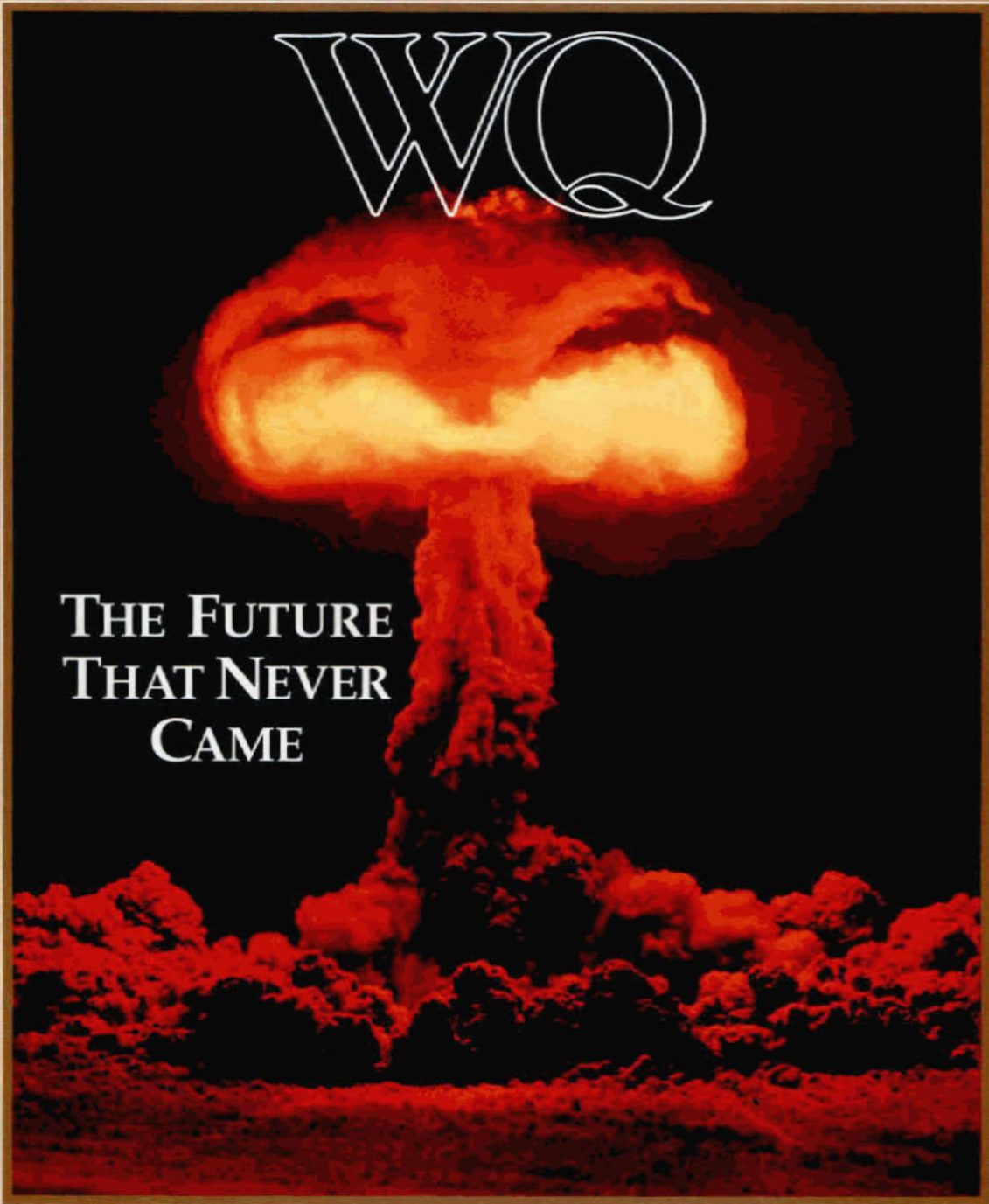


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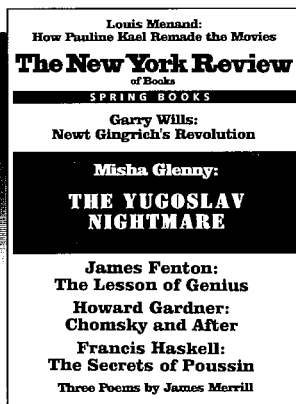
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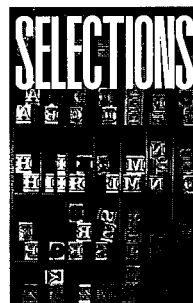


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RELIGION AND THE WRITER

A. G. Mojtabai • Amitav Ghosh

Faith and art once nurtured each other. Now the relationship is uneasy.
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Cover: A hydrogen bomb ("Event Hood") is exploded from a balloon
over the Nevada Test Site, July 5, 1957.

Printed in the U.S.A.

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EDITOR'S COMMENT

Fifty years ago this summer, a new age announced its arrival when the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bringing to a conclusion the Allies' long struggle with the last resisting Axis power. Scholars and others have debated the morality and necessity of these bombings ever since, most recently in the controversy over the now largely scuttled *Enola Gay* exhibit at one of our neighboring institutions, the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum.

While passionate disagreements characterize the attempts to explain those distant events, most people in the Cold War years shared at least one conviction when it came to the bomb: Nagasaki would not be the last time atomic weapons would be used for military purposes. The existence of two hostile nations, armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons, would see to that. No one thought that the Soviet Union would quietly close up shop and call for a truce. Some people still can't believe that it did.

Perhaps just as surprising is the fact that even before the Cold War ended, nations were beginning to discover that possession of what one historian dubbed "the winning weapon" might be more a liability than a source of strength. The story of the nuclear Armageddon that didn't come, and of the ongoing effort to encourage more countries to abandon their atomic arsenals, is one of the stories we offer in this issue.

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AT ISSUE

Shalt/Shalt Not

On the whole, the arrangement wasn't bad. Sex you learned about mostly on the streets, long before you were caught off guard one day by a parent who had found the courage to be straight-faced about the mechanics and their ("Take my word for it") spiritual dimension. The details, such as they were, resembled what you already knew about as much as a stick figure resembles a Reubens.

And religion you learned about mostly in school (theory) and church (practice). The Seven Deadly Sins, how to tell a mortal sin from a venial (the feathers of the former fan out like a peacock's), how to avoid specialized offenses like sins against the Holy Ghost, how to ratchet up an indulgence from partial to plenary without exhausting yourself in the process—none of these prickly matters was a welcome guest at the dinner table. But they and their countless thorny cousins were the second family we consorted with at school, between all the proper academic stuff like reading and spelling and arithmetic and geography and history, which generally made their claims free of doctrinal bias or color. True, the size of the Catholic population of a country was integral to a geography lesson, and there was sometimes a trace of nunnish wistfulness about what might have been had Spain or France K.O.'d England in the fight for North America. God's plan became notably inscrutable when it stiffed the Spanish Armada.

What else should one have expected in a Catholic school but religious indoctrination, and of a specific and dogmatic sort? Heaven was up, hell was straight down; purgatory was down too but not so far, and limbo a little over to the side, set off by a fence that screened all disturbance. Immediate seating in all areas. Seven-and-a-half years of this sublime marination were interrupted for me by six months in a New York City public school, and I found the drying-out process oddly unsatisfactory.

Of course there was no religious instruction in the public school, but there did exist a submerg'd religiosity, which I have since decided was the well-meaning generic Protestantism that probably passed as an unofficial American religion for 150 years. This all-purpose religiosity, whose watchwords were a sourcebook for samplers—self-reliance, honesty, hard work, and respect for your neighbor—surfaced principally at Tuesday morning school assemblies, where exhortations to good citizenship alternated with interludes of silent prayer and noisy song in praise of a distant one-size-fits-all Creator. Accustomed to a deity so close and invasive no piddling sin escaped him, I had difficulty warming to a God who would have needed the Palomar telescope to spot a dirty thought.

The spare Tuesday ceremonies were bland, well-meaning, and harmless (and the traditional virtues they endorsed by rote, let us not forget, were yeast to the nation's mighty rise). Who knew we were

being unconstitutional? Shouldn't national transgression have carried more of a rush? In the boundary-obsessed '90s, those vacuous weekly assemblies would carry the emotional resonance of Nuremberg rallies and educate even the Old Testament God to the niceties of official wrath.

Sex today has curricular status in public schools, and parents are off the hook (though there will always be some who reserve to themselves the prerogative of showing kids the chilling, blurred Polaroids of the birth). If only a fair exchange had outlawed religion to the streets! "Psst, kid, over here in the alley. Ever wonder where gods come from? Wanna see a picture of the Buddha? And check out this Confucius."

Even a back alley may be too public a place for religion in America these days. Children who attend sectarian institutions, and Sunday schools or their equivalent, may still plot their lives by the sacred road maps they learn to read in school and church. But what of children who attend public schools and no church, whose

WQ

parents are indifferent to religion and barely capable of New Age moral instruction? (Find your essence, ride the wave, live the dream.) What sense will they have of religion's power to master lives and to alter history?

At a time when portions of the globe seem to be fracturing like pond ice along radiating lines of difference, even modest palliatives have a claim. So should we consider educating the young about religions—quite apart from the education many of them may receive in a religion? Is there a case to be made not for teaching religion in public schools, which is plainly impossible, but for speaking formally about religions in a historical and cultural context, which is merely very difficult? The goal is not to make the young better but only to make them smarter.

The consequences of belief—and refusal and difference—are writ large in the histories of East and West, and microscopically in the behavior of anyone who ever struck or shunned or went to the aid of another human being out of a determination to do God's will. Much of the world's history—past and current—is meaningless without an understanding of the religious motivations that fueled wars, toppled empires, and staked a claim to continents, or sometimes just to neighborhoods.

And how does one make sense of Western cultural expression—in painting, sculpture, music, literature, architecture—without some understanding of Christianity, if only as the presence that has inspired as much rebellion as deference? Even religious art may hide mischief in its mystery: the painter who inscribes the face of his catamite on a floating cherub tweaks the tradition and extends it too. But you cannot notice if you do not know.

Objections to the notion of teaching religions in public schools leapfrog each other in their determination to be heard. "What need is there to tamper with current arrangements? Let children whose parents wish them to receive religious instruction attend the institutions that provide it—and let public schools bus kids to museums if culture is the issue." But a sectarian school by definition pays no attention to other religions. It is a religion school, not a religions school. It does nothing to advance the larger cause. Its ethos, one expects—one hopes—will be fundamentally

prejudiced. It believes in the superiority of its own product and does not advocate that we sample others before making up our minds. There is no feel-good ethic of egalitarianism. Martyrs have a cause, and those who kill them implicitly recognize its threat when they pay them the caps-off tribute of death.

"And about what religions do you propose to teach? Someone in the classroom is bound to feel slighted—marginalized, demeaned, and litigious." This is reasonably predictive, and not just because immigration has brought to America so many new residents from portions of the world beyond the boundaries that were once comfortable to the West. There is the additional risk of having in the classroom a sprinkling of adherents to shiny neophyte faiths. After all, what does it take to start a religion nowadays? A rule or two, a goal or two, a god or two—and the god no longer has to inhabit heaven but maybe just Beverly Hills.

So you begin to draw the lines: no class time for revelations that postdate World War II, or for a religion whose founder has appeared on a TV talk show. A music appreciation course is likely to overlook von Dittersdorf but not Mozart; a poetry course may slight Southey for Wordsworth; a fiction course forgoes Krantz for Kafka; a driver's ed class probably seats you in a Ford, a Chrysler, or a Chevy, but not in all three at once. Education is always about choices. There's time for just so much, and the essential thing is that sane and defensible criteria inform the decisions that give the nod to this and the hook to that. Limit religions instruction to religions that have had some major historical impact. Sounds simple enough.

In their imperialistic heyday, slick magazines like *Life* would sometimes take on topics that they decided were "important enough to warrant an entire issue." Entire libraries would not have been space enough to consider these topics adequately—among which figured "The World's Great Religions"—but the editors were unfazed. They recklessly distilled the essentials of each great religion—history, theology, influence—into a compact text and then scattered the words among pages of gorgeous pictures. We may marvel today at the

editors' boldness, but instructive popularizing deserves some admiration too. They didn't agonize over which religions have had the most profound consequences for civilizations; Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and maybe Taoism are my clouded memory's candidates. I keep the list alphabetical to avoid hierarchical debate.

You could do worse than start with that list as the basis for a high school religions course. It seems appropriate to recognize as well the religious practices of native inhabitants of the Americas, whom European missionaries labored to convert, and of the African peoples who were displaced and brought across the sea against their will. Remember, we are not talking about instruction in theology or about setting in motion the engine of any religion, which only faith can do, merely about examining the locked components of the engine while they are quiet and cool: some dates, some doctrine, some sense of growth and accomplishment, of claims on territory and the artistic imagination rather than on souls.

The goal is to understand a bit better not just how the world has worked but how it still works. The motive is not pious but rational. You cannot understand what is happening in American politics even as I write if you ignore the religious impulse behind the enthusiasm of many Americans who demand change. Nor will you adequately comprehend events in other parts of the world without a sense of their vital and compelling religious traditions.

We are suckers in America for the theme park sentimentality that insists "It's a small world"—and of harmonizing voices at that. If there is a family of man, a lot of evidence, in Bosnia and India and Algeria and Iraq, argues for its being terminally dysfunctional. And religious difference fuels much of the discord. Wistful and conciliatory, we are apt to say "It's not important *what* you believe but only *that* you believe." Ripe matter for Rodgers and Hammerstein, but it will

not deflect the sword from slicing the infidel who thought of himself as a harmless Anglican.

Is the schools' project even remotely doable? Good sense argues no. How do you present all this material without tipping your hand? What do you do with even the most familiar, the Judaeo-Christian tradition? How do you incorporate Judaism in its several varieties and Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism's extended family of sects not on speaking terms with one another? How summon equal measures of dispassion for Christ, the Buddha, Muhammad, Henry VIII, and Joseph Smith? Won't the least arch of an eyebrow, however involuntary, signal a judgment final as Dante's? Who is qualified to teach these things, and, perhaps more important, who is qualified to learn them? If students can't locate Turkey on a map, will it matter to them that there was once an Ottoman Empire and that we live still with the consequences of its collapse? If they can't find India, will they notice the blood in Kashmir?

The entire enterprise may be simply another instance of the old wanting to take hold of the young by the shoulders to say, "Listen, there is so much you should know, so much you will learn too late, so much you will never know. I know things that will make your progress through the world less puzzling and painful. Laws govern physical nature, and to recognize them is to gain a power over nature. Laws—religious, civic, social, psychological—govern much of the rest of life, and they can be comprehended too. We are talking of partial comprehension only, but that's not to say the understanding is trivial. For example, civilizations have a lifeblood, and they draw it richly from their notions of the divine."

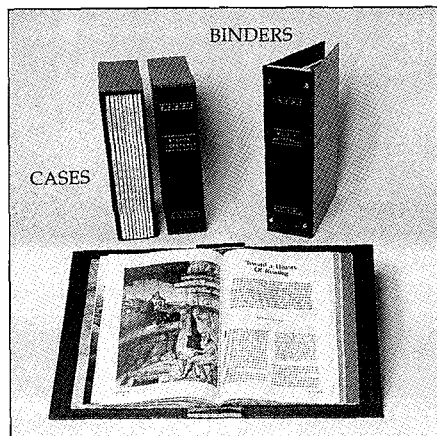
"Huh?"

Ah, well. Thou shalt have a lot of strange gods before you as you move through the world, but thou shalt not admit any of them to your neighborhood school.

—James Morris



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RELIGION AND

Faith and art have coexisted peacefully, even amicably, throughout most of history. In our day, however, relations between the realm of religion and the realm of literature are uneasy at best. As our contributors here suggest, the fault may lie with both sides—in the deafness of most contemporary writers to the religious yearnings of the average person; and in the aggressive intolerance of some believers who have gone the way of fundamentalism.



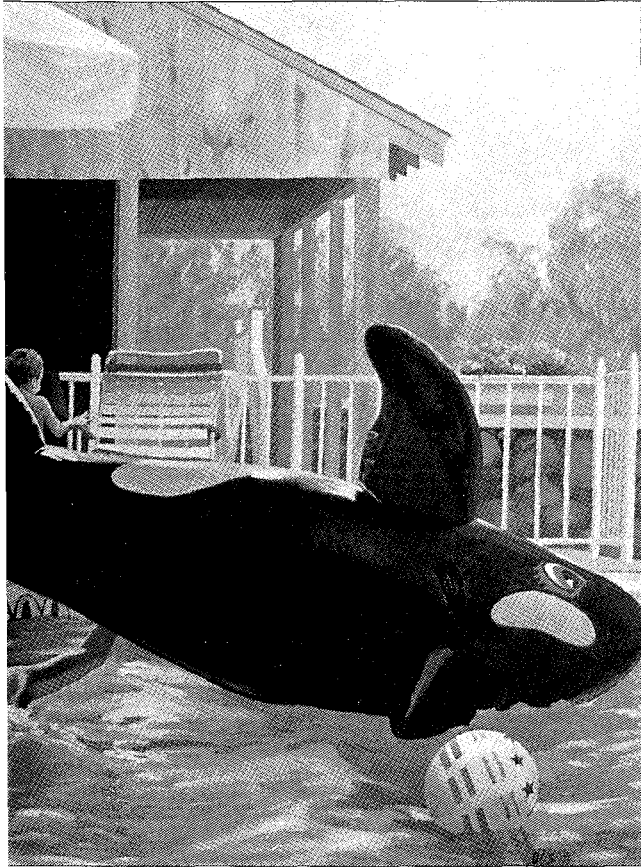
A MISSED CONNECTION

BY A. G. MOJTABAI

When I'm not teaching or writing, I work at the inpatient unit of St. Anthony's Hospice in Amarillo, Texas. It's a serious place. But not only serious: it's a house that contains everything, including laughter, comedy, farce, pettiness, terror, and peace, truly a house where, as Philip Larkin observed of churches, "all our compulsions meet."

One afternoon at the hospice, I was summoned to a patient's room to straighten out a lifting apparatus—one of those hanging hand pulls or grab bars, that are supposed to dangle over a patient's bed. The patient, an old man, was unable to speak, struggling to breathe, but still trying to communicate; he kept pointing overhead. The young woman tending him, his granddaughter, thought the device was what he

THE WRITER



The Distress of Lot (1991) by Joel Sheesley. The artist enlists an intensely realistic style to capture flickerings of spiritual anxiety beneath the outward comfort and ease of contemporary suburban America.

noticeably less labored. He'd arrived at that moment I've seen many times shortly before death, a frozen moment when the eyes open wide and stare intently, unhurriedly, with perfect calm, lucidity, and impenetrability. Utter inscrutability. In the Bible Belt, they call it "angel gazing." All I can say is that his eyes were trained on something upon, or beyond, the ceiling. I thought of an antique word: *Behold*. He beheld—he seemed to; as to what he beheld, here my imagination would fly, but fails—I stumble.

There was nothing much I could do before leaving the old man and his granddaughter for their precious last moments together except to fetch another pillow and try to realign the patient's head, now at an odd angle. Then—nothing more being asked of me—I went out.

In due course, not long after that, the patient died. The granddaughter requested time alone with the body. "Whenever you're ready," we told her. We withdrew.

Finally, the young woman emerged from the patient's room and made her way to the nursing station to ask what came next. She seemed dazed, as shaken and confused as she was sad.

Before calling the funeral home, one of the nurses offered to accompany the granddaughter back for a last visit to the patient's room, to read a poem the nurse had written, a poem about letting go. The nurse made her offer twice, the granddaughter not responding, seeming not to hear, the first time. But the second time, she looked up and gave a clear, emphatic answer: "No." Although the granddaughter seemed lost

wanted. He was obviously too weak to use it, but he *was* pointing directly overhead, and all *we* could see directly overhead was the triangular hand pull knotted up in its chain. So I struggled for long minutes, intensely, absurdly, with that chain.

It was quite futile, and typically myopic of me—a comedy of mixed signals, as I think back on it now. The man before me was dying, and pointing—pointing out what might have been the one thing needful to see, and there I was completely engrossed in fiddling with the gadgets on his bed.

Then the old man stopped pointing; his hand fell away. His breathing had grown

and unsure about everything else, she was very sure about not wanting a poem.

That young woman's emphatic "no" has stayed with me and become the prompting for these reflections. I suppose her role was that of a merely proximate cause to a mind largely prepared for this news; her answer gave firm voice to something I already more or less suspected, for, standing there at the nursing station, overhearing this exchange, I found myself thinking, "That's how it is." However appropriate, or inappropriate, the nurse's timing or motive might have been, however fine or poor her poem, the young woman's refusal—the part of it I recognized, and took to heart—echoed in my mind well beyond its original hospice context. That echo said to me that whatever we were writing nowadays was not expected to offer light in a dark place, an outstretched hand in a tight place.

That is the present state of expectation, as I've come to see it, and I think, to a large extent, writers have earned it. We've worked hard to establish it.

I realize that when I make a leap of generalization, as I'm doing now, I'm not taking into account numerous other factors, such as the reader's (or hearer's) lack of preparation for meeting serious literature, old or new, or the reputed current ascendancy of image over word, or the aggressive crowding of bookstore shelves with the dregs of the new, blunting the reader's judgment and turning good readers off anything contemporary; these factors have been discussed interminably by writers and educators. Certainly, I'm not trying to make a case for a literature that makes the least demand on the reader. Ob-

viously, I'm not disputing the right—even the obligation—of serious writers to criticize and move in advance of the culture, or to make formal explorations of their medium. If the reader fails to connect in such cases, it can't be helped.

What I want to go on to confront, though, is our failure as writers to connect with the reader for reasons that *can* be helped. What have we done to earn the reader's distrust?

The more I think about it, the more convinced I am that I've done *my* part to earn it. A case in point: one of my closing rites at the end of each semester is to remind my students of the ceaseless challenge of literary creation and our perpetual falling short by intoning from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* the lines from "East Coker" we all know:

Trying to learn to use words and every
attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different
kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the
better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say,
or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it.
And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the
inarticulate
With shabby equipment always
deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of
feeling. . .

But, of course, there's more in these lines than a healthy chastening, more than a salutary reminder of human frailty and fallibility. Despite the quite traditional religiosity of the context in which this passage

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is embedded, these lines are quintessential modernism: unprecedented candor and boldness. And yet, look again: how huddling—what a timid, fussy, piddling around in the sandbox! And isn't there a certain relishing of our failure amid the shifting shapes of ruins in retrospect, not to mention Samuel Beckett's "ruins in prospect," poking about with our shabby, always deteriorating little buckets and shovels? Dismantlement and then dismantlement: there's a mood and a program here—one can hardly call it a mission. Yet I had been so attuned to the long echo of modernism, with its dissonance, its sense of difficulty, discontinuity, and fragmentation, had been so thoroughly schooled in irony, that these habits of mind had become second nature, both invisible and ineradicable—*Music heard so deeply/ That it is not heard at all* (Eliot, "The Dry Salvages"). And whatever has come along in the way of postmodern advanced or retrenched gamesmanship couldn't do much in the way of releasing me from these habits, this music, much less make the world whole again.

Back in the days of my ancestors, there was an altogether different conception of the word: word and thing, word and deed were of a piece. Could I not reground myself, or, if not reground, then refresh, replenish, or fortify my spirit by gazing at this vision of maximal contrast? Consider Adam, by the power vested in him by the Creator, naming the animals: *And the Lord God formed out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them: and whatever the man called each living creature, that would be its name.* (Gen. 2:19). Think of the name "Adam," itself formed from the word for earth—"adamah." Thus: earthling, scooped from the earth. Recall Jacob wrestling with a strange being—with the human and the divine—to become, himself, a new being, with a new name: "Israel"—"Yisra-El," from "El," one of the names of God, and "sarita"—"you have striven." (Gen. 32:28).

There's the word that tears up from the roots: "lekh lekha"—"Get yourself" or "Go forth": *The Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your land, the home of your kin, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you."* (Gen. 12:1). And the word that rends in twain: "Choose. . ."—"u-vakharta"—"and now you choose": *I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life.* (Dt. 30:19).

And another conception of the word persists. Recently, in the continuing wake of the Second Vatican Council, Roman Catholics have taken to speaking of the Mass as being celebrated at two tables: the table of the word and the table of the bread.

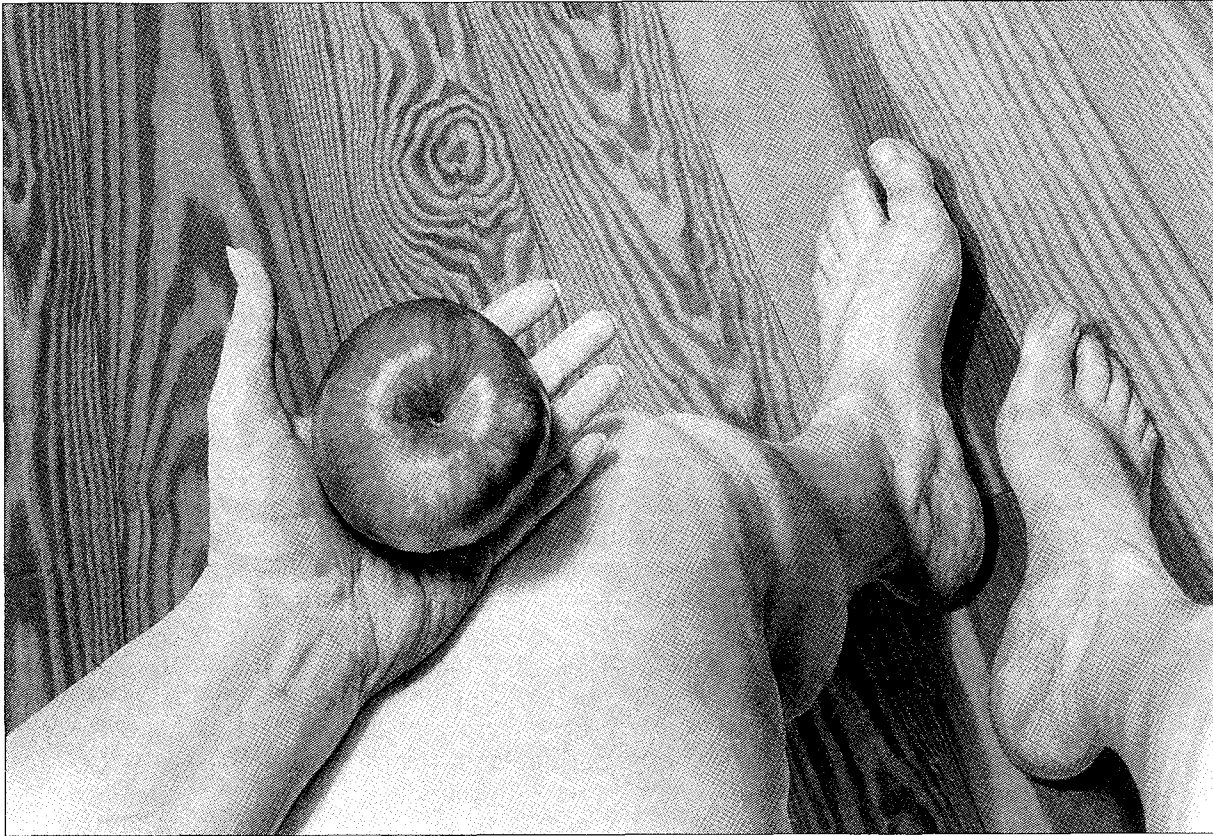
Think of it: the table of the word. How potent a conception of the word is enshrined here: the word that nourishes, brings everlasting life. The cleansing, purging word, so sweet to swallow, so bitter when it's down. The word that blesses, the word that binds. The radiant word. The singing word. And joining the two tables as one: the incarnate word.

O taste and see. Sandbox and table of the word: contrast and compare.



Let me make my bias plain. It has been suggested that the positive view I take of religion is a minority position among writers. I hope this is not the case, but if it is—so be it. A New Yorker born and bred, I live now—by choice—out on the high plains of Texas, well beyond shouting distance of the cultural trendsetters on either coast. I live in the heartland among so-called ordinary people. I speak from this ground. I may be out of step with the literati, but I don't think I'm out of touch.

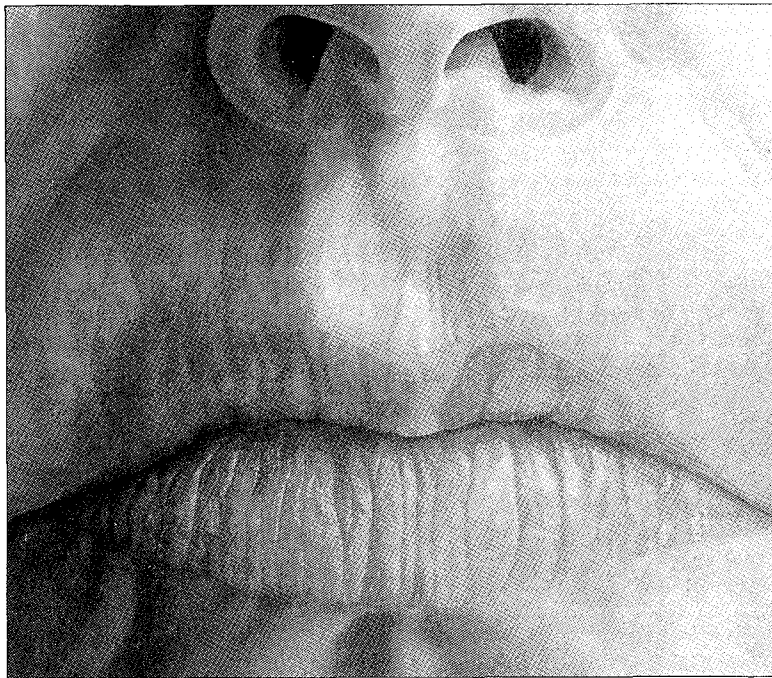
It is my conviction that there exists today a religious hunger in our country and in our world so widespread that writers ignore or disdain it at our peril. I'm not talk-

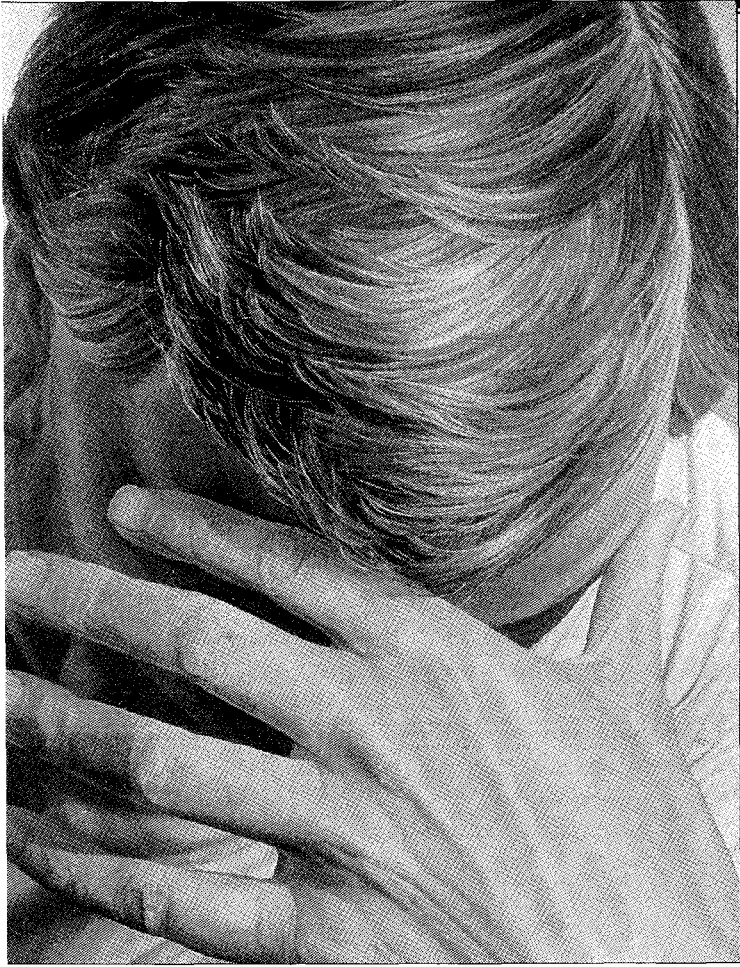


ing only about the peril of backlash, of censorship and repression from the outside, but of something even more deadly that eats away at us from within: untruthfulness, shutting out the voices we don't want to hear.

I don't believe this hunger is encountered only in the Bible Belt; it's to be found even in the great cities of the coasts. To be sure, it's harder to make out in the midst of the clamor of a large city, and it's also easier for writers to wall themselves off in enclaves of the like-minded if the population is large and diverse.

I heard Billy Graham say in a radio sermon once that there were more than 400 people claiming to be Christ in the city of Los Ange-





The Garden of Eden Trilogy by Catherine Murphy (clockwise from upper left): Self-Portrait with Apple (1989), Eric (1990), and Persimmon (1991).

les alone. I believe it. And if that many Christs, how many Mary Magdalenes, prophets, faith healers—and faith seekers?

I'll go further. You'll laugh, but I'd like to suggest that something so seemingly silly as our compulsion to plaster slogans on bumper stickers, t-shirts, and walls testifies to a widespread hunger for belonging and belief. Even slogans such as *Save the Whales*, *Life's a Bitch*, or *I Love Dallas* speak to a hunger for the proclamation of belief. So prevalent are these proclamations that those of us without words emblazoned on our chests may well begin to feel naked, undifferentiated—unreal.

Contemporary Americans may have garbled or lost much of the traditional language of religious belief, but we haven't lost the yearning for that belief. About this reality, this intractable huge fact, the American

literati, for the most part, have maintained a defensive or indifferent silence, or taken satiric note, and I suspect that this slighting of a matter of vital concern to so many people around us is symptomatic of other important things we're diminishing with our disdain, or just plain leaving out.

I preach to myself first of all—the "me" in the "we." Looking back over my first three novels and into my fourth, I've been struck by what these books have in common: views of a broken world, of lost connections . . . *the future/ Futureless* (Eliot again, "The Dry Salvages"). A bleak vision, accurate as far as it went, but incomplete, far too passive and acquiescent a reflection. I had set forth, in my first book, a

vision of mind and body severed beyond reconnection, then turned, in my second, to a utopian community where science and art, reason and emotion, were murderously torn; in my next, I moved on to a town divided first by the partition of a subcontinent, then by religious hatred and suspicion. Disconnection was my theme; it was what I saw. But it was not all that I saw. The connections were there all along, could I but reach for them. I was too busy indicting, documenting, with whatever clarity I could muster, my corner on the confusions of my time, too busy with the overriding demands of wordcraft to ask what sort of offering this made to the reader if served up in a steady diet of such things.

In teaching, we—I—don't talk much about ends; more time is devoted to questions of means. Students reflect these hab-

its of mind, habits reinforced by their reading of contemporary North American writers whom they tend to emulate. With my most accomplished students, questions of encompassing vision tend to be repressed as distracting to aesthetic concentration. The less skillful students might—and do, with much higher frequency—trouble about such matters. But, for the most part, there's a marked avoidance of those "eternal questions" (Why are we here? Where are we going? What is a truly human life?), a withering away of any significant sense of greatness. Indeed, the word "awesome" has lately become one of the tamest of expletives.

Passivity despite energy and constriction of aim strike me as tendencies for concern in contemporary North American fiction. When I say "constriction," I'm not speaking of scale but of a failure of vision. I recall somewhere in one of Ann Beattie's novels—*Falling In Place*, I believe—a man and a woman talking about a famous wishing well he had visited in Europe. She asks him what he wished for when he tossed in a coin. "The usual," he says. To me, this is a terribly poignant and revealing moment. By a winking sort of irony, he masks his aspirations, distances, diminishes, and effectively disempowers them.

Passivity and constriction are most obvious among our so-called minimalist writers, where they appear to be elements in a conscious aesthetic strategy, but constriction is to be found also in the very idea of postrealist fiction, if I understand it, in its highly conscious and strategic refusal to dream beyond the page, beyond the act of writing itself. I believe that too many of our writers are afflicted to some degree with passivity and constriction, refusing to own up to the full gamut of our dreams, or refusing to dream beyond what we think we know. The boundaries are self-imposed: they may be those of the page, or of the limited first-person narrator. You have only to think of the

scarcity of omniscient narrators in serious fiction today. To what does this scarcity testify? I suppose it points to the decline of the God idea among writers, and also—significantly? concomitantly? accidentally?—to a waning of our faith in our own ability to know.



In a lecture entitled "Virtuous Lying: Imagining More Than One Knows and Knowing More Than One Imagines," Monroe Engel laments the abundance of recent stories that, to a greater or lesser degree, "luxuriate in impotence," stories "content to tell us . . . that our lives are not what we would like them to be—which is, after all, something we are likely to know all too well already," and urges the writer to reach for "the exhilaration of imagining more and better than he knows." Engel highlights two stories in his argument: "The Blind Man," by D. H. Lawrence, and "Cathedral," by Raymond Carver.*

Readers will recall that both stories revolve around the presence of a blind man. (Each is differently constellated: in the Lawrence story, the blind man is the husband, and the sighted man comes to visit; in Carver's story, the husband and wife are sighted and the blind man comes to visit, but those are minor variations.) Minimally, both stories involve a married couple, an evening visit—including dinner, an aftermath with the two men alone together, a laying on of hands, and a transformation. In the words of one of my University of Tulsa undergraduates when I pressed him to say what the stories were about and what they had in common: "They're about different

*A later version of Engel's lecture was published as "Knowing More Than One Imagines: Imagining More Than One Knows" in *Agni Review*, 31-32, 1990, pp.165-176. I shall continue to refer to Engel's original lecture because it bears an immediate connection with a living occasion, that of hearing Carver give a reading of "Cathedral," and is the cry of its occasion—full of admiration, but also bristling with uncomfortable, needed-to-be-asked questions.

kinds of blindness." A terse answer—but a good, true one, for in both stories the so-called sighted are shown to be more deprived than the blind.

Within their commonalties, the two stories are very different. Carver's "Cathedral" is narrated in the first person, from the point of view of a very limited, unnamed individual. To grasp just how limited, listen, for a moment, to the opening lines:

The blind man, an old friend of my wife's, he was on his way to spend the night. His wife had died. So he was visiting the dead wife's relatives in Connecticut. He called my wife from his in-laws'. Arrangements were made. . . . I wasn't enthusiastic about his visit. He was no one I knew. And his being blind bothered me. My idea of blindness came from the movies. In the movies the blind moved slowly and never laughed. Sometimes they were led by seeing-eye dogs. A blind man in my house was not something I looked forward to.

And here is the narrator-host sitting down to dinner: "Now let us pray," I said, and the blind man lowered his head. My wife looked at me, her mouth agape." And here is his prayer: "Pray the phone won't ring and the food doesn't get cold."

This is the characteristic flat, numb sound of the narrator-protagonist. The maddening inadequacies of this man, apparent from his first utterances, are, of course, part of the story's brilliance. So much unfelt, unnoticed, unsaid, creates a lump in the reader's throat, a palpable ache of feeling, a longing for articulation. There are great gaps—wide blank spaces—silences—between the lines. You have to scour those silences between the lines where—if anywhere—meaning, hidden, lurks.

Nothing could be in sharper contrast to Lawrence's narrative strategy. In Lawrence, it's full illumination everywhere. Shifting from one person's point of view to another's, spelling out everything, including

the most private, delicately nuanced perceptions and thoughts, he creates a composite, overarching intelligence, the illusion of a nearly omniscient narrator brooding over the scene, an illusion, as I've mentioned, greatly absent from serious fiction today.

And there is no mistaking Lawrence's message; it is laid out programmatically. Too programmatically, perhaps, but his aspirations are large, prophetic, unafraid to inquire fully. Which is the more redeemed life? Why? He enters the intimate world of the blind man and imagines what he does not know. His incidental details are rich and luminous, none unliving, from the glistening white tablecloth dropping "its heavy pointed lace covers almost to the carpet," to the rain and the wind blowing in upon the horses in the stable, to the sweet roots crushed by the turnip pulper, to the "flattened grey head of the cat." As Engel has noted, "At the quick heart of Lawrence's story . . . is the essentially religious belief that a life of feeling was, or could be, superior to a life of ideas." In Lawrence's story, Maurice, the blind man, goes on "into the darkness with unchanging step. . . . Life seemed to move in him like a tide lapping, lapping and advancing, enveloping all things darkly. It was a pleasure to stretch forth the hand and meet the unseen object, clasp it, and possess it in pure contact. He did not try to remember, to visualize. He did not want to. The new way of consciousness substituted itself in him."

Here is Lawrence's blind man eating:

Maurice was feeling, with curious little movements, almost like a cat kneading her bed, for his plate, his knife and fork, his napkin. He was getting the whole geography of his cover into his consciousness.

Here is Carver's blind man eating:

The blind man had right away located



Signal (1991) by Joel Sheesley

his foods. . . . He'd cut two pieces of meat, fork the meat into his mouth, and then go all out for the scalloped potatoes, the beans next, and then he'd tear off a hunk of buttered bread and eat that. He'd follow this up with a big drink of milk. It didn't seem to bother him to use his fingers once in a while, either.

In the world of this Carver story, the blind man is finer, but not all *that* different from his companions; they are all equally into scarfing and grazing. There's a pervasive leveling, a shared cultural impoverishment.

The endings of the two stories are similar—and very different. Lawrence's ending is dark, shattering, momentous. Maurice observes that he does not really know his

visitor and asks for permission to touch him, to know him through touch; the other reluctantly consents. Then Maurice lays his hand on the other man's head:

Closing the dome of the skull in a soft, firm grasp, gathering it, as it were; then, shifting his grasp and softly closing again, with a fine, close pressure, till he had covered the skull and the face of the smaller man, tracing the brows, and touching the full, closed eyes, touching the small nose and the nostrils, the rough, short, moustache, the mouth, the rather strong chin. The hand of the blind man grasped the shoulder, the arm, the hand of the other man. He seemed to take him, in the soft, traveling grasp.

The sighted man, Bertie, is devastated:

He had one desire—to escape from this intimacy, this friendship, which had been thrust upon him. He could not bear it that he had been touched by the blind man, his insane reserve broken in. He was like a mollusc whose shell had been broken.

Admittedly, there's a dangerous—or what could be a dangerous—exercise of power here.

Carver's ending seems to be much milder and has an affirmative feel to it. Left alone with the blind man, having exhausted Scotch and marijuana in repeated attempts at onepmanship with the blind man, the desper-

ate narrator-host is at the end of his resources. He turns on the television and finds nothing but a documentary on cathedrals. The narrator is questioned by the blind man as to what cathedrals look like, then, failing to communicate with words, is asked to draw one while the blind man latches onto his sketching hand. The blind man asks the narrator to keep his eyes closed while they're drawing the cathedral, and the narrator complies. Inexplicably, he continues to keep his eyes closed even after the blind man tells him to take a look. Nothing really prepares us or accounts for the narrator's change of heart. Nothing except for a sudden infusion of grace, or, perhaps, the author's unease—a nagging sense that the limitations he has imposed upon his imagined character are intolerable, even—could it be?—inhuman.

Listen again to the penultimate lines:

I had my eyes closed. I thought I'd keep them that way for a little longer. I thought it was something I ought to do. "Well?" he said. "Are you looking?" My eyes were still closed. I was in my house. I knew that. But I didn't feel like I was inside anything.

A sort of *ex-stasis*, then, a standing outside himself? Hard to tell—but his words seem to suggest a bursting forth from his self-encapsulation—he's sharing blindness, if only for a moment. He's also, albeit in a very small way, sharing something of the experience of cathedral building, for the builders often did not live to see the completion of their labors. So, again in a very small way, he's breaking out of his historical encapsulation.

The narrator's final sentence, his best attempt at communicating his experience, is thoroughly in character, as inarticulate as anything he has come up with before: "It's really something," is all he can say. So we're left with either mystical ineffability or a relapse into the old limitations.

Even though, as Engel has noted, "in 'Cathedral,' starting with the title itself, the religious context is strategic and surely highly conscious, it's all a matter of 'negative reference.'" Engel continues:

Religious allusion suggests what is missing from the life depicted. It is not part of the present context of that life. The religious suggestions of "The Blind Man," by contrast, are less strategic, less intentional, and less overt, but Lawrence's intense experience of chapel in the mining village of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire where he spent the first half of his short life informs both the language of his fiction and his unappeasable appetite for transcendence.

Engel observes that "both stories concern themselves with human deprivation and inadequacy—with the ways in which our lives are not what we would like them to be. And each is evidence of the courage required to look steadily at these painful conditions of deprivation." Nonetheless, he feels "a kind of gratitude" for Lawrence's story that he cannot feel for Carver's. For, Engel explains, "the Lawrence story not only tells us that our lives should be better than they are, it also suggests something of what 'better' might mean." This is not necessarily to attempt to create "alternative forms of life."

Just imagining *why* our lives are not better than they are—why they do not meet those expectations and hungers that no amount of experience can lead us to relinquish—is after all another way of imagining more than we know. [The alternative] is to see our deprivations as inexplicable and beyond reach of that kind of imaginative inquiry that our best storytellers have so frequently had the arrogance or virtue to exercise.

And, finally, Engel puts the question: "Are we now in the hold of a morality or

an aesthetic that makes it difficult for a scrupulous writer to employ that virtue?"

I put that question to you as well.



If I could wish, toss my penny into the fountain, or better—since wishes are beggars—toss in my three pennies, and name my nine and more wishes for myself as a writer, for my country's writers, and for our literature, what would they be? I'd wish, first of all, to be able to name my wishes, to be able to avow them openly: to name them, to claim them, the better to act upon them. I'd wish upon most of us more ambition, a larger sense of possibility. I'd wish for a sense of mission beyond identity politics—a wider healing. I'd wish as many of us were as interested in healing as in indicting, and if not able to name, at least willing to point, or if not able to point, at least willing to *search* for what could make our lives better than they are. I'd wish for a serious literature less willfully inarticulate to spiritual need, less deaf to spiritual summons, a literature that looks to what has long endured as well as to the novelties of the moment, a literature that seeks wisdom, that is unafraid to speak, without taking ironic cover, its full heart and mind.

But, of course, wishing makes nothing happen. We choose our words—dim or radiant, clanging or choiring—and could choose differently.

There's a litany of theme, like some Galtonesque algorithm for creative thinking, that I can't get out of my head: writer *and* religion, writer *on* religion, writer *in* religion. I've come to the last part of this litany, and it seems to me, finally, that the writer is *in* religion—or should be—cannot

help but be, without diminishing our reason for being. What do I mean?

Clearly, I'm not thinking of the institutional-bureaucratic side of things; as a rule (a rule with notable exceptions) we don't do well there. But I'm not only thinking of the prophetic role. What I am thinking of is religion in its broadest signification. "Religion" from the root "ligare," meaning "to bind." To bind into meaning. Or perhaps to rebind—to connect what is broken—the known with the unknown, our one moment with the eons, each of us with one another.

Philip Larkin's poem "Church Going," which I echoed a little at the beginning, might well be speaking of literature—churches and the great literature of the past, which *held unspilt/ So long and equably what since is found/ Only in separation-marriage and birth/ And death . . . / . . . In whose blent air all our compulsions meet/ Are recognized and robed as destinies. . .*

Is it impossible nowadays to recapture that sense of things "unspilt?" It's been our fashion not to reach for it—or, at least, not to be seen reaching. Is it ever possible to completely stop trying, though? Even those of us who would deny any agenda for the arts beyond purely formal, internal fulfillments specific to the medium really can't stop there. Why struggle so for precision and clarity—honoring radiance, not murk? Why should the formal coherence of the artwork matter unless wholeness and integrity are to be prized? Where does this prizing come from? *Read* our revisions, our endless revisionings, not our manifestos. Despite our loudest professed intentions, and all our inattention, we still can't help making those ancient, barely explicable gestures of holding up and gathering in.

THE FUNDAMENTALIST CHALLENGE

BY AMITAV GHOSH



Traditional Islam bore no enmity toward the literary artist. To the contrary, the writer was a respected figure. This illustration from an early-17th-century Mughal manuscript shows a scribe at work.

With the benefit of hindsight, I am ever more astonished by the degree to which, over the course of this century, religion has been reinvented as its own antithesis. At much the same time that one stream within modernism created a straw version of religion as a cloak of benighted ignorance that had to be destroyed with the weapons of literary, artistic, and scientific progressivism, another stream within this same movement created a no less fantastic version of religion as a bulwark against the dehumanization of contemporary life.

To a greater or lesser degree, most of us have felt the tug of both these currents. Indeed, it is hard to think of any contemporary, modern, or even not so modern thinker, writer, or artist who has not. Karl Marx, for instance, while writing his much-quoted sentence about religion being the opiate of the masses (itself not as dismissive as some of his followers have assumed), also wrote a less known passage describing religion as the heart of a heartless world.

These are commonplaces, of course. We all know the stories of modernist figures who have swum from one of these currents into the other: a narrative best exemplified

by the career of W. H. Auden. At the heart of these stories is a moment, often an extended moment, of conversion, and it is this moment that puzzles me now—with the benefit of hindsight, as I said. It puzzles me because it seems to me increasingly that the intellectual pedigrees of most versions of religious extremism around the world today can be traced to similar moments of conversion.

Let me cite a few examples: Swami Vivekananda, the late-19th-century thinker who is today claimed by Hindu extremists as a founding father, was famously a rationalist in the best positivist tradition, until he underwent a dramatic conversion. Or consider the Anagarika Dharmapala, who laid the foundations of Buddhist revivalism in Sri Lanka at the turn of the century. The Anagarika Dharmapala's early education was in Christian schools, and he is said to have learned the Bible by heart at an early age. He was reconverted to Buddhism by the American theosophist Henry Steel Olcott, who arrived in Sri Lanka in 1880. As with so many such figures, the first popular movement the Anagarika Dharmapala led was social rather than religious in nature—a temperance campaign.

In Iran, the figure who is thought to have played the most important part in the radicalization of Shiite youth in the recent past was neither a mullah nor an ayatollah but rather a Sorbonne-trained sociologist, Ali Shari'ati. In Shari'ati's writings, religion often assumes the aspect of a sociological instrument, a means to resist the versions of modernity he had witnessed in France.

Similarly the intellectual progenitors of religious extremism in Egypt, Hasan al-

Banna and al-Sayyid Qutb, were not educated in traditional religious institutions. Both were graduates of the Dar al-Uluum, or House of Sciences, in Cairo, an institution that has been described as a "modernist teacher training institute." Al-Sayyid Qutb first made his name as a literary figure, a writer of fiction and critic who was actively involved in debates centered on questions of literary modernism in the Cairo of the 1930s and '40s. Like the Anagarika Dharmapala in Sri Lanka before him, he began his career in the educational bureaucracy. His bosses in Egypt's Ministry of Public Instruction sent him to America in 1948, apparently in the hope that he would be won over by American ways. His discovery of his religious mission is said to have occurred as he stood on the deck of the liner that was carrying him to New York. I have cited figures from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam; many similar figures could be cited from the Jewish and Christian traditions.

What do these moments of conversion signify? In trying to answer that question, we find ourselves reaching reflexively for the terms that float by on one or the other side of the modernist stream. On the one shore we find terms or phrases such as "atavism," "medievalism," "fear of uncertainty" coming all too readily to hand; on the other, our hands close upon "resistance," "alternative," "search for community," "thirst for meaning."

To a greater or lesser degree, moments of conversion such as those I have referred to are all of these things, but they are also something else: they also mark a crossing from one current of modernism to another. It is all too easy to forget that these reinvented forms of religion are not a re-

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Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, despite threats of Muslim militants, lived a public life in his Cairo neighborhood until he was assaulted in the street last October by a knife-wielding assailant.

pudiation of, but a means of laying claim to, the modern world. That is why the advance-guard of these ideologies are never traditional religious specialists but rather young college graduates or engineering students—products, in other words, of secularly oriented, modernist institutions. It is for this reason that we find the same things valued on both shores but in diametrically opposed ways. Literature and art, for example, being regarded as the ultimate repository of value on one side, come to be excoriated on the other, in exact and equal measure, so that their destruction becomes a prime article of faith.

Where else are we to look for the sources of this antagonism except within the whirlpools that mark the meeting of these two currents? Certainly the conflict cannot be ascribed to religion in the

broadest sense. For most of human history, religion and literature have been virtually inseparable, everywhere. I can think of nonreligious ideologies that have thought of literature as an enemy; I know of no religion that has historically held that position. That is why we must be rigorous and unrelenting in our rejection of the claims of those religious extremists who try to invoke historical and religious precedents for their attacks on writers. These claims are offered in bad faith. In fact, the roots of this hostility lie in the eminently modern pedigree of their own moments of conversion. The religions they invoke do not begin with a positive content of faith; they have their beginnings in acts of negation.

I have been using the phrase “religious extremism” with what may appear to be a reckless disregard for differences among the

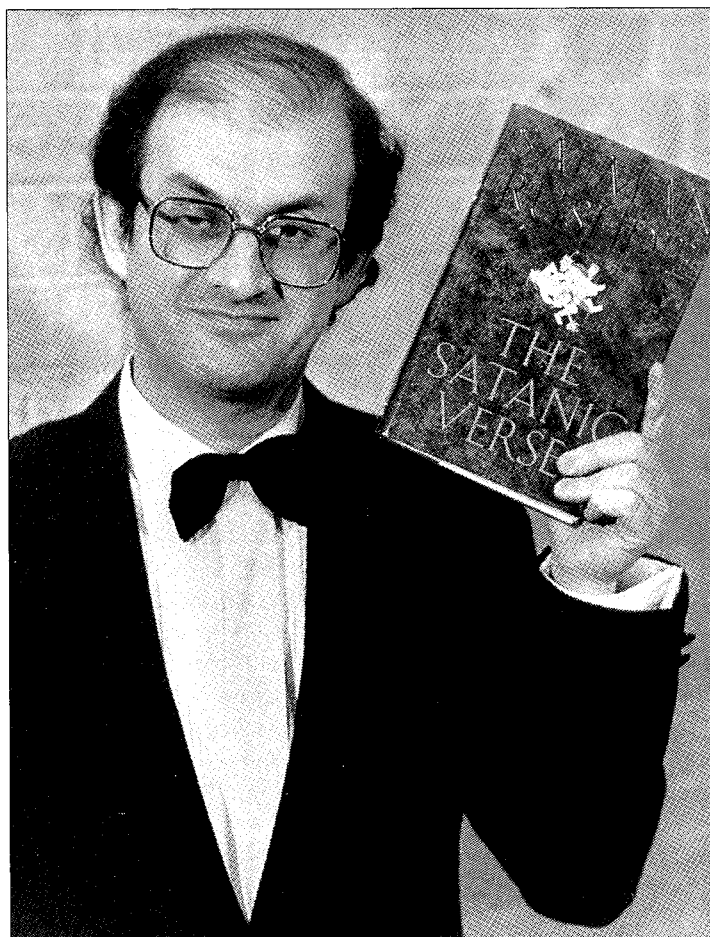
world's major religions. I do not do so unadvisedly. I do believe that the content of these ideologies is startlingly similar, across continents and cultures.

Consider, for example, that the rhetoric of religious extremism is everywhere centered on issues that would have been regarded as profane, or worldly, or largely secular a few generations ago: issues of state power, control of the bureaucracy, school curricula, the army, the law courts, banks, and other such institutions. Consider also that religious extremists are everywhere hostile to mainstream traditions of dissent within whatever religion they claim to be speaking for. Muslim ex-

tremists in the Middle East are contemptuous of the traditional Sufi tariqas that have so long been a mainstay within popular Islam; the political leadership of the Hindu extremist movement treats traditional mendicants and ascetics as a source of embarrassment. In both instances, this hostility has its roots in peculiarly bourgeois anxieties about respectability and rationality.

There is also much evidence to show that as the concerns of the major religions have grown more and more sociological, their doctrines and institutions have also increasingly converged. Yet while we speak of doctrine, we are still within a do-

main that is recognizably religious. But the truth is that in those areas of the world that are currently beset by religious turmoil, one very rarely hears anyone speak of doctrine or faith. In many of these areas, by a curious inversion, the language of religious hatred is not a religious language at all. The voices that spew hate invariably draw on more incendiary sources. One of these is the language of quantity, of number—statistics, in other words, that famous syntax of falsehood. Such and such a group is growing too fast, they declare, its birthrate is so and so; it will soon become a majority, overtake another group that has nowhere else to go; that group will then be swamped, washed into the sea by the rising tide of enemies within. Equally, these voices borrow the language of academic historiography. They produce ar-



Salman Rushdie brandishes a copy of the book that provoked Islamic mullahs in Iran to impose the death sentence on him. Rushdie remains in hiding.

chaeological data to prove that such and such a group has no right to be here, that they are invaders who arrived later than some other, more authentically located peoples, whose claim to the land is therefore greater.

One of the more curious elements of these bizarre but all too real discourses is what might be called the logic of competitive victimhood. Group X, incontestably a majority in its own area, will declare itself to be the real minority because it is outnumbered if the surrounding regions are taken into account. Its ideologues will cite this as the reason why, to preserve itself, it must drive members of Group Y off its territory: Group Y, which appears to be a minority, is actually a majority; the members of Group X are the real victims. And so on.

Most of these ideologies share similar discourses on women: what women should wear, how they should comport themselves, when and if they should reproduce. And all this, we are told, because scripture or custom has ordained it so. I remember very well an incident that dates back some 14 years, to a time when I was living in a village in Egypt. One day a schoolboy of 15—one of the brightest and most likable in the village—said to me: “Do you know what I did today? I gave my mother and the womenfolk of my house a stern talking-to. I told them they could not go to the burial ground any more to pray at our family’s tombs.”

I was taken aback by this. So far as I knew, the custom of visiting tombs was a very old one, and it served the additional function of providing women with a place to meet their kinfolk and friends. “Why?” I asked the boy. “What made you do this?”

“Because it is against our religion, of course,” he said. “Visiting a grave is nothing but irrational superstition.”

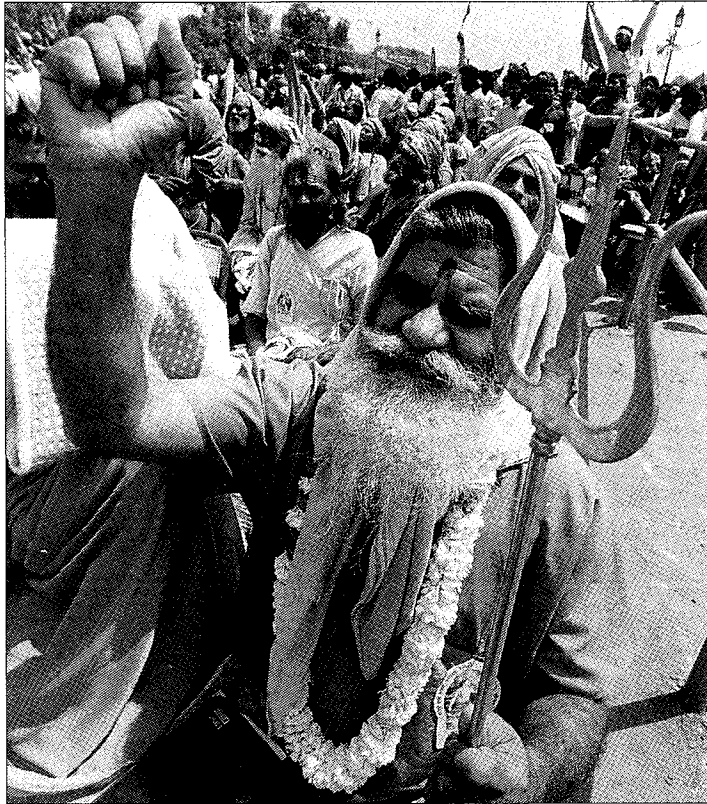
It turned out, I later learned, that a

schoolteacher with fundamentalist leanings had preached a fiery sermon in the mosque, urging the men of the village to put an end to this custom.

The image of that adolescent schoolboy lecturing his mother on what she could and could not do stayed with me for a long time. Where did he find that authority at the age of 15? Why did she allow him to speak to her like that? But wasn’t he also right to do what he did? After all, is it not perhaps irrational to visit graves? But still, did she resent having to renounce her trips to the graveyard? I don’t know. The outcome in any case was that she stayed at home. That is how religious extremism seems to work.

The issues around which these fundamentalist discourses are configured are not, of course, exclusively the concern of religious extremists. On the contrary, the concerns are precisely the same as those that animate certain kinds of conflict that have no religious referents at all: language conflicts, for example, or ethnic and tribal conflicts. In a sense, this is the most revealing aspect of these movements: that they all have recourse to the same language of difference—a language that is entirely profane, entirely devoid of faith or belief.

This was brought home to me very forcefully a couple of years ago when I was traveling in Cambodia. It so happened that the United Nations was then conducting a large-scale peace-keeping operation, and some 20,000 peace-keeping personnel from all over the globe had been deployed throughout the country. The principal obstacle to the peace was the Khmer Rouge, whose ideology had by that time been reduced to a nationalistic form of racism, directed at the Vietnamese and particularly the Vietnamese-speaking minority in Cambodia. A defector who had surrendered to UN officials



Hindu fundamentalists at a political rally in India in 1991.

a few months before the elections described his political training with the Khmer Rouge:

As far as the Vietnamese are concerned, whenever we meet them we must kill them, whether they are militaries or civilians, because they are not ordinary civilians but soldiers disguised as civilians. We must kill them, whether they are men, women, or children, there is no distinction, they are enemies. Children are not militaries, but if they are born or grow up in Cambodia, when they will be adult, they will consider Cambodian land as theirs. So we make no distinction. As to women, they give birth to Vietnamese children.

The Khmer Rouge carried out several massacres of civilians during the peace-

keeping process, most of them directed against small Vietnamese fishing communities.

I arrived in Cambodia in January 1993, just six or seven weeks after my own country, India, had faced what was perhaps its most serious political crisis since it gained independence in 1947. The crisis was precipitated by the demolition of a mosque in the city of Ayodhya by Hindu extremists. The demolition of the mosque was followed by a wave of murderous attacks upon Muslim-minority communities in India. In a series of pogroms in various Indian cities, thousands of Muslims were systematically murdered, raped, and brutalized by Hindu extremists. In many respects, the language of the

Hindu extremists, with the appropriate substitutions, was identical to that of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

It was against the background of these tragic events that I found myself one day in Siem Reap, in northwestern Cambodia. In this town, famous for its proximity to the glorious temple complexes of Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom, I came upon a group of Indian doctors who were running a small field hospital for the UN. By virtue of the camaraderie that links compatriots in a faraway place, I was invited to join them for a meal at their hospital. The doctors received me with the greatest cordiality in their prefabricated dining room. But no sooner had I sat down than they turned to me, smiling cordially across the rice and daal, and one of them said: "Mr. Ghosh, can you think of a good

reason why we Hindus should not demolish every mosque in India? After all, we are the majority. Why should we allow minorities to dictate what is right for us?" I had not noticed until then that my hosts were all Hindus, from various parts of India.

Their line of reasoning was, of course, far from unfamiliar to me: it was the standard majoritarian argument trotted out by Hindu extremists in India. But here, in this context, with the gunshots of the Khmer Rouge occasionally audible in the distance, it provoked an extra dimension of outrage. In the first place, these doctors were not extremists, in any ordinary meaning of the term. On the contrary, they were the personification of middle-class normality. Second, they were probably not religious in any but the most private sense. For them, most likely, religion was no more than a mark of distinction, defining the borders of what they believed to be a majority. In the course of the furious argument that followed, I was amazed to discover—though perhaps I should not have been—that these doctors actually harbored a lurking admiration for the Khmer Rouge, an admiration that was in no way diminished by the fact that we were then under Khmer Rouge fire.

I was amazed because I could not immediately understand why extremist Hindu beliefs should translate so fluently into sympathy for a group that had no religious affiliations at all, a group whose ideological genealogy ought to have inspired revulsion in these middle-class professional men. It only became obvious to me later, reading reports from Bosnia, Croatia, Sudan, Algeria, Sri Lanka, and other strife-torn lands, that for this species of thinking, religion, race, ethnicity, and language have no real content at all. Their only significance lies in the lines of distinction they provide. The actual content of the ideology, whether it manifests itself in its religious avatar or its linguistic or ethnic one, is actually the same in every

case, although articulated through different symbols. In several instances—Sri Lanka, for example—extremist movements have seamlessly shifted their focus from language to religion.

What then is this ideology that can travel so indifferently among such disparate political groups? I believe that it is an incarnation of a demon that has stalked liberal democracy everywhere throughout this century: an ideology that, for want of a better word, I shall call supremacism. It consists essentially in the belief that a group cannot ensure its continuity except by exerting absolute cultural and demographic control over a particular stretch of geography. The fascist antecedents of this ideology are clear and obvious. Some would go further and argue that nationalism of every kind must also be regarded as a variant of supremacism. This is often but not necessarily true. The nonsectarian, anti-imperialist nationalism of a Gandhi or a Saad Zaghloul was founded on a belief in the possibility of relative autonomy for heterogeneous populations and had nothing to do with asserting supremacy.

To return to where I began: it is my belief that extremist religious movements, whether in India or Israel or Egypt or the United States, are often supremacist movements, whatever their rhetoric. The movements that fit the pattern least perhaps are radical Muslim movements. Of all the world's religions, Islam remains today the least territorial, the least, as it were, nationalized. Yet it cannot be a coincidence that despite the critique of nationalism that is inherent in some branches of radical Islam, these movements have everywhere lapsed into patterns that are contained within the current framework of nation-states. Nor can it be a coincidence that in the Islamic world, as elsewhere, religious movements are at their most extreme in countries with large minority popula-

tions—Sudan and Egypt, for example. Indeed, such is the peculiar power of supremacist movements that they have actually conjured minorities into being where none actively existed before. Thus, in Algeria, Muslim extremists must now contend with an increasingly assertive minority Berber population.

In principle, it is not unreasonable that a population should have the right to live under religious law, with the proper democratic safeguards. But in practice, in contemporary societies, when such laws are instituted they almost invariably become instruments of majoritarian domination. Consider, for example, the blasphemy laws enacted in Pakistan in the 1980s. A recently published Amnesty International report tells us that “at present several dozen people are charged with blasphemy in Pakistan.” The majority of these belong to the minority Ahmadiyya community. This sect, which considers itself Muslim, was declared heretical by the country’s legislature, and its members were forbidden to profess, practice, or propagate their faith. According to Pakistani human rights activists, in a period of five years 108 Ahmadis were charged with blasphemy for practicing their faith. Over the last three years, according to the report, members of the Christian minority in Pakistan have also increasingly been charged with blasphemy. But here again, the meaning of blasphemy itself has changed. When a law such as this is available, it is unrealistic to expect that people will not use it in ways other than was intended. I quote from the report:

In a number of cases, personal grudges against Christian neighbors seem to have led people to settle their disputes by bringing blasphemy charges. Anwar Masih, a Christian in Samundri in Faisalabad district, had a quarrel with the local Muslim shopkeeper over a small debt and was subsequently

charged with blasphemy. . . . A 13-year-old Christian boy in Punjab was reported to have said that he had had a fight with the eight-year-old son of a Muslim neighbor. ‘It all started with some pigeons. The boys caught my pigeons and they didn’t want to give them back to me. . . . The little boy with whom I had a fight said he saw me write [blasphemous words] on the mosque. . . .’ [The boy], who has never learned to read or write, and two adult Christians were charged with blasphemy in May 1993.

How far we are here from a reverence for the spirit of scripture!

I would like to turn now to a novel which, more than anything I have read recently, has forced me to confront the questions that contemporary religious extremism raises for writers. This is the Bengali novel *Lojja* (Shame), by the Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin. I believe that this book, deeply flawed in many respects, is nonetheless a very important novel and a work of considerable insight. It is also a work that is literally much misunderstood, because at the moment it is available to most of the world in an English translation that can only be described as appalling. As a result the book has received many slighting and dismissive notices in America and Europe, probably because reviewers have assumed uncritically that the translation provides an accurate indication of the book’s quality. It happens that although I write in English, my own native language is Bengali, and having read the book in the original I know this assumption to be untrue. It seems more and more unlikely now that the book will ever get a fair reading, partly because it has become a pawn within the religious conflicts of the Indian subcontinent, and partly because Taslima Nasrin is herself now a global “cause” for reasons that have little to do with her writing.



Charged with offending religious sentiments in Bangladesh, Taslima Nasrin now resides in Sweden.

Lojja was apparently written at great speed, being completed in a couple of months. The book was later revised, but even in its revised version it remains a short novel—the new Bengali edition numbers 150 pages. The narrative is simple: through its protagonist, Suranjan Datta, it follows the fortunes of a Hindu family that finds itself engulfed in a wave of violence directed against the minority Hindu community in Bangladesh. The events it describes occur in the aftermath of the demolition of a mosque in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. The narrative is punctuated throughout with paraphrased news reports, items from the files of human rights organizations, and other accounts detailing actual instances of violence. In particular it is a severe, because factual, indictment of certain groups of religious extremists in Bangladesh.

As is well known, the book caused an

uproar when it was published in Bangladesh in 1993. It also became an instant best seller on both sides of the border: that is, in Bangladesh as well as in the Bengali-speaking parts of India. A few months after its publication the government of Bangladesh, in response to the demands of religious extremists, declared a ban on the book and had it removed from circulation. Shortly thereafter, an extremist Muslim leader declared Taslima Nasrin an apostate and issued a death warrant against her. The warrant carried a large bounty. A few months later, in response to certain remarks Taslima Nasrin was alleged to have made in a newspaper interview in Calcutta, the government of Bangladesh charged her officially with the crime of offending religious sentiments and began criminal proceedings. Taslima Nasrin then went into hiding for a period of two months. Thanks to the international outcry that followed, she was al-

lowed to leave Bangladesh in August 1994. She is currently living in Sweden. In her short career in exile she has continued to rock governments. Last October the French foreign ministry refused her a visa, a gesture that created such an outburst of public indignation that the ministry was soon forced to reverse its decision. What I have sketched here is perhaps only the beginning of Taslima Nasrin's story. Even as I write, a government prosecutor in Bangladesh is appearing before a court to demand that she be sentenced in absentia for the crime of blasphemy.

However, religious extremists were not the only people in Bangladesh who objected to *Lojja* when it first appeared. Many nonsectarian, liberal voices were also fiercely critical of the book. Their objections were important ones and must be taken into account because—and I cannot repeat this strongly enough—nonsectarian, broadly secularist voices do not by any means represent a weak or isolated strand of opinion in that country. Bangladeshi culture in particular, like Bengali culture in general, has a long and very powerful tradition of secularist thought; Taslima Nasrin is herself a product of this tradition. For all their visibility, the religious extremists represent a tiny minority of the population of Bangladesh. At present, for example, they control no more than two percent of the country's legislature.

Of the criticisms directed at *Lojja* by liberal, nonsectarian Bangladeshis and Indians, perhaps the most important is the charge that the novel, by limiting its focus to Bangladesh, profoundly distorts the context of the violence it depicts. Taken literally, this is, I think, true. By concentrating on the events in Dhaka the book does indeed, by omission, distort the setting and causes of those events.

What then was this context? I shall try to sketch the chain of events as I see them, very briefly.

On December 6, 1992, several thousand Hindu supremacists tore down a 400-year-old mosque in Ayodhya, claiming that the structure was built upon the birthplace of their mythical hero Sri Rama. The Indian government, despite ample warning, was culpably negligent in not taking action to prevent the demolition. Thus, through CNN, the whole world witnessed the destructive frenzy of a mob of Hindu fanatics attacking an archaeological site, in the service of an utter delusion. (After all, a legendary world-bestriding hero can only be diminished if his birthplace comes to be confined to a circumscribed geographical location.)

The destruction of the mosque was followed by tension and general unrest, in Pakistan and Bangladesh as well as India. In India this quickly escalated into violence directed against Muslims by well-organized mobs of Hindus. Riots broke out in several major cities, and within two days 400 people had died. The overwhelming majority of the dead, as always in these situations in India, were Muslim. There is evidence that in many parts of the country the police cooperated with and even directed Hindu mobs. Within six days, according to the official reckoning, about 1,200 people had died. Reports from all over the country attest to the unprecedented brutality, the unspeakable savagery, of the violence that was directed against innocent Muslims by Hindu supremacists. A month later, there was a second wave of anti-Muslim violence centered primarily in Bombay and Surat. The violence now assumed the aspect of systematic pogroms, with crowds hunting out Muslims from door to door in particular neighborhoods. I quote here a report from Surat, written by a Dutch observer:

In a refugee camp which I visited a small boy, hardly six years of age, sits all alone in a corner staring in front of him. Before his eyes he has seen first his father and mother murdered by the mob, then his grandfather and grandmother, and in the end three of his brothers. He is still alive but bodily not unscathed with 16 stitches in his head and burns on his back. The men who did it thought he was dead when they had finished with him. . . . Page after page of my diary is filled with this sort of atrocity. Women between seven and 70 were up for grabs by male gangs roaming around the localities. . . . People were also thrown into the flames and roasted alive. A high-ranking official told me how he had seen furniture coming down over the balcony from the opposite multistoried apartment building: mattresses, chairs, and then to his horror small children as well.

Such was the nature of the horror that visited India in the winter of 1992, in the name of religion.

In Bangladesh and Pakistan, the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque also led to violence. Temples were attacked and destroyed in both countries. In Bangladesh, which has a substantial Hindu population, a great many Hindu shrines were destroyed and desecrated; Hindu-owned businesses were attacked and looted; many Hindu families were driven from their homes. Yet it must also be noted that despite all that happened in Bangladesh, there was no actual loss of life so far as I know. If accounts could be kept of such events, it would have to be said that the scale of violence in Bangladesh was small compared to what occurred in India.

But here we have to ask whether events such as these can be weighed at all on a scale of comparative horrors. For a minority family that is being harassed in Dhaka (or wherever), the horror of the situation is not mitigated by the knowl-

edge that they are situated in the wings of the stage of violence, as it were, that far worse crimes are being visited upon minority groups in India. Equally, the terror of a middle-class Muslim family caught in a riot in Bombay is in no way lessened by the knowledge that there is greater violence still in Bosnia. To the Bosnian Serbs, in turn, the accounting of violence stretches back to the 14th century. To tinker with this calculus is really to enter into what I have called the logic of competitive victimhood: a discourse that ultimately serves only to fuel supremacism.

In inadvertently spotlighting events that were happening in the wings rather than center stage, *Lojja* inevitably presents a partial view. As it happened, Hindu supremacists in India seized upon *Lojja* with undisguised glee. Pirated editions were quickly printed and the book was even distributed free by Hindu activists in an attempt to whip up anti-Muslim feeling. This in turn led to accusations that Taslima Nasrin was a willing dupe of Hindu supremacists in India, that she was in the pay of a Calcutta publishing house, and so on.

In fact, *Lojja* is unequivocal in its condemnation of Hindu supremacists. It simply does not give them as much space as it does their Muslim counterparts in Bangladesh, which is unavoidable given the book's setting. Just as important, Taslima Nasrin can hardly be held responsible for the uses to which her book is put. In passing into the public domain, a book also passes beyond its author's control. I know of no way that an author can protect his or her text against abuse of this kind. The only option really is not to write about such matters at all.

We who write fiction, even when we deal with matters of public significance, have no choice, no matter how lush or extravagant our fictions, but to represent events as they are refracted through our

characters. Our point of entry into even the largest of events is inevitably local, situated in and focused on details and particulars. To write of any event in this way is necessarily to neglect its political contexts. Consider by way of example a relatively simple kind of event: a mugging, let us say, in the streets of New York. If we write of the mugging of a white man by a black man, do we not in some way distort the context of the event if we do not accommodate the collective histories which form its background? Conversely, if, in defiance of stereotypes, we were to make our mugger a white female bank executive, would we not distort an equally important context? But where would our search for contexts end? And would we not fatally disfigure the fictional texture of our work if we were to render all those broader contexts?

What then are the contexts that we, as writers of fiction, can properly supply? It seems to me that they must lie in the event itself, the scene, if you like: the aggressor's fear of his prey, the street lamps above, the paper clip that drops from the victim's pocket as he reaches for his money. It must be in some part the reader's responsibility to situate the event within broader contexts, to populate the scene with the products of his or her experience and learning. A reader who reads the scene literally or mean-spiritedly must surely bear some part of the blame for that reading.

Read by a responsible reader, *Lojja* succeeds magnificently. Through a richness of detail it creates a circumstance that is its own context, and in this sense is imaginatively available far beyond the boundaries of its location. I, for one, read *Lojja* not as a book about Hindus in Bangladesh but rather as a book about Muslims in India. It helped me feel on my own fingertips the texture of the fears that have prompted

Muslim friends of mine to rent houses under false pretenses or to buy train tickets under Hindu names. In short, it has helped me understand what it means to live under the threat of supremacist terror.

Lojja can be read in this way because it is founded on a very important insight, one which directly illustrates my main point. Almost despite herself, Taslima Nasrin recognizes that religious extremism today has very little to do with matters of doctrine and faith, that its real texts are borrowed from sociology, demography, political science, and so on. For a book that is said to be blasphemous, *Lojja* surprisingly contains no scriptural or religious references at all. Even words such as "Hindu" and "Muslim" figure in it but rarely. The words Taslima Nasrin uses are rather "minority" and "majority." There is nothing in *Lojja* that the most fastidiously devout reader could possibly object to, from a theological point of view. That it succeeded nonetheless in enraging extremist religious opinion in Bangladesh, and bolstering opinion within the opposite religious camp in India, is a sign that it cut through to an altogether different kind of reality. Yet it is a fact that, despite their outrage, the extremists could find no passage in it that could be indicted as blasphemous. That was why, perhaps, they later fell so gratefully on her throwaway remarks of doubtful provenance.

Iwould like to return now to some of the considerations with which I started. In particular I would like to go back to one of the images I offered at the beginning of this essay: that of W. H. Auden, breasting the modernist flow and crossing between currents. In offering this example I did not mean to suggest that Auden can in any way be associated with religious extremism as we know it today. To make such a suggestion would be plainly ludicrous. If there is an analogy here, it is a very limited one and

it consists only in this: that a conversion such as Auden's to Christianity was—among many other things—also an act of dissent, an opting out of what might be regarded as the mainstream of modernist consciousness.

It is finally undeniable, I think, that some kinds of contemporary religious extremism also represent a generalized, nebulous consciousness of dissent, an inarticulate, perhaps inexpressible critique of the political and moral economy of today's world. But the question remains, even if this is true: why are these movements so easily pushed over the edge, why are they so violent, so destructive, and why is their thinking so filled with intolerance and hate?

Today, for the first time in history, a single ideal commands something close to absolute hegemony in the world: the notion that human existence must be permanently and irredeemably subordinated to the functioning of the impersonal mechanisms of a global marketplace. Realized in varying degrees in various parts of the world, this ideal enjoys the vigorous support of universities, banks, vast international corporations, and an increasingly interconnected global communications network. However, the market ideal as a cultural absolute, untempered by any other ethical, political, or spiritual ideals, is often so inhuman and predatory in its effects that it cannot but generate dissent. It is simply not conceivable that the major-

ity of human beings will ever willingly give their assent to the idea that the search for profit should be the sole or central organizing principle of society.

By a curious paradox, the room for dissent has shrunk as the world has grown more free, and today, in this diminished space, every utterance begins to turn in on itself. This, I believe, is why we need to recreate, expand, and reimagine the space for articulate, humane, and creative dissent. In the absence of that space, the misdirected and ugly energies of religious extremism will only continue to flourish and grow.

What then, finally, of religion itself? Must we resign ourselves to the possibility that religious belief has everywhere been irreversibly cannibalized by this plethora of political, sociological, and, in the end, profane ideas? It is tempting to say no, that "real" Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and Muslims continue to hold on to other values. Yet if it appears that the majority of the followers of a religion now profess ideas that are, as I have said, essentially political or sociological, then we must be prepared to accept that this is in fact what religion signifies in our time.

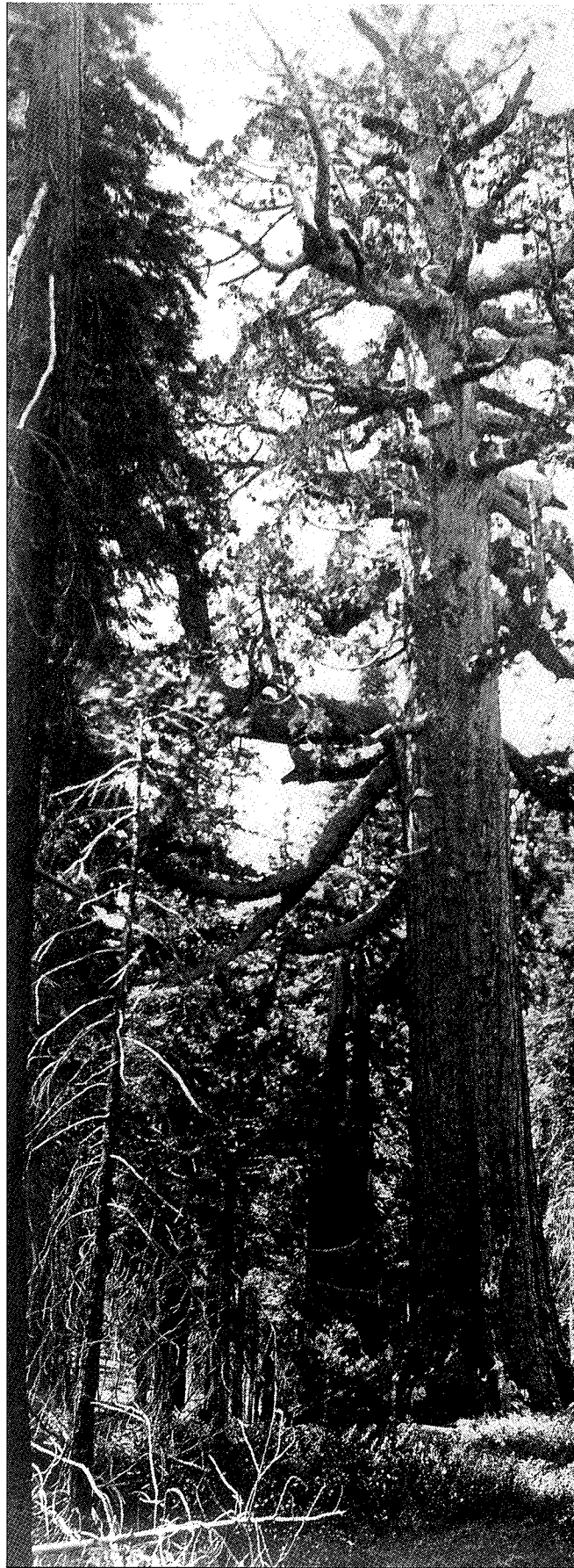
Still I, for one, have swum too long in pre-postmodernist currents to accept that some part of the effort that human culture has so long invested in matters of the spirit will not, somehow, survive.

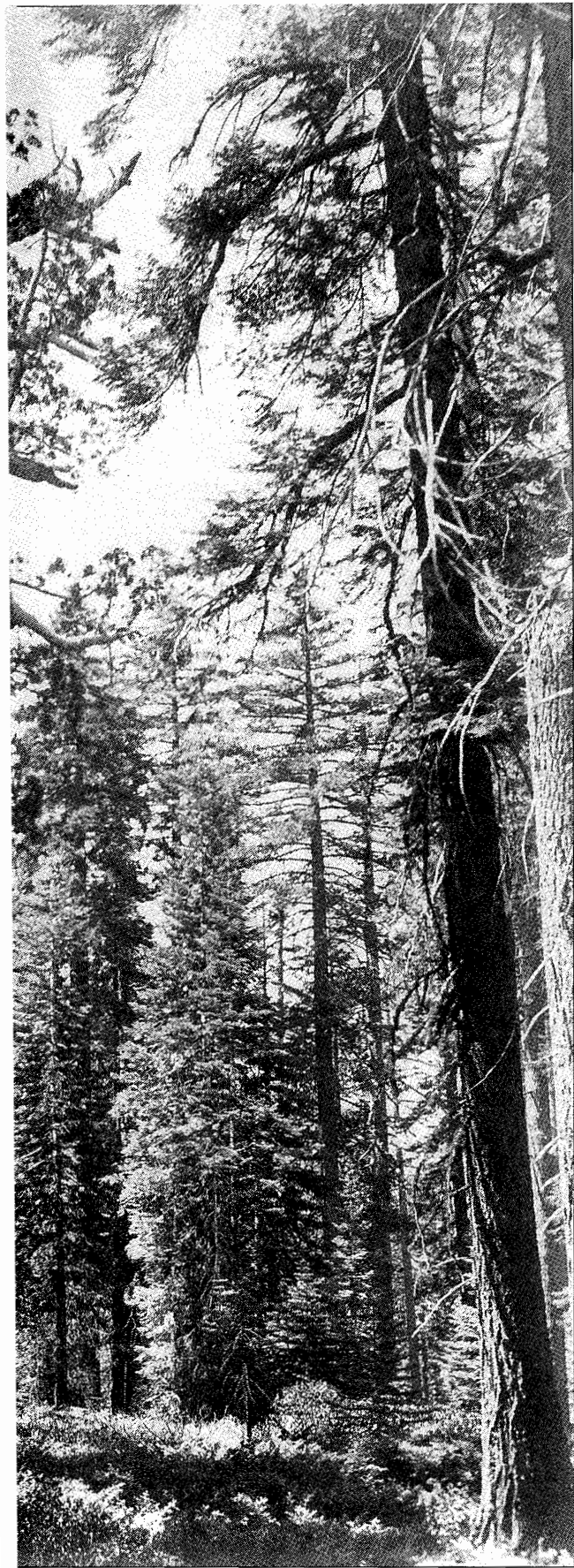
America's Verdant Cross

National mythologies are based as much on features of landscape as on heroic individuals, ideals, and great events. Simon Schama here tells how the "discovery" of giant sequoias in the 1850s helped to confirm America's sense of manifest destiny "at a time when the Republic was suffering its most divisive crisis since the Revolution."

BY SIMON SCHAMA

It was Augustus T. Dowd's big joke. On a spring morning in 1852 he had been after a wounded grizzly, meaning to finish the brute off and provide the men of the Union Water Company with fried bear for the rest of the week. That was his job. As he was tracking the animal through the woods of sugar pine and ponderosa, the flickering light gradually dimmed. Without any warning, Dowd abruptly came face to face with a monster. It was maybe 50 feet around and,





Grizzly Giant, by Carleton E. Watkins (1863)

as close as he could guess, nearly 300 feet high. It was a tree.

Of course, no one at Murphy's Camp would believe him. They were more likely to credit a giant bear than a giant tree, he supposed. And so he told them the next day that the biggest grizzly there ever was was lurking right there, deep in the woods. And when he took them right up to the strange thing, a cinnamon-brown tower etched with deep furrows up its whole length, cavities a man's arm could disappear into, not a branch below 50 feet and its crown invisible, he could point and jump about and crow and laugh: "Boys, do you now believe my big tree story? That's the grizzly I wanted you to see. Now do you believe my yarn?"

They did, and were quick, too, to figure out some way to profit from it. For the magnitude of what they beheld was not lost on a gang of laborers stuck out in the foothills of the western Sierra Nevada, digging canals and ditches for the mining camps of the Mariposa Estate. No one in Yosemite Valley in 1852 was there for the scenery; of that we can be sure. The miners who peopled the shacks and cabins that straggled over the hillsides were forty-niners whose dreams had soured. Panning the streams in the drenching days of spring, they survived by working for the soldier-explorer John C. Frémont, who set his mill machines to smashing quantities of quartz at the western end of the valley in the hope of extracting gold. It was not all high-altitude craziness. Some mines, such as Princeton and Pine-Josephine, gave up real riches, for a few years at any rate. The Frémont workers would take the extracted ore, set it with quicksilver into bricks, and then transport them

(with all due caution and security) to the bank vaults in San Francisco. From there they ended up, duly assayed, in the U.S. Mint.

Not much of this good fortune trickled down to the scrambling, violent crowd of Italians, Chinese, Mexicans, and Germans inhabiting the shacks and tents of the Mariposa. Along with the miners were the usual camp followers and hangers-on: hunters, loggers, ditchdiggers, cooks, and whores, many of them practicing more than one trade. But if their life was precarious, it was nothing compared to that of the Ahwahneechee Indians. As tribal cultures went, the Ahwahneechee were relatively sedentary (and therefore particularly despised by the Europeans), subsisting on black oak acorns, grubs, and on the trout scooped from the river, belly up, after the Indians poisoned the water with soapweed. The dazzling meadow-floor of the valley they called (in the Miwok tongue) *Ahwahnee*, or "gaping mouth." Although its white eulogists, such as John Muir, supposed it was untouched and Edenic, it looked the way it did because of the Indians' repeated set-fires, which cleared it of brush and opened the space for grazing. The Indians hunted a little too, and, driven from their food sources by the guns of the mining camps, they resorted to periodic raids to get some of their birthright back, and liquor and weapons too, if they could. Sometimes there was shooting and cutting. After one of these affrays, Major James D. Savage's Mariposa Battalion would thunder off after them, guided by Mono Indian pursuers, hounding the wretched Ahwahneechee from valley to valley until there were no more to be seen. The few who survived dispossession and dislocation called their tormentors *Yo-che-ma-te*: "some among them are killers."

Naturally, a more picturesque account of the etymology of the valley's name was needed. So the soldiers imagined that it derived from a Miwok term for "grizzly bear": *uzumati*. And the Big Trees in what became known as the Calaveras Grove were almost immediately treated as trophy: skinned, mounted, and displayed for bragging and for cash. In the summer of 1854 another ex-miner, George Gale, who saw gold in wood, rather than water or rock, picked out the biggest specimen he could find, 90 feet around at its base and known as the "Mother of the Forest." No sentimental respecter of maternity, Gale stripped the tree of its fragrant, dark-ridged bark to a height of 116 feet and shipped the pieces east, where they were stitched back together and the hollow giant shown as a botanical marvel. But a public already skeptical about P. T. Barnum assumed this, too, to be a crude hoax, along the lines of mermaids constituted from the head of a manatee and the tail of a salmon. The lines at the box office shrank and George Gale's fortune turned to fool's gold. Transcendentalists were delighted.

While jaded, cynical New York was refusing to suspend its disbelief, the learned botanical community knew better. The discovery of the Big Trees, originally reported locally in the *Sonora Herald*, was reprinted in the London *Athenaeum* and the English *Gardeners' Chronicle*. Lectures were given in short order at the Royal Society and the Société Botanique in Paris, British and French botanists (as usual) competing with each other to see who could come up with the clinching classification and nomenclature. The English, naturally, thought

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Section of Grizzly Giant, by Carleton E. Watkins (1861)

Wellingtonia gigantea would be fitting. But the French botanist Decaisne, believing the tree to be related to the California coastal redwood, the *Sequoia sempervirens*, decided instead on *Sequoia gigantea* for the giant of the Sierra. In actuality, the relationship is less close than might be supposed from casual observation. After it gets to 200 feet the Big Tree begins to expand its girth more than its height, while the redwood keeps on going well beyond an average of 300 feet. The former's needles are dark green sprays, the latter's blue and spiky. In fact, "sequoia" was an eccentrically inappropriate label for either species, being the name of a half-blood Alabama Cherokee (a.k.a. George Guess) who had invented a written language for the tribe. Its adoption by Asa Gray, the founder of Harvard University's botanical garden, and his New York colleague John Turrell, however, was of more

than purely taxonomic significance. As the author of the official state *Yosemite Book* explained in 1868:

It is to the happy accident of the generic agreement of the Big Tree with the redwood that we owe it that we are *not* now obliged to call the largest and most interesting tree in America after an *English* military hero.

The Big Trees were thus seen as the botanical correlate of America's heroic nationalism at a time when the Republic was suffering its most divisive crisis since the Revolution. To a skeptical Englishman who refused to believe that the bark he saw at the Crystal Palace at Sydenham was from a single tree, an American visitor took special pleasure in "assuring the Englishman that he had stood in the grove . . . that there were

even larger trees in it than this one, that in spite of the fact that the bark had been completely removed to the height of a hundred feet the tree was as green as any of the majestic fraternity." (It would not remain that way for very long.) "The Englishman gave one look of rage," the American tourist reported, "and bolted from the neighborhood."

The phenomenal size of the sequoias proclaimed a manifest destiny that had been primordially planted, something that altogether dwarfed the timetables of conventional European and even classical history. They were, their first observers thought (wrongly, again, for the less imposing bristlecone pines of the Sierras had not yet been dated), the oldest living things on earth. Even Horace Greeley, who saw them in 1859 and tried hard not to be impressed, was startled by the thought that they had stood upright "when David danced before the Ark; when Theseus ruled Athens; when Aeneas fled from the burning wreck of Troy."

In the first instance, though, it was the commerce of novelty, not the cult of antiquity, that took up the "Mammoth Trees." By the time James Mason Hutchings, the English-born publisher of *Hutchings' California Magazine*, took the first party of tourists to the Calaveras Grove in 1855, the botanical freak show was already well established. Iron pump augers were used to drill holes in trunks selected for felling, though even after they had been severed from the base, a further series of wedges levered the tree away from its upright, suspended position. The whole process could take five men three weeks (two-and-a-half days alone for toppling). "In our estimation," commented Hutchings without much conviction, "it was a sacrilegious act." But at the end was a half-million board feet of lumber and an instantaneous amusement park. A two-lane bowling alley was built (complete with protecting shed) along a planed-down surface of a trunk, and the stump of a felled sequoia

was made into a dance floor for tourists where, Hutchings tells us, "on the 4th of July, 32 persons were engaged in dancing four sets of cotillion at one time, without suffering any inconvenience whatever."

By the end of the decade, Hutchings had supplied the operational apparatus of scenic tourism in the Calaveras Grove. Travelers could get from Stockton to San Francisco either by a new railroad or by steamboat up the San Joaquin River. From Stockton they would use coaches and wagons via Copperopolis and Murphy's Camp. Hutchings could then accommodate them in the Mammoth Tree Cottage Hotel, a pretty building five miles from the grove boasting splashing fountains, a balustraded balcony, and appointments comfortable enough for the ladies, who were already beginning to visit the fabled woods.

Ironically, though, it was visitors (or, as they preferred to say, "pilgrims") from the East who transformed attitudes toward the sequoia groves, making them a place not just of curiosity but of veneration. The most important was the Boston Unitarian (and famous orator) Thomas Starr King, who in 1860 was dispatched to the Barbary Coast of California to minister to his denomination's First Church in San Francisco. King was a natural missionary and part of his vocation was to preach the virtues of the Union to Californians who might have been tempted by the demons of secession. But coming from the cradle of transcendentalism in New England, he found the lure of the Sierra Nevada irresistible, considering it both the visible face of divinity and the purest American habitat. His sermon "Living Waters from Lake Tahoe," for example, proclaimed that "this purity of nature is part of the revelation to us of the sanctity of God. It is his character that is hinted at in the cleanness of the lake and its haste to reject all taint." Moreover, by the time King took his vacation in the valley in the summer of 1860, a second and larger grove of Big Trees had been discovered, south of Calaveras,



In the Woods, by Asher Brown Durand (1855)

toward Mariposa itself, and King along with his high-minded friends and colleagues determined that the "wretched drudgery of destruction" that had overtaken the Calaveras trees should not be visited on the second forest. "The Mariposa stands," he wrote in his articles for the *Boston Evening Transcript*, "as the Creator fashioned it, unprofaned except by fire."

The Big Trees, in short, were sacred: America's own natural temple. "I think I shall see nothing else so beautiful till happily I stand within the gates of the Heavenly City," wrote Sydney Andrews in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*. And while Starr King assigned pagan

magic to the oak groves of Greece and Germany, "the evergreen," he noted, was "so much softer in [its] stock and far deeper and more serious in [its] music. . . . The evergreen is the Hebrew tree." And the dizzying thought that their age could be measured in millennia, and thus literally be coeval with the whole Christian era, only reinforced this sense of native holiness. "Tell me," King imagined himself whispering to the Big Tree, "whether or not your birth belongs to the Christian centuries; whether we must write 'BC' or 'AD' against your infancy?" And the correspondent of the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, in a rapture usually associated with tabernacle revival meetings (many of which, in mid-19th century New England, were being held in open-air groves), actu-

ally linked the nativity of the trees to the birth of the Savior:

What lengths of days are here! His years are the years of the Christian era; perhaps in the hour when the angels saw the Star of Bethlehem standing in the East, this germ broke through the tender sod and came out into the air of the Upper World.

The pious notion that the Big Trees were somehow contemporaries of Christ became a standard refrain in the hymns of praise. John Muir counted the rings on one martyr to the axe and discovered that "this tree was in its prime, swaying in the Sierra winds when Christ walked the earth." It was as if

contemporaneity banished geographical distance, that this immense botanical mystery was part of what Muir called the "Holy of Holies" in Yosemite. And like all things touched with divinity the sequoias were immortal, never actually decaying as they stood but falling only to the celestial forces of lightning-conducted fire, or the axes of infidel loggers. The crowns that had been stripped away by lightning were proof of the inconceivable antiquity that guaranteed that someday they would be struck by a bolt.

It was one of these blasted patriarchs that filled the frame of one of Carleton Watkins's glass-plate stereographs. More than any other images, Watkins's heroic prints shaped American sensibilities toward Yosemite and the Big Trees. They were not the first photographs of the valley. To drum up business, the ever-enterprising Hutchings had hired a painter, Thomas Ayres, and a photographer, Charles Weed, both of whose work was then engraved as promotional lures in *Hutchings' California Magazine*. Watkins had been working as a carpenter in San Francisco but had become known as an amateur daguerreotypist and photographer of the Mariposa mines and landscape, which had also attracted pioneers of the new medium such as Robert Vance and Eadwaerd Muybridge. In 1861 Watkins visited Yosemite and, using a "mammoth frame," created the icons of the valley: Half Dome, Cathedral Rocks, and El Capitan, along with parties of gentlemen and hoop-skirted ladies (including the widow of the British Arctic explorer John Franklin) demurely dining off wooden tables in the great outdoors. His Big Tree stereographs posed tiny figures, probably including the Mariposa guide, Galen Clark, against the immense trunk and captured the heroically mutilated quality of the "Grizzly Giant," storm-racked but defiant and enduring, a perfect emblem for the American public on the brink of the Civil War: a botanical Fort Sumter.

Watkins's pictures went on show at the

Goupil Gallery in New York in 1862 and were a phenomenal success. Those who had ridiculed George Gale's pieces of bark were now converted to the stupendousness of the sequoias. Oliver Wendell Holmes, writing in the *Atlantic Monthly*, extolled the pictures as fully the equal of the greatest productions of Western art and their subjects as the authentic, living monuments of pristine America. Suddenly Yosemite became a symbol of a landscape beyond the reach of sectional conflict, a primordial place of such transcendent beauty that it proclaimed the gift of the Creator to his new Chosen People.

Only the sense that Yosemite and the Big Trees constituted an overpowering revelation of the uniqueness of the American Republic can explain why Abraham Lincoln, in the midst of the Civil War, signing an unprecedented bill on July 1, 1864, granted them to the state of California "for the benefit of the people, for their resort and recreation, to hold them inalienable for all time." The bill, creating the world's first wilderness park, had been introduced by California senator John Conness, with the backing of Governor Frederick Low and the influential state geologist Josiah Whitney. And there is no doubt that the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted (then thwarted in his plans for Central Park and working as the superintendent-manager of the Mines) also had an important role in its promotion. Named to the Yosemite Commission along with Galen Clark and Whitney, Olmsted issued his first report in 1865. It still contains the clearest articulation of public, federal responsibility for denying areas of natural beauty to the use of private enterprise.

It was the aura of heroic sanctity, the sense that the grove of the Big Trees was some sort of living American monument, a botanical pantheon, that moved Lincoln and Congress to act as they did. The impression of a pantheon was reinforced when the

mightiest sequoias began to be baptized as "Daniel Webster," "Thomas Starr King" (who also rated a mountain), and "Andrew Jackson." ("General Sherman" is still with us, the biggest vegetable in America.) The sequoias seemed to vindicate the American national intuition that colossal grandeur spoke to the soul. It was precisely because the red columns of this sublimely American temple had not been constructed by human hands that they seemed providentially sited, growing inexorably ever more awesome until God's new Chosen People could discover them in the heart of the Promised West.

There was another reason why the Big Trees seemed an American godsend. A generation earlier, the forest had been represented in the popular imagination as the enemy. The eastern woods, after all, had been the habitat of the godless Indian. To make a godly settlement, then, required that both the wilderness and the wild men be comprehensively cleared. Beauty lay in clearance; danger and horror lurked in the pagan woods. The clearances were so extensive and so indiscriminate, though, that even as early as 1818 President James Madison was protesting the "injurious and excessive destruction" of timber. To a generation reared on James Fenimore Cooper's forest romances, the miraculous appearance of *western* woodlands seemed a sign of God's forbearance, a second chance for America to understand the divinity inscribed in its landscape.

It did not strike the artist Albert Bierstadt as particularly hypocritical to paint the Big Trees as embodying *both* national magnitude and spiritual redemption. He had made his reputation as a landscapist largely as a result of having produced huge, grandstanding panoramas of the Rockies, based on sketches made on a western trip in 1859. Some were exhibited at the Goupil Gallery, and it seems likely that it was Watkins's stereographs that influenced Bierstadt and the popular writer and lecturer Fitz Hugh Ludlow to make the

trip to Yosemite in 1863. Ludlow's articles for the *Atlantic Monthly* perfectly reflect the quizzical easterner dryly scrutinizing Eden but then surrendering to transports of conversionary amazement. Reporting the sequoias, Ludlow begins with a mere statistical report of circumference but then confesses that "we cannot realize time images as we can those of space by a reference to dimensions within experience, so that the age of these marvelous trees still remains to me an incomprehensible fact." Accustomed as New Englanders were to their own scaled-down version of heroic botany, Ludlow nonetheless noted that some of the Mammoth Trees "had fulfilled the lifetime of the late Charter Oak (at Hartford) when Solomon called his master-masons to refreshment from the building of the Temple." By the same token, he thought it impossible for his fellow travelers (for Ludlow and Bierstadt were accompanied by two other painters, Virgil Williams and Enoch Wood Perry) to convey anything but a pygmy representation of the sequoias:

The marvellous size does not go into gilt frames. You paint a Big Tree and it only looks like a common tree in a cramped coffin. To be sure you can put a live figure against the butt for comparison; but unless you take a cane of the size of Haydon's your picture is likely to resemble Homunculus against an average tree and a large man against *Sequoia gigantea*.

Perhaps it was these daunting technical problems that account for the absence of surviving Bierstadt Big Tree paintings from this first trip to Yosemite. But when he returned from his second trip, 1871-73, Bierstadt evidently felt that there would be a market for grandiose icons of the veterans of the ancient American woods, for at least six such paintings are known from this period. His star as a fashionable painter was, however, already dimming, and every exhibition of new work was met with a merciless fusillade from the



Giant Redwood Trees of California, by Albert Bierstadt (1874)

critic of the *New York Tribune*, Clarence Cook, who upbraided Bierstadt for his addiction to vulgar, flashy, and visually meretricious effects. Directed at the immense light shows of

Yosemite, the criticism had much merit. But Bierstadt's Big Tree pictures were in fact aiming for something other than sheer magnitude. The diminutive figure set against *The*

Grizzly Giant, for example, obviously established the immensity of the scale for the beholder. But the pose was taken directly from Carleton Watkins's plates and reshot for the official Yosemite survey and guidebook, in which Watkins posed Galen Clark in front of that particular tree.

Clark had been appointed "guardian" of the protected Mariposa Grove under the terms of the 1864 California statute (which provided a niggardly \$2,000 a year for the maintenance of Yosemite's entire area). But he had also become, in the writing of the period, a symbol of the idealized affinities between American nature and American people: decent, hospitable, enduring, hardy, but also hiding great nobility and wisdom behind a weather-beaten exterior—Natty Bumppo with a library. Olmsted wrote admiringly that Clark "looked like the wandering Jew but spoke like a professor of belles-lettres." And Fitz Hugh Ludlow described him as

one of the best informed men, one of the very best guides I ever met in the Californian or any other wilderness. He is a fine looking stalwart old grizzly-hunter, a miner of the '49 days, wears a noble full beard hued like his favorite game, but no head covering of any kind since he recovered from a head fever which left his head intolerant even of a slouch. He lives among folk near Mariposa in the winter and in the summer occupies a hermitage built by himself in one of the loveliest valleys of the Sierra. Here he gives travelers a surprise by the nicest poached eggs and rashers of bacon, homemade bread and wild strawberry sweetmeats which they will find in the State.

Clark then was himself a grizzly, posed beneath the grizzly sequoia in the valley named for the grizzly bear. But the great column that towered above him, almost an

extension of his own heroic American personality, was deep red rather than gray, and above all it spoke of an elemental chronology: not the chronology of classical European civilization, but the chronology of wild nature, America's own time scale, inherited directly from the Creator, without the supervening mediation of human pretensions. The truly *venerable* nature of American history, as the explorer Clarence King put it after seeing the Big Trees, could be measured in what he called, oxymoronicly, "green old age." Earlier in the century, writers such as Charles Fenno Hoffman, traveling in the valley of the Mississippi, seemed to shame the American tourists who thronged Rome and Paris by comparing "the temples which Roman robbers have reared" and "the towers in which feudal oppression has fortified itself" unfavorably with "the deep forests which the eye of God has alone pervaded and where Nature in her unviolated sanctuary has for ages laid her fruits and flowers on His altar!" What was the Colosseum beside the immense and prehistoric Grizzly Giant, a nobler ruin than the Parthenon, the epitome of heroic endurance over millennia: scarred, burned, ravaged by time, and decapitated by lightning. And unlike those heaps of stone, the Giant was yet alive with the vigorous green shoots of a new age. It exactly linked prehistorical antiquity to American posterity. No wonder, then, that Bierstadt chose to exhibit his version of *The Great Trees, Mariposa Grove* at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, where it could proclaim that the first 100 years of the American Republic were but the political twinkling of an eye.

The Big Trees also proclaimed the sacredness of American time. And it is conceivable that Watkins's albumen print was not the only source for Bierstadt's heroic treatment of the ancient and weathered tree. It is distinctly possible that he would have seen Caspar David Friedrich's *Oak Tree in Winter* in the National Gallery in Berlin, which he had visited between the two trips



Kindred Spirits, by Asher Brown Durand (1849)

to Yosemite. Bierstadt might well have had an immediate understanding of, and particular sympathy for, Friedrich's own versions of arboreal salvation. He himself

had been born in Solingen, but had been taken to the United States as an infant and had grown up in the prosperous Massachusetts whaling port of New Bedford.

But like others of his generation, in particular the Hudson Valley painter Worthington Whittredge, he had returned to Germany for his studies. The center of their training, it is true, was the Dusseldorf Academy, which boasted the least Romantic and most studiously naturalistic techniques in landscape. But as art historian Barbara Novak has persuasively argued, it seems unlikely that the intensity of German Romantic idealism, still far from moribund, would not have rubbed off on a group of American artists who were, in any case, extremely prone to a kind of visual transcendentalism.

Both Bierstadt and Whittredge, during their time in Germany in the 1850s, produced a number of landscapes in which great trees (usually oaks) figure as both heroic and spiritual actors in the scenery. And it was not long after his return that Whittredge painted one of the most successful and powerful of all his landscapes, *The Old Hunting Grounds*. Backlit in exactly the Friedrichian manner, Whittredge's birches rise like fluted columns to the arched, darker foreground trees that frame the composition. The effect is obviously architectural, almost an illustration of the tradition which located the origin of Gothic pointed arches and vaults in the spontaneous interlacing of tree limbs. But the title of Whittredge's forest interior was not casually given, for the painting is also loaded with the spiritual associations standard to the Hudson Valley painters. A ruined canoe eaten with decay lies in pond water as a memorial to the Indians, banished and vanished, "whose hunting grounds" these once were. The broken stump and the trembling birch leaves, emblems of death and new life, echo the canonical, anthemlike quality of the painting. Along with two other equally famous American forest interiors, Whittredge's painting became the literal visual expres-

sion of the pious cliché of the "cathedral grove."

In his own *Giant Redwood Trees of California*, Bierstadt transposed this ecclesiastical reading of the primordial woods to a sequoia forest. Indeed, the trees look more like the *Sequoia sempervirens* of the coastal forests than the Big Trees, and the red light, reflecting off the bark, suggests the luminous dimness of the much denser, darker redwoods of Mendocino and Humboldt counties. But the painting reiterated all the standard motifs of sequoia iconography: antiquity, reverence, and magnitude. And instead of the sentimental, inanimate elegy for the vanished redwood redskin, Bierstadt includes three Indians, a brave with his son seated by the pool and a squaw returning with a basket on her back, a native American version of the Georgic idyll. Most crucially, the tepee-like triangular opening in the side of the foremost tree is evidently the Indians' dwelling place. It is the most literal translation of what John Muir (who himself underwent a kind of theophany in Yosemite) meant when he wrote of returning to the American woods as "going home." Bierstadt's painting is sylvan-domestic: the ancient residence of the most indigenous Americans.

Both Bierstadt's and Whittredge's paintings paid homage to the patriarch of all American forest interiors, Asher Durand. President of the National Academy of Design in New York, Durand was, in effect, the theologian of the second generation of the Hudson Valley school. By his lights, the whole point of landscape was expressive veneration. In 1840, during a trip to England, he had spoken of his decision not to become a minister of the church, "the better to indulge reflection unrestrained under the high canopy of heaven." His famous "Letters on Landscape Painting," published in *The Crayon*, had appeared in the same year that he exhibited *In the Woods*, which also featured birches bowed together in

Gothic inclination. It was the exact illustration of the diluted transcendentalism preached in his essays—American nature shaped as the archway to divinity:

The external appearance of this our dwelling place, apart from its wondrous structure and functions that minister to our well-being, is fraught with lessons of high and holy meaning, only surpassed by the light of Revelation. It is impossible to contemplate . . . [them] without arriving at the conviction that the Great Designer of these glorious pictures has placed them before us as types of the Divine attributes.

Durand's most famous painting—a virtual manifesto of Hudson Valley sublimity—was *Kindred Spirits*, conceived as a memorial to Thomas Cole, the founding father of the school, who had died in 1848. A fictitious composite of two of Cole's favorite sites—the Kaaterskill Falls and the Catskill Clove, drenched in a radiant, golden light—it was also a comprehensive inventory of its stock symbols and emblems. The broken tree in the foreground signified Cole's premature demise, the evergreens his immortality, the hanging rock ledge the precariousness of life, the eagle flying toward the horizon the liberation of soul from body, and the river the voyage of life, which Cole had himself made the theme of one of his most ambitious series of allegorical paintings. The very composition of the painting, a swooping circular route for the eye, somewhat reminiscent of Brueghel, was surely a formal expression of the cycle of eternity. Standing on the ledge are Cole himself, holding palette and maulstick, and the poet William Cullen Bryant, who had delivered the funeral eulogy for the dead artist at the Church of the Messiah in New York and whose own work testified not merely to kinship between like-minded souls but to the essential *naturalness* of American identity.

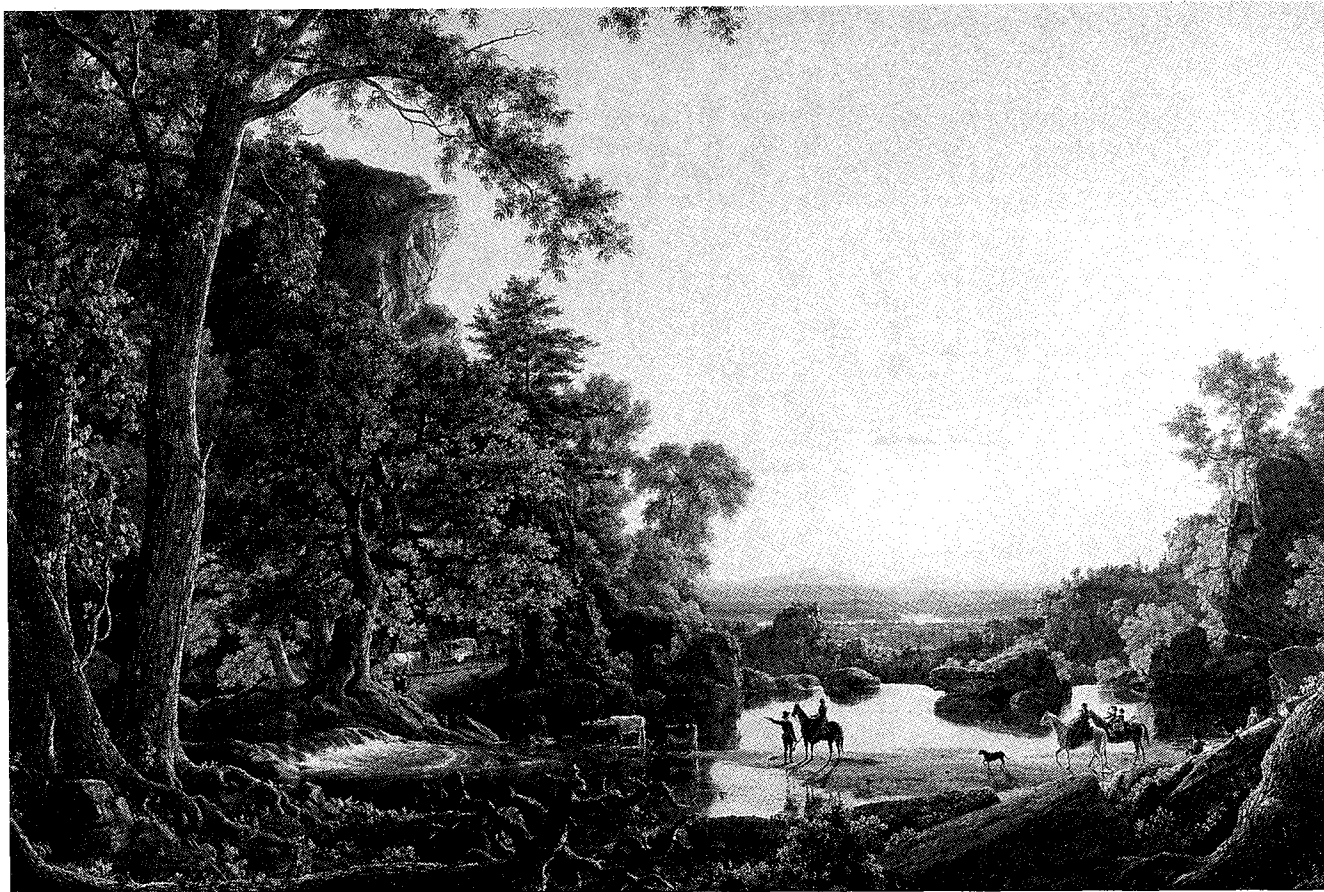
Bryant's poems (immensely popular in their day, almost unreadably plodding in

ours) revealed the American forests as the birthplace of the nation. To repair to the woods was to be reminded of two features of the national personality: its liberty and its holiness. An anthology published a year after Cole's death included two important poems in which the primitive antiquity of the forests was presented as a corrective to the national passion for novelty. In "The Antiquity of Freedom" the poet stands amidst "old trees, tall oaks and gnarled pines . . . / . . . In these peaceful shades / Peaceful, unpruned, immeasurably old / My thoughts go up the long dim path of years / Back to the earliest days of liberty." Freedom was not "as poets dream / A Fair young girl with light and delicate dreams," but a hoary warrior, "scarred with the tokens of old wars," in fact, a grizzly, cut about, blasted, and shaken, but always with the power to throw out new life. The woods, then, proclaimed the true natural constitution of free America, beside which a manmade document was merely the sapling of philosophical invention.

Even more important, though, the forest supplied America with the visible form of the primitive church:

The groves were God's first temples.
Ere man learned
To hew the shaft and lay the architrave
And spread the roof above them—ere
he framed
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems; in the darkling
wood
Amidst the cool and silence, he knelt down,
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
And supplication.

The idea of the "venerable columns" and the "verdant roof" supplying the original place of worship and then suggesting the actual form of spiritual architecture in the Gothic already had a long tradition by the time Bryant got around to giving it an American accent. But in the New World it had a special resonance. James Fenimore Cooper



Hooker and Company Journeying Through the Wilderness from Plymouth to Hartford, 1636, by Frederic Edwin Church (1846)

begins one of his more successful *Leatherstocking* tales, *The Pathfinder*, with the reader suspended like an angel and looking west above the rolling canopy of the virgin forest:

an ocean of leaves glorious and rich in the varied but lively verdure . . . the elm with its graceful and weeping top; the rich varieties of the maple, most of the noble oaks of the American forest . . . forming one broad and seemingly interminable carpet of foliage that stretched away toward the setting sun until it bounded the horizon by blending with the clouds as the waves and the sky meet at the base of the vault of Heaven.

It is from this primordial vegetable matter, celestially sanctified and unspoiled as yet by the touch of man, that America was born, the writers and painters of the first native generation

proclaim. In so doing, they self-consciously turned their back both on the classical contempt for woodland barbarism and the long Puritan legacy that equated the forest with pagan darkness and profanity. Instead, for his first important painting the young Frederic Edwin Church chose for his American Moses the Reverend Thomas Hooker, in 1636 leading a flock westward, away from the heavy hand of Old World authority represented by the Bay Colony government. And the Promised Land, it is apparent, is a dense woodland, not forbidding or packed with heathen terror but a sanctuary in the literal sense of holy asylum. Its foliage trickles with sunlight; its waters run sweet and clear. It is the tabernacle of liberty, ventilated by the breeze of holy freedom and suffused with the golden radiance of providential benediction.

A black and white photograph of a nuclear mushroom cloud. The cloud is large and billowing, with a dark, dense stem rising from a flat, open landscape. The background shows a horizon line under a dark sky. The image has a grainy, halftone texture.

The Future That Never Came

BY MITCHELL REISS

In August the world will solemnly mark the 50th anniversaries of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Their devastation in 1945 inaugurated an age fraught with doomsday anxieties: the fear of Armageddon, of uncontrolled proliferation, and, more recently, of nuclear terrorism. Yet even before the Cold War began to fade, many countries were quietly retreating from the nuclear temptation. Mitchell Reiss explains why—and what can be done to encourage the trend.

Half a century ago, World War II ended in two blazing flashes of heat, light, and devastation. The radioactive clouds that rose over Hiroshima and Nagasaki on those two fateful days in August 1945 cast a dark shadow over what historian John Lewis Gaddis has called “the long peace” that followed. Within seven years, the United States tested a fusion device 1,000 times more powerful than the atomic explosive that flattened Hiroshima and killed more than 100,000 Japanese. By then, the Soviet Union also possessed its own atomic bomb and would soon explode a thermonuclear bomb. It seemed a foregone conclusion that many other countries, in the quest for national security and international military and technological prestige, would seek and, inevitably, obtain nuclear weapons.

During the darkest periods of these 50 years, there seemed to be only one question on many people’s minds: when and where would the next Nagasaki occur? Few could have believed that every advanced country in the world would not want the bomb, and few would have imagined that such a “winning weapon” would not again be used in military conflict. Yet despite the wars and innumerable crises that have embroiled the nine countries known or believed to have acquired nuclear weapons (India, Israel, and Pakistan remain officially mute on the point), and despite the creation of nuclear warheads numbering in the tens of thousands, not one of these weapons has been

used in war since Nagasaki. Never before in military history have countries exercised such restraint with the destructive power at their disposal.

Nor have nuclear arms proved to be the irresistible temptation that many feared they would be. Not only have nations such as Germany and Japan eschewed them, but some countries that possessed either the weapons or the means to build them have quietly (and without much fanfare in the press) retreated. Even North Korea, the greatest saber rattler of recent years, has avoided all-out confrontation on its suspected nuclear weapons program.

Instead of the dreaded global nuclear conflagration, the 50 years since Nagasaki have provided the world with an unexpected nuclear education. These weapons have proved much less useful and far more costly than anybody expected. The imperative now is to recognize these lessons and to apply them in the post-Cold War world.

To the nuclear physicists of the early 1940s, the future had an ominous cast. Scientists working on the wartime Manhattan Project quickly recognized the dangers of unbridled postwar competition in atomic arms. They knew far better than their political masters that science knows no borders and that the American nuclear monopoly could not last.

The Manhattan Project itself was a cooperative venture among the United States,

the United Kingdom, Canada, and scientists from France. Its distinguished international cast, including Denmark's Niels Bohr, Germany's Hans Bethe, Hungary's Leo Szilard, and Italy's Enrico Fermi, was a living example of the cosmopolitan nature of scientific inquiry. The United States might keep its own atomic secrets (and even that proved impossible), but it was inevitable that other countries—perhaps many others—would eventually penetrate the mysteries of the atom on their own. The British physicist James Chadwick, whose experiments in the early 1930s revealed the inner structure of the atom, described his thoughts during the war: "I realized that a nuclear bomb was not only possible—it was inevitable. . . . Everybody would think about them before long, and some country would put them into action."

Even before the end of the war, these fears prompted Leo Szilard and other scientists working at the Metallurgical Laboratory of the University of Chicago, where history's first controlled-fission chain reaction took place in a squash court under Stagg Field in December 1942, to propose that the United States share its special knowledge with the world through a supranational organization. In return for receiving the peaceful benefits of the atom—chiefly, "energy too cheap to meter," in the phrase of the day—these nations would forgo autonomous nuclear research and development projects. The alternative was almost too horrifying to contemplate. Philip Morrison, a physicist who worked on the Manhattan Project, wrote immediately after the war: "If we do not learn to live together so that science will be our help and not our hurt, there is only one sure future. The cities of men on earth will perish."

The first two decades of the nuclear age

seemed to bear out some of the worst fears of the scientists. The poet W. H. Auden declared the postwar era an "age of anxiety." The bone-chilling prospect of a hundred Hiroshimas prompted policymakers to give serious thought to dispersing America's population to the countryside and even to building cities underground. The world-renowned British philosopher and pacifist, Bertrand Russell, was so alarmed by the nuclear peril that he recommended in 1946 that the United States launch an atomic attack against the Soviet Union if Moscow refused to help form a world government.

At first, hopes ran strong that atomic energy could be placed under international control. In a speech at the United Nations in June 1946, financier Bernard Baruch, the U.S. representative to the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC), proposed to transfer control of all the world's "dangerous" atomic activities, including fuel-production facilities, to just such a supranational authority. "Nondangerous" activities, such as the use of radioactive isotopes in medical research, would remain in national hands, monitored by the new agency. But only after these controls were in place would the United States relinquish the bomb. This plan, which now seems either hopelessly utopian or thoroughly cynical, was a serious attempt to prevent global disaster. "Let us not deceive ourselves: we must elect world peace or world destruction," Baruch declared.

The Baruch plan foundered on growing Soviet-American tensions. The Soviets offered a fundamentally different plan: the United States would eliminate its nuclear stockpile within three months, and an international control scheme would be devel-

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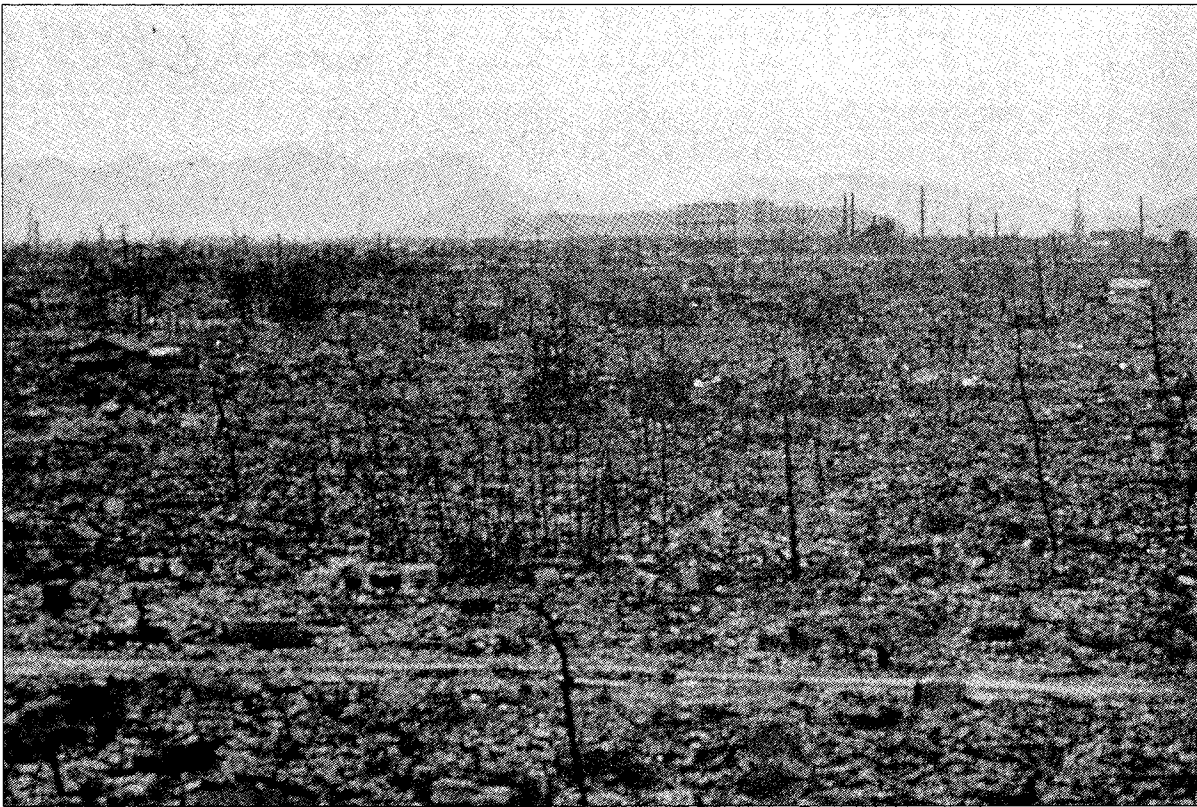
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oped in later negotiations. Two years of desultory political jousting followed before the UNAEC suspended its work in frustration. After Moscow exploded its first atomic device in August 1949, several years earlier than expected, most remaining enthusiasm for international control died, as did most talk in the U.S. scientific community of "one world or none."

Other countries, it was recognized, soon would be able to uncover the technological mysteries for themselves. As German physicist Werner Heisenberg warned in February 1947, the development of atomic bombs was "no longer a problem of science in any country, but a problem of engineering." In 1950, tens of millions of people around the world signed the Stockholm Appeal, a petition demanding that atomic bombs be outlawed as "weapons of terror and the mass destruction of whole populations." Audiences in the United States flocked to see *The Day The*

Earth Stood Still (1951), a Hollywood Cold War fantasy in which a benevolent visitor from outer space lands a flying saucer in Washington to warn humanity of its peril: the human race will destroy itself and perhaps the universe if it does not bring an end to the arms race.

Great Britain became the third member of the atomic club in October 1952, detonating a bomb on board a ship near the Monte Bello Islands off the coast of Australia. (No Americans were invited to observe the test, in retaliation for Washington's curtailment of the flow of nuclear information to London after World War II. The test, declared the British defense minister, showed that Britain was "not merely a satellite of the United States.") Later that month, at Enewetak Atoll in the Pacific, the United States exploded the world's first hydrogen bomb. It was built despite the opposition of some top nuclear scientists, including



Hiroshima after the blast, August 6, 1945. The bomb killed 140,000 people, about half of the city's inhabitants. Aftershocks killed another 60,000 by 1950.

Enrico Fermi and J. Robert Oppenheimer, who objected that such a "superbomb" could serve only as a weapon of genocide, not as a useful military device. "Mike," as it was called, gouged out a crater three miles wide and half a mile deep. Less than a year later, the Soviet Union exploded its own crude H-bomb. The arms race was on in earnest.

Inaugurating their famous "doomsday clock" in 1947, the scientist-editors of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* had set the minute hand at seven minutes to midnight; after the Mike test it edged five minutes closer. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, concerned about the growing cost of the U.S. defense effort and by the inability of the Western European countries to muster sufficient military forces to counter the Soviet threat, authorized in 1953 a "New Look" defense strategy. By empha-

sizing the use of battlefield (tactical) nuclear weapons to repel an attack, the New Look accelerated "vertical" proliferation: the enlargement of superpower arsenals. Now there would be nuclear artillery shells, demolition mines, and short-range missiles.

At the outset of Ike's presidency, 20 countries possessed independent nuclear-research projects that might allow them eventually to build the bomb. Eisenhower won worldwide applause in December 1953 when he announced his Atoms for Peace initiative before the United Nations. Coupling partial disarmament with the expansion of peaceful uses of the atom around the world, he proposed that the United States, Soviet Union, and United Kingdom "make joint contributions from their stockpiles of normal uranium and fissionable material to an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)." This would have the effect of reducing the amount of material available for the manufacture of weapons—though it would handicap the Soviet Union more than the United States. The IAEA would act as a kind of nuclear-materials bank for countries with peaceful nuclear-energy programs.

By the time the IAEA came into existence in 1957, however, Eisenhower's original disarmament idea was all but forgotten. The IAEA, based in Vienna, was now designed to promote the peaceful uses of atomic energy and to act as a watchdog to ensure that nuclear technology was not diverted to military ends, an important function that it still performs today.

Another potential route to disarmament was a ban on nuclear testing. The idea gained impetus when American H-bomb tests at Bikini atoll in 1954 showered radioactive fallout over a broad swath of the Pacific, forcing the highly publicized evacuation of several islands. To the horror of the

world, the crew of the *Lucky Dragon*, a Japanese tuna trawler that chanced to be nearby, contracted radiation sickness, and one of the men died. In Japan fear spread that fish, a staple of the national diet, had become contaminated. Forty million Japanese signed petitions calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Traces of fallout were later found in milk and other substances in the United States and elsewhere.

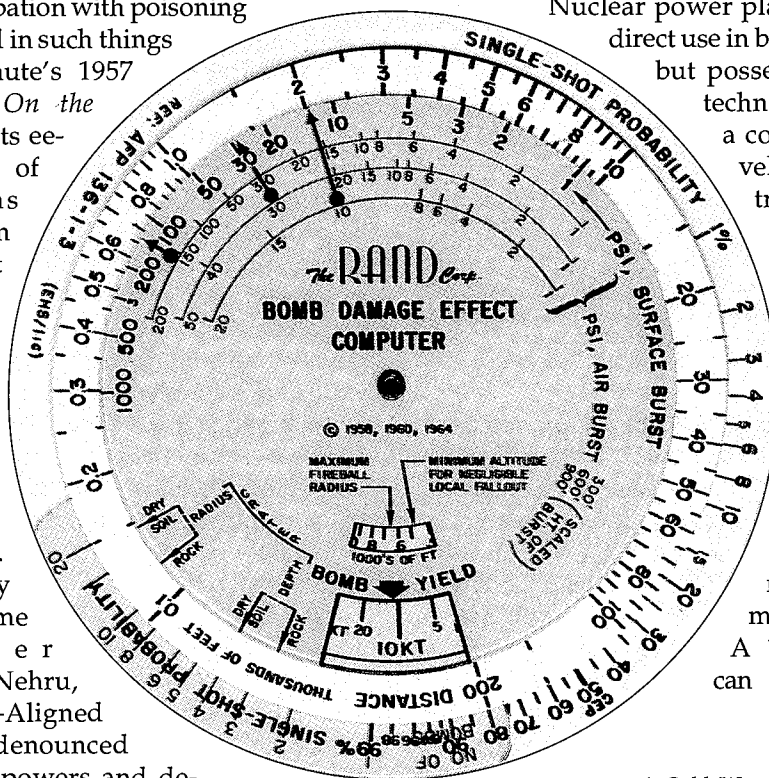
The public's sudden awareness of radioactivity raised a new kind of alarm, the threat of insidious nuclear contamination. The preoccupation with poisoning was reflected in such things as Nevil Shute's 1957 best seller *On the Beach*, with its eerie portrait of Australians carrying on as they await an invasion of deadly fallout produced by a world war that has destroyed the Northern Hemisphere.

Led by Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the Non-Aligned Movement denounced the nuclear powers and demanded a total ban on nuclear testing. In January 1958, a petition signed by 11,000 scientists from around the world calling for an end to nuclear tests was presented to UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. But the agreement that emerged five years later, the Limited Test Ban Treaty, prohibited tests only in the atmosphere, in outer space, and underwater. Because underground tests were still permitted, the treaty did little

to slow either nuclear testing or the bomb's spread. The chief U.S. test-ban negotiator, Averell Harriman, later lamented that it was merely an environmental-protection measure.

Meanwhile, other hurdles to nuclear proliferation, such as scientific expertise and engineering competence, were being lowered; the global diffusion of civilian nuclear research and power reactors by the United States, Great Britain, France, and (with much tighter controls) the Soviet Union was another cause for concern.

Nuclear power plants have no direct use in bomb making, but possession of the technology allows a country to develop a cadre of trained scientists and engineers with the skills and knowledge to develop fuel reprocessing and other technologies needed to make a bomb. A 1958 American study, 1970



A Cold War artifact: defense specialists used the Bomb Damage Effect Computer to estimate such things as the extent of fallout and the size of fireballs produced by bombs of different sizes.

Without Arms Control, predicted that "by 1970, most nations with appreciable military strength will have in their arsenals nuclear weapons—strategic, tactical, or both."

Two years later, in February 1960, an explosion in the Sahara made France the fourth member of the nuclear club. The British scientist and writer C. P. Snow predicted that "within, at the most, 10 years, some of these bombs are going off. . . . That is the certainty."

Speaking before the United Nations in 1963, President John F. Kennedy voiced the apprehension felt by many of his contemporaries: "I am haunted by the feeling that by 1970 . . . there may be 10 nuclear powers instead of four, and by 1975, 15 or 20. . . . I see the possibility in the 1970s of the president of the United States having to face a world in which 15 or 20 or 25 nations may have these weapons. I regard that as the greatest possible danger and hazard."

In 1964, China became the world's fifth nuclear power. By this time, every country that was technically competent to build nuclear arms, save Canada, had done so. China's test, the first by a member of the developing world, accelerated international efforts to halt the bomb's spread. New treaties restricting weapons in space and in Latin America were drawn up. In the United Nations, the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee abandoned its work on comprehensive disarmament and turned instead to nonproliferation. Its efforts led to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), signed by 61 countries in 1968.

Under the NPT, the non-nuclear states pledged to forswear nuclear weapons and to accept IAEA safeguards on their peaceful nuclear programs. The members of the nuclear club formally agreed not to help other countries to arm themselves. (China and France, however, did not sign the treaty until the 1990s.) In Article VI, they agreed to pursue negotiations on "cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date, and to nuclear disarmament." The day the treaty was signed, July 1, 1968, the United States

and Soviet Union announced the beginning of the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT).

But several countries that had no intention of swearing off the atom did not sign the NPT. With French help, Israel had developed a nuclear capability years earlier. In India, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri had concluded in 1964 that China's nuclear blast left him no option but to permit research on "peaceful" nuclear explosives. On May 18, 1974, the Indians got their bomb. (Prime Minister Indira Gandhi received news of the successful test in code words: "the Buddha smiles.") From China and India, the chain reaction led to Pakistan. Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had already vowed that his country would acquire nuclear weapons if India did, even if his people had "to eat grass or leaves, even go hungry" to free up the necessary resources. New Delhi's nuclear test energized Pakistan's quest for an "Islamic bomb." South Africa decided that it too needed nuclear arms. The world appeared well on its way to fulfilling Kennedy's nightmare vision.

II.

The Cold War, however, ended not with the expected bang but a whimper—or at least a long, exhausted exhalation. Its passing has eased the world's most extreme anxieties about the nuclear age. Less than a decade ago, Armageddon seemed even more imminent to some than it had in Kennedy's day. "The world is moving inexorably toward the use of nuclear weapons," wrote a commentator in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* during the early 1980s, expressing a fairly common view. By 1984, the editors of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, alarmed by the Reagan administration's military build-up and by the superpowers' increasingly bellicose

rhetoric, had inched their famous minute hand to three minutes to midnight, as close to apocalypse as it had been since the early 1950s. Visions of "nuclear winter," a new nightmare scenario of how the world would slowly die in the aftermath of a nuclear war, terrified the public, much as *On the Beach* had 30 years before. Critics warned that the arms race was propelling the world toward disaster.

Then, suddenly, it was over.

The disintegration of communism and of the Soviet Union itself after the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989 brought the quickest imaginable end—short of war itself—to the old fears. True, there had been significant change before 1989. Modest arms-control agreements during the 1970s that placed ceilings on certain categories of nuclear systems were replaced in the latter half of the 1980s with ambitious agreements that cut deeply, such as the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. But today the superpowers can't disarm fast enough to suit themselves.

In the fall of 1991, George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev announced sweeping reciprocal unilateral reductions in deployed tactical nuclear weapons. The 1991 START I Treaty virtually halved the number of U.S. and Soviet strategic nuclear warheads. If START II is fully implemented, the superpowers will cut their strategic nuclear arsenals by more than 80 percent from their Cold War peak. The United States and Russia will dismantle more than 15,000 warheads. The chief drag on disarmament now is not military or political but technical: the limited number of U.S. and Russian facilities equipped to dismantle these warheads and safely and securely store the leftover nuclear material.

Yet there has scarcely been time to celebrate. From the allied victory in the Persian Gulf War, barely more than a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, came the sobering discovery that Saddam Hussein's Iraq was well advanced on a secret project to build

an atomic bomb. In late 1992, the IAEA uncovered (with the help of U.S. spy satellite imagery) another case of nuclear cheating, this time in communist North Korea. Earlier this year, news reports suggested that Iran was perhaps only five years away from developing a bomb, much closer than previously estimated. According to a 1988 study chaired by veteran military analysts Fred C. Iklé and Albert Wohlstetter, 40 countries will be able to produce nuclear weapons by 2000.

To borrow the metaphor used by R. James Woolsey, former director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, the Soviet bear may be dead, but the forest is still full of poisonous snakes. The sprawling nuclear archipelago of the former Soviet Union, a complex of laboratories and factories employing almost one million physicists, chemists, metallurgists, engineers, and technicians, could well turn out to be a breeding ground for new nuclear snakes. Highly skilled scientists now earn less in a month than what an American teenager brings home after a day working the cash register at McDonald's. The temptations of going to work for a foreign power or even a terrorist group must be considerable.

Amid squalid military and deteriorating political conditions in Russia, there is also reason to worry about the safety and security of stockpiles of nuclear warheads and the fissile materials that can be used to make bombs. This is not an idle fear. To take one especially rich cache of bomb material out of circulation, operatives in a covert U.S. effort code-named "Project Sapphire" spirited 600 kilograms of highly enriched uranium (HEU), enough for perhaps 30 to 40 nuclear bombs, from a storage site in a remote and desolate corner of Kazakhstan. (However, 300 kilograms of HEU stored nearby was inexplicably left behind.) Nuclear smuggling from the former Soviet Union to the European black market is well documented. In one of the most alarming

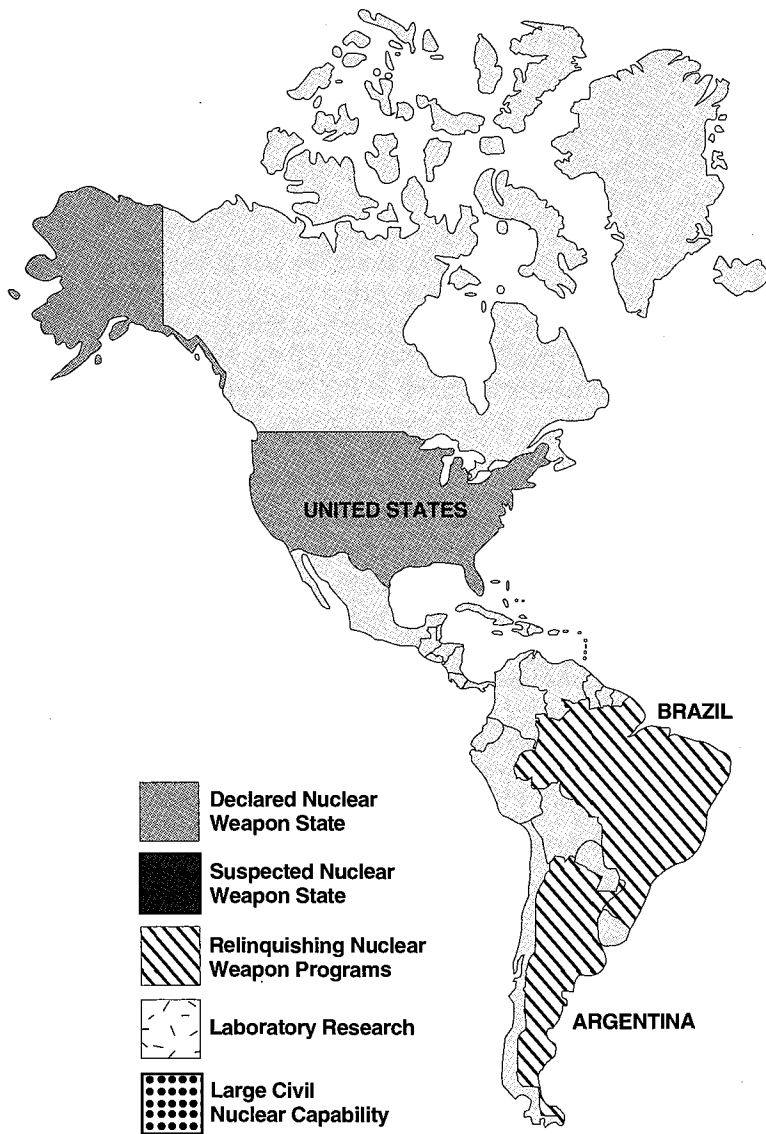


Six short-range Soviet missiles are readied for destruction in Kazakhstan. If the Start II Treaty is fully implemented, the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals will be cut by more than 80 percent after the turn of the century, leaving each side with 3,000–3,500 deployed strategic warheads.

cases, police in the Czech Republic acting on an anonymous tip last year seized six pounds of highly enriched uranium, about one-sixth the amount needed for a bomb. Three men were arrested at the time, but who was behind the plot and where the uranium was bound remain a mystery.

But the great and still largely unrecognized surprise is that contrary to what scientists, statesmen, and ordinary people have assumed since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the countries of the world have not rushed to arm themselves with nuclear weapons. Some have recognized the drawbacks and limitations of these weapons; others have gone so far as to conclude that they are a liability.

While the news media have focused with grim fascination on the new nuclear-nightmare scenarios of the post-Cold War world, several countries possessing nuclear weapons programs or harboring nuclear ambitions have, almost unnoticed, stepped back from the brink. They have slowed, halted, or even reversed their activities. Even North Korea, the most xenophobic and isolated country in the world, recently agreed to measures that promise over the course of 10 to 12 years to eliminate its ability to build nuclear weapons. These developments are without precedent in the nuclear age.



Moscow and Washington, moreover, have lowered the weapons' prestige value.

The stunningly large (and unexpected) bills that have started to fall due from the arms race also give other nations pause. The cost of dismantling nuclear weapons, storing excess plutonium and other dangerous materials, and repairing

the environmental damage caused by more than 50 years of weapons research and production is huge. The United States will have to spend between \$30 billion and \$100 billion to clean up various installations, including production facilities at Rocky Flats, Colorado, Hanford, Washington, and Savannah River, South Carolina. In the former Soviet Union, the bill could reach \$300 billion, although it is unlikely that anywhere near that amount will be found. And who knows what other costs of this radioactive legacy remain to be discovered? It is equally difficult to gauge the "opportunity costs" incurred by having generations of skilled scientists, engineers, and technicians devote their talents to building bombs instead of the gross national product.

All of these lessons have bred new attitudes toward nuclear weapons. In December 1991, when the Soviet Union was in its death throes, the world was confronted with the uncomfortable reality that three countries it had scarcely heard of—Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan—with leaders whom it hardly knew, now each possessed the means to

devastate the United States, Europe, or any other target they chose. Thousands of Soviet tactical and strategic nuclear weapons were located on these three countries' soil. Yet each of them agreed to surrender these arms over the next few years.

Quickest to act was Belarus, site of more than 1,000 nuclear weapons. Stanislaw

Shushkevich, a physicist-turned-antinuclear activist after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, used his largely ceremonial position as chairman of the Belarus Supreme Soviet to push a more rapid withdrawal than even Moscow wanted. In the West there was dread that the Muslim leaders of Kazakhstan might transfer some of its fearful nuclear inheritance—including 104 huge SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missiles, each code named “Satan”—to their radical coreligionists in the Middle East. Eager for U.S. aid and investment and wary of angering Moscow, Kazakhstan pledged in 1992 to return the SS-18s and other weapons to Russia.

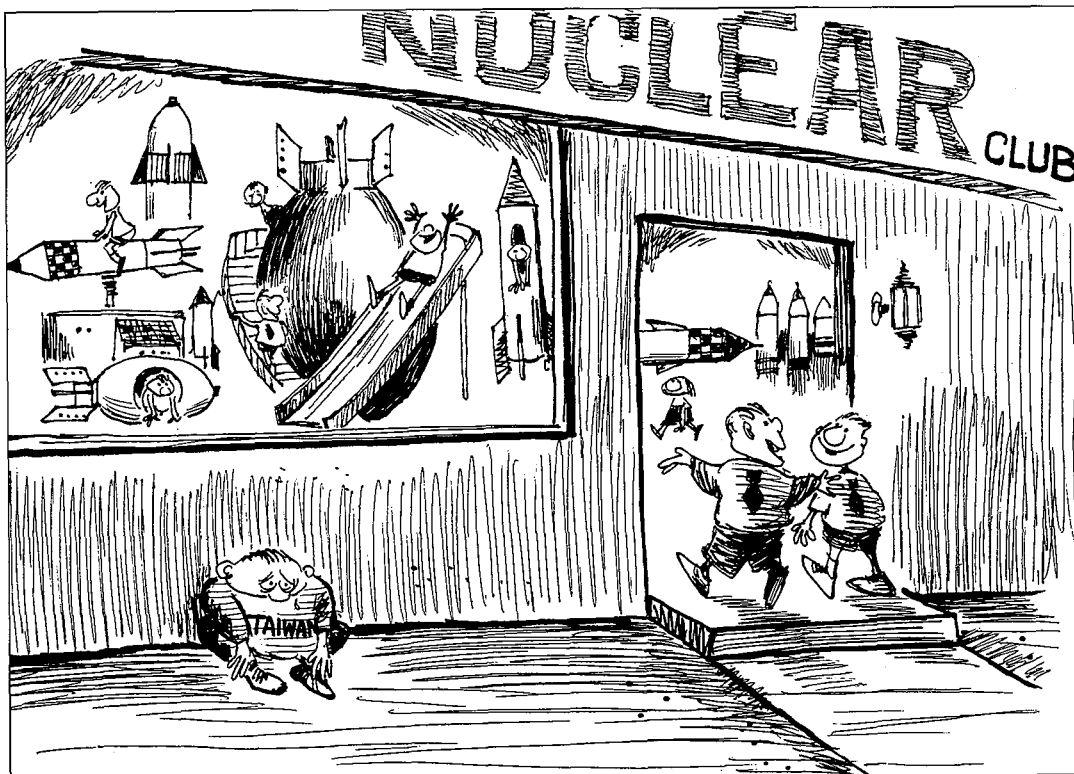
Ukraine was a little more recalcitrant. The country’s stolid president, former Communist Party ideology chief Leonid Kravchuk, understood that the weapons would not be terribly helpful in defending Ukraine or improving its appalling economic conditions. But they could be bartered for Ukrainian membership in useful international organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s Partnership for Peace. Ukraine’s assent was finally purchased in 1994 at the cost of hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. denuclearization assistance and, among other things, Russian promises to forgive Ukraine’s multibillion-dollar oil and gas debt and to provide fuel for the country’s nuclear power plants.

For each of these three countries the nuances were slightly different, but the fundamental calculations were essentially the same. Their leaders recognized that nuclear weapons are largely irrelevant to the most pressing problems of the late 20th century: civil war, ethnic and tribal conflict, mass migration, AIDS, economic backwardness, and international terrorism. More and more, these weapons appear to be elaborate and expensive anachronisms. There is not even much scientific prestige to be gained by building a bomb—now, after all, a 50-year-old technique.

A nuclear arsenal rarely promotes domestic prosperity, fosters better relations with neighbors, enhances national security, or wins international prestige. Nuclear weapons programs are more likely to siphon off scarce scientific and engineering talent, trigger a costly nuclear arms race with a regional adversary, sow mistrust among allies, inhibit the transfer of sensitive technologies needed for economic development, and invite international ostracism. This “winning weapon,” moreover, turns out to be almost too terrible to use.

That is one reason why the popular fear of nuclear terrorism, while not wholly unrealistic, is greatly exaggerated. Nuclear blackmail is a staple of international spy thrillers such as Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins’s *Fifth Horseman* (1980), in which Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi tries to force the United States to support the establishment of a Palestinian state by threatening to blow up New York City. But terrorists and leaders of “rogue” nations face many of the same constraints limiting others who seek to promote a political agenda. Would a nuclear blast advance their cause, or would it unify a horrified international community against them? If one is bent on violence, isn’t it far easier to strike at a symbolic target with conventional means? The terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center, after all, made their explosive from a mixture of fertilizer and diesel fuel. This is not to mention the still-daunting technical tasks of manufacturing and safely handling a nuclear bomb.

Only one country in history has unilaterally and voluntarily eliminated its own fully developed nuclear arsenal: South Africa. That it was done virtually without fanfare or international acclaim and headlines is regrettable, since South Africa’s experience illustrates some of the new realities of nuclear weapons. Immediately after becoming president in September 1989, F. W. de



A cartoon from the Taipei-based China Times shows nuclear weapons' continuing appeal on grounds of national pride. Under pressure from Washington, Taiwan abandoned nuclear weapons research in the 1970s.

Klerk ordered that the country's nuclear weapons program, including an arsenal of six nuclear devices that had taken a decade to build, be dismantled. By July 1991, the highly enriched uranium from the warheads had been removed and melted down and most of the non-nuclear components had been destroyed.

These extraordinary steps were part of a much larger design. The coming transfer of power to the black majority certainly helped sway de Klerk, but so did South Africa's growing sense of security from external threats following the negotiated removal of Cuban troops from Angola in December 1988 and the dwindling of Soviet influence in southern Africa. A nuclear arsenal, moreover, would hinder South Africa's efforts to become a respected member of the international community.

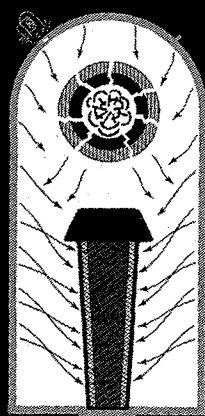
The power of international opinion is

not merely a matter of rhetoric. Countries that insist on maintaining nuclear programs pay a price in the international arena. They are excluded from international organizations such as the IAEA. They may be denied loans and other assistance by the World Bank and other multilateral institutions, as well as the Japanese and some other aid givers. They are also subject to formal and informal embargoes on the transfer of a variety of sensitive technologies, ranging from supercomputers to civilian nuclear power plants to induction furnaces used in the fabrication of high-tech metals. Some countries (such as Belarus) now clearly hope that there may be as much prestige to be gained from forgoing nuclear weapons as from possessing them.

International standing was a powerful consideration in the slightly less dramatic December 1991 decision by two long-time

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rivals, Argentina and Brazil, to accept international safeguards on all their nuclear activities. During the 1980s, both countries seemed intent on producing nuclear bombs—more for prestige purposes, apparently, than because one posed any threat to the other. Although relations between the two countries improved in mid-decade, the breakthrough came in the late 1980s with the accession to power of two dynamic civilian leaders, Carlos Menem in Argentina and Fernando Collor in Brazil. The two presidents were eager to carve out larger roles on the international stage (and in the international economy) for their countries,

and, not incidentally, for themselves. And that meant currying favor with the international community, especially the United States. Brazil, in addition, faced a threat from its long-time financial supporter, Germany, to cut off economic assistance by 1995 if Brasília did not abandon its nuclear pretensions.

Whereas Argentina's Raul Alfonsín could declaim to popular approval in the mid-1980s that he would break before he would bend to the wishes of the United States and the industrialized West, his successor, Carlos Menem, stated that he would much prefer Argentina to be the last country in the First World rather than the first country in the Third World. (The Argentine foreign minister put the idea more colorfully when he declared that he wanted ties between Argentina and the United States as intimate as "*relaciones carnales*.") For Argentina and Brazil, the price

of full admission to the international community was placing their nuclear programs under IAEA safeguards.

The United States had a hand in all of these success stories, directly cajoling, convincing, or coercing some countries and more indirectly influencing others through its support for international export controls, the NPT, and IAEA safeguards. But Washington probably played its most important role in May 1990, when the world may have come as close to nuclear war as it had since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

That spring, the explosive issue of

Kashmir was again agitating India and Pakistan. Amid strikes, bombings, and assassinations by Muslim separatists and fundamentalists in the Indian state of Kashmir, Indian prime minister V. P. Singh ordered a crackdown. Singh's government accused the Pakistanis of aiding their Muslim brethren; there was an exchange of hot rhetoric and before long there were military maneuvers along the India-Pakistan border. In May, U.S. intelligence concluded that Pakistan had assembled nuclear bombs. President Bush instantly dispatched Deputy National Security Advisor Robert Gates to mediate.

In Islamabad, Gates was blunt: "Our military has war-gamed every conceivable scenario between you and the Indians, and there isn't a single way you win," he informed Pakistan's leaders. Gates then visited New Delhi, where he warned that Indian air strikes against insurgent training camps in Pakistan-held Azad Kashmir might prompt Islamabad to use nuclear weapons immediately rather than as a last resort to save the regime. Gates was successful; both sides pulled their troops back.

In the annals of nonproliferation, however, the story of India and Pakistan must be counted a draw rather than a success. The two countries have not halted their nuclear programs, even though over the years they have exercised some self-restraint. India has not detonated a nuclear device since its first explosion more than 20 years ago. Pakistan has never conducted a nuclear test and reportedly stopped producing weapons-grade uranium in 1990 when President Bush cut off U.S. military and economic aid to Islamabad. Neither country has deployed nuclear weapons or ballistic missiles or even officially declared that it has nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, the subcontinent remains a potential nuclear flash point.

India can assemble 15 to 25 nuclear weapons on short notice and Pakistan can assemble six to eight, probably within a few days, according to U.S. government estimates. If nuclear war ever breaks out in the world, many defense analysts believe, the Indian subcontinent is the most likely location.

A more familiar "draw" is Israel, whose opaque nuclear posture was perfectly expressed by strategist Yigal Allon's remark in the mid-1960s: "Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons in the Middle East, but it will not be second either." Although widely suspected of having as many as 200 nuclear weapons, Israel has neither deployed nor detonated one, although some observers believe it was behind a mysterious flash in the South Atlantic detected by a U.S. satellite in September 1979.

Even nonproliferation success stories remain unfinished. Backsliding may yet occur; political commitments can be renounced and legal obligations can be flouted. Nuclear recidivism is a possibility, with North Korea the most likely candidate. A small number of countries will undoubtedly persevere in seeking to acquire nuclear arms or holding onto those they already have. Nuclear weapons are still thought by some to confer international status and enhance national security. For others, they remain useful tools for intimidating neighbors and regional rivals. These countries will pay the price of being hated in return for being feared.

There are military defenses against such transgressors—the United States, for example, is developing ballistic missile defenses. But nuclear weapons can be delivered by boat, truck, or several other means. Over the long term the most effective defenses are political.

III.

For four weeks this spring, delegates from 172 countries will meet in New York City to decide the fate of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. The conference can be seen, in effect, as a global referendum on the nature of the international system for the next century.

The absence of any solid security architecture to replace the Cold War's bipolar system has already contributed to a general unease in the world. Regional tensions have increased in many areas; ancient antagonisms, ethnic strife, and religious hatreds have resurfaced, literally with a vengeance in some cases. Without vigorous international regimes to control the spread of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction, the world will certainly become an even more dangerous place.

Since it took effect in 1970, the NPT has been the most important means of easing nuclear anxieties around the world. It provides countries with reasonable assurances that their neighbors, potential rivals, and enemies are not arming themselves with the world's ultimate weapon.

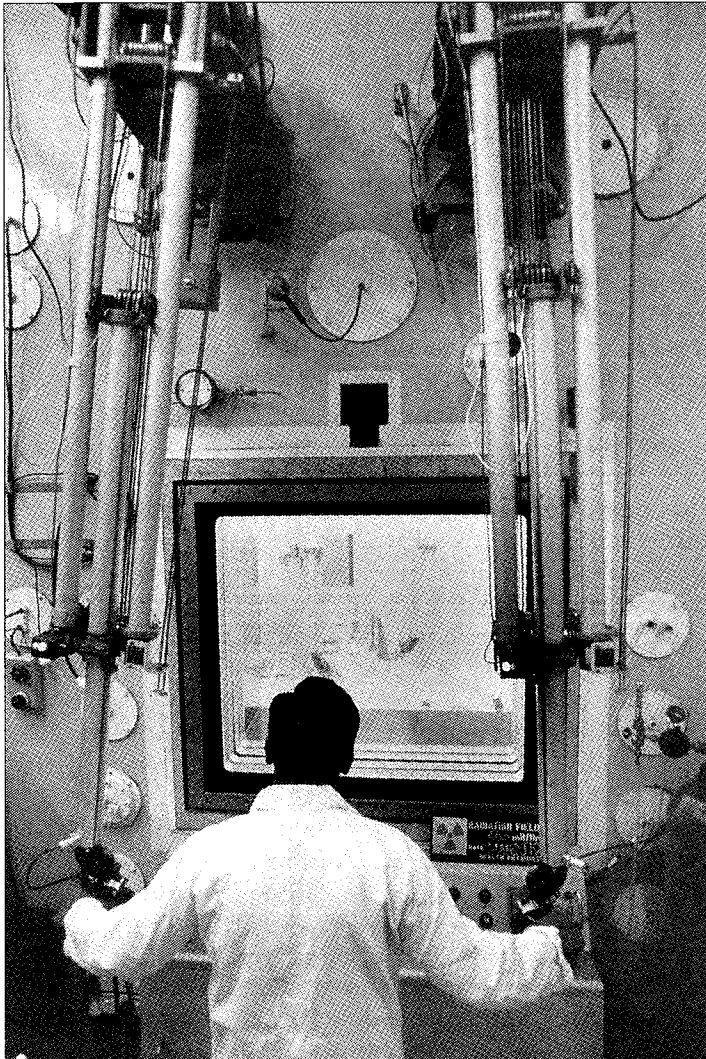
Along with the inspection and verification system provided by IAEA safeguards (which would end with the NPT's demise), the treaty is a vital strand in a web of interlocking, overlapping, and mutually reinforcing political pledges and legal commitments. This web also includes strict export controls that deny sales of sensitive technologies, such as supercomputers, that can be helpful in building nuclear weapons; nuclear weapons-free zones, such as those established in Latin America and the South Pacific (and soon to be created in Africa); strong multilateral alliances; ballistic missile defenses to protect U.S. and allied forces; and "negative" and "positive" security as-

surances, which are vows by the nuclear powers that they will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against other countries and will come to their defense should they face nuclear aggression.

The NPT and the IAEA safeguards system are not panaceas and they are certainly not fail-safe. They do not *determine* decisions by countries on whether to acquire nuclear weapons. But this harsh truth overlooks the positive influence they do exert. Submitting to comprehensive IAEA safeguards and taking NPT membership are earnest of the intent not to develop nuclear weapons. Although the sincerity and durability of these pledges may be questioned in some cases, such as Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, they are an accurate barometer of the nuclear intentions of the vast majority of countries.

Many of the states not possessing nuclear weapons that will participate in this spring's conference complain that the nuclear powers have not kept their side of the original bargain, notably their promise to share the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology—chiefly nuclear power. They are threatening to block the treaty's renewal or extend it only for a limited period. They believe, as Ambassador Makarim Wibisono of Indonesia, the leader of the 77-member Non-Aligned Movement at the NPT conference, observes, that "efforts to combat the danger of proliferation have been used to preserve and promote a technological monopoly in the hands of nuclear supplier states and relegate the developing countries to a position of continued dependency." Some of the nonnuclear states also want speedier superpower disarmament, or even a firm target date for the total elimination of nuclear arsenals.

At the heart of all of these concerns is the worry that if the treaty is extended indefinitely and unconditionally this spring, the non-nuclear states will lose a valuable (and, for many countries, their only)



An Indian engineer at a nuclear facility in Trombay. India has made the difficult step from civilian nuclear power to military capability.

means of leverage in their quest for wider technology transfer and nuclear disarmament. But the consequences of following through on their "nuclear extortion" would be very serious for these countries: without an NPT, their security would be at far greater risk than that of the states with nuclear weapons.

Anything less than the extension of the treaty indefinitely (or for a very long time) would be a failure. Even if the NPT is not canceled outright but only extended

for a short period, countries such as South Korea, Japan, and Germany would be tempted to hedge their bets against the treaty's eventual collapse by increasing their ability to build bombs. Analysts at the RAND Corporation have dubbed this ratcheting up of nuclear potential "virtual proliferation."

Total collapse of the NPT would have more clear-cut results. Gradually but inexorably, the bomb would spread. Perhaps the treaty's demise would galvanize the leading states to devise new institutions and arrangements to halt proliferation. But a failure to agree on extension would itself suggest a breakdown in the global consensus against proliferation.

The stakes ultimately go beyond nuclear weapons. The treaty's demise would cripple efforts to restrain the spread of other weapons of mass destruction. Specialists warn that it could doom the Chemical Weapons Convention, which

has been signed but not yet ratified by many countries, and vastly complicate efforts to strengthen the verification provisions of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. (The Central Intelligence Agency estimates that 25 countries currently have programs to build nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons.) Even under the best of circumstances, controlling these weapons in the future will probably prove even more difficult than the regulation of nuclear arms. A world that cannot agree

on the latter will be very unlikely to achieve the former.

IV.

In the early 1960s, a young physicist named Herman Kahn published a provocative book on thermonuclear war challenging the world to "think about the unthinkable." But it turned out that war, even with thermonuclear weapons, was easy to contemplate. The truly unthinkable challenge, as Kahn's critics noted, was to map out a realistic path toward a nuclear-free world. Until recently, this kind of thinking was casually dismissed, left to the liberal fringes of the peace and disarmament community. Hard-headed professional nuclear strategists, armed with their RAND Corporation "bomb wheels"—which allow them to estimate the size of the crater and the extent of the fallout from a blast of a given nuclear yield—preferred instead to discuss throw weights, MIRVs, and the seemingly ever-gaping "window of vulnerability."

Yet some especially visionary (or cynically calculating) politicians envisioned a different future. In January 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev called for a nuclear-free world by 2000. Nine months later at Reykjavik, Iceland, Ronald Reagan, the quintessential Cold Warrior, called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons (although his horrified advisers quickly qualified his statements). In 1988, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India proposed before the UN's Special Session on Disarmament a phased disarmament that would lead to a world without nuclear weapons by 2010. Recently a number of retired senior U.S. officials, including former secretary of defense Robert McNamara and General Andrew Goodpaster, former supreme allied commander in Europe, have urged that

the United States dedicate itself to the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

In fact, under both domestic law and international treaty, the United States is already obligated to eliminate all of its nuclear weapons. The legislation that established the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in 1961 and Article VI of the NPT both stipulate this goal. Is it really a desirable one?

Even among the dry policy analysts, there is serious discussion of moving toward a nuclear-free world. The end of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry, it is said, has vastly reduced the need for nuclear weapons. Their role in the Pentagon's war planning, for example, has greatly diminished. The United States, moreover, is highly unlikely ever to be the first to use these weapons in a conflict. Indeed, one former U.S. official argues that Washington would not likely use them even if the United States were attacked first. Nuclear weapons, in other words, are moving toward obsolescence.

At the other extreme, strategic analyst Kenneth N. Waltz of the University of California at Berkeley contends that "more might be better." The further spread of nuclear weapons to many countries might have a stabilizing influence on international life, he believes. Waltz's thinking is based on the Cold War experience of deterrence, the "balance of terror" that helped keep the peace between the United States and the Soviet Union. "The likelihood of war decreases as deterrent and defensive capabilities increase," Waltz argues. "New nuclear states will feel the constraints that present nuclear states have experienced."

Waltz's theory has been much discussed among academics during the past decade, and its flaws have been thoroughly vetted. It is not at all clear, for example, that other countries could reconstruct the same delicate balance of deterrence—and even the Soviet-American stand-off was full of

Thinking About the Unthinkable, Again

Some U.S. analysts argue a new military strategy is needed to deal with nuclear threats in the post-Cold War world. In the *National Interest* (Winter 1993-94), Eliot Cohen of the School for Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University offers one such view.

Three forces have come together to increase the danger of proliferation in the 1990s. First, over the decades technological know-how has diffused, putting nuclear potential within the range of a number of states. Second, the collapse of the Soviet Union has created a vast pool of scientists available for hire to work on such programs. It has also, in all likelihood, made nuclear material, including weapons, available for sale to potential proliferators. At the same time, the implosion of the Soviet state has removed from the world stage a major military power that had come to see the benefits of preventing nuclear proliferation. Third, and ironically, the Persian Gulf War has made it clear that no country can match the United States in a conventional conflict. To a hostile general staff, nuclear weapons look increasingly attractive as means of deterring either the Yankees or (more likely) their local clients, who provide the necessary bases from which American military power operates.

It is hard to see how any American strategy, no matter how clever the conception or assiduous the implementation, could do more than meliorate the fundamental problem. . . .

Of course it makes sense to pursue marginal remedies [such as anti-missile defenses and more aggressive efforts to help dismantle the Russian nuclear arsenal] as energetically as possible. . . . But both technically and politically they can achieve only limited success. The problem of detecting mobile missiles during the Gulf War offers a good example. Even if American pilots had received instantaneous warning of Scud launches (and some did, when they witnessed the actual firing of the missiles), they simply could not locate the launchers with sufficient accuracy to bring weapons to bear on them. . . . If ever the United States manages to defeat the ballistic missile, the low-flying (and soon, stealthy) cruise mis-

sile will prove a more difficult challenge yet. As for the talk of pre-emptive war, would that the United States were willing to engage in it, should the need arise. But really, who can imagine a president authorizing a large-scale, unilateral air and possibly ground attack against a country that has done no direct harm to the United States or its allies? The days of Osirak-type raids on a single, easily located and above-surface nuclear facility are over. Secrecy, camouflage, deception, and dispersion will make preemption a far more extensive and uncertain operation than ever before.

It is altogether proper to be gloomy about the proliferation problem. In addition to undertaking [other measures], the American government needs to prepare itself, materially, organizationally, and psychologically, for the day after the first nuclear weapon is used in anger. . . . The material preparation requires, among other things, a renewal of investment in the development of sophisticated nuclear weapons which the United States might use to destroy a nascent nuclear arsenal. It is technically feasible to develop nuclear weapons that could do useful work against such limited targets, without incinerating cities or blasting into the air large quantities of radioactive dust. The organizational preparation entails a kind of war planning unfamiliar to the armed forces in the recent past—crippling, punitive strikes against opponents whom the United States cannot disarm, or sudden, preemptive blows thrown at very short notice. The psychological preparation will prove the most difficult of all, however, for it will require a confession that none of the cleverly conceived arms-control efforts (export controls, buy-back plans, and international agreements) will do more than defer the dark day on which, for the first time since Nagasaki, a country uses an atomic bomb as a weapon of war.

perils. There are many other difficulties: a nuclear power might, for example, have an incentive to strike pre-emptively at a neighbor just developing a bomb. And as the number of nuclear powers rises, so does the chance of a classic "madman scenario" or, more likely, a fatal error in the more mundane command-and-control systems of the weapons.

Yet there is some wisdom in Waltz's argument, at least insofar as it applies to the *current* line-up of nuclear powers. Nuclear weapons do generally promote prudence and caution, in their possessors as well as in others. They deter others from using not only nuclear arms but perhaps chemical and biological weapons as well. Under some circumstances, they may even prevent conventional warfare among the states possessing nuclear weapons.

There are, in other words, benefits to be reaped from these ultimate weapons. But these benefits would survive even if the United States and other nuclear powers vastly reduced their arsenals. Borrowing a page from India and Pakistan, it may be possible to move to what specialists call "non-weaponized" deterrence. It is too late to "disinvent" the bomb, and impossible to lock its "secrets" away. But

nuclear weapons can be taken off alert, deactivated, and disassembled. Such a step would greatly lengthen the "nuclear fuse." It would fall short of total nuclear disarmament. It could, however, be a significant way station on the long road toward a goal that seemed hopelessly utopian only a short while ago. Before it can be reached, we will need to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons in international affairs and, ultimately, render them irrelevant to political life.

On this path to zero, perhaps the greatest danger is not from the spread of the weapons themselves but from our forgetting how very different they really are. For this reason, Harold Agnew, the former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, once suggested that a nuclear bomb be detonated in an isolated part of the ocean once each decade with world leaders in attendance. Then they would hear, see, and *feel* its awesome power. The danger is that as the echoes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki grow more distant with the passing of time, the devastation and unspeakable horror of those events may fade from our collective memories. We forget at our peril.

THE FUTURE THAT NEVER CAME

Hiroshima (1946), John Hersey's account of the bombing based on interviews with six survivors, remains a good starting point for any discussion of nuclear weapons. **The Making of the Atomic Bomb** (Touchstone, 1988), by journalist Richard Rhodes, tells the scientific and political story of the bomb's creation. Biographies of the leading scientists involved include **Genius in the Shadows: A Biography of Leo Szilard, the Man behind the Bomb** (Univ. of Chicago, 1994), by William Lanouette and Bela Silard; **James Conant and the Birth of the Nuclear Age: From Harvard to Hiroshima** (Knopf, 1993), by James Hershberg; and **The Advisors: Oppenheimer, Teller, and the Superbomb** (Stanford, 1989), by Herbert F. York.

Was the United States justified in dropping the bomb? Paul Fussell's answer is obvious from his book's title: **Thank God for the Atom Bomb** (Ballantine, 1990). His is the prevailing view. Its leading critic is Gar Alperovitz, author of **Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam** (Penguin, 1985).

The bomb's impact on American life is the subject of Paul Boyer's **By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age** (Univ. of N. Carolina, 1994) and Spencer C. Wear's **Nuclear Fear: A History of Images** (Harvard, 1988). William L. O'Neill's **American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945-60** (Free Press, 1986) is another sturdy survey. Sensational charges of Soviet atomic spying contributed to the Cold War atmosphere at home. Revisionist historians have argued that these charges were exaggerated. Much scholarship suggests otherwise. **The Rosenberg File: A Search for the Truth** (Vintage, 1984), by Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton, deals with the era's most celebrated case. Also noteworthy is David Holloway's **Stalin and the Bomb** (Yale, 1994).

Serious thinking about nuclear war began with Bernard Brodie's **The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order** (1946). Brodie argued that it is a contradiction in terms to think of waging nuclear war since it is impossible to

"win" such a conflict. Brodie elicited a host of responses, including Thomas Schelling's **The Strategy of Conflict** (1960); Herman Kahn's **On Thermonuclear War** (1960, repr. Greenwood, 1978); and Henry Kissinger's **The Necessity for Choice: Prospects of American Foreign Policy** (1961). These books' authors argued that presidents needed a host of intermediate military options. Among the results were a new emphasis on tactical nuclear weapons and the concept of graduated response in war—an idea that was applied to conventional warfare in Vietnam. Much of this history is surveyed in **The Wizards of Armageddon** (Stanford, 1991), by Fred Kaplan.

The New Yorker's Jonathan Schell gained celebrity with his alarming evocation of the consequences of nuclear war, **The Fate of the Earth** (1982), but his much more thoughtful consideration of the ways nuclear weapons can be tamed, **The Abolition** (Avon, 1986), was ignored.

A flurry of new books suggest that the debate over what to do about nuclear proliferation is coming to a boil. **Critical Mass** (Simon and Schuster, 1994), by journalists William E. Burrows and Robert Windrem, offers an alarming tour of today's nuclear world, emphasizing the need for controls on technology exports. Mitchell Reiss's **Bridled Ambition: Why Countries Constrain Their Nuclear Capabilities** (Wilson Center, 1995) stresses political and diplomatic measures. The 10 contributors to **New Nuclear Nations: Consequences for U.S. Policy** (Council on Foreign Relations, 1993), edited by Robert D. Blackwill and Albert Carnesale, emphasize the need to devise military responses. Michael Klare, in **Rogue States and Nuclear Outlaws** (Hill and Wang, 1995) critiques the Pentagon's nascent "counterproliferation" strategy.

Kenneth N. Waltz's argument that a world with more nuclear-armed countries would be more peaceful appears in **The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate** (Norton, 1995). Waltz's co-author and sparring partner, Scott D. Sagan, argues that the root problem with proliferation is all too human: the high likelihood that someone, somewhere, will someday make a disastrous mistake in handling these most destructive weapons known to humankind.

All the Presidents' Words

Theodore Roosevelt celebrated the "bully pulpit" as one of the grandest prerogatives of the presidency. But the pitfalls of serving as the nation's voice have contributed to the undoing of more than one of his successors.

BY CAROL GELDERMAN



On Saturday, November 13, 1993, President William Jefferson Clinton stood in the Memphis pulpit where Martin Luther King, Jr., had preached the night before his assassination. Speaking in Dr. King's very rhythms and cadences, the president exhorted the 5,000 black ministers and leaders at the Temple Church of God in Christ, and by extension all citizens, to look squarely at both how far the country had come in the struggle for racial equality and at the great distance it still must travel. In chilling detail, he described the violence and drug trafficking that ravage cities in which children, afraid of random killing, plan their own

funerals. He warned that the victories of the civil rights movement were being undermined by a "great crisis of the spirit that is gripping America today," that while Martin Luther King would take pride in the election of black Americans to political office and in the growing black middle class, were he to speak today, in all probability he would express utter dismay. Clinton even imagined the words King might have used:

I did not live and die to see the American family destroyed. I did not live and die to see 13-year-old boys get automatic weapons and gun down nine-year-olds just for the kick of it. I did not



"Yes," Theodore Roosevelt wrote, ". . . most of us enjoy preaching, and I've got such a bully pulpit!"

ment alone cannot rebuild whole communities, Clinton said. Each American has an obligation to help turn the country's permissiveness and violence around, he concluded.

This was moral suasion on a grand scale, and in the finest tradition of presidential moral leadership. Rising above party and ideology, the president summoned Americans to their highest ideals, and to their personal and collective responsibilities, even as he reminded them of certain home truths. The speech was educational, moral, inspirational—*political* in the finest sense of the word. Yet after an early flurry of favorable comment in the national press, the president's words seemed to vanish from the national consciousness.

The fate of Clinton's words is only partly the result of problems particular to his presidency. It is symptomatic of a larger challenge facing the presidential speech and the presidential speechwriting process. Clinton's difficulties are at least in part a result of his failure to come to grips with what political scientist Jeffrey Tulis has called "the rhetorical presidency."

Until the early 20th century, American presidents addressed themselves chiefly to the other branches of government, not to the people—and even then, most communications were written rather than spoken. The Constitution requires only that the president "shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union." Presidential reticence was not merely a matter of custom. As Tulis writes, it reflected a fundamentally different view of the office. The president was not a popular leader who sought to rally the public and promote a policy agenda. Even Abraham Lincoln rarely addressed the public. Indeed, Tulis points out, during a rare speech on the eve of the Civil War, Lincoln was cheered enthusiastically when he declined to utter a

live and die to see young people destroy their own lives with drugs and then build fortunes destroying the lives of others. That is not what I came here to do. I fought for freedom, he would say, but not for the freedom of children to have children and the fathers to walk away from them . . . as if they don't amount to anything.

The underlying cause of this social decay is unemployment, Clinton continued. "I do not believe we can repair the basic fabric of society until people who are willing to work have work. Work organizes life." Every institution needs to help. Government alone cannot nurture a child, and govern-

word about "the present distracted condition of the country."

The rhetorical presidency began with Theodore Roosevelt, who famously called the office a "bully pulpit." TR established the idea that the president has a direct relationship with the people. With his successful public campaign for a 1906 railroad regulation measure called the Hepburn Act, which he waged over the heads of Congress and despite the opposition of a majority within his own party, he showed for the first time how the bully pulpit could be used. Roosevelt did not influence much other legislation through his public speaking. Nevertheless, with his penchant for self-dramatization and his need to occupy center stage, he made Washington a major American news center. Yet constraints remained. Tradition still barred him, for example, from taking to the stump for his own re-election in 1908.

Not until Woodrow Wilson took office in 1913 was the rhetorical presidency institutionalized. Earlier in his career, the Princeton professor of political economy and progressive reformer had developed a thoroughgoing critique of the older idea of government. Wilson argued that the only national voice is that of the president, and that the executive, not Congress, is the branch most capable of governing a large modern society. The president, Wilson argued, should use his words to woo public opinion, for he "has no [other] means of compelling Congress" to accept his initiatives.

Although Roosevelt and Wilson wrote their own speeches, the plebiscitary presidency they introduced gave rise to a new speechmaking machinery in the White House. A president who leads a nation rather than only a government must be a loquacious president, and most recent ones have been loquacious to a fault. This change has been abetted but not caused by the rise of

television and other mass media. Gerald Ford, not generally remembered as a man of many words, delivered a speech on average every six hours in 1976 (including such things as press conference announcements as well as formal speeches). Jimmy Carter addressed his countrymen even more often, adding 9,873 single-spaced pages to the *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*. Ronald Reagan increased this bulk with another 13,000 pages, and Bill Clinton, in his first year as president, spoke publicly three times as often as Reagan did in his first 12 months. Indeed, such garrulousness is the essence of Clinton's rhetorical problem.

All of these presidents could have learned from the example of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the undisputed master of the rhetorical presidency. Although most people suppose that FDR took to the microphone every couple of weeks, the record shows that he delivered only 28 of his famous fireside chats during more than 12 years in the White House. (There were, in addition, messages to Congress and other addresses, some spoken, some not.) He used his words wisely by using them sparingly.

Brevity of this sort has been the exception. Presidents since Richard Nixon have relied upon an assembly line of writers capable of churning out words for them to say on every conceivable occasion. To be sure, even in the earliest days of the republic presidents called on others for help with their speeches—Alexander Hamilton and James Madison helped Washington draft his Farewell Address. But until relatively recently most presidents, most of the time, wrote their own words. Jefferson, the two Adamses, Madison, and Monroe were all highly literate, and Lincoln was probably the master wordsmith of the Oval Office. They wrote speeches that are still a pleasure to read. Others, before and after the Civil War, could have profited from ghostwriters but gamely penned their own dreary pronouncements.

The earliest "ghosts" were kept hidden

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FDR dominated the nation but not the airwaves. Here, he delivers one of his rare radio speeches in 1938.

in the presidential closet. The idea of a president speaking in anything but his own words was unacceptable. Judson Welliver's title was "literary clerk" when he began White House service for Warren Harding in 1921. Few Americans then or later knew anything about him or his job. He is remembered chiefly, if at all, for coining the term "the Founding Fathers." Describing his career in *Who's Who in America*, Welliver wrote: "attached to White House organization, occupying confidential relation to presidents Harding and Coolidge until November 1, 1925, resigned." Herbert Hoover's speechwriter was a man named French Strother. The president denied using Strother's words, yet as many as 21 years after Strother's death they still were showing up in Hoover's prose—giving new meaning

to the word "ghostwriting."

Since Franklin Roosevelt's time, presidential rhetoric makers have been openly employed, though their function has changed radically. A number of these high-profile draftsmen have gone on to become media stars in their own right, including public television's Bill Moyers and William Safire of the *New York Times*, former aides to Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, respectively. Safire's former colleague, Pat Buchanan, has larger aspirations.

There is nothing inherently wrong with the kind of speechmaking machinery that the rhetorical presidency has brought into being. Ideally, crafting a speech is a learning and synthesizing process. It allows a president

to acquire information, sort through issues, and come to conclusions about national goals and policies. And it helps him find the words to persuade his fellow citizens to follow. FDR and his immediate successors showed that a full collaboration with speechwriters could produce those benefits at least as well as solitary speechwriting once did. Indeed, collaborative efforts may now be essential. As a rule, the more that contemporary presidents have avoided working closely with their speechwriters—even when, like Clinton, they do a lot of their own writing—the more they have tended to find themselves in various kinds of political trouble.

Surrogate speechwriting came fully into its own under FDR. After announcing his intention to seek the presidency in 1932, he began cultivating an informal “brain trust” of advisers who contributed ideas and helped with speeches, including Columbia University professors Raymond Moley, Rexford Tugwell, and Adolph Berle. Several of these brain trusters went on to help run FDR’s New Deal agencies, even while they maintained speechwriting roles. Samuel Rosenman, who conceived the brain trust idea, served as presidential speechwriter during all four of FDR’s terms, yet he did not draw a federal paycheck until 1943. Before that he served as a judge on the New York State Supreme Court, commuting to Washington to serve the president on his own time.

During the war years (1941–45), most of the speeches were drafted by a trio of Roosevelt confidantes: Rosenman, playwright and presidential troubleshooter Robert Sherwood, and Harry Hopkins, a close FDR adviser who also held a number of top jobs in the government, including secretary of commerce. FDR’s speechwriters, in other words, were not merely verbal technicians but presidential aides with close contacts with the president and real policy responsibilities in the administration. The presi-

dent never kept their literary activities secret. Knowing how intimately involved Roosevelt was in their work, the public gradually began to take presidential speechwriters for granted.

Despite the crises that followed one after another in relentless succession during FDR’s occupancy of the White House, the president set aside five or six nights a month to work on speeches. “With his sense of history,” Sherwood said, “Roosevelt knew that all those words would constitute the bulk of the estate he would leave posterity and that his ultimate measurement would depend on the reconciliation of what he said with what he did.”

Roosevelt also understood that as the leader of a democracy, he could move only as far and as fast as the people would let him, and that speechmaking was the indispensable tool for widening his scope of action. By nudging public opinion forward, retreating when he was too far ahead, Roosevelt succeeded, for example, in shifting the country’s mood from isolationist to internationalist. It took three-and-a-half years of carefully constructed speeches to achieve his purpose, from his quarantine speech of October 5, 1937, which stirred a nearly unanimous negative response, to the signing of Lend-Lease on March 11, 1941.

On speechwriting nights the president and his writers gathered at 7:15 in the Oval Office for drinks, which Roosevelt mixed from a tray on his desk. After a half-hour of small talk, dinner was served at 7:45. Dinner over, the president moved to a sofa near the fireplace and read aloud the most recent speech draft while a secretary sat ready to take his dictated revisions and addenda. Together he and his writers tightened and simplified phraseology, eliminated sentences, paragraphs, and often whole pages, and dictated fresh passages to take their place. The president often drew material from his own speech file, a miscellaneous collection of items that he had been accumulating for many years. It included items

from his correspondence, notes from his reading, memoranda, clippings, and telegrams, as well as suggestions submitted by members of Congress and others. Sometimes a call went out to poet Archibald MacLeish, who served as librarian of Congress during the 1940s, or some other close adviser, to come in and lend a hand.

After the president went to bed, Rosenman and Sherwood and often Hopkins worked most of the night to produce another draft, which was placed on the president's breakfast tray the next morning. If there was time during the day, they conferred again and got further reactions and instructions from Roosevelt. In the evening, they resumed work in another after-dinner session in the Oval Office. This process continued day and night until they agreed on a final reading copy. Major speeches went through a dozen or more drafts, each of which the president had studied, added to, trimmed, read aloud, and subjected to searching criticism.

By the time he delivered the speech, Roosevelt knew it almost by heart and needed only occasional glances at the manuscript as he spoke. He was often persuasive and sometimes eloquent, displaying a power won in large part by his meticulous involvement in his speeches. Just as important, the men who helped him thoroughly understood his thought and rhetorical style as well as his politics. The speeches were a collaboration, with the president playing a major role.

FDR's next four successors followed very much in his speechwriting footsteps by adopting his collaborative method. Writers for Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson, by advising and consulting closely with the president, participated in decision making. These presidents, notwithstanding their considerable differences in personal and political style, all took for granted the

impossibility of separating writing and policy. Policy is made of words, they knew, and words shape thought.

For example, Eisenhower, who as a young army officer had penned several speeches for Douglas MacArthur, spent much energy and time during the first year of his presidency working on his Atoms for Peace speech, the 1953 address at the United Nations in which he proposed a plan for the international control of nuclear power. Its preparation set off a debate within the administration on atomic energy, necessitating 33 drafts of the speech over a seven-and-a-half-month period. The drafts circulated among senior advisers in the Atomic Energy Commission, State Department, Pentagon, and White House. Eisenhower appointed C. D. Jackson, his special assistant for Cold War strategy, to take charge of what would otherwise have become an unwieldy process. Uniting important policy-making and speechwriting functions in one trusted adviser was, Ike learned, a key to mastering the rhetorical presidency.

Kennedy and special counsel and chief speechwriter Theodore Sorenson did not have the luxury of seven- and-a-half months to determine the American response to the Soviet installation of nuclear missiles in Cuba in 1962. When he learned of their presence on October 16, Kennedy summoned his closest and most trusted advisers. They and the president conferred for the next 13 days and nights. Sorenson played a leading role not only because he wrote the speech but also because he was assigned to draft a summary of all the meetings. Entrusting this responsibility to a single person, he later said, is the only way to ensure that the president gets a clear sense of the emerging policy.

When dozens of meetings reduced the options to two, Kennedy told Sorenson to write two speeches. Drafting, however, led to further questions and meetings. This process, in which each participant repeatedly



LBJ consults with chief speechwriter Harry McPherson in 1968.

prodded, questioned, and elicited alternatives, led finally to a consensus that became the basis of the president's plan, which he announced to the world on Monday night, October 22. "The answer in the Cuban missile crisis," Sorenson told a *National Journal* reporter 10 years later, "was not resolved until it was effectively worded."

In like manner, Lyndon Johnson radically revised his thinking during the course of 14 drafts of his historic March 31, 1968, speech on U.S. policy in Vietnam. The president convened cabinet members, military chiefs, experts among the White House staff, retired generals, and elder statesmen for a series of meetings to consider how best to respond to North Vietnam's surprising Tet offensive, launched at the end of January. The president made it clear from the start that his special counsel and chief speechwriter, Harry McPherson, was to serve as everyone's conduit.

The president made no bones about his stand: "Let's get one thing clear! I'm telling you I am not going to stop the bombing." McPherson had already written six drafts of a speech along those lines. But privately

Johnson was not so certain. On March 22, a group of officials including McPherson met with him to discuss once again the possibility of limiting or ceasing all bombing of North Vietnam. Without the impetus of any discernible change in the president's thinking, McPherson wrote a memo on March 23 recommending a bombing cessation at the 20th parallel with the promise that all bombing would stop if North Vietnam agreed to end military activity in the demilitarized zone. Discussions continued. On March 26 the president chose

March 31 for the speech; on the 28th he told his principal advisers to meet in Secretary of State Dean Rusk's office to polish the speech. The men worked all day.

Knowing that Rusk and National Security Advisor Walt Rostow were unsympathetic to a bombing halt, Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford, as a last resort, burst forth in an emotional, tightly reasoned, hour-long appeal for jettisoning the speech as written. "It can't be polished; it's all war," he concluded. By late afternoon, his position had prevailed. To bring Johnson around, the group directed McPherson to begin anew with a conciliatory speech. The general counsel sent the first alternate draft to the president at 6 P.M. and then reconvened the group at 6:30 for an hour with LBJ, who still gave little indication of his position. Nonetheless, McPherson wrote a second alternate draft, dispatching it to the White House at 9 P.M.

Johnson agonized, trying to fix on a course of action. Not until the morning of March 29 did he finally make up his mind. He endorsed the second alternate draft. In the little time remaining, he and McPherson wrote three more drafts, trying to make each word as precise as possible. The surprise partial bombing halt, opening the way

for peace talks, was topped by Johnson's unexpected peroration: "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president."

This was modern presidential speechwriting at its best. For more than a month, the president and his top civilian and military advisers reasoned together in what amounted to a kind of exalted brainstorming. Because all information and opinion were funneled through McPherson, it worked. The continuing debate, discussion, and refinement of ideas clarified the choices and pushed the president and his advisers toward decision.

With LBJ's successor, Richard Nixon, everything rhetorical became a way of making image rather than policy. By the time he ran for president in 1960, 14 years into his public life, Nixon had become convinced that the perceived image of what a president is and does is far more important than the reality. Scattered throughout his presidential memos are comments that reflect this perspective: "Taft infinitely more effective than Teddy Roosevelt, but Roosevelt had personality"; "Ike had been distant and all business but appeared warm and kindly"; "JFK did nothing but appeared great while LBJ did everything and appeared terrible"; "Kennedy was colder, more ruthless than [Nixon], but look at his PR." Endless entries in the Haldeman diaries deal with staff efforts to "create a more friendly image of the P," as Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman routinely referred to Nixon.

Although he surrounded himself with advertising and public relations men such as Haldeman, Nixon made himself the architect of his presidential image as well as his presidency. He created an Office of Communications, an entirely new public relations arm of the White House that fed material to the press beyond Washington. The new Office of Public Liaison coordinated the White House "line of the day": the story that would be emphasized to the press. Of

nearly 550 White House staffers, 20 percent were connected, directly or indirectly, with public relations.

To script the president's effort to "establish the mystique," Nixon established the first formally structured White House speechwriting office, called the Writing and Research Department. Its 12 writers and eight researchers were the first Americans to be listed as such on the executive branch payroll. Nixon referred to his writers as the "PR group." In addition to drafting speeches, they analyzed opinion, drew up lists of remarks for the president to use "extemporaneously" in public appearances, and composed letters to the editor under real and assumed names. They even collected and indexed anecdotes for the so-called Richard Nixon Human Interest Program. (Under "Strength in Adversity" was filed a vignette about Nixon as a young father falling on the ice while keeping two-year-old Tricia safe in his arms.)

Yet for all this, the writers rarely assumed a consultative role in policy matters. Unlike their predecessors, from Rosenman to McPherson, these writers had no regular access to the Oval Office; they dealt instead with Haldeman as intermediary. Raymond Price, for example, rarely spoke directly to the president when he was head of writing and research, as Haldeman made clear in a January 9, 1970, diary entry: "reviewed Price's first real draft of the State of Union, . . . a complete disaster . . . led to a new harangue for a speechwriter who can write a Nixon speech. Hard for Ray to hit it right when he has no direct contact with P and no real guidance."

Nixon depended on his writers, but he controlled the content of every speech, spending "incredible hours alone" on drafts, according to Haldeman. But Nixon's understanding of the purposes of the presidential speech was fundamentally different from that of past presidents who did their

own writing. Nixon frequently wrote speeches (and made policy) in response to data supplied by his speech researchers and pollsters. His method represented an abrupt departure from what had been the accepted purpose of presidential speechmaking. Before Nixon, the speechwriting process was used to formulate policy and attain "so much of it as will receive general support by teaching," as FDR said. Nixon used it chiefly to manipulate public opinion.

The new focus on public opinion often created a disconnect between thought and word. The examples are endless. Nixon speaks of the urgency of passing the Family Assistance Plan but tells his chief of staff that he "wants to be sure it is killed by the Democrats and that we make a big play for it, but don't let it pass." He publicly praises civil rights and privately tells Haldeman he "does not believe in integration."

It may seem odd to speak of parallels between Nixon and Jimmy Carter, but there were striking similarities in their approaches to speechwriting. Like Nixon, Carter kept his writers, including James Fallows and Hendrik Hertzberg, at a distance and allowed them little role in policy. Having never had a speechwriter until his presidential campaign, Carter also insisted on writing for himself as much as time allowed. His experience underscores an important truth about the perils of the rhetorical presidency: who writes presidential speeches—even if it is the president himself—is less important than how and why they are written.

Unlike the calculating Nixon, who used speeches to define his public image more than his public policies, Carter managed to blur both. He had a penchant for combining his own engineer's lists of policy initiatives with a speechwriter's efforts and other material. His most famous speech is probably his disastrous address on Soviet-American relations at the U.S. Naval Academy in June 1978, in which he jammed together pieces of memos from his conciliatory secretary of

state, Cyrus Vance, and hawkish National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. The result was an unhappy amalgam of saber rattling and soothing rhetoric. The *Washington Post* accurately described it as "two different speeches."

Preachy, disjointed, and poorly delivered, Carter's public talking, which had landed him in the White House, just as surely propelled him out of it. Had he given at least one of his highly talented writers continual access and the mandate to act as a Sorenson or a McPherson, he likely would have constructed more convincing, focused, speeches—and, perhaps, policies to match.

Nixon's true heir in matters of public utterances, Ronald Reagan, enlarged Nixon's fully synchronized approach to rhetoric. He, too, relied on an amply staffed speechwriting department, as well as an Office of Communications, an Office of Public Liaison, an Office of Public Affairs, and an Office of Communications Planning. His staff also produced a "line of the day" for the nightly television news, either with scripted remarks or packaged events. According to Jeffrey Tulis, Reagan "spent more of his day in photo opportunities and greeting dignitaries than in policy discussion."

As during the Nixon years, pollsters played an important role in the higher councils of the Reagan administration. According to speechwriter Peggy Noonan, chief pollster Richard Wirthlin made it clear to the writers that he had a better "read" on what the public wanted than they did—a point he made in the Oval Office in Reagan's presence. He analyzed a recent speech during which members of a focus group were instructed to press a button when Reagan's words struck an emotional chord. Wirthlin pointed out that early in the speech, when the president said "reach for the stars," everyone squeezed. The word "free" is a good word, Wirthlin said, especially "free man from nuclear terror. . . . When you speechwriters talk about tax reform, that

is good. It's pro-family, pro-jobs, pro-future, pro-America. Pro is positive."

The parts of the speech that did not work, he continued, were those that lacked a positive note. He singled out a section in which the president spoke about the freedom fighters in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, and Nicaragua. "The listeners didn't know where these countries are," Wirthlin groused, "and anyway it sounds like we're launching a four-point war. Part of the problem seems to be that the language was so powerful it put people on edge. It made them feel 'down.' It wasn't positive."

Like presidential writers before them, Reagan's were responsible for the style, syntax, and accuracy of what the president said, and in executing these editorial duties, they necessarily served as brokers between policymakers. At times, they influenced policy more than the president probably intended. Sometimes, they unintentionally initiated policy. "What *is* the policy on conservation?" Peggy Noonan wondered before starting a speech on that subject. "Lacking certainty, we intuit." Noonan recounted the frustration of having her prose go through a 25-station review. "It would come back tapioca," she recalled in *What I Saw at the Revolution* (1990), "so I would use the 'hand grenade' technique. I would write a statement embodying an unambiguous, history-making commitment, throw it into the policy making machinery, and sooner or later somebody would knock it down or pick it up. *Then* we would find out what the president's policy was."

What is astonishing about Reagan's insulation from the men and women who wrote for him and about how little he participated in the preparation of speeches is that he launched his political career with a speech, variations of which he delivered starting in his early years as General Electric's spokesperson in the mid-1950s. Here was a man who had experienced unparalleled success from a speech that he had mulled over, written, and rewritten over a

period of years. Yet when he reached the White House, he delivered a packet of past talks to the speechwriting office with the instructions that the writers learn to imitate his style and substance.

What communications scholar Kathleen Hall Jamieson asked about Reagan may just as well be asked about other presidents: "Why should we expect someone who embraces the words of others to suddenly become an active, inquiring, scrutinizing manager of information when offered a plan [such as that] for aiding the Contras?" Had Reagan's successor George Bush been more actively engaged in the writing of his own words, for example, he might have thought more carefully about his ill-advised "read my lips" pledge not to raise taxes—and he might still be president.

Yet, for all that, Reagan was called "the Great Communicator." One reason he won the label was certainly that he stayed "on message" during the eight years of his presidency. From the night of his first presidential-nomination acceptance speech in Detroit's Cobo Hall to the day he turned over the Oval Office to Bush, he stuck to a few simple themes and repeated them with force and conviction. Not incidentally, Reagan was a great admirer of FDR, even if his overarching goal was to dismantle Roosevelt's coalition and programs. Reagan had come to maturity during the Roosevelt era, listening to the president's fireside chats and memorizing some of their best passages. He looked to his predecessor to teach him how to reach people effectively—even though his rhetoric, unlike FDR's, frequently did not match reality.

Right after Bill Clinton's election, his senior aides procured memos written by Reagan's transition team in late 1980. Included was a proposal by Wirthlin and speechwriter David Gergen for the president's day-by-day schedule during his first 100 days in office. The success of their plan largely depended on political consult-



Only a month into the Clinton presidency, critics began pointing out the perils of garrulousness.

ants and pollsters. Clinton uses these hired hands to an extent that goes far beyond anything Reagan did, and their influence is resented within his administration. "Speechwriting is not on their minds; image-making is," said one speechwriter. Clinton, however, understood all too well how Reagan had brought Congress to heel (for a time) by mobilizing such broad support that it seemed unsafe to thwart him, and he hoped to do the same.

What Clinton and Reagan seemed to have been looking for from the Nixon model was approval of the presidential person as a way to win support for policies. This represents a reversal of the earlier approach. Make good policies, Truman said, and good relations will follow; Eisenhower declared that "the job is to convince not to publicize." But today "presidents have become so audience-driven," communications scholar Roderick Hart has written, that "they unconsciously

use polling data to substantiate the essential wisdom of positions they champion."

President Clinton's wordsmiths, like virtually all of their predecessors of the past quarter-century, bemoan their lack of access to the man for whom they write. Yet in this White House the result has not been the unplanned policy influence of writers. As political journalist Elizabeth Drew observes in *On the Edge* (1994), Clinton "had thought through the nation's essential problems more thoroughly than any of his recent predecessors," and, more than any president in recent memory, he speaks for himself. The night before the signing of the Mideast policy accord in the fall of 1993, for example, he stayed up until 3 A.M. combing the Book of Joshua for inspirational references to use in his address. As former Clinton writer David Kusnet says, "this is a man

with knowledge of the basic texts of American oratory." Clinton can quote from memory large passages of Jefferson, Lincoln, FDR, and JFK. He knows the Bible and Shakespeare. He has all the "right stuff" to be an important national voice. But he has failed to make himself heard.

Early in his administration Clinton told *Washington Post* columnist David Broder that because the nation is "awash with news," he must work harder at being communicator in chief than his predecessors did. But to Clinton, working harder seems to mean talking more. He gave 600 speeches in 1993, and was an ubiquitous presence on television, in print, and on radio. This very strategy undermines his message. Just as putting too much money in circulation causes inflation and diminishes the value of a currency, too much presidential talk cheapens the value of presidential rhetoric. Television reporters tell Clinton's story over his mute gestures; radio talk-show hosts pummel his policies. As the White House itself recognizes, the definition of the president and his policies is now largely in the hands of others. He has lost the ability to shape public understanding, which is the essence of the bully pulpit's power.

Clinton makes matters worse by trying to get back on track with speeches that play to public opinion, creating new disconnects between past proclamations and present ones. Responding to public opinion in a democracy is no disgrace—FDR was a master of it. He probably had a better grasp of public opinion than any other president before or since. His habits of reading, listening, consulting, and yes, even studying public-opinion polls, were not a means of deciding which way to veer but of discovering

how much and what kind of persuasion was needed to bring the people along. Roosevelt believed that the relationship between the president and the people was direct but not reciprocal.

It is possible that we have reached the end of the rhetorical presidency, that Bill Clinton, for all his words, is America's first post-rhetorical president. In an age vastly more complicated than FDR's, an age overwhelmed by electronic words and images, it may be that no single person can serve as the national voice. But it is more likely that the age simply requires a leader who understands how to use words wisely and well, who does not feel compelled to "feed the beast"—who is the master (but not the manipulator) of what might be called the media complex. Television, as Peggy Noonan suggested, must be put in its place. Only by recovering the strengths of an earlier and quieter rhetorical presidency can that be done.

To reclaim the bully pulpit, a president (and it could still be Clinton) will need to do away with the public relations folderol and the separate speechwriting departments. He will need to cultivate a trusted speechwriting alter ego—a McPherson or a Rosenman. He will need to remember that to be truly effective a speech must clarify thought and policy, and that he must educate his listeners rather than merely pander to them. That kind of president could join the small band of America's best presidents, who "were leaders of thought at times when certain historic ideas in the life of the nation had to be clarified," as the second Roosevelt, echoing the first, defined moral leadership.

CURRENT BOOKS

Farewell to Modernism

THE ORAL HISTORY OF MODERN

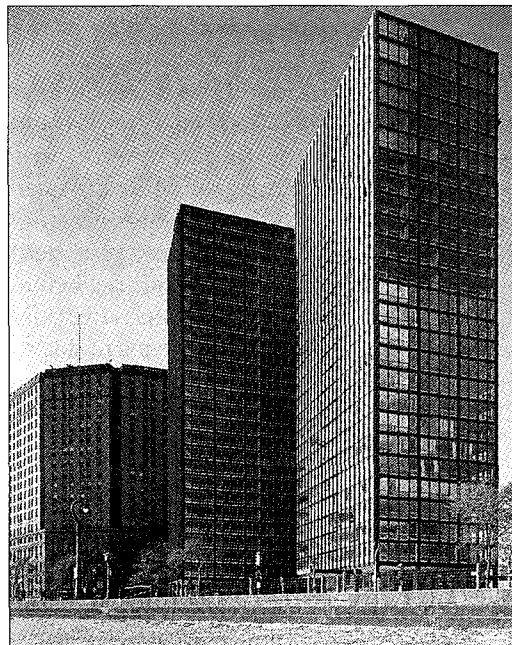
ARCHITECTURE: Interviews with the Greatest Architects of the Twentieth Century. By John Peter. Abrams. 320 pp. \$67.50

“Less is more,” Ludwig Mies van der Rohe supposedly said, thus summing up his severe, minimalist approach to the art of building. To which the architect Robert Venturi impishly replied, “Less is a bore.” Venturi’s postmodernist manifesto, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, was published in 1966, a year as good as any to date the end of what is commonly called the Modern Movement in architecture. This movement is remarkable for its pantheon of heroic figures—Mies, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright—and its equally heroic buildings. It is also distinguished by its brevity: beginning roughly in the 1920s, the Modern Movement held center stage barely 40 years.

Forty years is not a long time to reinvent architecture. But that is precisely what the early modernists set out to do. Their aim was to design buildings that owed nothing to the past and belonged distinctly and unmistakably to the 20th century. This ambition was in great part a reaction to the Victorian revivals of historical styles that had characterized architectural design during the late 19th century. Although the public generally liked neo-Elizabethan and neo-Flemish homes as well as Classical public buildings such as the National Gallery in Washington, many architects were dissatisfied with combining and recombining styles from the past. They felt that a modern age called for its own modern architecture. To this end, they generally ignored the well-established Classical architectural tradition that had nurtured architects as disparate as Freidrich Schinkel, Stanford White, and Edwin Lutyens. They did away with con-

ventional notions of ornament and decoration and instead found inspiration in such industrial prototypes as factories, steamships, and airplanes. Their aim, insofar as it was possible, was to make buildings machinelike. The results, from the Centre Pompidou in Paris to Boston’s City Hall, were sometimes refreshing, sometimes merely bizarre, often functionally implausible, but always strikingly original.

Despite the stylistic clichés that are commonly associated with modern architecture—flat roofs, pipe railings, and blank white walls—the Modern Movement was more than a fashion. It was truly a movement, that is, a loose grouping of people with a broad range of ideas. This diversity is made evident in historian John Peter’s *Oral History of Modern Architecture*, a collection of interviews with 59 of the most notable architects of the Modern Movement. What is surprising in Peter’s *Oral History* is not how much agreement there was among different modernist architects, but how



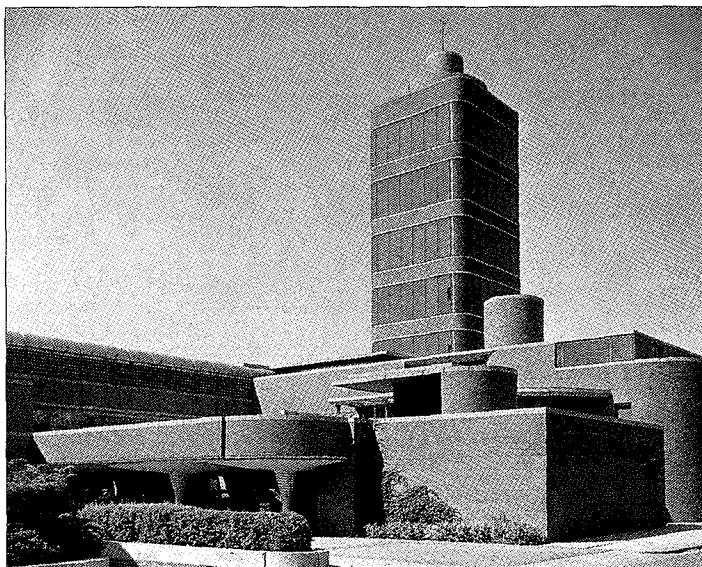
little. The Modern Movement was a very big tent, indeed.

Practicality, for example, is generally held to be integral to modernist design, and the Swiss designer Max Bill piously tells Peter that "what influenced all my thinking in doing architecture is always the human need." Mies, however, had a very different opinion: "The sociologists tell us we have to think about the human beings who are living in that building. That is a sociological problem, not an architectural one."

"Ornament is a crime," the Viennese modernist Adolf Loos famously wrote—a sentiment echoed by Le Corbusier's "I have been at war with decoration for a long time." But Willem Dudok, a Dutch early Modernist, is less doctrinaire: "Ornament is so elementary in the human desire," he observes.

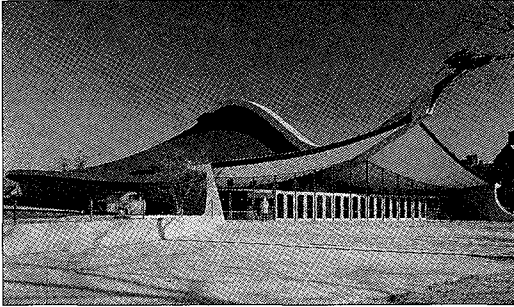
"Form follows function," wrote Louis Sullivan, but even this tenet was not universally followed. "I don't think that architectural form always should be practical or so," says the Finn Alvar Aalto in his fractured English. "There exists practically no culture in the world where it's only utility that commands."

The conversations with Peter also suggest that, though city planning was a preoccupation, here too there was no agreement. Le Corbusier denounces cities such as New York, London, and Paris as monstrous and proposes instead an urbanism of tall buildings and parkland. But his disciple, the Brazilian Oscar Niemeyer, who built many of the public buildings in his country's new capital, Brasília, seems unable to summon great enthusiasm for that soulless city, except to praise it for its lack of pollution. Louis Kahn orates unintelligibly about



transforming Philadelphia through the use of enormous parking structures, thankfully never built. Wright, who, despite his 80-odd years, understood that cars, telephones, and television may have made the traditional city obsolete, proposes a horizontal automobile city. "It's inevitable," he proclaims. (Forty years later, San Jose, Phoenix, and Houston have proved him right.) Understandably, most of the architects do pay lip service to the need for formal planning. But Mies is less sanguine on this point: "There are no cities, in fact, anymore. It just goes on like a forest It is gone forever, you know, the planned city."

Many interviews Peter recorded in his *Oral History* make unsatisfactory reading because the ideas expressed are so banal. Great architects, while they are often great talkers, are not necessarily great thinkers. Many of the conversations deal with abstractions—pious political ideals, vague generalities, half-baked social theories—rather than with the specifics of architecture and construction. Architects are trained to build buildings, not new societies, and while the Modern Movement heralded the new age,



it also seriously misinterpreted it.

Progressive in their aesthetic theories, modernist architects steadfastly held on to a principle that was, in effect, medieval: the ascendancy of the Master Builder. (An oft-repeated image in Bauhaus publications was the Gothic cathedral.) In their minds, at least, architects stood at center stage, ready to make—and unmake—the world around them.

But modern consumer society is much too complex, dynamic, and discordant to be guided by an individual vision, let alone the individual vision of someone as autocratic as Le Corbusier or Wright. Moreover, consumers are not passive; they impatiently make demands, often unexpected demands. They are not interested in being lectured to, and they want more choices, not fewer. The inability to anticipate the volatile and heterogeneous nature of consumer society was, finally, the Modern Movement's fundamental flaw.

It did not take long for the improvised ideology of the Modern Movement to begin to unravel. One already senses in Peter's interviews with younger modernist architects such as Minoru Yamasaki, Philip Johnson, and Eero Saarinen the beginnings of postmodernism, that is, a dissatisfaction with dogma, a tentative acceptance of the past, and a desire to broaden the architectural palette. By the 1960s, Yamasaki (designer of New York City's World Trade Center) was already producing a kind of neo-Gothic modern,

and Johnson had built a spate of museums that were defiantly neo-Classical in composition and used not raw concrete but hand-carved travertine.

But it was the mercurial Saarinen, the most gifted designer of his generation (he was only 51 when he died), who probably deserves the greatest credit for pushing design beyond the confines of the Modern Movement. He achieved this in a set of extraordinary buildings: Dulles International Airport, the CBS Building in New York, and the TWA Terminal at Kennedy Airport. In the Stiles and Morse Dormitories at Yale University, not his best work but ambitious sorties into historicism, he created a kind of Italian hill village in New Haven. As early as 1956, Saarinen told Peter: "God knows I am very, very enthusiastic about Mies van der Rohe and the almost common vernacular style that he created and that we all accept as a fine thing. However, I cannot help but think that it's only the ABC of the alphabet, that architecture, if we're to bloom into a full, really great style of architecture, which I think we will, we have to learn many more letters."

Saarinen was right. The orthodox architectural vocabulary that fills *The Oral History of Modern Architecture* was, finally, too meager to carry the Modern Movement into the future. I don't think Saarinen understood, however, that there was no going back once the apple cart was upset. As soon as architects started questioning the narrow tenets of modernism, it was every designer for himself. Having severed its links with the past, modernism left architects with little to fall back on.

The schools of architecture, which had already once drastically remade their curricula to suit the Modern Movement, were not much help. The result has been a sense that anything goes. A bewildering array of architectural ideas confronts the public on every street corner: buildings that meticu-

lously recreate bygone styles, buildings that try to remain faithful to Modern Movement ideals, buildings that resemble Braun toasters, and buildings that look like they fell out of the sky and never quite got pieced together. Less may have been a bore, as Venturi claimed, but the replacement has turned out to be not so

much complexity and contradiction as confusion and anarchy.

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Midmorning in the New World Order

TEMPTATIONS OF A SUPERPOWER. By Ronald Steel. Harvard. 144 pp. \$18.95

WORLD ORDERS, OLD AND NEW. By Noam Chomsky. Columbia. 311 pp. \$24.95

History seems to allow no time-outs. With unnerving rapidity, the winning of the Cold War has already turned to ashes in the mouths of the "victors." The "New World Order"—that glad, confident morning—is now clouded over with doubts and fears more shapeless than those that darkened the days of superpower confrontations. The Cold War, it seems, was the good war. As well as stifling ethnic and religious conflicts worldwide, it gave the protagonists a clear sense of purpose. Yet obvious as it may seem, Americans have had trouble grasping the point made in both of these books: the Cold War was more an advantage than a menace to the United States.

Beyond making that point, however, these two books could hardly be more different. Ronald Steel, a professor of international relations at the University of Southern California, displays a cool, skeptical pragmatism as he discusses America's efforts to define its new world mission. Noam Chomsky, known almost as much for his anti-establishment political commentary as for his pioneering work in linguistics, practically bristles with outrage at the politicians, public, and—to him, most unacceptable of all—intellectuals who

have assented to America's foreign policy, both past and present.

Though he does not share Chomsky's indignation, Steel does wonder whether the United States can "find a way back from the Cold War." After all, in American political life the Cold War was, he writes, "our society's central focus" for three generations. America's all-consuming effort to contain communism revealed its underlying missionary character. (Revolutionary France, Steel points out, possessed a similar sense of unique destiny.) But this evangelical zeal aside, the Cold War occurred at a unique historical moment in the international power system, when America's reach was—or seemed to be—global.

Immediately after World War II, America arrived at a definition of national security that was practically without precedent. Throughout history, great powers have defined their security essentially in terms of neutralizing immediate military threats. But to the formulators of postwar U.S. policy, national security meant shoring up democracy wherever it was threatened in the free world. Here was, quite possibly, an historical first—traceable to what Steel unkindly calls the "loose rhetoric" of Woodrow Wilson—in which national security, the ideal of universal peace, and a liberal-democratic world order were all inextricably linked.

Chomsky has a word for this policy: "interventionist." Its key article was summed up in Winston Churchill's assertion that "the government of the world must be entrusted to the satisfied nations, who wished nothing more for themselves than what they had." Chomsky will not allow that Churchill's noble expression was ever anything more than a justification for the strong to oppress the weak. He never entertains even the theoretical possibility that a great-power system could be beneficial or provide a fruitful stability. To him, the concept of stability has been so perverted by the governments of the satisfied nations—preeminently by the United States—as to have blighted its value altogether.

Chomsky is alternately enraged and mystified by what he sees as the self-righteousness of mainstream America. His passionate defense of the weak against the strong crudely reverses the old realist maxim, *Might Is Right*. To him, the weak are never in the wrong, the strong always are. Up to a point, his constant reversal of mainstream assumptions is bracing. Beyond that point (which is reached quite soon), it is simply paralyzing. His relentless attack on American altruism also compels him to take a dim view of the future. The only way America can become good, in Chomsky's view, is by becoming weak. And even if the United States ceases to be a superpower, it will remain too strong for its own or anyone else's good.

Steel's prognosis is hardly so pessimistic. Yet if the problems of superpower status during the Cold War were great, he sees those of a lone superpower as being even greater. The value of Steel's work lies in his attempt to find reasonable guidelines, reasonable limits, for international action in the post-Cold War world. To assay those limits, he investigates the "shibboleths"—stability, leadership, and democracy—that recently guided American foreign policy. Those principles, uncritically followed, will, he believes, burden America with a limit-

less, impossible agenda in world affairs.

But such principles may prove useful in the future, Steel thinks, if they are rationally analyzed rather than, as in the past, waved as battle flags. Leadership, if it is not too jealous of its status, can be a good thing. Stability, like peace, is clearly a good thing unless manipulated to obstruct necessary change. America's great weakness in the past—and here Chomsky is surely right—was its reluctance to tolerate or accept as democratic anything it found disagreeable beyond its borders. This monopoly of definition, if it persists, is bound to foster endless problems.

Steel's concluding chapter is fittingly titled "What America *Can* Do." What America can do, what it should do—these are questions that many others besides Steel are asking. Was there a legitimate principle behind America's (and other nations') intervention in Iraq, and, if so, when and how should it be applied elsewhere? What role, if any, should America assume in Bosnia or Rwanda? "Do we have any obligations to these troubled lands?" Steel asks.

To begin to answer this large question, he lays down a couple of general principles: it is not America's responsibility to counter aggression everywhere in the world, but genocide should not be tolerated. Yet his gloss of this no-genocide rule shows the difficulty of translating even so basic an imperative into physical action. America should have intervened in Rwanda and Cambodia, he argues, but it is right not to do so in Bosnia because the genocide there takes place "in the context of a traditional war over territory." Such a distinction seems ready-made for confusion and deception. Likewise, by asserting there is "no unconditional right of self-determination," Steel leaves the problem of deciding under what conditions America should act as intractable as ever.

Steel's minimal prescriptions do not supply the United States much of an international agenda in the post-Cold War world. But then

he believes America does not need much in the way of a huge global agenda. Of the analyst at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D. C., who wants "to defend legal order at the far reaches of the globe" on the grounds that "massive breakdowns in the civil order are too dangerous for the entire [global] system," Steel scathingly remarks, "Perhaps this distinguished scholar has not noticed the 'massive breakdowns in the civil order' that have taken place a few blocks from his imposing office."

Steel minces no words when he says that America's overriding duty is to face up to its internal problems. After all, America's rivals today—the industrial megalith of Japan, the nimble trading states of Southeast Asia, the emerging colossus of China, the giant emporium of a uniting Europe—do not want to bury capitalism. To the contrary, they want to do it better than Americans do. "While we struggle with our role of superpower," Steel comments, "they concentrate on productivity, market penetration, wealth, and innovation: the kind of power that matters most in today's world. In this competition we are—with our chronic deficits, weak currency, massive borrowings, and immense debt—a very

strange kind of superpower."

Finally, what are Steel's hopes for this international order in which America so strangely operates as a superpower? His search for a viable future leads him ultimately not forward but backward, into the past. The phrases "concert of Europe" and "balance of power" have an archaic 19th-century ring to them, but Steele finds them the brightest beacons for the 21st century. The role of global policeman is dangerous, but that of traditional "great power," for all Chomsky's labeling of it as naked imperialism, is actually quite useful. If security interests can be redefined less extravagantly, as was done within the balance of power, and if groups of powers can cooperate regionally, as was achieved in the concert of Europe, there is a genuine prospect for a "new world order"—one, Steel believes, that will not be vitiated by ideological polarization. Oh come back, you satisfied nations Churchill spoke of, come back.

—Charles Townshend, a former Wilson Center Fellow and a historian at the University of Keele in England, is the author of *Making the Peace: Public Order and Public Security in Modern Britain* (1993).

OTHER TITLES

History

THE FORBIDDEN BESTSELLERS OF PRE-REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE. By Robert Darnton. Norton. 409 pp. \$27.50

Pornography exploits women—and men, children, and dogs. Such, at least, is the conventional wisdom today, and people who agree on little else, feminists and fundamentalists, right-wing conservatives and gay rights activ-

ists, can at least agree that pornography represents the worst and most reactionary forces of society. Yet, venturing into an 18th-century underworld of penurious hack writers, nervous publishers, and police-dodging peddlers, Princeton University historian Darnton has discovered a forbidden erotic literature that was, in fact, enlightened, philosophical, and progressive.

For two decades Darnton has been elaborating a thesis about the French Revolution



that is itself somewhat revolutionary: namely, that the cultural origins of the Revolution lie beyond the witty *politesse* of the canonical Enlightenment, in the smutty, scandalous, and highly popular works of the so-called *Rousseaus du ruisseau* (Rousseaus of the gutter). In *The Business of Enlightenment* (1979), Darnton described how respectable publishers in France or just beyond its border sold illicit reading matter through such techniques as “marrying” or “larding” (splicing the pages of, say, *Fanny Hill* in French in between those of the New Testament). Now Darnton advances beyond the mechanics of book production and distribution to analyze the contents of these “hot” best sellers. The most popular illicit books of the pre-Revolutionary period (1750–89) were strange hybrids of materialist philosophy, explicit pornography, political slander, and radical utopianism. Darnton scrutinizes three books in particular: an ultra-racy novel, *Thérèse philosophe*; a political utopia

with the forward-looking title *The Year 2240*; and a libel (one of many) of Louis XV’s mistress, *Anecdotes of Madame the Countess du Barry*. Clearly, the line between smut and “serious” thinking was less sharply drawn at that time than today. In *Thérèse philosophe*, women and their lovers (usually priests) discuss fine points of materialist philosophy and utilitarian ethics between bouts of mutual masturbation, thus putting into practice John Locke’s proposition that all knowledge comes from the senses.

The question that Darnton gingerly circles is whether books, these or any others, actually make revolutions. His cautious, indirect answer goes something like this: books can offer readers stories that they understand in relation to their own “cultural frames,” which in turn may affect their behavior. The political slander aimed at Louis XV, his mistresses, and his hated ministers influenced readers’ perceptions of the political upheavals of the late 1770s, and in this indirect way possibly—but only possibly—contributed to the onset of revolution. Darnton’s “indirect causation” does not, in fact, much alter our basic understanding of the French Revolution. But by resurrecting works too explosive to have been included in the classical anthologies—yet works that 18th-century readers found nearly as *philosophiques* as Montesquieu’s political theory or Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*—Darnton has permanently altered our understanding of the Enlightenment that preceded the Revolution.

THE DE-MORALIZATION OF SOCIETY:

From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values.

By Gertrude Himmelfarb. Knopf. 314 pp. \$24

In the nine previous books that established her as a leading historian of the English Victorians, Himmelfarb insistently but discretely held up the Victorian past as a mirror to our modern ills. There is similar scholarship in *The De-Moralization of Society*, but the reticence is gone: now the past argues openly with the present (and wins). We have, Himmelfarb

pointedly suggests, a lot to learn from the Victorians, and we are only in second grade.

In elegant prose, the professor emeritus of history at the City University of New York shows how thoroughly we have misunderstood the Victorians—their family life and sexuality, their feminists and reformers, and much else. It was, she emphasizes, a society united, despite class fissures and other flaws, in its belief in “hard work, self-help, obedience, cleanliness, orderliness,” and in its pursuit of that all-important social glue, “respectability.” The Victorians, in other words, agreed on the virtues.

Thus even those who pushed against Victorian orthodoxy—and they were numerous—accepted and honored the larger values of Victorian society. The novelist George Eliot insisted on all the proprieties of married life—including the title “Mrs. Lewes”—even though Mr. Lewes, with whom she lived for 24 years, could not marry her. (He was unable to obtain a divorce from his wife.) “If there was one common denominator among” feminists of the period, Himmelfarb writes, “it was the belief that liberation—whether by means of the suffrage, or work, or education, or property and divorce reforms, or birth control—should not be purchased at the expense of ‘womanliness’ and the ‘domestic virtues.’”

The Victorians presided over a century of social progress, including not just a rising standard of living but even declining levels of crime and illegitimacy. Again, Himmelfarb argues, it was the Victorians’ extraordinary moral consensus that allowed this to happen. Under the New Poor Law of 1834, for example, they carefully distinguished between the independent but impecunious poor and the completely dependent pauper. The poor man could still claim a measure of respectability; the pauper was stigmatized, and was entitled to relief only at the workhouses (which were not quite as bad as those depicted in Dickens’s harrowing portrait, Himmelfarb says).

Himmelfarb says that it is our “reluctance to speak the language of morality, far more than any specific values, that separates us from the Victorians.” She traces this “de-

moralization” to what Friedrich Nietzsche in the late 1880s called the death of God. Nietzsche, she says, foresaw that this “would mean the death of morality and the death of truth—above all the truth of any morality.” Henceforth there would be no virtues, only “values”—one pretty much as good as any other.

In reality, the Victorians were already beginning to live off dwindling religious and moral capital when their queen took the throne in 1837. G. K. Chesterton observed that the Victorians were the first generation that “asked its children to worship the hearth without the altar.” Which leads to a question: to achieve the *re*-moralization of society urged by Himmelfarb, would it be enough to learn from the Victorians and, as she suggests, to apply their lessons to public policy, requiring welfare recipients, for example, to work? Or does the restoration of a moral society require a renaissance of religious conviction? That important question is never really engaged in this otherwise wise critique of our de-moralized society.

THE NIXON MEMO. By Marvin Kalb. Univ. of Chicago. 248 pp. \$19.95

THE HALDEMAN DIARIES. By H. R. Haldeman. Putnam. 698 pp. \$27.50

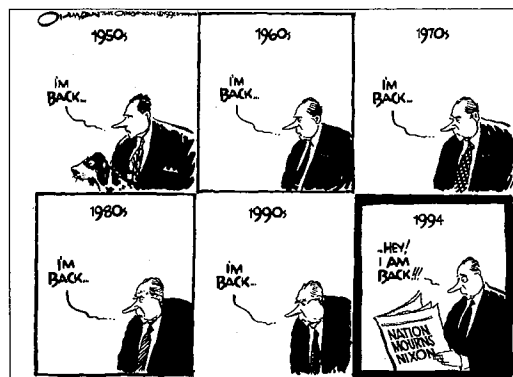
“There are no second acts in American lives,” F. Scott Fitzgerald once observed. Obviously he never met Richard Milhous Nixon. The only president ever forced to resign, Nixon (1913-94) by the time of his death was eulogized by the news media as “the most important figure of the postwar era.” How Nixon managed his apparent metamorphosis from dishonored ex-pol to elder statesman is chronicled with righteous gusto by Kalb, a former diplomatic correspondent who was once placed on Nixon’s “enemies lists.”

Fittingly for a politician who rose to prominence as a redbaiter, Nixon’s post-Watergate road to rehabilitation led through Moscow. Using the same genius for self-promotion and disregard for ideological consistency that had allowed him to begin normal-

izing U.S. relations with the People's Republic of China in 1972, Nixon in 1992 reversed his opposition to aid packages for Boris Yeltsin's Russia (which he had previously denounced as "counterproductive Western painkillers"). Essential to Nixon's strategy was his uncanny ability to manipulate the media. Kalb unravels the symbiotic relationships that Nixon cultivated with news outlets such as *Time* (where current Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott called himself Nixon's "case officer"), the *New York Times* op-ed page (which swallowed Nixon submissions as if they were bon-bons), and the TV networks (where Ted Koppel said "interviewing Nixon is one of the most fascinating political experiences").

The "Nixon memo" of Kalb's title refers to Nixon's carefully orchestrated dispatch on March 10, 1992, to 50 opinion makers blasting the Bush administration's Russia policy as "pathetically inadequate." Given Nixon's growing stature and his proven access to the media, neither President Bush then nor President Clinton later dared to alienate an elder statesman capable of asking the politically damaging question, Who lost Russia? While history may discredit Nixon's acuity as a Russia analyst (in 1991 Nixon was observing, "I doubt that Yeltsin wants Gorbachev's job"), his stage-management of the Russian question put Nixon, Kalb writes, "finally back in the big leagues."

Kalb's analysis would likely not have displeased Nixon, who once told his chief of staff H. R. Haldeman that "mystique is more important than content." There is an odd irony here. Kalb, for all his animosity toward Nixon, has not only explained but contributed to the former president's rehabilitation. Haldeman, who professed to admire Nixon and whom Nixon in turn said he "loved," may have all but ensured that the 37th president's rehabilitation will be temporary. Each evening Haldeman repeated into a tape recorder what Nixon had said and done that day, and there never has been a portrait of a president such as those tapes reveal. (These 700 pages are, in fact, but a fraction of the "diaries" available on CD-ROM.) Nixon's well-known dislike of



blacks and Jews, both individually and in general, is recorded here in detail; more surprising is his sheer lack of knowledge of both domestic and foreign policy. Almost every major domestic innovation for which the Nixon administration is credited—from education to welfare, from environment to consumer protection—was passed, Haldeman reveals, despite Nixon's secret opposition. The mystique of Nixon's second act, as Kalb shows, might have been new and improved; under the rhetoric, Haldeman reveals, the substance had not changed.

Arts & Letters

WALTER PATER: Lover of Strange Souls.
By Denis Donoghue. Knopf. 347 pp. \$30

Hearing of Walter Pater's death, Oscar Wilde reportedly said, "Was he ever alive?" Donoghue might answer, "Why, he lives still." In this eloquent and wonderfully nuanced book, Donoghue makes large claims for Pater, the languid 19th-century Oxford don who smuggled subversive Continental notions of art for art's sake into traditional Britain and, in so doing, helped conjure into existence artistic modernism.

Donoghue, who holds the Henry James Chair of Letters at New York University, writes against the current fashion in biography, in which the accreting volumes can double as doorstops. His book is not only of relatively modest size; it gets the proportions

right. The discussion of Pater's works, twice as interesting as his personality, fills twice the space of the formal biographical section. For, in truth, there was little outward excitement to Pater's life. He was born in London in 1839 and educated at Oxford, where, after becoming a fellow of Brasenose in 1864, he remained till his death in 1894. Occasionally he visited the Continent with his two sisters. But these were brief interruptions in the routine of the quintessential—cartoonish even—homosexual Victorian don, the type of committed nonbeliever who nonetheless toys with the idea of taking holy orders. His outward life might be compressed into a single sentence: he taught, he thought, he wrote. Displaying minimal social charm, he was the taciturn guest you would have dreaded sitting next to at dinner. But do not mistake the scale of the physical life for its true dimensions. In his mind, on the page, Pater made a life of continuous event. He created himself as a work of art.

Pater is most famous as the author of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873; later retitled *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*). The conclusion to his *Studies* was thought, in Victorian England, nothing short of dangerous. Pater's essentially pagan fervor might mislead young men, it was worried, as when he argued for the importance of self-realization, of experiencing the moment profoundly: "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy," Pater wrote in phrases that became famous, "is success in life." That so wan and self-effacing a personality should have measured his worth against fire and Dionysian transport is ironic indeed.

Why should we still care about Pater? To begin with, he is reckoned by some a master of English prose, and by some measures he indisputably is: the form is prose, the words are English, and Pater is masterful at putting them together in certain lush, idiosyncratic patterns. Whether today's reader will take pleasure in the patterns is another matter. Donoghue makes the strongest case for their appeal. He explains that the techniques of delay in Pater's sentences "mark refusal to live by the rhythms of public life, commerce, and

technology." This is ingenious, as is his assertion that Pater's truest existence was lived out in prose: "He was, sentence by sentence, a textual self in the act of becoming, of making itself, improvising itself from one intense moment to the next." For many readers, though, a Pateresque sentence approximates pushing a large rock up a hill and wishing finally, in exhaustion, that the thing will simply roll backward, flatten you, and end the ordeal.

But there is other evidence to argue the man's enduring importance. Donoghue believes that Pater, more than any other English writer, made available the disjunction of sensation from judgment and thereby intuited the form of modern literature we find in the early work of Yeats, Joyce, and Eliot. Pater was modern literature's first act, Donoghue argues, and "the major writers achieved their second and third acts by dissenting from him and from their first selves." In the end Donoghue appears to surprise even himself by advancing the claims of aestheticism, "for all its risk of triviality, exquisiteness, solipsism," against our dominant contemporary critical theory that understands every work of art as merely illustrative of a certain ideological formation. Finally Donoghue admires the shy Oxford don for his audacity in proposing a so-called "higher morality," which was "to treat life in the spirit of art."

THE BIRD ARTIST. By Howard Norman.
Farrar, Strauss. 289 pp. \$20

"My name is Fabian Vas. I live in Witless Bay, Newfoundland. You would not have heard of me. Obscurity is not necessarily failure, though; I am a bird artist, and have more or less made a living at it. Yet I murdered the lighthouse keeper, Botho August, and this is an equal part of how I think of myself."

With these sentences, short, flat, and unpretentious, begins what may be the past year's most successfully realized novel. *The Bird Artist*, like Norman's earlier *The Northern Lights* (both were nominated for the National Book Award), are novels of the unfamiliar, transpiring in a terrain simpler, harsher, and stranger

than the one most readers call home. Here the landscape is Newfoundland at the start of this century, and Norman fills it with characters (Fabian Vas, his parents Alaric and Orkney, Romeo Gillette), with places (Witless Bay, Richibucto, Trespasey), and even birds (teals, kittiwakes, mergansers) whose peculiar-sounding names reverberate exotically, to suggest a world apart. Each page is a repository of the sensory images of bygone Newfoundland: villagers in the crabapple light of dawn, dressing fish for salting, the odor of codfish blowing down from the flats. But *The Bird Artist* is, foremost, a novel for the ear. Norman favors pared-down sentences and broken dialogue, most of which convey some odd, savory turn of phrase that salts—hermetically seals—the story in its own packing of language. This language, at once simplified and oddly poetic, creates the temporal rhythms of an earlier time, and that time, that different rhythm in human relationships, is the real subject of this novel.

Curiously, the most lauded novel of 1993—Annie Proulx's Pulitzer Prize-, National Book Award-winning *The Shipping News*—is also set in Newfoundland. This may be more than a coincidence. Literature is filled with idealized, semifictional countries—Blake's Golgonooza, Yeats's Byzantium, Rilke's Russia (glimpsed from the speeding train compartment of a six-month visit)—that, at best, seem like places you might look up in an atlas. In this comedy about a semirecluse, a remote land, and a slower-paced era, Howard Norman has also created a mythic, visionary country, a weather and terrain of his own, where human society is reduced to essentials, people are stoic and humorous, and decency and integrity are the meaning behind everything. Most characters in *The Bird Artist*—except Fabian's mother in her ill-fated adultery with the lighthouse keeper—have learned the hard lesson that Fabian's drawing instructor has drummed into him. "Granted, cormorants can look eerily like a fossil bird come alive in your harbor, there," the instructor says of Fabian's draftsmanship. "Nonetheless, they are worthy of everything but your poor drawings of them. Bird art must derive its power

from emotion, naturally, but emotions have to be tempered and forged by sheer discipline, all for the sake of posterity."

THE HOUSE OF PERCY: Honor, Melancholy, and Imagination in a Southern Family. By Bertram Wyatt-Brown. Oxford Univ. 454 pp. \$30

According to some of its more legend-prone members, the Percy family in America was descended from Harry Percy, the Hotspur of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. Even if they have been deluded in that belief, the saga of this talented and tormented southern family betrays a grand Shakespearian sweep. The six generations of Percys that Wyatt-Brown studies enact a tale full of sound and fury—of senators, military heroes, and literary writers, of honor and bigamy, of eminence and madness and early death.

In his earlier *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (1982), Wyatt-Brown, a historian at the University of Florida, established himself as the authority on the traditional values of the South. Here he focuses on the Percy family—a clan he likens in some ways to the Yankee Adamses—because in it he finds southern culture writ small. If myth making, the ethics of honor, and the pathology of depression obsessed the Percys generation after generation, they have characterized southern preoccupations at large. Examining this extended group of relatives, beginning with Charles in the late 18th century, Wyatt-Brown anatomizes history in its smallest particulars, showing how general cultural values are recapitulated in families and individuals and at what cost.

The House of Percy illuminates, above all, the process of writing, of how for many Percys creative expression eased the pain of an inherited predisposition toward melancholy. Writing allowed brilliant Percy women, such as Sarah Dorsey (1829–79), release from the confines of southern culture when there were few other avenues of escape. Both the father and the grandfather of

the novelist Walker Percy (1916–90) committed suicide, but Walker wrestled a similar depression to fruitful issue in *The Movie-Goer*, *The Second Coming*, and *The Thanatos Syndrome*. In such novels he resolved his ambiguous feelings toward two father-figures—his guardian-cousin, Will (a poet and memoirist), and his real father, LeRoy—by inditing rather than indicting them. Rarely have the interconnections among family history, regional history, depression, and creativity stood more clearly delineated than in Wyatt-Brown's efforts to trace how an American family—whether descended from the Northumberland earls or not—turned itself into an aristocracy of conscience and talent.

HEBREW AND MODERNITY. By Robert Alter. *Univ. of Ind.* 192 pp. \$27.95

The rebirth of the Hebrew language is popularly considered a tale at once thrilling and weird: an ancient tongue, lost as a living language two millennia ago, fossilized in liturgy, was resurrected from the dead by a few enthusiasts on the soil of modern Israel. But as Alter, a professor of Hebrew and comparative languages at the University of California at Berkeley, makes clear, the story is more complicated and, if possible, even weirder. He tells of a language that, far from having died out of daily usage, lived "a flickering intense half-life" through all the years of Diaspora, which began in 586 B.C., a language in which Jews continued uninterruptedly to compose not just prayers but secular literature and poetry. Oddest of all, during the 18th century a group of dedicated Yiddish-speaking writers called the *nusakh* began to compose realistic novels in Hebrew, inventing a conversational

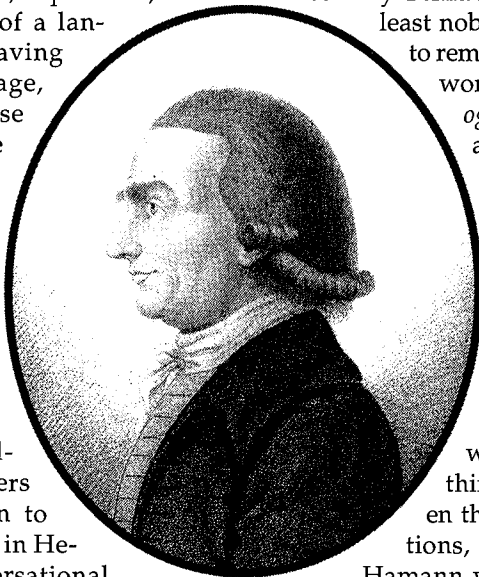
style for a language that no one conversed in. In large measure, Alter argues, this made possible the birth of Zionism and the modern tongue.

Alter's essay on the *nusakh* offers not just literary analysis but restored history. Even in Israel, few know that modern Hebrew literature did not result from Zionism but preceded it. In other essays, Alter analyzes modern Israeli novelists such as S. Y. Agnon and David Grossman and the poet Yehuda Amichai, to discover how an ancient mode of expression has been converted to modern, colloquial literary uses. Indeed, Alter suggests, if "postmodern" literature typically unites different, even discordant perspectives, voices, and eras in one work, then Hebrew, in which ordinary conversations can carry echoes of Ecclesiastes or the Book of Judges, makes a surprisingly congenial medium for postmodern poetry and fiction.

Philosophy & Religion

THE MAGUS OF THE NORTH: J. G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism. By Isaiah Berlin. *Farrar, Strauss.* 144 pp. \$21

Johann George Hamann (1730–88) is an 18th-century German thinker that nobody, or at least nobody since Goethe, appears to remember. The very titles of his works hint why. In *New Apology for the Letter H*, for example, Hamann attacked a respected German theologian who had suggested omitting the letter *h* wherever it was not pronounced. Hamann, to the contrary, celebrated the ghostly *h* as embodying the unpredictable, the element of fantasy in God's world, the beauty of everything incomprehensible. Given the nature of his preoccupations, the puzzle is not why Hamann was forgotten but why Sir



Isaiah Berlin, the Magus of Oxford, the octogenarian historian of ideas, has devoted a small book to reviving him.

At the very moment Diderot and his fellow Encyclopedists in Paris were erecting their edifice of rational knowledge, in Königsberg Hamann was advocating the idiosyncratic over the systematic, the bizarre over the daily, and the scarcely believable over the commonly accepted. And it is exactly this contrariness that interests Berlin. Hamann was the first European thinker to formulate a rebuttal of the Enlightenment that was not grounded on strictly religious premises. His fundamental insight was that the supposed universality of Enlightenment rationality tends not only to deny religious faith but to negate the validity of what all individuals uniquely see, hear, and feel for themselves. Consequently, Hamann opposed science, and even common sense, even when they produced useful results, fearing their suffocating effect upon the individual's autonomy.

At times Hamann comes off sounding like an early D. H. Lawrence, offering the same heady cocktail of antiscience, romanticism, and individualism. However, readers of this small volume will likely find Hamann's intelligence less intriguing than Berlin's. Berlin's complexity of mind, neither strictly Enlightenment nor "Counter-Enlightenment" (a word he coined), enables him to hold contradictory ideas simultaneously. He thinks that Hamann's irrationalist spiritual vision (so unlike Berlin's skepticism) does possess "intrinsic value," even though Hamann carried it into a fanaticism that imperils social and political life. Hamann's brand of fanaticism—a dangerous mixture of anti-intellectualism, anti-Semitism, fideism, and populism—would grow over the next two centuries "until it finally reach[ed] a point of violent hysteria in Austro-German racism and National Socialism." Yet it is for his positive as well as his negative qualities that "Hamann repays study," Berlin concludes. "He struck the first blow against the quantified world; his attack was often ill-judged, but he raised some of the greatest issues of our time by refusing to accept their advent."

Contemporary Affairs

BLACKS AND JEWS: ALLIANCES AND ARGUMENTS. Ed. by Paul Berman.

Delacorte Press. 303 pp. \$22.50

JEWS AND BLACKS: Let the Healing Begin. By Cornel West and Michael Lerner. Grosset/Putnam. 226 pp. \$24.95

Of all "emigrant groups" in America, blacks and Jews have come closest to sharing a common sociological experience: both historically were victims of persecutions, and both minorities were long regarded as outcasts by the dominant culture. For much of this century American Jews and blacks co-operated in an unofficial alliance, one that began with the supporting links between W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Crisis* and Abraham Cahan's *Jewish Daily Forward* and continued through the close friendship of those moral prophets, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King, Jr. Why, then, since the late 1960s, did black-Jewish relations go so bad?



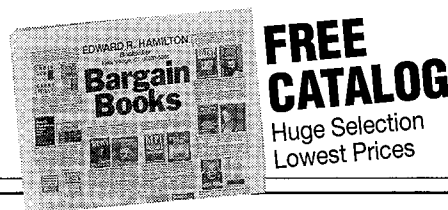
Paul Berman's anthology helps answer that question. Its essays show how the black-Jewish consensus of the civil rights era (perhaps romanticized even then) broke down amid acrimony over affirmative action, black nationalism, and the fear of crime. Black and Jewish intellectuals in the 1960s began to articulate diverging visions. Set forth here are the classically inflammatory essays—Norman Podhoretz's "My Negro Problem—and Ours" (1963), James Baldwin's "Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White" (1967), and Cynthia Ozick's "Literary Blacks and Jews" (1972)—that give a startling sense of how many steps it took to reach the current state of perplexed resentment and hostility. Baldwin, for instance, concluded his essay conciliatorily: "If one blames the Jew for not having been ennobled by oppression, one is not indicting the single figure of the Jew but the entire human race, and one is also making a quite breathtaking claim for oneself. I know that my oppression did not ennoble me. . . ." This tone did not last. More depressing than their essays themselves are the 1993 afterwards appended by Podhoretz and Ozick, in which they come across as dramatically more one-sided and unforgiving than when they wrote the essays.

In *Jews and Blacks: Let the Healing Begin*, Cornel West, a professor of African-American studies at Harvard University, and Michael Lerner, the editor of *Tikkun*, parlay their friendship into a dialogue about prejudice, American culture, and their perceptions of each other's histories. They begin with personal experiences. West grew up tough and unruly, beating up white students for lunch money. Lerner was just the kind of brainy white kid who got beat up. At one point Lerner entertains a paranoid fantasy about black anti-Semitism massively, brutally out of control. Ultimately, though, Lerner offers a liberal, if peculiar, reason for why Jews must shun antiblack sentiments. "If Jews can turn their backs on the suffering of

blacks," he writes, "they would be embracing a worldview that is indistinguishable from the rest of American life—so in that case, why bother to stay Jewish, with all the attendant hassles, risks, and separations from others?"

ART LESSONS: Learning from the Rise and Fall of Public Arts Funding. *By Alice Goldfarb Marquis. Basic. 304 pp. \$25*

Thirty years after its founding in 1965, the debates over the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) have settled into a familiar pattern. Conservatives condemn NEA-funded projects as alternately too elitist or too compromised by popular culture. They object most strenuously when taxpayers' money is



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used to support works they find offensive, such as the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe. Meanwhile, the endowment's liberal defenders argue that, under the NEA, the arts have helped to reverse decades of urban decline and to bring self-esteem to the disadvantaged. To the left of that left, many avant-garde artists simply view NEA funding as their due; denial of a fellowship, in their opinion, amounts to government censorship. With a new, conservative Congress threatening to put the NEA out of its misery, the time is ripe for a thoughtful analysis of the American experiment in public arts funding.

Marquis, the biographer of the Museum of Modern Art's *Alfred Barr* (1989), does not provide it. *Art Lessons* is a relentlessly negative portrait of financial sloppiness, cronyism, personal scandal, and tolerance for mediocre art by administrators who love to proclaim the arts' social value. In Marquis's telling, the NEA was born of a coalition of Rockefeller Republicans, Kennedy liberals, and philanthropic businessmen who saw themselves as missionaries bringing a European-style culture to a benighted populace stupefied by sports, television, and other mass media. Thirty years later, she claims, the NEA has become a hopelessly inefficient, corrupt bureaucracy, enslaved to a constituency its own funds have helped to create while indifferent to the public at large. Despite its founders' missionary zeal, the audience for "high art" remains as limited as it was at the end of the Eisenhower era. The time has come, she concludes, to abolish the NEA.

Marquis's critique may hold true for certain big cities—America's half-dozen "cultural capitals" located mainly on the two coasts. The arts in such places would be little different if the NEA did not exist. But with her penchant for scandals, she ignores NEA-sponsored projects at the local level—the repertory companies, exhibitions, children's theaters, and art education programs that have changed the face of the arts in America's middle-sized cities and small towns. Moreover, Marquis's unbounded attack gives little thought to the overall predicament of art in a market society. Opera, the symphony, and art museums will likely survive with private patronage, while all else, from folk artists to avant-garde composers, will succumb to com-

petition from commercial media with huge advertising budgets and an eye to equally huge profits. The results will hardly appeal to moralists. MTV, for example, has certainly done more to disseminate vulgar taste than the worst NEA projects. Rather than write yet another chronicle of its scandals, Marquis might have more profitably entered the debate about what stands in the way of a reformed NEA promoting a healthier cultural life in America.

IN THE BELGIAN CHATEAU: *The Spirit and Culture of a European Society in an Age of Change.* By Renee C. Fox. Ivan R. Dee. 339 pp. \$28.50

Fox, a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania, helped to create the disciplines of bioethics and the sociology of medicine in such path-breaking works as *Experiments Perilous* (1974) and *Spare Parts* (1992). During the late 1950s, when she visited Belgium to do research, she discovered, beyond her professional interests, a culture that intrigued her. For the next 35 years, she kept returning in an attempt to fathom what within that "conventionally 'bourgeois' society" corresponded to some "buried strangeness" within herself.

History explains some of Belgium's mystique. In 1831, following the revolt of the Catholic provinces of the southern Netherlands, the great powers of Europe created a new country. The united Kingdom of Belgium brought together two distinct and potentially divisive linguistic and ethnic communities, the French-speaking Walloons and the Flemish. What held Belgians together, in addition to external threats, were collective sentiments and symbols (which they usually deny they have)—common associations not simply with church and monarchy but with mundane objects, from the red brick of their houses to the Congolese rubber plants within them, the latter hinting at former colonial greatness. Indeed, it is the extraordinary, almost numinous sense of the house, the home—understandable in a country where security has been endangered in repeated invasions—that strikes a deep chord within Fox. "It was inside the Belgium house," she writes, "that

I found Belgium and both the professional and the personal meaning of my search."

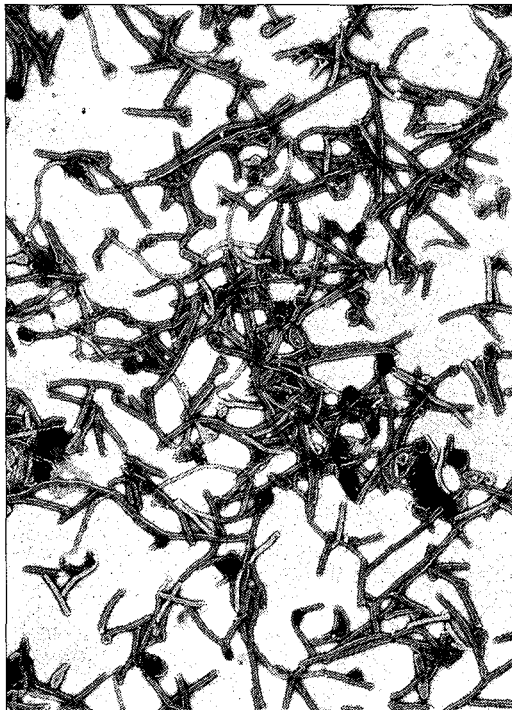
Ironically, Fox's quest for the essence of Belgian identity took place during years when profound internal changes threatened to dissolve the social and cultural glue that has held this "artificial state" intact. Belgium's internationalized postwar economy, the fading memory of its wartime experience, and the loss of its colonies are all working to erode a once-strong sense of national solidarity. In sensible, bourgeois Belgium, one now enters an Alice in Wonderland world where everything happens in double. Each town has separate shops for Flemish and Walloon customers; a street postbox has two slots, one for letters in French, the other for those in Flemish; and activists in Flanders are even pushing for a separate system of social security. The beloved country Fox examined threatened to disintegrate under her very microscope. History kindly intervened, however, to provide her study with a happy ending. The unexpected death of King Baudoin on July 31, 1993, provoked an outpouring of mourning that transcended particularistic loyalties, suggesting that all Belgians were a national family once again. The question, though, remains: *Après Baudoin, le déluge?*

Science & Technology

THE HOT ZONE. By Richard Preston.
Random House. 300 pp. \$23

THE COMING PLAGUE: Newly Emerging Diseases in a World Out of Balance. By Laurie Garrett. Farrar, Straus. 750 pp. \$25

In 1993, Stephen King spooked American television audiences with *The Stand*—an eerie, seemingly implausible story about a deadly virus that quickly annihilates most of the human species. A year later, King described the nonfictional *Hot Zone* as "one of the most horrifying things I've ever read." The central drama in *The Hot Zone* occurs in a "monkey house" in Reston, Virginia (19 miles from Washington, D.C.), where animals imported for scientific experimentation are routinely quarantined. In 1989, before scientists at the "monkey house" realized that the extremely lethal Ebola virus was killing



hundreds of monkeys, some humans became infected. Fortunately, life is not (or not always) a Stephen King movie, and this strain proved to be the single variety of Ebola that does not harm humans. *The Hot Zone*, written by *New Yorker* contributor Preston, has topped the best-seller lists and inspired the movie, *Outbreak*. Yet even critics who dismiss it as simply a nonfiction thriller acknowledge that it has drawn widespread attention to the "newly emerging" viruses and bacteria that are changing our very understanding of the modern world.

Plagues and pandemics were, quite simply, not supposed to happen in the hygienic late 20th century. During the early 1960s, scientists proclaimed that they had all but won the war against infectious diseases. Research biologists tended to focus on what was happening under their microscopes and ignored what was changing in their own human world. In *The Coming Plague*, medical journalist Garrett connects Ebola and other diseases such as AIDS, Lassa fever, and the "flesh-eating" streptococcus bacteria that killed Muppet creator Jim Henson to the larger political, social, and ecological landscape

that promotes their spread. Late-20th-century humankind, she argues, lives in a habitat unlike that of any of our ancestors. Air travel allows viruses from Africa (such as HIV) to “jump” to other continents in a matter of hours. In Third World cities, malnutrition combines with wretched sanitation to turn urban citizens into human petri dishes. And the destruction of ecosystems affects not only tropical rain forests but even Connecticut, where deforestation, by driving tick-bearing feral animals into the suburbs, has greatly increased the incidence of Lyme disease.

At midcentury, during the heyday of medical infallibility, one lone dissenter wrote, “Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world.” The dissenting voice was Albert Camus’s, in his novel *The Plague* (1948). Almost 50 years later, many people now wonder how close the world is to the “coming plague”—say, an airborne version of HIV. No one, including Garrett, can say, but she presents a frightening scenario of world health professionals ill prepared to identify and control diseases that nimbly spread, evolve, and become resistant to drugs. Garrett reminds her readers how the early reluctance of governments to grapple quickly with AIDS contributed to its rapid spread. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control has recently created a model “emerging infections program”; still, Garrett wonders whether what any one country does can enable it to “stave off or survive the next plague.” During the 1960s, people such as Marshall McLuhan predicted that the world would soon be one big village. For viruses, at least, the prediction has come true.

AN ANTHROPOLOGIST ON MARS:

Seven Paradoxical Tales. By *Oliver Sacks*. Knopf. 315 pp. \$24

Ask not what disease the person has, but rather what person the disease has. By following this maxim (learned from his parents), neurologist Sacks has brought a degree of humanity to patients otherwise regarded as freaks and dismissed by his colleagues as hopeless. In *Awak-*

enings (1983) and *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (1985), Sacks, not content with describing neurological illnesses, vividly evokes the personal experience of living within their effects. Sacks has described himself as a neuro-anthropologist but actually more resembles a physician making house calls at the far border of human experience.

Sacks calls his case studies or tales “paradoxical” because the patients he describes have succeeded not in spite but almost because of extraordinary dysfunctions. He describes an artist who, having lost his color vision in a car accident, now paints striking works in black and white through a heightened sense of their contrast. A surgeon with Tourette’s syndrome—characterized by oddly pitched vocal outbursts and arms flinging abruptly—manages, while operating, to control all manifestations of the disease. An autistic zoologist finds that autism permits her insight into animal behavior, but around human actions she is perplexed enough to feel like “an anthropologist on Mars.” Despite the neurological malfunctions that caused their conditions, Sacks writes, these people have adapted into “alternate states of being, other forms of life, no less human for being different.”

The “anthropologist on Mars,” though, more aptly applies to Sacks himself. Ever since Arthur Rimbaud attempted to “systematically disorder the senses,” literature has endeavored to resee the common world in new and strange ways. To this end, Franz Kafka often wrote in the guise of an animal—a mouse or gorilla or dog; Francis Ponge (and numerous other writers) invented fictitious countries where familiar practices and psychology were turned inside-out. Sacks outdoes such fictional contrivances, however, when he recreates the inner world of an idiot savant who sees ordinary objects as numbers or that of an alcoholic, suffering from a complete inability to remember, who lives in a hellish, endless present. In Oliver Sacks, science seems to have fulfilled literature’s old dream—to show that life is not only stranger than we imagine but even stranger than we *can* imagine.

POETRY

BEN JONSON

Selected and introduced by Anthony Hecht

That maker and breaker of literary reputations, T. S. Eliot, began an essay on Ben Jonson (1572–1637) this way: “The reputation of Jonson has been of the most deadly kind that can be compelled upon the memory of a great poet. To be universally accepted; to be damned by the praise that quenches all desire to read the book; to be afflicted by the imputation of the virtues which excite the least pleasure; and to be read only by historians and antiquaries—this is the most perfect conspiracy of approval. . . . No critic has made him seem pleasurable or even interesting.”

After an opening like that, surely we expect to lean back and see justice belatedly done. But that’s not quite what we get. Eliot, the restorer of life to John Donne, the literary assassin of Shelley, has nothing to say of Jonson as a poet but speaks of him only as a playwright (though he does pay complimentary attention to Jonson’s dramatic verse). And Eliot goes on to point out that Jonson has been unfavorably compared not only with Shakespeare but with Christopher Marlowe, John Webster, Francis Beaumont, and John Fletcher.

Eliot’s essay did little if anything to alter public indifference to Jonson, either as playwright or poet, and his failure simply confirmed the supposed soundness of that indifference. Jonson continued to be regarded by those who bothered to read him as a man of highly specialized sensibilities: learned, haughty, condescending, impersonal, classical, envious, and aloof. In brief, forbidding and unpleasant. “’Twas an ingenious remarque of my Lady Hoskins, that B. J. never writes of Love, or if he does, does it not naturally,” reports the 17th-century writer John Aubrey. What poet can hope to engage readers when handicapped by deficiencies in so central a poetic subject?

But Jonson deserves better of us. He is not as copious or versatile as Shakespeare, but at least one of his songs, “Queene and Huntresse,” is as lovely as any song of Shakespeare’s, and his musicianship (by which I mean his management of meter, rhyme, and stanza) is Shakespeare’s equal. His “Charme” (“The owle is abroad, the bat, and the toad”) could fit seamlessly into an incantation of the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth*, while some of his epigrams are wonderfully funny.

Teaching Jonson’s poems to undergraduates over the years has shown me what it is in his work that keeps the general readership at bay. Students come to him knowing only “Drink to me only with thine eyes,” and have been chilled by the artificial ingenuity, the remote formality, of that song. Renaissance English diction and spelling make the poems seem alien, stilted exercises devoid of humanity, so that when Jonson is being funny, as in “The

Dreame," they completely miss the whole tone and tenor of the poem.

Or scorne, or pittie on me take,
I must a true Relation make,
I am undone to night;
Love in a subtile Dreame disguis'd,
Hath both my heart and me surpriz'd,
Whom never yet he durst attempt t'awake;
Nor will he tell me for whose sake
He did me the Delight,
Or spite
But leaves me to inquire,
In all my wild desire,
Of sleepe againe, who was his Aid,
And sleepe so guiltie and afraid,
As since he dares not come within my sight.

Well, you can see what daunts those students, who are not enamored of allegorical figures. In this poem, both "Love" and "Sleep" are personified. Obscurely those students sense that some sort of plot is going on, but though "surpriz'd" and "guiltie and afraid" are intriguing, it's hard to care much about events involving ghostly personifications. But when it is pointed out to a class that this poem is about being awakened by what parents used to call "a nocturnal emission," and what boys referred to as "a wet dream," the whole poem suddenly falls into place. It becomes personal, even confessional in a good-humored and unpretentious way. Jonson becomes more human.

And yet his art is also always cunning. In his celebrated epitaph for the child actor Salathiel Pavy, the poem is set down upon the page so as visibly to alternate between long and short lines. The short lines are uniform in length, each closing with a feminine ending; but the long ones, closing as they do with masculine endings, are not uniform. Their metrical deviation, however, is not random or casual. They alternate between seven and eight syllables, the odd-numbered long lines containing seven syllables, the even-numbered ones, eight. The shorter of these long lines elide their opening syllables (the absent syllable is removed from the front, not the end, of the line), thereby providing a subtle and measured syncopation, all the while rhyming *a b a b* in quatrain form throughout. It might be argued that such syncopation reflects the asymmetrical imbalance belonging to the subject of a child who so successfully plays the roles of old men that the Fates themselves are deceived and summon him prematurely to his appointed end.

To be sure, Jonson writes much stately and occasional verse. But he can be engaging in many moods—in his wrath as well as his humor, and the two are closely linked. In general, he is far more various than is commonly recognized. No small part of this variety lies in the fact that his poems are by no means all spoken (or sung) *in propria persona*. Quite apart from his plays, he is a lively inventor of characters of both sexes.

From Epigrammes

VI
To Alchymists

If all you boast of your great art be true;
Sure, willing povertie lives most in you.

XIII
To Doctor Empirick

When men a dangerous disease did scape,
Of old, they gave a cock to Æsculape;
Let me give two: that doubly am got free,
From my diseases danger, and from thee.

CXX
*Epitaph on S.P. [Salathiel Pavy] a child of
Q. El. [Queen Elizabeth's] Chappel*

Weepe with me all you that read
This little storie:
And know, for whom a teare you shed,
Death's selfe is sorry.
'Twas a child, that so did thrive
In grace, and feature,
As Heaven and Nature seem'd to strive
Which own'd the creature.
Yeeres he numbred scarce thirteene
When Fates turn'd cruell,
Yet three fill'd Zodiackes had he beene
The stages jewell;
And did act (what now we mone)
Old men so duely,
As, sooth, the Parcae thought him one,
He plai'd so truely.
So, by error, to his fate
They all consented;
But viewing him since (alas, too late)
They have repented.
And have sought (to give new birth)
In bathes to steepe him;
But, being so much too good for earth,
Heaven vowes to keepe him.

From The Forrest

V
Song. To Celia

Come my Celia, let us prove,
While we may, the sports of love;
Time will not be ours, for ever:
He, at length, our good will sever.
Spend not then his guifts in vaine.
Sunnes, that set, may rise againe:
But if once we loose this light,
'Tis, with us, perpetuall night.
Why should we deferre our joyes?
Fame, and rumor are but toys.
Cannot we delude the eyes
Of a few poore houshold spyes?
Or his easier eares beguile,
So removed by our wile?
'Tis no sinne, loves fruit to steale,
But the sweet theft to reveale:
To be taken, to be seene,
These have crimes accounted beene.

From The Under-Wood

II
*A Celebration of Charis in
Ten Lyrick Peeces*

1. HIS EXCUSE FOR LOVING

Let it not your wonder move,
Lesse your laughter: that I love.
Though I now write fiftie yeares,
I have had, and have my Peeres;
Poets, though devine are men:
Some have lov'd as old agen.
And it is not alwayes face,
Clothes, or Fortune gives the grace;
Or the feature, or the youth:
But the Language, and the Truth,
With the Ardor, and the Passion,
Gives the Lover weight, and fashion.
If you then will read the Storie,
First, prepare you to be sorie,
That you never knew till now,
Either whom to love, or how:
But be glad, as soone with me,
When you know, that this is she,

Of whose Beautie it was sung,
She shall make the old man young,
Keepe the middle age at stay,
And let nothing high decay,
Till she be the reason why,
All the world for love may die.

VII
A Nymphs Passion

I love, and he loves me againe,
Yet dare I not tell who;
For if the Nymphs should know my Swaine,
I feare they'd love him too;
Yet if it be not knowne,
The pleasure is as good as none,
For that's a narrow joy is but our owne.

I'le tell, that if they be not glad,
They yet may evnie me:
But then if I grow jealous madde,
And of them pittied be,
It were a plague 'bove scorne,
And yet it cannot be forborne,
Unlesse my heart would as my thought be torne.

He is if they can find him, faire,
And fresh and fragrant too,
As Summers sky, or purged Ayre,
And lookes as Lillies doe,
That are this morning blowne,
Yet, yet I doubt he is not knowne,
And feare much more, that more of him beshowne.

But he hath eyes so round, and bright,
As make away my doubt,
Where Love may all his Torches light,
Though hate had put them out;
But then t'increase my feares,
What Nymph so e're his voyce but heares
Will be my Rivall, though she have but eares.

I'le tell no more and yet I love,
And he loves me; yet no
One un-becoming thought doth move
From either heart, I know;
But so exempt from blame,
As it would be to each a fame:
If Love, or feare, would let me tell his name.

XXIII
An Ode. To himselfe

Where do'st thou carelesse Lie
Buried in ease and sloth?
Knowledge, that sleepes, doth die;
And this Securitie,
It is the common Moath,
That eats on wits, and Arts, and oft destroyes
them both.

Are all th'Aonian springs
Dri'd up? lyes Thespia wast?
Doth Clarius Harp want strings,
That not a Nymph now sings!
Or droop they as disgrac't,
To see their Seats and Bowers by chattring
Pies defac't?

If hence thy silence be,
As 'tis too just a cause;
Let this thought quicken thee,
Minds that are great and free,
Should not on fortune pause,
'Tis crowne enough to vertue still, her owne
applause.

What though the greedie Frie
Be taken with false Baytes
Of worded Balladrie,
And thinke it Poesie?
They die with their conceits,
And only pitious scorne, upon their folly
waites.

Then take in hand thy Lyre,
Strike in thy proper straine,
With Japhets lyne, aspire
Sols Chariot for new fire,
To give the world againe:
Who aided him, will thee, the issue of Joves
braine.

And since our Daintie age
Cannot endure reproofe,
Make not thy selfe a Page,
To that strumpet the Stage,
But sing high and aloofe,
Safe from the wolves black jaw, and the dull
Asses hoofe.

LXXI
*To the Right Honourable, the Lord High
Treasurer of England. An Epistle
Mendicant. 1631*

MY LORD:

Poore wretched states, prest by extremities,
Are faine to seeke for succours, and supplies
Of Princes aides, or good mens Charities.

Disease, the Enemy, and his Engineeres,
Wants, with the rest of his conceal'd compeeres,
Have cast a trench about mee, now five yeares.

And made those strong approaches, by False
braies,
Reducts, Halfe-moones, Horne-workes, and such
close wayes,
The Muse not peepes out, one of hundred dayes;

But lyes block'd up, and straightned, narrow'd in,
Fix'd to the bed, and boords, unlike to win
Health, or scarce breath, as she had never bin.

Unlesse some saving-Honour of the Crowne,
Dare thinke it, to relieve, no lesse renowne,
A Bed-rid Wit, then a besieged Towne.

Miscellaneous

IV
*Hymn to Diana
from Cynthia's Revells*

Queene, and Huntresse, chaste, and faire,
Now the Sunne is laid to sleepe,
Seated, in thy silver chaire,
State in wonted manner keepe:
Hesperus intreats thy light,
Goddesse, excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare it selfe to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orbe was made
Heaven to cleere, when day did close:
Blesse us then with wished sight,
Goddesse, excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearle apart,
And thy cristall-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night,
Goddesse, excellently bright.

XXXII
Song

from *The Gypsies Metamorphos'd*

The faery beame upon you,
The starres to glister on you:
A Moone of light,
In the noone of night,
Till the Fire-drake hath o're gon you.

The wheele of fortune guide you,
The Boy with the bow beside you
Runne aye in the way,
Till the bird of day,
And the luckier lot betide you.

XVII
Charme

from *The Masque of Queenes*

The owle is abroad, the bat, and the toad,
And so is the cat-a-mountayne,
The ant, and the mole sit both in a hole,
And frog peepes out o'the fountayne;
The dogs, they doe bay, and the timbrels play,
The spindle is now a turning;
The moone it is red, and the starres are fled,
But all the skie is a burning:
The ditch is made, and our nayles the spade,
With pictures full, of waxe, and of wooll;
Their livers I sticke, with needles quicke;
There lacks but the bloud, to make up the floud.
Quickly, Dame, then, bring your part in,
Spurre, spurre, upon little Martin,
Merrily, merrily, make him saile,
A worme in his mouth, and a thorne in's taile,
Fire above, and fire below,
With a whip i'your hand, to make him goe.



The Sun Treader (Portrait of Carl Ruggles), by Thomas Hart Benton (1934)

MUSIC AGAINST GRAVITY

W*e all derive different, private meanings from the music that delights us, but the recurrence of certain musical patterns in the works of great composers hints at meanings of a more universal character.*

BY ALAN NEIDLE AND MARGARET FREEMAN

"Madame X installed a piano in the Alps."—Rimbaud, 1886

An old man not far from death lies in his bed in a nursing home in New England. The conductor Michael Tilson Thomas enters the room with a tape recorder. He places earphones on the gaunt head and turns the machine on. "Great! DAMN FINE WORK!" the old man declares, coming alive as he sings along with the music. He is Carl Ruggles, American composer (1876–1971), in the last of his 95 years. He is hearing his own composition, *Sun-Treader*, whose title was inspired by the epithet that Robert Browning bestowed upon Percy Bysshe Shelley.

The work begins with jagged leaps across large dissonant intervals. In about 30 seconds, led by the brass, the music surges, to the accompaniment of pounding timpani, upward across nearly four octaves. Truly a giant is bestriding the planets. Ruggles, bedridden, is taking a journey across vast spaces. Thomas recalls what Ruggles said at the end of the visit: "I'm composing, you know, right now. But my body . . . it is totally diseased. But I'm composing. Every day. First there are horns . . . here flutes! And strings—molto rubato, rubato! . . . Now don't go feeling sorry. I don't hang around *this* place, you know. Hell, each day I go out and make the universe anew—all over!"

Each piece of music is a journey. The idea is not simply a metaphor. The essence of music is motion. As a piece begins, you are in one place. As it comes to an end, some time later, you are in another. You have been somewhere and you have had an experience along the way, perhaps illuminating or even glorious, like *Sun-Treader* bestriding the heavens, or perhaps routine and tedious—but an experience, nonetheless. A journey.

Sun-Treader is a journey of liberation, a surmounting of forces that pull human beings down. Our ability to respond to such forces is of absorbing interest to us from infancy to old age. The first unaided steps of a child from one loving set of arms to another is an event of unreasoning exhilaration. We are inspired by those who haul themselves up by rope to a pinnacle—and even more by those who remain upright when tyranny beats down. The dream of staying aloft despite everything that would pull us down remains with us until no more dreams are possible.

Composers over the centuries have repeatedly written music evoking the great theme of mankind's struggle against gravity. They have done so in a variety of ways, but perhaps no more strikingly than in their deployment of four distinctive patterns: climbing, descending, rise-to-fall, and floating. Of course, there are many possible ways of using rhythm and meter to move a composition forward, but these patterns illustrate most dramatically how music suggests possible responses to the forces of gravity. Looking at these four patterns, as employed by some of the greater Western composers, may help us draw closer to an understanding of how music communicates meaning.

Climbing. In the music of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) there are themes that explode with volcanic energy. In the first movement of one of his early works, the Piano Sonata in D Major, op. 10, no. 3, a version of the main theme, after taking four steps down, surges rapidly upward in 16 steps across nearly three octaves. The steps are syncopated octaves until the last three, which are unison double-octave blows, fortissimo. That this sort of eruption is not solely the product of youthful exuberance is evident when we look at much later music, such as the opening of the “Ghost” Trio, op. 70, where piano, violin, and cello ascend rapidly and violently in a very similar fashion. Nor is the phenomenon of Beethoven’s themes straining upward limited to rapid and furious movements. The slow opening of the familiar Piano Sonata, op. 13, (“Pathétique”) begins with a brief motif, six notes that rise in an insistent dotted rhythm. After a pause the motif is repeated, but higher. Then twice more, each time higher.

The “Pathétique” epitomizes Beethoven’s propensity for struggling upward. After each declamation of the opening motif there is a choice—where to go—and each time Beethoven hoists the music higher. Examples of this could be multiplied almost ad infinitum. Of the 30 mature sonatas, the opening lines of 21 have motifs that are immediately repeated. In 18 of these 21, the repeated motif is hauled upward. If we extend the tabulation to second and third themes, as well as development passages where upward steps are especially prevalent, and do the same with second, third, and fourth movements, we will find that in the piano sonatas alone Beethoven propels us upward hundreds of times. Adding in 16 quartets, 11 piano trios, five cello sonatas, 10 violin sonatas, five piano concertos, and nine symphonies, it is safe to say that the prodigious Beethoven can take us through literally thousands of experiences of pressing, unstopably, upward.

Beethoven pushed beyond even the limits imposed by the normal pitch of instruments. An insight of the late German conductor Hermann Scherchen reveals how the composer, in the last movement of the Ninth Symphony, raised the piccolo’s highest note by accompanying it with the pitchless ringing and shimmering of triangle and cymbals. He also “climbed” downward by deepening bassoon notes with the beat of the bass drum.

Beethoven’s feats of climbing are not confined to small, though symbolically large, gestures such as expanding the range of the piccolo. He created entire mountains of his own to climb. An example is the late Quartet in A Minor, op. 132. Its first eight bars even resemble the shape of a mountain. They consist mostly of half notes piled on top of each other in an arch, but held to pianissimo—the white outline of a mountain in the distance. The overall architecture of five movements is like a massif. The central, or third, movement is itself a huge structure of contrasting blocks

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Traveller Gazing at a Sea of Fog, by Caspar David Friedrich (c. 1815)

of sound. It consists of a "Holy Song of Thanksgiving by a Convalescent to the Deity," heard in varied form three times, which alternates with vigorous interludes called "Feeling New Strength." This immense movement constitutes the core and dome of the mountain.

A great mountain brings together violent contrasts—fragile crystals of snow and blocks of granite, blinding light and impenetrable mystery. Those who attempt to conquer it often experience pain and struggle amid exaltation, life a step from death. Beethoven's ascent into this world in the quartet begins in the first movement.

It encompasses, in its 10-minute duration, some 17 thematic elements and about 60 more-or-less abrupt shifts between contrasting blocks of music. This abundance of contrasts includes a solemn introductory passage, rushing arpeggios, sinuous and lyrical melodies, and pounding dotted rhythms. The energy these contrasts generate will lift listeners upward through the large, scherzolike second movement, which begins with ascending steps, and on to the third, the dome of the mountain, where contrasts are greatest—solemn hymns remindful of the nearness of death, and vigorous interludes vibrant with life. In the glare of the mountain's summit this most fundamental of all contrasts—death next to life—is confronted and reconciled. Conquered.

How? What takes place on Beethoven's summit to bring this about? Surprisingly, it is the opposite of what one expects. Beethoven does not reconcile opposing elements by blending them, by sanding the edges. Instead, he makes them as extreme as possible. The opening hymn of thanksgiving consists solely of passages of quarter notes and half notes, which progress at one of the slowest possible paces in music, *molto adagio*, and which are mostly piano. The contrasting section, "Feeling New Strength," includes a dazzling spray of notes, eighths, sixteenths, thirty-seconds, trills, and even grace notes attached to thirty-seconds, which move at a sprightly *andante*, leap up and down across octaves, and frequently and abruptly shift from loud to soft. The contrasting sections, all five of them, are presented in the way most calculated to assert and impose their different character—as large blocks of music, each four or five minutes long.

Why do we call this a reconciliation rather than a complete fracturing? Because it is a coming to terms with the harshest dichotomy of our existence, death alongside life. How? By exposing it fully, by not shrinking from any aspect of it, by exploring all of its ramifications. When this has been accomplished through Beethoven's massive and teeming contrasts, we come down from the mountain more in awe than in terror. Having once stared unflinchingly into mankind's profoundest dilemma, we know that we can do so again. Is this not a reconciliation? Beethoven did not create and climb his mountain for the sake of evasion.

The phenomenon that we know of as "Beethoven" is the product of two large ingredients—a composer possessing gigantic creative powers and the intersection of his efforts with a special moment in history. He created his works at the turbulent confluence of two great cultural forces—the waning of Enlightenment thinking and the emergence of Romantic feeling. In this era of revolution and reaction, liberation and repression, of Napoleon, total warfare, Goethe, Schiller, Kant, there was much to challenge, huge intellectual and emotional mountains to scale. He began in the orbit of the Classical style, a student of Haydn, but his talents and his energies could not be contained by one movement or "school." Later he reached back to Bach and even Palestrina, while at the same time casting an enormous shadow forward. Unquestionably it is the Promethean character of his achievement, its boldness, its vast reach, its unlimited energy, its ceaseless exploration, that made Beethoven's music both an inspiration and a defining force for the Romantic

era that would dominate the cultural life of the 19th century. Beethoven hammered bolts in the sky and climbed up. His successors have been climbing up after him ever since.

D*escending.* At the end of the 16th century, the English lutanist and songwriter John Dowland (1563?–1626) set down a melody which by all accounts became the most popular tune in England and a good part of the Continent. Dowland himself wrote three versions of the piece—the first for solo lute, the second for voice and lute, the third for consort of viols. So well known did the piece become that it was referred to, as if familiar to everyone, in a dozen or so popular plays written, variously, by Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, Francis Beaumont, and others. More impressively, its opening four-note theme was quoted at the beginning of dozens of compositions by such composers as William Byrd, Thomas Morley, Orlando Gibbons, and Jan Sweelinck.

What type of theme could have such extraordinary impact—at a time of Shakespeare, Raleigh, and Galileo, of continental and oceanic warfare, of recurrent plagues, of religious dissension, of loyalty and betrayals? The opening is simple—just four notes, four adjacent descending notes. The name of the piece, “*Lachrimae Antiquae Pavan*,” or “*Pavan of the Ancient Tears*,” was commonly referred to simply as “*Lachrimae*.” The words which Dowland fitted to the lute piece begin, “Flow my teares, fall from your springs. . .” The imagery could not be stronger—tears flowing downward, falling, accompanied by a musical motif that pulls toward the ground. May we not assume that in an age of high poetic utterance Dowland’s theme could become a metaphor for misfortunes that must be endured, for human limitations that will in the end bring everyone down?

What is this somber four-note motif that resonated with such intensity with so many? The first note, G, holds level, steady, prolonged—the descent from F to E-flat and down to D is controlled, relatively swift, easy—and the landing, on D, is a genuine coming to rest. Why should this generate such power? Dowland himself has given us a clue. When in 1604 he published the consort version of “*Lachrimae*,” along with six additional pieces about tears, all beginning with the same descending four-note motif, he included the following words in his dedication to Queen Anne: “yet no doubt pleasant are the teares that Musicke weeps.” Is this perhaps a suggestion that art (*Musicke*) can bring solace to humans in the face of irreversible sadnesses? What we know from its wide popularity is that ordinary people, the nobility, musicians, all threatened with misfortunes, must have derived comfort and pleasure from this phrase. In its own way it is as memorable, as emblematic, as the famous first four notes of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony—three short, one long—which have meant so much to so many.

In the early decades of the 20th century, 300 years after Dowland’s “*Lachrimae*,” the work for solo piano most in demand was

the Prelude in C-sharp Minor by composer-pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943). After hundreds of his recitals audiences chanted “Prelude! Prelude!” The piece begins with a magnificent descent—three resounding octaves, A, G-sharp, and down to C-sharp. This theme is repeated some 18 times. Almost all surrounding passage work and a central interlude emphasize downward motion. Is it a coincidence that Rachmaninoff’s Prelude and Dowland’s “Lachrimae,” both appealing to unusually wide audiences, were composed at times of enlarged human horizons, with attendant anxieties, and that both are about falling with control and dignity?

R*ise-to-fall.* Instinctively we look to works of panoramic scale for profundity—the Sistine ceiling, Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, *War and Peace*. But large insights can also come to us through art of intimate scale. A piano work by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91) in D Major, K. 355 (594a), composed about a year before his death, consists of 44 bars and takes less than two minutes to play. It is simply called “Minuet”—and is a life journey in music.

The work is based in its details and in its overall structure on what we call “rise-to-fall” patterns. Unlike “climbing” or “descending” patterns, “rise-to-fall” patterns are integrated shapes in which an ascent and a descent form a single arching unit. Mozart’s Minuet opens with a short five-note theme that arches up and down with disarming simplicity. This motif is slightly expanded and intensified. The journey suddenly becomes suspenseful and even a bit foreboding with a chromatic rising in the bass completed by a sinewy descent in the treble. This idea is repeated twice more, rising higher. The first part of the Minuet ends with graceful steps that turn downward, a temporary respite in the mounting drama.

Abrupt dissonances and slashing figurations open the second part of the Minuet. These brief moments of intense friction generate the energy to propel the music upward. Now swirling contrapuntal passages take repeated steps higher and higher to the apogee of an arch—and then there is a long descent. A sense of precipitous falling and inevitability is created by the rush of rapid sixteenth notes. As the great descent approaches its lowest point, the scale shifts from major to minor, thereby painting the plunge earthwards in a darkening color. The Minuet returns to the rise-to-fall themes of the opening. Elegant Mozartean lines of notes glide lightly downward in the last measures, as if there has been a reconciliation, a calm acceptance of the final descent. And so in a span of 44 bars we have taken a journey beginning with a simple, almost childlike theme, rising gradually upward through chromatic tensions, lifting higher and higher, achieving the pinnacle of a great arc, tumbling downward, recovering in a world of calm, and ending in a last, peaceful descent.

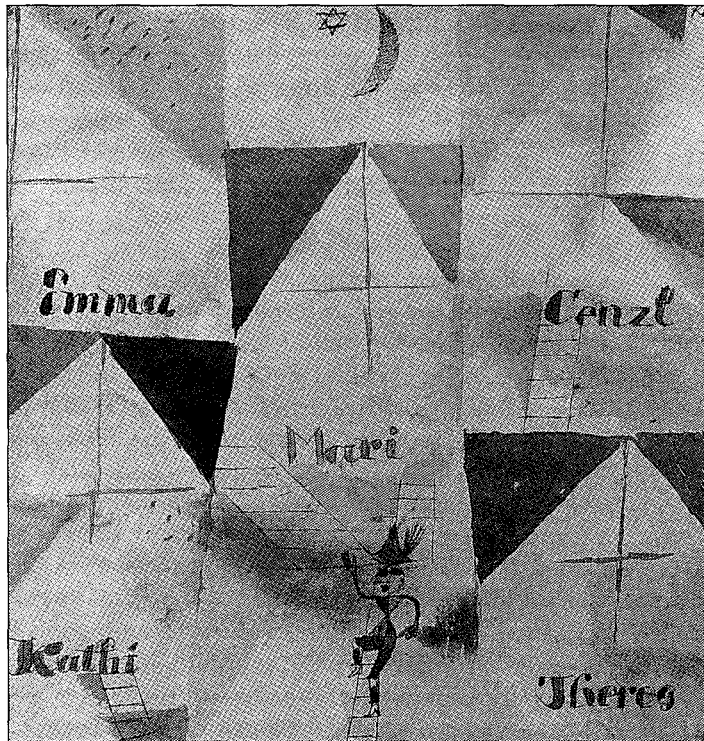
Rise-to-fall patterns occur throughout Mozart’s music in a wide variety of shapes. The opening theme from the familiar Symphony No. 40 in G Minor, with three pulses on either side of a sweeping ascent, is symmetrical but vibrant with energy. Some rise-to-fall themes are asymmetri-

cal, such as the opening of the E-flat String Quartet, K. 428, which boldly lifts up one octave at the very start and then twists down sinuously. Sometimes, as in the "Romanze" of *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, the melody will be an arch constructed of pulses, rests, slurs, and syncopations, combined to make the kind of elegant but nonetheless poignant creation which the world has come to recognize as uniquely "Mozartean."

Mozart was, of course, a protean creator. Amid his stupendous output there is much that has no direct connection with rise-to-fall. But there is much that does, a strikingly large amount, and in ways that reveal how fundamental this conception is in his music. Mozart left us almost no commentary on the aesthetic significance or meaning of his works, so we have no direct evidence whether or not specific experiences, such as the death of his mother in the summer of 1778, entered in any concrete way into the composition at that time of such a somber and passionate work as the A Minor Piano Sonata, K. 310, which contains many rise-to-fall elements. But in a letter to his father, in December 1777, Mozart gives us an intriguing clue about the way a specific emotional experience could affect his music.

Then 21, Mozart was giving piano lessons to a young lady, Rosa Cannabich, 13, whom he described as "very pretty and charming . . . intelligent and steady for her age. She is serious, does not say much, but when she does speak, she is pleasant and amiable." She gave him "indescribable pleasure" when playing his Sonata in C, K. 309. The Andante of the Sonata "she plays with the utmost expression." Mozart reported that when he was asked "how I thought of composing the Andante. . . . I said I would make it fit closely the character of Mlle. Rosa. . . . She is exactly like the Andante." The main theme of the Andante is a lilting, perky, and slightly earnest rise-to-fall theme.

This, of course, is indirect and fragmentary evidence that cannot be



The Bavarian Don Giovanni, by Paul Klee (1919)

carried too far. But it does tell us a few relevant things. A sonata such as K. 309 was not for Mozart an abstract construction of sounds. For him the *Andante*, based on a rise-to-fall theme, stood for a person, a specific individual, whose qualities and experiences were much on his mind. Although we cannot be certain whether rise-to-fall patterns were consciously metaphors in his mind for life experiences, we do not have to be. The important thing is the music itself—the notes. Mozart's rise-to-fall shapes, small and large, correspond to familiar patterns in human lives.

Viewed in a broader perspective, Mozart's creation of rise-to-fall patterns adds depth to our perception of him as one of the supreme exemplars of the classical style. These patterns are generally elegant and subtle and are, by definition, balanced, reflecting a poised acceptance that descents are inevitable—indeed, as inevitable and natural as ascents. But along the way there are some surprises, dark and unsettling passages, uncertainties and dislocations, flashes of the fantastic and incomprehensible. Mozart's music was "Classical"—but much, much more.

Floating. Music that takes us aloft, surmounting the pull of gravity, and carries us on a journey, ascending, floating, is an extraordinary phenomenon. It is humankind expanding its capabilities, its intellectual and spiritual horizons, through art. We have been experiencing this for more than a millennium. In the Middle Ages the unison lines of plainchants—stretching, shifting up and down without rhythmic stress or harmonic direction—carried worshippers into the vaulted heights of cathedrals and beyond to the sky and God. In the 20th century, starting in 1939 when he went into exile in France and continuing for three decades, the great Spanish cellist Pablo Casals (1876–1973) concluded concerts with the ancient Catalan folk song "El Cant del Ocells" ("The Song of the Birds"). The haunting melody, played alone on the cello, spirals round and round. Unnamed thousands, during those years of occupations and oppressions, journeyed into the sky and over the horizon to freedom with Casals, his cello, and the melody of the gliding bird.

One of the great creators of music that floats, many would say the greatest, was Frédéric-François Chopin (1810–49). While still a teenager he began a long series of enduring works with original and enthralling passages that float. The *Adagio* of his F Minor Piano Concerto, composed when he was 19, contains filigrees of notes high in the piano register which like tendrils in the air drift up and down with exquisite weightlessness. Chopin wrote to his closest friend that the music was inspired by thoughts of a young soprano, someone he had dreamed about for six months but to whom he had never communicated his feelings.

In Chopin's late bardic work, the *Fourth Ballade in F Minor* (1842), a profusion of passages float from bar 1 to bar 239, some 12 minutes later. The main theme is a quintessentially Chopinesque floating melody. It twists around itself, lingers on several notes to create tension, lifts up gracefully, hovers at a high point, and finally winds down-



Over the Town, by Mark Chagall (1916)

ward. After the music has journeyed into the strange and distant world of A major, Chopin weaves strands of this theme contrapuntally so that they twist their way back to the home key of F minor. Further on, the theme is transformed into arabesques that truly soar. In one passage, long lines of notes flow up from the depths of the keyboard at the same time that chords float down from above. Elsewhere figurations, after coiling tightly, rocket toward the top of the keyboard and then drift downward like pyrotechnic displays. And at several points the music, as if unable to contain itself, breaks into waves of sound of oceanic grandeur.

Like Chopin, other composers who have made music float—Bach, Haydn, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Fauré, Rachmaninoff, Debussy, Ravel—have not confined themselves to shaping melodies of a floating character. They have fashioned the environment, the entire musical world over which or through which the melody floats.

In his Requiem of 1887, Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924) brought into existence a remarkable world of floating. In the Sanctus (“Holy, holy, holy”), he weaves together many strands to lift the music and the listener. The principal melody is carried by unison lines of sopranos and tenors slowly gliding upward and downward. Harp arpeggios, undulating figures in the violas, and sustaining tones in the organ and low strings provide a cushion for the voices. Riding above the voices, an accompanying violin melody curls sensually. Toward the end of the movement a striding rhythm takes hold, trumpets and horns ring out, and the music rises to its climax with the stirring words “Hosanna in the highest.” The music subsides and the unison voices return together

with the curving violin obbligato and the gently rocking accompaniment. In Fauré's *Sanctus* the soprano and tenor melody, and the listener, are surrounded from above and below, enveloped, and lifted above the woes of earth.

Of the four gravity-related patterns, floating has by far been the most frequently employed. Its use spans at least a millennium—from plainchants of the Middle Ages to music in our century. Its scope extends across a broad range of poetic sentiments and deeply held beliefs, from the profane to the sacred, from the passionate utterances of Chopin to the spiritual aspirations of plainchant and Fauré. The metaphors of floating transcend traditional musical classifications such as "Baroque," "Classical," and "Romantic." They impress upon us the enduring and unifying elements in music.

Emerging patterns. What of the future? Music that has in the past so often probed humankind's anxieties and aspirations can surely be expected to continue to do so. But we must also expect, with the vastness of contemporary cultural change and the inexhaustibility of human creativity, that composers will find new ways to evoke gravity-related themes. The 1970 Cello Concerto of Witold Lutoslawski (1913–94), Poland's profound and humane innovator, takes us on a deeply moving journey into the realities of 20th-century political experience. The cello, carrying on an amiable and harmless dialogue with the society of the orchestra, is repeatedly interrupted by discordant and irascible trumpet salvos. The cello struggles to stay upright and then collapses, beaten down by ever more raucous, overbearing, and thuggish assaults. In the end the cello triumphs, doggedly ascending and repeating a single note. Throughout we hear patterns from the cello that only slightly resemble those we have encountered in earlier music. Instead, after being assaulted, the cello scurries in all directions, whimpers and sobs as if collapsing. The forces attempting to bring down the cello, the blaring trumpets, execute their mission with completely new musical metaphors—passages in which they rapidly perform their notes independently of each other, thereby making a uniquely modern and thrilling cacophonous din.

In their vividness and intensity, these transformed gravity metaphors reflect a degree of anguish about political conditions that composers of earlier times seldom, if ever, attempted to portray through music. The dedicatee and first performer was Mstislav Rostropovich, who knew much about the brutality of the state in crushing individuals and also about the human spirit in resisting conformity. Just before the concerto's premiere in 1970, the cellist reportedly told Lutoslawski that he wept when he played the passage where the cello seems to be beaten down.

We find in the work of the avant-garde Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952) even more radical departures from traditional patterns. In her "Du cristal . . . à la fumée" ("From crystal . . . into smoke") for large orchestra, including electronically amplified instruments, the

musical ingredients are soundscapes crackling with gongs and percussion, threads that stretch into microtones, massive clusters that shatter and disintegrate, timbres that alter imperceptibly and hypnotically, and electrifying eruptions of timpani. The listener experiences a sensation of floating, free from any pull of gravity. Yet there are no melodies at all, much less ones that float like Chopin's or Schubert's. Saariaho has created a mysterious and enthralling world for the 21st century. She communicates to us, through musical metaphors that do not yet have labels, the excitement of living in a world of cosmic grandeur and vast adventure.

What do we add to our understanding of music when we think of it in terms of various gravity-defying journeys? First, the reader should note, this approach in no way denies that individual listeners derive their own personal meanings from various works of music; it does, however, supplement and enrich individual interpretations by suggesting how, through history, certain patterns of sound have been taken repeatedly by composers and listeners to correspond to widely shared, perhaps even universal, human experiences.

Everyone can tell when music rises. Everyone can feel the distinctly different sensations of lifting upward and sinking downward. Everyone who listens will know when a weighty and precipitous descent is taking place, as in the opening of the Rachmaninoff Prelude. There is nothing arcane or esoteric about the exhilaration we experience when Fauré takes us soaring aloft.

For some, the experience of surmounting gravity in a musical journey may have a religious character. Being taken beyond the pull of gravity to a vision of the eternal will deepen the spiritual dimension of their lives. For many, the journey can be a celebration of being alive and a renewal of buoyancy, zest, and good cheer.

All of us, composers and listeners, may at one time or another harbor anxieties about our limitations, our infirmities, the terrors real or imaginary that occasionally grip everyone, the fear that we will not be able to remain upright if misfortune comes. When we take a journey with a composer in which we experience through the metaphors of sound the victory of spirit over frailty, we cannot help but be strengthened. If destructive forces loom in our own lives, we can come to feel that we also are capable of prevailing over them. And so we may enjoy new confidence, new determination, new reason for carrying on. If that is what a journey with Bach or Beethoven, with Ruggles or Lutoslawski, accomplishes for us, it is no small thing. Indeed, are we not justified in saying that one of the fundamental features of great musical journeys is that they are life sustaining?

The Night of the Whales

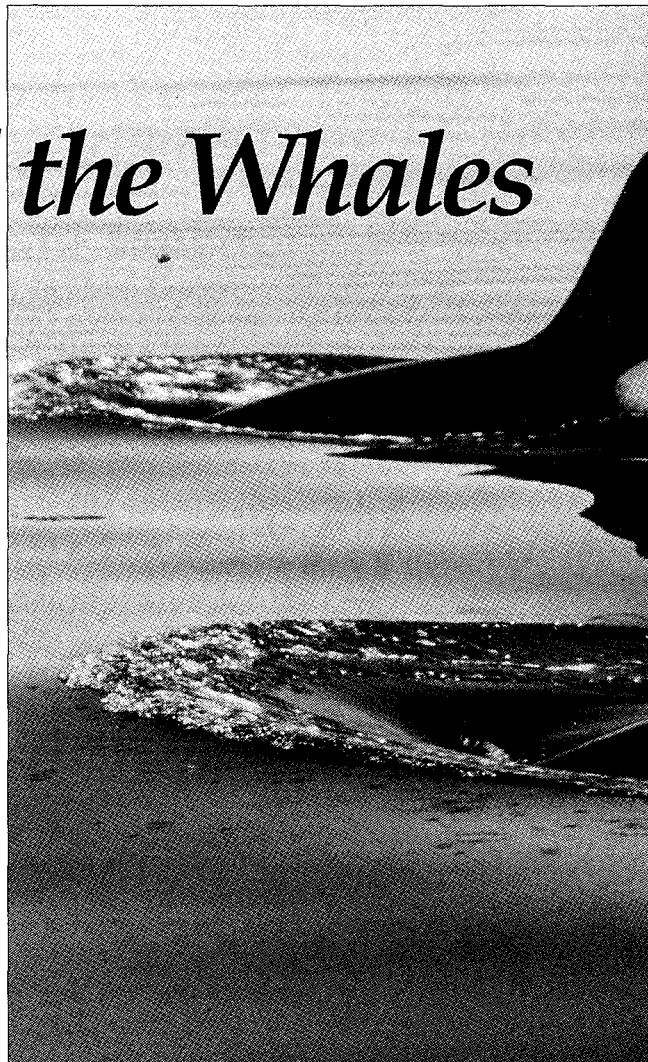
Long before cetaceans became objects of popular affection and scientific scrutiny, the author had his first and most memorable encounter with the killer whale.

BY WILLIAM W. WARNER

One January night almost 50 years ago I found myself looking straight into the eye of a large black whale. It had just finished swimming on its back, exposing a gleaming white underbelly, through a dense bed of kelp. The whale's swimming motion was slow, sinuous, and obviously sensual, as though it were enjoying a deeply satisfying back rub. Now it had righted itself and was swimming closer into the kelp bed, the inner edge of which was not more than 10 yards from the rocky beach where I stood. There it stopped for what seemed like a very long time.

Soon I became acutely aware that the whale's small, beady eye was fixed on me in what looked like a malevolent glare. Yielding to a small-boy impulse, I threw a rock at the whale. The rock hit the whale squarely on its shiny wet-black back, just behind its high dorsal fin. Instantly the whale raised its tail flukes, brought them down hard on the water, and drenched me in spray. I scrambled up the rocky beach, quite scared.

I knew the whale was a killer. "Bad feesh," said Don Clemente, my Yaghan Indian host, when the whales first came into



the small cove of Harberton on Tierra del Fuego's Beagle Channel. And had I not read how killer whales had lunged onto ice floes to snatch the sleeping sled dogs of Antarctic explorers? There was reason enough to give these creatures a wide berth. It is true of course that in recent years the orca, as the killer whale is also now popularly known, has been petted, caressed, and cheered by crowds as it performs all manner of acrobatics at various aquaria; it has also starred in a recent feature film. There are now even orca dolls for sale. They are a very popular item, I'm told, at San Diego's Sea World. But all of this, or *Orcinus orca's* kindly disposition toward humans, was quite unknown back in the 1940s when I was in Harberton.



What was known then was that given certain conditions killer whales might savagely attack penguins, seals, larger whales, and many other convenient forms of prey. They still do.

Even less known then was the concept of play among animals. Ethology, or the scientific study of animal behavior, was still in its infancy, concentrating mainly on mating rituals and territoriality. The idea that anyone other than ourselves might enjoy play for play's sake was not yet getting much serious attention. Certainly not in relation to cetaceans, at least, as the order that includes all whales and dolphins is known. But that is precisely what I was privileged to observe on a January night almost 50 years ago.

"Their large dorsal fins, cutting through the water like tall black sails . . ."

What took me to Harberton in the first place was an irrational urge to explore *la tierra mas austral del mundo*—the most southern land in the world—as Chileans and Argentines like to describe the Cape Horn region. Fresh out of the Navy and World War II, I had decided to make the trip using only public transport wherever such existed. Along the way I had the good fortune to meet the Bridges family of Viamonte on the Atlantic coast of Tierra del Fuego, descendants of the first English missionary to have dwelled successfully among the Yaghan. The Bridgeses kindly arranged for me to travel south across the

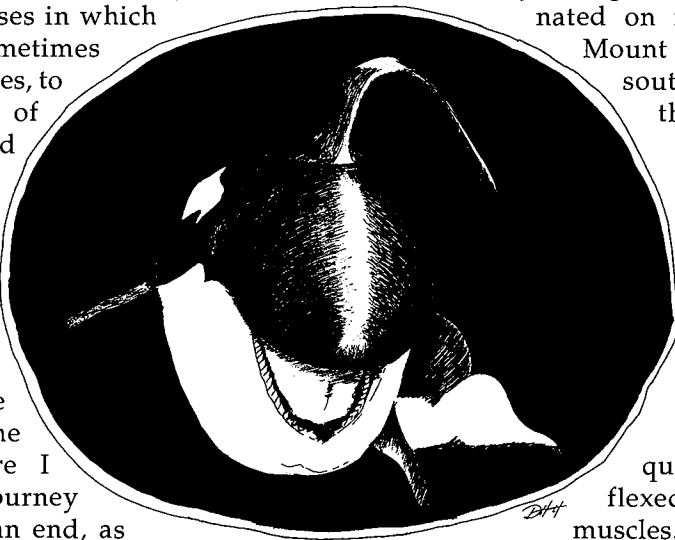
Darwin Range, guided by two of their ranch hands, to the family's original mission station at Harberton at the eastern end of the Beagle Channel. There, I was told, various small craft might stop en route down the channel to Ushuaia, a small town with a large prison then known as "the Devil's Island of Argentina." Once in Ushuaia, I could take my chances for transport to Cape Horn.

The journey across the Darwin Range, ordinarily one long day's ride, proved more difficult than usual. There were fast-flowing mountain streams to ford and bogs carpeted with brilliant yellow and orange mosses in which the horses sometimes sank to their bellies, to say nothing of snow-covered mountain passes. After a cold night on the trail—New Year's Eve, as it happened—I reached Harberton in the afternoon of the next day. There I thought my journey might come to an end, as day after day of the new year passed with not so much as a rowboat in sight.

I passed the time exploring Harberton's rocky shores, occasionally spotting a wary fur seal or flushing nesting pairs of Magellanic flightless steamer ducks. The latter are large birds, about the size of geese, known in Spanish as *patos vapores*. They never succeed in becoming airborne but move about quite rapidly

over the surface of the water by furiously beating their small wings and churning their webbed feet, "mak[ing] such a noise and splashing," as Charles Darwin once noted, "that the effect is most curious." The fur seals, much hunted in an earlier age, generally kept their distance or were quick to slither down into the protective masses of kelp. Sometimes, too, I scaled rocky headlands to view the countryside. To the north were the peaks of the Darwin Range, dusted with summer snows. To the south across the Beagle Channel was the Chilean island of Navarino, dominated by a long, low massif designated on most maps as Mount Misery. To the southwest, where the Beagle widened out to the sea, was uninhabited Picton Island, one of three small islands over which Chile and Argentina have long quarreled and flexed their military muscles. Beyond Picton and its two neighbors lay only the great southern seas and Antarctica.

It was about nine o'clock of a sunny evening during my second week, as I remember it, that the whales came to Harberton. They first announced their presence by a dull booming sound not unlike a distant or muffled cannon shot. I ran out of the kitchen where the camp crew was having a late supper to see three killer whales at the exact center of



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Harberton's small harbor. One after another the whales raised their tails, formed the flukes into cuplike shapes, and then slammed them down hard on the water surface. The result was a deep-toned and satisfying thud, loud enough to reverberate around Harberton's hills. (Humans can at least approximate the effect in a bathtub by cupping both hands and bringing them down sharply to make little depth-charge splashes.) My first thought was that the whales were trying to stun schools of small fish. I therefore ran to get my binoculars for a closer look. But all I could see was mirror-smooth water, untracked by any fleeing fish. Gradually and almost inevitably, the thought that the whales were simply having a good time crossed my mind. There could be no other explanation.

Since the small inner harbor had a narrow inlet at its mouth not more than half a mile from where I stood, I set out half-running and half-stumbling over the rocky terrain to reach it before the whales might choose to leave. Along the way I all but tripped over a pair of the *patos vapores*, which immediately took to the water and spluttered off, squawking loudly in protest. But well before reaching the inlet, I was stopped in my tracks by a spectacular explosion. A large whale shot up out of the water, rolled over in midair, and came down with a resounding splash less than 20 yards from the shore.

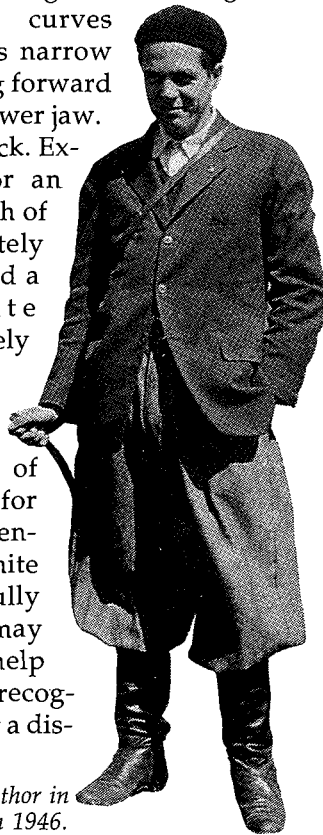
Killer whales are not large as whales go, but a healthy male adult will measure more than 25 feet in length and weigh as much as six tons. To see a creature of these dimensions erupt in quiet and confined waters—in a pond, in effect—is a nerve-shattering and awesome experience. What is more, the one leaping whale was quickly joined by about four or five others, including two juveniles. Some whales cleared the water entirely, landing as loudly as possible on their backs, sides, or bellies. Others shot up for only half or

two-thirds of their body length and then let themselves fall back in whatever posture gravity dictated. All joined in, adults and juveniles alike, in what I imagined could only be a joyous celebration of their chance discovery of a sheltered and secluded playground.

While this activity continued, one of the adults came into the kelp, rolled over, and began the slow and sensual swim I have previously described. This gave me a close view of one of nature's most startling black-and-white designs—the jet black of the whale's topsides, that is, against the gleaming white of its underparts. Whale-identification guidebooks generally describe the killer as having "back, sides, tail, fin and flippers black; chin, throat, chest and abdomen white." But the reader may gain a clearer picture of the contrast by imagining the white underside as flowing outward in gracefully scalloped curves from the whale's narrow tail and sweeping forward to a point at its lower jaw.

All the rest is black. Except, that is, for an oval-shaped patch of white immediately above the eye and a grayish-white saddle immediately behind the dorsal fin present on most whales.

The function of these patches or for that matter the entire black-and-white design is not fully understood. It may be that they help killer whales to recognize each other at a dis-



The author in Argentina in 1946.

tance, since there are slight variations in the shape of the patches, not to mention the overall design.

In time, or after getting sprayed as a result of my rock throw, I happened to look back from the higher ground at the small group of whales that had first appeared at the center of the harbor. Three whales were still there, but one of the steamer ducks was missing. Then came one of those rare events that leave us with a large measure of disbelief—disbelief, as the popular expression has it, in what is happening right before our eyes.

At first the whales took turns coming up under the remaining duck like surfacing submarines, thus causing the poor creature to slide down their broad backs in various ungainly postures. Then one whale tired of this activity and swam close alongside the duck, curving its body to look backward as it passed. It then raised its tail and brought it down sharply. The steamer duck, now quite exhausted from repeated attempts to flee the whales' attentions, made a desperate lunge to escape the blow. But the whale's tail flukes did not strike the duck—indeed I do not think such was the whale's intention—but rather came down just close enough to create a great lateral thrust of water which sent the bird skidding across the surface directly to another whale. Much to my amazement, the second whale promptly raised its tail and in the same manner sent the duck skidding to the third. The third passed it back to the first. So it went. Each time the weary *pato vapor* made one more feeble attempt to escape, and each time the whales sent it skidding in what resembled nothing so much as an ice hockey game featuring deadly accurate slap shots. But very soon something distracted my attention—a particularly loud splash, I think it was—from one of the whales nearest me. When I looked back at the hockey players, the steamer duck was gone. I like to think that perhaps

the whales had suddenly tired of their game and thus allowed the poor duck one last chance to reach the safety of the shoreline. But such a scenario, all things considered, seems unlikely.

All play must come to an end, of course, giving way in the animal world to the more serious business of the hunt. In the case of the whales who came into Harberton, the moment came very abruptly. It was as if a leader in the group had given a sharp command to leave, since all the whales swam through the harbor mouth within a very short time. Their large dorsal fins, cutting through the water like tall black sails, passed by me in what seemed a continuous review. I watched them for a long time in the waning sunlight of the summer evening as they headed out to sea toward Picton Island and the great southern seas surrounding Antarctica. So, too, did a nervous fur seal hugging the shore quite close to me.

A week later, a small schooner took me down the Beagle Channel to Ushuaia. There I found that the prison, the notorious Argentine Devil's Island, was no longer the town's principal reason for being. Rather, an airfield, some oil-storage tanks, and various improved port facilities were rapidly being built to be used as a base for Argentina's Antarctic pretensions. In fact, Ushuaia had been declared a *recinto militar*, or a restricted area under military governance. What is more, as luck would have it, the first Argentine Antarctic expeditionary ship was expected later in the same day of my arrival. These circumstances caused me yet another enforced stay. Not to explore ways of getting to Cape Horn, that is, but rather to get out of Ushuaia, where I was immediately thought to be a spy. But that is another story. More important to this narrative is the fact that a month later I was in New

York and eager to pass on my observations of killer whale behavior to any interested authorities.

My first stop (and only one, for reasons that will soon become clear) was the American Museum of Natural History, an institution that had been one of my favorite boyhood refuges. After various inquiries and calls from one office to another, I was eventually received by a scientist—I remember neither his name nor his position—whom I supposed to be a whale expert. Patiently I read my field notes to him, pausing briefly for questions or exclamations of wonderment. But none ever came from my listener, whose face remained fixed in a patronizing smile. As clearly as any words, his silence told me he was not about to believe the unlikely observations of the young man sitting in front of him. Finished, I asked if he would like a copy of my field notes. No, thank you, he replied, there was really no need, since he could scarcely forget my vivid account of such extraordinary doings.

It was as we say today the ultimate put-down. I left the museum feeling both humiliated and angry, certain that I would make no further attempts to reach the scientific community. Looking back, I now know that it was futile to have made the attempt in the first place. At that time, the late 1940s, the Smithsonian Institution alone had a true whale expert, which is to say a full-time curator of whales and other marine mammals, in the person of the late Dr. Remington Kellog. What is more, the study of whales there and later at the American Museum and other kindred institutions was for many years confined largely to systematics, as biologists now like to call taxonomy—that is, the patient business of identifying all living things and putting them in properly classified order.

All this has changed. Whale behavior is now eagerly studied by scientists and legions of dedicated whale watchers. Although there remains very much to learn of whale life cycles, we now know more about both the play and the communication signals of a number of species, *Orcinus orca* among them. The slamming of cupped tail flukes on the surface of the water which I first saw at Harberton is now known as “tail lobbing” and recognized as a playful activity shared by a number of other species. The same can be said of “breaching,” or jumping clear of the water. This, too, is recognized as a form of play in which killer whales and humpbacks are the absolute aerial champions. Jumping for joy, I prefer to call it, since there seems to be no other satisfactory explanation for their spectacular leaps, although some scientists prefer to think of them as “an emphatic form of audio-visual communication.” After observing killers in other places, notably British Columbia, and watching humpbacks in the waters of Newfoundland and southeast Alaska, I have come to the conclusion that leaping most often occurs close to shore in relatively sheltered waters with plentiful supplies of small food fish or other prey. A quiet spot for leisurely dining in other words, which is reason enough for rejoicing.

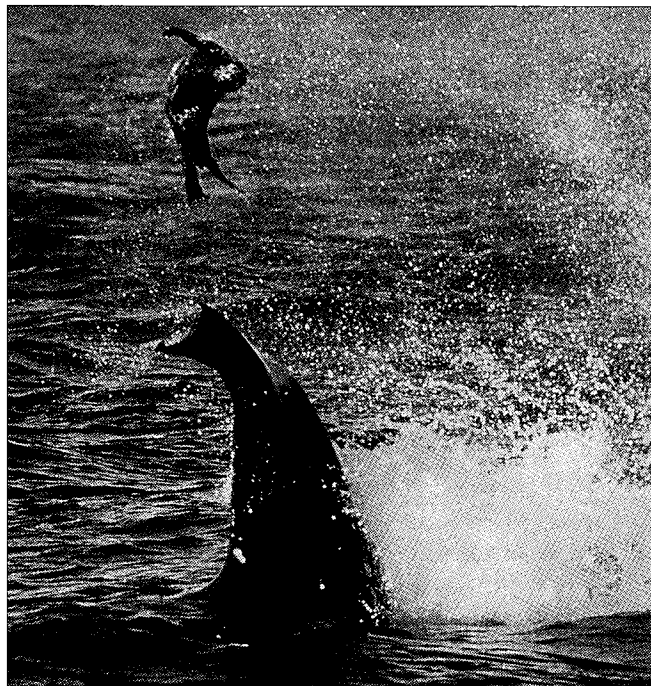
Nor should anyone be surprised to see killer whales lolling in kelp beds, as they did at Harberton. As far as we know, nearly all whales seem to welcome a sense of touch. This is especially true of the killers and their closest relatives, the dolphins. (Taxonomically speaking, killer whales *are* dolphins, or members of the family Delphinidae.) Given the opportunity, they are likely to investigate even a single piece of flotsam—a stray log, for example, adrift at sea—and rub up against it. Imagine, then, the attraction of coastal waters offering rocks, fine sand or pebbles, and wavy forests of kelp. Killer whales have been



*Above: an orca practices beaching.
Above, right: closing in on a herd of sea
lions. Right: an orca flips its prey before
devouring it.*

observed using all three, the rocks to scratch itchy or sore spots, the bottom sand or gravel for back rubbing, and, finally, the kelp as a lubricious balm, the ointment, so to speak, after a good massage. To prolong such tactile pleasures, in fact, the killers will often lift a mass of kelp and drape it over their heads and backs.

Neither is there any mystery about killer whales responding to command, as they appeared to do when I watched them leaving Harberton. To be sure, they lack the eerie and sometimes melodious "songs" of the humpback, recently the subject of so much study. But killer





whales do have a cacophonous variety of sounds—whistles, clicks, squeaks, grunts—which carry long distances and are more than enough for a repertoire of basic communications. That they do communicate, much like other dolphins, is now an established fact. Their working vocabulary, however, remains to be translated.

But there is one form of play, if indeed it can be called that, which the killer apparently shares with no other whale or dolphin. It is the deadly cat-and-mouse game, or the torment they inflict on their prey prior to consuming it. The steamer duck episode I witnessed in Harberton is

but one small example of what killers may do with larger prey species. Dr. Roger Payne and his associates, who have long studied right whales in Patagonia, and Dr. Claudio Campagna of the New York Zoological Society, who studies sea lions in the same general area, have seen small pods of killers play catch with both adult and young southern sea lions, a large species weighing up to 600 pounds. The killers literally throw the sea lions around, flaying them to death with vigorous head shakes. (Some scientists believe the flaying action helps remove the sea lions' fur pelts, which the whales normally regurgitate.) Other observers in both North and

South America have seen similar cat-and-mouse tactics used on penguins and seals.

More often than not, however, play is foregone in favor of a swift attack and kill. In a startling photograph that appeared in *National Geographic*, one of Dr. Payne's assistants captured the moment a killer whale used its tail to hurl a large sea lion some 30 feet into the air. Jen Bartlett, the photographer, has so described the event, after patiently watching a patrolling pod of approximately six killers: "Moments later the ocean erupted and the sea lion came hurtling out of the water. The other whales moved in, and it was all over in a matter of minutes, with nothing left but scraps of meat on the surface for kelp gulls to scavenge."

Given such attacks, we are left to confront the one great apparent contradiction in killer whale behavior. How is it, we may ask, that such seemingly savage carnivores appear to enjoy friendly associations with humans and take readily to training in captivity? But here, too, answers are beginning to emerge. In the first place, we must bear in mind that killer whales have absolutely no fear of anything that swims in the seas—they are, after all, top-of-the-line predators—and are inclined to show a nonhostile curiosity toward boats, human beings, and almost anything else that is not part of their natural environment. (This curiosity noticeably increases, moreover, wherever the whales are no longer hunted or otherwise molested; conversely, it disappears quickly whenever they find themselves threatened or the objects of too much attention.) When in 1965 an entrepreneur from the Seattle Aquarium found it necessary to dive into a temporary net enclosure holding the first two killer whales ever taken for captivity, the whales, although obviously stressed, did not attack or harm him in any way. The same proved

true in subsequent encounters with the next few whales bound for other aquaria.

But more interesting and certainly more significant explanations for the killer whales' dichotomy of behavior are coming from those who have studied the whales in the wild most intensively. The late Dr. Michael Bigg of the Canadian Fisheries Research Board, Kenneth C. Balcomb of the Center for Whale Research at Friday Harbor in northern Puget Sound, Alexandra Morton of Raincoast Research at Simoon Sound near the north end of Vancouver Island, and other observers now conclude that there are two basic populations of *Orcinus orca* with different social and behavioral patterns. In the first are what might be called resident communities. They are large in number—96 whales in the case of the Puget Sound community—and are made up of two- and three-generation families that bond for life. Remaining in one general area the year around, these community whales feed on salmon and other fish that are in relatively abundant supply on North America's northwest coast. They have not been seen to eat seals or other larger forms of prey.

The second grouping is composed of pods of whales, much smaller in number, that are best described as transients. Constantly on the move in pods of two to 10 individuals, they subsist mainly on penguins, seals, larger whales, and other warm-blooded animals. Stomach autopsies of these transients washed up on the shores of British Columbia have shown that they have also consumed such assorted fare as waterfowl, deer, and even the remains of a pig. But no fish.

In addition to opportunistic hunting, the transient whales also gather at certain specific locations at certain times of year to take advantage of large concentrations of their favored prey. A good example of

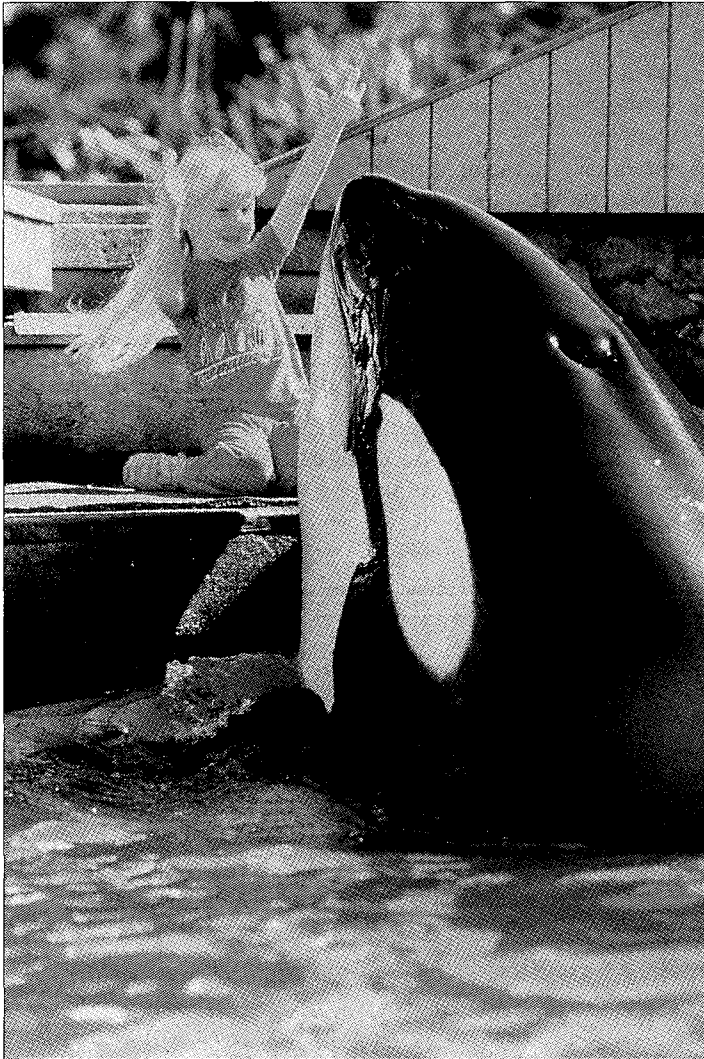
this phenomenon, recently the subject of a number of nature films, may be found at Punta Norte on the Valdés Peninsula of Patagonia. Here transient pods congregate every March and April, when the pups of the southern sea lion are born. Not content with what they may kill in the water, the whales crash through the surf, effectively stranding themselves, to snatch the pups on the beach. No other whales have the ability to save themselves from a stranding, but the killers are so strong and athletic that they have little trouble squirming back into the water. So important is this seasonal feast, in fact, that parent whales patiently teach the stranding technique to their young on empty practice beaches.

After almost 20 years of intensive study and observation, Kenneth Balcomb and his associates believe the two groups, the community residents and the transients, do not interbreed and have probably been genetically isolated for a very long time. More recently, Dr. A. Rus Hoelzel of the National Institutes of Health has managed to carry out DNA fingerprinting of the two groups. They are indeed genetically distinct, Hoelzel has found, so much so that "you might think they came from different oceans," as he likes to put it.

Although much more study is necessary, similarly separate groups or "races" appear to exist elsewhere. In 1979-80 the giant factory whaling ship *Sovietskaya Rossiya* purposely took 906 killer whales from Antarctic waters for scientific examination. As a result, Russian scientists now propose not different groups or races but two separate species. The first, provisionally named *Orcinus glacialis*, is noticeably smaller in all dimensions than the familiar *Orcinus orca*. It also has a slightly different cranial structure and a film of diatomaceous algae covering its skin that

gives it a yellowish cast. These "yellow whales," as the Russians like to call them, live in large communities of 150 to 200 individuals and subsist almost entirely on fish, which were found to make up 98.5 percent of their stomach contents. As their name suggests, the "yellows" stay close to the edge of the circumpolar pack ice the year around. In social organization and feeding habits, therefore, they would seem to correspond most closely to the resident communities of the Pacific Northwest. Nearby, but more often roaming in open water, the Russian scientists found much smaller groups easily identified as the standard *Orcinus orca*. Because these whales had no trace of yellowish coloring, the Russian scientists took to calling them "whites." Much like North America's northwest coast transients, the whites traveled in small pods averaging 10 to 15 individuals, were never seen to mix with the yellows, and subsisted mainly on other warm-blooded mammals, the remains of which constituted 89.7 percent of their stomach contents. The other warm-blooded mammals in this case were principally other whales, especially the minke, smallest of the so-called great whales. But as Soviet and other commercial whalers from the bad old days of Antarctic whaling will readily attest, the Antarctic killers will attack any of their kin regardless of size. This the whalers know not only from actual sightings but because they often found characteristic killer-whale teeth marks on the skins of all the various species they once took. Even on blue whales, in fact, largest of all living things.

Historically, the first killer whales captured for aquaria from 1965 to 1976 came from the two best-known resident communities in the United States and Canada, the Puget Sound-Straits of Georgia community of almost 100 individuals and the north Vancouver Island-Johnstone Strait community of 190. Since then, owing to mounting public reaction



Sea World's Shamu has a close encounter with an adoring young fan.

against further captures in both the United States and Canada, all killer whales taken for captivity have come from Iceland.

What might happen if a mature whale from one of the small transient pods—one of the offshore whales, as they are sometimes called—were suddenly introduced into an established aquarium community remains a matter of speculation. Meanwhile, the popularity of *Orcinus orca* as a public attraction has grown phenom-

enally. The obliging killers shoot up from the water like Polaris missiles, jump through hoops, allow trainers to ride their backs, strand themselves on tank aprons, and apparently enjoy audience participation, letting spectators pet them or even brush their teeth. The whales learn simple commands in a manner of weeks and attain what trainers like to call a performance repertoire in approximately six months. Accidents and fatalities in the training process have been remarkably few—one person dead by drowning and one serious injury as a result of a performance accident. Caution, however, remains the watchword. Some whales in captivity exhibit unfriendly if not downright hostile reactions to both humans and other whales and dolphins newly introduced into their environment. These reactions may take the form of bunting or ramming the new whale or habitually drenching a poolside attendant who has somehow

provoked their displeasure. A quiet approach, or time enough to get acquainted, seems the rule to follow.

Little wonder, therefore, that killer whales have become the star attraction of the aquarium world. (One recent aquarium survey has shown that attendance drops off 50 percent without the whales.) Vancouver, Vallejo, San Diego, San Antonio, Niagara Falls, Cleveland, Orlando, Miami—all these cities and more have their performing whales. They may

also be seen in Japan, Argentina, Hong Kong, and France's Côte d'Azur. And Keiko, the star of the motion picture *Free Willy*, has been kept in a relatively small tank in Mexico City for 10 years. (As of this writing, however, a private foundation has raised \$4 million of an estimated \$9 million needed to buy Keiko, rehabilitate him for life in the wild in a large new tank in Oregon, and then try to find his family in Icelandic waters prior to releasing him.)

With the killer whales' increasing popularity has come mounting criticism of their retention in aquaria. As the largest mammals held in captivity and one of the fastest swimming of all sea creatures, they cannot of course be kept in enclosures that begin to approximate their natural habitat, as is now the practice with some zoo animals. Thus it happens that when the thrilled gasps and the cheers of a performance have died down, the whales may be seen endlessly circling their confinement pools. Eventually they may grow listless, some critics claim, and die of disheartening boredom. More accurately they may grow listless and die from viral diseases—pneumonia is the most common—against which they have no natural defense. The life span of *Orcinus orca* has been estimated at anywhere from 40 to 80 years, with females usually outliving males. But in captivity, their life expectancy appears to be much shorter. Most specimens taken for capture are young—very young, on average four-and-a-half years old according to the Department of Commerce's National Marine Fisheries Service, which is charged with keeping track of all marine mammal populations. Records from the same source show that the life span for the first 30 aquarium whales that have died of known diseases since the early 1970s averaged seven-and-a-half years following capture.

The record, however, is everywhere improving. There are now significant numbers of whales that have spent 12 or more years in aquaria, which means they have attained sexual maturity, and a few that have passed 20, which means that they have reached the hypothetical age for grandparenting. Then, too, as aquarium directors are quick to point out, the number of baby killer whales born in captivity appears to be rising. Sea World, which operates four aquaria in the United States, has successfully raised nine calves since 1985. Five more have been born in other aquaria and marine parks during the same period. And the Vancouver Aquarium, a model of its kind, is pointing the way with a firm policy against taking any more killer whales from the wild, relying instead on births and breeding loans from other institutions.

In response to the criticism of Greenpeace and kindred organizations, aquarium directors maintain that performing killer whales have done more than any other single aquarium species to raise public consciousness of whales and the need for their protection. It is thus no coincidence, although something of a paradox, that the first places to show killer whales, notably Seattle and Vancouver, were also the first to see strong public reaction against their further capture. To put it another way, the performing whales—"the Teddy Bears and giant pandas of the marine world" as some call them—seem to have the power to evoke both instant enthusiasm and sympathy from their audiences the world over.

Science, too, has benefited from the retention of killer whales in aquaria and marine parks. The latter have offered what in effect are the first living laboratories for marine mammal research. In the predawn era of cetacean research, which is to say the preaquaria era, even such a

basic datum as the gestation period for killer whales and other dolphins was unknown. (It is 17 months for *Orcinus orca* and 11 months for *Tursiops truncatus*, the bottlenose dolphin of performance fame.) Today, thanks to these living laboratories, studies in cetacean behavior, acoustics, genetics, hematology, general physiology, and veterinary science have all made great advances. There are very few cetacean specialists, in fact, who have not profited from the visiting fellowships and general study facilities offered by the better aquaria.

Killer whales in confinement, it would therefore appear, are here to stay. To be sure, there are now more opportunities to observe the whales in their natural habitat through whale-watching cruises and day trips. For this reason, it is the view of some conservationists and humane-society critics that the wild should be the only place to see whales. But if only a very small fraction of the millions of interested viewers who now flock to aquaria to see killer whales perform—more than 15 million annually visit the four Sea Worlds in the United States alone—were interested in taking boats to the best-known killer-whale concentration areas of the Seattle-Vancouver region, the result might well be disastrous. The very size of the flotilla necessary to take the public to these areas and the resulting commotion of marine traffic in such confined waters as the Johnstone and Georgia straits might very well cause the disappearance of the north

Vancouver Island and Puget Sound communities.

Still, it is hard not to sympathize with the position of each camp. For myself it has been a rewarding experience to renew acquaintance with *Orcinus orca* through the convenience of public showings. Even as I might wish these noble animals could forever roam free, I find myself thrilled by watching them display their grace and athleticism in the intimacy of an aquarium setting, to the point of joining the cheers of the crowd, I must confess, or sharing the sense of wonderment and joy of the youngest spectators.

Yet, these are not the occasions that remain indelibly in my mind. What persists, rather, is the memory of the night the whales came to Harberton almost 50 years ago. Every incident of what was in effect a private showing in that wild and lonely amphitheater remains remarkably clear. The tail lobbing, the explosive breaches, the rolling in the kelp, the steamer duck hockey game—all these are like so many freeze-frame images that can be brought instantly and brilliantly to mind. But the image I like best, the one I think of most often, is of the whales' departure. It is the image of the tall black sails of their dorsal fins passing in review, heading out the Beagle Channel to the great southern seas and Antarctica in the waning light of a summer evening.



THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

Citizens of the World, Unite?

A Survey of Recent Articles

Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel," Dr. Samuel Johnson famously said, and 20th-century American liberals have been quick to agree. Indeed, liberals of a more utopian cast at times have gone one huge step further: they have tried to shed *all* patriotism and to embrace, in one guise or another, all humankind. Not many Americans have joined them in this, but the dream dies hard. In a special issue of *Boston Review* (Oct.–Nov. 1994), Martha Nussbaum, a noted professor of philosophy, classics, and comparative literature at Brown University, makes a case for world citizenship—and 29 other thinkers kick her argument around.

"[An] emphasis on patriotic pride is both morally dangerous and, ultimately, subversive of some of the worthy goals patriotism sets out to serve—for example, the goal of national unity in devotion to worthy moral ideals of justice and equality," Nussbaum proclaims. In place of patriotism, she proposes to put "cosmopolitanism," which would ask Americans to pledge primary allegiance to all of humanity. Students in this country should be taught that while they "happen to be situated" in the United States, "they are above all citizens of a world of human beings."

Citing the ancient Greek Cynic philosopher Diogenes (who declared himself "a citizen of the world"), Nussbaum says that he knew "that the invitation to think as a world citizen was, in a sense, an invitation to be an exile from the comfort of patriotism and its easy sentiments, to see our own ways of life from the point of view of justice and the good. The accident of where one is born is just that, an accident; any human being might have been born in any nation. Recognizing this, his Stoic successors held, we should not allow differences of nationality or class or ethnic membership or even gender to erect barriers between us and our fellow human beings. We should recognize humanity wherever it occurs, and give its fundamental ingredients, reason and moral

capacity, our first allegiance and respect."

Nussbaum is responding, in part, to an op-ed essay in the *New York Times* (Feb. 13, 1994) by philosopher Richard Rorty of the University of Virginia. Most Americans, he notes, "take pride in being citizens of a self-invented, self-reforming, enduring constitutional democracy. We think of the United States as having glorious—if tarnished—national traditions." But the American Left, found mainly in academia, "is unpatriotic," he asserts. "In the name of 'the politics of difference,' it refuses to rejoice in the country it inhabits. It repudiates the idea of a national identity, and the emotion of national pride." It favors "multiculturalism," instead of traditional American pluralism.

Rorty believes that, for all its faults, the Left is doing "a great deal of good for people who have gotten a raw deal in our society." Nevertheless, he says, it is painting itself into a corner. "An unpatriotic Left has never achieved anything. A Left that refuses to take pride in its country will have no impact on that country's politics, and will eventually become an object of contempt."

Nussbaum is unpersuaded. Patriotism, she

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says, "is very close to jingoism, and I'm afraid I don't see in Rorty's argument any proposal for coping with this very obvious danger."

Commenting in the same issue of *Boston Review*, Harvey C. Mansfield, a political scientist at Harvard University, says that despite Nussbaum's eminence as a professor of philosophy, "when it comes to politics, she's a girl scout. Indeed, she has less useful acquaintance with American politics than a schoolchild of either sex who has recently been exposed to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—unless, thanks to the foolish cosmopolitanism she encourages, these items are no longer in the curriculum."

Mansfield agrees with Nussbaum that Rorty's "groundless patriotism" could be perverted into jingoism, but asks why she excludes the possibility of a "reasonable" patriotism: "Why does she ignore the liberalism and the constitutionalism of the country in which she lives?"

Some other *Boston Review* thinkers have kind words for Nussbaum's idealism and eloquence, but—in what could be taken as a sign of widespread realism among liberal intellectuals today—very few accept her main argument.

Leo Marx, an emeritus professor of American cultural history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, observes that Nussbaum "seems to regard American nationhood as indistinguishable from other routine embodiments of nationalism. But the originating concept of the American republic was exceptional in at least two respects." The United States, he says, "was founded on precisely defined political principles." And these were selected "for their putatively universal moral and rational validity. Whatever the record of actual American practices since 1776, the fact is that this nation initially was—and in principle remains—dedicated to an Enlightenment brand of cosmopolitanism." Hence, he points out, Nussbaum, as an American citizen, can be both patriotic and cosmopolitan.

Yet how far can the bonds of obligation and loyalty be stretched? asks Harvard sociologist Nathan Glazer. In some ways, he notes, "they can encompass all men and women. Do we not sense, though, whatever the inadequacy of our principled ethical arguments, that we owe more to our family members than to others? The

greater closeness of bonds to one's country and countrymen need not mean denigration and disrespect for others." Of course, Americans should learn more about other countries and do have moral obligations to the rest of humanity. "But," Glazer adds, "there is a meaning to boundaries, in personal life and in political life, as well as a practical utility."

"I am not a citizen of the world, as [Nussbaum] would like me to be," declares political philosopher Michael Walzer, author of *Spheres of Justice* (1984). "I am not even aware that there is a world such that one could be a citizen of it." While Nussbaum is quick to perceive "the chauvinist possibilities" of Rorty's patriotism, Walzer observes, she seems blind to cosmopolitanism's "obvious dangers."

"The crimes of the 20th century have been committed alternately, as it were, by perverted patriots and perverted cosmopolitans," he writes. "If fascism represents the first of these perversions, communism, in its Leninist and Maoist versions, represents the second. Isn't this repressive communism a child of universalizing enlightenment? Doesn't it teach an anti-nationalist ethic, identifying our primary allegiance (the class limitation, 'workers of the world,' was thought to be temporary and instrumental) much as Nussbaum does?"

Precisely because powerful economic and technological forces are moving the planet closer to cosmopolitanism, the noted historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., points out, the appeal of patriotism is growing stronger, as people "seek refuge from threatening global currents beyond their control and understanding."

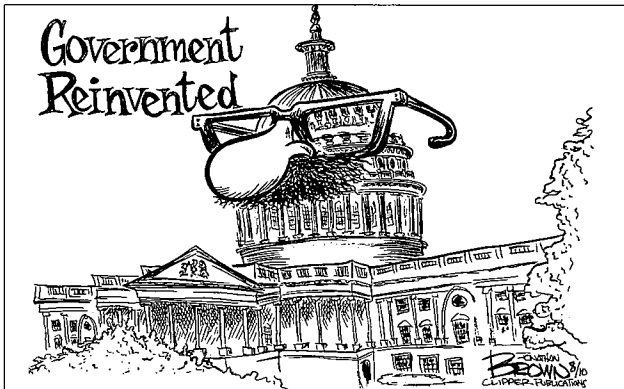
Extreme patriotism is evil—but patriotism need not be extreme, notes Stephen Nathanson, a professor of philosophy at Northeastern University and one of 15 additional commentators who respond to Nussbaum in *Boston Review* (Feb.–March 1995). It is possible to love one's country, he says, "without hating other countries, being an enthusiast about war, limiting one's concerns to one's own country, or believing in mindless obedience and support."

"In an ideal world," Arthur Schlesinger observes, "Martha Nussbaum's generous and enlightened appeal would be exactly right. But we must deal with the world we have."

Can Government Be Reinvented?

"Reinventing Public Administration" by James Q. Wilson, in *PS: Political Science & Politics* (Dec. 1994), American Political Science Association, 1527 New Hampshire Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

"Reinventing" the executive branch of the federal government so that it "works better and costs less," as Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review is supposed to do, is a very laudable goal, says political scientist Wilson, of



A skeptic's view of the Gore initiative to reorganize government.

the University of California, Los Angeles. Impractical, too, without getting rid of big government.

The Gore report, issued in 1993, would not do that. Although the vice president and his review staff regard the government's reliance on "large, top-down, centralized bureaucracies" as its "root problem," their solution is to make government more "entrepreneurial." They would retain almost all government programs and agencies, but "empower" government workers and "put customers first."

That is much easier said than done, Wilson observes. "The kind of sweeping cultural changes that are possible in some corporations are not possible in government agencies, precisely because they *are* government agencies. They are agencies invested with awesome powers of compulsion—to tax, regulate, inspect, arrest—and attractive powers of reward—to subsidize, purchase, and protect." And they are typically immune from competition. "To make them accountable, we enshroud them in a maze of laws, regulations, and court rulings; to keep

them responsive, we expose them to access by endless reporters, lawyers, committees, and investigators. The result, inevitably, is a culture of risk aversion that cannot readily be altered."

To truly empower government workers, they would have to be allowed—by interest groups, the news media, and congressional watchdogs—to make honest mistakes that get some people upset. "When a culture of forbearance and forgiveness descends on Washington," Wilson says, "please alert the FBI at once, for it will be evidence that somebody has kidnapped or anesthetized the entire legislative and judicial branches of government."

The prospects for putting "customers" first seem equally dim. "A 19-year-old high school dropout working at McDonald's will be prompt and courteous if the alternative is being fired," Wilson notes. The franchise manager will labor to see that employees measure up, if that means more money in his or her pockets. "But those conditions do not exist in the Postal Service or the IRS or the Social Security Administration. As a result, gains in customer satisfaction will have to be achieved

largely by means of exhortation." They are not likely to be large.

"When we and our elected representatives authorize the government to perform a task that once was performed in the private sector or not at all," Wilson says, "we are declaring, in effect, that we value some goal more highly than customer satisfaction or employee empowerment." The only way to really "reinvent" big government, he suspects, would be to dismantle it.

Toward a Passionate House

"A Madisonian Compromise" by James R. Stoner, Jr., in *Policy Review* (Winter 1995), The Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4999.

Conservatives seem to be of two minds about term limits, especially now that the Republicans have taken command of Congress. Enthusiasts argue that limiting lawmakers' terms would end

Back to the Future?

Contemplating the state of the Union from the other side of the Atlantic, novelist, essayist, liberal, and sometime political candidate Gore Vidal proposes, in *New Statesman & Society* (Jan. 6, 1995), a different sort of contract with America.

As the people get nothing much back from the money that they give the government—social security is not federal income—why not just eliminate federal income tax? How? Eliminate Washington, D.C. Allow the states and municipalities to keep what revenue they can raise. I know that tens, if not hundreds of thousands of lobbyist lawyers and hired media gurus will have a million objections. But let us pursue the notion.

Why not divide the country into several reasonably homogeneous sections, more or less on the Swiss cantonal system? Each region would tax its citizens and provide the services those citizens wanted, particularly education and health. Washington would then become a ceremonial capital with certain functions. We shall always need some sort of modest defense system, a common currency, and a Supreme Court to adjudicate between the regions, as well as to maintain the Bill of Rights—a novelty for the present court.

How to pay for what's left of Washington? Each region will make its own treaty with the central government and send what it feels should be spent on painting the White House, and on our common defense, which will, for lack of money, cease to be what it is now—all-out-offense on everyone on Earth. The result will be no money to waste either on pork or on those imperial pretensions that have left us \$4.7 trillion in debt. Wasteful, venal, tyrannous Washington will be no more than a federal theme park administered by Michael Eisner. . . .

People want to be rid of arbitrary capitals and faraway rulers: so let the people go. . . . But also, simultaneously, as we see in Europe, while this centrifugal force is at work—a rushing away from the center—there is also a centripetal one, a coming together of small polities in order to have better trade, defense, culture—so we are back, if by chance, to our original Articles of Confederation, a group of loosely confederated states rather than a United States, which has proved to be every bit as unwieldy and ultimately tyrannous as Jefferson warned. After all, to make so many of 'Many into One' you must use force, as we experienced in the Civil War. So let us make new arrangements to conform with new realities.

prevent the public from keeping good legislators indefinitely in office. Stoner, a political scientist at Louisiana State University, proposes a compromise: term limits for the House of Representatives but not the Senate.

This, he argues, would be in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution. The House, whose members face the voters every two years, was supposed to be the site of democratic ferment. In *The Federalist*, James Madison wrote that the House "should have an immediate dependence on, and an intimate sympathy with the people," since "it is essential to liberty that the government in general, should have a common interest with the people." That, Stoner says, is precisely the sentiment that has made term limits so popular today.

The Senate, he points out, was intended to be "a depository of experience and stability." Madison wrote that "such an institution may be sometimes necessary, as a defence to the people against their own temporary errors and delusions." For example, Stoner asks: Would the long U.S. commitment to the containment of communism have been maintained during "the heady days of détente in the 1970s, [if] the Senate had been purged by term limits of the Cold Warriors who remembered Stalin's and Khrushchev's threats?"

The original difference in the character of the two chambers was blurred by the 17th Amendment (1913). Senators thereafter were elected directly by the people instead of by state legislatures. Imposing term limits on the House but not the Senate, Stoner

political careerism and free citizen-legislators to act in the public interest; skeptics note that term limits were rejected by the Founding Fathers and would

thereafter were elected directly by the people instead of by state legislatures. Imposing term limits on the House but not the Senate, Stoner

argues, would restore "something of the original distinction" between the two bodies.

The Making of LBJ

"Lyndon Johnson's Victory in the 1948 Texas Senate Race: A Reappraisal" by Dale Baum and James L. Hailey, in *Political Science Quarterly* (Fall 1994), Academy of Political Science, 475 Riverside Dr., Ste. 1274, New York, N.Y. 10115-1274.

"Landslide Lyndon" they called Lyndon Johnson, after he won a 1948 run-off Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate by only 87 votes out of 988,295. In explaining LBJ's razor-thin victory (tantamount to election since Texas was then a virtual one-party state), Robert A. Caro, author of *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Means of Ascent* (1990), and other historians have focused on this remarkable occurrence in one precinct in the South Texas town of Alice: 202 Mexican-American voters, some of them dead or out of the county that election day, lined up in alphabetical order at the very last minute to cast their ballots overwhelmingly for Johnson. Caro and others see that as part of a pattern of deceit that runs through LBJ's long political career. The Alice vote was indeed a mite suspicious, note Baum and Hailey, a historian and graduate student, respectively, at Texas A&M University. Nevertheless, they contend, fraud was not the chief reason for the future president's narrow victory.

In the July primary that preceded the runoff, former governor Coke Stevenson, a West Texas rancher, got 40 percent of the vote to Johnson's 34 percent, while George E. B. Peddy, a decorated

World War II hero, got 20 percent. Peddy was a conservative and it was thought that his supporters would flock to fellow conservative Stevenson rather than to the more liberal Johnson. LBJ moved right, but, according to an analysis of the voting returns by Baum and Hailey, got little more than one-fifth of the Peddy voters. Nor did he make any significant inroads among Stevenson's original voters. LBJ did do extremely well at attracting new voters and those who had supported minor candidates. But that was not enough to offset the advantage Stevenson had with Peddy voters.

How then did Johnson win? The answer, according to the authors: he did an extraordinary job of getting almost all of his July supporters to turn out and vote for him again in August, while Stevenson abysmally failed to do likewise. An estimated 113,523 Texans who cast ballots for Stevenson in July stayed home in August, whereas only 4,054 LBJ voters did not return to the polls. In two West Texas counties—Hansford and Kinney—Stevenson's local supporters, believing their votes would not add significantly to his statewide margin of victory, complacently decided not even to hold run-off elections. By Baum and Hailey's calculations, their votes alone could have made all the difference for Stevenson.

Despite the "many thousands" of votes that Robert Caro believes were stolen for Johnson (and, it should be noted, numerous votes may also have been stolen for Stevenson), the authors say that if "Calculatin' Coke" had gotten just eight out of every 10 of his July supporters to cast ballots for him again in August, Lyndon Johnson would have had a very different political career.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Ethnic Equations

"Peoples Against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World System" by Ted Robert Gurr, in *International Studies Quarterly* (Sept. 1994), Dept. of Political Science, Ohio State Univ., 154 North Oval Mall, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

Civil wars in Bosnia, Croatia, and Azerbaijan; genocidal massacres in Burundi; clan fighting

in Somalia. . . . Since the Cold War ended, there seems to have been a veritable explosion of bloody ethnic conflicts around the world. But appearances deceive, says Gurr, a political scientist at the University of Maryland.

"Ethnopolitical conflicts were relatively common, and increased steadily, throughout the Cold War," he reports. The greatest in-

crease took place during the 1970s, when 55 ethnic groups were involved in serious clashes, up from 39 during the preceding decade. During the 1980s, the total was 62; in 1993–94, it was only eight higher.

Of the 50 “serious” ethnic conflicts in the world today, more than half began before 1987. These Cold War-vintage conflicts are also the more deadly ones, resulting, on average, in 111,000 deaths and 408,000 refugees. The 23 conflicts begun since 1987, in contrast, have produced many fewer deaths (43,000 on average) but many more refugees (684,000).

The end of the Cold War did intensify a few rivalries, notably in Afghanistan and Angola, where the superpowers’ disengagement gave impetus to existing tensions or allowed old ones to resurface. But most other Third World ethnic conflicts are in “the weak and economically stagnant states of Africa south of the Sahara.”

Twenty new states have come into being since the Cold War ended, and others have been experimenting with democratic institutions. “Much of the upsurge in communal conflict,” Gurr says, “has occurred precisely in these states, and as a direct consequence of the fact that institutional change has opened up opportunities by which communal groups can more openly pursue their objectives.” Six of the recent conflicts erupted in the Soviet and Yugoslav successor states.

Indeed, the sense of alarm about the supposed explosion of “tribal” conflict in recent years, Gurr believes, is partly a result of “the fact that some of the new conflicts have erupted on Western Europe’s doorstep.”

Head in the Sand?

“Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure” by Noel Malcolm, in *The National Interest* (Spring 1995), 1112
16th St. N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

For all of the West’s diplomatic efforts to halt the destruction of Bosnia, argues Malcolm, a London political columnist and author of

Bosnia: A Short History (1994), Western statesmen have failed to understand what the war there is about.

“Although commentators and analysts had been accurately charting the political strategy of the Serbian communist leader, Slobodan Milosevic, since 1988—the takeover of the political machinery in Montenegro and the Vojvodina, the illegal suppression of local government in Kosovo in 1989, the mobilization of nationalist feeling in Serbian public opinion, the slow-moving constitutional coup against the federal presidency, the Serbian economic blockade against Croatia and Slovenia in late 1990, the theft by Serbia that year of billions of dinars from the federal budget . . . and the incitement and arming of Serb minorities in Croatia and Bosnia during 1990 and 1991—it was as if the Western governments could see no pattern in these events whatsoever,” Malcolm writes. “When Croatia and Slovenia, losing patience with Milosevic’s attempts to manipulate the federal Yugoslav system, voted for independence, the West reacted with incomprehension.”

After the breakup of the Yugoslav Federation, Western policymakers comforted themselves with the thought that it had been inevitable, either because of the collapse of Soviet communism or because of “ancient ethnic hatreds” in Yugoslav history. The first theory was implausible, Malcolm says, as Yugoslavia since 1948 had been less under Moscow’s control than any other country in Eastern Europe. The second theory was simply wrong. The few examples of wars and massacres that were offered in its support, he says, “were from the 20th century, or at most the late 19th, [and] arose mainly from the most untypical episodes in Balkan history, conflicts introduced or exacerbated by forces (such as the Axis invasion) from outside Yugoslavia itself. For most of the rest of the history of those lands, there are no records of Croats killing Serbs because they were Serbs, or vice versa.”

The theory of “ancient ethnic hatreds” nevertheless became popular, Malcolm says. It was convenient to Western political leaders, for it made all sides to the conflict



The Western arms embargo has forced Bosnian government forces to rely on weapons such as those produced in this small-arms factory in Sarajevo. But the Bosnians have held off the better-equipped Serb forces.

equal. "At a stroke, attacker and defender were reduced to the same status. The fact that the defender in this war was not just an ethnic group but a democratically-elected government, containing Muslims, Croats, and Serbs, was an unfortunate detail which most Western policymakers tended to elide."

Instead of viewing the Bosnian war as an enterprise undertaken "by a set of people with political aims," Western leaders saw it as "an outbreak of an undifferentiated thing called 'violence,' which had just sprung up, as a symptom of Bosnia's general malaise. . . . Lacking a political understanding of the origins and nature of the war, the West responded to it not with politics but with therapy." Seeking to reduce the violence, the West imposed an arms embargo—denying the Bosnian government the weapons it needed to defend itself. Despite the Serbs' military superiority, Malcolm points out, "the Bosnian government forces have man-

aged to hold the front lines static for more than two years"—evidence of their higher motivation and morale.

Only military force will bring the Bosnian war to an end, Malcolm says. "With a minimal Western military action in October 1991, at the time of the bombardment of Dubrovnik, it might have been possible to check the Serbs' ambitions and make them seriously reconsider their plans for Bosnia. Again, with a proper guarantee to protect the Bosnian state in April 1992, backed up with an immediate response from the air, it might have been possible to stop the war in Bosnia within its first week." Since then, Western leaders have erred in assuming that stopping the Serbs would require massive NATO forces. The Bosnian government never even asked for Western soldiers. Those who are there should be withdrawn, and the arms embargo should be lifted, Malcolm argues. It is in the West's long-term interest "to see that the Greater Serbian experiment fails."

Merger Mania Revisited

A Survey of Recent Articles

If you were looking for fighting words during the 1980s, "mergers and acquisitions" would do nicely. This phrase could make the hair on a corporate titan's head stand on end and touch off ideological brawls among people worried about the future of the U.S. economy. Some said the decade's extraordinary number of corporate mergers, takeovers, and leveraged buyouts was destroying the U.S. economy. Others insisted that these activities were a healthy development.

In the cool light of history, it appears that the optimists may have been "more right" than the pessimists. In a special issue of *Business History Review* (Spring 1994), Harvard's Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., the dean of American business historians, puts the decade's events in longer-term perspective. Their roots go back to the 1960s, when U.S. corporations facing rising competition from domestic and overseas rivals began diversifying into other, frequently unrelated areas of business. There were some 6,000 mergers and acquisitions in 1969 alone. The trend toward conglomeration produced corporate indigestion, as headquarters personnel lost touch with their varied and far-flung operations. The financial restructuring that reached its crescendo in the 1980s actually got under way during the 1970s, as big businesses began to shed divisions they had unwisely acquired.

But the problems of American business were bigger than a few unwise acquisitions and by the 1970s they were becoming painfully apparent. In another article in the Spring 1994 issue, Carliss Y. Baldwin and Kim B. Clark, both of Harvard's Graduate School of Business Administration, argue that the usual explanations for declining competitiveness—the high cost of capital and the short time horizons of U.S. business executives—are too simplistic. They report that in a 1993 study of 432 large companies, economist Michael Jensen found that about one-quarter of them *overinvested* during the 1980s. General Motors spent \$67 billion on new plant and equipment but saw its market share drop from 45 percent to 35 percent.

The real problem, Baldwin and Clark believe, is more prosaic: the capital-budgeting and financial-planning techniques that big business increasingly adopted after World War II. These methods gave managers a way to estimate returns from investments in tangible items but made it difficult to evaluate spending on what the authors call "organizational capabilities": things such as skills, procedures, and information systems that improve the speed or quality of production. Adhering strictly to conventional methods, for example, it would be hard to justify costly investments in gathering customer feedback, reorganizing management, and redesigning products to improve quality. Quality is hard to quantify.

A backlash against those methods was already beginning in corporate circles as the merger-and-acquisitions movement gathered speed in the early 1980s. Both the backlash and the movement were propelled by ever-increasing competition, not only from foreign firms but within U.S. industry.

Chandler finds that financial restructuring varied a great deal during the period, depending upon the type of industry. In what he calls the "low-tech" industries (e.g., food, drink, and tobacco), there were a lot of mergers and takeovers, and many were highly publicized. Well-known companies such as General Foods, Nabisco, and Beatrice Foods were absorbed into other corporations. Most of these changes, Chandler suggests, were needed responses to the overdiversification of the recent past; in the end, the competitive strength of the low-tech sector was little affected.

In America's "high-tech" industries, such as chemicals, electronics, and aerospace, there were a number of high-profile mergers and acquisitions, but "managers, not financial intermediaries, proposed the moves and carried them out." Unlike the controversial "transaction oriented" deals masterminded by investment bankers and corporate raiders gunning for quick profits, these deals were normally made

by managers taking the long view. They bought and sold companies chiefly in the interest of reshaping "product portfolios." Consider chemicals (including pharmaceuticals), a \$210 billion industry in 1987, as compared with the \$127 billion auto industry. Reshaped by mergers and acquisitions and reinvigorated by heavy research-and-development (R&D) outlays, the U.S. chemical industry held its own against foreign competitors. Between 1987 and '91, exports rose from \$25 billion to \$44 billion.

"Stable-tech" industries, ranging from fabricated metals (e.g., cans) to farm equipment, suffered the most during the decade. The high-tech industries were able to respond to rising competition by boosting R&D spending to develop new products and markets. Stable-tech companies that were able to find similar opportunities generally managed to fend off unwanted suitors: oil companies moved into petrochemicals; companies such as 3M and Corning Glass moved into fields such as fiber optics. But other industries, such as steel, aluminum, and nonelectrical machinery, were battered by the merger-and-takeover wave. Corporate raiders such as Asher Edelman and Samuel Heyman contributed to the chaos, says Chandler, but corporate managers pursuing long-term goals were again the chief players. The problem was that in the super-

heated markets of the 1980s, investment banking houses and other financial intermediaries collected huge fees, costing industries hundreds of millions of dollars and forcing reductions in R&D and capital investment.

In a third *Business History Review* article, Berkeley economist Bronwyn H. Hall reaches similar conclusions with regard to firms that went through leveraged buyouts (in which so-called junk bonds or other forms of debt were used to take a company private) or big increases in debt loads. The action, she says, was focused in the stable-tech sector. Overall, she suggests, such a freewheeling "market for corporate control" has a salutary effect on business.

In all three sectors, Chandler concludes, the past few decades have taught business the dangers of unplanned growth. The stable-tech industries learned the hardest way. But "the United States is not going the way of the United Kingdom in terms of long-term competitive strength," he writes. Late-19th-century Britain failed "to make the long-term investments in production, distribution, and above all in management essential to compete globally. . . . Today American companies remain powerful competitors in the most dynamic and transforming industries of the late 20th century."

The Ugly Truth About 'Lookism'

"Beauty and the Labor Market" by Daniel S. Hamermesh and Jeff E. Biddle, in *The American Economic Review* (Dec. 1994), American Economic Assoc., 2014 Broadway, Ste. 305, Nashville, Tenn. 37203.

Now there is proof: women do face discrimination in the workplace on the basis of their looks. Economists Hamermesh and Biddle, of the University of Texas, Austin, and Michigan State University, respectively, have the evidence to prove it. But there is a surprise: men face even greater discrimination.

In three extensive surveys (two done in the United States in 1971 and 1977, and one in

Canada in 1981), interviewers not only obtained the usual labor-market and demographic information but also rated their respondents' physical appearance, from homely to drop-dead good-looking.

Hamermesh and Biddle's analysis shows that, other things (such as education, health, and marital status) being equal, the five percent of women judged homely or quite plain earn about five percent less than those with "average" looks. The unlovely male, however, pays a penalty of about *nine* percent. At the other end of the scale, good-looking or beautiful women earn about four percent more than ordinary-looking ones. Men who are "10s" (or thereabouts) get an earnings bonus of five percent.

The Malling Of Europe

"Eurosprawl" by Alex Marshall, in *Metropolis* (Jan.-Feb. 1995), 177 E. 87th St., New York, N.Y. 10128.

To Americans who loathe suburban sprawl and shopping malls, Europe has always seemed the promised urban land. Writing about the woes of U.S. cities, architects and city planners frequently dot their texts with cosmopolitan asides about how much more Europeans still care about community, about public spaces, about cities. "Well, they don't. At least not as much as we think," writes Marshall, a reporter for the *Virginian-Pilot* of Norfolk, Virginia, who explored Western Europe for 10 weeks last summer on a fellowship.

Outside Lyon, outside Copenhagen, outside Brussels, outside Cologne, he found a surprisingly familiar sight: "Just as in the United States, Europe's middle class has moved to the suburbs—where they shop in malls, live in secluded subdivisions, and drive on traffic-clogged freeways." Most Americans, Marshall notes, "don't see it and don't know about it because they don't go to Europe

to see shopping malls."

Yet the malls, very much like their American counterparts, are there. In one outside Lyon, France's second-largest city, Marshall encountered Jacques Martin, a balding man in his fifties, nursing a cup of coffee and reading the morning paper at L'Absinthe, a mall version of a sidewalk cafe. "I come here about once a week to shop and relax," Martin told the journalist. Although born and reared in old Lyon, Martin said he seldom ventured downtown anymore. "The traffic is too bad," he explained. Of the Lyon metropolitan area's 2.5 million people, less than 10 percent live in the city's core.

Eurosprawl is not quite the same as U.S. suburban sprawl, Marshall acknowledges. The European suburb "remains tied to the center by some form of mass transit. At least a bus line, and often train, subway, and bike lanes as well." One can travel from the baroque city hall in Lyon to open farm fields in under 15 minutes. "Europeans pay a price for this," he says. "In exchange for tighter, more cohesive cities, they generally live in smaller, meaner spaces than Americans do." They also



The sight is familiar to Americans, but not the site: just outside Lyon, France's second largest city.

must pay more for items such as washing machines "because there is less space for a Wal-Mart to muscle its way in beside the nearest freeway."

But the similarities outweigh the differences. "The classic European city no longer represents the real Europe," Marshall writes, any more than New York's Greenwich Village represents America. "The perfect European city we see on postcards and brochures is Europe in a box, kept there to remind the natives of their heritage, to look pretty, to reap tourism dollars. Meanwhile, the real day-to-day action goes on in the suburbs." *Mon Dieu!* What would Henry James think?

Bowling and Civic Rot

"Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital" by Robert D. Putnam, in *Journal of Democracy* (Jan. 1995), 1101 15th St. N.W., Ste. 802, Washington, D.C. 20005.

More Americans go bowling today than ever before, but too many of them are bowling alone. Nearly 80 million went at least once during 1993, a 10 percent increase over 1980. Nevertheless, bowling in organized leagues has plummeted 40 percent. This development may seem unimportant in the larger scheme of things but Putnam, director of Harvard's Center for International Affairs, insists that, on the contrary, it is very significant: one more sign, whimsical though it may be, of the decay of America's "civil society."

Americans' inveterate inclination to form civic associations greatly impressed Alexis de Tocqueville when he visited the United States during the 1830s. He considered, as do many latter-day Tocquevilles, that such civic engagement is vital to making democracy work. Putnam agrees. His own 20-year study of Italy, published as *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (1993), showed that the quality of governance in different regions varied with the level of civic engagement, as reflected in such things as voter turnout, newspaper readership, and membership

in choral societies. Many other observers have stressed the importance of a healthy civil society to the new democracies in Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

Putnam's evidence of civic decay in the United States goes beyond organized bowling (and the oft-deplored decline in voter turnout in national elections):

- The number of people reporting that they attended a public meeting on town or school affairs in the previous year fell from 22 percent in 1973 to 13 percent 20 years later.

- Participation in religious services and in church-related groups has declined by perhaps one-sixth since the 1960s.

- Participation in parent-teacher associations fell drastically—from more than 12 million in 1964 to barely five million in 1982 before recovering somewhat (to seven million today).

- The number of people who volunteer for mainline civic organizations is down. Volunteering for the Boy Scouts is off 26 percent since 1970; for the Red Cross, 61 percent.

- Membership in traditional women's groups has steadily declined since the mid-1960s. In the national Federation of Women's Clubs, membership is down 59 percent since 1964; in the League of Women Voters, it is off 42 percent since 1969.

- Membership in fraternal organizations, such as the Lions, Elks, and Masons dropped substantially during the 1980s and continues to fall.

It is true that newer organizations, such as the Sierra Club and the American Association of Retired Persons, have greatly expanded their memberships, says Putnam, but most members of such groups never even meet; they just pay their dues and perhaps read the organization's newsletter.

What has caused the erosion of America's "social capital"? A big factor, obviously, has been the movement of women into the work force. The loosening of ties within the family may be another. TV and VCRs, by turning citizens into couch potatoes, may also have played a role. Whatever the causes of the rot, Putnam concludes, America's civil society urgently needs repair.

Disabled or Dysfunctional?

"Welfare's Next Vietnam" by Heather Mac Donald, in *City Journal* (Winter 1995), Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

In the debate about welfare reform, the "welfare" under scrutiny is the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, which assists single mothers and their offspring. Reformers need to expand their horizons, argues Mac Donald, a contributing editor of *City Journal*. They should take a look at

the federal government's mushrooming welfare for the disabled, a category that now includes drug addicts, alcoholics, and even children with behavioral problems.

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program for the nonworking, disabled poor is "the nation's fastest-growing welfare program, about to surpass both AFDC and food stamps as the main form of support for the non-working poor," Mac Donald points out. Begun in 1974, SSI in 1993 dispensed \$20 billion in benefits to 4.5 million recipients. Meanwhile, Social Security Disability Insurance

(SSDI), launched in 1956 as a modest program to aid workers over 50 with severe disabilities, in 1993 provided 3.7 million "disabled" workers (of all ages) with \$35 billion in payments. The eruption of SSDI outlays is bankrupting the Social Security disability trust fund, which will have to be bailed out this year with money from the Social Security retirement fund.

Behind the explosive growth in these two programs, Mac Donald says, is a radical expansion of the concept of disability. Behavior that might simply be considered antisocial or even criminal is now taken as evidence of disabling "mental disorders." Thirty percent of all SSI recipients—and nearly 45 percent of male SSI recipients in their thirties and forties—are classified as mentally impaired; the situation is much the same with SSDI recipients. Increasingly, Mac Donald says, the disability programs are sup-

The Other America?

The Census Bureau recently reported that there are 39.3 million poor people in the United States. Writing in the *American Enterprise* (Jan.-Feb. 1995), Robert Rector, an analyst at the Heritage Foundation, isn't so sure that is an accurate description.

To the typical citizen, saying someone is "poor" implies he lacks a decent place to live, is short on food or clothing, or perhaps that he needs a car to get to work and doesn't have one. By this common sense standard, very few of the 39 million "poor persons" identified by the Census Bureau are, in fact, poor.

We can learn a lot about the Census poverty report by comparing it [with] other government reports that meticulously monitor the actual physical conditions of so-called poor Americans. These reports show that:

- In 1991 nearly 40 percent of all "poor" households owned their own homes.
- Nearly 60 percent of poor households have more than two rooms per person. Nearly 60 percent have air conditioning.
- Sixty-four percent of "poor" households own a car; 14 percent own two or more cars.
- Fifty-six percent own microwave ovens. Around a quarter have an automatic dishwasher; nearly one-third own a separate, stand-alone freezer.
- Ninety-one percent have a color television; 29 percent own two or more.
- "Poor" Americans live in larger homes, eat more meat, and are more likely to own cars and dishwashers than the general population in western Europe. A typical "poor" American has twice as much living space as the average Japanese and four times as much as the average Russian.

porting people who "may indeed be unemployable, but their unemployability reflects rampant drug use, a chaotic upbringing, and a lack of education and work ethic rather than any physical impediment." Today, at least 250,000 diagnosed drug addicts and alcoholics are on the disability rolls, up from fewer than 100,000 five years ago. They are receiving about \$1.4 billion a year in benefits.

In the early 1980s, the Reagan administration sought to rein in the disability programs. But instead of closely examining individual cases, it took "a meat-ax approach," reviewing 1.2 million cases and terminating the benefits of nearly a half-million recipients. The courts revolted. "The legacy of the 1980-84 review crisis," Mac Donald writes, "is enormous, for in the legal counterattack the reviews ignited, advocates challenged and enlarged the . . . eligibility standards. Ultimately, Congress codified virtually all of these victories" in the Social Security Disability Reform Act of 1984. It is time, she concludes, to reverse course and adopt a more sensible definition of disability.

The Sins Of the Fathers

"Feminist Theory's Wrong Turn" by John M. Ellis, in *Academic Questions* (Fall 1994), 575 Ewing St., Princeton, N.J. 08540.

Is the past a history of women's mistreatment by men, of "patriarchy" and sexist oppression? It is often presented that way by radical feminists. This is a profound misreading of the past, warns Ellis, a professor of German literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz. It threatens to turn the feminist movement, once associated with goals that enjoyed broad support, into an ever more isolated fringe group.

If women in the past were oppressed by a patriarchal conspiracy, he asks, why did they not rise up against it? To be consistent, feminists must take "a dim view of their sisters of yesterday." In reality, he contends, change is coming today for women, "not because they

have at last awakened to the enormity of the plot against them, but because the conditions of human life have changed." And this has allowed growing numbers of women to enter the labor force and to compete with men on an equal basis.

Although radical feminists just don't seem to get it, the conditions of life in the premodern era simply did not permit such things, Ellis argues. The absence of modern birth control methods is one important difference, but not the only one. The absence of Social Security meant that children were a virtual economic necessity: *they* were "social security" for people in old age. The high rate of infant mortality meant that in order to have two children who would live to adulthood, a woman would have to bear perhaps six or seven. The shorter life expectancy during the 19th century meant that a woman had a much shorter span of years during which to give birth seven times. The absence of refrigeration meant that most women had to breast-feed their children. The absence of motor vehicles and telephones made it hard for women with young children to work even five miles away from home.

"There are countless other features of modern life that affect the way women are now able to live their lives," Ellis observes, "and they go well beyond the obvious labor-saving devices that enable both men and women to devote a larger share of their time to doing what they like to do." Thanks to electricity, for example, "very few jobs are left in which the greater upper-body strength of men still matters." Profound advances in science and technology, medicine, communications, travel, and social legislation now, for the first time, are equalizing the opportunities available to women and men.

"If misrule by an oppressive 'patriarchy' were a correct interpretation of the past, the logical remedy" would be hiring goals and timetables for reaching parity in all professions and occupations, Ellis points out. But if women instead "see their situation of today as one that has coalesced gradually over the last century and could never have existed earlier, they will simply move to take advantage of their new opportunities." And they will make

their own choices. If the collective result of their choices is less than mathematical parity with men, that may be intolerable to radical

feminists at war with the patriarchy—but to everyone else, female as well as male, it will be just fine.

PRESS & MEDIA

Stranger than Fiction

A Survey of Recent Articles

During the Cold War, some U.S. journalists worked themselves into a lather over the fact that patriotic colleagues had given assistance of various sorts to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In a lengthy article in *Rolling Stone* (Oct. 20, 1977), reporter Carl Bernstein of Watergate fame claimed that over the preceding quarter-century, more than 400 American journalists had “secretly carried out assignments” for the CIA—and journalists, he seemed to take for granted, should not in any way be helping an intelligence agency, even their own government’s. Commenting in the *Washington Post* (Sept. 18, 1977), columnist George Will saw nothing wrong with much of the cooperation that had taken place between journalists and the CIA, but agreed that no reporter should be a paid agent.

Three years later, when foreign correspondents Arnaud de Borchgrave and Robert Moss’s *The Spike* appeared, a novel about Soviet efforts to influence the Western media, it was dismissed by many journalists as a far-fetched tale, an outgrowth of conservative, anticommunist paranoia.

Now, with the Cold War over, comes the reluctant admission by an eminent journalist at the *Guardian*, London’s highly regarded left-of-center newspaper, that he had taken money from the Soviet KGB—and, incredibly, the scandal is shrugged off in many journalistic quarters. “Holdover Sniping From Cold War Claims a Victim” is the headline over the *New York Times* (Jan. 8, 1995) story about the affair, with the poor “victim” being the *Guardian* journalist himself, Richard Gott.

“Given the *Times*’ remarkably incurious response to this journalistic scandal,” the *New Criterion*’s Hilton Kramer comments in the *New York Post* (Jan. 17, 1995), “one naturally wonders

how the paper would respond if, as more information about the KGB’s penetration of the Western press comes to light, it was discovered that one of its own correspondents had been enlisted in the service of the Soviet Union.”

Richard Gott’s work for the KGB was brought to light by London’s conservative *Spectator* (Dec. 10, 1994), in an article by Alasdair Palmer. He notes that the 56-year-old Gott—who had been an editorial writer, foreign correspondent, features editor, and, finally, literary editor of the *Guardian*—had made no secret of his communist sympathies. Indeed, Palmer writes, Gott had spent his long career “fulminating against the evils of international capitalism and attempting to airbrush out the faults of Soviet communism.”

But Gott *had* made a secret of his employment by the Soviet espionage organization. The *Spectator* says he was recruited by the KGB in the late 1970s. “Richard Gott committed no legal offense in meeting and talking with the KGB,” Palmer writes. But in taking money from that organization, he adds, Gott betrayed his readers’ trust “in the most fundamental way possible.”

The *Spectator*’s exposé prompted Gott to resign from the *Guardian* (Dec. 9, 1994), with a lighthearted admission of having taken—in an “essentially harmless saga”—what he calls “red gold” from the KGB to pay for trips to Vienna, Athens, and Nicosia “to meet their man.” His letter of resignation appears under the jaunty headline: “I was a mellow traveler.” The *Guardian*’s editor, Peter Preston, accepted the resignation in the same spirit, lauding Gott as “a free spirit and a brilliant journalist who has served the *Guardian* long and well,” and joking that “if the Russians thought of recruiting

Triumph of the Bland

The old-fashioned city editor—that grumpy tyrant who knew his city like the back of his hand (but who did not always set aside his prejudices about the people who lived in it)—is disappearing, part of a cultural and economic transformation of the news business. Carl Sessions Stepp, a senior editor at the *American Journalism Review* (Dec. 1994), casts an eye over the new landscape.

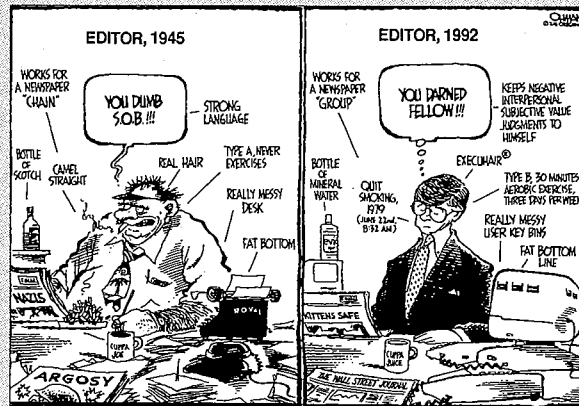
They're dying away now, almost extinct, a Neanderthal league of the politically incorrect, a dwindling herd of inky-fingered, whiskey-breathed, tyrannosaurus wrecks, edged aside by the Suits and the Slashes, the Assistant Managing Editor/ Locals, manicured managers for modern times.

Once they were kings.

The title resounded with glory. City editors bestrode the newsroom with the supremacy of Zeus and the swagger of Civil War generals. Hardened journalists cringed at their lacerating sarcasm, but a city editor's wink could render the coldest-blooded writer sniffling.

Stanley Walker of the New York Herald Tribune, perhaps the most famous of them all, captured the legend this way in his book City Editor:

He invents strange devices for the torture of reporters, this mythical agate-eyed Torquemada with the paste-pots and scissors. Even his laugh, usually directed at something sacred, is part sneer. His terrible curses cause flowers to wither, as the grass died under the hoofbeats of the horse of Attila the Hun. A chilly, monstrous figure, sleepless, nerveless, and facing with ribald mockery the certain hell which awaits him.



Yet looking back, journalists tend to remember them fondly, to miss their incendiary personalities. For all their pitiless bluster, old-line city editors were leaders and teachers, immovably loyal and unforgettably inspiring, and consumed constantly with mad, delirious pursuit of the latest three-alarm news story. . . .

Today's typical city editor is better trained, more rounded and surrounded by more assistants, more the "New World editor" than the "Cro-Magnon city editor," according to Jeff Cowart, who runs American Press Institute seminars for city editors. Most serve for only two or three years, Cowart says, seldom long enough to develop the encyclopedic community consciousness and street-smart craftiness of many old-timers.

you . . . no wonder they lost the Cold War."

William Shawcross, the liberal author of *Side-show: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (1979), is not amused. Writing in the *Times* of London (Dec. 16, 1994), he declares: "Gott's taking what he calls 'red gold' was not a joke, but treachery—against his profession, his col-

leagues, his readers, and, above all, those millions of defenseless people around the world whose interests he purported to defend. Gott took money from a regime which has murdered more millions of people than any other in history. Whatever his particular sense of humor, that is hardly a joke."

From Watchdogs To Attack Dogs

"Read All About It" by Adam Gopnik, in *The New Yorker* (Dec. 12, 1994), 20 W. 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

"Edge" and "attitude" are very highly prized attributes in journalism today. In a front-page story about President Bill Clinton's trip to Oxford University last June, the once-somber *New York Times* reported that he "returned today for a sentimental journey to the university where he didn't inhale, didn't get drafted, and didn't get a degree." The president is only "the most visible object of this malicious manner," and the *Times* only its most prestigious practitioner, notes Gopnik, a *New Yorker* staff writer.

Many analysts look upon the new approach as the triumph of the "tabloid" style over "serious" journalism. Watergate reporter Carl Bernstein has argued that the "idiot culture" of scandal and sensation must be countered with a reassertion of the investigative tradition that he champions. Gopnik, however, argues that "the new attitudes in the press" are the long-run consequence of "a peculiar twist in the logic of skeptical journalism that Bernstein helped to reinvigorate."

Once reporters got stories and status by

getting close to the powerful in government—which made the journalists more "responsible." That is not as true now. In the past 20 years, Gopnik writes, the press has been transformed "from an access culture to an aggression culture: the tradition, developed after the Civil War, in which a journalist's advancement depended on his intimacy with power, has mutated into one in which his success can also depend on a willingness to stage visible, ritualized displays of aggression."

Post-Watergate journalism may have looked like the hallowed "muckraking" traditions of yesteryear, but Gopnik points out that there was a profound difference: "The new crusaders had no causes, or were not allowed to admit to them." The commercial press still held aloft its traditional ideal of "objectivity," and the crusading reporters had to pay deference to it (or at least give the appearance of doing so) in their stories. The end result of this bind, over the years, Gopnik contends, is the sort of "knowing" yet mindless journalism in fashion today.

"The media," he writes, "now relish aggression while still being prevented, by their own self-enforced codes, from letting that aggression have any relation to serious political argument, let alone to grown-up ideas about conduct and morality." It is, he laments, "the Sam Donaldson era."

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

The Transformation Of Catholicism

"Christianity and Democracy" by Pierre Manent (translated by Daniel J. Mahoney and Paul Seaton), in *Crisis* (Jan. 1995 and Feb. 1995), 1511 K St. N.W., Ste. 525, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Pope John Paul II invites Christians to discover in their religion the true source of the rights of man, and the Catholic Church now celebrates the sacred character of religious

freedom and freedom of conscience. Yet not so very long ago, the church was indignantly denouncing these same rights and condemning the separation of church and state. This turnabout, contends Manent, director of studies at l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, reflects a profound change in the relationship between the church and democracy.

"If the church initially, and for so long, declared herself against democracy," he notes, "it is because she had . . . the conviction that the modern democratic movement was di-

rected fundamentally against her, that is, against the true religion and thus against the true God." And indeed, Enlightenment thinkers of the 18th century did aim to establish the secular, liberal state, based on the collective will, and without regard for "the law of God."

The excesses of the French Revolution chastened many liberals. Even as the Revolution's aggressively antireligious actions prompted the church to refine and harden its opposition to modernism, many true liberals became willing "to join with, if not always the church, at least Christianity, or with 'religion' in general," in order to place a check upon the human will.

To 19th-century liberals such as Alexis de Tocqueville, the hostility toward Christianity exhibited in the previous century was not "natural." Religious faith, not unbelief, was "the permanent state of mankind." And since religion was anchored in nature, Tocqueville reasoned, it could do without the state's support. Indeed, he noted, religion in the United States, invigorated by its independence from the state, was a useful restraint on men's minds, limiting the dangers of political liberty. In the end, says Manent, Tocqueville effectively reduced the justification of religion to social utility—"natural" religion was completely overshadowed.

Regarding itself as entrusted with the one true faith, the Catholic Church, however, was not content to have belief judged according to its usefulness to society. The church's "thought or doctrine contains commands, which is its nature, indeed its duty to want to have respected," Manent observes. Consequently, the separation of church and state placed it in a difficult position, one it long resisted. As late as the early 20th century, Pope (now Saint) Pius X denounced such separation as a "supreme injustice" done to God.

More recently, however, the church has taken a much different course. To escape the bind in which separation puts it, Manent says, the church has substantially transformed the character of its message. Since the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65, the church has ceased to present itself as "the most necessary and most salutary government, doing her best

in a political situation contrary to the good of souls." Instead, the church has become "simply the collective 'beautiful soul,' presenting herself to men as 'the bearer of ideals and values.'" The realization of ideals or values cannot be commanded, he observes, but must be left up to the free will of individuals. "The church repeats, in a more emphatic way, what democracy says about itself."

Although such a church cannot serve as Tocqueville's brake on democracy, Manent thinks that the "political submission . . . to democracy" is a good thing. "Democracy no longer, in good faith, has any essential reproach to make against the church. From now on it can hear the question the church poses, the question which it alone poses, the question *Quid sit homo*—What is man?" In an ironic reversal of their Enlightenment relationship, Manent concludes, the church, having ceded political sovereignty to democracy, has gained the advantage in the moral dialectic between church and state.

What Is a Catholic?

The historian-journalist Garry Wills, author of *Under God* (1990) and other well-known works, relates in the *New York Review of Books* (Dec. 22, 1994) what usually happens these days when the subject of his beliefs as a Roman Catholic comes up.

When I am asked whether I am a church-going Catholic and answer yes, no one inquires whether I really believe in such strange things as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection. I am asked about ovaries and trimesters. The great mysteries of faith have become, for many inside the church as well as outside, the "doctrines" on contraception and abortion. These are hardly great concerns in the gospels and the letters of Saint Paul, which never mention them. But they crowd out most other talk of Catholic beliefs in modern conversation.

Environmental Racism?

"Environmental Injustice" by Christopher Boerner and Thomas Lambert, in *The Public Interest* (Winter 1995), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Are poor blacks and other minorities—to add to all their other woes—made to bear more than their fair share of the burden of pollution? A disproportionate number of industrial and waste facilities are placed in their backyards, activists against "environmental racism" assert, and regulators often give owners carte blanche to pollute. In Washington, some liberal lawmakers have proposed banning construction of waste facilities in "environmentally disadvantaged" communities. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Carol Browner has promised "[to] weave environmental justice concerns throughout all aspects of EPA policy and decision making."

All of this corrective action is more than a bit premature, contend Boerner and Lambert, Fellows at the Center for the Study of American Business at Washington University in St. Louis.

They find various methodological flaws in the major studies cited by those who see "environmental racism." The most frequently cited piece of research, published in 1987 by the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice, found that zip codes with one hazardous waste plant had about twice the concentration of nonwhite residents as those with none. But because zip code areas are often large, Boerner and Lambert point out, what statisticians call "aggregation errors" can affect the data. Very different results were obtained in "the most comprehensive analysis . . . to date," a study by the Social and Demographic Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

The Massachusetts researchers looked at census tracts (which are smaller geographic units than zip code areas) and found no greater concentrations of minorities in neighborhoods with commercial waste facilities than in areas with none. "Indeed," Boerner and Lambert say, "in the 25 largest metropolitan areas studied, commercial hazardous-

waste facilities are slightly more likely to be in industrial neighborhoods with a lower percentage of minorities and a *higher* percentage of white working-class families."

Moreover, the authors contend, advocates of "environmental justice" ignore the economic benefits such facilities can bring. In Sumter County, Alabama, the all-black county commission has opposed state proposals to reduce the amount of waste accepted by a landfill that provides more than 400 jobs, a \$10 million payroll, and a guaranteed \$4.2 million in annual tax revenue.

The chief injustice involved in siting polluting facilities, the authors maintain, has nothing to do with race or income. The injustice is that while the public at large benefits from the facilities, only a relative few individuals bear the costs of playing host to them. The authors propose a new kind of "green" remedy for this injustice: compensation in hard cash (or other benefits) for all those affected.

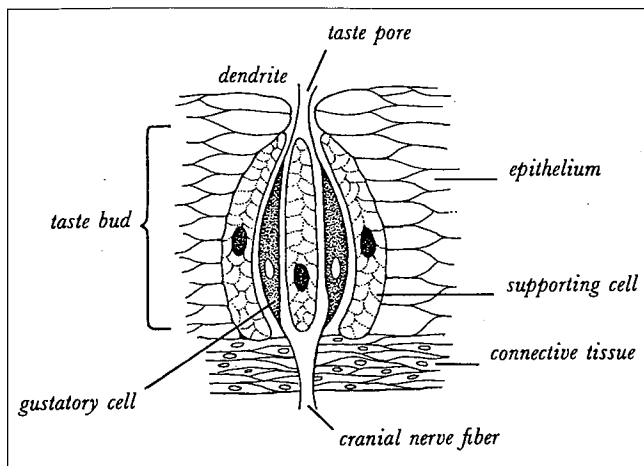
The Science of Taste

"Accounting For Taste" by Thomas Levenson, in *The Sciences* (Jan.-Feb. 1995), New York Academy of Sciences, 2 E. 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Everyone knows that some people savor their food while others seem indifferent to what they eat. What accounts for this difference in taste? Answer: the number of taste buds on one's tongue, reports Levenson, the author of *Measure for Measure: A Musical History of Science* (1994).

To measure differences in the ability to taste, Linda Bartoshuk, a professor in the Yale School of Medicine's Department of Surgery, asked volunteers to compare the strength of precisely graded "taste" solutions to sounds. Years of testing on hundreds of volunteers revealed wide variations: "A taste that seems as strong as a siren to a supertaster," she said, "will seem weak as a whisper to a nontaster."

Bartoshuk also counted the volunteers' taste buds, which, Levenson notes, are "the chemical receptors that detect the four basic tastes: sweet, salty, bitter, and sour." (Contrary to what most people learn in school, "all four tastes are de-



This (taste) bud's for you: Inside one of the body's sentinels.

tected all over the tongue . . . ; only the intensity varies.") She found a direct correlation between intensity of taste and the number of taste buds. About 20 percent of the volunteers had an unusually high number of taste buds and were extremely sensitive to sweet and sour tastes; another 20 percent had few taste buds and a dull sense of taste.

"The taste buds," writes Levenson, "can be understood as sentinels that stand at the body's gate, heralding helpful visitors and sounding alarms at signs of dangerous intruders. They frisk foods for signs of their basic intentions, then pass them along to the nose for further introductions. The flavors we find in chocolate, steak, or fine wine are largely olfactory labels. They are only fully sensed when specific chemicals flow through the retronasal passage at the back of the throat to the smell receptors in the nose. The taste buds themselves don't have time for long, complicated encounters, so they detect only [the] four basic flavors."

Bartoshuk found that women have a much sharper sense of taste than men do, Levenson says. More women are "supertasters," and the most sensitive of them are far more aware of sweet and bitter tastes than even highly sensitive men. Why should natural selection have made that so? Pregnant or nursing mothers, because they are eating for two, Bartoshuk pointed out, need an acute sense of taste to be able both to identify sources of calories and to avoid poisons.

Bad Bonzo

"To Catch a Colobus" by Craig B. Stanford, in *Natural History* (Jan. 1995), American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th St., New York, N.Y. 10024.

From Tarzan's Cheetah and Ronald Reagan's co-star in *Bedtime for Bonzo* (1951) to the more recent simian thespian Willie, who stole scenes from Matthew Broderick in the 1987 movie *Project X*, chimpanzees have long been looked upon as lovable, if mischievous, creatures. Even in the wild, they seldom were seen hunting other animals and, in fact, until the 1960s, were thought to be strict vegetarians.

Alas, it turns out that the chimps have a secret life, one that may tarnish their Hollywood image.

"We now know," writes Berkeley anthropologist Stanford, "that a small but regular portion of the diet of wild chimps consists of the meat of such mammals as bush pigs, small antelopes, and a variety of monkey species." In Tanzania's Gombe National Park (where anthropologist Jane Goodall first saw chimps eating meat) and its Mahale Mountains, and in the Tai Mountains of the Ivory Coast, chimpanzees "all regularly hunt red colobus monkeys."

"Gombe chimps use meat not only for nutrition," Stanford observes. "They also share it with their allies and withhold it from their rivals. Meat is . . . a social, political, and even reproductive tool." Males often kill prey to offer to female chimps who are in heat.

Because Stanford has studied both hunters and hunted, his research can at times be "a bit heart wrenching," he notes. In October 1992, for example, a party of 33 chimps encountered his main study group of red colobus. "The result was devastating from the monkeys' viewpoint. During the hour-long hunt, seven were killed; three were caught and torn apart in front of me. Nearly four hours later, the hunters were still sharing and eating the meat they had caught,

while I sat staring in disbelief at the remains of many of my study subjects."

The Costly War Against Death

"'The High Cost of Dying' Revisited" by Anne A. Scitovsky, in *The Milbank Quarterly* (No. 4, 1994), Blackwell Publishers, 238 Main St., Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

Health-care specialists have been worrying for years about the high cost of medical care given to dying patients. A 1984 study revealed that the six percent of Medicare enrollees who died in 1978 accounted for 28 percent of all Medicare expenditures. A powerful force behind the nation's soaring expenditures on health care (\$752 billion in 1991), concluded many analysts, was the expensive high-tech care being lavished on the critically ill in their final months. It's not so simple, warns Scitovsky, an emeritus senior staff scientist at the Research Institute of the Palo Alto Medical Foundation.

The costs of medical care in the last year of life are indeed great, she notes. Medicare payments in 1988 were about seven times higher for those who died than for those who survived: \$13,316 per per-

son-year compared with \$1,924. However, only about five percent of the deceased appear (from the fact that their Medicare payments amounted to \$40,000 or more) to have received aggressive, high-tech medical services, such as being put on a respirator or placed in intensive care.

Elderly patients who are given such care, it is important to note, do not all die soon after. Of those who had Medicare payments of \$40,000 or more in 1988, 73,000 died that year—but 70,000 survived. "It is easy enough in retrospect to regard those who died as terminal or dying patients," Scitovsky writes. "It is a different matter, however, to do so prospectively. Despite the enormous advances in medical technology (or possibly because of them), medical prognosis in most serious illnesses is still highly uncertain."

In the long run, Scitovsky believes, bringing health-care spending under control as the population ages is going to demand something even more difficult ethically than cutting back on high-tech care for the *critically* ill elderly in their final months. It will require deciding when to stop giving sustenance and ordinary care, such as antibiotics to fight infection, to *chronically* ill elderly patients in nursing homes. That, she says, will demand "a change in our expectations of what medical care can do for us, especially our attitude toward death."

ARTS & LETTERS

Broadway's Final Curtain

"Who Killed Broadway?" by Brooke Allen, in *City Journal* (Winter 1995), Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Despite competition from movies, home video, and cable TV, there is still an audience for live theater. But many theatergoers now go to Broadway only once or twice a year. They are put off by the outrageous ticket prices: at least \$55 to \$65 for a lavish production such as *Les Misérables*, and nearly \$50 even for *Politically Incorrect*, in which a lone comedian,

wearing an ordinary suit, performs in front of the barest of sets. Yet absurdly high as ticket prices have risen, observes Allen, who has written for stage and TV, the costs of production keep going up faster. The result, she argues, is the apparent end of Broadway as a place for original dramas, or even original comedies and musicals.

Just to stage a modest one-set, two-actor play—"the kind of show that, 30 or so years ago, used to open by the dozen every Broadway season"—now takes an initial investment of some \$800,000, Allen says. "Weekly running costs amount to at least \$135,000, which

covers salaries for actors, stagehands, designers, and stage managers, rental [of] sound and light equipment, theater rental and fees, managers' salaries, advertising costs, and many other smaller items. No wonder Broadway tickets are never cheap."

But why are the production costs so high? The unions, those of stagehands and of musicians in particular, get a lot of the blame. The stagehands' union requires each of the 36 Broadway theaters to have a permanent "house" carpenter, electrician, and property manager. They help set up scenery and conduct rehearsals, and then, when the show is running, appear only on payday—to collect a weekly salary of \$800–\$900. The musicians' union, meanwhile, insists that from nine to 22 musicians be assigned to each theater used for musicals, and that they all be employed even if the show needs only four. [The union in 1993 agreed to relax this rule in "special situations." The producers of *Smokey Joe's Café*, a musical which opened in March, have been allowed to pay only the seven musicians who actually play.]

Broadway producers typically must also pay theater owners five to six percent of the weekly gross, plus about \$40,000 a week for ushers, concession workers, janitors, and box office staff, plus a separate flat fee of as much as \$20,000 a week. "These sums have gone up enormously in recent decades," Allen says, "largely because ballooning real estate values have driven owners' taxes up."

All of this has consequences on stage. Producers now try to cut costs by reducing the cast, simplifying the scenery, or cutting a three-act play to two acts. "Their other way of staying afloat," Allen writes, "is to minimize risk: hence the push for reliable blockbusters and revivals."

Last season, at Christmas, only one Broadway production was not a musical: *An Inspector Calls*, a revival of a 1924 English play. And of the 17 musicals playing, seven were revivals, one was a reworking of old material, and seven had come to Broadway only after successful runs in London. "The economic problem has become an aesthetic one as well," says playwright Arthur Miller. "My early play, *The*

Crucible, would never be produced on Broadway today—too expensive." The ultimate comment may be that Broadway productions of Shakespeare are now all but impossible.

"With any luck," Allen writes, "noncommercial theatrical ventures as well as the popular, mainstream pieces that no longer thrive on Broadway will continue to find a home—albeit a smaller and less glamorous one—off-Broadway." But off-Broadway can never be the major cultural force that Broadway was in its heyday 40 years ago. That Broadway, she laments, is now gone, apparently forever.

The Revenge of the Eminent Victorians

"Eminent Victorianism: What Lytton Strachey Hath Wrought" by Richard D. Altick, in *The American Scholar* (Winter 1995), Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

With *Eminent Victorians* (1918), biographer and critic Lytton Strachey did what no one else, before or since, has done, writes Altick, an emeritus professor of English at Ohio State University. With a single 350-page book, Strachey "turned an entire past society into a laughingstock in the estimation of a new one." Not quite eight decades later, however, it appears that the last laugh is on Strachey.

Eminent Victorians cruelly profiled four Victorian worthies: Roman Catholic Cardinal Henry Manning; Florence Nightingale, an idolized humanitarian; Thomas Arnold of Rugby, an education reformer, and General Charles "Chinese" Gordon, a national hero for his exploits in China and his ill-fated defense of Khartoum. In the developing climate of cynicism after World War I, Strachey treated his subjects with indiscriminate ridicule, Altick notes. He portrayed Manning as an obsessive ecclesiastical opportunist, the redoubtable Nightingale as a workaholic driven by ruthless devotion to duty, Arnold as a zealous, pompous public-school headmaster who tended to confuse himself with God, and Gordon as a religious fanatic and dipsomaniac, alternating between Bible and brandy bottle."

Strachey (1880–1932) insisted that he only sought to tell the truth about his subjects and claimed to have done a great deal of research. In reality, Altick says, he relied heavily on the “standard” biographies, and used them “with great license, selecting and tampering with the data to conform to his fixed idea of his subject and going so far as to suppress contrary evidence and falsify quotations.”

Nevertheless, Strachey’s “boldly innovative book” made a big splash, Altick says. It ushered in “the jazz age biography,” fizzing with colorful personal details, imagined scenes, purported psychological insights derived from letters or thin air, and illusive intimacy, as when one biographer of Matthew Arnold called that exponent of high seriousness ‘Matt’ from cradle to grave.” *Eminent Victorians* and the hundreds of imitations that followed touched off a debate about biography that continues to this day. It is a debate over what balance must be struck between what the biographer owes to the memory of the subject and the subject’s survivors and his duty to his readers, over the balance between the recital of fact and artistic effect.

Yet *Eminent Victorians*

When Max Beerbohm did this 1929 caricature of Lytton Strachey, he called him “The Prince of Prose-Writers.”



itself has not worn well. “As a literary work,” Altick says, “it is almost unreadable, except as a curiosity. One is struck not by Strachey’s once admired urbanity and elegance but by his pose as a middle-aged enfant terrible, his obsession with meretricious effects, and his astonishing predilection for clichés.”

More important, Altick writes, the stereotype that Strachey so firmly attached to the Victorians—that they were “stupid . . . parochial, philistine, complacent, prudish” people—has been largely overturned by scholars (although traces of it still persist, even among them). The very fact that a decade ago, former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher could invoke “Victorian values” as a remedy for current woes showed “how radically the image of the Victorians has been altered.” Today, Altick concludes, it is *Eminent Victorians*, not Victorian civilization, that stands discredited.

Getting Real in Children’s Literature

“Reading for Profit and Pleasure: *Little Women* and *The Story of a Bad Boy*” by Ellen Butler Donovan, in *The Lion and the Unicorn* (Dec. 1994), Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, Journals Division, 2715 N. Charles St., Baltimore, Md. 21218–4319.

Generations of young people have enjoyed the adventures of the March sisters in Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868–69). But readers today may not realize how much of a radical departure in children’s literature this classic—along with its lesser-known contemporary, Thomas Bailey Aldrich’s *The Story of a Bad Boy*—represented. The two books, contends Donovan, of Middle Tennessee State University, were the first for children to offer more-realistic characters and a world not tightly controlled by adults.

Before *Little Women* and *Bad Boy* (first published in serial form in 1869), children’s fiction aimed mainly to teach moral or religious lessons, Donovan says. The child characters served as examples of either good or bad behavior, and adult paragons of virtue were in-

variably on hand to guide or correct the one-dimensional children.

Drawing on their own experiences, Alcott and Aldrich created more-natural characters. Each of the March girls has her own individual traits: Jo is short-tempered, Meg longs to be fashionable, Amy is vain, and Beth is bashful. In *Bad Boy*, Aldrich went even further, Donovan notes. Tom Bailey, the title character, "manages to involve himself in all sorts of scrapes," and even spends time in jail.

Both authors gave adults only minimal roles in the novels, and these elders were not automatically invested with absolute moral authority. Unlike the ideal parent portrayed in the typical children's literature of the day, the March mother, Marmee, is not "all wise, all knowing, and all good." Instead, she makes mistakes, admits them to her daughters, and at one point even apologizes to Meg for making a "very unwise" decision. Marmee is "just an older, more experienced version of the girls," Donovan points out. In Aldrich's *Bad Boy*, the adult Sailor Ben even serves as Tom Bailey's accomplice.

Although *Little Women* and *The Story of a Bad Boy* marked a fundamental literary change, both novels were immediately snapped up by the book-buying public and remained popular throughout the 1870s. These groundbreaking works had appeal in a time when adolescence was increasingly being recognized as a stage between childhood and adulthood. *Little Women* has retained its popularity to the present day, and

A Poet of the Sea

In the *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Winter 1995), poet Richard Tillinghast of the University of Michigan recalls the elemental force of Robert Lowell (1917–77) and his poetry.

My parents were driving me from Memphis to Cambridge in 1962 to begin graduate school. I was reading Life Studies for the first time. The angst, the vulnerability, the exposed nerves of the author of that often harrowing book led me to expect someone other than the man I was about to meet.

Physically Robert Lowell gave an impression of force, with strong shoulders and an unusually large head—not a head that revealed the skull and hinted at the brain as with his mentor Allen Tate: one, rather, that gave a powerful but awkward, elemental impression, making one think simultaneously of a bull and a creature of the sea. Though he had been a footballer at St. Mark's and at Kenyon, where he played varsity tackle, fishing was in later life the one sport he found meaning in. He was born under the constellation Pisces.

Water was his element. I can think of no other poet who has evoked the sea so often and so tellingly. Fish, gulls, whales, turtles, seals appear again and again in his work. The dolphin of his later work was both muse and self:

*Any clear thing that blinds us with surprise,
your wandering silences and bright trouvailles,
dolphin let loose to catch the flashing fish. . . .*

"These lines—with their unlikely rhyme, surprise/trouvailles, which itself surprises—speak to the restlessness, the search for novelty, the need for reinventing himself periodically which characterize Lowell's entire career. It was this impulse which led him to invent the personal style of Life Studies—"the biggest change in myself [my italics] perhaps I ever made or will." The sea for Lowell was an eternal present, an emblem of the life force as he saw it, brutal and destructive: "The ocean, grinding stones," he wrote in "Near the Ocean," "can only speak the present tense; / nothing will age, nothing will last. . . ."

has inspired three film adaptations (the latest last year). Aldrich's novel and its young protagonist, Tom Bailey, however, long since have faded into obscurity. Perhaps young readers found Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn more to their liking.

OTHER NATIONS

Good Earth For Fiction

"New Chinese Literature" by Judy Polumbaum, in *Poets & Writers Magazine* (Jan.-Feb. 1995), 72 Spring St., New York, N.Y. 10012.

Most observers of cultural developments in China assumed that the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest and massacre would have an extremely chilling effect, particularly on Chinese literature. But the cultural frost was not as severe as expected. Indeed, literature in China seems to be flourishing today, reports Polumbaum, a journalism professor at the University of Iowa. In the past year alone, about 10,000 short stories, 1,000 novellas, and 100 novels were published, and they include many "innovative and experimental" works.

From the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 through the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s, writing was "a politically foolhardy occupation," Polumbaum points out. As a result, novels and stories from that period were populated with "heroic workers and peasants. The characters were stereotyped, the plots banal, the language uninspired." But with Mao Zedong's death in 1976, new voices began to emerge and the range of acceptable characters was expanded. These new writers started to express "a backlog of grievances" dating from the late 1950s and the Cultural Revolution of 1966-69. Their writing was "a prelude to more daring and sophisticated work."

Today, Chinese fiction regularly features such topics as "abuse of power, romantic love and family life, the complexities of traditional culture, and the contradictions of contemporary life." Many of the new works—such as Wang Anyi's *Brocade Valley* (English translation, 1992), whose female protagonist has an extramarital affair, and Zhang Xianliang's *Good Morning Friends* (1987), about the erotic experiences of secondary school students—also include the kind of sexual explicitness that in decades past might have landed the author in a re-education camp. "These days," writes Polumbaum, "demotion or loss of one's job are more realistic dangers." While the risk of imprisonment for "the vaguest of offenses" reappeared after the Tiananmen tragedy, it is

far more remote today than in the past. "Prepublication censorship," says Polumbaum, "is [now] actually a rarity in China: certain topics ostensibly must be cleared by authorities ahead of publication, but this may or may not occur, and the list of literary taboos is constantly in flux." Outright bans "often backfire," Polumbaum notes, "by fueling demand and creating a black market."

Even controversial writers find a range of publishing options. An author whose book is rejected as too subversive by one publisher can now turn to another of the "more than 500 publishing houses and more than 4,000 printing establishments, along with legions of unlicensed, often fly-by-night operations," or strike a deal with one of the 500 literary journals or thousands of popular magazines and newspapers. Zhang's *Good Morning Friends*, for instance, first appeared in a provincial literary journal.

Some authors have even managed to turn the appearance of government censorship to their advantage. Jia Pingwa published his racy 1993 novel, *The Abandoned Capital*, with blanks in place of words supposedly excised by the censors, and the book became a runaway best seller. Although the novel eventually was officially banned (with little effect on sales), it now seems that the blanks may have been merely a promotional gimmick.

Church and Stasi

"The 'Stasi' and the Churches: Between Coercion and Compromise in East German Protestantism, 1949-89" by John S. Conway, in *Journal of Church and State* (Autumn 1994), P.O. Box 97308, Waco, Texas 76798-7308.

"*Kirche, wir danken dir!*" ("Church, we thank you!") proclaimed a large banner paraded through the streets of Leipzig in late 1989. The Evangelical (Protestant) churches of the former East Germany had been instrumental in bringing down East German communism. But after the files of East Germany's hated secret police, the Stasi, were opened, the churches suddenly were cast in a much less flattering light, notes Conway, a historian at the University of British Columbia. Not only

Vichy François

Writing in the *American Spectator* (Feb. 1995), Roger Kaplan, editor of *Freedom Review*, suggests that in soon-to-retire president François Mitterrand, "this immensely complex, shrewd man, this man of perverse loyalties as well as the most breathtaking selfishness," the French may well have seen "a true reflection of themselves."

François Mitterrand was a fascist in his youth. Evolving philosophically (or at least politically), the man who represents the French Left remained on friendly terms with some of the worst numbers in the Vichy regime of Marshal Pétain. Moreover, as president of the Republic, he had aided and abetted the National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen, actively helping these Jew- and America-hating Saddamophiles go from one to 15 (20 in some regions) percent in the polls—not the opinion polls, mind you, the votes of French citizens. . . .

The scandal that hit Paris last August was provoked by Pierre Péan's Une Jeunesse Française, a meticulously researched book on Mitterrand's career in the 1930s and '40s.

The shock was not so much in the broad fact of Mitterrand's participation in the Vichy regime that ran France under the German shadow from the summer of 1940 until the summer of 1944. That was already known. Rather, it was in the details: the sincerity with which he had engaged himself, the enduring loyalties that he formed while there. What was intolerable to those who for years had bought Mitterrand's own rationale—Vichy was a cover for Resistance work—was the feeling of having been had. Which is exactly how Jean Daniel put it in a lead editorial in his weekly Le Nouvel Observateur, the conscience

and weathervane of the French Left and the Paris intelligentsia. What Daniel expressed was not only exasperation with the 50-year game of "love me, love me not" that Mitterrand has played with the French people, and the French Left, but the feeling that the French had never sufficiently expiated the sins of the fascist Vichy regime. . . .

[But] the Left has no case for pretending "it did not know." The only thing you could plausibly say "it did not know" was that Mitterrand continued to maintain personal relations with fascists and killers, of whom [René] Bousquet [who sent thousands to the death camps] was the most notorious. Until some Jewish organizations finally got wise to [Mitterrand] and raised the issue, he

put flowers on Pétain's grave ("The hero of Verdun") every year. But the substance of all these revelations was known. Thus the question really is this: What did the Left think it was doing?

The Left was trying to do what Mitterrand himself was doing, and what, in a certain sense, much of France has always done, which is to have it both ways. Vichy comes back at the French again and again, and they react by saying, "Indeed, let us have it out once and for all," and then when they see what that entails, they shove it back into the closet. But little by little, the honesty becomes colder, the facts come out more clearly, the French feel a little better.



had the clergy been infiltrated, but church leaders for many years had held secret talks with the Stasi.

Theological conservatives, mainly from West Germany, charged that the East German churches had been wholly misguided in recent decades in seeking an accommodation with socialism and the Marxist state; they had neglected the church's prophetic duty to resist tyranny and injustice, and by meeting with the Communists, and even the Stasi, had "sold out" the church. Radicals from the church-related "basis groups," who had helped topple the regime, also demanded that the churches face their failures. The East German bishops, however, took a "cautious and hesitant stance" toward any "Declaration of Guilt."

The critics have lost perspective, Conway contends. The bishops, pastors, and other ecclesiastical leaders had to operate in the same "murky world of corruption, espionage, and intimidation which marked the daily experience of the East German people." The revelations that perhaps 113 pastors worked for the Stasi were shocking, Conway says, but those spies represented only a small fraction of the roughly 4,000 pastors in the former East Germany.

That Manfred Stolpe, the former chief administrative officer of the East German Church Federation, and other church leaders had secret contacts with Stasi and other officials was much more disturbing, Conway notes. Stolpe claimed that in more than 1,000 meetings with the Stasi, he—with the backing of his ecclesiastical superiors—had sought only to protect church interests, to keep suspected individuals out of the Stasi's clutches, and to prevent worse repression. But the fact that the secret talks were held meant that the churches could not claim to have been "merely the innocent victims of Stasi machinations," Conway notes. How far their "collaboration" went, or what the consequences were, is not clear.

The churches' very involvement in the anti-government opposition had ambiguous origins. During the 1970s, the Stasi began to encourage so-called "progressive elements" within the churches, letting compliant churchmen travel to ecumenical meetings abroad

and secretly subsidizing organizations such as the Prague-based Christian Peace Conference. During the 1980s, things started to get out of control, as church leaders and the basis groups of peace activists began "to criticize all militarism, including that of the Soviet Union." Church-organized peace meetings in 1981 drew large crowds, especially of young people; soon, new groups of human-rights and other activists sprang into existence.

Stasi officials met secretly with church leaders and demanded that they bring the basis groups to heel. Whatever the inclinations of the churchmen may have been, they knew they would lose all credibility with their supporters if they tried. In 1989, Conway reports, "the wave of protests and demonstrations sharply increased. In church halls and basements, where there had been scores, hundreds now took part in public discussions calling for reform. In Leipzig, where the Monday prayer meetings for peace had attracted hundreds, thousands now turned up and the crowds spilled out into the streets." The eventual result was completely unambiguous, the collapse of communism, and for helping to bring it about, Conway insists, the churches still deserve much credit.

On Being Nordic

"Between Balts and Brussels: The Nordic Countries after the Cold War" by Ole Wæver, in *Current History* (Nov. 1994), 4225 Main St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19127.

During the Cold War, the five Nordic countries took a lofty stance toward the East-West struggle, calling for peace, disarmament, and alternatives to confrontation. With the end of the Cold War, they suddenly got their wish—and were none too happy about it, writes Wæver, a lecturer in international relations at the University of Copenhagen.

For the Nordic nations, the Cold War was ideal, he says. "Their rhetoric—their national image—depended on being against and maintaining a distance from the Cold War, but that was pleasant. They had lower tensions, no nuclear weapons, no foreign troops." Norway and Denmark played

minimal roles in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as did Iceland, which has no army. Sweden was neutral, and Finland, bordering the Soviet Union, wanted to be.

Shunning "confrontation, ideological clarion calls, and militarization," the Nordic countries "could consider themselves keepers of the promise of the more humane society to come when others freed themselves from the grip of East-West antagonism." Sweden especially imagined that it offered other nations a social-democratic "middle way" between communism and capitalism. When the Soviet bloc fell apart, however, the new democracies of Eastern Europe did not rush to adopt the "Scandinavian model." Indeed, in Sweden itself, the Social Democrats fell from power and their vaunted model fell from grace.

Defining Nordic identity anew, Wæver says, has turned into a contest between "European Union-appendix" and "Festung ('Fortress') Norden"—that is, between drawing closer and adapting to an integrated Europe on the one hand, and defending Nordic independence against spreading "Europeanness" on the other. It is a false dichotomy, Wæver believes.

He proposes a new middle way (though he does not call it that): a Scandinavia that looks not only to Brussels but to the new states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea. Being Nordic, Wæver asserts, "is to be involved both in Brussels affairs and in the development of the new Baltic states. . . . Nordics are those of us who travel as more than tourists to Tórshavn, St. Petersburg, and Brussels."

A Radical Cure For Africa

"A New Colonialism? Europe Must Go Back into Africa" by William Pfaff, in *Foreign Affairs* (Jan.-Feb. 1995), 58 East 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Hopes for Africa's future, soaring only a few years ago, are crashing down today. "From now on," says Congolese writer Ange Séverin Malanda, "the danger in several parts of the continent is of pure destruction or generalized

destabilization." Somalia, Liberia, and Angola are approaching anarchy, while the "pure destruction" of genocide appeared in Rwanda last year. The post-Cold War movement toward democracy is foundering, with fewer than one-third of sub-Saharan nations having anything resembling multi-party politics. "Africans acknowledge the immensity of their crisis and the need to consider hitherto unacceptable remedies," writes Pfaff, author of *The Wrath of Nations* (1993). His proposal: "a disinterested neocolonialism" by Europe's former colonial powers.

The project, which might take as long as a century, he says, would not only benefit Africa but would be "a deeply constructive accomplishment for Europe." Africa's plight, after all, is partly the West's fault. The European powers that, from a mixture of motives, colonized Africa destroyed the social and political institutions they found, Pfaff says, but did not stay "long enough to put anything solid and lasting in their place." After the "great wave" of decolonization in the late 1950s and early '60s, "a shameful series of self-interested foreign interventions and ruthless exploitation of indigenous African conflicts by the Soviet Union, its proxy, Cuba, and the United States" made matters worse.

Kenya's Ali A. Mazrui, an editor of the *UNESCO General History of Africa*, last year proposed a United Nations trusteeship system, with African and Asian nations among those appointed to govern certain countries, under the guidance of a council of major African states. It is not going to happen. Pfaff believes that a new form of European oversight stands a slightly better chance of becoming a reality.

The ex-colonial powers have an urgent interest in easing Africa's problems and stemming the tide of immigration to Europe. They also have the means to help, Pfaff observes. "As its former colonial ruler, the Italians know Somalia, just as the French know West and Central Africa, the British, East Africa, and the Portuguese, Angola and Mozambique. . . . If anybody is competent to deal sympathetically with these countries, the Europeans are."

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

"Casualties, Public Opinion, and U.S. Military Intervention: Implications for U.S. Regional Deterrence Strategies."

RAND Corp., 1700 Main St., P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, Calif. 90407-2138. 27 pp. \$7.50
Author: Benjamin C. Schwarz

The American public's apparent reluctance to take in stride the casualties that result from military action is often regarded as the nation's Achilles' heel. Yet the common perception that Americans will choose to cut and run once the body bags start coming home is very much in error, contends Schwarz, a RAND researcher.

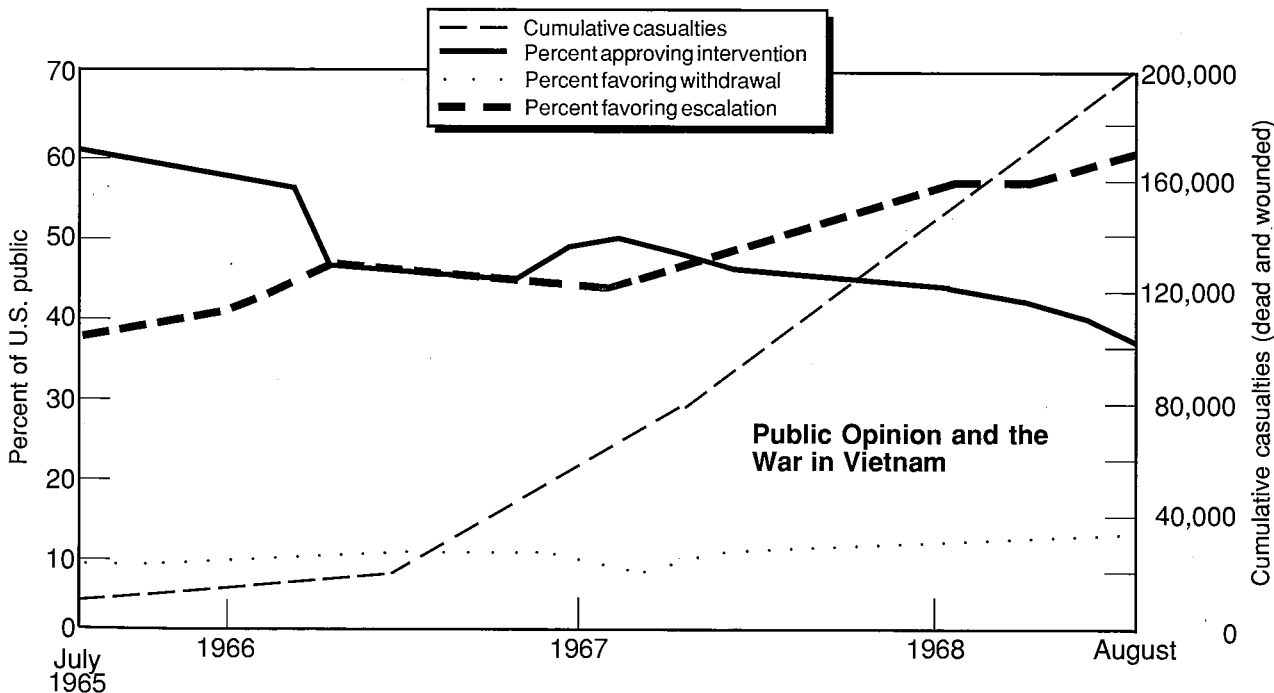
During the Vietnam and Korean wars, as the toll of dead and wounded mounted, polls reflected the public's increasing unhappiness. Public approval of the initial decision to intervene in Vietnam fell from

62 percent in July 1965, when U.S. ground troops were committed, to only 32 percent in August 1968, when casualties had risen to 200,000.

That retrospective assessment was politically important for President Lyndon B. Johnson. His popularity suffered, as the surprisingly strong showing by dovish senator Eugene J. McCarthy in the March 1968 New Hampshire primary showed. But Schwarz points out that asking the public about the initial decision to intervene was not at all the same as asking it about the best future course.

In August 1968, only nine percent of Americans favored withdrawal from Vietnam—a percentage virtually unchanged since July 1965. And, although little noted at the time, those New Hampshire voters who cast ballots for McCarthy favored, by a three-to-two margin, fighting harder in Vietnam, not withdrawing from it. Indeed, as disapproval of the original commitment grew, so did the public's desire to escalate the conflict to achieve victory.

During the Korean War, the polls told a similar story: increasing disapproval of the ini-



Source: Benjamin C. Schwarz, *Casualties, Public Opinion, and U.S. Military Intervention* (Harris, Roper, NORC, and *New York Times* polls)

tial decision to intervene—but steady opposition by the overwhelming majority to withdrawal. “In both wars,” Schwarz writes, “far more Americans preferred to fight (harder) than to quit.”

The mistaken perception that mounting casualties will prompt America to cut and run can undermine the deterrent effect of U.S. military threats and lead to miscalculations by potential enemies, Schwarz ob-

serves. During the months preceding the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Saddam Hussein repeatedly asserted that America did not “have the stomach” for a prolonged and costly conflict. The public *was* much more divided over the wisdom of intervention than it had been before the Korean or Vietnam wars, Schwarz says. Yet once the national commitment was made, he notes, most Americans “quickly rallied around the

flag.” Just before the air offensive against Iraq in January 1991, 79 percent were in favor of going to war. And the public subsequently showed little sign of wanting to withdraw from the conflict. “In fact,” Schwarz says, “believing firmly that war with Iraq would be a horrible experience for America, most Americans nevertheless wanted to continue making war against Iraq *even after* Saddam’s forces were ejected from Kuwait.”

“Human Capital and Economic Development.”

W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 300 S. Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo, Mich. 49007-4686. 163 pp. \$23 (cloth); \$13 (paper)

Editors: *Sisay Asefa and Wei-Chiao Huang*

Will the U.S. economy be hurt by the country’s slow population growth? In his 1987 book, *The Birth Dearth*, Ben Wattenberg of the American Enterprise Institute argued that it will: markets and productivity will grow more slowly, while an increased elderly population will consume a growing share of national wealth.

Economist Richard A. Easterlin of the University of Southern California, one of six contributors to this collection, says the historical experience of the United States and other advanced countries does not bear out Wattenberg’s thesis: “While population growth has trended downward in most of these countries over the last century, real per capita income growth has trended upward.” Moreover, Easterlin says, doomsayers forget

that the burden imposed on the working population by rising old-age dependency is likely to be offset by the declining cost of supporting infants and children as birth-rates drop.

In any event, Easterlin is not sure that population forecasters have a good picture of the future. They did not foresee the post-World War II baby boom, and also were caught by surprise when fertility started to plunge in the 1960s. They may be wrong again. The U.S. total fertility rate (estimated number of lifetime births per woman) was 2.09 in 1990—slightly less than “replacement level” fertility (2.11), but up from the 1986 “baby bust” rate of 1.77. A new “fertility upswing” may be in the making, Easterlin says.

Economist D. Gale Johnson of the University of Chicago throws cold water on another bit of conventional wisdom.

Between 1950 and 1980, he notes, population in the developing countries increased rapidly, by two percent a year or more. Yet the widely predicted disaster never occurred. In fact, per capita gross domestic product in these countries increased faster, by 2.6 percent annually.

Whether population growth is slow or fast, Easterlin and Johnson indicate, it is a minor factor in determining the value of “human capital” or a nation’s economic well-being. “Government policies are of far greater importance,” Johnson says.

In the United States, other contributors to this volume argue, making the most of human capital requires improving the education and training of the working populace rather than trying to influence such largely ungovernable forces as population size or growth rate.

COMMENTARY

We welcome timely letters from readers, especially those who wish to amplify or correct information published in the Quarterly and/or react to the views expressed in our essays. Letters may be mailed to our editorial address or sent via facsimile, at (202) 287-3772, or E-mail, at WWCEM166@SIVM.SI.EDU. The writer's telephone number and address should be included. For reasons of space, letters are usually edited for publication. Some letters are received in response to the editors' requests for comment.

Games People Play

I read Wilfrid Sheed's essay "Why Sports Matter" ["The Future of Sports," *WQ*, Winter '95] with excitement. As with many good essays, I discovered that I already knew most of what the essayist was writing but did not know that I knew it until I read the essay.

Sheed mentions Robert Maynard Hutchins doing away with football at the University of Chicago to preserve the academic integrity of the university. When I was a student at Chicago, I was told that Hutchins had actually said that the university had a choice. It could either give up football or else buy the Chicago Bears and call them the University of Chicago football team.

It is interesting to speculate about what might have happened had the university, with its long and noble football record, bought the Bears and hired George Halas as the football coach. Surely other schools would have followed suit.

*George R. Wren
St. Louis, Mo.*

Among the valuable background provided by your excellent articles on sports, Edward Tenner tells how the rise of professional coaches for college teams supplanted amateur advisers such as Woodrow Wilson. Few people would think of Wilson as a football coach. Yet in his Wesleyan days (1888-90) when he was professor of history and political economy, he also served as football coach. In 1889 he wrote in his diary, "It is one of my duties to train the football eleven, and when we win, I just call attention to the fact that I have a share in the victory." In addition to serving as coach, he was also director of the "Foot Ball Association."

David B. Potts, in *Wesleyan University 1831-1910*, quotes a Wesleyan alumnus who remembered Wilson as "a tall thin man running up and down these very sidelines during the afternoon's football practice, waving his closed umbrella in the air and cheering encouragement at the top of his lungs to the team on almost every play."

*Edmund T. Delaney
Chester, Conn.*

Like Wilfrid Sheed, I regret the pass we have come to where so many of us believe that some college athletes should be paid wages for their valuable box office

service to their alma maters. But practically speaking the Rubicon was crossed long ago, when athletes were first awarded scholarships ("grants-in-aid," as they are euphemistically called) irrespective of financial need.

Among all participants in extracurricular activities, only athletes are provided this largesse straight up; only athletes were long ago set aside as a class apart. There are no grants-in-aid for student singers or student cheerleaders or student actors or, even, student journalists. Therefore it is neither a philosophical nor emotional leap to pay them in the coin of the realm; student-athletes are already a little bit pregnant.

Two other developments have occurred which justify cash on the barrelhead. Once upon a time—and not so long ago, either—all sides were kind of in it together. Even the best coaches made modest salaries. John Wooden never earned more than \$40,000 while winning 10 championships in 12 years at UCLA, and the lads would go over and toast marshmallows with Mrs. Coach in the off-season. Now Mr. Coach takes home 500 grand from Nike and another 250 from his summer camp on university property, the athletic department makes millions from NBC and the sale of personalized sweatshirts, and there is no off-season for the players, because they are expected to spend hours daily in the weight room year-round.

Nostalgia and best-of-all-worlds aside, the fair response is to pay the athletes who bring in the money (mostly football and basketball players) and award scholarships to all other athletes on a need basis only, the way other students are treated.

*Frank Deford
Contributing Editor, Vanity Fair
New York, N.Y.*

Just as the culture of Chaucer's "verray parfit gentil knight" vanished with the invention of gunpowder, the sporting ideal, according to John Hoberman and Edward Tenner, has been killed by technology. Tenner eloquently argues that technology, a category in which he includes not only equipment but organized logical thought, has undermined the amateur spirit. Character, intelligence, and honor no longer count for much in athletic competition. Arduous and exacting practice, professional coaching, and high-tech equipment are often the difference between winning and losing. Hoberman laments that doping compromises what is

unique about sport: its ability to serve as a measure of human potential.

While both writers show how a society's acceptance of new technologies can undermine its own values, they leave one important question unanswered: did technology initiate the decline of the sporting ideal or did it only sustain an existing trend?

The first step in answering this question is to explore what the authors mean by the "sporting ideal." For Hoberman, the ideal involves testing the limits of human potential; the "biochemically engineered superperson" is the antithesis of the pure athlete. Tenner's ideal is somewhat different. Technology in his view undermined what he calls the amateur ideal. This is strange, because Tenner recognizes that the amateur ideal never existed historically, but he apparently wants to believe in the world of the early 20th century fictional character, Dink Stover, in which spirit and character triumph over rationalized efficiency. He proposes that "the decline of the heroic ideal is reflected in the history of protective technology," and the use of technology and scientific training has distinguished the professional athlete from the amateur. Yet, we wonder when this amateur athlete existed. Even Greek athletes in 600 B.C., Tenner notes, "resorted to special diets, coaching, and other aids in attempts to improve performance." The Greeks, we would add, even used specially constructed "halteres" (weights used in long jumping). They did not even have a word for amateur.

Technology may not have caused the decline of the sporting ideal, but clearly it has affected the nature and meaning of sport. Before technology is introduced into any endeavor, be it ballet, business, or basketball, its potential impact should be carefully studied. We can and must make active, educated choices so as to avoid *accidentally* killing the not so perfect "verray parfit gentle knight."

*Nadine Gelberg and Ronald A. Smith
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Penn.*

If readers of your sports cluster begin with Allen Guttmann's selective bibliography on the subject, they will discover books—many of them decades old—that contain most of the "insights" in the articles by Sheed, Tenner, and Hoberman. To current students of the subject, the pieces by your authors also lack—to quote an ugly but accurate phrase—"methodological rigor."

Your writers seem unaware of the last two decades of sports studies, dominated by such highly professional researchers as Michael Real, Lawrence Wenner, and Garry Whannel. Unfortunately, these authors and their colleagues converse in jargon-encrusted prose, extremely difficult for general readers to comprehend. Nevertheless, their work is the current

source of energy in the field. When they analyze sports and the media in terms of ideology and iconography (e.g., Wenner's article on beer commercials during sports telecasts) they leave the amateurs far behind.

I applaud *WQ's* attempt to enlist authors who write in clear, coherent prose. Unfortunately, you selected three writers still on leisurely cross-country jaunts compared to the new breed of researchers with their hi-tech training methods. Next time, try to find writers on sports who can explain their research to general readers, or journalists who can do it for them.

*Murray Sperber
Indiana University
Bloomington, Ind.*

Guns or Butter?

I agree with every word of A. J. Bacevich's "Use of Force" [*WQ*, Winter '95]. I have always been depressed by what one might call the "Weinberger-Powell imperative" of American strategy: only to get involved in wars that you know you can win. The combination of an army prepared to deal only with major wars against other regular armed forces and a population unwilling to accept casualties even in a minor confrontation is a recipe for military impotence of which both the enemies and, I am afraid, the allies of the United States will be taking very careful note.

Britain was brought to disaster before 1939 very largely by the reluctance of her army and her people even to contemplate continental war. The United States could be placed in equal difficulties by an army reluctant to contemplate anything else. But in both cases the fault lies, not so much with the armed forces themselves, as in the first place with a political leadership unwilling to lay down firm political guidelines and ensure that the military follow them; and in the second, with an electorate that is at best indifferent to such questions and, at worst, unwilling to accept even minimal losses in a minor campaign. Nations, I am afraid, tend to get the armies they deserve.

*Sir Michael Howard
Berkshire, England*

"The Use of Force" is an excellent overview of the problems we face today concerning military intervention all over the world. As is customary with such types of analysis, however, it offers no program for overcoming these problems.

I believe it is erroneous for Bachevich to conclude that our military is doomed to failure because of its inflexible "orthodoxy." I participated in the occupation of North China in 1945 and 1946 to stabilize North China and to repatriate the Japanese army. My doc-

trine in those days came from several old China Hands who had served in China before World War II. It was a smooth occupation; it was a peace-keeping mission and warfare was not on the agenda.

Our success was based on the fact that there was a clear mission and the State Department was actively engaged on location. Given the same kinds of direction, today's troops would be able to execute similar successful missions abroad. They are hampered, however, by a lack of political leadership to guide the military activities.

*George N. Mayer
Washington, D.C.*

A reading of A. J. Bacevich's article leads one to wonder if the author had thought before he penned. A rereading leads to an inescapable negative conclusion.

The fact is that America's military has served us well throughout our history. It is especially true that we have been better served by the military mind than its civilian overseers. We can hope that civilian minds will catch up to the military's, but if the author is an example, it is unlikely. If Vietnam taught us anything, it should be that having minds from academia involved in military [and perhaps many other] matters is a great mistake. The ivory tower is a poor perch from which to view the real world.

*Edmund E. Ackerson
Belmont, Mass.*

Ed. Note: Bacevich served as an army officer for 23 years, including tours of duty in Vietnam and Europe.

Vietnam's Prospects

Frederick Brown's survey of the policies and moods of Vietnam ["Vietnam Since the War, 1975-1995," *WQ*, Winter '95] is, I believe, an accurate account of the past two decades. The only fact of importance dealt with incompletely is that the election of 1956 was provided for in the protocol of the 1954 Geneva agreement, which neither we nor the South Vietnamese signed.

There is an interesting paradox that emerges at the end of the essay. In a dynamic situation where the underlying economic and social forces are making for the diffusion of power and democratic rule, can centralized Communist Party power persist? Or, can the transition already underway be carried to its logical conclusion without a Tienanmen Square or the bloodshed of civil war? (The same question hangs over contemporary China.)

Logically, Vietnam belongs with the medium powers, most bordering the South China Sea, that make up ASEAN. It is in that company that it will find its prosperity as well as the independence and freedom

which Brown refers to. At the end of the 1960s I predicted to my astonished colleagues that this would happen by the end of this century.

We'll see.

*W. W. Rostow
Univ. of Texas, Austin
Special Asst. to President Johnson, 1966-69*

Frederick Brown has written a tour de force. Seldom has so much been written so well in such limited space about developments in Vietnam over the last two decades. But as an expatriate American who has lived a quarter-century in Australia, my perspective is somewhat different. Nowhere is this more evident than in the editors' introduction to the essay, which asserts that "now, with their Soviet patron gone and the U.S. trade embargo lifted, Vietnam's communist leaders are looking outward. . . ." This is very much an American-centered perspective. Vietnam began looking outward at least three years before the embargo was lifted. America must come to realize that it is not the only player in Vietnam today.

I have two major quibbles with Brown's analysis. While he correctly details the ideological and policy failings of the Hanoi regime, he fails to factor in the impact of the U.S. embargo. It would be important to know, for example, whether or not unremitting U.S. hostility played into the hands of Vietnam's communist conservatives.

Americans, scholars and officials alike, have never quite understood the origins of the Vietnam War and the fact that the Vietnam Communist Party was a national organization. It is true that there were North-South differences and that these differences manifested themselves within the party. But Brown's analysis fails to highlight those elements of cohesion within the ranks of Vietnam's communist movement. How else can we explain that approximately one-third of the present ruling politburo are southerners?

*Carlisle A Thayer
Australian Defense Force Academy
Canberra, Australia*

The Vietnamese Communists won the war, and it was a far longer war than most of their adversaries endured. But it can only be said that they subsequently lost the peace. Their retribution against their erstwhile nationalist foes drove into exile many potential contributors to the rebuilding of the country. Their application of communist economics at almost the same time it was being found wanting in most of the rest of the world, plus the isolation of the country from its Asian neighbors, caused Vietnam to miss the huge burst of growth the rest of Asia experienced.

Mr. Brown correctly recounts the recent moves by

the Vietnamese authorities to rejoin the world, opening their borders to the *Viet kieu* from overseas and moving toward an acceptance of the free market and foreign investment. This has indeed given new life to the country, spurring its agricultural production and filling its streets with foreign consumer goods.

But political freedoms are harder to permit, as they can put in doubt the authority of the cadres whose harsh discipline directed the victorious battles of the past. So while entrepreneurs and even foreigners are encouraged to engage freely in economic growth, the modern "Mandarins" of the Party insist that they alone administer the nation politically.

But an articlesimilar to Mr. Brown's 10 or 20 years hence will show that this effort will erode as surely as communist economics has. Fellow Asian nations Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Indonesia, all authoritarian politically 10 and 20 years ago, have moved decisively toward democratic rule. Economic success in those states created a middle class, and it in turn pressed for recognition of rights and for participation in the direction of the nation. This will surely happen in Vietnam and lead to a real reconciliation of the erstwhile foes within that nation and its full membership among the Asian "tigers," the objective for which many Americans fought and died.

William E. Colby
CIA Director, 1973-76
Washington, D.C.

Plaudits for Poetry

To include a poetry section among the treasures to be found in the *Wilson Quarterly* was one of your best ideas. It's almost an introductory course. I had never heard of L. E. Sissman, whose poems Anthony Hecht included in the winter edition.

Everything Mr. Hecht says of these poems is there: they are charming, witty, alive with youthful gaiety. Now I must start a search for the volumes mentioned.

Eugene L. Swan, Jr.
Athens, Me.

Correction

In Frederick Z. Brown's "Vietnam Since the War (1975-1995)" (*WQ*, Winter 1995), Ho Chi Minh's slogan, *Khong co gi quy hon doc lap tu do*—meaning, There is nothing more precious than independence and freedom—was incorrectly given. A "g" was inadvertently added to the word *hon*. We regret the error.

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FROM THE CENTER

There is, to borrow from Adam Smith, a good deal of ruin in the nation, and for the moment the students of ruin aren't sure why. One popular theory holds that the size of government itself serves as a kind of crude index of the health of the polity—too much of the one marking too little of the other. But how much is too much, and how do we know? Clearly this is a matter of proportions, but what is government proportionate to? To answer that we need politics, the more knowledgeable the better.

Our politics might be more knowledgeable if we paid more attention to the voice of the economist Herbert Stein, a credentialed conservative who is also respected by liberals. In a recent column on the budget, Stein challenged the idea "that any objective observer, if you can imagine such a thing," having studied how the public business is done elsewhere in the world, "would think that excessive size of government is one of America's big problems."

What is it that leads so many to think otherwise? Economic miseries alone won't do as an answer. Stein notes that while everyone would prefer boom times, the American economy is in pretty good condition. Relative to the gross domestic product, total government expenditures in the United States are lower than in other nations, where the misery seems no greater. Though our federal expenditures, driven hard by military needs and soaring entitlement costs, rose sharply after the mid-1970s, the federal share of total outlays is still smaller here than in countries that count for comparison. For decades now the level of federal civilian employment has been essentially flat, at about 2.5 percent of total employment, and while a work force of just under three million people is formidable by any standard, America is a big place and the number—now declining thanks to the Clinton administration's reinventions—doesn't tell us much about how well or badly the duties of the national government are being performed.

Despite the cogency of such level-headed observations, the rhetoric of opposition to Washington and all its ways intensifies. The situation is complicated beyond the usual by the re-emergence in Republican circles, for the third time

since the Nixon years, of talk about a new federalism. Budget cutters are speaking up for the virtues and problem-solving abilities of the states and local governments.

Cynics are understandably skeptical about this, but there may be something new in the devolution talk of today. The earlier new federalisms were back-burner political programs that never amounted to much. Cold War concerns were on the front burner, and the Cold War imposed disciplines. It fostered nationalism, and nationalism meant that Washington, the capital of the free world, would be required to show that democracy on a national scale could deal with its toughest problems. Thus the modern civil rights revolution, the wars on poverty, illiteracy, drugs, and much else besides—all directed from Washington.

Military spending, always broadly defined, shaped the federal role in the economy during a long period of extraordinary growth, often in ways at one or more removes from strict military necessity. Nonmilitary spending helped to stabilize a crisis-prone system and showed that intractable problems such as unemployment and dependency among the elderly could be managed if not resolved. Mass public higher education got started with the GI Bill, and was secured by the provisions of the National Defense Education Act. The very costly interstate highway system that took a generation to build was justified officially by its bearing on national security. NASA was intended to trump Sputnik, and so on down much of the line.

It is a good question, then, how the problem-solving spirit of nationalism will fare without its external enemies, and how Washington will fare as a symbol for the achievements of the national culture as it recedes. No one can say. But as Herbert Stein makes clear, even for those who believe that the national government ought to be smaller, "there is no reason to think that making it smaller would solve any serious problem in the country." The problems that government in general must be proportionate to will remain.

*Michael J. Lacey, Director
Division of United States Studies*

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