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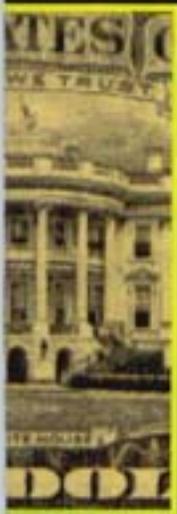
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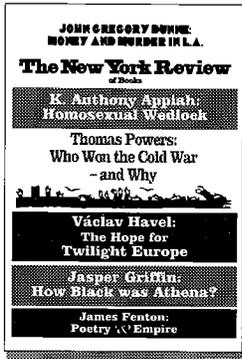
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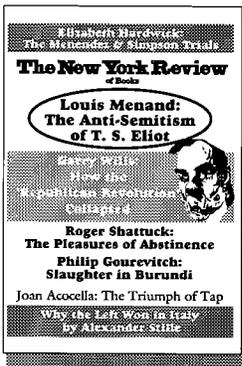
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SUMMER 1996

THE WILSON QUARTERLY

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- 11 **HEALING AMERICAN HEALTH CARE**
*Caroline Poplin • Peter J. Ferrara • Eric J. Cassell • C. Everett Koop
Louis Lasagna • Willard Gaylin*
Health care in America is changing. Describing the new regime, our authors point to perils ahead and suggest a little preventive medicine.
- 52 **THE LITTLE ISLAND THAT COULD**
by Anne F. Thurston
The arrival of full democracy in prosperous Taiwan again raises the question of the island's relations with the mainland.
- 44 **FREDERICK TAYLOR'S APPRENTICESHIP**
by Robert Kanigel
The father of "scientific management" helped kill the apprentice system that had provided the first step in his own career.
- 68 **"AND NOW A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR"**
by James B. Twitchell
The author of *Adcult* explains how advertising shapes our culture.
- 78 **REBECCA WEST AND THE GOD THAT FAILED**
by Carl Rollyson
How one of Britain's best writers resisted the siren of communism

DEPARTMENTS

- 3 EDITOR'S COMMENT
- 4 CORRESPONDENCE
- 6 FINDINGS
QWERTY • Hispanics • Silicon Alley
- 8 AT ISSUE
Postered and Mugged
- 72 BOOKS
Why Things Bite Back
Democracy's Discontent
The Open Sore of a Continent
- 90 POETRY
Anthony Hecht on Joseph Brodsky
- 117 PERIODICALS
Rise of a Counter-Academy?
The Suicide of the Newspaper



COVER Design by Adrienne Onderdonk Dudden.

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EDITOR'S COMMENT

Lamented or celebrated, President Bill Clinton's failure to bring about sweeping health-care reform left the system to take care of itself. And pretty much willy-nilly, that is what the system has done.

The two general questions our authors ask in our six-part treatment of this unfolding story is where the system is heading and whether this direction bodes fair or ill for the future of health care. The views advanced by our authors, five of whom are trained physicians, reflect a range of ideological preferences. Yet taken together, they constitute a forthright critique of our *faute de mieux* system of managed care.

To be sure, the media have been abuzz with horror stories about managed care. Under the new arrangement, we have learned, the two most crucial players—the doctor and the patient—must defer to the directives of administrators in health maintenance organizations, often without the patient's awareness of the rules of the game. It's hardly surprising that such directives, driven by considerations of cost containment, can sometimes run counter to the patient's best interests or the physician's best judgment. But rather than revisit horror stories or demonize the HMOs (which, after all, are merely stepping into a void resulting from stalemate and indecision), we offer a close look at the arrangement and its ramifying effects on everything from medical research and hospitals to primary care and the doctor-patient relationship.

Our goal is not to offer a counsel of despair. It is to understand what we have—and to examine alternatives, from the single-payer system to medical savings accounts, that Americans may one day decide are preferable to the current arrangement.

For helping us to defray the expense of these articles, we gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Commonwealth Fund, Pfizer Inc., and Pharmacia and Upjohn, Inc. The funders also provided crucial support to the Woodrow Wilson Center's Program on Health, Values, and Public Policy.

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THE WILSON QUARTERLY (ISSN-0363-3276) is published in January (Winter), April (Spring), July (Summer), and October (Autumn) by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at 901 D Street S.W., Suite 704, Washington, D.C. 20024. Indexed biennially. Subscriptions: one year, \$24; two years, \$43. Air mail outside U.S.: one year, \$39; two years, \$73. Single copies mailed upon request: \$7; outside U.S. and possessions, \$8; selected back issues: \$7, including postage and handling; outside U.S., \$8. Periodical postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. All unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Members: Send changes of address and all subscription correspondence with *Wilson Quarterly* mailing label to Subscriber Service, *The Wilson Quarterly*, P.O. Box 420406, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0406. (Subscriber hot line: 1-800-829-5108.) Postmaster: Send all address changes to *The Wilson Quarterly*, P.O. Box 420406, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0406. Microfilm copies are available from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. U.S. newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior Street, Sandusky, Ohio 44870 (for information, call 1-800-221-3148). Visit our World Wide Web site at <http://wwics.si.edu/OUTREACH/WQ/QUARTERL.HTM>. DIRECT ADVERTISING INQUIRIES TO: Bob Rosen; Kalish, Quigley & Rosen, Inc.; 850 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019 TEL: (212) 399-9500, FAX: (212) 265-0986

FINDINGS

FARCICAL CONSTRUCTIONS: A New York University physicist named Alan Sokal caused an uproar recently when he duped the editors of *Social Text*, a trendy academic journal specializing in cultural studies, into publishing his hilariously inane and gibberish-ridden tract, “Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity.” The high point of Sokal’s send-up—actually, one of the few intelligible points of any kind—may be his assertion “that physical ‘reality,’ no less than social ‘reality,’ is at bottom a social and linguistic construct.” It’s all very funny and instructive, but one has to wonder why Professor Sokal went to all the trouble. After all, “serious” scholars (the quotation marks are borrowed from *Social Text*) publish equally outlandish “prose” all the time. Challenged to identify the finest examples of such writing in a contest recently, the participants in an Internet discussion group sponsored by the editors of *Philosophy and Literature* came up with a multitude of entries, including this passage from a book called *A Defense of Poetry*, published last year by a prestigious university press: “It is the moment of non-construction, disclosing the abstention of actuality from the concept in part through its invitation to emphasize, in reading, the helplessness—rather than the will to power—of its fall into conceptuality.”

Alas, this was only bad enough to win a tie for third place.

THE GREAT QWERTY QUESTION: How we wound up with the vexingly illogical QWERTY arrangement of keys on our typewriter and computer keyboards has become more than a matter of idle puzzlement. The QWERTY anomaly figures prominently in noted books such as Paul Krugman’s *Peddling Prosperity* (1994) and *The Winner-Take-All Society* (1995), by Robert Frank and Philip Cook, as an example of how markets can malfunction, allowing inferior alternatives that establish themselves early to triumph over superior competitors. Economists call this “path dependence,”

and the QWERTY case is one of the building blocks of the theory. But economists Stan Liebowitz and Stephen E. Margolis, writing in *Reason* (June 1996), take exception to those who slander QWERTY’s good name. As they show in amusing detail, the case for QWERTY’s inferiority is very shaky. They discovered, for example, that when the unsigned World War II-era navy study generally cited as proof of the superiority of the competing Dvorak system of arranging keys was carried out, “the Navy’s top expert in the analysis of time and motion studies . . . was none other than . . . Lieut. Com. August Dvorak.” This and other evidence—including the conclusion of a pair of IBM researchers that there are no superior alternatives to QWERTY—they published six years ago in the prestigious *Journal of Law and Economics*. Nevertheless, the QWERTY myth lives on. Even scholars sometimes can’t stand to let the facts get in the way of a good story.

LEFT ON LEFT: Certain graying eminences of the American Left, including a few veterans of the New Left, have been voicing dissatisfaction with the prevailing currents of contemporary left-wing thought lately. Philosopher Richard Rorty, for example, in a speech partially reprinted in *Harper’s* (June 1996), says that the class struggle in America “is a war in which the rich are winning, the poor are losing, and the Left, for the most part, is standing by.” The problem, he claims, is the academic Left’s almost exclusive preoccupation with issues of rights, elaborately construed. While “enormous ingenuity and learning are deployed in demonstrating the complexity of this or that institution . . . with patriarchy or heterosexism or racism,” Rorty writes, little is done to persuade wealthier Americans “to take notice of the desperate situation of their fellow citizens.”

With even more vehemence, linguist and veteran *contestateur* Noam Chomsky charges that leftists today have almost no contact with the “world of people with live problems and concerns.” No longer can

they be found, as they would have been 60 years ago, “teaching in working class schools” or “participating in or speaking for popular organizations.” Chomsky’s complaint is quoted in an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 12, 1996) by historian Russell Jacoby, who himself has harsh words for academics who view “symbolic politics” as an adequate replacement for “the gritty politics of community and street.” As he notes, “It is all too easy for professors, whose lives unfold in front of books and computer screens, to begin seeing the world as completely made up of texts and symbols, and to conclude . . . that changing the name changes the thing itself.”

If any single piece of writing sums up the more traditional leftists’ critique, it is Steven Marcus’s review, in the *New Republic* (June 10, 1996), of Kirkpatrick Sales’s recent book on the Luddite movement, *Rebels against the Future*. After a point-by-point indictment of Sales’s inaccuracies and misreadings, Marcus comes to a devastating peroration: “I don’t believe that I have read a book that so fully illustrates the intellectual bankruptcy of what passes these days for radical and left-wing thinking. . . . Culturally vacuous, historically garbled, at sea in the unfathomable complexities of contemporary life, it is a failed undertaking of critical intention, without system, without theory, and sometimes even without ideas.”

FEWER BUT BETTER HISPANICS: Since 1980, the U.S. Census has designated *Hispanic* an ethnic category. The small print in Census literature explains that “Hispanics can be of any race,” and a majority have identified themselves as white. Now, however, the Census Bureau is thinking of making *Hispanic* a racial category. As Peter Skerry points out in the *Brookings Review* (Summer 1996), this change may allow Hispanics to claim race-based benefits, but it could also have an odd effect on the statistical profile of one of America’s faster-growing populations. A test run recently by the Census Bureau suggests why: although people in certain groups (Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans) switch in significant numbers from the white racial designation to the Hispanic,

overall the number of people who call themselves Hispanic declines by as much as 30 percent.

What might this portend? In the classic film *Ninotchka* (1939), Greta Garbo plays a Soviet agent who, stepping off the train from Moscow, announces that things are going fine under Comrade Stalin: “We have fewer but better Russians.” Maybe the same will soon be said of America’s Hispanics.

NEWS FROM NOWHERE?: We’ve been promised that the Internet will liberate us all from the deadening constraints of time and place, transforming us into telecommuting, teleconferencing, teleshopping citizens of cyberspace. Pop futurologists are already worrying about what we’re going to do with all those empty office buildings and shopping malls. It’s curious, however, that the brains behind this revolution all tend to congregate in what are, unmistakably, actual places, such as Silicon Valley.

When software giant Microsoft agreed to back a new on-line political magazine, it insisted that editor Michael Kinsley set up shop not in the city of Washington, where the political action is, but in the state of Washington, where Microsoft headquarters is. Now it appears that the World Wide Web—the spiffy and rapidly growing graphical part of the Internet—is putting down roots in, of all places, Manhattan. In the shadow of the Flatiron Building, one of the icons of the industrial age, scores of large and small companies have created a new Silicon Alley. It turns out that the “content providers” clustered around 23rd Street—writers, editors, home page designers—generate just the kind of creative energy the industry needs. But if weaving together people in Boise, Bangor, and Biloxi with fiberoptic strands doesn’t work for the Masters of the Web, will it work for anybody else?



CORRESPONDENCE

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The Missing Father

David Popenoe's "A World without Fathers" [WQ, Spring '96] does not, and probably cannot, answer whether children are better served if their parents remain in a troubled marriage or get divorced. There are simply no data on how children fare when their parents stay together "for the sake of the children."

My own experience is that children are ill served when their parents stay in a dysfunctional marriage. Most such marriages are better ended.

Howard Jacoby
East Norwich, N.Y.

Running through your articles on fatherhood is the idea that what is needed is not just a "new father" but a new husband: one who does housework and child care as part of his primary responsibility, rather than just "help." I'd like to see 50,000 men in an arena promising to vacuum and miss work for sick children (as well as love, honor, and cherish their families).

I agree that until women want men to stay around as husbands, their children are less likely to have fathers in the house, and I thank your writers for raising the issue.

Laura Peebles
New Orleans, La.

During the 19th century, men became "breadwinners" who spent the day in "the world"; women became domestic specialists who reared the children and ran the household. The same forces that drove this change also loosened the connection of the nuclear family to extended kin and community.

To look at family life as David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead have, without this historical background, is to distort the nature of the problems of fatherlessness and family. They treat fatherhood and family only as independent variables rather than see them as part of a complex web of economic, social, and cultural factors. This not only leads Popenoe to hold fatherlessness responsible for every social

ill imaginable, but it also creates an underlying tone of personal blame. The trend toward self-concern that they decry is not a result of modern obsession with individual rights but is a historical outgrowth of broad social processes—the development of an economy based on unfettered individual action, the corrosive effects of the market on the common good, and the flourishing of a consumer ethic that focuses on self-indulgence and quick, easy solutions to complex personal problems.

Instead of asking individuals and nuclear families to shoulder burdens of change that they cannot bear alone, we should look at the larger context of which they are a part and imagine how to change it, even as we ask individuals to change too.

E. Anthony Rotundo
Andover, Mass.

Fatherhood may be in decline, as David Popenoe claims, but paternalism thrives. Popenoe and other champions of the traditional nuclear family want to save us from our own inclination to divorce or even enjoy positive media depic-

tions of such evils as adultery, out-of-wedlock births, and "alternative lifestyles."

What will these restrictions on liberty achieve? The effect of divorce on children is about as controversial as the effect of the minimum wage on fast-food workers. You choose between studies demonstrating that kids are resilient and can cope relatively well with divorce and studies showing that they are badly damaged by it; you weigh the effects of extreme marital conflict against the effects of marital breakup.

Generally, our ideological biases will determine which statistics we cite. Popenoe has a clear preference for traditional family life. I have a preference for individual liberty, and a belief that throughout our history traditional married life and restrictions on divorce have been essential to a culture and legal system that offered women protection and dependence instead of equality.



It is true that the usual range of social ills, including drug abuse, violent crime, and out-of-wedlock births, has coincided with a decline in the traditional nuclear family, but it has coincided as well with the decline of labor unions, an increased interest in religion and spirituality, and the war against drugs, arguably the biggest public policy disaster of the past 25 years. It has greatly contributed to gun violence (and helped finance the arms race in the streets) and wrecked communities. Where are the fathers in inner-city neighborhoods? Many are in prison, serving long mandatory sentences for relatively minor, nonviolent drug offenses. First get them out of prison; then we'll talk about divorce.

*Wendy Kaminer
Cambridge, Mass.*

As a single father and a member of one of the fastest-growing groups in America (single-male-headed households), I agree with both David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead that children need two parents. But I was disappointed that both fail to give much attention to my group and to grapple with certain facts. Whitehead suggests that men must accept women as working mothers, but, frankly, most families have no other choice but to accept this fact. Perhaps if we focused more on dealing with two-income families and their difficulties sustaining a close family life rather than on the collection of child support, the latter might not be such a large issue.

*Alan T. Schroeder, Jr.
Huntington Beach, Calif.*

The Hard Swedish Reality

As an inveterate Sweden watcher, I was pleased to read Gordon Sander's article, "Sweden after the Fall," in your Spring issue. It is a perceptive account of the current Swedish mood of self-examination. Swedes, having chased perfection to the point of exhaustion, are now being compelled to acknowledge the limits to social meliorism.

The article alludes to the Swedish loss of *raison d'être*: "We're not used to being a second-rate nation." Like Americans (and people of other nations), Swedes have long nourished a belief that they are somehow fundamentally different from other people. The content of this exceptionalism has varied; the Romantic

Correspondence continues on page 142

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Chosen in open annual worldwide competitions, some 50 Fellows at the Center carry out advanced research, write books, and join in discussions with other scholars, public officials, journalists, and business and labor leaders. The Center is housed in the original Smithsonian "castle" on the Mall. Financing comes from both private sources and an annual congressional appropriation.

AT ISSUE

Posterred and Mugged

The front door of my high school was a thousand feet from the front door of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but Greenland might as well have blocked the distance for all the travel there was between the two. Not once, in four years, were we directed to the museum, and the museum, in those chilly 1950s, folded its arms against the temptation to reach out. These days, the reaching out by museums is so aggressive that you walk a little faster when you pass an entrance, to elude the hook that will pull anyone inside, each body a number, and maybe a wallet—a diner, a souvenir hunter, a magazine subscriber, a course taker, annually, eternally. Just about every museum with its lights still on has to market itself like a detergent or a presidential candidate. And other not-for-profit arts and cultural institutions are similarly pressed. Expenses and public expectations have soared, and money cannot be allowed to duck for cover.

Two recent books, written under the auspices of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in New York and published by Jossey-Bass, are exceptionally instructive on the evolution—and the school-of-hard-knocks education—of the not-for-profits: *Managing Change in the Nonprofit Sector: Lessons from the Evolution of Five Independent Research Libraries*, by Jed I. Bergman (in collaboration with William G. Bowen and Thomas I. Nygren), and *The New-York Historical Society: Lessons from One Nonprofit's Long Struggle for Survival*, by Kevin M. Guthrie. Resist the novocaine of the titles and you are home free, for the texts are lucid and compelling, and require no specialist's degree to be understood.

If you've wondered why ballet shoes ring the edge of your scarf and an odalisque curls round your coffee mug, why

your gym bag boosts PBS and your lunch dates are inscribed in the Book of Kells, let Bergman and Guthrie suggest answers. Their proper subjects are a half-dozen prestigious research institutions, all of them libraries and several of them museums as well, but it is not difficult to draw from the seemingly narrow case studies lessons applicable to other not-for-profit cultural organizations (symphony orchestras, ballet companies, regional theaters, and so on) that now need to work as adroitly as the libraries to survive.

WQ Bergman describes how the financial status of five great American private libraries underwent a fundamental change during the last 25 years. There was a time when the income on their endowments could sustain these institutions. But once the libraries committed themselves to a future of stronger and better-housed collections, new technologies, and service to a wider range of clients—an admirable commitment, by the way—they chose a future in which adequate funding was no longer guaranteed. Vulnerable to reductions in their earned income, they became dependent on external funders, whose generosity might well be driven by idiosyncratic priorities. How many strings must be attached to a gift before an administrator declines to accept it lest the strings enmesh the institution? A library, even—especially?—a great research library, is not an easy sell to the general public. Its collections are of interest primarily to scholars, who will always seek them out and need no lure, but who tend to think deep rather than reach deep.

Then, too, luxury and lack seldom cohabit as closely as they do in some cultural organizations, which conceal an arrhythmic heart behind a deceptively sturdy physical or artistic facade. The

New-York Historical Society is a good example. An imperious presence on Central Park West, the place was once thought secure as the rock beneath Manhattan. Though its travails for the past decade and more have been a matter of public record, the head-shaking detail gathered by Guthrie lends them a new cautionary force.

There are less charitable explanations than the ultimate insufficiency of old endowments for why budgets sometimes separate themselves from reality in not-for-profit organizations: the unsteady attention of trustees, or their downright ignorance of the mission and financial status of the institutions for which they are responsible; the willfulness of directors, who may wish to build or acquire when prudence dictates that they lock their office doors and remain seated; the reluctance of donors to put their money where there's not a large public to marvel at their generosity.

The rising costs are attributable as well to a phenomenon known as "Baumol's disease," after the economist William Baumol of New York University (who, in truth, has the manner of a family doctor making a house call and deserves to have his name attached to a *cure*). In sectors of the economy where output is not heavily dependent on labor as an essential input (automobile manufacturing is an example), productivity grows at a faster rate than it does in sectors where labor inputs are critical (teaching, for example, or dance performance). That is to say, you can always find a more efficient way to build an automobile, but you can't save a salary by reducing the pas de deux in a ballet to a solo, or a string quartet to a trio, or symphonies to piano transcriptions, or operas to recitals—the examples multiply endlessly—without stripping each experience of its first meaning.

Nonprofit cultural organizations (not just research libraries) provide services that, by their very nature, are labor-intensive. As labor costs increase, so too do the costs of maintaining the primary functions of these institutions, of keeping them true to themselves. The organi-

zations must find new ways to cope. No wonder we have suffered the expansion of the museum shop into the museum shopping mall. Mugs and coasters and T-shirts, pens and posters and tote bags—all are the trivial surface blemishes that suggest some underlying disorder.

How much crowding and dunning and shilling and hustling—but civilized, always civilized—will the public put up with? A lot, apparently. Some years ago, merchandise on display at the sprawling souvenir stand just past the finish line of the Met's Velázquez exhibit was partially visible while you were still in the homestretch presence of the pictures. You could view simultaneously a glorious Velázquez and its beckoning poster reproduction. The reproduction was to the original as Cliffs Notes are to *Paradise Lost*. True, it could be rolled up and taken on the bus. But nothing could compensate for the falseness of its colors against the damning witness of the original.

The Met should not have countenanced the reproduction's display, let alone sponsored its sale. But customers seemed not to care, or notice. Is it the business—I mean *purpose*—of a museum to make them see the difference? Once upon a time, perhaps, but the purpose has grown more equivocal these days. Being severe with visitors needs to be weighed against being liked by them. The first purpose is survival. And so, relaxing their starch, cultural organizations let go their dignity. In their zeal for dress-down Fridays, they sometimes forget to fasten the buttons on their jeans.

Commercialism—exuberant, successful, and rank—must inevitably tempt nonprofit cultural institutions that want to be true to their original mandates in an age when it is no longer possible to be a library exclusively for scholars, an opera company for patrons only, a museum of empty corridors, or an orchestra indifferent to its community. As soon as they seek money from foundations, corporations, and federal agencies, they will be grilled Soviet-style about outreach

activity and efforts to build new audiences and encourage—what else?—diversity.

What do these institutions risk in adapting to survive, especially when the task is not equally difficult for all? Some have sure-fire ways to open wallets: a museum can hang Monet or Van Gogh or Matisse, an orchestra can program Beethoven, and PBS can quite easily reshow “Yanni at the Acropolis” and “*Les Misérables* in Concert.” But a research library? Its real treasures—not just information, but knowledge, wisdom—may not lend themselves to easy exposure. There is nothing glamorous about fulfilling the basic mission of a library. Books attract readers, not crowds. Collections are expensive to grow and to keep, and require as much care as moody orchids. Libraries can work only with what they have; in so doing, they should not compromise what they are. In “the new funding environment” (the ozone layer gone, the air thinning), even the Library of Congress is scrambling. It holds all the cards, and a lot else besides, and has begun to lease portions of its collections to commercial vendors, who will digitize and package the materials and make them available to distant publics—for a price. Information is not such common coin as we may presume. For some, it positively glitters.

The effort to make accessible the higher culture that was once the preserve of the few is entirely laudable—essential, in fact, if the culture is to keep breathing. Seal it

off from the bracing air of fresh exposure and it will mummify. But by how much of the air of contemporary culture and its hucksterish proclivities can the higher culture be touched without beginning to spoil? “High” is already barely “middling”: a few bomb-free Jane Austen films are thought to signal a cultural renaissance, though dozens of movies about blood loss or animals who excel at a sport continue to pitch the world toward darkness.

You can argue art’s origins back to the Garden of Eden, to the moment the first couple garnished themselves with greens and altered a simpler reality. Art was born of trouble, brought culture in its wake, and both have been trouble ever since. They’ve been fun too, and marketable, never more so than in our own day, when the only unpardonable emotion may be boredom. What’s it to be for pleasure, then, on a Saturday afternoon, the museum or a movie, Watteau or Willis, Chuck Close or Glenn Close? And, on the CD player, Telemann or Tesh; on the night stand, the *American Scholar* or *George*? We move freely between cultural realms because they are marketed alike. Tickets to museum shows are available through the same agency as tickets to plays, pop concerts, and football, and the sameness of the marketing erases the line between high and low, blurs the differences between what’s being sold, slides the products toward identification, till they all sit atop one another and any protruding edges are lopped off. The equivalence is violently won, and counterfeit.

—James Morris

HEALING AMERICAN HEALTH CARE

Despite its many sterling qualities, the nation's health-care system has become a \$1 trillion monster with oversized problems that seem to grow larger by the minute: soaring federal outlays for Medicare and Medicaid, nearly one-sixth of the population without medical insurance, and rising expenses everywhere. Now the system is lumbering in a new direction, toward managed care. Appraising this new destination—with all its implications for patients and doctors, hospitals and researchers—our authors suggest a variety of midcourse alterations.



- 12 *Caroline Poplin on the rise of managed care*
- 25 *Peter J. Ferrara on medical savings accounts*
- 28 *Eric J. Cassell on the fate of primary care*
- 31 *C. Everett Koop on the future of the hospital*
- 34 *Louis Lasagna on horizons in medical research*
- 38 *Willard Gaylin on the expanding definition of health*

Mismanaged Care

by Caroline Poplin

Two years ago, the United States was caught up in a furious national debate over the future of its health-care system. That debate is over, with nothing substantial accomplished, and most Americans probably believe that its passing spelled the end of any significant change in the health-care system in the immediate future. Today, however, that system is changing right before our eyes. Only now there is little debate, and the driving forces are said to be beyond anybody's control.

The signs of change are everywhere. Economy-minded employers are switching to lower-cost "managed-care" plans, and employees are being told to choose new doctors or forgo insurance reimbursement. More than two-thirds of all insured Americans now belong to health maintenance organizations, preferred provider plans, or other managed-care health insurance plans. People who do not work for big corporations or other large employers, even healthy people, are finding it more and more difficult to obtain insurance. Those who fall seriously ill or leave their jobs are having trouble maintaining their insurance coverage. Patients are being discharged from hospitals quicker—and maybe sicker. Some new mothers now are sent home 24 hours after routine deliveries.

Physicians are also feeling the effects. Under the regime of managed care, they are being told by insurers to reduce their fees and adapt their practices to new guidelines, or else lose their patients. Many newly graduated specialists, carrying debts the size of home mortgages, cannot find permanent jobs because managed care has sharply limited referrals to expensive specialists. Tasks formerly performed only by doctors—such as simple surgery and routine anaesthesia—are being turned over to less costly "physician extenders"—physicians' assistants, nurse practitioners, and technicians. Yet the *Wall Street Journal* notes that new health-care conglomerates are making more money than they can profitably invest.

Hospitals are being merged, sold, or closed. Last year, 664 U.S. hospitals (more than 10 percent of the total) were involved in mergers or acquisitions. Many nonprofit hospitals are being taken over by for-profit companies, and some hospitals are being shut down. In the last two years, Philadelphia alone has lost six hospitals and a medical school. Proud old teaching hospitals have been told by managed-care companies to bring their charges down to competitive levels or suffer the consequences. Two bastions of the American medical establishment, Harvard's Brigham and Women's Hospital and Johns Hopkins Medical Institution, are even advertising for patients.

Some of the seeds of today's transformation were sowed by the very success of American medicine during the past half-century. The rise of third-party health insurance and the triumph of modern technology,



The Bureaucrats of Medicine (1993), by Jose S. Perez

combined with the traditional fee-for-service structure of American medicine, are driving today's historic changes.

American medicine has always been highly decentralized, rooted in close personal bonds between doctors and their patients. The doctor-patient relationship was considered essential to accurate diagnosis and a key to effective therapy, boosting the patient toward recovery—or helping him to accept failure. Even specialists operating out of hospitals tried to develop personal relationships with their patients. Each doctor was—and remains today—legally and morally responsible to the patient for the consequences of each decision he or she makes for that patient, and good doctors take that responsibility seriously.

The historical focus on the doctor-patient relationship had important economic consequences. With competition among physicians for business held in check by the American Medical Association, great economic power rested in the hands of the individual doctors. They alone decided whether, and where, a person should be hospitalized (albeit with the patient's consent) and which expensive tests or treatments should be undertaken. Doctors, like most repairmen, generally charged separately for each service they performed and for each visit, a custom called fee-for-service billing. A major thrust of the managed-care revolution is to change that practice.

Traditionally, doctors have also claimed the right to set their own prices for their services. This practice has the potential for abuse, but it has also allowed physicians to charge wealthier patients more so that they might also offer services to the poor. Such cross-subsidies, not only for care of the poor but for research and education, are a characteristic feature of American medicine. From the days of the earliest colonial dis-

pensaries and 19th-century charity wards right up to the present, moreover, there has been an abiding link between medical education and care of the poor. Young doctors have learned their profession by taking care, at virtually no charge, of those who could not afford a doctor on their own.

For all the apparent continuity in American medicine, many familiar features of the system are of quite recent origin. Not until the end of the last century, for example, did professionalized medical care become an important factor in the lives of ordinary people—often the difference between death and total recovery. Medical science simply did not have much to offer most people. Only in the last 50 years have Americans ranked medicine as a necessity of life, along with food, clothing, and shelter, and a “right” to which everyone is entitled.

Health insurance is likewise of relatively recent vintage. Blue Cross (for hospital bills) was created in the 1930s, after hospital care became too costly for middle-class families to afford out of pocket, and Blue Shield (for doctors’ bills) was launched in the early ’40s. These were nonprofit plans created by the medical profession and the business community. Large commercial insurers, such as Prudential and Aetna, entered the market in force after World War II, and labor unions were instrumental in winning employer-subsidized health insurance as a benefit for many people. Today, more than 1,200 firms sell health insurance in the United States.

It was not entirely coincidental that this period also saw the rise of the wealthy doctor. Before World War II, physicians were respected members of the communities they served, but they were not usually rich. Only with America’s postwar prosperity did the practice of medicine become a reliable opportunity to do well by doing good. Today, the average physician enjoys an income of about \$150,000, and some specialists, such as radiologists and certain surgeons, routinely earn in excess of \$200,000.

The final postwar building block was the involvement of the federal government. For 200 years, the only real public contribution to medicine in the United States was the construction of municipal hospitals for the poor, state hospitals for the insane, and the provision of care to the military in war. Significant federal support for medical research and education dates only from the 1950s; federally sponsored health insurance for the elderly and the poor, with Medicare and Medicaid, respectively, began in 1965. Today, the federal government pays about 45 percent of the nation’s \$1 trillion annual health-care bill.

Federally sponsored research and education have had a profound impact on the system. Federal dollars helped to build the downtown temples of medicine and to produce the specialists, researchers, and teachers who make American medicine in many ways the envy of the world. During the 1960s and ’70s, the boom years of American medicine, 40 new medical schools opened their doors; medical specialists now outnumber generalists nearly three to one. The National Institutes of Health, the primary overseer of the government’s research effort, was consolidated in 1930; its budget has grown from \$200,000 in that year to just over \$12 billion today. In

> CAROLINE POPLIN, M.D., a practicing internist in Virginia, graduated from Yale Law School and practiced law for more than a decade before attending the University of Rochester Medical School. Copyright © 1996 by Caroline Poplin.

1971, President Richard Nixon declared war on cancer, calling it “the most significant action taken during my administration.” Congress appropriated about \$230 million for the effort that year. In 1995, despite new fiscal constraints, it gave the National Cancer Institute about \$2.1 billion.

The results of the nation’s heavy investment in research and training came in a rush: widespread use of ventilators, the development of the intensive care unit and the computer-assisted tomography (CAT) scanner, the introduction of cardiac bypass surgery, all in the 1970s; fiber-optic devices and magnetic resonance imagers (MRIs) in the 1980s, which made possible diagnoses that heretofore had required invasive surgery, along with recombinant DNA pharmaceuticals, and materials and techniques for total joint replacement; and finally, in the 1990s, laparoscopic surgery, which permits surgeons to perform major procedures such as gall bladder removal and chest lymph-node biopsy through a few inch-long slits, thus allowing the patient to go home the same day.

These new technologies are marvelous, but there is a catch: they are all very expensive.

By the late 1970s, policymakers were beginning to realize that Medicare, the crown jewel of the Great Society, might be turning into a budgetary disaster. Medicare spending started at \$64 million in 1966, grew to \$32 billion in 1980, reached \$160 billion in 1994, and is still climbing.



Throughout the 1980s, medical costs grew faster than inflation, rising at annual rates of about 10 percent. The rate of growth has since subsided somewhat, but health-care cost increases still outpace increases for other items in the consumer’s market basket. By 1994, the United States was spending 14 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on health care, the highest percentage of any country in the world and more than double the share in 1960. (Next on the list of big spenders was Canada, at 10.2 percent of GDP. By comparison, in 1993 France and Germany spent 9.8 percent and 8.6 percent, respectively.)

As much as we spend, we still do not take care of everyone. Nearly 40 million Americans now lack health insurance. Some of these people choose to forgo insurance, and some get medical care at public facilities. Yet the existence of this big uninsured population is one of the most important reasons why, even though it spends a larger share of its national wealth on health care than any other nation in the world, the United States does not necessarily enjoy the best health in the world. America’s life expectancy and infant mortality rates, for example, are only in the middling range among Western industrialized nations.

Why does it cost so much to cover so few? The answer lies in the peculiar interaction between modern medicine and the marketplace.

As anyone who has ever been ill knows, obtaining health care is not like buying a car or some other product. Ordinarily, a consumer shopping for an expensive item actively searches out the merchant who will give him what he wants for the lowest price. The dealer will charge the highest price he can get without driving his customer to another store. By such transactions does the invisible hand of the free market produce efficiency: the

most desired type and quantity of goods and services at the lowest cost.

Not so in medicine. When a doctor orders tests or treatments for a patient with insurance, that patient has no reason to try to shop for a lower price, even if he has the time and information to do so. This can be quite striking in practice: a patient who would cross town to take advantage of double coupons at the grocery store, or haggle for weeks over the price of a car, will enthusiastically accede to an expensive test without ever asking “How much will that be?” (or the related question, “Is it really necessary?”). Incentives to the providers, however, are unchanged: they want to sell as much as possible at the highest prices they can command. The insurance company, now the only one with an incentive to hold the line on costs, is not even a party to the initial transaction. It doesn’t find out about it until the bill arrives.

These elements together are a prescription for soaring costs.

The asymmetry between buyer and seller, patient and provider, does not mean the end of competition. On the contrary, providers—doctors, laboratories, hospitals, and others—continue to compete fiercely for consumers’ business. But they often compete on the basis of quality rather than price: convenient facilities, attentive staff, good outcomes, whatever they think will attract their target market.

It is important to remember that not everything about this situation is bad. The knowledge that they would be rewarded for superior new technology, even if it was more expensive, doubtless encouraged manufacturers to push ahead with the development of CAT scanners and MRI machines, which are invaluable and indispensable tools in modern medicine. The flip side, though, is that medical “arms races” developed in many cities, as hospital executives concluded they must have the latest equipment to attract doctors and patients. (At one time, it was said that there were more MRI machines in Boston than in all of Canada.)

The traditional structure of health insurance, modeled on commercial insurance, also helped push medicine toward high-cost, inpatient procedures. In general, insurers design policies to cover only unexpected, expensive losses. Routine, predictable costs—be they ordinary wear and tear on cars or routine outpatient visits for people—generally are not covered. That gives both patient and provider an incentive to shift treatment into one of the covered—and more costly—areas.

With strong pressures driving costs up and nothing pushing them down, the medical system now fondly remembered by so many doctors and patients was inherently unstable. There inevitably would come a time when those footing the bill—employers, insurers, and taxpayers—would tolerate it no more. That time arrived during the 1980s.

The federal government, paying open-ended “reasonable and customary” fees under Medicare (the pricing system organized medicine demanded in return for supporting the creation of Medicare in 1965), responded to the steadily rising costs of health care with price controls, first on hospitals, then on doctors, for Medicare reimbursements. As physicians increased the volume of their services to make up for the lost income, the government added a downward adjustment based on volume. And so it went, with escalating effort and ingenuity each round.

Many insurers responded to rising costs with *their* traditional weapon: they tightened their “underwriting,” the practice of identifying and classifying risks and setting appropriate premiums. Since something like 10 per-

cent of the population is responsible for 80 percent of medical costs in any given year, it behooves a prudent insurer to identify the sickly individuals and avoid them like the plague. This is called “cherry picking” by some policymakers. Tighter underwriting is the reason individuals are having more difficulty obtaining health insurance, especially at attractive “group” or “community” rates, and why insurers refuse to cover “pre-existing conditions.”

Finally, under mounting financial pressure, private employers, together with their insurers, devised an innovative

solution—“managed care.” Much of the thinking was done by insurance company officials and corporate executives who met periodically in the late 1980s in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, under the tutelage of physician Paul Ellwood and Stanford University economist Alain Enthoven. The corporate managers took advantage of the power they understood best: market power.

Recall that in the “classical” medical transaction, the third-party payer is passive: the doctor decides what is best for the patient, the patient agrees, and the insurer gets the bill. Some insurers and employers realized that because they insured many patients, they had enormous power in what was in fact a highly competitive provider market, with too many hospital beds (particularly if patients were hospitalized only for conditions *requiring* hospitalization) and too many doctors (especially as research funds dwindled). Increasingly, insurers and employers demanded steep discounts for services rendered to the individuals they covered, secure in the knowledge that if a particular doctor or hospital refused, others would be happy to step in. Patients were told by insurers to see doctors only on an approved list.

Doctors complained, correctly, that this new insurance technique would destroy the doctor-patient relationship. Many were bitterly disappointed when patients they had served faithfully for years went off to the new, discount doctors with barely a whimper or a look back. Yet for the average—which is to say healthy—patient, such a change is not necessarily a big deal. It is the chronically ill patient who suffers.

Insurers did not stop with discounts. They began to suspect that some doctors were ordering more tests and doing more procedures than were



Contemplation Before Surgery (1988) by Joe Wilder, M.D.

really “necessary” in order to make up for money trimmed elsewhere. Certainly it was difficult to explain why, for example, orthopedic surgeons replaced almost twice as many knees in Boston as in New Haven in 1982 despite the two cities’ having similar populations. Perhaps the New Haven doctors were doing too few knee replacements, but, considering differences in the compensation system, it seemed more likely to analysts that the Bostonians were doing too many. So in the late 1980s some insurers moved closer to truly “managing” care: they began to examine *what* care was ordered, not just how much it cost.

Their new initiative took a variety of forms—a requirement for second opinions, “preclearance” from the company for elective hospital admissions, and “utilization review,” an after-the-fact check to make sure the service was medically indicated. Predictably—and appropriately—these techniques evoked howls of protest from the medical profession. Doctors complained they were being second-guessed by nurses or even clerks who knew little about medicine, were using secret protocols, and had never seen the patient. Doctors also complained that they were required to spend too much time on paperwork.

There was worse to come. Managed-care companies are increasingly finding that the best means of controlling costs lies with the doctor himself. In the most highly developed form of managed care, instead of paying a doctor for each visit or task (“fee for service”), the company pays him a flat fee per patient per month. If the patient stays healthy and needs nothing, the fee is all profit for the doctor; if the patient falls ill, the doctor must provide whatever care the patient needs, even if it costs more than the monthly fee. Under such a system, doctors become, in effect, insurers; they are at financial risk. This arrangement is called “capitation,” and it is the hallmark of the emerging system of managed care.

Capitation reverses the incentives of fee-for-service medicine. Under the old system, the more a physician did, the more money he made. In the new regime, the *less* he does, the better off he is. Often the principle is extended to expensive services the doctor controls but does not necessarily perform himself. For example, the company may withhold certain sums from a physician’s compensation for referrals or hospitalizations in excess of an expected number. The company doesn’t inspect these cases individually. After all, he is the doctor. And if he makes an error under this cost-cutting pressure, only he is responsible.

For insurers and employers, capitation is the Holy Grail. By definition, it limits their costs. There is no need to second-guess experts in the field. They don’t have to risk alienating patients by denying claims. Their paperwork is simplified. More important, they can offer the kind of truly comprehensive coverage long sought by consumers; it is now in the doctor’s interest as well as the insurer’s to manage the patient with the least-expensive effective therapy. The doctor now has a stronger incentive, for example, to closely monitor chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes in order to prevent costly hospitalizations or complications. The insurers can legitimately argue that they are shifting the emphasis in health care from curing disease to preventing it.

For doctors, however, capitation is a pact with the devil. The only way to survive financially under such a system is to sign up a large number of healthy patients and try to avoid the sick, which directly contradicts their

training. There are also strong incentives to abandon solo practice for a group practice: a few severely ill people at the wrong time can spell disaster for the solo doctor—and perhaps for his patients too, as strains on his time and finances begin to effect the quality of their care.

Most troubling of all, however, is the effect of capitation on physicians' medical decisions. Many medical calls are quite straightforward. A frail 80-year-old woman with diabetes, living alone in her own home, is hospitalized so that she can be given intravenous antibiotics for pneumococcal pneumonia; it would take a brave doctor to try to manage her as an outpatient. A 50-year-old male smoker with crushing substernal chest pain and certain electrocardiogram changes goes straight to the emergency room for clot-busting drugs if he can get there in less than six hours. (Even this case is not entirely straightforward: does the man get streptokinase at \$300 per dose, or TPA, a slightly better drug for certain heart attacks, at \$2,400?)

But what about the 45-year-old woman with chest pain and more subtle EKG abnormalities? The EKG is consistent with heart disease but also with other conditions. Do you send her home? Order an exercise stress test (about \$1,200, and many false positives)? Refer her to a cardiologist (knowing referrals count against you)? Treat her with medication empirically “just in case,” although every drug has side effects? Every doctor in practice knows that serious heart disease is not common among women in this category, but there are some exceptions. Is your patient one of those?

Of course, doctors have been making such decisions for a long time. However, managed care introduces a new element: the doctor's own financial interest. It is sometimes said that under the old fee-for-service system, doctors also had a financial interest—in doing more: more tests, more procedures, more visits. But there is a significant difference. Doing more rarely means doing harm. Under managed care, doctors protect themselves by *denying* care that might help their patient (but also might not).

Some analysts say the solution is disclosure. The doctor says, “Yes, Mrs. Smith, you have locally invasive breast cancer, and I think a bone-marrow transplant might help you. But your insurance doesn't cover it.” The doctor has fulfilled his professional responsibility and is off the hook. The patient sues the insurance company to have her treatment paid for. That's why many managed-care companies now include a “gag” clause in their contracts with physicians, threatening discharge for just such disclosures, or even the disclosure that a gag clause exists.

Capitation is more fiendish still. If the physician decides not to recommend the bone-marrow transplant because recovery is unlikely and the insurer will drop *him* if he goes ahead, the last thing he is going to do is tell the patient. Nor will a doctor tell a heart patient who has occasional chest pain but can still get around that he is not recommending bypass surgery (at a cost of \$25,000) because, since the research literature shows that surgery for the patient's single vessel disease increases the quality but not the length of life, the insurer penalizes doctors who recommend it.

Ethically, of course, the decision about surgery should be the patient's to make, but when recommended surgery is free to the patient, virtually everyone will choose it, and costs will soar. Between 1990 and '93, for

example, U.S. physicians performed four times as much bypass surgery on heart attack victims as their Canadian counterparts did, with only modest differences in ultimate outcomes.

Managed care is changing the entire health-care delivery system in the United States—who provides care, who receives it, and what care is given. The stated goal of managed care is efficiency. Its method is to bring to medicine, the last cottage industry in the United States, the techniques of mass production. It works on volume. It assumes that there are economies of scale to be achieved. It incorporates the latest information technology. It seeks to standardize care. This allows an employer to use less skilled (and lower paid) personnel. The cardiologist can tell the internists how to treat the heart attack victim; the internist can tell the nurse practitioners how to take care of diabetics. “Cookbook medicine,” say the doctors. “Improved quality control,” respond the managers.

To managed-care advocates, however, the crowning achievement of their system occurs at the next level up: the reintroduction of the market. If all managed care accomplished were a transfer of profits from physicians to managers, what would be gained? The savings to *society* only accrue when different managed-care companies compete with one another for customers. As competition drives down the price each company asks, the total spent on health care must necessarily decline.*

Managed care promises to reshape health care in America. It could very well alter the traditional doctor-patient relationship beyond recognition. More important, it provides an unsettling answer to the question of who should be making the important therapeutic decisions: the doctor, the patient, or the managed-care company.

The changes wrought by managed care will reverberate throughout the health-care system, touching important institutions that consumers rarely think about. Medical schools are already feeling the effects. While academics are vigilantly protecting their right to take on as many subspecialty fellows—doctors seeking advanced training in cardiology, orthopedic surgery, and the like—as they want, young physicians are voting with their feet. Applications for specialty residencies are already falling. No one in his or her mid-thirties is going to spend three or four years working 80 hours a week at a salary of \$35,000 to get trained out of a job. At some point, senior faculty are going to have to put aside some of their research and other pursuits to take up the slack.

Nonetheless, it is heartening that, despite clear suggestions that doctors in the future will have less independence and lower incomes than physicians today, applications to medical schools reached an all-time high in 1994. There were 45,000 applicants, almost double the 1986 number, for about 16,000 slots. Maybe it is just the prospect of a secure job in an insecure time that explains this increase, but perhaps now that medicine’s material rewards are being scaled back, the field is attracting fewer people who are interested in the money and more whose chief goal is to help others feel better. The organized profession, in the meantime, is trying to

**One of the reasons President Clinton’s failed Health Security Act of 1994 grew to such gargantuan proportions was that its architects tried to remedy some of the shortcomings of managed care. To prevent monopolies from emerging (in, say, a town that can support only one hospital), the plan provided for “managed competition.” To help consumers evaluate the quality, as well as the price, of competing health plans and to prevent companies from soliciting only healthy customers, it called for more government oversight.*



Corporate Decision (1983), by George Tooker

improve its position vis-à-vis insurers by reducing the oversupply of physicians. It is cutting residencies, reducing medical-school class sizes, and trying to close doors to foreign medical graduates.

Medical research is also likely to be affected by the onslaught of managed care. Overall, there may well be less money going into research, particularly since insurers are intent on eliminating the higher fees that universities and specialists charge for ordinary care in order to subsidize research. The focus of research may also change, from seeking better medications or techniques that cost more to identifying those that cost less (or can be used effectively by workers with less training).

Hospitals are already changing. Community hospitals, unable to meet expenses in the new environment, are selling out to investor-owned chains. In return for financial support, the new owners may radically alter a hospital's mission—closing an unprofitable emergency room, converting it from acute to convalescent care, or restricting uncompensated care to the minimum required by law. Big cities such as New York and Washington, D.C., are overhauling the aging municipal hospitals that have traditionally served the poor, laying off bureaucrats and medical staff alike. Nor are proud university hospitals exempt from the new managed-care regime. They also must transform themselves, reducing research and teaching in favor of patient care and shifting from cutting-edge, high-tech specialty care to inexpensive primary care.

Despite all of managed care's pitfalls, Republicans and Democrats in Washington, who have reached near-total gridlock in other areas, seem to agree that it is the solution to the nation's health-care problem—even though they disagree what that problem is. Embarking on his health-care reform initiative in 1993, President Clinton said that the principal problem was access. The percentage of the population lacking medical insurance was on the rise, having increased from 12.5 percent in 1980 to about 15 percent in 1993. The only way to save enough money to

pay the bill for covering these people, Clinton concluded, was to encourage everyone to choose managed care, in a system of managed competition. The administration attempted to overcome all the shortcomings of managed care with detailed government regulation, spelling out its vision in a 1,364-page plan. There is no need to remind you of the plan's fate.

The Republicans took another route. In 1994, they warned that Medicare, the giant federal health-care program for the elderly, would be "bankrupt" by 2002. Their solution? Introduce managed care. Give seniors vouchers for private health insurance and allow private companies to compete for their business on the basis of price and, in theory, quality. No regulations were necessary. Health care for seniors would be back in the private sector where it belonged. Consumers would have more choices (of plans if not of providers), and by paying attention to the price of insurance, they would drive down the total cost of their health care to something the nation could afford. (Savings of \$270 billion over seven years were promised.) And tempting prices would lead most of them to sign up for managed care. This bill, however, was the victim of a presidential veto during the budget battle of 1995.

Some conservatives, including House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R.-Ga.), were particularly taken with a variation on the voucher theme known as medical savings accounts (MSAs). Under this scenario, seniors use a portion of a government voucher worth perhaps \$5,000 to buy "catastrophic" health insurance—coverage for medical expenses in excess of, say, \$3,000. The remainder of the voucher goes into a savings account to cover check-ups, medications, and other routine medical expenses. Any money that goes unspent ultimately winds up in the insured individual's pocket.

In theory, this encourages the prudent patient to shop carefully for doctors, drugs, and tests, and not to overuse routine services or go to the doctor too often. In other words, it is supposed to restore price competition to the market for health-care services and thus drive down costs. (This is one reason why Gingrich and others favor making MSAs of some kind more available not only to Medicare beneficiaries but to the population as a whole.) In practice, these accounts give patients an incentive to skimp on important preventive care. But MSAs have other significant drawbacks. At bottom, the difficulty is that they would return us to a model that doesn't work anymore, the old fee-for-service system with a third-party payer. Any medical problem serious enough to require hospitalization or significant medical tests will put a patient over the deductible. If that happens, an insurance company will again be doling out checks to physicians, hospitals, and other providers. This is precisely the arrangement that paved the way for managed care in the first place.

Between 1988 and '95, the proportion of workers and their families covered by managed care jumped from 29 to 70 percent. Some analysts predict that by 2000, this number will reach 90 percent. One way or another, managed care will be incorporated into Medicaid and Medicare—already, about 10 percent of seniors nationwide have opted for managed-care programs.

Does managed care work? Is it providing more efficacious health care at lower cost? Is it at least providing the *same* health care for less money?

On quality, the jury will be out for a long time. Advocates of managed

care say they have positive indications, but even they admit that these gauges—immunization and mammography rates and member satisfaction surveys—are crude measures. On cost, there are a few more straws in the wind. In California, where managed-care providers now dominate the market (covering 95 percent of the insured population in southern California alone), average insurance premiums fell for the first time in 1992. Nationwide, annual increases in medical costs have moderated in the last year or two. Some analysts attribute part of the improvement to the increased penetration of managed care. Those who have probed deeper into managed care's impact ascribe the savings primarily to two factors: a decline in hospitalization (especially length of stay) and capitation of physicians. The savings from shorter hospital stays, they fear, are one-time reductions. And the success of capitation returns us to the all-important and still-unanswered question of what is happening to the quality of care Americans receive.

Whether or not managed care will lead us to medical utopia, do we have any choice? For reasons we are all too familiar with, it is apparent that we can no longer afford the present system, certainly not Medicaid and Medicare. Doubtless, fee-for-service medicine will survive as a niche market for the well-to-do and the health obsessed. Must managed care be the destiny of everybody else?

In virtually every other developed country, it is not. These countries have gone a different way. As Joseph White, a Brookings Institution analyst, points out in *Competing Solutions* (1995), the United States is revolutionizing its health-care delivery systems in order to maintain its private financing structure. To one degree or another, Canada, Germany, France, England, Australia, and Japan have done the opposite: they have changed their finance systems and left their care-provider structures largely in place.

Each of those countries has enacted some form of national health insurance that is universal, mandatory, and comprehensive. The degree of individual choice in selecting doctors and treatments depends primarily on the historical practices in each country. Germans, for example, are able to select their own outpatient doctors, but, following the national tradition, generally get whoever is on call at the time if they need hospital care. In Canada, again following established practices, the family doctor remains the patient's primary physician in and out of the hospital. In most countries financing is public, but health care *provision* remains in the private sector. Only in England are doctors and other medical personnel employees of the government.

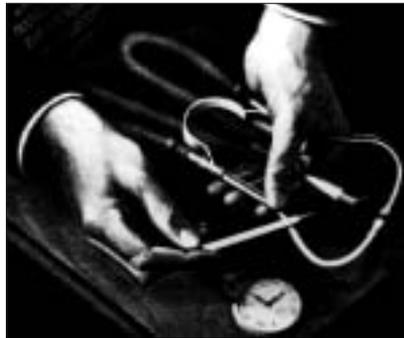
However, in each single-payer country, the national government is directly or indirectly involved. Generally, it controls costs by negotiating overall "global" budgets with large groups of providers. The providers then allocate the money among themselves as they see fit, but no more money is spent on health care. One way or another, the government also controls large capital expenses, such as hospital construction and major equipment purchases.

The single-payer approach does rein in costs, without any detectable increase in illness or mortality. At the same time, it extends at least some health care to everyone and avoids expenses caused by adverse selection, cost shifting, and multiple bureaucracies. It has already achieved some of the more desirable goals of managed care, such as a higher ratio of family doctors to specialists.

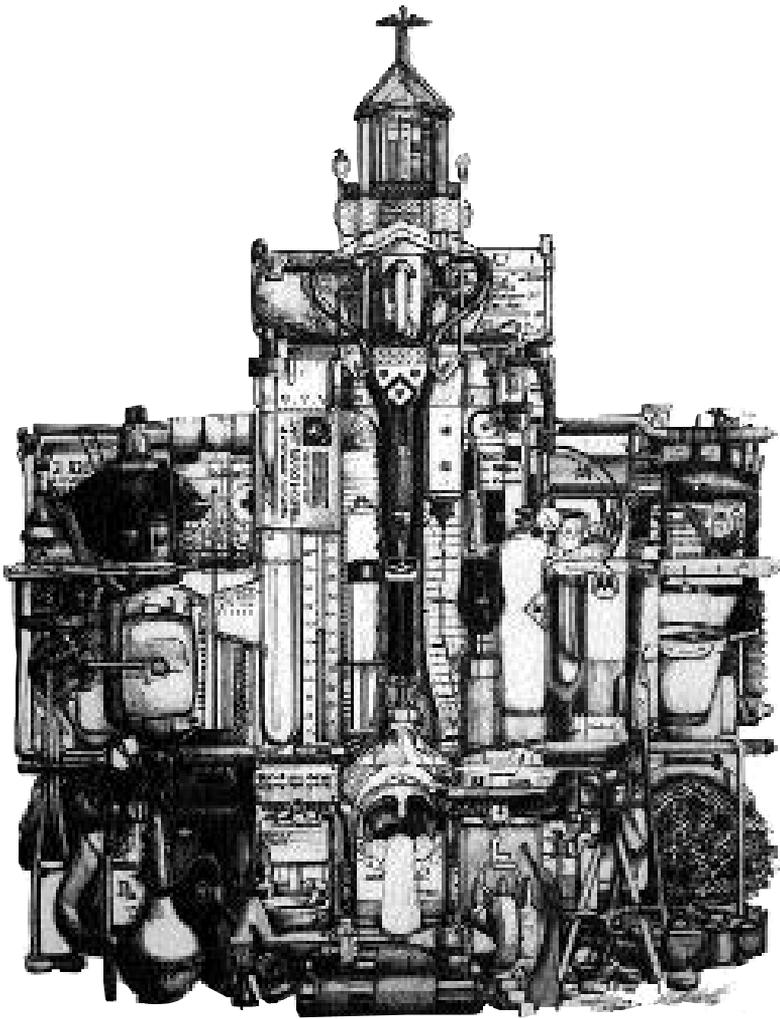
Of course, these systems are not perfect. Canada, whose experience is most relevant to our own, is also having difficulty keeping costs down. Ironically, the Canadians are now considering some managed-care techniques, including capitation. And the technique that might do the most to control expenses, requiring copayments (small fees paid by the patient for each service), seems to have been rejected as too politically unpopular. Still, Americans have much to learn from Canada and other countries.

The problems of American medicine, indeed of all Western medicine, are a direct result of its triumph. Our technology and understanding allow us to go to unprecedented lengths in pursuit of “health,” and most patients expect the system to go to those lengths for them. Yet increasingly, we do not want to pay for the system that makes such benefits possible. Taxpayers do not want to pay more for the care of the elderly and the poor; employers and employees balk at paying higher insurance premiums.

The cost of health care must be trimmed, and that means that someone must decide who gets less than “everything.” Traditionally in this country, the market has performed this rationing function, efficiently and invisibly, transaction by transaction. But in medicine this system is now failing us, and whatever their particular virtues, piecemeal reforms such as those proposed in the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill will not solve the fundamental problem. (The proposed law guarantees workers who leave their jobs the opportunity to retain some insurance, limits insurers’ ability to deny coverage for pre-existing conditions, and may make MSAs more attractive.) Leaders across the political spectrum, from Hillary Clinton to Newt Gingrich (despite his flirtation with MSAs), are opting instead for managed care. The consequences of this fateful decision are now beginning to be felt, and doctors in particular are waiting, some anxiously, some confidently, for patients to revolt. But it is not enough to criticize managed care. Those who fear its failings must be prepared to offer something better.



Family Doctor (1940), by Grant Wood



St. Mary's Hospital (1986), by Don Stewart, M.D.

A New Prescription

by Peter J. Ferrara

Years of debate have not produced much agreement on the future of the American health-care system. But people who study the system are virtually unanimous in their diagnosis of what's wrong with the country's traditional forms of health-care financing. The patient (with advice from a doctor) ultimately decides what services and care are purchased, but another party—an insurance company, or the government, through Medicaid or Medicare—pays the bills.

As a matter of basic economics, this is a prescription for runaway health costs. In deciding what to purchase, patients have no incentive to weigh costs against benefits, for the simple reason that someone else is paying the bill. As a result, they are likely to buy any service that offers any conceivable benefit regardless of cost—from a test of dubious utility to perhaps a minor surgical

procedure. And consumers' lack of concern has ripple effects. When patients are not careful shoppers, doctors and hospitals do not adequately compete to control costs. They compete instead primarily on the basis of quality.

This fundamental flaw can be overcome only by uniting in one party the ultimate power to decide what services are purchased and the responsibility to pay for those services. There are only two ways this can be done. One is to shift the ultimate power to decide from the patient to the third-party payer. This is what is done in government-financed health-care systems: through rationing, the government or some deputized third party ultimately decides what health-care patients receive. This is also the approach taken by health maintenance organizations and other managed-care plans. The insurer ultimately decides what care patients will receive. This was the essence of President Bill Clinton's ill-fated health-care plan. It is also the reason why the proposal was so soundly defeated. The American people simply do not want to surrender control over their own health-care decisions to a third party. And who can blame them?

The only other way to overcome the defect of traditional health-care financing is to turn the purse strings over to the patient. This is the idea behind medical savings accounts (MSAs). In a traditional system, employers and employees buy all health coverage from an insurer. With MSAs, the insurer is paid a much more modest sum for catastrophic insurance, which covers only bills over a high deductible of perhaps \$3,000 per year. The rest of the money that would have gone to the insurance company is paid instead into an individual account for each worker. He can then use the funds to pay his medical bills below the deductible amount, choosing any medical services or treatments he wants. If there is money left in the account at the end of the year, he can, depending on how the system is designed, roll it over or withdraw it and use it for any purpose he pleases.

Workers with MSAs, therefore, spend what is in effect their own money for noncatastrophic health care. As a result, they have every incentive to control costs. They will seek to avoid unnecessary care or tests, look for doctors and hospitals that will provide quality care at the best prices, and consider whether each proffered service is worth the cost. If MSAs were in wide use, they would stimulate true cost competition among doctors and hospitals, who would seek not only to maximize quality, as they do now, but to minimize costs as well.

MSAs already exist and, despite a substantial tax disadvantage compared with standard health insurance, they are rapidly growing in popularity. Under current law, the dollars that employees pay toward health insurance are excluded from taxable income, but MSA contributions are not. (Legislation according MSAs equal treatment is under consideration in Congress.) Nevertheless, more than 3,000 employers in the United States now offer MSAs to their employees, including *Forbes* magazine and Dominion Resources, a Virginia utility company. The United Mine Workers union has negotiated a plan for about 15,000 employees of coal mine operators. Perhaps the leading example of MSAs in practice is at Golden Rule Insurance Company, which has offered the plan to its 1,300

> PETER J. FERRARA is general counsel and chief economist at Americans for Tax Reform. Copyright © 1996 by Peter J. Ferrara.

workers in Indianapolis. In 1994, more than 90 percent of the company's workers chose MSAs, and they received an average year-end rebate of about \$1,000, half the amount deposited in the account. Yet health costs for the company dropped about 30 percent from what they would have been with traditional health insurance.

Typically, an MSA plan might have a \$3,000 deductible and \$2,000 or more per year in the savings account, leaving maximum out-of-pocket exposure for the worker of \$1,000 per year. By contrast, under a standard traditional insurance plan with a \$500 deductible and a 20 percent copayment fee on the next \$3,000, out-of-pocket expenses could reach \$1,500 per year. The MSAs also offer, in effect, "first-dollar" coverage: the first \$2,000 in expenses can be paid directly out of the account, with no deductible.

Critics charge that if MSAs were more widely available, only the healthy would choose them, leaving the sick "ghettoized" in increasingly expensive conventional plans. But it is easy to see why this is wrong. With less out-of-pocket exposure, and with first-dollar coverage as well as complete freedom to spend the money as they see fit, the sick as well as the healthy would prefer MSAs. This has been the experience with the firms that already offer the option. More than 90 percent of workers who are given a choice pick MSAs, with no differences between the healthy and the sick. Moreover, workers who become sick show no tendency to leave MSAs.

In practice, MSAs have also increased the use of cost-effective preventive care. That is because of their first-dollar coverage for any care the patient chooses, including preventive care. Many traditional plans, by contrast, do not cover the costs of routine checkups and other preventive care. At Golden Rule, about 20 percent of the company's workers reported in a survey that they used funds in their accounts to pay for preventive care they would not have bought under the company's traditional insurance policy. What the MSA patient *does* have is an incentive to avoid preventive care that costs more than it yields in benefits. Good candidates for trimming, for example, are the batteries of tests that often get ordered up. (John Goodman, president of the National Center for Policy Analysis, has pointed out that we could spend the entire gross national product on prevention simply by getting every American to take all of the blood tests that are currently available.)

It is true, as critics argue, that when people exhaust their MSAs and begin to draw on their catastrophic coverage, we revert to the problematic arrangement of traditional health care: the patient is choosing services but an insurer is paying the bill. But the potential savings from MSAs are so vast that this problem should not be our first concern. If they are designed with reasonable deductibles, MSAs can bring 50 percent or more of all U.S. outlays for health care under the sway of market forces. Overall, they have the potential to cut our \$1 trillion national health-care bill by 30 percent or more.

Vast savings are not the only benefit. Instead of granting even more power to government, big insurance companies, and managed-care bureaucracies, MSAs would shift control of health care to individual workers and patients, and to the doctors and hospitals they choose to serve them. In short, they would solve the health cost problem by giving more power to the people.

The Two Faces Of Primary Care

by Eric J. Cassell

Among the cost cutters who are overseeing the rapid and often thoughtless restructuring of the American health-care system, “primary care” medicine has become a panacea. To the executives and physicians who run the managed-care organizations that increasingly dominate America’s health-care landscape, primary care seems to offer promising solutions to many of the problems of modern high-cost medicine. They see the primary care physician as a combination low-cost general practitioner and “gatekeeper” to the rest of the health-care system, reducing the flow of patients into more specialized and expensive forms of medicine.

Within medicine, however, primary care has long had a different meaning. While its name suggests simplicity, primary care is in fact a very sophisticated response to problems created by high-cost, high-technology, highly specialized modern medicine. It has been evolving as a distinct field for several decades. Primary care emphasizes a more comprehensive view of patients and their treatment than does today’s standard medicine. It seeks to aid the vast majority of patients who are not best served by the high-technology, superspecialized medicine at which the American health-care system excels, especially the poor, the chronically ill, the aged, and the disabled. Consider the plight of a poorly educated 58-year-old woman, a diabetic for 20 years. Her mother and her son both died of the disease, and she lives in constant fear of its complications. Yet she seems almost completely unable to follow the regimen of diet, exercise, and medications prescribed by a specialist. Without the added attention to the psychological and social elements of her illness that primary care provides, there is little hope of helping her.

The cost cutters tend to see only the financial and organizational advantages of primary care, and there is no question that these are considerable. Primary care is inexpensive relative to high-technology specialist care. Because most care is administered by one physician, it makes the task of administration relatively uncomplicated. And since primary care physicians do not need to operate out of high-technology hospitals or medical centers, this kind of medicine can be brought close to the places where people live, at relatively low cost—an especially useful characteristic in providing for the poor of the inner city and rural America. And, of course, there is the fact that primary care physicians can act as gatekeepers, aiding in the more rational use of resources.

It is a common and destructive error, however, to assume that the medicine itself is simple—as if primary care is concerned only with the treat-



The Clinic (1944), by Ben Shahn

ment of colds, sprains, and other simple ailments, and with determining who is ill enough to require the attention of a specialist. In fact, primary care is a more effective medicine not only for people with simple ailments but for those with illnesses that are serious and complex.

Specialists and specialism put the focus of medicine on an organ system or a disease; primary care medicine makes the *patient* its subject and object. It understands functional impairment and disease to be processes that enter into the patient's life story, and its interventions are chosen with the course of that story in mind. Diseases such as diabetes or even cancer unfold over such a long time that the nature of the person has an enormous impact on the evolution of the disease and its treatment. This focus on the patient rather than the disease is what makes primary care unique, and what makes it as well suited to prevention as to treatment, to children as to adults, to the well as to the sick. It is especially well adapted to the care of people with chronic illnesses, who make up the largest number of the sick.

The primary care doctor is not just an updated version of the storied general practitioner of old (who was, in any event, more storied than real for most people). Primary care physicians are generalists schooled not only in the intellectually and technically exacting realm of medical science but in communication skills, principles of behavioral science, and methods of developing the doctor-patient relationship. With these skills they can, for example, help patients become more involved in their own treatment, change harmful kinds of behavior, and stick to their therapeutic regimens. About one-third of each year's roughly 16,000 medical school graduates go into fields that are classified as primary care—family medicine, pediatrics, and general internal medicine—but only a minority of these new doctors receive such special training in primary care. The newer medical schools of the Southwest have been quicker to embrace primary care training than the more traditional citadels of the Northeast and West (although Pennsylvania State University's Hershey Medical Center

has one of the nation's exemplary primary care programs).

The rise of primary care is one of the expressions of a fundamental intellectual shift that has been taking place within medicine during the 20th century. For almost 200 years, health has been defined as freedom from disease, and medicine has been thought of as a world of disease—peopled by those who have an acute disease, are being prevented from having a disease, are being cured of their disease, or are being rehabilitated from the effects of a disease. But with the aging of the population and the growth in the number of people suffering chronic illnesses such as diabetes, arthritis, and heart disease, the idea that health is simply freedom from disease has become increasingly inadequate. Is a person with diabetes ill even if the disease is under control and he is able to live as others do? Among the elderly virtually everybody has one disease or another. Are all people who have a disease unhealthy?

Primary care has its roots in the effort to find definitions of health that accommodate these new realities and help patients meet their social, emotional, and economic goals despite illness, impairment, and functional limitation. It has links to two somewhat older movements in medicine, family medicine and hospice and palliative care (the specialized care of the dying), and shares with them the imprint of American society's growing emphasis on individual choice and dignity and its recognition of cultural diversity.

The innovative primary care that has been evolving within medicine and the kind of primary care commonly envisioned by the leaders of the new managed-care juggernaut are not necessarily mutually exclusive. There is much talk of reducing the number of specialists produced by the nation's medical schools and increasing the number in primary care fields. But if money for medical education and residency training is held back by corporate and government cost cutters, the development of true primary care and the training of primary care physicians—and specialists—will be slowed. If physicians are treated as part of the nation's health-care problem rather than part of the solution, over-regulation and declining income and morale among doctors will hamper change. This would be especially hurtful, because the eventual triumph of primary care medicine seems assured. For the older, more demanding, and more cost-conscious America of the 21st century, it is the only choice that makes sense.

> ERIC J. CASSELL, M.D., is a practicing internist in New York City and a professor of public health at Cornell University Medical College. His latest book, *Doctoring: The Nature of Primary Care Medicine*, will be published by Oxford University Press next spring. Copyright © 1996 by Eric J. Cassell.

The Future of The Hospital

by C. Everett Koop

Back in medical school, when my eyes would become tired and sore late at night after hours of peering through a microscope, I would often take a break by walking to the middle of the Queensboro Bridge, where I would gaze into the distance at the lights of Manhattan or at the stars overhead. Looking far away was a welcome change, and it also gave me a better perspective on my work.

In more recent years, since leaving my post as surgeon general in 1989, I have devoted myself to the challenge of health-care reform. Traveling throughout the United States, I have spoken out on the ethical imperative of reform



Hospital Ward II (1920), by Hilming Linnqvist

and offered concrete suggestions about what we need to do. It has been a formidable task, often requiring intensive, almost microscopic examination of the many problems within the American health-care system. Thus, the opportunity to look into the distance, into the future, to try to get a glimpse of what the American hospital might look like 10 or 20 years from now, comes as another welcome change. Yet the images I see are more kaleidoscopic than telescopic: intriguing but always shifting, often reflecting the past as much as projecting into the future.

The hospital has become one of the dominant institutions in American society. The hospital is the one building in the community that each citizen will enter sooner or later. As the 20th century has seen the medicalization of the milestones of life—birth, pain, aging, death—the hospital has become one of the few remaining centers of communal life in our individualistic society. In popular imagery and in the top television shows, the hospital has replaced the Wild West, the city streets, and the courtroom as the place of ultimate human drama. *Gunsmoke*, *Hill Street Blues*, and *L.A. Law* have given way to *ER* and *Chicago Hope*. And for years, *General Hospital* ruled daytime television, a pop-culture icon demonstrating not only the preeminence of the hospital in American society, but also the “generalization” of the hospital—its evolution into an institution that provides all medical services to all people. We have become so accustomed to this image of the hospital that we may forget how recently it developed. And we may find more hints about the future of the hospital in its past than in its present.

The general hospital of the late 20th century is the product of a variety of very different ancestors, and it will give birth to a variety of very different descendants. Before the modern era, American hospitals served a number of distinct and differing functions, often on the periphery of both medicine and society. From their 17th-century origins as almshouses and pesthouses, American hospitals only gradually became associated with medical care. During the 19th century they branched out in different directions, as some became institutions devoted to the treatment of a particular affliction (tuberculosis, blindness), a religious or ethnic group (Catholics, Protestants, Jews), a segregated racial group (African Americans), or an age group (children).

Even in the 19th century, most Americans did all they could to avoid hospitals, which were stigmatized as places for the indigent and the dying. For a while, progress in 19th-century home medicine and home surgery even led medical visionaries to anticipate, as the author of a prize-winning Harvard University essay put it in 1876, “that state of perfection where hospitals can be dispensed with.” Instead, of course, the hospital grew in importance, as the rise of scientific and technological medicine in the early 20th century led to the hospitalization of medicine and to the medicalization of the hospital. But the 21st century may see a renewed diversification, or even fragmentation, of the American hospital.

Since the early 1980s, cost-control measures have drastically changed the hospital’s economic environment from one in which it thrived to one in which it must struggle even to survive. Urban hospitals dependent upon city and state taxpayer subsidies, Medicare, and Medicaid will be forced to retrench, requir-

> C. EVERETT KOOP, M.D., was surgeon general of the U.S. Public Health Service from 1981 to 1989. Copyright © 1996 by C. Everett Koop.

ing them to reduce beds and lay off personnel. Academic medical centers may see support for graduate medical education dwindle as a result of inevitable reductions in the growth of Medicare and in a diminished flow of federal funds for research. Meanwhile, curricular changes in medical education may put more students in ambulatory care centers and fewer in traditional hospitals. Suburban and rural hospitals, often competing with one another for the opportunity to provide increasingly costly care to a shrinking patient pool, will be forced to merge or shut down.

Managed care, growing far more rapidly than either its proponents hoped or its detractors feared, will put even more pressure on American hospitals. Some will simply be bought out or squeezed out of the market by hospitals owned by health maintenance organizations (HMOs). Others will find that their financial agreements with managed-care organizations force them to carry even more of the financial risk of patient care. The untoward aspects of managed care, especially of investor-driven, for-profit HMOs, may be addressed in time, either by state-by-state legislative mandates or by businesses and citizens as they gradually realize that shortcut, short-term-profit medicine may be unprofitable in the long run. But these antidotes to the problems of managed care may take years to assert themselves, and in the meantime hospitals face some tough sledding.

The solutions to these problems may lie in a return to the kind of diversification among hospitals that was seen in the past, as the harshness of the new economic climate forces hospitals to realize that they cannot be all things to all people. Competing hospitals may need to divide specialty coverage, with only one hospital in a city performing coronary bypass surgery, for example, while the other handles all magnetic resonance imaging. As economic concerns and surgical advances lead to more same-day surgery, allowing patients to return home from the hospital without an overnight stay, hospitals may need to support freestanding ambulatory clinics or same-day-surgery centers in several neighborhoods, and to extend their work in medical education to these sites.

But while some functions formerly performed in the hospital may need to be conducted at new locations outside the hospital, other services can be drawn into the hospital. A number of hard-pressed rural hospitals have found that their empty beds can be filled with long-term custodial care patients. The long-term care crisis is but one of many health-care issues our society needs to resolve. A year in a nursing home now costs more than a year at Princeton. The economic and institutional solution of the long-term care problem may need to await the retirement of millions of baby boomers (now turning 50 at the rate of one every 7.6 seconds), but hospitals should be poised to provide their part of the answer. And we also may see a return to disease-specific or condition-specific hospitals, as more Americans live longer with chronic ailments.

There is one final and vitally important way in which hospitals in the early 21st century may find themselves back where they started, for part of their function must remain the free care of those in need. I pray that charity grows, not diminishes, in the America of the 21st century, and that society as a whole provides hospitals support so they will always be able to care for those in particular need. We cannot let the hospital's present or future mission for curing eclipse its historic mission for caring.

The Research Dilemma

by *Louis Lasagna*

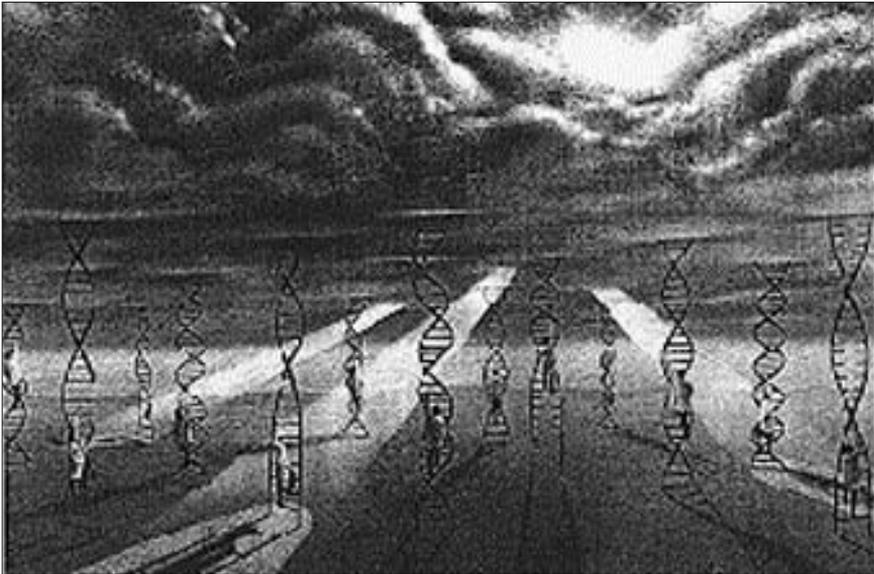
One of the legacies of the national debate over the Clinton health-care plan is a new public ambivalence about the value of medical research and technology. During that debate, Americans were told over and over—and are still being told—that the ballooning national cost of health care could be traced in part to the never-ending supply of new diagnostic and therapeutic options produced by medical science: CAT scans, MRIs, surgical procedures, medicines, prosthetic replacements for dysfunctional hips and knees, organ transplants, and so on. The co-villains in this national health-care melodrama were a medical profession profligate in its approach to medical care and a greedy, obscenely profitable health-care industry. And their sins included the promiscuous and irrational use of the new techniques and technologies.

Like all melodramas, this one is not entirely removed from reality. Medical research and technology undoubtedly have contributed to the rising cost of health care. What is often forgotten, however, is that they have also spared us incalculable expense and suffering. Vaccines have eradicated smallpox from the planet, for example, and may someday eliminate poliomyelitis. Cost-benefit analyses for individual diseases show that some treatments generate savings. Continuing digitalis therapy (which is not very costly) in patients with congestive heart failure has been estimated to prevent 185,000 clinic visits, 27,000 emergency room visits, and 137,000 hospital admissions every year. The net annual savings total an estimated \$406 million.

In a perfect world, we might be able to separate “good” (i.e. cost effective) research from “bad,” but it is an essential characteristic of knowledge, especially the knowledge produced by basic research, that it refuses to follow fixed paths. Peter Medawar, who won a Nobel Prize for his research on the immune system, writes that “nearly all scientific research leads nowhere—or, if it does lead somewhere, then not in the direction it started off with. . . . I reckon that for all the use it has been to science about four-fifths of my time has been wasted, and I believe this to be the common lot of people who are not merely playing follow-my-leader in research.”

Critics who are alarmed by the large share of national wealth claimed by health care should direct their attention to a real villain: disease. Cardiovascular ills, cancer, and Alzheimer’s disease cost the United States more than \$300 billion annually in medical expenses and indirect costs such as lost work time. Add arthritis, depression, diabetes, and osteoporosis, and you rack up another \$200 billion. Cutting these costs has to be considered an urgent national priority.

Medical discoveries not only reduce expenses but allow the beneficiaries



In Search of the Human Genome (1993) by Lewis E. Calver

to continue to live productive lives—and, not incidentally, to enjoy something to which, for better or worse, no price tag can be attached: a better quality of life. Every year, there are 500,000 new cases of duodenal ulcer in the United States and four million recurrences. While ulcers may seem to those who don't have them to be little more than a metaphor for the condition of modern life, they are quite painful—and they cost society between \$3 billion and \$4 billion annually in direct and indirect costs. Until very recently, doctors believed that ulcers are caused by “stress” or some mysterious form of “hyperacidity”—and that very little could be done about them. But research has shown, as a National Institutes of Health (NIH) panel concluded in 1994, that a treatable microorganism called *Helicobacter pylori* is responsible. The discovery will vastly improve the quality of life for millions of people in years to come—and save the United States billions of dollars.

Until the 1980s, most medical research in the United States was funded by the federal government, chiefly through NIH, but that has since changed. More than \$30 billion is now spent annually on health-related research and development, and over half of that amount comes from industry, chiefly the pharmaceutical industry, with outlays of \$16 billion in 1995. (Other research is carried out by manufacturers of medical devices such as heart valves.) NIH is a \$12 billion enterprise composed of 17 specialized institutes, which deal with everything from neurological disorders and stroke to dentistry. It channels about two-thirds of its money to outside researchers in universities, hospitals, and other institutions. Much of the work funded by NIH is basic research, essential but without any immediate prospect of a payoff. Despite the new budgetary constraints in Washington, Congress has continued to expand NIH's budget modestly.

Still, much of the momentum in health-care research has shifted to the private sector. The United States is a world leader in pharmaceuticals—a lead American companies maintain in part by plowing an extraordinary 19

percent of sales income into research. Thousands of chemicals are synthesized for every one tested on humans, and of the latter, only 20 to 25 percent make it to market. The time from discovery to marketing of a new drug now averages 10 to 15 years. The average cost of bringing a new drug to market is more than \$300 million (counting failures and allowing for the cost of money that could have been invested elsewhere).

The rise of managed care and the new stringency in health care have begun to alter the strategy of the drug companies. A new drug today must be either a “blockbuster” or persuasively better in some way than already-available drugs to win acceptance from the formulary committees at health maintenance organizations and hospitals and the pharmaceutical benefits programs that increasingly decide which drugs are bought. Drug companies now have little incentive to develop products that are only incrementally better.

After years of criticism, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has speeded up drug approvals somewhat (especially for cancer and AIDS drugs), but its demands for data from tests on animals and humans still inflate costs and needlessly prolong the process of getting new drugs into circulation. Congress may soon send a bill streamlining many of the FDA’s procedures to President Bill Clinton’s desk, but it is unclear whether the legislators are going to propose dramatic changes. And they may simply run out of time, leaving the matter to be dealt with after the 1996 elections.

The FDA has until recently focused primarily on its role as protector of the public health, guarding citizens from fraud and ineffective and unsafe drugs. It needs to shift its emphasis to the *promotion* of public health, which means in part getting new advances onto the market as quickly as possible. Approving an ineffective drug is bad, but so is rejecting or delaying approval of a drug that is effective. While Americans are often urged to look to Europe for models of national health-care systems, relatively little is said of Europe’s speedier drug regulation processes, which frequently make new treatments available to patients long before they are in the United States.

More flexibility at the FDA, however it is achieved, is essential to the success of America’s nascent biotechnology industry. Many of the most exciting medical discoveries of the future could come from this new field. Few of the roughly 1,300 biotechnology firms in the United States have become profitable so far, largely because it takes so much time to develop and win approval of a new drug, diagnostic kit, or vaccine. Nevertheless, the industry has already created such important laboratory-made health products as recombinant proteins (human insulin and human growth hormone), erythropoietin (for anemia from various causes), and alpha interferon for hairy cell leukemia.

Many diseases are still poorly treated: most cancers, Alzheimer’s disease, multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, and muscular dystrophy, to name a few. The apples picked from the research tree thus far have been those on the lower branches. Among the most exciting prospects on the higher branches is gene therapy, a technique whereby defective genes in human beings can

> LOUIS LASAGNA, M.D., is dean of the Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences at Tufts University and has been for 20 years director of the Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development. Copyright © 1996 by Louis Lasagna.

be repaired or replaced. A number of genes responsible for inborn diseases have been identified and isolated, and the exact nature of the defects characterized. But history also teaches us humility, or at least it should. We have known the molecular basis of sickle cell anemia for half a century, but treatment remains grossly inadequate. Even for those few diseases in which a defect in a single gene is responsible, repair or replacement of the affected gene may not provide a cure.



A Silent War (1989) by Randall Lake

Inevitably, however, medical research is going to present us with painful dilemmas. We now have, finally, a treatment for a very rare genetic disorder called Gaucher's disease, which causes the body to produce a flawed version of an enzyme needed in the metabolism of lipids. The enzyme in question is expensive to produce, and treatment at launch was estimated to cost \$100,000 to \$300,000 per patient per year. To my knowledge, insurers have been reimbursing for this treatment, but would they if the disease afflicted not a handful of people but millions? What if gene therapy for cystic fibrosis worked, but cost \$1 million per patient? Would our health-care system pay for it? What about Alzheimer's, that cruel disease whose victims Elie Wiesel once eloquently compared to books losing their pages one by one, leaving nothing at the end but dusty covers? What if an effective therapy is discovered but is "too expensive"?

As a society that already spends 14 percent of its wealth on health care, the United States is eventually going to confront a reluctance to pay large new sums for all of the fruits of medical research. Restraining research might allow us to avoid the creation of expensive new treatments, but it would also mean sacrificing the most affordable fruits and abandoning the prospect of unexpected breakthroughs. It is a route we cannot afford. Eventually Americans will need to confront the need for rationing—not the inescapable rationing that occurs on the battlefield or in times of natural disaster, but rationing of services we can supply but for which as a society we simply are unwilling to pay. And that is a route for which we are completely unprepared.

Health Unlimited

by Willard Gaylin

The debate over the current crisis in health care often seems to swirl like a dust storm, generating little but further obfuscation as it drearily goes around and around. And no wonder. Attempts to explain how we got into this mess—and it is a mess—seem invariably to begin in precisely the wrong place. Most experts have been focusing on the failures and deficiencies of modern medicine. The litany is familiar: greedy physicians, unnecessary procedures, expensive technologies, and so on. Each of these certainly adds its pennyweight to the scales. But even were we to make angels out of doctors and philanthropists out of insurance company executives, we would not stem the rise of health-care costs. That is because this increase, far from being a symptom of modern medicine's failure, is a product of its success.

Good medicine keeps sick people alive. It increases the percentage of people in the population with illnesses. The fact that there are proportionally more people with arteriosclerotic heart disease, diabetes, essential hypertension, and other chronic—and expensive—diseases in the United States than there are in Iraq, Nigeria, or Colombia paradoxically signals the triumph of the American health-care system.

There is another and perhaps even more important way in which modern medicine keeps costs rising: by altering our very definition of sickness and vastly expanding the boundaries of what is considered the domain of health care. This process is not entirely new. Consider this example. As I am writing now, I am using reading glasses, prescribed on the basis of an ophthalmologist's diagnosis of presbyopia, a loss of acuity in close-range vision. Before the invention of the glass lens, there was no such disease as presbyopia. It simply was expected that old people wouldn't be able to read without difficulty, if indeed they could read at all. Declining eyesight, like diminished hearing, potency, and fertility, was regarded as an inevitable part of growing older. But once impairments are no longer perceived as inevitable, they become curable impediments to healthy functioning—illnesses in need of treatment.

To understand how the domain of health care has expanded, one must go back to the late 19th century, when modern medicine was born in the laboratories of Europe—mainly those of France and Germany. Through the genius of researchers such as Wilhelm Wundt, Rudolph Virchow, Robert Koch, and Louis Pasteur, a basic understanding of human physiology was established, the foundations of pathology were laid, and the first true understanding of the nature of disease—the germ theory—was developed. Researchers and physicians now had a much better understanding of what was going on in the human body, but there was still little they could do about it. As late as 1950, a distinguished physiologist could tell an incoming class of medical students that, until then, medical intervention had taken more lives than it had saved.

Even as this truth was being articulated, however, a second revolution in medicine was under way. It was only after breakthroughs in the late 1930s and during World War II that the age of therapeutic medicine began to emerge.



A Day in the Hospital (1993), by Jose S. Perez

With the discovery of the sulfonamides, and then of penicillin and a series of major antibiotics, medicine finally became what the laity in its ignorance had always assumed it to be: a lifesaving enterprise. We in the medical profession became very effective at treating sick people and saving lives—so effective, in fact, that until the advent of AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), we arrogantly assumed that we had conquered infectious diseases.

The control of infection and the development of new anesthetics permitted extraordinary medical interventions that previously had been inconceivable. As a result, the traditional quantitative methods of evaluating alternative procedures became outmoded. “Survival days,” for example, was traditionally the one central measurement by which various treatments for a cancer were weighed. If one treatment averaged 100 survival days and another averaged 50 survival days, then the first treatment was considered, if not twice as good, at least superior. But today, the new antibiotics permit surgical procedures so extravagant and extreme that the old standard no longer makes sense. An oncologist once made this point using an example that remains indelibly imprinted on my mind: 100 days of survival without a face, he observed, may not be superior to 50 days of survival with a face.

Introducing considerations of the nature or quality of survival adds a whole new dimension to the definitions of sickness and health. Increasingly, to be “healthy,” one must not only be free of disease but enjoy a good “quality of life.” Happiness, self-fulfillment, and enrichment have been added to the criteria for medical treatment. This has set the stage for a profound expansion of the concept of health and a changed perception of the ends of medicine.

I can illustrate how this process works by casting stones at my own glass house, psychiatry, even though it is not the most extreme example. The patients I deal with in my daily practice would not have been considered mentally ill in the 19th century. The concept of mental illness then described a clear and limited set of conditions. The leading causes of mental illness were tertiary syphilis and schizophrenia. Those who were mentally ill were confined to asylums. They were insane; they were different from you and me.

Let me offer a brief (and necessarily crude) history of psychiatry since then. At the turn of the century, psychiatry's first true genius, Sigmund Freud, decided that craziness was not necessarily confined to those who are completely out of touch with reality, that a normal person, like himself or people he knew, could be partly crazy. These "normal" people had in their psyches isolated areas of irrationality, with symptoms that demonstrated the same "crazy" distortions that one saw in the insane. Freud invented a new category of mental diseases that we now call the "neuroses," thereby vastly increasing the population of the mentally ill. The neuroses were characterized by such symptoms as phobias, compulsions, anxiety attacks, and hysterical conversions.

In the 1930s, Wilhelm Reich went further. He decided that one does not even have to exhibit a neurosis to be mentally ill, that one can suffer from "character disorders." An individual could be totally without symptoms of any illness, yet the nature of his character might so limit his productivity or his pleasure in life that we might justifiably (or not) label him "neurotic."

Still later, in the 1940s and '50s, medicine "discovered" the psychosomatic disorders. There are people who have no evidence of mental illness or impairment but have physical conditions with psychic roots, such as peptic ulcers, ulcerative colitis, migraine headache, and allergy. They, too, were now classifiable as mentally ill. By such imaginative expansions, we eventually managed to get some 60 to 70 percent of the population (as one study of the residents of Manhattan's Upper East Side did) into the realm of the mentally ill.

But we still were short about 30 percent. The mental hygiene movement and preventive medicine solved that problem. When one takes a preventive approach, encompassing both the mentally ill and the potentially mentally ill, the universe expands to include the entire population.

Thus, by progressively expanding the definition of mental illness, we took in more and more of the populace. The same sort of growth has happened with health in general, as can be readily demonstrated in surgery, orthopedics, gynecology, and virtually all other fields of medicine. Until recently, for example, infertility was not considered a disease. It was a God-given condition. With the advances in modern medicine—in vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, and surrogate mothering—a whole new array of cures was discovered for "illnesses" that had to be invented. And this, of course, meant new demands for dollars to be spent on health care.

One might question the necessity of some of these expenditures. Many knee operations, for instance, are performed so that the individual can continue to play golf or to ski, and many elbow operations are done for tennis buffs. Are these things for which anyone other than the amateur athlete himself should pay? If a person is free of pain except when playing tennis, should not the only insurable prescription be—much as the old joke has it—to stop playing tennis? How much "quality of life" is an American entitled to have?

New technologies also exert strong pressure to expand the domain of health. Consider the seemingly rather undramatic development of the electronic fetal monitor. It used to be that when a pregnant woman in labor came to a hospital—if she came at all—she was "observed" by a nurse, who at frequent intervals checked the fetal heartbeat with a stethoscope. If it became more rapid,

> WILLARD GAYLIN, M.D., is professor of psychiatry at Columbia University Medical School and co-founder and president of the Hastings Center, an institution devoted to bioethical research. His most recent book, with Bruce Jennings, is *The Perversion of Autonomy*, published in June by the Free Press. Copyright © 1996 by Willard Gaylin.

suggesting fetal distress, a Caesarean section was considered. But once the electronic fetal monitor came into common use in the 1970s, continuous monitoring by the device became standard. As a result, there was a huge increase in the number of Caesareans performed in major teaching hospitals across the country, to the point that 30 to 32 percent of the pregnant women in those hospitals were giving birth through surgery. It is ridiculous to suggest that one out of three pregnancies requires surgical intervention. Yet technology, or rather the seductiveness of technology, has caused that to happen.

Linked to the national enthusiasm for high technology is the archetypically American reluctance to acknowledge that there are limits, not just limits to health care but limits to anything. The American character is different. Why this is so was suggested some years ago by historian William Leuchtenberg in a lecture on the meaning of the frontier. To Europeans, he explained, the frontier *meant* limits. You sowed seed up to the border and then you had to stop; you cut timber up to the border and then you had to stop; you journeyed across your country to the border and then you had to stop. In America, the frontier had exactly the opposite connotation: it was where things began. If you ran out of timber, you went to the frontier, where there was more; if you ran out of land, again, you went to the frontier for more. Whatever it was that you ran out of, you would find more if you kept pushing forward. That is our historical experience, and it is a key to the American character. We simply refuse to accept limits. Why should the provision of health care be an exception?

To see that it isn't, all one need do is consider Americans' infatuation with such notions as "death with dignity," which translates into death without dying, and "growing old gracefully," which on close inspection turns out to mean living a long time without aging. The only "death with dignity" that most American men seem willing to accept is to die in one's sleep at the age of 92 after winning three sets of tennis from one's 40-year-old grandson in the afternoon and making passionate love to one's wife twice in the evening. This does indeed sound like a wonderful way to go—but it may not be entirely realistic to think that that is what lies in store for most of us.

During the past 25 years, health-care costs in the United States have risen from six percent of the gross national product to about 14 percent. If spending continues on its current trajectory, it will bankrupt the country. To my knowledge, there is no way to alter that trajectory except by limiting access to health care and by limiting the incessant expansion of the concept of health. There is absolutely no evidence that the costs of health-care services can be brought under control through improved management techniques alone. So-called managed care saves money, for the most part, by offering less—by covert allocation. Expensive, unprofitable operations such as burn centers, neonatal intensive care units, and emergency rooms are curtailed or eliminated (with the comforting, if perhaps unrealistic, thought that municipal and university hospitals will make up the difference).

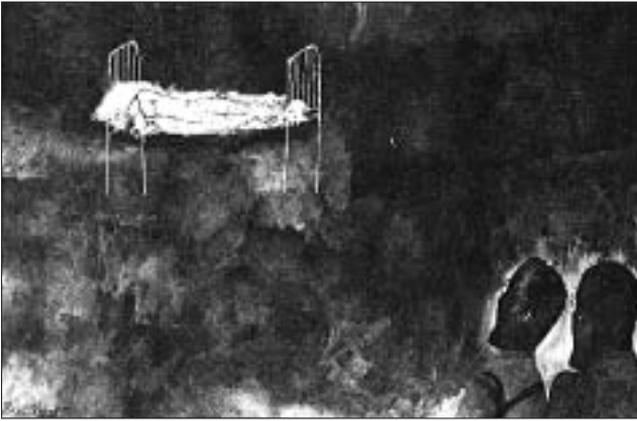
Rationing, when done, should not be hidden; nor should it be left to the discretion of a relative handful of health-care managers. It requires open discussion and wide participation. When that which we are rationing is life itself, the decisions as to how, what, and when must be made by a consensus of the public at large through its elected and other representatives, in open debate.

What factors ought to be considered in weighing claims on scarce and

expensive services? An obvious one is age. This suggestion is often met with violent abuse and accusations of “age-ism,” or worse. But age *is* a factor. Surely, most of us would agree that, *all other things being equal*, a 75-year-old man (never mind a 92-year-old man) has less claim on certain scarce resources, such as an organ transplant, than a 32-year-old mother or a 16-year-old boy. But, of course, other things often are not equal. Suppose the 75-year-old man is president of the United States and the 32-year-old mother is a drug addict, or the 16-year-old boy is a high school dropout. We need, in as dispassionate and disinterested a way as possible, to consider what other factors besides age should be taken into account. Should political position count? Character? General health? Marital status? Number of dependents?

Rationing is already being done through market mechanisms, with access to kidney or liver transplants and other scarce and expensive procedures determined by such factors as how much money one has or how close one lives to a major health-care center. Power and celebrity can also play a role—which explains why politicians and professional athletes suddenly turn up at the top of waiting lists for donated organs. A fairer system is needed.

The painful but necessary decisions involved in explicit rationing are, obviously, not just medical matters—and they must not be left to physicians or health-care managers. Nor should they be left to philosophers designated as “bioethicists,” though these may be helpful. The population at large will have to reach a consensus, through the messy—but noble—devices of democratic government. This will require legislation, as well as litigation and case law.



It's No Use to Do Any More (1961–62), by Ben Shahn

In the late 1980s, the state of Oregon began to face up to the necessity of rationing. The state legislature decided to extend Medicaid coverage to more poor people but to pay for the change by curbing Medicaid costs by explicitly rationing benefits. (Eventually, rationing was to be extended to virtually all Oregonians, but that

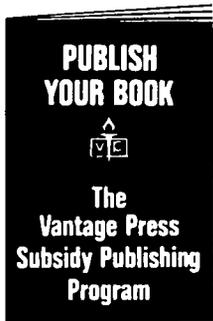
part of the plan later ran afoul of federal regulations.) After hundreds of public hearings, a priority list of services was drawn up to guide the allocation of funds. As a result, dozens of services became difficult (but not impossible) for the poor to obtain through Medicaid. These range from psychotherapy for sexual dysfunctions and severe conduct disorder to medical therapy for chronic bronchitis and splints for TMJ Disorder, a painful jaw condition. Although the idea of explicit rationing created a furor at first, most Oregonians came to accept it. Most other Americans will have to do the same.

Our nation has a health-care crisis, and rationing is the only solution. There is no honorable way that we Americans can duck this responsibility. Despite our historical reluctance to accept limits, we must finally acknowledge that they exist, in health care, as in life itself.

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Frederick Taylor's Apprenticeship

The “father of scientific management” always looked back fondly on his days as an apprentice in a small manufacturing firm. It was an experience he believed every engineer should have. Ironically, his system of industrial efficiency helped make that impossible.

by Robert Kanigel

One day in 1874, early in the apprenticeship of Frederick Winslow Taylor at a small pump-manufacturing firm in Philadelphia, the head of the shop approached him with a question. “Do you,” he asked, “know the rule?”

“What rule?” Fred Taylor replied.

“Do you know the rule?” the older man repeated.

What was he talking about? “I don’t know what you mean,” the boy fumbled.

“Do you mean to come here and ask to be an apprentice and do not know this foot rule?”

Oh, he knew a *foot* rule, of course.

So the man laid it down on the table in front of him. It was a foot rule with a difference. No numbers were engraved on it, only lines, the bare rulings themselves. The man laid the point of his knife on one of them. “Tell me quick what that means.”

Taylor couldn’t. With a moment’s trouble, he could have counted the lines and determined that it was, say, five and three-sixteenths inches. But he couldn’t do it instantly; he didn’t “know the rule.” So far as any self-respecting mechanic was concerned, he knew nothing.

Fred Taylor, age 18, had, on travels with his family in Europe, seen Bismarck’s Berlin and Louis Napoleon’s Paris. He could tell a Michelangelo from a Raphael, knew geometry, Latin grammar, and meal-

time manners. Back in Germantown, the leafy neighborhood on the outskirts of Philadelphia where he lived with his wealthy parents, he was almost an adult. But down here at the pump works on Race Street, hard by the storage yards, docks, foundries, brick works, and bolt makers of Philadelphia’s teeming industrial heart, he was a child.

In 1878, Taylor finished his apprenticeship and got a job in a Philadelphia steel mill. Over the next 12 years, he worked his way up—through family connections, hard work, and sheer ability—to chief engineer. Along the way he developed time-and-motion study, pay-incentive schemes, work standards, and other innovations, which together made for what he saw as a new “science,” one promising ever cheaper, more efficient production. Taylor—“father of scientific management,” as his champions called him and as it is inscribed on his tombstone in a Philadelphia cemetery—was the first real efficiency expert, progenitor of all the faceless, clipboard-clutching, stopwatch-clicking engineers who stalk the offices and factories of the industrial world.

At first, he was known only within American engineering and industry. Then, in 1910, in a case heard before the Interstate Commerce Commission, attorney (and future Supreme Court justice)

Louis Brandeis made Taylor a household name. Certain powerful railroads had petitioned the ICC for a rate hike. They didn't need it, argued Brandeis. What they needed instead, he said, was a dose of scientific management, Frederick Winslow Taylor's system of science-bred industrial efficiency. Overnight, Taylor was transformed into a celebrity, the man whose genius would save the railroads "a million dollars a day"—the figure that grabbed the headlines. Now, suddenly, efficiency was all, boundless prosperity its certain consequence. During World War I, Taylor's methods and ideas were embraced by the combatant nations. In the 1920s, they swept through the factories—and offices, kitchens, schools, and hospitals—of half the globe.

Lenin, in exile in Zurich, read Taylor's *Shop Management* (1903) in German translation and later, in a speech carried by *Pravda*, urged introduction of Taylorism to the new Soviet state. Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Communist revolutionary, absorbed Taylor's ideas. Weimar Germany was bewitched by *Taylorismus*, France by *taylorisme*. Twelve years after Taylor's death, Mussolini personally welcomed the international scientific management congress to Rome, met Taylor's widow, and exchanged a picture of himself for one of her sainted husband's.

Taylorism shattered the old ideological categories. More goods, lower prices, higher wages. *Everyone* wanted these. And all came courtesy of the new efficiency, born of beneficent science. Management and labor need no longer quarrel over how hard a man must work or how much he should earn; science, the impartial arbiter, would decide.

These notions were immensely seduc-



Taylor in 1873, the year before he entered his apprenticeship

tive, and by 1924 one observer could grandly declaim that Taylor's thinking had become "part of our moral inheritance." Today, it permeates modern life—alive in every work rule, every standard operating procedure, every fast-food burger cooked for just so many seconds.

Back from three years of travel in Europe with his family, Taylor had in 1872 enrolled at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, aiming for Harvard and then law school. But during his last year, plagued by headaches induced by untreated vision problems, he dropped out. A few months later, he passed the Harvard admissions exam, but he did not enroll the following fall. Instead, after a fitful summer hanging around the house in Germantown, he started in as a patternmaker's apprentice.

In their letters to him at Exeter, his

parents had spoken of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, or some other engineering school as an alternative to Harvard: no more Latin dictionaries with tiny type to cause eyestrain and headaches. But that possibility went nowhere. In Taylor's time, just seven schools offered mechanical engineering degree programs, and their 1874 graduates numbered only about 30. The formal education of engineers was still a new idea. A much older idea—apprenticeship—was a young man's far more customary path into industry.

This went for well-off young men, too—men confident that, 30 years later, they would be running the company and not a lathe. "We know of a number of cases," observed a Wilmington, Delaware, newspaper in 1871, "where the sons of our most highly respected citizens are either apprentices or journeymen in our machine shops. . . . Such do not, of course, expect to remain journeymen always. [But in the meantime], they daily don their blue overalls and blouses and work amidst the dust and grease, veritable 'greasy mechanics,' without any thought that their employment in any way compromises their honor and dignity, and without any loss of social position."

Apprenticeship, then, represented no radical turn for a rich man's son. In Philadelphia especially, Taylor himself would say, it had long "been customary for many young men with parents who are well-to-do to start at the bottom in our machine shops, industrial establishments and mercantile houses, and work absolutely on the same level as the regular employees of the shop." At the city's giant Baldwin Locomotive Works, almost one in five apprentices came from middle-class homes. "Professional and white-collar fathers saw a Baldwin apprenticeship," writes John K. Brown, author of a history

of Baldwin, "as a point of entrance for their sons into the high-technology industry of the generation, precision metalworking. . . . [Such apprenticeship programs as Baldwin's were] the engineering colleges of their era." Parents clamored to get their boys accepted. Several company directors had come up through its program.

It was a time when you could still hope to complete your apprenticeship, take a journeyman's job as a blacksmith, machinist, patternmaker, or molder, save your money, start your own shop, and make your fortune. Some, indeed, did just that. Taking *American Machinist* advertisers as emblematic of successful machinist-entrepreneurs, a legendary shop figure known as "Chordal" (a nom de plume of the magazine's editor) pictured their origins this way: At 18, most of them

were working in shops, drilling set screw holes in pulleys, cutting bolts, chipping new holes in old boilers, contriving ways and means to get old broken studs out of old cylinders, forging square keys out of round iron, butt-welding erroneous connecting rods, gouging out core boxes, gluing up segments, spitting white pine dust . . . and doing everything one man does for another man's money. They were not preparing themselves to take charge of probated fortunes. They were working.

Working, that is, and learning. In principle, every apprenticeship was an exchange—the neophyte's labor for the master's knowledge. But while the apprentice surely worked, the master, boss, or foreman didn't exactly "teach"; you didn't so much learn a craft as absorb it.

Especially at first, you simply *did*. You swept up. When one of the men asked for something, you fetched it. You were an errand boy. In a machine shop—the paradigmatic 19th-century workplace where skilled men shaped castings and forgings with machine-mounted cutters of hardened steel—you oiled the overhead shafting that delivered power to the tools. One

> ROBERT KANIGEL, a Baltimore writer, is the author of *The Man Who Knew Infinity: A Life of the Genius Ramanujan* (1991) and a forthcoming biography of Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The One Best Way*. He is also senior fellow of the Institute for Language, Technology, and Publications Design at the University of Baltimore. Copyright © 1996 by Robert Kanigel.

legendary steel industry figure, John Fritz, recalled of his apprenticeship in a blacksmith shop 35 years earlier that his first days were spent pumping a bellows and wielding a sledgehammer. When an apprentice did get something more substantial to do, an *American Machinist* correspondent observed of the traditional “shop-trained boy,” he was “set to work doing things [he could not] spoil by any chance.”

There was wisdom in this, of course. How better to learn the layout of the shop than to find a tool for someone? How better to learn to take orders? How better to ensure that the new boy didn’t wreck the shop?

At first, the apprentice learned much else, too—to keep his limbs out of gears and the overhead couplings; to keep the oil lamp out of the jaws of the chuck; to button his shirt to keep hot, flying chips out. The price of such knowledge was scars, severed fingers, and burns.

Yes, all this was learning of a sort. But was it really what the apprentice, or his parents, had in mind when they looked ahead to four, or five, or seven years at the side of a master craftsman? What about the exchange? Where was the *real* learning? How was the boy to learn his trade?

Certainly, book learning counted for little. In his day, Taylor would assert, all his reading was confined to a single book on machine shop practice which he finished in a couple of hours and from which he gleaned little.

If books did not supply apprentices with much, neither did formal training programs. Nor could you expect some sage old workman to take you under his wing and confer upon you his store of knowledge. Rather, what the apprentice learned in the small machine shops of his youth, a veteran machinist recalled later, was mostly what he picked up from watching: “Machinists, as a rule, were not very liberal with information of the right kind. Once in a while someone would give you some good advice, but that was the exception.”

One report from around Taylor’s time found that apprentices got scant atten-

tion from anyone; whether or not they became skilled workmen depended largely on their own motivation. And *there* lay the “chief vice” of the apprenticeship system, a Philadelphia civic association heard it argued—that it had “scarcely anything of an educational character, and is exceedingly wasteful of the time of the learner.”

A veteran machinist might show the new boy a special tool, impart to him odd bits of shop knowledge. “To straighten a reamer which has sprung in hardening,” one apprentice recorded in his journal in 1858, “heat it with the hot tongs and suck plunger of straightening machine down very lightly—so Bob Bolton says.” And in time, the tips and teaching *did* add up.

But only with glacial slowness. One machinist with otherwise fond memories of his 1870s-vintage apprenticeship, W. D. Graves, could nonetheless concede in 1910 that “after a few half-days in the manual training department of a good public school,” a boy would learn more than “in a month of shop apprenticeship.” By late in the century, many apprentices felt they were working too hard, earning too little, and learning too slowly.

Moreover, the knowledge they imbibed was too often blind, profoundly conservative, and based on simply doing what you were told or as others in the shop did it. Taylor would tell how as an apprentice he’d fashion a tool bit: “We would heat the metal” in the blacksmith’s forge, “lay it on the edge of the anvil one way and ask a friend to hit it a crack, and then turn it around and repeat the process,” giving it a diamond-shaped point. Why that shape? Why not rounded, or blunted, or something else? Well, “in the primitive shops, such as the one in which I served my apprenticeship,” he explained, the diamond point was what you used, period. Here was tradition at work, the dead weight of the past.

When he was a boy back in the 1840s, 70-year-old J. F. Holloway said in a lapse into nostalgia at an American Society of Mechanical Engineers meeting in 1895, apprentices typically served in small

machine shops

owned by the man who operated them, or by a small partnership, and the apprentice had the privilege, the inestimable privilege, of living in the family, of getting up in the early morning and making the fire, milking the cow, and taking care of the horse, before he went to work in the shop. There was a certain community of feeling between the boys in the shop and the master.

But by Taylor's day, just 30 years later, that warmly communal era was gone forever. Rare was the boy who lived with his master. And many were those who didn't serve out their terms at all. Apprentices were traditionally "bound" for many years so that the master might ultimately recoup losses he suffered while the boy was still ignorant and useless. But now, impatient to earn \$12 a week or so, instead of the \$3 they might earn as apprentices, boys would leave long before their terms were up. Abuses, of course, went both ways; many employers exploited apprentices as cheap labor. The old skein of mutual responsibility had more and more unraveled.

Then as now, *apprenticeship* was one of those charged words, steeped in myth, romanticized with images of the Middle Ages, of boys in coarse garments absorbing wisdom from a grizzled old master in a tiny shop. But the 19th century was not the 13th. It was a time, writes W. J. Rorabaugh in *The Craft Apprentice*, that "confused many Americans, who accepted uncritically the belief that whatever was called an apprenticeship must in fact be one." During this period—one foot in the preindustrial past and the other on the brink of modernity—it was "not always easy to tell the difference between a true apprenticeship and a false one."

Fred Taylor's own apprenticeship was, if not exactly a throwback to the Middle Ages, something close to a "true" one.

At Enterprise Hydraulic Works (known also as Ferrell & Jones, after its proprietors), Taylor took up the craft of the patternmaker, the highly skilled worker who made the wooden patterns that produced hollows in hard-

pressed sand to mold molten metal, producing iron and brass castings.

Patternmaking demanded great skill and intelligence. As one trade manual from the turn of the century observed, a machinist at least had the rough casting itself to guide his work, something to see and touch; but the patternmaker "must *imagine* the casting before him, and must build something in wood which will produce that casting in metal." Some of what he made corresponded to the final shape, some to the negative of the final shape. And he had always to journey, in his mind's eye, between those abstract realms, to imagine dark recesses that twisted and curled in space and through which white-hot metal would ultimately flow.

If any trade, then, was apt to subvert a rich boy's preconceptions about men who worked with their hands, it was that of the patternmaker. At Ferrell & Jones, a company that occupied two attached buildings about the size of a modern suburban house, Fred Taylor worked with three or four such overall-clad virtuosos every day. "The very best training I had was in the early years of [my] apprenticeship in the pattern shop," Taylor wrote decades later, "when I was under a workman of extraordinary ability, coupled with fine character. I there learned appreciation, respect, and admiration for the everyday working mechanic."

Before his apprenticeship, a family friend, Ernest Wright, later recorded, Taylor had shown scant interest in things mechanical. And others of Taylor's friends noted that he showed real antipathy to working with his hands. But, Wright went on, "the influence and teaching of John Griffith, head patternmaker at Ferrell & Jones, made a permanent impression on Fred and laid the foundation for his life work."

Young Fred ate breakfast each morning at 5:30, and took the train (or, less likely, the horsecar) into work. By 6:30, he was sweeping the floor of the shop. Soon, with the steam engine powered up and the other workmen at their places, he was busy taking orders, doing as he was told. For 10 hours or more, he worked amid patterns, and pieces of patterns, in pine or

mahogany—almost comically light and soft compared with the metal pieces they made; lengths of wood and pots of glue, jack planes and grinding wheels, routers, rabbet planes, chisels and gouges, squares and calipers.

All day long the soft gloom of the shop enveloped him; in that era before the electric light, only areas of the shop near the windows or beneath a skylight enjoyed bright light. Especially during the winter, night work left the men hunched over candles, lanterns, or gaslight—making for, in one contemporary observer’s choice phrasing, “a black immensity with little spots of light in it.”

During those early months, everything was new for Fred Taylor: working with his hands, doing menial jobs, coming home exhausted at day’s end. So, too, was working beside men who, unlike him and his friends, *had* to earn their livings. Euclid and Cicero were a distant memory now. The gentleman’s son from Germantown had stepped into the rough-hewn world of working-class Philadelphia.

It was doubtless some time early in his apprenticeship that, as Taylor told it later, he’d come home to his parents’ house in Germantown at the end of the day, tired and drained, only to be greeted with a light supper of rhubarb—after a day down on Race Street, rhubarb! And later, in the

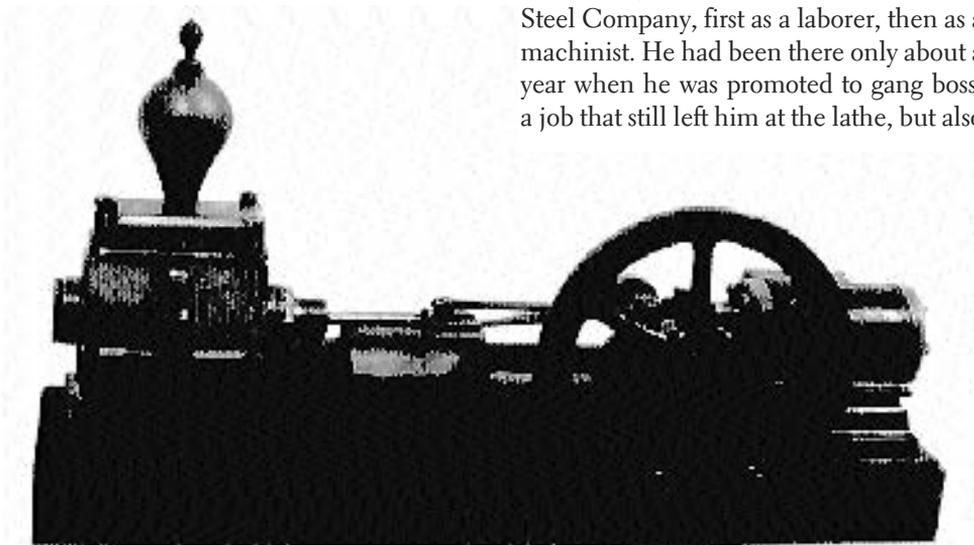
calm of the dining parlor, as a servant cleaned up the dishes, he would listen to his father read, in French, the first volume of Hippolyte Taine’s *Les Origines de la France contemporaine*.

The next morning, often before dawn, he was off to work again, walking down the steep hill flanked by low stone walls. “I look back upon the first six months of my apprenticeship as a patternmaker as, on the whole, the most valuable part of my education,” he once wrote. “Not that I gained much knowledge during that time, nor did I ever become a very good patternmaker; but the awakening as to the reality and seriousness of life was complete, and, I believe, of great value.”

He was strangely happy at his work. As he would later tell his wife, in those early days he would throw “himself entirely into the life of the shop, leaving each morning . . . in overalls, lunch pail under his arm. From then on, he showed such enthusiasm for his new work that his old friends . . . wondered if perhaps they ought to be following his example.”

In 1876, Taylor took six months off and served as a kind of trade show booth sitter for a group of New England machine tool manufacturers at Philadelphia’s Centennial Exposition. After that, he returned to the pump works and served a second apprenticeship, this time as a machinist.

In 1878, he went to work at Midvale Steel Company, first as a laborer, then as a machinist. He had been there only about a year when he was promoted to gang boss, a job that still left him at the lathe, but also



A miniature steam pump that Taylor made to show what he had mastered in his apprenticeship



Two workers at Tabor Manufacturing, in Philadelphia, about 1905, following Taylorist time sheets

involved overseeing the work of others. “Now, Fred,” said some of the men, coming up to him after he’d been named gang boss, “you are not going to be a damn piece-work hog, are you?”

That, of course, is about what he *did* become: first as gang boss and then as foreman, he set about getting more work out of the men. And over the next two years—through argument, cajolery, threats, and firings—he succeeded. But it was a Pyrrhic victory. “I was a young man in years,” he recalled bitterly, “but I give you my word I was a great deal older than I am now with the worry, meanness, and contemptibleness of the whole damn thing. It is a horrid life . . . not to be able to look any workman in the face all day long without seeing hostility.”

He had lost the friendship and acceptance of the men. And not, in his mind, only those at Midvale. The four years of his apprenticeship, just recently past, haunted him. At the pump works, he had enjoyed a comradely ease among the men, cussing up and down with them, working by their side. If only in retrospect, it must have seemed to him a kind of personal Eden.

How, at Midvale, to restore that lost

Eden? The men said they could push their machines and themselves no harder; he was sure they could. So, stopwatch in hand, he resolved to *study* work, tease apart its elements, establish quantitatively a fair day’s work. He’d rise above petty workplace bickering, let cool, neutral science decide. The result was time-and-motion study, and the rest of the baroque assortment of management tools that came to be known as the Taylor System.

After leaving Midvale in 1890, Taylor took on a succession of industrial clients, bringing to each one some or all of the innovations he had pioneered at Midvale. At Bethlehem Steel, which he joined in 1898, he developed a new, fast-cutting tool steel that revolutionized the machine shops of the world. And—if his famous account, today enshrined in the world’s management textbooks, is to be believed—he got a laborer he called “Schmidt” to load 47 tons of pig iron a day instead of 12.

During this period, too, he wrote the first in a series of influential papers on shop management.

Taylor nominally retired in 1901, but over the next decade he brought legions of industrialists and other acolytes to his estate outside Philadelphia for long, nonstop perorations about his system. Then, in 1910, came Brandeis, the Eastern Rate case, the million-dollars-a-day fuss, and celebrity. The following year’s publication of Taylor’s *Principles of Scientific Management*, which was translated into a dozen languages, projected his ideas onto the world stage.

The better to stir his audience, Taylor would state his views starkly, sometimes brutally. And along the way, his high-handed methods estranged many with whom he had worked, bosses and workers alike. The bosses didn’t like the higher wages he insisted ought to go with higher output; nor that, in turning to science for answers, he took from old-line managers many of their prerogatives, denying them their hunch-ridden ways of old. Meanwhile, in 1912, organized labor had Taylor

hauled before a House Committee to Investigate the Taylor and Other Systems of Shop Management, where he endured a four-day inquisition. This cruel man's system, said his enemies in labor, made for just another brutal speed-up; workers had to toil harder and faster than ever, and any extra pay was apt to be short-lived.

But labor's hostility went deeper than that. In a Taylorized factory, you worked not just harder and faster but by someone else's lights, not your own. Step-by-step, minute-by-minute instructions—the time the job ought to take, just *how* you were to do it, in what order, with what tools—came from on high. Your duty was to execute them, like a machine; the word *robot* had not yet been coined. In the dark imaginings of Taylor's most hostile critics—and often in practice, too—human work was being stripped of much of what made it rewarding. Taylor's experts and engineers did the thinking, while you were consigned to mindless doing.

Fred Taylor took strands of thought and practice already present in the late 19th century and wound them into a thick, muscled cable—Taylorism. And Taylorism helped seal the fate of the traditional apprentice system, weakening it even as an

ideal. If apprenticeship promised a slow accretion of knowledge through the work itself, Taylorism insisted on a passing down of knowledge, by rule and dictum, from on high. If apprenticeship tended to breach class lines, Taylorism buttressed them. If, for the craft apprentice, thinking and doing blurred, Taylorism sharply partitioned them.

Some critics have argued that through its army of specialists, Taylorism created *more* skilled jobs, not fewer, and threw open the ranks of white-collar functionaries to many more people. Maybe so. But it almost certainly led to less of the kind of skilled work that seamlessly melded thought *and* act, brain *and* hand, in the same 10 hours.

Which, given all that Taylor's own apprenticeship meant to him, represents no inconsiderable irony. All his life, he would look back wistfully to those days at the pump works. Later, when he was an important man, he'd tell anyone who'd listen that no engineering graduate should leave school without a year in a shop like that. And yet his system, the system that made his name known around the world, discouraged just the sort of rich, lingering work experience he had enjoyed as a young man in that small shop on Race Street.

TAIWAN

The Little Island That Could

The missiles that the People's Republic of China launched toward Taiwan this spring were but the latest salvo in a long and sometimes heated dispute over control of the tiny island. Such threats of force, Anne Thurston suggests, will do little to improve chances of reconciliation. The People's Republic might be wiser to adopt some of the ways of its forward-moving neighbor.

by Anne F. Thurston



On February 20, 1996, during a lunar new year visit to the popular Lungshan Buddhist temple in downtown Taipei, Lee Teng-hui brought his campaign message, "Sovereignty rests with the people," to an overflow crowd. With his back to the statue of Buddha, the man who had served as Kuomintang-appointed president since 1988 told his audience that the government should be more like Kuanyin—the goddess of compassion, mercy, and peace before whom Buddhists pray in times of need. Across the Taiwan Straits about 100 miles away, 150,000 troops from the Chinese People's Liberation Army were poised to begin military exercises intended specifically to intimidate Taiwan. The Chinese government had accused Lee of favoring independence and hoped to cow the island's citizens into voting against him in the upcoming March 23 elections.

The saber rattling had little effect. Lee won the election with an unexpectedly high 54 percent of the vote, thus becoming the first popularly elected leader of Taiwan—or any Chinese society—in 5,000 years of history. The results, Lee proclaimed, "demonstrated to the world that Chinese indeed can carry out direct democratic elections. We have proved . . . that freedom and democracy are even more important than life itself."

The Taiwan elections are a rare triumph in an era when communist and

authoritarian regimes have crumbled but the promises of democratization have yet to be fully met. Taiwan's own road to democracy has been bumpy. In the Legislative Yuan, or parliament, fisticuffs have regularly substituted for reasoned debate, and raucous street demonstrations have been part of the political scenery. More than half of all local elected officials are reputed to have criminal ties, and accusations of corruption continue to tarnish the Kuomintang. But no one denies that the process of democratization is finally complete. "Taiwan's political system is now fully democratic by the norms of the international system," notes Columbia University professor Andrew J. Nathan, who has been following the political evolution of Taiwan for years.

All things being equal, Taiwan should become a textbook case for democratic theorists—proof (as theory holds) that long-term economic development and the rise of a middle class lead eventually to demands for political participation and democratic reform. The Taiwan example also refutes the argument made most often by the so-called Singapore school that Confu-



The bustling Youth District in downtown Taipei symbolizes the new Taiwan. Most of these affluent shoppers were born on the island.

cianism and Asian values are incompatible with democracy.

But all things are not equal on Taiwan. Not even its newly elected president refers to the island as a country. Taiwan is the last great vestige of the officially unsettled civil war between China's Communist and Nationalist (Kuomintang) parties.

When the Communists swept through the Chinese mainland after World War II, establishing the People's Republic of China in October 1949, Kuomintang supporters of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek fled to the island of Taiwan, some 100 miles off the coast of Fujian province. By 1950, two million mainlanders had arrived. But the civil war was not over. From the "unsinkable aircraft carrier" of Taiwan, Chiang Kai-shek promised to retake the mainland and unite it under Nationalist rule. Communist Party chairman Mao Zedong was equally determined to bring Taiwan under

Communist rule, but was prevented from launching an all-out attack against Taiwan by the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 and the dispatch of the U.S. Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Straits.

Although ideological disagreements between Chiang and Mao were fundamental, both leaders agreed that there was only one China and that China includes the province of Taiwan. The United States has never challenged that position. In 1979, when the Carter administration withdrew diplomatic recognition from the Republic of China on Taiwan and granted it to the People's Republic of China, what changed was the official U.S. stand on which of the two governments held the legitimate claim to rule.

The official positions of the United States and the People's Republic of China have changed only slightly during the intervening years. The United States continues to hold, as it did in the 1972 Shanghai communique, that "there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China," and to hope that the two sides will settle their differences peacefully. Moreover, in accordance with the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, Washington regards any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means a matter "of grave concern."

The People's Republic of China, for its part, continues to treat the long-term goal of reunification as a fundamental tenet of national policy and offers to end the state of civil war when Taiwan agrees to accept the formula of "one country, two systems." Taiwan will be permitted considerable autonomy as a "special administrative region" under the mainland's formulation but will still be subordinate to Beijing. Until this is achieved, though, China reserves the right to retake the island by force and promises to use it if Taiwan declares independence. Beijing also regards foreign intervention as "meddling" in China's internal affairs.

But while the United States and the People's Republic of China have more or less remained fixed in their positions, Taiwan has made a decisive bid for change. The process began with a series of small steps taken by the Generalissimo's son Chiang Ching-kuo in 1986 and accelerated after Lee Teng-hui assumed the presidency following Chiang's death in 1988. In 1991, Lee declared the period of "national mobilization for suppression of the communist rebellion" to be over and abandoned the Kuomintang's promise to retake the mainland, thus effectively ending his party's participation in the civil war. At the same time, he recognized the government of the People's Republic of China as a legitimate political entity.

China, according to the now-official Taiwanese formulation, is one country, "temporarily divided and governed by two distinct political entities on either side of the Taiwan straits." Taiwan stipulates that it will begin negotiations over reunification only when the mainland renounces the use of force and allows negotiations to be conducted by representatives of the two governments, not of the two respective ruling parties. Taiwan will agree to reunification only after the mainland becomes democratic, free, and prosperous. Moreover, until reunification is achieved, the Republic of China on Taiwan will seek full diplomatic recognition and a seat in inter-

> ANNE F. THURSTON, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is the author of *Enemies of the People* (1987) and *A Chinese Odyssey* (1992), and collaborated with Dr. Li Zhisui, Mao's personal physician, on *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (1995). She also wrote the cover story for the Autumn 1993 WQ, "The Dragon Stirs," which explored the sweeping changes occurring on the Chinese mainland. Copyright © 1996 by Anne F. Thurston.



Taiwan's proximity to China has produced a complex web of relationships with the mainland. But the People's Republic would meet stout resistance if it sought to retake the island by force.

national organizations, including the United Nations.

The mainland's first response to Lee's initiatives was positive, and contact between the two sides expanded rapidly. Mainlanders visited relatives they had not seen for as long as 40 years. Taiwanese tourists flocked to China, and Taiwanese businesses began investing there. Some daring entrepreneurs even established shoe and clothing factories in southern provinces such as Fujian and Guangdong, relying on the cheap labor that had flocked to the coast from rural inland provinces. Today, more than 100,000 Taiwanese businesspeople are said to work in China, where they have invested \$25 billion, an amount second only to what Hong Kong entrepreneurs have poured into the People's Republic. Unofficial organizations—the Straits Affairs Foundation on Taiwan and the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Straits on the mainland—were set up to manage the proliferating array of transactions, and representatives of the two organizations met together for the first time in Singapore in April 1993.

By 1995, however, Beijing was growing suspicious. Lee Teng-hui, in an interview that appeared in the Japanese weekly *Shokan Asahi*, told author Shiba Ryotaro that “all those who held power in Taiwan before were outsider regimes,” including the Kuomintang regime of Chiang Kai-shek. If Chiang was an outsider, Beijing inferred, so any form of mainland rule would also be considered a “foreign” intrusion. Taiwan's continuing push for international recognition was further proof to mainland officials that Lee favored an independent Taiwan.

Beijing's suspicions of Lee's collusion with the United States were aroused when President Bill Clinton, under pressure from Congress, agreed to grant Lee a visa in order to deliver a graduation address last year at Cornell University, where he had earned a Ph.D. in agricultural economics in 1968. High-level State Department representatives had previously assured Chinese officials that the visa would be withheld. When that position was abandoned, the Beijing press began to accuse Lee Teng-hui of



From his post on Taiwan's coast, a soldier keeps close watch during the spring PRC military exercises.

“betraying the nation and splitting the motherland.” U.S.-China relations went into free fall. Strangest of all, old foes of communist China, such as conservative Kuomintang elders Lin Yang-kang and Hao Po-tsun, suddenly became Beijing's friends because they opposed Lee and favored accommodation with Beijing. As the elections drew near, Beijing began conducting live military exercises off the Taiwan coast, firing three or four

M-9 missiles within miles of the ports of Keelung and Kaohsiung. The United States responded by dispatching two aircraft carrier battle groups to waters just east of Taiwan.

“It's all Beijing opera—just lots of loud gongs and beating of drums,” a Singapore diplomat told me recently. “You Americans don't understand.”

“We [mainlanders and Taiwanese] understand each other very well,” representatives of both Taiwan and the mainland separately assured me during the drama's post-election intermission.

But do they? And does such understanding extend to the vexed question of Taiwan's identity?



The mainlanders' perceptions of Taiwan are unquestionably colored by a modern variation on what might be called “Middle Kingdom syndrome,” an outlook that for millennia served as the justification for imperial rule. *China* literally means “Middle Kingdom,” and China traditionally has seen itself less as a territorial than as a cultural entity, superior to all others. For most of Chinese history, China's undisputed cultural superiority allowed it first to conquer and then to sinify the peoples on the periphery of its heartland. During the 19th century, that same sense of cultural superiority prevented China from understanding that the West was not only economically superior but incapable of becoming Chinese. But today, Taiwan and Hong Kong present China with an even more upsetting challenge. Both are peripheral entities that are not only economically superior but also, in their view, more culturally Chinese than China itself.

That Taiwan could become more “Chinese” than the Middle Kingdom is, to mainland leaders, an unthinkable development. After all, few Chinese could even be found on the island when Portuguese navigators discovered Taiwan in 1590, naming it Formosa—or beautiful—Island. Aboriginal Malays, a tiny minority of the present population of 21 million, began settling on the island some 6,000 years ago. Large-scale Chinese migrations did not begin until the early 17th century. Later, in the early 18th century, an unprecedented population explosion drove thousands of residents of Fujian to the island across the straits. China had asserted its dominion over Taiwan

only a little earlier, in 1683. It was then that the Manchu government (which had overthrown the Ming dynasty and established the Qing dynasty in 1644) was finally successful in routing the remnant forces of the deceased Ming patriot Koxinga (Cheng Ch'eng-kung), who had used the island unsuccessfully as a base from which to challenge Manchu rule.

Historians differ over how firmly or well the Manchus ruled. Some argue that the island was administered like any other frontier area, though even then its inhabitants were decidedly more culturally advanced than those of other areas along the periphery of the Chinese state. Taiwan's traditional academies produced more literati—the educated class from which Chinese officials were drawn—than other frontier areas such as, say, Gansu. Some champions of Formosan independence, such as Thomas W. I. Liao, who from 1954 to 1965 led a Tokyo-based independence movement before returning to his native Taiwan, have argued that the Manchus were never much interested in the island and exerted little effective government control. The Manchu administration on Formosa, according to Liao, was inefficient and corrupt, and the central government in Beijing never considered the island an integral part of China. True or not, everyone agrees at least that the island was never easy to govern. So rebellious were its inhabitants that a Manchu saying described them as launching “a disturbance every three years and a rebellion every five.”

Taiwan was not upgraded to provincial status until 1885, but by then the Qing dynasty was in decline and unable to repulse the Western powers then nibbling away at the country's sovereignty. The Manchus' greatest humiliation was their defeat in 1895 at the hands of the Japanese, whom the Chinese had for centuries regarded as culturally inferior. Formosa was the prize. True to tradition, the people of Taiwan offered fierce resistance. Although 10,000 Formosans gave their lives in the struggle, the island became a Japanese colony.

By most accounts, the Japanese governed the island fairly and effectively, at least after ruthlessly establishing their rule. Opium use, which had sapped the spirit of so many on the mainland and undermined Manchu legitimacy, was restricted, female foot binding was forbidden, and public health and sanitation were improved. The Japanese introduced modern technology and bureaucratic efficiency. Trade increased and exports soared.

To be sure, the Taiwanese resented their treatment as second-class citizens, but educational opportunities expanded, and some of the best students were selected to receive higher educations in universities in Tokyo or Kyoto. (Lee Teng-hui himself graduated from Kyoto Imperial University in 1946, and Peng Ming-min, longtime leader of Taiwan's independence movement and the Democratic Progressive Party's losing candidate in the March presidential elections, studied at Tokyo Imperial University during the same period.) By the 1920s, a new wealthy class—the beneficiary of educational opportunities—had begun to emerge. In 1937, the per capita income of the Taiwanese population was two times that of mainland residents, and its economy was far more advanced. And by 1940, 56 percent of all bureaucratic positions and 35 percent of the top administrative posts were held by Taiwanese. Many local officials, including the fathers of both Lee Teng-hui and Peng Ming-min, were democratically elected.

Taiwan's interaction with Japan produced a complex psychology, the effects of which are felt even today. The islanders' pride, first noted by the

Manchus, grew even stronger under the Japanese, and many Taiwanese who had benefited from Japanese rule felt superior to the mainland. That pride, in turn, produced an unsettling ambivalence about the meaning of being Chinese.

Peng Ming-min embodies that conflict. Describing a 1929 visit to the mainland with his family, when he was only five, Peng recalls that his parents “were deeply impressed by how big China was and felt some sadness and nostalgia when visiting their ancestral home area, but with regard to social development, industrialization, education, and public hygiene, they felt that China compared with Taiwan was backward.”

Peng’s parents were not alone. Many Taiwanese under Japanese rule continued to be proud of their connection with China’s 5,000-year-old culture, yet were ashamed of the country’s backwardness and weakness. At the same time, they were proud of Taiwan’s economic modernity, social progress, and efficient governance, but embarrassed about being second-class citizens.

The Japanese invasion of China in 1937 left many on Taiwan in agony, and news of Japan’s defeat in August 1945—and of the island’s impending return to Chinese rule—brought euphoria. Many assumed that under Chinese rule the leadership positions still held by the Japanese would be assumed by members of the new Taiwan elite.

Eyewitnesses describe the rising excitement as the day of the Nationalists’ arrival approached. In October, country folk young and old flocked to the port cities to greet the troops, filling hotels and crowding the homes of relatives and friends. Sentries were posted on rooftops and hills to scan the waters for arriving ships. Euphoria gave way to frenzied hysteria. Towns went wild when the first troop ships were sighted, and people filled the streets waving Nationalist flags, setting off endless rounds of firecrack-



Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang arrived in Taipei to a tumultuous welcome in 1949, but the Generalissimo made it clear that his interests lay more with the mainland, not the island.

ers, clapping, and cheering as the ships drew near.

For some, the glorious occasion turned into a shattering disappointment. As chairman of the Taiwanese Reception Committee in the port of Kaohsiung, Peng Ming-min's father was standing near the neat and orderly delegation of Japanese troops that lined the docks to greet the arriving mainland soldiers. The first Chinese to step off the ship, Peng recalled, "was a bedraggled fellow who looked and behaved more like a coolie than a soldier, walking off carrying a pole across his shoulder, from which were suspended his umbrella, sleeping mat, cooking pot, and cup. Others like him followed, some with shoes, some without. Few had guns. With no attempt to maintain order or discipline, they pushed off the ship, glad to be on firm land but hesitant to face the Japanese lined up and saluting smartly on both sides." Peng's father was seized by nearly unbearable embarrassment.

The first years of Nationalist rule on Taiwan were hardly auspicious. The Nationalists had no intention of placing control of the island in the hands of the Taiwanese. Mainlanders saw themselves as liberators of a misguided people, corrupted by their erstwhile Japanese rulers—the enemy against whom the mainlanders had fought for eight long and disruptive years. Taiwanese continued to look down on the backward mainlanders, disappointed at being denied the respect they felt they had earned through their accomplishments under Japanese rule, and still resentful at having been abandoned after the war of 1895. As peace on the mainland failed, and the long-simmering conflict between the Nationalists and the Communists broke into full-scale civil war, the same problems that had weakened the Nationalists on the mainland began to appear on Taiwan—a corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy, raging inflation, declining production, rising unemployment, the growth of an underworld, and widespread dislocation and social disorder.

Tensions led to tragedy on February 28, 1947. An angry scuffle erupted when Nationalist police attempted to arrest a Taipei street peddler suspected of selling contraband cigarettes. A bystander was shot and killed. News of the altercation spread first to other parts of the city and then throughout the island. During the next two weeks, Taiwanese took to the streets in protest, their angry demands against the government escalating and oscillating. The military responded with lethal force, killing thousands of protesters in its effort to reassert control. Estimates of the number of deaths vary, from a low official figure of about 2,000 to a high of 100,000. Over time, the death toll has been most often put at 10,000. The 2-28 incident, as the episode came to be called, soon assumed the proportion of myth, even as public discussion about the event was forbidden. Few Taiwanese were unaffected by the tragedy, and resentments festered for more than 40 years.

The Taiwanese independence movement traces its genesis to this tragedy, though the movement's leading proponents, including Peng, spent decades in jail or in exile abroad. Surely part of Lee Teng-hui's popularity today is based on his efforts to allow the dead, finally, to be publicly and properly mourned. In 1991, under pressure from the independence-minded Democratic Progressive Party, he commissioned an official study of the episode, which found the Nationalist government guilty of excessive force. A \$71 million compensation fund was established for relatives of the dead. Several memorial shrines were erected, and February 28 was made a day of

public commemoration. Last year, at a memorial service broadcast throughout the island, Lee Teng-hui finally issued a formal government apology. “As the head of state, bearing the burden of mistakes made by the government and expressing the most sincere apology,” he said, “I believe that with your forgiving hearts, we are able to transform the sadness into harmony and peace.” This year again he noted the day by placing a wreath before a monument to the dead.

But the wounds were still fresh when the Nationalists on the mainland were defeated and Chiang Kai-shek fled to the island in December 1949. The welcome extended by the six million Taiwanese was understandably less than wholehearted.

The aloof and dictatorial Chiang Kai-shek did little to allay Taiwanese fears. Taiwan was a mere way station to the Nationalists, determined to recover China. “We will surely retake the mainland” remained the Generalissimo’s slogan during the last 26 years of his life.

The political system, reflecting the Kuomintang’s early collaboration with the Soviet Comintern, was a Leninist form of one-party rule, and the government mirrored the one Chiang had forged on the mainland, structured to govern the whole of China. Taiwanese were relegated to minor roles. Dissidents of all stripes—those who leaned toward independence for Taiwan, people who might have sympathized with the Communists, those who publicly expressed doubt about the Nationalists’ ability to retake the mainland—were silenced, and some spent years in exile or in jail on the notorious Green Island. Human rights organizations were no less critical of the Nationalist government on Taiwan than of the Communist government on the mainland.

But “desperation is the mother of reform,” notes K. C. Wu, the former Nationalist mayor of Shanghai who had become governor of Taiwan in late 1949 (and who resigned and moved to the United States in 1953 to work for a more democratic Taiwan). In addition to reconstructing the war-ravaged economy—three-fourths of Taiwan’s industry, two-thirds of its power plants, and one-half of its power plants had been put out of operation by American bombers—Chiang’s government introduced a series of controversial but ultimately successful reforms.

Land reform remains the most notable of them. In 1949, half of Taiwan’s population was engaged in farming, and virtually all the landlords were Taiwanese. Under the slogan “land to the tillers,” absentee landlords were forced to sell their acreage to the state—for cash, rice bonds, or stocks in industries formerly owned by the Japanese. The state then resold the land to farmers. Former landlords, initially unhappy with rural reform, soon became industrial capitalists. Agricultural output improved, and with further help from the U.S.-funded Sino-American Joint Committee on Rural Reconstruction, rural Taiwan came to prosper.

Lee Teng-hui, who began working with the Joint Committee after receiving a master’s degree in agricultural economics at Iowa State University in the early 1950s, can take some credit for Taiwan’s green revolution. Industry, including the manufacture of textiles, bicycles, furniture, and other consumer goods, grew in tandem with agriculture, as small, low-tech, labor-intensive factories on the outskirts of towns absorbed surplus labor from the countryside. Industrial production increased at the rate of 10 percent a year throughout the 1950s, and the growing prosperity, togeth-



Taiwan's economic boom started in rural areas and only gradually made its way to the cities, in sharp contrast to what happened in other Asian countries such as South Korea and Singapore. Some analysts believe that mainland China can bring about a similar transformation—but only if its leaders acknowledge the need for political as well as economic reforms.

er with opportunities for Taiwanese to elect their own local leaders, served to mute the discontent with Kuomintang rule.

Taiwan's dramatic success contrasted sharply with the situation on the mainland. Land reform there had been violent, and when Mao Zedong attempted to transform small-scale collectives into gigantic communes in 1958, the country was plunged into the worst famine in history. Between 27 and 43 million people died—several times the population of Taiwan at that time. In the mid-1960s, just when recovery from the famine was complete, Mao launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The country descended into a decade of political chaos. Traditional Confucian values were attacked, tearing the moral fabric of society, and many of the country's cultural artifacts were destroyed



By contrast, Taiwan's economic growth, and with it rising per capita income, continued throughout the 1960s, as manufactured exports of textiles, paper products, and electronic components grew and the share of industrial production in the economy expanded. People began to describe Taiwan's success as an "economic miracle," and together with South Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong, the island became one of the "four tigers" of the Asia Pacific region.

But Taiwan faced daunting political challenges. Chiang Kai-shek's unassailable and authoritarian rule, two and a half decades of uninterrupted economic prosperity, U.S. and international support, and a mainland China wracked with famine and political upheaval had made it possible for Taiwan to put off addressing the underlying political problems. Chiang's death in 1975 and the erosion of international recognition made glossing over them more difficult.

International support for Kuomintang claims had begun to collapse in

1971, when the United Nations voted to give China's seat on the Security Council, then occupied by Taiwan, to the People's Republic instead. President Richard M. Nixon's historic 1972 visit to Beijing also doomed any long-term ties between the United States and Taiwan. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter granted diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China, broke official ties with Taiwan, and announced the termination of the mutual defense treaty—in effect since 1954—and the withdrawal from the island of all remaining American troops. An economic and cultural office in Washington now began to function as a pale and humiliating substitute for Taiwan's embassy. High-level contacts between Washington and Taipei were forbidden, and U.S. diplomats took leaves of absence from their official government positions to serve in the American Institute in Taiwan, as the unofficial embassy was now called. Taiwan became something of an international pariah as country after country withdrew diplomatic recognition in favor of the mainland. Even today, the Republic of China on Taiwan has diplomatic relations with only 32 countries, mostly in Africa and Latin America.

Internally, the legitimacy of Kuomintang rule over Taiwan was waning, and a sense of mortality—of institutions and men—loomed large. The hollow promise to retake the mainland and the claim to rule for all of China had become ludicrous. The mainlanders who had fled with Chiang Kai-shek were aging, and the claim of the elderly legislators to make laws for all of China had become a not-so-funny joke. Demography was having other political effects. Because 85 percent of Taiwan's population was island-born, the interests of this majority quite obviously lay with the island rather than the mainland. As per capita income went up, people expected to play a role in the political decisions affecting their lives. Taiwanese who had gone abroad to study in the 1960s and '70s, often to the United States, were returning. Exposed to democratic societies in other parts of the world, they became advocates of democracy in Taiwan.

Above all, the distrust between the mainlanders and the Taiwanese persisted. No government that failed to give Taiwanese a full and equal voice could long remain legitimate.

When Chiang Ching-kuo succeeded his father as president of the Republic of China on Taiwan in 1975, few would have described him as a political liberal. Educated in the Soviet Union during the 1920s and '30s, Chiang Ching-kuo had spent his political life with arguably the most repressive organs of state—the military and security apparatuses. Many saw him as the strongman responsible for keeping the lid on political dissent. That view was strengthened in December 1979, when a Kaohsiung demonstration organized by advocates of democracy and Taiwan independence turned into a riot. Fourteen leaders were arrested, convicted of sedition, and sentenced to prison terms ranging from 12 years to life.

But Chiang Ching-kuo had taken the pulse of the society he was charged with guiding. His ties to the security apparatus had taught him the sources of discontent, and his grass-roots involvement gave him an understanding of the citizens' wishes. He knew that his own authority was largely inherited from his father. In the absence of a successor from the Chiang clan, that authority would die with Chiang Ching-kuo. In 1986, he began to institute reforms—lifting martial law, loosening controls on the news media, and



Lee Teng-hui, shown here with a youth group, is so popular with the Taiwanese that the press have coined a term—“Lee Teng-hui Complex”—to describe the phenomenon.

legalizing the formation of competing political parties. The Democratic Progressive Party, with a platform of independence, was officially established that year.

Chiang Ching-kuo's most dramatic political reform, undertaken in 1984, was the appointment of Lee Teng-hui as his vice president and thus his political successor. What was most important about the choice was that Lee, unlike other officials in the upper reaches of the Kuomintang, was a native Taiwanese.

Lee had been born in 1923 and, like many who grew up during the period of colonization, was an admirer of many aspects of Japanese rule. (Even now, his Japanese is reputed to be better than his Mandarin Chinese.) He did not join the Kuomintang until his mid-forties, after his return from Cornell, and was thus even more of an outsider within the party. A technocrat and public servant rather than a politician, he had served only in appointive positions—as minister without portfolio beginning in 1972, as mayor of Taipei from 1978 to '81, and as governor of Taiwan from 1981 to '84.

Chiang Ching-kuo's selection of Lee to serve as his vice president came as a shock to many mainlanders in the Kuomintang. When Chiang Ching-kuo died in 1988 and Lee became president, many doubted his capacity to govern. Lee Teng-hui surprised them. Chiang Ching-kuo's admirers now believe the choice was shrewd. Indeed, during the eight years he has served as president, Lee has revolutionized Taiwanese politics.

But the game he has played is dangerous—pursuing the contradictory goals of accommodation with the mainland and Taiwanization and democratization of the island's political system.

Taiwanization and democratization necessarily work against reunification. Indeed, a core of the island's citizenry—between 30 and 50 percent—favors an independent Taiwan, and democracy grants this group both a voice and a minority of seats in the parliament. At the same time, virtually no one seems to favor immediate reunification with the mainland. In the

March elections, the candidates most closely associated with reunification—Lin Yang-kang and Chen Li-an—won the lowest percentage of votes—13.7 and 9.9 percent, respectively, a total of only about 24 percent. Public opinion polls show that the vast majority of people on Taiwan favor neither immediate reunification with the mainland nor quick independence, but improved ties and continuation of the status quo.

Publicly, Lee Teng-hui continues to favor reunification on Taiwan's terms. But, ironically, by permitting and encouraging contacts between Taiwan and the mainland, he has helped sustain popular support for the status quo. Taiwanese encounters with China often serve to confirm the view that the Middle Kingdom's claim to cultural superiority no longer holds.

"This isn't China," a visibly distressed Taiwanese businessman told me as we shared a late-night cab ride from Beijing's international airport into the city. In the ordeal of the Beijing airport he had experienced a sort of modern-day, civilian version of the scene Peng Ming-min witnessed in 1945 with the arrival of the Nationalist troops in Kaohsiung—the silent, surly

immigration officials; the uncertainty of baggage pickup; the pushing, shoving, unruly crowds as one emerges into the airport's public space; the assault of free-lance taxi drivers, cigarettes dangling from their mouths; the disorder of the officially sanctioned taxi queues.

"Confucianism teaches proper behavior, politeness," the businessman told me. "We believe in *renqing*—human sympathy. The mainland is destroying Chinese culture." He wondered whether I had visited Taiwan, where, he said, Chinese culture remains intact.

Mainlanders returning to their home villages after some

40 years often report that their villages have barely changed, in glaring contrast to the spectacular rural development in Taiwan. Mainlanders often envy the wealth of their Taiwan relatives, and many have suffered, particularly during the Cultural Revolution, because they had family in Taiwan. Playing on their Taiwanese relatives' guilt, they demand economic compensation, and their relatives comply, showering them with consumer goods—televisions, sewing machines, bicycles—and paying for the construction of their homes. At the same time, with money they channel through Hong Kong, Taiwanese are building new schools and factories on the mainland, thus becoming major benefactors of their native villages. "My father hopes that by building schools and maintaining close ties with his village he can encourage democracy there," the Taiwan-born son of a mainlander explains.



Using some of the wealth generated by the robust economy, the Taiwan government has embarked on an ambitious program to modernize the island's infrastructure.

But Taiwanese businesspeople voice their frustration. One of them, a manager of an international fast-food chain, tells what she hated about China when she first arrived—the backwardness, the rudeness, the poor service, the suspicion and lack of trust, the dirt and lack of sanitation. But then she adds, “If I had been born here, I’d be like that, too. They didn’t choose to be like this. They want to live like we do. We have had a lot that they haven’t. If I can make life better for them, I want to. We’re all Chinese. We’re all relatives, friends. So I say we must have patience and love.”

For now, both the exchanges and the social impact are largely one-way, from Taiwan to the mainland, and Taiwan’s influence often serves as a subtle reminder of the continuing shortcomings of Communist Party rule. Satellite dishes along the coast bring Taiwan television into urban homes, exposing millions to news, soap operas, and Taiwan culture, both high and low. The sentimental ballads of Taiwan pop star Deng Lih-chun are heard in taxis, hotels, and homes. “I watch Taiwan television and talk to Taiwanese businessmen here,” a taxi driver in Xiamen, on the coast of the straits, told me. “I know they live better and have more than we do.” Another thing they have, he says, is democracy.

Taiwanese-owned plants in southern China contract to produce running shoes for Reebok and agree to abide by the human rights principles Reebok requires of all its suppliers. Safety standards, dormitory facilities, working hours, and training requirements differ greatly from those in Chinese-run private enterprises. Taiwan-managed chains such as McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken insist on unfailingly friendly service, spotless rest rooms, and high standards of cleanliness and sanitation, offering a sharp contrast to the state-run establishments and a goad to improvement. Chinese-run Rong Hua Ji, which is opening fast-food chicken restaurants within a stone’s throw of Kentucky Fried Chicken, is a less-expensive imitation but not yet a worthy competitor.

Mainlanders are aware that Taiwanese look down on them, and many resent it. Some offer grudging admiration. “It’s clear now that the Kuomintang should have won,” said a friend who graduated from college the year the Communists took over. He thinks the Communist Party will stay in power for another 10 or 20 years. “But we’ll get multi-party democracy just like Taiwan—like the Democratic Progressive Party,” he says. For some Chinese intellectuals, Taiwan is proof that being both modern *and* Chinese is not impossible. Some mainlanders seek a revival of Confucianism, hoping to take the best of China’s ancient culture—the strong emphasis on the family, harmony, and good-heartedness—and adapt it to a more modern, liberal society, just as Taiwan has done.

Official Beijing, however, has few conceptual tools for understanding Taiwan. That a renegade province could be both economically more advanced and more Chinese than China is simply inconceivable. And that is at the root of the problem of reunification. Beijing perceives itself as magnanimous in offering Taiwan autonomy under reunification, and Taiwan refuses to subordinate itself to a regime with such obvious political, economic, and cultural problems.

“The mainland mentality is this,” says Taiwan’s minister of foreign affairs, Frederick Chien. “They are the center, the superior, and Taiwan is the local and the inferior. But that is completely ignoring reality.” Taiwan’s per capita gross national product today is more than \$10,000 per year, compared with \$450 on the mainland. Its literacy rate approaches 90 percent in contrast to 78 percent on the mainland. And Taiwan is a fully functioning democracy.

Taiwan’s push to gain international recognition through membership in international organizations and re-entry into the United Nations may be an effort to gain globally what it cannot receive from its “relatives”—respect for its accomplishments and treatment as an equal. Contrary to what Beijing charges, Lee Teng-hui may be sincere in claiming to favor eventual reunification while simultaneously seeking international recognition.

But Beijing is right to be worried. Democracy gives Taiwan de facto autonomy, calls into question Beijing’s claim to speak for all of China, and deprives the mainland of any but a territorial rationale for retaking the island. Taiwan’s search for “living space” in the form of participation in international organizations will become harder for other countries, including the United States, to ignore. As Taiwan has changed, the assumptions underlying American policy toward it no longer hold. The United States currently lacks a coherent strategic policy for dealing with Taiwan and the mainland, a situation that undermines its ability to forge cooperative ties among the three governments.

Most military experts agree that the Chinese People’s Liberation Army is now incapable of conquering Taiwan. Despite its numerical advantage, the Chinese military is neither as well trained nor as well equipped as that of Taiwan, and its amphibious forces are weak. Taiwan has more than 400,000 active-duty personnel in its armed forces, and its air force includes American-made F-16 and French-built Mirage fighter jets.

But the balance of power is shifting, and a decision by China to ready its forces to take over Taiwan could be carried out in a matter of years. In the meantime, through blockades and selective missile attacks, the mainland could still do grave damage to Taiwan and seriously undermine its trade-dependent economy. Beijing’s recent military maneuvers may have been mostly gongs and drums, but war is not completely out of the question. The strident new nationalism being voiced on the mainland today has infected even otherwise sober-minded intellectuals.

“Why shouldn’t we retake Taiwan?” some of my mainland friends are asking. “It’s ours.”

“Before, Taiwan would have had to go 100 percent of the way toward independence in order to provoke us into attack,” one friend told me. “Today they only have to go 80 percent of the way. Tomorrow maybe they’ll only have to go 60 percent.”

The difficulties between Taiwan and the People’s Republic are as intractable as any in the world today, but an agreement between the two sides may not be impossible. The most workable long-term formula for reunification is a commonwealth or confederation that would

accept Taiwan as China's equal and permit close cooperation for the mutual benefit of both.

In the meantime, the mainland has much to learn from Taiwan. Although the Chinese economy is now growing at an average rate of about 10 percent per year, modernization's human costs and dislocations are wrenching. As China's coastal areas speed ahead, inland areas lag behind, and agriculture stagnates. Taiwan's agricultural development, its balance between agriculture and industry, and its symbiosis between rural workers and fledgling, labor-intensive industries deserve study across the straits. Also worthy of emulation is Taiwan's Confucian emphasis on education. The proportion of the national budget Taiwan spends on schools is second only to that spent on the military. The mainland, by contrast, ranks close to the bottom among all countries in education expenditures. Beijing might also study Lee Teng-hui's handling of the 2-28 incident, for eventually the mainland regime will need to atone publicly for its role in the events of June 4, 1989, when the military moved into Beijing to put a brutal end to weeks of peaceful protest.

But the most important lesson China can learn from Taiwan has to do with political survival. At an officially sponsored conference in Beijing in the summer of 1995, before cross-straits relations began to deteriorate, scholars from Taiwan likened China today to Taiwan at the time of Chiang Ching-kuo's death. The Kuomintang, they said, had had to reform in order to survive. Democratization was the party's only hope. Just as with the Kuomintang then, the scholars pointed out, so the legitimacy of the Communist Party today is waning. Taiwan's political reform began with competitive elections in villages and gradually moved up to the island-wide level. The mainland, too, has begun to introduce competitive elections at the village level, and reformists on the mainland are hopeful that, in time, free elections can be held at the county level and then at the provincial level. Only in the long run—10 or 20 years, they say—are elections likely to be introduced at the national level. Taiwan's example has much to teach about how such reforms might be made. And only with such major political reform on the mainland will peaceful reunification between China and Taiwan ever take place.

But it will not happen immediately. What the scholars from Taiwan were too polite to point out is that their two great leaders, Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo, had to die before political reform could begin. Deng Xiaoping turns 92 in August. Major political reform and peaceful reunification are impossible until he passes into history.



“But First, A Word From Our Sponsor”

Advertising, the author argues, has become the single most important manufacturer of meaning in America today.

by James B. Twitchell

Whenever a member of my paunchy fiftysomething set pulls me aside and complains of the dumbing down of American culture, I tell him that if he doesn't like it, he should quit moaning and go buy a lot of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods. And every time he buys soap, toothpaste, beer, gasoline, bread, aspirin, and the like, he should make it a point to buy a different brand. He should implore his friends to do likewise. At the same time, he should quit giving so much money to his kids. That, I'm sorry to say, is his only hope.

Here's why. The culture we live in is carried on the back of advertising. Now I mean that literally. If you cannot find commercial support for what you have to say, it will not be transported. Much of what we share, and what we know, and even what we treasure, is carried to us each second in a plasma of electrons, pixels, and ink, underwritten by multinational advertising agencies dedicated to attracting our attention for entirely non-altruistic reasons. These agencies, gathered up inside worldwide conglomerates with

weird, sci-fi names like WPP, Omnicom, Saatchi & Saatchi, Dentsu, and Euro RSCG, are usually collections of established shops linked together to provide “full service” to their global clients. Their service is not moving information or creating entertainment, but buying space and inserting advertising. They essentially rent our concentration to other companies—sponsors—for the dubious purpose of informing us of something that we've longed for all our lives even though we've never heard of it before. Modern selling is not about trading information, as it was in the 19th century, as much as about creating an infotainment culture with sufficient allure to enable other messages—commercials—to get through. In the spirit of the enterprise, I call this new culture Adcult.

Adcult is there when we blink, it's there when we listen, it's there when we touch, it's even there to be smelled in scent strips when we open a magazine. There is barely a space in our culture not already carrying commercial messages. Look anywhere: in schools there is Channel One; in movies there is product placement; ads are



Barbara Kruger's "Untitled" (1984)

in urinals, played on telephone hold, in alphanumeric displays in taxis, sent unannounced to fax machines, inside catalogs, on the video in front of the Stairmaster at the gym, on T-shirts, at the doctor's office, on grocery carts, on parking meters, on tees at golf holes, on inner-city basketball backboards, piped in along with Muzak . . . ad nauseam (and yes, even on airline vomit bags). We have to shake mag-

azines like rag dolls to free up their pages from the "blow-in" inserts and then wrestle out the stapled- or glued-in ones before reading can begin. We now have to fast-forward through some five minutes of advertising that opens rental videotapes. President Bill Clinton's inaugural parade featured a Budweiser float. At the Smithsonian, the Orkin Pest Control Company sponsored an exhibit on exactly what it

advertises it kills: insects. No venue is safe. Is there a blockbuster museum show not decorated with corporate logos? The Public Broadcasting Service is littered with “underwriting announcements” that look and sound almost exactly like what PBS claims they are not: commercials.

Okay, you get the point. Commercial speech is so powerful that it drowns out all other sounds. But sounds are always conveyed in a medium. The media of modern culture are these: print, sound, pictures, or some combination of each. Invariably, conversations about dumbing down focus on the supposed corruption of these media, as demonstrated by the sophomoric quality of most movies, the fall from the golden age of television, the mindlessness of most best-sellers, and the tarting-up of the news, be it in or on *USA Today*, *Time*, ABC, or *Inside Edition*. The media make especially convenient whipping boys because they are now all conglomerated into huge worldwide organizations such as Time Warner, General Electric, Viacom, Bertelsmann, and Sony. But, alas, as much fun as it is to blame the media, they have very little to do with the explanation for whatever dumbing down has occurred.

The explanation is, I think, more fundamental, more economic in nature. These media are delivered for a price. We have to pay for them, either by spending money or by spending time. Given a choice, we prefer to spend time. We spend our time paying attention to ads, and in exchange we are given infotainment. This trade is central to Adcult. Economists call this “cost externalization.” If you want to see it at work, go to McDonald’s. You order. You carry your food to the table. You clean up. You pay less. Want to see it elsewhere? Buy gas. Just as the “work” you do at the self-service gas station lowers the price of gas, so consuming ads is the “work” you do that lowers the price of delivering the infotainment. In Adcult, the trade is more complex. True,

you are entertained at lower cost, but you are also encultured in the process.

So far, so good. The quid pro quo of modern infotainment culture is that if you want it, you’ll get it—no matter what it is—as long as there are enough of you who (1) are willing to spend some energy along the way hearing “a word from our sponsor” and (2) have sufficient disposable income possibly to buy some of the advertised goods. In Adcult you pay twice: once with the ad and once with the product. So let’s look back a step to examine these products because—strange as it may seem—they are at the center of the dumbing down of American culture.

Before all else, we must realize that modern advertising is tied primarily to things, and only secondarily to services. Manufacturing both things *and* their meanings is what American culture is all about. If Greece gave the world philosophy, Britain drama, Austria music, Germany politics, and Italy art, then America gave mass-produced objects. “We bring good things to life” is no offhand claim. Most of these “good things” are machine made and hence interchangeable. Such objects, called parity items, constitute most of the stuff that surrounds us, from bottled water to toothpaste to beer to cars. There is really no great difference between Evian and Mountain Spring, Colgate and Crest, Miller and Budweiser, Ford and Chevrolet. Often, the only difference is in the advertising. Advertising is how we talk about these fungible things, how we know their supposed differences, how we recognize them. We don’t consume the products as much as we consume the advertising.

For some reason, we like it this way. Logically, we should all read *Consumer Reports* and then all buy the most sensible product. But we don’t. So why do we waste our energy (and billions of dollars) entertaining fraudulent choice? I don’t know. Perhaps just as we drink the advertising, not the beer, we prefer the illusion of

> James B. Twitchell, *Alumni Professor of English at the University of Florida*, is the author of *Adcult USA: The Triumph of Advertising in America* (1995). This essay appears in a collection of essays, *Dumbing Down: Essays on the Strip Mining of American Culture*, edited by Katharine Washburn and John Thornton and published this summer by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright © 1996 by James B. Twitchell.

choice to the reality of decision. How else to explain the appearance of so much superfluous choice? A decade ago, grocery stores carried about 9,000 items; they now stock about 24,000. Revlon makes 158 shades of lipstick. Crest toothpaste comes in 36 sizes and shapes and flavors. We are even eager to be offered choice where there is none to speak of. AT&T offers “the right choice”; Wendy’s asserts that “there is no better choice”; Pepsi is “the choice of a new generation”; Taster’s Choice is “the choice for taste.” Even advertisers don’t understand the phenomenon. Is there a relationship between the number of soft drinks and television channels—about 27? What’s going to happen when the information pipe carries 500?

I have no idea. But I do know this: human beings like things. We buy things. We like to exchange things. We steal things. We donate things. We live through things. We call these things “goods,” as in “goods and services.” We do not call them “bads.” This sounds simplistic, but it is crucial to understanding the power of Adcult. The still-going-strong Industrial Revolution produces more and more things, not because production is what machines do, and not because nasty capitalists twist their handlebar mustaches and mutter, “More slop for the pigs,” but because we are powerfully attracted to the world of things. Advertising, when it’s lucky, supercharges some of this attraction.

This attraction to the inanimate happens all over the world. Berlin Walls fall because people want things, and they want the culture created by things. China opens its doors not so much because it wants to get out, but because it wants to get things in. We were not suddenly transformed from customers to consumers by wily manufacturers eager to unload a surplus of products. We have created a surfeit of things because we enjoy the process of “getting and spending.” The consumption ethic may have started in the early 1900s, but the desire is ancient. Kings and princes once thought they could solve problems by amassing things. We now join them.

The Marxist balderdash of cloistered

academics aside, human beings did not suddenly become materialistic. We have always been desirous of things. We have just not had many of them until quite recently, and, in a few generations, we may return to having fewer and fewer. Still, while they last, we enjoy shopping for things and see both the humor and the truth reflected in the aphoristic “born to shop,” “shop ‘til you drop,” and “when the going gets tough, the tough go shopping.” Department store windows, whether on the city street or inside a mall, did not appear by magic. We enjoy looking through them to another world. It is voyeurism for capitalists. Our love of things is the *cause* of the Industrial Revolution, not the consequence. We are not only *homo sapiens*, or *homo ludens*, or *homo faber*, but also *homo emptor*.

Mid-20th-century American culture is often criticized for being too materialistic. Ironically, we are not too materialistic. We are not materialistic enough. If we craved objects *and* knew what they meant, there would be no need to add meaning through advertising. We would gather, use, toss out, or hoard based on some *inner* sense of value. But we don’t. We don’t know what to gather, we like to trade what we have gathered, and we need to know how to evaluate objects of little practical use. What is clear is that most things in and of themselves simply do not mean enough. In fact, what we crave may not be objects at all but their meaning. For whatever else advertising “does,” one thing is certain: by adding value to material, by adding meaning to objects, by branding things, advertising performs a role historically associated with religion. The Great Chain of Being, which for centuries located value above the horizon in the world Beyond, has been reformed to settle value into the objects of the Here and Now.

I wax a little impatient here because most of the literature on modern culture is downright supercilious about consumption. What do you expect? Most of it comes from a culture professionally hostile to materialism, albeit secretly envious. From Thorstein Veblen on there has been a palpable

sense of disapproval as the hubbub of commerce is viewed from the groves of academe. The current hand-wringing over dumbing down is not new. It used to be Bread and Circuses. Modern concepts of bandwagon consumption, conspicuous consumption, keeping-up-with-the Joneses, the culture of narcissism, and all the other barely veiled reproofs have limited our serious consideration of Adcult to such relatively minor issues as manipulation and exploitation. People surely can't want, ugh!, things. Or, if they really do want them, they must want them for all the wrong reasons. The idea that advertising creates artificial desires rests on a profound ignorance of human nature, on the hazy feeling that there existed some halcyon era of noble savages with purely natural needs, on romantic claptrap first promulgated by Rousseau and kept alive in institutions well isolated from the marketplace.

We are now closing in on why the dumbing down of American culture has occurred with such startling suddenness in the last 30 years. We are also closing in on why the big complainers about dumbing down are me and my paunchy pals. The people who want things the most and have the best chance to acquire them are the young. They are also the ones who have not yet decided which brands of objects they wish to consume. In addition, they have a surplus of two commodities: time and money, especially the former. If you can make a sale to these twentysomethings, if you can "brand" them with your product, you may have them for life. But to do this you have to be able to speak to them, and to do that you have to go to where you will be heard.

The history of mass media can be summarized in a few words: if it can't carry advertising, it won't survive.

Books are the exception that *almost* proves the rule. Books used to carry ads. Initially, publishing and advertising were joined at the press. Book publishers, from William Caxton to modern university presses, have advertised forthcoming titles on their flyleaves and dust jackets. No doubt publishers would have been willing

to bind other material into their products if only there had been a demand. While we may have been startled when Christopher Whittle marketed his *Larger Agenda* series of books ("big ideas, great writers, short books") by inserting advertising into what was essentially a long magazine article bound in hardcover, he was actually behaving like a traditional book publisher. When Whittle published William Greider's *Trouble with Money*—94 pages of text and 18 pages of Federal Express ads—book reviewers turned away, aghast. But when Bradbury & Evans published Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* in 1857, no reviewer or reader blanched at seeing the bound-in ad section touting Persian parasols, smelling salts, portable India-rubber boots, and the usual array of patent medicines.

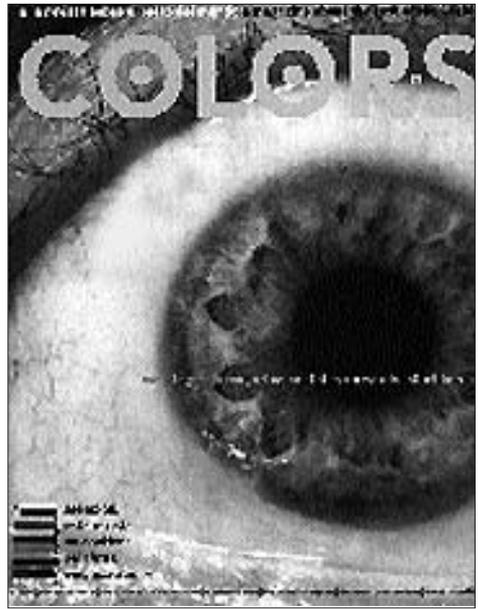
The reason why books were not an advertising medium is simple: there wasn't much to advertise, and once there was a surplus of machine-made parity items, there was a cheaper medium—the magazine. The death knell of book advertising is still being rung not by publishers but by the postal service. Put an ad in a book and it no longer travels at fourth-class book rate but at third-class commercial rate. A prediction: advertising will return to books. UPS, Federal Express, and the other commercial carriers make no such distinction about content, only about weight and size. In addition, since Dr. Spock fought Pocket Books to have cigarette ads removed from his baby-care book in the late 1940s, the Authors' Guild has advised writers to have a no-advertising clause inserted in the boilerplate of their contracts with publishers. What would it take to reverse this? Not much, I suspect. Put a few ads in, drop the price 10 percent, and most people would accept it. Of course, the real reason books are currently ad free is that the prime audience for advertisers, namely the young, is functionally illiterate.

Here is the history of magazine and newspaper publishing on a thumbnail. All the innovations in these media were forced on them by advertisers. You name it: the appearance of ads throughout the pages, the "jump" or continuation of a story from page to page, the rise of section-

alization (as with news, cartoons, sports, financial, living, real estate), common page size, halftone images, process engraving, the use of black-and-white photography, then color, sweepstakes, and finally discounted subscriptions were all forced on publishers by advertisers hoping to find target audiences.

From the publishers' point of view, the only way to increase revenues without upping the price, or adding advertising space, is to increase circulation. First-copy costs in magazine and newspaper publishing are stupendous. Ironically, the economies of scale are such that to increase the "reach" of this medium and lower your last-copy cost, you must also run the risk of alienating core readership. This is not advertising-friendly. What amounts to a Hobson's choice for the publisher has proved a godsend for the advertiser. It means that papers and magazines will tend to self-censor in order to provide a bland and unobtrusive plasma as they, on their own, seek to maximize their profits. They dumb down automatically. Look at the *New York Times* and you can see this operating in slow motion. The increase of infotainment and the presence of movie ads, the jazzy "Style" section of Sunday, and, of course, the use of color, to say nothing of the appearance on the front page of stories that used to be deemed tabloidlike and were therefore relegated to the back sections—were attempts to find the "proper" readership, not to find all that is "Fit to Print." If newspapers want to survive, they will have to think of themselves not as delivering news or entertainment to readers but delivering readers to advertisers.

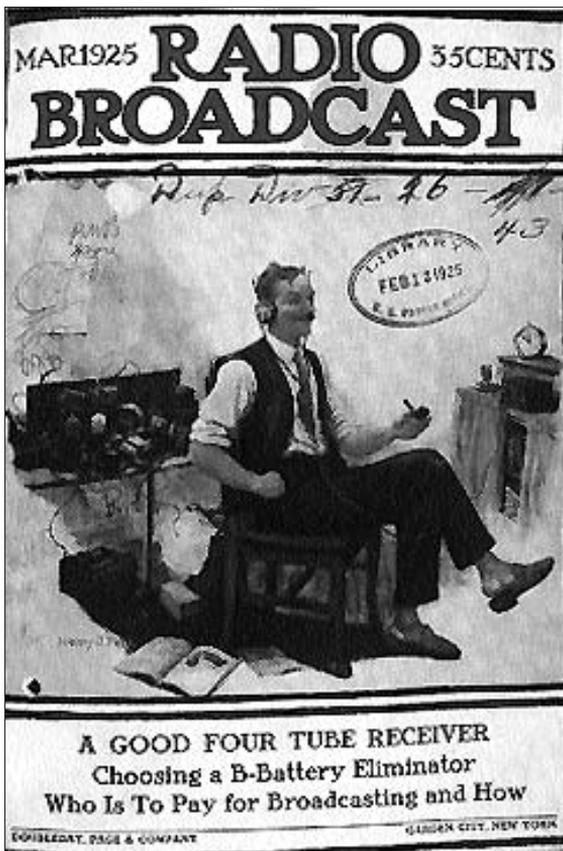
One might even see newspapers and magazines, in the current bafflelab, as members of a "victim" class. They are remnants of a print culture in which selling was secondary to informing. To survive, they had to replace their interest in their reader as reader with the more modern view of the reader as commodity. Still, print media might have maintained their cultural standards, had not radio and television elbowed them aside. Ironically, print had



to conglomerate, to fit itself into huge oligopolies such as Scripps-Howard, the Tribune Company, the New York Times Company, Gannett, the Washington Post Company, Times Mirror, Meredith, and the rest, in order to sell advertising space profitably. As advertising will flow to that medium which finds the target audience cheapest, the demographic specialization of print is a direct result of the rise of Adcult.

This struggle to find targeted audiences has led to two interesting extremes. On one extreme are magazines that are pure advertising, such as *Colors from Benetton*, *Le Magazine de Chanel*, and *Sony Style*, which erase the line between advertising and content so that you cannot tell what is text and what is hype. At the other extreme are magazines such as the reincarnated *Ms.* or *Consumer Reports*, which remain ad free for political or economic reasons. Meanwhile, the rest of magazine culture aspires to the condition of women's magazines, in which the ratio of advertising space to print space is about 10 to 1, and to the editorial condition of newspapers, which is as bland as vanilla.

The electronic media have turned the screws on print, have made it play a perpetual game of catch-up, have forced it into niches so that only a few national magazines and newspapers have survived. Broadcasting has forced print to narrow-



This March 1925 Radio Broadcast magazine posed the key question facing the nascent medium: who is to pay?

cast. Television is usually blamed, but the real culprit is radio. Radio started with such high hopes. It has achieved such low reality. Rush Limbaugh and Howard Stern are not stars of this medium by accident.

After World War I, Westinghouse found itself with a surplus of tubes, amplifiers, transmitters, and crystal receivers. So in November 1920, it started KDKA in Pittsburgh on the Field of Dreams principle ("If you build it, they will come"). It worked. Once transmitters were built, Westinghouse receiving apparatuses could be unloaded. You could make them at home. All you needed was a spool of wire, a crystal, an aerial, and earphones—all produced by Westinghouse. Patience and a cylindrical oatmeal box were supplied by the hobbyist. By July 1922, some 400 stations had sprung up.

Rather like users of the Internet today, no one then seemed to care "what" was on as long as they were hearing something. When stereo-

phonic sound was introduced in the 1950s, at first the most popular records were of the ordinary sounds of locomotives and cars passing from speaker to speaker. People used to marvel at the test patterns of early television as no doubt monks stood in awe before the first printed letters. However, in the 1920s, great plans were being hatched for radio. Universities would take advantage of this new way to dispense their respective cultures by building transmitters. The government would see to this by allocating special licenses just for universities. This medium would never dumb down, it would uplift.

The problem was that everyone was broadcasting on the same wavelength. When transmitters were placed too close together, the signals became mixed and garbled. AT&T suggested a solution. It would link stations together using its existing lines, and soon everyone would hear clearly. AT&T envisioned tying some 38 stations together in a system it

called "toll broadcasting." The word "toll" was the tip-off. Someone was going to have to pay. The phone company suggested that time could be sold to private interests, and it called this subsidy "ether advertising." The suggestion was not an immediate success. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, considered a presidential possibility, warned that it was "inconceivable that we should allow so great a possibility for service . . . to be drowned in advertising chatter," and that if presidential messages ever "became the meat in a sandwich of two patent medicine advertisements it would destroy broadcasting." Such Cassandras were uniformly ignored. This would never happen. The universities would see to it by their responsible use of the medium.

In 1922, AT&T started WEAJ (for wind, earth, air, fire) in New York. The station tried all kinds of innovative things, even broadcasting live from a football stadium. It tried letting companies buy time to talk about their prod-

ucts. Such talk was always in good taste: no mention of where the products were available, no samples offered, no store locations, no comparisons, no price information—just a few words about what it is that you offer. At 5 P.M. on August 28, the station manager even let a Mr. Blackwell step up to the microphone and say his piece about a housing development. He spoke only once. This is what he said, and it is every bit as important as “Mr. Watson, come here, I want you,” only a bit longer. It was to be the Mayday distress call of high culture:

It is 58 years since Nathaniel Hawthorne, the greatest of American fictionists, passed away. To honor his memory the Queensboro Corporation has named its latest group of high-grade dwellings “Hawthorne Court.” I wish to thank those within sound of my voice for the broadcasting opportunity afforded me to urge this vast radio audience to seek the recreation and the daily comfort of the home removed from the congested part of the city, right at the boundaries of God’s great outdoors, and within a few miles by subway from the business section of Manhattan. This sort of residential environment strongly influenced Hawthorne, America’s greatest writer of fiction. He analyzed with charming keenness the social spirit of those who had thus happily selected their homes, and he painted the people inhabiting those homes with good-natured relish. . . . Let me enjoin upon you as you value your health and your hopes and your home happiness, get away from the solid masses of brick, where the meager opening admitting a slant of sunlight is mockingly called a light shaft, and where children grow up starved for a run over a patch of grass and the sight of a tree. Apartments in congested parts of the city have proved failures. The word “neighbor” is an expression of peculiar irony—a daily joke. . . . Let me close by urging that you hurry to the apartment home near the green fields and the neighborly atmosphere right on the subway without the expense and trouble of a commuter, where health and community happiness beckon—the community life and the friendly environment that Hawthorne advocated.

Three weeks later, the Queensboro

Corporation had sold all its property in Hawthorne Court (named for “America’s greatest writer of fiction,” who clearly had never been read by Mr. Blackwell) in Jackson Heights, Queens. The genie was out of the bottle.

Giving the public what it wants had its price. Like television today, the messenger was soon being blamed for the message. Commercial radio broadcasting was “dumbing down” American culture with its incessant repetition of mindless humor, maudlin sentimentality, exaggerated action, and frivolous entertainment. Proving yet again the power of Gresham’s Law when applied to culture, radio programming by the 1930s was selling out to the lowest common denominator. Typical of highcult outrage was James Rorty, erstwhile advertising copywriter turned snitch for such leftward-leaning periodicals as the *New Republic*:

American culture is like a skyscraper: The gargoyle’s mouth is a loudspeaker [the radio], powered by the vested interest of a two-billion dollar industry, and back of that the vested interests of business as a whole, of industry, of finance. It is never silent, it drowns out all other voices, and it suffers no rebuke, for is it not the voice of America? That is this claim and to some extent it is a just claim. . . . Is it any wonder that the American population tends increasingly to speak, think, feel in terms of this jabberwocky? That the stimuli of art, science, religion are progressively expelled to the periphery of American life to become marginal values, cultivated by marginal people on marginal time?

But wait! What about those universities? Weren’t they supposed to make sure the airwaves would be full of “the best that had been thought and said”? While there were more than 90 educational stations (of a total 732) in 1927, by the mid-1930s there were only a handful. What happened? Surely, the universities would never participate in any dumbing down. Alas, the universities had sold their radio licenses to the burgeoning networks—called “nets” or, better yet, “webs”—emanating from Manhattan. In one of the few attempts to



*A selection from Jenny Holzer's Survival Series (1986)
displayed in Times Square*

recapture cultural control from commercial exploitation, the National Education Association (NEA) lobbied Senators Robert Wagner of New York and Henry Hatfield of West Virginia to reshuffle the stations and restore a quarter of them to university hands. These stations would forever be advertisement-free, making “sweetness and light” available to all. The lobbying power of the NEA met the clout of Madison Avenue. No contest. The Wagner-Hatfield bill died aborning, defeated by a margin of almost two to one.

One of the reasons the Wagner-Hatfield bill floundered so quickly was the emergence of a new cultural phenomenon, the countrywide hit show. Never before had an entertainment been developed that an entire nation—by 1937 more than three-quarters of American homes had at least one radio—could experience at the same time. “Amos ‘n’ Andy” at NBC had shown what a hit show could do. NBC thought a “hit” was the way to sell its RCA receivers, and the network was partially right—more than 100,000 sets were sold just so people could hear the minstrel antics of “The Mystic Knights of the Sea.” But CBS knew better. Hits could make millions of dollars in advertising revenue. Although they were not yet called “blockbusters” (that would come with the high-explosive bombs of World War II), the effect of hits was already acknowledged as concussive. One could support hundreds of programming failures.

In truth, CBS or not, television never had a chance to be anything other than the

consummate selling machine. It took 25 years for radio to evolve out of wireless; it took much less time for television to emerge. And while it took a decade and an economic depression for advertisers to dominate the radio spectrum, it took only a few years and economic expansion for them to do the same with television. Advertisers had rested during the war. They had no product to sell. No surplus = no advertising.

Even though radio not only survived but prospered during the war, the new kid on the block was too tough to beat. From the first narrow broadcast, television was going commercial. The prophetic Philo T. Farnsworth presented a dollar sign for 60 seconds in the first public demonstration of his television system in 1927. Once Hazel Bishop became a million-dollar company in the early 1950s based on television advertising, the direction of the medium was set. It would follow radio. Certain systemic changes in both broadcast media did occur, the most important being the networks’ recapture of programming from the agencies. Although this shift away from agency control took scandals to accomplish (notably, the scandals involving quiz shows rigged under pressure from ad agencies), it would have happened anyway. Simple economics made it cheaper to sell time by the ounce than by the pound. The “nets” could make more by selling minutes than by selling half- or full hours. Magazines maximized ad revenues by selling space by the partial page; why not television? The motto of this new medium became, “Programs are the scheduled interruptions of marketing bulletins.” How could it be otherwise?

We need not be reminded of what is currently happening to television to realize the direction of the future. MTV, the infomercial, and the home-shopping channels are not flukes but the predictable continuation of

this medium. Thanks to the remote-control wand and the coaxial (soon to be fiber-optic) cable, commercials will disappear. They will become the programming. Remember, the first rule of Adcult is this: given the choice between paying money or paying attention, we prefer to pay attention.

What all this means is that if you think things are bad now, just wait. There are few gatekeepers left. Most of them reside on Madison Avenue. Just as the carnival barker doesn't care what is behind the tent flap, only how long the line is in front, the poobahs of Adcult care only about who's looking, not what they are looking at. The best-seller lists, the box office, the Niensens, the various circulation figures for newspapers and magazines, are the meters. They decide what gets through. Little wonder that so much of our popular culture is derivative of itself, that prequels and sequels and spin-offs are the order of the day, that celebrity is central, and that innovation is the cross to the vampire. Adcult is recombinant culture. This is how it has to be if advertisers are to be able to direct their spiels at the appropriate audiences for their products. It's simply too expensive to be any other way.

Will Adcult continue? Will there be some new culture to "afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted"? Will advertising, in its own terms, lose *it*? Who knows? Certainly, signs of stress are showing. Here are a few: (1) The kids are passing through "prime-branding time" like a rabbit in the python, and as they get older things may settle down. The supposedly ad-proof Generation X may be impossible to reach and advertisers will turn to older audiences by

default. (2) The media are so clogged and cluttered that companies may move to other promotional highways, such as direct mail, point-of-purchase displays, and couponing, leaving the traditional avenues targeted at us older folks. (3) Branding, the heart of advertising, may become problematic if generics or store brands become as popular in this country as they have in Europe. After all, the much-vaunted brand extension whereby Coke becomes Diet Coke which becomes Diet Cherry Coke does not always work, as Kodak Floppy Disks, Milky Way Ice Cream, Arm & Hammer antiperspirant, Life Saver Gum, and even EuroDisney have all shown. And (4)—the unthinkable—mass consumption may become too expensive. Advertising can flourish only in times of surplus, and no one can guarantee that our society will always have more than it needs.

But by no means am I predicting Adcult's imminent demise. As long as goods are interchangeable and in surplus quantities, as long as producers are willing to pay for short-term advantages (especially for new products), and as long as consumers have plenty of disposable time and money so that they can consume both the ad and the product, Adcult will remain the dominant meaning-making system of modern life. I don't think you can roll this tape backwards. Adcult is the application of capitalism to culture: dollars voting. And so I say to my melancholy friends who bemoan the passing of a culture once concerned with the arts and the humanities that the only way they can change this situation is if they buy more Fast-Moving Consumer Goods, change brands capriciously, and cut the kids' allowances. Good luck.

Rebecca West And the God That Failed

The recent rediscovery of Rebecca West's masterful study of Yugoslavia, Black Lamb and Grey Falcon (1941), has brought deserved recognition to one of the more remarkable minds of this century. As her biographer here shows, West's early stand against communism made her an isolated voice of conscience on the British Left.

by Carl Rollyson

In *The God That Failed*, published in 1950, Arthur Koestler and five other writers told how they came to join or fall within the orbit of the Communist Party. All had once experienced a sense of outrage at injustice and a need to identify with a cause and an ideology that they believed represented the wave of the future, a god to whom they could tender their absolute devotion.

At this late date—after many memoirs like those in *The God That Failed*—there is little need to rehearse why these and other writers became disillusioned with communism. We have a literature of debates about John Dos Passos's shift from left to right, the testimony of those who recanted their communism before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and more recently, Susan Sontag's apostasy in 1982, accompanied by her coinage of the expression that communism is fascism with a human face. If Francis Fukuyama's announcement of the end of history means anything, it is that the god not only failed but died. The future that communism supposedly foreshadowed, and the interpretation of history it offered, have lost all credibility, despite revenant rumblings in some of

the old communist haunts.

In memoirs such as *The God That Failed*, we have been schooled to believe in a paradigm—call it the Arthur Koestler paradigm—of the intellectual true believer whose disenchantment with the communist utopia leads to an apocalyptic vision of darkness at noon. The trouble with the paradigm is that it concedes that at some point, however briefly, communism was a seductive ideal. We expect the 20th-century intellectual, except for the staunchly conservative thinker, to be enticed—even corrupted—before he or she recovers.

But what of Rebecca West? She occupies a position that is highly unusual, if not unique. She had the honor, and also the misfortune, to declare communism a dud as early as 1918—even before Lenin had consolidated his power. She was only 25 years old, the author of *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), a classic of World War I fiction, and of *Henry James* (1916), an incisive and witty study that helped to place that author in the canon. George Bernard Shaw observed that his British colleague handled a “pen as brilliantly as ever I could and much more savagely.” As early as 1912, she had been taken under the wing of H. G.

Wells, Ford Madox Ford, and the Fabian socialists. A militant feminist, she had rocked the Edwardian world with her savage and witty essays in the *Freewoman*, a radical weekly of which Wells quipped that it existed “chiefly to mention everything a young lady should never dream of mentioning.” Indeed, the young author’s pseudonym, taken from the heroine in Ibsen’s play, *Rosmersholm*, embodied the cause of political protest and seemed a desirable alternative to Cicily Fairfield, her real—and impossibly genteel—name.

If West displayed a precocious independence of mind, it was largely because

once said, when she did not have a “rough idea of what is meant by capitalism, socialism, individualism, anarchism, liberalism, and conservatism.” Her Scottish mother, Isabella, an accomplished pianist with an acerbic wit, often took her to public lectures, and both of her two older sisters became involved in the Fabian movement.

West learned very early how to take the measure of people and their ideas. Her conservative father, an Anglo-Irish journalist named Charles Fairfield, brought home intellectuals, artists, and politicians, including several Russians. She saw then that Marxism was just another “rainbow,” as she said later. “*Das Kapital* is a dreary book, except for that chapter of wild praise for the achievements of the bourgeoisie.” Her father had been tutored by the Reolus brothers, anarchists who had been thrown out of France. Among her family’s friends were many Russian refugees and revolutionaries who came to argue with Charles Fairfield and to be shrewdly observed by his precocious daughter. She knew at eight what socialists such as the Webbs never figured out: that it would not do to patronize the Bolsheviks. She knew they were much more cultivated, more on the spot, and far more dangerous and sophisticated than the Webbs could see. That realization “rather cut me off from the left-wing movement of my time,” West dryly remarked.

But West’s views did not turn her into a young fogy of the Right.

She flayed the conservative opposition throughout the second and third decades of the century, irreverently suggesting, for example, that Prime Minister Herbert Asquith would make an excellent butler. Her first published article trumpeted her defiance of the status quo in blunt language rarely employed by male writers, let alone by a woman not quite 19 years of age: “There are two kinds of imperialists—



Rebecca West in 1921

the world of ideas was a part of her life from her earliest years. She was born in London in 1892 but educated at George Watson’s School in Edinburgh. At 16, a bout of tuberculosis ended her schooling, yet she never really regretted her lack of a university degree, possibly because she received a first-rate education at home. She could never remember a time, she

imperialists and bloody imperialists.”

Yet never for a moment did West consider the 1917 revolution in Russia the harbinger of hope. To this day, significant elements of the Left have never forgiven her for being correct. Her position cost her friends and earned her enmity. It was damned indecent of her not to have had at least some initial enthusiasm for the great experiment.

But this is to get ahead of her story, one that is not widely known or understood. The common impression of her is that after starting out well as a flaming feminist and socialist—and in 1914 bearing a son, Anthony West, out of wedlock with H. G. Wells—West let down her side: she turned conservative, married a rich man in 1930, retired to a country estate, and by the time of her death in 1983 was a supporter of Margaret Thatcher. In other words, West is consigned to the left-to-right slot.

In fact, Rebecca West never deserted the Left; it was the Left that repudiated her. In late 1917, as reports filtered into England about the Bolshevik seizure of power, West wrote disdainfully of the revolutionary movement’s “orgiastic loquacity.” A year earlier, she had denounced the trade unions for seeing things only in terms of the class struggle and ignoring the German invasion of Belgium and the Kaiser’s threat to England. She believed in national purposes and traditions—not in supranational ideologies that led, as she later argued in *The Meaning of Treason* (1948), to the betrayal of rational, democratic values.

One of her finest moments of intellectual integrity came in 1924, when the anarchist Emma Goldman visited England. West admired Goldman’s campaigns in the United States for freedom of speech, and now Goldman sought to awaken the British Left to Soviet atrocities. West lined up speaking engagements for her, and made sure that she met Bertrand Russell,

H. G. Wells, and many prominent socialists. The Left at first feted Goldman but then quarantined her when she made it clear that the Soviet system could not be ameliorated. It was not just a matter of protesting this or that failing of communism, it was time to junk it, Goldman argued. But that is what the Conservative Party recommended! gasped the Left.

West responded with a preface to Goldman’s *My Disillusionment with Russia* (1923), observing that to “reject a conclusion simply because it is held by the Conservative Party is to be snobbish as the suburban mistress who gives up wearing a hat or dress because her servant has one like it.” To pretend that the Soviet Union was a “conscientious experiment in communism” was sentimental rubbish, West declared, and socialists who shut their eyes to its evils degraded the socialist movement, which would rot from within, she predicted, if it did not oppose a government that deprived its citizens of the “elementary rights of free speech and assembly.” Neither Goldman nor West advocated intervention in Soviet affairs: “We must let each people seek God in its own way,” West proposed. Her concern was that in propping up the Soviet Union as a positive model, socialists would lose their credibility, their ability to reckon with “real facts,” and become “tedious liars about life.”

Isn’t this precisely what happened? Didn’t the Left discredit itself by willfully ignoring, or rationalizing, or denying Soviet oppression? It angered West that the British, who had developed their own tradition of socialism, should enslave themselves to the Soviet model.

West lacked the tactical and temperamental sense to acquire acolytes or to attach herself to movements such as Bloomsbury, and she was not afraid to turn her corrosive and uncompromising wit on friends as well as enemies. At *Time and Tide*, a British weekly to which West contributed for more than three decades, a colleague observed (anonymously): “It is

> CARL ROLLYSON is professor of English at Baruch College of the City University of New York, and the author, most recently, of *Rebecca West: A Life*, to be published by Scribner’s this fall. He has also written biographies of Marilyn Monroe, Lillian Hellman, Martha Gellhorn, Norman Mailer, and Pablo Picasso, and is currently working with Lisa Paddock on a biography of Susan Sontag. Copyright © 1996 by Carl Rollyson.

probable that if there is ever an English Revolution there will come a point when the Reds and Whites will sink their differences for 10 minutes while they guillotine Miss West for making remarks that both sides have found intolerably unhelpful.” Her editor at the *Evening Standard* remarked that people saw her as a “caustic, bitter, twisted woman with a tongue like broken glass, fierce, mocking, inhuman.”

Although West wanted a home on the Left, she was never willing to play by the house rules. She thought Stalinism a greater threat than McCarthyism, and when she said so in 1953, her series of articles in *U.S. News & World Report* was subjected to a firestorm of criticism from liberals. If West did not fiercely attack Joseph McCarthy, she was regarded as pro-McCarthy and conservative. But to the hysterical claims about the danger of McCarthyism (she conceded McCarthy did abuse the system), she replied that focusing on him merely diverted attention from the menace of the communist conspiracy. He was not murdering people; the communists were. And in Europe the myth of McCarthyism was used as an anti-American weapon to suggest that America now had a dictator, the puffed-up senator from Wisconsin.

Not surprisingly, West’s main criticism of McCarthy was ignored. She argued that the real danger in McCarthy was that his reckless attack on the federal bureaucracy weakened faith in government. She did not see how modern life could be governed without bureaucracies, and while she supported their reform, she distrusted politicians who seemed to run against government itself.

West wrote an admiring review of Whittaker Chambers’ *Witness* (1952), but unlike him she could not embrace the conservative cause. (Chambers, for his part, came up with perhaps the most trenchant description of her temperament: “Rebecca West is a Socialist by habit of mind, and a conservative by cell structure.”) She shied away from William F. Buckley, Jr.’s invitations to write for *National Review*,

although she was Buckley’s guest and often his sympathetic reader. Early on, she was one of Winston Churchill’s fiercest opponents, finding him to be a politician without principle, saying that his career proved that there were some souls for whom the devil did not care to pay a price. Yet she gloried in his prosecution of the war, saying he had brought back the age of the Elizabethans. Like the majority of British voters at the end of the war, she voted to remove him from office, believing he had served his usefulness. Yet even as she helped vote in a Labor government, she was highly critical of it in her private letters and conversations, just as she criticized big-government corruption in the New Deal but praised Roosevelt’s efforts to lead the nation.

What appealed to West was patriotism—not mindless loyalty, but a critical devotion to the national ideal. She once wrote that every nation should be chauvinistic in the sense that it should believe it has something unique to contribute to the world—but, she added, thank God the whole world was not England or, perish the thought, the Soviet Union! Not enough readers have been exposed to the biting humor and the wisdom of such remarks—too many of which are still buried in periodicals, having never appeared between hard covers.

West’s early and persistent criticism of communism cost her dearly. The South African novelist Doris Lessing, responding to my biography of West (published in the United Kingdom in the fall of 1995), wrote to me that she thought West had been

consistently and bravely critical of communism, at a time when this meant she was subject to the usual denigration and slanders. I remember it all too well. It wasn’t just a question of “the comrades” but a climate of opinion which extended far beyond the extreme left. Orwell was a target and so was Rebecca W. It must have been hard to stand up to it, particularly as she was sensitive and hated being considered negligible, yet she did, standing by her guns. And of course she was right, and her critics so very wrong.

That climate has not entirely changed. When I began work on my biography of West in 1990, I was puzzled at the paucity of good work on her. Other than Victoria Glendinning's excellent short biography,* there are reviews, a few introductory studies, a handful of perceptive articles, but no in-depth study of this major 20th-century writer. In academic circles, it has been quite all right to approve West's early socialist articles, collected under the title *The Young Rebecca* (1982), but her mature work has been ignored. There are many reasons for this neglect, and one of them surely is her politics.

West's hostile readers might want to dismiss her as a career anticommunist who at best has served her purpose and is only of historical interest. But in addition to her considerable legacy as a novelist, literary critic, and biographer, there is a political body of thought that deserves book-length treatment. Her masterwork, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941), is a monumental study of Yugoslavia as well as her definitive pronouncement on feminism, marriage, the history of Europe, and that of Western civilization. What is happening in the former Yugoslavia would not have surprised her, for she realized that although Tito had suppressed national and ethnic rivalries, he had not addressed them. Indeed, communism, with its bogus internationalism, attempted to deny people their heritage—not just the national political rights of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, but those of Macedonians, Albanians, Hungarians, Italians, and Slovenes.

For Rebecca West, history could not be understood in terms of ideology, of ideas that could be superimposed on tradition. Instead, she allied herself with writers such as Burke and Tocqueville, precisely those thinkers whose worth has

risen as Marxism has bankrupted itself. Both Burke and Tocqueville believed in the character of a people, that the French major in being French just as the Americans major in being American. There is no political god, only political legacies that people can extend and improve upon.

West emphasized the need for improvements in the legacies; this is why she regarded herself more as a liberal than as a conservative. But she shared common ground with conservatives in that she treasured conservation and was willing to support a government that was 30 percent right as opposed to one that was 15 percent so. (I cite her figures.) In other words, she could live with the terribly flawed aspects of the positions she supported, recognizing the truth, however small, in other positions, and not pretending she had found her god.

There remains a puzzle. How did West get it right so much sooner than others? Why did she never express even sympathy for the Soviets? For one thing, she did not confuse means and ends. She was not willing to overlook crimes in the Soviet regime because its ends (so people thought) were good. If the means were evil, the ends would be evil. To take away human rights and civil liberties was to take them away—they would not return on a better day.

West also believed in her own intellect and her assessment of human character. She could not brush off Emma Goldman the way Susan Sontag brushed off Czeslaw Milosz's *Captive Mind*: "When it came out in 1953, I bought the book—a passionate account of the dishonesty and coerciveness of communism, which troubled me but which I also regarded as an instrument of Cold War propaganda, giving aid and comfort to McCarthyism." As Rebecca West would say, this is the logic of the status-conscious suburban housewife.

But what gave West the wherewithal and courage to stand by herself? Here biography helps. Her father, though a brilliant archconservative, taught his

*Glendinning's *Rebecca West: A Life*, published in 1987 by Knopf, was supposed to be followed by a fuller biography, to be written (at West's request) by Stanley Olson. But Olson died before he had done much research or writing, and I decided to write the second biography after West's Yale University archive was opened in 1989.

child to have faith in her own arguments and insight. And in fact, she came to reject many of his own pet ideas, especially his antifeminism. Yet what she absorbed and retained from Charles Fairfield was an unflinching intellectual rectitude. He was a man who was not afraid to go it alone, as her fictional portrait of him in *The Fountain Overflows* (1956) shows.

But Fairfield left his daughter a darker legacy, one that taught her to yearn for and yet to beware of the god that failed. He had been a brilliant man but an aloof father, with an Anglo-Irish aristocratic bearing, a contempt for his wife's lowly Scottish relations, an insatiable appetite for other women, and a penchant for gambling away the rent money. West was only eight years old when he abandoned the family, going off to Africa in search of his fortune. He returned to die in Liverpool, virtually a pauper, when West was 13. She never saw him again after he left home. Though she never ceased longing for his return, she never stopped blaming him for the hardship his desertion had caused her, her mother, and her two older sisters, as her writing attests. Godlike male figures abound in West's fiction, where they take the form of characters such as the adulterous Edward Rowan, an Anglo-Irish politician who fails Laura Rowan and her mother in *The Birds Fall Down* (1966).

The mad King Lear, arbitrary but grand, demanding that his daughters love him even as he destroys the possibility that their love can be freely granted him, haunted West's imagination. His story was both a familial and a political metaphor—as she makes clear in her great study of politics and literature, *The Court and the Castle* (1957), a book the distinguished critic John Wain ranked beside T. S. Eliot's finest prose. West hated Cordelia for not rebelling against her father as West had rebelled against Charles Fairfield. Yet she could no more forsake

the idea of authority, traditionally invested in the male, than could Cordelia. Like Shakespeare, West was drawn to characters who had treason in the blood.

If *The Meaning of Treason* is West's most profound study of the god that failed, it is because it fuses her own biography with the main story of her book, an account of the traitor, William Joyce (1906–46), popularly known as Lord Haw-Haw. Joyce grew up in a home torn by religious differences (he had a Protestant father and a Catholic



William Joyce—the infamous Lord Haw-Haw—whose treason inspired some of West's best writing

mother) but devoted to the British Empire. William's father, Michael, had made himself most unpopular in his native Ireland because of his pro-Unionist politics, and William adopted his father's allegiance—to the point of enlisting in the British army before he was of age. There was something extraordinarily pure and touching about William's patriotism. During his brief army stint, his fellow recruits made sport of his earnestness by whistling "God

Save the Queen,” knowing that he would jump out of bed and stand to attention.

Yet William knew there was something in his family history that might cause others to doubt his allegiance to the British Empire. He had been born in Brooklyn, New York, and feared that the British authorities would consider him an American citizen, even though his father had brought the family back to Ireland (and destroyed evidence of his own U.S. citizenship) when William was still a boy. Ironically, William’s treason trial would hinge on the issue of his citizenship: did England have the right to try him once his American citizenship was established?

However complicated its sources and twisted its expression, Joyce’s devotion to Britain was passionate. And even though it led him to embrace fascism and street brawling, such patriotism was something with which West could identify. Like Joyce, moreover, she too was the product of mixed parentage, was precocious, and possessed a sharp tongue that often got her into fights.

West’s earliest memories of her father’s conservatism, of reading writers such as Kipling, of revering the Royal Family (memories that came flooding back to her when she met the queen during the war), equipped her to amplify Joyce’s biography. She presented him as a sincere soul, an excellent tutor of young children, who perverted his own desire for distinction into an identification with totalitarianism, when England did not recognize his abilities, when its own fascist leader, Oswald Mosley, failed to treat his deputy, William, with the respect that he had worked so hard to earn. In West’s telling, Joyce turned on England as if on a lover who had spurned him, leaving the country at the beginning of the war to serve Hitler as a means of seeking a way to return triumphantly to London.

Exactly how William Joyce transformed himself from British patriot to traitor, from a conservative to a fascist, can never be

fully explained. Yet West provided an entirely plausible account. With psychological brilliance, she extrapolated a narrative that equates the intensity of Joyce’s desire to be accepted by the British with the intensity of his fascism, a powerful new ideology that would restore an effete England to Joyce’s idealized and heroic version of it. Indeed, Joyce is depicted as Britain’s insidious alter ego, invading British homes with an intimate, cocksure radio voice.

For West, family life determines the individual, and in her evocation of Joyce’s background she remarks that he was being “strangled by the sheer tortuousness of his family destiny.” Like West, Joyce was the “apple of his family’s eye,” and, like her, he reacted to his family’s confidence in his exceptional abilities with an extraordinary rebelliousness, as if his own genius were paradoxically inhibited by the family’s claim on him. Joyce invested fascism with an international character, West argues, so that fascism sanctioned his betrayal of family and country in a way that other British fascists, such as Mosley, could not abide.

Those passages in which Joyce’s character melds with West’s become apparent when she shifts to suppositions. She has him embarking for Germany: “One day his little feet twinkled up the area of his basement flat near Earl’s Court. His eyes must have been dancing.” Such passages are bereft of evidence but full of her utter identification with her subject, her ability to show what joy it must have been to Joyce to turn traitor.

Rebecca calls William Joyce “the revolutionary,” a term she uses to define one who both hates order and loves it, who will destroy so that he might create a superior order. It is here that West took her stand in the postwar world against revolution, reaffirming what she had said 20 years earlier about the Russian Revolution—that it was bound to restore the tyranny of tsardom. One cannot murder society in order to save it. The transformation of Joyce into the quintessential Rebecca West character is achieved in a single

sentence: “He was not going to be king.” Every dynamic character in her fiction and nonfiction sooner or later is measured in terms of royalty. Joyce’s kingly attributes suggest to West that he is a symbol of humanity, that he has it in him to want simultaneously to live and to die. Like one of Shakespeare’s heroes, he achieves tragedy in his struggle. His example marks an “end to mediocrity.”

It is an empathetic portrait, yet West affirms the court’s decision that William Joyce must hang. All of her later writing is an effort to reconcile herself to authority and to study how badly things go wrong when those such as Joyce will not submit to be governed. Even though he was not a British subject, she thought it right that he should be tried as a traitor. She carefully threaded her way through the legal arguments, affirming the rightness of the principle that allegiance draws protection and protection draws allegiance. William Joyce, in other words, conducted himself as a British subject, traveled abroad on a British passport, had a claim to be protected by British laws and the British government—and by the same token was liable to be tried by them.

The very lengths to which West goes to justify this conclusion, however, sug-

gest that it was a near thing in her own mind, that her own sympathies and the court’s judgment could have gone the other way. A part of her clearly believed that the individual has a right to throw off allegiance, a matter the lawyers debated for days during Joyce’s trial. West concedes at the end of *The Meaning of Treason* that there is a case for the traitor and that all men should have a drop of treason in their blood. Otherwise, how can the status quo be challenged, how can a nation avoid the fatal complacency that can lead to its demise? Thus West presents herself as a hanging judge, with qualms. No more than Joyce did she ever see herself as acceptable, an Establishment figure.

But if her sense of herself as an outsider was as strong as Joyce’s, she always resisted the easy solution. She never had to visit Russia to be disillusioned. She never went through a conversion experience with communism. It never represented the rainbow or an eschatological hope. Her father brought history home to her when she was just a little girl. She had revolutionaries in her home for dinner. At table, she heard their arguments and saw them for the word-spinning zealots they were, and she knew for the rest of her life that there are visions of better worlds that are not worth the price.

CURRENT BOOKS

The Gremlin in the Machine

WHY THINGS BITE BACK:

Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences.

By Edward Tenner. Knopf. 352 pp. \$26

by Jackson Lears

Technophilia is back. In truth, the return began in the early 1980s, after a decade of doubts and criticism sometimes bordering on technophobia. At about the same time that President Ronald Reagan declared that it was “morning in America,” Tracy Kidder discovered *The Soul of a New Machine* and the Tofflers paddled out to meet *The Third Wave*. To be sure, the icons of the new technophiles are not the factories, automobiles, and airships of the messy “second wave”; rather, they are the personal computers, monitors, and modems of the Information Age.

Yet for all the new trappings, the technophilia of the late 20th century remains tied to the 19th-century assumption that technological progress is inevitable, linear, and benign. Like “the economy” or “the market,” the “information highway” is now thought of as an autonomous force that drives change regardless of human preferences or social policies. “Ever kiss your baby good-night . . . from the airport? Ever go to a sales meeting . . . in your bare feet?” asks AT&T. “YOU WILL!” (presumably whether you want to or not).

Not surprisingly, such an oversimplified view provokes a mirror-image response: apocalyptic jeremiads lamenting irreversible decline. Dreams of beneficent control on one side, nightmares of chaos on the other. The journalistic understanding of technological issues has become a melodramatic face-off between Dr. Pangloss and Cassandra.

Edward Tenner will have none of this. A former science editor at Princeton University Press, he has produced an illuminating meditation on technological change. *Why Things Bite Back* is a bracing critique of technological determinism in

both its utopian and dystopian forms. Spurning the notion that technology constitutes an irresistible demiurge in human affairs, Tenner also debunks the managerial faith in predictability and control. He knows about everything from 19th-century railroad accidents to zebra mussels and graphic interfaces. He has a sharp eye for the telling detail and an uncommon ability to combine scientific with historical insight. No one who wants to think clearly about our high-tech future can afford to ignore this book.

Tenner’s master idea is that technological developments often (indeed, nearly always) have “revenge effects”: unforeseen consequences that create new problems or undo existing solutions to old problems. Tenner first developed this insight eight years ago in a prescient essay, “The Paradoxical Proliferation of Paper,” in which he pointed out the obvious but unacknowledged fact that the computerized office was spewing forth far more printed documents than its low-tech and supposedly paper-cluttered predecessor.

Looking around, Tenner found mounting evidence that “revenge effects” have steadily increased over the last 100 years, as technical innovations have become part of “tightly coupled systems.” Disasters are more easily averted and risks minimized in “loosely coupled systems”—a crowded beach, for example, can be cleared by lifeguards when a thunderstorm approaches. But as Tenner explains, when the same number of people are packed into a stadium surrounded by gates, turnstiles, and other control devices, the possibilities for catastrophe increase. “The fall of a single person can panic a crowd, part of which is then

crushed against some obstacle,” he writes.

Our manmade environment is full of such tightly coupled systems. Their components have multiple links that can interact unexpectedly, says Tenner, “as when an airline coffeemaker heats concealed wires and turns a routine short circuit into a forced landing and near crash.” It was the prevalence of such unexpected malfunctions that led the engineer Edward Murphy to conclude: “If there’s more than one way to do a job and one of those ways will end in disaster, then somebody will do it that way.” Murphy’s Law is not a fatalistic prediction of disaster; it is a call for alertness, anticipation, and adaptation. It is also a challenge to complacent technophiles.

One of Tenner’s major themes is the shift from tool use to tool management, which puts “human agency at greater and greater removes” from the task at hand. No one, least of all Tenner, would deny the benefits of distancing workers from hot, dirty, dangerous physical labor. But distance has its dangers. In the computerized office, it can trigger “the revenge of the body”; carpal tunnel syndrome and other cumulative trauma disorders challenge “the vulgar Platonism of computer studies that assumes a frictionless and disembodied world of information processing.”

Tenner identifies the same problem in medicine, where the reduction of direct physical involvement can lead to an over-reliance on tests rather than old-fashioned hands-on diagnosis. For example, a student at Stanford University endured four weeks of horrific tests before the hospital finally acknowledged that his stomach pains were the result of a ruptured retrocecal appendix. Tenner reports that “a retired physician and family friend had recognized the symptoms at once, but the young doctors trusted tests above tradition-

al judgment.” About so-called automated treatment, Tenner warns that it “requires greater attention on the part of physicians, surgeons, nurses, and technicians, and increasingly of computer programmers and software developers.” Unmonitored software can fail to signal dangerous conditions, send false alarms, deliver too much or too little medication, even administer fatal doses of radiation. In medicine, as elsewhere in our high-tech society, we see a departure from what anthropologists call “local knowledge” (wisdom patiently accumulated over years of experience) and a movement toward an intense, narrow focus on technical solutions to specific problems.

Rising expectations of a smoothly ordered existence are rooted in the managerial “illusion of control,” which Tenner exposes most clearly in his discussion of the computerized office. “What-if” software allows managers to simulate the consequences of various decisions. But growing evidence suggests that such model building does not improve decision making at all. Instead, the what-if

software feeds the fantasy that “we are making things happen when in reality they are chance events.” In business, situations constantly arise “in which what-if questions are of limited value, in which politics, distribution, the evolution of standards, and sheer bluff matter as much as technical excellence.”

Tenner’s universe, like William James’s, is pluralistic and contingent. At the same time, everything is interrelated. In the field of public health, “we are awakening from the 19th-century dream of specificity.” How can we go on fighting pitched battles against specific diseases when before our eyes bacteria are mutating into new, vaccine-resistant strains? “The boundaries between species and organisms are not as well defined as our ancestors believed,” writes Tenner. “In only 50 years we have



gone from the offense to the defense.”

As a history of Murphy's Law in operation, Tenner's book reminds us that Nature has a way of undermining human schemes regardless of intent. When the owners of smelters and power plants built tall stacks to meet strict emission-control standards in the 1970s, the effect was to create acid rain hundreds of miles away. The suppression of natural fires by the Forest Service provoked "Smokey's Revenge": the growth of a "doghair thicket of young pines, white fir, incense cedar, and mature brush," which kindled a new type of forest fire that spread faster and burned hotter than previous conflagrations. During the Depression, the Department of Agriculture encouraged the planting of the east Asian kudzu vine all over the South in an effort to regenerate leached-out soil. Ever since, the kudzu has been pulling down telephone poles, obliterating traffic signs, and overwhelming stationary objects—including (if you believe folk wisdom) passed-out drunks. The best scientific minds have not been able to forecast the latent consequences of altering natural systems. In Tenner's apt phrase, undoing the effects of such tinkering can be "as impossible as unscrambling an egg."

Tenner does not counsel despair. He points out that "the real perils are not those we fear," while also noting that "the real benefits are usually not the ones we expected." He has faith in the "long term reverse revenge effects" of disaster, and he believes that "we have learned the limits of intensiveness." On a hopeful note, he suggests that "by replacing brute force with finesse, concentration with variety, and heavy traditional materials with lighter ones, we are already starting to overcome the thinking and habits that lead to many revenge effects."

The "we" in this sentence is, of course, the industrialized West. But what about the rest of the world? Tenner aptly observes that "what appears to be a technological question—how much of anything we really need—is in the end a social one." But when it comes to the social (and political and economic) questions, Tenner's thought can be surprisingly unfocused. Despite his deep distrust of

technological determinism, he sometimes allows human beings to disappear from view. Writing of the desolation of resource-rich regions such as the Pennsylvania anthracite country, he admits that "absentee ownership" may have played a role. But the real source of the impoverishment, he says, was the resources themselves: "It was wealth that became an enemy of a vital diversity." Obviously, this leaves out the question of whether different human agents with different priorities—say, local entrepreneurs instead of outside investment capital—might have structured the regional economy in a less exploitative way.

The point is not to demonize the coal industry but to suggest that Tenner's analysis might have benefited from a larger conceptual framework. As part of recent corporate downsizing strategies, computers have been helping to create technological unemployment or underemployment for thousands of white-collar workers. This is not a revenge effect, as Tenner defines it. The computers may well be doing just what they were meant to do: cutting costs and increasing productivity. (For Tenner, a revenge effect would occur if the remaining employees were too few or too dispirited to perform productively, as often is the case.) Yet there is no question that the disappearance of job security can be seen, metaphorically at least, as a revenge effect resulting from a complex interaction of technology with concentrated power and dominant values. Likewise the deterioration of civil society, the loss of social tranquillity, and the decline of biological and cultural diversity.

Still, to sharpen the critique might be to weaken the case. In today's intellectual climate, critics must be exceptionally careful about challenging the bromides of technophiles, who, as Tenner observes, are "always ready to dismiss revenge effects as 'transitional.'" Only a handful of nuts (militiamen and unbombers, it is tacitly assumed) deny the beneficence of our corporate technostucture. Tenner's genteel language of "tastes and preferences" is probably more effective than rhetoric (however justi-

fied) about power and domination. And his skeptical, humane perspective makes it plain where his own values lie. "The open question," he writes, "raised during the upheavals of the 1970s and then forgotten during the boom of the 1980s, is whether cultural change can lead to new preferences that will in turn relieve

humanity's pressure on the earth's resources." Thanks to Tenner, that question has just opened a little wider.

> JACKSON LEARS teaches history at Rutgers University and is the author most recently of *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (1994).

Ragged Individualism

DEMOCRACY'S DISCONTENT:

America in Search of a Public Philosophy.

By Michael J. Sandel. Belknap of Harvard Univ. Press. 417 pp. \$24.95

by Samuel H. Beer

Out of step with many of his colleagues in the political science trade, Michael Sandel takes ideas and ideals seriously. "For all we may resist such ultimate questions as the meaning of justice and the nature of the good life," he writes in the preface to this penetrating new book, "what we cannot escape is that we live some answer to these questions—we live some *theory*—all the time."

For Sandel, a professor of government at Harvard University, every public philosophy is derived from some theory of ethics. In contemporary America, where dissatisfaction with politics is at an all-time high, the theory of ethics shaping our political behavior is radical individualism. Its premise is that each person is "a free and independent self capable of choosing his own values and ends." This is not the cynical view of man as a self-centered egoist. The individualist Sandel attacks is a worthier and more formidable figure: that often idealized American, the self-made man. Instructed by Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack* and Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance," this individual strives to realize his own freely chosen conception of the good life, constrained only by the right of others to do the same. He is autonomous: in Sandel's vivid phrase, "an unencumbered self."

Derived from this radical individualism

is the public philosophy that Sandel calls "the procedural republic." According to this conception, the role of government should be limited to enforcing the procedures by which citizens may exercise their freedom of choice while in no way taking a position on what they should choose.

Of course, the more familiar term for this is "liberalism," a term that is both fitting and confusing. It is appropriate because liberalism does indeed aim at facilitating individual freedom of choice. But it is also confusing because in modern times liberalism has subdivided into two quite distinct tendencies. One takes the view that the main task of government is to prevent citizens from interfering with one another's freedom. (In America this libertarian emphasis is often called "conservatism.") The other tendency proposes that government must intervene whenever external circumstances (such as poverty) constrain individual freedom. This notion of positive government is often what Americans mean by "liberalism."

According to historians such as Louis Hartz, individualistic liberalism has long been the public philosophy of every major contender in the American political debate. Indeed, it is seen as the essence of that American exceptionalism which sets Americans apart from Europeans.

Contradicting this claim, other histori-

ans—notably Gordon Wood—find in American political thought since the founding a powerful communitarian current which they call “republicanism.” Its premise is that the values of the individual are taken from, and realized in, a community. Sandel shares this view, and emphasizes that the community it describes is not just any community but a self-governing body of citizens “deliberating . . . about the common good” and then being morally bound by the “way of life” that emerges.

Where Sandel breaks new ground is in his claim that republicanism was in fact dominant throughout most of America’s history, and that only recently has it been superseded by individualistic liberalism. In his view, the change occurred in the 1960s, when President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society made its central concern the extension of individual rights rather than the promotion of community. And in that shift Sandel finds the source of our present discontent—a discontent with liberalism itself. Liberalism, he writes, cannot “deliver the liberties it promises because it cannot inspire the moral and civic engagement which self-government requires.”

It is easy to go along with Sandel’s view that individualistic liberalism cannot suffice as the moral foundation of modern American democracy, even though it will always be a powerful force in American political life. It is harder, however, to accept Sandel’s explanation of how we got into this slough of individualistic excess, and what we should do to get out.

Consider Sandel’s interpretation of the Great Society. Stressing the degree to which its reforms were carried out under the banner of individual rights, he neglects to consider that they also embodied such eminently republican values as participation, decentralization, and community.

Of participation, the most important example was the increase in the number of voters who, in accordance with reforms of party structure, began to take part in the nomination of the major parties’ presidential candidates. In both parties, the choice shifted from the closed arena of national conventions to the wide-open process of primaries and caucuses.

The Great Society also had decentralization built into it. Unlike the programs of the New Deal, those of the Great Society were administered not directly by the federal government but, with few exceptions, indirectly by grants-in-aid to state and local governments.

With regard to community, I am puzzled, indeed astonished, that Sandel makes only glancing references to the issue of race. Rightly, he praises the civil rights movement as “the finest expression of republican politics in our time.” Yet by depicting the movement as a phenomenon confined to the black churches of the South, he overlooks its deeply biracial, bipartisan, multid denominational, and nationwide character. If this had not been the case—if NAACP attorney Jack Greenberg had not fought alongside Chief Counsel Thurgood Marshall, Rockefeller Republicans alongside Humphrey Democrats, and white freedom riders alongside black freedom riders—the movement would never have triumphed. And in harmony with its broad social composition, the movement was not limited, as Sandel suggests, to winning equal civil and political rights for black Americans. Conceivably, that objective could have been achieved under conditions of racial separation—that is, under a wholly honest and ideal regime of separate but equal. But this possibility was rejected. The goal was integration, as Walter White argued successfully against W. E. B. DuBois in the 1930s, and as Martin Luther King, Jr., reasserted in the 1960s.

The same rationale informs affirmative action—which, however we may debate its effectiveness, is indubitably a case of “the political economy of citizenship” by which (according to Sandel) republicanism justifies government intervention in the economy for the sake of noneconomic “civic consequences.” The overriding goal is social equality between the races. To forbid and penalize racial discrimination is surely to “legislate morality,” an operation which Sandel insists is beyond the reach of the procedural republic.

In such actions, the law has clearly taken a stand on the substance of the good

life. While many Americans may feel disappointed by the results, remarkable progress in race relations has been made since the beginning of the civil rights era. Affirmative action has not done much for the poor, but it has greatly helped to expand and integrate the black middle class. Obviously, much remains to be done. But if the effort to achieve racial integration is to be judged a failure, then it is a failure not only of liberalism but of republicanism in our day and nation.

On this crucial point, regrettably, Sandel is evasive. For him, the public philosophy of republicanism was already moribund when the Great Society was launched. Looking back at the New Nationalism of Teddy Roosevelt, which “unfolded from the Progressive era to the New Deal and the Great Society,” he concludes that it “failed to cultivate a shared national identity.” Without the moral cohesion that goes with such a shared national identity, Sandel fears that even the worthiest goals (he has expressed approval of programs such as affirmative action) are doomed. “The American welfare state,” he writes, “is vulnerable because it does not rest on a sense of national community adequate to its purpose.”

Does Sandel have a solution? Yes, and it is one that has great resonance these days. Since the “sense of a national community” has failed, he finds “a more promising basis for a democratic politics” in “a revitalized civic life nour-

ished in the more particular communities we inhabit.” Small local communities, whether governments or private associations, can indeed serve as wellsprings of reform and civic virtue. They cannot, however, cope with the forces of a complex and interdependent modern economy unless they act within a national framework of policy and power. As revealed by the few, thin examples in his concluding pages, Sandel’s localistic hope is virtually a counsel of despair.

Under British rule, the American Founders learned to be wary of concentrated power. But under the Articles of Confederation, they saw what happened when power was too widely dispersed. In response, they drew up a constitution that would unite the American people in what George Washington in his Farewell Address termed “an indissoluble community of interest *as one nation*.” Republicanism in this *national* mode inspired the leading minds among the Founders, and it has continued to be the dominant theme in our political culture to this day. Individualistic liberalism is no substitute, as Sandel so persuasively demonstrates. But far less persuasive is his faint hope that the small community will somehow rescue us. There is no cure for our present discontent without a renewal of republican purpose on the national scale.

> SAMUEL H. BEER is the Eaton Professor of the Science of Government, emeritus, at Harvard University.

Can Nigeria Be One?

*THE OPEN SORE OF A CONTINENT:
A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis.*

By Wole Soyinka. Oxford University Press. 176 pp. \$19.95

by Makau wa Mutua

When Wole Soyinka all but pronounces the death of his native Nigeria, the world should listen. Not only is Soyinka Africa’s best-known writer; Nigeria is in many ways the epitome of the modern African state—rich in people

and resources, yet devastated by political misrule and ethnic divisiveness.

Born in 1934 and educated in Nigeria and England, Soyinka became in 1986 the first African to win the Nobel Prize in literature. He is best known for such plays as

The Lion and the Jewel (1959) and *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1961), which combine elements of Yoruba ritual with Western stagecraft. His fictionalized portraits of Nigerian society in transition are both tragic and satirical, with many of his barbs aimed at the villainies of despots. But this nonfictional narrative of political repression in contemporary Nigeria is his most anguished polemic to date. To be sure, Soyinka hopes that Nigeria can be saved from the predations of the present military dictator, General Sani Abacha. But he is at best ambivalent about his country's future. Without saying so, he seems to conclude that Nigeria is doomed.

Soyinka's despair is understandable. Nigeria's political history since independence from Britain in 1960 has been for the most part a nightmarish succession of corrupt and brutal tyrants propped up by the international oil industry. But the real problem, persisting from colonial times to the present, is Nigeria's fragmented ethnic composition. The British attempted to deal with this problem on the eve of their departure. As a condition of independence, they made the three dominant ethnic groups accept a complex power-sharing federal system. Those groups were the Yoruba in the west (20 percent of the total population), the Igbo in the south (17 percent), and the Hausa and Fulani in the north (21 and 9 percent, respectively).

Reasonable as it might have seemed, the design proved flawed. Compared with the oil-rich south and the industrialized west, the predominantly Muslim north is an economic wasteland. Yet the north controls the military and is the most populous region; by 1966, its refusal to share power prompted an Igbo coup, followed by a massacre of Igbos living in the north. The result was the break-away state of Biafra—reincorporated into Nigeria in 1970 after a four-year civil war that left more than 250,000 civilians dead. Since then, a close-knit syndicate of northern military leaders has jealously held power. It is almost impossible to conceive of any circumstances under which this clique would cede control to civilians from the south or west or, for that matter, to any democratically elected leaders.

Yet rather than rest blame on the flawed federal design, Soyinka argues that the artificiality of Nigeria, and of other modern African states, is no greater than that created in the formation of many nations outside Africa. He suggests that the African nations are passing through a kind of purgatory, waiting to attain the "status of irreversibility—either as paradise or hell." To Soyinka, Nigeria's birthday should have been June 12, 1993, the day when the will of the people, freely expressed through the secret ballot, should have sent the military back to the barracks and ushered in democracy.

Instead, the 1993 election saw the culmination and, finally, the frustration of a devious strategy engineered by General I. B. Babangida, the military ruler since 1985. Through "physical and moneyed thuggery," Babangida made sure that only two parties, and two presidential candidates, would be able to compete for power. At the same time, many suspected that only one outcome would be tolerated by the military: victory by the candidate from the north, Bashir Tofa. Soyinka calls Tofa "a straw figure specifically set up by the perpetuation machinery of I. B. Babangida."

As it turned out, most of Nigeria, including the north, voted for the Yoruba businessman Moshood Abiola. In response, Babangida and a coterie of officers led by fellow northerner Sani Abacha annulled the election, plunging the country into chaos. Abacha then forced Babangida to step down, setting up an interim government that he himself overthrew a few months later. Having declared himself supreme ruler, Abacha has since ruled by ruthlessly suppressing any opponents, real or imagined.

This tale of tin despots with huge egos is enlivened by Soyinka's seductive style. Describing Abacha's phony "transition" program, he writes, "It is a fair assessment of the IQ of Abacha that he actually imagines that this transparent ploy for self-perpetuation would fool the market woman, the roadside mechanic, the student, factory worker, or religious leader of whatever persuasion. Even the village idiot must marvel at such banal attempts to rival a disgraced predecessor."

As persuasive as Soyinka is, however, one might question the faith he invests in the 1993 election. According to one expert observer, Omo Omoruyi, a respected political scientist who was forced to flee for his life after the annulment of the election, the “democratization” process was compromised every step of the way by excessive state interference. Why, then, is the election so important in Soyinka’s eyes?

The answer, I believe, lies in the ethnicity of the winning candidate. Abiola’s presidential ambitions go back at least two decades; after being thwarted once in 1983, he used his enormous wealth to bribe his way back into power. Like a West African Ross Perot, he financed his own party in order to secure a place at the top of its ticket. But Soyinka barely touches upon Abiola’s corrupt practices, treating him throughout as a hero. The only explanation is that Abiola, like Soyinka, is a Yoruba.

And therein lies one of the weaknesses of this book. Soyinka is a distinguished champion of democracy. His many writings expose and attack despotic rule, and his activism has forced him into exile, where he has formed an opposition movement called the United Democratic Front of Nigeria. Yet in the passion of his protest, Soyinka reveals his own ethnic bias. His lionizing of a fellow Yoruba, and his belittling of northerners in general (as opposed to the leaders), threaten to undermine his larger purpose.

The Open Sore of a Continent is replete with accounts of brutal acts by the military. But few are as poignant as the persecution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the writer and defender of one of Nigeria’s many minority ethnic groups, the Ogoni. (Together, minority groups comprise 33 percent of the total population.) The Ogoni, who occupy one of the richest oil-producing regions, have suffered the consequences of ecological devastation,

seeing their once-lush farmlands turned into an inferno of burning oil swamps. Hence the Movement for the Salvation of the Ogoni People, a civil organization seeking better conditions or, failing that, secession. In 1994, Saro-Wiwa and several other Ogonis were arrested and charged with the murder of four pro-government Ogoni leaders.

In a trial that was universally viewed as a mockery of the most basic human rights and legal guarantees, Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues were convicted and sentenced to die. In November 1995, they were hanged in a show of what

Soyinka calls “shabby cruelty.” In the case of Saro-Wiwa, a man in his fifties, it took five attempts to kill him. This incident, more than anything else the Abacha regime has done, has relegated it to pariah status in the eyes of the world. Yet the regime cares little for international public opinion as long as the world’s largest oil purchasers, including the United States, continue to buy Nigerian oil.

What the death of Saro-Wiwa demonstrates was the determination of the Abacha regime to crush any credible threat to its control of the country’s main industry. The incident further proves that the northern military clique is not about to share power with non-northerners. What, then, are the Yoruba, Igbo, and other minorities supposed to do? How long are they supposed to wait before they receive their due as fellow Nigerians? It seems only a matter of time before a three-state partition becomes the sole viable option. But will the north ever allow separation? These are questions for which Soyinka has no answers. For now, Nigeria seems headed toward the apocalypse. That is why this book is a requiem.



Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1993

> MAKAU WA MUTUA is associate professor of law at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

History

GERMANY FROM NAPOLEON TO BISMARCK, 1800–1866.

By Thomas Nipperdey. Trans. by Daniel Nolan. Princeton Univ. Press. 760 pp. \$69.95

In the study of German history, revisionism is especially sharp edged. Over such matters as the significance of Luther or Bismarck, the causes of World War I, or (especially) the sources of Hitler's National Socialism, fierce interpretive rivalries rage.

Amid such *Sturm und Drang*, the work of Thomas Nipperdey, a professor of history at the University of Munich until his death in 1992, shines as a beacon. Nipperdey's interests ranged widely, from the Reformation to political parties in Imperial Germany. But his crowning achievement was his three-volume history of Germany in the 19th century, of which the present volume is the first to appear in English.

When the German original, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800-1866, Bürgerwelt und starker Staat*, was published in 1983, it was widely praised (even by Nipperdey's rivals) as a masterwork, and it has since become the standard academic prelude to Gordon Craig's *German History 1866–1945*. Perhaps more surprising, it was also a best-seller in Germany. These successes are due in part to Nipperdey's engaging style but also to the way he cut against the prevailing trends in German historiography.

He did so by writing *narrative* history. Nipperdey makes no reference to scholarly debates and feels no compulsion to document sources. (The German edition contains a relatively modest bibliography.) His book has neither preface nor introduction, and the epilogue fills barely a page. What Nipperdey does do is tell a story, thickly detailed but also spirited. "In the beginning was Napoleon," he opens. Then he sets off at a gallop for the finish line, some 700 pages ahead. There he closes with a succinct account of Prussia's victory over Austria and the creation of an enlarged Prussian state in

the north. Like Craig, he sees 1866, not 1871 (when Bismarck's Reich was established), as the turning point. Yet Nipperdey spurns the deterministic hindsight of many of his colleagues. In his view, the future in 1866 was still "open."

While the great historians of the last century, such as Franz Schnabel, focused on the history of ideas, Nipperdey gives equal atten-

tion to how institutional and cultural changes affected family life, the status of women, the conditions of labor, and the hopes and fears of different classes. And while the so-called critical historians (a group of theory-oriented academics led by Hans-Ulrich Wehle in the 1970s) have found clear continuities in German history leading up to Hitler, Nipperdey sees instead "infinite shades of gray," contradictions, and incongruities.

Yes, Nipperdey finds "a deeply ingrained tendency towards the doctrinaire" in the infant parliamentarianism of the 1840s. Yes, he concedes that "each pre-1933 epoch is indirectly related to Hitler." But each period was also "immediate to itself," he contends. Through sustained comparisons with contemporary developments in other European societies, he resists the idea of a German *Sonderweg*, or special path.

Nipperdey also raises tough questions about how much our understanding of one period can help us make sense of a later epoch. Whether we are searching for clues about today's reunified Germany or coping with post-Cold War disunity and fragmentation elsewhere, these are questions worth pondering anew.

—Jeffrey Gedmin

A TALE OF TWO UTOPIAS: *The Political Journey of the Generation of the 1900s.*

By Paul Berman. Norton. 300 pp. \$24

What is utopia but the worship of perfection at the expense of the good? Thomas More understood this when he contrasted his neologism *utopia*, meaning "no place,"



with *eutopia*, meaning “the good place.” The Right has its utopias, usually in the Good Old Days. But for serious utopias, set in the Glorious if Receding Future, the Right can’t hold a candle to the Left. There have been moments—in 1830, in 1848, in 1917—when the Left thought itself just one manifesto, protest, or burning barricade away from utopia. But these expectations were not met—a point memorialized by graveyards around the globe.

Berman, a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, is a man of many expectations. He would add two more dates to the list of revolutionary moments: 1968 and 1989. To some degree, he is merely stating the obvious. Clearly, 1968 was one of the more tumultuous years of the century, and 1989 was arguably the most important year since 1945. But Berman wants to do more than mark these milestones. He wants to connect them as parts of a single utopian project.

Berman contends that 1968 was the apogee of not one but four revolutions. The first was the Western youth revolt, epitomized in the United States by the New Left and the counterculture’s “insurrections against middle-class customs.” The second revolution was one of the spirit, encompassing everything from a turn toward Asian religion to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. The third comprised the worldwide insurrections against Western, mostly American, imperialism. And the fourth was the battle against communism, spearheaded by the Prague Spring.

Berman tries to knit these diverse revolts, rebellions, reforms, and riots into a single, essentially left-wing fabric. But too many threads keep unraveling—most notably the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia and the less velvety revolutions in the rest of Eastern Europe. Undeniably there were affinities between these anti-communist movements and the Western counterculture. Vaclav Havel was a champion of what Herbert Marcuse called “the great refusal,” urging his fellow Czechs to create “parallel lives” where they could live “in truth.” The rock bands, the cult of Frank Zappa, the sexual liberationism, the anticareerism—these were all too recognizably the hallmarks of protest in the West.

But what does it mean to be left-wing under communist rule? To Berman’s chagrin, Havel and some of his like-minded

compatriots moved from *Ramparts* to *Commentary*, began to read Adam Smith, and praised President Ronald Reagan’s Euromissile policy as a necessary bulwark of freedom. Berman records his dismay at visiting Czechoslovakia and seeing the “utopianism” of the average citizen’s admiration for America. His only consolation, it seems, is that “eventually the people of the East were fated to get a clearer idea of American bleakness and social decay.”

In the end, Berman’s mostly hortatory attempt to equate 1989 with 1968 founders on the facts. Unlike the New Left, the protest movements of Eastern Europe did not dream of building the perfect society. They did not consider liberal democracy to be morally bankrupt. Instead, they sought to disentangle themselves from the failed utopia of communism and achieve what they called “a *normal* society” of family, friends, work, and faith—a eutopia, at most.

—Jonah Goldberg

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

Stanley I. Kutler et al., eds. Macmillan. 4 vols. 1,941 pp. \$385

The tone of this excellent new reference work is that of the academy in the 1990s—neither cheerleading nor doomsaying, skeptical of government’s ability to do good but wary of the presumed magic of markets. “Nostalgia is our greatest barrier to historical understanding,” writes editor in chief Kutler (a historian at the University of Wisconsin and editor of *Reviews in American History*). There is nothing nostalgic about the articles dealing with governance and public policy. Historian James Patterson, for example, gives a masterful account of government efforts to shape the contours of wealth and poverty. Harry Schieber’s article on federalism provides much needed perspective on current fantasies of a benign, decentralized, Tocquevillian future. And political scientist Bert Rockman’s brilliant review of the 20th-century presidency concludes that, for all the increased visibility and bureaucratization of the White House, “it is not clear that the office is any more powerful in 1993 than it was in 1893.” As Rockman quips, “the buck stops nowhere in the American system.” In historians’ handbooks, it is rare to find such a fine, dry spirit of realism.

—Michael Lacey

Arts & Letters

BLAKE: *A Biography.*

By Peter Ackroyd. Knopf. 399 pp. \$35

If anybody was ever born to endure life's hardships, it was surely William Blake (1757–1827). Ignored by most of his contemporaries and thought mad by some, he suffered the condescension of lesser poets and artists and barely eked out a living from his work in the engraving trade. Yet he was more than consoled by a powerful visionary gift that many people took as the sign of his instability. From around the eighth year of his life, when he glimpsed the face of God at his window, Blake was inclined to believe that the sensible world was an illusion and snare, of use only if one could see through it to the spiritual reality beyond.

The great source and medium of vision, Blake held, was the Imagination, which in turn he claimed was nothing less than the divine itself.

If all this makes Blake sound like the supreme protohippie, Peter Ackroyd's richly detailed biography should dispel the notion. What sets Blake worlds apart from the would-be visionaries of the consumer age was his heroic commitment to work, his belief that in visions begin responsibilities.

Born in London to a family of Dissenting Protestant tradespeople, William, the third child, was taken on as an engraver's apprentice at age 14. While mastering the craft, he developed his own considerable poetic and artistic gifts. Yet early on, he found himself at odds with England's art establishment. As a student at the Royal Academy, he made clear his preference for pure outline, clearly defined form, and water-based paints—a style distinctly at odds with that of the reigning master, Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose oil paintings of historical subjects Blake found, in Ackroyd's words, "too fluid and indeterminate." Reynolds and his followers reciprocated by never taking Blake's work seriously.

Ackroyd is at his best evoking Blake's

London, particularly the neighborhoods of the working poor, where Blake lived for all but three of his 70 years. The biographer shows how this urban scene fueled Blake's moral indignation and nurtured a radical visionary poetics. After reading Ackroyd's book, no one can think that the boys immortalized in Blake's famous poem "The Chimney-Sweeper" were quaintly colorful creatures of an earlier age; their lives were simply wretched, and Blake's

bitterness toward a society that tolerated such exploitation was great. Yet, as Ackroyd writes, "Blake was in no sense a 'Romantic' artist, like those of the next generation, who despised trade and who tended to withdraw from the urban turmoil." Blake saw the lineaments of the New Jerusalem even in London's squalor



and suffering.

Blake made his artistic purpose emphatically clear: "I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Man's / I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create." Ackroyd judges Blake to be not only a great artist but also a true prophet: not a soothsayer, but someone who saw clearly what *is*. Before almost anyone else, Blake discerned the limits of the scientific worldview; he created Urizen, one of the most compelling figures in his elaborate mythology, to dramatize the inadequacy of the merely reasoning mind.

Blake's life was not all a tale of woe. Though he managed to alienate most of his patrons, a few stayed loyal until his death. And in old age, he found new admirers among a group of mystically inclined artists who called themselves the Ancients. By far, though, Blake's greatest blessing was his wife, Catherine. This simple, unlettered woman believed in his visions, worked tirelessly as his assistant, and indulged his every whim, including a fondness for *alfresco nudism*.

Despite Blake's many quirks, the relatively eventless course of his life does not make for a particularly compelling story—

at least as Ackroyd tells it. Yet Ackroyd does do many things right. One is to set forth the terms and trying conditions of Blake's great project without explaining away (or worse, psychologizing) his visionary genius. Such tact, though leaving us eager for more answers, turns us toward the only reliable source—the works of the artist himself.

—Jay Tolson

ORNAMENT:

A Social History since 1450.

By Michael Snodin and Maurice Howard. Yale Univ. Press and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

232 pp. \$45

Upper-class English ladies have never worn tattoos. Or have they? In 1901, Lady Randolph Churchill celebrated the coronation of Edward VII by having a tiny serpent tattooed on her forearm. Tattoos were all the rage at the time. By 1920 the traditional prejudice against tattooing had returned, and Lady Churchill was never seen in public without a bracelet covering the spot.

The authors of this fascinating book do not say whether Lady Churchill ever regretted her tattoo. But they do explain much else, including the likely reason why she chose the serpent motif. Snodin, head of the designs collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and Howard, an art historian at the University of Sussex, begin their survey in 1450, when the invention of printing led to the circulation of Renaissance and other design ideas throughout Europe. By the mid-1500s, art patrons were poring over “emblem books” in search of “visual symbols of personal qualities that a patron aspired to.” In this context, the serpent was “a symbol of eternity.” Hence the serpent embroidered in the sleeve of Elizabeth I in the famous “Rainbow” portrait (c. 1600).

As a social history of ornament, this book is a first. Snodin and Howard explain that 19th-century “grammars of ornament” classified visual motifs (everything from the Corinthian acanthus to the Chinese Willow Pattern) according to a hierarchy of aesthetic and moral value. With the 20th century came a different approach, one that read psychological meanings into various recurring images. (Need we dwell on what Lady Churchill's serpent would have meant to a generation raised on Freud?) This lavishly

illustrated volume takes the next step, which is to give historical context to our understanding of ornamental hierarchies and of the rules shaping ornament's private and public uses. Today's postmodern designers like to think they are beyond such considerations, but, as the authors wisely point out, “If rules are broken, then people choose to do that consciously; the very process of breaking rules emphasizes the fact that normally they are there.”

—Martha Bayles

ROSEBUD:

The Story of Orson Welles.

By David Thomson. Knopf. 448 pp. \$30

Forget the aging, obese Orson Welles, who promised to “sell no wine before its time” on television in the 1970s and '80s. This biography begins with the golden, whirling days of Welles's early career, when the handsome boy out of Kenosha, Wisconsin, had boundless creative vitality—and the power to charm anyone, in the theater or out. In 1931, the 16-year-old Welles was appearing at the Gate Theater in Dublin. In 1935, he was staging a sensational *Macbeth* with black actors in Harlem. Two years later, he was directing and starring in *Doctor Faustus*, working with John Houseman and Marc Blitzstein on the inflammatory prolabor musical *The Cradle Will Rock*, and lending his plummy voice to the radio role of Lamont Cranston in *The Shadow*. Welles (and Houseman) launched the Mercury Theater with a revelatory *Julius Caesar*. When the Mercury began a weekly radio series in 1938, Welles hoodwinked the nation with *War of the Worlds*, his notorious fake news broadcast of a Martian invasion.

Then Welles invaded Hollywood, where he directed a first feature that many regard as the best film ever made by an American: *Citizen Kane* (1941). He went on to make a second, darker movie, *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), that might have been even greater had it been released in the form Welles intended. But he was in Brazil spending—



wasting?—RKO's money on a new film (which he left incomplete) when the studio edited 40 minutes out of *Ambersons* to give it more box office appeal. It was not the last time Welles would let a project slip out of his control—and in so doing seem to disavow what he had created.

The cliché about Welles is that everything went downhill after these first two films. But as Thomson, an actor and the author of several books about film, makes clear, this was not so—except in the sense that Welles never surpassed *Kane*. (But then, who has?) To be sure, Welles was forever beginning projects, dropping them, and taking them up again years later in makeshift locales and even with different casts. Yet despite a professional life that often resembled a Ponzi scheme, Welles the charlatan was also a practicing magician, reaching into his shabby hat and pulling out movie treasures such as *Macbeth* (1948), *Touch of Evil* (1958), *The Trial* (1962), parts of his admittedly disjointed Falstaff saga, *Chimes at Midnight* (1966), *The Immortal Story* (1968), and *F Is for Fake* (1973).

Thomson's Welles is monumentally imperfect, full of passion, appetite, guile, lies, manipulation, misjudgment, arrogance, doubt, and, of course, a kind of genius. He is a manic-depressive egotist, "vividly disturbed and hysterically well,

beyond treatment, so knowing that no doctor ever had a chance with him." This book traces the arc of his tumultuous life with surprising and admirable dispatch.

Too bad, then, that Thomson keeps intruding. His memory of seeing *Citizen Kane* for the first time, as a teenager alone in a revival house in London, is typical of the missteps: "I struggled with *Kane* because I knew that its show was more intense than anything I had seen, because I felt aroused by the need to run a little faster, because the shining young *Kane* was so entrancing."

Even more irksome are the imaginary dialogues between Thomson and—whom? his publisher? his alter ego?—that occur at irregular intervals without so much as a *caveat lector*. These are meant to dangle qualifications, questions, and alternative interpretations before our wondering eyes, and in their general fruitiness they are perhaps *echt*-Wellesian (the hokum Welles, that is). But mostly these dialogues recall the moments you faced as a child when a movie turned "icky" and you went to buy popcorn, hoping the actors would return to their senses by the time you returned to your seat. Too bad Thomson can't resist trying to upstage his subject. He of all people should have realized that no one ever upstaged Orson Welles.

—James Morris

Science & Technology

THE END OF SCIENCE:
Facing the Limits of Knowledge in the Twilight of the Scientific Age.

By John Horgan. Addison Wesley Longman. 320 pp. \$24

Ours is a time of endings: not just of a century but of a millennium. Honoring custom, we daily announce finalities. Academics lecture on "late"—not "advanced"—capitalism. Optimists foresee the demise of talk shows, pessimists the death of the humanities. Can modern science, gray with 300 years, be far behind?

According to Horgan, many of the best and brightest scientists, mathematicians, and philosophers are resigned to defeat. What looms is a "postempirical" and "ironic" approach: the abandonment of the search for fundamental laws of nature, and the rise of a

"science" that is . . . well, anxious, evocative, literary. In Horgan's words, "One must accept the possibility—even the probability—that the great era of scientific discovery is over. By *science* I mean not applied science, but science at its purest and grandest, the primordial human quest to understand the universe and our place in it. Further research may yield no more great revelations or revolutions, but only incremental, diminishing returns."

Horgan is the well-known author of profiles appearing in *Scientific American*, where he has explored the thinking and (more effectively) the personalities of a galaxy of stars, or at least scintillators, among those who have been doing science or meta-science for the past few decades. His finely crafted interviews have been adapted for *The End of Science*, with new material added.

For anyone interested in the far frontiers of basic science and philosophy of science, not to mention the peculiar people who excel at such work, this book will prove absorbing.

Among the personas explored, all are cleverly and accurately depicted, although Horgan's likes and dislikes, his stylistic and even political sympathies, come through, whether by accident or design. His aversion to, for instance, Nobel laureate immunologist (and now neuroscientist) Gerald Edelman and the late Sir Karl Popper, philosopher of science, contrasts sharply with his deference to paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould and mathematician Roger Penrose.

But then, these are simply opinions. What of the author's claim of an ongoing abandonment of the great goal of science, which was to obtain not just answers but *the answer*? Horgan seems to have two main reasons for making this claim. First, he accepts the well-worn argument that we are in an era of diminishing returns from research, a view lately bolstered by the assertion that in seeking a "theory of everything" particle physics has finally overreached: neither "superstrings" nor any other mathematization of what is already mathematical, hence untestable, is likely to produce *the answer*.

Second, Horgan deduces from interviews with unquestionably powerful minds (and from meetings in which they assemble for metascience and bagels) that these good people are *troubled*. Asked whether they anticipate the end of science, many of them squirm but do not deny it.

Yet engaging as these glimpses of angst-ridden greatness may be, they are not fully persuasive. As Horgan properly notes, greatness has often announced that its work is done—only to be proved wrong. Granted, natural selection was a 19th-century idea, as were atoms made mostly of empty space. But genetics, apart from Mendel's pioneering insight, is a 20th-century story. So is the fusion of genetics with biochemistry, natural history, ecology, development, and earth history. The mystery of quantum gravity may or may not be solved, but whole territories of physics remain unexplored.

Finally, a certain gloom is bound to settle over any business that has grown exponentially and must now grow, if at all, linearly. Ask the brilliant, egotistical leaders in any field if their own achievements are likely to

be trumped; most will stroke their chins and think not. Interview the youngest, most up-and-coming scientific geniuses, and you will get a different answer.

—Paul R. Gross

*HISTORY OF THE HOUR:
Clocks and Modern Temporal Orders.*
By Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum. Trans.
by Thomas Dunlap. Univ. of Chicago
Press. 451 pp. \$29.95.

There is nothing more distinctively modern than the ordering of all existence by days, hours, minutes, seconds, and, it sometimes seems, nanoseconds. How did time become the tyrant of modern life? The answer is not as obvious as it might appear. After all, time (or more accurately its measurement) is as old as the Babylonians, who invented the sundial and the 24-hour day. Yet the Babylonians didn't live by the clock.

Modern time began with the invention of the mechanical clock during the 13th century. Nowadays, scholars eager to find Eurocentrism lurking under every bed suggest that medieval Europeans borrowed the technology from the Chinese or Muslims. This hypothesis gets little more than a cold stare from Dohrn-van Rossum, a historian at Germany's University of Bielefeld. At great length, he shows that while much of the mechanical clock's history remains obscure, many different inventors in scattered European towns and cities had a hand in its development.

Dohrn-van Rossum observes that what really brought time to the public realm was the use—beginning in Orvieto and other northern Italian towns early in the 14th century—of *public* clocks capable of striking the hours. By the early 15th century, he notes, "life in [Europe's] cities was equated with



life by the clock.” But he attacks the scholarly consensus that urban merchants and traders who demanded standardized forms of time were chiefly responsible for this change. He shows that churchmen—usually seen as foot-draggers—gladly advanced the cause of time and that local aristocrats in towns and cities across Europe regarded public clocks as civic status symbols and rushed to install them. Nor was standardized time an instrument solely of workers’ oppression, Dohrn-van Rossum argues. As early as the 15th century, workmen turned it to their own advantage, using the clock to win hourly wages and limited working hours.

Despite prose charitably described—even allowing for the vagaries of translation—as uninviting, Dohrn-van Rossum paints a highly nuanced picture of time’s conquest of modern life. The old idea that time consciousness was imposed by a rising bourgeoisie intent upon reordering and rationalizing the world no longer seems solid. Dohrn-van Rossum paints a more complex (and untidy) picture of scattered and spontaneous generation; it makes time seem less our tyrant than our duly elected monarch.

—Steven Lagerfeld

*AN ISLAND OUT OF TIME:
A Memoir of Smith Island in the
Chesapeake.*

By Tom Horton. Norton. 352 pp. \$25

“Two things I never felt bad over—poachin’ oysters or takin’ waterfowl.” Who is speaking, a friend of the environment or one of its enemies? When it comes to the Chesapeake Bay, the answer is far from simple. The speaker is a Smith Island waterman, a member of a community that has long depended on the bay for its survival. Yet as native son and environmental journalist

Horton shows in this lyrical memoir, the watermen no longer enjoy an untroubled relationship with their home. Instead, they must deal with the fact that the bay is, as Horton observes, “a world-class resource, polluted big time, and now the object of unprecedented restoration efforts.”

But Horton’s main concern is not with the politics of conservation. It is with the interconnectedness of people who have for generations lived as intertwined with one another as the salt marshes are with the bay. As one islander says, “You know just how to avoid an argument, and you know just how to start one.” Sustaining this balance is a deep sense of tradition—some Smith Island families go back to the 1600s. Only recently has modern life intruded: electricity in 1949, telephone lines to the mainland in 1951. While younger islanders struggle with the enticements of the outside world, pattern and routine remain strong among the older. As one remarks, “I’m 55, and I’ve been crabbing right here for more than 40 years. This boat is nearly the same age. . . . If you were to put me in a new boat, I don’t think I would even know how to crab.”

Still, hovering over Horton’s vivid account is the clash between environmental activists and communities that, like this one, are part of the “ecosystem” the activists are crusading to save. The waterman who doesn’t regret poaching oysters or taking waterfowl tells Horton how “one freezing winter we sent up to Crisfield for corn and fed thousands of starving redheads [ducks] right off the stern of our boats.” Such people should be heeded when they protest. “Whenever you make a law that applies to everywhere,” the same waterman says, “it can’t apply over here. We got no industry and no farmland—just our marsh and the water, and nobody takes care of us but ourselves.”

—Debbie Lim

Contemporary Affairs

THE SOCIAL MISCONSTRUCTION OF REALITY:

*Validity and Verification in the
Scholarly Community.*

By Richard F. Hamilton. Yale Univ. Press. 278 pp. \$32.50

Mozart was buried in a pauper’s grave. The Duke of Wellington said “the Battle of

Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton.” Protestant Christianity nurtured the “spirit of capitalism.” Hitler’s greatest support came from the lower-middle class. Totalitarianism began with the Enlightenment project of reforming criminals instead of punishing them.

Are all of the above true? Or are they

“misconstructions” endlessly repeated by educated people who should know better? With this provocative question, Hamilton, a sociologist and political scientist at Ohio State University, launches his powerful assault on academic groupthink.

Drawing on an earlier work, *Who Voted for Hitler?* (1982), Hamilton refutes the entrenched claim that the lower-middle class is historically the most “reactionary.” Combing through voting records from the Weimar Republic, he finds that support for the Nazis actually rose with voters’ social class, and that the lower-middle class nowhere exhibited a strong preference for Hitler. But while evidence of this voting behavior has long been available, too many scholars of Nazism have preferred to derive their conclusions from faulty Marxist models of German class attitudes.

Equally striking is Hamilton’s reconsideration of the influential French philosopher Michel Foucault. In *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison* (1975), Foucault advanced the thesis that the 18th-century shift in penology from retribution to character reform was not, as many assume, a progressive step for humankind. Instead, said Foucault, the rise of the modern prison—exemplified by Jeremy Bentham’s “panopticon,” a circular structure in which observation-tower guards could see into all cells—marked a quantum leap in oppression. Foucault asserted not only that the panopticon was “the architectural programme of most prison projects,” but also (in Hamilton’s paraphrase) that the modern prison “extended its principles, an all-pervasive system of surveillance and discipline, to the entire society.”

There is just one problem with Foucault’s argument: the panopticon was never built. Nor was it imitated anywhere, except for three highly modified experimental prisons in the United States. This fact is no secret among historians, as Hamilton reports. Yet not a single reviewer of *Discipline and Punish* questioned Foucault’s grandiloquent claims.

How did Foucault get away with such pseudoscholarship? In a broader discussion of “validity and verification,” Hamilton shows how a reluctance to check original sources results in lengthy, little-examined citation chains. Struggling to keep up with “knowledge overproduction” in their own

highly compartmentalized fields, most academics receive scant reward for undertaking literature reviews, replication studies, or other efforts to keep abreast of what is happening in adjacent fields.

There is one question that Hamilton does not ask but probably should. Which ideologies—and ideologues—do most of the misconstruction? His case studies focus on the academic Left. It seems self-evident, however, that scholars of all political persuasions are capable of distorting their work to serve ideological interests. But then, after reading Hamilton, one might feel less secure about what seems self-evident.

—John Rodden

*THE PRICE OF A DREAM:
The Story of the Grameen Bank, and
the Idea That Is Helping the Poor to
Change Their Lives.*

By David Bornstein. Simon & Schuster.
360 pp. \$25

A real page turner on economic development? Unlikely as it may sound, that is exactly what Bornstein, a free-lance journalist, has produced. His subject, the Grameen Bank, was founded by an irrepressible economics professor from Bangladesh named Muhammed Yunus. Educated at Vanderbilt University, Yunus was teaching at Chittagong University in his native country in 1976 when he first got the idea that the poor remain poor because they have no access to the resources that would enable them to improve their lot—they can’t get there from here. So, beginning with the impoverished residents of a nearby village, Yunus began practicing “capitalism with a social conscience.”

Yunus’s idea was to jump-start the development process by making “micro-loans” of \$10, \$25, or \$50 to landless or near-landless peasants. Borrowers formed teams of five for the purpose of mutually guaranteeing the loans taken out by each. If any member defaulted, no other member of that team could ever again receive a loan from the Grameen Bank. Peer pressure did the rest. The borrowers used the money to establish themselves as peddlers, vegetable gardeners, seamstresses, or dairy farmers. More than 90 percent of the borrowers were women, because their poverty is most acute and they are the primary providers of care to children. The idea worked aston-

ishly well. By 1995, the Grameen Bank had two million borrowers in Bangladesh and 90 percent of its stock was held by borrowers (who are required to buy shares). While still dependent on donors, the bank is close to self-sustaining.

What's missing from Bornstein's otherwise fine reporting is a sense of the broader institutional arrangements in the Bangladeshi economy. He mentions corruption in passing, but he neglects the vital issue, so pertinently raised by the Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, of how government corruption and overregulation stunt the growth of grassroots entrepreneurship. The tough question is whether Grameen Bank borrowers will graduate from micro-

enterprise into fully legal business operations, or whether they will be driven by bureaucratic red tape into the vast "informal economy."

Despite such gaps in his story, Bornstein makes it dramatically clear that the Grameen Bank has pioneered a far better way to help the poor than the massive, top-down schemes so long favored by the World Bank and other international development agencies. Already, several countries, including Chile, are attempting to replicate the bank's success. Bornstein's superb account may drum up even more business for Muhammed Yunus's excellent idea.

—Ronald Bailey

Religion & Philosophy

THE POLITICS OF FAITH AND THE POLITICS OF SKEPTICISM.

By Michael Oakeshott. Yale Univ. Press. 128 pp. \$25

In this volume, released six years after his death, the distinguished British political philosopher Michael Oakeshott (1901–1990) crystallizes what for him are the two "poles" of modern political thought. "The politics of faith" begins in Francis Bacon's assertion that human beings can achieve perfection, and that government can be the primary agent of human betterment. Such a regime places all human activity under the surveillance of its notion of the good.

"The politics of skepticism," by contrast, originating in Thomas Hobbes and Niccolò Machiavelli, rejects any attempt to order human experience according to a single standard. In this view, government should strive not to be the expression or fulfillment of the common good but rather to serve as the instrument for assuring basic order, rights, and liberties. Beyond this, the regime should abstain from involvement "with the souls of men."

Oakeshott seeks neither to inform our practical decisions about public policy nor to plead for one form of government over the other. Rather, he would redirect the contemporary discussion of politics away from an ambiguous lexicon (of which the present uses of "liberal" and "conservative" are but

the most egregious examples) and toward a new vernacular. His principle of moderation, or "appropriateness," eschews the "nemesis" of pure faith on the one hand, pure skepticism on the other. Where the middle ground lies at the moment, he does not say. Nor does he need to. By clarifying "the 'charges' of the poles of our political activity, each exerting a pull which makes itself felt over the whole range of government," he has written a guide to the future of political thought.

—Joseph Landau

THREE GOSPELS.

By Reynolds Price. Scribner. 288 pp. \$23

"Forget that you ever read a gospel; forget you ever heard of Jesus." With these startling words, Reynolds Price invites readers to ignore the accumulated knowledge of centuries of Christian theology. The invitation is easier to accept than one might think. Price—the author of numerous works of fiction and nonfiction, including *A Palpable God* (1978), a consideration of the Old and New Testaments—provides fresh access to the foundational texts of Christianity. Bringing decades of study to the task, he has produced convincingly faithful translations of what he believes are the two central Gospels: the Book of Mark, arguably the oldest Gospel (though recent

archaeological evidence casts some doubt on that claim) and the Book of John, which purports to be an eyewitness account set down by John bar Zebedee, one of Jesus' own disciples, in his old age.

Reading these translations in the narrative form in which they first appeared (chapter and verse breaks were, respectively, 13th- and 16th-century additions), and in English that closely mirrors the original Koiné Greek, is almost like encountering the Gospels for the first time. Gone are the transitional embellishments and vernacular updates present in so many modern translations, as well as the weighty marginalia which, in Price's view, distract the reader from the experience of these stories: "These texts were not written for, nor can they be successfully read by, the inattentive."

What emerges—or, perhaps more accurately, reappears—is the strangeness and excitement of these narratives. It is possible, as Price acknowledges in his preface, to view Jesus of Nazareth merely as "an itinerant Jewish healer and teacher who worked briefly in an obscure corner of the Roman empire." In the Gospel of Mark, partly because of the writer's awkward narrative style and parsimonious reporting, the reader (like Jesus' own disciples) remains unsure whether Jesus truly claims to be the Son of God, whether he is simply delusional, or whether he is only accepting the mantle thrust upon him by others. Even his promised Resurrection is only hinted at in the story's abrupt ending.

By contrast, the Jesus of John's more intimate narrative is a frightening figure. When he pronounces "I Am!," he is not merely claiming his self-revelation; his words are a conscious echo of the Hebraic

name for the Being who spoke to Moses from the burning bush. The words strike Jesus' listeners like a thunderclap. At least twice before the final confrontation with the high Jewish authorities that leads to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, the claims he makes to divinity provoke attempts on his life. Each time, almost magically, he eludes his enemies. The three appearances of the risen Christ described by John are dramatically rendered: the encounter with Mary Magdalene in the garden, the appearance to the Twelve (and the proof offered to "doubting" Thomas), and, most movingly, the encounter on the shores of Galilee, when Jesus entrusts his teaching to impetuous Peter. To the critic C. S. Lewis, the scenes ring so true that either John's Gospel is reportage or else "some unknown writer in the second century, without known predecessors or successors, suddenly anticipated the whole technique of modern, novelistic, realistic narrative."

In the learned commentaries that precede his two translations, Price acknowledges his acceptance of and belief in Jesus. But to the reader, this is secondary to Price's enchantment with the Gospels as a fantastic story—the *most* fantastic story, whether real or imagined, ever composed. Price's admiration for this story leads him to compose his own gospel, which he calls *An Honest Account of a Memorable Life*. Using the Gospels of Mark and John for narrative structure, and adding the scenes from Matthew, Luke, and other New Testament sources that ring truest to his ear, Price so enlivens the tale that it becomes not just a testament of his own faith but a kind of revelation: the "good news" arriving afresh.

—James Carman



POETRY

Joseph Brodsky

Selected and introduced by Anthony Hecht

In an eloquent tribute to Joseph Brodsky, published almost exactly a month after his premature and widely lamented death, Tatyana Tolstaya, in the *New York Review of Books*, quotes some lines from the poet's early work:

In the dark I won't find your deep blue facade
I'll fall on the asphalt between the crossed lines

She goes on to conjecture: "I think that the reason he didn't want to return to Russia even for a day was so that this incautious prophecy would not come to be. A student of—among others—Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva (he knew their poetic superstitiousness), he knew the conversation they had during their one and only meeting. 'How could you write that. . . . Don't you know that a poet's words always come true?' one of them reproached. 'And how could you write that. . . ?' the other was amazed. And what they foretold did indeed come to pass."

Without any desire to sound mystical, I do think something prophetic can be claimed for Brodsky's poetry, or at least for two details, one of them small, the other large and visionary. The first is from a poem actually titled "A Prophecy," addressed to an unnamed beloved, and containing these lines:

—And if
we make a child, we'll call the boy Andrei,
Anna the girl, so that our Russian speech,
imprinted on its wrinkled little face,
shall never be forgot.

Joseph (as everyone who ever knew him was allowed affectionately to call him) was the father of two children, a boy born in Russia, still there, from whom he was separated by involuntary exile, and a daughter, born in America to his Russian-Italian wife, Maria. The children are named Andrei and Anna.

The larger, more spacious and important prophecy is embodied in a major poem, "The Hawk's Cry in Autumn" (printed here in full), of which Tolstaya remarks in the same tribute: "He has a poem about a hawk . . . in the hills of Massachusetts who flies so high that the rush of rising air won't let him descend back to earth, and the hawk perishes there, at those heights where there are neither birds nor people, nor any air to breathe."

To this brief comment I would like to add some of my own. The *wind* with which the poem begins is the wind of the spirit (John 3:8) as well as of inspiration, the necessary (and destructive) element in which the poet tries to dwell. The bird, at the pinnacle of his flight, *guesses the truth of it: it's the end*. The Erinyes (Furies) themselves are invoked, as though the

aspiration to great heights must necessarily entail retributive punishment, as exemplified in Greek tragedy. And, echoing another ancient tradition, the agony and sacrifice of the bird/poet precipitates a thing of beauty, the first snowflakes of winter, the poems of a soul that has sustained the punishing climate of Archangelic Russia. The brilliance that delights earth-bound children has been purchased at the price of unendurable suffering and death. Whether Brodsky's wind owes anything to Percy Bysshe Shelley's annihilating "West wind," whether the Russian poet's hawk is any kin to Gerard Manley Hopkins's falcon, Thomas Hardy's darkling thrush or his blinded bird, each reader must determine for himself. And can it be that this assertion of Rainer Maria Rilke's played some part in Brodsky's thought?: "Whoever does not consecrate himself wholly to art with all his wishes and values can never reach the highest goal."

In his collection of essays, *Less than One*, Brodsky has written so movingly about his early life that I will present here only the most meager biographical details. He was born Iosif Alexandrovich Brodsky on May 24, 1940, in Leningrad, the only child of adoring and adored parents so straitened of circumstances that the boy quit school after ninth grade to help support the family. He held more than a dozen jobs, including milling-machine operator, helper in a morgue (he once thought he might wish to become a doctor), photographer (his father's work at one time), and participant in geological expeditions. Despite his limited formal schooling, his love of poetry led him to learn Polish, English, German, Spanish, Italian, and French, as well as Latin, in a determination to acquaint himself with all the world's great poetry. He began writing his own poems in his teens, and earned money by translating Serbo-Croatian and Spanish poetry into Russian. He also translated the poems of John Donne and other Metaphysical poets, and two plays, *The Quare Fellow* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. In 1964 he was forced into a "psychiatric hospital" and then arraigned at a show trial, charged with "parasitism" and with writing "anti-Soviet poetry that would corrupt the young." What this actually meant was absolute state disapproval of a poetic credo Brodsky expressed in his Nobel Lecture: "A work of art, of literature especially, and a poem in particular, addresses a man tête-à-tête, entering with him into direct—free of any go-betweens—relations." What Brodsky means, of course, is not only the necessary absence of censors but also the need for a literature disburdened of ulterior (which is to say, political) motives. He was sentenced to five years of degrading hard labor, but after the sentence provoked unambiguously condemnatory outcries from all over the world as well as within Soviet intellectual circles, it was "commuted" to exile. He left behind everything he loved: parents, language, son, home, and, with the help of W. H. Auden and the Academy of American Poets, made his way to his first teaching job in America, at the University of Michigan, under the watchful care of Carl and Ellendea Proffer.

The condition of exile is rarely easy, but Brodsky, fortified by a temperament both cheerful and mordantly sardonic, taking now as his domain the global landscape, the cold galactic emptinesses, the whole range of human history, set about his poetic task with fierce and undiscourageable industry. In the course of only a few years, he acquired an international audience of admiring readers, among them the members

of the Swedish Academy. This recognition was accompanied by a blissful marriage to a beautiful woman, half-Russian, half-Italian, and the birth of a daughter, named Anna, probably in homage to Brodsky's "discoverer" and poetic heroine, Akhmatova, and in fulfillment of a pledge. But these blessings were of the briefest duration, cut short by his death at the age of 55.

His poems are not easy; nor are they difficult in the familiar manner of, say, John Donne or William Empson. In their original Russian, they observe demanding formal patterns combined at times with an informality of diction that can be witty and irreverent, and are usually filled with unexpected, almost balletic leaps of the imagination. The Russian also evokes a playfulness that no English version can quite as gracefully convey. So richly furnished are the rueful and the comedic aspects of his work, his irony and bravado, that a willing reader will find enormous delights, enviable gifts, large spans of imaginative life that have not been lost in translation. In the time allotted to him, cut short by addictive smoking that endangered a heart already badly damaged by penal servitude (and for which he had undergone two bypass operations and was scheduled for a third), he managed somehow to acquaint himself as an intimate with the greatest poets of all periods, to feel at home (if, as an exile, nowhere else) at least in their demanding company, and able to sustain companionship with their best work in what must be thought of as a widely comprehensive multilingual anthology that he was apt to have almost exactly by heart.



Letter to an Archaeologist

Citizen, enemy, mama's boy, sucker, utter
garbage, panhandler, swine, *refujew*, *verrucht*;
a scalp so often scalded with boiling water
that the puny brain feels completely cooked.
Yes, we have dwelt here: in this concrete, brick, wooden
rubble which you now arrive to sift.
All our wires were crossed, barbed, tangled, or interwoven.
Also: we didn't love our women, but they conceived.
Sharp is the sound of the pickax that hurts dead iron;
still, it's gentler than what we've been told or have said ourselves.
Stranger! move carefully through our carrion:
what seems carrion to you is freedom to our cells.
Leave our names alone. Don't reconstruct those vowels,
consonants, and so forth: they won't resemble larks
but a demented bloodhound whose maw devours
its own traces, feces, and barks, and barks.

On Love

Twice I woke up tonight and wandered to
the window. And the lights down on the street,
like pale omission points, tried to complete
the fragment of a sentence spoken through
sleep, but diminished into darkness, too.

I'd dreamt that you were pregnant, and in spite
of having lived so many years apart
I still felt guilty and my heartened palm
caressed your belly as, by the bedside,
it fumbled for my trousers and the light-

switch on the wall. And with the bulb turned on
I knew that I was leaving you alone
there, in the darkness, in the dream, where calmly
you waited till I might return,
not trying to reproach or scold me

for the unnatural hiatus. For
darkness restores what light cannot repair.
There we are married, blest, we make once more
the two-backed beast and children are the fair
excuse of what we're naked for.

Some future night you will appear again.
You'll come to me, worn out and thin now, after
things in between, and I'll see son or daughter
not named as yet. This time I will restrain
my hand from groping for the switch, afraid

and feeling that I have no right
to leave you both like shadows by that sever-
ing fence of days that bar your sight,
voiceless, negated by the real light
that keeps me unattainable forever.



The Hawk's Cry in Autumn

Wind from the northwestern quarter is lifting him high above
the dove-gray, crimson, umber, brown
Connecticut Valley. Far beneath,
chickens daintily pause and move
unseen in the yard of the tumbledown
farmstead; chipmunks blend with the heath.

Now adrift on the airflow, unfurled, alone,
all that he glimpses—the hills' lofty, ragged
ridges, the silver stream that threads
quivering like a living bone
of steel, badly notched with rapids,
the townships like strings of beads

strewn across New England. Having slid down to nil
thermometers—those household gods in niches—
freeze, inhibiting thus the fire
of leaves and churches' spires. Still,
no churches for him. In the windy reaches,
undreamt of by the most righteous choir,

he soars in a cobalt-blue ocean, his beak clamped shut,
his talons clutched tight into his belly
—claws balled up like a sunken fist—
sensing in each wisp of down the thrust
from below, glinting back the berry
of his eyeball, heading south-southeast

to the Rio Grande, the Delta, the beech groves and farther still:
to a nest hidden in the mighty groundswell
of grass whose edges no fingers trust,
sunk amid forest's odors, filled
with splinters of red-speckled eggshell,
with a brother or a sister's ghost.

The heart overgrown with flesh, down, feather, wing,
pulsing at feverish rate, nonstopping,
propelled by internal heat and sense,
the bird goes slashing and scissoring
the autumnal blue, yet by the same swift token,
enlarging it at the expense

of its brownish speck, barely registering on the eye,
a dot, sliding far above the lofty
pine tree; at the expense of the empty look
of that child, arching up at the sky,
that couple that left the car and lifted
their heads, that woman on the stoop.

But the uprush of air is still lifting him
higher and higher. His belly feathers
feel the nibbling cold. Casting a downward gaze,
he sees the horizon growing dim,

he sees, as it were, the features
of the first thirteen colonies whose

chimneys all puff out smoke. Yet it's their total within his sight
that tells the bird of his elevation,
of what altitude he's reached this trip.
What am I doing at such a height?
He senses a mixture of trepidation
and pride. Heeling over a tip

of wing, he plummets down. But the resilient air
bounces him back, winging up to glory,
to the colorless icy plane.
His yellow pupil darts a sudden glare
of rage, that is, a mix of fury
and terror. So once again

he turns and plunges down. But as walls return
rubber balls, as sins send a sinner to faith, or near,
he's driven upward this time as well!
He! whose innards are still so warm!
Still higher! Into some blasted ionosphere!
That astronomically objective hell

of birds that lacks oxygen, and where the milling stars
play millet served from a plate or a crescent.
What, for the bipeds, has always meant
height, for the feathered is the reverse.
Not with his puny brain but with shriveled air sacs
he guesses the truth of it: it's the end.

And at this point he screams. From the hooklike beak
there tears free of him and flies *ad lumen*
the sound Erinyes make to rend
souls: a mechanical, intolerable shriek,
the shriek of steel that devours aluminum;
"mechanical," for it's meant

for nobody, for no living ears:
not man's, not yelping foxes',
not squirrels' hurrying to the ground
from branches; not for tiny field mice whose tears
can't be avenged this way, which forces
them into their burrows. And only hounds

lift up their muzzles. A piercing, high-pitched squeal,
more nightmarish than the D-sharp grinding
of the diamond cutting glass,
slashes the whole sky across. And the world seems to reel
for an instant, shuddering from this rending.
For the warmth burns space in the highest as

badly as some iron fence down here
brands incautious gloveless fingers.
We, standing where we are, exclaim
"There!" and see far above the tear

that is a hawk, and hear the sound that lingers
in wavelets, a spider skein

swelling notes in ripples across the blue vault of space
whose lack of echo spells, especially in October,
an apotheosis of pure sound.
And caught in this heavenly patterned lace,
starlike, spangled with hoarfrost powder,
silver-clad, crystal-bound,

the bird sails to the zenith, to the dark-blue high
of azure. Through binoculars we foretoken
him, a glittering dot, a pearl.
We hear something ring out in the sky,
like some family crockery being broken,
slowly falling aswirl,

yet its shards, as they reach our palms, don't hurt
but melt when handled. And in a twinkling,
once more one makes out curls, eyelets, strings,
rainbowlike, multicolored, blurred
commas, ellipses, spirals, linking
heads of barley, concentric rings—

the bright doodling pattern the feather once possessed,
a map, now a mere heap of flying
pale flakes that make a green slope appear
white. And the children, laughing and brightly dressed,
swarm out of doors to catch them, crying
with a loud shout in English, "Winter's here!"



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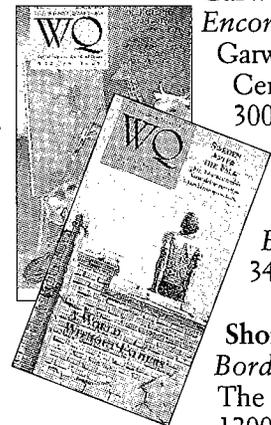
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The Rise of a Counter-Academy?

A Survey of Recent Articles

Last winter, Yale University graduate students seeking recognition as a union refused to issue the grades of undergraduates in courses they had taught. This “grade strike” outraged the professors. “What faculty [member] in his right mind wants a TA [teaching assistant] who’s not going to do the grading?” Peter Brooks, chairman of the comparative literature department at Yale University, tells Emily Eakin, a staff member of the *New Yorker* writing in *Lingua Franca* (Mar.–Apr. 1996).

The Yale grade strikers were unsuccessful, but their dramatic action points up the fact that, in the humanities, job prospects for students who acquire Ph.D.’s are bleak. Yale’s English department, for instance, last year was able to place only two out of 15 students in tenure-track positions. This dismal employment situation nationwide may ultimately produce sweeping change in the heavily politicized field of literary study. The prospect worries many academics. “The job crisis and the oversupply of Ph.D.’s color everything we do,” Cary Nelson, a professor in the English department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, writes in *Academe* (Nov.–Dec. 1995). “Indeed, the market will almost certainly lead many campuses to reintroduce all the injustices [the American Association of University Professors] has fought against for decades.” Endangered, he asserts, are the tenure system and free speech.

Despite the drop in demand for humanities Ph.D.’s, the universities (with some exceptions) apparently have not cut

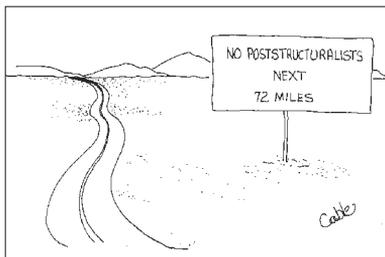
back production. The number of humanities doctorates awarded annually has increased by more than 20 percent since the job market turned down in 1989, reports George Judson in the *New York Times* (Jan. 17, 1996).

The reason for the continued production is obvious, according to Nelson. “Without a viable job market, Ph.D. programs have only one economic rationale—they are a source of cheap instructional labor for universities.” In his own department, he says, graduate students teach two-thirds of the courses. Nelson himself has in the past taught composition “and enjoyed it, [but] I would now find it demoralizing and intolerable to have to grade hundreds of composition papers each semester. There is no way I could do it as carefully and thoroughly as my graduate students do.”

Although he favors closing “some poor quality and underutilized degree programs,” Nelson basically wants to keep the surplus labor pool of graduate students—but treat them as employees being “culturally enriched” rather than as apprentices. He urges graduate students to unionize. They “have much to gain and little to lose but their illusions, their false consciousness, and the myths of professionalism that makes them complicit in their own exploitation.

Unionize. . . . You have nothing to lose but your chains.”

The academy, Nelson says, needs to do a much better job of enlightening the public about “our achievements” in recent decades: “The 20-year



effort to open the canon and recover a fuller sense of our literary heritage should be widely viewed as a triumph of democracy. Yet it has been successfully demonized and represented as a loss of standards and value."

But even Nelson's fellow humanities professors are far from united in seeing the recent developments as a triumph. Writing in *Commonweal* (Apr. 5, 1996), Frank McConnell, an English professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, angrily charges that "the barbarians" have taken over the English departments in most of America's major universities: "We've produced a generation of teachers who cannot read, can barely write, and do not teach." Until recently, academics have been able to brush off arguments that trends such as deconstruction, multiculturalism, and new historicism are "silly, self-serving, anti-educational cults of specialists" because they were often voiced by "mere" journalists. But dissension is increasingly being voiced within the ranks. "When Harold Bloom, surely our most eminent and humane critic, said the same thing . . . the stuck-pig squeals of outrage from the tenured" were loud indeed, McConnell notes.

Sander L. Gilman, a University of Chicago professor and president last year of the 32,000-member Modern Language Association (MLA), is appalled by such assaults "on our profession by our own colleagues," he declares in the association's journal, *PMLA* (May 1996). "These relentless attacks on the humanities in general and on the MLA in particular," he says, "have given comfort to those who desire to downsize and eventually bury our entire system of higher education."

Hilton Kramer and Roger Kimball, editor and managing editor, respectively, of the *New Criterion* (Feb. 1995), do not believe civilization would be diminished by the elimination of much of the intellectual fare at MLA conventions. At the 1994 meeting, they write, literature was "the principal casualty. At almost every turn we encountered an open and agreed-upon hostility to it, and on the rare programs where it was discussed as anything but a disguised form of malign political repression or a 'text' for some variety of 'transgressive' sexuality, it was either derided, condescended to, or openly attacked." The MLA, they concluded, "has fully suc-

ceeded in rendering itself irrelevant to the real world of literary and humanistic study." Yet the conventions roll on, featuring offerings such as "Self-Reflectivity, Narrative Strategies, and the Soap Opera as Postmodern Genre," listed in *PMLA* (Nov. 1995).

"In the early 1970s," Ricardo J. Quinones, a professor of English and comparative literature at Claremont-McKenna College, comments in *Academic Questions* (Winter 1994-95), "we were at a critical turn: the old New Criticism had long been dead. . . . There was a fork in the road and we, American academic criticism and American academic learning, took the wrong turn, making ourselves and our organization the laughingstock of the generally sensible and literate public."

Such critics took heart from the formation in late 1994 of the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics (ALSC)—whose 1,800 members now include such eminent names as Robert Alter, Denis Donoghue, Donald Hall, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., John Hollander, Christopher Ricks, Richard Poirier, and Roger Shattuck. *Philosophy and Literature* (Apr. 1996) presents the fruits of the ALSC's first convention, held in Minneapolis last year.

One of the essays—"The Uncanonical Dante: *The Divine Comedy* and Islamic Philosophy," by Paul A. Cantor of the University of Virginia—is representative. Cantor attacks the simple-minded view that the Western canon "is Eurocentric, that it remains confined within a narrow orbit of European ideas and beliefs, thus excluding all other views of the world." In the canonical *Divine Comedy*, for example, Dante's portrayal of Limbo was influenced by the medieval Islamic philosopher Averroës. Appropriately, Dante placed him in Limbo, "with the ancient philosophers Dante greatly admired, thus giving an honored position to perhaps the most feared and hated thinker in the Christian Middle Ages." It would have been more theologically correct to have put Averroës with the heretics in the *Inferno*. Dante was widely suspected in his day—perhaps with good reason—of harboring heretical thoughts. The Western canon, Cantor concludes, is not so Eurocentric as critics suppose, nor so orthodox as some defenders of it imagine.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Making Money Do Good

“Bad Contribution” by Norman Ornstein, in *The New Republic* (June 10, 1996), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Political campaigns for national office have become more expensive than ever, even though good-government reformers have largely succeeded, over the last two decades, in imposing drastic regulations on the flow of money to political candidates. The results of their earnest efforts, argues Ornstein, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, have been perverse. While most candidates are forced to scramble for cash in unseemly ways, extremely wealthy—and otherwise unlikely—contenders, such as Steve Forbes and Michael Huffington, can spend freely and so dominate, or at least distort, contests for the nation’s high offices.

Despite reformers’ hopes, Ornstein observes, the 1971 ban Congress imposed on political contributions by corporations and the strict limits on what individuals and political action committees (PACs) can give “have not . . . rooted out corruption, ended incumbent advantages, or reduced candidates’ obsession with raising money.” Now reformers are urging another dose of the same kind of medicine, in the form of a bipartisan proposal backed by President Bill Clinton. The measure would ban PACs, put a cap on spending by congressional candidates, require candidates to get at least half of their money in-state—and in the end, Ornstein argues, only make matters worse. “Temptations to corrup-

tion will increase—hitting up business and labor officials and their families one by one to replace PAC contributions (in a fashion much less amenable to disclosure), laundering out-of-state funds into the state, finding ‘in-kind’ ways to spread the message without directly spending money. And, of course, reforms that make it harder to raise money will benefit multimillionaire candidates who do not need to.”

Running a modern congressional campaign is necessarily expensive. “Rather than trying, quixotically, to drive money out of politics,” Ornstein says, “campaign laws should create incentives for candidates to raise the right kinds of money.” Among his suggestions: federal income tax credits for people who make small individual contributions, giving them in effect a dollar-for-dollar rebate, with a tax on PACs (say, 50 cents for every dollar they contribute) to defray the costs. Ornstein also proposes matching vouchers for broadcast time to candidates who raise \$25,000 in small (\$100 or less), in-state, individual contributions. Potential challengers to incumbents ought to be allowed to raise a certain amount of “seed money” from individual contributors who give up to \$10,000, 10 times the current limit. Instead of trying to render money impotent, Ornstein suggests, reformers should harness its power to serve their ends.

How to Settle the Character Question

“Dueling as Politics: Reinterpreting the Burr-Hamilton Duel” by Joanne B. Freeman, in *The William and Mary Quarterly* (Apr. 1996), Box 8781, Williamsburg, Va. 23187-8781.

On the morning of July 11, 1804, Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr stood opposite each other on the heights of Weehawken, New Jersey, each with a pistol in hand, waiting for the command to fire. Hamilton, whose own son had died in a duel, was “strongly opposed” to the illegal practice, and, while Burr was sure his rival had privately attacked his character, his only hard evidence of an insult was a letter writer’s vague reference in an Albany newspaper to a “despicable opinion” about Burr that Hamilton had uttered. Why, then, were the two



The Burr-Hamilton duel, 1804.

men dueling? Emotional excess has been historians' usual answer: Hamilton was suicidal and Burr malicious and murderous. Freeman, a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Virginia, argues that there was a great deal more to it than that.

In this era before full-fledged national political parties, she observes, a politician's personal honor was perhaps his most precious political asset. Duels "were intricate games of dare and counter-dare, ritualized displays of bravery, military prowess, and, above all, willingness to sacrifice one's life for one's honor." From the first "notice" of an insult to the final acknowledgment of "satisfaction" (which might be weeks or even months later), politicians considered themselves engaged in an affair of honor. The ritualized negotiations were an integral part of the duel. Often, shots were never fired.

These contests, Freeman says, "did not result from a sudden flare of temper; politicians timed them strategically, sometimes provoked them deliberately. Often, the two seconds published conflicting newspaper accounts of a duel, each man boasting of his principal's bravery and mocking his oppo-

nent's cowardice. Fought to influence a broad public, synchronized with events of the political timetable, political duels conveyed carefully scripted political messages."

Hamilton (who had served as treasury secretary under President George Washington) looked upon Burr as a dangerous man. One was a Federalist, the other a Democratic-Republican, but their differences ran deeper. When the presidential election of 1800 was thrown into the House of Representatives, Hamilton managed to tip the balance to Thomas Jefferson, whom he merely hated, rather than see victory go to Burr, whom he despised. When Burr ran for governor of New York, Hamilton worked against him, and did indeed privately make "extremely severe" attacks on Burr's character. Six weeks after his humiliating defeat, Burr wrote to Hamilton about the letter in the Albany newspaper, demanding an explanation. If Hamilton again apologized (as he had twice before for remarks about Burr), Burr could brand him a coward. Either an apology or a duel would let Burr keep the support of his followers.

When Hamilton pointed out the inquiry's

The Power of Words

After serving as an assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from 1992 to '94, David T. Ellwood has a new appreciation for the importance of campaign rhetoric, he writes in *The American Prospect* (May-June 1996). He is now academic dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Governing requires a powerful political message as well as good policy. Consider the phrase, "If you work, you shouldn't be poor," which [Bill] Clinton used during the campaign. That simple but powerful concept compelled action when he became president. When I first arrived in Washington, advocates pointed out that in spite of the president's promise, the earned income tax credit that was about to be introduced in the budget was too low to raise the working poor out of poverty. As a result, we added more than \$1 billion to the EITC in an afternoon. It was the last easy billion I found in Washington.

The president's famous promise to "end welfare as we know it" was the most potent sound bite on welfare. It came up so often that we referred to it as EWAKI. Yet while implying that welfare is a massive failure and conveying seriousness of purpose about reform, EWAKI only vaguely suggests that we can replace the current system with something better. Even more destructive was the phrase "two years and you're off." Our pollsters told us that "two" was the single most memorable number of the 1992 campaign. The problem, of course, is that "two years and you're off" seems to imply no help at all after two years. That is never what was intended. Nonetheless, this phrase gave real impetus to plans now before Congress and in the states that call for time limits followed by nothing—no welfare, no jobs, no support—even if the person is willing to work and genuinely cannot find any job.

vagueness, Burr forced the issue by demanding an apology for any derogatory rumors that any remarks by Hamilton might have inspired during their long rivalry. Refusing, Hamilton accepted Burr's challenge, thus complying with what he called the "public prejudice" regarding honor and preserving his "ability to

be in future useful" in public affairs. At the same time, however, he resolved to adhere to his principles and withhold his fire in the field. Though Hamilton was mortally wounded in the duel, Freeman writes, Burr lost the subsequent battle for public approval. He became "a failed duelist."

Congress on the Big Screen

"Hollywood Goes to Congress" by Tom Rosenstiel, in *Media Studies Journal* (Winter 1996), Columbia Univ., 2950 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10027.

The conviction that there is something rotten in Congress is nothing new. Consider Hollywood's first major movie about the institution, Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), in which a Boy Scout leader (Jimmy Stewart) is named to fill a vacancy in the Senate and finds mostly corruption and greed there. Although usually remembered as a celebration of naive idealism, notes Rosenstiel, a congressional correspondent for *Newsweek*, the film endures "because it depicts the subtle and credible humanity of the hack reporters, the bad senator, the overly partisan opposition leader, and the taciturn vice president." Capra's Senate is corrupt, but it also is finally honorable, and the film is "an appeal for people to aim high and not compromise too easily." In the decades since, Rosenstiel contends, the "take" on Congress in this most American of popular art forms has changed, tracing a disturbing arc from hope to despair.

The Senator Was Indiscreet (1948), written by Charles MacArthur (co-author of *The Front Page*) and George S. Kaufman, is a sophisticated farce in which a senator is undone by his diary, filled with Senate secrets. The film "describes a political world filled by hacks and phonies rather than bright but misled men," Rosenstiel notes. But it's all harmless fun: politics "doesn't much matter in people's lives."

The Cold War changed that. Otto Preminger's *Advise and Consent* (1962), based on

the Allen Drury novel, portrays the Senate as it grapples with the controversial nomination of a liberal intellectual for secretary of state. For all the film's melodramatics, Rosenstiel says, it "celebrates the subtle, cold pragmatism of the Kennedy age. . . . The film admires the subtle and complex dimensions of Congress—the friendships between political enemies, men who lead with their minds rather than their emotions."

Fast-forward to the post-Watergate era. Hollywood provided *The Seduction of Joe Tynan* (1979), "a cautionary tale about what happens to a decent senator when he begins to become a national figure," Rosenstiel says. Power (and a beautiful civil rights lawyer) seduce a senator played by Alan Alda. But ultimately, the senator's private sins are forgiven. His country needs him.

That is definitely not the outlook of the most recent film about Congress, *Distinguished Gentleman* (1992), in which a smalltime Florida con man, played by comedian Eddie Murphy, is elected to Congress, where his crooked skills serve him well. The corruption, Rosenstiel points out, now involves not ideology or power but money: "The whole system is rigged, voters are idiots, and campaign rhetoric is laughable. . . . The film is pure anger against a system that seems unredeemable." What is new, in both the public mood and the films that reflect it, Rosenstiel laments, is this sense of "utter hopelessness."

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

The Limits of Global Compassion

"Distant Compassion" by Clifford Orwin, in *The National Interest* (Spring 1996), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Ever since the United States sent 28,000 soldiers to Somalia in 1992 to avert mass starvation in that unhappy African country,

there has been talk about the "CNN factor" in foreign policy—that is, the influence of TV images of the suffering of distant inno-



CNN's Christiane Amanpour reports from Bosnia in 1992. Would the West care about Bosnia were it not for TV?

cents on the public and thus on policymakers. The CNN factor is real, but not all it's cracked up to be, argues Orwin, a political scientist at the University of Toronto.

Without TV, he says, the starvation in

Somalia and the tribal slaughter in Rwanda would not have made much impression on the publics in the Western democracies; nor would the "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia have elevated Bosnia to the summit of foreign policy concerns. No national interests are at stake, Orwin observes. "The widespread response to them has . . . been 'humanitarian,' and has been stimulated

largely by televised images."

But such compassion for people suffering in remote corners of the "global village" is likely to be extremely tenuous. It is generally based only on feelings of common

What Are Soldiers For?

Writing in *Chronicles* (May 1996), A. J. Bacevich, executive director of the Foreign Policy Institute of the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, questions the sentimentalization of the American soldier.

Thirty years later, now elevated to positions of prominence, those who evaded service [during the Vietnam War] now truckle and fawn to demonstrate the depth of their regard for men in uniform. Whether to assuage their consciences, remedy past injustices, or just cater to the folks back home, the motives hardly matter: the effect is to sentimentalize "the troops" in a way that society would never dream of sentimentalizing other professionals—the police, firefighters—upon whom in extremis it must rely.

The military itself is only too happy to play along. The moral leverage embedded in "the troops"—manifested in a sensitivity to casualties without precedent among history's major military powers—provides the Pentagon with enormous political clout. Senior military leaders do not hesitate to exploit that clout for their own purposes. They deflect or modify tasks not to their liking—contributing, for example, to the months of government hesitation and indecision over Haiti and Bosnia. They pass off on others the responsibility for failure—as was the case, for example, when Les Aspin absorbed the blame for botched operations in Mogadishu. . . .

The real culprit lies not in the Pentagon but in a polity that does not take seriously—indeed does not acknowledge—the imperative of defining the prerogatives and obligations of a professional military force in the new circumstances that exist following the Cold War.

The imperative transcends partisan politics, arguments over foreign policy, and the debate over specific controversies such as Bosnia. Indeed, absent a commonly accepted understanding of the risks inherent in being a soldier and the role that Americans expect their military forces to play, coherent debate over policy becomes next to impossible.

humanity, without more specific shared identities (such as being fellow Americans or fellow anticommunists) to reinforce them. "To find, as the Good Samaritan did, a single victim by the roadside is one thing," Orwin notes. "To confront a succession of them on television, widely scattered around the globe, is something else. Our humanitarian impulses may fire, but they will also tend to sputter."

Because humanitarian intervention is not based on pressing national interests, he points out, its viability "depends very much on the perception of it at home. Here too the role of television is both crucial and ambiguous." Underscoring "the ruthlessness of an oppressor" on TV may well provoke more indignation with him and evoke more compassion for his victims, but "it also highlights the risks inherent in continued intervention."

Let 'Em Fight

"The Interservice Competition Solution" by Harvey M. Sapolsky, in *Breakthroughs* (Spring 1996), Defense and Arms Control Studies Program, Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 292 Main St. (E38-603), Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

For many years, reformers attacked "wasteful" interservice rivalries in the U.S. military. Then, in 1986, they won a significant victory. The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act strengthened the position of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and ushered in "jointness": the armed services were supposed to put aside juvenile interservice rivalries and work together to define military needs. Although the services opposed the legislation, they have since become "champions of jointness, their shield against being played off against one another by civilians," writes Sapolsky, a political scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In his view, however, more interservice rivalry would be a good thing.

Interservice competition offers civilian defense leaders several important advantages, he argues. For one, it helps them to get vital information. "What the Navy will not tell us about its vulnerabilities, the Air Force and Army might," he notes. Competition also gives civilian leaders more leverage in their effort to control defense policy. "Ranks of medal-bedecked generals and admirals agreeing on the same position are a formidable force to confront

"It is hardly surprising," Orwin says, "that the responses of Western governments to the Balkan war have deferred" to the ambivalence about intervention that viewers feel. When a high official of one European country was asked, off the record, why his government neither intervened in force in Bosnia nor refrained from intervening, but instead intervened ineffectually, he explained "that such was the policy dictated by the CNN factor." Western governments, Orwin observes, wanted "their interventions to be [tele]visible, while avoiding [tele]visible losses."

It is possible that television's influence will diminish in the future. Ironically, Orwin points out, the medium's constant stream of disturbing images from around the world may eventually have the effect of inuring viewers to distant suffering.

in any Washington policy battle," Sapolsky points out. Civilians do better with "informed and powerful military allies in defense strategy and budget discussions."

Interservice rivalries also spur innovation, he argues. "It was the Navy's fear of losing the nuclear deterrent mission entirely to the Air Force in the 1950s that gave us the Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missile, which in turn reduced our need to deploy hundreds upon hundreds of vulnerable and costly strategic bombers and most of the liquid fueled missiles the Air Force was developing."

The Pentagon's civilian leaders may not be keen to bring back the good old days, Sapolsky says. "Interservice friction produces a great deal of political heat because it usually involves appeals to Congress and the recruitment of partisans among military retirees, contractors, and friendly reporters." Instead of being viewed as the necessary prelude to informed judgment, the political conflict may leave the impression of bad management on the part of the civilian defense officials, especially when accusations begin to fly about "wasteful duplication."

Fortunately, Sapolsky says, there is

another force that will foster more competition: fiscal austerity. “There is no better spur to candor, error correction, and cre-

ativity in defense planning,” he says, “than a very tight budget and a few smart rivals competing for budget share.”

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Race and Real Estate

“Mortgage Lending in Boston: Interpreting HMDA Data” by Alicia H. Munnell, Geoffrey M. B. Tootell, Lynn E. Browne, and James McEneaney, in *The American Economic Review* (Mar. 1996), American Economic Assn., 2014 Broadway, Ste. 305, Nashville, Tenn. 37203.

Blacks and Hispanics seeking to buy a home generally have a harder time getting a mortgage than whites do. Minority applicants are almost three times as likely to be rejected, according to data collected under the federal Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA). But is that because lenders discriminate, illegally, on the basis of race—or is it only because they are selective, quite reasonably, on the basis of economic factors, such as income and credit history? Analyzing additional data for 1990 gathered by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Munnell, a member of the U.S. Council of Economic Advisers, and three colleagues from the Boston Fed contend that the legitimate selectivity explains a large part of the racial gap—but not all of it.

On average, the authors say, minority applicants have less wealth and weaker credit histories than white applicants do, and they need to borrow more relative to the value of

the property they seek to buy. When these disadvantages are taken into account, the difference in rejection rates shrinks considerably. But minority applicants are still 1.8 times more likely to be rejected than comparable white applicants. Minorities’ “adjusted” rejection rate is 28 percent, compared with a rate for whites of 20 percent. It appears, the authors say, that “white applicants may enjoy a general presumption of creditworthiness that black and Hispanic applicants do not.”

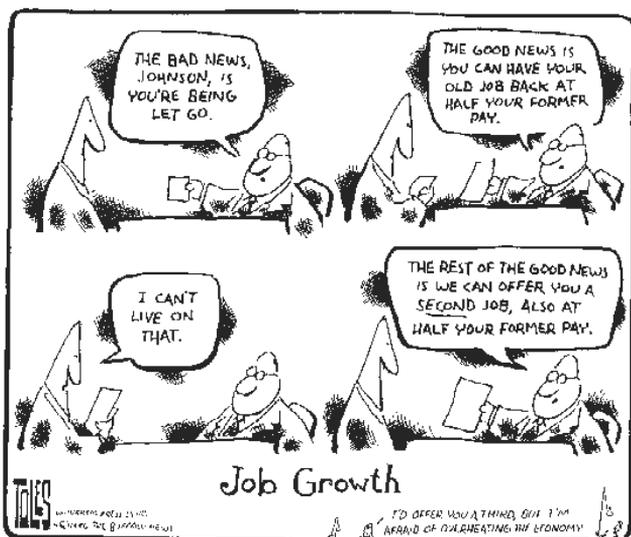
David Horne, of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and other critics have claimed that the Boston Fed study, whose preliminary findings were available four years ago, is ideologically biased and methodologically flawed. Munnell (who was director of research at the Boston Fed when the study was done) and her colleagues now fire back at Horne and his “errors.” The statistical battle goes on.

One Third of a Nation?

“The Crusade That’s Killing Prosperity” by Lester Thurow, in *The American Prospect* (Mar.–Apr. 1996), New Prospect Inc., P.O. Box 383080, Cambridge, Mass. 02238.

Nearly eight million Americans were officially out of work last fall—5.7 percent of the labor force—but they were only a small part of the vast, hidden army of the unemployed and underemployed in the United States, contends Thurow, an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Add to the officially jobless the five to six million not counted because they are not actively seeking work (perhaps having become discouraged), and the 4.5 million



part-time workers who would prefer full-time work—and the total number of unemployed reaches 17 to 18.5 million, or almost 14 percent of the labor force. Then add the more than 18 million *underemployed*: 8.1 million workers in temporary jobs, two million who work “on call,” and 8.5 million self-employed “independent contractors,” many of whom, Thurow says, are downsized professionals “too proud to admit that they are unemployed.” Finally, add the 5.8 million “missing males,” 25 to 60 years old, who show up in census figures but not in labor statistics; some of these men are homeless, others are in the illegal underground economy. All told, Thurow calculates, “about one-third of the American workforce is potentially looking for more work.”

“No wonder workers have no bargaining

power,” Thurow writes. The labor surpluses of the past quarter-century have prevented workers from claiming their fair share of the nation’s growing wealth, which went disproportionately to the more educated and highly skilled. These labor surpluses accelerated the rise of income inequality and the fall of real wages.

“Today’s slack labor markets were produced by the war against inflation” begun in the early 1970s, Thurow says. Although inflation has been defeated—the Consumer Price Index was down to 2.5 percent last year—the Federal Reserve Bank continues to pursue a tight money policy that restricts economic growth. It is time to declare victory over inflation, he concludes, and begin to put the many millions of unemployed and underemployed Americans back to work.

Getting By before Social Security

“The Poverty of Impoverishment Theory: The Economic Well-Being of the Elderly, 1890–1950” by Brian Gratton, and “Myth of the Industrial Scrap Heap: A Revisionist View of Turn-of-the-Century American Retirement” by Susan B. Carter and Richard Sutch, in *The Journal of Economic History* (Mar. 1996), 302 Thayer St., Box 1981, Brown Univ., Providence, R.I. 02912.

During the Progressive era and the New Deal, reformers argued—and historians, by and large, have agreed—that America’s late-19th- and early-20th-century industrialization impoverished the elderly. As workers aged and became less fit for physically demanding factory work, the reformers contended, they were cast onto the proverbial scrap heap. Only after the Social Security Act of 1935, supposedly, was there financial security in old age.

The case no longer seems airtight. It is true, says Gratton, a historian at Arizona State University, looking at median annual earnings between 1890 and 1950, that workers over 50 were generally paid less than younger men. But older men shared in the steady improvement in real income for all workers. Men 60 and older earned \$528 in 1890 and \$936 in 1918 (in constant dollars). More important, however, was the fact that men of all ages could count on their children to help support the family from the time the children were young all the way into adulthood. In 1918, offspring provided nearly one-third of family earnings in households headed by men in their early sixties.

Over the years, moreover, the general rise in real wages allowed families in all age

groups to reduce their reliance on the earnings of offspring.

Not only that, but between 1900 and 1910, about one-fifth of all men who reached age 55 eventually chose “retirement,” living without paid labor or the support of grown children, say Carter, an economist, and Sutch, an economist and historian, at the University of California’s Riverside and Berkeley campuses, respectively. “Individuals saved in order to be able to retire. Many used their savings to purchase assets, which they invested in owner-occupied, owner-operated farms, shops, and homes. Many men voluntarily left the wage sector long before retirement age to work for themselves.” Later, the authors believe, these men liquidated their assets (or rented them to others) to provide adequate income in their old age.

The declining role of children’s earnings before the Social Security Act was enacted indicates that both young and old Americans wanted to get away from that way of providing for old age, which, Gratton notes, can cause a lot of intergenerational friction. “The Depression raised the specter of a return to the old way, and the New Deal offered an attractive alternative.” Americans took it.

Do Green Regulations Pay?

“Toward a New Conception of the Environment-Competitiveness Relationship” by Michael E. Porter and Claas van der Linde, and “Tightening Environmental Standards: The Benefit-Cost or the No-Cost Paradigm?” by Karen Palmer, Wallace E. Oates, and Paul R. Portney, in *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Fall 1995), American Economic Assn., 2014 Broadway, Ste. 305, Nashville, Tenn. 37203-2418.

When federal and state environmental regulations compelled the Dow Chemical Company to shut down certain wastewater evaporation ponds recently, Dow reaped an unexpected benefit. Engineers redesigned the production process to eliminate the need for such ponds, saving \$2.4 million a year in reduced waste at a cost of only \$250,000.

That kind of potential exists throughout corporate America, say Porter, a professor of business administration at Harvard Business School, and van der Linde, a management specialist at St. Gallen University, in Switzerland. Because reducing pollution often means improving the productivity of resource use, strict environmental regulations, if crafted to encourage innovation, can enhance a firm’s competitiveness. Such arguments are increasingly heard among advocates of “green” business practices.

Palmer, Oates, and Portney, all of Resources for the Future, a Washington-based

think tank, are skeptical. “With literally hundreds of thousands of firms subject to environmental regulation in the United States alone, it would be hard *not* to find instances where regulation has seemingly worked to a polluting firm’s advantage.” Officials at Dow Chemical and three other firms Porter and van der Linde cite, for example, each say that despite savings in some instances, environmental protection is “a significant *net* cost to his company.”

That is true in general, as well, Palmer and her co-authors say. In 1992, according to the Commerce Department’s Bureau of Economic Analysis, pollution abatement and control expenditures in the nation came to \$102 billion, while the cost “offsets” were estimated to be less than \$2 billion. “The underlying message from Porter and van der Linde about environmental regulation is not to worry, because it really won’t be all that expensive. But it will.”

SOCIETY

Here Comes the Groom . . .

A Survey of Recent Articles

Love and marriage, says the old song, go together like a horse and carriage. These days, however, the horse, though

healthy, may well elect to remain unhitched, and the shiny new carriage may soon be abandoned by the side of the road. In 1994,

Hip Is Out

American culture is hip—and that’s a real bummer, Tom Frank, editor in chief of *The Baffler*, declares in *The Nation* (Apr. 1, 1996).

Pick up any recent book of management theory: Today, hip is the orthodoxy of Information Age capitalism. It’s being your own dog, Reebok letting U.B.U., Finding Your Own Road in a Saab; it’s Ginsberg shilling for the Gap and William Burroughs for Nike; it’s business texts quoting Gurdjieff and Bob Dylan and bearing titles like Thriving on Chaos and The Age of Unreason. . . .

Clearly, hip is exhausted as a mode of dissent. As the affluent society amid which it once made some sense drains away, we need to recover that much more powerful strain of dissent that built the affluent society in the first place, to rediscover the language of class, the non-market-friendly concept of industrial democracy. Leave hip to the M.B.A.s.

people who were divorced or had never married together constituted almost 33 percent of the adult population, and the proportion of children living in one-parent families reached 31 percent.

With the institution of marriage thus in a dangerously weakened condition, along comes a proposal to change its very definition—to permit members of the same sex to wed. Proponents, such as Andrew Sullivan, author of *Virtually Normal* (1995), contend that this would be good for homosexuals and good for society. Opponents, such as political scientist James Q. Wilson, author of *The Moral Sense* (1993), argue that such a change could further undermine an already wobbly institution.

The issue appears to be coming to a head. Hawaii's Supreme Court held in 1993 that denying marriage licenses to same-sex couples is at odds with that state's constitution, which bars discrimination on the basis of sex. Even as Hawaii's courts reconsider the issue, Congress has been pondering a bill that would free the states of the Constitutional requirement to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. The bill also would deny federal recognition to such unions. President Bill Clinton has said he would sign such a measure if it reaches his desk.

"Let them wed," argue the editors of the *Economist* (Jan. 6, 1996). "Homosexuals need emotional and economic stability no less than heterosexuals—and society surely benefits when they have it. . . . Homosexuals do not choose their condition; indeed, they often try desperately hard, sometimes to the point of suicide, to avoid it. However, they are less and less willing either to hide or to lead lives of celibacy. For society, the real choice is between homosexual marriage and homosexual alienation. No social interest is served by choosing the latter."

For the government to withhold its sanction from same-sex marriages, maintains Andrew Sullivan, former editor of the *New Republic* (May 6, 1996), is to make "the most profound statement our society can make that homosexual love is simply not as good as heterosexual love; that gay lives and commitments and hopes are simply worth less."

But a marriage license "is not a prize for good citizenship, not a recognition of personal integrity, not a symbol of equality," observes Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, editor

of *Commonweal* (Sept. 22, 1995). "It is the hope and provision for future citizens." Men and women are "licensed" by the state, she says, "to form marriages into which children are born, cared for, educated, and raised to be good citizens, and in which a stable family provides material and spiritual resources for both its members and its community."

Sullivan and others liken gay marriage to a childless heterosexual union: if the latter sort of wedlock is permitted, why not the former? The fact that some couples go childless or divorce, says Steinfels, does not alter the defining purpose of marriage as an institution. If the marriage bond is first of all a procreative one, then it necessarily must involve a man and a woman.

But marriage serves important social purposes other than rearing children, Jonathan Rauch, author of *Demosclerosis: The Silent Killer of American Government* (1994), points out in the *New Republic* (May 6, 1996). These purposes include "domesticating men and providing reliable caregivers. Both purposes are critical to the functioning of a humane and stable society, and both are much better served by marriage—that is, by one-to-one lifelong commitment—than by any other institution." Whether the marriage joins people of different sexes or the same one is immaterial.

So-called domestic partnerships, recognized in some places as a sort of "marriage-lite" for homosexuals, and qualifying them for health insurance, inheritance rights, and other benefits, are rejected by leading proponents of gay marriage. The concept of "domestic partnership" is so vague, Sullivan pointed out long ago in the *New Republic* (Aug. 28, 1989), that all sorts of "partners" who live together, gay or straight or not even in a sexual relationship at all, might qualify, getting "a vast array of entitlements" at little cost. Gay marriage "places more responsibilities upon gays."

Elizabeth Kristol, a Cincinnati-based writer, is skeptical about the advocates' portrait of gay marriage. Reviewing Sullivan's book in *First Things* (Jan. 1996), she points out that he fails to address the difference in behavior between most lesbians and most gay men: that the former tend to form long-term monogamous relationships, whereas the latter do not. On what marriage between gay men would be like in this regard, "Sullivan

sends us a mixed message.” On the one hand, she says, he portrays homosexuals “as sharing the same emotions, longings, and dreams as heterosexuals,” but on the other, he says that in gay relationships, there is (in Sullivan’s words), “more likely to be a greater understanding of the need for extramarital outlets between two men than between a man and a woman; and again, the lack of children gives gay couples greater freedom.”

Gay marriage would likely seem a parody

to most people, one that could further weaken an already beleaguered institution, James Q. Wilson suspects. Writing in *Commentary* (March 1996), he observes: “To me, the chief limitation of Sullivan’s view is that it presupposes that marriage would have the same domesticating effect on homosexual members as it has on heterosexuals, while leaving the latter largely unaffected. Those are very large assumptions that no modern society has ever tested.”

Farewell to a Factoid

“A Re-evaluation of the Economic Consequences of Divorce” by Richard R. Peterson, “The Economic Consequences of Divorce Are Still Unequal” by Lenore J. Weitzman, and “Statistical Errors, Faulty Conclusions, Misguided Policy: Reply to Weitzman” by Peterson, in *American Sociological Review* (June 1996), Dept. of Sociology, Univ. of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz. 85721.

In the ongoing debate about the consequences of relaxed divorce laws, one statistic has stood out: after divorce, women suffer a 73 percent decline in their standard of living, while men experience a 42 percent increase. This staggering finding first appeared in sociologist Lenore Weitzman’s award-winning 1985 book, *The Divorce Revolution*, and it has been repeated hundreds of times since, not only in scholarly journals but in newspapers, magazines, and court cases. Yet the dramatic statistic, Peterson contends—and Weitzman now concedes—is simply wrong.

Weitzman’s finding was based on interviews with people who were divorced in Los Angeles in 1977, seven years after the state introduced a “no-fault” divorce law; such laws allow a spouse to win a divorce without proving a “fault” such as adultery. This and other reforms (including equal division of marital property) were supposed to put women on an equal footing with men, but Weitzman’s work suggested that women (and children) now fared much worse. (All 50 states since have adopted some form of no-fault law.)

Peterson, a sociologist at the Social Science Research Council in New York,

replicated Weitzman’s analysis, using corrected data he derived from Weitzman’s raw data. His re-analysis found a 27 percent average decline in women’s standard of living and a 10 percent increase in men’s. These results are roughly in line with the studies done before Weitzman’s.

Although he performed various operations on the data, Peterson says he is at a loss to explain how Weitzman got her inaccurate results. So is Weitzman, who says that her own original corrected data file no longer exists. She claims that she herself was originally skeptical about the 73 percent figure but that “my computer expert” verified it, “and I accepted that.”

The “major finding” of her book, she says, still stands: “Women and children are unfairly and disproportionately burdened by divorce.” True, responds Peterson, but her argument about no-fault divorce and related reforms does not. Although she herself did not favor a return to fault-based divorce, others who did use her inaccurate data to bolster their case. But rolling back no-fault, it now appears, may not be much help to divorced women and their children.

Baseball Goes Uptown

“The Future of Baseball” by Shannon Dortch, in *American Demographics* (Apr. 1996), 127 W. State St., Ithaca, N.Y. 14850.

A baseball crowd “is a beer-drinking crowd, not a mixed-drink crowd,” Bill Veeck, the late owner of the Chicago White Sox, once observed. He never saw the cappuccino

and cheesecake stands at Oriole Park at Camden Yards in Baltimore, notes Dortch, senior editor of *American Demographics*. Baseball today, she argues, is a sport for the

Regarding Myself

Writing in *Commentary* (Feb. 1996), Joseph Adelson, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, considers the state of scientific knowledge concerning one of the decade's most highly prized commodities.

So what, in the end, do we know about self-esteem? As huge as is the outpouring of books designed to laud and to enhance this elusive quality, the amount of serious research or theoretical writing on the subject is surprisingly small. Until just a few years ago, most textbooks in developmental psychology did not even list self-esteem in the index.

As for actual findings, few of them come as a surprise. The most important is that, like almost all other traits of personality, self-esteem starts early and stays late. Those who think either well or poorly of themselves as young children will continue to do so into adulthood, and, within limits, under almost any circumstances. Although some of our greatest dramas and works of fiction are built around acts of personal transformation, they are dramas precisely because they are improbable—out of the ordinary. In the typical course of events we find continuity: Johnny, a troublesome child at four, is troublesome at nine, and by the time he reaches adolescence he is a handful, perhaps even beyond reach.

Self-esteem, then, is very deeply rooted, and once in place it is hard—not impossible, but hard—to dislodge or overcome. I put this so strongly precisely because the self-esteem literature, particularly in the field of education, does not. Rather, rejecting the notion that character is destiny, it prefers in its utopian way to believe in the infinite openness of personality. In this literature, self-esteem is not inherent but circumstantial, and can be raised or lowered by a teacher's behavior. It is also extraordinarily delicate, and easily bruised.

*I have already indicated my skepticism with regard to this last assertion, which has become bedrock to the entire education industry. As Charles Sykes spells out in gruesome detail in his recent book, *Dumbing Down Our Kids*, the need to preserve a student's good opinion of himself is now assumed by educators to take clear priority over achieving academic excellence; the latter, indeed, is seen as a weapon aimed at the former, and the teacher's primary task is to blunt that weapon. For—the reasoning goes—if the work is too hard, the child will be discouraged and will be unable to learn. As Sykes takes pains to point out, there is no evidence at all to support this idea; it is a fiction, born of ideology.*

affluent and in danger of becoming the ex-national pastime.

The 1994–95 strike by (wealthy) players against (wealthy) owners seems to have permanently turned off a lot of fans, not least working-class ones. Only 14 percent of adults in blue-collar and lower-paid white-collar jobs went to the ballparks last year, a decline of about four percentage points since 1993. Among physicians, lawyers, and other professionals, in contrast, attendance remained the same: 21 percent.

It's not just the strike that's responsible. The average cost of a day at a major league ballpark for a family of four last year totaled \$97.25. (That bought four average-priced tickets, two small draft beers, two small soft

drinks, four hot dogs, two game programs, two souvenir caps, and one parking space).

In smaller markets, such as Cincinnati, the tab can be much smaller. Teams such as the Reds depend heavily on ticket and concession sales and so remain "keenly aware of the need to keep baseball affordable," Dortch observes. But in the biggest markets, such as New York and Los Angeles, revenue from TV broadcasts matters most. Many owners, she says, see television executives as the most important "fans," not the bleacher bums. This view may prove very shortsighted. The percentage of adults who watch baseball on TV dropped to 22 percent last year, down sharply from 31 percent in 1993.

Cheat to Compete

“What We Know about Cheating in College” by Donald L. McCabe and Linda Klebe Trevino, in *Change* (Jan.–Feb. 1996), Heldref Publications, 1319 18th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-1802.

Although it doesn't show up in the glossy “viewbooks” that colleges give out every year to prospective students, cheating on exams has long been a feature of undergraduate life. And McCabe and Trevino, organization specialists at Rutgers University and Pennsylvania State University, respectively, report that it seems to have become much more common in recent decades.

Surveys of students at nine state universities found that the proportion admitting to copying test answers doubled between 1963 and '93, reaching 52 percent. The proportion admitting to helping another student to cheat rose from 23 percent to 37 percent, while the share of those who said they used crib notes jumped from 16 percent to 27 percent. Of the nearly 1,800 students surveyed in 1993, 38 percent said they had cheated on tests

more than three times.

According to the authors, female students are responsible for the increased cheating on exams. Whereas only 59 percent of the women in 1963 admitted having cheated at least once, three decades later, 70 percent did. In that, women were merely achieving parity with men.

“Thirty years ago,” McCabe and Trevino explain, “fewer women were competing with men in majors such as business, science, and engineering,” in which student cheating is rife.

One hopeful sign, from a 1990–91 survey of students at small, highly selective colleges: only 29 percent at schools with honor codes said they had cheated at least once, compared with 53 percent at schools without honor codes.

Orphanages, Pro and Con

“The Rise and Demise of the American Orphanage” by Dale Keiger, in *Johns Hopkins Magazine* (Apr. 1996), 212 Whitehead Hall, Johns Hopkins Univ., 3400 N. Charles St., Baltimore, Md. 21218–2692; “Orphanages: The Real Story” by Richard B. McKenzie, in *The Public Interest* (Spring 1996), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich ignited a firestorm a while back when he recommended a return to orphanages for abused and neglected children as part of an overhaul of the wel-

the modern social-welfare system.

Orphanages first appeared in significant numbers in the United States in the early 19th century, Crenson tells *Johns Hopkins Magazine* senior writer Keiger. They were founded by private charities as well as by states and counties. By 1900, according to Crenson, author of a forthcoming book, *The Invisible Orphanage: A Pre-history of the American Welfare System*, there were close to 1,000 of the institutions, housing some 100,000 youngsters. No more than 10 to 20 percent of the children were orphans; most had parents who were alive but destitute, unwilling to care for them, or considered unfit.

Although some 19th-century orphanages were well run and had compassionate adults in charge, conditions at many others left a lot to be desired. Many of the institutions were highly regimented, with corporal



A century ago, boys at the House of Industry, a New York City orphanage, learned useful trades.

fare system. Ironically, notes Matthew Crenson, a political scientist at Johns Hopkins University, it was reaction to the problems with orphanages that originally paved the way for

punishment common. Older boys often preyed, in some cases sexually, on younger ones.

Progressives such as Jane Addams wanted to abolish the institution. Keiger writes that the 1909 White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, convened during Theodore Roosevelt's presidency, declared "that children should not be removed from their families except for urgent and compelling reasons, of which destitution was not one. If necessary, poor families should receive financial aid to support their children." Foster families were to be preferred for children who did need to be taken from their parents.

"The conference had a phenomenal impact," Crenson says. By 1920, 40 states had acted to provide so-called mothers' pensions. Although most states confined the aid to widows and wives of disabled fathers, a few states also assisted unwed mothers. These pensions,

Crenson says, were a precursor to the modern welfare system.

The orphanage did not completely disappear. McKenzie, a business professor at the University of California, Irvine, and the author of *The Home: A Memoir of Growing Up in an Orphanage*, reports on a survey of alumni, all age 44 or older now, of three modern orphanages. Measured by median income, jobless rate, education, time in prison, and other criteria, McKenzie says, the alumni seem to have done better than their counterparts in the general population. More than 92 percent said that, if they'd had the choice, they would have preferred their orphanage to foster care, and 75 percent said they would have favored their orphanage over the available members of their own families. At least some orphanages, McKenzie concludes, "appear to have known how to break the cycles of poverty, neglect, and abuse for hordes of children."

PRESS & MEDIA

The Suicide of the Newspaper

A Survey of Recent Articles

Wall Street danced on *New York Newsday's* grave yesterday," the *New York Daily News* reported last year after Times Mirror Company stock jumped on the news that it would shut down the 10-year-old daily. Times Mirror CEO Mark H. Willes then turned his attention to the chain's flagship paper, the highly regarded and very profitable *Los Angeles Times*. One-hundred-and-fifty positions there were slashed, and numerous special sections of the paper were eliminated. These dramatic acts were not simply the work of one crazed "cereal killer" (as Willes, who had come to Times Mirror from General Mills, soon found himself designated). They were part of a widespread trend, one that has some analysts worried that the days of the good newspapers now in existence may be numbered.

In business jargon, "the 'core competency' of newspapers—that service that no one else can do better—is reporting the news," notes Alex S. Jones, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. "Yet throughout the nation," he writes in *Nieman Reports* (Spring 1996), "news budgets are being squeezed, news staffs depleted, news travel curtailed, news holes [total space for news] reduced, and the news

itself dumbed down." Challenged by the electronic "information superhighway," the nation's newspaper executives, Jones says, are busily undermining "the very thing that is the absolute essential key to their survival."

Why? Not because newspapers are unprofitable, John Morton, a media analyst for a Wall Street firm, points out in the same issue of *Nieman Reports*. Newspapers have serious problems—notably, waning circulation and readership, particularly among young people, and, as a result, some restless advertisers—but lack of profits is generally not one of them. Profitability in the newspaper industry is roughly twice the average for Fortune 500 firms, Morton says. Newspaper executives want to increase that to three or four times the average. This is not simple greed on their part—they are responding to what Morton calls "the inflated level of expectations" of shareholders.

In the mid-1980s, the newspaper business thrived. "Newspaper unions had been generally neutralized and high technology allowed huge savings in production costs," Alex Jones notes. "Most newspapers were the only ones

A Reporter's Reporter

Reading the two volumes of the Library of America's *Reporting World War II* (1995), a compilation of journalism from the war years, *Newsday* columnist Murray Kempton reflects in *Nieman Reports* (Spring 1996) on what being a reporter is all about.

What struck me most in these men and women was not just how magnificently they rose to the occasion but how much more they were able to learn than their editors at the home desk or their audience at far civilian remove.

These reporters had done what Stein told Marlowe in Lord Jim that we all must do, which is to "in the destructive element immerse." The destructive element is where the shock of recognition happens to be far more accessible to those who are buffeted than to those who buffet. As the back knows more than the lash, the target knows more than the gun. . . .

These reporters came upon that lesson in the only place they could meet it, as men and women not of the rear echelon but of the line. Of all this noble company, Ernie Pyle, whom I never had much chance to read at the time, stands above the rest because he most fully incarnated what a reporter ought to be.

Pyle went again and again wherever the wont extremes waited, the unscripted man bound by conscience to the comradeship of the conscripted, and enduring by free will what they were compelled to endure by necessity. By instinct, in the destructive element he immersed.

in town, and the Reagan economy was booming." In 1986, newspapers with a circulation of about 50,000 reported average profits of more than 20 percent; at some bottom line-oriented chains, they were double that.

Then profit margins began to shrink. "The leveraged buyout frenzy of the 1980s sank the advertising budgets of several major department store chains," Morton explains, and other retailers also cut back. The 1990 recession bit deeply into classified ads, which provided 42 percent of all advertising revenues.

In 1991, average profit margins hit a bottom of about 12 percent. Shareholders sent management a message: get the profit margins back up. Cost cutting and cereal killers followed. "New York *Newsday* wasn't killed because Willes worried it would run forever at a loss," Sydney H. Schanberg, a former *New York Newsday* columnist, asserts in the *Washington Monthly* (March 1996). "It was killed because a paper of its quality was not going to earn the massive profits that would make him a hero on Wall Street."

Columnist Richard Harwood, in the *Washington Post* (July 31, 1995; Apr. 2, 1996), takes a more skeptical view. In the late 1970s, after profit margins started to soar, newspapers began "a hiring binge," even as the number of dailies declined; now, many

papers are trimming back. He is unsentimental about *New York Newsday's* demise: "The paper's circulation . . . was less than 250,000, a poor fourth in a four-paper market."

Yet even the family-controlled *New York Times*, which highly values news gathering, has felt obliged to cut costs modestly to boost profit margins, writes the *New Yorker's* (June 10, 1996) Ken Auletta. There is no question that the market is putting intense pressures on managers. The 33 daily newspapers in the Knight-Ridder chain, if sold separately at an average value of \$1,800 per paying reader, would bring a total of \$6.5 billion, notes Philip Meyer, a veteran journalist who teaches at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in *American Journalism Review* (Dec. 1995). Yet the company's stock is worth only \$3.2 billion. A takeover bidder could, in theory, buy the company and sell off the newspapers at a profit.

Significant cutbacks are under way at Knight-Ridder's *Miami Herald*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *Philadelphia Daily News*, reports Susan Paterno, who teaches journalism at Chapman University, in *American Journalism Review* (Jan.-Feb. 1996). Such pressures undoubtedly helped to persuade

Gene Roberts, the *Inquirer's* widely respected executive editor, to take early retirement in 1990. (He is now managing editor of the *New York Times*.) "If death comes to newspapers," he told Paterno,

"it'll be death by suicide. It'll be because we starved ourselves to death in the name of becoming healthier companies, starved to death our newsrooms, the very thing that makes it possible for us to exist."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Piety or Faith?

"Decencies for Skeptics" by Roger Scruton, in *City Journal* (Spring 1996),
Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Distressed by America's social ills, many American conservatives look to a revival of organized religion for salvation. It's not just genuine believers, says Scruton, editor of the *Salisbury Review*, a British conservative journal. "All too often," he writes, the search for a religious solution to the problems of secular society "is conducted in a spirit of despair by people who are as infected by the surrounding nihilism as those whose behavior they wish to rectify. Their message is simple: 'God is Dead—but don't spread it around.'"

But it already has been spread around, Scruton says. Benjamin Disraeli and many other 19th-century conservatives could combine private skepticism with public support of the established church. Yet in a time of widespread skepticism, pretending makes little sense—and may even be harmful. In an age without faith, Scruton argues, it is still possible to do as the ancient Chinese and Romans did—"to cultivate a habit of piety, while being skeptical toward religious doctrine." Piety, which involves respect for the

dead and for the wisdom embodied in the inherited customs of society, can serve as an antidote to the "principal damage" done by liberalism, which "has come from the relentless scoffing at ordinary prohibitions and decencies, and the shrill advocacy of 'alternatives' that ordinary people are unable in their hearts to recognize." Crime, drug abuse, illegitimacy, and easy divorce, Scruton says, are rooted in a failure to acknowledge "obligations that are stronger than desire."

The conservatives who hope that a return to religious faith will safeguard "natural piety" are instead endangering this reverent attitude, Scruton maintains, because they make it seem irrational. "But piety is not irrational at all. It is the voice that tells us that the goods of society are inherited and could never be rediscovered by the generation that foolishly rejects them. . . . [It] speaks of duties that lie above and beyond our desires and contracts. If people cease to recognize such duties, society will crumble."

Mr. Kant's Peace Plan

"Kant's Third Image: Systemic Sources of the Liberal Peace" by Wade I. Huntley, in *International Studies Quarterly* (Mar. 1996), 210 Woodburn Hall, Dept. of Political Science, Indiana Univ., Bloomington, Ind. 47405-6001.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who envisioned the liberal republic as the foundation of "perpetual peace," is the intellectual godfather of the foreign policy thinkers today who argue that spreading democracy abroad should be the chief goal of U.S. policy overseas. After all, they say, liberal democratic states do not wage war with one another.

Neorealist critics such as Kenneth Waltz contend that Kant and these modern liberal internationalists neglect the permanent condition of anarchy that prevails among

states, making the threat of war ever present. Kant's heirs respond that liberal states can, in fact, overcome the effects of international anarchy. Largely overlooked in this debate, argues Huntley, who obtained



Immanuel Kant

his doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley in 1993, is the large role that Kant himself gave to anarchy and conflict in bringing about the liberal peace.

In “Perpetual Peace” (1796), Kant argued that republics were inherently inclined toward peace, since citizens are more reluctant than kings to declare war. Republics could establish the rule of law among themselves by creating a federation of free states. War and the threat of war, in Kant’s view, serve as the “most essential” force for peace. “The growth of republics, and of the rule of

law among them (embodied in their federation),” Huntley explains, “is not an intentional creation as much as a gradual product of accumulating self-interested reactions to lawlessness and violence. Conflict is the fountainhead of progress—and so the propensity for war itself sows the seeds of war’s end.”

But “perpetual peace” was an ideal that might be destined, Kant said, “forever to remain a pious hope.” Since backsliding by a republic was always a possibility, peace would never be perfectly secured.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Too Pretty to Be True?

“Do We Have the Structure of DNA Right?” by Robert Root-Bernstein, in *Art Journal* (Spring 1996), College Art Assn., 275 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001.

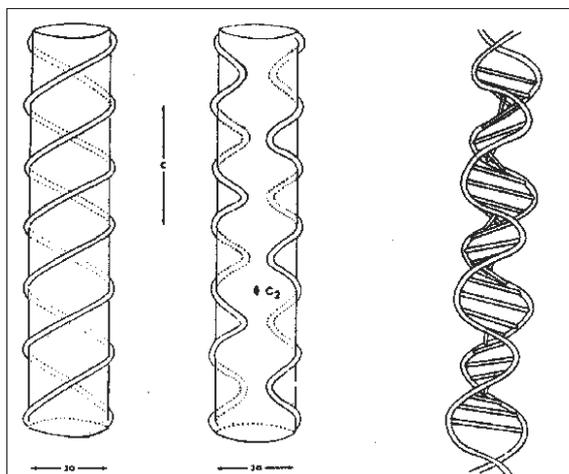
The double helix of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is one of the icons of the modern age. What most textbooks do not reveal, says Root-Bernstein, a professor of physiology at Michigan State University, is the real possibility that this is *not* the structure of DNA.

times since. However, the famous double-helix model remains “a bit doubtful,” Root-Bernstein says.

A big problem is that it is not clear how a DNA double helix is unwound so as to allow it to be replicated. Unwinding the DNA strands within the cell nucleus, Root-Bernstein says, would be like unwinding several hundred kilometers of twisted strands with the thickness of fishing line, inside a basketball: “Where does the energy come from to perform the unwinding of the strands? What mechanism can be imagined that could perform such a feat, even if the energy were available to do it?”

Watson and Crick themselves recognized in 1953 that the unwinding problem was “formidable,” and they noted a possible alternative to the double helix: a “ribbonlike” or “side-by-side” structure, in which the two chains were joined together by the base pairs but did not twist about each other. But the double helix, Root-Bernstein says, had an aesthetic appeal for the two scientists that the ribbon-like alternative did not. As Watson himself often said, the double helix “was too pretty not to be true.”

Nevertheless, it may not be true, as some scientists have argued since the 1970s. Most researchers, however, cling to the double helix, avoiding the unwinding problems, Root-Bernstein says, by asserting “that the



DNA puzzle: Do the chains twine around each other (left), or are they “side-by-side” (center) and joined by base pairs (right)?

Biologists James Watson and Francis Crick proposed the double helix (with two chains twining around each other, connected by “steps” formed by pairs of nucleic-acid bases) as the structure in 1953, and later won the Nobel Prize for their work. Most features of their proposal—including the base-pairing idea, which is the basis for how information is encoded in genes—have been verified many

Silicon Real Estate

Gordon E. Moore, chairman of Intel Corporation, proposes in *Daedalus* (Spring 1996) an arresting image of the semiconductor.

Our industry sells an area on the silicon wafer for about a billion dollars an acre; this has remained roughly constant since the advent of the integrated circuit. By making things smaller, development density is increased. More function can be built on a given area, causing the price of electronic functions to be cheaper and cheaper.

strands are repeatedly broken and reattached by enzymes during the replication process." Such mechanisms may be nature's ad hoc

way of sidestepping the problems with the double helix, he observes, but they hardly enhance its aesthetic appeal.

Electromagnetism Unplugged

"Apocalypse Not" by Jon Palfreman, in *Technology Review* (Apr. 1996), Bldg. W59, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

For more than 15 years, some scientists, journalists, and activists have been warning that the electromagnetic radiation generated by electric power lines may cause cancer or other diseases. Journalist Paul Brodeur, in a much-noted series in the *New Yorker* (and later in a book, *The Great Power-Line Coverup* [1993]), wrote about a high incidence of cancers among the residents of a Connecticut street and the staff of a California school, both near power substations. Despite such "smoke," there is no convincing evidence of any "fire," maintains Palfreman, a senior producer at WGBH, Boston's public TV station, where he specializes in medical-political issues.

Of some four dozen epidemiological studies, he points out, none have established any cause-and-effect relationship between proximity to electromagnetic fields and disease. The high incidence of cancer Brodeur found, Palfreman notes, could well be simply the result of chance.

The proposition that power lines' electro-

magnetic fields cause cancers or other diseases is unlikely in the first place, Palfreman says, given the extensive existing knowledge about the interaction of such fields with living tissue and what one physicist calls the "absolutely minuscule" strength of the fields involved. "Cancer is usually caused when very energetic radiation, or some chemical agent, directly breaks or rearranges DNA," he observes. "But the forces holding DNA molecules together are millions of times larger than any force that electromagnetic fields from power lines could produce."

Laboratory studies conducted as part of a \$65 million federal program under the auspices of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences have so far failed to find any adverse health effects in lab animals from electromagnetic fields.

"Even if we suppose that magnetic fields from power lines do cause cancer," Palfreman points out, "the fact that the connection has been so hard to prove means that, by definition, the risk cannot be large."

The Tinted City

"City Lights" by James Bradley, in *Metropolis* (April 1996), 177 E. 87th St., New York, N.Y. 10128.

Since the 1970s, America's cities have literally been cast in an entirely new light. During that decade, municipalities across the country began replacing their old incandescent and mercury-vapor streetlights with

more energy-efficient, high-pressure sodium lamps. The change, says Bradley, a New York writer, has hurt city street life.

The sodium lamps emit a yellowish light that casts a strange, muddy pall over the

streetscape and, apparently, the human spirit. Near his own Brooklyn home, Bradley notes, Eastern and Ocean parkways are much alike during the day. But on warm nights, Eastern Parkway throbs with life while Ocean Parkway is an urban desert. Ocean is illuminated by sodium lights, while Eastern is lit by newer metal-halide lamps that produce something much closer to the full-spectrum “white” light of the sun. In car dealerships and shopping mall parking lots, where bad lighting can hurt sales, metal-halide lights are invariably used. Costs are the rub. Metal-halide lights burn out relatively quickly. In 1992, the city of Toronto judged that a switch to the aesthetically superior lighting would triple maintenance out-

lays—yet made the change anyway.

Oddly, anti-light-pollution activists are adamantly opposed to the new technology. Astronomer David Crawford, executive director of the International Dark Sky Association, claims that it creates more glare than sodium lights. (And astronomers can more easily filter out interference from sodium lights.) But Bradley says that many specialists believe that the glare is caused by poor fixture design, not the lamps.

Where will it all end? Not in a world lit by metal-halide alone, Bradley hopes. As one lighting designer told him, using different kinds of lighting as each situation demands is the secret to creating a more “textured nighttime experience.”

Smart, Smart, Stupid

“What Should We Ask about Intelligence?” by Robert J. Sternberg, in *The American Scholar* (Spring 1996), Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Almost everyone knows of a bright, even brilliant person who succeeds in school but flunks in life. Is such an individual really intelligent? Yes and no, says Sternberg, a professor of psychology and education at Yale University.

Traditionalists in the controversial field of intelligence take much too narrow a view of what intelligence is, he contends. (See “The IQ Controversy,” *WQ*, Spring ’96, pp. 133–35.) He and other “revolutionaries,” notably Harvard University psychologist Howard Gardner, have been trying to expand the conventional horizons. Every major college textbook in introductory psychology “now prominently features two of the revolutionary theories,” Sternberg’s and Gardner’s.

In Sternberg’s view, intelligence has three major aspects: analytical, creative, and practical. IQ tests and the like tend to weigh analytical skills most, he writes, and these are

likewise emphasized in most school curricula (which is why such tests can predict school achievement fairly well). In fact, Sternberg says, schools sometimes even penalize the exercise of creative and practical skills, “as when students who depart from a teacher’s expectations or point of view find themselves graded down for having done so.”

Gardner favors a different typology, with seven “relatively independent intelligences”: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and “intrapersonal” (self-knowledge).

If human intelligence is as broad as he and Gardner believe, Sternberg argues, colleges and universities are misguided when they reject students because of low scores on SATs and other standardized tests. Such tests may indeed indicate likely class grades. But—as everybody with common sense knows—grades aren’t everything.

ARTS & LETTERS

The Failure of Public Art

“What Happens when American Art Goes Public” by Peter Plagens, in *New England Review* (Summer 1995), Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vt. 05753.

Works of “public art” are everywhere to be seen these days, from downtown plazas and college campuses to office-building lawns

and lobbies. But whether sponsored by governments, universities, or corporations, argues Plagens, who is a painter and art critic

ic, public art usually doesn't work: either it displeases the public (or some angry, mobilized faction), or it simply is not good art.

Over the last dozen years, he says, most of the sculptures and other works of public art he has seen have fit the latter category. They are "arty but not too arty, playful but not too playful, colorful but not too colorful, and avant-garde but not too avant-garde." In short: mediocre. The "demi-sculptures" and "glorified benches" that have been materializing in America's public spaces are like "Fisher-Price toys for white-collar adults: you can walk on them, climb on them, play on them, and eat lunch on them," yet "for all their putatively progressive social trappings" they are "boring and even silly."

Unlike older public art by Alexander Calder and other artists, who exhibited mainly in galleries and museums, many of the new monuments are the work of artists who have left the studio behind. They go "from arts council to arts council, municipality to municipality, state to state . . . in answer to calls for public works of art." The resulting public art fre-

quently is "compromised and tepid."

Two works of public art that succeeded as art, in Plagens's view, prove the rule. Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.—"probably the best 20th-century work of public art in America"—is regarded as a great success. But when Lin's design was criticized as dishonoring those who had fought, Frederick Hart's more traditional sculpture of three soldiers was added, Plagens points out. "The society that commissioned [Lin's work] could not drink it down full." The lesson is even clearer in the case of Richard Serra's "Tilted Arc," a 120-foot-long, 12-foot-high wall of brown, stained steel that was placed in Foley Plaza in downtown Manhattan in 1981. So loud were the howls of protest from federal workers who used the plaza that the offending work (for which the government had paid \$175,000) was eventually removed (at a cost of \$50,000). Some critics blamed the debacle on the arrogant artist, but Plagens believes that "Tilted Arc" failed as public art chiefly because it worked as art: its "real sin was to disturb."

Revenge of the Maus

"Art Spiegelman's *Maus*: Graphic Art and the Holocaust" by Thomas Doherty, in *American Literature* (Mar. 1996), Box 90020, Duke Univ., Durham, N.C. 27708-0020.

A Holocaust comic book seems an unlikely, if not indeed obscene, conceit, yet Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1986, 1991), awarded a special Pulitzer citation in 1992, made it

work. In this two-volume cartoon biography of his father, a survivor of Auschwitz, Spiegelman cast the Nazis as snarling cats, Jews as forlorn mice, and Poles as stupid pigs.

IF YOU HAD STILL A HEALTHY BODY TO WORK, THEY PASSED YOU THROUGH AND GAVE YOU ANOTHER UNIFORM UNTIL IT CAME THE NEXT SELEKTION...



The language and tone of Spiegelman's comic book work are tempered and austere.

In a way, contends Doherty, a professor of American studies at Brandeis University, Spiegelman was turning the Nazis' own view of art against them.

Nazism was not only a force in history but an aesthetic stance, critics such as Hans-Jurgen Syberberg have maintained. The Nazis condemned abstract impressionism and other "degenerate art," and insisted that art should celebrate perfection in form. This vision was expressed most vividly in such films as *Triumph of the Will* (1935), a documentary of the 1934 Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg, in which filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl "worshipfully frames the hallowed faces of beatific *Hitlerjugend* and fanatic Labor Service workers."

The Nazis regularly consigned the Jews to the "lower" visual medium of the cartoon, which they regarded as a valuable propaganda tool. "The pivotal inspiration for Spiegelman's cat and mouse gamble," Doherty writes, "was the visual stereotypes of Third Reich symbology, the hackwork from the

mephistoes at [Joseph] Goebbels's Reichsministry and Julius Streicher's venomous weekly *Der Stürmer*—the anti-Semitic broadsheets and editorial cartoons depicting Jews as hook-nosed, beady-eyed *Untermenschen*, creatures whose ferret faces and rodent snouts marked them as human vermin." Spiegelman's anthropomorphized mice carry traces of *Der Stürmer's* anti-Semitic Jew-as-rat cartoons, the artist himself has said, "but by being particularized they are invested with personhood; they stand upright and affirm their humanity."

Against the vivid newsreel footage of the Nazi death camps, with their emaciated survivors, heaps of corpses, and children with serial numbers tattooed on their arms, it is all but impossible for the visual artist to compete, Doherty notes. One way is to resurrect "the impressionist techniques censored by the Nazis" and use them to show Nazism's horrors. "Working from a lowbrow rung of the ladder of art," that is what Spiegelman successfully did.

A Friend Speaks. . .

"What do you think of the *New Yorker* now?" Martha Davis Beck, associate editor of *Hungry Mind Review* (Spring 1996), asked novelist and long-time *New Yorker* contributor John Updike.

I think the New Yorker is worth trying to save, and clearly any magazine changes; the New Yorker itself changed quite a lot in the course of its pre-Tina [Brown] years. Maybe she is more like Harold Ross, and it is now more like Ross's magazine than the long [William] Shawn interim. Under Shawn it was a literary publication that nevertheless attracted advertisers and had a fair amount of revenue to disperse to writers, who indeed created and supported it—a whole stable of writers. . . .

[Whatever] else it is at this point, it's not a magazine that's offering itself as a seedbed for literature. It will print writers who have a name, and it will bring on a few splashy younger ones, but the old one was so nurturing. I mean, they ran so much fiction—they ran at least two and sometimes three stories an issue. And you felt it was a real trade, an honest trade. You made a thing which you could sell. And that's not a bad way to be a writer. There has to be some connection to the market. You have to make a living, you have to feed your children. So I'm sorry to see that particular cultural slot go.

Nocturne for the Duke

"The Duke's Blues" by Stanley Crouch, in *The New Yorker* (Apr. 29 and May 6, 1996), 20 W. 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Duke Ellington (1899–1974) maintained an orchestra for nearly a half-century—

longer than any other Western composer. (The orchestra that Prince Esterházy of

Austria provided in the 18th century for Franz Joseph Haydn lasted only 29 years.) But critics have often said that after Ellington's "greatest period," 1940–42, there was a falling off, that he exceeded the limits of his talent in his later, more extended compositions. Crouch, a New York writer and critic, begs to differ.

Ellington wrote and recorded hundreds of compositions and arrangements between 1924 and 1973, and, Crouch argues, they "make the case for their creator as the most protean of American geniuses," whose achievements in music rival those, in other media, of Herman Melville, Ernest Hemingway, Fred Astaire, and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Like Bach and Handel, Crouch says, Ellington "was an inveterate recycler." He extended earlier brief melodies, written in the 78-rpm era, into 15-minute masterpieces such as "Tattooed Bride" (1948). His earlier "tonal portraits" of uptown New York—including "Echoes of Harlem," "Harmony in Harlem," and "Harlem Speaks"—evolved into the 14-minute "Harlem" (1950), which was his favorite longer work. "It is one of Ellington's most thorough and masterly explorations of blues harmony," Crouch says.

"It is true," the author admits, "that the early '40s were a kind of golden period for the Ellington Orchestra. In 1939, Ellington had brought the marvelous composing talent of Billy Strayhorn into the organization and was soon rewarded with Strayhorn's 'Take the A Train.'" About the same time, bassist Jimmy

Blanton and tenor saxophonist Ben Webster joined the Ellington organization and were prominently featured in such classics as "Jack the Bear" and "Cotton Tail."

But Ellington's sensibility was always the determining one—"which is why the music maintained its identity through so many changes in the players, no matter how strong their individual personalities," Crouch points out. The Afro-Hispanic and exotic rhythms from around the world that Ellington explored in such Blanton-Webster classics as "Conga Brava" and "The Flaming Sword" were "the basis for such greater works in the '60s and '70s as "Afro-Bossa," "The Far East Suite," and "The Togo Brava Suite." Ellington also brought "new authority and depth" in his later years to his arrangement of popular songs, Crouch says.

The finest European concert musicians are expected to get better with middle age, Crouch says, but jazz musicians are supposed to decline after they leave youth behind. "In fact," he maintains, "Ellington's greatest band existed not in the '40s but between 1956 and 1968. . . . Beginning in the middle '50s, what he got from Johnny Hodges, Paul Gonsalves, Harry Carney, Lawrence Brown, Ray Nance, Cootie Williams, Russell Procope, Jimmy Hamilton, and the others could only have been achieved by men who had lived beyond 40 or 50." By then, they had developed a matchless intimacy with their horns, and had experienced most of the joys and sorrows of life. "It's all in their playing," he says.

OTHER NATIONS

China's Slaughter of Innocents

A Survey of Recent Articles

This baby girl . . . is now 100 days old. . . . She is in good health and has never suffered any illness. Due to the current political situation and heavy pressures that are too difficult to explain, we, who were her parents for these first days, cannot continue taking care of her. We can only hope that in this world there is a kind-hearted person who will care for her. Thank you. —In regret and shame, your father and mother.

—A note left with an infant born in 1992 and abandoned in China's Hunan Province

In the past few years, the coercive and inhumane nature of China's population control policy has become impossible to

deny. The policy has met with widespread resistance in China, especially from peasant women, who, despite the threat of heavy

financial and other penalties, continue to bear more than the officially permitted one or two children, hoping to produce a son to carry on the family line and to provide security in old age. As a result of the regime's draconian policy, girls (as well as handicapped infants) are increasingly "thrown away," through sex-selective abortion, abandonment, and infanticide. By some estimates, the number of "missing girls" (reflected in the abnormally high ratio of male infants to female ones) has been growing by more than one million a year. In some regions of the country, Kay Johnson, a professor of Asian studies and politics at Hampshire College, Amherst, Mass., writes in *Population and Development Review* (Mar. 1996), "there is mounting evidence" that female infants are being abandoned by the tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, each year.

Originally, in 1979, China's communist regime adopted a policy of limiting births to one per family. Unless couples obtained an official permit, they were not supposed to have a child, and a woman who became pregnant without a permit was obliged to have an abortion. Despite extensive efforts at enforcement, overall compliance with the policy was low. During the late 1980s, the regime slightly relaxed the formal policy, permitting rural couples whose first child was a girl to have a second child. At the same time, however, the regime stepped up enforcement.

In Hunan Province, in south-central China, Johnson says, the local cadres charged with implementing the unpopular decrees were caught between the strong desires of their fellow villagers and the stern demands of the authorities. The cadres often coped by turning a blind eye to abandonment of infant girls, and simply required that

couples end up with no more than the authorized number of children.

Among the abandoned infants housed in state-run welfare centers, Johnson notes, death rates are high: more than 40 percent in some of the major orphanages and as high as 80 percent in some of the smaller, more remote, or more poorly equipped ones. But, she points out, "even a well-equipped and devoted orphanage staff would face a daunting task." Many of the children "are in critical condition when they arrive, due to exposure, dehydration, malnutrition," and other afflictions. "It is likely that many abandoned infants die before they are recovered or that they are not recovered at all."

The "dying rooms" (as a 1995 British TV documentary termed the orphanages) are not "just a matter of bad institutional management, as some Western observers have asserted," says John S. Aird, a former U.S. Census Bureau senior research specialist on China and author of *Slaughter of the Innocents: Coercive Birth Control in China* (1990). "The real problem," he declares in the *American Enterprise* (Mar.-Apr. 1996), "is the Chinese government's attitude toward the orphans. China's leaders consider these children 'surplus' population. . . . To these authorities, the death of orphans is nothing to regret, because it furthers their objective of reduced population growth."

The current birth control crackdown, launched in 1991, is regarded in Beijing as highly successful. Last October, it was announced that China's population growth was actually below the state targets from 1991 through 1994 and could be as much as 15 million persons below target by the end of 1995. "Still," Aird notes, "the authorities warn the local cadres not to relax their family planning enforcement."

City in the Chips

"Dateline Bangalore: Third World Technopolis" by John Strem lau, in *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1996), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2400 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037-1153.

During the British Raj, the south Indian city of Bangalore, located on a cool, lush plateau 3,000 feet above sea level, a haven from the torrid coastal cities, was a favorite retirement spot for senior colonial officers. Today, with a growing population of nearly five million and a booming computer soft-

ware industry, the onetime "Pensioner's Paradise" has become the subcontinent's "Silicon City," reports Strem lau, a staff adviser at the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict.

Citibank, American Express, General Electric, IBM, Texas Instruments, Hewlett-

Packard, and Compaq, he writes, are only some of the U.S. companies that are using software developed and tailored to their needs in Bangalore and other Indian cities. Since 1990, India's annual software exports have jumped 53 percent, reaching \$500 million in fiscal 1994-95.

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister (1947-64), envisioned Bangalore as India's "City of the Future," Stremlau notes. "For more than four decades, India's central government invested lavishly in the building of Bangalore's civilian science and technology infrastructure as well as the nation's most sensitive and advanced military and space research facilities." Today, the city boasts three universities, 14 engineering colleges, 47 polytechnic schools, and an assortment of research institutes.

But during those same decades, in an effort to escape the legacy of colonialism, India shunned foreign trade and investment. That changed in 1991, when Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao's government introduced free-market reforms and decided to participate more fully in the world economy. Bangalore's "sudden market-driven success" since then, Stremlau says, is regarded by Indian economists as proof that this still predominantly agricultural country of one billion people "can catapult to the forefront of the 21st century global economy."

In the meantime, however, success has brought problems to Bangalore. Population growth has strained roads and basic public

services. Many high-tech firms are creating "their own self-contained communities called technology parks," Stremlau says.

Another problem, he believes, is the grow-



The Bangalore way.

ing gap between rich and poor. Experienced computer professionals in Bangalore often earn in the neighborhood of \$10,000 a year—"a princely salary" in a city with a per capita annual income of only \$404.

The Agony of Cuba

"Cuba's Long Reform" by Wayne S. Smith, in *Foreign Affairs* (Mar.-Apr. 1996), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021; "You Can't Get There from Here" by Ann Wroe, in *The Economist* (Apr. 6, 1996), 25 St. James's St., London SW1A 1HG; "Fidel and Mr. Smith" by Charles Lane, in *The New Republic* (Mar. 25, 1996), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Ever since Cuban dictator Fidel Castro came to power 37 years ago, some Americans and others have blamed his misdeeds on the United States, which, by failing to support his revolution, supposedly drove him to embrace communism. Now that his great patron, the Soviet Union, is gone, Castro's Cuba is in dire straits, and once again, some analysts are faulting the United States, this time for prolonging its 34-year-old embargo on trade with Cuba.

Smith, a visiting professor at Johns Hopkins University who served in the U.S.

embassy in Havana from 1958 to '61 and was chief of the U.S. Interest Section there from 1979 to '82, contends that the embargo is counterproductive and should be lifted. "Castro's departure or ouster is unlikely to occur soon, and it is probably undesirable," he says. The dictator (who turns 70 in August) "continues to enjoy considerable popular support," has the army and security forces on his side, and is reluctantly making Cuba "an economy that mixes private enterprise with a continued role for the state and a far more open political system."

Cuba has indeed been changing, reports Wroe, the *Economist's* "American Survey" editor, "but at a glacial pace." Cubans can now hold dollars, tourists are welcomed, foreign investment is sought, state enterprises are being broken up, and "private" farmer's markets are being allowed. Whereas in 1989, 95 percent of Cubans worked for the state, now "only" 75 percent do. The Soviet withdrawal from Cuba (popularly known on the island as "Armageddon") caused the island nation's gross domestic product to shrink 35 percent between 1989 and 1993. Thanks to the limited reforms undertaken since, the Cuban economy last year grew 2.5 percent. But much of the country, Wroe says, "remains in economic and physical ruin." Even so, she adds, "the revolution is not nec-

essarily bound to crumble." Despite the hard times, she believes, most Cubans "still assume that Mr. Castro has their best interests at heart. American antagonism only bur-nishes his reputation." She considers the U.S. embargo "a cynical farce which need-lessly hurts 11 million people" and which, whether tightened or lifted, will not bring democracy any closer.

Nevertheless, argues Lane, a senior editor at the *New Republic*, the embargo remains for Americans "our only leverage and our best symbolic protest against Castro's dicta-torship." The "endless debate over U.S.-Cuban relations," he believes, helps to obscure "the only question about Cuba that really matters: Why on earth does Castro refuse to hold a free national election?"

Japan's Backward Banks

"Cultural Captivity: Japan's Crippled Financial System" by Eugene Dattel, in *World Policy Journal* (Spring 1996), World Policy Institute, New School for Social Research, 65 Fifth Ave., Ste. 413, New York, N.Y. 10003.

Just a decade ago, many Americans worried that "Japan, Inc." was an invincible economic juggernaut poised to conquer their country. No longer: Japan's ongoing financial crisis has exposed the invincibility as a myth. And the condition of Japan's financial institutions is far worse than many analysts realize, contends Dattel, a former managing director at the Tokyo branch of Salomon Brothers, a U.S. investment bank.

"Non-performing" loans, in excess of \$400 billion, may not be the financial system's most serious problem. Tightly controlled by the powerful—and secretive—Ministry of Finance, Japan's banks and other financial institutions, Dattel says, "are, in effect, ossified government bureaucracies," with regulated franchises in the world's second-largest economy. They "have proved themselves incapable of allocating capital efficiently, investing the country's enormous savings, or recycling its trade surplus."

Japan's economy is two-thirds the size of America's, and its financial system is a consolidated one, with only 150 banks (compared with 13,000 U.S. banks) and only 21 life insurance companies (compared with America's 2,000).

The companies are poorly managed. The practice of rotating employees to new jobs about every three years has exalted the gener-

alist at the expense of the technical specialists who are vital to integrating advanced technology into the financial system. It also has encouraged employees to focus their attention on bureaucratic skills rather than business, Dattel says. Their acknowledged lack of managerial skills was not overcome, as many analysts once expected it would be, by "buying" expertise from foreigners. "The Japanese cultural obsession with Japan's uniqueness and self-sufficiency" made that extremely difficult, he says. For example, "no Japanese bank has substantive American senior management in its U.S. operations."

Excessive centralization throughout the Japanese financial system, he argues, is another serious flaw, which has encouraged "duplication of effort, wasteful political struggles, and defective risk-monitoring systems." By avoiding individual and departmental accountability, *Nemawashi*, the much-admired Japanese consensus-building technique, has made proper evaluation of proposed financial transactions difficult.

There has been much talk of reform in recent years, Dattel says, but very little significant action. "While many of Japan's manufacturing and distribution companies are effectively adjusting to the competitive environment of the 1990s, Japan's rigid financial system appears impervious to change."

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

"Postcommunism: Four Perspectives."

Council on Foreign Relations, 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021. 208 pp. \$17.95

Editor: Michael Mandelbaum

Out of the collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire emerged 27 sovereign states (pop.: 325 million) stretching from the center of Germany to the Pacific coast of Russia and from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Since 1989, notes Mandelbaum, a professor at the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, postcommunist governments "have formed political parties, held elections, established stock markets, and turned previously communist-controlled economic assets over to private owners."

But with popular discontent, cynicism, crime, and corruption now rampant in many of these states, is their transition to democracy and capitalism in danger? Not very much, argues John Mueller, a political scientist at the University of Rochester. For Russia (pop.: 150 million) and most of the other countries of central and eastern Europe, he says, the transition has already been essentially accomplished. These countries "are already full-fledged democracies if [they are compared with] real Western countries (as opposed to some sort of vaporous ideal), and by most realistic standards they have already substantially achieved the kind of capitalism found in the West, where governments still control and regulate much of the economy." In Russia, six of seven nonfarm workers are now employed by private business.

Charles Gati, author of *The Bloc That Failed* (1990), is much more pessimistic. He agrees that political pluralism is now "a fact of life" in central and eastern Europe (including the Baltics). There, every country has had at least one, and in some cases two

or three, competitive elections; no elections have been canceled. However, the former Soviet states east of the Baltics "have experienced only modest political change." In Central Asia, no free, multiparty elections have been held in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, or Uzbekistan.

Progress toward free-market economies has been made, especially in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, and Slovakia, Gati notes. Russia has privatized "about half of its assets," while Ukraine (pop.: 52 million) has moved more than 30 percent into the private sector. However, Belarus and Moldova, as well as the eight states of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus, have done little or nothing.

"Only in central Europe (the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia) and to a lesser extent in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are the democratic prospects promising," Gati believes. Elsewhere, even where outside observers discern some progress, the people who live there are much less impressed. The dominant trend is toward "partial retrenchment," with large majorities prepared to jettison "the very system and values of Western-style democracy." Emerging, he writes, is "a group of semi-authoritarian (and therefore semidemocratic), nationalist, populist regimes."

Yet, contends Stephen Holmes, a political scientist at the University of Chicago, stronger, more effective government, which can tax people efficiently and fairly and provide "elementary public goods" such as security, sanitation, and currency stability, is precisely what the postcommunist countries need.

"Preparing for the Urban Future: Global Pressures and Local Forces."

Woodrow Wilson Center Press. Distributed by Johns Hopkins University Press. Hampden Station, Baltimore, Md. 21211. 455 pp. \$55 cloth; \$19.95 paper

Editors: Michael A. Cohen, Blair A. Ruble, Joseph S. Tulchin, Allison M. Garland

Twenty years after the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, many of the 22 contributors to this volume (prepared for a second conclave this year) agree that there has been a sea

change in both the circumstances of the world's cities and in the ways specialists think about cities' problems.

We are all urbanites now, say Ruble, Tulchin, and Garland, who are all on the

staff of the Wilson Center. “Even most of the Third World is now more than 50 percent urban, and the migration from the country to the city and its surrounding region is most rapid in the most ‘backward’ areas.”

“Globalization” is the big change that has swept the world’s cities. Because of accelerating international flows of goods, capital, and people since the 1960s, says Weiping Wu, of Virginia Commonwealth University, “cities around the globe are connected with each other more than ever.” Indeed, some “world cities” now have stronger economic ties to cities elsewhere on the globe than they have to their own national economies. “A new global urban hierarchy is forming,” says Wu, “on top of which are such contemporary world cities as New York, Tokyo, London, Paris, Los Angeles, and Hong Kong. These cities now function as focal points of the global economy.”

Globalization has hurt many cities.

Surveying Africa, Mohamed Halfani, of the University of Dar es Salaam, in Tanzania, nevertheless finds cause for hope in the rise of civic engagement at the level of “the neighborhood and the primordial community” in cities such as Dar es Salaam, Lagos, Brazzaville, and Bamako, Mali.

The second major change noted by several contributors is a new modesty among urban specialists. “The idea that society and its organizations could be managed in some comprehensive form collapsed” after the first UN conference in 1976, writes H. K. Savitch of the University of Louisville. While cities share many problems—poverty, unemployment, pollution—there is growing recognition that one-size-fits-all solutions will not work. In coping with globalization, Savitch says, each city must build on its unique strengths, especially what Savitch calls its “social capital”—“the skill, training, and capacity for mutual assistance lodged within its people.”

Partners & Adversaries: The Contentious Connection between Congress & the Media.

The Freedom Forum, 1101 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Va. 22209. 218 pp. Free

Author: *Elaine S. Povich*

Even many journalists now concede that liberals are overrepresented in their ranks, although how much that affects news coverage continues to be debated. But the results of a Roper Center/Freedom Forum survey of the political predilections of 139 Washington bureau chiefs and congressional correspondents in various media (in an appendix to this report) are still surprising.

How would you characterize your political orientation?

Liberal	22%
Liberal to Moderate	39
Moderate	30
Moderate to Conservative	7
Conservative	2

What is your current political affiliation?

Republican	4%
Democrat	50
Independent	37
Other	9

Did you vote for Bill Clinton, George Bush, Ross Perot, or some other candidate?

Bill Clinton	89%
George Bush	7
Ross Perot	2
Other	2

Eighty-eight percent of the reporters consider their main role as that of an objective reporter rather than an adversarial watchdog.

A separate national survey of 100 editors at newspapers large and small across the country indicated a somewhat greater diversity of political preferences.

How would you characterize your political orientation?

Liberal	9%
Liberal to Moderate	23
Moderate	35
Moderate to Conservative	19
Conservative	6

Fourteen percent of the editors said they were Republicans, 31 percent Democrats. Sixty percent voted for Clinton, 22 percent favored Bush, 4 percent went for Perot, and the rest chose minor candidates or stayed home.

Does the ideological imbalance affect coverage? In a separate national poll, a sample of the public was asked if media coverage of Congress is “fair and unbiased.” Forty-six percent “strongly” or “mildly” agreed that it is; 47 percent disagreed.

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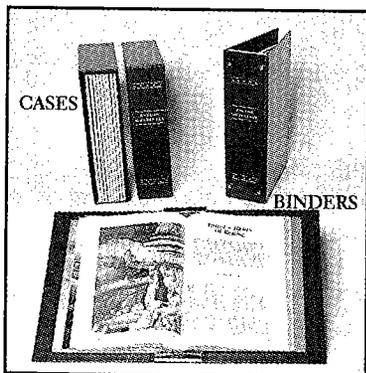
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Continued from page 7

nationalism of the 19th century gave way to the “welfare patriotism” of the 20th century. So much of the Swedish amour propre was bound up with the successes of the welfare state that its limitations came as a rude surprise.

But, just as the virtues of the Swedish Golden Age were exaggerated, so also are the rumors of its demise. Downsizing does not mean disappearance, and the Swedish emphasis on reducing social insecurities is not likely to vanish any time soon.

There are limits, to be sure. But there is still much to be learned from Swedish experience. Even with its imperfections, Sweden is about as sane and socially compassionate a country as even the most hardened realist is likely to find. And, with its increasing heterogeneity, it has become a far more interesting country as well.

Joseph B. Board
Schenectady, N.Y.

Lincoln's Moral Stance

Reading Robert W. Johannsen's illuminating essay on “America's Forgotten War,” [WQ, Spring '96], I waited in vain for a reference to Abraham Lincoln's opposition to that U.S. military venture. Johannsen noted that “certain luminaries of the day” opposed the war, but the only examples cited were Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. The Whig congressman from Illinois was vehemently against “Mr. Polk's war,” and his stance cost him his seat in the House after one term.

I sometimes wonder what “Honest Abe” would have done if he had been subject to military conscription for the Mexico expedition. Faced with service in a war he considered immoral, he might have exerted his many political skills to avoid the draft. Of course, we don't know. Nor do we know how the young Lincoln would have reacted to the prospect of military service in Vietnam six score years later. Nor, for that matter, how young Bill Clinton would have responded to military conscription in World War II, nor how George Bush and Bob Dole would have reacted to conscription for the Vietnam War—a war no less controversial in our time than the Mexican War in Lincoln's.

The moral of these speculations is that voters in any era should base their choice for president not on one candidate's having served in the armed forces and the other having avoided it for moral or other honorable reasons, but

solely on the candidates' perceived abilities to lead the nation. America's “forgotten war” deserves to be remembered for its lessons germane to our own time.

David J. Steinberg
Alexandria, Va.

Death of the Novel . . . Again

The death of the novel is a story that John Barth knows well, and I for one am always pleased to hear him retell it [“The State of the Art,” WQ, Spring '96]. Like a child at bedtime, I'm gratified that he tells it exactly the same way every time, no matter what new technology is doing the deed. Still, it would have been nice if Barth had actually read one of the hypertexts or electronic fictions he takes as his subject. Had he done more than “glance through” the *American Book Review*, for example, he might have seen that a number of the essays he cites appeared originally on-line, in the *electronic book review* [www.altx.com/ebr]. But Barth only considers the printed version.

Even so, Barth admits to reading ABR more or less the way he reads *Modern Maturity*—he looks through it but doesn't “inhale.” The sensory metaphors are telling here, even for an author who believes that print narrative is “anaesthetic,” placed well above any “literal sights/sounds/feels/tastes/smells,” and therefore (Barth implies) a thing of enduring value that will outlast the material basis of its transmission. This is Platonism pure and simple, which leads to an understanding of human communication as weirdly detached from its medium of expression. And Barth's particular Platonism results in an idealist notion of literary representation that's as disembodied as any environment in cyberspace.

Electronic fiction can actually make readers appreciate the material qualities of writing. Creating the “look” of an electronic text, and engaging our visual senses as well as our readerly desire for linear, word-by-word narrative, is very much what on-line writing is about.

Readers might check out *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*, by John McDaid (complete with allusions to Barth's own funhouse fictions of the 1960s), to see how the arrangement of text on the screen can interrupt and even enhance the linear flow of a narrative. E-text has made people aware of more recent mixtures of visual and verbal elements in a single narrative, such as Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse*, William Gass's *Willie Master's Lone-*

some *Wife*, and, not least, John Barth's own novel *Letters*. I know that Barth deplors "in-your-face" lists, but I include him on my private list anyway, and I hope that he'll learn to recognize aesthetic possibilities in one of the few publishing environments that still offer a place for spirited literary innovation.

Joseph Tabbi

Editor, electronic book review
Chicago, Ill.

Of States and Men

John Lukacs ["Our Enemy, the State?," *WQ*, Spring '96] suggests that "state" is the power or authority to govern and that "government" is the act or process of governing. This distinction is trivial and uncontroversial. What is controversial is the equivocal, open-ended principle by which he determines "the proper authority of the state" and "the proper practices of government."

Lukacs asserts that the purpose of the state is to protect its citizens and to protect civilization. According to Ayn Rand, a government protects individual rights and creates a civilized society by barring physical force or coercion from social relationships. The police, the military, and the law courts can impose only a negative obligation (one of noninterference) on individuals; in other words, an individual may not violate another's rights to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness. However, Lukacs

places no such restriction on the power of the state. He sees the state as an authoritative father. As such, the state can demand that individuals not harm one another, and it also can demand that individuals help one another. Lukacs supports a welfare state in which altruism and charity are not voluntary, but compulsory. He sees public education, public health care, etc., as the hallmarks of civilization. Because he holds such a "constraining" and "inhuman" standard of civilization, Lukacs is unable to evaluate properly the merits of such political systems as Hitler's National Socialism, Stalin's communism, Italy's city-states, and Western Europe's monarchies. In fact, he seems to suggest that these models of government are as valid and as morally legitimate as early America's capitalism. He is capable of this obscenity because he believes that essential liberty does not include freedom from government coercion.

Lukacs presents Americans with a false dilemma: anarchy or tyranny, no government or total government, unconditional freedom or no freedom, barbarism or civilization. The real choice is between a constitutional republic that is limited by the principle of individual rights and a dictatorial democracy that is willing to sacrifice the individual to an unquestioned and undefinable "public good."

Charles J. Drexler
Cincinnati, Ohio

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FROM THE CENTER

One of the few melancholy aspects of life at the Wilson Center is the mass exodus about this time each year of the Fellows who have been with us, and with one another, since the beginning of the academic year. The practice of having an annual “class” of Fellows, enriched in our case by Guest Scholars who come and go at briefer intervals, is by no means uncommon at centers for advanced study. It was begun here at the Wilson Center a few years ago as a way of strengthening the bonds of intellectual community among the Fellows we gather from the worlds of learning and public affairs. It is the diversity of our Fellows that makes this an especially fruitful practice. We are, so far as I know, the only institution of our kind that welcomes men and women from every field of learning (except, for practical reasons, laboratory science and studio art), and from every profession, every walk of life, and every part of the globe.

By the working of what I can only think of as an invisible hand, our selection process each year has produced an extraordinary variety of people and projects that not only stand out on their own merits but benefit one another in ways that would be impossible to predict, let alone to design in advance. Not long ago, for example, a political scientist and former member of the National Security Council staff in the Bush White House came to the Center to write about the reunification of Germany and its consequences for post-Cold War Europe. At the end of his stay, the ambassador noted with some surprise that his work had benefited most not from his fellow political scientists or international relations experts but from a historian of 16th-century Britain, an Indian journalist, and a Ghanaian philosopher. I cannot explain why this should be so, but I was not surprised by it.

The Wilson Center’s uniqueness grows in part out of its adherence to the belief in the unity of knowledge that Woodrow Wilson repeatedly and passionately expressed

during his tenure as president of Princeton University. Taking issue (though never by name) with the most formidable university president of his time, Charles William Eliot of Harvard, who was the champion of specialization and of the “elective system” in higher education, Wilson maintained that a university must be steeped in “a pervading sense of the unity and unbroken circle of learning.” With great prescience, and with no little dismay, he foresaw that scholarly specialization would lead to increasing isolation of the various disciplines and thus to the impoverishment of them all.

Although the narrow specialization that Wilson feared has led to enormous advances in scholarship, it has carried a price. While it may seem counterintuitive to suppose that a sociologist might learn from a novelist, or a political scientist from a historian, or a general from a philosopher, the testimony of hundreds of our alumni suggests that this is precisely what happens.

Describing Wilson’s vision a few years ago, Hanna Holborn Gray of the University of Chicago, who served, like Wilson, as a distinguished university president, wrote: “His emphasis always was on the ideal of a cohesive community, gathered around faith in the ultimate unity, order, and clarity of knowledge and its uses. This community was to be, perhaps, a bulwark against the consequences of the fragmentation, incoherence, wrong uses, and failures of knowledge in a changing world, which might yet be ordered and improved if education was shaped to its rightful goals, including the goal of running the world’s affairs.”

This is precisely the kind of community the Center aspires to create, and in September, after the summer’s Guest Scholars have departed and its special projects have concluded, we are confident that it is the kind of community the arriving members of the Class of 1997 will find it to be.

Charles Blitzer
Director



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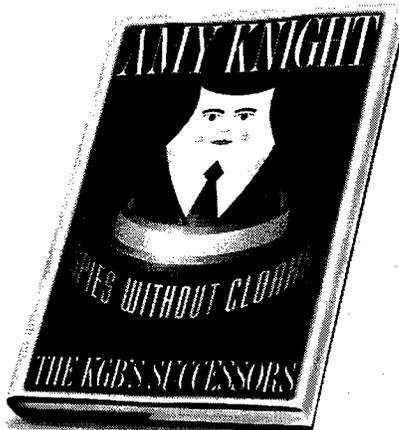
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