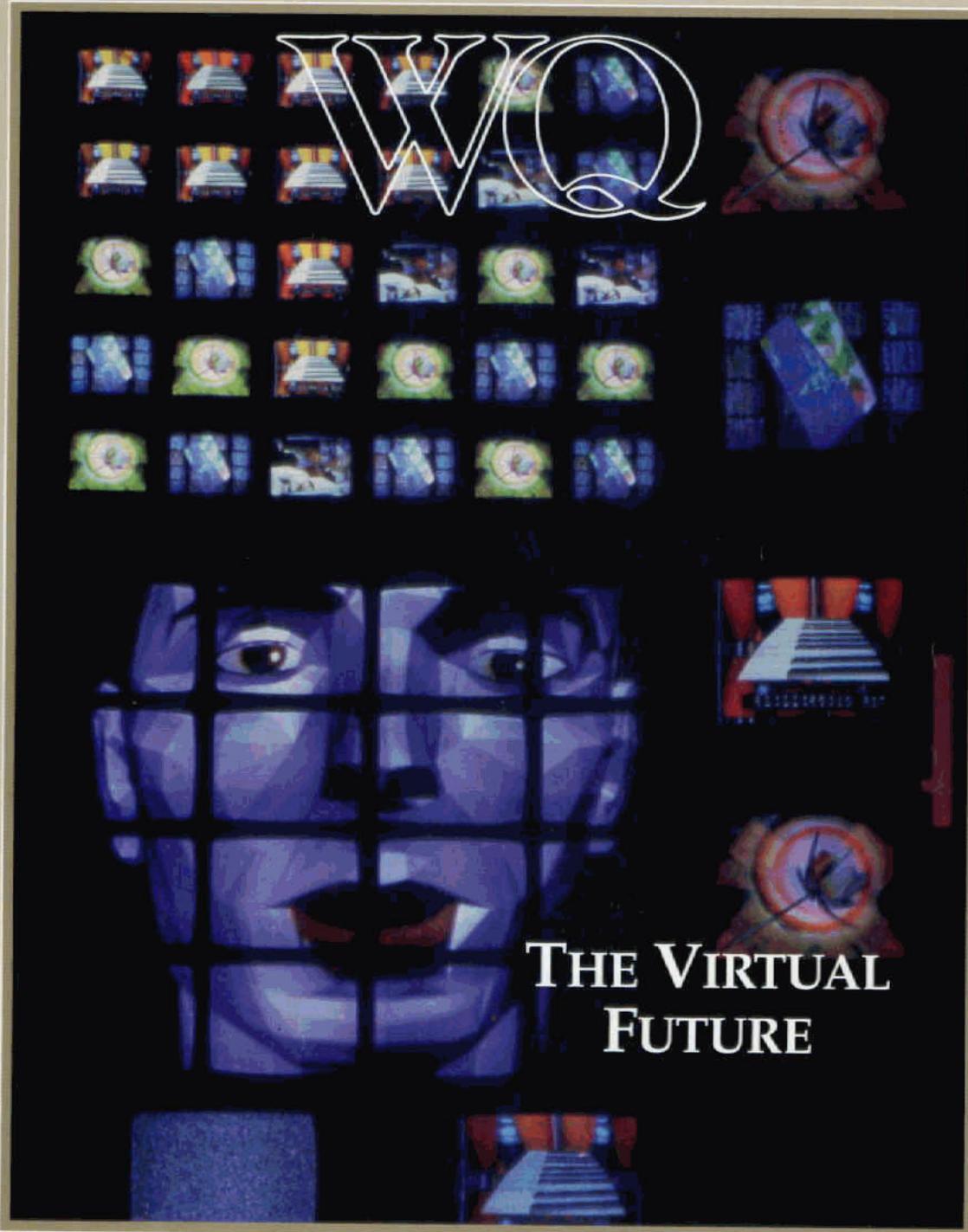


SUMMER 1994

\$6.00  
Canadian \$7.80

# THE WILSON QUARTERLY



## THE VIRTUAL FUTURE

### THE GREAT POPULATION DEBATE

HAMILTON'S LEGACY • AFTER SOVSPEAK • A DOUBTER'S DICTIONARY

# American Stories

## LINCOLN IN AMERICAN MEMORY

Merrill D. Peterson

"Lincoln is a national treasure, and this book is worthy of him"—*Library Journal*. "Among the thousands upon thousands of books that have been written about this greatest of all Americans, *Lincoln in American Memory* occupies a very high place.... Describes in richly revealing detail the shaping of the Lincoln image in the popular mythology, embracing everything from



poetry to advertising to politics to music to film.... A model for the study of popular culture"—Jonathan Yardley, *The Washington Post*

*Book World*. "Engaging and encyclopedic"—James M. McPherson, *The New York Review of Books*. "A work without parallel among the thousands of works on Lincoln—a trustworthy guide to that enormous store of history and myth"—Mark E. Neely, Jr. \$30.00, 482 pp.

## THE OXFORD HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN WEST

Edited by Clyde A. Milner, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss

"An excellent addition to the library of anyone interested in the triumphs and tragedies of the American West"—Tony Hillerman. "It is truly staggering—a fresh, innovative, and dramatically comprehensive survey of the past and present American West"—Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. "The American West is a big, unruly subject, but this book manages to rope, flank, and tie it with amazing grace. Among compendiums of frontier Americana, this just may be the daddy of 'em all"—Jane and Michael Stern. "Truly a harvest of the revitalized interest in the West, and a celebration of the renewed recognition of the West in American history"



—Howard R. Lamar.  
\$39.95, 832 pp.,  
216 illus. (16 in color)

## PAUL REVERE'S RIDE

David Hackett Fischer

"A delightful narrative"—Pauline Maier, *The New York Times Book Review*. "A work of rare historical distinction, an unputdownable narrative scraping away the tarnish of time and myth to reveal the essential metal of Paul Revere"—Robert Taylor, *The Sunday Boston Globe*. "A meticulously researched and wonderfully evocative narrative that will be enjoyed by history lovers and scholars alike.... Part biography of Revere and part history of the battles of Lexington and Concord, it places the 'midnight ride' in the broad context of American resistance to Great Britain"—*Library Journal*. \$27.50, 445 pp.



## THE GREAT LOS ANGELES SWINDLE

Oil, Stocks, and Scandal During the Roaring Twenties

Jules Tygiel

"Told with hypnotic skill and splendid authority.... A scurvy tale all the way through, populated by fascinating, if somewhat repellent characters, and rich in anecdote"—T.H. Watkins, *Washington Post Book World* (cover). "Tygiel's swiftly-paced page-turner conveys the excitement of a whodunit, but, at the same time, reveals a penetrating understanding of the history not only of California but of the nation during this frenetic period"—William E. Leuchtenburg. "The first complete telling of this saga of greed"—*Library Journal*. \$25.00, 398 pp.

## ANTISEMITISM IN AMERICA

Leonard Dinnerstein

"A landmark history of anti-Semitism in America"—*Library Journal*. "Both sobering and hopeful, this is an important contribution to a complex and still-evolving topic"—Abraham H. Foxman, National Director, Anti-Defamation League. "A tour de force—comprehensive, thoughtful, and highly readable.... A well-documented narrative and cogent analysis of antisemitism in America, from its roots in European Christianity to the present day"—Jerome A. Chanes. \$25.00, 375 pp.

At better bookstores. To charge, 1-800-451-7556 (M-F, 9-5 EST)

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

SUMMER 1994  
**THE WILSON QUARTERLY**

---

*Published by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*

**8**

**WIRED FOR WHAT?**

*Douglas Gomery • Edward Tenner • Tom Maddox*

The building of the information superhighway is a revolution in the making.  
Our contributors ponder the economic, political, and cultural implications.

**54**

**THE POPULATION QUESTION REVISITED**

*by George Moffett*

World population has increased by 40 percent in the past 20 years.  
No problem, some say. On the eve of an important conference  
in Cairo, our author explores a continuing debate.

**40. Hamilton's Legacy**

*by Michael Lind*

It's time to reconsider the ideas of our least-loved Founder.

**108. Language on the Verge of a  
Nervous Breakdown**

*by Anatoly Naiman*

Russians are still suffering from 70 years of language abuse.

**118. A Doubter's Dictionary**

*by John Ralston Saul*

A few choice words exposing current assaults on common sense

**DEPARTMENTS**

- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>2. Editor's Comment</b> | <b>125. Periodicals</b>      |
| <b>4. At Issue</b>         | <b>152. Research Reports</b> |
| <b>80. Current Books</b>   | <b>154. Commentary</b>       |
| <b>100. Poetry</b>         | <b>160. From the Center</b>  |

Cover: Detail of *Fin de Siècle*, by Nam June Paik. The original  
painting is in the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York  
(Gift of Laila and Thurston Twigg-Smith).

Printed in the U.S.A.

The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

USPS 346-670

WILSON

VOL. XVIII NO. 3

The Wilson Quarterly (ISSN-0363-3276) is published in January (Winter), April (Spring), July (Summer), and October (Autumn) by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at 901 D Street S.W., Suite 704, Washington, D.C. 20024. Indexed biennially. Subscriptions: one year, \$24; two years, \$43. Air mail outside U.S.: one year, \$39; two years, \$73. Single copies mailed upon request: \$7; outside U.S. and possessions, \$8; selected back issues: \$7, including postage and handling; outside U.S., \$8. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. All unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Members: Send changes of address and all subscription correspondence with Wilson Quarterly mailing label to Subscriber Service, The Wilson Quarterly, P.O. Box 420406, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0406. (Subscriber hot line: 1-800-829-5108.) Postmaster: Send all address changes to The Wilson Quarterly, P.O. Box 420406, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0406. Microfilm copies are available from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. U.S. newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior Street, Sandusky, Ohio 44870 (for information, call 1-800-221-3148).



## EDITOR'S COMMENT

**B**eware of prophets bearing predictions. That simple maxim should be repeated like a mantra whenever anyone suggests what the information superhighway will bring. Why then devote 10 bytes to the subject, much less a group of articles? We do so in this issue for two reasons: First, despite the large popular literature on the subject, relatively little has been written from the scholarly perspective. Second—and this reason follows directly from the first—the history of technology and communications can provide a healthy antidote to some of the grander claims being made for the coming information infrastructure. While sounding a cautious note, our contributors are neither technophobes nor neo-Luddites; they are, in fact, veteran users of the existing (though not quite super-) highway. But because they know how the system works, they come to the subject with few illusions. If the stories they tell bear a common theme, it is that information access and delivery are wonderful aids to the growth of knowledge but not its guarantee. Much will depend on who supplies and controls the network—and on what the users bring to it. Above all, we delude ourselves if we think that an information network can serve as an adequate substitute for the learning, research, and scholarship that go on in mundane reality. Neglect that reality for virtual reality, and we will end up wired for little purpose.

*Editor:* Jay Tolson

*Deputy Editor:* Steven Lagerfeld

*Managing Editor:* James H. Carman

*Literary Editor:* Karen Lehrman  
(on leave: Jeffery Paine)

*Associate Editor:* Robert K. Landers

*Poetry Editors:* Joseph Brodsky;  
Anthony Hecht

*Copy Editor:* Vincent Ercolano

*Design Consultant:* Tawney Harding

*Contributing Editors:* Linda Colley,  
Denis Donoghue, Max Holland, Walter  
Reich, Alan Ryan, Charles Townshend,  
Alan Wolfe, Bertram Wyatt-Brown

*Researchers:* Kristi Flis, Liubov

Fortunova, Katie Mauro, Kelly M.

May, Heather Vogell *Librarian:* Zdenek

V. David *Editorial Advisers:* K. Anthony

Appiah, Mary B. Bullock, Robert

Darnton, Nathan Glazer, Harry

Harding, Elizabeth Johns, Michael

Lacey, John R. Lampe, Jackson Lears,

Robert Litwak, Frank McConnell,

James M. Morris, Richard Rorty,

Blair Ruble, Ann Sheffield,

S. Frederick Starr, Joseph Tulchin

*Founding Editor:* Peter Braestrup

*Publishing Director:* Warren B. Syer

*Publisher:* Kathy Read

*Business Manager:* Suzanne Napper

*Circulation Director:* Rosalie Bruno

Direct advertising inquiries to:

Kathy Read

901 D Street S.W., Suite 704

Washington, D.C. 20024

(202) 287-3000

## WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS

*Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D.C.*

Charles Blitzer, *Director*  
Samuel F. Wells, Jr., *Deputy Director*  
Dean W. Anderson, *Deputy*  
*Director for Planning and Management*

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Joseph H. Flom, *Chairman*  
Dwayne O. Andreas, *Vice Chairman*  
*Ex Officio Members:* The Secretary of  
State, The Secretary of Health & Human  
Services, The Secretary of Education,  
The Chairman of the National  
Endowment for the Humanities, The

Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution,  
The Librarian of Congress, The Director  
of the U.S. Information Agency, The  
Archivist of the United States. **Private**  
**Citizen Members:** James A. Baker III,  
William J. Baroody, Jr., Marlin Fitzwater,  
Gertrude Himmelfarb, Carol Iannone, Eli  
Jacobs, S. Dillon Ripley. **Designated by**  
**the President:** Anthony Lake.

### THE WILSON COUNCIL

Stanley R. Klion, *Chairman*  
Albert Abramson, J. Burchenal Ault,

Charles F. Barber, Theodore C.  
Barreaux, Conrad Cafritz, Edward W.  
Carter, Peter B. Clark, William T.  
Coleman, Jr., Michael DiGiacomo,  
Robert R. Harlin, William A. Hewitt,  
James H. Higgins, Eric Hotung,  
Donald M. Kendall, Christopher  
Kennan, Sol M. Linowitz, Plato  
Malozemoff, Edwin S. Marks, C. Peter  
McColough, Martha T. Muse, David  
Packard, L. Richardson Preyer, Robert  
L. Raclin, Raja W. Sidawi, William A.  
Slaughter, S. Bruce Smart, Jr.

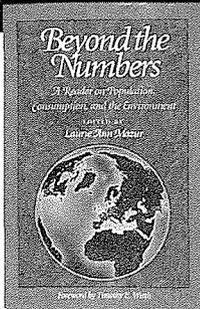
The Wilson Center has published the *Quarterly* since 1976. It also publishes Wilson Center Press books, special reports, and a series of "scholars' guides" designed to help researchers find their way through the vast archival riches of the nation's capital. All this is part of the Wilson Center's special mission as the nation's unusual "living memorial" to the 28th president of the United States.

Congress established the Center in 1968 as an international institute for advanced study, "symbolizing and strengthening the fruitful relation between the world of learning and the world of public affairs." The Center opened in 1970 under its own presidentially appointed board of trustees, headed by former vice president Hubert H. Humphrey.

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

# ISLAND PRESS

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLISHER



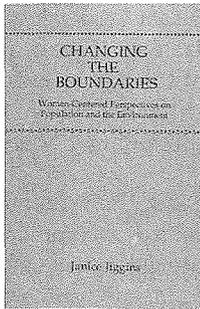
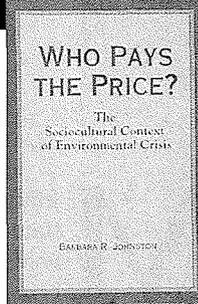
**Beyond the Numbers**  
*A Reader on Population and Consumption Issues*  
 Edited by Laurie Ann Mazur. Foreword by Timothy Wirth, counselor,  
 Department of State

*Beyond the Numbers* presents a thought-provoking series of essays by leading authorities on issues of population and consumption.  
 445 pages - charts, graphs, index Cloth: \$40.00; Paper: \$19.95

**Who Pays the Price?**

*The Sociocultural Context of Environmental Crisis*  
 Barbara R. Johnston. With contributions from members of the Committee on Human Rights of the Society for Applied Anthropology

*Provides a detailed look at the human experience of environmental crisis.*  
 290 pages - maps, photos, index Cloth: \$45.00; Paper: \$19.00



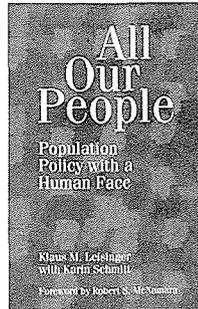
**Changing the Boundaries** *Women-Centered Perspectives on Population and the Environment*  
 Janice Jiggins

*In this insightful examination of global population and development policy, Changing the Boundaries explores gender relations with respect to education, reproductive health services, and agricultural resources.*  
 240 pages - tables, figures, index Cloth: \$45.00; Paper: \$22.00

**All Our People** *Population Policy with a Human Face*

Klaus M. Leisinger with Karin Schmitt. Foreword by Robert S. McNamara, International Conference on Population and Development/UNICEF

*In many parts of the world, population is growing so rapidly that sustainable development simply cannot be achieved. All Our People is a compelling and heartfelt examination of that complex problem.*  
 400 pages - tables, figures, index Cloth: \$45.00; Paper: \$24.95



Available in Bookstores or Call 1-800-828-1302 Island Press Box 7, Dept. 4WQ Covelo, CA 95428

## Learn Another Language on Your Own!

Learn to speak a foreign language fluently on your own and at your own pace with what are considered the finest in-depth courses available. Many were developed by the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State for diplomatic personnel who must learn a language quickly and thoroughly. Emphasis is on learning to speak and to understand the spoken language. A typical course (equivalent to a college semester) includes an album of 10 to 12 audio cassettes (10 to 18 hours), recorded by native-born speakers, plus a 250-page textbook.



- |  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic (Saudi) \$185  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindi \$185     | <input type="checkbox"/> Persian \$185        | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish Level II \$165 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cantonese \$185       | <input type="checkbox"/> Hungarian \$195 | <input type="checkbox"/> Polish \$185         | <input type="checkbox"/> Swahili \$225          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French \$185          | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian \$185   | <input type="checkbox"/> Portuguese \$215     | <input type="checkbox"/> Swedish \$185          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French Level II \$215 | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese \$185  | (Brazilian)                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tagalog \$295          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> German \$185          | <input type="checkbox"/> Korean \$195    | <input type="checkbox"/> Russian \$255        | <input type="checkbox"/> Thai \$195             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> German Level II \$155 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lakota \$185    | <input type="checkbox"/> Serbo-Croatian \$195 | <input type="checkbox"/> Turkish \$195          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greek \$185           | <input type="checkbox"/> Latvian \$185   | <input type="checkbox"/> Slovak \$185         | <input type="checkbox"/> Ukrainain \$195        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hebrew \$255          | <input type="checkbox"/> Mandarin \$185  | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish \$185        | <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese \$225       |

You can order now with a full 3-week money-back guarantee, by calling toll-free 1-800-243-1234 or by fax (203) 453-9774, or by mail by clipping this ad and sending with your name and address and a check or money order — or charge to any major credit card, by enclosing card number, expiration date, and your signature. Our 56-page *Whole World Language Catalog* offers courses in 91 languages. Call or write for your free copy. Our 22nd year.

**AUDIO-FORUM**  
 THE LANGUAGE SOURCE

Audio-Forum, Room G718, 96 Broad St., Guilford, CT 06437

---

---

## AT ISSUE

### *By Theory Possessed*

**M**y father offered few words on the state of the world, but the few he volunteered were usually shrewd. I remember, in particular, what he used to say about college tuitions—"The more you pay, the less you seem to go."

Alas, my father didn't know the half of it. It was not merely that steeper tuitions bought less time. They also bought less content. A grossly oversimplified history may help explain.

Beginning in the mid-1960s or thereabouts, a revolution occurred in the liberal arts curricula of many of America's elite universities. This revolution consisted of a gradual but ineluctable movement away from substance toward theory, away from the empirical data of a field of studies (whether facts of history or works of literature or philosophy) toward ideological readings of the data. The theory of choice during these tumultuous years was a variety of neo-Marxism, usually served up with a dose of psychoanalytic theory, à la Herbert Marcuse. It was bracing stuff, and made a young sophomore feel pretty damn smart about the world. It was also one of the things that made so many members of the baby boom generation close to insufferable.

Some conservatives look back on this academic vogue as part of a vast left-wing, or even communist, conspiracy, but it wasn't that at all, unless the communists were even clumsier than we now know them to have been. No, this early flowering of the theory craze was far too incoherent and dreamy to serve any purposefully subversive political end. What it really represented was an attempt to forge a humanist countercultural religion on the ruins—or what were perceived to be the ruins—of American liberalism.

To be sure, the 1960s were too quick to declare the death of America's liberal creed. It had not really died. It was—and remains—in

ill health, having cut itself off from the religious traditions that once tempered its worst traits—its selfish individualism and its spiritual aridity. But if liberalism was not dead, it looked as though it was, and the perception of its demise, compounded by acute social crises at home and an unpopular war abroad, was enough to propel many of the brightest on a search for new meaning, a search that in the academy found its outlet in vaguely Marxist theorizing.

During the 1970s and '80s, the theoretical menu expanded and diversified, accommodating a number of special-interest or grievance-group agendas (e.g., feminism, environmentalism) as well as a flurry of Continental intellectual fashions, including structuralism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction. But a vaguely Marxist dissatisfaction with America—racist, sexist, fascist "Amerika"—remained the unifying theme, the dressing for theory's crazy salad, which was now truly the staple of a liberal arts education.

And a very lean cuisine it was. It was practically unseemly to mar its pristine unclutter with ugly little facts. So, for example, a student in history might still be introduced to the broad historical narratives in the obligatory survey courses. He or she might read of a battle here, a treaty there, the causes and consequences of the Thirty Years War or the Taiping Rebellion. But such matters were handled as expeditiously as possible in order to leave plenty of room for theory. Here one learned not only to question, decode, or deconstruct the various narratives or discourses framing the highly problematic factual base, but inevitably to accept as axiomatic that most facts and narratives themselves belonged to a suspect "master narrative" that served only to prop up the hegemony of white Western males.

Theory itself was not the villain. There is something of value in even the most manda-

**WQ**

---

rin of theories, something that pushes the mind to consider facts in a different light. More to the point, there is no escaping theory. We theorize to make sense and to create order. Because it is essential to knowledge—if not, as some extremists claim, coincident with it—theory certainly has its place at the advanced stages of study. But we have a problem when theorizing moves downward and takes over wider and wider swaths of the curriculum. When this happens, when we come too quickly to theory, a crucial stage in learning is missed.

The effort to master a body of knowledge is, above all, a humbling experience. Among other things, it teaches us how much more there always is to learn. It expands our frame of reference, even while forcing us to see how much more it could be expanded. It gives us, if we go about it diligently, an awareness of how rich even the smallest fact may be, of how infinitely susceptible it is to analysis and to comparison with other facts. Learning this, we acquire a proper sense of modesty before buzzing, swirling reality.

A mind that has drunk too early and too deeply of theory fails to acquire such humility. Having missed the sheer drudgery of gathering, assimilating, and even memorizing the data, it goes forth into the world precariously understocked. Such a mind will attempt to make do with too little information, will come too quickly and confidently to conclusions, and take too much on faith—faith in the authority of theorists, all too often. The possessor of such a mind tends to become knowing rather than knowledgeable, sophisticated rather than wise, cynical instead of cautious. Nothing is more dangerous than the overly confident theorist. As proof, consider some of the more diabolical figures of our century.

In fairness, the academy, or at least a significant part of it, has already recognized the error of its ways. Substance is making a comeback, even in the nation's better universities. Narrative history, thanks to such historians as Simon Schama, enjoys newfound respect. Students are returning to primary sources, works of literature or art, and depending less on the metareadings offered by critical theorists. Lit-

erary *history* is even regaining respectability, although it had to creep back under the banner of the highly theorized *new* historicism. The return to substance has not yet been decisive, and perhaps it never will be, but the theory-mongers no longer appear to be in the ascendancy.

That's the good news. The bad news is that such encouraging developments in the academy will not be felt in the wider culture for some time. Intellectual history is always the story of lag and trickle-down. On the wider field of culture, we see the playing out of what a generation has imbibed at the wells of learning, and the sight is not uplifting.

Consider, to begin with, what happened at the lower levels of education. It wasn't simply that Mr. Gradgrind was fired; even more humane lovers of facts were given their walking papers. Their replacements—steeped in the worst theories of all, education theories—inflicted concepts and reasoning skills on their clueless charges. What the young ones were supposed to reason about remained something of a mystery. One day, an alert University of Virginia professor, E. D. Hirsch, wondered whether American pupils were acquiring even a minimal level of cultural literacy. His findings were, to put it mildly, discouraging. Hirsch and like-minded teachers launched a remedial program, but it is only beginning to have an effect. What our kids are still not learning in their first 12 years of school should be cause for continuing concern.

Journalism is another legatee of the theoretical craze—no surprise, since the elite news organizations are increasingly staffed and run by graduates of the elite schools. What the theoretical bent has wrought in this field is an approach to news heavily weighted toward editorializing and subjective analysis (along with personality-focused feature writing, which itself allows for endless pop-psychological theorizing). Hardscrabble digging and reporting still take place, but journalists armed with graduate degrees are not content merely saying what happened. They want to offer their reading of the news. Even on the front

---

pages of the nation's top newspapers, we now get stories barely distinguishable from editorials or features, those most theory-prone of journalistic forms. Facts are seldom allowed to speak for themselves but are parceled out as they fit the reporter's "reading" of events. Readers, meanwhile, are left scratching their heads—at least those readers who have not already given up on the news.

In the entertainment world, the heavy hand of theory makes itself felt in the crudest of ways. Hollywood loves the "high concept," which is nine parts casting and production values and one part story. The story, however, is really only an idea of a story, a theoretical notion, which is why most movies end up being ersatz dramas. They are episodes strung on the thread of an idea, without real characters, real conflict, or real point. In this respect at least, movies have become almost indistinguishable from most television fare, which has long been the ideal entertainment for a theoretical age that thinks in categories, types, and generalities. The rough edges of reality seldom intrude upon our seamless entertainment continuum.

Looking around, indeed, one finds large portions of the culture enmeshed in theories and theory-mongering. What sociologist Daniel Bell dubbed the New Class, that sizable army of bureaucrats, lawyers, journalists, advertising executives, and other influential "symbol-manipulators," is a class that lives largely by producing and consuming theories. Most of our social trends for the last 30 years appear to have emanated from the weightless

regions of cloud-cuckoo-land. We have gone from "greening" ourselves to being our own best friend, from connecting with our inner child to locating our specific brand of victimization. Theories have engendered counter-theories, and new theoretical incantations have replaced the old. Trotskyites have become neo-conservatives, and many who once heralded the dictatorship of the proletariat now worship the magic of the marketplace. Theorism, we can only hope, is entering the terminal stages of self-strangulation. With luck, it too shall pass.

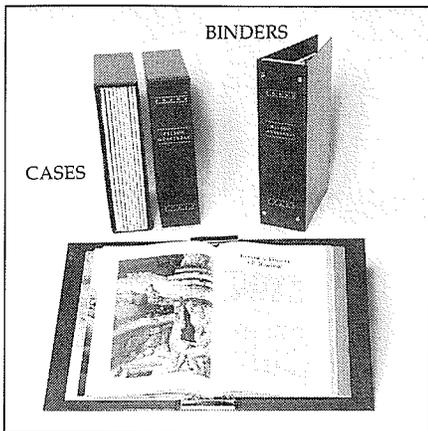
**B**ut we are still a long way from being free of it. The theoretical mania rears its head in the higher circles of government and, as one would expect, among the media mavens who move there. We hear disturbing talk about the need to formulate new paradigms, new models, and new theories in response not only to our own social dilemmas but to a world in which history, theoretically, has ended. Perhaps the wiser course would be to forestall such formulations, to begin, rather, by admitting to a degree of ignorance and uncertainty. This need not lead to inaction; it may even lead to more decisiveness and firmness, based upon a well-grounded, textured appreciation of the needs and histories of specific challenges and crises, national and international.

A little more caution, a little more empirical testing, and—who knows?—we may even discover that theories, if indispensable, are truly the last thing we need.

—J.T.



## Organize & Protect Your Copies of Wilson Quarterly



These custom made cases and binders are the perfect way to organize and protect your valuable copies of the **Wilson Quarterly**. Beautifully crafted from reinforced board covered with durable leather-like material in maroon with gold logo, the cases are V-notched for easy access, and the binders have a special spring mechanism to hold individual rods which easily snap in. Each binder or case holds 2 years (8 issues) of the **Wilson Quarterly**.

**Cases:** 1- \$7.95 3- \$21.95 6- \$39.95  
**Binders:** 1- \$9.95 3- \$27.95 6- \$52.95

The Wilson Quarterly  
Jesse Jones Industries, Dept. WQ  
499 East Erie Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19134

Enclosed is \$\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_ cases, and \_\_\_ binders. Add \$1 per case/binder for postage & handling. Outside USA add \$2.50 per case/binder (US funds only). PA residents add 6% sales tax.

PRINT NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

**CHARGE ORDERS** (\$15 min): AMEX, VISA, MC, DC accepted. Send card name, account number, and expiration date.

**CALL TOLL FREE (7 days, 24 hours):**  
1-800-825-6690

SATISFACTION IS GUARANTEED

# CITIES WITHOUT SUBURBS

## DAVID RUSK

“Every mayor, every governor, every county executive, indeed anyone who cares about our great but ailing cities, ought to read it.”

—John Gallagher, *Detroit Free Press*

“If Clinton and Gore are really serious about reinventing government, there is a genuinely revolutionary idea they might try: abolish the suburbs. This is a serious suggestion. David Rusk makes the case in his new book, appropriately titled *Cities without Suburbs*.”

—Mickey Kaus, *New Republic*

“There has to be a way to bring cities and suburbs together politically and governmentally, as David Rusk argues so compellingly in his book.”

—Theo Lippman, Jr., *Baltimore Sun*

“The way to save Hartford is to make it a little more like Albuquerque. . . . Rusk’s understanding of the urban problem is so acute and his book so challenging that it would seem only just to endorse all of his solutions.”

—Alan Ehrenhalt, *Governing*

\$13.95 paperback

Published by

**THE WOODROW WILSON CENTER PRESS**

Distributed by

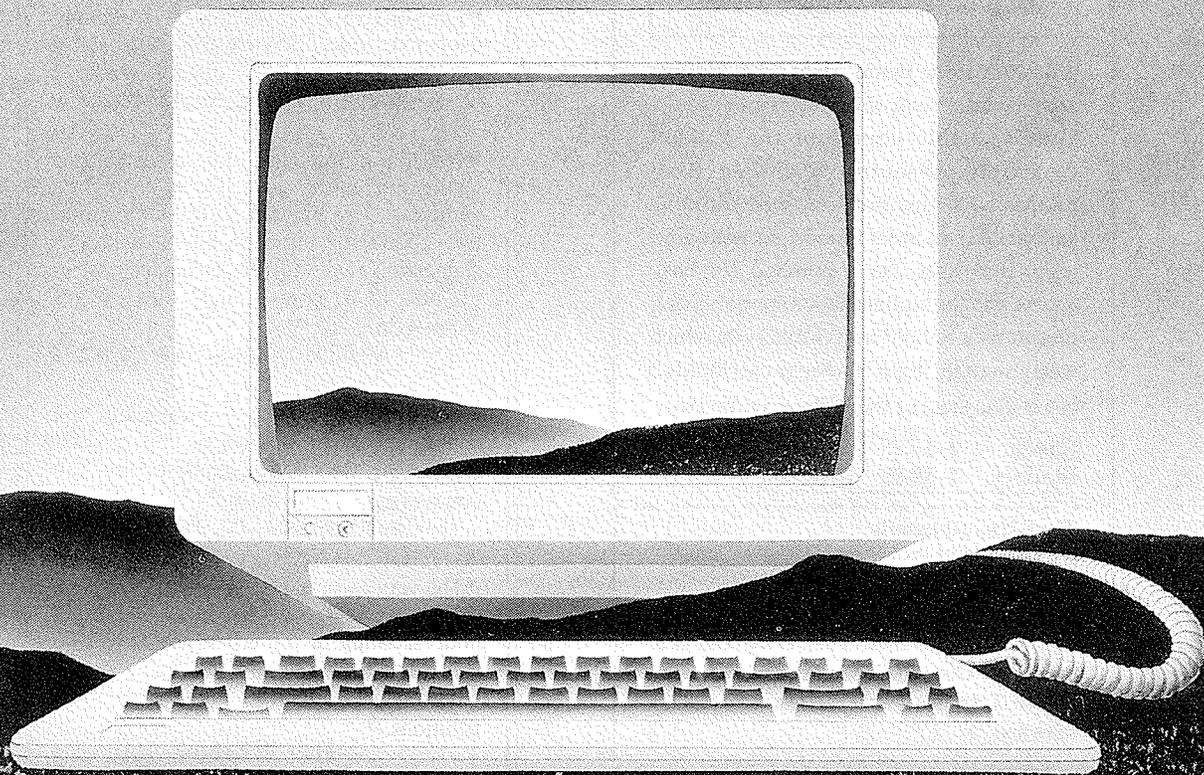
**THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS**

Hampden Station, Baltimore, MD 21211

To order, call 1-800-537-5487.

20% discount to Wilson Center Associates

# WIRED FOR WHAT?



*The race is on to build the information superhighway. From "players" in business, government, and other realms comes promising talk of empowering individuals and launching a new age of digital democracy. From critics come warnings that the highway may only expand the empire of television, creating a "vaster wasteland" of 500 channels. Stepping back from the hubbub, our contributors ask what Americans might want from the information superhighway, what can be learned from recent experience with today's Internet, and what the history of other media suggests about the information highway of the future.*

# IN SEARCH OF THE CYBERMARKET

BY DOUGLAS GOMERY

**T**hat crashing noise you keep hearing in the distance is the sound of Big Deals collapsing on top of Big Hype about the information superhighway. Last fall, regional telephone company Bell Atlantic and cable giant Tele-Communications Incorporated (TCI) announced their \$15 billion marriage, the largest corporate merger in history, and promised us all the moon and the stars—a new era of faster and better communication, international interactive bridges, more high-tech jobs, and an information-fueled economic expansion lasting into the next century. This was only the biggest and fanciest of a string of shotgun weddings that were announced as corporations scrambled to get in on the imminent arrival of the superhighway. The deals included a \$4.9

billion union of Southwestern Bell and the Cox Enterprises cable company, and a \$12.6 billion American Telephone and Telegraph takeover of McCaw Cellular Communications.

The hype approached the dimensions of hysteria. Several months before the Bell Atlantic-TCI merger was announced, John H. Gibbons, a science adviser to President Bill Clinton, declared, "Information highways will revolutionize the way Americans work, learn, shop, and live." Alan Kessler, head of 3Com Corporation, predicted that the infohighway "will collapse time and space, erase cultural boundaries and move continents and people closer together." In January, Vice President Al Gore promised that the National Information Infrastructure, as he calls it, will "educate, promote democracy, and save lives."

---

Now many of the deals have come undone, the fragility of the dreams—and especially the economics—underscored by the fact that the big Bell Atlantic-TCI deal was wrecked in part by federal regulators' decision to trim cable TV rates slightly. Some sort of information superhighway will certainly be built, skeptical dismissals of the "superhighway" notwithstanding. But it now seems clear that a certain modesty about our expectations for when it will be built and what it will accomplish is in order.

**A** generation ago, futurists heralded the coming of cable TV in terms very similar to those being heard today. In 1971, the foundation-backed Sloan Commission on Cable Communications predicted: "Cable technology, in concert with other allied technologies, seems to promise a communications revolution. . . . The potential of cable television in the service of formal education—that is, as part of the school and higher educational system from kindergarten onwards—has been universally acclaimed." Our metaphors are as old our hype. In 1972, writer Ralph Lee Smith published a book called *The Wired Nation*, arguing that the United States should use cable TV as an "electronic communications highway." By the 1980s, Smith was predicting that Americans would be learning at home, corresponding by electronic mail (E-mail), and scanning far-off libraries in search of information.

Cable TV has arrived, but it is not very close to what was imagined or hoped for. A tiny minority of Americans are now doing the sorts of things that Smith and others talked about, but not through cable TV. Smith's wired nation is basically a one-way televised street, with plenty of mass entertainment, some new information, and little in the way of formal pedagogy. The big networks still dominate. Despite a few success stories (CNN and

C-SPAN), there has been no flowering of "serious" TV programming. All-opera and all-ballet cable channels have come and gone, and the state of public-access TV, which was supposed to have given us a new electronic commonwealth, is summed up by *Wayne's World*, the fictional public-access show hosted by two teenage heavy-metal music freaks in the hit film of the same name. Perhaps the biggest surprise on cable is the success of QVC and other home-shopping networks, which ring up \$3 billion in annual sales. After 20 years, cable TV is a lot less like an information superhighway than an entertainment supermarket, or, if the highway metaphor must be maintained, the traffic-clogged road down by the local mall.

The lesson ought to be plain: Technology alone does not a communications revolution make. Economics trumps technology every time. People must be offered things they want at prices they are willing to pay, and in the information arena, as in other realms of human life, people tend to want things that are not supposed to be good for them. Many of the futurists who see a new day dawning are going to be disappointed by what they find at dawn's early light. The notion that people who spend dozens of hours watching sitcoms every week and never read a newspaper will somehow be transformed into Renaissance men and women by the availability of new information services in the home seems overly hopeful, to say the least.

**A**t the same time, to make at least a few dreams come true, it is important to lay down in the near future a general political and regulatory framework for the new system. The choices range from a more or less laissez-faire approach, favored by many in industry, to something like the regulated monopoly model that governed the nation's telephone system until

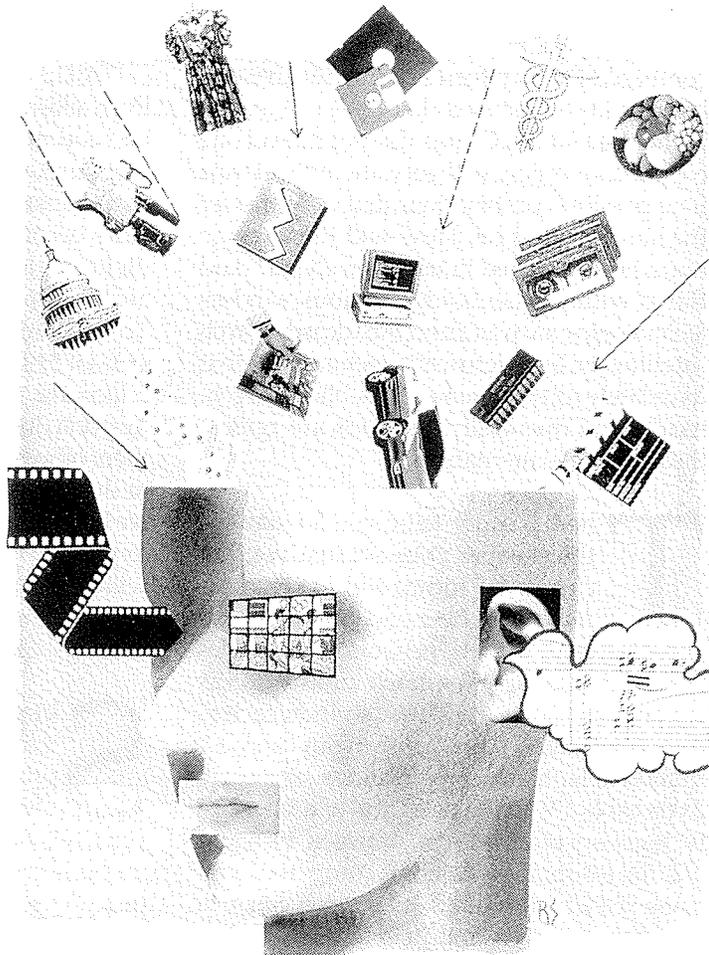
---

*Douglas Gomery, a professor in the College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, is the former senior researcher at the Wilson Center's Media Studies Project. His writing credits include nine books, most recently Shared Pleasures (1992) and The Future of News (1992). Copyright © 1994 by Douglas Gomery.*

the breakup of the Bell system in 1984. The first possibility would likely get the infohighway built somewhat more quickly; the second would give regulators a stronger voice on such matters as ensuring access for all. All of the competing bills now actively under consideration in Washington represent efforts to strike some sort of middle ground between these extremes. Uncertainty over what the federal government will do is one of the big imponderables forcing a readjustment of corporate timetables.

The technological force driving many of today's developments is *convergence*. Television, movies, radio, newspapers, books, and data have all in the past been composed in different media—on paper or film or magnetic tape. Today, however, all can be reduced to a single form of "information," the common language of the computer's binary code, an endless string of ones and zeroes. No longer is it necessary (technically at least) to print a newspaper on paper or to distribute a movie on film. Everything can be reduced to the same simple form and transmitted directly to—and in some cases from—consumers by wire, or, for that matter, on floppy disc or compact disk. And if film, print, and music are similar forms of "information," then the traditional divisions among industries that produce them begin to make less sense. This partly accounts for the frenzy of business mergers and ventures. "Our vision is: all forms of information, any place, any time," Michael Braun, an IBM executive, told the *Washington Post*.

The technology needed to reduce sound,



*The human appetite for information seems boundless. Yet the share of regular book readers in the population, 25 percent, hasn't changed since 1930.*

pictures, and words to a common form of information already exists and is being rapidly improved. The real economic, political, and technological question is how best to deliver all this information to Americans in their homes. What makes the delivery question so confusing is that some very basic questions have yet to be settled. Will there be one "wire" to the average household or two—one from a telephone company, another from a cable TV company? What kinds of wires will they be? Fiber-optic cables can carry massive amounts of information, but wiring the nation with fiber optics would be very expensive. Since technologies exist to get more out of both the coaxial cable already strung by cable TV com-

---

panies and the copper wires run by phone companies, it may turn out that the average household will have no fiber-optic connection in the near future. Or one fiber-optic and one copper connection. In theory, there are at least nine possible combinations that may answer the simple question, How will the average household be wired in the years ahead? And this is without mentioning various wireless technologies, such as direct broadcasting from satellites or by microwave technology, that have lately received reams of publicity. (Technically and financially, the odds are against these wireless alternatives.)

**T**here is much to be said for some of the cheaper wire alternatives, but clearly the future will not have arrived until fiber connects all homes and businesses with the network. Fiber carries at least 150,000 times as much information as copper wire. Forty fiber-optic strands, each as thin as a human hair, together can carry 1.3 million telephone conversations or nearly 2,000 cable TV channels. (Parts of a fiber-optic highway already exist. Between 1985 and '92, for example, telephone companies laid some 95,000 miles of cable between cities, in new communities, and in a variety of other places.) Only with the wide bandwidth of fiber optics will the system reach its full potential to carry vast quantities of complex information.

The basic device serving consumers at home will almost certainly be some sort of hybrid telecomputer that marries a computer processor and a television screen. It will display wide-screen images, easily accommodating all of Hollywood's CinemaScope-like images without lopping off the sides. Since sound and pictures will be recorded in digital code rather than as analog magnetic waves, as they are today, they will be crisp, clear, and distortion-free. A CD-ROM component will allow consumers to store and later retrieve data, from train timetables to family photographs. The telecomputer will have a keyboard, but its interactive heart will be a semi-

conductor chip.

All of this will be enormously expensive. Even allowing for the fact that competition can be counted on to drive down costs, telecomputers of the sort described here will cost thousands of dollars each. When they finally become widely available, for example, digital high-definition television (HDTV) sets are likely to cost in the neighborhood of \$5,000. To wire the nation with fiber-optic cable, add at least \$1,000 per household, or a cool \$100 billion for the whole country. That is not to mention the cost of wiring businesses, government offices, and nonprofit institutions. Sums of this size serve as reminders that, much as we like to think of the infohighway as the centerpiece of a "postindustrial" era, building it will be a very old-fashioned capital-intensive undertaking. It will take a long time, and it will be very expensive.

**S**ince, unlike the actual highway system, the infohighway is being built by private industry rather than government (and is likely to remain a private venture), the question of how to ensure access for all is central. The Clinton administration provides a somewhat contradictory answer. Vice President Gore told the *Wall Street Journal*: "As the National Information Infrastructure develops, President Clinton and I believe strongly that we must choose competition and protect it against both suffocating regulation on the one hand and unfettered monopolies on the other. . . . President Clinton and I are committed to making the benefits of the communications revolution available to all Americans across all sectors of society. It is a priority for this administration that every classroom, library, hospital, and clinic be connected to the National Information Infrastructure by the year 2000."

Clinton and Gore envision corporations developing the information superhighway with modest government encouragement and regulatory nudging. The administration anticipates a bimodal world. On one side, cable TV companies will begin to offer voice and data

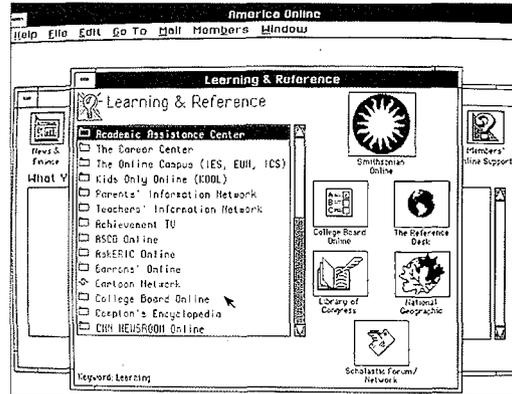


High hopes: One highly touted infohighway service of the future is video conferencing for business and families. Limited online conferences are already possible. At left, a meeting on the Internet using an ordinary Macintosh computer and CLI-See Me software developed at Cornell University. Below, a menu of choices available to customers of America Online.

services. On the other side will be the Baby Bells (the seven regional telephone companies) and long-distance carriers such as MCI and AT&T, which will begin to offer entertainment services. There will be two (probably fiber-optic) wires into homes and businesses, provided by competing companies.

Clinton and Gore want the best of both worlds: the advantages of competition and those of monopoly. They call for a classic cross-subsidy, similar to what the Bell system provided in the days before its breakup. Money will be transferred from well-off users to underwrite services for nonprofit institutions and poor people. In this very spirit, Bell Atlantic has already announced that it will give 26,000 public schools free access to the information superhighway, paid for by profits it will make from mainstream users. But Bell Atlantic's free wire does have a catch: It will run only to the schoolhouse door. Local school systems will still be responsible for wiring inside the building, buying necessary equipment, and providing training, not inconsequential expenses in this age when poorer school districts are unable to afford new library books.

Finally, Gore insists on a "switched" system. Today's telephone system is a switched network: It allows one user to connect directly with any other user. By contrast, traditional cable TV systems are nonswitched: The same message goes to everyone who tunes in. For financial reasons, some cable providers prefer a future highway with limited two-way com-



munication capabilities. Their experience as providers of mass entertainment rather than communications further impels them toward that option. The telephone companies and infohighway enthusiasts favor a switched system. The Electronic Frontier Foundation, a self-styled public-interest group founded by software multimillionaire Mitchell Kapor, points out that a nonswitched system restricts access because there must be a fixed number of channels. With a switched network, "anyone with content to distribute—whether to one, 100, or 100,000 users—can do so without the permission or advance approval of the carrier." Such a system is essential to Kapor's "Jeffersonian vision" of the electronic future, in which every American is a potential creator (of videos, software, political tracts, etc.) and every home is a de facto broadcast studio. The unanswered question, however, is whether there will be enough demand for such active uses of the new technology to justify universal service of this kind. The Jeffersonian road could, alas, lead us to a gold-plated version of today's public-access TV.

Once all the wires and other hardware are in place, what will they bring to America's homes, schools, and offices? And who will pay

---

for it? These are questions that, apart from a number of agreeable generalities, have not been widely examined. If you build it, they will come, seems to be the attitude of Gore and many of his fellow enthusiasts. One formulation of Say's Law, a controversial hypothesis of 18th-century economics, holds that supply creates its own demand. But Say probably could not have imagined a market already overwired with 80 or so cable channels per household and about to move up to hundreds of channels. Research shows that as things stand now most cable viewers simply tune out the vast majority of their choices and repeatedly view only five or six channels. (Another item from the annals of survey research that does not augur well for a high-tech future is the finding that more than half of all VCR owners have not even managed to program the time on their machines, apparently preferring to stare at an eternally flashing "12:00.")

**W**hat will Americans want from their wired world? One embarrassing truth is that plain old TV programming will almost certainly be a mainstay during the early days of the highway, and possibly for quite a long time. Only one entirely new service seems obvious to all: video on demand. It is easier to order up movies from the comfort of one's couch than to hop in the car and drive to a video store, where inevitably every copy of the latest Arnold Schwarzenegger epic has already been signed out. The video rental trade is now a \$12 billion business, and the high-tech info entrepreneurs are intent on capturing a slice of the humble home-video pie. Time Warner's chief executive officer Gerald M. Levin is blunt: "People clearly want [these movies] and they are already paying for them now. All we need is a fraction of that demand."

Some other possibilities for interactive systems include home shopping, video conferencing, education at home, town meetings, video games, and home banking. Some of these are bound to fail. Michael Noll, dean of the University of Southern California's

Annenberg School of Communication, observes: "[Home banking] has gone through generations of failure and failure and failure. Until we invent a home terminal that dispenses cash, home banking won't get far, except for people who want to do extra work." When *Wired* magazine asked four experts to predict when interactive TV would be widely available, two said never. (The other two said the turn of the century or later.) Yet entrepreneurs will certainly invent entirely new and as yet unimaginable kinds of products. For example, Carol Peters, one of Silicon Valley's most respected computer designers, has formed DaVinci Time and Space to develop an interactive video network for children. Blending the lure of a Disneyland-style electronic theme park with the pedagogy of *Sesame Street*, DaVinci Time and Space seeks to go beyond video on demand to provide a computerized "space" in which kids can play games, watch videos, or simply hang out online. Since someone has to pay, the plan is to sell advertising and provide the service free. In that respect, DaVinci Time and Space is like old-fashioned TV; interactivity is what makes it radically new.

Leaving aside such experiments, the basic economic principle best suited to an understanding of the technofuture is simple (and uninspiring) enough: the substitution effect. If one technology is currently being used, can an interactive on-line video version do a better job? Can catalogs now printed on paper and delivered by the U.S. mail be displaced by interactive TV sales that allow customers to enter an electronic showroom? Economic logic says that business elicited by printed catalogs will go down as sales generated by TV technology increase. The big players already recognize this. The substitution effect target list, when added up, is staggering. In 1993, shopping (\$160 billion), telecommunications (\$150 billion), information services (\$35 billion), and entertainment (\$28 billion) totaled well over a quarter-trillion dollars. Yet "obvious" substitutions do not always work and experiments frequently backfire. In suburban Denver,

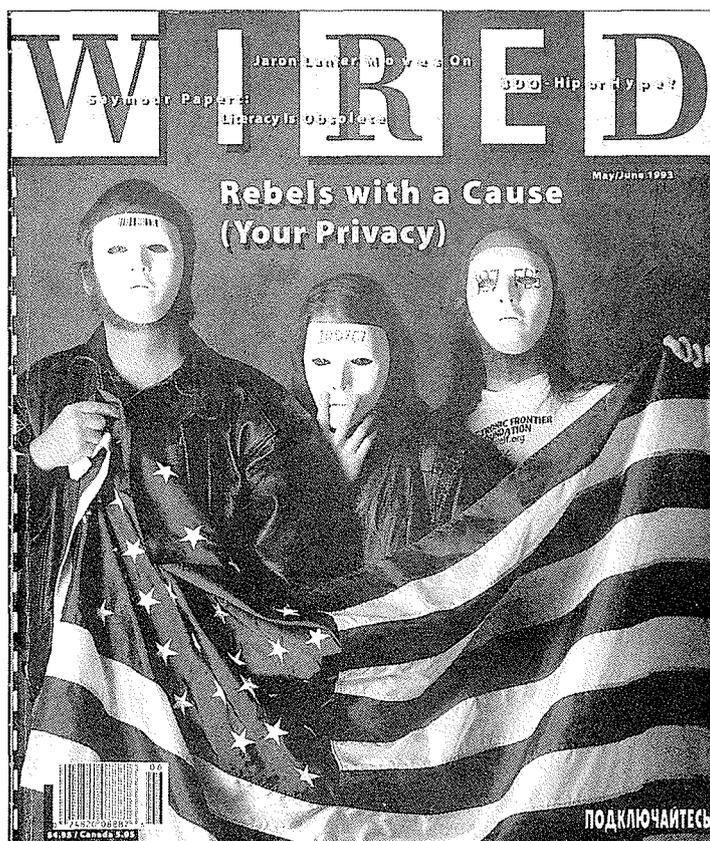
where TCI is running a market test offering its customers movies on demand, it has found that customers like the service, but also that those who sign up simply cancel HBO and the Movie Channel, making the experiment essentially a wash for the company.

Some futurists see the germ of the 21st century in today's nascent "on-line" services, such as America Online, Prodigy, and CompuServe. Pay a membership fee and dial up one of these services using a modem attached to your personal computer, and you can catch up on the news, check your mutual fund investments, and chat with like-minded folks on bulletin boards devoted to such specialized topics as your hometown hockey team, office etiquette, opera, or nuclear proliferation. But so far the services have attracted only a specialized clientele of affluent, highly educated, gadget-oriented users. The total subscriber base of these three top on-line services stands at less than three million, smaller than the subscriber base of *Newsweek*. At America Online, the hottest of the services, the largest number of pioneers actually traveling in cyberspace at any one time is only about 8,000.

One sticking point is money. After a burst of key-strokes, sticker shock sobers up even the selected sample of on-line users, and thereafter those who remain on-line—the dropout rate is high—rarely again exceed their minimum monthly charge of \$10–\$15. It would cost hundreds of dollars per month to make full use of these services. And even at these prices, providers are not having an easy time

making a go of it. Prodigy, jointly owned by Sears and IBM, has failed to turn a profit in six years.

To see what consumers want, telephone, cable, and other technology companies are testing other combinations of services in a variety of places around the United States and Canada. Experiment after experiment so far has proved inconclusive at best. In June 1993, Bell Atlantic began offering movies on demand over existing telephone lines to a selected set of employee-customers in a suburb of Washington, D.C., with plans to extend the test to two New Jersey sites. Results will be coming from other tests in Seattle, Omaha, Denver, Salt Lake City, West Hartford, and various sites in California and Ontario throughout 1994 and '95. The biggest experi-



Defining the First Amendment in cyberspace is becoming increasingly difficult and controversial. In the future, on-line communications will be encrypted. The issue: Should the government be given the keys to the code?

---

ment is scheduled to commence at the end of 1994 with Time Warner's trial offering to 4,000 Orlando, Florida, consumers of the world's first true "full-service network": switched, digitized, fiber-optic, multimedia, and interactive. The lucky few will be able to see any movie they want at any time, view all current and any new TV services, shop, play video games, telecommute, and read E-mail.

Interactivity is the heart of this million-dollar experiment. "Our new electronic superhighway will change the way people use television," declared Time Warner's Gerald M. Levin when he announced the plan in January 1993. "By having the consumer access unlimited services, the Full Service Network will render irrelevant the notion of sequential channels on a TV set." In other words, out go NBC, CBS, ABC, and Fox, and in comes Time Warner.

Yet all has not gone well. For the moment Levin has quietly placed his full-service network test on hold; his two major software and converter suppliers cannot meet the deadline. It is one thing to display the power of 500 or so channels in a laboratory, quite another to make the future work in 4,000 homes. William Weiss, the chief executive officer of Ameritech, one of the regional Bell telephone companies, deserves a prize for realistic punditry for telling the trade publication *Electronic Media*, "There are about five quantum steps between the prototype and what the customer will eventually pay for its use."

Apart from the commercial on-line systems and the experiments by Time Warner and other corporations, there are two other models that in interesting ways mark out some future possibilities for the information superhighway.

**T**o see true popular interactivity of the kind envisioned by some futurists actually working today—albeit in a crude, simplistic way—one must turn to, of all places, France. The Minitel system links 6.5 million French households, using a simple video screen and keyboard combination that allows users to play chess, scan lists

for bargain vacations, and chat with new friends by means of typed messages. When Minitel was introduced 10 years ago, teenagers made it a fad. The yellow pages became passé; it was more fun to type in the requested name and see the phone number appear magically on the screen. Punching in "3615 arts" provides newspaperlike lists of the latest movies. To order a pizza, a hip French teen no longer calls, but types "Zapizza."

Minitel works with an unassuming little box and a relatively primitive computer system. The device costs about \$4 per month to rent from the national telephone company and is attached to the copper-wire (not fiber) French telephone system. This is a highway based on early-1980s technology. An American telephone company, US West, is conducting tests in San Jose and Minneapolis of a version of Minitel that links parents and schools. Minitel has the great virtue of being practical and workable, but its decade-old technology is a severe limitation.

A better-known model is the Internet. "The future will look and work like the Internet today," Vice President Gore declared recently. Started during the 1960s by the Pentagon for scientists in universities and other research institutions, the Internet has expanded rapidly in recent years. It has gone beyond the exchange of scientific studies and academic data to become a vast international network whose users enjoy such things as E-mail, data bases, and specialized bulletin boards and lists where Chaucer scholars, foot fetishists, rock 'n' roll junkies, and particle physicists can converse in text. At least 15 million people in more than 100 countries are hooked up—there is no central authority, and the system's unofficial demographers have lost count.

There is much to admire about the Internet. It promotes diversity; it is truly interactive; it encourages commentary by one and all. But the Internet will not work as a mass medium in the future. There is no revenue stream (it is underwritten by the federal government, universities, and other institutions), and it requires too much time and expertise to

---

learn and use. Indeed, in the next few years there will be a struggle for the soul of the Internet as advertisers seek to use its reach to send messages to its millions of users.

**T**he future will not look like America Online, Minitel, or Internet. If the information superhighway is to be for all, then it cannot (and should not) be limited by price, technological crudity, or scientific configuration. The new infohighway ought to be as advanced as possible and available to all who might like to use it. But here is the central contradiction: Cost of access will be high if corporate combatants expect to rake in millions of dollars in fees. But such access fees will limit use and growth. Michael Schrage, a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, calculated the real cost of the new technoworld by adding up a mock monthly bill for the wired consumer of the future. His "United Multimedia's First Consolidated Monthly Statement" for two dozen on-line connections, setups, entertainment and news services, home-shopping purchases, and assorted extras came to \$2,467.48—a bit of exaggeration that makes an important point. The fear that the information superhighway may be only for the well-to-do, even if every household in America is wired, is not entirely unrealistic.

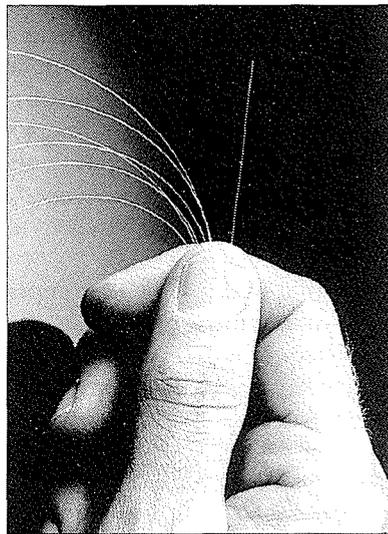
Building the infohighway is the most immediate challenge, and the phone and cable companies are justified in complaining that it is difficult to figure out how to invest when no rules and regulations are in place. Congress has moved very slowly. The Energy and Commerce Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives has approved two sweeping telecommunications bills that allow cable and telephone companies to compete on a limited

basis. The House Judiciary Committee has approved a conflicting version of permissible bimodal competition. Fights on the House floor, actions by the Senate, compromises, the signature of the president, and reviews by the courts await.

In the meantime, new regulatory schemes continue to be floated to satisfy the major corporate players (who desire deregulation) or consumer advocates (who call for regulations requiring universal access and affordable rates). Some sort of requirement for universal access probably will be written into law, but legislating a requirement is one thing and devising definitions of terms such as "universal" and the regulations to implement them is another. Accustomed to free access to information—television, radio, public libraries—we are perplexed by the prospect of pay-as-you-go information.

With significant technical, economic, and regulatory impediments to overcome, our multimedia future will remain unsettled for some time to come. When there is risk involved, conservative corporate America treads ever so carefully and ever so slowly. Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in the 1870s, but as late as 1940 most Americans did not have a phone at home and the vast majority had never made a single

long-distance call. Everything about the information superhighway will continue to be the subject of vigorous debate. Hype and hysteria will continue, as will mergers and megadeals. But because of the uncertainties that remain, it will be a long time before somebody peddling access to the information future knocks on your front door and makes an offer you cannot refuse.



# LEARNING FROM THE NET

BY EDWARD TENNER

**T**he end is NII. That's the National Information Infrastructure, of course, the amorphous web-to-be that has become an inkblot test of the national psyche. Some proponents dream of a 24-hour global symposium combining the best of Madame de Staël and Mortimer Adler, while skeptics fear a future of conference calls with the likes of John Wayne Gacy and Joseph Goebbels. Some fear a surveillance machine of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Internal Revenue Service, others a witches' sabbath of hackers and virus artists. And while dreamers await a fiber-optic fountain of packet-switched wisdom, naysayers expect an overflowing bathtub brew of banalities, recycled programming, and junk messages. Glimmerings of all of these things are already visible.

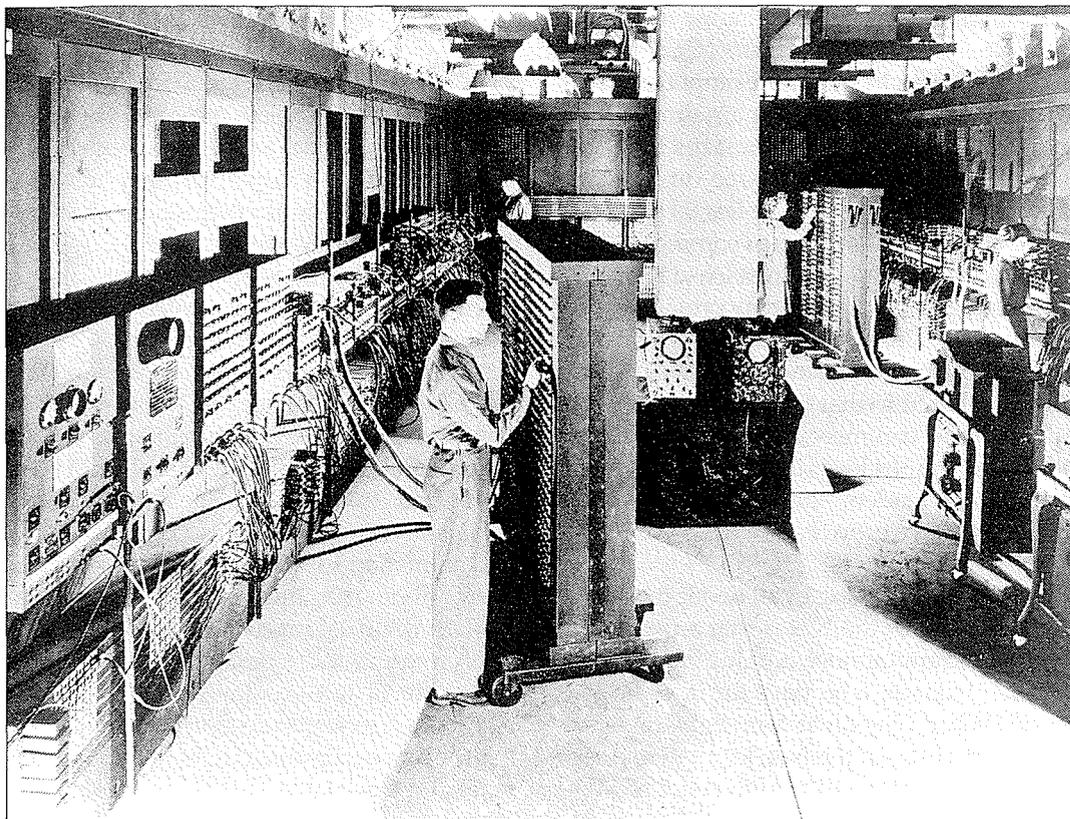
What will the NII really be, whatever its ultimate name? The central problem of electronic futurism is that even the most gifted pioneers miss essential features of systems to come. That is inevitable. How can we know what is to be discovered and invented without discovering or inventing it? Paul Valéry pointed this out when he wrote in 1944 that "unpredictability in every field is the result of the conquest of the whole of the present world by scientific power." Even the legendary John von Neumann, one of the fathers of the computer, did not foresee small, personal machines. As a colleague of his has pointed out, von Neumann was interested mainly in developing machines for weather prediction. Yet many of the issues that will concern us for at least the next 10 years can already be seen in the operation of networks today. Much of this experience suggests that a National Information Infrastructure may be depressingly like real life.

The NII's promoters use a highway metaphor to describe it not only because the NII

will allow individuals to travel hither and yon electronically but because the metaphor powerfully suggests other possibilities as well. Americans believe that an Infrastructure grows a Superstructure. Look what the interstate highways did. Americans are still willing to contemplate the prospect of immense wealth generated by something that has yet to be described or explained. We are all aware that hype is our birthright, that most of us are here because our ancestors believed equally extravagant promises. The fact that nobody knows how the NII will work or be financed is no great concern. Few people can describe all the workings of the Internet, but it works.

The real problems with the NII are in the Superstructure we expect. As to that, no one can safely say that an open, competitive order by itself will create the electronic promised land we hope to find. To the contrary, the benefits created so far by the Internet have come not from market-oriented firms but from enlightened monopolies and oligopolies, and these seem increasingly endangered just as the Internet is making their value clearer. Moreover, experience with the Internet today suggests that no matter what is done to promote access, electronic networking will promote elitism and secessionism as much as it does collegiality and community. The issues are, respectively, "depth" and "breadth." But first a few words about what today's Internet is.

**I**n computer networking as in real life, results often do not have much to do with intentions. The free-spirited, cosmopolitan, decentralized Net was hatched under the wing of the Cold War eagle. It depends on a technique called packet switching: cutting up data into discrete, labeled units, sending them over high-speed lines by various routes,



*In the beginning there was ENIAC (the electronic numerical integrator and computer), shown in 1946.*

and reconstructing them for the recipient shortly before they reach their destination. If it is a highway, it is one in which vehicles and contents are dismembered, the pieces carefully labeled for reassembly, and each sent independently to be joined again in a single unit at the destination. The packet-switching idea was put into practice three decades ago by the Air Force-funded RAND Corporation as a safeguard against the collapse of defense-related communications in a nuclear attack or other emergency. There was no master switchboard; if one node went down, data could be routed around it. The first organization to use this system was the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), which sponsored "Arpanet" at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1969 and expanded it through the 1970s. The network soon assumed a life of its own. In the early

1980s, Arpanet split into military and civilian networks, and the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) began to administer the Arpanet backbone. The NSF still contracts out the maintenance of lines and equipment to a variety of telephone, hardware, software, and service concerns.

During the 1980s three developments helped networking expand. First, the NSF insisted that all faculty and students at member institutions, not just those receiving NSF or Pentagon funds, have access to the network. Second, the adoption of the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) and Internet Protocol (IP), already embraced by the Department of Defense in 1974, gave all Internet members a common method of sending and receiving data. Third, the organizations and committees in charge of the Net allowed new members—chiefly universities and other institutions—to

---

join at flat fees related to the number of users rather than the volume of traffic. Commercial information services such as CompuServe and Dialog can readily track the amount of time individual users spend on-line (and bill them accordingly). This is not done on the Net. Knowledge, the system implies, is good for you. Because most owners of copyrighted information are reluctant to release it in this freebooting realm, the Net may provide a very spotty view of human knowledge. But the Net is also available for extended use at a cost trifling compared to that of the commercial databases. The commercial sector is hard on browsers. The Net loves them—perhaps more than it loves readers—and that is one reason for its explosive growth.

**T**he best thing of all about the structure of the Net is that a user need know almost nothing about who runs it, who pays for it, or how it works. When I log on to something on a far-away computer on the Net, let's say to a service called Gopher at the University of Minnesota, I am doing a number of things. From my home personal computer, connected by a modem to telephone lines, I am operating a sophisticated Sun computer in a nearby Princeton University building. (A dozen or more other users may be on-line at the same time, but each appears to have exclusive control.) That machine is linked to the university's high-speed Ethernet ring, one of two networks that circle the campus. Another Princeton computer then forwards my request to one of 19 regional centers around the country. Here the request, broken up into packets or units the size of a typed page of text, passes through dedicated fiber-optic lines to the regional center for Minneapolis, and from there to the right computer on the University of Minnesota system. Data flowing back to me from that computer follows a similar course in reverse.

The Minnesota Gopher can be imagined as a branching burrow offering the user a series of new menus. Each menu may offer from one to dozens of choices, or more. Each item may be as practical as a campus telephone book, as broad as a nationwide list of research library catalogs, or as cute as a mock dictionary of electronic smiley faces. Gopher—named after the university's mascot—is only a few years old, and it illustrates the fact that the wider and more powerful the Net becomes, the easier it is to use.

Convenience has made Net connections contagious. According to *Computerworld*, by 1994, 15 million users around the world were connected to the Net. The system's size doubles every year. And as graphics, sound, and animation supplement plain old text, the size of files transmitted is growing rapidly as well. (A digitized image for a book jacket can easily require more disk space—perhaps a megabyte of information—than the whole text.) The Net seems destined to become the main way corporations exchange data internally and externally. This is unsettling news for most of the people who have been regular users of the Net. While industrial laboratories have been members since the beginning, the Net is most uncorporate. Suits are not its strong suit. Users revel in individualism. They are proud of the absence of a central authority and, in many cases, of their ability to overcome whatever local authority or obstructions exist. Of course, that means investing a small amount of time, and often the result is that one simply finds more things to waste time on in the Net. But value is not the point. Freedom is.

The system works as well as it does for two reasons. First, at a cost of about \$11 million annually the federal government modestly subsidizes the Internet backbone, the leased lines that connect regional centers, branching out to cover the entire country. Second, each Internet "site" is a network of its

---

*Edward Tenner is author of Tech Speak and a Visiting Fellow in the Department of Geological and Geophysical Science at Princeton University. He is writing a book about the unintended consequences of technology. Copyright © 1994 by Edward Tenner.*

own, often with multiple servers (computers that supply end users' machines with programs and data), which are accessed by individuals using personal computers or work stations. Such decentralization has advantages. It allows academic departments, computer administrators, and others to make their own decisions about software and other matters, yet keeps the whole Net working together.

Behind the Net's usability and expansion is a paradox. Its agreeable anarchy rests on an efficient and unobtrusive (and largely informal) bureaucracy, just as the individualism of the American suburb and the romance of the open road require billions in tax and public works subsidies. The spirit of the Net may be self-realization through exploration of infinite possibilities and sources of knowledge. But the soaring fantasies of its users require untold subsidized person-hours. Holding up the Net is a corps of professionals paid by universities, government laboratories, and businesses, yet often doing work that benefits users elsewhere. The Internet would be useless to me and most other Princeton users, for example, if people in the university's academic computing and telecommunications departments did not troubleshoot the cables, upgrade the software, keep out the rogues (usually), and otherwise make the world safe for individualism. Other people at Princeton and other institutions develop and support the software that even proficient users need. Still others provide, free of charge, the amazing multifaceted contents

## Feast or Famine?

*Thousands of discussion groups have blossomed on the Internet, a good number of them fairly exotic, as this sampler from the Chronicle of Higher Education (June 1, 1994) suggests.*

"AACUNY-L" is for discussing Asian American culture and is available from [LISTSERV@CUNY-VM.CUNY.EDU](mailto:LISTSERV@CUNY-VM.CUNY.EDU).

"ARL-ERESERVE" is for discussing electronic-reserve systems in libraries and is available from [LISTPROC@CNI.ORG](mailto:LISTPROC@CNI.ORG).

"HARRY-STINE" is for conversing with the author G. Harry Stine and is available from [HARRY-STINE-REQUEST@ILC.COM](mailto:HARRY-STINE-REQUEST@ILC.COM).

"MAXLIFE" is for discussing ways to work toward a positive, healthy life style that avoids heavy consumerism and is available from [LISTSERV@GIBBS.OIT.UNC.EDU](mailto:LISTSERV@GIBBS.OIT.UNC.EDU).

"PIANOMAN" is for discussing the life and career of the singer Billy Joel and is available from [LISTSERV@PSUVM.PSU.EDU](mailto:LISTSERV@PSUVM.PSU.EDU).

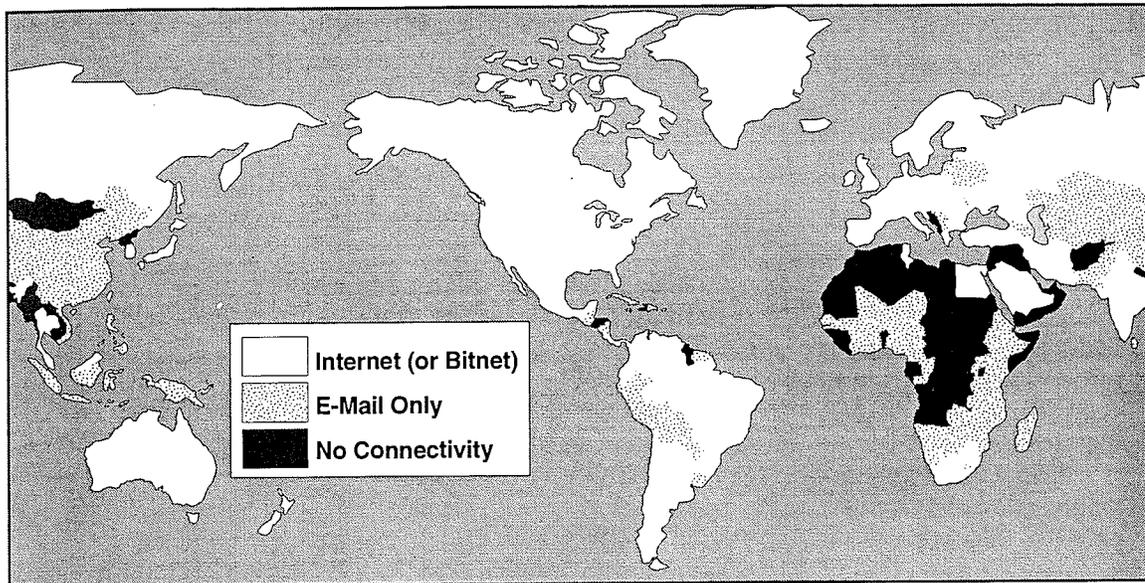
"SCUBA" is for discussing scuba and skin diving in either English or Turkish and is available from [LISTSERV@CC.ITU.EDU.TR](mailto:LISTSERV@CC.ITU.EDU.TR).

of the Net: the endless supply of bibliographies and texts and data files and images. They need salaries, grants, and contracts. In other words, they need to be part of a well-funded organization.

**T**he software commonly used on the Net comes not from entrepreneurs but from big technological corporations and academia. Unix, the Net's basic operating software—the equivalent of the personal computer's DOS or Windows—is an industrial-strength operating system written for programmers, not end users. ("User" and "user friendly" have long been disparaging words in some programmer circles.) Unix is uncompromising and

---

## Toward a Wired World



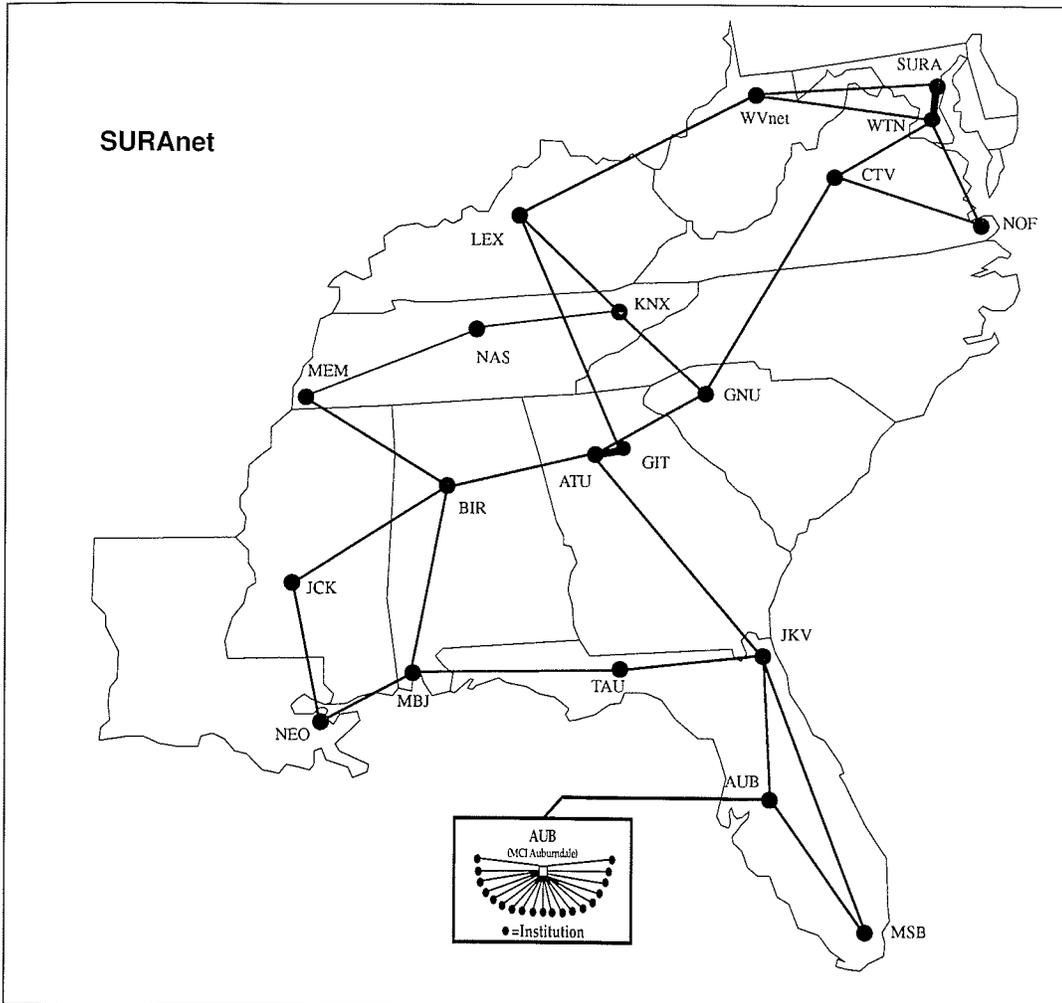
*A new network connects to the Internet every 20 minutes, but less than one percent of the world's population has access to it. (E-mail users cannot search databases or send or receive large files.) The map at right is a simplified view of SURAnet, a regional unit of the Internet. Individual users are not shown, only the institutional networks they are linked to. Information may travel any number of paths to get from one point to another.*

unforgiving to the novice. On-line help consists of a stark, laconic glossary of commands mastered by trial, error, peer advice, and a growing number of third-party handbooks. But Unix is fast and effective once the user learns it. It should be. Bell Telephone Laboratories originally developed it for the operation of long-distance telephone switching. Barred by regulators from marketing it—these were Bell's monopoly days—the company gave the program away to educational users.

More recently, universities have developed Net programs on their own. From Columbia University comes the nearly indispensable Kermit communication software. From the University of Minnesota comes Gopher, the almost foolproof menu system for navigating the Net. The World-Wide Web (WWW) is an even more flexible and powerful system for doing the same thing. A click on a computer's mouse can point a user from one document to another source containing related informa-

tion—possibly on computers thousands of miles away from the one containing the original document. The Web was developed for research at the European Particle Physics Laboratory (CERN) in Geneva, big science at its biggest and best. The Mosaic software that lets me access the WWW comes from the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the University of Illinois at Urbana, another elite government-funded program.

**W**hat makes the Net so accessible, in other words, is research the public has funded in one way or another: not only through taxes but through ordinary payments for products and services, especially tuition and long-distance phone service. The cost of this research was always hidden in the prices of other things. It all seemed part of overhead, like new scales and postal meters for the mail room. Up to a point, it was. But by the



early 1990s, it had become clear that the whole Net had become much more than the sum of the parts.

Now that the Net appears about to go public, the depth that helped create it is increasingly seen by captains of industry and finance as a luxury and "curiosity-driven research" as a profanity. In real dollars, industrial research and development spending has stagnated since the late 1980s, according to one estimate. A few miles from my Princeton home, one of the country's greatest research organizations, RCA's Sarnoff Laboratory, was devastated during the early 1980s when its

main project, the videodisc, floundered. Other corporate laboratories are shadows of their former selves. More than ever, universities are the deep organizations of last resort for established researchers. But they have few career positions to offer young Ph.D.'s.

In the new age of the lean, "reengineered" corporation, depth no longer counts for much. We once resented the arrogance of big science, big government, big education, and big medicine. But we respected their competence and above all their commitment to planning and standard-setting. Even today, a battered IBM maintains specialized laboratories to test com-

---

puters for interference with other electronic devices so that airplane passengers, for example, can use their portable computers without endangering aircraft navigation systems. The second-tier suppliers and clonesmiths of the world cannot afford such high-mindedness. It is true that for all their contributions, big, proud, securely financed organizations are not always fun to work with. They offer few bargains. But they do have the luxury of assigning people to worry about standards, systems, and details. With secure market share, they can help out weaker firms and niche producers. They also can impose private and semipublic taxation systems in the public interest. Stiff rates for long-distance calls helped the Bell System keep local residential service cheap and reliable before its 1984 breakup. The British Broadcasting Corporation's license fees supported in-house symphony orchestras. The Ivy League's stratospheric tuition permits guaranteed financial support for low-income students. These attitudes and practices are what IBM, DuPont, Merck, and others have, at least in the past, shared with the British Museum, the former Soviet Academy of Sciences, the great universities, and at different times the Benedictines and Jesuits.

The fate of deep organizations may also have a powerful affect on the content that will travel on the NII—and, for that matter, via conventional media. Thin is a polite term to describe much of what is now produced. Creating innovative, exciting projects to feed the NII will be an immense challenge. Editors and producers already struggle to find good work in conventional form. Commercial media depend not only on the marketplace but on deep organizations, with their academic salaries, libraries, and computer centers. Even so, more and more high-quality books and documentary films have shifted from the commercial economy to more or less deep, subsidized, nonprofit institutions, such as university presses and public television. And these, too, are under financial pressure that new technology will not relieve. Somehow people have to

be paid to produce new knowledge.

Financiers, journalists, and even customers once respected depth, even if they did not always like the haughtiness and conservatism that often accompany it. But depth seems to be waning, and nobody knows whether institutional leanness will turn out to be technological anorexia.

**C**an we substitute new broad structures for depth? Can a network take the place of deep organizations? Using programs like Gopher and Mosaic, can the newly empowered masses navigate their way to new knowledge and connections? Once more, the Net is all too much like real life.

For people who belong to an existing community, whether it is a corporation or a research project involving a dozen or more universities, the Net can be a powerful tool for collaboration. Yet as communication specialist Phil Agre has pointed out in a document widely circulated on the Net, the system does not alter certain fundamental human truths. Behind electronic communications there are still the same three-dimensional people, occupying the same points in space and time, and having the same power. The Net mirrors their social structure. An "alias group" of six, a dozen, 50, or more researchers or administrators seems to form a key social unit of the Net. They are another expression of what the sociologist Diana Crane has called "invisible colleges"—communities of researchers intensely concerned with the same problems, such as earthquakes in southern California. In general, the more prominent a person, the more likely that most of his or her time on the Net will be spent with these close electronic collaborators, not chatting with casual inquirers.

The reticence and indifference of much of the elite makes space for the rest of us, allowing the bright graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and some assistant professors to shine. It encourages people from related fields to join discussions. But the silence of the Establishment also creates problems. On a science-

studies mailing list (an automated bulletin board for subscribers, sometimes open to all and sometimes not) I once saw a call for action against the Acoustic Thermometry of Ocean Climate (ATOC) for using sound waves to measure possible effects of global warming in the oceans. The author predicted ear injuries fatal to thousands of whales and other marine mammals. Disturbed, I consulted a colleague and through the Net he was able to search the resources of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California, and retrieve page after page of description and environmental defense of the project. Nobody at Scripps or elsewhere had posted a rebuttal to the original item on the list—they may not even have seen it. Somebody who relied only on the list would not have enough evidence.

ATOC *might* still be hazardous to marine life, but the Scripps people had a good case that it would not be. Unfortunately, the case was not made when and where it should have been.

There are excellent, balanced discussions on Net lists as well as dreadful ones. The expertly moderated Risks Digest (available as *comp.risks* on most systems offering news groups), one of the best, is an invaluable chronicle of cautionary tales and informed opinion on the hazards of computing. But in most lists, lacking participation by the best and most active minds in the field, exchanges may be irregular and turnover rapid. Flaming—the practice of sending scorching reproofs and rejoinders via E-mail—is less common than I had expected, but what might be called fading (just dropping out) is endemic. So are drift and fatigue. Where the Net excels is less in evaluating ideas than in pooling factual intel-



*Anonymity is a major feature of social existence in the on-line world, allowing users to shed, for better or worse, all manner of inhibitions.*

ligence. It is a great place to get suggestions for a reading list on almost any subject. If one needs a reference on the origin of left- and right-hand driving rules, on the location of a 19th-century French artist's papers, on the refraction of light through water, or on Aristotle's rhetorical terminology, the Net is superb. But it is an impractical substitute for any other form of learning, and is likely to stay that way.

**T**he real test of breadth, though, is not the experience of academics, writers, scientists, and technical people in discussion groups. Most of these people are connected in some way with a deep organization, even if they are independent professionals or entrepreneurs. Nor is it the medical use of networks. What the Clinton administration wants is much broader: access for

DRAWING BY P. STEINER, COPYRIGHT © 1993, THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE, INC., ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

---

all citizens and connections for all primary and secondary schools. If the old AT&T was the ultimate deep organization, the American public schools are the consummate broad organizations, curiously like the Net in their loose coordination and grouping in autonomous districts.

Americans are proud of depth but not always convinced it pays. They are even prouder of breadth, though, and the political support for the NII shows it. In a December 1993 speech, Vice President Al Gore declared that "broadcasts, telephones, and public education were all designed to diminish the gap between haves and have nots" (a debatable assertion), that the NII should do the same, and that "schools and our children are paramount." He went on to call for giving "every child access to the educational riches we have in such abundance."

Admirable as the idea of wiring all schools sounds, it is financially not a simple thing. As the vice president himself noted, only one-quarter of all schools possess even a single modem, even though one can be had for about \$100. And wiring and hardware are only a small part of the true cost of computerizing. Far greater costs accrue in the time specialists spend installing, maintaining, and debugging equipment and software. Computer prices may be dropping, but these hidden costs of computing are not. Indeed, some have been rising sharply as hardware and software manufacturers discontinue free telephone support services for customers.

Setting aside such difficulties, the real challenge to breadth is the character of the educational software on the future NII. Vice President Gore seems to assume that this material already exists in "abundance." But does it? True, vast amounts of literary, scientific, artistic, and musical material can now be transmitted electronically, and more will certainly become available. Even at today's prices, a book can be scanned and digitized for under \$10; a library of 10 million volumes could be scanned for a price modest by Washington standards. In the near future, students pre-

sumably will be able to download great books, hear symphonies, visit the great art galleries of the world, and so forth. But the vice president may be missing the point.

Using any resource demands what social scientists call "tacit knowledge": skills and ideas that may not be recorded in written form but that arise from person-to-person learning and experience. One of the functions of computer networking at the highest professional levels is to draw on just this kind of experience. An expert radiologist, for example, may see patterns in a nuclear magnetic resonance scan sent over the Net that most other physicians would probably overlook. My colleagues in structural geology and geophysics can see things in plots of seismic data that elude even many experienced petroleum geologists. The Net lets people with a high degree of tacit knowledge share it with others at similar levels.

The anthropologist and computer writer Bryan Pfaffenberger shows in *Democratizing Information* (1989) that even for adults, using on-line information depends on tacit knowledge acquired through personal interaction, information and skills that may not be documented anywhere. Someone beginning to study a subject, whether as a schoolchild or an

### The E-Mail Crisis

*More than half of all traffic on the Internet is E-mail, and much of that is inconsequential chatter. After raising the subject of electronic communication in the New Yorker, writer John Seabrook was deluged with E-mail, including the missive below.*

From: peter911sc@aol.com

Real problem with the Information Superhighway is typified by this letter: God only knows how many idiots like me will tie up your time with responses.

---

adult, needs these hard-to-define abilities. Learning any game or skill requires immersion in a group of people who already have the skill. Weight training can improve an athlete's game, and a flight simulator can sharpen a pilot's abilities, but machines cannot develop a skill that is not already there.

**N**etworked information can develop and extend skills that have already been taught by schools. And many computer operations are becoming important skills in their own right. It is another thing, however, to expect networked software to replace the social world of the school as a social order of teachers and learners. We do not really know what learning is, and we do not understand why some people are so much better at teaching and learning than others. We certainly do not know how to teach a computer to teach. By brute force, today's dedicated chess computers can defeat even grandmasters in the speed game. What programs alone still cannot do is tutor an average beginner to expert level. Even if the same material is available free to all schools, students without a strong basis in tacit knowledge will benefit far less than those who have it. If the haves and have-nots are treated equally, then the gap between them will probably grow, not shrink.

When it comes to building better software for a future Net, educators are likely to find another unpleasant surprise. The better and more powerful the hardware and the greater the network bandwidth, the more expensive software may be to produce. As the historian Steven J. Ross has pointed out, the improved production values of motion pictures after World War I increased costs and helped concentrate power in major studios. Labor unions and political dissenters had far fewer opportunities to get their views into national distribution. While improving the medium, technology had helped multiply producers' expenses. In the 1990s, movies with spectacular electronic special effects, such as *Terminator 2* and *Jurassic Park*, have had the biggest budgets.

Educational animation and sound are unlikely to reach the same stratosphere of cost, but software development remains both labor intensive and risky; some of today's acclaimed educational CD-ROMs have sold only a few thousand copies. The outlook for high-quality products is good, but they will not be cheap, and in one way or another they will need heavy public financing, especially if equity is a concern. How will schools that can barely afford almanacs pay for on-line multimedia software?

If the deep organizations that developed the Net are in trouble and the broad organizations do not yet provide the base that can take advantage of it, what can the future of an NII be? We already have multiplied our ability to communicate and to collaborate. Our problem, and the challenge of any future network, is that we have multiplied it all too well. Communication is the only thing in society that risks self-destruction as it is multiplied. Imagine an Infotopia in which any person or organization could send a multimedia file of any size to anyone else, at almost no charge. Infotopia would collapse almost instantly. Many people already resent junk E-mail and incipient advertising on the Internet. Newsgroups, the discussion forums that are probably the best-known feature of the Net, are already dangerously unwieldy just because of the growing volume of traffic. That does not mean the Net itself is going to collapse, but only that selection and self-selection are going to grow.

**I**t might be time to think again about the overused but unavoidable superhighway metaphor. Roads and networks do have something important in common. Both make it easier to work with people dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of miles away. And both thereby give you an alternative to getting along with the people next door. You can get out of uncomfortable situations. You can limit your visits to people who share your interests, biases, and outlook. And if your new space becomes unpleasant, why, you can move again. Building suburbs and exurbs is

---

not so different from building networks.

Yes, networks can help people strengthen neighborhoods and communities. But they also encourage people to find ways out. Unhappy with your schools? Join the parents who have turned to home schooling. Teaching materials and mutual support are already available on-line, and home educators have been using electronic mail effectively to organize and lobby for their rights. Their children may learn all they need to, but the economist Albert O. Hirschman has pointed out that when the most quality-conscious users are free to leave a troubled system, whether railroads or schools, the system suffers further by losing its most vocal critics. Any future information network will help unhappy people secede, at least mentally, from institutions they do not like, much as the interstate highway system allowed the affluent to flee the cities for the suburbs and exurbs. Prescribing mobility, whether automotive or electronic, as an antidote to society's fragmentation is like recommending champagne as a hangover remedy.

Equality, like community, can also be elusive. We have seen that much of the real business of the Net is invisible to most of the people on it, not through elitist conspiracy but

through operational necessity. It turns out to be not an alternative world but an extension of the conventional world and its hierarchies. For example, the Net in its majesty grants to the faculties of rich and poor universities equal electronic means for filing grant applications, but if government panels include affiliation snobs (as they often do), all the equal access in the world will not help the first-rate applicant from the second-rate school. Electronic networks, like highways, may bring you to the door but won't necessarily let you in, or upstairs.

**W**hy are so many people ill at ease with the administration's proposals for telecommunications law reform? It's because of the assumption that more flexible regulation will unleash investments that will open a cornucopia of knowledge. It's because of the claims that a system can assure universal affordable access *and* respect copyright as we know it. But above all, it's because of the tendency of communication to divide people as effectively as it unites them. What desperately needs attention is not tomorrow's infrastructure but the knowledge base, in depth and breadth, on which it will depend.

# THE CULTURAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

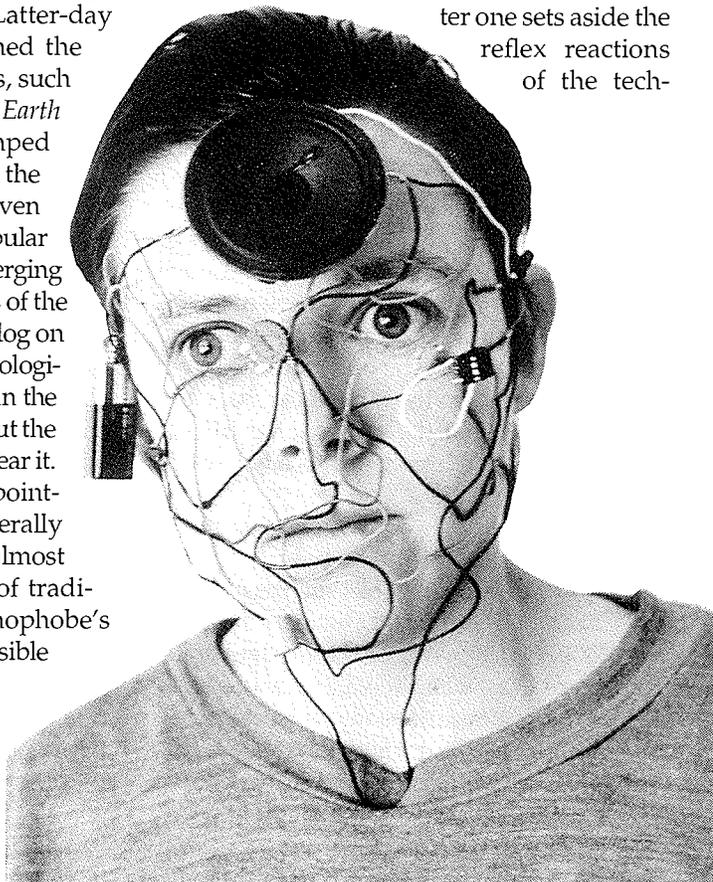
BY TOM MADDUX

**T**he coming of the information superhighway, or, more modestly, the National Information Infrastructure (NII), has reanimated America's running debate about the vices and virtues of technology. It has also reshuffled the ideological deck in interesting ways. Latter-day counterculturalists who have joined the ranks of the technological optimists, such as Howard Rheingold of the *Whole Earth Review*, find themselves encamped alongside the likes of George Gilder, the onetime apostle of Reaganomics. Even as Theodore Roszak, one of the popular prophets of the 1960s, assails the emerging "cult of information," staid members of the academic establishment scramble to log on to the Internet. In truth, these new ideological divides are little more helpful than the old, for it is as right to be hopeful about the future unfolding before us as it is to fear it.

As technophobes are fond of pointing out, technology's effects are generally unpredictable, often negative, and almost always produced at the expense of traditional ways of life. From the technophobe's point of view, therefore, a moral, sensible response to the NII is to reject it in principle and fight against it with whatever means are at hand—to sabotage it intellectually and combat the policies that would bring it into being.

Persuasive as some of its

concerns may be, such a neo-Luddite view of the NII seems beyond the pale of serious consideration. As a people we are wont to explore the paths along which our desire leads us, and it seems virtually foreordained that our desire will lead us to build and use the NII. Even after one sets aside the reflex reactions of the tech-



---

nophobe, however, there is much reason to feel uncertainty and anxiety over the NII. The history of electronic media, especially television, is a powerful reminder that new information technologies can easily be turned to malign ends. Through advertising and other means, they have been used not only to exploit our hearts' desires but to manufacture new ones. Along with the specter of greater government control over citizens' lives that becomes possible with the new information technologies, this "commodification of desire" must be considered one of the darker prospects of the NII. Add to it the inescapable unease one feels in contemplating a wired world, an almost subliminal fear of the accession of what historian Manuel de Landa, in *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (1991), calls the "machinic phylum"—the set of things that operate according to the machine's laws of rationality and order. To put these fears more succinctly, with the NII, it seems likely that the machines will grow stronger, as will marketers and governments.

**I**t is possible that another, less defined group, at once the weakest and least organized and also the most numerous, subtle, and relentless, can wrest control of the NII. That is the group of each of us, insofar as we represent ourselves and not the need to consume, on the one hand, or to behave obediently, on the other—each of us as we represent what the philosopher Michel Foucault called "a certain decisive will not to be governed."

Certainly, in many situations this group has virtually no voice and no power. Against it, Foucault insisted in books such as *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975), is the power of the modern state. And there is as well the vast array of businesses and organizations that exist primarily to sell us images of our wants and needs, to ply us with our own fantasies. Their most effective

and characteristic medium is commercial television, where the advertising surrounds and overwhelms a content that, as MTV videos and elaborate "infomercials" illustrate, increasingly becomes indistinguishable from it.

The same groups can be seen working, along with others, to create the NII. Government spokespersons and telecommunications industry flacks ply the media promising manifold blessings, at least to citizens of the United States. "All Americans have a stake in the construction of an advanced National Information Infrastructure," according to a U.S. government "Agenda for Action." "Development of the NII can help unleash an information revolution that will change forever the way people live, work, and interact with each other." In *Business Week*, an MCI Telecommunications ad fantastically asserts: "The space-time continuum is being challenged. The notion of communication is changed forever. All the information in the universe will soon be accessible to everyone at every moment." All because of a dream known as the information superhighway and a vision known as network MCI. The pitchman's hyperbole and the government's bland assurances alike should tell us that we are being hustled, worked—like a crowd standing in front of the ring-toss stand at a traveling carnival.

Note the two passages' common theme of changing things forever: "communication," according to MCI; "the way people live, work, and interact," according to the government. Oddly, just here, where the hyperbole appears to be at its worst, both advertising agency and government are telling the simplest of truths: Should the NII come to pass, it will change things forever. Like the magician's showy gesture or the pitchman's barked promise, these declaiming voices serve to distract our attention from something else: in this case, the subtler, more disturbing truth that no one—neither the White House nor MCI nor anyone

---

*Tom Maddox is writing coordinator at Evergreen State College. He is the author of Halo (1991), a science fiction novel, and a columnist for Locus magazine. Copyright © 1994 by Tom Maddox.*

---

else—can predict the nature of the changes that will be brought about by the NII.

Consider some of the characteristic technologies of the last 100 years: the telephone, the automobile, the radio, the television, and the computer. At the time of their inception and for many years afterward, no one understood the implications of their invention and use. Sociologist Colin Cherry, writing about the history of telephone systems, says, “The new invention can first be seen by society only in terms of the liberties of action it currently possesses. We say society is ‘not ready,’ meaning that it is bound by its present customs and habits to think only in terms of its existing institutions. Realizations of new liberties, and creation of new institutions means social change, new thought, and new feelings. The invention alters the society, and eventually is used in ways that were at first quite unthinkable.” That the automobile would become such a common killer of adolescents, for example, or the telephone a powerful instrument for the gratification of a distinctive brand of aural sexual pleasures that did not exist as such before its invention—who could have predicted these and a myriad other such things?

“Mechanical properties do not predestine the development and employment of an innovation,” social historian Claude Fischer notes in his study of the social consequences of the telephone, *America Calling* (1992). “Instead, struggles and negotiations among interested parties shape that history. Inventors, investors, competitors, organized customers, agencies of government, the media, and others conflict over how an innovation will develop. The outcome is a particular definition and a structure for the new technology, perhaps even a ‘reinvention’ of the device.”

One could write the history of the broadcast media in the United States in very similar terms. When radio stations began broadcasting in the 1920s, they sprang up almost at random and did pretty much what they wanted. “Radio” was still up for grabs; the

nature of the medium was undefined. Advertisements, for example, were extremely controversial in the early days, many people (including Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover) holding that the airwaves should be employed for the public good, not for commercial purposes. In 1927, motivated in part by the need to keep stations on separate wavelengths, Congress created the Federal Radio Commission (FRC), directing it to regulate the radio waves according to “public interest, convenience, and necessity.” This remains the standard for the regulation of broadcast media today by the FRC’s successor, the Federal Communications Commission, the justification for de facto censorship of radio and television and other regulation of program content.

There were dissenters, of course. Radio preacher Aimee Semple McPherson, who in fact trampled all over other stations’ wavelengths, telegraphed Washington:

PLEASE ORDER YOUR MINIONS OF  
SATAN TO LEAVE MY STATION  
ALONE STOP YOU CANNOT EX-  
PECT THE ALMIGHTY TO ABIDE  
BY YOUR WAVE-LENGTH NON-  
SENSE STOP WHEN I OFFER  
PRAYERS TO HIM I MUST FIT INTO  
HIS WAVE RECEPTION STOP

Despite her plea, the situation was becoming clear: If the Almighty wanted to go on radio, he would have to play by the U.S. government’s rules. Anybody who has listened to much radio or watched much television can draw his or her own conclusions about how well those rules have served the public interest, the public convenience, or the public necessity. Whatever defects unregulated radio and television might possess theoretically, it is difficult to imagine that they would be more numerous and thoroughgoing than those of the existing regulated varieties.

The NII today is in a condition much like that of radio during the 1920s. The stakes, however, are much greater. Through the NII, it may become possible for businesses and

---

*"Emoticons" (viewed sideways) are a popular form of expression among some E-mail users. These are from the book Smileys (1993).*

**: - )**  
*standard smiley*

**: - D**  
*very happy smiley*

**: - (**  
*sad smiley*

**: - O**  
*amazed smiley*

arms of the government to acquire an intimate knowledge of every citizen—what we love and hate, what compels us and what we ignore—and with it perhaps the ability to manipulate our needs and our behavior. Every choice we make could be recorded, as could every moment of consumer bliss or image consumption. We could be profiled in terrifying detail, almost casually, as a kind of side-effect of the network software. Viewed this way, the NII becomes the Panopticon triumphant, to borrow Michel Foucault's notion of a machine for constraining our desire within socially acceptable limits, on the one hand, and commercially viable ones, on the other.

The experience of the Internet suggests how this can be prevented. It shows that the individual users of telecommunications and computer technology can sometimes achieve a kind of victory by wresting control of the technology. Originally created by the Pentagon to keep defense-related computers connected even in the aftermath of a nuclear war, the Internet has become one of the prime sites of many kinds of individual and collective activity. Almost from the beginning, the Internet has served the individual's purposes with enormous flexibility—as much as, if not more so, than it has served the institutions that brought it into being. As personal computers became nearly ubiquitous during the 1980s and Internet connections commonplace, they unlocked possibilities entirely unforeseen by

the technicians or the managers who oversaw the system. Defense Department bureaus found their employees swapping recipes; staid and reputable organizations of all sorts found their members or employees engaging in unlicensed and uncontrolled debate, discussing the theory and practice of sado-masochism or chatting about whatever they wished with people from all over the world. In short, while the technology (of computers and networks) made such things possible, it neither anticipated nor encouraged them, nor could it stop them.

Perhaps we can expect more of the same from the NII. If, as seems likely, there emerges out of today's struggles and negotiations over the new medium considerable freedom for individuals in their use of the NII, people will exploit it in currently unimagined and unsanctioned ways. To many people, some of what occurs will seem wasteful, disgusting, obscene, sexist, racist, even criminal; to others, merely vulgar and depressing. Some already lament the waste of network resources—or "bandwidth"—resulting from the storage and transmission of binary files of explicit sexual images or from "anti-social" modes of behavior such as "flaming" (i.e. sending abusive E-mail to an individual one finds annoying). Such practices stand as honorable evidence of that "certain decisive will not to be governed," and so we must protect them above all, as we must protect the speech that most offends us and the religious beliefs we find most stupid and repulsive.

*Presidential smileys*

**=!:-)**  
*Abe Lincoln*

**:(=)**  
*Jimmy Carter*

**: ' }**  
*Richard Nixon*

**7: ^ ]**  
*Ronald Reagan*

**=: o ]**  
*Bill Clinton*

In fact, because the new information technology we are creating seems to lend itself more readily to improvisation and freedom than to rigid planning and control, it is not unreasonable to hope for triumph. Still, the possibility remains that the NII could turn into a largely one-way street, one where "consumers" receive information but will not have freedom to retransmit or alter it. This is the "500 channels of TV" model, the worst scenario for the future because it implies an audience composed of inert consumers and passive paracitizens, easily manipulated by any technically adept spin doctors with access to the profiles. Many of today's cable television providers are eager to offer just this sort of service.

The history of American broadcast media is not greatly encouraging. Network and local programming alike have proceeded according to unspoken canons of propriety that defy adult standards of free speech and journalistic practice. As a result, we have a national standard of infantilized media, which allow necessary human chaos only as it sneaks through in the form of eroticized violence and violent eroticism, both typically subtextual, subliminal, and dishonest. If we wish the NII to escape such a malign fate, we should work toward an opaque and open NII, one that, for instance, allows universal and near-anonymous access, guarantees the individual the right (which the government does not currently do) and means to encrypt information, and provides individual control over content, both outgoing and incoming. Taken together, these technical attributes would combine to create an NII that might actually serve us without entangling us even more in the embrace of commercial and governmental forces.

Telecommunications and computer technologies are themselves also forces to contend with. Building the NII, we create a vast and productive niche for the enlargement of de Landa's "machinic phylum," worlds in which machines can grow and evolve, and this eventually may have profound implications for human consciousness. Even in the relatively primitive forms it takes today, information

technology seems to encourage a fixation on virtual rather than real experience—on technologically mediated perception, not direct apprehension. It can also saturate us in a hypnotic image-repertoire that works to render us passive and dream-struck no matter who, if anyone, controls it.

% \* @ :- (

*smiley with  
hangover*

:- {#}

*smiley with  
braces*

=8->

*nerd smiley*

M-) :X) :-M

*see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil*

Marvin Minsky, the dark knight of the information age, generally considered, along with John McCarthy, one of the founding fathers of the field of artificial intelligence, said in a speech a few years ago that he preferred virtual sunsets to real ones because the virtual sunset could be constructed so as to be perfectly enjoyable. Provocative lunacy, I thought at the time, not realizing how many people agree with him.

The virtual can seduce us because it offers the promise of being completely shaped to our wishes, while the material world remains refractory—there we suffer and die and live out fates that cannot be edited or replayed to render them more beautiful, more charming, less disastrous. The virtual worlds we can master, the material world we cannot. Even the most open model of the NII—one that does not lock individuals into passive roles as consumers and citizens—forces us to contend with this dialectic of virtual and real, and especially with the ethical dimensions of an allegiance to the virtual.

As the electronic media make us more aware of conditions around the world—or, at least, of images of such conditions—we realize how much horror exists and how

---

## Dark Days on the Net

*The many virtues of the Internet are being undermined by the system's sudden popularity and rapid democratization, staff writer Paul Wallich observes in Scientific American (March 1994).*

Someday the Internet may become an information superhighway, but right now it is more like a 19th-century railroad that passes through the badlands of the Old West. As waves of new settlers flock to cyberspace in search of free information or commercial opportunity, they make easy marks for sharpers who play the keyboard as deftly as Billy the Kid ever drew a six-gun. Old hands on the electronic frontier lament both the rising crime rate and the waning of long-established norms of open collaboration.

It is difficult even for those who ply it every day to appreciate how much the Internet depends on collegial trust and mutual forbearance. . . . Most people know, for example, that E-mail messages can be read by many people other than their intended recipients, but they are less aware that E-mail and other communications can be almost tracelessly forged—virtually no one receiving a message over the Net can be sure it came from the ostensible sender.

Electronic impersonators can commit slander or solicit criminal acts in someone else's name; they can even masquerade as a trusted colleague to convince someone to reveal sensitive personal or business information. Of those few who know enough to worry about electronic forgeries, even fewer understand how an insidiously coded E-mail message can cause some computers to give the sender almost unlimited access to all the recipient's files. . . .

In the early days, only researchers had access to the Net, and they shared a common set of goals and ethics, points out Eugene H. Spafford of Purdue University. . . . A lack of

security . . . did not bother anyone, because that was part of the package, according to Dorothy E. Denning, a professor of computer science at Georgetown University: "The concerns that are arising now wouldn't have been legitimate in the beginning." As the Internet grew, however, the character of its population began changing, and many of the newcomers had little idea of the complex social contract—and the temperamental software—guiding the use of their marvelous new tool.

By 1988, when a rogue program unleashed by Robert T. Morris, Jr., a Cornell graduate student, brought most Internet traffic to a halt for several days, a clear split had developed between the "knows" and the "know-nots." Willis Ware of the Rand Corporation, one of the deans of computer security, recalls that "there were two classes of people writing messages. The first understood the jargon, what had happened and how, and the second was saying things like, 'What does that word mean?' or 'I don't have the source code for that program, what do I do?'"

Since then, the Internet's vulnerability has only gotten worse. . . . Moreover, as the Internet becomes a global entity, U.S. laws become mere local ordinances. In European countries such as the Netherlands, for instance, computer intrusion is not necessarily a crime. Spafford complains—in vain, as he freely admits—of computer science professors who assign their students sites on the Internet to break into and files to bring back as proof that they understand the protocols involved. . . .

If the Internet, storehouse of wonders, is

connected we are to it. Thus, despite our prosperity and plenty, we find ourselves intolerably affronted by images of disease and destruction. We do not wish to see starving children or piled-up bodies as we wait for our evening meal. However,

through the virtual worlds we master the horrors, discovering ways to prevent them from deeply disturbing our composure. And virtuality has a wide domain. The Holocaust becomes a museum and a Spielberg movie, a spectacle, as the Situationists say,

---

also a no-computer's-land of invisible perils, how should newcomers to cyberspace protect themselves? Security experts agree that the first layer of defense is educating users and system administrators to avoid the particularly stupid mistakes. . . . The next level of defense is the so-called fire wall, a computer that protects internal networks from intrusion. Most major companies have long since installed fire walls, and many universities are adopting them as well. Fire walls examine all the packets entering and leaving a domain to limit the kinds of connections that can be made from the Internet at large. They may also restrict the information that can be passed across those connections. . . .

Encryption could provide not only privacy but authentication as well: Messages encoded using so-called public-key ciphers can uniquely identify both recipient and sender. But encryption software in general remains at the center of a storm of political and legal controversy. The U.S. government bars easy export of powerful encoding software even though the same codes are freely available overseas.

Within the United States, patent rights to public-key encryption are jealously guarded by RSA Data Security, a private firm that licensed the patents from their inventors. Although software employing public-key algorithms has been widely published, most people outside the U.S. government cannot use it without risking an infringement suit.

To complicate matters even further, the government has proposed a different encryption standard, one whose algorithm is secret and whose keys would be held in escrow by law-enforcement agencies. Although many civil libertarians and computer scientists oppose the

measure, some industry figures have come out in favor of it. . . . The question is not whether cyberspace will be subjected to legislation but rather "how and when law and order will be imposed," says Donn B. Parker of SRI International. He predicts that the current state of affairs will get much worse before the government steps in "to assure privacy and to protect the rights people do have."

Others do not have Parker's confidence in government intervention. Marcus J. Ranum of Trusted Information Systems foresees an Internet made up mostly of private enclaves behind fire walls that he and his colleagues have built. "There are those who say that fire walls are evil, that they're balkanizing the Internet," he notes, "but brotherly love falls on its face when millions of dollars are involved."

Denning counts herself among the optimists. She lends her support to local security measures, but "I don't lose any sleep over security," she says. Farber, also cautiously optimistic, sees two possible directions for the Internet in the next few years: rapid expansion of existing services, or fundamental re-engineering to provide a secure base for the future. He leaves no doubt as to which course he favors. Spafford is like-minded but gloomier. "It's a catch-22," he remarks. "Everyone wants to operate with what exists, but the existing standards are rotten. They're not what you'd want to build on."

Even if computer scientists do redesign the Internet, he points out, putting new standards in place may be impossible because of the enormous investment in old hardware and software. So much of the Internet rests on voluntary cooperation, he observes, that making sweeping changes is almost impossible.

*From "Wire Pirates," by Paul Wallich. Copyright © 1994 by Scientific American, Inc. All rights reserved.*

and we watch and weep yet are strangely exultant at the end of it all, and why not? We are alive and have our technology to instruct and amuse us. Today the corpses pile up in Bosnia (or was that Croatia?) and Rwanda, and the day's bald television images and

puerile narrations haunt us, but tomorrow they will have become elements of an aesthetically rewarding film.

The NII will serve us efficiently in this regard. In Wim Wenders's film, *Until the End of the World* (1992), characters become addicted

---

to image technology, lost in reliving memories of their infancy through a device that turns their thoughts into pictures. The NII would not grant us this power, but it would put rich, complex sets of images at our command—"All the information in the universe will soon be accessible to everyone at every moment"—and thus generate the potential for its own kinds of addictions: to beautiful images and to virtuality itself.

Ultimately, the NII finds us being ourselves in the late 20th century: caught in the web of our own fantasies, governed by forces that inscribe their orders into our being, fighting nonetheless, through a stubborn will, to manifest something like authentic individual desire. The sharp-edged technology of the NII can cut a number of ways: It can enlarge the domain of the commodifiers and controllers; it can serve the resistance to these forces; it can saturate us all, controlled and controllers alike, in a virtual alternative to the real world.

Meanwhile, most of humanity will live and die deprived of the wonders of the NII, or

indeed of the joys of adequate nutrition, medical care, and housing. We would do well to regulate our enthusiasms accordingly—that is, to remember where love and mercy have their natural homes, in that same material world. Otherwise we will have built yet another pharaonic monument to wealth, avarice, and indifference. We will have proved the technophobes right. More to the point, we will have collaborated to neglect the suffering of the damned of the earth—our other selves—in order to entertain ourselves.

Yet as William Gibson says in *Neuromancer* (1984), the canonical work of cyberpunk science fiction, "The Street finds its own uses for things," the Street referring to the unauthorized, unsanctioned play of human desire. Thus, we can approach the NII in a properly skeptical or suspicious frame of mind and yet remain open to its possibilities. After all, the Internet has shown that even a technology designed to enable the military to fight on after a nuclear holocaust can be made to serve the unfettered human imagination. With this experience to guide us, it is possible, perhaps even likely, that the same can be accomplished with the NII.



## WIRED FOR WHAT?

If you have not yet visited cyberspace—and most Americans have not—no amount of description can quite do it justice. The next best thing to a visit to this nerdy netherworld may be a run through **The New Hacker's Dictionary** (MIT, 2d ed., 1993), compiled (from on-line data bases) by Eric S. Raymond. There, among the inscrutable definitions of inscrutable terms such as "pessimizing compiler" and "sandbender," one learns that to gweep is "to hack, usually at night," and that to hack is, among other things, "to work on something (typically a program)." One definition seems to distill the essence of hacker existence:

**ha ha only serious** [from SF fandom, orig. as mutation of HHOK, 'Ha Ha Only Kid-ding'] A phrase (often seen abbreviated as HHOS) that aptly captures the flavor of much hacker discourse. Applied especially to parodies, absurdities, and ironic jokes that are both intended and perceived to contain a possibly disquieting amount of truth, or truths that are construction on in-joke and self-parody. This lexicon contains many examples of ha-ha-only-serious in both form and content. Indeed, the entirety of hacker culture is often perceived as ha-ha-only-serious by hackers themselves; to take it either too lightly or too seriously marks a person as an outsider, a **wannabe**, or in **larval stage**. For further enlightenment on this subject, consult any Zen master. See also **Humor, Hacker**, and **AI koans**.

As the avant-garde of cyberspace, the tiny minority of hackers has so far set the tone, albeit more on the Internet than on the smaller, commercial on-line services such as Prodigy and America Online. (The latter apparently are a bit too user-friendly, with their flashy graphics and easy-to-follow instructions, for most self-respecting technically minded sorts.) In both realms, useful deposits of highly specialized information can be found and retrieved. Alas, many of the bulletin boards and discussion groups, those off-proclaimed waves of the future, are less than scintillating, with dialogues (or monologues)

conducted at a level of sophistication closer to that of the exchanges that occur on the walls of public restrooms than to the great intellectual salons they are often compared to. This world still awaits its chronicler—with luck we may find a book called something like *Dave Barry Goes On-line* stacked by the front door of the local bookstore someday. In the meantime, some insight into on-line goings-on can be gleaned from three magazines (listed in order of increasing distance from the mainstream): *Wired*, *Whole Earth Review*, and *Mondo 2000*. Each has its virtues, but each takes its subject perhaps a bit too seriously. The hacker's smirks—HHOS—that are allowed do not intrude upon the sense, à la *Star Trek*, that readers are boldly going where no one has gone before.

The bookstores *are* full of Internet guide books and directories, and the thinking individual will quickly deduce from the impressive thickness of these volumes that cyberspace is not an easy place to get around in. It is another one of the dirty little secrets of the Internet that conditions on this trendy data highway are quite primitive. Not only are there obscure codes and commands to memorize and all manner of other obstacles to overcome, but there are a multitude of mundane perils, such as the dread possibility (some would say likelihood) that a burst of static on the phone line or some other mysterious occurrence will freeze the cybertraveler's computer—causing him or her to become "hung" or "wedged," according to the *New Hacker's Dictionary*—and forcing a time-consuming withdrawal from the Internet. In any event, the classic introduction to the Internet is Brendan P. Kehoe's **Zen and the Art of the Internet** (Prentice Hall, 2d ed., 1994). **The Whole Internet User's Guide & Catalog** (O'Reilly & Associates, 2d ed., 1994) is one of the oldest and still one of the best of the rising pile of more detailed manuals. Another useful volume is Paul Gilster's **Internet Navigator** (John Wiley & Sons, 1993).

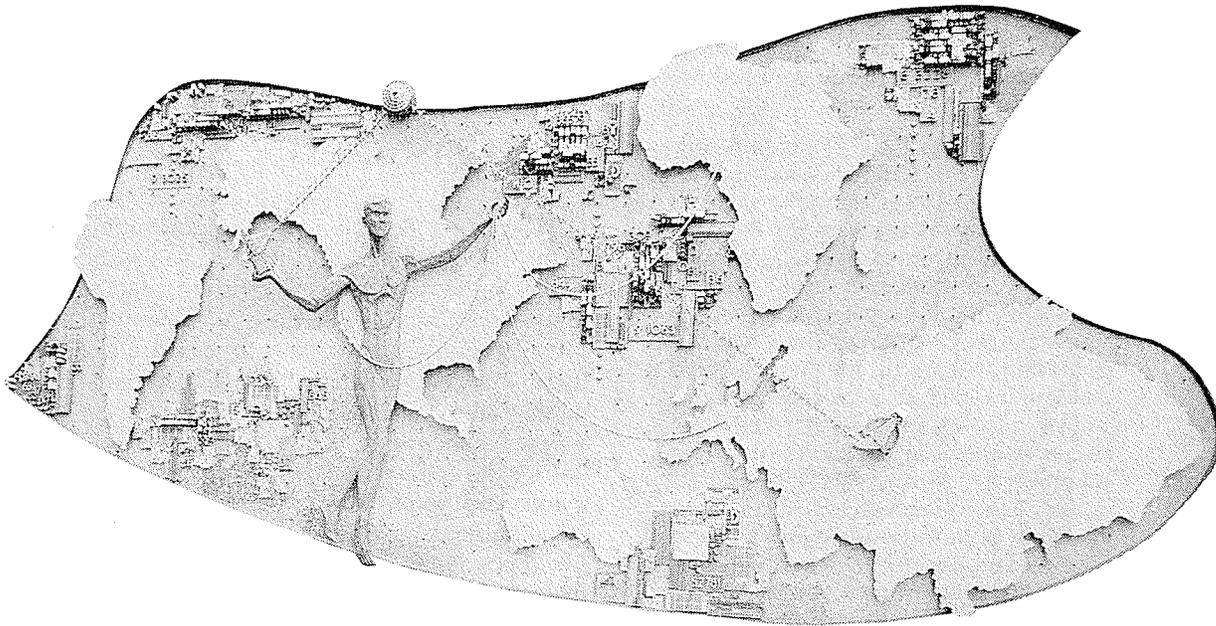
What the guidebooks do not make clear is that learning even the basics of the Net, not to

---

mention active "Netsurfing," requires a considerable commitment of time. Moreover, a guidebook or two is not really enough to help one get around; human guides and informants are needed. *The New Hacker's Dictionary* speaks of the "guru" ("An expert. Implies not only wizard skill but also a history of being a knowledgeable resource for others"), but this seems too exalted a term to describe what average users need (and the kind of knowledge they are likely to find on the Net). The Net's labyrinth-like quality, as well as the patchiness and recalcitrance of its resources, suggest a more medieval metaphor: the monk.

ness through technology.

At one extreme is Walter B. Wriston, the former chairman of Citicorp, who writes in *The Twilight of Sovereignty: How the Information Revolution is Transforming Our World* (Scribner's, 1992) that the information revolution is empowering individuals and boosting markets while it undermines the powers of nations and corporations. "As long as capital consisted largely of factories, heavy equipment, and natural resources, government felt free to impose rules and exact payments with no fear that the nation's capital base would steal away in the



In fact, medievalism already is an undercurrent in some corners of the Net. A popular segment of the Net is Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs), where users can assume imaginary identities and play out elaborate games set in outer space or King Arthur's Court. Among the various futurists who have tried to think about the consequences of the Net and whatever kind of information superhighway eventually grows out of it, however, the medieval model—of a segmented society of electronic communities—is little discussed. Rather, the optimists among them—and most of them are optimists—tend to see the world moving toward some sort of One-

night. Extreme impositions would reduce productivity—the Communist economies never worked very well—but on the whole government held the cards." None of this is possible anymore, Wriston believes. A parallel argument about the collapse of borders is made by Robert Reich, now U.S. secretary of labor, in *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st-Century Capitalism* (Knopf, 1991).

Wriston's argument is larded with examples of the positive power of information flows, such as that of the Sri Lankan farmers who recently raised their incomes by 50 percent when the coming of telephones allowed them to cut out

---

middlemen and deal directly with buyers in the capital city of Colombo.

A similarly upbeat note is sounded by George Gilder, imagining the impact of the networked "telecomputer" of the future in **Life After Television: The Coming Transformation of Media and American Life** (Norton, 1992): "Rather than exalting mass culture, the telecomputer will enhance individualism. Rather than cultivating passivity, the telecomputer will promote creativity. . . . Perhaps most important, the telecomputer will enrich and strengthen democracy and capitalism all around the world."

If cyberspace is a place being formed by the convergence of a variety of digital technologies, it is also a place where a degree of political and cultural convergence is taking place. For alongside Gilder, author of the 1981 supply-side treatise *Wealth and Poverty*, stand a variety of distinctly New Ageish sorts. The romance of the Net is best captured in **The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier** (Addison-Wesley, 1993), by Howard Rheingold, editor of *Whole Earth Review*. Here, in addition to the best existing reportage on cyberspace in book form, is the idea of electronic community and democracy elevated (albeit cautiously) nearly to utopian heights. In discussion groups and other locales in cyberspace, Rheingold writes, he turns for advice on parenting, collects ideas and information for professional use, engages in political discussion and activism, forms friendships, and shares grief. "In traditional kinds of communities," he writes, "we are accustomed to meeting people, then getting to know them; in virtual communities, you can get to know people and then choose to meet them."

At perhaps the farthest fringe of the optimists' camp—with enthusiastic blurbs from both

Gilder and Rheingold—is **Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-Biological Civilization** (Addison-Wesley, 1994), by *Wired* executive editor Kevin Kelly. Resurrecting cybernetics and stirring in, among other things, a few items from William Gibson, the science fiction laureate of cyberspace, Kelly speculates at length about the merger of technology and biology and "the rise of neo-biological civilization."

The critics, of course, have not been silent. In **Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology** (Knopf, 1992), Neil Postman, a professor of communication arts at New York University, warns of "the Technopoly story." It emphasizes "progress without limits, rights without responsibilities, and technology without cost. The Technopoly story is without a moral center. It puts in its place efficiency, interest, and economic advance." Postman recoils at "neobiological" metaphors: "The computer, it is implied, has a will, has intentions, has reasons—which means that humans are relieved of responsibility for the computer's decisions." In **The Cult of Information: A Neo-Luddite Treatise on High-Tech, Artificial Intelligence, and the True Art of Thinking** (Univ. of Calif., 2d ed., 1994), historian Theodore Roszak offers a similar thought: "The irony behind [information] technology is the tendency it encourages in some of its most talented and enthusiastic developers to cheapen—or even to try to replace—the mind that created the technology in the first place."

James R. Beniger's **Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society** (Harvard, 1986), which traces the origins of today's information society to the 19th century, is a useful reminder that technology does not have a life of its own but is created by human beings to serve human ends. Technology, one might conclude, is not destiny.

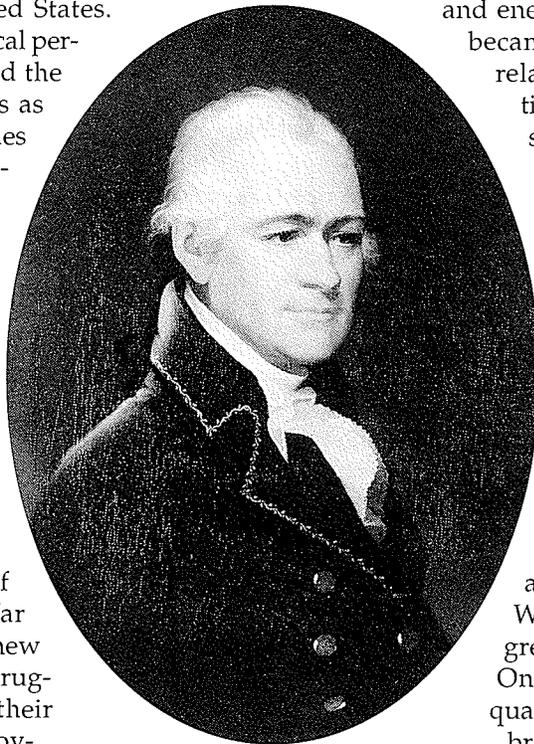
---

# HAMILTON'S LEGACY

*He was George Washington's right-hand man, an abrasive genius and ruthless political infighter. As America's first secretary of the treasury, Alexander Hamilton worked hard to implement his vision of government, economy, and foreign policy—a vision that merits renewed attention in these uncertain times.*

BY MICHAEL LIND

After the revolutions of 1989 brought down communism in Eastern Europe, many of the political and intellectual leaders of the emerging democracies turned for guidance to the United States. Americans of all political persuasions recommended the writings of such sages as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Abraham Lincoln. Alexander Hamilton was seldom mentioned, even though his contributions to that compendium of political wisdom, *The Federalist*, far outweigh those of his co-authors Madison and John Jay. No one suggested that the theories and example of Hamilton might be far more relevant to the new democratic regimes struggling to consolidate their rule and build new governmental, financial, and military institu-



*Alexander Hamilton (by Ezra Ames)*

tions on the remnants of Soviet colonialism.

This oversight is puzzling, if not tragic, because Hamilton was perhaps the most practical nation builder among the Founding Fathers. Thanks largely to his vision and energy, the United States became what it is today: a relatively centralized nation-state with a military second to none in the world, a powerful presidency, a strong judiciary, and an industrial capitalist economy. John Marshall, the first chief justice of the Supreme Court, who did so much to fix Hamilton's expansive view of federal authority in law, thought that Hamilton and his mentor George Washington were the greatest of the Founders. One contemporary acquaintance, Judge Ambrose Spencer, who had clashed with Hamilton, nevertheless declared

---

that he was "the greatest man this country ever produced. . . . He, more than any man, did the thinking of the time." The great French diplomat and statesman Talleyrand, who worked with Hamilton during the Revolution and the early years of the republic, put his "mind and character . . . on a par with [those of] the most distinguished statesmen of Europe, not even excepting Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox."

Such praise was anything but fulsome. As well as serving as George Washington's valued aide-de-camp during most of the Revolutionary War (and successfully reorganizing the Continental Army as one of his tasks), Hamilton helped to initiate the move toward a more centralized union that resulted in the Philadelphia convention of 1787 and the federal constitution. His view of the Constitution as the source of implied as well as enumerated powers became the dominant interpretation, thanks to his admirers and students John Marshall, Joseph Storey, and Daniel Webster, and his conception of expansive presidential war and foreign policy powers would prevail in the 20th century. As secretary of the treasury (1789-95), Hamilton established the fiscal infrastructure of the new republic, including the Bank of the United States, precursor of the Federal Reserve. He not only articulated the theory of tariff-based industrial policy (an inspiration to later American, German, and Japanese modernizers) but organized the Society for Useful Manufactures (SUM), the first American research institute and industrial conglomerate, sited on 38 acres by the Passaic River falls in Paterson, New Jersey.

**T**oday, however, those who remember the mastermind of the Washington administration (1789-97) tend to know only a caricature of Hamilton as a champion of the rich—the prototype of such Wall Street wizards as Andrew Mellon and Michael Milken. Now and then Hamilton's ideas are invoked by those seeking to justify policies of economic nationalism, but more often "Hamiltonianism" is used as

shorthand for a blend of plutocracy and authoritarianism, the antithesis of democratic idealism associated with his lifelong political rival Thomas Jefferson. (Jefferson placed a bust of Hamilton on the right side of the entrance hall at Monticello, across from his own portrait on the left. He explained to visitors: "Opposed in death as in life.") Regardless of political orientations, American politicians all claim to be Jeffersonians. Few, if any, will admit to being Hamiltonians. In the late 20th century, it appears, the consensus holds that Noah Webster was right to name Hamilton "the evil genius of this country."

**I**t is far easier to understand why Hamilton has been maligned than why he has been forgotten. His life was as dramatic as any in the annals of the early American republic. The only non-native among the Founding Fathers, he was born in the British West Indies, probably in 1755, the illegitimate son of an aristocratic Scot and a French Huguenot. Orphaned at 13, he supported himself as a clerk in the St. Croix office of a New York import-export firm, acquiring a head for commerce that would further distinguish him from all the other Founders but Franklin. Hamilton so impressed his employers with his intelligence and industry that they, and other sponsors, sent him to the North American colonies to further his education. He enrolled in King's College (later Columbia) in 1773, but academic pursuits were cut short by his involvement in the writing of anti-British pamphlets and the subsequent outbreak of war. Nevertheless, wide and thorough reading kept Hamilton abreast of intellectual developments in Britain and continental Europe. Perhaps one of the strongest influences on his thought was the work of the Scottish philosopher David Hume, whose skepticism about classical republicanism and yeoman virtues made him anathema to Jefferson and other American republican idealists.

Psychobiographers eager to explain away Hamilton's devotion to the principle of a strong military need look no farther than his

---

years in the inner circle of Washington's headquarters. As a member of what Washington called his "family," Hamilton made himself so indispensable that he almost missed his chance for martial glory. (That finally came at the Battle of Yorktown, where the slight, still boyish-looking officer personally led his battalion in an assault on a British position.) The bond forged with Washington, though subject to strains, would eventually bring Hamilton into the first president's administration. But between the war's end and Washington's inauguration, Hamilton was never idle. He read and practiced the law, started a family with Elizabeth Schuyler (a New York patrician's daughter whom he had married in 1780), and became increasingly involved in New York and national politics. To the latter he brought his strong conviction that the weakly knit confederation could not work, a conviction that spurred his cogent defense of the proposed constitution in the essays that he and his collaborators Madison and Jay wrote between October 1787 and May 1788. (At least two-thirds of the 85 essays eventually published as *The Federalist* came from Hamilton's pen.)

**A**s an immigrant, Hamilton lacked any ties to a particular region that might have qualified his intense devotion to the American nation in its entirety. Installed as Washington's secretary of the treasury, he took decisive steps to strengthen the standing and power of the federal government. To that end, and to make the nation creditworthy, he arranged for the federal government to assume the debts accumulated by the states during and after the Revolution and devised a system of taxation to pay off the debt. (A political pragmatist, he won support for his plan, a bitterly contested assertion of sovereignty by the federal government, by agreeing to back Thomas Jefferson and other southerners in their ambition to move the nation's capital to a site on the

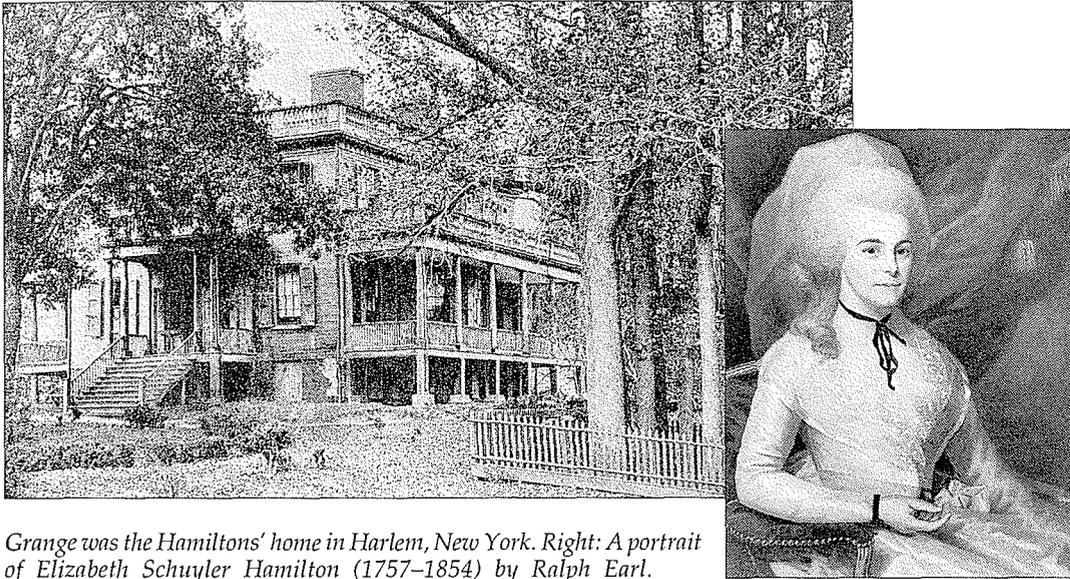
Potomac River.) Though at first opposed to political parties because of their disruptive character, Hamilton helped to create and then took the helm of the Federalist Party to push his policies through the legislature. His rivals in the newly formed Republican Party, including Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, fought just as hard to thwart Hamilton's agenda, which they labeled crudely as probusiness, antidemocratic, and monarchical. Hamilton's disposition to favor England over France—and to hold up England's powerful civil administration as a model—only stoked his enemies' animosity. The Republicans' efforts to drive their foe from office, including unfounded accusations of wrongdoing, finally succeeded in 1795, two years before the end of Washington's second term.

**S**till wielding power in private life—among other ways, through the *New York Post*, which he founded (and which survives to this day)—Hamilton began to make enemies even among his fellow Federalists, opposing John Adams's reelection to the presidency in 1800 and supporting the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Hamilton, who, like Napoleon, preferred to make war on allies, enraged another Federalist by speaking ill of his candidacy for the governorship of New York. The offended party, Aaron Burr, demanded satisfaction. Hamilton accepted, though in the resulting duel he took care to aim away from his challenger. Burr was not so gracious. Hamilton, who as a boy had hoped to become a physician, offered an immediate evaluation of his condition: "This is a mortal wound, Doctor." He died the next day—July 14, 1804.

His ideas could not be so easily extinguished. Like his rival Jefferson, Hamilton was a theorist as well as a statesman. His premature death prevented him from writing the "full investigation of the history and science of civil government and the various modifica-

---

*Michael Lind, a senior editor of Harper's, is the author of The Next American Nation, which will be published by the Free Press in the autumn of 1994. Copyright © 1994 by Michael Lind.*



Grange was the Hamiltons' home in Harlem, New York. Right: A portrait of Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton (1757–1854) by Ralph Earl.

tions of it upon the freedom and happiness of mankind," to which he had planned to devote his later years, according to his admirer Chancellor Joseph Kent, an early chief justice of the Supreme Court of New York. Though he never wrote his treatise on government, Hamilton lived to see the republication of *The Federalist* and his polemical *Pacificus* letters defending presidential authority in foreign affairs. These and other occasional writings, together with the three great reports he made to Congress as secretary of the treasury—*The Report on the Public Credit* (1790), *The Report on the Bank of the United States* (1790), and *The Report on Manufactures* (1791)—constitute a substantial body of work explicating the principles of Hamiltonianism.

As Hamilton saw it, the United States was (and should always remain) a nation-state in which the states are clearly subordinated to a strong but not oppressive federal government. The federal government must possess the military force not only to secure America's interests abroad but to suppress domestic insurrection quickly and effectively—a lesson he learned in the Whiskey Rebellion, which President Washington, with Hamilton's aid, put down in 1794. The success of the federal gov-

ernment, for Hamilton and his followers, depends upon an efficient and competent executive branch and a powerful federal judiciary, both insulated to a degree from the popularly elected legislature. "The test of good government," Hamilton wrote, "is its aptitude and tendency to produce a good administration." Holding that good administration requires first-rate officers with long tenure, Hamilton firmly rejected the Jeffersonian notion that a great and powerful state can be administered by amateur politicians and short-term, inexperienced appointees.

One of the duties of the federal government, in Hamilton's view, is the active promotion of a dynamic, industrial capitalist economy—not by government ownership of industry (which Hamilton favored only for military contractors) but by establishment of sound public finance, public investment in infrastructure, and promotion of new industrial sectors unlikely to be profitable in their early stages. "Capital is wayward and timid in lending itself to new undertakings, and the State ought to excite the confidence of capitalists, who are ever cautious and sagacious, by



A cartoon of 1793 ridicules the Anti-Federalists' overheated attacks on Hamilton.

aiding them to overcome the obstacles that lie in the way of all experiments," Hamilton wrote in *The Report on Manufactures*.

Hamilton, who had studied Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, agreed with the Scottish philosopher on most points but criticized two of his ideas. He rejected Smith's notion that agriculture was preferable to manufacturing industry. And though Hamilton saw many benefits in trade and foreign investment, he believed that free trade was a mistaken policy in some circumstances. Hamilton had learned during the Revolutionary War how important it was for a country not to depend on others for "the manufactories of all the necessary weapons of war." He also advocated protection of infant American industries such as textiles, at least until they were capable of competing on an equal basis with foreign products. Finally, Hamilton

thought it foolish for a country to open its markets to countries that protected theirs. In short, Hamilton held that economic policymakers should be guided by results rather than by dogmas in promoting state interests such as national security and the diversification of the national economy.

With the collapse of the Federalist Party a few years after Hamilton's death in 1804, his philosophy of a strong, centralized national government promoting industrial capitalism and defending America's concrete interests abroad with an effective professional military passed into partial eclipse for a couple of generations. Quite different conceptions—states' rights, minimal government, agrarianism, isolationism, a militia-based defense—inspired the Jeffersonian and Jackson-

---

ian Democrats who dominated antebellum American politics. "National Republicans" such as John Quincy Adams, and later Whigs such as Daniel Webster and Henry Clay, kept the Hamiltonian legacy alive. The Whigs, fusing with antislavery Jacksonian Democrats in the 1850s, formed the new Republican Party, which under Lincoln and his successors crushed the Confederacy, abolished slavery, and made America into a strong union linked by a federally sponsored railroad infrastructure and industrializing behind high tariff walls.

The triumph of the Union was in many ways a vindication of Hamilton's vision, as was the rise of the United States as one of the world's great powers by the time of the Spanish-American War. "For many decades after the Civil War," Hamilton biographer Forrest McDonald writes, "his niche in the pantheon of American demigods was beneath only Washington's, if indeed it was not at Washington's right hand." Even so, the industrial magnates of the Gilded Age—the Jay Goulds and Edward H. Harrimans and J. P. Morgans—were not as a rule Hamiltonian in their philosophy. They tended to follow Herbert Spencer, the English philosopher of laissez-faire Social Darwinism. Moreover, many American business leaders were pacifists, believing that international capitalism, by increasing interdependence, would render war and economic rivalry between states obsolete.

The intellectual and political heirs of Hamilton operated largely outside the realm of business. Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, in *The Soldier and the State* (1957), describes the rise and fall of a neo-Hamiltonian school between 1890 and 1920. It included politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt and Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge as well as intellectuals such as Herbert Croly, Brooks Adams, and Alfred Thayer Mahan, the prophet of American navalism and great-power politics. This congeries of like-minded men often combined *realpolitik* in foreign policy with support for progressive reforms at home—more in the

interest of national efficiency than of abstract social justice. They rejected the Gilded Age's celebration of the entrepreneur in favor of the patrician-military ideal of an elite that serves the public by serving the state. According to Huntington, "Brooks Adams even went so far as to suggest openly that America would do well to substitute the values of West Point for the values of Wall Street." (It should come as no surprise to learn that West Point was a scaled-down version of Hamilton's grandiose vision of a comprehensive military academy.)

**A**t the beginning of this century, Hamilton's reputation reached its peak. The most influential of his proponents was Herbert Croly, the founding editor of the *New Republic*. In *The Promise of American Life* (1909), Croly contrasted Hamilton's view that "the central government is to be used, not merely to maintain the Constitution, but to promote the national interest and to consolidate the national organization" with the Jeffersonian theory that "there should be as little government as possible." The latter view rested on what Croly considered a naive belief in "the native goodness of human nature." To Croly and his allies, Jeffersonian doctrines, if they had ever been relevant, were obsolete in the new era of national and multinational corporations, mass organizations, technological warfare, and imperialism. Croly conceded that Hamilton's version of American nationalism had been inadequate because of its excessive distrust of popular democracy, but he held that the basic conception of an activist national government promoting the common good was as compatible with egalitarian as with aristocratic notions of a good social order.

Croly's beau ideal of an American statesman was Theodore Roosevelt, whom he praised for emancipating "American democracy from its Jeffersonian bondage." TR united progressive nationalism in domestic policy with an assertive realism, based on military power, in foreign affairs—a realism seen in his seizure of Panama and his mediation of the

---

Russo-Japanese War in the interest of the Pacific balance of power, for which he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1904. Roosevelt, like his friend Henry Cabot Lodge, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, favored U.S. intervention in World War I but opposed Wilson's League of Nations Treaty because it committed the United States to a vague collective security arrangement rather than a traditional limited alliance. In his own biography of Hamilton, published in 1883, Lodge predicted that "so long as the people of the United States form one nation, the name of Alexander Hamilton will be held in high and lasting honor, and even in the wreck of governments that noble intellect would still command the homage of men."

Lodge spoke too soon. After World War I, Hamilton's reputation, along with Hamiltonianism, went into sudden decline. The defeat of the progressive TR-Robert La Follette wing of the Republican Party by the representatives of the conventional business elite made the Republicans hostile to overseas military intervention, high levels of military spending, and ideas of government activism in the economy, even on behalf of business. The liberal wing of the Democratic Party inherited the legacy of Hamiltonian progressivism. But New Deal liberalism, as it evolved in the 1930s, was quite different from the nationalism of earlier Progressives such as TR and Croly.

**T**he claim is often made that the New Deal resulted in a fusion of the two great American traditions of government—the pursuit of Jeffersonian ends by Hamiltonian means. The historian Merrill D. Peterson writes that during the New Deal, "national power and purpose grew without disturbing the axis of the democratic faith. For all practical purposes, the New Deal ended the historic Jefferson-Hamilton dialogue in American history." One might more plausibly argue that New Deal liberals abandoned the democratic and technocratic Hamiltonianism of Herbert Croly in favor of the ideal of the lobby-based broker state.

Partly to shield themselves from accusations that the New Deal was the American version of fascism or communism, New Dealers stressed the *absence* of centralized state direction of the economy. The journalist John Chamberlain described Roosevelt's broker state as a liberal-democratic alternative to the directive state of the Progressives (and totalitarians). Interest-group liberalism was seen as a pragmatic, democratic, American version of corporatism or syndicalism. "We have equilibrated power," theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote. "We have attained a certain equilibrium in economic society itself by setting organized power against organized power" in the form of unions, corporations, and professional associations.

**N**ew Deal liberals found a patron saint for interest-group liberalism not in Hamilton but in Madison, particularly in his *Federalist* no. 10, with its theory of factions in a democracy. They reinterpreted Madison to stress the idea not of conflict but of harmony and equilibrium through pluralism. In the 1940s and '50s, Madison was elevated to the status of a patron saint of interest-group liberalism, while Hamilton, the moving force behind *The Federalist*, was denounced by, among others, historian Douglass Adair for favoring "an overruling, irresponsible, and unlimited government."

Franklin D. Roosevelt himself played an important role in expelling Hamilton from the American pantheon. FDR, a tory Democrat from the landed gentry of the Hudson River, saw himself in the tory democrat from the Virginia Tidewater. In his mind, Jefferson stood for popular government, not necessarily for weak or decentralized government, while Hamilton was a forerunner of Andrew Mellon and identified with the worst excesses of callous plutocracy. Reviewing a book by Claude G. Bowers, *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Struggle for Democracy in America*, Roosevelt suggested in 1925 that the common people needed a champion against the forces of plu-

---

ocracy: "I have a breathless feeling, too, as I wonder if, a century and a quarter later, the same contending forces are not mobilizing." At the 1928 Democratic national convention, FDR, the keynote speaker, declared, "Hamiltons we have today. Is a Jefferson on the horizon?" Soon enough, Jefferson—or at least a sanitized Jefferson, whose racial views and small-government, states' rights preferences were conveniently underplayed—came to stand at the head of a line leading, by way of Andrew Jackson, to President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself. The work of rewriting American history as a prelude to the New Deal was completed by the moderate-liberal consensus historians of the 1950s and '60s, including Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Richard Hofstadter. At least one dissenting historian, Samuel Eliot Morison, considered this dismissal of the Federalist-Whig-Republican tradition "unbalanced and unhealthy, tending to create a neoliberal stereotype." But Hamilton's stock remained low.

**T**o the extent that the Hamiltonian tradition lived on, it was in foreign policy. The logic of the broker state did not apply to the centralized national-security state that was assembled during World War II and consolidated into a permanent structure during the Korean War. Samuel Huntington notes "the curious way in which Theodore Roosevelt was the intellectual godfather of Democratic administrations after 1933" in foreign policy, and he sees a "clear line" from such neo-Hamiltonians as TR and Elihu Root to "Stimson to Marshall, Lovett, and McCloy."\*

One might have expected the leaders of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s to have looked to Hamilton for inspiration. The civil rights struggle, after all, was largely carried out in the name of federal authority by federal judges, whose power and indepen-

\*The theory of Cold War American realism, however, owed little to Hamilton, TR, Lodge, or Mahan, and far more to European émigré intellectuals such as Nicholas Spykman and Hans Morgenthau (the exception being the perennial critic of foreign policy utopianism, Walter Lippmann, Croly's fellow *New Republic* editor).

dence Hamilton strenuously defended (notably in *Federalist* no. 76). What is more, Hamilton was one of the more ardent opponents of slavery and racism among the Founding Fathers. When he was aide-de-camp to Washington, Hamilton favored giving blacks their freedom and citizenship and arming them as soldiers: "The contempt we have been taught to entertain for the blacks, makes us fancy many things that are founded neither in reason nor experience. . . . [T]he dictates of humanity and true policy equally interest me in favour of this unfortunate class of men." After the war, Hamilton—who had grown up in the slave society of the West Indies—helped organize the Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves. Jefferson, by contrast, opposed emancipation if it could not be accompanied by the immediate colonization of black Americans abroad, and his speculations about alleged black racial inferiority in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784–85) made him a hero to generations of pseudoscientific racists. Nevertheless, the modern habit of attributing everything good in American life to the inspiration of Jefferson alone has resulted in his being given credit for convictions about black equality and freedom that are, in fact, closer to those of Hamilton.

The New Left and the modern conservative movement both draw on Jeffersonian distrust of concentrated authority, whether commercial or governmental, and on Jeffersonian individualism. The Jeffersonian Left stresses sexual rights, while the Jeffersonian Right stresses property rights; Left-Jeffersonians attack big business, while Right-Jeffersonians attack big government. For all that, there is a striking similarity in the paeans to the virtue of the people and the suspicion of authority and organization shared by the leaders of both the sexual revolution and the tax revolt—and a common dislike of Alexander Hamilton, the socially conservative proponent of big business and big government.

While liberals were redefining their tradition as one that stretched from Jefferson to Lincoln to FDR, leaving out Hamilton and TR,

---

the conservatives of the 1950s were reading Hamilton out of the lineage of the contemporary Right. Conservative writer Russell Kirk, who repeated the hoary Jeffersonian libel that Hamilton sought to ensure that the rich and well born "could keep their saddles and ride . . . like English squires," criticized him as an unwitting precursor of the New Deal welfare state. "A man on the Right," according to historian Clinton Rossiter in 1955, "is not necessarily a conservative, and if Hamilton was a conservative, he was the only one of his kind." The McCarthy-Buckley-Goldwater conservative movement owed more to the old southern Democrats than to the Federalist-Whig-Republican tradition. Its philosophical roots sank deep in Jeffersonian antistatism, states' rights, and free-market libertarianism, and its antielitism and anti-intellectualism originated in southern and western populism. The defense of the Hamiltonian tradition fell to northeastern moderate Republicans such as Senator Jacob Javits of New York. In *Order of Battle* (1964), Javits sought to defend his conception of the Republican Party against the ex-Democratic Goldwaterite conservatives of the South and West: "This is the spirit which has represented the most dominant strain in Republican history. Hamilton-Clay-Lincoln-Theodore Roosevelt: they represent the line of evolution embodying this tradition." Arguably the last great Hamiltonians in American politics were Richard Nixon—a foreign-policy realist who admired TR—and John Connally, who, as one of Hamilton's distant successors as secretary of the treasury, shocked foreign governments and American critics with his unapologetic economic nationalism.

**B**y the time Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980, the Republican Party had become a completely libertarian, antistatist party in economics, with serious disagreements in its ranks only over social issues such as abortion and school prayer. Though Kevin Phillips, a graduate of the Nixon-Connally wing of the GOP, published a book, *Staying on Top: The Business Case*

for *National Industry Strategy* (1984), advocating a conservative industrial policy that would target federal aid to "basic industries like steel or automobiles, or high-technology industry," his was an isolated voice. (Phillips was decisively read out of the Right for attacking its plutocratic tendencies in his 1990 best seller, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*.) Former Reagan trade negotiator Clyde Prestowitz founded the Economic Strategy Institute (ESI) to contest orthodox laissez-faire notions and advocate government-business partnership and a results-oriented trade policy.

Nevertheless, the dominant group in the Republican Party today consists of southern and western Jeffersonians in the Dixiecrat tradition, along with ex-Democratic intellectuals who, while retaining a strong cultural nationalism, have repudiated the New Deal and the Great Society for laissez-faire economics and the libertarian ideal of minimal government. In 1990, George Will named Jefferson the "Person of the Millennium," writing that Jefferson "is what a free person looks like—confident, serene, rational, disciplined, temperate, tolerant, curious." Ronald Reagan, himself an apostate Democrat, recommended that we "pluck a flower from Thomas Jefferson's life and wear it in our soul forever."

**H**amilton probably would have thought as little of the contemporary Republican Right as it thinks of him. Reagan's brand of populist conservatism, contrasting the virtue of the people with the evils of the elite, would have found no favor with the elitist Hamilton. He despised politicians concerned with "what will *please* (and) not what will *benefit* the people." Though often maligned as a champion of plutocracy, Hamilton favored imposts on the luxuries of the rich as a means of "taxing their superior wealth," praised inheritance laws that would "soon melt down those great estates which, if they continued, might favor the power of the few," and denounced the poll tax in order "to guard the least wealthy part of the community from oppression." Though

---

Hamilton was not alarmed by a moderate deficit, he would have been shocked by deficits produced, like Reagan's, by an unwillingness to levy taxes to match spending. In his *Second Report on the Public Credit* (1795), he noted that runaway debt is "the natural disease of all governments" and that it is difficult "to conceive anything more likely than this to lead to great and convulsive revolutions of empire." The first and greatest secretary of the treasury, who during the Whiskey Rebellion helped President Washington to mobilize the militia to collect excise taxes, would not have smiled upon the tax-revolt rhetoric of Howard Jarvis and Ronald Reagan.

Having seen the consequences of feeble government during the Revolutionary War and the years of the Articles of Confederation, Hamilton would have been appalled by Reagan's assertion that "government is not part of the solution; it is the problem." Indeed, during the French Revolution, Hamilton contemptuously dismissed the "pernicious system" that maintained "that but a small portion of power is requisite to Government . . . and that as human nature shall refine and ameliorate by the operation of a more enlightened plan, government itself will become useless, and Society will subsist and flourish free from its shackles."

"The American nation reached the peak of its greatness in the middle of the 20th century," historian Forrest McDonald has lamented. "After that time it became increasingly Jeffersonian, governed by coercion and the party spirit, its people progressively more dependent and less self-reliant, its decline candy-coated with the rhetoric of liberty and equality and justice for all: and with that decline Hamilton's fame declined apace." Repudiated by *ersatz* Jeffersonians and Jacksonians of the Left and Right alike, Hamilton, by the mid-20th century, was even being cast as a villain in American fiction and poetry. In his book-length poem *Paterson* (1946–58) William Carlos Williams, one of America's leading midcentury modernist poets, chose the site of Hamilton's early industrial experiments as a

symbol of the blighting of the American spirit in the era of centralized government and concentrated industry. (The poem is interlarded with quotations from a pamphlet Williams had read attacking Hamilton and the Federal Reserve, entitled "Tom Edison on the Money Subject.") In the ultimate insult—from an eccentric populist perspective—Gore Vidal's best selling historical novel *Burr* (1986) cast Hamilton as a sinister foil to the man who murdered him in a duel. Never had Hamilton's reputation been lower.

In recent years, Hamiltonianism has been reintroduced into American political debate by way of Japan. Whereas the neo-Hamiltonians of the late 19th century looked to Hamilton as a guide to power politics, the Hamiltonians of today are more likely to view him as the patron saint of industrial policy and economic nationalism.

The architects of the postwar Japanese economic miracle in the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) were inspired not only by the examples of 19th-century Germany and America, but by the theories of the 19th-century German economic nationalist Friedrich List, who, when he lived for a time in Pennsylvania, absorbed Hamilton's ideas about the protection of infant industries. By the late 1970s, the remarkable success of modern Japan in promoting its high-tech industry and banking sectors by combining protectionism and industrial policy with the targeting of open foreign markets—including that of the United States—was presenting a challenge to orthodox American economists and politicians, who had been committed to free trade since the aftermath of World War II. Working within the neoclassical paradigm, architects of "the new trade theory" (which is little more than a recycling of the old Hamilton-List theory of tariff-driven industrial policy) began to question the orthodox view that free trade is always beneficial to a country.

By the early 1980s, a growing number of American thinkers and politicians was advo-

---

cating the emulation, in the United States, of aspects of Japanese industrial policy. It would be a mistake to describe all American proponents of industrial policy as "Hamiltonian." Most of the industrial-policy advocates were Left-liberals such as Robert Reich, Robert Kuttner, and Lester Thurow, whose interest in different (and sometimes conflicting) versions of industrial policy grew out of a desire to help American workers threatened by foreign competition. Also in this school is Laura Tyson, who left the Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy, an influential forum for the new trade theory, to chair President Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers. Many of these liberals are reluctant nationalists. Given a choice, they would prefer a "global New Deal" regulating the excesses of transnational capitalism to American economic nationalism in the service of American self-sufficiency and geopolitical pre-eminence. They are better described as neo-Keynesians than as Hamiltonians. As for Ross Perot's brand of economic nationalism, it owes more to southwestern populism than to Hamilton's principles.

**T**he genuine Hamiltonians, one can argue, are the politicians and national-security experts more concerned about the U.S. defense industrial base than about union jobs in Detroit. The United States has long had its own military-led industrial policy, in the form of Pentagon-funded research and development. Military procurement has been largely responsible for the postwar U.S. lead in industries characterized by high risk and high research costs requiring government support: computers, aircraft, and communications equipment. The chief Pentagon agency—the American MITI—was the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).<sup>\*</sup> During the 1980s, DARPA funded R&D in sectors including very high speed integrated circuits (VHSIC), fiber optics, advanced lasers, computer software, and composite materials, which promised to have com-

<sup>\*</sup>President Clinton has since dropped the word "Defense" from the agency's name.

mercial applications as well as military uses.

The leading Hamiltonians to emerge from the military-industrial complex have not fared well in politics or in the private sector. DARPA director Craig Fields, an advocate of industrial policy, was forced out of his job by the Bush administration in 1990. The view that prevailed in that administration was one attributed to Michael J. Boskin, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers: "It doesn't matter whether the United States makes computer chips or potato chips." Admiral Bobby Ray Inman, the former National Security Agency (NSA) director who grew concerned about American technological dependence in the mid-'80s, left government for an unsuccessful stint as the head of a government-backed computer consortium, Microelectronics and Computer Technology Corporation (MCC), in Austin, Texas. (It might be useful to recall, however, that Hamilton failed both in his political efforts to promote an industrial policy and in his private attempt to jump-start American industrialization with his Society for Useful Manufactures in Paterson—only to be posthumously vindicated by later generations that adopted certain aspects of his program for national development.)

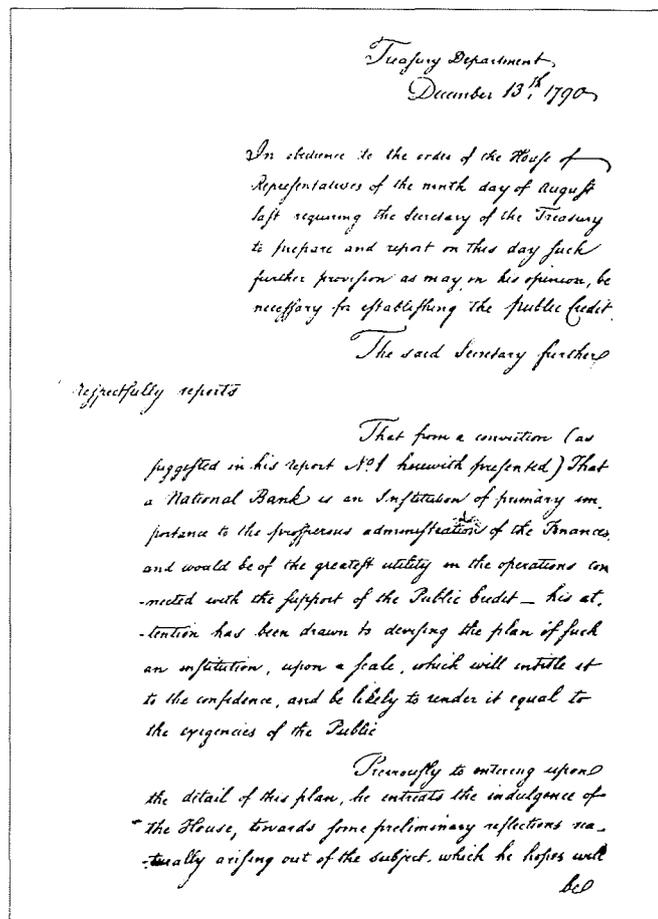
Among recent American politicians, only the "Atari Democrats," led by Gary Hart and Al Gore, combined interests in military innovation and domestic technology policy in true Hamiltonian fashion. Gore's advocacy of military intervention in the Persian Gulf, technology policy, and the building of an "information highway"—the modern version of canals and railroads—makes this southern Democrat the philosophical descendant of northern Federalists, Whigs, and Republicans. One influential thinker among the neoliberal Democrats, journalist James Fallows, is the author of a book on high-tech military reform, *National Defense* (1981) as well as a study of the application of the Hamilton-List economic theory in modern Japan, *Looking at the Sun* (1994). Hamiltonian economic ideas, currently out of favor, can be expected to make a comeback if the contemporary panacea of free-trade agreements

such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) fails to produce the promised results in terms of employment and the revitalization of the American industrial base.

If the neo-Hamiltonians of the 1890s gave a one-sided emphasis to Hamilton's foreign policy realism, the Hamiltonians of today may be overstressing his approach to trade and industry. To Hamilton, foreign policy and economic policy alike were mere means to achieving the goal to which he devoted his life—the unity of the American nation and the competence of its agent, the national state. The circumstances of the 1990s are far different from those of the 1890s, and the United States is a far different country—thanks, in no small part, to Hamilton and his successors. And yet the questions of national unity and competent government are as important in our day as in his.

Today the greatest threat to national unity comes not from sectionalism but from multiculturalism—from the idea that there is no single nation comprising Americans of all races, ancestries, and religions but only an aggregate of biologically defined "cultures" coexisting under a minimal framework of law. Neither Hamilton nor any of his contemporaries gave any thought to the necessity of a multiracial but unicultural society. Still, Hamilton's impassioned vision of a "continentalist" American society can inspire us indirectly as we seek to integrate the American nation in the aftermath of both segregation and multiculturalism.

When it comes to the problem of effective democratic government, Hamilton's legacy is more relevant today than ever. For a generation, the United States has suffered from po-



The first page of Hamilton's Report on a National Bank (1790)

litical gridlock, symbolized by, but not limited to, an inability to make tax revenues match spending. What Jonathan Rauch has called "demosclerosis" is a lethal by-product of the interest-group liberalism of the New Deal, a system now in advanced decay. Rauch, along with other conservatives and libertarians, argues for a "Jeffersonian" solution involving the radical reduction of government at all levels and the dispersal of authority from the central government to the states. However, in the conditions of the 21st century, when the United States will likely face geopolitical competition with rising technological powers, mercantilist economic rivalries, and the threat of mass immigration from the Third World, minimal government will almost certainly not

---

be a realistic alternative. Because the quantity of national government will not be significantly reduced, the quality of national governance will have to be improved. That will mean repudiating the ideal of the directionless broker state—now three-quarters of a century old—and attempting to realize the Hamiltonian and Progressive ideal of a strong but not authoritarian executive branch that is led by a meritocratic elite and capable of resisting interest-group pressures without ceasing to be ultimately accountable to elected representatives.

**T**he 1992 campaigns of Clinton and Perot—both of whom, in essence, promised more “businesslike” government rather than less government—are signs that the American public is disenchanted with New Deal interest-group liberalism and with the nostalgic antigovernment libertarianism of the Reagan Right. Journalist David Frum sees American politicians on both Left and Right slowly returning to “the political formula that has won more presidential elections than any other: active government intervention in the economy to promote welfare and assist private business, conservative moral reform at home, and the assertion of American nationality.” If Frum is right, then in the decades ahead Hamiltonian nationalism may once again define the political mainstream.

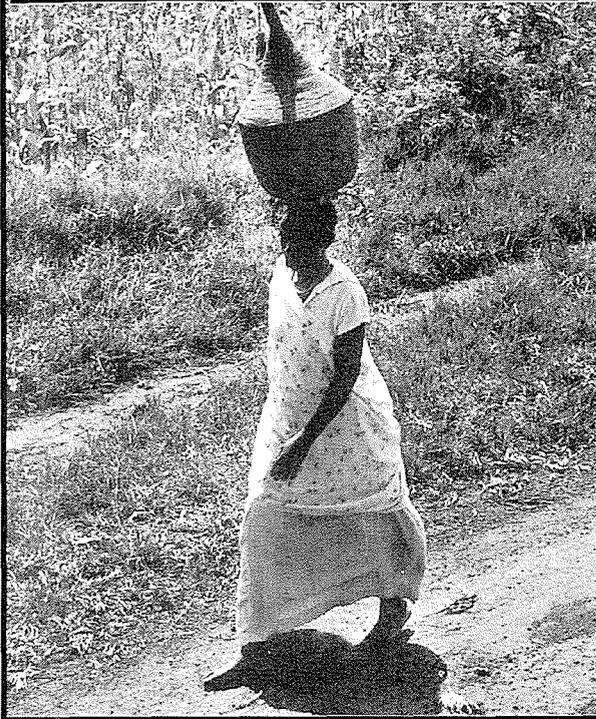
Elsewhere in the world, the Hamiltonian approach to building democratic capitalism in ex-communist and Third World societies could not be more timely. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, Americans urged a “Jeffersonian” model of reconstruction on societies everywhere, thinking that immediate elections and rapid marketization of

statist economies would solve all problems. The result, in Russia and much of Eastern Europe and the Third World, has been economic collapse, popular disillusionment with democracy and capitalism, and the acquisition of local industries by foreigners at fire-sale prices. The leaders of new democracies can learn from Hamilton and his mentor Washington that it is not enough to hold elections and establish free markets. A struggling new democratic government must be able to defend its borders against foreign enemies, suppress insurrection and criminality, gradually construct a system of sound finance, and guide industrial reform and development in the nation’s interest—if necessary, at the expense of free trade.

Not only contemporary Americans, then, but people everywhere have much to learn from Hamilton and Hamiltonianism in the century ahead. In the words of Clinton Rossiter, Hamilton “was conservative and radical, traditionalist and revolutionary, reactionary and visionary, Tory and Whig all thrown into one. He is a glorious source of inspiration and instruction to modern conservatives, but so is he to modern liberals.” Earlier in this century, when the threats were totalitarian imperialism and domestic conformity and repression, Americans and freedom-loving peoples around the world may have been right to look for inspiration to apostles of revolution and individualism such as Thomas Jefferson. In the aftermath of successful revolutions, however, a quite different kind of leadership is called for. The task of the coming generation is not to tear down, but to rebuild and build anew. In that task, Alexander Hamilton, the master architect among America’s Founders, must be our pre-eminent guide.



## Burundi: Ethnocide as Discourse and Practice



**René Lemarchand**

This book situates Burundi in the current global debate on ethnicity by describing and analyzing the wholesale massacre of the Hutu majority by the Tutsi minority. The author refutes the government's version of these events that places blame on the former colonial government and the church, and offers documentation that identifies the source of these massacres as occurring across a socially constructed fault-line. Published in cooperation with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).

*Woodrow Wilson Center Press Series*

45176-0 Hardback \$54.95

*Available in bookstores or from*

**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211

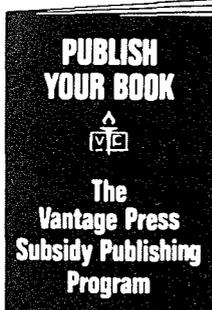
Call toll-free 800-872-7423

MasterCard/VISA accepted. Prices subject to change.

## PUBLISH YOUR BOOK

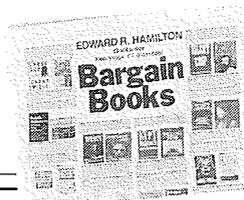
Since 1949 more than 15,000 authors have chosen the Vantage Press subsidy publishing program.

You are invited to send for a free illustrated guidebook which explains how your book can be produced and promoted. Whether your subject is fiction, non-fiction or poetry, scientific, scholarly, specialized (even controversial), this handsome 32-page brochure will show you how to arrange for prompt subsidy publication. Unpublished



authors will find this booklet valuable and informative. For your free copy, write to:

**VANTAGE PRESS, Inc.** Dept. RD-6  
516 W. 34th St., New York, N.Y. 10001



**FREE CATALOG**  
Huge Selection  
Lowest Prices

## America's Biggest Selection of Bargain Books

**Overstocks, Remainders, Imports and Reprints** from all major publishers. Books recently priced at \$20, \$30, \$40 - now as low as \$1.95, \$2.95, \$3.95.

**Thousands** of titles, from yesterday's best sellers to books you never knew existed.

**Over 40 subject areas:** Biography, History, Fiction, Sports, Literature, Politics, Health, Nature and more.

**Fast Shipment**, normally within 48 hours, and a moneyback guarantee.

Please send me your Free Catalog of Bargain Books.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**HAMILTON** Box 15-448, Falls Village CT 06031

# THE POPULATION QUESTION REVISITED

BY GEORGE MOFFETT

*Despite surprising reductions in birth rates in many parts of the world, more than 90 million people are being added to the Earth each year. World population is now approaching six billion, up from only three billion in 1960.*

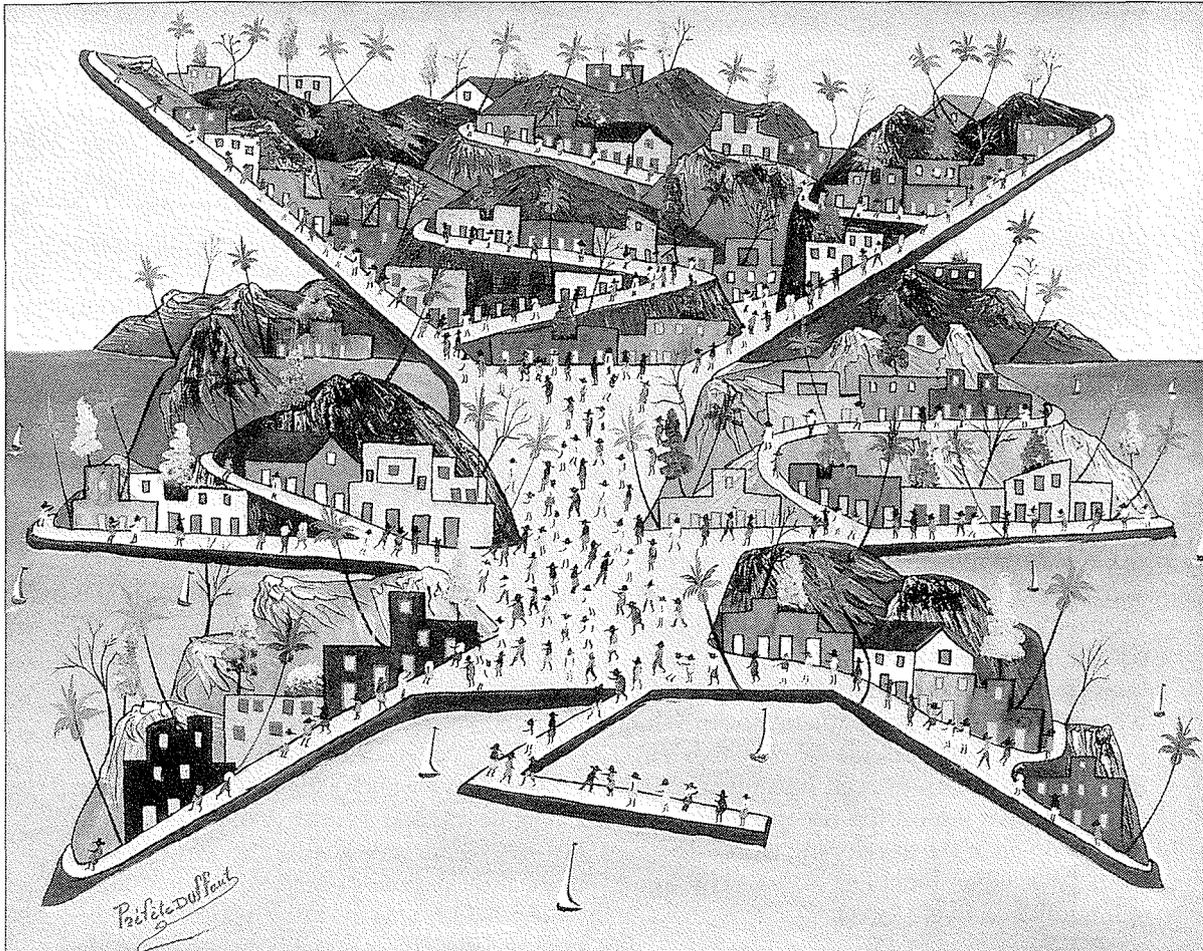
*During the next 20 years, it could increase by as much as 40 percent, to almost eight billion people, or by less than 30 percent, to about 7.2 billion.*

*The difference will depend in part upon decisions that are made by the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo this September. Behind the conference, George Moffett explains, simmers a long debate between those who see the rise in population as a clear and mounting danger and those who argue that such growth ranks low, if at all, among the world's problems.*

**T**here are two ways to view the extraordinary growth in human numbers that has occurred during the last half of the 20th century. One is with trepidation. The other is with hope. During a recent three-year tour of duty as a newspaper correspondent in the Middle East, I found abundant cause for both.

Trepidation comes more easily in a region

where continuing high rates of population growth have contributed to a visible array of political, economic, and social problems. It is an emotion evoked merely by walking down the street in a city like Algiers. The vacant stares of the jobless men who wile away long hours on street corners and in coffee houses because they have nothing else to do tell a disturbing story. These poor are part of an army of unemployed men and women that includes



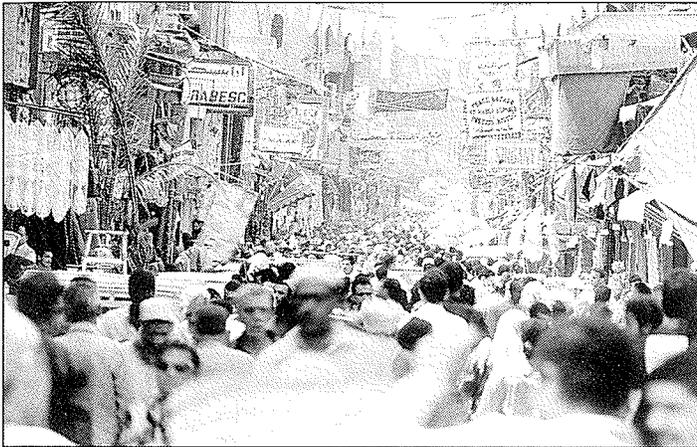
*Jamel, a painting by the 20th-century Haitian artist Préfète Duffaut*

three-quarters of Algerians between the ages of 16 and 29. Their circumstances are bleak for many reasons. An inefficient socialist economy and 30 years of increasingly corrupt one-party rule have done their damage, but there is something else at work and it bears down more heavily each year on Algeria's future. It is the relentless onrush of humanity that has magnified inefficiency and mismanagement, that has swelled the ranks of the jobless, and that has led even hard-core optimists to wonder whether this once-proud nation can ever regain its footing. The despair reflected on the faces in Algiers tells one side of the population story.

But there is a more hopeful side to the

subject as well. I discovered it one day while reporting on the consequences of rapid population growth in Egypt. After interviewing the usual government officials and population experts, I was directed to a small family-planning clinic, located near Cairo's infamous "City of the Dead," a sprawling group of cemeteries that is now home to half a million living Cairenes who have nowhere else to reside. It was there that I met Aziza.

Until three years before, Aziza had been one of the majority of Egyptian women who, according to one Egyptian public-opinion poll, wanted to stop having children but did not know how. Just how to use the birth control devices passed out by a local government



Cairo, site of this year's population conference, is the world's 12th most populous city. It currently has 97,106 residents per square mile.

clinic was a mystery. Family and friends warned her of grave side effects if she tried. Meanwhile, the children, five born into the squalor of her teeming Cairo neighborhood, kept coming. At the clinic she finally found what she needed: a sympathetic doctor who took the time to provide advice that cut through the layers of fear, ignorance, and suspicion that attend the use of contraceptives in much of the developing world. Three years later, when I met her, Aziza's children still numbered five.

**T**he uncertainties occasioned by world population pressure are nothing new. Despairing or hopeful, thousands of books have been written on the subject, and virtually all of them have something to do with a dramatic historical trend that began around the turn of the 17th century and that will probably end sometime during the 22nd. Throughout most of human history the world's population remained below 250 million, capped by birth rates and death rates locked in a seemingly permanent

equilibrium. But sometime after 1600 the line demographers use on graphs to plot population growth began to stir, then took an unexpected—and until now permanent—turn upward. The ascent was slow at first. The line probably crossed the half-billion mark sometime during the 17th century. Nudged along by improvements in agriculture and public health and then by the Industrial Revolution, it climbed higher through the 18th century. After the turn of the 19th century it reached a milestone, passing the one billion mark for the first time in human history. This was not long after the English economist Thomas Malthus penned his famous essay warning that such growth would outpace food supplies and keep mankind in the grip of poverty.

The line continued upward into the present century and began its steepest ascent in the years after World War II, when two developments sent death rates plummeting in the poor nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. One was the introduction of antibiotics and the advent of public health programs that led to mass immunizations and improvements in sanitation and water supplies. The other was an agricultural revolution based on chemical fertilizers, irrigation, and improved seed strains that dramatically expanded food supplies. The combined effect was to reduce mortality rates. But with no corresponding drop in birth rates, the population line was propelled into the demographic stratosphere. By the 1960s, the *rate* of population growth reached 2.1 percent globally and 2.5 percent among developing countries—the highest

---

*George Moffett, a former Wilson Center Guest Scholar, is a diplomatic correspondent and former Middle East bureau chief of the Christian Science Monitor and the author of The Limits of Victory: The Ratification of the Panama Canal Treaties (1985). This essay is adapted from Critical Masses: The Global Population Challenge. Reprinted by arrangement with Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books, USA, Inc. Copyright © 1994 by George Moffett.*

---

ever recorded—and then dropped off. But, driven by the disproportionately large percentage of young people in the nations of the Third World, the line plotting the actual growth in human numbers continued its upward course.

The world's population now stands at about 5.6 billion, on its way to six billion by the turn of the century. At current growth rates it will double by 2035, while in Africa, where growth rates remain the highest in the world, population will double in just over half that time, from 670 million today to 1.4 billion around 2015. Exactly when and at what level global population growth will finally peak is extremely difficult for demographers to predict. Several decades of the fastest population growth in human history still lie ahead, according to the United Nations. If fertility declines fast enough, the line will begin to level off sometime after the middle of the 21st century. If it does not, its ascent will continue into the 22nd. Its long upward journey will then, finally, be at an end.

Although many specialists believe that rapid population growth is a root cause of economic underdevelopment, political instability, and environmental degradation, the population issue has evoked little public concern in the United States since the late 1960s and early 1970s, when books such as Paul Ehrlich's *Population Bomb* and the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* created a stir with projections of famine and economic collapse. Nor has it assumed over the past decade the kind of priority among American policymakers that it was once given by one secretary of state, Dean Rusk, who warned during the 1960s that bringing nuclear weapons and high global population growth rates under control were the two greatest challenges facing mankind.

According to one recent Gallup poll, only 50 percent of Americans believe it is in the best interest of the United States to help other nations slow their population growth. Only four percent more support providing U.S. economic or technical assistance to curb population growth in developing nations. Asked how

best to help developing countries protect their environments, only a slightly higher number in other Western democracies, queried on the eve of the Rio "Earth Summit" in 1992, endorsed supplying family-planning information.

Such apathy is bound up with a problem long familiar to pollsters: that long-term trends and complex issues of public policy are beyond the ken of all but the most educated members of the public. But neither ignorance nor apathy will spare Western nations from the implications of the growing body of evidence that population expansion, alone or in conjunction with other factors, is having significant and adverse consequences, and not just in poor nations.

**I**n the United States, which has a population growth rate five times that of western Europe and four times that of Japan, immigration and natural population growth are occurring so fast that the U.S. Census Bureau was recently forced to revamp its long-term projections. In the late 1980s, the bureau projected that the nation's population would peak at slightly over 300 million just before the mid-21st century. New projections issued just four years later put the 2050 total at between 383 and 500 million, with continuing increases projected through the 21st century. The result: Today's American children could end their lives in a United States almost twice as crowded as it is today.

Elsewhere, the effects of rapid population growth are far more severe. Among the wealthy industrial nations of Europe, population increases lie behind significant new social tensions and the growth of pernicious right-wing political movements. The cause: a steady flow of people crossing the Mediterranean in search of jobs that North Africa's inefficient economies are unable to generate fast enough to keep up with population growth. Six million Africans now live in France and Germany alone, adding to the existing burden of absorbing refugees from the former Soviet bloc, Turkey, and Asia. The visible manifestations are shantytowns and street

---

crime and outbursts of anti-immigrant violence. The region with the world's lowest rate of population growth is bracing itself against worse to come from the region with the world's highest rate. Africa, which today has about the same number of inhabitants as Europe, will have three times Europe's population within a generation.

Elsewhere in the developing world, demographic change is contributing to political and social dislocations that could put the most serious strains on the international system in the post-Cold War world. All around the developing world, governments are struggling to counteract the effects of rapid population growth on domestic economies, particularly on the potential for job creation. Some 500 million people are already un- or underemployed in developing countries, and 30 million more are entering the job market each year, according to the United Nations Population Fund. Many experts doubt that capital and technology can be created fast enough in poor countries to keep up with the demand. Population growth, meanwhile, has magnified the problems created by bad government policies and social inequities, contributing to extensive deforestation, land degradation, overcropping, urban overcrowding, regional tensions, and, in countries such as Algeria, worrisome political trends.

"Population projections out to 2050 are dramatic and have dramatic implications," say John Steinbruner, director of foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution. "Along with the internationalization of the economy and the information revolution, population creates an entirely new set of circumstances, altering the character of what we understand to be security. We have a major story on our hands here, and people will eventually have to notice."

## II

Unlikely as it may seem in a world of nearly six billion people, population was a concern in

a world one-twentieth that size. The reason is not so surprising: Long before human numbers began to have an impact on the global environment, they had an impact on the local environment. The specter of widespread deforestation and soil erosion in ancient Greece, for instance, occasioned mostly by overgrazing, convinced Plato and Herodotus that the city-states of Attica had to balance population growth with available resources. Moderation in population size as in all other matters, the Greek philosopher and the Greek historian reasoned, was desirable. Aristotle, the intellectual godfather of the pessimistic persuasion of many modern-day demographers, anticipated other problems that would attend rapid population growth. It is necessary that the state "take care that the increase of the people should not exceed a certain number," he cautioned, adding that the failure to do so "is to bring certain poverty on the citizens." It is evident, Aristotle warned, that "if the people increased, many of them must be very poor."

Across the Mediterranean, in the capital of the great empire of antiquity, Cicero believed that there could never be such a thing as too many Romans. But a neighbor of later times was unconvinced. When "every province of the world so teems with inhabitants that they can neither subsist where they are nor remove elsewhere . . . it must come about that the world will purge itself through floods, plagues, or famines," warned the Florentine statesman Niccolò Machiavelli, early in the 16th century.

To a list that included environmental degradation and poverty, Sir Walter Raleigh a century later added another danger of rapid population growth: imperialism. "When any country is overlaid by the multitude which live upon it, there is a natural necessity compelling it to disburden itself and lay the load upon others, by right or wrong," wrote the explorer, who had reason to know.

Plato and Aristotle, Machiavelli and Raleigh provided one answer—a resounding yes—to the central demographic question of the ages: Is there such a thing as too many



The "dismal scientist," Thomas Malthus (1766-1834)

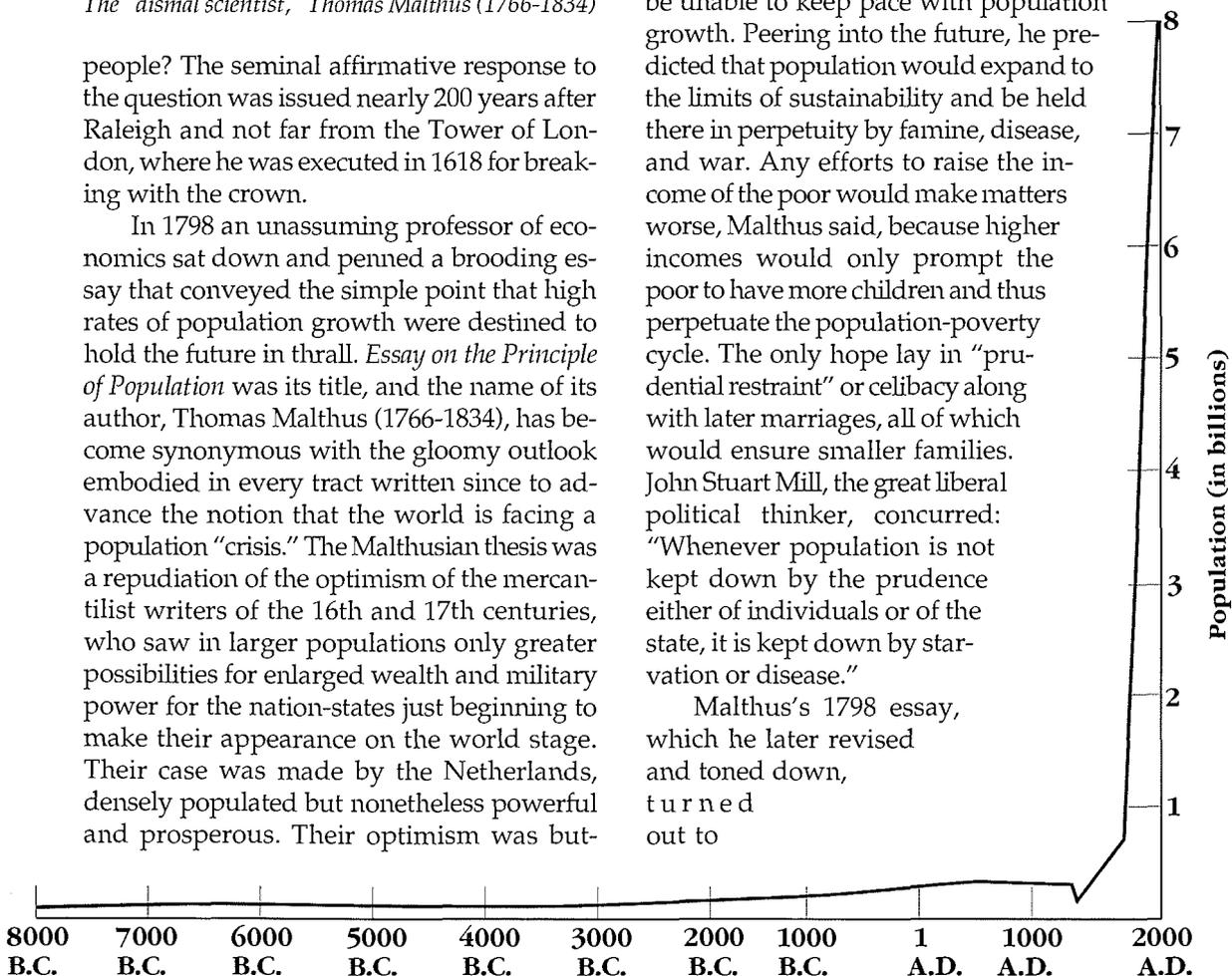
people? The seminal affirmative response to the question was issued nearly 200 years after Raleigh and not far from the Tower of London, where he was executed in 1618 for breaking with the crown.

In 1798 an unassuming professor of economics sat down and penned a brooding essay that conveyed the simple point that high rates of population growth were destined to hold the future in thrall. *Essay on the Principle of Population* was its title, and the name of its author, Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), has become synonymous with the gloomy outlook embodied in every tract written since to advance the notion that the world is facing a population "crisis." The Malthusian thesis was a repudiation of the optimism of the mercantilist writers of the 16th and 17th centuries, who saw in larger populations only greater possibilities for enlarged wealth and military power for the nation-states just beginning to make their appearance on the world stage. Their case was made by the Netherlands, densely populated but nonetheless powerful and prosperous. Their optimism was but-

tressed by utopian writers such as France's Marquis de Condorcet, who wrote convincing assurances that man's technology and ingenuity would combine to create the economic opportunities needed to accommodate expanding populations. But by Malthus's time such opportunities seemed remote. Industrialization had created great wealth but also great poverty in Britain, which reeled from a series of economic crises and bad harvests.

The man at the center of the great demographic debate was an immensely popular figure in London, a tall and handsome scholar, "in appearance and conduct a perfect gentleman," according to a contemporary magazine. Malthus looked out from Britain's cauldron of troubles and concluded that progress would be stymied because economic growth and food production would be unable to keep pace with population growth. Peering into the future, he predicted that population would expand to the limits of sustainability and be held there in perpetuity by famine, disease, and war. Any efforts to raise the income of the poor would make matters worse, Malthus said, because higher incomes would only prompt the poor to have more children and thus perpetuate the population-poverty cycle. The only hope lay in "prudential restraint" or celibacy along with later marriages, all of which would ensure smaller families. John Stuart Mill, the great liberal political thinker, concurred: "Whenever population is not kept down by the prudence either of individuals or of the state, it is kept down by starvation or disease."

Malthus's 1798 essay, which he later revised and toned down, turned out to



---

## Religion and Family Planning

**P**adre Alberto Marquez Aquino's church, Maria Madre, is located in the sprawling western reaches of Mexico City, the second largest city in the world. A Roman Catholic priest for more than 20 years, Marquez is a respected figure in this lower-middle-class community, where the church retains a strong hold on popular affections and loyalties. He speaks as a man who has no doubt about the church's position on contraception but understands the struggles of those who do. He also grasps the surprising fact, borne out by a large body of anecdotal evidence, that despite the church's well-publicized views on the subject, very many Catholics do not understand the large area of permissibility that enables Catholics to space children and to use natural means of contraception to limit family size.

"Many people think that the church says they should have a lot of kids," the soft-spoken cleric explains. "Others think that Catholicism is totally against any type of contraception and family planning. Maybe 10 percent know what the church really feels. And because they don't understand what the church doctrine is, they don't even think about it and they do what they want to do. Some feel guilty, but most are simply ignorant of the church's true position."

As the senior priest of Maria Madre for the past seven years, Marquez has spent dozens of hours talking to parishioners about natural methods of birth control. "If they really understood that natural methods do work," he insists, "they would not use artificial contraceptives." Father Marquez has no way of knowing how many obey because most parishioners no longer confess to using modern contraceptives. But he is worried that the battle is being lost—and not without reason. If the statistics are accurate, Mexico has become a nation of Catholics who believe themselves faithful despite a breach over the essential issue of contraception. Across Mexico and around the Catholic world, a historic transformation of lay attitudes toward contraception is taking place as the relentless pace of modernization is forcing millions of believers to revise their ideas about what is morally correct and religiously acceptable.

In Latin America, where half the world's 800 million Catholics reside, this transformation has already produced significant demographic changes. A continent that used to be the object of gloomy demographic predictions, similar to those now made about Africa, is today a notable, if not uniform, family-planning success story. "In terms of attitudes toward family planning, Latin America is like Berlin after the wall came down," says Paul Burgess, a former priest and Vatican official who is an expert on population issues. "It's a whole new era."

In many individual countries, Catholics use contraceptives at rates equal to or higher than among adherents of other faiths. Of those who do not, religion is usually not the main reason. Meanwhile, despite pressure from the church, governments in most Catholic countries are now committed to family planning and have invested large sums to make contraceptives widely available.

**O**n the matter of specific contraceptive choice, public attitudes in Mexico and elsewhere across Latin America are also largely at variance with Catholic teachings. Despite the church's 1975 ban on sterilization, 20 percent of Latin American couples of reproductive age use sterilization and the proportion is rising fast, according to one UN study. Fully one-fourth of married women of reproductive age in Brazil have been sterilized, one-third in Panama and El Salvador, and 40 percent in Puerto Rico, which has the highest rate in the world. And these trends show no sign of leveling off. Among women in their later thirties and early forties the figures are higher still. As for the pill, banned in the church's definitive 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, only northern and western Europe surpass Catholic Latin America in its use. Together the pill and female sterilization account for two-thirds of all contraceptive use in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The use of modern birth-control devices is just as widespread in Catholic nations outside Latin America, testifying to the prevalence of what Pope John Paul II has described as the "contraceptive mentality." The prime example lies outside the pope's front door. Italy, where condoms can be

---

purchased within sight of the Vatican, has the highest contraceptive prevalence rate (nearly 80 percent) and the lowest fertility rate (1.3 children per woman) ever recorded. According to the World Health Organization, the country's birthrate has declined by half since the early 1960s. Italy now produces fewer children in relation to its population than any country in the world.

Nor is Catholicism the only religion buffeted by the contraceptive revolution. Millions of Muslims have responded by accenting a more permissive side of their theology. In the process they have removed one barrier to reducing fertility in the Muslim crescent of South Asia and the Arab world, where birthrates are among the highest in the world.

Just what is and what is not allowed under Muslim law is a matter of debate. Throughout the 1,400-year history of Islam, the world's second largest faith, children have been considered one of the greatest blessings of God. The religion's long tradition, based on the Prophet Muhammad's injunction to "marry and have children"—the Islamic equivalent of the enjoinder in Genesis to "go forth and multiply"—is one reason why large families have been the rule in Muslim nations.

But in the Muslim world, as in Catholic nations, old teachings are bumping up against the hard realities of population trends that have fundamentally altered daily life. In Egypt, Mohammed Sayeed Tantawi, a government-appointed mufti, or interpreter of religious law, speaks with authority as a keeper of doctrine for the world's 850 million Sunni Muslims. "Islam provides no opposition to controlling birth. There is no Koranic verse which forbids family planning," says the cleric. "I personally, if I were to have a meeting with the pope at the Vatican, would explain to him that the Shari'a of Islam does not forbid family planning as long as the couple sees that there is a necessity for it."

The implications of high birth rates in the Arab world dawned first upon politicians whose jobs depend on keeping up with spiraling demands for jobs, food, and housing. More than three decades ago, Tunisia's long-time leader Habib Bourghiba warned of "a human tidal wave that is implacably

rising—rising more quickly than our capacity to support ourselves."

"What good is it to increase our agricultural production and our mineral wealth if the population continues its anarchic and demential growth?" Bourghiba asked when he established the region's first successful family-planning program.

Thirty years later, the logic of family planning extends even to the bastion of Shi'ite orthodoxy, Iran. When they seized control from the shah in 1979, the country's new Islamic rulers sneered at birth control as a Western plot. Fifteen years later, faced with twice the population but the same fixed, oil-based annual income, the mullahs have caught the spirit. With the zeal of converts, they have created a family-planning program that includes everything from aggressive public education to free vasectomies to financial disincentives that discourage anything larger than a three-child family.

**T**he ethics of reproduction are also changing in Hindu nations. Like most of the world's major faiths, Hinduism is pronatalist and patriarchal. Sons are extremely important because, among other reasons, males are responsible for the funeral rites that ensure the survival of the souls of the departed. In rural Nepal, the emphasis on sons has been so great that couples traditionally have as many as six children to ensure two surviving sons, according to research conducted by the Ford Foundation's James Ross.

But in Nepal, as elsewhere, new factors have altered the calculus of reproduction. With less and less agricultural land to divide among heirs, the economics of having large families has been altered. As a result, religious considerations favoring large families have taken a back seat to the necessity of having fewer children so that they can be educated for salaried jobs. The trend toward smaller families in Nepal has been abetted by the increasing availability of health-care services that have raised child survival rates, and by the provision of basic family-planning services by the government.

In nearly every region of the world, similar circumstances have prompted millions of believers to separate their reproductive decisions from their religious faith.

—G.M.

---

be one of the more influential economic treatises ever written; it set the terms of a demographic debate that has lasted to the present day. The essayist William Godwin, whose optimism Malthus had set out to repudiate in his own work, was nevertheless impressed by it and called Malthus "the most daring and gigantic of all innovators." Thomas Carlyle was depressed by it and dubbed Malthus's new discipline the "dismal science." Decades later Karl Marx was simply angered by it, and he vilified the essay as "nothing more than a schoolboyish, superficial plagiarism [that] does not contain a single sentence thought out by [Malthus] himself." More vociferous than Marx was Friedrich Engels, co-author of *Das Kapital*, who thundered against "this vile and infamous doctrine, this repulsive blasphemy against man and nature. Here, brought before us at last," Engels roared, "is the immorality of the economists in its highest form." Part of Malthus's pessimism stemmed from the conviction that when population increased, the price of labor would drop. In short, too many people would mean lower wages and more poverty. Marx and Engels rejoined that low wages were not a function of population but of class exploitation, which resulted from the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Factor out the inequities of capitalism, they argued, and population growth would pose no problem.

**T**he other main criticism of Malthus, echoed by Marx but anticipated nearly a century earlier by the French utopians, was that technology would offset the diminishing price of labor, rescuing mankind from a future of population-induced food shortages. "New instruments, machines, and looms can add to man's strength and improve at once the quality and accuracy of his productions, and can diminish the time and labor that has to be expended on them. The obstacles still in the way of this progress will disappear," Condorcet predicted in an essay published in 1795, a year after his death. "A very small amount of

ground will be able to produce a great quantity of supplies."

Malthus was burdened by fatalism induced by fears of population growth and resource shortages. His critics were buoyed by optimism induced by faith in market forces and the power of technology. Together they defined the poles of a debate that, under far different circumstances, continues today. Once confined to economists, it is now largely waged between economists, on the one hand, and biologists and environmentalists, on the other. Once focused on conditions in the industrialized nations, the debate now centers on the implications of rapid population growth in less developed countries where the lion's share of growth is now occurring. Once limited to issues such as industrial wages and food supplies, it now extends to the viability of the very ecological support systems on which human life depends. Only the question remains the same, though with numbers that Malthus, who lived in a world of less than one billion inhabitants, would have trouble comprehending: Can the planet, regions of which are already sagging under the weight of its 5.6 billion passengers, sustain five or 10 billion more?

The modern demographic debate has been set in the context of unprecedented population growth rates that took off in Malthus's day and peaked during the late 1960s. Surveying the developing world, modern Malthusians, who for the first three decades after World War II included the vast majority of population experts, were sure that population growth was largely responsible for the famines, economic slumps, and political unrest that were endemic in the post-colonial era. To this scene of disarray they brought a bold policy prescription unknown to Malthus: family planning. The use of modern contraceptives, they argued, would reduce fertility and speed economic and political development.

One school of modern Malthusians believed that population growth retards economic development. Too many people, the

---

reasoning went, leads inevitably to poverty and unemployment. It was a view that deeply influenced American policymakers during the Cold War, who worried that rapid population growth would prevent or retard development, thus opening the door to communism in the Third World. They responded by adding a family-planning component to U.S. aid programs starting in the 1960s. Another more pessimistic version of modern Malthusianism dealt less with economics and more with the ecological limits to growth. Because supplies of life-supporting resources such as land, water, and minerals are finite, pessimists argued, high rates of population growth could endanger the survival of humanity.

**T**his gloomy perspective was given enormous credibility by a publishing event in 1972 that, as demographer Kingsley Davis notes, seemed at the time to settle the debate in favor of the alarmists. In that year a group of scholars associated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology fed data on land use, food supplies, pollution, and patterns of industrialization and resource use into a computer and watched in awe as it cranked out projections of a bleak future for humankind. They concluded that the world's population would grow so fast, that pollution would reach such high levels, and that resources would be drawn down so far and so fast that the inevitable result would be "overshoot" and "collapse." They called their study *The Limits to Growth*. As Donella Meadows, a Dartmouth College biophysicist and one of the report's principal authors, later put it, "The world is racing ahead like a speeding car heading for an accident." The only way to avoid such an accident, the authors argued, was to slow industrial and population growth.

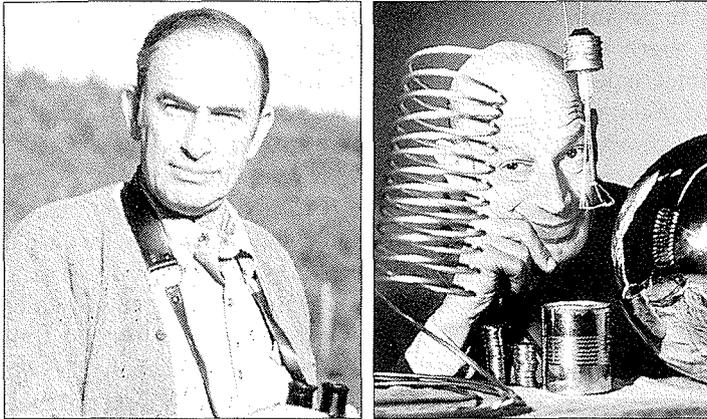
But even as *The Limits to Growth* succeeded in galvanizing public concern that a population crisis was at hand, the aura of crisis it helped to create unexpectedly dissipated almost as fast as it had gathered. By the

mid-1970s fears of famine began to diminish because of the green revolution in Asia and Latin America, the latest manifestation of a two-century advance in agricultural productivity that has continued to the present day. Meanwhile in many developing nations birth-rates began to drop from historic highs attained in the late 1960s, presaging eventual population stabilization. Elsewhere in the developing world, economic growth rates started to rise, notably in the densely populated nations of East Asia. Suddenly the correlation between population and underdevelopment was in doubt.

Such doubts energized the smaller community of demographic revisionists, who emerged to do battle with their Malthusian brethren. The most vocal among them were New Right conservatives and libertarians who unexpectedly resurrected the old Marxist critique of Malthus, arguing that faulty economics, not high levels of population growth, was the cause of scarcity. Unlike Marx, they looked to an unfettered market economy, not socialism, to create opportunities for the earth's masses.

**H**arbingers of this revisionist view had appeared in the 1930s, when a few writers ventured the opinion that, in the industrialized nations at least, population growth could stimulate economic growth. In the mid-1930s, Harvard University economist Alvin Hansen had argued that underemployment and underinvestment during the Great Depression were the result of insufficient population growth, a view elaborated by the influential British economist John Maynard Keynes. After World War II, conservative economists reaffirmed the link between population growth and business expansion. "The importance of family growth for business activity is beginning to be realized by business planners," *U.S. News & World Report* noted in 1950. "They are revising upward their estimates of future markets."

The notion that population growth is a



The population antagonists: Paul Ehrlich (left) and Julian Simon

neutral or even positive phenomenon gained wider acceptance during the 1970s, when many of the earlier apocalyptic forecasts failed to come true. Contrary to such predictions, nearly all the indices of human progress have improved since the dawn of the industrial age. Aggregate statistics indicate that life expectancy, literacy, global economic output, and per capita income are all at unprecedentedly high levels, despite rapid population growth. Infant mortality rates, mineral prices, and food prices, meanwhile, have fallen to record low levels.

"The data shows that Malthus had it backwards," wrote David Osterfeld, a political scientist whose book *Prosperity and Planning* was published just before his death in 1992. "The population explosion didn't limit production. It was made possible by the explosion of production, of resources, food, scientific information, and medical advances. Thus, if anything, the limits to growth are receding rather than growing nearer and the world is therefore growing relatively less populated."

**P**redictions of catastrophe have been wrong on two counts, according to revisionists. The first is that economic models, including the one used for *The Limits to Growth*, project outcomes far into the future using the technology and know-how in existence today and thus vastly underestimate the potential achievements of

future generations. The other, related mistake is the persistent tendency of Malthusians to underestimate human ingenuity. If population growth creates problems, revisionists say, then history has proved time and again that it also calls forth the innovations needed to solve them. One case in point is the green revolution, which catapulted growth in agricultural output above population growth rates in some of the most densely packed nations on earth. "The basic problem," concluded Osterfeld, "is that Malthus underestimated everybody's intelligence but his own."

### III

Like David and Goliath, two combatants have stood out from the academic armies engaged in the great demographic debate. Both prefer to think of themselves as David, the virtuous underdog. But both are more like Goliath, armed to the teeth, in this case with graphs, charts, and computer models designed to penetrate the other's intellectual defenses. The *New York Times Magazine* has called these rivals "the Cassandra and the Dr. Pangloss of our era." According to script, one is an environmentalist—Paul Ehrlich of Stanford University—and the other is an economist—Julian Simon of the University of Maryland.

Paul Ehrlich first came to notice when, as a young biologist, he wrote the book that carried the population issue from the precincts of academe to a mass popular audience. *The Population Bomb* (1968) built upon a simple mathematical calculation: finite natural resources divided by a rapidly expanding population. The nearly inevitable result, Ehrlich wrote, was mass starvation and ecological overload. "The birthrate must be brought into balance with the deathrate or mankind will breed itself into oblivion,"

---

Ehrlich warned. "We can no longer afford merely to treat the symptoms of the cancer of population growth; the cancer itself must be cut out. Population control is the only answer."

*The Population Bomb* sold three million copies and made Ehrlich the leading Jeremiah of his age. Thirty books, dozens of articles, and innumerable media appearances later, he is still the most sought-after expert on the population issue. Unlike Cassandra, the mythical figure whose dark predictions were always right but usually ignored, Ehrlich has commanded and held a large popular following. His biggest media triumph was an appearance on the Johnny Carson show in 1970, earned by the overwhelming success of *The Population Bomb*. A scheduled 10-minute interview turned into a 45-minute media event that produced the biggest response in the show's history, generating 5,000 letters to Carson in the weeks that followed. Admirers and critics alike attribute Ehrlich's success to a glib speaking style and a gift for analogy, talents he has harnessed to the task of purveying to popular audiences a compelling image of imminent disaster.

**B**ut fame has brought criticism as well as praise. Ehrlich is repeatedly reminded that some of the dark prophecies contained in his book have failed to materialize. Hardest to live down has been a projection of massive famine within a decade of the book's publication. "In the 1970s the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions are going to starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now," Ehrlich had warned. He acknowledges the error but insists that developments in the quarter century since the book was published—global warming, for example—have proved that, if anything, his prediction was not pessimistic enough. On balance, Ehrlich maintains, ecologists have been better forecasters than economists. Among the latter, Ehrlich likes to point out the one who in the 1950s predicted that India would be one

of the strongest nations on earth by the end of the century precisely because of its large population.

"It's true that we didn't foresee the great success of the green revolution," Ehrlich says. "But it's also true that we missed a lot of other things: depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain, the accelerating destruction of tropical forests, playing Russian roulette with the atmosphere—all of which are at least partly due to population growth. It makes you wonder what else is going on out there that we don't know about yet. We did miss a lot of stuff. But the fact remains that we were too optimistic."

Ehrlich bristles at the charge that he blames environmental degradation entirely on population growth, particularly in poor nations where it is occurring at the fastest rates. "We've published more pounds of paper than anyone else trying to explain that the real problem is overconsumption in the United States," he says, referring to various academic colleagues, including his Stanford biologist wife, Anne, with whom he has collaborated in print. "Seventy percent of global environmental damage is because of the rich countries. The problem is not just the poor."

But rapid population growth, which is mainly among the poor, ranks a close second in Ehrlich's hierarchy of concerns. Some economists say declining population growth rates have defused the population bomb. Ehrlich disagrees. With China factored out, fertility in less developed countries remains high, he says. Even in countries with successful family-planning programs, such as Indonesia and Mexico, fertility declines have stalled well above replacement level. Not to worry about birthrates and not to promote family planning aggressively under such circumstances, Ehrlich says, is folly.

When asked about his adversary, Julian Simon, Ehrlich is equally direct: "It's as if Julian Simon were saying that we have a geocentric universe at the same time NASA is saying the earth rotates around the sun. There's no reconciling these views. When

---

---

## The Cost of a Solution

**A**ny sound strategy for slowing global population growth will have to include several elements. One is a strong emphasis on economic development, which demonstrably reduces the demand for large families. Another is the promotion of greater equality between the sexes. But no single measure will have a greater short-term payoff than extending family-planning programs so that safe and effective birth control methods are made universally available.

Demographic and health surveys conducted in dozens of developing nations indicate that 125 million women who want to space their children or stop having children altogether are not using contraceptives. Just by tapping into the demand that already exists, the public and private agencies and commercial outlets that dispense contraceptives could, by the most conservative estimates, increase contraceptive use in developing nations to at least 60 percent of couples. There are 180 million more couples who might use contraceptives if they were available.

Compared to the benefits, the costs of tapping in are minimal. Right now a total of about \$5 billion is spent annually on family-

planning services, three-quarters of which comes from the developing countries themselves. To stabilize population below 10 billion, it will be necessary to reach the replacement-level fertility rate of 2.1 children per family early in the next century. That means between 70 and 75 percent of couples will need to use contraceptives, a level of use that would increase the total annual cost of family planning to about \$11 billion (in 1993 dollars) by the end of the decade, rising to around \$14 billion in 2015, with outside donors picking up an increased share. The cost would total \$17 billion in the year 2000 if a broader array of reproductive health services were included. For the United States, for example, this would mean increasing annual expenditures on population planning from \$500 million to about \$1.3 billion (\$1.9 billion including other reproductive health services) by the end of the decade, still a small share of U.S. foreign aid but arguably the most effective in terms of its contribution to the welfare of developing nations.

The strongest indication that such an investment would be cost-effective is that an estimated one-quarter of births in the develop-

you launch a space shuttle you don't trot out the flat-earthers to be commentators. They're outside the bounds of what ought to be discourse in the media. In the field of ecology, Simon is the absolute equivalent of the flat-earthers."

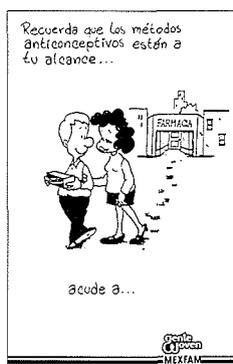
**T**he two combatants, now both in their early sixties, have never met in person. But corresponding in 1980, they arranged the 20th-century equivalent of a duel to determine whose view of the future was more accurate. Ehrlich and two colleagues accepted a long-standing Simon bet that the prices of five minerals—tin, copper, tungsten, chrome, and nickel were

agreed upon—would be lower in 10 years. They wagered \$1,000, but the real stakes were much higher. "We knew if we bet on metals there would be a fair chance we'd lose," Ehrlich says now. "But we knew at the very least that if we took him on we could keep him quiet for a decade. The bet was trivial: We could have bet on the state of the atmosphere or on biodiversity loss, but it would be too hard to determine who won. With metals it's unambiguous." As it happened, the price behavior of metals—and what it says about future scarcity—turned out to be the trump card in Simon's hand.

It was Dr. Pangloss in Voltaire's *Candide* who advanced the sunny notion that "all is for

ing world (excluding China) are unintended and that 25–50 million abortions are performed each year, many or most in countries where planning programs are weak. Corroborating evidence is supplied by national fertility surveys, which indicate that in most countries outside of subSaharan Africa more than two-thirds of all married women want to limit their family size or to space the births of their children. Today less than half of women in developing countries are using modern contraception, just over one-third not counting China. In most countries, all that's missing to increase these figures is the means.

The simple truth is that rapid population growth is one of the few solveable problems in an otherwise complicated world. Four decades of experience with family planning have made abundantly clear which programs and methods work best. Lessons learned in countries from Thailand to Mexico are even



now being incorporated into the practice of countries that were late to set up population programs.

"Family planning is one thing we know how to do well so let's get on with it and rejoice," says Malcolm Potts, a professor of public health at the University of California at Berkeley. "Just provide services in a respectful way, listen to what people want, provide good geographically, culturally, and economically accessible services and fertility falls. That's what the data show."

As Potts notes, rapid population growth is no longer a problem looking for a solution but a solution looking for resources. It was the resources of the industrialized nations that helped lower death rates in the developing world half a century ago, contributing to the population explosion that has occurred there since. The idea of investing the modest resources now needed to lower birth rates has appealing symmetry. More to the point, such an investment would be the consummate act of enlightened self-interest on the part of wealthy nations, which, in the absence of such support, will not long remain isolated from the daunting consequences of rapid global population growth.

—G.M.

the best in this best of all possible worlds." For Julian Simon, there has been much to be sunny about lately. Fifteen years ago he was on the sidelines of the great demographic debate, a man of unorthodox views and—as a professor of business administration—atypical qualifications. An intense and prolific advocate like Ehrlich, he has since elbowed his way into the debate and nearly single-handedly shifted the mainstream in his direction. Although he has not won the popular acclaim of his Stanford nemesis, even some of his critics concede that his optimism is not altogether ungrounded.

Simon was not always sanguine about the population issue. When he was younger, he

says, he "enlisted in the great war to reduce population growth." He set out to learn the theory and data of demography. In the process he came across the statistical correlations between population growth and economic growth developed by demographer-economists Simon Kuznets and Richard Easterlin that challenged the conventional wisdom. "I realized the data did not square with the theory that population growth causes resource depletion and environmental degradation. So I decided I'd better follow the path of the data, not the theory." It was a path that led to the conclusion that the population growth that is a curse to Malthusians is really a blessing in disguise.

---

One reason, he says, is that by stimulating larger demand for goods and services, population growth expands markets, and thus leads to economic growth. Another reason is that population is the necessity that is the mother of invention—in particular the invention of the technologies that Simon is convinced will “liberate production from the land, find substitute materials, and overcome damage to the ecological base.” It was the massive growth of population in southern Asia, he points out, that set agronomists to work on the package of technologies that created the green revolution. “Again and again,” Simon says, “temporary scarcities induced by the growth of population and income have induced the search for solutions which, when found, left us better off than if the scarcities had never arisen.” Simon’s views burst forth upon an increasingly divided population community in 1980 in an article in the prestigious journal *Science*. There he argued that government should not interfere with high fertility because “more people not only means the use of more resources but more units of creativity and productivity. More people compete creatively for ways to develop or find substitutes. Thus the world’s resources are not finite.”

If Ehrlich’s *Population Bomb* was “a gloomy book for a gloomy age,” as Jonathan Mann writes in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Simon’s seminal and highly controversial article was a cheerful rebuttal for an era determined not to be pessimistic about much of anything. The article and Simon’s later writings found a receptive audience among many conservatives (including the editors of the *Wall Street Journal*), making the Maryland economist an influential figure during the presidential administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

Though rarely the dominant view, the notion that population growth can confer benefits on society has a long history and distinguished expositors going back at least as far as Condorcet. Simon’s contribution was to make the populationist argument so aggressively that it commanded attention, even as it made him the archenemy of the environ-

mental movement. “A lot of what Simon said had been said earlier but ignored,” says Fairfield University sociologist Dennis Hodgson, who has written widely on the demographic debate. “What Simon did was to marshal the arguments and put them forth in a form that was difficult to ignore, and he did it at a time when people were more receptive to them.”

On at least one issue Simon was right, and the cost to Ehrlich and his friends was \$1,000, paid without comment and on time in 1990. When it comes to so-called nonrenewable resources, the economist had insisted, the whole concept of “finiteness” was meaningless because reserves of any mineral are merely a function of price and demand. Natural resources “will progressively become less scarce and less costly, and will constitute a smaller portion of our expenses in future years,” Simon says.

**A**s it turned out, despite a population increase of nearly one billion during the decade, the price of each of the five metals indeed dropped. And despite massive increases in the demand for metals since the start of the industrial age, supplies of most minerals have not shrunk but expanded. Rising prices have made deeper extraction financially rewarding. Improved methods of locating minerals have been discovered. Businesses and consumers are more conservation-minded. The use of alternatives has increased. The result: Reserves of copper, to choose but one example, grew from 91 million tons in 1950 to 555 million tons in the early 1980s, according to UN statistics.

If price is any indication of scarcity, food and minerals have never been more abundant, confirms the Cato Institute’s Stephen Moore. “Measured in terms of how long a person must work to purchase them, natural resources were 20 percent cheaper on average in 1990 than in 1980, half as costly as in 1950, and five times less costly than in 1900.” Ehrlich concedes that over the short term prices have fallen. But even if Simon has been

---

right so far with respect to some nonrenewable resources, he says, the combination of continued population growth and increased global consumption is catapulting the world toward a point of diminishing returns. More to the point, it is not minerals but the depletion of renewable resources such as air, water, and soil that poses the real risk to the future of humankind. Despite the still-prevalent impression that the future is secure, Ehrlich says, appearances can be deceiving.

#### IV

When *The Population Bomb* was written, the earth had 3.4 billion inhabitants. The addition of more than two billion since then has done little to diminish the intensity of the great demographic debate, nor to break the stalemate that has existed since the battle was joined by the revisionists during the 1970s. It is a debate that, to the consternation of a confused public and frustrated policymakers, has generated more heat than light. It is a debate that has failed to establish with any certainty whether there are limits to growth and, if there are, when they might be reached.

That the debate has been so inconclusive has several explanations. Not the least important is the extent to which the opposing sides have been talking past each other. Economists typically think in terms of labor, capital, and production; ecologists think in terms of finite supplies of land and water and natural habitat. Economists say the ecosystem is basically healthy; ecologists worry that it may be on the verge of being irreparably damaged. Economists celebrate the prosperity of densely packed countries such as Japan; ecologists fret that Japan is merely exporting the environmental costs of such crowding by exploiting the forests and mineral resources of other countries.

Economists accent aggregate trends and exult that, on average, the world's citizens are better fed, housed, educated, and cared for medically than ever before; ecologists accent

the maldistribution of such gains and fret that aggregate statistics provide cold comfort to the hundreds of millions in individual countries who have not benefited by them and who live on the hard edge of want and starvation.

It is as if the two sides, which have access to the very same data, are talking about different subjects, and in a sense they are. Nathan Keyfitz, a professor emeritus of sociology and population at Harvard, has spent considerable time analyzing the debate. It is stuck on dead center, he concludes, because the parties to it live in "largely noncommunicating worlds." One problem, says Keyfitz, is that many of the participants in the debate have drawn conclusions that extend far beyond their specific areas of professional expertise. Within their own disciplines, he says, individual scholars are held to a high standard of scholarship: "There's enough internal discipline that if there's a flaw in their logic or a contradictory argument, they won't be able to get away with it." But when economists and ecologists range beyond their disciplines—as when economists talk about biodiversity loss or ecologists about the price behavior of minerals—they venture into a realm that has fewer checks and balances, permitting predictions, generalizations, and conclusions that under normal circumstances might not pass muster. The result has been a gap between levels of analysis that, in turn, has led to irreconcilable conclusions, as the point-counterpoint debate between Ehrlich and Simon on the subject of biodiversity illustrates.

Simon insists that there is no scientific proof that species are becoming extinct at any significant rate and that until there is, scientists should operate on the assumption that losses are minimal. For his part, Ehrlich cites frightening statistics on deforestation—the direct cause of species loss—which give a misleading impression of quantitative certainty. There are, in fact, large data gaps. Rates of deforestation and reforestation in China, for example, are virtually unknown to Western scientists. Many scientists

---

---

## The Urban Explosion

While world population is expected to be at least three times as large in 2025 as it was in 1950, urban population will have increased six times during the same period. In 1950, fewer than one in three people lived in cities, and only two cities—New York and London—held more than eight million people. There are 20 such megacities today, 14 of them in the developing world. In developing countries, the urban sector will absorb virtually all the increase in population between now and 2025; it has absorbed 49 percent of the increase since 1950. In a few years, cities of the developing world will contain twice as many inhabitants as those in developed countries, and by 2020, they will have three times as many. Demographer Robert Fox puts the case nicely when he writes, “The urban explosion, after all, is now essentially the population explosion.”

In earlier centuries, cities grew slowly and could rely, as Jane Jacobs has argued, on an economic relationship with the hinterland. Time and resources allowed infrastructure to be created ahead of or at least in step with immigration. This pattern of growth remains characteristic of cities in developed countries, whose urban population is already three-quarters of the size it is projected to reach in 2025. With developing countries, however, the situation is quite different. Cities in the de-

veloping world, already huge, are projected to triple in size by 2025 and to increase by 80 million people a year for some time after that. The suddenness and magnitude of this increase beggars anything that the more developed countries have known. Moreover, the importation of grain from Europe and America has broken the economic links tying urban areas to the productivity of the surrounding countryside. This is especially true in nations dominated by one enormous metropolitan area—San José in Costa Rica, Lima in Peru. The political and economic resources, and the extended periods of time, that allowed developed countries to urbanize gradually are not available in the developing world.

The cities of the developing countries now provide one springboard for international migration. Immigrants, legal and illegal, arriving in developed countries now tend to have an urban background; unable to find jobs in Cairo or Djakarta, they are attracted to Los Angeles or London, especially since enclaves of their countrymen already live in those cities. Thus the urbanization of the developing world may presage increasingly strong pressures to immigrate to urban centers in the North.

—Mark Sagoff, Director,  
*Institute for Philosophy & Public Policy*  
*University of Maryland*

Reprinted by permission from *Report from the Institute for Philosophy & Public Policy*, Volume 13, Number 4.

nevertheless believe that forests in general and rain forests in particular, where most species are found, are disappearing at an alarming rate. Bruce Wilcox of the Institute for Sustainable Development reconciles the opposing views: “There’s no question that a loss of rain forest is occurring at a catastrophic rate, but there’s no way we can produce statistics to prove it with more than plus or minus 50 percent confidence.”

The problem is that the very frameworks the two sides have built up make them mutually incomprehensible, says Nathan Keyfitz. “Because of the overlap of interests, those preoccupied with months are at the moment engaged in a lively controversy with those preoccupied by millennia. . . . When biologists and economists try to talk to one another the biologists speak concretely about the fragile character of rain forests and the economists

---

more broadly about the power of substitution impelled by the price system. There is plenty of goodwill but effectively no dialogue."

Keyfitz uses the world's fisheries to illustrate the problem of communication. The economist's goal is to optimize the catch. He judges success based on how the equipment on the boat is operating, by the efficiency of boat and crew, by how many fish are caught. His frame of reference is only one part of the commodity cycle: If the maximum number of fish is caught, providing the greatest array of choices at the lowest possible prices to consumers, the operation is a success. He thinks in the relatively short term and with a focus on human needs.

The biologist is willing to reduce efficiency in the interest of sustaining the catch. He judges success by how effectively human needs are reconciled with the needs of the ecosystem. His frame of reference is the entire commodity cycle, and he worries that the economist's objective is consistent with the destruction of the habitat. He thinks in the longer term and with a focus on balancing the needs of humankind with other species that share our habitat. The differences reduce to a question of values: Is saving fish or meeting consumer needs at the lowest cost the higher good?

The failure of the dialogue to clarify the effects of population growth on ecosystems and mineral supplies has other causes. One study conducted in 1980 examined seven economic-demographic models constructed to project the future of food and resource supplies and pollution levels. Though each was serious and academically rigorous, their results were dramatically different, ranging from the doomsday scenarios projected in *The Limits to Growth* to the far more benign projections of study groups based in Argentina and Japan. The problem, as Keyfitz notes, is that

"no one of them proves anything" because all of them reflect the assumptions factored into them.

The problem of bias is not confined to econometric and biometric models. It runs deep in disciplines nominally dedicated to the search for truth and whose analysis is essential to answering the questions that relate most directly to the future of humankind. As



*The People's Republic of China advocates one child per family.*

noted by Michael Teitelbaum and Jay Winter, co-authors of an informative essay on the demographic debate, the adversaries in it have been curiously united by a tendency to marginalize or exclude information or frames of reference incompatible with their own. The selective use of evidence, in turn, has had the effect of oversimplifying an immensely complex subject, driving wedges between disciplines that need to cooperate. The tendency is reinforced by the way research grants are awarded. To facilitate grant making, science is compartmentalized into various narrow sub-disciplines by megafunders such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. The process has retarded the kind of interdisciplinary research required by complex environmental and population issues.

Perhaps in the end, as the American Enterprise Institute's Nick Eberstadt suggests, it is no more reasonable to expect that demographers can come up with comprehen-

---

sive "laws of population" than to expect historians to create a unified theory of history. "For all the mathematical rigor of some of its investigations," writes Eberstadt (*WQ*, Winter '86), "population studies is a field of social inquiry. . . . Researchers may uncover relationships between population change and prosperity, poverty, or war in particular places at particular times, but none of these findings can be generalized to cover the world at large."

Even so, the debate that has raged over these very issues has been bad for all the disciplines involved and worse for the policymakers who have been left on their own to formulate responses to one of the most pressing of world problems. Worse yet, it has sent a signal to policymakers and the public both that, in the absence of a consensus on what its implications are, population growth can safely be ignored.

## V

A quarter century after books such as *The Population Bomb* and *The Limits to Growth* reignited and popularized the debate over the consequences of population growth, important tactical gains have been won by those who challenge their apocalyptic view of the future. Economists such as Julian Simon and the American Enterprise Institute's Ben Wattenberg have made it impossible to ignore the huge contributions science has made to human welfare, even in the face of the most rapid population growth in history, or to discount the argument that further advances could diminish the impact of projected future increases. In the presence of decades of declining prices, meanwhile, the case for limiting population growth is now rarely argued on the basis that supplies of non-renewable resources are likely to be jeopardized in the near term by rapid population growth. Many mainstream Malthusians are more guarded about using the word *crisis* to describe the implications of population growth. Their willingness at least to gesture to the arguments

made by their opposite numbers, the cornucopian economists, has become an unexpected new form of political correctness. Still, while the global community of population experts is generally less skeptical of the cornucopian thesis, worries persist among many, probably most, that, as Rockefeller University demographer Joel Cohen notes, even if Malthus has been wrong for the past two centuries he may not be wrong for the next two.

The population community's nagging concern about the future is based on a fear that the stunning technological advances that have so far mitigated the worst effects of rapid population growth may have merely postponed, not necessarily precluded, an ultimate day of reckoning. While most specialists acknowledge that technologies such as those of the green revolution have rescued humankind from hunger and want, some point out that such advances occurred when global consumption rates and real annual increases in population growth were smaller than they may be in the near-to medium-term future. Within the next half century, the UN projects, twice as many people will be seeking three times the food and fiber and four times the energy and engaging in five to 10 times the level of economic activity. That means dramatically greater energy use, more resource consumption, more wastes, and more environmental degradation associated with mining and refining nonrenewable natural resources. Moreover, while the point has been proven that rapid economic and population growth can occur simultaneously, such growth has not been taking place in an infinite world but within the confines of a closed biosphere, which is now exhibiting unmistakable signs of overburden.

"You can't ignore the forces that have worked in the past: technological innovation and market adjustments. In the future, these could take different forms and operate even more rapidly than before," acknowledges the World Resources Institute's Robert Repetto. "But when you think about the expansion in

---

the scale of the population and the scale of economic activity, especially in the Third World, there's every reason to believe that renewable resources are going to be altered drastically, probably irreversibly: forests, coral reefs, wetlands, wildlife habitat, soils."

**I**n general, population experts appear less confident that "skilled, spirited, hopeful people," to quote Julian Simon, can make social and economic contributions significant enough to compensate for their absolute numbers, especially under the conditions of poverty and overcrowding that hold so many in the grip of ignorance, joblessness, and ill health. They are also less sanguine about the long-term implications of what British ecologist Paul Harrison describes as the "enigma" of the simultaneous depletion and expansion of nonrenewable resources. Economists have made much of the paradox that even as demand has increased for many nonrenewable resources, supplies have expanded and prices have dropped. Harrison voices what may be the more prevalent view, that under the impact of rising consumption rates and population growth, a point of diminishing returns may eventually be reached: "The magic porridge pot that has spewed forth riches in the past may work for us for a few decades more. But it would be imprudent to rely on it forever. A world of 10-to-16 billion people cannot continue to consume resources at current Western levels. Something has to give."

Studies to establish undisputed cause-and-effect relationships between population growth and environmental degradation have been too few, too country-specific, or, like one conducted recently by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and reported by the UN Population Fund, too circumstantial to be definitive. After surveying habitat loss in

50 African and Asian nations, the IUCN concluded that the 20 percent of countries that lost the most habitat (averaging 85 percent) had 1,900 people per square kilometer on average, while the 20 percent that had the least loss of habitat (averaging 41 percent) had only 300 people per square kilometer on average.

While highly suggestive, such studies have not always met the test of scientific proof. But for most policymakers, enough such suggestive studies have been conducted to justify measures to limit population growth. As one World Bank official notes, inferences have often had to substitute for conclusive data to justify investments by national governments and international lending institutions in population programs. No airtight case has been made, for example, that population retards economic development, he says. "But we do know that too many births too closely spaced strongly correlates with infant mortality, and that large families diminish the productivity of women and increase national health costs. Those are the arguments we use at the Bank [to secure money for population programs]. We're coming in the side door, but it's honest and it works."

The growing body of solid and circumstantial evidence linking rapid population growth with environmental degradation is so worrisome that even the scientists some economists have been banking on to rescue the



*Toxic smog: an indirect product of Mexico City's 15 million population*

---

future have been gripped by a belated failure of confidence. In one widely noted warning issued jointly in 1992, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the Royal Academy of London predicted that if current population and consumption trends continue, "science and technology may not be able to prevent either irreversible degradation of the environment or continued poverty for much of the world. . . . Some of the environmental changes may produce irreversible damage to the Earth's capacity to sustain life."

**A**nother warning, dispatched the same year and signed by 1,700 scientists, including more than 100 Nobel laureates, cautioned that "pressure resulting from unrestrained population growth puts demands on the natural world that can overwhelm any efforts to achieve a sustainable future. Not more than one or two decades remain before the chance to avert the threat we now confront will be lost and the prospect for humanity (and nature) immeasurably diminished." Yet another report, this one issued by 56 national academies of science in October 1993, cautioned that "it is not prudent to rely on science and technology alone to solve problems created by rapid population growth, wasteful resource consumption, and poverty."

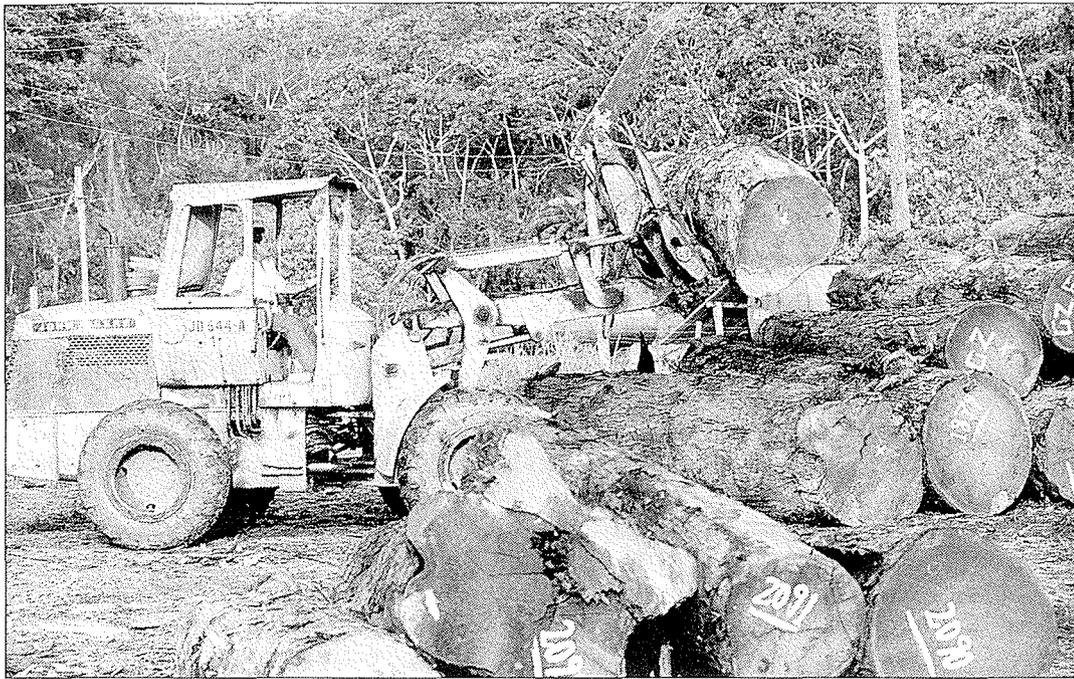
Buttressing that view are growing indications that environmental change may be occurring on a scale unprecedented since the advent of the glacial ages one million years ago, and that population growth is one contributing factor. Permanent damage to fragile local ecosystems has already resulted, and many demographers and scientists worry that the added pressures likely to be imposed by simultaneous increases in population and living standards could catapult worrisome global trends across critical environmental thresholds. Meanwhile, as Robert Repetto notes, even though the world's renewable resources—water, soils, and living organisms—have yielded increasing production, it has been at the cost of sacrificing current and

future productivity, which could undermine the capacity of many countries to provide for the much-larger populations expected in the near future.

The problem is epitomized in the forests of Guatemala, where settlers have hacked out the only living available to them, halving the country's last remaining forested area in less than two decades. Haiti, which has one of the highest population densities in the world, is a worse case. While it was once heavily wooded, only two percent of the country remains forested, and those trees that still stand are at the mercy of more than six million people starved for fuel wood. Thirty years from now, 12 million Haitians will compete for what's left. Population is not the only reason for Haiti's deforestation. But as one population expert notes, if impoverished Haitians turn the country's last trees into firewood, irreversible damage may be done to Haiti's watershed and eventually to its arable land and fresh water—results paralleled in other countries, including India, where deforestation has caused flooding during the rainy season and water shortages during the dry season.

Deforestation has also led to the loss of one of the most important habitats for animal and plant species, along with wetlands and coral reefs. As already noted, scientists have been unable to estimate reliably either the number of species in nature or the rate of their loss. But their presumptive reasoning has not led to encouraging conclusions. Most species live in tropical rain forests. But the rain forests are now disappearing in Washington state-sized chunks each year, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. In the handful of nations where the world's remaining tropical forestland is concentrated, population doubling times are as short as 22 years. With most of the wood harvested in developing countries used for fuel, a drastic shrinkage of forests and species seems all but certain.

But the problem is not just forests. At stake is the extent to which all the earth's "renewable" resources and its ability to absorb



*Clearing the mahogany forests in Bolivia*

wastes are being taxed by a combination of bad government policies, inappropriate technology, high levels of consumption, and rapidly growing populations. However much scientists and economists may differ on the scope and implications of such global changes, the fact is that most developing nations now operate on the assumption—correct or incorrect—that rapid population growth is a serious problem that needs to be addressed quickly and decisively. Accordingly, nearly all have adopted ambitious programs to lower birthrates, sometimes adopting coercive measures at which even staunch Malthusians have winced.

Government leaders have been galvanized not only by the conviction that rapid population growth will mortgage economic development but by a lengthening inventory of small and large environmental calamities to which population pressures have contributed. All across the developing world, for example, population growth, livestock, and wasteful agricultural practices are putting pressure on soils, contributing to the process of desertifi-

cation that has led to a steady exodus from the land. And desertification is only the most extreme result of the relentless pressure that is being placed on land to feed swelling populations. As much as half the world's wetlands have been drained to provide farmland since the turn of the century. Meanwhile, the world fish catch, which provides the main source of protein for the population of 40 countries, has leveled off and may have reached a point of diminishing returns because of overharvesting and the destruction of spawning habitats, according to the Worldwatch Institute.

**F**resh water, the resource whose shortage is most likely to impinge on human development, is also under pressure, in substantial part because of population growth. In 1990, one-third of a billion people lived in countries defined as water-stressed or water-scarce, according to Population Action International (PAI). Without a breakthrough in desalination technologies, the number could increase to three billion, or one in every three people, by 2025,

---

mostly in Africa and Asia. Compounding scarcity is the growing problem of water degradation caused by salt-water intrusions, chemical pollutants, and human sewage.

The effect of population growth on finite water supplies is illustrated by comparing Iran and Great Britain. In 1990, the two countries had the same number of inhabitants—just under 60 million—and access to equivalent amounts of renewable fresh water. Assuming supplies remain stable, by 2025 Iran will have only half the amount of water per capita that it has now because its population, according to the UN's medium projection, will double. In Britain, where population is expected to grow by only five percent during the same period, per capita availability will remain close to what it is today.

As PAI reports, there is no more fresh water on the planet today than there was 2,000 years ago. Yet the earth's population today is more than 20 times greater, which is one reason why chronic freshwater shortages are expected soon in Africa and the Middle East, northern China, parts of India and Mexico, the western United States, northeastern Brazil, and several former Soviet republics. More troubling, some of the highest population growth rates are occurring in some of the most arid regions. "Within a decade," PAI reports, "water could overshadow oil as a scarce and precious commodity at the center of conflict and peacemaking."

Water is a natural renewable resource. But like land and ambient air, it can also be a repository for waste, which is yet another reason many demographers and scientists view the future with misgivings. Human activity has severely taxed the planet's absorptive capacity. Vast flows of toxic chemical and human wastes now pollute the earth's rivers, streams, and oceans, damaging aquatic life and posing health hazards to humans. Air pollution from factory emissions, motor vehicles, and utilities has brought disease to European forests and to crops in Africa, has damaged the ozone layer, and has loaded the atmosphere with greenhouse gas-

ses. The estimated global emissions of carbon from fossil fuels alone have tripled since 1950.

**A**s in the case of global warming, global environmental degradation has mostly to do with profligate energy use in the First World. Japan, western Europe, and the former Soviet republics account for about 35 percent of the carbon emitted into the atmosphere through the combustion of fossil fuels. The United States, with five percent of the world's population, accounts for another 25 percent of carbon emissions. Per capita fossil fuel consumption is actually declining in the United States, but the decline has been more than offset by an annual population growth of 2.6 million. As a result, the U.S. contribution of carbon to the atmosphere continues to increase.

But the balance between developed and developing countries is beginning to shift as living standards, and thus energy and resource use, gradually rise in developing countries. Such improvements hint at what many environmentalists see as a potentially tragic paradox: that human progress may push environmental degradation to a point that produces human suffering. Given the persistently high rates of population growth in many developing nations, the environmental effects of even small increases in per capita consumption could be magnified, shifting more of the blame for global environmental degradation to poor countries. The Third World share of the global consumption of aluminum and copper alone rose from 10 percent in 1977 to 18 percent in 1987, according to one study. If incomes in less developed countries continue to grow at about three percent annually, 40 years from now "these countries will produce more than half the global waste loadings (though still less per capita than the rich nations), and the world economy will be five times as large as it is today," according to Mark Sagoff of the University of Maryland's Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy.

---

The dark threat posed by the combination of simultaneous population and consumption increases in the developing world is suggested in projections issued by the Futures Group, a strategic-planning firm in Washington, based on a study conducted in the Philippine capital of Manila. That city's population of eight million will soar to 12 million within 20 years under a low-growth scenario, and to 16 million under a high-growth projection. Concurrently the number of motor vehicles in Manila is projected to double, from one for every 10 people to one for every five. The level of air pollution from particulate matter in Manila is already three times the maximum level deemed safe by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. With the projected population and consumption increases, the volume will rise to between 25,000 and 33,000, or nearly six times maximum safe levels. Such dry statistics translate into an enormous human tragedy, which, for monetary and bureaucratic reasons, is unlikely to be mitigated by pollution-control efforts.

"In the absence of legal, regulatory, and incentive programs, there's no chance of tight emission controls," says the Futures Group's John Freymann. "What the figures demonstrate to policymakers is that lowering population growth is a fundamental part of any environmental strategy."

In the end, the concern exhibited by large numbers of population specialists is mostly inferential, an educated hunch about global trends backed up largely by evidence drawn from local trends that the order of population growth projected for the future will pose challenges of unprecedented magnitude. But it is a hunch that has generated a degree of passion even among normally dispassionate natural scientists.

## VI

Economists, demographers, and ecologists have managed to agree on at least one thing: that population growth is only one factor con-

tributing to environmental degradation. The consensus holds that poverty and inappropriate government policies are the main problems—so far. In many developing nations, sluggish economic performance has led directly or indirectly to measures that have had a lethal impact on forestlands. Unable to keep up repayment of massive foreign debts incurred in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, many developing nations have been pressured by international lending institutions to accept austerity measures that have led to deep cuts in government services. The result has been the dislocation of the poorest and most dispossessed, some of whom have spilled into virgin forests in countries such as Guatemala. Countries such as Brazil, which have been pressured to generate more foreign exchange, have exploited the forests for minerals and timber for export, often with devastating ecological results.

Governments have frequently made matters worse by granting concessions to cattle ranchers on terms that have created incentives for reckless exploitation, or by granting squatters' rights to settlers who "improve" the land by clearing it. In the notable case of Costa Rica, squatters who clear forestland are entitled to sell it to parties who are allowed to take immediate title. As a study of Costa Rica released by the World Resources Institute concludes, "many enterprising poor and landless could make a business of simply clearing marginal public and private lands, selling them to eager cattle ranchers or other speculators, and moving on to repeat the process."

The classic example of synergy between population and bad government policies, and an underlying cause of much of the deforestation in Latin America, is the inequitable landholding patterns that have long existed in many Latin American nations. Under conditions of low population growth, these patterns have had minimal impact on forestland. But where the growth in real numbers occurs rapidly—which is to say, in nearly every de-

---

veloping nation—such patterns have pushed poor farmers into the only areas remaining for exploitation. Land redistribution could sharply reduce the impact of population growth on forestland but has occurred in only a handful of nations,

Richard Bilborrow, a demographer at the Carolina Population Center in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, has studied the process of deforestation in Guatemala for nearly two decades. He holds the view that population growth is an indirect but highly important agent of deforestation. "Population growth leads to fragmentation of the land and forces people to migrate to other parts of the country, where they continue the process of deforestation," he says. "The exact amount of deforestation is directly related to the size of the families that engage in it."

**I**n theory, one means to retard deforestation would be to create jobs in regions like the Petèn in Guatemala to discourage farmers from expanding into cattle ranching, which is far more lucrative but also more destructive to soils and forests. One means to do that would be for the government to invest in low-impact eco-tourism facilities that would create the demand for cooks, drivers, tour guides, and other service workers. The problem is that even prosperity could rebound to the detriment of the Petèn's remaining forests.

"The non-governmental organizations all assume that if the farmers make a good living from tourism that they won't go into or expand cattle ranching, but there's always the possibility that they might," says the anthropologist Norman Schwartz, who has been doing fieldwork in Guatemala since the 1960s. "If they make more money from tourism they might expand the size of their ranches because they'll have extra income to invest. In that case, the forests won't be helped but hurt."

The good news is that where economic or tenurial policies encouraging land clearing have been changed—as in Costa Rica and Brazil, for example—deforestation rates have

slowed. The bad news is that such changes are rare and unlikely to be enacted and implemented in other countries in time to save more than a fraction of the vast forests that once covered countries such as Guatemala and the Philippines. The reasons are largely political. Unlike logging interests and large landowners, forests as a rule have no constituency, although a green movement is beginning to take shape in the forested nations of Central and South America.

In the last analysis, such cases as Guatemala, Costa Rica, and the Philippines may best explain why the future looks so uncertain to so many population experts. It is not that the future has to be so, but that it is likely to be so given the factors that countervail against humankind's indisputable ingenuity and innovative technology. One such factor is economic: Poor nations are simply unable to afford environmentally sound consumption and production practices. Another factor is political: In the face of widespread poverty, diverting resources to environmental protection is largely out of the question.

"Given the problems that Guatemala faces," Norman Schwartz explains, "who could give conservation first priority? You're facing a hungry population, increasing land shortages in the mountains, ethnic problems, urban unemployment, anti-government guerrillas, a powerful oligarchy that says land distribution is a communist plot. As important as land conservation is, there are other things that, no matter what you believe, are just going to get first priority."

**E**ven if governments were not so constrained, they would have only limited ability, for example, to enforce revised property laws designed to prevent squatters from despoiling forestlands. As for reducing poverty, perhaps the principal cause of deforestation, it is a task that is likely to take more time than the forests have available at current rates of destruction. It is precisely such limitations that cause environmentalists to worry. If poverty remains perva-

---

sive, if the regulatory arm of government remains weak, or if governments continue to make bad policies, the doubling or tripling of populations that is likely before population stabilization occurs seems certain to become the most important factor in the process of deforestation, placing much of the world's remaining forestland in jeopardy.

**E**nvironmental writer Clive Ponting makes the point that human history is one long record of humanity's attempts to circumvent the limitations imposed by nature. The biggest departure from these limitations has been the growth in human numbers that, Ponting says, has far exceeded a level supportable by natural ecosystems. The departure was made possible first by advances in agriculture, then by the use of fossil fuel energy, which opened the door to the quantum increases in the production of goods required to support a growing population.

As viewed by some, the escape from nature's constraints has been a triumph of human ingenuity, a testament to the promise of technology. As viewed by a large number of natural scientists, it has been something else, rather more of a borrowing against time than a permanent escape from ecological lim-

its. If bad policy, social inequities, and simple incompetence were the only factors contributing to environmental degradation, the debate between the optimists and the pessimists would be academic. But increasingly, there are signs that there is something more involved. As Population Action International's Robert Engelman points out, bad policy is nothing new. Social inequities are ancient. Land has always been badly distributed. Why is it, then, that only in the past three decades has deforestation suddenly begun occurring at such a rapid rate all over the tropics? Why is it that peasant-farmers have suddenly become such lethal, if unwitting, agents of forest destruction? Many scientists now believe that the answer may have something to do with the synergy between bad policy and population growth that appears to be tending toward a dangerous critical mass.

When population growth was slow and other frontiers remained to be conquered, the latitude for bad judgment and bad policy was broad. With population high, the latitude is shrinking. In the past, the planet forgave humankind's excesses and mistakes, except in local settings. But with more than five billion inhabitants, the Earth is now considerably less forgiving. It is likely to become even less so as the human race presses on toward its next five billion.

---

## CURRENT BOOKS

### How to Make History

#### TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT HISTORY.

By Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob. Norton. 322 pp. \$25

This book is the work of three prominent American academic historians—from, variously, the University of California, Los Angeles (Appleby), the University of Pennsylvania (Hunt), and the New School for Social Research (Jacob). Their areas of expertise include 17th- and 18th-century British and American history, the Enlightenment, modern French history, and the history of science and the scientific revolution. They make a formidable team.

Yet for this book, these authors' most important credential is probably the fact that they're not associated with conservative intellectual or political views. Why? Because the arguments they offer in defense of the discipline of history and of the professional historian's capacity to write a reasonably objective narrative in this age of rampant relativism and saturating irony and a skepticism that might have rattled Pyrrho would receive less credit in important quarters if they were put forward by card-carrying traditionalists.

The authors (and they write as a single voice) are plainly sympathetic to much that has been happening at American colleges and universities these past 20 years—to, for example, the intellectual overhaul of disciplines by new linguistic, anthropological, philosophical, and literary theories, and to calls for a multicultural agenda in American classrooms that reflects a vision of America different from the one that has served up to now. Their own scholarship, in fact, has bolstered such reconsideration and change.

But they worry that the sorcerer's apprentice of relativism that they perceive to be cavorting on American campuses (and throughout the larger society) has lost control of the broom, which now threatens to sweep away more of the intellectual enterprise than they want to see go. The current uncertainty about the nature of objective knowledge—indeed, about the very possibility of such knowledge—promises intellectual chaos. Why bother writing history at all if one version is as true, or false, as any other? Why do we need departments of history? Or professors?

The authors locate the sources of our contemporary predicament in the Enlightenment. They trace the ascendancy of the heroic mode of Enlightenment science, under whose influence historians were persuaded to turn themselves into perfectly neutral investigators capable of precise reconstruction of the past. Ideas of modernity and progress encouraged historians to discover *laws* of human development, valid and absolute as scientific laws. Then, in the 19th century, "building the nation became an absolute value, and history's contribution to that effort was assumed unreflectively." So nationalistic history came to hold sway.

As they move forward from the 16th century to our own, the authors write an intellectual history of the rise and fall of the



---

absolutisms—science is shown to be socially conditioned and anything but value-free, nationalistic history to be fiercely exclusionary, and so on. It was inevitable, and healthy, that these absolutisms be questioned. But the “fluid skepticism [that] now covers the intellectual landscape, encroaching upon one body of thought after another” is dangerous and debilitating “because it casts doubt on the ability to make judgments or draw conclusions.” With history’s potential for getting at the truth denied, a new absolutism—rooted, ironically, in subjectivity and relativism—is upon us.

**T**o counter the disarray, the authors propose what they call a “practical realism”—and what no one would call a philosophical breakthrough. They are reluctant to claim too much, but they insist at the least on the existence in the world of things knowable and usable that, though separate from the linguistic expressions used to describe them, are capable of being captured in the mind by these expressions: “Words and conventions, however socially constructed, reach out to the world and give a reasonably true description of its contents.” Relying on documents and evidence, historians can pursue their vocation in this cautiously real world (too cautiously real for those of us not racked by Sausurrian-inspired doubt about language, who believe still that the distracted jaywalking Sausurrian about to be flattened by an 18-wheeler would come to terms once and for all with the link between the signifier and the signified if the sole observer, a mischievous Aristotelian, yelled “Mind the pillow!”).

Moreover, the “deeply social nature of scientific truth-seeking” and the necessarily subjective manner of individual scientists do not mean science cannot speak truth about the world. Newton was a practicing alchemist, but that did not keep him from being a mathematical genius too, or from formulating universally applicable laws of gravity.

The authors admit that historians cannot capture all the variables bombarding a single past event. But this inability does not render

quixotic or meaningless the attempt to say *something* about it—with a qualified objectivity that recognizes the artificiality of language and the subjectivity or culturally shaped character of the individual historian. Different interpretations of the same event do not alter the event, and the sum of interpretations, in the larger continuing historical enterprise, will better convey its reality and achieve a kind of collective truth. In other words, that there may be 13 ways of looking at a blackbird does not make the bird green.

This sane pragmatic position is so hardly won and tenuously held that I do not want to say anything that might erode it. It does seem, however, that the reality the authors advocate is just a slightly paler version of the one the best historians traditionally have embraced. Almost 65 years ago, the great German historian Hajo Holborn wrote in a paper for a Princeton University symposium: “[The critical historian] trusts that the ideal of a science of history can be made evident by a common effort of scholars. . . . To talk about a science of history means nothing but an affirmation of the critical and systematic approach to history, and the validity of the results achieved in this way.” Though the words “science of history” will induce horror today, the practice behind the words should not, particularly if Holborn’s words are amended to read “a common effort of *diverse* scholars.”

To argue that history can still be done, the authors do history. And that is one of the values of their book. It is a coherent narrative that, by its very existence, challenges critics who may think they have revoked the credentials of the form. Regrettably, the authors depict the events of centuries with a brush stroke so broad that one fears a lot of the paint has missed not just the mark but the canvas. For example: “For the Greeks and Romans, history concerned persons, things, or events but did not exhibit overarching meanings or patterns. History showed only the inexorable effects of human passions, weaknesses, and ambitions.” This would have come as news to Thucydides, who wrote his book precisely so that it might be “judged useful by those who

---

want to understand clearly events that occurred in the past and (human nature being what it is) will occur again in the future, at some time or other and in much the same way." And Polybius, Sallust, Tacitus? Were they really blind to overarching meanings and patterns in events?

**I**n their last chapter, the authors write, "For almost a half century, [the Cold War] determined identities, magnified anxieties, and permeated every intellectual enterprise." Not *some* or even *many* intellectual enterprises but *every* intellectual enterprise? Even at the height of the Vietnam War, when I was in graduate school, colleagues working on dissertations about Latin love poetry and Greek moods—intellectual enterprises by my reckoning—did so well beyond the reach of any war, hot or cold. These are minor points perhaps, but neither statement reflects the quality of painstakingly careful judgment and nuance the authors have been urging on historians in previous chapters if they are to make sense of the past.

Incidentally, this last chapter, on "the future of history" in the post-Cold War era, promises a great deal more than it delivers—and some of what it delivers should be returned to sender. The chapter is not about the

future of history as such (it does not preach to Brazilians, Germans, or Japanese) but about the future of history in American classrooms and the need for (reflexive) accommodation to multicultural narratives: "The motifs of a multicultural history of the United States will have to incorporate themes and variations on *all* [emphasis added] the identities that Americans carry with them, because only this will satisfy our awakened curiosity about what it truly means to be part of American democracy." This chapter appears to have been included to assure readers that the authors' liberal credentials are intact and that their embrace of objective reality is not too tight.

Yet even if they have told only part of the truth about history, the authors should be commended. They will receive the criticism of colleagues both from the Right and the Left. The book will be dismissed as thin gruel by traditionalists, who want more meat. But perhaps among at least some of the modish, who are making do with smaller and smaller portions at an intellectual table set for perpetual Lent, it will have the forbidden appeal of *crème fraîche*.

—James Morris is director of the Division of Historical, Cultural, and Literary Studies at the Woodrow Wilson Center.

## The Masculine Mystique

**THE TROUBLE WITH BOYS.** By Angela Phillips. Basic Books. 272 pp. \$23

**WHAT MEN WANT: Mothers, Fathers, and Manhood.** By John Munder Ross. Harvard Univ. Press. 242 pp. \$29.95

**F**or the past 30 years or so, experts, activists, and talk show hosts have been thoroughly absorbed with what women want, what women don't have, and what society has done to women. The "dominant sex,"

meanwhile, has been relatively ignored in scholarly tomes and readily abused in political and pop-psych rhetoric. We hear a great deal about the "deadbeat dad," the "insensitive male," the "hormone-driven warmaker." The "problem with men," according to current wisdom, is that they are not women.

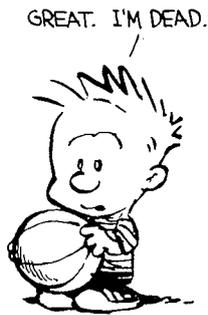
Two new books seek to bring men back into the picture, and, just as astonishing, they do so with sympathy. Phillips, a British journalist attuned to the impact of class on social

relations, and Munder Ross, an American psychoanalyst and teacher, are well acquainted with men who make trouble and are in trouble. But their critical compass takes such matters into consideration as only one part of a very complex story. From their very different angles of vision, Phillips and Munder Ross reach startlingly similar conclusions. Perhaps most startling is that many of the conclusions are not new at all, but really pieces of old wisdom, long buried under layers of errant nonsense, ideological excess, and not-so-benign neglect.

What both authors say amounts to this: Men may be more inherently aggressive, but social factors—our contradictory definitions of masculinity, a troubled economy, the rise of single-parent families—are far more respon-

social, and civic repertoire that defines them in certain ways.

Every text that takes up contemporary men needs its fair share of dismal data. Phillips and Munder Ross do not disappoint. In the United Kingdom, the United States, and everywhere else in the world, young men are the likeliest perpetrators of violence. Increasingly, they are also at greatest risk of being its victims. In all major industrial societies, girls do better than boys in school. This is especially striking among black Americans: Twice as many black girls as black boys graduate from college, according to Phillips. Eighty-five percent of children categorized as “special ed” are male. Fidgety young boys, disproportionately categorized



sible for many of the problems boys and men have been getting themselves into. “The trouble with boys,” writes Phillips, “is that they must become men, and if the only picture of men available is that of a brute then in order to become male they must be brutish.” Instead of focusing on cultural and social factors, Phillips contends, we’ve been too busy blaming men for being men. Feminists took the lead in the blame game, but they are not alone. Many of those in the “helping professions” tend to approach the male as a beastly nuisance. The result has been that men all too easily play the parts the scripts require. No more than women are men puppets on the end of a social-deterministic string. But no more than women can they leap out of a world with a deeply ingrained psychological,

as suffering from “attention disorders” of one sort or another, are separated out, turned over to therapists, or fed Ritalin.

How much all of this is the result of “wiring” is impossible to say. But the rising rates of boys at risk and boys posing risks to others correlate precisely, as Phillips shows, with the increase in fatherless homes. Relying heavily on interview material, Phillips shows how fatherless young men are more likely to be aggressive and self-destructive and to exhibit antagonism toward women. Without the steadying influence of a male adult, who both draws out and inhibits their aggressive spurts, boys and young men spin out of control.

Children, it turns out, long for their fathers. According to Munder Ross, who has analyzed more than 20 years of study, including his

---

own, the father introduces a principle of "difference" and "triangulation" into the early mother-child dyad, helping to tease out "the child" as a separate identity from its early engulfment in the maternal figure. Father absence poses "terrible threats to the boy's gender identity." A boy without a father has trouble knowing what appropriate male behavior is. And paradoxically, rather than spurring a strong identification with the mother, father absence more likely produces a spurning of things female. In an effort to achieve a separate identity, a boy without a father will seek to sharpen the distinction between himself and his mother.

Munder Ross lays part of the blame for our not fully understanding "a father's less obvious role in procreation" on a certain sort of "phallic dominance" assumed by male and female psychoanalysts. He discusses the "pervasive and abiding omissions" of fathers in clinical formulations and treatment plans, which only perpetuate the dismissive stereotyping of responsibility for children as "women's work." This is the world of "separate spheres" that feminists railed against, at least until the "pathological male" became the dominant scapegoat in orthodox feminist discussion. Ironically, we are now enjoined to celebrate a world of "women and children only," as if the primary problem is one of inadequate social provision, provision that would permit, even encourage, women with children to "go it alone" without a man.

Mere father presence, of course, is not enough, and Phillips reports that women increasingly would rather raise a child alone than raise one with an abusive husband. Fathers need not only to be involved in child rearing but also to offer a model of constancy and caring. Not coincidentally, this image of "father" has been encouraged by a prominent line of thinkers in the West, at least from the writings of 16th-century reformers (Luther, Calvin) through the Romantics (including Rousseau) up to and including liberals (Mill, Wollstonecraft). But this father also had "authority." It was his job to protect and to discipline, in moderation. Fathers have now been stripped of their authoritative roles, and many

are stripped of their useful labor. At the same time, they are required to become "like mothers"—nurturing, caring, and communicative in exactly the same way as women—if we are to honor them at all.

This is Munder Ross's most important contribution to the contemporary debate—though I doubt very much that its gatekeepers will permit his voice to be heard. He doesn't have in mind the well-documented troubles in America's inner cities; rather, he indicts the upper-middle classes, those on the "cutting edge" of social change.

Munder Ross discusses the post-World War II world in which "a man's loyalties shifted to his corporation or institution as the owner of his life, well-being, and energies, indeed, as his family away from home." Vital childrearing functions were ignored. Then in "what was probably a distortion of feminism," Munder Ross concludes with noteworthy understatement, women, too, began to conform to the "extrafamilial power structure governing our lives," a structure that values "economic necessity" and the world of production above the "nurturing of human life itself."

Perhaps we need to begin by redefining masculinity. Although Phillips's rhetoric grows overheated at points ("What is it about men that creates, in one group, the thirst for power and, in another, the thirst for destruction?"), her evidence suggests it isn't anything "about men" in some essential or strictly predetermined sense that invites or causes trouble. Instead, a society that requires certain things from men—responsibility, protection, a stoic determination to get the job done—also increasingly denies many of them respectable work and respect for the work they do when they try to live up to these standards.

Phillips observes that one "of the things that struck me so forcefully as the mother of a son is that growing up male is hard, very hard." What's so hard about it is that, increasingly, no one knows what men are around for except to make babies. At the same time, save for a few upper-middle-class homes in which

---

it might be possible for fully equal and shared parenting, men are neither encouraged nor rewarded for staying at home. When they try to pitch in and help, they are often chastised by their wives for “not doing it right.” Phillips puts the matter in stark but apt terms: “A man without a wage has no value in a family system in which wage earning is a man’s only function.” Small wonder, then, that when things start to fall apart for men, their rate of suicide, depression, and substance abuse soars.

How should we redefine masculinity? Neither author offers a completely satisfactory answer, but at least many of the right questions are finally being addressed. Munder Ross stresses the “feminine underside” of a man’s nature. He finds that, much more than traditional psychoanalysis allowed, men (and boys) want to be like women (and girls). Even as girls may yearn for the ostensible “external” excitement of the male world, boys yearn for the relational warmth and safety of the female world, as they have themselves experienced it as sons.

The point is that males are just as variable and complex as females. But, as Phillips states, “lessons in violence, indifference, and separation are provided every day for every male child.” At the same time, crying and distress in boys are less tolerated and less tended to than in girls. Boys are still ordered to “shape up.” Much greater latitude is permitted to girl tomboys than to boy sissies. “There is no socially sanctioned way in which boys can show their anxiety and ask for help,” writes Phillips.

“If they are rough and anxious they are seen as aggressive, but they are given precious little encouragement to show weakness either.” Destructive boys need to be taught not to be destructive; calling them monsters only assures that the behavior will continue.

There are a few moments of speculative silliness in Phillips’s book, passages where she becomes untethered from her own evidence and suggests that men are somehow united in a determination to “fiercely” defend the status quo. The “world would be a better place without hard men,” she concludes. Here I would recommend repeat readings of, say, Max Weber’s “Politics as a Vocation” to Phillips to get her off this particular kick. Statecraft is infinitely more complicated than adolescent males fielding teams determined to do one another to death.

But all in all, these volumes show us just how hollow current celebrations of “difference” really are. On the most elemental level, we seem no closer to respecting the reality of male and female difference and the complexity of negotiating the shoals of that difference in the emergence of our own identities and in our engagements with one another than we ever were. That we cannot do so means the project of generous and accepting equality between the sexes will continue to elude us.

—Jean Bethke Elshtain, visiting professor of government at Harvard University, is author most recently of *Democracy on Trial*, forthcoming from Basic Books.

## Reading Cultural Studies

**THE CULTURAL STUDIES READER.** Edited by Simon During. Routledge. 478 pp. \$49.95

Imagine feeling like an alert, slightly irritable foreign guest in the midst of your own culture. Imagine that the TV shows, pop songs, movies, best sellers, radio pro-

grams, and sports events that other people look to for pleasure or edification have a much different status for you. To you, they are artifacts to analyze. And you analyze them not in terms of the pleasure they yield but in terms of their power to perform certain social functions. You want to see whether they induce

---

conformity, challenge it, or somehow do both of those things at once.

So a popular movie such as *Sleepless in Seattle* is of interest to you for the way it tries to keep the ideal of heterosexual marriage and the nuclear family alive during a time when the movements for women's rights and gay rights and certain economic developments have put that ideal in question. Granted, you may also have liked the movie, but then you'd want to interrogate your own attraction to its conventional ideals.

Someone who approaches popular culture in this way is practicing (albeit in a rather elementary form) what the academy calls cultural studies. Cultural studies is the latest academic wave, the movement that seems to have taken the vanguard position recently occupied by new historicism and, before that, by deconstruction.

Cultural studies practitioners are something like anthropologists in the midst of their own culture. They ask how the meanings that the culture manufactures create social cohesion. They look at cultural works in terms of ritual, with ritual understood as a symbolic action that confirms and reproduces existing social forms. A Jivaro initiation ceremony in Peru may allow the young initiate a period of liminal self-dispersion in which his conventional identity is suspended, but the ultimate objective is for the young man to embrace a self-conception much like his father and grandfather's.

The cultural studies critic is attuned to the possibility that an artist might challenge the status quo. But because he begins with the anthropological assumption that cultural works tend to consolidate, rather than question or defy, established social forms, the critic will be especially alert to how what looks like a rebuke to the existing order may subtly re-



inforce it. So Oliver Stone's *JFK*, which suggests that a pro-Vietnam War junta killed the president, may strike one as a subversive piece of work. But it's Hollywood work, the cultural-studies critic warns, so look twice. Conspiracy theorists such as Stone are often optimists in disguise: If only it weren't for those wicked cabals, they suggest, we'd be fine. They forget that it's political and economic injustice—deeply rooted, systemic problems—that account for most human misery in America. A movie such as *JFK* takes your eye off the real target. Cult-studies analysts supposedly have their antennae poised for the genuine article—for music, film, and dance that release progressive energies. But mostly what they see around them are ersatz goods.

As Simon During, who teaches English and cultural studies at the University of Melbourne, writes in his thoughtful introduction to *The Cultural Studies Reader*, a cultural studies maven is likely to be on the Left: He's likely to see cultural works in terms of how they refute or reaffirm capitalism's lucrative patterns of oppression. And the popular work that engages his energies will probably be contemporary, though there are cultural studies types devoted to, say, Elizabethan pop culture, often with special attention to what Shakespeare or Marlowe might have skimmed from it. The method will be interdisciplinary, combining terms and theoretical narratives from

---

sociology, psychoanalysis, literary criticism, and elsewhere. And, too, the practitioner is probably out of patience with what he takes to be the blind commitment to a high-brow standard of taste sustained in the local department of English.

Fair enough. But to his casual description of the contemporary scene, During wants to add a historical genealogy of cultural studies. The genealogy starts out well. During discusses the work of F. R. Leavis and Raymond Williams and points to the Birmingham School studies of popular culture by writers such as Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggart, the latter the author of the brilliant and moving 1957 volume, *The Uses of Literacy*. But During also wants to tell a more or less Hegelian story about how cultural studies picked up influences on the way to its present apotheosis, gaining resources from the Frankfurt School, Foucault, feminism, and gay studies.

Actually, the field is far less systematic. A good cultural studies critic will have read Marx, Foucault, Bourdieu, Adorno, Lyotard, and Williams (all but the first of whom are represented in During's anthology). But she will apply these and other big thinkers with a chef's discretion: a dash of historicism, a dollop of Althusser, and a drizzle of Derrida when needed.

The turn to cultural studies seems to me potentially a splendid development. What better for intellectual life than that a lot of bright people who know something about both art and philosophy go public with their interests? Pauline Kael wrote vivid movie reviews for the *New Yorker*, recording the immediate experience of seeing a film like no one before or since; Stanley Kauffmann's confident aesthetic judgments and catholic taste, still on display in the *New Republic*, remain gifts to be grateful for. But one might hope for more comprehensive responses to film than either of these critics have been in a position to provide. Why not try, for instance, to see major films in terms of their power to console, inflame, define, or shape what one might call the national psyche? I've been looking for a long time to

find an expansive cultural critic with something valuable to say about what I take to be the best American movie, *The Godfather Part 2*, and in particular about its deep broodings on revenge—a major subject in the wake of the Vietnam War. Most people will, I suspect, be able to point to popular works that have meant a lot to them, works they would like to see explicated with gusto and skill. So I want to like cultural studies, no doubt about it.

And in fact sometimes I do, though only two of my favorite practitioners turn up in During's anthology. One is Andrew Ross, who has recently moved from Princeton University to New York University. During excerpts Ross's chapter on pornography from his recent book, *No Respect: Intellectuals & Popular Culture* (1989). It is perhaps the least consequential chapter in the book, but it's not hard to see why an editor would want a treatment of pornography to enliven his volume. Ross writes about the attitudes struck by American intellectuals in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s on issues such as media, race, camp, and the Rosenberg case, as well as pornography. He shows how the American intelligentsia tried to acquire cultural authority by condemning popular forms in unthinking, programmatic ways. But Ross can be almost as hard on his contemporary colleagues in arms: He is suspicious of Marxists who denounce all popular forms as simple functions of bourgeois ideology.

So Ross bobs and weaves, showing how mass-produced, commercialized products such as Motown soul music aren't to be written off as trash, as a somber socialist like Irving Howe would have been inclined to do. Nor is such music the product of pure appropriation, of callous businessmen sucking the passion and protest out of indigenous black culture—sanitizing Little Richard and selling him as Michael Jackson. To Ross, there's good stuff in popular Motown music. It's simple, passionate, direct (as John Milton said all poetry ought to be), speaks for sex and tenderness, and also for black pride.

---

To be sure, Ross's work can degenerate into a guide to hip, left-wing taste. He can be read as telling you—and here's a phrase I hear all too unself-consciously now—what "it's okay to like." Can you be into Frank O'Hara and still count as a bona fide left-winger? Yet I like Ross because he has fresh, complicated things to say about popular culture. The optimal critical method, said T. S. Eliot, is to be very intelligent, and that describes Ross at his best.

It also describes a number of the better critics who are not included in this volume: Carol Clover, who is to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* what Aristotle was to *Oedipus Rex*; Laura Kipnis on *Hustler*; Constance Penley on home-made fan magazines; Mark Crispin Miller, whose pieces in *Boxed In* (1982) on Richard Dawson and *Family Feud*, on *The Cosby Show*, and on Orwell as prophet of TV culture are marvels; and Richard Poirier, whose 20-year-old reflections on the Beatles, published in *The Performing Self* (1992), are a model of receptive close scrutiny and speculative panache.

But the best any critic of popular cultural has recently done in combining critical individuality with (give or take) progressive left-wing politics has been Roland Barthes, represented in the *During* collection by a piece called "Dominici, or the Triumph of Literature." Barthes, who taught at the Collège de France until his death in 1980, went through a new theoretical phase in virtually every book: He has avatars as a Marxist, a semiotician, a structuralist, a post-structuralist, a reader-response theorist, and an allusive autobiographer. In whatever guise he wrote, Barthes delivered marvelous observations. He's a serious critic with the right light touch: The staged wrestling match "enacts the exact gestures of the most ancient purifications"; Greta Garbo's face "reconciles two iconographic ages, it assures the passage from awe to charm"; the Eiffel Tower "makes the city into a kind of nature"; Baudelaire strove "to protect theatricality from the theater."

Yet the academic verdict on Barthes has

been revealing. Virtually no academics write in the mode of Roland Barthes. In fact, despite his extraordinary originality and range, he's rarely even cited by academics. Though he's a great critic, he's too urbane, too much the *flâneur*; he doesn't take himself, or his methods, seriously enough. Susan Sontag, the author of a polemical essay called "Against Interpretation" (1964) that calls at its close for an erotics of art, saw this, and connected herself with Barthes in ways that she couldn't with the more somberly methodological Derrida and Foucault.

When, by contrast, the very intelligent Meaghan Morris, an Australian feminist critic, decides to write about shopping malls, she prefaces her trip to the contemporary agora with a slag heap of anxious reflections on method. The reflections are wearisome, the theory dull. Barthes would have known better; Ross too. Morris's approach is a way of establishing credentials with the other intellectuals, of flashing badge. It's also a way of engaging good old Arnoldian high seriousness. For, in truth, professional anxiety continues to be rife in cultural studies, as it was during the reign of high theory. Intellectuals seem to need to apologize for their immersion in Barbie and Ken, in *The Dukes of Hazzard*, in Madonna, by longer and longer bouts of ritual theorizing.

Ross paid his dues by writing a so-so book about modernism; Barthes wrote a sleepy volume of his own to inaugurate his career. Both of them then used academic security to have some fun. In fact, it's often the respectable youth, *les enfants gris*, who are cluttering what could be a splendid field with their ponderous, adult wisdom. Why doesn't someone write a cultural studies book on professorial rituals?

—Mark Edmundson, associate professor of English at the University of Virginia, is the author of *Towards Reading Freud: Self-Creation in Milton, Wordsworth, Emerson, and Sigmund Freud*.

---

## OTHER TITLES

### History

**DOUBLE LIVES:** Spies and Writers in the Secret Soviet War of Ideas Against the West. By Stephen Koch. Free Press. 338 pp. \$24.95

The demise of Soviet communism has inspired more than a few indignant exposés of those Westerners who fell under its spell. Add to this growing list of often bilious works Koch's *Double Lives*. Koch, chairman of the Writing Division of the School of Arts at Columbia University, seeks to lay bare the workings and reach of the Soviet Union's early propaganda apparatus in the West. Using the life of Willi Münzenberg, the first master of Stalinist spin control, Koch tells a tangled tale of fellow travelers, unwitting literati, and master spies that enmeshes everyone from Madame Sun Yat-sen to Ernest Hemingway.

Called by Koch "one of the unseen powers of 20th-century Europe," Münzenberg was already a canny underground organizer in Germany when he met Leon Trotsky in 1914. Trotsky led him to Lenin, who entrusted Münzenberg with helping to found the Communist International, or Comintern. Münzenberg's first real foray into international agitprop, however, did not take place until the Soviet famine of 1921, when Lenin ordered him to launch an appeal for aid from the "international proletariat." That effort in turn provided the foundation for what would become known as "the Münzenberg Trust," a media combine that spanned the globe. In Japan, for example, the trust directly or indirectly held sway over 19 magazines and newspapers.

Münzenberg's career as a propagandist provides a jumbled structure for Koch's work, but the real focus—or, rather, target—of *Double Lives* is the "adversary culture" that yielded Münzenberg a "rich secret harvest" from "the Left Bank of André Malraux," the "Bohemia of Greenwich Village," and "the rooms of Trinity College, Cambridge." Koch's recounting of those associated with what Münzenberg liked to call his "Innocents' Clubs"—book and film societies, conferences, and committees designed to push Soviet causes—reads like a who's who of the chattering class in the 1930s and '40s: John Dos Passos, André Gide, Ernest Hemingway, H. G. Wells, Dorothy Parker, and Bertolt Brecht, to name a few.

Münzenberg's organization sought supporters and converts by tapping the disaffection of the intellectual elite over issues such as racism in America, philistinism and middle-class repression in England, fascism in Germany, and capitalism everywhere. Koch provides ample details of the elaborate fronts Münzenberg set up in Paris, London, New York, and Hollywood to capitalize on the anti-establishment sentiment generated by such events as the trial of Niccolò Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti and the Spanish Civil War. He also notes that such Münzenberg creations as the League Against War and Fascism provided a well-stocked pool of would-be recruits for Soviet intelligence agents, yielding among other catches the notorious British double agent Kim Philby.

Yet in Koch's darkly simplistic view, sympathy with the lofty ideals professed by Soviet propaganda could have been the result only of manipulation or collaboration. He reduces many of the finest contemporary minds in the West to victims or accomplices of an "elaborate secret service network . . . set up to keep this large number of celebrity sympathizers appearing in the right places and reading the right lines."

Koch's paranoia might be more plausible were it backed by more than the flimsiest of evidence. Prominently pegged by Koch as a fellow traveler, for example, is John Dos Passos; but Koch himself notes that Dos Passos reacted to his free five-star tour of the Soviet Union by telling Hemingway that leaving the communist state "was like being let out of jail." All too often, Koch's charges about the secret Communist Party membership of various intellectuals rest on "may have beens" or "might have beens." Positing a conversation between British homosexual spies Anthony Blunt and Guy Burgess on the utility of homosexuality for espionage rings, Koch says, "I have no evidence to prove it, but some such conversation may well have taken place, and if so, it must have been an interesting one." Careful scholarship in the Kremlin and elsewhere may one day yield the truth about which Western intellectuals actually led "double lives." No one doubts there were fellow travelers swayed by Münzenberg and his minions. Indeed, Koch's own penchant for sensationalism, half-truths, and trumped-up irrelevancies suggests that, in another time, he "might well have been" one of them.

---

**TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS:** The Origins of an Anglo-American Right. *By Joyce Lee Malcolm. Harvard. 248 pp. \$29.95*

What Congress meant by the Second Amendment may be the most controversial question in modern constitutional debate. "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed," the amendment reads. The mystery lies in the relationship between the clauses: Is the right to bear arms limited to militia members, or does the first clause merely offer one compelling reason why every citizen must be allowed to own a gun? Malcolm, a scholar of 17th-century English history, explicitly declines to take sides in the modern gun-control debate. Yet she argues that we cannot answer its fundamental question without understanding the former colonists' philosophical debt to the motherland.

In preindustrial England, most subjects believed that an armed populace was the only safeguard against the ambitions of a power-hungry monarch, and, despite a law limiting private ownership to wealthy landowners, most households contained guns. The majority of Englishmen also believed that any standing army posed an outrageous threat of despotism. Yet in the late 1660s, Charles II, cynical and insecure after his father's execution and his own exile, amassed England's first standing army. Partially in response, Parliament soon passed England's first Bill of Rights, which specifically declared the right of all Protestant subjects to keep arms for



their defense.

The American colonies went beyond English law: Colonists were required to carry weapons when traveling outside towns and attending church. (The exceptions, of course, were Indians and slaves; it was a crime to sell them firearms.) The terror of standing armies also persisted, especially when the redcoats did not disband upon the conclusion of the French and Indian War in 1763. Drawing up constitutions during the Revolutionary War, the individual colonies explicitly condemned standing armies and made provisions for a popular militia. But there was disagreement as to individual rights to firearms. While Massachusetts declared, "The people have a right to keep and to bear arms for the common defence," Pennsylvania included personal defense, stating "that the people have a right to bear arms for the defence of themselves and the state."

When it came to drafting the federal Constitution, the Founders debated an amendment that read: "That the people have a right to bear arms for the defence of themselves and their own State, or the United States, or for the purpose of killing game; and no law shall be passed for disarming the people or any of them, unless for crimes committed, or real danger of public injury from individuals." Ultimately, though, they approved the Constitution without a bill of rights.

The Founders, of course, also granted extensive control to the central government over both the standing army and the state militia. These provisions provoked outrage during ratification, but in the end, many argued, if the people remained armed the standing army would never be able to enforce unjust laws. Yet disagreement continued over whether the right was to be for collective or individual protection. The House drafted one version of the Second Amendment based on states' proposals. The Senate, paring out wordiness (and choosing not to include the phrase "for the common defense"), cut the amendment to its current concise abstruseness. As Malcolm writes, "At each stage of its passage through Congress the arms amendment became less explicit . . . and brevity and elegance have been achieved at the cost of clarity."

Still, Malcolm believes that the Framers and Congress meant to protect individuals' right to arms for self-defense and to guard against tyr-

---

anny: "The argument that today's National Guardsmen, members of a select militia, would constitute the *only* persons entitled to keep and bear arms has no historical foundation." How modern Americans should act on this conclusion she declines to say: "We are not forced into lockstep with our forefathers. But we owe them our considered attention before we disregard a right they felt it imperative to bestow upon us."

**BUDAPEST AND NEW YORK:** Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870–1930. Ed. by Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske. Russell Sage Foundation. 416 pp. \$39.95

In 1870, Budapest and New York were rising stars of urban modernization. During the following 30 years both acquired world-famous bridges and subways, substantial new populations, and all the trappings of modernity. Moreover, their economies outpaced those of their closest urban rivals. Yet while the next 30 years made New York wealthy and cosmopolitan, an avatar not just of America's but of the world's future, Budapest settled into economic stasis and a reactionary torpor. What happened?

It's tempting to blame Budapest's political system, a nearly ossified centralized government with limited suffrage (under five percent of the population voted). But according to Bender, Schorske, and the 14 other historians who contributed to this volume, politics was not the only reason, or even a major reason, for Budapest's stagnation. In fact, a brief phase of relatively progressive politics, from 1900 to the failed Revolution of 1919, had minimal effect. Rather, the historians argue that New York's success depended on its ability to produce and retain diversity, while Budapest floundered because of its virulent xenophobia, which produced widespread resistance to cultural innovation.

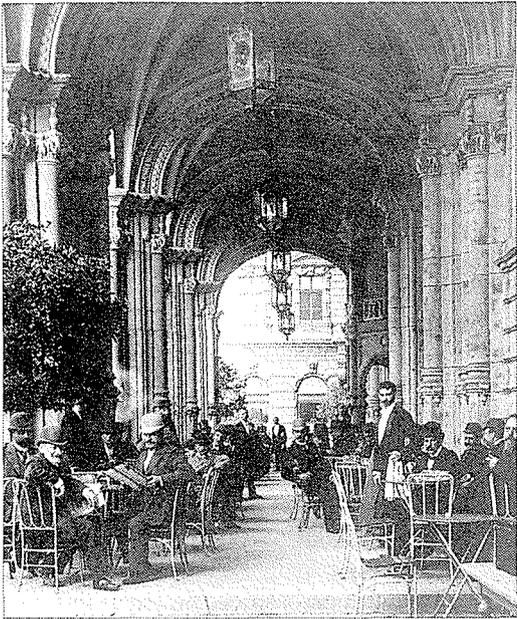
Ethnic difference forced on New York's institutions, from its local government to its construction industry, the sort of resourcefulness and flexibility that remained essential to the city's ever-evolving infrastructure. For example, Central Park evolved out of a contest of various civic interests: Frederick Law Olmsted's patrician vision of a zone of rural tranquility became, under public (i.e. ethnic) pressure, the home of brass

bands, working-class crowds, and a zoo. The heterogeneity and chaos of mass-market newspapers and avant-garde art were vital in founding a new urban order precisely on "moral and intellectual disorder." In the new newspapers—read by Bowery workers and uptown aristocrats alike—limerick contests that drew more than a million responses ran side by side with Will Durant-style philosophizing and pious exhortations about poverty.

Meanwhile, Budapest was being "Magyarized." An influx of rural Hungarians at the turn of the century had the effect of driving German-speakers and Jews out of the city and stifling modernization in the commercial and public spheres. City parks and other sites of social mingling never flourished in Budapest. From 1900 on, Budapest's literary and cultural scene (aside from a tiny, virtually ignored avant-garde) was ruled by various antimodernists who denounced the sinful excesses of urbanity or mocked its notions of progress. In one fictional account, the "woeful people of Pest" spend their lives selling each other antifreckle cream and preparations for perspiring feet. There was even a spirited campaign against something as innocent as the telling of jokes, which came to signify to the provinces how un-Hungarian the capital had become.

Why did petty provincialism and xenophobia exercise such a stranglehold on Budapest? In part because, as Hungary's capital, it was expected to remain somehow exemplary of the nation as a whole. Budapest was home to one of eight Hungarians and yet could never seem Magyar enough to satisfy most newly arrived Hungarian peasants. New York, by contrast, was never home to more than one-twentieth of the nation's population, and was capital only of a commercial and financial network that exerted an admittedly strong but still comparatively indirect control over America. Furthermore, being progressive, innovative, or forward-looking—traits that came to characterize New Yorkers—commanded respectful attention, even envy, from the rest of the country.

Curiously, for all of the talk of bigotry's effects, the historians who contribute to this volume bring up New York racism toward African-Americans only in passing. If the retention and toleration of diversity is indeed the essential



prerequisite of successful urbanization, then why did racism persist, even deepen, as New York modernized? In the end, the self-congratulatory optimism of the New York accounts, and the air of melancholy and self-reproach in the chapters on Budapest, may lie less in the past than in the present. The book gives off the faintest whiff of post-Cold War triumphalism. Nevertheless, it usefully explores the deep connections among such aspects of a city's life as a heterogeneous political debate, technological and commercial innovation, a thriving avant-garde, and the toleration of ethnic differences. By 1930, Budapest could boast of none of these virtues, while New York was the nurturing alma mater of them all.

### *Contemporary Affairs*

**A RAGE TO PUNISH:** The Unintended Consequences of Mandatory Sentencing. By Lois G. Forer. Norton. 204 pp. \$23

The thesis of *A Rage to Punish* sounds so unobjectionable that one may wonder why the author had to write the book at all: Public safety should be our top priority in sentencing criminals; a judge should be the one to determine a

convict's sentence; once sentenced, prisoners should serve out their time.

But Forer's appeal for criminal-justice reform comes at a time when we are passing laws that run directly counter to her desired goals. Our ever-harsher sentencing laws mandate minimum sentences for certain crimes, especially nonviolent drug crimes, leaving judges with little discretion to sentence as they see fit. As a result, prisons are overflowing, dangerous criminals are being let out years early, and preventable violent crimes are further jeopardizing public safety.

Forer, a state trial judge in Philadelphia for 16 years, left the bench in 1987 to protest a prison sentence she considered unfair but would have been forced to impose under state mandatory-sentencing laws. She thinks we need to get over our retributive and moralistic approach to crime. Judges should lock up only those criminals they deem dangerous. The others should be fined, forced to make reparations to their victims, and placed on probation with requirements such as finding a job or learning to read.

America has already seen one attempted reformation of criminal law along the lines Forer proposes. It was spearheaded by the U.S. Supreme Court after Earl Warren's appointment as chief justice in 1953. Victim-compensation laws and alternative sentencing became commonplace, and for the first time the Supreme Court guaranteed the right to free counsel to all defendants, in the landmark *Gideon v. Wainwright* decision in 1963. But a period of what Forer dubs counter-reformation set in when the Supreme Court in 1976 restored the death penalty, which had been abolished only four years earlier. Rehabilitation was declared a liberal pipe dream, and mandatory-sentencing laws spread. With the 1980s war on drugs, Forer argues, jails became packed with drug-runners and other two-bit criminals. She wistfully recalls the days before guidelines, when a crotchety old judge could bark at a prosecutor who had brought in a petty thief, "There are wolves out there and you bring me squirrels and chipmunks. Case dismissed."

Part of the current impetus behind mandatory time was the fear that sentencing had grown arbitrary, that judges of different ideological stripes were imposing vastly different sentences

---

for the same crimes. That fear turned out to be misguided, Forer claims. In a survey of her own court's sentencing during the early '70s, she found that conservative and liberal judges consistently imposed similar sentences in similar circumstances. In fact, under mandatory guidelines, sentencing has become far more discriminatory, though now differences result far more from the color of the accused than from the political leanings of the judge. Prosecutors, who now have the power to sentence, notoriously convict a disproportionate percentage of minority defendants, and black defendants receive the death penalty at a far higher rate than whites.

The estimated re-incarceration rate for released prisoners in the United States is 41 percent, and it costs the government \$35,000 a year or more to keep each prisoner behind bars. Does it make sense to keep throwing bad actors back into the prisons at such an expense? A doctoral candidate at the Wharton School of Business found that less than a quarter of the 600 felons Forer had sentenced—most to probation and payment of restitution—were rearrested for other crimes. One such case involved Willie, an illiterate 19-year-old gang member who was convicted of aggravated assault for injuring a member of a rival gang in what police called a routine rumble. Rather than send Willie to jail, as she now would be forced to do, Forer put him on strict probation for five years. She required him to live in a supervised group home, to learn to read, to find work, and to pay a \$300 fine by the end of the fifth year. With the help of an unusually conscientious parole officer, Willie finished parole with a high school diploma, a job, his own apartment, and a wife (Forer performed the wedding ceremony). Perhaps most important, Willie had no new arrests.

**THE GREEN CRUSADE:** Rethinking the Roots of Environmentalism. *By Charles T. Rubin.* Free Press. 312 pp. \$22.95

Two centuries after the nation's founding, environmentalism is probably the closest thing Americans have to a civic religion. While it is illegal to pray aloud in school and suspect to salute the flag, it is not thought unusual if

schools teach a fantastic environmentalist catechism of devastation and disaster that suggests, among other things, that Planet Earth will soon be reduced to a lifeless cinder if children let the water run while brushing their teeth.

If this really is a new order in the making, Rubin's intellectual survey of its founding mothers and fathers does not offer much encouragement for the next two centuries. In the work of Rachel Carson, Paul Ehrlich, E. F. Schumacher, and the handful of other environmental popularizers he carefully scrutinizes, the Duquesne University political scientist finds internal contradictions and, worse, sloppy and often downright dishonest science employed to advance half-hidden utopian political agendas. Rubin is not a shrill critic, however, and he points out that others have erred in labeling these environmentalists Luddites. Indeed, he argues, it is their technological optimism and faith in a rationally designed world that often leads them into totalitarian temptations: Follow my plan and we will solve all human problems, they suggest.

Their faith in certain visions of progress blinds both environmentalists and their critics to the complexities of human needs and desires, Rubin writes. But oddly enough he looks for a remedy in the scientific method, hoping that future environmental prophets will see its virtues. One exemplary figure is British scientist James Lovelock, who, in response to scientists' criticisms over the years, has continually revised his famous Gaia hypothesis, which suggests that the earth is a kind of self-regulating entity working toward the optimum conditions of life. Another is René Dubos, whose famous slogan "Think Globally, Act Locally" Rubin sees as a rejection of the dangerous "everythingism" of environmentalism, in which the connection of one problem to all others allows nothing but all-encompassing solutions.

It is not encouraging to read Rubin's chapter on the likely next generation of environmentalist popularizers. "Deep ecologists" such as Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess and American academics William Devall and George Sessions dismiss their predecessors as mere "reform environmentalists" and criticize them for accepting the corrupt "anthropocentric" view that

---

human beings enjoy a “privileged” status in nature. Aptly enough, Rubin calls this chapter “The Mind O’erthrown.”

**THE WAGES OF GUILT:** Memories of War in Germany and Japan. By Ian Buruma. Farrar Straus. 330 pp. \$25

To Ian Buruma as a child, the first enemies were the Germans—this despite his having been born in the Netherlands six years after World War II ended. The old animosity persisted in Holland, where adults kept it fresh for children too young to have experienced the war’s reality. Despite the cultural similarities between the two nations, or because of them, the Dutch after the war drew clear borders, geographical and mental, to keep the Germans beyond the pale.

In his early forties, Buruma began to wonder how the Germans remembered the war. Having lived in and written about Asia for many years (he was the arts editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*), he also began to wonder the same about the Japanese. So in his fourth book, which blends history, sociology, political commentary, and cultural appreciation, he set out to explore the complex psychological legacy of World War II for the two defeated nations.

A clear-eyed observer alert to rote pieties and practiced evasions, Buruma is curious why so many Germans today are obsessed with the war and the Nazis, with mourning and remembrance, when 30 years ago they were accused of being unable to mourn. The turning point, Buruma found, was the broadcast of the American miniseries *Holocaust* on German television in January 1979. Although it was entertainment, not art, it struck home with the Germans as nothing had before, unleashing the introspection that continues to this day. Buruma believes German memory is now like “a massive tongue seeking out, over

and over, the sore tooth.” Although many of those old enough to have lived through the Nazi years would prefer to forget, the young especially want the past rehearsed, to establish a moral superiority over their parents and to “crack their guilty silence.”

This German preoccupation with guilt over old horrors puzzles the Japanese, who are far more reluctant to come to grips with their wartime past. Why is the collective German memory so different from that of the Japanese? Buruma suggests various possible reasons: Japan is an

Asian shame culture, Germany, a Christian guilt culture; the Japanese were responsible for much unspeakable cruelty—the atrocities the army committed against the Chinese at Nanjing in 1937 were kept hidden for years from the Japanese

public—but for no Holocaust; finally, to some Japanese, the atom-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki argue powerfully that they were victims.

For Buruma, the explanation lies less in the history of the war than in the history of the postwar political arrangement imposed on the Japanese, “a generous version of the Versailles Treaty: loss of sovereignty without financial squeeze.” The Japanese were encouraged to get rich, while matters of war were taken out of their hands. The same corrupt party stayed in power for more than 40 years. The settlement helped to stifle public debate and has, in his view, kept the Japanese from political maturity: “As far as the history of World War II was concerned, the debate got stuck in the late 1940s.”

Buruma believes that Japan will not develop a grown-up attitude toward the past until it is allowed political responsibility over matters of war and peace. That the justice minister in the Japanese government newly come to power in the spring of 1994 could dismiss the massacre at Nanjing as a “fabrication” shows the distance still to be traveled. That he was fired three days later shows there is hope.



---

## Arts & Letters

**PADDY & MR. PUNCH:** Connections in Irish and English History. By R. F. Foster. Penguin. 382 pp. \$27.50

Elizabeth Bowen once described the uneasy relationship between the English and the Irish as "a mixture of showing-off and suspicion, nearly as bad as sex." In this new collection of essays, Foster argues that that relationship, however strained, shows that there is no such thing as a purely "Irish" history or a purely "English" history: The two islands' histories are inevitably intertwined.

Foster is a professor of history at Oxford University. More important, he is Irish and thus a product of the connection between England and Ireland. Bowen, too, was such a product, having, as Foster writes, lived ambivalently between two worlds: the Anglo-Irish gentry in an independent Ireland and literary London and Oxford. Just before she died in 1972, Bowen wrote to friends: "I hate Ireland." Foster says Ireland had grown away from her, "or away from the collusive, stylish, never-never land which she had chosen to inhabit." The Ireland of Bowen's imagination made her view England as eccentric, peculiar, exotic. The interaction between the two nations moved her art in a tradition distinctively, if uncomfortably, Irish. This is a predicament that faced other figures Foster treats, including W. B. Yeats, Anthony Trollope, and William Thackeray.

Foster's main argument is that "cultural diversity and cross-channel borrowings are implicit in Irish history." That may seem an obvious notion, but for making similar assertions in the past Foster has been called a "revisionist," a London Irishman, an Oxford Mick, a Southern Prod Historian. These labels are hurled at him by the keepers of the grail of classic Irish nationalism. As Foster explains, "One version of Irish history stood for many years as an important component in political state-building and in religiously dominated education: Any mild attempt to review it arouses a disproportionately vehement reaction from vested interests."

That version of history is based on the notion that the "real" Ireland was Catholic and Irish-

speaking. This nationalist view, which began to emerge in the mid-19th century, denies the major role of Protestants in the south of the island in culture, business, and particularly in the independence movement. Equally, it ignores the fact that only a very small percentage of the population still spoke Irish. And finally, the nationalist "ideal" excludes a culturally different community of one million Irish people in the north of the island, the Ulster Protestants, who were of largely Scottish stock and Calvinist in religious bent. Similarly, early Ulster Unionist mythmakers refused, in most cases, to accept any connection with the label "Irish."

Foster's version of history challenges and, using new scholarship, corrects the record. As he says, in a country continually invaded and settled, who qualifies as "Irish" anyway? Indeed, almost half of the revolutionary movement's leaders had lived in Britain or were of returned emigrant stock. Even Erskine Childers, the director of publicity for Sinn Fein (and author of *The Riddle of the Sands*) who eventually was executed by his former comrades in the Irish Civil War (1921-1923), qualifies as "a quintessential English adventure-hero." He had been educated in England and spoke with an English accent.

There seems to be a clear correlation, Foster notes, between mixed identity and stridency and extremism. The poet Yeats, for example, was a Protestant Irishman whose youth was spent alternating between England and Ireland, and his only permanent home for decades was in London's Bloomsbury. Yeats was regarded with suspicion by the more muscular figures of the independence movement for not being sufficiently "Irish." Is this why he overemphasized his Irishness? And was his pursuit of the occult the product of his envy of Catholic "magic" that most of his fellow Irish possessed as their birthright? Foster would have us think so.

Both the nationalism in what is now the Irish Republic and the nationalism of Ulster unionism were exclusive, inward looking, tribal. Foster's book advocates a new Ireland: pluralistic, diverse, all-encompassing, where the two traditions show each other mutual respect. This does not mean Irish "unity" necessarily but an attempt to share power within Northern Ireland and, at the same time, allow links for both com-

---

munities with the Irish Republic and Britain. Slowly but surely a less antagonistic relationship between the two islands—including membership of both in the European Union and the loosening of church power—is inching Ireland into the 21st century. An honest and inclusive re-examination of shared history such as Foster's can only accelerate the process.

**PERSPECTIVES ON MUSICAL AESTHETICS.** Ed. by John Rahn. Norton. 386 pp. \$35

What is the function of music? Should it act, as French intellectual Jacques Attali has suggested, as a mirror to the modern world and a prophecy of its future? Or should it respond to some loftier—if undefinable—aesthetic? Indeed, it may be fruitless to ascribe meaning to a medium so inherently subjective; what strikes one listener as pleasurable may send another shrieking from the room. Nonetheless, most of the essays in this volume, culled from the pages of the journal *Perspectives of New Music* and written by composers as well as theorists, grapple bravely with just such questions.

One difficulty with discussing modern musical composition is pinning down exactly what is being discussed. It was once a relatively simple matter to categorize music as baroque or classical or romantic, but such reliable signposts are much harder to come by in today's all-inclusive repertoire. As philosopher Michel Foucault points out in a dialogue with composer Pierre Boulez, "The evolution of these musics after Stravinsky or Debussy presents remarkable correlations with the evolution of painting." And just as Cézanne and Picasso pointed the way toward abstract expressionism, so too did Arnold Schönberg open the door for composers such as Philip Glass and John Cage (who in his famous 4' 33" [1952] added no sounds to the space in which the piece was performed—silence as music). Once the door was ajar, it became impossible to bar entry to any manner of composition, a phenomenon that composer J. K. Randall comments on humorously in his freeform essay, "Are You Serious?" Randall relates his impressions of a weekend festival of "spiritual expression through music and dance,"

a celebration of New Age music and its purported healing effects on the soul. Ultimately, the music leaves Randall cold: "I'm agog at the coupling of 1. find your true self & unblock your creativity & get in touch with the cosmos with 2. do exactly what I'm doing and saying as I transmit to you by rote what I got by rote from someone who got it from God by rote."

Other essays explore the narcissism of composition and performance, and of the self-conscious pressure of not repeating what has gone before. The hand-wringing exhibited by composers such as Milton Babbitt ("I try to write the music which I would most like to hear, and then am accused of self-indulgence, eliciting the ready admission that there are few whom I would rather indulge") makes one wonder how they ever manage to put notes on paper. Sometimes they do not. Babbitt has been a proponent of taped improvisation, essentially classical "jam sessions" that attempt to fill a space with sound in the hope that something worthwhile will emerge.

What emerges from these essays is the idea that the function of music is multiple and contradictory. Indeed, it's easy to feel a certain sympathy for the composer's task: to create music that brings self-satisfaction, breaks new ground, and remains accessible enough to gain entry into the symphonic repertoire (with enough attendant recording sales and airplay to keep one off the breadlines), while at the same time saying something significant about the human condition. Clearly, the impulses that drive composers are as varied as listeners' responses to their music, but it may be best not to overanalyze them. Comments such as these from David Dunn, noted for his experimentation with animal sounds, may make one long for the days when composers merely wrote the music, and left its interpretation to others: "There may be clues for our continued survival on this planet which only music can provide. . . . I'm much more interested in that than in being a composer."

**THE OXFORD BOOK OF EXPLORATION.** Ed. by Robin Hansbury-Tenison. Oxford Univ. 530 pp. \$30

One pleasure afforded by this enchanting anthol-

[SIMPLE...SENSIBLE...SMART...FREE]

# If only everything from Washington were as good as <sup>THE</sup> NEW REPUBLIC

“THE SMARTEST, most impudent weekly in the country...” (*Vanity Fair*). “... America’s finest journal of opinion.” (*Time*). “A must read.” (*GQ*).

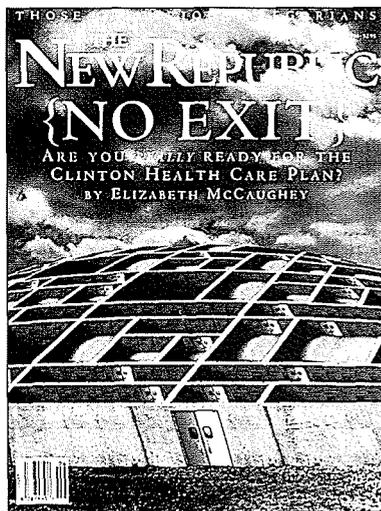
Welcome to THE NEW REPUBLIC – it’s unlike anything you’ve come to expect from Washington. Bold. Provocative. Astute. Courageous. A real leader.

It’s the weekly that refuses to suffer fools. That challenges conventional wisdom. That sets the political agenda. That never compromises its principles – or your intelligence.

THE NEW REPUBLIC crosses the line...to find the truth, to discover new answers, to track down a good story. It’s fearless. Unimpressed with power. Ready to expose hypocrites and reveal hidden agendas.

Impossible to predict, its influence is impossible to ignore. In a recent poll, THE NEW REPUBLIC won first place as the nation’s “best liberal” magazine and second place as “best conservative” magazine.

Among its readers you’ll find President Clinton and Senator Dole. Vice President Gore and Citizen Perot. Left-to-right media types, Hollywood hangers-on, Beltway pundits, up-and-



[YES!]

Send me a free issue of  
THE NEW REPUBLIC.

*If I like it, I'll start a 6-month subscription and receive 23 more weekly issues (24 in all) for just \$19.99. That's almost half off the regular subscription rate – \$50.81 savings off the newsstand cost. If I decide it's not for me, I'll write "cancel" on your bill, return it and the issue is mine to keep.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: THE NEW REPUBLIC  
Post Office Box 602  
Mount Morris, Illinois 61054

[OR CALL 1-800-827-1289]

Canadian subscribers, please add US\$7.50.  
Foreign subscribers add US\$15.00.

AWQ941

coming wannabes and government insiders of every stripe.

AMONG ITS WRITERS you'll read Andrew Sullivan and Leon Wieseltier, Fred Barnes and Ann Hulbert, Mickey Kaus, Michael Kinsley, Weston Kosova, Charles Lane, Michael Lewis, Robert Wright and Jeffrey Rosen.

And among its pages you'll discover more than just pols and politics. THE NEW REPUBLIC also features a fascinating festival of the arts: the latest books, the current cinema, the worlds of theater, poetry, television, and popular culture reviewed by Stanley Kauffmann, Robert Brustein and a cast of critics every bit as accomplished as the artists they come to praise – or bury.

WHY NOT SEE for yourself? Mail in the coupon below and get a free issue of THE NEW REPUBLIC. If you like it, you can start a guaranteed subscription and save 70% off the cover price. If you don't like it you can cancel and keep the issue free.

Imagine! Ideas from Washington that make sense, that are worth following, that you can try free... Call or write today.

---

ogy is proof that you cannot destroy the allure of good travel writing, not even by the kind of overexposure the genre has received in recent years. Hansbury-Tenison's collection sticks to the subgenre of travel writing with the best dramatic possibilities: first-person period accounts of explorers, all of whom struggled to visit far-



flung and unreported places or underwent astonishing ordeals, and often both. Hansbury-Tenison, himself a gold-medalist explorer with the Royal Geographic Society, suggests in his introduction that "explorers are quite different from travelers," since their curiosity impels them not toward other cultures per se but toward extremes of novelty, danger, and privation. He also acknowledges that his explorers' sense of accomplishment in reaching exotic places was heightened, far too often, by complete obliviousness to the people who actually inhabited them: "Time and again the European explorer, as he 'discovers' some new land, makes a passing reference to his native guide."

None of this interferes, fortunately, with the selector's editorial gusto; nor with the reader's ability to appreciate these hundreds of accounts for their better qualities. They're mostly of easy browsing length and are arranged by region and chronology, so that you can trudge through Asia repeatedly from Marco Polo's day to Sir Edmund Hillary's (and discover few changes apart from mode of locomotion). There are a fair number of self-caricaturing British imperialist types, from the British Jesuit William Gifford Palgrave in 1862 fulminating against camels—"from first to last an undomesticated and savage animal, rendered serviceable by stupidity alone"—to Lady Florence von Sass Baker, wife of an explorer, writing home to her stepdaughter from Africa in 1871 for more handkerchiefs: "The whole country is in a state of the wildest anarchy. . . . We shall have to support some

tribes and subdue others before any hope [of] order can be entertained."

But the moxie and ardor of these explorers comes through, too, along with an old virtue that doesn't always get its due these days, sheer physical bravery. This is especially true of the classic South Pole accounts that Hansbury-Tenison wisely places at the end. Though endlessly anthologized, this sequence remains thrilling: Roald Amundsen reaching the Pole in 1912, Robert Falcon Scott devastated to arrive a month later and learn he's been beaten, the agonies of Scott and his men on the attempted return march ("no idea there could be temperatures like this"), their gruesome deaths, and the horror of the next team when its members find Scott's diary. Scott was especially concerned that posterity know of the grit with which one companion handled his imminent death from frostbite and gangrene: Lifting the flap of the tent in a raging blizzard, he remarked, "I am going outside the tent and may be some time."

### *Science & Technology*

**HIGHER SUPERSTITION:** *The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science.* By Paul Gross and Norman Levitt. Johns Hopkins. 328 pp. \$25.95

It's hard to imagine deconstructionists, Afrocentrists, and radical feminists and environmentalists taking any cues from Christian fundamentalists. Yet the latest target in the academic Left's war against a white, male, Western worldview is science. So say Gross, a former director of the Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory, and Levitt, a professor of mathematics at Rutgers University. And while creationists merely tried to replace evolutionary biology with Genesis, a growing element within the academic Left is seeking to disavow science completely, labeling it another tool of cultural oppression.

For most of this century, Gross and Levitt argue, scientists were natural allies of progressive thinkers, and often at the forefront of movements for racial and sexual equality or global ecological responsibility. But since postmodernism began to infect the academy in the 1960s, the search for objective truth has become the worst

---

form of heresy. Vigilant feminists deconstruct algebra problems to uncover ostensibly sexist stereotypes (“Why is it *Bob* and *Fred* in the powerboat race?”) and expose the semiotic tyranny of DNA, while Afrocentrists claim their ancestors were the first to approximate the value of pi.

The complaint Gross and Levitt make about this critique of science is less philosophical than factual: these humanities professors don’t know the first thing about science. “Buoyed by a ‘stance’ on science, they feel justified in bypassing the grubby necessities of actual scientific knowledge,” the two authors argue. The philosopher Steven Best, for example, makes the case for “postmodern science” by hailing chaos theory over Newton’s linear equations. But oops! Newton’s equations are nonlinear.

Feminists are among the main culprits, as they search for an alternative “feminist science” to counter centuries of male-driven research. Gross and Levitt concede that the profession has traditionally excluded women, but they deny that the foundations of science are distorted by patriarchal assumptions. There is only good and bad science, they argue, not male and female science. The feminists’ mistake, they say, is to confuse language that describes results with the results themselves. But is the attack on metaphor mongering really the feminists’ only complaint? Take the authors’ main example: A group of feminists has decried a textbook description that depicts “martial gang rape” of an egg by the sperm. The feminists’ complaint certainly goes overboard, but as Gross and Levitt themselves point out, a vast science has emerged in the past

30 years, pioneered by women, proving that the egg is much less passive than was previously thought. Contributions by women have challenged basic assumptions.

Gross and Levitt reserve their harshest criticism for Afrocentric theorists, who are guilty of “flagrant falsification of science in the service of Afrocentric chauvinism.” In the collection *Blacks in Science*, Khalil Messiha argues that a small wooden figure of a bird made in Egypt is an example of “African experimental aeronautics.” The evidence? If you build a copy with lighter balsa wood and add a vertical stabilizer, you get a so-so version of a toy glider. This kind of analysis is destructive, Gross and Levitt say, because it assumes “black children can be persuaded to take an interest in science only if they are fed an educational diet of fairy tales.”

While Gross and Levitt succeed in making light of their opponents, one is left wondering, as their own last chapter asks, “Does It Matter?” As they themselves admit, “scientists generally ignore these critiques,” so they are unlikely to affect the field. And with the exception of feminists, the other radicals they describe are at the periphery of the academic Left. If the issue at stake is the ability of the larger culture to interact with science, then scientists are partly to blame. Research contracts have professionalized and isolated many scientists into lab ghettos, where they have little contact with the general culture. In the end, it all seems like a lot of academic bickering that could be mitigated by a steady dose of mandatory English and biology courses.

---

---

# POETRY

KATHERINE HOSKINS

*Selected and Introduced by Anthony Hecht*

If I were still teaching graduate students in modern English and American poetry and had assigned to me an especially gifted student, widely conversant with the whole rich canon from, say, Chaucer right up to the last minute, a student who was enthusiastic, willing to work, imaginative, painstaking, and keenly sensitive to poetic nuance, I think I could do him or her no greater favor than to suggest a careful poem-by-poem commentary on the poems of Katherine Hoskins. It would doubtless prove a demanding task, but the rewards would be incalculable if it were to eventuate in a publishable book of solid critical appreciation, for it might restore her to the notice she has deserved from the first, and was hers only in the view of the best of her fellow poets. Think, if you can, of another modern poet who won the enthusiastic praise of the likes of Robert Lowell, Randall Jarrell, William Meredith, James Dickey, and Theodore Roethke, and is, in spite of this, quite simply unknown and out of print. It is a fate feared by Keats himself, to whom Hoskins bears certain touching and quirky resemblances.

To be sure, she did not court public notice. The books of her work that I own, three in number, are at pains to reveal nothing whatever about her except that she lived in Weston, Massachusetts. Nary a word about her family, nor her education, though it might be inferred that if she were an autodidact (as some very good poets have been) she did a first-rate job. I was able, however, to glean some facts from her publisher. Katherine DeMontalont Hoskins was born May 25, 1909, at Indian Head, Maryland, where her father was inspector at the naval proving ground, and was later to retire as rear admiral. Although she did not attend school until the age of 11, she graduated from the Smith College Honors Program in its Class of 1931. Five years later, she married Albert Hoskins, an officer of the Boston Municipal Court. They made their home in Weston, and had one child, a daughter. Hoskins was awarded the Brandeis University Creative Arts Poetry Grant in 1957 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1958. She died a widow, after a stoic battle with esophageal carcinoma, in 1988.

Reading through her poems, one is aware of literary allusions, influences, and sympathies that cover an enormous range and include a great deal of 16th- and 17th-century English poetry, as well as Chekhov, Faulkner, Marianne Moore, Dickinson, the very best and earliest children's literature, folklore, and fairy tales, Renaissance painting and sculpture, geography and cartography, American and European history, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and a keen love of the qualities and properties of the natural world, linked, often enough, to a thoughtful capacity for allegory and moral reflection.

Her poems, moreover, make no glib concessions to lazy readers. Her syn-

---

tax is gnarled (though far from uncomely); her stanzaic forms as complex, at times, as those of the most intricate metaphysical poems, exhibiting something like the same density and compression. They also display a ventriloquist's capacity to shift within the body of a poem from the adopted diction, or noble accents, of the great Renaissance poets to local and regional dialect. She is a woman of many voices, all of them superbly tuned to achieve her wiliest effects.

Take, for example, the opening of a poem that, by the time its mere three stanzas close, has shown us the horrifying tableau of a woman (clearly a black woman) cradling in her arms a man who has been beaten to death, and whose head now is only " 'a sack of little bones.' " The poem is called "After the Late Lynching." (The asterisks, my own, are explained below.)

No,  
It goes not liquidly for any of us.\*  
    Yseult  
    's as hard as Troilus.  
Heloise is far away and  
    Difficult.  
Nor's Death felicitous.\*  
Not princes' proud defiant trumpets,  
Not good men's easyness  
With Death is not ours yet\*

This elaborate stanza is faithfully repeated (though with approximate rhymes later on) throughout. Its tone is seemingly wry and disenchanting. It speaks of the old juxtaposition of Love and Death, and it does so by deliberate literary allusion. Yseult is given her medieval (not her Wagnerian) name to insist upon the antiquity of the conflict in which she played a part. Troilus and Heloise are both "far away and/ Difficult." It all seems artificial, legendary, highly literary in the most removed sense, and the poet knows exactly what she's doing.

**B**ut in addition to those famous names, there are also allusions in the lines I've starred with asterisks. The first is to a poem ("Philomela") by John Crowe Ransom, which I had occasion to comment on recently in these pages [*WQ*, Spring '94]. The allusion is important here. Philomela, too, was a victim of love and rape; she too was an ancient figure. In Ransom's poem we, in our modern era, are hopelessly severed from the grandeur of music and of tragedy that her story and her song as a nightingale represent. There has been for Ransom, as for Hoskins, a crude and degenerate falling away from an earlier loveliness, though with no diminution of the world's horror.

The second starred line is meant to recall the dying words of Hamlet, who says to Horatio, "If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,/ Absent thee from felicity a while,/ And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,/ To tell my story." There is brilliant irony at work here. For Hamlet, death may seem felicity because life is repellent; for Hoskins, the death she is about to describe is almost too hideous to believe.

Finally, the third starred phrase concerns the death of good men as conceived by John Donne in a poem called "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."

---

The very title suggests its relevance to Hoskins's purpose. And her spelling of "easyness" is meant, once again, to confer the burnish of antiquity. Donne opens his poem thus:

As virtuous men pass mildly away,  
And whisper to their souls, to go,  
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,  
The breath goes now, and some say, no. . . .

The serene tranquility Donne allows to those who have a clean and untroubled conscience at the hour of death is, again, opposed by Hoskins to what is found in the world we moderns inhabit. The richness and ramifications of all her allusions serve as substructure and solid foundation for the modern horror she is ruthlessly planning to expose.

Readers properly equipped to get the most of Katherine Hoskins's poems will come upon her splendid "To Apollo Musagetes" (Apollo as leader of the Muses) and will find themselves compelled to think of Yeats's "The Circus Animals' Desertion," Coleridge's "Work Without Hope," Robert Lowell's "Epilogue" to his last book, and, finally, of Keats's self-composed epitaph: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

---

## A Merry Meeting

*Allemagna?* She offers the store with the candy.  
He reaches and, Ah! *Allemagna* has recognized.  
And how deeply, magnificently blue the sky  
Is over Milano, Via Manzoni.

And they are hand in hand, laughing like lovers.  
Cinema handsome, they laugh, peering through louvers  
At those sleek seals, the Milanese,  
Balancing circus-colored cakes and candies.

Leaves pattern plaster—Via Marco di Marchi.  
Then he, with affectionate ado,  
Goes back to his Piétà, she to the zoo.  
Great Milano—villaged by her stranieri.

He takes a sweet and clapboards close around  
Them once again—they somewhat breath-bound  
Still from when they wandered Milano together  
For thirty seconds, and were lovers.

---

## After the Late Lynching

No,  
It goes not liquidly for any of us.  
    Yseult  
    's as hard as Troilus.  
Heloise is far away and  
    Difficult.  
Nor's Death felicitous.  
Not princes' proud defiant trumpets,  
Not good men's easyness  
With Death is not ours yet

Whose lives construe so little of what is brave.  
    Grace notes  
Should not be asked of slaves.  
Slaves' is, lunk-dumb and mutinous,  
    At whipping posts  
To crouch and whine till they've  
Spelled out the primitive construction—  
So plain, so difficult—  
Of a death and a woman.

Nor not from whitest light of foreign poems  
    Hope help;  
    But from her native woe  
Who took that black head in her hands  
    And felt,  
    "A sack of little bones";  
Whose arms for the last time round him knew,  
    "All down one side no ribs  
    But broken things that moved."

## For Tazio

The royal quality  
Of this child's beauty  
Gives me who wait on him  
Such inordinate pleasure  
As, from Rome to Delft,  
Those painters must have felt  
Who drew so close to nature  
The nature of cherubim

---

## At Giuffre's "Harbor View"

Called from sole and scrod,  
Chef picks up the phone;  
Catches words like God's  
From it and hurls it down.

*My wife?!*

Sprung from wrung bowels, the cry  
Is quick disguised  
By young and loyal waiters who  
Toss pots and clatter pans;  
Then, still in the blood-spattered apron  
Of his trade, support him to a landing  
Off the stairs  
And seat him.  
Grieve here, they say, but don't disturb  
The diners who have reached liqueurs,  
That profitable course.  
Grieve, grieve at your ease, old man,  
But do not howl.  
He squats on the chair  
And does not howl,  
Just stares.  
The while, on bloody apron gray as wash,  
On face and hair of soggy ash,  
On an old beat-up clothes-horse,  
The young waiters wait—  
Brown-skinned, black-chevelured, sinewed, muscled—  
Two to a side.  
And now another mounts the stair.  
Cup-bearer, brandy in his hand,  
His knee is bent  
To climb, to make a present.  
And the light shifts.  
You'd say someone had varnished it.  
You'd say an antiquarian Masaccio,  
Stumbling upon an ancient garden statue,  
Some remnant of the Greeks  
Weathered to low relief,  
(Silenus or a garden variety of Grief)  
Had set it on its pedestal and set  
His bronze-eyed cinque-cento boys round it.  
Bronze-muscled and bronze-eyed,  
Adept with knife and rod,  
These young Guineas recognize a god,  
Still.

---

Courage, old stone, they murmur,  
(who once cold-chisel sleeked like us  
To features will be reived from us,  
Too)  
Don't howl,  
(Who are our own).  
But let us go now to fetch liqueurs.  
Back at their jobs,  
Suave gestures,  
Sorrow-spattered eyes  
Abstracted to a past they can't recall,  
Speak of a statue fallen  
In a neglected garden,  
Of abandoned sepultures.

### For the Inheritors

Compassion bends us to our young  
Who, in a slant-eyed glance, betray  
Their old old selves.  
To them we yearn, we cry—  
Pushing the hair back from their solemn eyes—  
No, no. Be children still.  
In spite of us, your world and you are young.  
Go, go. Go play.

Play? They answer  
As wanting to please us, only our words  
Slip by them like the cries of strange birds  
Long long ago and in another world  
And even there scarce heard.  
Play, dear Elders? they repeat their duty.

At ease in summer chairs,  
We watch the westing sun pick out  
A stark oak limb  
From frolic foliage,  
Its massive corrugations rosy-lit.  
Moved by that sudden bareness note  
The strength, part true part fabulous, of oak.

---

## In Praise

Silk without weight; liquid without wet;  
Caressive yet impalpable.  
Trees waving stir what sun has warmed.

We cannot use it as the birds do—  
Three swifts quartering the evening sky,  
The glider hawk that, quiet, quiets all.

At home though. Like silent fish  
Ten fathom down on ocean's pasturage,  
We move around each other separately;

Encased, enthralled and gentled by  
Our kindest element, the summer air.

## Guilt

Patient and small as life, our minor betrayals  
Await us in the ante-room to Hell;  
Mild creditors of fear and snobbery,  
And lazy cruelty.

At ten, how eloquent we were to teach  
That boy shame for country shoes and speech.  
His blue eyes, brilliant with astonished tears,  
Illuminate the years.

An old black nurse took ferry, trolley, bus  
To call on his beautiful child, now all grown-up;  
Grown-up too vain to doff her busyness  
Before his tiredness.

And what of those lonely women who found in Death,  
Not us, the punctual friend? To right and left,  
The benches fill with our gentle victims; not  
Insistent, not forgot.

---

## To Apollo Musagetes

Farewell, farewell  
Who was the best of me.  
My mind's turned Quakerish  
And silent sits  
Possessed by grey vacuity.  
Bunched like silly swallows on a line,  
Presaging rain,  
Words preen, shove, twist and twit  
But will not ever burst up into the wild air again,  
Nor jet-dive down that narrow, nested chimney-flue of mine.  
Jet-power and precision-sight are gone,  
Long gone.  
Farewell.  
Say I strung gauds to an almost poem;  
Rhymes, rhythms, images contrived;  
In fact, a compleat mechanism niftily  
devised  
And that pleased the critics;  
Remembering thee, I could no less  
Than hate that seeming  
And mourn again the warm, the fleshed  
And quiet breathing  
That, with thy help, I'd sometimes come by.  
Farewell.  
Say I confessed my every grievous lack  
Of body, spirit, mind and corrected all—  
Shored with six virtues each sagged fault—  
No effort brought, nor none will get thee back.  
Thou cam'st in deed the sun  
To pour me down and gild with courage, brightness, gay  
persuasions.  
And goest too  
Like him, ghost-  
ing me to farthest Antipodes,  
Native  
To live  
There with some pale, timid, forlorn race  
Of twilight savages  
That's never seen thy face.  
Farewell.  
Who, having seen, can't keep thee  
Lose heart even to weep thee.  
Farewell, farewell.

---

Reprinted by permission with Scribner's, an imprint of Simon & Schuster, from *Excursions*, by Katherine Hoskins. Copyright © 1945, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1964, and 1966 by Katherine Hoskins.

---

# Language on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown

BY ANATOLY NAIMAN



*An Englishman in Moscow, by K. Malevich*

*Shortages of all kinds contribute to Russia's turmoil today, but none is more damaging than the dearth of meaningful language. Anatoly Naiman here tells how decades of totalitarian rule have enfeebled language, making political discussion next to impossible and paving the way for the ascent of extremists.*

**I**t happened in Moscow sometime in the middle of the 1970s. A researcher at one of the institutes—a timid 30-year-old bachelor who had lived his whole life with his parents in a tiny two-room flat and had long since been pummeled into submission by the usual body punches of the Soviet system—this man at length resolved to buy a co-op apartment for himself and begin life on

his own. Naturally, his application was turned down by the authorities “on the basis of law”—meaning, because this was Soviet law, that he needed to proffer a bribe. The most important thing in bribery, as everyone knows, is identifying exactly who should get the goods. People told the man, in appropriate whispers, that if he appeared on such-and-such a day, at such-and-such a time, at office

---

number such-and-so of Moscow's City Hall, and gave the official he found sitting there 1,000 rubles, the official would "put him in line" for an apartment.

The timid little man did everything as instructed. In the designated office, behind a desk, sat an immobile gentleman with an inscrutable face. The timid man entered and began, stammering, to recount his story of elderly parents and a life not yet under sail on his own. In response came neither word nor gesture. The timid man took out an envelope with the 1,000 rubles and, nearly fainting, placed it on the desk as he mumbled something incoherent. The ominous figure, in an ill-fitting black suit, opened a drawer of the desk, tossed the envelope in, and slammed the drawer shut again. The unfortunate supplicant, turning toward the door, could manage only a plaintive "So I can hope. . . ?" Not a sound came in reply, and the timid man left the room.

Reaching the stairwell, he began to come to his senses. And then it dawned on him: He was the victim, he realized bitterly, of a primitive swindle. That was no official, merely somebody's front man using an office that was empty at the time; neither the 1,000 rubles nor the apartment would ever be heard of again. Enraged to the point of unthinkable rashness, the man rushed back, threw open the door of the office, and from the threshold hurled out in a cracking voice: "And what kind of guarantee do you give me?" The inscrutable face turned to the man, and the mouth at its base intoned: "The word of a Communist!"

**W**hat an incredible journey our language has made, having come, like the serpent, full circle and caught itself by surprise from behind, bruising its heel with its head. The giving of one's "word," which for untold centuries (even into our own) signified a commitment better to die for than to dishonor, and the word "Communist," which signaled service to the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth—these two words had been joined in the Russian of our time to form a

sentence equivalent to a Chicago gangster's saying, "My word is as good as gold."

The Russian language, like any language, is a system—an organic, self-regulating, and self-cleansing system, more precisely. It can accommodate a great deal: the abstruse, the babble of didacticism, even the word pranks of the Russian futurists and other linguistic innovators. But it tolerates this type of thing only on its outer shell, so to speak, like a birthmark, a sunburn, or a blister. On the "inside" things are different: Language can purge itself of the poison of deception and outright falsehood, but only if the dose is limited.

You may, for example, call a rutted, pot-holed country lane a "road"—but you cannot call it a "highway." I mean, you may call it whatever you like, of course, call it an airstrip if it suits you; the word itself cannot resist. But *language* as a system can and does repel such assaults. By the context which the word organizes, by the artificiality of the elevated style or the mocking wink of irony—by the resulting deformation, briefly put, which is plain for everyone to see, language signals that such a usage is simply not true, that language, against its own will, is being "used." The word is simply not functioning *as itself*.

Viewed from another perspective, language also shows itself to be a system at once agile and reflective. It is ready to bring to bear its entire treasury of semantic and grammatical properties, those on active duty and even those in the reserves, to meet the needs of the individual speaker and the speakers of a whole society. Our language is relatively indifferent, for example, to whether a government institution is called an "office" or a "department" (much less a "department" or a "ministry"). It is also ready and willing to anoint everything alien with a foreign word. Thus the dubbing of a man in a leather coat, sporting a revolver and a pince-nez, a man from outside or who had left "his own" people—calling such a man a "commissar" was, as with the application of any other unknown word, almost natural. And the adjective appended to it, "people's," with its maximum degree of

---

indefiniteness, simply confirmed in one's consciousness that the subject in question was something brought in from elsewhere, something that needed not so much to be understood, heaven forbid, as to be learned by rote. The Russian acronym *Narkom*—from *Narodnyi* (People's) *Kommissar*—while seeming to preserve at least the external traits of the parent words that spawned it, was associated on a deeper and surely more spontaneous level with concepts inherited by language from nature, as in someone who appears *narokom* and *narochno* (one sent with a mission, on purpose) and someone you must “feed” or “satisfy” (*nakormit*). So the transition from the word “ministry” (*ministerstvo*) to the acronym *narkomat* (from the words for “People's Commissariat”) did not seem forced at all. On the contrary, the change gave a long, incomprehensible concept a semblance of human features and the ring of human speech.

## II

Such examples are legion. It was impossible, for example, to call by their proper names the fraud, treachery, theft, and murder that became Soviet state policy. The necessity of replacing these terms with words that expressed the same concepts yet somehow covered over their ugly reality (with a web of strategic commonplaces cast over it from critical angles)—this led to the creation of a special language of double-entendres, a two-track phenomenon that Orwell later named “doublespeak.” A man is fired from his job, arrested, and shot; this comes to be called a “purge.” In effect such renaming resembled someone's deciding that alongside the standard number system, based on 10, one could also employ a base-two system when the mood struck—so the number 100 could

mean either 100 or four, depending. “So-and-so was shot” was the truth, but “such-and-such an establishment cleansed its ranks of an alien element” was not an untruth. The “element” who had been shot really was “alien,” and the “ranks” really had been cleansed of him. The concept of “destruction” was invested with a positive connotation by the substitution of the word “cleansing.” Such an operation, however, required the effective demotion of the concept of “people” to the category of “ranks” and “elements.” The organism of speech, forced to function in an environment of artificiality, compensates for the overload on some of its parts by diminishing the activity of others.

**A**nd there they were: running up against the fact that our language does not simply suborn itself to the whim of the speaker—that one really cannot call a country lane a “highway.” The people who wanted to do just that resorted to two general strategies. The first was to insert an alien tissue into the natural organism of language: a sort of injection of an extraneous idea which, as a rule, lent itself to free interpretation, and led everything associated with it into the realm of the subjective (or what passed for the subjective)—who would explain, after all, whether “people's” or “nonpeople's” went with “commissar?” And thus christened, a People's Commissar (whatever that was) might indeed remark, for example, “This country lane does not seem to me the least bit bumpy; on the contrary, how smooth and broad it is, like a great turnpike.”

The second tack was to introduce a word into a system wider than that in which it actually belongs—that is, into a group to which it does not now belong but at some point could. Thus one could give the country lane a route number and affirm publicly that it be-

---

*Anatoly Naiman, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is a poet, essayist, and translator. His most recent books include a selection of his poems, Clouds at the End of the Age (1993), and a prose meditation, Remembering Anna Akhmatova (1991). Mark Teeter, who translated this essay from Russian, is Deputy Director of the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies at the Wilson Center.*

---

longed to the network of roads under the administration of the Ministry of Highway Transportation. Doing so, one could now begin to call our humble lane a primary national thoroughfare.

The trick in both strategies was to force the displacements of terminology right up to the limit of language's capacity to accept them, but not beyond. The sense of a word had to slip ever so gradually, a degree or two at a time, down the slope in the desired direction. The spine of language, so to speak, had to be bent until the bones were cracking and the head was bruising its own heel—but not to the point where the spinal column itself snapped. The result of this methodology was that the direction in which the language evolved, at each step along the way, was dictated arbitrarily by (and always to the advantage of) those whose power permitted whim and willfulness.

### III

I don't mean to suggest that this process was unique to the Soviet period of Russian history. In fact, the replacement of one meaning for a word with another, without apparent change in common usage, dates back quite a long time in Russia—all the way to the period when Ideas began to displace Belief in the popular consciousness. This is a nation whose very origins trace to the acceptance of the Christian word and Christ as the Word; for centuries Russia retained the sacramental concept of the word as such. And it is from this, no doubt, that Russians' notorious and boundless faith in the printed word springs as well.

Russia's first printed book, *The Apostle* (1564), was in fact a one-volume compilation of the Book of Acts and the Epistles. All books following this prototype were, in the eyes of the people, mere derivatives; they were composed, after all, of words made from the same letters used for the original book. It was left for Russia's Age of Enlightenment to secularize the vocabulary. It turned out that one could "pray," for example, to things other than God.

So while the external appearance of words remained the same, the familiar and "eternal" images just as before, the foundations of the fortress of language began to acquire new stones, stones that supported not beliefs but ideas. And ideas, in contrast to beliefs, could replace one another. This in turn gave rise to a sense of uncertainty about the judgments now being expressed; the many and various—and competing—opinions seemed to corrode the wholeness of Truth, which had been taken as perhaps ultimately unattainable but nevertheless objectively real.

This gradual destabilization of language, so vividly demonstrated in Russia, was in fact part of a larger, more universal phenomenon. For in the very modus of language lurks an unresolvable contradiction. From the moment of the appearance of language (not its body but its use) there has been at work a kind of natural impulse or energy directed toward overturning the hierarchy of beings, things, concepts, and qualities that are represented by words. Food is greater than the taste of food, and hunger is greater than food; pleasure is greater than the object of pleasure, and pain is greater than pleasure. God is greater than man. But the words used to express all these and other concepts are formally equal to one another. "Death," in Russian a noun of the feminine gender and third declension, is on equal footing with "life," a word in the same categories. So it is with "evil" and "good," both of them second-declension neuters. God said: Do not eat of this tree; if you do, you will die. The serpent said, No, you will not die. Adam and Eve ate of the tree—because "yes," as a grammatical particle, is equal to what is only another grammatical particle, "no." And they died—because in reality the word of God is the real word, while the "no" of the serpent is nothing, a lie.

The enlightened strata throughout the world have, at the appropriate moments in their respective cultural histories, recognized the onset of this fundamental shift in language. Those in Russia were particularly alert to it—especially to the gradual replacement of the

---

word of faith by the word of ideas. In Russia, however, the word in its printed form—embedded in the old traditions, so to speak—continued to cast its remarkable hypnotic spell. In 1830 no less a figure than Alexander Pushkin, who shaped the Russian language that we speak to this day, could write, “I have noticed that the most unsound judgments and ridiculous abuse gain a certain weight of credibility from the magical effect of typography. To us the printed page still seems sacred. We keep assuming: How can this be ridiculous or unjust? It is right here in print, after all!”

By the beginning of the 20th century, the institution of “opinion” had triumphed: One opinion after another, each one contradicting the previous contender, was being assembled from the very same typographical tools used once to produce only the Word. Universal literacy, brought about after the revolution of 1917, was the same kind of revolutionary development in the history of Russian civilization as the invention of the candle, which lightened the darkness after sunset, or the introduction of glass for windows, letting light indoors and making pictures of the day outside. Eyes that had never before beheld print began to read, wresting literacy from the privileged control of a particular social class of “booklords”—the clergy, the bureaucracy, and the nobles. The new readers cared little that these former lords had been the masters not of the cheap wisdom of the new brochures and the propaganda of the postrevolutionary press but rather of certain kinds of *books*. (In one of Alexander Ostrovsky’s plays an illiterate policeman remarks about an armload of just such books, “And that’s only at my house; imagine how many more there are in other places!”) To the eye that had just mastered the deciphering of letters and their assembly into words, there was no difference between something written long ago and something just written. Books were all very well, this new reading public muttered to itself, but these leaflets and newspapers—well, they didn’t read these to us before, did they now, so look at the truth here they were hiding from us!

Psychologically, then, the Russian people were primed to consume precisely the literary bread baked for them by the state authorities.

#### IV

“But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire.” So says Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew. Modern man is hardly likely to take this as literal instruction, and until recently I regarded this warning as merely another of those great maxims by whose ideal Christianity points the way to the holy life. It is hard to imagine that in reality someone who says to someone else “You’re an empty-headed dolt” should answer for this before the supreme clerical court of the land. But the history of Russia in the 20th century does nothing if not reveal the real and immediate wisdom of these words from the New Testament.

Once you call someone by something other than his own unique name, once you resort to some other term that suits you simply because a person angered you or showed himself a fool or a lunatic in your eyes—once you have done this, you have started down a path on which there is no stopping. Logically, and most frequently, this path ends in the taking of a life. After all, when you have someone who is clearly a good-for-nothing, a general nuisance, a nonentity, a nut case, a sociopath, a public enemy, a monster, you get rid of such a person only by destroying him. This string of epithets illustrates the rule: Each name on it differs only slightly from its predecessor; each puts a finer edge on the point, if you will. Each succeeding term can become—and as a rule does become—a retort used by the accused against the accuser. The terms will go back and forth a few times, and only happenstance dictates whose word will prove the

---

decisive one, the last uttered before the destruction of one speaker by the other. Over the course of 70 years of Soviet power, this chain of purposeful epithets, a short enough fuse as it was, was shortened to a minimum: from first word immediately to the last. A man trying to squeeze into a crowded bus would bark at someone blocking his way, "Aristocrat!" to which the other would almost automatically respond, "I'll kill you for that." So putting someone who has insulted his brother before the council makes all manner of sense, because the very enunciation of the word begins the unstoppable torrent of all the words in the arsenal; someone is required to hurl "fool" at someone else, which in turn finally brings on "I'm going to kill you." In appropriate circumstances there *will* be a killing, and the Evangelist's reference to eternal hellfire acquires a new and serious air.

So this chain reaction, this landslide of words, has a clear and distinct direction to it—and a sadly notorious endpoint. With the phrase "I'm going to kill you," a circle of animosity closes, after which each word in the circle becomes equal, each at once means everything and nothing. That is, in using any one of them you cannot be sure which one you may *really* be snarling out—simply "Idiot!" or, in fact, the command "Fire!" In the haze stirred up by this landslide of words, it is easier by far to call things by whatever's handy.

A simple old woman asks a student of the new era what kind of textbook it is that he is reading:

"It's *Marxist Dialectics*."

"And what, pray tell, is that?"

"How can I explain it to you, granny? Let's try this: Who will go to the bathhouse first, a clean man or a man who's dirty?"

"The dirty one, of course."

"Ah, but you're wrong there. You see, the clean man is clean precisely because he's used to going to the bathhouse, and the dirty one is dirty because he isn't."

"So, the clean one, then?"

"Wrong again. The clean man doesn't need a bath—he's clean—while the dirty man

is precisely the one who needs to wash."

"Ah, so both of them go."

"Oh no; don't you understand? The clean man is already clean, and the dirty one doesn't like to go to the bathhouse."

"So—neither one, then?"

"Why do you say that? The clean one is accustomed to washing, and the dirty one clearly needs to. So who is going to go to the bathhouse, then?"

"The devil only knows!"

"That's dialectics for you, granny."

At the moment the goal is reached and the circle closed, all restrictions governing the possible meanings of words are removed. The first reaction of the people who reached this goal was to treat their success as a great and unqualified victory. Soon, however, they discovered that the complete removal of restrictions on the use of the words which they strove so to manipulate to their own advantage had another practical result: the collapse of the language's basic standards, words whose *commonly accepted precise* meanings simply could not be done without. "The veranda was bathed in sunlight," recalled the poet Vladislav Khodasevich of his trip to the countryside shortly after Soviet power had established the concept of Time by Decree. "But because my host took off his pince-nez and his boots, then unhitched his belt and lay down, I understood that night had fallen. It was ten o'clock by Soviet Time; in reality it was six."

In the recent past, during the Brezhnev period, there came to be more than a dozen kinds of rubles, all of them officially recognized: There were ordinary rubles, accounting rubles, nonliquid rubles, yellow certificate rubles, blue certificate rubles, and on and on, all the way up to gold rubles—which in the real world simply didn't exist. And not one of those rubles was a "stump of silver of a known value," as the old dictionaries defined the word. Thus it was that the dollar—which began to be used in settling accounts, first foreign and then domestic as well—became for us the unofficial yet universally recognized standard unit of money.

---

## V

In language this kind of standard unit is the word of poetry. Poetry is, after all, the work and the art of naming things. Actually, it might be more precise to call it the work-art of naming things, as clearly no one could produce an inventory of everything in existence without being an exceptionally talented worker-cum-artist. It is a relatively undemanding business to name a bunch of shoots protruding from a single plant a "bush"; the protopoet who named it thus had at his disposal both a nice selection of words not yet in use and, no doubt, an appropriate hint from some external Muse as to which of these words to pick. Also at work in the process, finally, was the well-known element of random chance.

But to name a thorny bush which in the spring covers itself in a profusion of rose-colored petals—such a thing could not simply be done by choice or at random. For at the moment of naming that bush, so many words—essentially all words—were already in circulation. And they existed in defined relationships with one another, developed over centuries; violating these arrangements arbitrarily was out of the question. The word *boyarishnia* (nobleman's daughter) existed; but so did the word *zarya* (dawn). The ethereally untouchable *boyarishnia*, in her rosy freshness, could be likened to the dawn; the dawn, for that matter, could be likened to a young "rose-fingered" goddess. Either term, in short, could have been used with justice as the basis for naming this plant. As it happened, the Romance languages chose the affinity to the dawn, giving us the French *aubepine*, while the Slavic languages chose the flower of feminine nobility and dubbed the plant *boyarishnik*.

Yet every new day is unlike any that has come before, and in the course of the hundreds of thousands of days in which the *boyarishnik* has been called that, untold legions of unanticipated connections with other things have arisen around the word. Some of these things gave the word part of their own meaning; others took part of the word's meaning for them-

selves. In any case, the moment eventually arrived when the poet Proust had to cover several pages with words just to be able to name the thing once again, this time in more exact correspondence to what exactly it now is in the universe of man.

Or more accurately, in more exact correspondence with what it either is or seems to be. Human vision, once poisoned by the juices from the fruit of Eden's tree of knowledge, has taken on a hard-edged sharpness—but in the process has sacrificed clarity. This serves to penetrate the dim shroud between the seer and the world around him only enough to reveal the most elemental blacks and whites: Is it skin or clothing before me, a man or a woman, a smile or bared teeth, and so on. Our vision, in other words, can only *distinguish* things and people, not *see* them. Knowledge has become, first and foremost, the dissection of the world and the analysis of its constituent parts. The comprehension of the world in its entirety and the relationship of its parts to the whole has been left to the End of Time, and even then will be given, it is believed, only to those who have so agonizingly and consolingly labored to clear their vision during their time here on earth.

**I**f we humans are the image and likeness of God, then our thoughts, though as distant from His as earth from sky, nevertheless convey something, preserve something, reflect something of the image and likeness of the thought of God. In this connection it bears recalling that God himself named five things; and it follows that these, since He alone named them, are true cornerstones. The light He called day and the darkness night; the firmament became the heaven, the dry land He called earth, and the great waters were seas. The naming of the birds and beasts He gave to man, "to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name." This act of bestowing upon man a divine prerogative was an act of complete trust and concerned involvement. The creation of the dry land was inseparable



The poet Velimir Khlebnikov, drawn from memory by Vladimir Tatlin, died in 1922 at age 37, still a believer in the Revolution.

from the act of naming it earth. Having assigned to man further naming, God by that act separated the art of naming from other arts, affirming its primacy and unique power, its synchronicity with the advent of things themselves. And thus He left man with a model—of naming, of poetry, of speech.

It is further worth recalling that this happened *before* human vision became distorted, so man could name the bush with the same conviction and indisputable authority that God commanded when he called the dry land earth. Obviously, after man stopped seeing with his original clarity and began to view things differently, he lost the ability to name

things truly and as a result lost the freedom to create new names for things not yet assigned identities. The names already given things remained in force, but new names had to be manufactured from those already in currency by ferreting out hidden connections, trying untried combinations, and making novel comparisons between and among them.

This is what poetry has always been about: Its great calling has been precisely that, a Great Calling, a critical assigning of names that has gone on unceasingly since the day the human mind and tongue originally put intuition and sound together and produced the first Name for a thing.

Trying out the “feel” of specimen words, taken from under a dim glass cover of the laboratory, the poet has the power to choose any he likes and the right to insist on the choice he alone makes. Yet he also, unavoidably, must submit to the exigencies of language, whose mechanisms engage with the very first, most superficial touch of its vocabulary. The listener must be consciously convinced, or at any rate sense strongly, that the name chosen by the poet rings true. The ear of the listening public must not only remain unoffended; it must in the end find

pleasure in the poet’s proffered novelty, for the voice of the people, when all is said and done, must merge with that of the poet himself. “If the horn puts forth only an incomprehensible noise, who will prepare for battle?” the Apostle Paul soberingly asked the reveling citizens of Corinth. “And if you speak incomprehensible words, how will people know what you are saying? You will be talking into the wind.”

## VI

So the standard currency of language is the poetic word, that is, each of those words

---

which, having been forged together in a sure and certain bond, make up a sure and certain text—and receive an equally sure and certain meaning unto themselves as units of that text. Such a text is always absolutely precise, for if its creator, the poet, makes a mistake in word choice, by accident or design, the inexactitude or plain falsehood will spread like an infection to everything around it—and a text so poisoned cannot be poetry. In this regard, moreover, it bears mentioning that poetry itself is always blameless. It cannot and does not share responsibility for the miscalculations, misfires, and missteps of the poet himself, for when such things occur, the resulting agglomeration simply ceases to be poetry.

And so it is that poetry certifies words, examining and verifying each one as a sower checks each seed before planting: alive or dead, strong or weak, what strain or culture, and so on. The authenticity of a word, the sense that a word *works*—this is something literally everyone determines, those sensitive to poetry and those without a poetic bone in their bodies. The poet defines the value of a word, imprints it with a hallmark, so to speak, which no one can dispute; thereafter the word can be used as standard currency—until the clumsiness or greed of manipulation, of someone's great Plan for it, debases the word altogether.

One of the first to begin such manipulations is the reigning Power. This power has two goals, which are mutually exclusive: to use this word for internal consumption, thus preserving it as a genuine gold ruble; and, having made up various derivative copies, to put this counterfeit currency into circulation in channels which the Power controls. Take for example "freedom," a word lauded by the poets and an uncontentious concept in both its universal and individual dimensions. One attaches this word to the Castro regime, which "freed" Cuba from its predecessor, and for decades one refers to the country over and over again, as virtually an official name and repeatedly in officially approved articles and books, as the Island of Freedom.

As to the first goal, here the Power must

enter into an absurdly self-contradictory relationship with the poet. On the one hand, the Power is at least in principle interested in seeing the poet speak freely and openly, to give some stability to the order of things. On the other hand, when the poet speaks thus unhindered, everybody hears him—and what he says bears witness to the corruption of language by the Power.

A means of squaring this circle—combining a ban on poetry with a partial toleration of it—was hit upon in Russia in the halls of government. The proscription lists that issued forth from the new Soviet regime came to include the names of all the greatest poets of 20th-century Russia: to the names of Nikolai Gumilev (shot by firing squad) and *gulag* victims Osip Mandelstam and Nikolai Kliuev it is difficult not to add those of the Soviet-era suicides Sergei Esenin, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Marina Tsvetaeva. The thunderous directive of the Party Central Committee against Anna Akhmatova in 1946 and the state's persecution of Boris Pasternak in 1958 demonstrated the "constructive" line taken by the Power: Shut their mouths, but don't slit their throats.



Anna Akhmatova (1922) by Kuzma  
Sergeevich Petrov-Vodkin

---

It was precisely through this great—negative—recognition of the importance of poetry in the life of the nation that the state authorities confirmed the primary *status* of the word above all else. And this word, the provocative, influential, ever-active word of poetry would not be harnessed; so the state resolved to destroy the Russian language, thoroughly and systematically, by bending it for state purposes: strip-mining its derivatives from the greatness of its whole, turning poetry into the handmaiden of demagoguery.

**A**n out-and-out lie is normally readily apparent, and dispensing with it is relatively easy. It is more artful (if one may use that word in this context) and more productive to channel speech into a tortuous and dusty riverbed in which the streams of poetry and those of demagoguery flow together. The crime against language was not the naming of a Soviet concentration camp in Kazakhstan “Freedom,” but rather the transporting of a whole speech culture to a place where such an act of naming becomes possible.

And then came *glasnost*, which announced—and brought to life!—the freedom of speech for which so many martyrs had hoped for so many years in so many fantasies. It was freedom of speech, all right—freedom of *that* kind of speech: words long corrupted, disenfranchised, devoid of sense were given freedom. Then, and only then, did we come to fathom the true depth of the crisis in which the Russian language now finds itself.

The governmental crisis, the economic crisis, the political, moral, and cultural crises—all these must wait their turn in a country where words themselves are no longer trusted, where faith in human speech is exhausted almost entirely and almost everywhere. After the elections of December 1993,

one of the television crews went into the countryside, reaching a village a good hour and a half from Moscow:

“So,” the reporters asked the villagers, “are you pleased that Zhirinovskiy won?”

“Of course we’re pleased. We voted for him!”

“You voted for fascism, then?”

“What fascism? Fascism’s something in Germany. There’s never been fascism here.”

“And what about going to war?”

“Why would we go to war?”

“But Zhirinovskiy says that before long Russian soldiers will be washing their boots in the Indian Ocean. How are they going to do that without a war?”

“Oh no, we didn’t vote for war, we won’t go off to fight anywhere.”

“But your candidate says it quite plainly. . . .”

“Well, people say a lot of things.”

That is the next step, and presumably the final one, after Orwell’s “War is peace” and “Love is hate”: We have now moved on to “War is not war” and “Hate is not hate.”

And yet, and yet . . . it bears repeating that belief in the word is not completely exhausted, merely almost. The “neofascist” villagers are talking the same *way* that villagers just after the revolution talked. Anna Akhmatova captured that language in one of her poems:

The smart ones, they always decide.  
Our job—to stand to one side.

In language, as in man, the instinct for self-preservation is strong; thanks to that instinct, neither one nor the other marches willingly toward extinction. Man instinctively guards himself against falsehood. And language instinctively guards itself, by abstention, withdrawal, and refusal to cooperate in the debasement of its trust, from those who would wreak its demise.

—Translated from Russian by Mark Teeter

---

---

# A DOUBTER'S DICTIONARY

*John Ralston Saul, the Canadian novelist and essayist, would probably have felt more at home in the 18th century, a century he visited in Voltaire's Bastards (1992). But he would likely have steered the Enlightenment toward a somewhat different conclusion. The Age of Reason, in Saul's view, has brought too much certainty to today's world, from politicians who think themselves the panacea for the world's ills to a populace mesmerized by the authority of "experts." As he suggested in that earlier book, "we must alter our civilization from one of answers to one which feels satisfaction, not anxiety, when doubt is established." Consider these selections from Saul's forthcoming lexicon as a helpful injection of incertitude into our daily lives.*

BY JOHN RALSTON SAUL

**A BIG MAC.** The communion wafer of consumption. Not really food but the promise of food. Whatever it tastes like, whatever it is made of, once it touches lips A Big Mac is transubstantiated into the mythological hamburger.

It is, with Perrier, one of the sacred objects of the leading philosophical school of the late 20th century—public relations. Cynics often unjustly suggest that this school favors superficial appearances over content.

Had this been the case, PR would have failed. Most people, after all, can easily recognize the difference between appearances and reality.

A Big Mac, for example, is not big. It doesn't taste of much. It isn't good for you. And it seems sweet. Why does it seem sweet if, as the company says, it isn't laced with sugar?

What the philosophy of PR proposes is theoretical content (such as sex appeal, fun, individualism, sophistication, the rejection of sophistication) in the place of actual content (banal carbonated water and a mediocre hamburger). This is modern metaphysics.

Because public relations is built on illusion, it tends to eliminate choice. This is an important characteristic of contemporary capitalism. A Big Mac, like so many creations of PR, is a symbol of passive conformity. As Mac McDonald put it: "If you gave people a choice, there would be chaos."

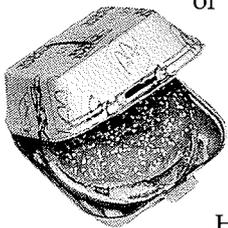
**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH.** The triumph of banality over ego.

**AIR CONDITIONING.** An efficient and widely used method for spreading disease.

One of the keys to the revolution in architecture and planning that struck Western cities after World War II was the gradual realization that systems of forced air could heat and cool large numbers of people in a cost-effective manner.

This removed one of the major restrictions on the size of buildings. If windows needn't be opened, then neither density nor height had to be limited. Once heated or cooled, the air could be endlessly recycled through buildings.

But people began to notice that working in large office towers was far more draining than in



---

buildings where windows could be opened. Then a dramatic incident focused attention. A group of old American veterans staying in a hotel to attend a convention began to die, as if struck by a plague. It was explained that Legionnaire's disease was the result not of recycled air but of defective recycling.

There were more common experiences which weren't fatal. Sometimes people merely caught a cold; increasingly it was a virulent strain of what was called the flu. But these flus could bring on vomiting, dangerous temperatures, and exhaustion. They often killed the elderly or fragile. In fact, they seemed to come in international waves that changed character each season. Every few months there would be a mutation in the type of virulency. Planes made these flu strains instantly international. And the office towers then spread them around in each city.

Modern hospitals were also being built with these airflow systems and it soon became common knowledge that hospitals were places in which you caught things. The hard-learned medical lessons of physical isolation clarified in the 19th and early 20th centuries seemed to have been forgotten.

Much of modern medicine is based upon controlling diseases by controlling movements. Now there were new and unexpected waves of viral diseases, small epidemics, in fact. One year it would be viral pneumonia. The next there would be a line of executives struck by ill-defined symptoms that exhausted them, sometimes for several years.

Air conditioning also became a clear example of the inflexibility of modern industry and of technocratic structures generally. Economics seems to be painfully linear. Every hour of work lost to a company through sickness is also money lost. It is common during the winter in places with moderate climates to find that 20 to 30 percent of office workers are home sick. There seems to be no room for applied thought that uses practical observation in order to re-evaluate earlier policies.

Corporations inquiring whether windows can be made to open in office towers are told by architects and the construction industry that this is impossible, or is possible only for a significant extra charge, plus long-term air-management costs. In spite of thousands of books about management and competitiveness, many of which talk about getting the most out of executives and other employees through leadership, training, and encouragement of individual talents, there seems to be no calculus for integrating the costs of sick leave into those of air conditioning.

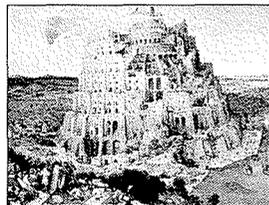
In truth, the air-conditioning system is rarely mentioned by companies when they build, buy, or rent office space. Nothing prevents them from demanding air-conditioning systems limited to small areas—less than a floor—and that constantly take in and expel air. Nothing, that is, except the inability of our system to integrate widely recognized medical costs with those of engineering.

**ANGLO-SAXONS.** A racial group composed mainly of Celts, Germans, Italians, Chinese, Ukrainians, French, and other peoples who have been conquered by or immigrated to the English-speaking world. To blame for everything.

**BABEL, TOWER OF.** Multilingualism remains the source of movement and growth in a civilization.

The ability to fill the house of reality, intellect, and imagination with different furniture is a great pleasure and a great strength. The strengths of comparison and of contradiction. The ability to draw on the originality or strengths of one to enrich another.

But for this to happen, writers and intellectuals must play their role, carrying words, images, emotions, and ideas back and forth between languages. Unilingualism is one result of the



---

acceptance by writers of professionalism. As they embrace the related idea that creativity is a sufficient justification for writing, so many become lost in the worship of a single tongue. The only status worse than this involves seeing themselves as the professional voice of a culture or a nation.

The laziest intellectuals have been produced by the four or five dominant cultures of the West. They claim that it is hard to write well if you speak more than one language, a problem that Dante, Voltaire, and Tolstoy do not seem to have encountered. More recently they have taken to complaining that a similar unilingual sectarianism has sprung up among smaller linguistic groups who feel threatened. At both levels the writers are guilty of betraying their obligation to communicate.

Today more senior bureaucrats and business executives are multilingual than writers. The corporatist elites are therefore inheriting by default the right to decide what will be in the language of our international agendas, whether they deal with politics, business, or culture.

**BAD PEOPLE.** In public life bad people, like bad money, drive out good. Only a constant effort by the citizenry to favor service over ambition and, in policy, balanced complexity over manipulative simplicity, can draw the good forward.

It is far easier to gain and hold power for those who seek only power. Self-interest is not constrained by the distracting difficulties of trying to serve the public good. Unless society has a respect for public service so strong that it amounts to an unwritten obligation, a large number among those who present themselves will be the unreasonably ambitious and the emotionally damaged seeking to work out their inferiority complexes and other problems in public.

This difficulty has always been with us. In his definition of fatherland, Voltaire complained that "he who burns with ambition to become aedile, tribune, praetor, consul, dictator, cries out that he loves his country and he loves only himself." Yeats returned to the subject in "The Second Coming": "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity." What is this lack of conviction?

Relatively well-balanced, disinterested people make an important private sacrifice by giving time to the general good. They also have trouble believing that their contribution could be important. This is not false modesty. The energy of political ambition is like a tornado that clears out those who don't have it. The particular problem of our courtier-ridden society is that its standards are those of pure power and of money.

In 1993, the departing director of the French secret service, Claude Silberzahn, laid out for his agents their principal areas of work. The first was the rise of ethnic intolerance. The second was the "extraordinary and frenetic quest for money in all its forms . . . by the political and economic elites, as if money had no smell . . . when often it is dirty, doubtful, and illicit." This atmosphere repulses most people.

More balanced citizens may have strong convictions about the public weal and public service. But they are less likely to be obsessed by the exercising of power. *The Federalist*, in arguing for the new American constitution, argued for checks and balances that would neutralize the power of factions and so draw the best citizens out into the public process. But the ultimate checks and balances are not constitutional. They are the approval and disapproval of the citizen. So long as we reward raw ambition and the skillful manipulation of power, we will continue to draw those whose interest is self-interest.

---

*John Ralston Saul has written several novels, including The Birds of Prey (1977) and The Paradise Eater (1990), as well as the critical study, Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West (1992). These selections are excerpted from the forthcoming book, The Doubter's Companion: A Dictionary of Aggressive Common Sense, to be published in October by The Free Press. Copyright © 1994 by John Ralston Saul.*

---

**CALM.** A state of emotion that is overrated except in religious retreats. It is used principally to control people who are dissatisfied with the way those in authority are doing their jobs. When individuals show annoyance, the person in power or with privileged information or expertise will make them feel they are not calm enough to deal with the situation rationally. A lack of calm suggests a lack of courage, intelligence, or professionalism.

Calm was the quality most admired by World War I generals in themselves and in their troops. Since then, calm incompetence has risen to become a quality of high professionalism. A loss of calm in a catastrophe is seen to be worse than cowardly; it indicates a lack of breeding as well as inappropriate amateurism. Outsiders are amateurs.

The cliché of calm as a virtue was captured in Rudyard Kipling's "If you can keep your head when all about you. . . ." But Kipling was far too smart to mean that people should be victims of incompetence or mulishly stubborn or blindly loyal to either their professions or their class. He was talking about deft, razor-sharp coolness; a fast, flexible mind capable of admitting error and adjusting to circumstance; a talent for reaction to crisis with white-heat action or invisible subtlety.

The captain of the *Titanic* was no doubt pleased that his male passengers in first class remained calm as they waited to drown. Had they been less controlled they might have found some small satisfaction in passing their time by throwing him overboard.

**CANADA.** 1. So complicated that nobody knows how it works, which causes Canadian social scientists to talk about it all the time, which causes foreigners to say it's boring because nothing ever happens;

2. The most decentralized country in existence, which causes Canadians to complain constantly about the power of the central government;

3. Administered under the third-oldest constitution in the world, which causes Canadians to insist that it has never worked and

must be changed;

4. The only major country in which the two leading Western cultures have managed to live peacefully together for several centuries, causing Canadians to insist they cannot live together;



5. Burdened by the laziest elite of any developed nation; people who have made their fortunes by selling off the country's resources and by working for more energetic foreigners. They are most comfortable on their knees, admiring those from larger countries who have purchased them;

6. A country where 95 percent of the land is north of the major cities, which causes its urban inhabitants to treat their hinterland as an embarrassing and backward region, while pretending that they themselves are situated hundreds of miles to the south, somewhere between New York and Florida. (See **FLORIDA**.)

#### **CONSUMPTION.**

*You can never get enough of what you don't really want.* —Eric Hoffer

The problem with markets dependent on consumption is that consumers cannot be relied upon to know what they want.

Consumers are unreliable. The producer must constantly try to outguess them. This is risky and tiring. Above all, in a stable middle-class society, people don't need or want enough goods to support an economy built upon their desire to consume. They already have a great deal. There is only so much room in their houses. Their family size shrinks as their class level rises. The middle-class mentality inevitably admires restraint and care, and seeks quality goods that last and can be repaired.

It is therefore more rational simply to decide what people should want, then tell them they need it, then sell it to them. This three-step process is called consumption.

---

**DANDRUFF.** The answer is usually vinegar. To some problems there are solutions.

What we call dandruff is often the result of a pH imbalance on the skin, which shampoo exacerbates. Wash your hair with a simple nondetergent shampoo, soap, olive oil, beer, almost anything. Rinse. Then close your eyes and pour on some vinegar. The extremely cheap but natural sort—apple cider, for example—is probably best. The smell will stimulate interesting conversations in changing-room showers and your explanation will win you friends. Wait 30 to 60 seconds. Rinse it off. The smell will go away. So will your dandruff.

All dermatologists, pharmacists, and pharmaceutical companies know this simple secret. They don't tell you because they make money by converting dandruff into a complex medical and social problem. By most professional standards this would amount to legally defined incompetence or misrepresentation.

Dandruff shampoos that promise to keep your shoulders and even your head clean are harsh detergents and may promote baldness. Advising people to use them ought to constitute malpractice.

**DEATH.** Something that has happened—although this has not been statistically verified—to everyone who has lived, with a few disputed exceptions. As neither Christ nor His Mother nor the Buddha ascended bodily in the presence of licensed medical practitioners, it could be argued that while not everyone is dead, everyone who has lived has eventually died. In a world filled with risk and speculation, death remains one of the few things that can be relied upon. It is more inevitable even than birth, since we cannot say that everyone who could have been born was born.

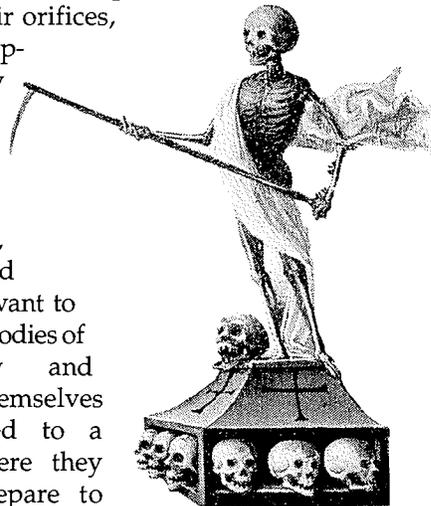
In its struggle to preserve the human body, modern medicine has achieved what we now call miracles. Still, it hasn't saved anyone from death, just postponed the ap-

pointment. These admirable delays are generally treated as the greatest accomplishments of modern civilization. Lives have been saved, we say, when we mean prolonged. That small slip of the tongue betrays the great cliché—that we do not want to die.

Our growing technical sophistication seems to have had a negative effect on the reasonableness with which we face death. Where once it was treated with a certain bluntness, as part of family life, we have fallen back on childish denial. We don't die, we pass on, we de cease, we are the late dearly beloved, people are sorry to hear about us. To hear what? There has never been an era in which death was such an unacceptable topic of conversation. Humans have never so planned their prolonged lives and taken so little account of their termination.

Among the possible explanations for this change is the decline of organized religion. However, more compelling is modern society's obsession with function. The overwhelming importance now attached to what people do is the natural product of a society that defines itself by its systems and structures. These systems have no meaning in themselves, but they function as if they were eternal. Like medicine with lives, they prolong conscious limitation out of sight.

Millions of people, either old or terminally sick, lie in hospitals with tubes up all their orifices, waiting. Apparently they are not waiting for death. If they were, they would probably want to free their bodies of machinery and have themselves transported to a place where they might prepare to



---

take leave of their family and friends and then consider their life as it was lived and then consider the approaching bridge or cliff.

Conscious thought isn't greatly admired in a civilization devoted to systems. Active consciousness is seen as a form of rebellion. And yet what possible harm could self-doubt do when the doubter is no longer strong enough to walk, let alone preach?

Neither current education nor the life that follows is designed to prepare the individual for that inner conversation. The sight of millions of self-doubting diers—*compos mentis* or not—would sow doubt among those still proceeding through their stages of specialization and promotion. Besides, care of the human body is a specialist profession to be handled as part of a continuous process. To remove individuals from that system before it has finished with their bodies would be to suggest either that that process is less important than this civilization says it is or that the medical profession is not doing its job properly.

**DOUBT.** The only human activity capable of controlling the use of power in a positive way. Doubt is central to understanding.

The elites of organized societies define leadership as knowing what to do. The citizenry is not so certain. Its response is to doubt, consider, and deliberate. That is, to question, contemplate, and weigh carefully.

Most human activities are divided into three stages. The act of doubting is the second and is the only one that requires the conscious application of our intelligence.

The first stage consists of the reality by which we are faced. This is always a confusing mixture of situations out of our control, attitudes clouded by received wisdom, and a variety of cure-all solutions. The third stage is what we call decision making. In a rational society, this is supposed to be the result of having a solution produced by the correct answer. Decision making is, in fact, an overrated business, rarely more than

mechanistic. It, in turn, is followed by a minor, passive business—the management of the decision taken. Given our obsessions with leadership and right answers and our fear of doubt, we have slipped into treating this managerial stage as if it were of primary importance.

Doubt is thus the space between reality and the application of an idea. It ought to be given over to the weighing of experience, intuition, creativity, ethics, common sense, reason, and, of course, knowledge, in balanced consideration of what is to be done. The longer this stage lasts, the more we take advantage of our intelligence.

Perhaps this is why elites move so quickly to limit doubt and consideration. Those who gain power almost automatically seek to leap from reality to solution, from abstraction to application, from ideology to methodology. This is as true of contemporary rational society as it was of those dominated by religion or monarchies. Deliberation is mocked as weakness. Consideration is rushed through, if possible eliminated. The effect is to reduce the intelligence of the citizenry to received wisdom, unconscious or secretive procedures, and mechanistic actions.

Healthy democracies embrace doubt as a leisurely pleasure, and so prosper. Sick democracies are obsessed by answers and management and so lose their reason for existence. But above all, doubt is the only activity that actively makes use of the human particularity.

**FLORIDA.** Former American state. Latin Americans are now locked in a long-term struggle with Canadians for control. The Latin Americans are driven by their need for financial and political stability, the Canadians by theirs for warmth and a place to die. The ultimate weapons of the Latin Americans are politically based para-military groups and organized crime financed by drug money. The Canadians have set up a professional hockey team.

---

**HAPPY HOUR.** A depressing comment on the rest of the day and a victory for the most limited Dionysian view of human nature.



**SEX.** Despite being a common activity, demand always runs ahead of supply. This has made sex the market-driven aspect of personal relationships, running somewhere behind property in the schema of economics.

Demand, in sex as in commerce, is an irrational mystery. The long-term contractual approach requires property arrangements such as marriage. In the speculative pay-as-you-go market, sex is often linked to meals and entertainment. In either case, it has become the most successful bull market of the last three decades. Theoretical demand stretches so far ahead of real supply that sex has become the opiate of the people.

In 1992, a French court established the per-session value of sex between a husband and wife. The man had been denied intercourse for two-and-a-half months after a doctor mistakenly daubed his penis with acid during a treatment. Damages were awarded on the basis of FF300 per missed coupling. The court was not suggesting that this was the absolute value of sex or the value of sex between that particular couple. Rather, they were ruling that, since money is our society's only regulated reward system, sex must have an equivalent monetary value and in that particular market—a small provincial town—it was worth FF300 per session. The couple might have received 10 or 20 times more had they lived in an expensive district in a major city.

**UNIVERSITY.** A place in which a civilization's knowledge is divided up into exclusive territories.

The principal occupation of the academic

community is to invent dialects sufficiently hermetic to prevent knowledge from passing between territories. By maintaining a constant flow of written material among the specialists of each group, academics are able to assert the acceptable technique of communication intended to prevent communications. This, in turn, establishes a standard that allows them to dismiss those who seek to communicate through generally accessible language as dilettantes, deformers, or popularizers.

**WEATHER FORECASTERS.** Experts who never apologize for being wrong.

The concept of expertise seems to negate that of accountability. Thus, while there is nothing remarkable about being wrong, it is astonishing to speak to the same audience the next day without either an apology or some sort of explanation. Since for the purposes of argument it must be assumed that neither speaker nor listener has received a blow to the head during the intervening hours, there is a suggestion that either the expert or the expert-worshiper cannot bear the admission of error and therefore of a flawed past and therefore of memory. Like sunshine and rain, expertise always resides in the future.

**YES.** An affirmation that results in sexual, commercial, or political consumption. Deliberate confusion of the three is central to advertising and public relations.

The underlying argument that accompanies this word is that we must not be afraid to say yes. "Say yes to life." The suggestion is that it takes courage to take a risk. In reality, yes is the traditional response of the passive party to the lover or the salesman or the person with power. If courage is to be treated as a serious factor, then it must take the form either of a no or of a negotiation for better terms. Modern politics at its most cynical sells the courage to say yes.

---

---

# THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

## Dueling over Gun Control

A Survey of Recent Articles

After years of struggle between advocates and opponents of gun control, the Brady bill was signed into law by President Bill Clinton last December. Proponents, such as the editors of the *New Yorker* (Dec. 13, 1993), hailed the measure as a first national step toward eliminating the deadly menace of unregulated firearms. Opponents, such as Jacob Sullum, managing editor of *Reason*, writing in *National Review* (Feb. 7, 1994), insisted that it "won't take a bite out of crime, but it will gnaw away at the right to keep and bear arms." Judging by recent articles on the subject, there may be a third possibility: that the national debate over gun control, long marked by exaggerated claims and bumper sticker reasoning, may move into a new and more thoughtful stage, one in which gun regulation of some kind can be seen as worthwhile, but not as a panacea for violent crime.

The Brady legislation provides that a person wishing to buy a handgun must wait five days while his background is checked to determine if he is a convicted felon, has been found mentally incompetent, or is otherwise ineligible. Even proponents admitted that the law's impact would be very limited. (And the law now faces court challenges in several states; in Montana, a federal judge suspended its key background-check section on states' rights grounds.) The Brady law would not stop felons and others denied handguns from obtaining them illegally, or from moving up to rifles or shotguns, whose purchase generally does not require any waiting period or background check. Nor, David B. Kopel, of the Independence Institute, in Golden, Colorado, observes in *Policy Review* (Winter 1993), would the Brady law have prevented John W. Hinckley, Jr., from buying a handgun. Hinckley, who bought two handguns five months before he shot President Ronald Reagan and press secretary James Brady in 1981, was not a convicted felon and had no record of mental illness.

The United States already has some experience with gun control. Before enactment of the Brady

law, 18 states had laws at least as stringent on the books. "It is undeniable that gun-control laws work—to an extent," Daniel D. Polsby, a professor of law at Northwestern University, notes in the *Atlantic* (March 1994). During the past two years, California's background-check law has prevented some 12,000 people with criminal records or a histories of mental illness or drug abuse from buying handguns in the state. "Surely some of these people simply turned to an illegal market, but just as surely not all of them did," Polsby notes.

With the Brady bill's passage, Josh Sugarmann, executive director of the Violence Policy Center, declares in *Mother Jones* (Jan.-Feb. 1994), those who favor gun control "find themselves at a crossroads. We can continue to push legislation of dubious effectiveness. Or we can acknowledge that gun violence is a public-health crisis fueled by an inherently dangerous consumer product. To end the crisis, we have to regulate—or, in the case of handguns and assault weapons, completely ban—the product."

In 1991, a total of 38,317 Americans died from gunshots, according to the Centers for Disease Control's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT	127
FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE	130
ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS	133
SOCIETY	135
PRESS & MEDIA	138
RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY	139
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT	142
ARTS & LETTERS	145
OTHER NATIONS	148

---

(Jan. 28, 1994). In seven states (California, Louisiana, Maryland, Nevada, New York, Texas, and Virginia) and the District of Columbia, the number of firearms-related deaths equaled or exceeded motor vehicle-related deaths. Opinion surveys indicate that most Americans favor stricter gun-control laws—though (outside the East) not prohibition. “Half the households in America are armed,” writes Ann Japenga in *Health* (April 1994). And lately, it seems, many women are taking up arms: Sales of Smith & Wesson’s LadySmith revolver doubled in 1992. A 1993 poll by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* found that one-third of unmarried women in the South have a gun at home.

Having firearms in the home is a terrible mistake, Arthur L. Kellerman, an emergency room physician and professor at Emory University in Atlanta, believes. In the *New England Journal of Medicine* (Oct. 7, 1993), he and his colleagues conclude from a study of 388 murder victims that the risk of homicide is much greater in homes where guns are present. However, Daniel Polsby points out in the *Atlantic*, the flaw in the study is that such people may arm themselves in the first place because they are already at greater risk. Indeed, Polsby and others say, many studies overlook the varied aspects of the deterrent function of handguns. In a 1986 study, for example, Kellerman and his colleagues concluded that a gun in the home is 43 times more likely to be involved in the death of a household member (through suicide, homicide, or accident) than it is to slay an attacker. But Florida State University criminologist Gary Kleck, author of *Point Blank: Guns and Violence in America* (1991), estimates that at least one million civilians use guns in self-defense every year. They fire in only one-fourth of the cases, and when they do, they kill their attackers less than once every 100 times. In the overwhelming majority of cases, he tells Ann Japenga, a household firearm is simply used to scare off an intruder.

If firearms increase violence and crime, Daniel Polsby adds, then throughout the 1980s, when the national stock of privately owned handguns was burgeoning by more than one million a year, the crime rate should have gone up—but it did not. Instead, the number of victims of violent crimes fell from 35.3 per 1,000 persons in 1981 to 29.1 in 1989. Similarly, “the rates of violence and crime in Swit-

zerland, New Zealand, and Israel [should not] be as low as they are, since the number of firearms per civilian household is comparable to that in the United States. Conversely, gun-controlled Mexico and South Africa should be islands of peace instead of having murder rates more than twice as high as those here.”

Even the countries that do fit the gun-control argument may do so only superficially. “Britain had very low rates of crimes involving guns” even before it had strict firearms regulation, Polsby notes. Japan also has very strict gun control and a low crime rate. But Japan’s *nongun* robbery rate is also much lower than the American rate, observes David Kopel in *Asian Pacific Law Review* (Winter 1993), “an indication that something more significant than gun policy is involved.”

**T**he nation that is probably more like the United States than any other—Canada—usually gets little attention in American gun-control debates. Canada’s firearms controls are stricter than those in the United States overall but more lenient than some American state laws, Kopel notes in *Temple International and Comparative Law Journal* (vol. 5, no. 1, 1991). Rifles are almost as common, on a per capita basis, as they are in the United States. Handguns are “restricted weapons,” but there are plenty of illegal ones around.

While the 1977 Canadian law, according to Kopel, “appears to have had little or no effect on the overall rates of murder, suicide, gun accidents, or robbery,” it still serves, he says, in the eyes of most Canadians as a symbol of their cherished values of orderliness and nonviolence: “Gun control, the exaltation of the police, deference to authority, and rejection of violence, are all threads in the tapestry of Canadian culture.” The same could hardly be said of American culture.

Nevertheless, the Brady law—besides whatever modest benefits it provides in the way of keeping handguns out of the hands of those who should not have them—also may serve as a symbol, representing not so much a first step in gun regulation as a national desire to bring violent crime under control. Accomplishing that end, however, will certainly take more than gun control.

## *The Inimitable Presidency*

"FDR: The Illusive Standard" by Patrick J. Maney, in *Prologue* (Spring 1994), National Archives, Washington, D.C. 20408.

Should President Bill Clinton and his top aides have spent so much time and effort devising a detailed health-care reform bill? The legendary example of Franklin D. Roosevelt, brilliant mastermind of all that famous New Deal legislation, suggests that Clinton, an FDR admirer, was doing the right thing. But the Roosevelt of legend, warns Maney, a Tulane University historian, is not the same as the Roosevelt who occupied the White House. Awed by his inspiring leadership of the nation through economic depression and war, we have exaggerated his legislative accomplishments, overlooked his misdeeds, and forgotten the extent to which he was the servant rather than the master of events.

Much of the New Deal, Maney points out, was not FDR's work. His role as a "legislative mastermind," for example, has been greatly exaggerated. "Of the 15 major pieces of legislation passed during the first Hundred Days [in 1933], only two originated with him": the Economy Act, which gave him the power to slash veterans' pensions and government workers' salaries, and the Civilian Conservation Corps. Congress took the "leading role" in the New Deal, Maney contends, "although it never received the star billing that it deserved."

Roosevelt himself would have been surprised at his posthumous reputation for legislative wizardry, Maney writes, "for he believed that moral leadership and public education, not law making, were the primary functions of the president." During both the first Hundred Days and the second, in 1935, he "issued a dramatic call to action and then allowed Congress to respond to the challenge." He was hailed as a champion of the American worker after the landmark 1935 National Labor Relations Act became law, but, as his labor secretary Frances Perkins later recalled, he never "lifted a finger" to help advance the measure.

Some of the things Roosevelt did do, Maney argues, are not worthy of emulation. "He and his aides smeared the so-called isolationists, who, before Pearl Harbor, opposed American entry into World War II. Roosevelt misrepresented their views, impugned their patriotism, and accused them of being Nazi sympathizers." He also authorized the FBI to tap their phones and open their mail. Finally, Maney argues, much of the Roosevelt record is irrelevant today. Race relations is an example. "For his time, and with help from Eleanor, Roosevelt compiled a respectable record on racial matters," Maney notes. But it offers no guidance today.

Reading into Roosevelt "things that may not have existed" is nothing new, Maney observes. Ever since he was first elected president, people "have projected onto him their hopes and fears, imposing a mastery of events that he did not have, indeed which no person could have had." FDR's great asset may have been his ability to seem so godlike to so many Americans—not something one can achieve through emulation.

## *A Kind Word For Congress*

"America's First Hundred Days" by James Sterling Young, in *Miller Center Journal* (Spring 1994), 2201 Old Ivy Road, P.O. Box 5106, Charlottesville, Va. 22901.

Poor Congress. It is branded cumbersome, meddling, incompetent, and everything in between. As if to compensate, critics often say that it is not the individuals who are at fault but the institution. Legislative government, they say, is a contradiction in terms. This is an American chestnut, one heard two centuries ago. During the constitutional debates of 1787–89, Alexander Hamilton and other advocates of an independent executive made much of the failings of legislative government. No legislative body, they said, could act with the energy, speed, efficiency, consistency, secrecy, and responsibility that the survival and well-being of the nation require.

---

But in making that argument, observes Young, a political scientist at the University of Virginia, Hamilton and the other critics ignored the legislature's great successes "under the severest performance test possible—an unprecedented war of liberation by a hastily assembled league of colony/states against the world's most powerful nation." Soon after the British attacked a colonial arms cache at Concord, Massachusetts, in April 1775, delegates from the 13 colonies assembled in Philadelphia. "In short order," Young writes, "they organized themselves as a body, adopted rules of secrecy, digested reports of the battle and of British military activities elsewhere, and adjourned into a 'committee of the whole on the state of America' to hammer out a policy. Decidedly different views were aired, competing priorities were argued, and contending proposals were debated." And consensus on a plan of action was reached.

A final petition for redress was sent to the king. In anticipation of rejection, a policy of armed resistance to British use of military force was adopted—and, Young says, "pursued with Hamiltonian energy, secrecy, and dispatch." A committee chaired by George Washington came up with a scheme to supply the colonies with arms and ammunition. Another committee, chaired by Benjamin Franklin, oversaw the creation of a national postal service and of the Committee of Secret Correspondence, which ran an intelligence network. In June, Congress organized a volunteer army and named Washington to lead it. In July, after the Battle of Bunker Hill, Congress issued its unforgettable call to American arms.

During those early days of crisis, Congress also adopted a policy of peaceful coexistence with Indians, undertook to prevent British-sponsored terrorism, and mounted a campaign to drum up public support for the American cause.

If a president had said and done what Congress did in America's first hundred days—not to mention throughout the Revolution—Young observes, he "would surely be ranked high on the short list of great presidents." Perhaps, he concludes, legislative government deserves a second look.

## Legislative Oversights

"A House Divided" by David Segal, in *The Washington Monthly* (Jan.-Feb. 1994), 1611 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Congress, the supposed watchdog of the federal government, has acted more like the proverbial pussycat in recent years, asserts Segal, an editor at the *Washington Monthly*. Not only has it failed to stave off such catastrophes as the savings and loan disaster of the 1980s but it has missed a depressing variety of smaller-scale governmental outrages. Why, to cite one minor example, is there someone in government called the "Federal Inspector of the Alaskan Natural Gas Pipeline," earning \$115,300 a year, "even though no such pipeline exists"?

Congress has plenty of resources to play its watchdog role, Segal notes. The House and Senate have an elaborate network of 247 committees and subcommittees run by a staff of some 3,400 people. Over the past 16 years, the House committees alone held a total of 54,034 hearings—about 20 each day the chamber was in session. "There's also a kennel of accountants and investigators in the General Accounting Office which can be sicked on any subject, not to mention inspectors general in the agencies themselves whose findings can be used to pursue inquiries," Segal observes.

But Congress seldom uses its investigative resources effectively, he says. Only two committees—Government Operations in the House and Government Affairs in the Senate—are exclusively devoted to oversight, and they are the least popular ones among members of the two bodies. Other committees have oversight subcommittees, Segal notes, "but their work has been extremely uneven. Today, only a few legislators—most notably John Dingell (D.-Mich.) of the House Oversight and Investigations subcommittee of Energy and Commerce—have earned reputations as strong and thorough overseers. It's far easier, and more comfortable, to make a name as a participant in deals rather than a spoiler of them."

Of course, many legislators are reluctant to ask tough questions about federal dollars headed to their home districts or states. More often, as

## Populist Poppycock

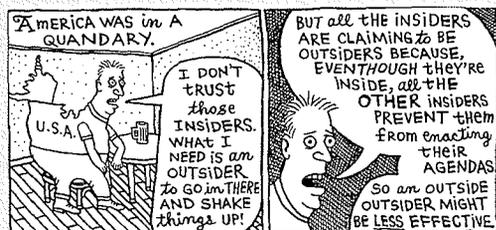
Recent populist exhortations to rescue government from the special interests and give it back to the people have a fatal flaw, Jonathan Rauch, author of *Demosclerosis* (1994), observes in the *New Republic* (June 6, 1994).

In America today, the special interests and "the people" have become objectively indistinguishable. Groups are us. As a result, the populist impulse to blame special interests, big corporations, and political careerists

for our problems—once a tonic—has become Americans' leading political narcotic. Worse, it actually abets the lobbying it so righteously denounces.

Begin with one of the best known yet most underappreciated facts of our time: Over the past three or four decades we have busily organized ourselves into interest groups—lobbies, loosely speaking—at an astonishing rate. Interest groups were still fairly sparse in America until about the time of World War II. Then they started proliferating, and in the 1960s the pace of organizing picked up dramatically.

Consider, for instance, the number of groups listed in Gale Research's *Encyclopedia of Associa-*



tions. The listings have grown from fewer than 5,000 in 1956 to well over 20,000 today. They represent, of course, only a small fraction of America's universe of interest groups. . . .

The concept of the special interest is not based on nothing. It is, rather, out of date, an increasingly empty relic of the time of machine politics and political bosses, when special interests were, quite literally, special. Simply because of who they were, they enjoyed access that was available to no one else. But the process of everyone's organizing into more and more groups can go only so far before the very idea of a special interest loses any clear meaning. At some point one must throw up one's hands and concede that the hoary dichotomy between special interests and "us" has become merely rhetoric.

it happens, the dollars are going to someone else's home base—but there is a strong urge to go along and get along. Legislators, even the best of them, face a basic conflict, Segal observes. Making new laws requires them to round up all the support they can from their colleagues—and checking up on how well existing laws are being implemented is one way to lose friends fast.

The news media do little to encourage rigorous congressional oversight, Segal notes. "What creates press interest are the sensational, scam du jour hearings"—not the unglamorous digging into the nuts and bolts of government programs.

Legislators who are willing to ask hard questions are often stymied by the sheer size

of their legislative domains. As chair of the Senate's Labor and Human Resources Committee, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), for example, is supposed to keep an eye on the Department of Health and Human Services, an agency with 127,000 employees, an annual budget of \$641 billion, and 250 different national health and welfare programs. "Kennedy may be equal to the task," Segal writes, "but it's hard to believe he could be without slighting the roughly 220 hearings held last year by the nine other committees on which he sits."

Segal doubts that the fundamental problem the legislators have is going to go away. Law-making and oversight are just "two radically different, virtually contradictory" things.

### *The New Age Of Warlords*

"The New Warrior Class" by Ralph Peters, in *Parameters* (Summer 1994), U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pa. 17013-5050.

After decades of Cold War preparations, the U.S. Army today is finely tuned for battle with Soviet-style armies. But the coming years are likely to bring a very different enemy, warns Peters, an army major assigned to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence. Instead of disciplined soldiers, he says, American troops will face brutal "'warriors'—erratic primitives of shifting allegiance, habituated to violence, with no stake in civil order."

A "new warrior class," already numbering in the millions, is emerging in many parts of the world, Peters believes. "We have entered an age in which entire nations are subject to dispossession, starvation, rape, and murder on a scale approaching genocide—not at the hands of a conquering foreign power but under the guns of their neighbors. Paramilitary warriors—thugs whose talent for violence blossoms in civil war—defy legitimate governments and increasingly end up leading governments they have overturned. This is a new age of warlords, from Somalia to Myanmar/Burma, from Afghanistan to Yugoslavia." Lately, the warriors have been joined by ex-Soviet military men, who now serve as mercenaries or volunteers in the former Yu-

---

### *A Hobbesian World*

In much of the globe, Michael Mandelbaum, a professor of foreign policy at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, writes in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1994), life is becoming "nastier, more brutish, and shorter than [it was] before the Europeans arrived."

*The world is ready for a government; or rather, it is ready for more international governance than ever before. But the [United Nations] is not a world government and it will not become one. The instruments of order are sovereign states. But there is no effective method of extracting resources from states to pay for governance. Further, the most powerful state, the United States, has shown little interest in making the large-scale contributions necessary to fulfill the international mandate arising from the end of the Cold War.*

*Thus, for large parts of the world beyond the secure, prosperous triad of Western Europe, North America, and Japan, one of the great developments of the modern era is being reversed. The revolution in the technology of transportation and warfare over the past several centuries led to the expansion of European power throughout the world. Although in historical perspective that expansion was not in all ways a benign development, it did bring order to much of the world. Tribes, nations, and sects that had fought one another with primitive weapons were forced to submit to the supe-*

*rior firepower of alien conquerors and to accept their institutions.*

*Now, however, the Europeans and their North American offspring have gone home and are disinclined to return. The response of the West to the ensuing disorder has not been to intervene; instead, it has tried to wall itself off from the misery that disorder brings. For many parts of the world where Europeans once governed it will be as if they had never come, with two exceptions: The traditional indigenous sources of order have long since been weakened if not destroyed, and the arms available are more numerous and deadlier than ever before. Saddam Hussein, Mohammed Farah Aidid, and Slobodan Milošević, the political descendants of premodern chieftains, have equipment such as rocket-propelled grenades, long-range artillery, and jet aircraft, which can do far more damage than anything in the possession of their equally brutal predecessors. Thus, in much of the world beyond the prosperous industrial triad, continued suffering and carnage of the kind northern Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia have experienced is a very real prospect.*



Are General Aidid's ragtag warriors a harbinger of enemies to come?

goslavia and in conflicts throughout the former Soviet Union.

The United States has already been tripped up by a late-20th-century warlord in Somalia, where its attempt to bring General Mohammed Farah Aidid to heel was an embarrassing failure. But the United Nations has experienced even more trouble in the former Yugoslavia, Peters maintains: "Imagining they can negotiate with governments to control warrior excesses, the United Nations and other well-intentioned organizations plead with the men-in-suits in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo to come to terms with one another. But the war in Bosnia and adjacent regions already has degenerated to a point where many local commanders obey only orders which flatter them." If a peace treaty ever is signed, the only way it could be made to work would be "for those forces loyal to the central authorities to hunt down, disarm, and if necessary kill their former comrades-in-arms who refuse to comply with the peace terms. Even then, 'freedom fighters,' bandits, and terrorists will haunt the mountain passes and the urban alleys for years to come."

Warfare with warriors, Peters says, "is a zero-sum game. And it takes guts to play." The United States, he urges, should begin amassing intelligence on specific warrior chieftains for future use, and the army should give more time to training its officers and soldiers to deal with warrior threats.

Meanwhile, he says, some basic questions must be answered: "Do we have the strength of will, as a military and as a nation, to defeat an

enemy who has nothing to lose? When we face warriors, we will often face men who have acquired a taste for killing, who do not behave rationally according to our definition of rationality, who are capable of atrocities that challenge the descriptive powers of language, and who will sacrifice their own kind in order to survive. . . . Are we able to engage in and sustain the level of sheer violence it can take to eradicate this kind of threat?"

## Out of Control?

"Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations" by Richard H. Kohn, in *The National Interest* (Spring 1994), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

"The U.S. military is now more alienated from its civilian leadership than at any [other] time in American history," and civilian control over the military is becoming dangerously frayed. So contends Kohn, who was chief of Air Force history from 1981 to '91 and now teaches at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The situation today, he observes, is very different from what it was during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, when civilian leaders aggressively asserted control over the military. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara imposed restrictive rules on military operations in South Vietnam, and President Lyndon B. Johnson personally selected bombing targets in North Vietnam. Aiming to keep the war limited, they instead were keeping it from being won, in the eyes of many officers. After McNamara, Kohn notes, the military and its political allies reacted powerfully against what they regarded as civilian meddling in military affairs.

Other developments widened the civilian-military breach. As "national security became a matter of intense partisanship," beginning in the late 1960s, the professional military "became politicized, abandoning its century-and-a-half tradition of non-partisanship," Kohn writes. "It

---

began thinking, voting, and even espousing Republicanism with a capital R." Under President Richard M. Nixon and later GOP administrations, moreover, the military was given greater authority in setting military policy within the Pentagon and in making decisions in the field. And with the end of the draft, the officer corps became less ideologically diverse. The post-Vietnam military as a whole became "increasingly conscious of itself as a separate entity in American society."

The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 greatly strengthened the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, making him the principal military adviser to the president and secretary of defense. Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., who served as chairman from 1985 to '89, "used his position to influence foreign policy" on such matters as whether to escort Kuwaiti ships through the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq war. (He was in favor.)

Crowe's successor, General Colin L. Powell, "was much bolder," Kohn maintains. Even before assuming the chairmanship in the fall of 1989, Powell concluded that the Cold War was over and that U.S. strategy and force structure needed to be overhauled. "Without any authorization from superiors," he developed a plan to do that, and—in spite of Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney's initial disagreement with his assumptions about the Soviet threat—sold his plan to the White House and Congress. As chairman (until retiring last year), Powell also "took it upon himself to be the arbiter of American military intervention overseas [in] the most explicit intrusion into policy since MacArthur's conflict with Truman." For example, he firmly opposed intervention in Bosnia. After Bill Clinton's election, Powell "virtually defied" his move to allow avowed homosexuals to serve in the armed forces.

Secretary of Defense William Perry, Kohn concludes, must "undertake a concerted campaign to restore civilian control," one that goes beyond just asserting his authority on policy matters. "Proper civil-military relations will have to be taught to the officer corps at every level," Kohn believes, if the dangerous trend he sees is to be reversed.

## Wilsonian Illusions

"What Is Wilsonianism?" by David Fromkin, in *World Policy Journal* (Spring 1994), World Policy Institute, New School for Social Research, 65 Fifth Ave., Ste. 413, New York, N.Y. 10003.

Woodrow Wilson is unique among 20th-century American presidents in having spawned an "ism"—and Wilsonianism is far more than just a memory from decades long past. President George Bush's quest for a New World Order, for example, was certainly Wilsonian in character. But what exactly is this Wilsonianism that continues to haunt America? asks Fromkin, author of *A Peace to End All Peace* (1989).

It cannot be the body of governing principles that guided Wilson in his decisions, Fromkin argues, for there was no such thing. Although biographer Arthur S. Link contends that the president reasoned deductively from a core of general principles to arrive at policies, Wilson's positions were not consistent, Fromkin points out. "He initially was opposed to U.S. involvement in world affairs, to preparedness, to American entry into the Great War, and to participation in an international league. Later he advocated all of these." Wilson did not act from principle, in Fromkin's view, but rather appealed to principle "to justify what he wanted to do for personal reasons—or else felt compelled to do politically, even if against his own inclinations or beliefs." When he intervened in Mexico (where civil war threatened U.S. business interests) to depose Mexican dictator Victoriano Huerta in 1914, for example, he "proclaimed standards for recognizing Huerta's government that, if applied uniformly, would have required the United States to withdraw recognition from almost all the world's governments."

Even if one limits the definition of Wilsonianism to ideas Wilson expressed in his role as "peacemaker to a war-torn world" toward the end of World War I, and takes his "points, principles, ends, and particulars at face value, they still fall short of outlining a doctrine," Fromkin says. In 1918, Wilson "essentially proposed a wholly new approach to the framing of a postwar settlement: He proposed that the great powers put aside their own needs and interests and instead resolve all questions on their intrin-

---

---

sic merits." Justice supposedly was the key to a lasting peace. Wilson failed to see that "it is not enough to say 'do justice,' when there is no "objective code or standard" that is universally accepted.

What Wilsonianism really amounts to, after all, Fromkin concludes, is "the view that perpetual peace can be achieved through international cooperation, if it is institutionalized, even though the nations of the world remain independent." Warfare is not just to be reduced or mitigated—it is to be abolished.

During the 1930s, Fromkin argues, "Wilsonianism was put to the practical test. . . . There were frequent and eloquent appeals to world public opinion by leaders of all the democracies. FDR and oth-

ers addressed reasoned pleas to the dictators themselves. The democracies practiced disarmament and convened world disarmament conferences. The League of Nations declared an embargo on supplies to fascist Italy in the [1935] Abyssinian matter. Roosevelt organized an embargo on oil supplies to militarist, aggressive Japan. They exhausted this full bag of Wilsonian tricks, and none of them worked."

Wilsonianism's "intellectual bankruptcy" was apparent then, Fromkin writes, and realist thinkers such as Hans Morgenthau spelled out clearly what was wrong with it. Even so, as Bush's New World Order attests, Wilsonianism today remains quite influential.

---

---

## ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

---

### *Payment Due*

"Generational Accounting: A Meaningful Way to Evaluate Fiscal Policy" by Alan J. Auerbach, Jagadeesh Gokhale, and Laurence J. Kotlikoff, in *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Winter 1994), American Economic Assoc., 2014 Broadway, Ste. 305, Nashville, Tenn. 37203-2418.

Ross Perot and many others who bemoan the mounting national debt and demand deficit cuts claim that today's Americans are unfairly shifting the fiscal burden to tomorrow's. The situation is even worse than these critics realize, according to economists Auerbach, of the University of Pennsylvania, Gokhale, of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, and Kotlikoff, of Boston University.

They favor a new "generational accounting" method that better reflects the future costs of today's spending. The conventional deficit figure, they point out, is "an arbitrary number whose value depends on how the government chooses to label its receipts and payments." In fact, the Congressional Budget Office routinely offers an assortment of deficit estimates, including ones for the very large "official" deficit (\$290 billion in 1992), the extra-large "on-budget" deficit (\$340 billion), which excludes the big Social Security surplus, and, for the Pollyannas in the

populace, the merely large "standardized employment" deficit (\$201 billion). None is the "correct" deficit, and none measures long-term effects of deficit spending.

Enter "generational accounting," a concept that Auerbach and his colleagues developed and which the federal government has used in appendices to the last two federal budget documents: "Generational accounts indicate, in present value, what the typical member of each generation can expect to pay, now and in the future, in net taxes." Net taxes are all taxes (federal, state, and local) that a generation pays over its lifetime minus all the governmental transfer payments that it receives (such as Social Security and Aid to Families with Dependent Children). Using a variety of demographic and economic projections, generational accounting makes it possible to estimate what the unborn will owe in their lifetimes.

The authors calculate that while men who were 40 years old in 1991 will pay \$180,100 in net taxes in the years remaining to them, and 65-year-olds will get a net *benefit* of \$74,000, males born in 1991 will pay net taxes of \$78,900. Given current policy, Auerbach and his colleagues say, the "typical" future generation of males born after 1991 will have to pay \$166,500 (in 1991 dollars)—an amount about 111 percent greater than



Anxiety about the future has already created inter-generational friction between baby boomers and others.

the newborns' net payout. (The forecast for women is depressingly similar.) This represents a "significant generational imbalance in U.S. fiscal policy," the economists say. To correct it, they warn, "a much more significant sacrifice by current generations than politicians seem to realize" will be needed.

## MITI Misfires

"Growth, Economies of Scale, and Targeting in Japan (1955–1990)" by Richard Beason and David E. Weinstein, Harvard Institute of Economic Research Discussion Paper #1644 (Oct. 22, 1993), Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Economists and others impressed by postwar Japanese industrial policy claim that the famed Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) shrewdly identified the semiconductor, automobile, and other industries as the economic stars of tomorrow and gave them the assistance they needed to flourish. What is usually ignored is the fact that virtually all industries received some government aid. To figure out how successful Japan's industrial "targeting" really was, economists Beason, of the University of Alberta, and Weinstein, of Harvard University, look at the assistance that was given only to selected industries. Analyzing the distribution of the various governmental goodies—corporate tax breaks, subsidies, loans, and trade protection—they conclude that MITI for the most part gave them to the "wrong" industries.

Mining and textiles, which had the lowest growth rates during the 1955–90 period of 13 industries studied, were among the big winners of special government assistance, the economists report. By contrast, the three fastest-growing industries—electrical machinery, general machinery, and transportation equipment—got benefits that were, for the most part, lower than average. "Despite all that is written about the targeting of Japan's semiconductor industry," the authors say, "electrical machinery overall received so little in benefits" that it appears that industrial policy must have taken more money out of the industry in higher taxes than it put back into it in benefits.

Whatever the chosen targets, the economists found scant evidence that Japanese industrial policy improved the affected industries' productivity (and therefore competitiveness).

To the extent that industrial policy spurred growth and investment, Beason and Weinstein write, it was in Japan's low-growth and declining industries—"mistargeting," they speculate, that may have been caused by the political pull of these industries.

## The Antidumping Boomerang

"U.S. Trade Laws Harm U.S. Industries" by James Bovard, in *Regulation* (Vol. 16, No. 4), Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

Free trade advocates are often accused of putting the interests of American consumers ahead of the welfare of U.S. industries and workers. Bovard, a Cato Institute policy analyst, argues that all suffer from protectionist American trade policies.

Antidumping laws are a case in point. Although the laws are intended to protect U.S. industries, Bovard maintains that they increasingly prevent U.S. firms from getting foreign supplies and machinery that they need, and thus hurt U.S. competitiveness. In 1991, for example, the U.S. Department of Commerce ruled that Japanese advanced flat panel displays—the screens used in laptop and notebook comput-

---

ers—were being dumped in the United States. But there are no viable U.S. manufacturers of flat panels, Bovard says, and IBM, Apple Computer, and Compaq begged the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) not to impose prohibitive duties. The ITC did so anyway, “largely because Japanese imports prevented would-be U.S. flat panel producers from raising the capital to begin manufacturing.” The ruling prompted an exodus of production overseas. “We were going to produce our new Powerbook laptop computer in Colorado—but instead we are producing them in Cork, Ireland,” said Jim Berger of Apple Computer. “That is entirely because of the flat panel dumping duty.” Thousands of jobs may be lost as a result of the decision, Bovard claims.

The problem goes beyond the high-tech realm, he notes. In 1990, the ITC imposed dump-

ing duties on Japanese mechanical transfer presses used to mass-produce certain auto parts. Only two U.S. companies make such presses. According to John Scicluna of Ford Motor Company, the Japanese presses work twice as fast as the American ones and turn out higher-quality parts.

Because dumping is exceedingly hard to define, Bovard argues, antidumping laws are subject to manipulation. Foreign companies that sell products in the United States for less than they do at home or at prices less than the cost of production and an eight percent profit are considered to be “dumping” under U.S. trade laws. But determining such things as the true cost of production is difficult. In effect, Bovard asserts, the laws give the Department of Commerce the power to place de facto price controls on imports worth almost \$500 billion a year.

---

## SOCIETY

---

### Civilizing Suburbia

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

**T**he 1990 census made it official: The United States has become a suburban nation. Nearly half of all Americans live in suburbs, only about one-third in cities. Yet some thinkers argue that terms such as *bedroom community* and *suburb* are no longer adequate to describe places that have been transformed from bucolic retreats into centers of commerce and industry. For all intents and purposes, many suburbs have become cities. Robert Fishman, a historian at Rutgers University and author of *Bourgeois Utopias* (1987), calls these areas “new cities” or “techno-suburbs,” while *Washington Post* reporter Joel Garreau has coined the term “edge city” (also the title of his 1991 book on the subject). As Fishman writes (*WQ*, Winter 1990), “The peripheries have replaced the urban cores as the heartlands of our civilization. . . . They have become a new kind of city.”

The defenders of the older urban faith have not been idle, of course, and indeed still domi-

nate the intellectual debate. The prevailing view, articulated by Columbia University’s Saskia Sassen in *The Global City* (1991) and recently in a Woodrow Wilson Center paper, “Urban Impacts of Economic Globalization” (April 1994), is that big cities with strong financial and service sectors still dominate the world economy. Directly attacking the “new city” camp in *American Quarterly* (March 1994), William Sharpe of Barnard College and Leonard Wallock of Hunter College insist that the suburbs of old are all too alive and all too well. Fishman and company are wrong to stress the merely “functional” (i.e. economic) characteristics of the so-called new cities, they contend, because what really matters is that they still lack true urban “diversity, cosmopolitanism, political culture, and public life.” For example, even though the black suburban population grew rapidly during the 1970s, studies show that old patterns of racial and class segregation persist in the suburbs.

Perhaps the most conclusive evidence that

little has changed, in Sharpe and Wallock's view, is the continuing domination of American popular culture by what they see as a "suburban ideology" of exclusion and "female subordination." On TV, for example, outsiders such as the young black star of *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* are made "objects of humor and suspicion." In films such as *Fatal Attraction* (1987) and *Presumed Innocent* (1990), more or less traditional housewives do battle with career women who threaten to steal their husbands and their way of life.

Garreau and Fishman agree that what might be called the urbanity deficit is the central challenge facing the new cities. Replying to Sharpe and Wallock in the same issue of *American Quarterly*, however, Fishman tartly comments that they "cling to a vision of a simpler world" in which a knee-jerk hatred of all things suburban was a sure sign of intellectual sophistication. Using outdated studies, he says, they underestimate the degree of racial integration outside the central cities, even as they ignore the growing divisions within them. He chides the two for confusing what is on TV with what is real, and expresses perplexity at their insistence on drawing a sharp distinction between "merely" functional urbanity and social and cultural urbanity. Places such as Silicon Valley have "displaced the urban factory zones as the places where the most advanced work of America gets done," he writes, and one form of innovation follows the other. Far from reinforcing "patriarchal familism," for example, the new cities have made it easier for married women to work outside the home and have "tended to equalize gender roles."

Writing in *American Demographics* (Feb. 1994),

Garreau argues that a "fourth wave" of change "is bringing edge cities the one thing they lack—civilization." His data base on 37 traditional downtowns and 190 edge cities—locales with heavy concentrations of homes, jobs, and shopping—shows, among other things, that seven of the top 10 spots for nightlife in America are edge cities. (The hottest spot in America, by this measure, is the so-called Stemmons Freeway/Love Field Area outside Dallas-Fort Worth, with three nightclubs per 100 workers.) Diversity? Half of the top 10 concentrations of Hispanics in the country are in edge cities. (See chart.)

### Hispanic Neighborhoods

	Nearest major city	Percent Hispanic
1 Miami Airport/West Area, EC	Miami	73.8
2 San Antonio, DTN	San Antonio	73.4
3 Los Angeles, DTN	Los Angeles	67.8
4 Miami, DTN	Miami	62.7
5 Phoenix, DTN	Phoenix	59.0
6 Irwindale-Covina, EC	Los Angeles	53.5
7 Santa Ana Freeway/Santa Ana, EC	Los Angeles	53.3
8 LAX/El Segundo, EC	Los Angeles	52.0
9 San Diego, DTN	San Diego	49.4
10 Coral Gables, EC	Miami	47.0

EC= Edge City  
DTN=Traditional Downtown

Fishman and Garreau concede that America's new cities have yet to develop the kinds of public spaces and institutions that sustained the civic culture of the old downtowns. Alas, the old downtowns now lack a functioning civic culture, as well. Breathing life into the public sphere of America's cities—old or new—will not be helped, they suggest, by continuing the old intellectual Cold War of city versus suburb.

## The Paradox Of Slavery

"Europeans and the Rise and Fall of African Slavery in the Americas: An Interpretation" by David Eltis, in *The American Historical Review* (Dec. 1993), 914 Atwater, Bloomington, Ind. 47401.

Historians generally agree that the practice of slavery in the Americas was rooted in econom-

ics: Slaves from Africa were used because that was the least-costly source of labor for New World plantations. Curiously, observes Eltis, a historian at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, there was an even cheaper alternative: slaves from Europe. There were plenty of plausible candidates—convicted criminals, prisoners of war, vagrants, and the poor—and the cost of shipping them to the Americas

---

would have been low. Yet the Europeans did not even consider it. That "dog that did not bark," Eltis argues, may be the key to understanding the slave trade and the system it supported.

When Columbus arrived in America in the late 15th century, Eltis notes, almost all societies in the world accepted slavery as legitimate—but they differed greatly in their ideas about who could be legitimately enslaved. In Western Europe, virtually all natives of the subcontinent, including some who were nonwhite (but few who were non-Christian), were considered ineligible. A much more limited conception of "insider" had prevailed in Roman times, but the definition had become much broader by the 15th century. Not even criminals or prisoners could be turned into chattel slaves, if they were Europeans. Enslavement had become, in European eyes, "a fate worse than death and, as such, was reserved for non-Europeans." And the line dividing "insider" and "outsider," Eltis says, "was never drawn strictly in terms of skin color or race."

Among Africans and American Indians, however, much narrower notions of who should not be enslaved prevailed; immunity was usually confined to those who belonged to one's own tribe or nation. How, it is often asked, could Africans enslave other Africans and sell them into the slave trade? Nathan Huggins, author of *Black Odyssey: The Afro-American Ordeal in Slavery* (1977), has replied that the enslavers saw neither themselves nor their victims as Africans.

Paradoxically, Eltis argues, the more Europeans rejected the enslavement of fellow Europeans, the more likely they were to contemplate enslaving non-Europeans. In a profound sense, Europeans' chattel slavery overseas resulted from the expansion of freedom at home. And yet that expansion—the idea that enslavement of Europeans anywhere was a wrong that needed to be righted—may have been the first step toward abolition of slavery generally.

"The central development shaping Western plantation slavery from the 16th century onward was the extension of European attitudes to the non-European world," Eltis writes. "If, by the 16th century, it had become unacceptable for Europeans to enslave other Europeans, by the end of the 19th century, it was unacceptable to enslave anyone."

## Generation X: A Myth in the Making

"The Twentysomethings: 'Generation Myths' Revisited" by Everett Carl Ladd, in *The Public Perspective* (Jan.–Feb. 1993), The Roper Center, P.O. Box 440, Storrs, Conn. 06268-0440.

Much ink has been spilled about today's "Generation X," "twentysomethings," or—courtesy of Neil Howe and William Strauss, authors of *ThirteenthGen.: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?* (1993)—"thirteeners." (They claim that today's young people are "the 13th generation to know the U.S. flag and the Constitution.") By whatever name, this generation is said to be seething with resentment toward baby boomers. "Thirteeners," according to Howe and Strauss, "blame boomers for much that has gone wrong in their world." Ladd, editor of the *Public Perspective* (and a member of the Silent Generation), contends that all this—and indeed most of what is written about Generation X and other generations—is nonsense.

Some studies, such as Paul Light's *Baby Boomers* (1988), are serious and thoughtful, Ladd says, but most who write about the various generations serve up utterly unsubstantiated assertions. Survey researchers have found not the slightest evidence of any generalized Generation X resentment. And when it comes to unhappiness, there seems to be little difference between young and old. In a 1993 survey, 25 percent of those 18–29 years old said they were dissatisfied with their lives, while 26 percent of those 30–44, 28 percent of those 45–64, and 24 percent of those 65 and older said the same.

Most of those who write about generations, Ladd complains, confuse generational experiences and the effects of aging. "For various reasons, social and psychological, individuals as they grow older tend to move attitudinally toward more 'moderate' positions," Ladd notes. (Here, survey research simply confirms what Aristotle had to say on the subject in *Rhetoric*.) The fact that Americans under 30 are less likely to go to church than those over 50 does not mean that the "younger generation" is greatly different and will remain different when its members reach 50. It just means that they are behaving as young people generally do.

For the most part, survey research indicates that generational differences in social and politi-

---

cal outlook are slight. When social change does take place, Ladd notes, the young are likely to embrace it most fully. Twentysomethings today are the most likely of all age groups (89 percent of young women, 84 percent of young men) to reject the view that a woman's place is in the home.

Sometimes, Ladd acknowledges, decisive events do drill distinctive social and political

values into a generation. The Depression Generation, for example, has long leaned strongly toward the Democrats. The young people who have come of age politically since the late 1970s have sharply broken with the New Deal past: They have given a big share of their votes to the Republican Party. But that alone does not make the twentysomethings profoundly different from other generation.

---

## PRESS & MEDIA

---

### *The Imperial Editors*

"The New High-Tech Press Pack" by Tom Rosenstiel, in *Forbes MediaCritic* (Vol. 1, No. 3, 1994), P.O. Box 762, Bedminster, N.J. 07921.

There is nothing new about news editors using Associated Press (AP) or other "wire" stories to second-guess their own reporters. But informa-

tion technology has taken the second-guessing to new heights—and that is a very mixed blessing, according to Rosenstiel, who writes about politics and the media for the *Los Angeles Times*.

Editors at major news organizations now receive a torrent of information from third parties. Into the newsroom computers flow transcripts of all public utterances by the president and cabi-

---

### *The Corruption of Journalism*

In *Nieman Reports* (Spring 1994), Michael J. O'Neill, former editor of the *New York Daily News*, limns the impact of moral relativism on the news media.

*This is the central ethical problem facing the media today—the corruption of journalism by the culture of entertainment, by new technology that informs by image and emotion, and by an intellectual elitism that rejects objective rules of behavior in favor of limitless self-expression and moral relativism. "Why has moral discourse become unfashionable or merely partisan? . . ." asks the scholar James Q. Wilson. "Because we have learned . . . from intellectuals . . . that morality has no basis in science or logic. To defend morality is to defend the indefensible." The old rules based on moral intuitions have therefore been replaced, Wilson says, by a freedom-of-choice morality in which one picks and chooses values as casually as "ice cream flavors."*

*In this process, right and wrong become sub-*

*jective judgments rather than objective measures of human conduct. Reality and truth are only what we say they are—they have no existence outside our own fictions. Our celebration of laissez-faire lifestyles is extended to the outer frontiers of moral behavior. So we have the spectacle of producers not being the least bit troubled when they butcher facts, truth, and just about everything else to create fanciful docudramas like Oliver Stone's JFK. Or we see a Joe McGinniss cynically defending his departure from "traditional journalism" to steal from William Manchester, to invent quotes and private thoughts, and to create phony scenes in order to hype his own garbled version of Ted Kennedy's life. . . . Instead of outrage and denunciation, there is general acceptance.*

---

---

net members; of every press briefing at the White House, State Department, and other departments and agencies; even of every political talk show on television. The editors can tune in to CNN and to C-SPAN. When they sit down to edit their reporter's story, they can refer to other versions prepared by rivals at AP, Reuters, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Newsday*, and other organizations. Drawing upon these sources, editors, with or without the assistance of the reporter, often turn the story into a seemingly comprehensive "take" on the day's subject, a presentation of the collective journalistic wisdom of the day. It may not be the best that journalism could offer, however. "Theoretically," Rosenstiel notes, "more sources of information should make the news more accurate. But in practice, some editors use news accounts—sped to them instantly—that their reporters on-the-

scene know are off the mark."

With the shift in power from the reporter in the field to the editor in the newsroom has come a devaluation of original reporting. Even some reporters now prefer to stay in their information-laden offices. Michael Duffy, a *Time* correspondent who covers the White House, says that he no longer attends the daily White House briefings and usually does not show up even when the president makes himself available to the press. But not being there may have its price. "What happens when you get out of the office," says Michael Barone of *U.S. News & World Report*, "is the serendipitous, the unexpected, the thing that changes your view." Yet the reporter in the field who discovers "the unexpected" may well find it hard to overcome the conventional wisdom developing back in the newsroom—and may not even be consulted.

---

---

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

---

### A Postmodernist John Dewey?

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

**R**ichard Rorty is not exactly a household name. But his provocative philosophical and political views, expressed in several books and countless essays, have attracted unusual interest and controversy, both inside and outside the academy. Rorty, a professor of humanities at the University of Virginia, considers himself a "Deweyan pragmatist." He tries to wed pragmatism, à la John Dewey (1859–1952), the eminent American philosopher-activist, with today's Nietzschean "postmodernism." Rorty has been vigorously attacked by critics on both Left and Right. The former—such as Michael Billig in *New Left Review* (Nov. 1993)—object to his insufficiently radical political stance, while the latter—such as Richard John Neuhaus in *First Things* (Dec. 1990)—charge him with undermining the intellectual foundations of democracy.

Rorty takes some comfort from the two-sided nature of the assault. "If there is anything to the idea that the best intellectual position is one

[that] is attacked with equal vigor from the political Right and the political Left, then I am in good shape," he writes in *Common Knowledge* (Winter 1992). But there has been another, perhaps not so easily elided, line of attack on Rorty's positions: that he is far from the Deweyan pragmatist he claims to be.

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), Rorty rejected "foundational epistemology," which accepts the possibility of finding propositions that faithfully "mirror" or accurately represent the world "as it really is." In proceeding without foundations, he believes that he is being consistent with pragmatism. "All too tersely stated," Gordon D. Marino, a philosopher at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy, writes in a profile of Rorty in *Commonweal* (May 6, 1994), "pragmatism is the view that there is no absolute truth. 'Ideas become true just so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relations with other parts of our experience' (William James). Rorty may have an

---

ironical . . . view of everything else, but he is downright devout about his pragmatism."

Yet while Dewey and his fellow pragmatists, Charles Peirce and William James, "did not believe that inquiry either began from, or culminated in, indubitable axiomatic proof," observes Charles W. Anderson, a political scientist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in *Polity* (Spring 1991), they did not reject, as Rorty does, the idea that the reality "out there" can be grasped. The pragmatists "were skeptical of metaphysics, but they were rationalists, not romantics," Anderson writes. "Their most distinctive position was not, in fact, their doubt that reason could reflect reality, but their belief in the power of self-correcting, collaborative inquiry. The pragmatists did not claim [as Rorty does] that reason was meaningless, and that 'anything goes' in science, and that philosophy is essentially conversation. Rather, they were convinced that disciplined, systematic, scientific inquiry would pay off. We could get somewhere."

**N**owhere, i.e. utopia, may be where Rorty wants to go. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), he advanced a vision of "a just and free society," in which the private behavior of citizens would have no bearing on their public lives. Such "liberal ironists" could be "privatistic, 'irrationalist,' and aestheticist as they please so long as they do it on their own time—causing no harm to others and using no resources needed by those less advantaged." The private Nietzschean and the public Deweyan would be combined in one and the same person.

Rorty sketches out his thinking in *Raritan* (Spring 1990): "The Romantic intellectual's goal of self-overcoming and self-invention seems to me a good model . . . for an individual human being, but a very bad model for a society. We should not try to find a societal counterpart to the desire for autonomy. Trying to do so leads to Hitler-like and Mao-like fantasies about 'creating a new kind of human being.' . . . The point of a liberal society is not to invent or create anything, but simply to make it as easy as possible for people to achieve their wildly different private ends without hurting each other."

There is a long-standing tradition in social

philosophy that tries to break down the distinction between the private and public spheres, Rorty says. "This is the tradition which, with Plato, sees society as the soul writ large. Most philosophers in this tradition try to isolate some central, ahistorical, noncontingent core . . . within us, and to use [it] as a justification for certain political arrangements, certain social institutions." Michel Foucault, by contrast, argues that every social institution is equally unjustifiable, precisely because no such core exists. Both err in assuming that the public sphere must somehow rest on a connection with the private realm, says Rorty. Whatever a person is in private—be it a mystic or a foot fetishist—he has the same public moral obligations as everybody else, Rorty maintains, even though no "deep philosophical reason" can be given to justify those obligations.

This outlook would disarm defenders of the liberal democracy that Rorty favors, contends Richard John Neuhaus in *First Things*. It "can neither provide a public language for the citizens of such a democracy, nor contend intellectually against the enemies of democracy, nor transmit the reasons for democracy to the next generation."

Rorty, writing in *Common Knowledge*, points out that similar criticisms were aimed at John Dewey during the 1930s and '40s. According to Rorty, Dewey shared his view "that there was nothing bigger, more permanent and more reliable, behind our sense of moral obligation to those in pain than a certain contingent historical phenomenon—the gradual spread of the sense that the pain of others matters. . . . This idea, Dewey thought, cannot be shown to be true by science, or religion, or philosophy."

**B**ut Rorty's radical private/public dichotomy would have been anathema to Dewey, Kenneth Wain of the University of Malta maintains in *Political Studies* (Sept. 1993). Dewey held as basic to his social philosophy what Rorty attacks: "that the springs of private-fulfillment and human solidarity, are the same." Dewey, Wain writes, rejected "the Romantic view that self-creation is essentially a private matter which has nothing to do with and cannot itself be achieved in solidarity with others." Dewey gave primacy to the community and

---

expressed hostility toward “strong individuality”; he stressed “the social value of cooperative thought and action against the private and poetic, which he regarded with suspicion.” He could not see a side of the individual that was not social. “Rorty’s interest in *la mode française* allows

him to present his liberalism in flashy packaging that conventional liberal doctrines typically lack,” Ronald Beiner, a political scientist at the University of Toronto, writes in *Critical Review* (Winter 1993), “but this fancy wrapping comes at a price.”

---

## Theology to The Rescue

“Newman, God, and the Academy” by Daniel Cere, in *Theological Studies* (Mar. 1994), Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass. 02167.

In the modern academy, there is “a strange silence about ultimate questions of good and evil, life and death,” observes Cere, a lecturer in religion and theology at Concordia University, Montreal. Theology—the tradition of inquiry into the “God-question,” the question of the “supreme good”—has been pushed to the margins of academic debate, replaced by “religious studies,” which deals with religious experience only in descriptive and historical terms.

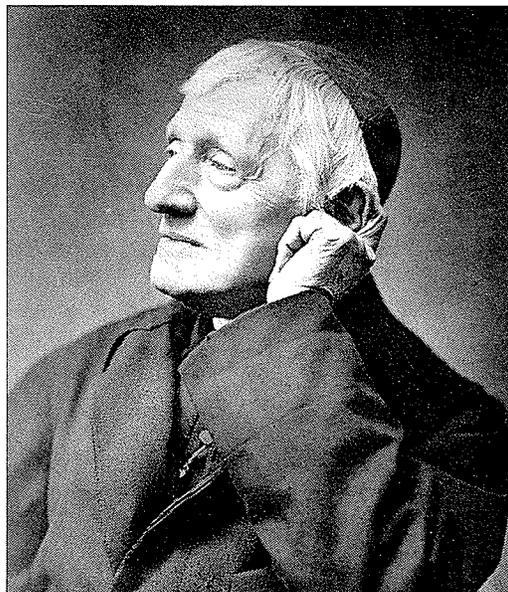
In his controversial 1987 book about higher education, *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom blamed the academy’s malaise on its blanket repudiation of the Socratic tradition of philosophical inquiry, yet he ignored “the foundational role of the Christian tradition in the development of the university,” Cere says. Bloom’s own nemesis, Nietzsche, “warned that we cannot expunge ‘God’ from our grammar and expect that things will go on as before. Athens needs Jerusalem since metaphysical reason cannot stand without a universal ground.”

John Henry Newman (1801–90), in his classic defense of liberal education, *The Idea of a University* (1853), presented a more balanced picture, Cere believes: “Newman’s bifocal view of the Greek and Judeo-Christian heritage of the academy alerts the reader to the critical role of theology in the emergence of the European university and in the evolution of Western academic discourse.”

A Roman Catholic cardinal who, before his conversion, had been a leader of the high-church Oxford Movement in the Church of England,

Newman saw theology not as a sovereign “queen” reigning over the academy but as a legitimate “sister” in the “goodly family of sciences.” “I am claiming for Theology nothing singular or special, or which is not partaken by other sciences in their measure,” he wrote. Its exclusion—already begun in Newman’s day, Cere notes, “on the basis of some narrowly defined and typically indefensible theory of what constitutes a ‘scientific’ discourse”—left the character of academic discussion deformed. “Attempts to ‘slur over’ the God question, to deflect attention from it, impose closures on intellectual debate that are without any sufficient warrant,” Cere explains.

Theological inquiry, Newman maintained, would respect “the integrity of the distinct theological traditions (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish,



John Henry Cardinal Newman, shown here in 1888

---

Islamic, etc.) in their approach to the God question," Cere notes, but those traditions "must engage in dialectical encounter." The dialectic, Newman believed, moved toward universality. That these claims might ultimately compete with one another was no excuse for a retreat into exclusive reliance on faith or into relativism. "No traditions have a claim upon us which shrink

from criticism, and dare not look a rival in the face," Newman wrote—a challenge he might well have hurled at the champions of the modern university, from which theology has been banished. Restoring theology to its place alongside its sister sciences, Cere writes, could do much to revive "the shriveled and cramped soul of modern academic discourse."

---

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

---

### *Creationism's Design Flaws*

"Life's Grand Design" by Kenneth R. Miller, in *Technology Review* (Feb.–Mar. 1994), Bldg. W59, MIT, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

Creationists today tout "intelligent-design theory" as an alternative to evolution. They contend that living organisms have features that are so perfect that they cannot be the result of the random workings of evolution but must be the product of conscious design. However, says Miller, a biologist at Brown University, scientists argue "that complex organisms not only *could* have evolved through evolution's trial-and-error mechanisms, but *must* have done so." And it is the errors that constitute the best evidence.

Take the human eye. It is indeed a marvel, Miller notes. "The eye, like a top-of-the-line modern camera, contains a self-adjusting aperture, an automatic focus system, and inner surfaces surrounded by a dark pigment to minimize the scattering of stray light. [The] sensitivity range of the eye, which gives us excellent vision in bright sunlight as well as in the dimmest moonlight, far surpasses that of any film. Its neural circuitry enables the eye to automatically enhance contrast. And its color-analysis system enables it to quickly adjust to lighting conditions . . . that would require a photographer to change filters and films. Finally, the eye-brain combination produces depth perception that is beyond the range of any camera."

Evolutionary theory can explain such developments in terms of natural selection over thousands of years, along with other factors. The

most persuasive argument for evolution, however, may be the imperfections in nature. Consider the neural wiring for the human eye's light-sensing retinal photoreceptor cells. The wiring is placed not behind the retina but in front of the photoreceptors, thus blocking out some light. That also means that the wiring carrying nerve impulses from the photoreceptors to the brain must go directly through the wall of the retina. As a result, there is a blind spot in the retina, about a millimeter in diameter.

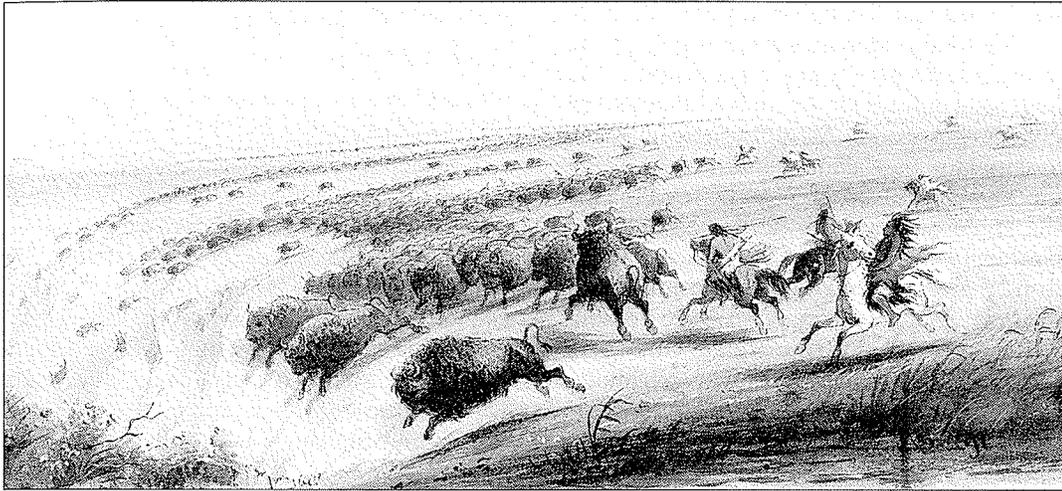
Evolution, which works by repeatedly modifying existing structures, can explain such design "mistakes"; intelligent-design theory cannot. Which is not to say, Miller hastens to add, that evolution and a belief in God are incompatible.

### *Farewell, Arcadia!*

"Ecological Collapses of Ancient Civilizations: The Golden Age That Never Was" by Jared M. Diamond, in *The Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* (Feb. 1994), Norton's Woods, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Environmentalists often speak of living in harmony with nature, harking back to an idyllic pre-industrial past. Recent discoveries by archaeologists and paleontologists, however, tell a very different story about this imagined golden age, writes Diamond, a professor of physiology at the medical school of the University of California, Los Angeles.

Consider New Zealand, where the Polynesian settlers known as Maoris arrived around



*Friends of the Earth? Nineteenth-century Indian hunters drive a herd of buffalo over a cliff.*

1000 A.D. A few centuries later—before Europeans appeared—all known species of the moa, a large native bird, were extinct, as were certain types of geese, ducks, swans, and other bird species. Research at more than 100 large archaeological sites reveals what happened: “Maoris cut up prodigious numbers of moas, cooked them in earth ovens, and discarded the remains. They ate the meat, used the skins for clothing, fashioned bones into fishhooks and jewelry, and blew out the eggs for use as water containers. . . . Maoris must have been slaughtering moas for many generations.”

On all the main islands of Hawaii, Smithsonian paleontologists Storrs Olson and Helen James have identified fossil bird species that disappeared during the Polynesian settlement, which began around 500 A.D. At least 50 species perished before Captain James Cook’s arrival in the 18th century.

In the American Southwest, Spanish explorers arriving during the 16th century found gigantic multistory buildings standing empty in the middle of treeless desert. The vanished builders were known to the Navajo Indians in the region only as “Anasazi” (“the Ancient Ones”). Paleobotanists Julio Betancourt, Thomas Van Devender, and their colleagues have been able to reconstruct what happened, Diamond says. When the pueblos were built in what is now New Mexico’s Chaco Canyon National

Monument shortly after 900 A.D., they were surrounded by piñon-juniper woodland and ponderosa pine forest, which the Anasazi gradually cleared. “As deforestation caused progressively increasing erosion and water runoff, and as irrigation channels gradually dug gullies into the ground, the water table may finally have dropped below the level of the Anasazi fields, making irrigation without pumps impossible.” The Anasazi were forced to abandon Chaco Canyon during the 12th century.

What distinguishes late-20th-century humans from their primitive forebears, Diamond says, is not the innocence of the latter but the former’s scientific understanding of the environment. The Anasazi had the excuse of ignorance; today’s humans do not.

### ***Sunny with a Chance of Meltdown***

“The Once and Future Sun” by Ron Cowen, in *Science News* (Mar. 26, 1994), 1719 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The sun’s extinction may not be one of humankind’s more pressing concerns, but the star that gives us life appears, like today’s baby boomers, to be approaching middle age. At about 4.5 billion years of age, it is more than one-

---

third of the way through its expected life span.

Like a baby boomer, the sun is going to get fatter, but it's also going to get brighter. The long-term outlook for the sun's earthbound clients is not good. Astrophysicist I.-Juliana Sackmann of the California Institute of Technology and two colleagues recently tried to chart the sun's fate, reports *Science News* writer Cowen. During the next 1.1 billion years or so, its brightness will increase 10 percent. According to a model proposed six years ago by James F. Kasting of Pennsylvania State University, that is likely to trigger a runaway greenhouse effect on Earth, with highly unpleasant consequences: "The planet's oceans will boil away, destroying life as we know it."

Some 6.5 billion years from now, the sun will have more than doubled its present brightness, according to Sackmann, Arnold I. Boothroyd of the University of Toronto, and Kathleen E. Kraemer of Boston University. Having consumed all the hydrogen nuclei at its core, it will start on the hydrogen nuclei in a shell of gas around the core. The energy released will make the core hotter and denser, while the sun's outer envelope will expand and cool, growing redder in color. Over a period of 1.3 billion years, the sun will increase enormously in size, transforming itself into a "red giant," as stars of this type are called, and swallowing Mercury and perhaps Venus.

Eventually the sun will enter a quiescent stage, burning the helium nuclei in its core. After about 100 million years, the helium in a shell of gas just outside the core will ignite. "At about 12.3 billion years of age," Cowen writes, "the sun [will] become a star with two burning shells," one of helium, the other of hydrogen. With its nuclear fuel depleted, the core will contract, drawing in the two gas shells around it. Another series of explosions will trigger "the final phase of expansion and brightening, which will last about 20 million years."

A few million years later, the end will come. "Ejecting its puffy outer layers, the elderly star will lay bare its smoldering, collapsed core, thus becoming a relic known as a white dwarf." Around it, in all likelihood, a lifeless planet Earth will go on revolving forever.

## *Information Age Auto da Fé*

"Discards" by Nicholson Baker, in *The New Yorker* (Apr. 4, 1994), 20 W. 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Cheerfully, even gleefully, library administrators all over the United States are bidding adieu to their dusty old card catalogues and plugging in brand new "on-line" catalogues. They only joke about building bonfires out of the old cards, but what they are actually doing with them is every bit as dismaying, writes Baker, a novelist: They are throwing them out.

"On-line catalogues are wonderful things in principle," he concedes. They are also inevitable. Thanks to the boom in academic publishing since the 1960s, some collections are growing by 500 items per day, which makes computerization a necessity. But destroying the old card catalogues seems almost criminal. One reason for preserving them is purely practical. At Harvard University, for example, an outside contractor is transferring the information on five million pre-1980 cards at about 100 different Harvard libraries to the university's on-line catalogue, HOLLIS. Even with the very low official error rate of less than one percent, there will be as many as 50,000 errors. Some of these, Baker points out, will make it difficult, perhaps impossible, for scholars to locate certain books or other items. (Harvard, as it happens, has microfilmed its cards, but most libraries cannot afford such a luxury. Yet they, too, are getting rid of their cards.)

Errors are only the beginning of what Baker thinks is wrong with the conversions. The new data bases "are much harder to browse efficiently, are less rich in cross-references and subject headings, lack local character, do not group related titles and authors together particularly well, and are in many cases stripped of whole classes of specific historical information (e.g., the original price of the book, its acquisition date, its original cataloguing date, its accession number, the original cataloguer's own initials, the record of any copies that have been withdrawn, and whether it was a gift or a purchase)." The hyperefficiency of the on-line systems can also be a curious handicap. Searching one of the best data bases for the works of Peter Illich Tchaikovsky, for example, would not yield

---

the works of Petr Il'ich Chaikovskii—or those listed under 18 other versions of the great composer's name. But a subject search under a heading such as *labor* will yield too many references to be useful; the computer does not make the kind of distinctions (e.g., between labor unions and labor during childbirth) that a card catalogue does.

Why are the putative guardians of the written word so eagerly disposing of their treasures? At work, Baker suspects, is the desire of library admin-

istrators (most of them men) to distance themselves from the old image of the (usually female) librarian. They "believe that if they are disburdened of all that soiled cardboard, they will be able to define themselves as Brokers of Information and Off-Site Hypertextual Retrievalists instead of as shy, bookish people with due-date stamps and wooden drawers to hold the nickel-and-dime overdue fines." A small justification indeed for an act that historian Helen Rand Parish likens to "the burning of the library at Alexandria."

---

## ARTS & LETTERS

---

### *Shakespeare Lite*

"When Blood Is Their Argument': Class, Character, and Historymaking in Shakespeare's and Branagh's *Henry V*" by Robert Lane, in *ELH* (Spring 1994), Dept. of English, Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, Md. 21218.

When Kenneth Branagh's much-praised film *Henry V* appeared in 1989, many critics compared it with Laurence Olivier's 1944 movie version of the play. They said that Branagh presents "a much darker world" and a more complex King Henry than the earlier film did. That may be so. But when Branagh's version is compared with Shakespeare's, argues Lane, an English professor at North Carolina State University, the verdict is not so favorable.

Branagh himself described the play as "a journey toward maturity" by the end of which King Henry "has learned about true leadership" and acquires "moral *gravitas*." But Shakespeare, Lane contends, portrays the king and his war against France, culminating in the great English victory at Agincourt in 1415, in a much less approving light. The Bard, he says, stresses "the cynicism and doubtful legality that infected [the war's] initiation," the common soldiers' deflation of the king's noble rhetoric, and questions about Henry's character.

Branagh, Lane complains, prunes the roles of figures other than the king, "especially those who, like the commoners, might impinge on or question the narrative of the king's maturation." By use of cinematic techniques, Branagh

continually puts the focus on the king, "not as part of an ensemble (as he would be on stage), not even as a party to a conversation. What others say in the film is decidedly secondary, their diminished function as approving audience underscored by the persistent pattern of reaction shots to Henry's speeches—shots of [uniformly approving] nobles, common soldiers, and especially of the French herald Montjoy . . . cuing the audience to what its reaction should be."

Branagh's shots of battle, Lane notes, "climax with a series of slow motion close-ups of various individual soldiers, focusing on their faces in the midst of mortal combat. None show any trace of fear." Instead of carrying forward Shakespeare's probing examination of male comradeship in war, Lane says, Branagh "reinforces the cinematic spectacle's rehearsal of the timeworn notion that warfare provides the optimal occasion for men to achieve their highest fulfillment. He thus allows Henry and us—the audience—to evade the full force of [the Duke of] Burgundy's warning that when men 'nothing do but meditate on blood,' they 'grow like savages.'"

Branagh also obscures the king's responsibility for causing the violence. In the film, Henry marches across the battlefield, bearing the body of the slain character called Boy, "accompanied by the swelling chorus of a hymn." But the stirring scene is Branagh's invention; Shakespeare's Henry gives no indication that

---

he even knows of the youth's death. The movie scene's tone is mournful, but there is no hint of remorse in Henry. "Branagh, instead, presents the Boy's death as a sacrifice, a martyrdom that, through appropriation (by Henry as surrogate parent), the king at once acknowledges and disavows any role in bringing about. The Boy's innocence, with his blood, spills over onto the king."

Shakespeare acutely recognized "the persistent penchant to sanitize the history of those who wield power," Lane writes. In his alteration of *Henry V*, he concludes, Branagh has provided an example of this tendency.

## ***The Birdman Of America***

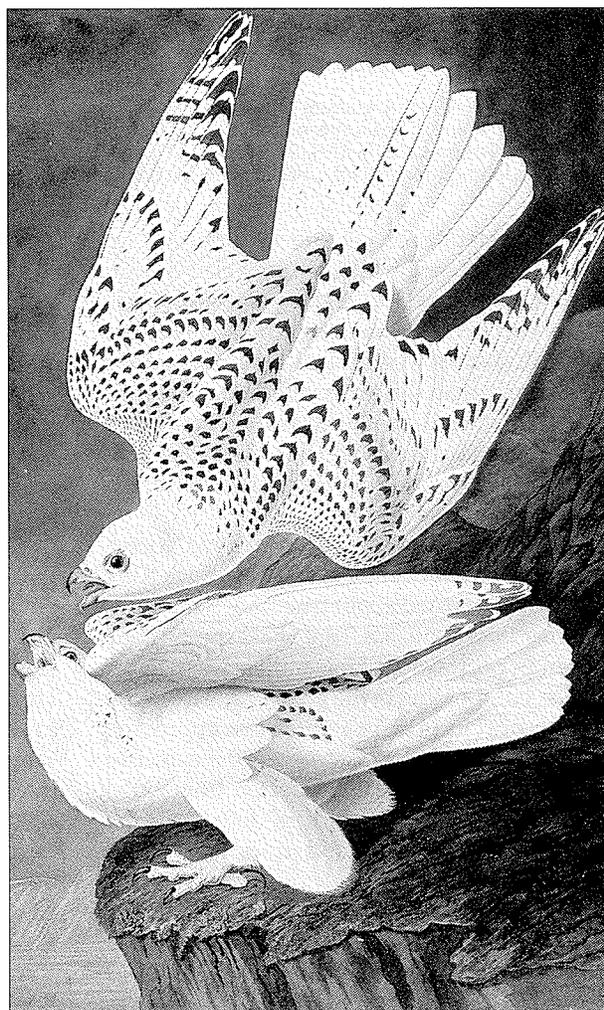
"Magnificent Obsession: Audubon's *Birds of America*" by Stephen May, in *American Arts Quarterly* (Winter 1994), P.O. Box 1654, Cooper Station, New York, N.Y. 10276.

Although John James Audubon's bird prints are familiar around the world, his original watercolors are seldom seen by the public. Now, with an exhibition of the paintings on a national tour, Audubon (1785-1851) can be widely recognized as not just an illustrator but an artist, May observes. The watercolors, says the freelance writer, "are refreshingly varied, deft in composition, brilliant in color, startlingly realistic, and dynamic in depicting each bird in characteristic action."

Born in Haiti, the son of a French sea captain and his mistress, a French chambermaid who died six months after her son's birth, Audubon was raised near Nantes, France, by his father and stepmother. They encouraged his love of nature and saw that he received some art training. At age 17, partly to avoid the Emperor Napoleon's draft, he was sent to manage his father's modest estate outside Philadelphia. His earliest surviving artworks are from 1805-12. He married in 1808 and soon sought his fortune as a frontier merchant in Kentucky; before

long he was reduced to eking out a living as an itinerant portrait painter.

In 1820, at age 35, Audubon audaciously decided to depict every bird in America from nature. Four years later, he took his portfolio to Philadelphia, then to New York, and finally to England and Scotland, before he found financial backing and an engraver to copy his works. *The Birds of America*, which came out in four volumes between 1827 and 1838, consisted of 435 hand-colored prints faithfully etched, aquatinted, and engraved from Audubon's original watercolors by Robert Havell, Jr., of London. Audubon's salesmanship and tireless labors ultimately led



*Audubon's Gyrfalcon*

---

to orders for 200 complete sets of the prints, priced at the then-enormous sum of \$1,000. (First editions now sell for as much as \$4 million.) Audubon subsequently turned to documenting the mammals of America.

The artist changed forever the way in which birds are illustrated. Before him, noted illustrators such as Alexander Wilson (1766–1813) used stuffed birds as models and produced accurate but stiff and static images. Audubon, by contrast, “sought to gain direct knowledge of his subjects in their natural settings by traversing woods, plains, and swamps all over the land,” May notes. He rarely painted stuffed specimens but instead “drew directly from freshly killed birds in order to capture the shapes, textures, and colors as accurately as possible. He threaded birds with wire to set them in poses which were both characteristic of their daily activities, such as foraging or hunting prey, and aesthetically pleasing.”

In Audubon’s work, Theodore E. Stebbins, curator of Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, observes, “the noblest traditions of European art and European ornithology met with wilderness America.” No one in America could match him “for graphic inventiveness until Winslow Homer some 60 years later.”

## A Whale Of a Reputation

“Melville Climbs the Canon” by Paul Lauter, in *American Literature* (Mar. 1994), Box 90020, Duke University, Durham, N.C. 27708-0020.

Despite the academy’s “canon wars,” Herman Melville’s status as a great American writer seems secure. But this dead white male owes his position to more than just the undoubted virtues of his work, maintains Lauter, a professor of literature at Trinity College, Hartford, Conn.

Melville (1819–1891) was among the more celebrated American authors at the end of the 1840s, but he subsequently fell into such obscurity that his death prompted only a single obituary notice. He was not rediscovered until the 1920s, and as his reputation rose during that decade, critics radically made over his image,

Lauter argues. At the beginning of the decade, the author of *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847) was seen—as the publisher of a 1921 book about him put it—as “the father of South Sea literature.” The “primitive” was in vogue after World War I, and Melville, who, as one writer noted, came from “the best American stock, English, Scotch-Irish, and Dutch,” seemed a safe guide. “Well-born, and nurtured in good manners and a cosmopolitan tradition,” the critic Richard Weaver observed in 1921, “he was . . . a gentleman adventurer in the barbarous outposts of human experience.” And he did not “go native,” critic Carl Van Doren added approvingly.

Before long, however, a different Melville emerged from the writings of biographer Lewis Mumford and others: the author as heroic genius misunderstood by the masses. The neglected Melville, Lauter writes, came “to stand more generally for the plight of artists in crass materialistic societies, like those of America in the 1850s and 1920s.” Critics endlessly quoted Melville’s lament in a letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne: “Dollars damn me. . . . What I feel most moved to write, that is banned,—it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the *other* way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches.” (Few critics of the period noted that Melville was finishing *Moby Dick* [1851] when he penned that complaint.)

Increasingly, Melville came to be seen “not as a transparently approachable chronicler of sea tales, but as a densely allusive composer whose most precious treasures would be yielded up, as with other modernist texts, only to learned initiates.” At the start of the Melville revival, he was valued *despite* his mannered style; by the end of the 1920s, “his value lay precisely in the appeal of his style to a modernist reader.”

“The appeal of the myth of the misunderstood, exiled artist to modernist intellectuals, however differently articulated . . . can hardly be exaggerated,” Lauter notes. The myth “elevated writers to positions of moral primacy and their priests, the critics and professors, to cultural dominion.” Melville has many virtues as a writer, but it is because he came to embody that myth, Lauter contends, that he has remained “required reading.”

## Europe's Headless Liberalism

"The Other Velvet Revolution: Continental Liberalism and Its Discontents" by Mark Lilla, in *Daedalus* (Spring 1994), Norton's Woods, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

During the years between the world wars, it was hard for even the warmest advocates of European liberalism to imagine the whole of Western Europe living under stable liberal governments anytime soon. The future belonged to communism, fascism, socialism—anything but liberalism. Remarkably, observes Lilla, a professor of politics and French studies at New York University, liberalism has triumphed.

Yet it prevailed through "a revolution without ideas," he contends. Economic growth and an expanded welfare state eased ordinary citizens' acceptance of the new political institutions, but few intellectuals embraced liberalism. That liberal institutions came into existence anyway may show that ideas are not as important as economic growth and peace for establishing a liberal order. But in the long run, ideas do matter, and for that reason, Lilla finds it disquieting that the collapse of Marxism "has revealed persistent hostility to the liberal idea" in Europe.

In Italy, that hostility is rooted in the historical experience of government corruption. Liberals who sought reform either have been co-opted by the ruling parties or rendered impotent. Intellectuals who resisted this *transformismo* either joined the Italian Communist Party or, like the liberal philosopher-historian Benedetto Croce (1866–1952), withdrew from politics. The recent "Tangentopoli" ("Bribe City") scandals, Lilla says, confirmed what the Italian Left said all along about corruption. The aging liberal socialist Norberto Bobbio is the exception that proves the rule that most Italian intellectuals today continue to have "an instinctive suspicion of the liberal intellectual tradition." And that is unlikely to change, Lilla writes, "until the Italian state delivers something that looks more like liberalism."

In Germany, it is the Nazi past that prevents intellectuals from embracing liberalism. While the memory of German guilt rallied the general public to the liberal institutions of the

Bundesrepublik, it had the opposite effect on many intellectuals, Lilla observes. "For them, the rejection of the German past also meant the rejection of the German present, including the new liberal state meant to 'master' the past." They see the German nation as a source of evil. After the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, novelist Günter Grass and other intellectuals campaigned against German unification "on openly antinationalist grounds." Philosopher-sociologist Jürgen Habermas, perhaps Germany's leading intellectual, embraces what he calls the "Enlightenment project" but insists that it cannot be fulfilled by Western liberalism, and certainly not by German liberalism. The result of all this, Lilla says, is that German intellectuals remain at war with their own sense of national identity and cling to a variety of more or less utopian ideas.

The story is different in France. Starting in the mid-1970s, "world events that elicited little immediate response elsewhere in Western Europe—the translation of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, the butcheries in Cambodia, the flight of the boat people, the rise of Solidarity in Poland—suddenly set off a profound *crise de conscience* among the French." During the 1980s, French thinkers abandoned "the Hegelian, Marxist, and structuralist dogmas that nourished intellectual contempt for liberalism after the war," and in journals such as *Le Débat* and *Commentaire* began to bring about "a serious revival of liberal thought."

The question, Lilla concludes, is whether Italian and German intellectuals will follow the French example, or perhaps find some other way to make peace with their own liberal societies. If they do not, liberalism in Western Europe may find itself under challenge once again.

## Ireland's Own

"Ireland's Cultural Revolution" by Fintan O'Toole, in *Europe* (Apr. 1994), Delegation of the European Commission, 2100 M St. N.W., Ste. 700, Washington, D.C. 20037.

James Joyce, Sean O'Casey, Samuel Beckett, and a host of others made exile seem the normal condition for influential Irish writers and

artists. In recent years, however, many of their successors—including novelist Roddy Doyle, poet Ciaran Carson, playwright Brian Friel (*Dancing at Lughnasa*), and film directors Jim Sheridan (*In the Name of the Father*) and Neil Jordan (*The Crying Game*)—have bucked the expatriate tradition. “By staying in Ireland and writing out of their experience of it, they have had to [deal with] a period of radical change and unsettlement” on the island, observes O’Toole, a columnist for the *Irish Times*. Their work, as a result, has aroused international interest in modern Ireland.

For artists from the North, such as Brian Friel (who lives in rural Donegal) and fellow playwright Frank McGuinness (*Someone Who’ll Watch Over Me*), dealing with change “has meant facing up to the traumas of the Northern Ireland conflict over the past 25 years,” O’Toole says.

For those from the Republic of Ireland, the change has been less dramatic but still considerable. Roddy Doyle, Neil Jordan, Jim Sheridan, and the members of the rock band U2 live in Dublin. “The working class urban experience described by Roddy Doyle, the dislocated city sounds of U2, the wild side of sexuality in the films of Neil Jordan,” O’Toole points out, “all speak of an Ireland very far removed from the world of farm, pub, and kitchen that was typical of Irish novels and plays up to the 1960s.”

Elsewhere in Europe, it is said that international (i.e. American) film and music are overwhelming local cultures. Not in Ireland, O’Toole maintains. “By taking hold of the new forms, Irish artists have been able to gain both new ways of expressing themselves and the international audience that film and rock music bring.” The Dublin soul band in Doyle’s novel *The Commitments* is “a good symbol,” O’Toole believes, “of the way in which Ireland has taken

the new cultural influences from the international mainstream and made something fresh and distinctive from them.” The book gave rise to a movie that was internationally popular, which in turn led to a most unlikely spectacle, an Irish soul album rising on the charts of America’s *Billboard* magazine.

### Rotten in Russia

“The Russian ‘Mafiya’ ” by Stephen Handelman, in *Foreign Affairs* (Mar.–Apr. 1994), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Though frequently discussed by Western observers, organized crime in Russia is often underestimated, contends Handelman, a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University’s Harriman Institute and former Moscow bureau chief for the *Toronto Star*. It has become “a dagger pointed at the heart of Russian democracy.”

Large criminal organizations, led by godfathers known as *vory v zakonye* (thieves-in-law), first surfaced during the 1960s in many Russian cities, often operating in tandem with government officials. During the 1970s and ‘80s, Russians be-



The view from Krokodil, a Moscow magazine.

---

gan using the word *mafiya* to describe "the vast networks of corruption lurking inside regional and central ministries," Handelman says. Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika*, by expanding the realm of private commerce, gave the "underground tycoons and party barons" a legitimate outlet for their secret wealth. "Black and gray money poured into the stock exchanges, joint ventures, cooperatives, banks, and joint stock companies that were otherwise celebrated abroad as harbingers of economic reform." By the late 1980s, according to Russian analysts, most of the small cooperative businesses established during *perestroika* were either controlled

by criminal elements or heavily in debt to them. Liberalization since has eased the way for the *mafiya*. "In the absence of government regulation, criminal cartels have infiltrated banks, real-estate markets, stock exchanges, and even the rock-music industry." Popular support for economic reform has been undercut.

Smuggling has become the *mafiya's* main source of revenue. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party machine, huge quantities of copper, zinc, and other metals were shipped from central Russia in unmarked trucks or military aircraft to Baltic ports and then to Scandinavia or Western Europe.

---

### A Faithful Leninist

Did Joseph Stalin betray Vladimir Ilich Lenin and the promise of Leninism? Western Communists and their sympathizers said so for many decades, but Harvard University historian Richard Pipes, writing in the *American Scholar* (Spring 1994), offers a different view.

*An examination of Stalin's career reveals that he did not seize power after Lenin's death [in 1924] but ascended to it, step by step, initially under Lenin's sponsorship. Lenin came to rely on Stalin in managing the party apparatus, especially after 1920, when the party was torn by democratic heresies. . . . [Contrary] to Trotsky's retrospective claims, Lenin depended not on him but on his rival to carry on much of the day-to-day business of government and to advise him on a great variety of issues of domestic and foreign policy. . . . That in the last months of his active life Lenin developed doubts about Stalin and came close to breaking off personal relations with him should not obscure the fact that until that moment he had done everything in his power to promote Stalin's ascendancy. And even when Lenin became disappointed with his protégé, the shortcomings he attributed to him were not very serious—mainly rudeness and impatience—and related more to his managerial qualifications than to his personality. There is no indication that Lenin ever saw Stalin as a traitor to his brand of communism.*

*But even the one difference separating the two men—that Lenin did not kill fellow Communists*

*and Stalin did so on a massive scale—is not as significant as may appear at first sight. Toward outsiders, people not belonging to his order of the elect—and that included 99.7 percent of his compatriots—Lenin showed no human feelings whatever, sending them to their death by the tens of thousands, often to serve as an example to others. . . . Lenin's insiders were to Stalin outsiders, people who owed loyalty not to him but to the Party's founder and who competed with him for power; and toward them, he showed the same inhuman cruelty that Lenin had displayed against his enemies.*

*Beyond the strong personal links binding the two men, Stalin was a true Leninist in that he faithfully followed his patron's political philosophy and practices. Every ingredient of what has come to be known as Stalinism save one—murdering fellow Communists—he had learned from Lenin, and that includes the two actions for which he is most severely condemned: collectivization and mass terror. Stalin's megalomania, his vindictiveness, his morbid paranoia, and other odious personal qualities should not obscure the fact that his ideology and modus operandi were Lenin's.*

---

Today, some 3,000 to 4,000 gangs, with perhaps 100,000 members, are operating in Russia, Handelman reports. "Gangland murders, bomb explosions, kidnappings, and gun battles have become part of daily life." Crime jumped by one-third between 1991 and '92. In a 1992 survey, three out of four Muscovites said they were afraid to walk the streets at night. Such fears have built support for extremists such as ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who has advocated shooting lawbreakers on sight.

Russia's new leaders, Handelman contends, "have failed to adopt any significant measures to curb organized crime." As the law stands now, police may arrest people they catch in a criminal act, but the "mastermind" who is not on the scene cannot be prosecuted. Handelman advocates Western assistance not only to beef up Russia's police and criminal justice system but to help to develop viable banking and legal systems.

## Turkey's Democratic Secret

"Why Turkey Is the Only Muslim Democracy" by Bernard Lewis, in *Middle East Quarterly* (Mar. 1994), 4304 Osage Ave., Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

Democracy has reached the seedling stage in many parts of the globe recently, but has not flourished in the Islamic world. Of the 51 sovereign states in the International Islamic Conference, only one—the Turkish Republic—has experienced more than one democratic transfer of power. Lewis, an emeritus professor of Near Eastern studies at Princeton University, is not entirely satisfied with the standard explanation of Turkey's success.

He does not disagree with many of the major points commonly made. It is important that, unlike most of the Islamic lands of Asia and Africa, Turkey was never subject to imperial rule or domination. "The Turks were always masters in their own house, and, indeed, in many other houses, for a long period," Lewis notes. Modern Turkey, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), emerged from the wreckage of the Ottoman Empire after World

War I. Its politics was not built around a national liberation movement.

Nor was full democracy introduced all at once. Beginning under the later Ottoman rulers, Turkey "went through successive phases of limited democracy, laying the foundations for further development, and, at the same time, encouraging the rise of civil society," with its "mediating institutions"—the neglected factor, Lewis believes, in Turkey's success. Gradually, "a professional, technical, managerial, entrepreneurial middle class" emerged. By its own efforts, and not by some accident, such as the presence of oil in the subsoil, Turkey was able to achieve significant economic growth, an important undergirding for democracy.

"It is not easy to create and maintain free institutions," Lewis notes, "in a region of age-old authoritarian traditions, in a political culture where religion and ethics have been more concerned with duties than with rights, in which obedience to legitimate authority is a religious obligation as well as a political necessity, and disobedience a sin as well as a crime." Indeed, some observers have considered Atatürk's separation of religion and state the crucial difference between Turkey and the rest of the Muslim world.

But when it diminishes civil society, modernization can work *against* democracy, Lewis points out. The pre-Atatürk modernization in some ways did this. It strengthened the power of the sultans while weakening or eliminating mediating institutions: the religious establishment, the military establishment, and the *ayan* ("notables, who amounted to a provincial gentry and magistracy").

The movement for constitutional and representative government that began in 19th-century Turkey, Lewis says, was not just a drive "to import or imitate Western practices," but an effort "to restore . . . old established rights, and to restrain what was perceived as a newly imposed despotism." Perhaps because of this reform tradition, modern Turkish rulers seem to appreciate the importance of mediating—and sometimes troublesome—institutions such as independent newspapers and trade unions. The spread of such bedrock institutions of civil society, Lewis says, is vital to the spread of democracy in the Middle East.

---

## RESEARCH REPORTS

*Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions*

### **"Asian Flashpoint: Security and the Korean Peninsula."**

Dept. of International Relations, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National Univ., Canberra ACT 0200 Australia. 188 pp. \$24.95

Editor: *Andrew Mack*

**I**s North Korea's apparent determination to develop nuclear weapons just a ploy to extract maximum U.S. concessions? Some analysts in government and the press have seemed to assume so. But as Kim Il Sung's regime keeps refusing to play its "nuclear card," despite the ready availability of U.S. concessions, observes Andrew Mack, a political scientist at Australian National University, in Canberra, it becomes more likely that Pyongyang views nuclear weapons "as a vital strategic asset that must be maintained at almost any cost." That would be very bad news indeed for the rest of the world.

No longer protected by the Soviet Union, North Korea has good reasons to want nuclear weapons, Mack points out in this collection of essays by a dozen scholars of various nationalities. They would serve Kim's regime as a deterrent to the threat implicit in the U.S. "nuclear umbrella" over South Korea, and also against South Korea's smaller but overwhelmingly superior conventional military.

North Korea today is "the most militarized, brutal, and undemocratic country in the world," observes Yale University's Paul Bracken, but the quality of its armed forces is low. They are badly trained, the command-and-control system is "primitive," and com-

manders lack good intelligence on the South. Kim's regime no longer seems to be thinking of trying to reunify the Korean peninsula, Bracken and others say; instead, it is worried about its own survival.

A nuclear North Korea not only would set back efforts to control nuclear proliferation, says Satoshi Morimoto, of Tokyo's Nomura Research Institute, but would pose a threat to Japan and other Asian countries. Even more worrisome, notes Mack, is the prospect that North Korea would sell weapons-grade plutonium, technology, or even nuclear arms themselves to the likes of Iraq, Libya, and Iran.

**N**orth Korea has been on the economic ropes since the demise of the Soviet Union, its principal trading partner. Its economy shrank in 1993 for the fourth year in a row, and its gross national product now is less than one-tenth that of South Korea (whose population of 46 million is twice North Korea's). Industrial production has dropped by as much as 40 percent, and food shortages have been reported. The population has been urged to get by on two meals a day.

The communist regime's demise would solve the nuclear problem. But its sudden collapse would be a problem for Seoul. Unification, observes Kyongsoo Lho, of the

Korean Institute of International Studies, "will entail enormous challenges even if it comes gradually."

Were North Korea to give up its nuclear-weapons program, Mack notes, trade, aid, and investment would flow its way. But what seems like an attractive prospect to outsiders may look like a danger to "Great Leader" Kim, now 82, and his son and heir apparent, "Dear Leader" Kim Jong Il. As North Koreans in a more open economy learned about life in South Korea, "they would discover that they had been systematically lied to for decades," Mack says. In addition, reversing the North's economic decline would require a shift in economic—and eventually, political—power away from the state.

But if inducements are unlikely to work, neither are international economic sanctions, Mack says. Ordinary folk, not the regime, would bear their cost. And a military strike against Kim's nuclear facilities might not only fail, but might start a new Korean war.

Since the chances of keeping Korea nuclear-free seem slim, Mack suggests that the United States and South Korea try a desperate gambit: make unilateral concessions to Pyongyang in hopes of provoking a response. The concessions could be taken back, he points out, if no progress results.

## Youth Suicide Rates, 1950–90

(Per 100,000 persons)

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
<b>Age 15-19</b>	2.7	3.6	5.9	8.5	11.1
Male	3.5	5.6	8.8	13.8	18.1
Female	1.8	1.6	2.9	3.0	3.7
<b>Age 20-24</b>	6.2	7.1	12.2	16.1	15.1
Male	9.3	11.5	19.2	26.8	25.7
Female	3.3	2.9	5.6	5.5	4.1
<b>Total, Age 15-24</b>	4.5	5.2	8.8	12.3	13.2
Male	6.5	8.2	13.5	20.2	22.0
Female	2.6	2.2	4.2	4.3	3.9

*Suicide among the young has increased sharply, reports the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (April 22, 1994). Although rates for young adults are substantially higher than for adolescents, most prevention programs are aimed at the latter.*

### “Between the Lines: Interpreting Welfare Rights.”

The Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-2188. 344 pp. \$36.95 (cloth); \$16.95 (paper)

Author: R. Shep Melnick

From *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) to *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and beyond, the U.S. Supreme Court has boldly gone where presidents and legislators feared to tread. Although much less noticed, interpretations of federal statutes, particularly by the 800 lower federal courts, have also had a big impact.

Seeking to do good, says Brandeis University political scientist R. Shep Melnick, courts hearing cases on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, and education of the handicapped, have unilaterally readjusted the balance among the branches of the federal government and between Washington and the states. On occasion the courts

have undermined the very programs they sought to enlarge. In 1977, Congress was forced to revise the food stamp program because of growing costs and unpopularity—fueled in part by court rulings, including a Supreme Court decision requiring Washington to give food stamps to college students. The courts have irked even supporters of the programs. They “have the right to interpret the laws, not write them,” Representative Thomas Foley (D.-Wash.) complained in 1977, when he chaired the committee that oversees the food stamp program.

With respect to AFDC, lower courts have handed down “hundreds of decisions touching nearly every aspect of the program,” Melnick says. After

Congress in 1967 required states to try to establish the paternity of children of unwed AFDC mothers, many states decided to cut off benefits to women who refused to cooperate. Of 15 lower-court decisions on this issue, all but one invalidated state regulations (and it was soon reversed).

Federal judges, Melnick says, seem to have assumed that national views should prevail over state or local ones, and that social progress requires that eligibility and benefit levels reflect “actual need.” This may seem obvious in a judge’s chambers, Melnick says, but “reasonable, honest, and well-meaning men and women continue to disagree about which direction is forward.”

---

## 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. 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.*

### The Leadership Question

I picked up the three articles on leadership ["Questioning Leadership," *WQ*, Spring '94] with some foreboding. The title of the section suggested it would be another "know-nothing" attack on the subject. Instead I was pleased to see three diverse essays, all providing interesting insights. I must note, though, that the introductory statement about the voluminous nature of the subject (3,500 articles and books) seriously understates the case. The Bass & Stogdill *Handbook of Leadership* (1990) contained 7,500 references, and many more were excluded.

In calling attention to the erosion of public confidence in our politicians, Alan Brinkley points to the key missing leadership ingredient—trust. The loss is exacerbated by the media's focus on celebrities, conflict, crime, and corruption rather than conciliation, consensus, compromise, and cooperation. The lack of trust and the attention to celebrity status suggest that Phil Donahue with his daily TV exposure may exert more leadership influence on many more sectors of the public than Bill Clinton and his "bully pulpit."

Alan Ryan raises the question of whether leadership is more salient in the United States than elsewhere. It would seem so. The term is relatively new in many countries. S. L. A. Marshall reported that our French and British allies in World War I could not believe that we could provide troops the needed leadership with 30 days of training. A Japanese historian told me that Japan has little need for leadership since everyone knows his role in groups.

In concluding with Weber, Jacob Heilbrunn put his finger on the new direction that leadership studies has taken in the past 15 years. Leadership can be transactional, focusing on carrots and sticks, or transformational, focusing on aligning individual and collective interests.

Accumulated evidence supports the fact that leadership can be taught and leadership can be learned. Leadership makes an important difference in the success or failure of community and national development. Transformational lead-

ers inspire the led, intellectually stimulate them, and enable them to succeed in their development.

The movers and shakers of the world merge the populist and antipopulist approaches to politics. Nelson Mandela has sensed that most whites in South Africa are tired of the costs of maintaining their morally unjustified privileged position. Most of the blacks are seeking a better life and the end of their humiliation rather than revenge for past injustices. Mandela speaks for the best people when he says, "Forget the past!" And he proceeds to arrange for a transitional constitution and government of conciliation, not majority winners and minority losers.

*Bernard M. Bass  
Professor of Management Emeritus and  
Director of the Center for Leadership Studies  
State University of New York  
at Binghamton*

A discussion of your articles on leadership is taking place on the E-mail network to which I subscribe.

I found Jacob Heilbrunn's article particularly interesting. It was generally a good review of the study of leadership, even though it did not include the concept of servant leadership, which was first articulated by Robert Greenleaf some 25 years ago. As is the case with most contemporary articles on the topic, the author focused on the definition and study of leadership but failed to address if and how leadership can be learned.

At Gettysburg College's Leadership Development Center, we strongly believe that leadership potential is widely distributed in our population and can be learned and developed. Our vision of leadership development is based on individuals as citizen leaders rather than merely spectator citizens and a clear underlying value system that views good leadership as a process based on the value of service. In this perspective, leaders should be dedicated to empowering others and helping their groups contribute to the public good wherever they employ their talents.

---

A service orientation is beneficial whether the setting is business or corporations, a political or government function, an education or other not-for-profit enterprise, or community volunteer organizations. Both in theory and practice, we attempt to bring into focus the fundamental relationship between follower and leader. A major tenet of developing effective leadership is understanding and experiencing effective followership and teamwork so that contributing followers and leaders easily move from one role to the other.

Our focus is the general undergraduate college population instead of elected student leaders, business majors, or groups of elite students. Every student at Gettysburg College has the opportunity to participate because the question is not whether one can or will lead, but rather how effective a leader one becomes. Students continually put to the test of experience their theoretical models and, in many ways, the skills, practice, and understanding of leadership are encouraged and developed for the broad purpose of advancing the common good.

*William E. Rosenbach, Ph.D.  
Evans Professor of Leadership Studies  
Director, Leadership Development Center  
Gettysburg College  
Gettysburg, Pa.*

The idea of publishing several articles on leadership is a good one. Unfortunately, these articles are individually and in toto a big disappointment.

Alan Brinkley's contribution to questioning leadership is itself questionable. I question his interpretation of the Progressive movement of the 1890s to the 1920s and the bifurcation of the movement into populists and antipopulists. And I question his analysis of our political life at the end of the 20th century insofar as leadership is involved. But most of all I question Brinkley's understanding of leadership and his old-fashioned ideas about what leaders and collaborators can do together to change the system for the better. Brinkley doesn't seem to have a clear concept of leadership beyond the normal, everyday activities of politics, which, I submit, is not what leadership is about at all. One cannot question leadership if one doesn't know what leadership is.

Alan Ryan's introduction to his article was thought-provoking, but he quickly got sidetracked and never addressed the important issues that surfaced in his introduction. The ex-

tended discussions of Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Weber are beside the point, as none of them wrote about leadership. They did write about authority, governance, politics, power, and management (Weber), which Ryan translates as leadership. They also wrote about kings, princes, rulers, guardians, philosophers, and managers (Weber), whom Ryan translates as leaders. Such translations are sloppy scholarship and don't validly question the concept and practice of leadership in modern political organizations and in our society at large—much less in profit and nonprofit organizations and groups, large and small. The article is basically irrelevant to the basic issues of what leadership is all about and whether leadership matters.

The question that Jacob Heilbrunn asked—"Can Leadership Be Studied?"—is rather silly. DeMott notwithstanding, the answer is: Of course, leadership can be studied. The question should be: Has leadership been studied well (or effectively)? Have the 3,000 books and articles on leadership, mentioned in your introduction to the three articles, helped scholars and practitioners understand leadership better than what common sense would tell us? Have they made a difference in our political and organizational lives, in a good life that we all want to live?

With few exceptions, the answer unfortunately is "no!" Despite Heilbrunn's exposition of "10-Second Leadership"—"To grasp and hold a vision. . . is the very essence of successful leadership" à la Reagan—a macroassessment of the output of 20th-century leadership authors is a C- at best. The realities of the sad state of leadership studies for the last 75 years are painstakingly documented in my book, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (1991). The other sad reality is that we now have three more articles on leadership that don't authentically question what leadership is and what role it plays in living the good life. But things are looking up. We will soon have a whole new millennium to get it right!

*Joseph C. Rost, Ph.D.  
Professor of Leadership and Administration  
University of San Diego  
School of Education  
San Diego, Calif.*

The three articles on leadership were well worth reading for their recapitulation of earlier thinking about leadership. Yet only Jacob Heilbrunn brings the topic into the present and deals with important questions about leadership in the fu-

---

ture. His closing remarks deserve expansion.

The American people organize themselves for all varieties of vocational, recreational, religious, or cultural interests, and join campaign groups to support every shade of difference in belief or commitment. Each of these groups seeks effective leaders, and endeavors to gain consensus on its major purpose. We need not only national leaders but all kinds of leaders to make our organizations effective.

Our elected officials serve this pluralistic society with its myriad of highly vocal, well-organized, single-issue advocates by becoming mediators. But their leadership is corrupted when they accept campaign contributions and other favors from those who plead before them. Their leadership will appear to their constituents to be worthless when no middle ground can be found. Unless we understand the nature of leadership by mediation, we will not be wise enough to recognize those elected officials who serve us well.

Our educational programs, offered in schools or by the media, would be more effective if the realities of the context in which leadership is exercised were clarified, and if the role of the members, followers, or constituents in supporting our leaders were better understood. Learning about leadership is critical in a nation that picks its leaders from more than a select elite.

Far too much attention is paid to the few historical figures who ruled in times very different from our own. We learn of the mischief of tyranny in an earlier age, but we learn too little about avoiding the petty tyranny that emerges in ourselves and others as we fill the roles of parents, supervisors in the workplace, bureaucrats, appointed officers, and elected officials. The good that comes when different actions inspire and give direction to the lives of others also needs more discussion. Maintaining respect for the talents and the rights of others is a key component of leadership.

*Kenneth E. Clark  
Smith Richardson Senior Scientist  
The Center for Creative Leadership  
Greensboro, N.C.*

## Struggling with Race

In line with your editor's exhortation, I read Ivan Hannaford ["The Idiocy of Race," *WQ*, Spring '94], but do not "heed" him. Hannaford may believe the ancient Greeks evolved a neat ap-

proach in incorporating different races into the body politic. Perhaps that is so, perhaps not, but Hannaford does not mention the great and enduring conflicts the Greeks had with aggressive cultures outside their own turf, the so-called Persians for example.

Hannaford and some others may in effect deride the significance of genes and race, but it is unconvincing. Nature is replete with the examples of birds of a feather sticking together, and there is some natural force at work here that must be recognized and accepted as natural law. It seems to me very probable that race and genetic heritage is something that far transcends scientific understanding or those who wish to bend natural law to their own political purposes.

It is not very clear what Hannaford proposes in citing ancient Greece and circumstances that were very different indeed 2,000 to 4,000 years ago. What Hannaford and all of us should really heed are the massive conflicts that will characterize the 21st century in terms of race and cultures. These conflicts are already beginning or underway, though our own media hardly gives us a clue as to what is really at the root of the conflicts in the Balkans, to name just one ominous case.

*H. E. Hays  
Bainbridge Island, Wash.*

Congratulations on the article "The Idiocy of Race." Now is the time for an article on the larger idiocy, "The Idiocy of Nationalism"!

Some five or so billion of us on this planet are divided among some 165 or so gangs called nations. Each with its own turf, and many with claims to turf occupied by others. Each, in accepted principal and practice, a law unto itself. No law or government above them, and no movement among us toward either.

What fools we mortals be!

*John H. Beringham  
Scarsdale, N.Y.*

In "The Idiocy of Race," Ivan Hannaford writes that the Jews expelled from Spain who settled in Constantinople did so "under the protection of the papacy and the Orthodox church." The refugees arrived in Constantinople a scant 40 years after Mehmet the Conqueror had captured the city and did so at the invitation and under the protection of Sultan Bayezid II, ruler of the Ottoman Empire. Jewish writers of the time

---

affirm this, as do their descendants, who recently celebrated 500 years in Turkey.

Marian Koral  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

For several years I've looked forward to receiving the *WQ*; it has provided me with keen insights into issues I might otherwise have neglected, or missed altogether. For that I thank you.

I looked forward with interest to Hannaford's "The Idiocy of Race," especially on noting his credentials. But as I proceeded into the article I became more and more confused. "Just what is this guy talking about?" I wondered. "What does that mean? Where's the referent?" On page 19 I simply quit reading . . . and started writing you.

Generally when I come upon some writing that confuses me I have tended to assume the failure lay in me—I'm simply not bright enough to grasp what is being said. But this article reinforces an insight that arrived recently: Some books and articles (and here we have an excellent example!) are simply miserably written and incompetently edited. Hannaford presumably knows what he intends to say (and it is probably well worth learning), but somehow he does not know how to say it well—despite those impressive credentials. He expresses his thoughts in such convoluted and overpacked sentences that the rest of us must grope after him—and at times there's no way to decipher just what he intends at all!

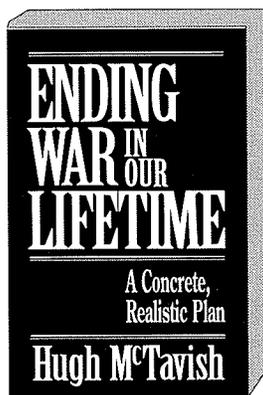
And, is it not the aim of editing to help the writer express himself clearly and cogently? I understand the function of editor has, in many places, advanced from simply fostering communication to conducting a business. I hope that is not true at *WQ*.

One final comment: I take issue with Hannaford's last sentence on page 18. It seems to me Jesus showed little interest in formulating rules to be observed by his followers. His iconoclastic focus was on relationship—if the record is in any way reliable. Why else was he crucified?

Gerald F. Herbener, Ph.D.  
Lexington, Ky.

## Why Architecture Doesn't Endure

Witold Rybczynski's article "Why Wright Endures" [*WQ*, Spring '94] leaves little room for disagreement. As always, Rybczynski deftly describes Frank Lloyd Wright's appeal, at least to those of us previously schooled in his genius.



"Imaginative & Thoughtful"  
— Senator Gary Hart

"★★★★ Excellent"  
— Rapport, *The West Coast Review of Books*

"A fascinating blend of vision and common sense."  
— Prof. Russell Langworthy, Carleton College

"No one concerned with the future of our species can afford to pass up this thoughtful, provocative, and insightful book."  
— Philip Slater, author of *The Pursuit of Loneliness and A Dream Deferred*

For a **FREE** article adapted from this extraordinary book, call  
**1-800-517-7377**

---

But the author might have just as easily entitled his article "Why Architecture Doesn't Endure." Ask any American layperson who his or her favorite architects are and you would most likely find Wright's name on the list. But actually, and unfortunately, most Americans hardly know any architects at all. Why? Because most Americans still believe that education in the arts—and that includes architecture—is optional. Mathematics and the sciences or law and medicine are thought of as practical, useful skills, helpful in one's future career. But visual decision making is considered secondary, extracurricular, and not the least bit useful for one's future life.

We know Wright because he was "fascinating, adorable," and an "utterly irresponsible genius," and that is the way it should be. Many of his works will no doubt endure, and they should. But there will never be more Wrights if we as Americans don't begin to take art seriously in our education.

Jeremiah Eck  
Jeremiah Eck Architects  
Lecturer in Architecture,  
Harvard Graduate School  
of Design  
Boston, Mass.

---

---

## Returning to Trains

Mark Reutter's interesting and informative "The Lost Promise of the American Railroad" [WQ, Winter '94], was, unfortunately, marred by a serious factual error concerning the current performance of Amtrak's various regional operations.

By characterizing the Washington-New York-Boston Northeast Corridor (NEC) as the "happy exception to Amtrak's woes," Reutter has overlooked the fact that the NEC alone produces an annual operating deficit, according to Amtrak, of \$250 million. This loss must be combined with the ownership cost of the NEC infrastructure and the corporate general and administrative overhead expenses associated with operating the NEC, which total another \$100 million. The full cost of just the NEC, therefore, accounts for virtually all of Amtrak's \$353 million annual operating subsidy from the federal government, meaning in turn that the entire remainder of Amtrak's national system operates virtually at break-even. The remainder of the national system would be solidly profitable if its capacity were expanded to accommodate existing demand for intercity rail passenger services. Amtrak in this regard is no different from any trunk airline: Head counts may be higher in the high-density corridors, but the profits come in the high-revenue long-distance markets.

Amtrak's long-distance trains, which carry about 20 percent of its riders, consistently account for about half of its gross revenues. All of these trains are solid, positive net cash flow contributors, and show deficits only after disproportionate shares of Amtrak's fixed costs, including NEC costs, are arbitrarily allocated to them by Amtrak's obscure accounting systems. The politically mandated routes of the early 1970s are all long gone.

Reutter's enthusiasm for high-speed rail also conveniently overlooks the mammoth capital costs associated with developing such systems. By contrast, huge improvements in both public service and Amtrak's financial performance would be readily available from modest capital investment in increased carrying capacity in today's skeletal network of conventional intercity services, primarily the longer-distance services where real money can be made. High-speed rail can, and should, come later, as it did in Japan and Europe, after market demand and a political constituency for it have been fully developed.

Finally, in a much smaller error, Reutter decries slower train services, especially in the long-distance sector, than existed when Amtrak was created in 1971. While that is certainly the case in a few

isolated submarkets, the fact is that many of Amtrak's long-distance trains today operate at speeds higher than were allowed in 1971, due to the post-deregulation rehabilitation of the general-purpose freight railroad industry generally. In many cases, endpoint trip times, or substantial intermediate-segment trip times, for Amtrak long-distance trains are much faster today than was the case in the late 1960s.

Andrew C. Selden  
Vice President, Law and Policy  
United Rail Passenger Alliance, Inc.  
Jacksonville, Fla.

Mark Reutter replies: Andrew Selden misconstrues what I wrote: I never said that Amtrak turns a profit in the Northeast Corridor. Selden's numbers conceal complex issues, such as the degree to which Amtrak subsidizes commuter agencies that run many trains in the Corridor. On his second point: A comparison of timetables shows that today's long-distance trains are consistently slower than those of the late 1960s.

Mark Reutter's essay did an excellent job of pulling together information that previously was widely scattered. It is obviously to the nation's detriment that we allowed our railroad system to fall apart without much long-range thought. Just for the record, Reutter fell into a trap that has snared others before him when he listed the *Phoebe Snow* and the *Wabash Cannon Ball* as "turn-of-the-century" passenger trains. The *Wabash Cannon Ball* existed only in musical literature until well after World War II when, in the waning days of railroad passenger train promotion, the Wabash named its day trains connecting Detroit and St. Louis the *Cannon Ball*. The trains survived until the advent of Amtrak on May 1, 1971. Similar is the case of the *Phoebe Snow*. "Phoebe Snow" was a fictional young woman created by the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western advertising department many, many years ago. Sort of a railroading Betty Crocker, if you will. Phoebe Snow traveled in white clothing and arrived clean as a pin because "she rode the road of anthracite." But there was no train by that name until close to midcentury, when that name was given by the DL&W to a New York (actually, Hoboken) to Buffalo run. When the DL&W acquired the Erie and the surviving firm became the Erie Lackawanna, the name might have been given to an extended East Coast to Chicago train.

Wiley W. Spurgeon  
Syracuse, Ind.

The marvelous article by Mark Reutter covers in fascinating detail most of the reasons why other countries have pulled far ahead of ours in railway passenger service and technology. One additional factor not mentioned in the article was the abrogation of mail contracts by the U.S. Postal Service with railroads in the 1950s, the elimination of railway post office cars, and the diversion of Railway Express Agency traffic to trucks and planes. These actions in many instances turned trains that were making a little money or breaking even into money losers that were stanchied by discontinuation throughout the late 1950s and '60s.

Randolph Gregg  
Washington, D.C.

## What Makes a Brit?

I found the articles on ethnic minorities in Europe ["The Rise of Europe's Little Nations," *WQ*, Winter '94] quite enjoyable and informative. I have two problems with the article on Scotland, however.

Alastair Reid refers to the "United Kingdom of Great Britain." I am not troubled by the use of the phrase "United Kingdoms of England & Scotland," but I thought that the term "United Kingdom," capitalized, arose with the Act of Union of 1801. Was there any confusion between the Act of Union of 1707 that created the Kingdom of Great Britain with the Act of Union of 1801 that created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland?

Second, I was surprised to learn that residents of the U.K. didn't refer to themselves as "British" unless away from home (page 52). I subscribed to the British magazine *Air International* for many years. It was quite common for its writers to refer to themselves as "British" or "Brits."

Perhaps it would be accurate to say that the Scottish don't refer to themselves as "British," as "British" was reserved for the English. Historically that would make sense. "Britain" comes from the Celtic tribe of "Britons," whom the Romans encountered in the southern part of the island. The Scots developed from the Picts, Scots, Caledonians, and other Celtic tribes, and the Roman name for their region was Caledonia. So even back in those early years the term Briton/Britain as a geopolitical unit referred only to part of the island.

Walter Aardsma  
Royal Oak, Mich.

**Credits:** Cover, Detail from *Fin de Siècle* (1989), by Nam June Paik, Collection of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Gift of Laila and Thurston Twigg-Smith, additional permission by the artist and the Carl Solway Gallery, Cincinnati, Ohio; p. 8, copyright © Kenneth E. Shotwell/Stockworks; p. 11, Copyright © Rob Saunders/Stockworks; p. 13 (left), Photo by Charles Harrington, Cornell University Photography, Ithaca, New York; p. 13 (right), Photo by James Carman; p. 17, Courtesy of Siecor Corporation, Hickory, NC; p. 19, Copyright © Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History; p. 22, Map by Paul Woodward, Mapline Cartographic Services, from original copyright © 1994 Larry Landweber and the Internet Society (available via anonymous FTP from ftp.cs.wisc.edu in the connectivity\_table directory); p. 23, SURAnet Backbone Map available via anonymous ftp from ftp.sura.net in the MAPS directory; p. 25, Drawing by P. Steiner, Copyright © 1993, The New Yorker Magazine, Inc. All Rights Reserved; p. 29, Diana Burgoyne, "untitled performance" (1987), Photo by Guy Rodrigue; p. 31, Photograph by Melgar Photographers; p. 36, *The Thinker*, by Nam June Paik from the Whitney Buddha Complex, 1981-1985, Video Installation with sculptures, 1 of 3 components, The Rivendell Collection of Late 20th Century Art on permanent loan to the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, additional permission from the artist and the Carl Solway Gallery, Cincinnati, Ohio; p. 38, Courtesy of Gary Anderson, Pacific Bell, Inc., photograph by Alan Braus; pp. 40, 44, 81, 94, 98, 124, The Bettmann Archive, New York; p. 43 (left), "The Hamilton Grange" (1895) by Ralph Earl, Museum of the City of New York, New York; p. 43 (inset), "Mrs. Alexander Hamilton" (1787) by Ralph Earl, Gift of Mrs. Alexander Hamilton and General Pierpont Morgan Hamilton; p. 51, National Archives; p. 52, National Museum of American History; p. 55, *Jacmel*, by Préfète Duffaut, Courtesy of Jack Mower, Photograph by Rick Reinhard; p. 56, Copyright © 1991 by Michael Melford, Mt. Kisco New York; p. 59, *Thomas Malthus*, by J. Linnell, National Portrait Gallery, London; p. 64 (left), Stanford University News Service; p. 64 (right), Copyright © Dan Borris/Outline Press Syndicate, Inc.; p. 67, Courtesy of Mexfam (the Fundación Mexicana para la Planeación Familiar); p. 71, UN photo #152739, New York; pp. 73, 90, 118, AP/Wide World Photos, New York; p. 75, Copyright © Haroldo Castro/PPG International; p. 83, *Calvin and Hobbes*, Copyright © Watterson, Dist. by Universal Press Syndicate, reprinted with permission, all rights reserved; p. 86, Photo by Patrick Pagnano, CBS, March 31, 1994; p. 92, From *Budapest and New York*, courtesy of the Russell Sage Foundation; p. 108, *An Englishman in Moscow* by K. Malevich at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; p. 115, *Portrait of Velimir Khlebnikov Drawn from Memory* (1940), by Vladimir Tatlin, frontispiece to *Velimir Khlebnikov's Unpublished Works*, Moscow, 1940, art courtesy of Professor John Milner, University of Newcastle; p. 116, *Portrait of Anna Akhmatova* (1922), by Kuzma Sergeevich Petrov-Vodkin, from *Soviet Art, 1920s-1930s*, Copyright © 1988 by Soviety Khudozhnik, Moscow, reprinted by permission; p. 119, *Tower of Babel* (1563), by Pieter Bruegel (the Elder) at Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, photo from Art Resource by Erich Lessing, NY; p. 122, Detail from *The Triumph of Death*, by Bourges, at Musée du Berry, France, Giraudon/Art Resource, NY; p. 129, "Washington" Copyright © Mark Alan Stamaty, Washington Post Writers Group/reprinted with permission; p. 131, Copyright © C. Steele-Perkins/Magnum Photos; p. 134, Mike Keefe at the *Denver Post*, reprinted by permission; p. 141, Mary Evans Picture Library, London; p. 143, *Hunting Buffalo*, by Alfred Jacob Miller, Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore; p. 146, *Gyr Falcon*, by John James Audubon, Collection of the New-York Historical Society; p. 149, Vladimir Mochalov, Russia, Cartoonists & Writers Syndicate.

---

## FROM THE CENTER

One of the justices of the United States Supreme Court recently told me that when a young Russian lawyer asked him to name the Court's most important decision since World War II, he unhesitatingly replied *Brown v. Board of Education*. Prompted to put the same question to a number of judges, lawyers, and legal scholars myself, I received the same answer in every instance. Although I can scarcely describe this as a scientific survey, I would be astonished if such a survey did not produce virtually the same result. From the moment the Court's unanimous decision was handed down in 1954, the word "landmark" became as firmly attached to *Brown* as any conventional Homeric epithet to its respective noun.

By contrast, the 40th anniversary of the *Brown* decision this spring evoked a response that can best be described as muted. The event did not go unnoticed—seminars were held, editorials were written, pundits pontificated—but running through all the observances was a predominant tone that ranged from disappointment to despair.

What might account for this dissonance? The best answer, I believe, lies in the distinction between the constitutional significance of the decision as a redefinition and enlargement of the "equal protection" clause of the 14th Amendment and the practical, social consequences that have (or have not) followed from it.

In its decision, the Court ruled that even if an agency of government offered facilities equal in every way to pupils in schools that were racially segregated by official act, the mere fact of that segregation was in itself a denial of equal protection. In short, the doctrine of "separate but equal" that had been endorsed by the Supreme Court in 1896 and had governed in such cases for nearly 60 years was now declared to be a contradiction in terms. It remained for Congress to impose similar rules in the private sphere, but it is easy to see why the *Brown* decision should be viewed as a landmark in our constitutional history and, conversely, should have led to an outcry for the impeachment of Chief Justice Earl Warren.

The very vehemence of the white segregationists' reaction to the *Brown* decision is, ironically, as good a measure as any of the hopes it aroused among those devoted to the vision of America as a unified society in which ethnic groups would live and work together harmoniously. Just as the desegregated armed forces of the Korean War had improved relations between

the races, so now would desegregated education. Indeed, the argument ran, desegregation in the schools would produce even more striking results because it came at an earlier and more impressionable age. In addition to requiring local authorities to refrain from imposing segregation in the public schools, the *Brown* decision called upon them to take positive steps "with all deliberate speed" to end de facto segregation. Given the inescapable fact of residential segregation—a consequence of tradition, economics, and personal preference, often among minorities themselves—the only way to comply with the directive was to bus students from school to school, neighborhood to neighborhood, until some semblance of racial balance was achieved. I am tempted to describe this practice in the manner of Yogi Berra as one that was not liked even by those who liked it. Although it continues to this day, it clearly imposes burdens upon the students, is subversive of the cherished notion of the neighborhood school, and produces scant results.

A recent Harvard University study shows just how scant. It reports that two-thirds of black children attending public schools in 1991–92 (4.6 million of 6.9 million) were in predominantly minority schools, the highest level recorded since 1968. At the same time, the "equality" of schools that had been at least the official standard before 1954 seems in practice to have been forgotten once segregation was declared unconstitutional. Although some states have recently attempted to address the disparities among their schools by finding sources of funding other than the local property tax, the task of realizing the vision implicit in *Brown v. Board of Education* seems impossibly daunting.

And this is only one part of a larger and still bleaker situation in which our society confronts the prospect of a permanent underclass living in conditions of squalor, violence, and anomie that almost defy description. While the statistics are depressing, I will end with just four sentences from Alex Kotlowitz's unforgettable account of the lives of two black brothers living in a public housing project in Chicago, *There Are No Children Here* (1992): "And then I asked Lafayette what he wanted to be. 'If I grow up, I'd like to be a bus driver,' he told me. *If, not when.* At the age of 10, Lafayette wasn't sure he'd make it to adulthood."

—Charles Blitzer  
Director





## MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK

Civic Traditions in Modern Italy

Robert D. Putnam

With Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti

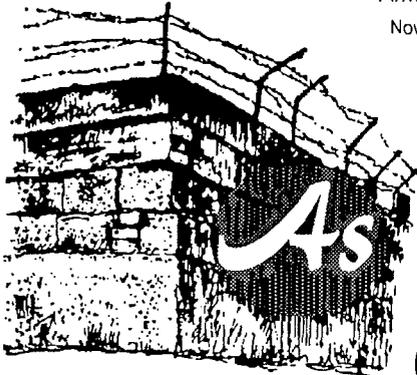
"Here is a book that masquerades as a routine study of Italian regional government but is actually a great work of social science, worthy to rank alongside de Tocqueville, Pareto and Weber. . . . The implications of this book are enormous."—*The Economist*

"Seminal, epochal, path-breaking: All those overworked words apply to a book that, to make the point brazenly, is a *Democracy in America* for our times."—*The Nation*

Now in paper: \$14.95 ISBN 0-691-03738-8



Photo credit: Martha Stewart, 1992



# As the World Gyrate . . .

## GERMANY DIVIDED

From the Wall to Reunification

A. James McAdams

" . . . a notable analysis of the two Germanys and how they became one."  
—*Publishers Weekly*

" . . . based on a thorough knowledge of both East and West German politics as well as on key German and American Cold War scholarship. . . . comprehensive coverage and first-rate analysis of the intricate East-West German relationship in the 1970s and '80s. . . ."—*Choice*

Now in paper: \$14.95  
ISBN 0-691-00108-1



## ADAM SMITH GOES TO MOSCOW

A Dialogue on Radical Reform

Walter Adams and James W. Brock

With a foreword by Robert Heilbroner

"A fascinating conversation between an Eastern European statesman who has read Adam Smith and an American economist who knows how to use a Russian proverb to make a point."—William F. Sharpe, Nobel Laureate in Economics

"This is a gem of a book. . . . the complex issues of the economic transformation to the market in Eastern Europe are ingeniously explored. . . . The flow of the dialogue is concise, fast and intellectually robust. . . . a brilliant and fascinating read."

—*Times Higher Education Supplement*

Now in paper: \$12.95 ISBN 0-691-00053-0

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

AVAILABLE AT FINE BOOKSTORES OR DIRECTLY FROM THE PUBLISHER: 609-883-1759