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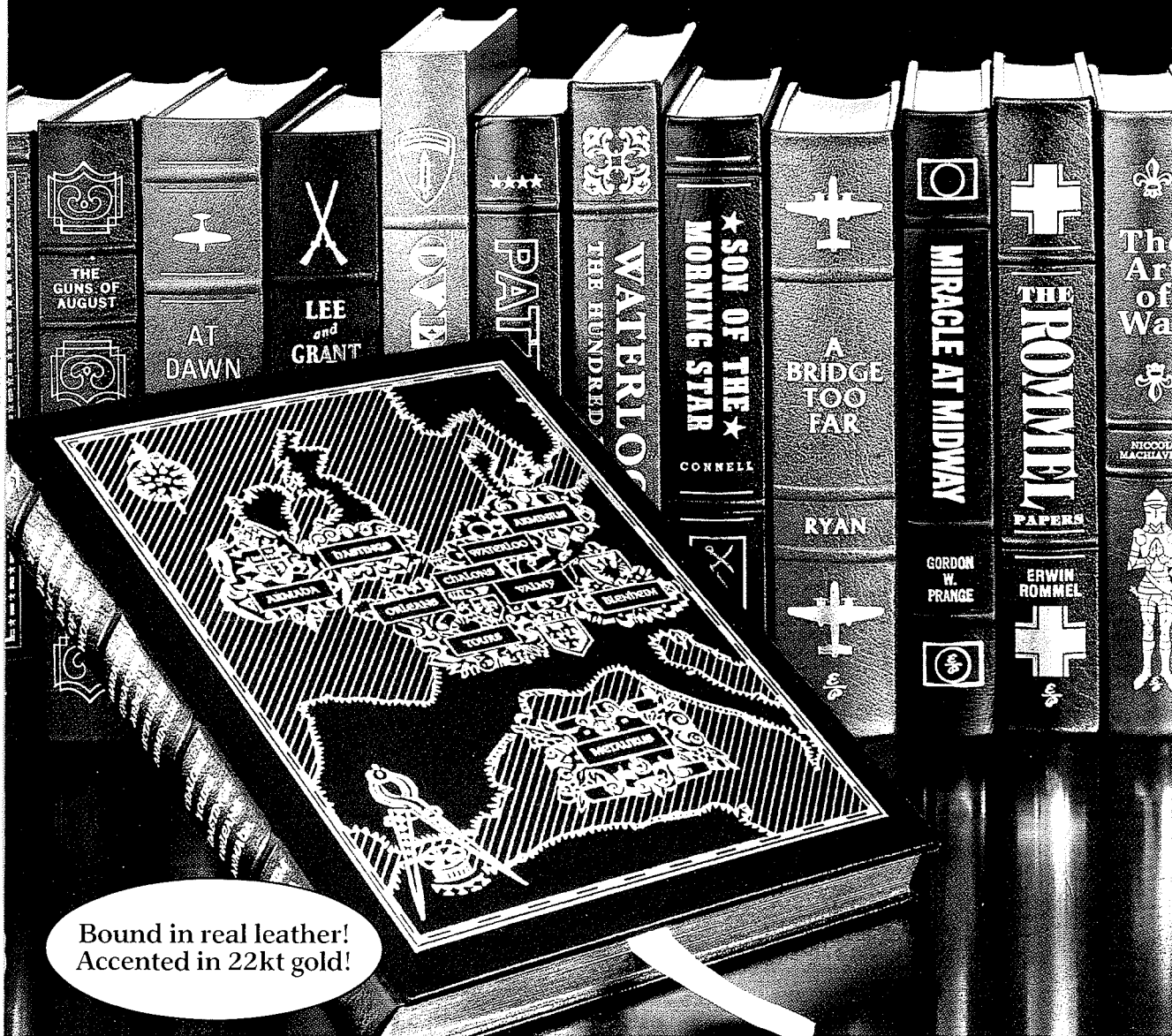


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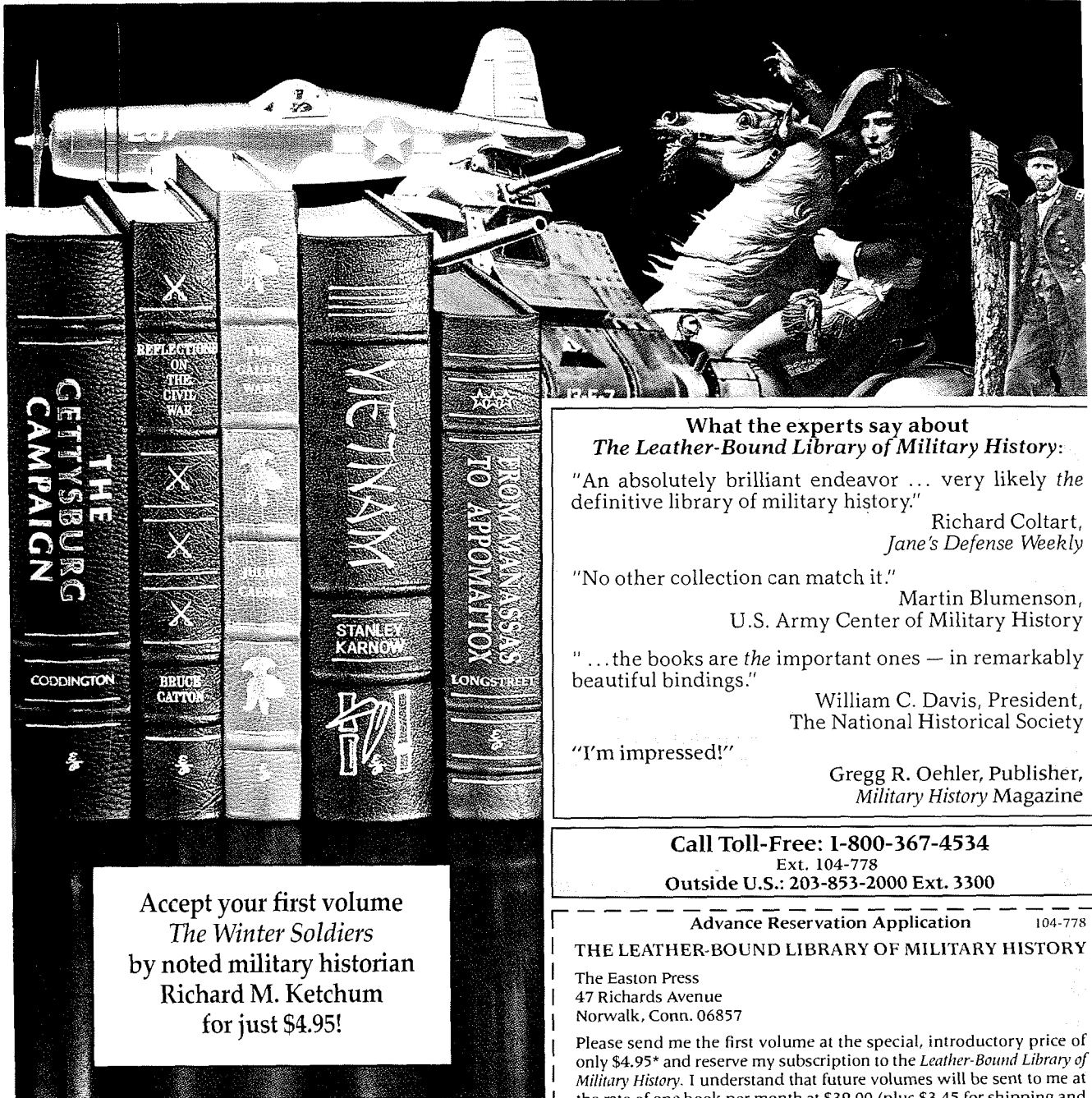
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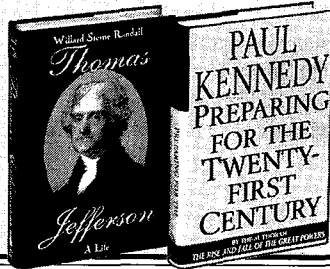
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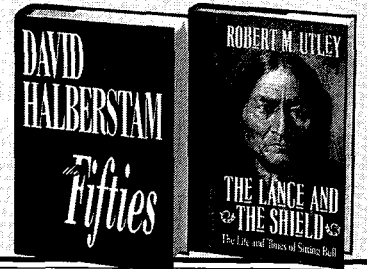
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EDITOR'S COMMENT

Leaders and followers of more than 125 religions—some 6,000 people in all—recently assembled in Chicago to commemorate the centennial of the first World's Parliament of Religions. The original gathering, held in connection with Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893, was marked by an outpouring of ecumenical optimism, much of which has been lost in the succeeding years. Thanks partly to the scholarly investigation of world religions (which received a great push at the first Parliament), few people today share the naive confidence that all faiths are tending toward one, true, and universal faith. And the grim record of sectarian conflict everywhere from Bosnia to India shows that religions continue to divide as much as to unite. Nevertheless, as the centennial itself attests, a chastened understanding of the real differences among religions has not ended the search for a common ground. Scholars of religion may have abandoned the hope for a universal faith, but now they work to fashion a dialogue among the world's many faiths. One such scholar is Diana Eck, a professor of Indian studies at Harvard University and a participant in the recent Parliament. In this issue (p. 90), she explains some of the more important changes that have taken place in the study of world religions—and how this scholarship may help us in coping with the dramatic demographic changes that are remaking the georeligious map of the world.

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AT ISSUE

Vox Populi

The same-sex married couple, one of whom has achieved sameness through surgery, are denouncing the biological mother of the child they have adopted. She is fighting them for custody because she has now found steady and responsible work as a topless dancer and no longer lives with the serial killer who is the child's biological father. There they sit, aligned on the stage before cameras and lights more perfectly than they will ever be aligned elsewhere (but for the killer, who is to participate by phone from his cell, thanks to an arrangement with the authorities). The moderator uses her microphone to conduct a chamber symphony of woe, before an audience which has long since learned to listen for the familiar notes and which is prepared, when called upon, to work its own zany riffs on each theme. It's morning in America. And midday. And midnight. And through the TV screen baroque nightmares seep casually into our waking lives.

So what? Are the freak shows of our time really any worse than those the barker hid in his tent? The scale, of course, has changed; our electronic circus tents accommodate millions. Our taste in deformities has changed too; we prefer crippled psyches. What else is new? Well, some significant number of Americans are now willing to expose their private shames and emotional failures, their hurt feelings, their least opinions, to another significant number of Americans willing to watch and listen and add their two cents, or 10 bucks. What was spoken of once in whispers, if at all, or considered not worth saying, is now matter for a public lecture with slides.

In the process, dignity has gone the way of grammar. It seems to have been replaced by self-esteem, which turns out to be not the same thing at all. Neither is it the same as self-respect. We are many miles from the territory staked out by William Faulkner when he told his agent how to handle a request for a bit of biography: "Don't

tell the bastards anything." He was on the right track. We seem determined that the whole nation should have the privacy of a military barracks. Supreme Court decisions turn precariously on invocation of a constitutional right to privacy, and we want that right fiercely guarded. Yet we often behave in daily life as if nothing should be kept private anymore, and no one spared.

It is some comfort to believe that the current infestation of TV and radio shows trading in curiosity, unbridled talk, ignorant opinion, and loopy emotions will simply die out, of exhaustion and self-parody, when these programs have nothing left to feed on. But the near-term prognosis is not encouraging: The landscape still looks awfully green, a money-color green, and millions of Americans are hooked. Is the phenomenon worth taking seriously? Is high fever an index of disease?

Two aspects of these shows are particularly troubling. In their fixation on exposure, the more sensational the better, under a pretense that to know all is to understand all and, *hopefully* (the word in all its insistent misuse is the favored mantra of hosts, victims, accusers, and audiences alike), forgive all, they promote an attitude toward the world that undermines dignity, belief, and trust. In their glorification of unchecked opinion in the service of medicine-show nostrums, they debase thought and speech itself.

But wait. Aren't we better off free of the puritanical constraints that made hypocrites of our ancestors, and the illusions that made them fools? One would like to think so, even against the evidence. Now we are all adults here, including the kids, and what monster—psychic, social, cultural, political, sexual—can we not face head-on and domesticate, maybe over coffee? Even before Oprah, Terence had the right idea. "I am human," he said, "and nothing human is foreign to

WQ

me." (Or might Terence have had second thoughts these days?) We can stare down all our demons and put them on leashes, to air and display when we choose. (And, incidentally, my private devil is uglier than yours.)

The exposé, of course, is a time-honored exercise. What is new is that so many people seem hell-bent not just on exposing others (and their vengeance usually begins at home) but on self-exposure. They are so desperate to talk that they will say the most appalling things, even about themselves. There is no zone from which they would bar others: this far and no farther. What has happened to the citizen who keeps his own counsel, and his dignity, who does not just say no but says nothing? The realm of the properly private has been narrowed to the distances between radio bands and remote-control buttons. "I hear America singing," sang the poet; he should be glad he did not live to hear America talking.

The fundamental issue is not prurience, though prurience is the attraction that is always held over for an extra week. These shows will take on any topic: politics, war, world hunger, race hatred, body fat, extraterrestrial traffic, cosmetic surgery. Nothing is too trivial that it can't be handled, and nothing is too important either. In the end, the topics find a common level—and this is what is most disturbing—reduced by the TV screen, the staged circumstances, and the endless chatter, by so little thought in the service of so many feelings to a like significance.

Sometimes the leveling is accomplished through exposure and revelation, as when the famous are brought low (to the level of the audience) or when an entire dysfunctional family is made to face facts and implodes. Sometimes it is implicit in the very nature of the proceedings: Every view counts, no matter how dumb. We have dropped through the floor into some dank, crowded subbasement of democracy where every tongue is urged to flutter and every opinion is accorded equal value and where ignorance held in common passes for group wisdom.

These shows are but one symptom of the mania for revelation that afflicts the country. Though not one person in a thousand could

identify Tacitus, we have been trained to a surprisingly Tacitean view of the world, which regards the surface of daily life, in and out of imperial circles, as mostly sham. We expect camouflage and conspiracy and routine deception, by private citizens (the model father, e.g., who admits finally to being the town pyromaniac) and by public figures (the star quarterback who can no longer conceal his addiction). The unmasking in due course has the inevitability, and the satisfaction, of ritual. There is less risk in being hugged by a python than in being embraced by the public. First we celebrate what is exceptional about artists, actors, poets, statesmen, athletes, warriors, popes, guardians of civil order, promoters of social justice. In time we press the breath right out of them.

We won't be fooled again, not by Christopher Columbus or Thomas Jefferson or even Rock Hudson. We are beyond the need for sustaining myths (except for being sustained by the myth that we do not need them). We will have no more John Kennedys, for example. To Kennedy's death and its aftermath can be traced the beginnings of the country's long slide, quickened by the events of subsequent decades, into doubt and suspicion, about politics and government, at least. Kennedy himself would certainly be given a more difficult time under current conditions, and his evasive tactics would need to be a lot more sophisticated for him to escape the forms of scrutiny we now take for granted. But who knows? If he confessed to Phil or Larry or Joan and asked for understanding (perhaps as one of several "CEOs Who Lived Beyond the Rules"), and took questions from the audience, we might find it in our hearts to forgive. And if Paris was worth a Mass, the presidency must be worth Larry King.

Coleridge once defined dignity as "the absence of ludicrous and debasing associations." We have become as careless of our associations as of our traditions. Surely something is wrong when we accept, and perhaps expect, that a politician in high office, or aspiring to high office, will occupy the same chair, within the same TV frame, as the thieving executive, the chastened rapist, the defensive cross-dresser, the parent-divorcing child,

the child-divorcing parent, the poseur rock star, and the overvalued athlete, to make a case—in that context proper to pop-psych moralizing and shabby emotional display—for some matter meant to be taken seriously. This is presumably a way of reaching the people. No matter that in the process personal dignity, institutional dignity, and national dignity are all diminished.

Talk shows are not the only contributors to the national din. Americans are being urged from many quarters to speak out and speak up, when they might better be sent to sit in the corner for a while. The pollster's questions read our slippery moods like a CAT scanner: Should McDonald's serve pizza? Should the government serve health care? Would you be willing to pay more for a slightly bigger cookie? Are you in favor of armed intervention if no one will get hurt?

These are equally issues on which we are asked to have opinions, and having made our opinions known, we expect to have them regarded. The fate of the hamburger is of passing interest, but if government turns skittish and bends to each pollster's reading of public preference, it does no service to democracy, which cannot survive continual indulgence. Rather than hold to a core of unshakable belief and endure the consequences, too many politicians go limp as new balloons until inflated with the hot air of public opinion. This passes for responsiveness when it is really only self-preservation. And

even as it is indulged, the public loses respect for its easy leaders, who maneuver themselves farther from esteem—and are called to account on the air.

Gravity for us has mostly to do with physics, but the Latin word from which our word derives, *gravitas*, carries a richer association of meanings, of "weight" and "heaviness" not just in a physical sense but in a moral sense as well—seriousness of temperament, conduct, and speech, and the dignity and authority that one wins as a consequence. To be famous for your *gravitas* was to enjoy a high reputation. In our day, when we no longer forge links to the past but keep hold of it with adhesive tape at best, it may be pointless to bring up the Romans. But it is gravity in the Roman sense that is missing from too much of our social, political, and cultural life, an awareness of the proper dignity and proportion to be observed in the performance of every act of life.

Debasing associations abound and work their harm. Yet what is to be done? Perhaps the disease will simply have to run its course, and its ravages bring us to our senses. In the meantime, modest remedies might relieve some of the symptoms. Raymond Carver once used as the title of a short story a request that should now be made at large: *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* Well, it's a beginning. Hopefully.

SPAIN

IN SEARCH OF ITSELF

*The transformation of Spain since the death of
General Francisco Franco in 1975 has been remarkable.*

*One American journalist recently described the country as a
"thoroughly modern land, increasingly sexy and shockproof and rich."*

*Only a few years ago, optimists in Madrid were promoting
their country as the "California of Europe."*

*But today, reports John Hooper, recession and mounting political
uncertainties have punctured some of the optimism.*

*They have also raised doubts about where
the new Spain is heading.*

BY JOHN HOOPER

Just about the first thing anyone arriving in Madrid is likely to see these days is a pair of immense office towers standing on either side of the northern entrance to the city. They dominate the skyline from countless angles and can be glimpsed from miles away across Spain's arid central tableland, the *meseta*. What makes them remarkable is not so much that they reach 27 stories into the sky but that they tilt precariously toward each other—at angles nearly three times as precipitous as the one at which the Tower of Pisa famously leans.

Unlike London, Paris, or Rome, Madrid never had an instantly recognizable monument. The *Puerta de Europa* (Gate to Europe), as the two-tower complex is called, has given it one. In time, the towers should be as readily identified with their city as Big Ben, the Eiffel Tower, or the Coliseum are with theirs. For the time being, though, these remarkable—and disconcerting—structures are likely to remain



The Living Room (1970) by Equipo Crónica updates Velázquez's famous *Las Meninas* (see p. 27).

more symbolic than celebrated. As is embarrassingly apparent from the steel-and-glass cladding that reaches only halfway up their sides, they are unfinished, unoccupied, and likely to remain so for some considerable time.

Residents of Madrid—*madrileños*—refer to these buildings not as the “Gate to Europe” but as the “KIO towers,” in allusion to the Kuwait Investment Office, one of whose subsidiaries arranged for them to be built. Last year the KIO pulled out of Spain, complaining that it had lost huge sums of money and alleging that its misfortune was partly due to malpractice by its Spanish agents. Nobody is in a hurry to take over the Gate to Europe project because Madrid today finds itself with a huge

surplus of office space.

In several ways, the KIO towers epitomize the Spain that Felipe González and his Socialist Party have created since coming to power in 1982: the soaringly ambitious, daringly imaginative idea; the obligatory link with Europe; the dependence on foreign investments, and the whiff of irregularity that often floats around such investments. If, moreover, you had to hang a sign on Spain at the moment, it would be the same as the one that ought to be hanging on the KIO towers: "Work Temporarily Suspended."

The economic prodigy of late-1980s Europe is now in trouble. Even before "Spain's year"—1992—had ended, the country was plunging into recession. Domestic productivity, which increased 2.3 percent in 1991, is projected to decline about 1.0 percent in 1993; the same period has seen falling wages and growing unemployment. Such a downturn is scarcely surprising in today's financially depressed Europe. In Spain, though, economic setbacks have a wider relevance that is exceptional, if not unique.

When González paid his first official visit to Washington shortly after taking office, the Reagan administration concluded that the young prime minister and his team were best seen not as Socialists but as "young nationalists." It was a remarkably perceptive conclusion, for González and his intimates belong to, and spring from, a specifically Spanish tradition that dates back to the end of the last century, and beyond.

Spain, it should not be forgotten, was once the most powerful nation on earth, though delusions of grandeur long outlived the reality of imperial greatness. In 1898, when the United States seized the last remnants of Spain's first empire, even the more self-deluding Spaniards were forced to recognize the

extent of their country's decline. From that point on, the causes of, and remedies for, Spain's *atraso*—its perceived backwardness relative to the rest of Europe—became the abiding obsession of its thinkers and leaders. An entire school of Spanish poetry, the "generation of '98," took its name from that fateful year.

By the 1930s, the Spanish had shown signs that they could in fact catch up. In 1936, when they held their first truly democratic general election, there were more telephones in Spain than there were in France. But the outcome of the 1936 ballot plunged the country into civil war. And when the fighting ended in 1939, it was a quasi-fascist coalition, led by General Francisco Franco and backed by the Axis, that had emerged victorious. All hope of expunging the *atraso* vanished. Instead of removing the General after the defeat of the Axis in World War II, the Allies opted to punish the Spanish people as a whole for having let their country be taken over by an undesirable. Spain was excluded from the Marshall Plan, and a trade embargo was placed on it by the newly created United Nations.

It was not until 1951 that Spain's per capita national income recovered its pre-civil war level. By then, parts of the country had come near to suffering outright famine. This is not a chapter of their history which the Spanish are particularly keen to recall or which, for different reasons, the rest of the world is particularly eager to disinter. The number of books written about Spain in the 1940s is minimal. Perhaps the best contemporary foreign account is Gerald Brenan's *The Face of Spain*, first published in 1950.

In it, Brenan records a walk through the hills in southern Spain, a walk that "led us past the mouth of a little cave or rock shelter, whose entrance had been blocked with a few household chattels. Behind these we discovered a woman lying on some sacks, who, when she

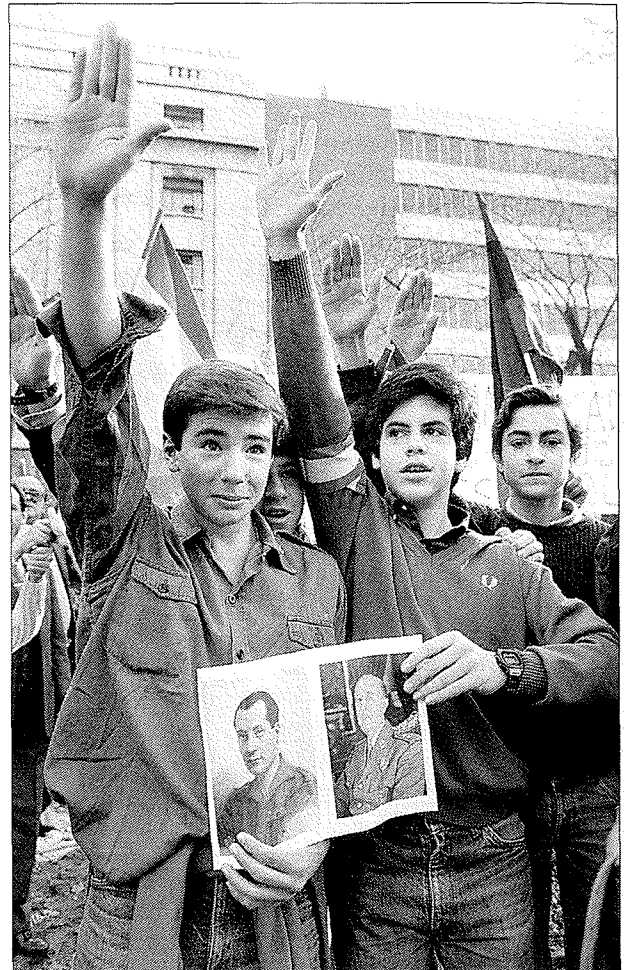
John Hooper lives in Madrid, where he is the correspondent for the Guardian, the Economist, and the Observer. He is the author of The Spaniards: A Portrait of the New Spain (1986), which won the Allen Lane Award in 1987 for the best first work of nonfiction. Copyright © 1993 by John Hooper.

saw us, got up and came out. She was a woman of under 30, dressed in a very old and ragged black dress which showed her naked body through its rents. . . . She was obviously starving, but she did not complain, or ask for money, and when I gave her some, appeared surprised."

Conditions improved gradually during the 1950s, but it was not until 1959—long after Spain's diplomatic and commercial isolation had been eased—that the country's inherent economic potential was tapped. The so-called Stabilization Plan of that year was the prelude to a period of wholesale liberalization. The results were extraordinary. Between 1961 and 1973, Spain's economy grew at an average rate of seven percent a year, faster than that of any other country in the noncommunist world except Japan. By 1964, Spain had ceased to be a "developing nation" as defined by the United Nations. Its economy changed from an agriculturally based one into one based increasingly on industry and services, notably tourism. The exodus from the towns and villages into the cities, which had begun in the 1950s, gathered momentum during the 1960s. By the time the boom was over, one in seven Spaniards had fled the countryside in search of a better life.

That, eventually, is what most of them secured. The early years—often spent camped in illegally constructed shacks or lodged with friends in cramped, noisy, shabby apartments—were usually appallingly harsh. But, with time, the migrants attained progressively better accommodations and some of the more modest luxuries and conveniences: a refrigerator, a television, even a car.

In the mid-1970s, though, their progress and that of their country came to a shuddering halt, as a general slowdown hit the developed world. During this period the West discovered that a cyclical economic downturn,



The spirit of Franco lingers. In Madrid, members of the Fascist Youth Corps observe the 10th anniversary of the general's death.

when set against a history of widespread deficit budgeting and in the context of quadrupled oil prices, could produce inflation at the same time as stagnation.

Spain's experience with stagflation was particularly bitter, because the worldwide economic crisis of 1973–74 commenced just as General Franco was reaching the end of his life. Decisive responses to the crisis conditions were frequently postponed or avoided as the country's leaders grappled with the problems of transforming Spain from a dictatorship into a democracy. Between 1975, when Franco died, and 1983, average real income

dropped—if only by 0.07 percent. Spain had again fallen behind in the race to catch up, and though the word *atrás* was no longer used, events were about to show that the concept it implied—the idea that Spaniards had a mission to put their country back in contention with the likes of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy—was still very much alive.

Among the first statements made by a Socialist leader after his party took office was that of Alfonso Guerra, the party's deputy general secretary and then deputy prime minister. The Socialists, he said, were going to change Spain "so that even its own mother wouldn't recognize it."

Guerra was, and still is, the outstanding proponent of the idea that Spain has it within

its grasp to become the "California of Europe." This notion, which became particularly prevalent in the mid-1980s, took as its point of departure the revolution in information technology of the previous 10 years or so. Since industries no longer had to be located close to the source of their raw materials, it was argued, the people who ran them could now choose where to work. And, given a choice between a cold north and a warm south, they would opt for the latter. Once the European Community had a single internal market, it would see a transfer of resources of the kind that was already taking place in the United States. Large tracts of Northern Europe were doomed to become the Community's "rust belt," while a swath of the Continent from Portugal to Greece stood fair to become its "sunbelt."

Despite these plans there is scant indica-



Prime minister of Spain since 1982, Felipe González here rallies his Socialist supporters at the beginning of last summer's general election. His victory on June 6 surprised many pollsters.

tion of overseas firms setting up business in Spain in order to sell vanguard technology products to the rest of Europe. And it is not too difficult to see why.

The cultural differences that might deter an entrepreneur from switching from, say, Dusseldorf to Seville, are infinitely greater than those standing in the way of a move from New York to Santa Monica. California has always had a lot more to offer than sun—an exceptionally well-educated work force, impressively well-developed communications, and a culture geared to enterprise. Without belittling the progress made by Spain, and especially Andalusia, one must note that both are still a long way behind most of the rest of the EC on all three counts.

While the Socialists may not have turned Spain into the California of Europe, they can justifiably boast of bringing about a substantial improvement in the material well-being of the country, both in absolute terms and relative to the rest of the EC, which Spain joined at the start of 1986. An initial period of cut-backs and industrial downsizing gave way in the late 1980s to a spectacular boom. In the four years to the end of 1989, gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an annual average of 4.7 percent. In 1985, per capita income had been less than 72 percent of the EC average. By 1989, it was almost 76 percent.

Strengthened and encouraged by their increased prosperity, Spaniards started to make their presence felt in areas and ways that had previously been unthinkable. Spanish models began to be seen sauntering the catwalks of Paris and gazing out from the covers of glossy international fashion magazines. Spanish scientists cropped up on some of the world's most advanced research projects, including Europe's Nuclear Fusion Project. Spain's film industry, once seemingly incapable of turning out anything but grim, gory allegories, all of a sudden produced the comic genius of Pedro Almodóvar and a host of other directors—including Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón and Juan José Bigas

Lana—who are less known abroad but no less innovative than the celebrated creator of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*.

Spanish tennis players such as Arantxa Sánchez-Vicario, Concha Martínez, and Sergei Bruguera hover close to the top of the international rankings. This year, Miguel Induráin won cycling's premier event, the Tour de France, for the third year running. And at the 1992 Olympics, the Spanish astonished the world by carrying off 22 medals, including 13 golds—a better performance than was turned in by France, Italy, Australia, or Great Britain.

Spain's accomplishments in the world of journalism have been equally impressive. One of the English-speaking world's fastest-growing magazines is the Spanish-owned and inspired *Hello!* One of Britain's leading daily newspapers, *The Independent*, is now partly owned by a Spanish one, *El País*. There was a time when it was rare to find more than a handful of Spanish correspondents at even the biggest international events. But during Operation Desert Shield, the Spanish media contingent was easily as large as that fielded by Italy, France, or Germany. And it was a Spaniard—Alfonso Rojo of *El Mundo*—who became the only non-Arab press reporter to stay in Baghdad alongside Peter Arnett of CNN throughout the Persian Gulf War.

Indeed, Spain is a fully responsible member of the international community. Madrid successfully hosted the opening round of the 1991 Middle East peace conference. It was a Spanish initiative that helped bridge the gap between the two opposing camps in the EC over economic and monetary union, and a Spanish proposal that added a new dimension to political union by introducing the concept of community citizenship. It was not until 1989 that the first Spaniards joined a United Nations peace-keeping force. Yet today there are more Spanish officers wearing the sky-blue beret than there are officers of any other nationality. And in perhaps the sharpest irony of all, General Franco's notorious Spanish Legion

now tries to enforce the peace in the former Yugoslavia.

In the 1989 election campaign, González had boasted that under his administration Spain had acquired greater international prestige than at any other time since the reign of the Emperor Charles V in the 16th century. A similar message was subliminally projected by the staging of the extraordinary round of festivities held during 1992, when Barcelona hosted the Olympic Games, Seville staged Expo '92, and even Madrid was given a part to play as the EC's 1992 "Capital of Culture."

Last year was also, of course, the 500th anniversary of several of the more decisive events in Spain's history, even though—as was rarely pointed out—Spain itself had yet to come into existence in 1492. During that year, Columbus arrived in the New World, the combined forces of the Crowns of Aragón and Castile defeated the last Muslim kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula, and the monarchs of the two realms, Ferdinand and Isabella, agreed to the expulsion of their Jewish subjects.

None of these events is viewed with universal approval elsewhere. Spain's reaction to criticism of its 1992 jamboree, which generally began as astonishment and turned into indifference, betrayed a remarkable degree of continuing cultural and intellectual isolation. But it also suggested that González is not alone among today's Spaniards in looking back with pride to the days when Spain was conquering, then ruling, that empire "upon which the sun never set."

It is not that the Spanish aspire to, much less expect, some form of domination, but many do feel that they have an opportunity—and a responsibility—to put their country back where they believe it belongs. It is this, perhaps, which explains a sense of national purpose, a sort of instinctive patriotism, which one would be hard put to find elsewhere in Western Europe and which is more reminiscent of the spirit that animated many of the newly independent Third World states of the 1960s. Spanish journalists, in

print, on radio, and on television, often refer to their country as "our country." Any sign of anyone, anywhere paying attention to Spain is picked up and relayed back, to be pored over with fascination. When a Spanish ballet company put on a performance abroad recently, it earned a front-page photograph in that otherwise sophisticated newspaper, *El País*, together with a caption explaining how the event showed that Spanish culture was capable of transcending "our frontiers."

Yet suddenly, in their race to catch up, the Spanish are stumbling. It seems that the gap separating Spanish incomes from the EC average is now growing bigger rather than smaller. At the same time, an odd series of events has cast a searching light on the quality of much that has been achieved.

Spain's present economic situation is remarkable for the speed with which it has tipped from boom to bust. Employment is perhaps the best example. Joblessness had been edging upward since mid-1991, at a rate of 50,000–100,000 every three months. During the final quarter of last year and the opening quarter of this one, though, the number leapt by more than half a million. Put another way, one in every 25 Spaniards with a job in October 1992 had lost that job by the end of the following March.

Such a steep drop in employment would occasion a change of government in most democracies, especially if—as in Spain's case—the eventual election were held against a backdrop of no less than three currency devaluations in eight months. Yet, in the general election on June 6, Felipe González and the Socialists not only captured the largest single share of the vote but achieved a bigger-than-expected margin that has since enabled them to form a minority government. González managed to do what John Major did in Britain—retain power in a recession—and he succeeded in doing what Paul Keating did in Australia—defy a worldwide trend away from anything remotely linked to Karl Marx.

But then he managed much more than either. The very reason the election had been called was to distract attention from a split in the ranks of the ruling Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE). And the reason for the split was that González had tried—and failed—to get someone to take the rap for a corruption scandal. The reason the scandal had been an issue in the first place was that a team of his own administration's accountants had told the Supreme Court that the ruling party had, as alleged, been funded by systematic graft.

One might examine these peculiar events and conclude that the Spanish, faced with a temporary economic setback, responded prudently by choosing not to change political horses in midstream. It can be argued that the speed with which the Spanish economy went into reverse was in part due to last year's megafiesta. The boom had really ended in 1989, when the government put the brakes on an overheated economy by means of a credit freeze. It was then faced with the challenge of preparing Spain for its big year. In order to do so, it reversed its policy and sanctioned expansionary budgets for both 1991 and 1992. A building spree helped generate economic activity in general and keep people off the dole queues in particular. But the collapse, when it came, was correspondingly more abrupt.

The case for not changing horses in midstream was made repeatedly by the Socialists during the election. One of the main planks in the PSOE's platform, in fact, was that it was the only party that had succeeded in pulling Spain out of a recession in the mid-1980s. Then again, it was also the only party standing that had managed to cast Spain *into* a recession.



La Bolsa, Madrid's stock exchange, is one of Spain's four exchanges and accounts for 82 percent of the nation's trading.

The underlying question remains whether recent developments do not say something less sanguine about the underlying condition of the Spanish economy and the workings of Spanish democracy.

Anyone with a knowledge of Spain's modern economic history who has witnessed the developments of the past few months is bound to be troubled by an ominous sense of déjà vu. Ever since 1959, when it was opened to the outside world, the Spanish economy has reflected international developments—to an exaggerated degree. The highs have been higher, the lows lower. If history is indeed repeating itself, Spain is heading—as it was in 1974—for a deeper and longer recession than can be expected elsewhere.

There are at least two reasons why this pattern has developed. The first is an enduring lack of substance in the Spanish economy. Most of Spain missed out on industrialization, and those parts that did not are currently being stripped of the "sunset" businesses that once provided them with wealth without noticeably acquiring the "sunrise" industries they need for prosperity. In recent times, Spain has been forced to absorb the excess labor it was once able to unload on the rest of the world by means of emigration, first to Latin America and latterly to northwestern Europe. Nor has it ever achieved international competitiveness. Spain's trade balance has been consistently negative. The current account has been put into the black, when it has been in the black, by tourist earnings and emigrant remittances, not by sales of Spanish goods and services overseas.

It is noteworthy that Spain—unlike Italy, for example—has failed to produce any high-prestige, high-quality brand names. Indeed, Spain today is at least at the same stage of development that Italy was during the 1960s. Yet there is no sign that anything produced in Spain can win the worldwide recognition given to Lamborghini cars, Ferragamo shoes, or even Vespa scooters.

The second reason for Spain's roller-coaster economic progress is its acute dependence on the outside world. Though an immense amount of hard work has been done by Spaniards to make their country as prosperous as it is today, it is also a fact that the country's two modern booms were both crucially dependent on external catalysts.

If the mainspring of Spain's rapid growth in the 1960s was tourism, then what sparked the latest spurt of growth was Spanish accession to the EC in 1986: Membership in the Community offers a virtual guarantee to foreign investors. The EC principle of "solidarity" ensures that the Community's poorer members will be helped to grow until such time as they are more or less on a par with the rest. Sensing that putting money into Spain was almost a sure bet, foreign investors poured cash into the economy, stimulating the growth that was foreseen and closing what was in effect a "benevolent circle" of self-fulfilling expectations.

In order to preserve the inflated value of Spain's national currency and to make it attractive for investors to keep their money in pesetas, the González administration pursued a policy that sustained high interest rates. But the effect was to generate an essentially speculative rather than productive boom. Spanish industrialists—despairing of the cost of money and the rates of exchange—opted in droves to sell their businesses to foreigners and reinvest the proceeds in stocks, bonds, and other financial assets, thereby heightening the external dependence that has been at the root of the policy. By the end of 1992, according to the *Economist* Intelligence Unit, half of all Spanish industry was foreign-owned.

Because so much of Spain's growth has been externally stimulated, its economic advancement has not been accompanied by the degree of social change usually needed to bring such advancement about. For all the business that has been going on in Spain, the Spanish business culture remains remarkably tradition-bound. Take the not-so-small

matter of the afternoon siesta.

Spanish hours are, if anything, even wackier than they were before the recent booms. The traditional *jornada partida* ("split day") was a response to the intense heat of the Spanish summer. It was intended to allow for a siesta in the afternoon. Nowadays, with the spread of air conditioning, its original purpose has largely disappeared. In any case, even before the arrival of air conditioning, most workers had ceased to be able to take a siesta because, in big modern cities, their workplaces were too far from their homes.

Shop hours throughout Spain nevertheless continue to be from about 9–10 A.M. to 2 P.M. and from 4:30–5:30 P.M. until 8–8:30 P.M. Factories, on the other hand, mostly work a *jornada intensiva* which, in theory if not always in practice, lasts from 8 A.M. to 3 P.M. This is also true of offices, though a growing number now use the *jornada partida* in winter (when there is no need for the siesta it is meant to facilitate) and the *jornada intensiva* in summer (when some younger employees choose to sleep after work until almost midnight and then spend all night out and go to work straight from the disco). There is no accepted rule for when companies should change from one timetable to another and, just to make matters even more difficult, other firms—to keep step with their foreign parent companies—work nine to five or 10 to six. Virtually no one works on Friday afternoons.

It is still normal for bosses to keep their secretaries in the dark about their whereabouts when they leave the office. At the same time, Spanish bosses are notoriously reluctant to delegate authority. As a result, all decision-making is paralyzed in their absence. If someone you are trying to contact is out (and most Spanish office workers spend up to an hour midmorning eating breakfast in a nearby "cafeteria"), then it is you—not he or she—who is expected to return the call.

Personal links remain of paramount importance in any sort of business. Anyone who tries to make contact by sending a fax or letter out of the blue is likely to be ignored. If,

however, you can elicit a relationship, no matter how tenuous or specious, with the person you need to contact, you will usually succeed on the first try. Possibly the single most useful phrase for anyone working in Spain is *de parte de*, though it is rarely mentioned in language courses and woefully mistranslated in most English-Spanish, Spanish-English dictionaries as "on behalf of."

When a caller says, "Llamo de parte de Señor X," what he or she is actually saying is "I got your number from X and am ringing with his blessing." It could well be that X is the husband of the second cousin of the person the caller wants to speak to, and the caller may know him only because he has a colleague whose sister-in-law went out with X five years earlier. Nonetheless, a bond of obligation has been established, and unless the person being sought is ready to risk insulting X, then that person is going to have to come to the phone and give the caller whatever help he or she requires.

The survival of such arcane practices is just one illustration of the way in which the immense changes of the last quarter century have left Spain's patina of modernity distinctly patchy. But there are other examples as well.

On the Paseo de la Castellana—the eight-lane highway that runs north-south through Madrid—you could be in, say, Atlanta. Shiny new limousines and roadsters race down a canyon formed by clean-lined office blocks in which the lights burn long after dark. But an hour's drive or less across the *meseta* and you can be in a world of attitudes and rituals that would have been completely familiar to Europeans of centuries ago.

There is growing concern in the rest of Europe, for instance, over the degree of cruelty to animals at village fiestas in Spain. A terrified goat is hurled each year from a church belfry at Manganeses de la Polvorosa. A hapless donkey is harried and jostled and leapt on in the streets of Villanueva de la Vera. In some villages, chickens are buried up to their necks



Rock musician Alberto Rojas of "Third World War," posing here with his parents, typifies Spanish youth today: rebellious but devoted to family.

and dispatched with either stones or clubs. In others, they are brained or decapitated while hanging from a cord. At Tordesillas in Old Castile, it is the young women of the town who, blindfolded, lay about the hapless, captive birds with swords. Bulls are tortured in any number of ways, with lances, darts, and flaming balls of tar stuck to their horns. For sheer weirdness, though, it would be difficult to beat what happens at Robledo de Chavela in the province of Madrid. There, the Easter Sunday parade stops beside a large tree stump. From it dangle earthenware pitchers which—the night before—are filled with small animals. To the strains of the Spanish national anthem, the pitchers are stoned by the parishioners until the animals fall out dead or dying. The ritual has been vigorously defended by the parish priest, who has linked it with the "struggle against sin."

There is a topsy-turvy, out-of-kilter feel to modern Spain that is, by turns, refreshing and disturbing. The isolation of the early Franco

years, the two frantic bursts of economic growth, and the political transformation that occurred in between have all combined to insulate the country from a number of the intellectual movements and social phenomena that have contributed most toward shaping contemporary attitudes elsewhere.

Just to take two examples, Spain is waking up in a postindustrial, postfeminist world having scarcely experienced either industrialization or feminism. The absence of large-scale industrialization outside the Basque country, Catalonia, and Asturias goes a long way toward explaining the persistence—other than in those areas—of that anarchic streak that 19th-century visitors found so striking in the

Spanish. Industrialization encourages regimentation, and through the growth of trade unions and collective bargaining, it promotes solidarity. Both characteristics are noticeably lacking in Spain.

The level of trade-union membership is the lowest in Western Europe, and there is nothing even resembling a working-class identity. Pressure groups of all kinds are less common than elsewhere in the developed world. Those that do exist tend to have smaller memberships by comparison. A high proportion of Spain's environmental protest groups are short-term, single-issue movements based firmly on the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) principle.

The Spaniards' leap from a preindustrial, agriculturally based society to a postindustrial, service-oriented one also perhaps explains why they have brought with them attitudes more typical of the 18th century than

of the 20th century. If they are to make sense of the social relationships around them, visitors to Spain would be well advised to imagine themselves inside a novel by Fielding or Smollett.

Bosses will deliver orders with a bluntness, and employees receive them with a servility, that can shock outsiders. Yet, underlying their relationship, there is often an assumption of personal equality, a recognition of personal dignity, that is lacking in most other advanced contemporary societies. The same chauffeur who greets the Chairman as "Don Pedro" can be seen arguing vigorously with him over the news of the day on the way to the office.

Relations between the sexes are equally deceptive. On the surface, Spanish women seem to have caught up with their sisters in the rest of Europe. There are three women in the cabinet. The head of one of the biggest state-owned corporations—the RENFE railway network—is a woman. And the government funds an institute for the promotion of women's rights.

But public opinion in Spain was never given the ear-bashing it received in the United States at the height of the feminist movement in the 1970s. At that time Spaniards of both sexes were far more concerned about whether or not their country was going to slip back into dictatorship. Every so often a rape or harassment case reveals stunningly reactionary attitudes among members of the judiciary. A judge recently threw out a sexual-abuse prosecution on the grounds that the alleged victim was too old and plain to have excited the defendant. Advertisements that would never get off the drawing board on Madison Avenue easily find their way onto the billboards of Spain. A recent ad for quince jelly, which the Spanish eat with sheep cheese, showed a woman naked from the waist up cupping a pair of quinces in front of her breasts, with the slogan, "What the quince jelly girl is offering you tonight."

An organized feminist movement did exist in Spain, but by the time it waned in the 1980s its only palpable achievement was a limited abortion-rights law. Equal-opportunity

legislation now exists, but it is widely ignored. Spanish bosses are habitually gender-specific in job advertisements and often pay men and women different rates for the same work.

In most of the rest of the developed world, progress toward sexual equality followed on—doubtless grew from—progress towards sexual freedom. The same process occurred in Spain, but acquired certain special characteristics.

The arrival, back in the 1960s, of millions of tourists in what was a still-traditional society allowed Spanish men to indulge in premarital relationships without involving Spanish women. The *sueca*—it means "Swedish woman" but was applied to all sexually available northern females—soon figured prominently in Spanish popular legend. The effect was twofold. Spanish women were left feeling that they had some catching up to do and that they needed to prove they were as desirable as any foreigner.

The results are still visible today. For the most part, Spanish women give the impression that they want to be seen as alluring first and equal second. As it happens, during the last few years a more balanced diet made possible by prosperity has produced a generation of taller, slimmer *españolas*—and done so at a time when fashion and prosperity have provided them with an opportunity to flaunt their charms. And flaunt is often the word. The fine distinction between elegance and sexiness which is drawn elsewhere counts for little in Spain. What is good for the disco is frequently good for the office, too.

It rarely raises a murmur, though. After 36 years of dictatorship under the late General Franco, today's Spaniards seem almost obsessively determined to avoid censure of anything other than perhaps racism, terrorism, and corruption. But explicit sex on the telly at 5 P.M. when the kids are home from school and playing with the zapper? So what? The papers say that such-and-such a politician has had a child by his mistress. Who cares? It is only now—10 years at least since the problem be-

came evident—that a handful of conservative local government authorities are taking steps to stop junkies from shooting up in public places.

Even the minor social vices are winked at. In five years since returning to Spain, I have not only never been given a breathalyzer test but have never seen anyone else being tested. It often seems, in fact, that drinking and driving is compulsory rather than just tolerated. Almost every highway gas station has a machine selling canned beer, and several offer spirits with mixers in easy-to-open, easy-to-hold, wide-necked bottles, presumably so that you can take a swig of gin and tonic or rum and Coke while you steer.

For more than a year it has been fashionable for the young of Madrid to dance all night from Saturday into Sunday, then dose up on an awesome cocktail of designer drugs and roar off by car to Valencia, 225 miles away. There they can continue dancing until about 6 P.M. before returning, exhausted, along the same busy road. The practice is sufficiently established for night clubs to have been set up along the route to cater to those revelers who choose to break their journey for a quick top-up of pounding music, pills, or both. The police must know what is going on—it has even been written up in the newspapers—but so far they have done absolutely nothing to stop it.

It often seems as if tolerance is being used to replace, rather than accompany, decisions about what is good or bad, right or wrong—a knock-on effect perhaps of the decline in the influence of Roman Catholicism. That decline is largely explained by the history of the church's close association with Franco. The hierarchy in particular came down squarely on the side of the General and his forces during the civil war, and although the priesthood leaned progressively further toward the opposition in the later stage of Franco's rule, it was not enough to clear away the stigma that Roman Catholicism had acquired in the eyes of

many progressive Spaniards. The leadership of the PSOE, for example, is overwhelmingly agnostic.

Spanish society continues to respect those family values whose implantation is widely, if debatably, credited to the church. Though premarital sex is common in Spain, cohabitation and illegitimacy rates are among the lowest in Western Europe. Some 70 percent of young people live with their parents until they marry. Yet the comprehensive rejection of Roman Catholic teaching on contraception is made evident by the fact that, since 1980, the average number of children per family has been just 1.5.

For all intents and purposes, though, Roman Catholicism is Spain's only faith. Its Jews were expelled five centuries ago and its Muslims not long after. Protestantism was kept out by the Inquisition. Freemasonry was proscribed by Franco. So the decline of Roman Catholicism has effectively deprived the Spanish of what for centuries was their sole ethical lodestone. The idea of turning to another religion, or even to a sect or cult, rarely seems to occur to Spaniards. The Spanish philosopher José Luis Aranguren has described the resulting condition as "moral minimalism."

In politics, one finds both moral and ideological minimalism. Successive González administrations have drifted from socialist principles progressively closer to a kind of managerial pragmatism. A third of the members of his present cabinet are not even members of the PSOE.

"We no longer have a policy," a Socialist once told me without a trace of regret. "We use opinion polls instead. The moment we see that 51 percent of the electorate is in favor of something, we make it law." The polls, often lavish in scale, are prepared by a special, government-funded polling center, the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, some of whose studies are withheld from the general public. Such an approach makes it almost impossible for the opposition to find an issue on which to attack the party in power and attract votes.

Political debate, when it is not about personalities, therefore often centers on whatever scandal happens to be catching the attention of the media at the moment.

Ideological commitment is hard to come by except on what, in Spain, passes for the hard Left: an intensely fissiparous electoral alliance of Communists, disgruntled Socialists, Republicans, ecologists, pacifists, and feminists known by the misleading title of the United Left. Just as the Socialists have succeeded in stealing the clothes of the Right, so the Right, in the form of the People's Party (PP), is forever attempting to steal the clothes of the Left. In the last general election, for example, it shied away from admitting that privatization was its answer to tackling the budget deficit, preferring instead to stress its commitment to welfare.

The idea that ideological labels are for taking off and putting on at will is perhaps the inevitable result of Spain's recent political history. The stock phrase to describe what happened during the late 1970s is "Spain's peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy." Yet the process was not peaceful at all. In fact, politically inspired violence has claimed more than 1,000 victims since Franco's death. It was not until the boil of neo-Francoist resentment burst with an abortive military coup in 1981 that subversion of the new order by supporters of the old one ceased to be a serious problem. Before and since then, Spain's democratic rulers have had to contend with a variety of left-wing terrorist groups originally set up to undermine the dictatorship. The Basque guerrilla movement is well known; less so are its nowadays more or less defunct Galician and Catalan counterparts. Spain is also home to the First of October

Antifascist Revolutionary Groups (GRAPO), an organization inspired by beliefs reminiscent of those of the Italian Red Brigades.

What gave Spain's transition its identity was not the absence of violence, then, but a decision intended to minimize the threat of even greater disruption. Franco, it should be remembered, died in his bed. Spain's quasi-fascist regime, unlike Portugal's, was never overthrown. Although it was widely accepted—even by many former supporters—that it had had its day, the institutions that were meant to guarantee its survival were still in place when its creator expired. Instead of making a clean break with the totalitarian past, as proposed by leaders of the clandestine opposition to the dictatorship, it was decided to win the consent of the Francoist institutions to their own abolition or reform.

This was the plan concocted by Prince Juan Carlos and his advisers. It was put into effect by Spain's first democratically elected post-Franco prime minister, Adolfo Suárez, who ran the country from 1977 until 1981. It was entirely characteristic of the process that Suárez himself had been the last secretary general of the only



Lt. Colonel Antonio Tejero de Molina, front man for the abortive military coup of 1981, holds forth from the podium in Spain's parliament.

party allowed to operate legally under Franco, the National Movement.

Franco's relatives were never put in jail. What awaited them was the perhaps worse fate of being subjected to weekly coverage in Spain's gossip magazines. Franco's leading secret policemen were mostly assigned to the battle against terrorism. Several of the most renowned torturers among them have since retired to well-paid jobs in the private-security industry. Numerous major and minor public figures from the Franco era were quietly allowed to soften their image, shift their stance, and then re-emerge as if they had been lifelong committed democrats. There are showbiz personalities with their own programs on Spanish television today who were once only too happy to be photographed entertaining Spain's aging dictator. Newspaper editors who had Franco's full faith and trust can now be heard on Spanish radio confidently offering their strictures on the Socialists' approach to civil liberties.

At no time was a line drawn through the Right, as it was in Portugal, in order to distinguish between democratic and totalitarian conservatives. One consequence is that the People's Party, which is led by incontrovertibly moderate, democratic right-wingers, nevertheless attracts a pretty heterogeneous array of supporters, from neoliberals to more or less unreconstructed Francoists. This makes it comparatively easy for its opponents to claim that a vote for the People's Party is a vote for a return to dictatorship, which the Socialists did in the final stages of this year's general election campaign. At various times they compared the PP's leader, José María Aznar, to Hitler, Franco, and the leader of the failed 1981 coup, Antonio Tejero de Molina.

An indication of the success of these tactics could be discerned in the way the exit polls, which have a good record of accuracy in Europe, failed to get it right in Spain. Like the polls conducted during the campaign, they showed the PP and the Socialists neck and

neck. Numerous Spaniards must have lied to—or withheld the truth from—pollsters even after they had voted. Many of these are thought to have been poorer, mostly rural voters who were playing it safe and misleading—or omitting to answer—the pollsters, just in case González's warnings did come true and their answers were somehow one day held against them.

This fear may be a bit disquieting, but it is not really surprising. Spaniards have never seen one fully combatant party hand power over to another after losing at the ballot box. Or rather, most of them have not. The oldest among them saw it happen in 1936, when the Popular Front beat the National Front. And that led to the civil war.

Spain's only previous ruling party since the death of General Franco, Adolfo Suárez's Union of the Democratic Center (UDC), fell apart in office. The Socialists, by far the biggest opposition party at the time, stepped in to fill the gap, but before they were able to do so maverick elements within the army staged their failed coup. Small wonder there is a fear of change.

It has been argued that a democracy cannot be properly consolidated until power has been voluntarily surrendered through the ballot box at least twice. On that reckoning, and even if you regard the 1982 election as constituting a voluntary surrender of power, Spain does not yet have a consolidated democracy.

Is there, in fact, any likelihood of a return to dictatorship—or, still worse perhaps, civil strife? Looking around Spain today it is very difficult to imagine. Almost a quarter century of impressive if irregular economic growth has healed the raw political divisions and vast social imbalances that made Spain so explosive in the 1930s. The civil war is rarely mentioned precisely because it is reckoned too terrible to recall. The ultra-Right nowadays collects a minute percentage of the vote at election time. Almost nothing has been heard by way of serious complaint or protest from

within the armed forces for years now. Nor is there a cause apparent that could provide reactionary officers with the minimum of public support they would need for another intervention. Looking around Europe, there would seem to be at least a dozen countries more at risk of instability than Spain.

But in today's Europe it would be unwise to take anything too much for granted, and it has to be admitted that a "nightmare scenario" can be made out. It depends for its credibility on the interaction between Spain's ethnic and cultural diversity on the one hand and the peculiar role assigned to its armed forces on the other.

Spain is an unusual example of a state whose ethnic composition has remained stable yet varied. It has scarcely altered since the 17th century, when the last Muslims were deported, yet it is characterized by considerable heterogeneity.

At the point where France meets Spain in the crook of the Bay of Biscay are to be found the Basques, a people whose non-Indo-European language—now spoken by only about 10 percent of the inhabitants of the Basque country—is thought to go back to the late Stone Age. At the other end of the Pyrenean mountain range that runs from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean is Catalonia, a territory that was partly repopulated after the Arab invasion of A.D. 711 by Franks and that even today has a distinctly French air. Catalan looks and sounds indeed like a cross between French and Spanish. Not only is it spoken by about two-thirds of the population of Catalonia itself, but variants of the language are used by some two-thirds of the Balearic Islanders and about half the inhabitants of the Valencian country, immediately to the south of Catalonia.

If Catalan resembles a cross between Spanish and French, then Galician—the language of the far northwest of Spain—seems like a hybrid of Spanish and Portuguese. It is in fact every bit as much a separate language as Catalan, and the parent tongue of Portuguese, rather than vice versa. The number of

speakers is reckoned at over 80 percent of all inhabitants of Galicia, though that includes large numbers who speak a bastardized, semi-Hispanicized, version.

In all, almost a quarter of the population of Spain speaks a language other than that somewhat inappropriately named tongue, Spanish. (In Spain, as in Latin America, it is often referred to as *castellano*, that is, Castilian.) Linguistic differences constitute a significant centrifugal force pulling at the state, and not the only one.

Spain's size, its relatively low population density, its mountainous topography, the scarcity of navigable rivers, and, until comparatively recently, the shortage of other communications have all combined to isolate Spaniards from one another. This has not only made the regional differences among them greater but also—in many instances—more apparent than real.

Even so, Spain is like both Italy and Germany in having a population that has been divided among different states for much of its history. Before the unification of Spain—a process not finally settled until the middle of the 17th century—the people who lived in what is now Spain were scattered among the Muslim Kingdom of Granada, the Kingdom of Navarre, and the so-called Crowns of Aragón (a federation of the Aragonese, the Catalans, the Valencians, and the Balearic Islanders) and Castile (which took in not only Castile but also Asturias, Cantabria, León, the Basque country, Estremadura, and Andalusia). Because Italy and Germany were united only during the last century, one might conclude that the separatist impulse is potentially stronger in those nations than in Spain. This may yet prove to be the case, but it is equally important to bear in mind that because the centralizing process in Spain took place in an earlier age, it was carried out with less sensitivity and also with less efficiency. The Basques, in particular, were left to enjoy rights—known as *fueros*—which gave them a privileged and separate status within a nominally unitary state.

Two factors have helped contain Spain's centrifugal tendencies. One has been the flow of job-seeking migrants into the industrialized Basque country and Catalonia which began in the last century and continued right up to the early 1970s. Because there has been considerable "absorption," particularly in Catalonia, where the language is easier to learn, ethnically "pure" Basques and Catalans are now reckoned to be in a minority in their respective lands.

Improvements in communications, particularly within the past decade, have also played a unifying role, helping to show Spaniards that they are not perhaps quite as different from one another as they had once believed.

In between these two developments, and overlapping them, however, was an outburst of intense regional nationalist feeling which—for better or worse—has left its mark on the country. It was almost certainly linked to the upsurge in regional nationalist sentiment elsewhere in Europe during the mid-to-late 1970s, but it took strength mainly from popular reaction to Franco's remorseless centralism.

In response to the pressure for a quasi-federalist solution, Suárez's administration set up a system in which each of the 17 regions of Spain, dubbed "autonomous communities," acquired its own president, government, flag, legislature, and judiciary. The outstanding peculiarity of the system was that various regions were given different degrees of self-government. The Basque country, Catalonia, and Galicia were granted, as a right, a generous measure of home rule. But a sort of democratic obstacle course was set up for the others to test how much autonomy each really wanted. Only the Andalusians of southern Spain succeeded in putting themselves on a par with the Basques, Catalans, and Galicians.

The eventual scheme of graded autonomy turned out to reflect quite accurately the intensity of separatist sentiment in the various parts of Spain. The snag was that it left open the door for incessant bargaining: Every time one of the "autonomous communities" gets additional powers, all the others clamor for compensatory increments of their own. To date, this

has not been much of a problem. The 1978 Constitution sketched out the powers assigned to each sort of autonomous community and, in their negotiations, the central and regional governments have been operating well within the bounds outlined 15 years ago. The Constitution, however, is a vague—often deliberately vague—document, and it creates numerous gray areas where it is by no means clear whether power ought to be exercised by Madrid or by one or more of the regional administrations.

Most of the responsibilities indisputably assigned by the Constitution to the regions have since been transferred. Quite soon therefore the debate will focus on areas where it will be a matter of opinion as to whether the deal struck goes beyond the terms of the Constitution. Indeed, this is already starting to happen. The Catalan nationalists have demanded control over a share of the income tax collected in Catalonia—a question not covered, let alone settled, by the Constitution.

It is at this point that another part of the document becomes of paramount importance, for it stipulates that the armed forces "have as their mission to guarantee the sovereignty and independence of Spain, defend its constitutional arrangements and its territorial integrity." It was this last requirement that was used to justify the failed 1981 coup—an uprising launched specifically to abort the creation of the autonomous communities.

One reason why the 1981 coup failed was a logical inconsistency obvious to all but the most purblind officers—the very constitution that empowered the armed forces to intervene also sanctioned the system of regional government to which the conspirators objected. No such inconsistency arises, however, if the arrangements can be depicted as exceeding the limits of the Constitution.

The regional nationalists' ability to secure concessions from the central government is almost certain to increase. For the past 11 years, authority has been exercised in Madrid

by an administration with an outright parliamentary majority. Last June, however, the Socialists lost their ability to pass legislation without reference to the opposition and, at present, are attempting to negotiate deals with the Basque and Catalan nationalists. Both groups had earlier been invited to join a coalition government, and both have said they will reconsider the offer when they see the shape of the Socialists' budget for next year.

To a large extent, the future stability of Spain depends on two factors. The first is the effect of the nationalists' incorporation into government. If the military sees nothing but endless concessions by the central government, the situation could turn nasty. But if there is evidence that the nationalists are gradually being drawn into assuming responsibility for the fortunes of the Spanish state, then the results could eventually be positive.

A second factor is the fate of the project for European union. The reason Spaniards are so keen on membership in the EC is not, as one might think, that they are among the net beneficiaries. Polls show that a majority believe—against all the evidence—that their country has lost out from belonging to the Community. The benefits of EC membership are perceived as being less tangible. It proves to the Spanish that they truly are Europeans, and not—as they sometimes, only half-jokingly, claim—*medio moros* (semi-Arabs). But it also offers a solution to the interlocking problems created by the

armed forces and the regional nationalists.

We tend to forget that the extension of EC membership to the poorer states of Southern Europe had more to do with Continental security than with anything else. It was not just a way of rewarding the Greeks, the Portuguese, and the Spanish for having got rid of their unpleasant and potentially destabilizing regimes; it was also a means of ensuring that they remain democratic by making it clear that democracy is a condition of membership. The successful results of that policy can be seen in Spain today: Barely a murmur has been heard from the army in the nearly eight years since the Rome Treaty was signed.

EC membership, in so far as it commits Spain to the process of European union, also holds out the prospect of a solution to the regionalist problem. How depends on your standpoint. The centralist view is that Basque and Catalan demands will gradually become irrelevant in a united Europe. The Basque and Catalan nationalists, by contrast, believe that once the existing state frontiers disappear, the way will be open for a more rational, ethnically based internal territorial division.

But what happens if the process of European union, on which Spain is staking so much, should come to a dead halt, as it has sometimes threatened to do in the past year or so? The most likely answer, on the generally impressive evidence of the recent past, is that the Spanish would find a peaceful and sensible way of resolving the dilemma. Nevertheless, the shadow of a doubt must remain.

SPAIN IN SEARCH OF ITSELF

The English poet W. H. Auden described it as "that arid square, that fragment nipped off from hot Africa, / soldered so cruelly into inventive Europe." Auden's characterization of Spain is only a gentler version of a typical European condescension that survived right up until recent years. "Africa begins at the Pyrenees," announced the 19th-century French novelist Alexandre Dumas, snidely implying that Europe ended there. Indeed, the period labels by which we usually chart Western European history—Renaissance and Reformation, Enlightenment and Industrialization—seem largely inapplicable to Spain. Its tradition has been one of isolationism driven by some form of authoritarian rule and stiffened by a powerful Catholic Church. This has earned Spain a reputation for stagnation and backwardness, one that for much of its history it has deserved.

But Spain has not always lagged behind its neighbors to the northeast. It was, after all, the first nation to enjoy a "golden age," building an empire of a scale unseen since the days of Rome. In *Spain and Its World, 1500–1700* (Yale, 1989), John H. Elliott, a professor of early modern history at Oxford University, suggests that 16th-century Castilians saw themselves as successors to the Romans, "as a chosen, and therefore superior, people, entrusted with a divine [Catholic] mission which looked towards universal empire as its goal." But that self-perception included a fatalistic belief in inexorable decline. As Elliott notes, no thinking Spaniard could avoid asking the question: "If all great empires, including the greatest of them all, had risen only to fall, could Spain alone escape?"

Elliott points out that Spain's decline was not so much a national as a Castilian failure, resulting from the crown's inability to rid itself of "imperial delusions." Spaniards have long lived with the weight of an extensive bureaucracy, one of the legacies of the Austrian Hapsburgs who gained the Spanish throne when Charles I (later Holy Roman Emperor Charles V) succeeded his grandfather, Ferdinand, in 1516. The wealth of empire was reserved almost exclusively for the crown, but so was the burden of managing it.

Sixteenth-century American possessions "made it possible for Castile to sustain itself as the dominant world power, but at an economic, administrative, and psychological cost which only slowly became apparent. . . . In fact, empire had become a psychological burden which made it almost impossible to think in realistic terms about the changing international situation." The result was one expensive war after another with contending European powers.

Historian Richard Herr's *The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain* (1958) stands as the best work about a thoroughly neglected century in Spanish history. Despite the challenge of new political ideas from abroad, notably liberalism, Spain remained united beneath, and loyal to, the crown and the church. As Herr shows, the mercantilist policies pursued by Madrid resurrected the economy and for once favored the peripheral maritime provinces, such as Galicia and Catalonia, making the state more self-sufficient and actively encouraging the exportation of surplus goods. The provinces responded with a new loyalty to throne and country. And "by keeping progressives from hearkening to anti-Christian extremists in France," Herr says, "their religious faith prevented the entry of the Enlightenment into Spain from destroying the spiritual unity of educated Spaniards. . . . The nationalism that imbued Spaniards from all over the peninsula at the end of the century had as its rallying cry 'Religion, King, and Country!'"

But throughout the tumultuous 19th century—what historian Adrian Shubert in *A Social History of Modern Spain* (Unwin Hyman, 1990) calls "an unbroken litany of short-lived governments, military coups, and civil wars"—Spain suffered a progressive deterioration of national identity. In *Spain, 1808–1975* (Oxford, 1982), Oxford historian Sir Raymond Carr resists blaming this decline on any one of Spain's paradoxes, "its traditionalism or its revolutionary individualism, its extremism or its static conformism." Instead, he points to Spain's slow economic and industrial develop-

ment. Out of insufficient wealth, he says, emerged persistent regionalism and finally separatism, as Catalonia and the Basque country started to go their own ways as independent states. If Spain had become a prosperous and progressive nation, Carr writes, "all would have 'utilized' the Spanish state and found their interests in the general prosperity of the union."

This instability led finally in 1936 to the Spanish civil war, fought between the Popular Front—a coalition of Left Republicans and Socialists—and the Nationalists, a fascist movement backed by the military and led by Generalissimo Francisco Franco. George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938; reprinted by Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1969) remains perhaps the best personal account of that bloody war. Orwell, who fought for a year on the Republican side, bore grim witness to both the political and human realities of the conflict: "Outside Spain few people grasped that there was a revolution; inside Spain nobody doubted it."

The nature of the revolution, the complicated ideological conflict of the war, and its outcome receive scholarly treatment in Hugh Thomas's epic work, *The Spanish Civil War* (1961; reprinted by Harper & Row, 1986). Thomas concludes that while Franco "ruled regally, according to no theory save his own style of compromise . . . between Falange, Church, army, monarchists, and industry," and while Spain remained "politically immobile" for more than 30 years, it still became one of the countries that "will be seen to have had its industrial revolution under the aegis of an authoritarian right-wing regime."

There is little doubt that Franco's death in 1975 was the event most crucial to the democratic transition of the late 1970s, but it was not the only necessary factor. In *The Return of Civil Society* (Harvard,

1993), Complutense University of Madrid sociologist Victor M. Pérez-Díaz relates that liberal tendencies among the educated elite began to emerge by the late 1950s. The real change was in the mentality of the Francoist establishment, "a realization of the failure of the corporate, authoritarian, counter-reformist, and autarkic aims incorporated in the idea of a 'well-ordered' society. . . . From that moment on, it became increasingly evident that such an ideal did not constitute a credible scenario for the future of Spain."

Despite the rising tide of liberal and leftist sentiment after 1975, including among Francoist defectors, the extreme Right was still a force to be reckoned with, particularly because its power was grounded in the military. University of London historian Paul Preston, in *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain* (Methuen, 1986), argues that to avoid a catastrophic clash between Left and Right, "it



Las Meninas (1656) by Diego Velázquez

was essential that . . . the introduction of democracy . . . meet with the approval of the armed forces and the bulk of the old guard." The result was that the Francoist constitution remained in force until 1978 and that the transition took place within its framework. Meanwhile, the other partner in the regime, the Catholic Church, redefined its role completely. As Adrian Shubert points out, the church has always wanted a national Catholicism, a popular identification of Spain as a nation largely defined by its ties with the Catholic Church. So by the time of democratic transition, the church had not only forsaken its alliance with the Francoist "crusade," Pérez-Díaz says, "but it began to ask the people's forgiveness for having failed to avert the war."

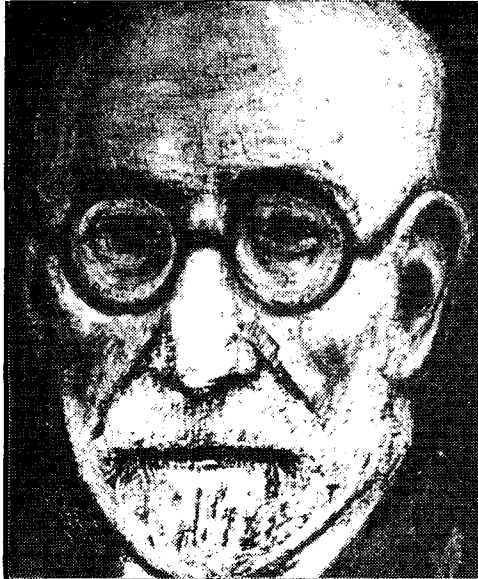
The years before and during the democratic transition were uncertain, to say the least, but it was not a time of political upheaval or revolution (apart from an abortive military coup in 1981). The triumph of democracy in Spain was that nation's first instance of political success by way of moderation, compromise, and even toleration between Left and Right. What this meant for the liberal opposition, Preston argues, was a string of sacrifices: "Hopes of significant social change were shelved in order that the urgent immediate goal of political democracy might be secured." The post-Franco reformers, who were educated in the burgeoning liberalism of the 1960s, seemed to possess a nonradical, democratic "sense." Pérez-Díaz argues that the political elites "were successful not because they were able to lead the public but rather because they were able to learn from and follow the public mood." The fulcrum of Spanish political stability was no longer the rigid, counter-reformist ideology of monarchy or dictatorship, but instead the fluid, liberal ideas of a new generation.

The first of Spain's recent economic revivals actually preceded the political transition, and it might have had more significant consequences for Spanish society. Journalist John Hooper, in *The Spaniards* (Viking, 1986), cites a fairly typical case from the 1960s and '70s—a man who had started his working life as a shepherd but ended up an electrician on

the *Talgo*, the Spanish-designed and -manufactured super train: "He had gone from poverty to prosperity, swapped the most rudimentary job imaginable for one that required a high level of technical sophistication, and moved from a cottage in the hills to a neat three-bedroom flat in a block with fitted kitchens, modern bathrooms and a swimming pool." By the time the first "miracle" ended in the winter of 1973-74, Spain was the world's ninth industrial power.

Still, it is hard to overstate the psychological costs of the civil war and Franco's reign. In *Out of the Past: Spanish Cinema After Franco* (British Film Institute, 1986), author John Hopewell explains the flowering of Spanish film in the last decade as part of a national struggle to forget the war and its legacies. The war itself and the Francoist "peace" of the 1940s and '50s "left many in a permanent state of evasion, of absence from reality. . . . Filmmakers [such as Luis Buñuel and Pedro Almodóvar] and critics broke with dominant film styles in an almost neurotic and thoroughly understandable attempt to start from scratch, to dissociate themselves from a damned and damning past." If anything, says Hopewell, the Spanish tend to think of the past as "a tragedy for which no one is responsible. . . . Spanish filmmakers tend to portray it as if, even at the time, it were already determined." In this, they seem not unlike their 17th-century ancestors: heirs to a fatal destiny.

In *Barcelona* (Knopf, 1992), critic Robert Hughes returns to Orwell's Catalonia, in part to determine the extent to which Spain has shed its Francoist character. Hughes quotes the grandson of Joan Maragall, a turn-of-the-century poet and Catalan separatist, to illustrate Spain's current predicament: "After nearly 40 years of Franco's insisting that *his* ideology was the essence of Spain, that everything else was foreign and un-Spanish, Spain must (as it were) re-Hispanicize itself, draw a self-definition that includes openness." Indeed this is Spain's challenge: to transcend its closed, authoritarian history and create a new identity that will allow the "miracle" nation of the 1970s and '80s to become a major player on the European and global stage.



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*All the more reason, Jonathan Spence urges, to return to the man himself—
and to the little we know about his life and words.*

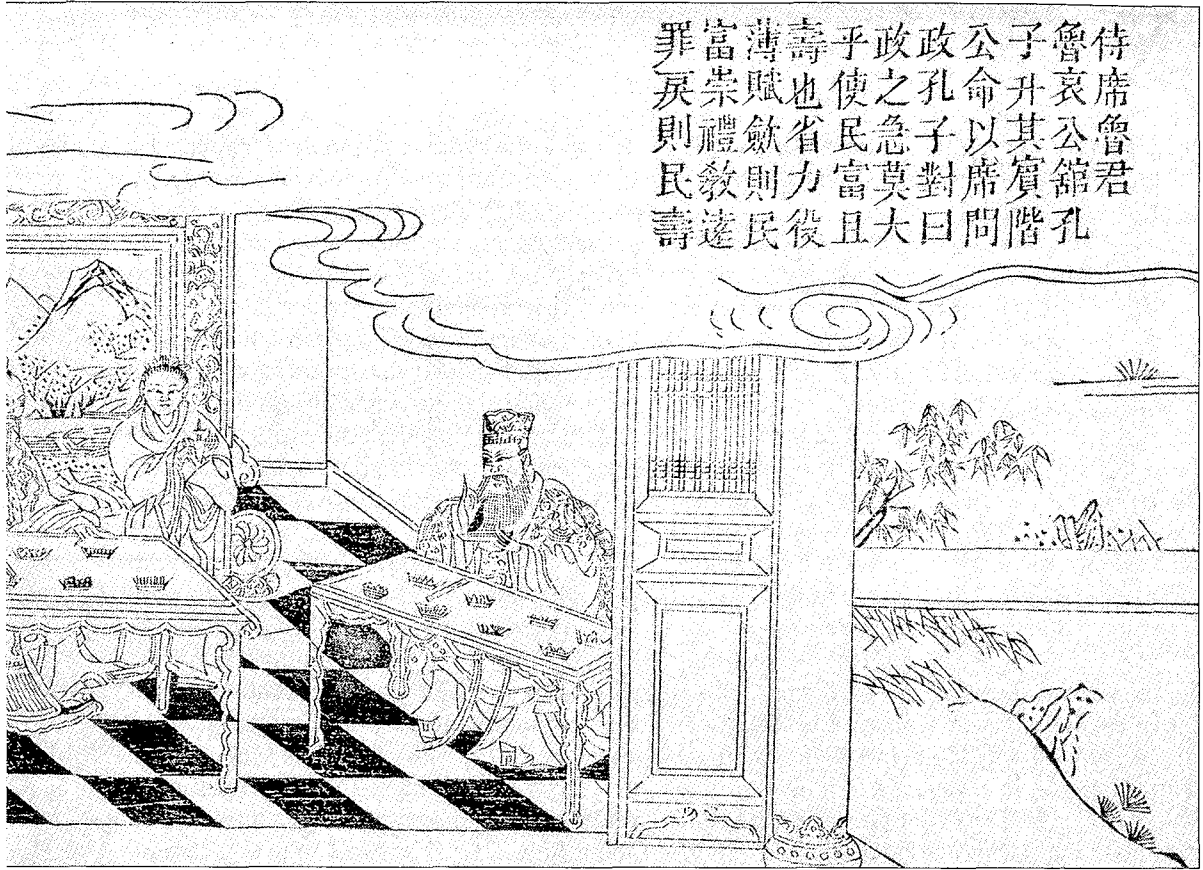
BY JONATHAN D. SPENCE



Across the centuries that have elapsed since he lived in northern China and lectured to a small group of followers on ethics and ritual, the ideas of Confucius have had a powerful resonance. Soon after his death in 476 B.C., a small number of these followers dedicated themselves to recording what they could remember of his teachings and to preserving the texts of history and poetry that he was alleged to have edited. In the fourth and third centuries B.C., several distinguished philosophers expanded and systematized ideas that they ascribed to him, thus deepening his reputation as a complex and serious thinker. During the centralizing and tyrannical Ch'in dynasty that ruled China between 221 and 209 B.C., the works of Confucius were slated for destruction, on the grounds that they contained material antithetical to the obedience of people to their rulers, and many of those who prized or taught his works were brutally killed on the

emperor's orders.

Despite this apparently lethal setback, Confucius's reputation was only enhanced, and during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.—A.D. 220) his ideas were further edited and expanded, this time to be used as a focused source for ideas on good government and correct social organization. Despite the pedantry and internal bickering of these self-styled followers of Confucius, his ideas slowly came to be seen as the crystallization of an inherent Chinese wisdom. Surviving the importation of Buddhist metaphysics and meditative practices from India in the third to sixth centuries A.D., and a renewed interest in both esoteric Taoist theories of the cosmos and the hard-headed political realism of rival schools of legalistically oriented thinkers, a body of texts reorganized as "Confucian," with their accumulated commentaries, became the basic source for competitive examinations for entrance into the Chinese civil service and for the analysis of a



wide spectrum of political and familial relationships: those between ruler and subject, between parents and children, and between husband and wife. In the 12th century A.D., a loose group of powerful philosophers, though differing over the details, reformulated various so-called Confucian principles to incorporate some of the more deeply held premises of Buddhism, giving in particular a dualistic structure to the Confucian belief system by separating idealist or universalist components—the inherent principles or premises, known as the *li*—from the grosser matter, or manifestations of life-in-action (the *ch'i*).

A final series of shifts took place in the last centuries of imperial China. During the 16th century elements of Confucian doctrine were deepened and altered once again by philosophers who emphasized the inherent morality of the individual and tried to overcome

Confucius (far right) holds forth in the court of Duke Ai of Lu. The sage counseled his lord on many subjects, including the principles of governance.

the dualism that they felt Confucians had erected between nature and the human emotions. In the 17th century Confucian scholars confronted the promise and challenge of newly imported scientific ideas from the West, brought by Jesuits and other Catholic missionaries. During the following century Confucian scholars embarked on a newly formulated intellectual quest for the evidential basis of historical and moral phenomena, one that led them cumulatively to peaks of remarkable scholarship. In the 19th century these scholars began to cope with Western technology and constitutional ideas and with the development of new modes of education. But in the 20th century Confucian ideas were attacked from within and without China as contributing to China's economic backwardness, myopic ap-

proach to social change, denial of the idea of progress, resistance to science, and a generally stultified educational system.

These attacks were so devastating that as recently as 20 years ago, one would have thought that the chances of Confucius ever again becoming a major figure of study or emulation were slight indeed, in any part of the world. In Communist China, where he had been held up to ridicule or vilification since the Communist victory of 1949, his name was invoked only when mass campaigns needed a symbol of the old order to castigate, as in the "Anti-Confucius and anti-Lin Biao Campaign" of 1973-74. But in that case the real focus of the campaign was Chairman Mao's former "closest comrade-in-arms," General Lin Biao, not the discredited sage of Lu. In Taiwan, though constant lip service was paid to the enduring values of Confucianism, the doctrine that lived on under that name was slanted in content and attracted few of the brightest young minds. It was a version of Confucian belief that followed along lines first laid down by Nationalist Party ideologues during the 1930s in an attempt to boost their own prestige and give a deeper historical legitimacy to party leader Chiang Kai-Shek. Although in Taiwan as in other parts of Asia there were great scholars who continued to explore the sage's inner meaning, in many Asian schools Confucius was also invoked in support of authoritarian and hierarchical value systems. In Europe and the United States, though Confucian texts were studied in East Asian and Oriental studies centers, they did not arouse much excitement, and the young—if they were interested in earlier Asian studies at all—were likely to be far more interested in Taoism or Buddhism.

Now, however, the revival is in full swing. Confucian study societies have sprung

up inside the People's Republic of China, with government approval. In Taiwan, Confucianism is studied as a central aspect of philosophical inquiry, and so-called New Confucians are linking his ideas on conduct and the self to certain preoccupations in modern ethics. In the United States especially, many colleges now teach sophisticated and popular courses in "Confucian belief," and a distinguished stream of "Confucian" academics jet around the world as conference participants and even as consultants to foreign governments on the sage. Translations of Confucius's work, and that of his major followers, are in print with popular presses, often in variant editions. And "Confucian principles" are cited approvingly as being one of the underpinnings of the disciplined work habits and remarkable international economic success of a number of Asian states.

The renewed interest in Confucius is not the result of any rush of new information about him. There has been no newly discovered cache of intimate details about him or his family that could engage the public interest, no fresh sources that can be ascribed to him and thus deepen our sense of his achievement, or that could serve as the basis for new controversies. The scraps of information about Confucius are so slight that they barely give us an outline, let alone a profile, of the man. (The modern name Confucius is an early Western rendering of the sage's Chinese honorific name, "K'ung-fu-tsu.") We are almost certain that he was born in 551 B.C. We have a definite year of death, 479 B.C. He was born in the kingdom of Lu, one of the many small states into which China was then divided and which corresponds roughly to the area of modern Shandong province. His parents might have had aristocratic roots, but they were neither prominent nor wealthy, and though Confucius received a good education in historical and ritual matters, his parents died when he

Jonathan D. Spence is George B. Adams Professor of History at Yale University. His many books include The Death of Woman Wang (1978), The Gate of Heavenly Peace (1981), The Search for Modern China (1990), and, most recently, Chinese Roundabout (1992). Copyright © 1993 by Jonathan D. Spence.

was young, and the youth had to fend for himself. He acquired a number of skills: in clerical work, music, accounting, perhaps in charioteering and archery, and in certain "menial activities" on which we have no other details. Sometime between 507 and 497 B.C. he served in the state of Lu in an office that can be translated as "police commissioner" and that involved hearing cases and meting out punishments. Before and after that stint of service he traveled to various neighboring states, seeking posts as a diplomatic or bureaucratic adviser but meeting with little success. Because of some feud he was, for a time, in mortal danger, but he handled himself with calmness and courage. He married and had one son and two daughters. His son predeceased him, but not before producing an heir. One of his daughters married a student of Confucius who had served time in jail. Confucius approved the match because he believed that the young man had in fact done no wrong. During his later years Confucius was a teacher of what we might now call ethics, ritual, and philosophy; the names of 35 of his students have come down to us.

To compound the problems caused by this paucity of biographical information, we have nothing that we can be completely sure was written by Confucius himself. What we do have is a record of what some of his disciples and students—or their students—said that he said. Usually translated as *The Analects of Confucius*, this collection is brief, aphoristic, and enigmatic. But the *Analects*, despite the problem of indirect transmission, remain our crucial source on Confucius's beliefs, actions, and personality. Not surprisingly, scholars disagree on how to interpret many passages and how much to believe in the authenticity of the different parts of this text. The best and perhaps the only gauges of authenticity are internal consistency, tone, and coherence. One can also look at the construction of each book—there are 20 in all, each running about five pages in English translation—and search for

obvious distortions and later additions. The last five of the books, for example, have lengthy sections that present Confucius either as a butt to the Taoists or as an uncritical transmitter of doctrines with which he can be shown in earlier chapters to have disagreed. It is a fairly safe assumption that these were added to the original text by persons with a special cause to plead. Other books give disproportionate space to Confucius's praise of a particular student whom we know from other passages that he rather disliked. Perhaps in such cases we are witnessing attempts to correct the record by later followers of the student concerned. There does not seem to be any political censorship; indeed, one of the mysteries of the later uses of Confucianism concerns the way that the original text as we now have it has been preserved for two millennia even though it seems quite obviously to contradict the ideological uses to which it was being put. Interpretation and commentary, that is to say, carried more weight with readers than did the original words.

Given the bewildering array of philosophical and political arguments that Confucianism has been called on to support, and given, in particular, the generally held belief that Confucius was a strict believer in hierarchy and the values of absolute obedience to superiors, and that he lacked flexibility and imagination, it is an intriguing task to read the *Analects* with open eyes and without any presuppositions drawn from later interpretative attempts. What was, in fact, the central message of the man Confucius himself?

Personally, almost two and a half millennia after his death, I find that Confucius is still especially valuable to us because of the strength of his humanity, his general decency, and the fervor of his belief in the importance of culture and the act of learning. He emphatically did not feel that he had any monopoly on truth. Rather, he was convinced that learning is a perpetual process that demands flexibility, imagination, and tenacity. He scolded stu-

dents who would not get up in the morning, just as he scolded those who were unctuous or complacent. He said that he had no interest in trying to teach those who did not have the curiosity to follow up on a philosophical argument or a logical sequence of ideas after he had given them an initial prod in the right direction. He let his students argue among themselves—or with him—and praised those who were able to make moral decisions that might benefit humankind in general. But at the same time he adamantly refused to talk about the forces of heaven or to speculate on the nature of the afterlife, since there was so much that he did not know about life on this Earth that he was convinced such speculations would be idle.

It is clear that Confucius derived great pleasure from life. Once, one of his students could not think what to say to an influential official who had asked what sort of a person Confucius really was. Hearing of the incident, Confucius gently chided his student with these words: "Why did you not simply say something to this effect: He is the sort of man who forgets to eat when he tries to solve a problem that has been driving him to distraction, who is so full of joy that he forgets his worries and who does not notice the onset of old age?"

This brief exchange comes from *The Analects of Confucius*, book VII, section 19, and it is typical of words that Confucius left us, words through which we can in turn analyze his character.* Another example could be taken from Confucius's views concerning loyalty to the state and the value of capital punishment. In later periods of Chinese history, it was commonplace to assert that "Confucian" bureaucrats and scholars should always put their duty to the state and the dynasty they served ahead of personal and family loyalties. Chinese history is also replete with grim details of executions carried out in the name of

"Confucian" ideology against those who violated the state's laws. But in the most clearly authenticated books of the *Analects* that we have, we find completely unambiguous views on these central matters of human practice and belief. What could be clearer than this?

The Governor of She said to Confucius, "In our village there is a man nicknamed 'Straight Body.' When his father stole a sheep, he gave evidence against him." Confucius answered, "In our village those who are straight are quite different. Fathers cover up for their sons, and sons cover up for their fathers. Straightness is to be found in such behavior." (XIII/18)

On executions, Confucius was equally unambiguous:

Chi K'ang Tzu asked Confucius about government, saying, "What would you think if, in order to move closer to those who possess the Way, I were to kill those who do not follow the Way?" Confucius answered, "In administering your government, what need is there for you to kill? Just desire the good yourself and the common people will be good. The virtue of the gentleman is like wind; the virtue of the small man is like grass. Let the wind blow over the grass and it is sure to bend." (XII/19)

If it were humanly possible, Confucius added, he would avoid the law altogether: "In hearing litigation, I am no different from any other man. But if you insist on a difference, it is, perhaps, that I try to get the parties not to resort to litigation in the first place." (XII/13) In the long run, the fully virtuous state would be forever free of violent death: "The Master said, 'How true is the saying that after a state has been ruled for a hundred years by good men it is possible to get the better of cruelty and to do away with killing.' " (XIII/11)

Since the words of Confucius have been preserved for us mainly in the form of aphorisms or snatches of dialogue—or the combi-

*All citations of the *Analects* are from D. C. Lau's Penguin Books translation, *Confucius, The Analects*. In some cases I have made minor modifications to his translations.

nation of the two—one way to find a coherent structure in his thought is to track the remarks he made to specific individuals, even if these are widely scattered throughout the *Analects*. Sometimes, of course, there is only one remark, especially in the case of those whose behavior Confucius considered beyond the pale. My favorite example here is his dismissal of Yuan Jang, allegedly once his friend: “Yuan Jang sat waiting with his legs spread wide. The Master said, ‘To be neither modest nor deferential when young, to have passed on nothing worthwhile when grown up, and to refuse to die when old, that is what I call being a pest.’ So saying, the Master tapped him on the shin with his stick.” (XIV/43) That tapping on the shin, perhaps playful, perhaps in irritation, shows an unusual side of Confucius. Was he trying to add physical sting to his sharp words? More commonly with him, it was a laugh or a shrug that ended a potentially confrontational exchange.

With several of his students, Confucius clearly felt a deep rapport, even when they did not see eye to eye. One such student was Tzu-lu, who was more a man of action than a scholar. Confucius loved to tease Tzu-lu for his impetuosity. Thus, after telling his students that if he were on a raft that drifted out to sea, Tzu-lu would be the one to follow him, Confucius added wryly that that would be because Tzu-lu had at once more courage and less judgment than his teacher. On another occasion, when Tzu-lu asked if Confucius thought he, Tzu-lu, would make a good general, Confucius replied that he would rather not have as a general someone who would try to walk across a river or strangle a tiger with his bare hands. (V/7 and VII/11)

Different in character, but still very much his own man, was the merchant and diplomat Tzu-kung. Confucius acknowledged that Tzu-kung was shrewd and capable, and made a great profit from his business deals. He even agreed that Tzu-kung’s type of intelligence was especially useful in the world of literature

and thought: “Only with a man like you can one discuss the Odes. Tell such a man something and he can see its relevance to what he has not been told.” (I/16) But Confucius did not like Tzu-kung’s insistence on always trying to put people in a ranked order of priorities, as if they were so many objects—“For my part I have no time for such things,” Confucius observed—and he was equally upset if he felt that Tzu-kung was skimping things that really mattered because of his private feelings: “Tzu-kung wanted to dispense with the practice of ritually killing a sacrificial sheep at the announcement of the new moon. The Master said, ‘You love the sheep, but I love the Rites.’ ” (XIV/29 and III/17)

Most readers of the *Analects* feel that the student called Yen Yuan was clearly Confucius’s favorite, and the one closest to the Master by behavior and inclination. Yen Yuan was poor but lived his life without complaining. He did not allow poverty to sour or interrupt his search for the Way, and his intelligence was truly piercing. As Tzu-kung, not a modest man, put it, “When he [Yen Yuan] is told one thing he understands 10. When I am told one thing I understand only two.” To which Confucius sighed in agreement, “Neither of us is as good as he is.” (V/9) In a similar vein, Confucius praised Yen Yuan’s prudence, contrasting it with Tzu-lu’s bravado. As Confucius phrased it, Yen Yuan was the kind of man who “when faced with a task, was fearful of failure,” and who knew how “to stay out of sight when set aside;” furthermore, Yen Yuan was not above making mistakes, but more important, “he did not make the same mistake twice.” (VII/11 and VI/3) When Yen Yuan died young, before being able to achieve his full promise, Confucius gave way to a conspicuous display of immoderate grief. When some of his students remonstrated with him for showing such “undue sorrow,” Confucius’s answer was brief but powerful: “If not for him for whom should I show undue sorrow?” (IX/10)

Confucius lived to a fine old age, and not even regret over the loss of his favorite student and his own son could blunt the pleasures he felt at his own mounting experience and the attainment of something that might be approaching wisdom. He did not boast about the knowledge he had acquired—indeed he thought he was lucky to have got as far as he had. As he put it once to Tzu-lu: "Shall I tell you what it is to know? To say you know when you know, and to say you do not know when you do not, that is knowledge." (II/17) His own greatest ambition, as he once told Yen Yuan and Tzu-lu jointly, was "to bring peace to the old, to have trust in my friends, and to cherish the young." (V/26) On another occasion he went even further, telling his followers, "It is fitting that we hold the young in awe. How do we know that the generations to come will not be the equal of the present?" (IX/23) In the passage that is perhaps the most famous of his sayings, Confucius gave his own version of the stages of life, and it is as different as anything could be from Shakespeare's "Seven Ages of Man," with its heart-rending account of man's descent into the weakness and imbecility of old age after a brief phase of youthful vigor. Whereas according to the *Analects*, the Master said, "At 15 I set my heart on learning; at 30 I took my stand; at 40 I came to be free from doubts; at 50 I understood the Decree of Heaven; at 60 my ear was attuned; at 70 I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the line." (II/4)

Certainly we should not read Confucius as though he were always right. And as we read through the *Analects* we can find Confucius revealing a fussy and sometimes impatient side. Some of his vaunted arguments seem like quibbles, and he could be punctilious to the point of prudishness. His political motivations are often obscure, and he seems to appreciate various struggling rulers' foibles less than his own. But cleared of the accumulation of unsubstantiated details and textual over-interpretations that have weighed

him down across the centuries, we find to our surprise an alert, intelligent, and often very amusing man.

How then did he get the reputation that he did, one at once more austere, more pompous, harsh even, and as a reinforcer of the status quo? Strangely enough, part of the reappraisal resulted from the efforts of the man who is undeniably China's greatest historian, Ssu-ma Ch'ien, who lived from around 145 to 89 B.C., during the Han dynasty. In his life's work, a composite history of China entitled simply *Historical Records*, which was completed between 100 and 95 B.C., Ssu-ma Ch'ien aimed to integrate the histories of all China's earlier states and rulers with the steady and inexorable rise to power of the centralizing Ch'in dynasty (221–209 B.C.), and he determined to give Confucius an important role in this process. Thus Ssu-ma Ch'ien paid Confucius the ultimate accolade by placing his story in the section devoted to the ruling houses of early China, as opposed to placing him with other individual thinkers and statesmen in the 70 chapters of biographies that conclude the *Historical Records*. In the summation of Confucius's worth with which he ended his account, Ssu-ma Ch'ien gave concise and poignant expression to his homage:

In this world there have been many people—from kings to wise men—who had a glory while they lived that ended after their death. But Confucius, though a simple commoner, has had his name transmitted for more than 10 generations; all those who study his works consider him their master. From the Son of Heaven, the princes, and the lords on down, anyone in the Central Kingdom who is dedicated to a life of learning, follows the precepts and the rules of the Master. Thus it is that we call him a true Sage.

To give substance to this judgment, Ssu-ma Ch'ien took all known accounts written over the intervening three centuries that purported to describe Confucius, following the



Confucius as deity



Confucius as teacher

principle that if there was no clear reason for discarding an item of biographical information, then he should include it, leaving for later generations the task of winnowing the true from the false. Thus was Confucius given courageous ancestors, his birth described in semi-miraculous terms, his own physical distinction elaborated upon. In one curious addition, Confucius's father was described as being of far greater age than the sage's mother: By one interpretation of the phrase used by Ssu-ma Ch'ien, that the marriage was "lacking in proportion," Confucius's father would have been over 64, while his mother had only recently entered puberty. Confucius's precocious interest in ritual and propriety, his great height and imposing cranial structure, the fecundity of the flocks of cattle and sheep that he supervised in one of his first official posts, his preternatural shrewdness in debate, his instinctive brilliance at interpreting unusual auguries—all of these were given documentary precision in

Ssu-ma Ch'ien's account. The result is that Confucius not only emerges as a key counselor to the rulers of his native state of Lu, but the meticulousness of his scholarship and his flair for editing early texts of poetry, history, and music are presented as having attracted an ever-widening circle of hundreds or even thousands of students from his own and neighboring states.

Having constructed this formidable image of a successful Confucius, Ssu-ma Ch'ien was confronted by the need to explain the reasons for Confucius's fall from grace in Lu and for his subsequent wanderings in search of rulers worthy of his service. Being one of China's most gifted storytellers, Ssu-ma Ch'ien was up to this task, presenting a convincing scenario of the way the sagacity of Confucius's advice to the ruler of Lu made him both respected and feared by rival rulers

in northern China. One of them was finally able to dislodge Confucius by sending to the ruler of Lu a gift of 24 ravishing female dancers and musicians, along with 30 magnificent teams of chariot horses. This gift so effectively distracted the ruler of Lu from his official duties—most important, it led him to forget certain key ritual sacrifices—that Confucius had no choice but to leave his court.

In various ways, some subtle, some direct, the portrait of Confucius that Ssu-ma Ch'ien wove incorporated diverse levels of narrative dealing with the unpredictability of violence. This was surely not coincidental, for the central tragedy of Ssu-ma Ch'ien's own life had been his court-ordered castration, a savage punishment inflicted on him by the Han dynasty emperor Wu-ti (r. 141–87 B.C.). Ssu-ma Ch'ien's "crime" had been to write a friend a letter in which he incautiously spoke in defense of a man unjustly punished by the same emperor. Despite this agonizing humiliation, which placed the historian in the same physical category as the venal court eunuchs he so deeply despised, Ssu-ma Ch'ien refused to commit suicide; he maintained his dignity by making his history as grand and comprehensive as possible—his presentation of Confucius being a stunning example of his dedication to craft and content. Thus he describes Confucius as a man who had the bureaucratic power to make major judicial decisions but who did so only with care and consideration of all the evidence. When Confucius acted harshly, according to Ssu-ma Ch'ien, it was only when the long-term threat to his kingdom was so strong that leniency would have been folly. This explains one shattering moment in Ssu-ma Ch'ien's biography. One rival leader was planning to overthrow the ruler of Lu, but each of his

ruses was seen through and foiled by Confucius. At last, in desperation, the rival ruler ordered his acrobats and dwarfs to perform wild and obscene dances at a ritual occasion that the ruler of Lu was attending. Confucius, according to Ssu-ma Ch'ien, ordered the dwarfs killed.

In another dissimilar but equally powerful comment on violence, Ssu-ma Ch'ien showed that even the descendants of a man of Confucius's integrity could not escape Emperor Wu-ti's willful power. Thus at the very end of his long biography, before the final summation, Ssu-ma Ch'ien lists all of Confucius's direct descendants in the male line. When he comes to the 11th in line, An-kuo, the historian mentions tersely that An-kuo had died "prematurely" under the "ruling emperor." Ssu-ma Ch'ien knew—and knew that his readers knew—that An-kuo had been executed on Wu-ti's orders for involvement in an alleged court coup. The line had not, however, been stamped out, because An-kuo's wife had borne a son before her husband was killed.

Ssu-ma Ch'ien's attempt to reconstruct a convincing psychological and contextual universe for Confucius was a brilliant one, and his version was elaborated upon and glossed by scores of subsequent scholars, even as suitable pieces of the Confucian legacy were seized upon by later rulers and bureaucrats to justify some current policy decision or to prove some philosophical premise. But after more than two millennia of such accretions, it seems time to go back to the earlier and simpler version of the record and try to see for ourselves what kind of a man Confucius was. The results, I feel, in our overly ideological age, are encouraging to those who value the central premises of humane intellectual inquiry.

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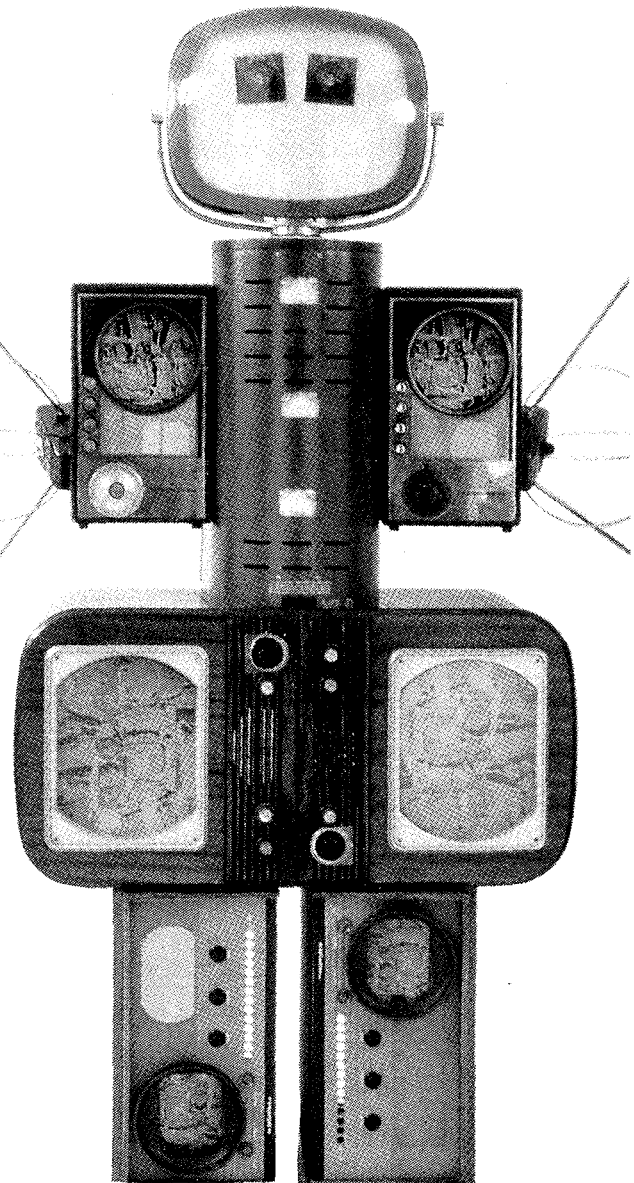
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TV & AMERICAN CULTURE

"I hate television. I hate it as much as peanuts," Orson Welles once observed. "But I can't stop eating peanuts." Like it or not, most other Americans are just as hooked. As our three contributors demonstrate, no other single force since World War II has done more to reshape American society than the Tube. Television is so pervasive, Douglas Gomery shows, that defining its influence is as difficult as drawing a circle around the air we breathe. Todd Gitlin proposes that television is America's school for morals and manners, one that has reeducated our national character into something it never was before. Frank McConnell, in cautious defense of TV, suggests that its critics more often than not exaggerate the hazards of the medium in order to advance their own social agendas. Television meanwhile grows more and more like the late Orson Welles—every day a bit bigger than it was the day before.



*Nam June Paik's Family of
Robot: Mother (1986)*

AS THE DIAL TURNS

BY DOUGLAS GOMERY

It was a defining moment in American history, albeit one run over and over, like an episode of "Star Trek." Into the tidy living room of a young family's suburban home, usually just days before Christmas, came the electronic marvel. The old mahogany radio set, already seeming a bit antique, was shoved into a corner, and two hefty deliverymen struggled to position the bulky new console across from the couch, between the easy chairs. Everyone gathered around as the first test pattern came on. Then the fun began—perhaps with giggling children on "Howdy Doody" or the Top 40 beat of "Dick Clark's American Bandstand" or the stars on "Ed Sullivan's Toast of the Town" or the magnificent coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Thus was a new age born.

Pictures flowing through the air. That miracle had been much sought after and anticipated since movies and radio transformed American popular culture during the first quarter of the 20th century. And like those two earlier marvels of mass communication, and with many times more power, television has so refashioned and reshaped our lives that it is hard to imagine what life was like before it.

During the Great Depression and World War II, families gathered in crowded city apartments or in the parlors of distant farms to listen to the radio. But TV was instantly and unalterably linked with midcentury America's rising suburban ideal. Indeed, certain TV offerings, such as "Ozzie and Harriet," became synonymous with the ideal. Along with closely cropped lawns, two cars in the driveway, and a single earner so well paid that no one else needed to work, TV became a symbol of the "good life" in modern America.

The TV boom was delayed first by the war and then for several years after 1948 by what

might be called "technical difficulties." By 1948, the number of stations in the United States had reached 48, the cities served 23, and sales of TV sets had passed sales of radios. Coaxial cables also made possible fledgling networks, relaying live shows (there was no tape then) from the East to the Midwest. But as more and more stations went on the air it became clear that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) had not allowed enough geographic separation between stations to prevent serious interference. The agency froze TV-station allotments and redrew the maps. It was only on April 14, 1952—with the FCC's Sixth Report and Order—that TV as we know it first began to flow to all sections of the United States.

So rapid and complete was TV's friendly takeover of the American imagination that when Lucille Ball gave birth to her second son the "same" night in January 1953 that her Lucy Ricardo character on "I Love Lucy" gave birth to "Little Ricky," it caused a national sensation, including an article in *Life* and a cover story in *TV Guide*, itself newly born.

Ubiquity may be the medium's leading characteristic. In 1950 far less than 10 percent of Americans owned sets. Those were folks lucky enough to have the \$500 that a black-and-white receiver cost at a time when \$3,000 was considered a good yearly salary and \$5,000 would buy a splendid Cape Cod in Levittown. But TV's allure was powerful. By 1955 about two-thirds of the nation's households had a set; by the end of the 1950s there was hardly a home in the nation without one. By 1961, when Newton Minow, the newly appointed chairman of the FCC, proclaimed television a "vast wasteland," there were more



Parents and children seated around a television set became, during the 1950s, an American icon for prosperity and wholesome family values.

homes in the United States with TV than with indoor plumbing. In less than a generation, the TV set had gone from being an expensive, somewhat experimental gadget to a home appliance considered more indispensable than the toaster or washing machine. With the possible exception of the videocassette recorder (VCR) in the 1980s, no other electronic gadget has been adapted so widely and with such alacrity.

Today, 99 percent of all households possess at least one TV, and most have two or more. There are nearly 200 million sets in use. More American homes have TVs than have telephones. (One study of the tiny minority of people who spurn TV found that the archetypal naysayer is a university professor of literature, wedded professionally to the printed word.) We take them to the beach, plug them into our automobiles, and even strap them on our wrists when

we go jogging. Now a company called Virtual Vision promises to make TV even more omnipresent. Its \$900 wraparound TV eyeglasses can be worn anywhere; they project an image that appears to float about 10 feet in front of the wearer.

In the space of only a few decades, watching TV seems to have become one of life's essential activities—along with eating, sleeping, and working. TV has become the Great American Companion. Two-thirds of Americans regularly watch television while eating dinner. The A. C. Nielsen Company, which monitors sets in a carefully selected nationwide sample of 4,000 households, regularly reports that the TV is on about seven

and a half hours a day—virtually all of the time remaining if one subtracts eight hours for sleep and eight hours for work. Collectively, the nation tunes in to a staggering 250 billion hours per year. If one assumes that the average hourly wage is \$10, that time is worth \$2.5 trillion. If we could collect just \$1 per hour we could wipe out the yearly federal budget deficit.

Figuring out who is actually watching the tube and when he or she is doing so is tricky. Nielsen's method shows when a set is on and what channel it is tuned to, but many studies have found that during much of the time the TV is on, no one is watching. Researchers have developed People Meters to try to determine who is watching, but these gadgets rely on viewers to "punch in" when they sit down in front of the set and "punch out" when they leave—hardly a foolproof method. As best as researchers can determine, the average person "watches" about four hours per day, varying

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. He is author of nine books, including Shared Pleasures (1992), which recently earned a prize from the Theater Library Association. Copyright © 1993 by Douglas Gomery.

by season (more in winter, less in summer), age (kids and senior citizens view the most), and race (African Americans and Hispanics watch more than whites).^{*} When are the most Americans watching? Prime time (8 to 11 P.M., Eastern Standard Time) on Sunday nights in the depths of winter.

TV is one of the things that bring us together as a nation. Thanks to television, the Super Bowl has become our greatest national spectacle, watched in at least 40 million homes. (By contrast, Ross Perot's first "town meeting," which was wildly successful compared to other political broadcasts, was watched in only 11 million homes.) Such peak moments generate mind-boggling revenues. Advertisements during the 1993 Super Bowl, which NBC sold out a month before kickoff, cost in the neighborhood of \$28,000 per second. Nevertheless, because virtually the entire nation assembles to watch this single game in January, advertisers such as Pepsi, Budweiser, and Gillette gladly ante up, and others have found it a perfect showcase for major new products. It was during Super Bowl XVIII in January 1984 that Apple introduced the world to the Macintosh personal computer. (The Los Angeles Raiders beat the Washington Redskins, 38 to 9.)

TV is a multibillion-dollar business. Sales of new sets alone come to about \$7 billion per year. Advertising revenues amount to more than \$30 billion, still collected in large part by the major broadcast networks—ABC, NBC, CBS, and, since 1986, Fox. Prime-time ads generate some \$4 billion, and billions more come from morning, soap opera, news, and late-night offerings. Cable TV in 1992 received ad revenues in excess of \$3 billion, and another \$2 billion came from subscribers who paid for the privilege of watching its millions of advertisements.

Buying and selling television shows was a \$25-billion business last year, principally

^{*}African Americans and Hispanics watch more TV than whites because they have lower incomes, on average. TV is, after all, just about the cheapest form of entertainment available. Only as one gets richer can one afford the luxury of fancy meals, nights at the theater, and other forms of diversion.

done by the major Hollywood studios. TV shows, from the latest episodes of "Roseanne" to 1960s-vintage series such as "Bewitched," are also one of the nation's biggest exports. If once it was said that the sun never set on the British Empire, now it never sets on "I Love Lucy." The U.S. trade in sitcoms and soap operas shaves some \$4 billion per year off America's chronic trade deficit, a contribution exceeded only by that of the aerospace industry.

The TV industry itself is split in two. As a result of antitrust policy decisions during the Nixon administration, the networks are barred from owning Hollywood studios, and the studios are barred from owning networks—with one famous exception. To promote the development of a fourth network, the FCC in 1986 allowed Fox to create a limited TV network while owning a major Hollywood studio, Twentieth Century-Fox. As a rule, the networks can only show (not own) TV's valuable series. These complex rules are now being phased out and should be gone by the end of the century. Then we are likely to see a spate of mergers joining Hollywood studios and the TV networks.

Despite all the hype and hoopla that attend its doings, TV is a mouse among industries, a relatively small collection of enterprises whose earnings, even if lumped together, are still smaller than those of either Exxon or General Motors alone. TV's cultural influence likewise tends to be exaggerated. The medium is so pervasive that whenever critics confront a vexing social problem, they blame TV. Crime on the rise? It must be TV's fault. Scholastic Aptitude Test scores dropping? Blame the boob tube. Now it is said that TV-induced passivity is literally killing us. A recent study in the *American Journal of Health Promotion* concluded that couch potatoes are twice as likely to develop high levels of serum cholesterol as those who rarely watch television.

Our anxiety about TV increases as the nation changes. More and more children in

TV in America

There are more TV sets in the United States than there are bathtubs or showers. There are more American homes with television than with indoor plumbing.

An average American living to age 65, at present levels of TV viewing, will have spent nine years of his life watching TV.

When children aged four to six were surveyed, "Which do you like better, TV or your daddy?" 54 percent said "TV."

*Why is there no Channel 1 on your television set?
The FCC took the frequency away from TV broadcasters in May 1948 for use by the military.*

Twenty-seven million people watched the first televised presidential inauguration of Dwight Eisenhower on January 20, 1953. It was upstaged, though, the night before, when 44 million people tuned in for the birth of "Little Ricky" Ricardo on "I Love Lucy."

A 1979 Roper Poll of 3,001 couples showed that the leading cause of marital disputes was disagreement about which TV shows to watch.

If you were guilty of every crime shown on American TV in just one week, you'd go to jail for 1,600 years. Unless you had Perry Mason for your attorney.

Reprinted from *The Official Couch Potato Handbook*, copyright © 1982, 1983, 1988 by Jack Mingo. Published by Last Gasp Publications, San Francisco, Calif. Reprinted with permission.

this divorce-ridden society watch TV unsupervised. "Behold every parent's worst nightmare: the six-year-old TV addict," says *Time* magazine—who takes Bart Simpson as a role model, one might add.

Violence on television is probably the public's main concern. A recent Times-Mirror survey found that 80 percent of adults think that television violence is harmful to society. More than 1,000 studies have been carried out to search for links between TV viewing and violent behavior. Under pressure from Congress, the networks recently agreed to provide warnings before their most violent offerings. One mother declared in the *Washington Post* recently: "I find myself curiously unmoved by television producers covering themselves with a First

Amendment flag. As far as I'm concerned, they have abrogated their rights to freedom of speech by being so resolutely unconcerned about the impact of what they put on television. That includes the 100,000 acts of violence . . . that the average child will have watched by the end of elementary school."

In 1992 the American Psychological Association concluded that televised violence can sometimes stir aggressive behavior in certain kinds of disturbed viewers. Most researchers probably would concur. But this is a narrow case. Whether video violence has a significant impact on the general public is quite another matter, and the pile of studies published so far has not produced a consensus. It is clear that heavy viewers of televised violence are more likely to engage in aggressive behavior than are light viewers, all other things being equal. But it may be that people with a predisposition toward violence are

more likely to watch action/adventure programming to begin with, not that watching makes them become violent.

To regard some of the more extreme claims about the impact of TV skeptically is not to dismiss the challenge posed by the medium. By the time an average American child enters the first grade, she or he has seen at least 5,000 hours of TV and by all accounts has fallen in love with the medium. New video diversions soon appear, such as Nintendo (which has sold an astonishing 25 million machines in the United States). According to a 1991 National Assessment of Educational Progress study, nearly three of every four fourth graders admit to watching more than three hours of TV every day. By the end of

high school, teens have seen some 19,000 hours of TV—and an equal number of televised homicides. We do not need hundreds of studies to know that the time children spend spaced out in front of the tube is time they are not devoting to homework or baseball or daydreaming or any number of other more worthwhile activities.

There are legitimate fears about the effects of TV on young children. But once children learn how to use TV—how to pick acceptable shows to watch, for example, or to substitute videotapes when nothing good is on—only excess seems to prove harmful. Putting a positive spin on this, critics such as Ellen Wartella, dean of the College of Communication at the University of Texas, argue that the accumulated “effects research” suggests that classes in “visual literacy” for the young are a better bet than more radical measures to control what is aired.

Technology, meanwhile, is rapidly changing the very nature of the television challenge. In the very near future, for example, it even promises a partial solution—a technological fix—to the problem of children’s excessive TV watching. Soon consumers will be able to purchase digital TV sets that can be selectively “deprogrammed,” allowing adults to block certain programs from their children’s eyes and ears.

For 30 years after the FCC’s landmark Sixth Report and Order, TV changed very little. During the last 10 years, however, it has been transformed. Roughly two of three households are now connected to cable television, and that proportion is steadily growing. Cable households have access, on average, to 30 networks rather than the traditional three.

TV Around the World

The Japanese watch more TV than anyone (U.S. viewers are a close second). In Japan, the national TV craze is called ichioko-sohaku-chi-ka or “the complete idiotization of 100 million people.”

Iceland, not generally considered a repressive country, has a TV-free day every Thursday “to reduce disruption to family life.”

Sesame Street is so popular in Pago Pago that the government once considered naming the island’s main street after it.

Bonanza is the most widely syndicated TV series. It has 250 million viewers in 85 countries.

A UNESCO Study found that TV-owners worldwide sleep an average of 13 minutes less per night than non-owners.

TV was banned in South Africa until 1975. The government was afraid it might threaten the precarious apartheid system there. Even as late as 1988, TV sets cost double what they would elsewhere to keep them out of the homes of black citizens.

A generation ago, five of six viewers tuned into one of the Big Three networks; today only three of six do. The medium, in other words, is now more diverse. And we have changed not only what we watch but the way we watch it. Armed with remote controls, another relatively new piece of technology, viewers now “graze” or “surf” across cable’s never-ending channels, from all-documentary formats (Discovery) to channels aimed at African Americans (Black Entertainment Network), from an alphabet soup of movie channels (AMC, TNT, TBS, and HBO) to all-weather and all-consumer news. We are promised all-crime, fashion, military, book, and (horror of horrors!) game-show channels in the near future. We can even shop by cable TV—and we do so to the tune of \$2.2 billion annually. Soon, in all likelihood, we will do our banking and pay our bills through TV as well.

It was not only cable that overthrew the Big Three and transformed the TV experience. During the 1980s, the VCR took America by storm, occupying only one of every five house-

holds in 1985 but four of five today. Last year Americans rented an amazing 3.5 billion videos, which works out to an average of one a week for each household. Videotape rentals are now a \$12-billion industry.

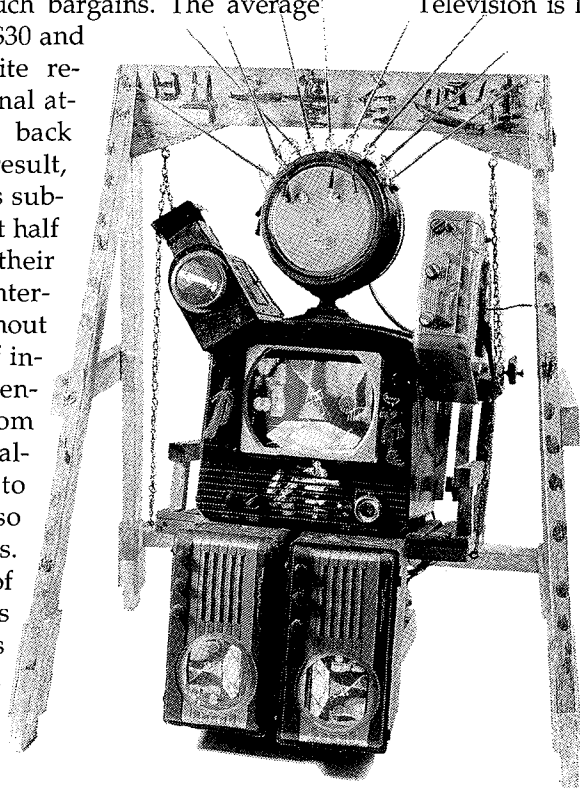
Impossible as it may seem, more technological change is coming. By the end of the century we will have digital high-definition television with movie-quality images, and in the next century, if not sooner, we will acquire the ability to summon (for a fee) an electronic newspaper on our screens and search through the biggest libraries in the world for information.

Already, these far-reaching changes have injected an undemocratic element into what was once in many ways a most democratic medium. Everybody could watch Neil Armstrong walk on the moon or Richard Nixon tender his resignation. That was because a TV set by the early 1970s cost only a third as much as the first '50s sets had. Cable TV offers no such bargains. The average monthly bill is \$30 and climbing, despite recent congressional attempts to roll back prices. As a result, poor Americans subscribe to cable at half the rate of their wealthier counterparts, going without a whole slew of information and entertainment, from C-SPAN to local-access TV to ESPN. Many also go without VCRs. Add in the cost of videotape rentals and new gadgets (such as VCR Plus) and watching TV can suddenly become a

\$1,000-per-year habit.

It is typical of the American attitude toward TV that, much as we may criticize the medium, we are also troubled by the fact that some Americans do not have equal access to it. Television has become the greatest entertainment and information machine of all time. Love it or leave it, we all—rich and poor, the powerful and the underclass—use it to educate ourselves in various ways and to define a common culture. Nielsen's Top 10 tells us what is "in." "Murphy Brown" elicits the wrath of former Vice President Dan Quayle. "Monday Night Football" defines the quintessential male-bonding night at the bar. "Jeopardy" teases Ph.D. candidates away from their dissertations to see if they are really smart. "Sixty Minutes," the single show virtually everyone agrees is entertaining and enlightening, has become as a consequence the most popular program in TV's history—and surely the one we all hope never to be caught on.

Television is like the fabled uncle who came to dinner and never left: It is difficult finally to decide how we feel about it. In one recent survey people were asked how much money it would take to convince them to give up TV for a year. Almost half refused for anything less than \$1 million! After a half-century-long love-hate relationship, we are just not sure if the story of TV in America will have a happy ending. But we do know that TV—probably in some advanced version we have yet to imagine, and surely not as all-consuming or as controlling as its current critics believe it to be—will be forever with us.



TV & AMERICAN CULTURE

FLAT AND HAPPY

BY TODD GITLIN

Today, there is no getting away from the electronic hearthland. Commentators may routinely misinterpret one of the more widely circulated statistics about television—that the average household has a set *on* more than seven hours per day—to mean that the average person *watches* that amount. (It is no mere pedantic detail to note that a set being *on* does not mean that it is being *watched*.) But even the correct figure of four hours a day is nothing to trifle with. Television watching is second only to work as the primary activity, or inactivity, that Americans undertake during their waking hours. One sign of how thoroughly television has been assimilated, even among the more literate, is that it has become a sign of inverse snobbery to proclaim affection for a pet series. Whole generations of popular-culture scholars now unashamedly rhapsodize about the stellar qualities of their favored habits.

The nation has assimilated television. Has it, then, been assimilated *to* television? More to the point, is television now a dominant force in shaping the character of Americans? Many analysts have argued the affirmative,

even though they disagree on whether this is for the good. Television, it seems, has served as an instrument for the nationalization of American culture, furthering tolerance while eroding ethnocentrism and other forms of parochialism. For good reason did Edward R. Murrow choose to inaugurate the first coast-to-coast broadcast, on November 18, 1951, with a split screen showing the Statue of Liberty and the Golden Gate Bridge simultaneously.

It was no small blow against white supremacy, during the 1950s and 1960s, to bring into the living rooms of white America images of the brutal treatment of blacks, nor for that matter, during the 1980s, to convey to a white audience that professional-class blacks such as Bill Cosby were effectively identical to their white counterparts. In *No Sense of Place* (1985), Joshua Meyrowitz argues that television has brought to public view the “backstage” of American social life, educating the public to see through appearances and cultivating a knowledgeable skepticism even while contributing to the spread of egalitarian sentiments. On the other hand,

conservative critics such as Michael Medved and Richard Grenier suggest that television promotes adversarial attitudes, incites mindless rebellion, and cultivates a corrosive attitude toward social responsibility. The interesting thing is that both viewpoints presume that the impact of television is considerable, rather uniform, and, on balance, subversive of established authority.

The presumption in all these arguments is that television operates in a space left vacant by the demise of traditional authority. Some, such as George Gerbner, former dean of the Annenberg School of Communication, go so far as to call television a "religion." Others, more subtly, see television purveying identities, especially for the young, in a fluid, unsettled society where neither work, religion, nor family is stable or compelling enough to do the traditional job. Has an entire culture become, in the words of novelist William Gass, "nothing more than the darkening cross-hatch where the media intersect"? The smothering hypothesis, anticipated by novelist Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), has a dire appeal. It is easy to see why. Television not only looms large and loud in every private domain, its pervasiveness transcends that of all previous systems of communication.

Indeed, to call television a medium of communication misses much of the point. It is somewhat like calling a family a system of communication. Family therapists do so, but their descriptive power falls short of Tolstoy's. It might carry us somewhat further to say that television is a medium of cultural power. What happens on, or through, television—the images, topics, and styles that circulate through living rooms—does proceed from headquarters outward to take up a space in the national circuitry. But to speak of television as if it were nothing but a sequence of images is to miss a crucial feature

of the machinery, namely *how much of it there is and how easily it enters the house.*

To think of American life today without television taxes the imagination. One extraordinary social fact about television is that it is both ubiquitous and, on the scale of social goods, disappointing. Television has the virtues of being cheap and accessible, and does not require much engagement—it is therefore most popular among children, the old, the poor, and the less educated. Society's most powerless receive television as a consolation prize. Even many of these, and most other people most of the time, think watching it an activity not so much valuable in itself as preferable, perhaps, to other choices near at hand. Yet, in several social experiments, many people have refused large sums of money for volunteering to do without television for one month. But even these diehards, like most people, rank television low among their pleasures. It is an enjoyment that turns out to be not so enjoyable after all. *What are you doing? Nothing, just watching television. How was the program? OK. Watching television is something to do, but it is also and always just watching television.*

The low status of TV watching obscures, however, a deep truth about the peculiar place of television in American life. Consider that in most households the television set itself has prestige. True enough, as the price of low-end televisions came down and households acquired more than one, the large-screen console television lost some of its majesty. Still, especially in the households of the working class, and probably in the majority of American homes, the set remains a centerpiece of the living room—to judge from the framed photos, trophies, and other esteemed objects surveying the room from the top of the set—something of a conspicuous secular shrine. It takes up, one might say, prime space. In

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this respect, the TV is an extension of the piano that was, in earlier decades, a virtually mandatory certificate of status in the parlor of actual or aspiring middle-class families. Members of the working class buy console sets and display them proudly in their living rooms, while members of the professional class buy high-tech large screens for their living rooms, keeping their smaller, simpler sets sequestered, for private use, in their bedrooms.

In all these households television is, I suggest, more than an amusement bank, a national bulletin board, a repertory of images, an engine for ideas, a classification index, a faithful pet, or a tranquilizer. It is all of these, in some measure. But television's largest impact is probably as a school for manners, mores, and styles—for repertoires of speech and feeling, even for the externals and experiences of self-presentation that we call personality. This is not simply because television is powerful but also, and crucially, because other institutions are less so.

As work, family, and religion lose their capacity to adumbrate how a person is expected to behave, television takes up much of the slack. In the working world, for instance, the focus of employment has shifted during the 20th century from the craft itself ("I am a tailor") to the paycheck and the status ("I am an Assistant Grade II" or alternately "I am a working stiff"). Religious belief, while prevalent, is awkwardly coupled with the roles that most people act out in their daily lives, so that, even for most believers, "I am a Christian" is no longer a very clear badge of identity. More-

over, divorces, remarriages, stepparents, and live-in arrangements increasingly characterize family life, so that one (or one's subself) belongs to more than one family at a time. In this setting, where primary identities have slackened and people are members of many "clubs" at once, Americans look to popular culture for ways of identifying themselves. Consider, for example, the personal ads in local newspapers or magazines. Fifteen years ago you might have read, "Woody Allen seeks his Annie Hall"; today

it will more likely be, "L. A. Law type looking for Vanna White."

It is reasonable to suspect that, at the least, television teaches people how they should talk, look, and behave—which means, in some measure, that it teaches them how they should think, how they should feel, and how, perchance, they should dream. Ideologically minded critics of the Right (those writing for the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, for example) or of the Left (Noam Chomsky, for example), obsessed with the power of ideas over benighted citizens, have distracted us from recognizing the deep-



A "Saturday Night Live" skit from 1976 portrays Nixon and Kissinger as a pair of comical idiots. No public figure, many critics contend, emerges from TV exposure with his or her authority intact.

est workings of television because their own rational bias impoverishes their social imagination. They cannot imagine that there might be any other reason for wrong-headed policies than the misinformation of influential publics.

In speaking of the cultural power of television, I am referring not simply to its impact on knowledge. For decades, researchers have published literally thousands of studies of the effects of watching television. As a result, many things can be said to be "known" about

"the effects of television." But all the hard-nosed studies qualify as hard-nosed—and therefore receive funding—only insofar as their scope is limited to specific, measurable effects on distinct behaviors and conditions such as buying, voting, aggression, and sexual arousal; or, more ambitiously, on ideas, attitudes, perceptions, and the salience of particular concerns in people's minds. Indeed, the very notion of "effects" suggests the sort of before-and-after controlled experiment that can be done, or simulated, only when the effect under scrutiny is demarcated precisely.

What interests me are more elusive and arguably more important matters: the tone and temper of American culture. Intuitively, one senses that the transformations of television in the past half century are deeply implicated in the way Americans feel. Of course, all cultures change, none more than America's. (If we think of technological innovations alone, and make a rough estimate of the cultural changes that followed, it is hard to imagine any decade to compare with 1895-1905, which brought the automobile, the airplane, the motion picture, and radio.) But the forms of cultural change in recent decades are remarkable. Distinctions that were formerly sacrosanct—urban/suburban, northern/southern, public/private, national/local, naughty/nice—have blurred. To borrow Joshua Meyrowitz's terms, themselves borrowed from the late sociologist Erving Goffman, the frontstage world of formal American life is more tolerant—there is a growing degree of routine sexual and racial acceptance. Gay figures pass across the evening news without scandal; Oprah Winfrey, Arsenio Hall, and Whoopi Goldberg have their talk-show billings; suburban white teens thrill to African-American rappers. Meanwhile, the backstage world of ordinary relationships is nastier. From domestic battering to automatic cursing and the rudeness of motorists—note the decline in directional signaling over the last few decades—a harshness has settled into the texture of everyday life. It

seems to me that television has furthered these changes—without having, all by itself, devised or caused them.

I am struck, in particular, by the growth of "knowingness," a quality of self-conscious savvy that often passes for sophistication. Knowingness is not simply access to or a result of knowledge; knowingness is a state of mind in which any particular knowledge is less important than the feeling *that* one knows and the pleasure taken in the display of this feeling. Knowingness is the conviction that it is possible to be in the know; it is the demonstration that one hasn't been left behind, that one is hip, with it, cool. It is a mastery of techniques by which to reveal that one has left the side show and made it into the big tent. The opposite of knowingness is unabashed provincialism, naiveté, complacent straightforwardness. This provincialism and straightforwardness have been eroded within the American culture of recent decades—with the help of television.

Two generations ago, "simple people," morally straightforward types along with rural and other uneducated types, were amply represented on network television. There were the staunch, steady, plainspoken western figures of "Gunsmoke" and "Have Gun, Will Travel." There were the rural butts enacted endearingly by Red Skelton and the apparently artless working-class heroes of "The Honey-mooners." There were the unself-conscious rubes who served as Groucho Marx's foils on "You Bet Your Life" as well as their offensive racist equivalents on "Amos 'n' Andy." On all these shows, sophisticates got to show off by distinguishing themselves from buffoons. The conflict between the two often drove the plot.

As late as the 1960s, despite the decline of the western, rural settings and folksy types were still on display in "The Beverly Hillbillies," "Green Acres," and "The Andy Griffith Show." As I explain in my book *Inside Prime Time* (1983), these shows were canceled in the early 1970s, despite their commercial success, when the incoming president of CBS made the

decision to seek younger, more urban, more affluent viewers with "sophisticated" series such as "All in the Family," "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," and "M*A*S*H." Later in the 1970s, a few rural revivals succeeded: "The Waltons," "Little House on the Prairie," and "The Dukes of Hazzard." One running theme in many of these programs was that deviousness got its comeuppance at the hands of moral earnestness—though of course the comeuppance was never final, deviousness getting a new lease in the next installment.

But television's most affectionate renditions of plain folks in small-town America were delivered to the West Virginia hollows and Nebraska farms just as the hollows and farms were emptying out. The volunteers who troop onto the contest shows, quiz shows, and dating games today are vastly more media-savvy than the bumpkins who took their chances with Groucho on "You Bet Your Life" two generations ago. Today's hopeful contestants still submit to teasing, but unlike Groucho's foils, they can also tease back. They know how to banter without skipping a beat. They may still be shocked by Oprah's transsexual priest, Sally Jessy's teary molester, or Donahue's tortured immigrant, but boy, do they have a story for you, too. In the talk show studios as well, spectators in the live audience wear appraising looks. Ordinary fans may be thrilled by the presence, the sheer aura, of their stars, but they are also—as Yale sociologist Joshua Gamson shows in his forthcoming *Claims to Fame*—able to stand back and chat knowingly about the techniques with which publicists go about the business of manufacturing glamour and fame.

I do not want to suggest that television has merely replaced the plainspoken down-home characters and bucolic settings of the older shows. Literary critics, preoccupied with "text," have led cultural analysts to concentrate on representation—on the content of the programs. Many who criticize television criticize it because they take its representations as categorical and dislike the way various categories are represented. Thus conservatives have

argued that when businessmen are treated as "crooks, conmen, and clowns" (to quote the title of a probusiness pamphlet of the 1980s), they inspire public contempt for business; likewise feminists have argued that when a woman character is victimized by violent crime, the representation teaches women that their role is to play the victim. Such critics tend to assume of television the principle, *Monkey see, monkey do*, and they also assume, rather as in Stalinist Russia, that characters must be exemplary in the manner prescribed by the critic. But if television exercised influence simply by spurring emulation, the popular rural comedies of the early 1970s should have led to rural resettlement.

The content of television is not simply one story after another. In fact, to think of television as nothing more than a sum of stories is like thinking of a lawn as nothing more than a sum of blades. The very significance of the units derives from their membership in the ensemble. As the British critic Raymond Williams pointed out, one remarkable thing about television is the sheer profusion of stories it delivers. No previous generation of human beings has been exposed to the multitude of narratives we have come to take for granted in our everyday lives. The impact of each one may be negligible, but it hardly follows that the impact of the totality is negligible. Moreover, the profusion of stories changes each component story. The stories exist in multiplicity: Their significance bleeds from one story into another.

Most people watch *television*, not discrete narrative units. The flow of television is both *rapid* and *interrupted*. A story begins with credits. A few minutes of story take place. The story is interrupted for commercials—probably more than one per commercial break. There may be previews of news bulletins, promotions, previews of other shows. The story resumes. There are more commercials, more announcements. The story resumes. And so on. At the hourly or half-hourly station break, there may be trailers for the following week's

episode, trailers for shows later that night, announcements of coming events. As the remote control-equipped viewer "zaps" or "grazes" through dozens of cable channels at the touch of a button—to the delight of postmodernist theorists celebrating the recombinant culture of juxtaposition as an exercise of freedom—cacophony is in the nature of the pastiche. In the wonderful world of television, anything is compatible with anything else. The one continuity is discontinuity. The flow resembles that of a mountain stream, complete with white water, more than a slow, steady passage. Indeed, rapidity and interruption are cen-

Nights-worth of stories, and the meaning of any particular show has a shelf life of, usually, minutes. A viewer engages less with the content of one program than masters an attitude of superiority to them all. Rather than learn one subject well, he or she acquires a sophisticated repartee and light banter good for discussing anything and everything that comes up—a style in which, as noted before, to seem quick and knowing is more important than what one knows.

Obviously rapidity and interruption are not brand-new features of Western civilization. Television is a caricature of what, before television, was already a way of life. The ide-

The private becomes the public: On daytime TV people confess their deepest secrets not to the priest but to the millions.



tral to the sensory impression television leaves.

The question then arises: What kind of social education, what type of character formation, occurs when there are so many stories and each one is constantly interrupted, is soon over, and flows immediately into an unrelated story that, in turn, is swallowed up by the next? In an earlier America, even the uneducated could know well, and reflect upon, a small stock of stories—in particular, the Bible and Shakespeare. Lincoln, largely unschooled, read Shakespeare deeply enough in his youth to be able to rank one soliloquy over another in a letter written two years before he died. By contrast, every evening television tells a Scheherazade's 1,001

als and sins it depicts are those of America's formulaic modernity. The picture may be seipia but the frame glitters. Thanks to slick visuals (known in Hollywood as "high production values") and crisp movement, glibness rules. Like the Sears catalogue performing its service in the outhouse, the commercials and network IDs and promos and news flashes emanate from the cosmopolis. Willy-nilly, the slick wrapping carries the tumult and velocity of a commercial version of urban life, the cornucopia of desire, the lure of consumable things and "lifestyles." Commercials don't simply announce the wonders of goods and the lives they promise, they also bring energy and novelty—news of what passes for fun, freedom, and security these days.

Television and its spin-offs have thus furthered what psychologist Martha Wolfenstein called in the 1940s America's "fun culture." The motto is Hey, No Problem! A bright happiness is more the equilibrium state on television than in any other cultural form at any other time in history. In commercials problems are easily surmounted or minimized—as in a child's world where difficulties can be left behind. It is no coincidence that in almost all family sitcoms (with the exception of "The Cosby Show"), the parents, especially fathers, are typically shown as slightly stuffy, misguided, or well-meaning bunglers who are set straight,

ads, is the premium style. TV's common currency consists of slogans and mockery. Situation comedies and morning shows are in particular obsessed with the jokey comeback. The put-down is the universal linkage among television's cast of live and recorded characters. A free-floating hostility mirrors, and also inspires, the equivalent conversational style among the young who grow up in this habitat.

As critic Mark Crispin Miller has observed, the knowingly snide attitude is so widespread and automatic that it deserves to be called "the hipness unto death." The promotion of David Letterman to CBS's 11:30 P.M.



at the end of 30 minutes, by their sons and daughters. Children Know Best.

On TV both children and adults speak with an unprecedented glibness. Thanks to the wonders of editing, no one on television is ever at a loss for words or photogenic signs of emotion. Not even the bereaved parent asked "How do you feel?" about the death of a child is seen to hesitate. Hesitancy, silence, awkwardness are absent from TV's repertory of behaviors, except in sitcoms or made-for-TV movies where boy meets girl. Yet outside TV, awkwardness and hesitancy often characterize the beginning, and each further development, of interiority, of a person's internal life. On TV, however, speech is stripped down, designed to *move*. The one-liner, developed for

talk-show slot signals the ascendancy of this style. Relentless if superficial self-disclosure is one of the conventions of television today. The audience is simultaneously alerted to the contrivance, transported behind the scenes, and pleased by both—and by the possibility of enjoying both. It is obvious how this plays in "Saturday Night Live," but more surprising to see how it plays in "straight" commercials and programs designed for people one would not commonly think of as sophisticates. In one commercial of the 1980s, a man in a white coat looks you in the eye and says, "I'm not a doctor, but I play one on TV." The audience is expected to recognize him as a soap-opera actor. (He goes on to say that other people also think they can "play doctor" and as a result

may take the wrong medicine. He has come to sell the right one.) There followed the "Joe Isuzu" series, in which a huckster makes outrageous claims about Isuzu automobiles: They get 100 miles per gallon, they cost \$99.98, and so on, while subtitles provide the truth. Consider further the business news and gossip of "Entertainment Tonight," along with its knockoffs on CNN, MTV, and the local news, and the canny entertainment sections of today's newspapers, making the audience privy to Hollywood marketing calculations, casting tactics, career moves, and box-office figures. We are invited to understand Hollywood not only as a machine for dreams but as a game through which we, the spectators, are dreamed of—a game whose success or failure we are also invited to inspect.

Through this relentless inspection, character is dissected, torn apart. Indeed, character—based upon self-mastery, moral resolve, learning or understanding, and quiet or heroic action—is reduced to personality, impression management, the attractions of body and mannerism. Here again, television is not inventing but perfecting already long-standing trends in our social life. In *Within the Context of No Context* (1981), George Trow traces the changing nature of American magazine covers to show how character has been supplanted by personality. The typical faces on the cover of *Time* and *Life* through the 1930s and '40s—faces of people such as Roosevelt and Churchill and Hitler, who were famous, for better or worse, for what they achieved or brought about in public life—eventually gave way to personalities (Madonna would be a contemporary example) who are famous mainly for being famous.

The equivalent process operates in our thinking (and feeling) about politics. Coverage and conversation are dominated, first, by a focus on personality, and second, by the inside analysis of the stratagems of campaigns and governance. Politicians concluded that the arts of governance are less

fateful than acts of spin control—and as television observes the spin, reporting thus feeds cynicism. The audience is flattered that it is superior to the corruption, dishonesty, and hypocrisy of public servants. The viewer has been brought into the know. He or she is treated as an inside-dopester, savvy to spin doctors, speech writers, electorate-pleasing "positioning," and all manner of practical calculations. In one sense, what is going on is democratic unmasking: Let the politicians be put on notice that they are hired hands! In another sense, at least under present circumstances, the cynicism that has become so widespread in politics is more likely to generate withdrawal than political engagement. The increased voter turnout in the 1992 general election, in which Ross Perot served as a third-party side-show attraction, may only be an interruption in the otherwise long-term decline in the size of the electorate.

The glibness, relentless pace, sloganeering, and shrinking attention spans of private life filter into television, via the selective antennae of the television-industrial complexes of Hollywood and New York, only to be reinforced there, like a rocket that accelerates by swinging close to Earth, using its gravitational pull to swing free of that same gravitational pull. The free-floating nastiness of sitcom existence may well be cultivating an equivalent show of popular sentiment, so that the endless put-downs of popular comedy penetrate the rest of everyday life. Take your own brief survey of bumper stickers (Florida's "We don't care how you do it up North"), of slang (e.g., *drop-dead* as an adjective meaning "stunning," as in "She has a drop-dead body" or "Our paints are available in 36 drop-dead colors"), and of T-shirts ("I'M NOT DEAF, I'M JUST IGNORING YOU"; "OUT OF MY WAY, BITCH"), which then recycle, especially via the Fox network's youth-oriented shows, into the popular domain.

In summary: *Television has nationalized American culture and made it more knowing.* This conclusion may seem to fly in the face of pre-

dictions that television's homogenizing days are waning. On the surfaces of culture, distinctions do multiply. Basic cable service now enters 62 percent of American homes, bringing an average of 30 channels. What the postnetwork cable channels offering popular music, home shopping, evangelical Christianity, African-American music, and Spanish-language soap operas have in common is that they thrive on undiminished enthusiasm for breathless, slick entertainment. Advances in interactive technology will probably not divert from these main tendencies; they will render more efficient the services that people already use—banking, video games, commercial movies, quiz shows. Pride in the national cornucopia will become a cornerstone of the orthodox American identity. White bread has already ceased to be the symbol of national unity. It has been supplanted by the new standard supermarket shelf of 72 different loaves, each bland in its own way. TV programs that would truly widen the spectrum—as far as character types and kinds of approved behaviors presented—are nearly as unlikely in the post-cable cornucopia as they were on the Big Three networks. For a series about, say, a gay couple disturbed about restrictions on military service or a devout Catholic family worried about the increasing materialism of daily life, a viewer, remote control in hand, will zap through his or her 30 channels in vain.

Make no mistake. The uniformities in present-day American style are not simply the creatures of television or of corporate culture more generally. They build, in turn, on cultural uniformities already observed in the early 1830s by Alexis de Tocqueville, who pointed out, long before Stallone, Schwarzenegger, Roseanne, or MTV, that America's cultural products

substitute the representation of motion and sensation for that of sentiment and thought. . . . Style will frequently be fantastic, incorrect, overburdened, and loose, almost always vehement and bold. . . . There will be more wit than erudition, more imagination than profundity; and literary performances will bear marks of an untutored and rude vigor of thought, frequently of great variety and singular fecundity.

In such passages where Tocqueville describes the arts in America, and where he predicts that surface and motion will replace the exploration of the soul, he appears almost to be anticipating the development of a democratic "art" like television. Tocqueville often speculated about what could hold together a country of such disparate regions and so many varieties of people. Not even he could have dreamed, however, of this slick and all-knowing personality—this glib persona fostered by television, which undermines all authority and is adaptable to every class and ethnicity—that would become, as it were, *the* American citizen, the glue that in its peculiar way unites the country.

One hardly needs to read Tocqueville to surmise that, regardless of the channel or brand name, the odds are that the rule of the slick, the glib, and the cute will prevail. The once-over-lightly glibness of American culture prevails not only on television but in the movies and magazines, among sports announcers and talk-show hosts, in the jargons of politics and psychotherapy alike. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that America's culture of comfort and convenience, of the quick fix and fast relief, of mass-manufactured labels of individuality, has acquired in television a useful technology to reduce the range of colors in the spectrum of life to a bleached center glittering with sequins in many dropped-dead colors.

TV & AMERICAN CULTURE

SEEING THROUGH THE TUBE

BY FRANK D. McCONNELL

I begin with a true story. In 1974 I was having coffee in the English department lounge at Northwestern University when two of my colleagues—a younger, untenured man and an older, tenured woman—entered in mid-conversation.

"Oh, no," the woman was saying, "I just won't have a television in my apartment. I know there are *some* good things on it, especially on public broadcasting. But so much of it is just garbage!"

My younger friend laughed. "Joke's on you, then," he said. "It's got an off button."

For years I've thought that a brilliant riposte: If you don't like it, you don't have to do it. It certainly has all the bracing moral simplicity of our former first lady's insouciant slogan, "Just Say No." But now, having immersed myself in as many anti-TV jeremiads as anyone can digest, I wonder. The vast majority of media studies over the last 30 years, both anti-TV and, in a few heroic or quixotic cases, pro-TV, are unanimous on one point and one point only: that TV is not just a new medium but a revolutionary and

cataclysmic alteration in the way humans perceive and process their world, destined to change forever the nature of consciousness and society itself. The consensus, in other words, is that, though "it's got an off button," the button doesn't really work. We are all creatures—or prisoners—of the Tube.

Now this is a fairly apocalyptic tonnage of significance to load on what is, after all, an entertainment or advertising or information medium barely 40 years old. Developed in the 1930s but largely dormant during World War II, TV blossomed only in the early years of the Bomb and the Cold War. As Robert C. Toll reports in *The Entertainment Machine* (1982), while in 1950 there were only about three million sets in the country, by 1953 the number had grown exponentially to 21 million. Today it is the rare American household that possesses only one set, and the atypical American who watches less than four hours of TV a day.

This much is statistical fact—a crucial psy-

chic fact of late 20th-century life. But the facts do not prepare one for the Druidic solemnity with which writers, many brilliant, have attacked TV as a kind of cultural succubus, seducing the Republic and draining it of its vitality.

In the 1976 film *Network*, Paddy Chayevsky, himself one of the great early TV writers, created a nightmare vision in which TV "news," driven by the ratings race, becomes a tawdry, debased, debasing, and ultimately murderous form of entertainment, pandering to the most prurient appetites of its audience. Recent, popular "reconstructed reality" shows such as "Hard Copy" and "A Current Affair," in which actors re-create tabloid "true stories," can seem a chilling fulfillment of Chayevsky's fantasy—as does the recent admission by NBC that, in a report on the safety failures of GMC trucks, the producers had "enhanced" the explosion of a truck by planting what were in effect bombs under the chassis. Novelists such as Don DeLillo (*White Noise*, 1985) and Thomas Pynchon (*Vineland*, 1990) use TV as a central metaphor for what they see as the Novocainized, universal moral stupor of present-day America. And media critics, from the populist to the high-culture mandarin, have argued that TV, by its very nature, reduces culture to the lowest common denominator, provides a false, substitute reality from which

the viewer cannot escape, and is in fact little less than mind control.

But not only do intellectuals hate TV; TV seems to hate itself. A number of highly popular series since the 1960s—"The Dick Van Dyke Show," "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," and "Murphy Brown," to name a few—have orbited around the idea of writing for, producing, or selling a TV show. In each case, the assumption has been that the industry itself is well short of the respectable or the grown-up. In the vast range of the family sitcom—surely one of TV's staple crops—I cannot call to mind a single instance in which the image of a family watching TV together is presented as in any way a good thing. One example will serve. (And I note in passing that few of TV's most vituperative critics ever deign to discuss the specific details of a given show.) In "The



"You see, Dad, Professor McLuhan says the environment that man creates becomes his medium for defining his role in it. The invention of type created linear, or sequential, thought, separating thought from action. Now, with TV and folk singing, thought and action are closer and social involvement is greater. We again live in a village. Get it?"

Simpsons"—the widely praised cartoon sitcom about a preternaturally dense family which is itself a parody of the archetypal TV-sitcom household—each episode begins with the father leaving work, the mother coming home from the supermarket, and the kids returning from school, all of them arriving simultaneously and throwing themselves on the sofa, their glazed-over eyes fixed on the TV set.

Plato, notoriously, attacked the art of writing as an unworthy vehicle for wisdom—in, of course, some of the greatest writing the world has known. And Swift and Voltaire, among others, satirized the dangerous side effects of the proliferation of printed books—in, naturally, printed books of their own. We can even fantasize that, at the dawn of language itself, some anxious shaman delivered an eloquent speech to the effect that this newfangled thing, speech, would lead to no good.

Nevertheless, the salient fact about the birth of TV is the complexity of its historical moment. I have said that the industry began to burgeon in the late 1940s and early '50s, the age in which it first became thinkable that humanity, in possession now of the atomic bomb, could commit global suicide. The planet itself, again for the first time, began to align itself in two mutually hostile tribes—the "Free World" and the "Communist Conspiracy," to use the phrases that now almost elicit nostalgia. But that was not all. The moment of TV's birth was also the moment at which information itself began to be perceived as the only truly valuable commodity for the future. World War II, more than any previous conflict, had been a battle of and for information. The breaking of the Japanese code "Purple" and the German code "Enigma," and the instantly legendary Manhattan Project, whose secrecy was soon after revealed to have been pen-

etrated by the Soviets—all of these information struggles were as crucial as any "real-world" military engagement in securing victory for the Allies. As much as TV, in other words, it was the war itself that guaranteed that ours would be a period obsessed with info-tech as its prime tool for survival.

In 1948—the year, by the way, that Milton Berle became the first TV superstar—Claude Shannon published his seminal book, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Shannon, a cryptographer during the war, was then working for Bell Laboratories, trying to devise a more efficient, static-free system of telephonic exchange. His monograph does not make for chair-gripping excitement, yet it may be one of the defining works of this century. For what Shannon, the sublime technologist, did was reassign the priorities: The *content* of the message sent, he argued, is less important than the *means* by which it is sent. Shannon could not have known in 1948 that his theories were mapping a phenomenon—TV—that would come to be seen as the third pivotal revolution, after writing and printing, in the history of communication. It would require Marshall McLuhan, in *Understanding Media* (1964), to translate Shannon's argument into what is certainly the slogan of the info-tech age: "The medium is the message." It was McLuhan who single-handedly raised the "question of media" to a level of philosophical and moral urgency it has not yet lost. And it is McLuhan who is perceived as the Great Adversary by virtually every later, anti-TV writer.

McLuhan, a professor of English at the University of Toronto, discovered the new world of media not through information theory but through his discipleship to a very remarkable man, Harold A. Innis. A historian

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and a humanist, Innis was concerned with the ways writing and printing technologies, "monopolies of information," influenced the growth of empires. In his 1951 book, *The Bias of Communication*, he argued that the print revolution, by making "texts" available to a hitherto ignored class of readers and by encouraging a new sense of *privacy* in the act of reading, contributed to the formation of modern, individualist, and democratic man. His argument has, by now, become all but dogma.

What McLuhan did was extend Innis's idea to include the technology of speed-of-light, audiovisual information: radio, and above all, TV. His two definitive books, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964), contain his major argument, and they turned the man himself into something of a media celebrity—rare and heady for an academic! The conclusion of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* reveals McLuhan's prophetic fervor:

The new electric galaxy of events has already moved deeply into the Gutenberg galaxy. Even without collision, such co-existence of technologies and awareness brings trauma and tension to every living person. Our most ordinary and conventional attitudes seem suddenly twisted into gargoyles and grotesques. Familiar institutions and associations seem at times menacing and malignant.

There is something vaguely Nietzschean in the urgency of "new electric galaxy"—in its paradoxically apocalyptic optimism. McLuhan was unquestioningly sanguine about the effects of the revolutionary TV on human consciousness and culture. If oral society had been a media extension of hearing, he argued, and manuscript and print culture an extension of sight, then the new "electric galaxy" was, or would become, an extension of the central nervous system itself. TV would usher in a postliterate, immediate linkage of all peoples with all peoples, a hot line from self to self that would deliver us all from the bondage of literacy and establish us as a "global village"—humankind's long dream of one world, at last

accomplished by the infinite crisscrossing of electromagnetic waves around the world.

It is easy for anti-TV critics to read McLuhan's great expectations as yet another excrescence of the solipsistic 1960s, like tie-dye T-shirts and macrobiotic cuisine. The TV set, around whose glow we gather in our darkened living rooms, becomes an avatar of the primal campfire around which the tribe would collect to share its grievances, its gossip, and its gospel. Does the phrase "Woodstock Nation" call up an embarrassing ghost here?

And yet, in ways McLuhan could not have predicted, we have become, thanks to TV, a global—or at least a continental—village. To take two obvious instances, it was indisputably TV coverage of the war in Vietnam that generated a massive public revulsion against that particular adventure, and it was obviously Ronald Reagan's superbly telegenic presence, more so than his policies, that made him the first two-term president in 30 years. More recently, in the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton and H. Ross Perot simultaneously contrived the "TV town meeting," an electronic question-and-answer session that gives the illusion, at least, of coast-to-coast intimacy with the candidate. This phenomenon, certain to be a feature of all future campaigns, is itself modeled on a genre that didn't even exist when McLuhan wrote: the "talk show," in which Phil Donohue, Oprah Winfrey, or Geraldo Rivera, guests, and audience all share a conversational space at once glaringly public and deeply private, one part group therapy to two parts tribal council. To give a final example, it is now a very real challenge in heavily covered court cases (the Rodney King beating trial, the William Kennedy Smith rape trial, the Amy Fisher assault trial) to find jurors fit to serve. If they have seen the TV coverage of the alleged crimes, how impartial can they be? But given the ubiquitousness of TV in our lives, if they haven't seen any coverage, how *awake* can they be? The global village, in other words, turns out to be a reality. The question is whether the

secret name of the village is Salem.

McLuhan's enthusiasm was for TV as a technology, a new way of perceiving, a new connectedness. What he did not take into account is that TV is also a *business*. Until very recently, three major networks held and enforced a crushing monopoly on what could be shown and what could be said, reducing the viewer to the passive status of a chooser-among-sames. Could the electromagnetic Eden of the TV tube be a return not to the primal garden but to the state of enslavement?

Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (1977) makes this case. Mander is a former advertising executive who used his first book to recant his sins. Sometimes *Four Arguments* reads almost like an auto-da-fé. The common theme of his four arguments is an almost exact inversion of the Innis-McLuhan approach to media. Yes, TV is a new and startling way of perceiving reality, but it is a false, engineered "reality" thrust upon its passive victims in such a way as to isolate them from the reality of their own lives. Yes, TV is a unifying force, but it is a unifying force only insofar as it turns us all into eager consumers of the products it exists, above all, to convince us we need. TV, for Mander, is more than anything else a sales medium, its other functions (news, entertainment, etc.) serving only as a kind of narcotic foreplay for the Big Sell:

Whenever we buy a product [advertised through TV] we are paying for the recovery of our own feelings. We have thereby turned into creatures who are the commodities we buy. We are the product we pay for and all life is reduced to serving this cycle.

This is a powerful indictment. Part of the enduring charm of Mander's book, in fact, is his brave sense of himself as a lone voice crying out in the wilderness against the final closure of the TV-addicted mind. Few, if any, later anti-TV tracts catch quite his pitch of anger or risk his uncompromising solution to the problem of TV, which is, to quote Voltaire on Christianity, "Crush the infamous thing!"

Mander is a man on fire with a vision of a great wrong, and we cannot expect such men to speak always with complete realism. The conclusion of his book is ringing and poignant:

How to achieve the elimination of television? I certainly cannot answer that question. It is obvious, however, that the first step is for all of us to purge from our minds the idea that just because television exists, we cannot get rid of it.

Between McLuhan's enthusiasm and Mander's apocalypticism, later discussions of TV occupy a moderate, perhaps more habitable space. The Mander final solution to the TV problem is "Luddite," as Neil Postman calls it in his 1985 book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. And Postman sensibly observes that this recourse is impossible. To date at least, the single indisputable fact about technology—any technology—is that it is not reversible. You cannot uninvent TV any more than you can uninvent the alphabet, the printing press, the wheel, the smelting of iron, or nuclear fission. As a species, just as individuals, our fate is to learn to live with what we have imagined.

Postman accepts, as Mander does not, the inevitability of the TV revolution, but he analyzes the negative effects of that revolution. Postman is not a disaffiliated adman but a distinguished professor of communication and rhetoric. And the debasement of mature public discourse caused by the "televising" of reality is the gravamen of his argument. Whereas Mander accuses TV of being primarily a narcotic, Postman's perhaps more damning position is that it is lethally trivializing.

What Postman claims here is not that television is entertaining but that it has made entertainment itself the natural format for the representation of all experience. Our television set keeps us in constant communion with the world, but it does so with a face whose smiling countenance is unalterable. The problem is not that television presents us with entertaining subject matter but that all subject mat-

ter is presented as entertaining, which is another issue altogether.

Television then not only abstracts and etiolates experience, it compartmentalizes it—within the single compartment of entertainment. In a universe of discourse in which everything from tragedy to farce is presented simply as spectacle, both tragedy and farce and everything between become impossibly confused. Postman uses the example of the evening news. No one seems to notice, he remarks, the irony that the evening news on every channel in America is introduced with urgent-sounding signature theme music. The implication is that the events of the day, whether a plane crash in California or an international crisis, are all contents of a “show.” A serious-looking anchorman or anchorwoman narrates, with video, the more ominous or violent events of the last 12 hours. After a break to advertise completely irrelevant products, a usually jocund weatherperson discusses what the weather might be like tomorrow. (In California, especially, this is virtually null information.) After another ad break someone appears to talk about sports; then, with perhaps a few local news items, the serious person with whom we began “wraps it all up,” more often than not urging that one stay tuned for the sitcom or movie of the week that is to follow. The real and the fictional, the serious and the trivial, become hopelessly blurred, until only the uninterrupted, zombifying carrier wave itself is the “real” meaning of the transmission. The medium is not the message but, in McLuhan’s best pun, the massage.

The political implications are ominous. Postman compares TV culture to the smilingly mindless dystopia of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932). In Huxley’s novel the people are kept in happy servitude by the drug “Soma,” which reduces all stress and makes the world look just perfectly all right. “Better a gramme than a damme,” as they are fond of saying. TV, Postman argues, is Huxley’s Soma: an infallibly relaxing drug that reconciles the individual to his or her own tyrannization.

Social critic Jonathan Kozol hailed Postman’s book as a “prophetic vision.” In his own book published the same year, *Illiterate America*, Kozol makes his case with at least equal earnestness. Kozol’s own “prophetic” credentials as a passionate advocate of public education are impeccable. And while *Illiterate America* has relatively little to say about TV, what it does say is damning. On the much-touted use of TV as an educational tool, he writes:

The television learner is entirely passive. The television mode is intellectual disjunction. The consequence of televised instruction is a deeper balkanization of the human consciousness than anything that academic fragmentation has engendered up to now. The mechanistic dangers are no longer metaphoric but specific when we learn from a machine. The separation of a skill from a reflective understanding of its ethical or anti-human implications is enhanced (and it is often virtually assured) by televised indoctrination.

Kozol, even more than Postman, understood that the ultimate extension of TV technology would be not the simple passive-receptive viewer entranced by whatever happened to be “on” at the time, but the burgeoning—now triumphant—technology of *interactive* TV: the video game, the computer-enhanced curriculum, and the soon-to-be-perfected “virtual reality.” Kozol suggests that this particular brave new world is even more Huxleyan than its immediate ancestor:

The learner manipulates the terminal that sits beside her television console; yet it is she who is manipulated by the button she selects. Her only option is to choose at which specific moment she will plug into the sequence of accredited information which has been approved by those who know what is best for her, and for themselves, and who have planned the literacy curriculum with sensitive anticipation of its probable results.

For Kozol, TV is a disease of republican-

ism. At the opposite pole from a cordial "global village," we face the specter of a semi- or largely illiterate population, TV junkies all, voting, reacting, feeling, and desiring precisely as the "virtual" or, better, *ersatz* reality of the Tube tells them to. Marxist cultural critics such as Herbert Marcuse (*One-Dimensional Man*, 1962), Jacques Ellul (*The Technological System*, 1978), and Jean Baudrillard (*For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 1981) have argued along similar lines. They charge that the salient feature of "mass culture" in advanced capitalist society is that it infinitely forestalls revolution by making the concept of *revolution* just another form of show business. How to form an underground movement when the "underground" is immediately taken up and celebrated on "The Tonight Show"?

Not surprisingly, the major anti-TV arguments begin, after a while, to sound the same. All are aimed, after all, at the same target. But we can say, at the risk of caricature, that Mander's main objection is that the medium, as primarily an advertising tool, narrows the scope of experience to artificially implanted needs and wants; and that, as a corollary, the experience of TV watching is, neurophysiologically, a trancelike or comalike state that short-circuits rational thought. Postman's concern is directed more to the body politic than to the awareness of the individual watcher. To him, TV's worst effect is that it cheapens the quality of public discourse by reducing it to the sensationalism of the sound-bite, giving us the illusion of sophistication without the reality of experience. And Kozol is alarmed at the implications of all this for a public-education system that is manifestly in crisis. An illiterate underclass, dependent solely upon the Tube for its information, is perfect prey for totalitarianism. You need not be so crude as to burn dangerous books if you can simply render them unreadable.

What all these arguments have in common, even Mander's call for a jihad, is that they are written, as it were, by "metaphysicians" of television. These authors are not ob-

jecting (only) to this or that show, or to a particular kind of programming, or to a specific network. When they write about TV, the sum of the parts has almost nothing to do with the parts. They attack TV *as a medium*, almost as though it were a destructive metaphysical force. Or, put another way, in the land of television the important point is not that the individual citizens are bad or good but that the country itself is so corrupting and polluted that it scarcely matters who or what the individuals are.

In the various exchanges about television *as medium*, two arguments furnish the subtext for almost every discussion. The first argument is that TV is the next phase of communication, supplanting print. The second is that television creates an artificial reality—the world as advertisement, or entertainment, or passively viewed spectacle—which distances us from our real or "natural" surroundings. To attack TV in either of these two ways is to fault the medium not for how it works but for what it is.

Alvin B. Kernan is a distinguished literary critic and historian at Princeton University. In *The Death of Literature* (1990), he articulates the academic humanist charge against TV that has been uttered, though less authoritatively, ever since TV came to be: that it is evil *just because it is not literature*. Kernan is too thorough a thinker to be a rhetorician. Book reading and watching TV, he concedes, both involve a distinctively human act of decoding some kind of signal to create a meaning. (Cats do not read; nor do they watch TV.) And yet he wants to insist that the reader, as opposed to the watcher, is "intensely active mentally," involved in something that is somehow *serious*, since reading is—again, somehow—more complex than watching.

But to say this is to make what can only be called a leap of faith, faith in the sacramentalism of the printed as opposed to the electromagnetic Word. Are we, indeed, becoming significantly more doltish than our print-oriented ancestors? Are we increasingly submissive hostages

to the light show of the Tube—like the chained prisoners in Plato's allegory of the cave in *The Republic*, condemned to watch only the shadows of the real world?

We do not know. More important, we cannot know. And we cannot because TV is part of our reality. Kernan assumes that we can judge the new medium from the perspective of a "pre-TV" sensibility. That is as impossible for us as it would have been for, say, Shakespeare to imagine a universe without printed books. The eye, as Wittgenstein says, can see everything except itself. Indeed, it is far from clear that literature is "dying" in the TV age any more than painting "died" with the evolution of photography or concert performance "died" when Edison recorded sound.

Perhaps more serious than the charge that TV is bad because it is not literature is the charge that TV is bad because it is not the real world, or that TV somehow occludes our participation in the real or natural world. That, at any rate, is the charge registered in Bill McKibben's remarkable book, *The Age of Missing Information* (1992).

McKibben is a naturalist with a brilliant prose style. In *The Age of Missing Information* he produced a book that, whatever else it may be, is a work of belles-lettres. It is a book about two "days." McKibben enlisted his friends to tape an entire TV "day" of all the shows on all 93 cable channels in Fairfax, Virginia, and he watched *every show that was on that day*. Then, on another day, he climbed a hill in the Adirondacks, took a swim, had some lunch, and slept under the stars. The book narrates these parallel days in alternating chapters. The chapters about the "TV day," timed precisely (e.g., "2:00 P.M.") describe the welter of shows, from sitcoms to televangelism to infomercials, that were on at the named time. The chapters about his day on the mountain are ruminative, Thoreauvian in tone, and given comfortable, cuddly titles like "Twilight" and "Deeper Twilight Still." McKibben's conclusion is that by becoming TV addicts we deny ourselves the real "information" of what it means to hike

up a mountain, take a solitary swim, and simply be one with nature.

It is a gorgeously written, elegantly planned, and deeply unfair book. McKibben assumes that the only alternatives are total deliverance to or total liberation from the beast of commercialism. In fact his conclusion is implicit in the very terms of his experiment. And that is bad science.

No one watches TV the way McKibben did on his extended "day" in front of the set. I can inject a lab rat with large quantities of virtually anything—caffeine, beer, or vitamin X—three times a day for a week, and I will very likely find that by Sunday the rat is having some problems. Have I proved anything—except that the SPCA should tap my phone?

It should be obvious that I am still thrashing over the problem of the off button. If it really works—that is, *if we can use it*—then it seems the new medium is no more, or less, dangerous to civilization than any of its predecessors. (Who, after all, has not let the coffee boil over while engrossed in a book? Is this "enslavement to print"?)

In *The Five Myths of Television Power* (1993), Douglas Davis asserts that the ominous warnings about TV as mind control, substitute reality, and insidious counterliteracy drug are all, not to put too fine a point on it, nonsense. His subtitle is *Why the Medium Is Not the Message*. And his claim is that the cataclysmic alteration in consciousness assumed by both pro- and anti-TV-writers is, after all, not much of an alteration at all and surely not very cataclysmic. The TV watcher, he says, "knows precisely what is wrong, as well as what is right, with the drug that only appears to enslave him."

Nothing, perhaps, is as truly shocking or scandalous as common sense. Could it be that we always do know that we are watching TV, just as we always knew we were just reading books? And that we still manage to get on with our lives much as we always have? Davis is, if nothing else, a threat to most of the writers who have built their careers as "media analysts" since he assumes that people, however

they communicate, tend to remain sane. And this is a very alarming thing for him to say, because it is *not* alarmist.

So what, finally, are we to make of all this moral anxiety over a technological *fact*? I said earlier that technology is irreversible. For all the cautions and caveats about its deleterious effect on human society, one thing is as certain about TV as about the wheel: It will not go away. Our relationship to the Tube, as both Davis and Postman observe, is a matter of dealing with the way the world is for us. A Bill McKibben may want to insist that TV is not natural, but I find it hard to imagine "nature" as anything other than the total surround of experience as it is given to me in this time and place.

There is perhaps something better to compare TV to than nature. Running through all the anti-TV jeremiads is the metaphor of TV as drug: TV hooks viewers, saps their will, and makes them demand increasingly higher dosages. This is, rhetorically, an attractive image, since America in the 1980s and '90s substituted the idea of "addiction" for what used to be called moral choice. People write books and appear on TV explaining that they are "addicted" not just to drugs or alcohol but to gambling, shopping, TV itself, or even sex (an especially curious addiction, one must observe).

If TV is "addictive," let us then compare it to the other addictive substance which is not only legal in our society but subtly promoted by it, in ads, mythologies, and general behavioral standards: alcohol.

There *are* alcoholics. There are men and women whose lives are defined and circumscribed by an organic compound without which they find that they simply cannot function. For these people the substance is a living death, and the only escape is total abstinence.

But there is a far greater number of people for whom alcohol is a palliative and perhaps a not destructive enhancement of life. As my wife observes, there is a vast difference between someone who wakes up and thinks, "I want *alcohol!*" and someone who at 5 P.M.

thinks, "A martini would be nice." (Did any of McKibben's neighbors, one wonders, wake up thinking, "God, I get to watch and tape *television* all day!")

And there are people for whom the drug—and alcohol *is* a drug—is, more than an enhancement, a perceptual tool. Some people can use the booze—knowing its dangers and side effects—to make their internal and social lives richer and more productive. The only necessary ingredients for them are self-consciousness and control.

The same hierarchy, I suggest, obtains among TV watchers. It is surely possible to become a "Simpson"-style couch potato, imprisoned by the endless wash of images, immobilized, imbecilic, impotent. But most people are probably not quite so addicted: They know how to use the off button and they watch only those shows that give them some sort of pleasure. Our anti-TV pundits notwithstanding, they have lives of their own beyond the glow of the set.

There are even those for whom TV is a cultural experience no less nor more rich than poetry, music, or drama. The "complexity" of an art has to depend, after all, upon the complexity of the observer's intelligence. If you can watch *Hamlet* stupidly—and a number of very distinguished people have—then possibly you can watch "Gilligan's Island" intelligently, perhaps even notice that "Gilligan's Island" is actually a version of the pastoral romance of *As You Like It* or *The Tempest*.

In fact, when considering *individual* television viewers, one can be quite optimistic. Anybody with a little intelligence, self-awareness, or irony can manipulate TV rather than be manipulated by it. But if you consider the "sociology" of TV viewing, that optimism may be strained. There do seem to be groups of TV watchers caught in a typology as inflexible and harsh as the old class system was once thought to be. Certain types of viewers *are* particularly vulnerable to the Tube—children, illiterate or semilliterate people, poor people. TV provides their major source of in-

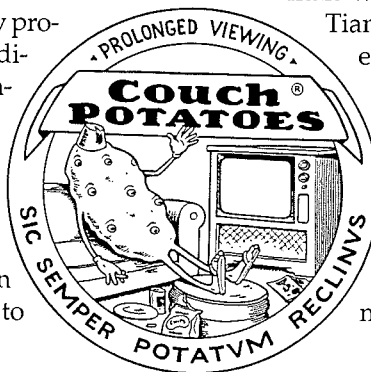
formation, and they have fewer alternative resources by which to measure its distortions. Certainly the three major networks, during their long domination of the airways, showed a crass cynicism in marketing programs that targeted these groups even while reinforcing their marginalized self-image. Detective series, for example, from "I Spy" and "Hawk" in the 1960s to "Matlock" and "Miami Vice" in the '80s, attracted African-American audiences by featuring a black detective who was invariably a sidekick or of lesser partner to the white detective. Today, MTV addresses an adolescent audience to whom it presents a picture of teenage life dominated by fashions and consumerism, fast in body and shallow in thought. The demagogic possibilities here are exactly Kozol's burning concern.

The avuncular Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has belatedly recognized the dangers of TV: It has prohibited cigarette commercials on television and, more recently, required stations to post "warning labels" on programs featuring excessive violence. It is a bit unrealistic, however, to expect the FCC to protect the more vulnerable groups of TV viewers from themselves. I would rather place my hopes on cable TV, which has grown explosively during the last 20 years. Today there are nonnetwork channels that are not merely aimed *at* but are actually produced *by* and *for* nonmass audiences—Spanish-language channels, channels with African-American news, channels for gays, and channels for senior citizens—which break the networks' old dominance and, as it were, democratize TV. When such "marginal" groups speak to

themselves about their own concerns, paradoxically they cease to be marginal and enter into the public discourse. And let me disagree with Jonathan Kozol one last time: The coming developments of "interactive TV" can only enhance this democratization, as the technology grows beyond the clumsily "authoritarian" mechanisms of its early stages.

I conclude with a true story. In 1992, HBO ran a series of sleazy documentaries called "America Undercover." In one episode, "The Best Hotel on Skid Row," a young, heroin-addicted prostitute was interviewed sitting on the bed in her flophouse room with her boyfriend, an older wino. She wanted to get off junk and into a methadone clinic, but at the time there was no room available. In the middle of the interview she broke down crying. Her boyfriend looked at the camera and said, "Will you turn that thing off?" But the camera came back on, obscenely, a moment later, over their shoulders, while the broken little guy hugged his friend and tried to console her for the—what?—terribleness of existence.

Never mind that the cameraman and the director filmed these unhappy people against their will. That little fellow—like the young man who stood before the tanks in Tiananmen Square—is a model of ethics in the age of mass, TV culture. He knew where to find the off button, and how to use it, even against itself. More than any of the critics we have discussed, he understood that TV neither saps our humanity—nor allows us to give that humanity up.



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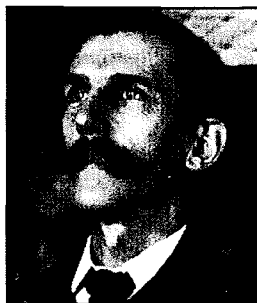
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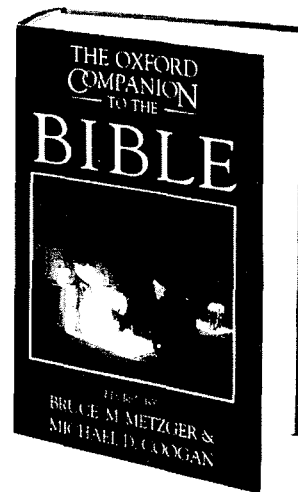
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CURRENT BOOKS

Pacific Games

LET THE SEA MAKE A NOISE: A History of the North Pacific from Magellan to MacArthur. By Walter A. McDougall. Basic. 793 pp. \$30

As guiding notions go, the idea that the United States has a Pacific Destiny has enjoyed a surprisingly resilient life. By the late 19th century, West Coast railroad magnates were already insisting that the Atlantic had become the ocean of the past, and they were not alone. The Pacific Rim has beckoned to Americans of all stripes, from the early missionaries drawn to the Sandwich Isles (as the Hawaiian Islands were once known) to trading-house merchants bewitched by the lure of "four hundred million customers," the number at which China's population stood at the turn of this century. Yet the full wave of Pacific enthusiasm swelled only during the 1970s, when free marketeers and competitiveness gurus embraced the creed. Today, both G-7 summit communiqués and business journalists proclaim the "Pacific Century" as an established fact.

But what is the Pacific Century? One might first ask *where* it is, since most discussions of this Asia-Pacific region—perhaps wisely—leave the matter tellingly vague. The many recent books that describe, often with visionary nomenclature, the "East Asian Challenge," the "Asian Miracle," or the Asian "NICs" (newly industrializing countries) share a common theme: Because of their recent growth rates, Asian economies must be inherently superior. American reporting from this part of the globe conjures up a picture of undifferentiated diligence, adaptation, and progress. It also leaves a nagging sense in the national consciousness that our future dynamism, if we are to be so blessed, can be found only on western Pacific shores.

One reads far less about the serious flaws in the Asian Success Story. It is seldom emphasized, for example, that successful Asian capitalism remains mostly a *coastal* and *East Asian*

phenomenon. Within China, India, Indochina, and Indonesia, much of Asia's *interior* still reveals overpopulated misery, disastrous governance, ecological crisis, and dwindling resources. Industrialization may have irrevocably changed the texture of Korean and Japanese culture, spawning inventiveness and creativity, but the same cannot be said for Indonesia or Thailand.

Mercifully, McDougall, a professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, has not added another volume to that already precariously tall stack of Pacific booster books. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1986 for *The Heavens and the Earth*, a political history of the space age, McDougall here has written an equally entertaining and informative kind of history. One of its virtues is that it goes well beyond the old story of cross-cultural conflict and Western intrusions in Asia since the 16th century. Traversing more than 400 years of diplomatic and military history, McDougall breaks into caches of Euro-imperial, Asian, and American history, ransacking these storehouses for materials that emerge from old, settled "national" histories and fashioning them into a wider tale, that of the "North Pacific."

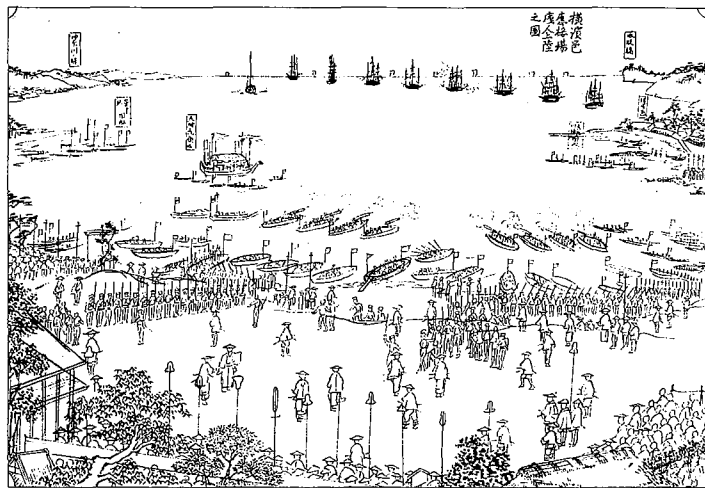
McDougall sees an enduring competition among Pacific peoples that is every bit as heated as similar contests were in the Americas, Africa, or the Asian heartland. It is a competition populated with as diverse and colorful a cast of characters as perhaps ever peopled a nonfiction book: doomed Russian sailors facing Japanese naval guns at Tsushima Bay, clever Polynesian rulers such as Kamehameha IV, naval visionaries in America or Japan, inventors who had little or nothing to do with the Pacific (Robert Fulton's steam engine and Rudolf Diesel's internal combustion engine changed the Pacific tempo forever), fumbling rulers like Russia's Nicholas II, visionary railway financiers like Collis P. Huntington and Count Sergei Yulyevich Witte.

To structure such a wealth of materials, McDougall divides it into three technological eras—the age of sail and muscle, the age of steam and rail, and the age of the internal combustion engine. But McDougall steers clear of the sort of technological determinism that marks such histories as Carlo Cipolla's *Guns, Sails and Empires* (1966). To McDougall, the dominant technologies of conquest or naval expansion are less important historically than the fact that

easier and faster passage shrank the buffer zones that once kept American, Japanese, and Russian ambitions from colliding too frequently. The Trans-Siberian railway moved millions closer to Manchuria. Rogue sea currents lost their power to becalm or disorient when steam-powered ships could cross directly from point to point. And air travel, the most emphatic consequence of the internal combustion era, has thrown millions of European and Asian people together in the contemporary Pacific.

In the Pacific, Japan and America crossed purposes early, and indeed Japanese-American antagonism is perhaps the dominant leitmotif of the second half of McDougall's history. From the anti-immigration mood in the early 20th century, and from American obstruction of Japanese aims on mainland Asia, arose periodic crises, some of which became full-blown war scares. Books such as *The Menace of Japan, Must We Fight Japan?* and *The Next War* appeared in the United States soon after World War I. Let us hope that the current crop of look-alike titles does not prove so prescient.

Despite its length, McDougall's book is supremely readable. But it is not without its weaknesses. One is the author's incessant striving to cast events in the North Pacific as the pivot of world politics in the 19th and



20th centuries, when the fulcrum was still in Europe—where it remained right up through the Cold War.

Also puzzling are the 14 colloquies that McDougall scatters throughout his chronicle. To these periodic *aka iki* (a Hawaiian word approximating “high deliberative councils”) he summons five major historical personages. These five spirits then judge, squabble with, or applaud the living storyteller, the “Scholar”—McDougall himself. The ghosts first appear in the book's opening pages when the author purports to nod off during a flight over the Pacific. They include Kaahumanu, Hawaiian king Kamehameha's chief consort; William Henry Seward, U.S. secretary of state during the American Civil War; Saito Hiroshi, Japan's ambassador to the United States during the 1930s; Count Witte, tsarist Russia's prime minister after 1905; and Father Junípero Serra, the Franciscan monk who built a string of 18th-century missions in California.

In his acknowledgments, McDougall thanks his editors and publisher for having accepted “the notion, not of a historical novel, but of a novelistic history written, though it be serious nonfiction, in a spirit of magic.” The colloquy that comes immediately after an account of the U.S. annexation of the Hawaiian Islands gives the “magical” tone:

Kaahumanu: So they stole my kingdom after all. . . . So the Americans took my islands. Why do you say the Japanese own Waikiki?

Scholar: There are tidal waves yet to come, Kaahumanu.

Seward: Excuse me, your highness, but Americans did not steal your kingdom. They settled it, made it prosper. . . .

Scholar: But they did use force, Mr. Seward. . . . The Army Corps of Engineers finally got its chance, and did some outstanding work on ports and roads—

Saito: —to make Hawaii a military base and exclude the Chinese and Japanese?

And on it goes for another seven pages. Yet one must ask what this device finally achieves. Yes, it keeps the narrative fresh, providing the reader relief from the dense currents of economic, diplomatic, and military fact. It also allows McDougall to clarify and qualify his own narrative. Still, it will be a very patient reader who is not irritated by the distracting jump-cut rhythm thus given to the book.

My greatest misgiving, however, concerns the coherence of the "North Pacific" as a region. Large reaches of the map have assumed, in different ages, a recognizable coherence through shared experience of conquest, culture, trade, or ecology. Obviously that coherence is also a historical phenomenon, which can exist in one period and vanish in another. Consider how "Turkestan" or "Hindustan" show, by the quaintness of their names today, the transience of shared experience. The area encompassed by "Southeast Asia," in fact, became a widely recognized region only during the 1940s, when the term denoted a theater of war.

Incontestably, the North Pacific has a special coherence as a geographic area. The case for it as a distinct region of cultural coherence is less clear. By joining hitherto separate imperial or national histories, McDougall's "North Pacific" lends new perspective to the Ameri-

can westward expansion, to the sale of Alaska to the United States, to Japan's opening to the West, to the humiliations of China, and to the diplomatic chicanery over the Hawaiian Islands. All these fit without too much artifice into a North Pacific structure.

But it seems to me that the North Pacific only rarely figured as an arena per se in the minds of the competitors working there. McDougall strains to fit European diplomatic maneuvering into a total North Pacific "game," one that is perhaps intended to resemble the "Great Game" that Victorian Britain and imperial Russia played for control of Central Asia during the last century. Sharp conflict in Manchuria? To be sure. Tense talks over Sakhalin? Definitely. But this reviewer is hard pressed to cobble together into some lasting, grander scheme the many conflicts, large and small, that have erupted in the North Pacific during the last four centuries. I cannot see how these add up to make the North Pacific a special, coherent place, a place (in McDougall's words) "of explosions . . . racial explosions, the explosions of war, the explosiveness of the environment itself, the sense of a dangerous heaven."

Perhaps McDougall himself may be secretly skeptical of the coherence of "the Pacific." For, if his region embraces *all* the Pacific Ocean north of the Equator, then he has allowed too many key places and events to slip past almost without notice. Korea's early history, Spain's and Portugal's dream of Christianizing China, and Canada's role during the 20th century only begin the list of raw data for a Pacific history that are omitted here. Such omissions add up. Instead of evoking a grand region that previous historians have neglected, McDougall often seems himself to be renarrating a familiar contest—a "North Pacific Triangle" with Russia, Japan, and the United States standing in each corner.

Finally, the book ends with a large irony. The ever-growing numbers of pundits who speak of the Pacific region and America's Pacific Century will feel, during most of the

book, that they have found their historian. They will be surprised, then, and perhaps dumbfounded by the conclusion. In his closing pages, McDougall describes an America in diplomatic and economic retreat from Asia, just one generation after the end of the Korean War. He sees this withdrawal as, in fact, having been fated to occur "exactly because the United States won such a thorough victory in the Pacific War [World War II]," and because America so overextended itself thereafter. America, he writes, "took upon [itself] the burden of defending the rimlands and opened its markets and lands to the enterprise and immigrants of Asia and Mexico—all in the name of ideals of freedom, enterprise, equality and

human dignity introduced to the North Pacific by white men." I, for one, do not disagree that America's most influential time in Asia now lies behind it. At this time of new hosannas to the Pacific Age, the supreme irony lies in the American *retreat* from the western Pacific. We are leaving to Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and China the vibrant markets we helped nurture, protect, and create.

—James Clad, a former Wilson Center Fellow and formerly the Southeast Asia correspondent for the Far Eastern Economic Review, is the author of *Behind the Myth: Business, Money, and Power in Southeast Asia* (1989).

The Nature of Virtue

THE MORAL SENSE. By James Q. Wilson.
Free Press. 313 pp. \$22.95

For nearly three decades, James Q. Wilson has been one of America's leading authorities on crime and drug abuse. No narrow technocrat or data-cruncher, Wilson, a political scientist at the University of California at Los Angeles, is that rare academic who possesses both the gift of lucid expression and the respect for the ordinary citizen necessary to discuss complex social problems in a broad, accessible way. He has written important books on bureaucracy, government regulation, urban politics, schooling, and welfare. But the study of crime and its regulation has remained at the center of his interests, not simply as a social and political problem but as a philosophical conundrum. Through his study of criminality, Wilson examines the fundamental questions of political philosophy: What is the nature of human nature, and what are the sources of social order? What are the "natural" human drives, dispositions, and poten-

tialities (if any), and how can they be melded into a relatively stable and peaceful social order? What causes individuals to violate that order? Does criminal conduct represent the breakthrough of unruly nature, aberrations of biology, or the failure of social order? How can such conduct be prevented without jeopardizing the flourishing of humanity?

In *Crime and Human Nature* (1985), Wilson and his co-author, psychologist Richard J. Herrnstein, explored the question of why the few engage repeatedly in criminal conduct. In this splendid new work, Wilson examines the rest of us: the vast majority who remain essentially decent, law-abiding, and, at times, compassionate, even in the face of desperate circumstances and obvious self-interest.

Crime and Human Nature proved controversial among social scientists largely because of its willingness to take seriously the possibility of biological causes of persistent criminality, a position that raises fears of discrimination, indifference to the social causes of crime, and ultimately, eugenics. *The Moral*

Sense may well provoke a similar reaction, for it too appeals to a concept of "human nature" informed by contemporary biological research—only here to support the politically more acceptable conviction that human beings are naturally social and hence naturally moral. Nevertheless, any belief in human nature challenges the reigning intellectual pieties of the day, indeed of the last two centuries, which have proclaimed human beings to be either natureless lumps formed by their social maker or rational calculators of economic, biological, or psychological self-interest. Human morality is thus unmasked as nothing more than ideology, social utility, rational choice, or simply taste.

Wilson attributes the pervasive moral skepticism and relativism of our age to the intellectual triarchy of Darwin (wrongly understood), Marx, and Freud. To revive a view of human morality more consonant with both ordinary experience and contemporary science, he turns instead to the triumvirate of Darwin (rightly understood), Adam Smith, and, above all, Aristotle. From this perspective, human morality—in the sense of feelings such as sympathy and fairness, which guide our moral judgments if not our conduct—is the natural and legitimate outgrowth of a child's innate sociability and normal development. Because the human infant is so dependent on adult care, the formation of "attachment" between caregiver and child—what used to be called "love"—is biologically essential and, thanks to natural selection, innate. Behaviorally and psychologically, this translates into a growing child's natural desire to please those upon whom he or she depends and a natural fear of failing to do so. From such fear and desire we learn to be sensitive to the feelings and reactions of others and to control and judge our own. Out of this "universal attachment between child and parent," Wilson writes, "the former begins to develop a sense of empathy and fairness, to learn self-control, and to

acquire a conscience."

To suggest that the development of such moral sentiments as sympathy, fairness, self-control, and duty is natural is, however, not to say that human beings are innately good or that universal moral rules exist. Wilson acknowledges that awareness of this universal human nature enables us to deduce only "a handful of rules or solutions [e.g., incest taboos] to any but the most elemental (albeit vitally important) human problems." Why then does Wilson believe that such knowledge is vital to us? Why should this whole intellectual squabble over "human nature" and "human morality" matter to those beyond the agnostic world of academia? After all, if the moral sense develops naturally even among skeptical intellectuals and their offspring, not to mention among the rest of us, who ought to care about such wrong-headedness?

Wilson's answer, both wise and subtle, is rooted in the traditions of political philosophy and informed by a careful examination of modern social-scientific and biological research. Like Aristotle, Wilson holds that however "natural" the various human virtues may be as potentials, we develop them by habit. In Aristotle's words, "we become just by the practice of just actions, self-controlled by exercising self-control, and courageous by performing acts of courage." The family may be the primary training ground of virtue (and of vice), but the completion of such moral development depends on the *polis*. For Wilson, no less than Aristotle, lawgivers help make citizens good "by inculcating [good] habits in them." To accomplish this goal, both families and lawgivers must have a correct understanding of human nature and of their proper task; otherwise, moral development will be stunted or distorted. In Wilson's view, this latter fate—misunderstood human nature leading to a troubled social order—is our own. The inadequacies of our contemporary thinking about character, he argues, have contributed to many of our current public problems (such as crime, drug abuse, and welfare de-

pendency). To overemphasize the economic causes of crime or poverty—as many on both the Left and the Right are prone to do—may inadvertently discourage the sense of responsibility and reduce the stigma associated with such conduct, thereby helping to rationalize it. To unmask law, morality, and custom as if they merely constituted (in Plato's phrase) "the advantage of the stronger" may unintentionally weaken the legitimacy of constraints both external and internal.

The skepticism and relativism that prevail among intellectual elites thus encourage moral confusion among parents and policy makers, often masquerading as tolerance of lifestyle and value choices. The resulting crisis of confidence may lead to a lack of resolve on the part of families, schools, and governments, which then fail fully to establish and maintain the necessary limits on conduct, to nurture the necessary democratic virtues, and to encourage their extension beyond the narrowest social circles. The moral sentiments, Wilson acknowledges, are relatively weak and fragile by nature, especially in comparison to our "selfish desires" for survival, sex, and power against which they must constantly do battle. Family breakup, intellectual rationalizations, or an "adversary" culture's assault on bourgeois morality in the name of self-expression can all too easily upset the fragile balance between moral sentiments and selfish desires—particularly for those most vulnerable by either biology or circumstance.

Wilson is not arguing that our contemporary social problems all result from culturally induced malformations of character. He clearly recognizes the range of factors contributing to immoral conduct: "The problem of wrong action arises from the conflict among the several moral senses [e.g., duty and sympathy], the struggle between morality and self-interest, and the corrosive effect of those forces [both material and intellec-

tual] that blunt the moral senses."

As multifaceted as it is, though, Wilson's explanation may not go far enough. From the Old Testament to Freud, the Western moral tradition that Wilson seeks to revive has also included an awareness of the human "heart of darkness" and the possible complicity of the "moral senses" themselves in the doing of evil. It is the "dark knowledge" within the Western moral tradition that Wilson does not adequately confront. Although he acknowledges that "sociability is a two-edged sword . . . the source not only of our moral sentiments but also of our concern for reputation and respect" which may compel us to "join in a crowd's assault on an innocent person" or "obey leaders who order us to commit atrocities," the problem of evil may lie deeper. The desire to be liked and to win approval is not sufficient to account for the depravity of ordinary human beings engaged in extraordinary brutalities. Nor is the original parochialism of the moral senses enough to explain the hatred and violence that "we" may direct against "them." Moral particularism may account for *indifference* toward others but not hatred. There may be more of a tendency toward anger and resentment, cruelty and depravity, which is more universal among human beings, more powerfully aided by such moral senses as "justice" and "duty," and more frequently directed against our loved ones as well as against strangers, than Wilson cares to admit.

Such an objection does not, however, diminish my admiration for this wise and lucid book written against the spirit of our age. *The Moral Sense* is a powerful reminder of our nature as moral beings and of the responsibility of families, schools, and governments to foster its development.

—Howard L. Kaye is professor of sociology at Franklin and Marshall College and the author of *The Social Meaning of Modern Biology, from Social Darwinism to Sociobiology* (1986).

What the Medicine Said

LISTENING TO PROZAC: A Psychiatrist Explores Antidepressant Drugs and the Remaking of the Self. By Peter D. Kramer. Viking. 409 pp. \$23

On the evening after I began reading Peter Kramer's *Listening to Prozac*, I had an appointment with a woman in her mid-forties for whom I had prescribed Prozac several months earlier for depression. Joan, an intelligent, poised, and successful employee of a large company, had developed many of the classic symptoms of depression. They included an abiding sense of sadness, the inability to feel pleasure in activities that used to give her pleasure, low self-esteem, frequent crying episodes, poor appetite, weight loss, diminished energy, marked indecisiveness, and a deep sense of fragility. These symptoms had begun after she separated from her husband, three months before she first called me.

I could have prescribed a number of other antidepressants for Joan but chose Prozac, a relatively new drug that causes fewer troublesome side effects and is about as effective as the others in treating depression. Introduced in the United States in January 1988, Prozac, whose generic name is Fluoxetine, has by now been taken by more than nine million patients around the world, about half of them in the United States. Most antidepressants affect several chemicals in the brain, known as neurotransmitters, that appear to be related to depression. Prozac was the first to be introduced that affects only one of these, serotonin, which is one reason it causes fewer

side effects than the older antidepressants.

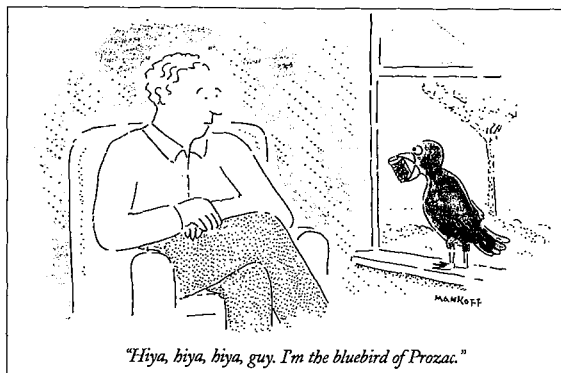
Though Prozac has been accused during the past couple of years of causing serious side effects—especially violence and suicide—these accusations seem to have been unjustified, and the drug has been enjoying immense popularity among psychiatrists, other physicians, and significant segments of the general public.

Within a month of starting to take Prozac, Joan began to feel better. A month later, it was clear that her depression had mostly lifted. Her sadness had disappeared, she could feel pleasure, her energy and appetite were back, and she felt self-assured. By the fourth month of treatment, Joan's depression was gone. In fact, she felt better than she had felt before she became depressed. "I feel much more relaxed," were the words I recorded in her chart. "I think more clearly. . . . I felt at risk; I don't anymore." When I saw Joan for our next appointment three weeks later—on the evening after I had begun reading *Listening to Prozac*—

she was feeling not only better but *different*: "I just feel free—to talk to people, to be loose. The last time I felt free was in the 1970s. . . . But even then it wasn't like this. I can be me and it's OK, and when I *am* me people are responsive to me." She attributed the

change to Prozac, and so, tentatively, did I.

In *Listening to Prozac*, Peter Kramer, a psychiatrist on the faculty of Brown University, and one I have known since he completed his psychiatric training, describes several patients not very different from Joan in their responses to Prozac. Though I had not yet finished the book when I saw Joan at our next appointment, I suggested to her that she read it. I



"Hiya, hiya, hiya, guy. I'm the bluebird of Prozac."

thought she might learn about the medication as well as discover, in reading about the reactions of others to it, something about her own response.

I have not yet heard Joan's thoughts about the book, but I can report on mine. I find it original, interesting, troubling, provocative, highly speculative, probably wrong in some places, imaginatively right in others, and much more theoretically ambitious than one would expect of a book written for a popular audience. I think I can safely infer that I am not the only psychiatrist recommending the book to patients currently on, or considering, Prozac. The book has appeared on the best seller list of the *New York Times Book Review*, an unusual achievement for a work that addresses so complex a theme.

Having attended to his patients' responses to Prozac, Kramer concluded that the medication can tell us something important about both mental illness and the nature of being human. As a psychotherapist who had used talk as the agent of therapeutic change, Kramer was "used to seeing patients' personalities change slowly, through painfully acquired insight and hard practice in the world. But recently I had seen personalities altered almost instantly, by medication. . . . Prozac seemed to give social confidence to the habitually timid, to make the sensitive brash, to lend the introvert the social skills of a salesman." By observing these changes, by "listening to Prozac," Kramer felt forced to conclude that much of what he had assumed was primarily a result of personal history—not only mental illnesses but also personality patterns—was, in fact, a result of biological factors, many of them ultimately of genetic origin, that could be profoundly and quickly ameliorated by medications. "Spending time with patients who responded to Prozac," he writes, "had transformed my views about what makes people the way they are. I had come to see inborn, biologically determined temperament where before I had seen slowly acquired, history-laden character." He had come to see, in

short, how central biology is not only to mental illness but to personality, to the traits that people display as they live in the world and with each other.

This insight has serious implications not only clinically and scientifically but also in the professional marketplace. For many years, patients with mild depressions or personality difficulties often paid little attention to the question of whether a therapist was a psychiatrist or a psychologist since they assumed they would be treated with "talk therapy" and not medications. A patient who reads Kramer's book, however, and decides that medication would be more effective and faster than psychotherapy in treating his low self-esteem, chronic mild sadness, or obsessionality would likely turn to a psychiatrist, who as a physician is by law allowed, and by training equipped, to prescribe medications, rather than to a clinical psychologist, who is not. This book may well give further impetus to the ongoing efforts by clinical psychologists to obtain prescribing privileges.

Many psychiatrists will object to some of the suppositions and arguments of the book. Some will point out that Prozac is not, in general, as strikingly effective a drug as Kramer (or my case vignette of Joan) suggests. First of all, only a small minority of patients respond to Prozac with a sense of having been "remade." Some psychopharmacologists also argue that the sense of some patients who take Prozac that they are "better than well" may be a result of being "revved up" by the medication rather than of being transformed. Others stress that, though unlikely to cause many of the side effects typical of antidepressants, such as dryness of the mouth, Prozac is not entirely free of side effects, such as, in some patients, anxiety, insomnia, and weight loss, and, like other antidepressants, it may lose efficacy after a period of use. Finally, the evidence for the efficacy of Prozac (and other antidepressants) in "the remaking of the self" is largely anecdotal and based on individual case reports. People have reported feeling "remade" as a

result of a variety of experiences ranging from taking placebo medications to falling in love to winning the lottery. All of this should make one hesitant to attribute such impressive powers to Prozac.

Yet most psychiatrists would agree, I think, that Prozac does have properties that make it significantly different from older antidepressants and efficacious in treating not only depression but other serious conditions including obsessive-compulsive disorder and panic anxiety. Moreover, it appears to help at least some people who experience sensitivity to rejection, excessive inhibition, and chronically low self-esteem.

It is in connection with the use of Prozac as a "mood brightener" in persons who do not have diagnosable mental illnesses that serious ethical questions arise. Should a psychiatrist treat someone with medications who does not have an illness listed in the official diagnostic manual? If a person who does not have what is ordinarily considered an illness can be made to feel and function better by a medication, whether it is Prozac or some better drug that may come along, is it right for his or her physician to prescribe such a medication? Should that condition, or state, now be called an illness simply because it is susceptible to pharmacological amelioration? Should health insurance companies pay for such "cosmetic" psychopharmacological treatment? Might employers one day conclude that an employee—say, a manager, a salesperson, or a receptionist—should be more outgoing and demand that he or she begin treatment with medications as a condition of continued employment? Kramer takes up these and other questions that are bound to face psychiatrists as psychotherapeutic medications are made ever more specific and effective at ameliorating an ever larger roster of illnesses and problematic personality patterns.

Kramer might have profitably devoted more attention than he does to the relationship between psychological suffering and what

have traditionally been considered the cultural products of such suffering. It is often assumed that, without their spiritual anguish, some figures in the arts, religion, philosophy, and other creative endeavors would never have produced works that we all consider emblems of human achievement. "Nothing great in politics, poetry, or the arts," Aristotle wrote, "has ever been achieved by anyone without a melancholic temperament." What would happen if this temperament were once and for all eliminated? What if a drug is developed some day that is far better than Prozac—one that helps everyone who takes it and that alleviates, in a clear and predictable way, not only depressions but also the many quirks or characteristics in ourselves that are associated with personal unhappiness and dissatisfaction? Would not such a drug, when taken by people, reduce the likelihood that they would produce a great work of art or invent a new religion?

It might. But it would do so only if they would take it, and, presumably, they would do so only if they wanted to take it. Unless the taking of such medications were to become something that could be forced upon suffering persons, they would be free and able to suffer and produce as they wished. Moreover, more than a few artists suffer from psychological difficulties that interfere with their abilities to realize their gifts, and medications might alleviate those difficulties. Certainly some artists who suffer from severe depression and who cannot do creative work because of it, such as the author William Styron, have been able to resume their productive lives because of treatment with medications.

It is important to remember, moreover, that even if great human achievements are sometimes a product, in part, of human suffering, the overwhelming mass of suffering produces nothing that benefits society or the individual sufferer. Psychological suffering is almost universally unwanted. If a pill could indeed abolish psychological suffering, especially without at the same time distorting the qualities that make one human, such as

the capacity to feel and think fully and freely, that pill would be in most cases a treasure indeed. Only unsuffering and probably unfeeling social and literary critics would want to keep it from those who need it.

In some ways, what Kramer says in *Listening to Prozac* should not surprise any of us. It is hardly news that so much of what we are, both physically and mentally, has a biological basis. But the implications of that reality are becoming ever more weighty as we expand our capacity to affect that biology and,

thereby, the essence of our human selves. That capacity is only in its infancy, and from what I can tell, it seems more likely to grow into a blessing than a curse. Humankind, in all its agonized and creative variety, is not slouching toward a pharmacologically normalized Bethlehem to be reborn.

—Walter Reich, a practicing psychiatrist and Senior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center, is the author of *A Stranger in My House* (1984).

OTHER TITLES

History

CHURCHILL: A Major New Assessment of His Life in Peace and War. Ed. by Robert Blake and Wm. Roger Louis. Norton. 581 pp. \$35

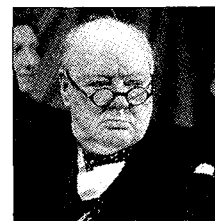
CHURCHILL: The End of Glory. By John Charmley. Harcourt Brace. 742 pp. \$34.95

Is the time yet right for a new assessment of Winston Churchill? Charmley, a radical conservative historian at the University of East Anglia, thinks so. His iconoclastic *End of Glory* presents Churchill as a great man but a greater failure, an inept war addict who kept England from successfully exiting a war it could not win (so Charmley believes) but which eventually Germany managed to lose. When published earlier in England, Charmley's revisionism—with its hints that it would have been better for Britain to trust Hitler than to trust America—elicited an almost universally cold response.

Charmley's study is provocatively strident, but in terms of thoroughness, when set beside Louis and Blake's big compilation, it practically dissolves into air. Louis, an historian at the University of Texas, and Blake, the editor of the *English Dictionary of National Biography*, have as-

sembled the academic equivalent of a Hollywood extravaganza. David Cannadine writes on Churchill's family, Gordon Craig on Churchill and Germany, Michael Howard on Churchill and World War I, Stephen Ambrose on Churchill and Eisenhower, Philip Ziegler on Churchill and the monarchy, and on and on the list goes.

While historians (before Charmley) might have desisted from assaulting the central national myth of Churchill's wartime leadership, they have not failed to point out the astonishing combination of talent, energy, and fallibility that marked every phase of Churchill's checkered career. The contributors to this volume carry on in this tradition, many with



elegance. The best of several good pieces on Churchill's attempts to win two world wars is Richard Ollard's cool, compelling analysis of his naval ideas. Those ideas were at best misguided, at worst catastrophically misconceived. Like Napoleon before him, Churchill had a soldier's vision of sea warfare and repeatedly demanded that ships perform duties for which they were

dangerously unsuited. The whole Mediterranean fleet might have been lost to enemy airpower (just as the battle squadron sent to Malaya was lost a few months later) in the bombardment of Tripoli, but for freak weather conditions. Readers may be taken aback by this reconstruction of the widely accepted legend of the "former naval person," who, for his work at the Admiralty prior to World War I, has largely been given credit for Britain's preparedness to fight in that war. Ollard does pay proper tribute to Churchill's real achievements as a naval administrator, especially in improving the survival chances of ordinary seamen, even as he points out his terrifying capriciousness as an armchair admiral.

If there is to be a significant new assessment of Churchill, it will likely concern his contentious record as a peacetime minister. Peter Clarke argues that, in the 1920s, Churchill made a better chancellor of the exchequer and had a surer understanding of economics than his predecessors Lloyd George, Stanley Baldwin, and Neville Chamberlain. And Paul Addison shows how, despite his Tory and aristocratic background, Churchill became "one of the founders of the welfare state." Yet considering the array of historical talents assembled here, their collective verdict is modest enough. Churchill emerges overall as the same familiar figure, though with more nuances. The picture might have been more telling were there not one conspicuous absence among the distinguished contributors—Martin Gilbert, the author of the eight-volume biography of Churchill. To have "a major new assessment" of Churchill without Gilbert's contribution is, as one wit put it, rather like having a discussion of *Hamlet* without mention of Shakespeare.

W. E. B. DU BOIS: *Biography of a Race. Vol. I: 1868–1919.* By David Levering Lewis. Holt. 700 pp. \$35

As a 25-year-old graduate student in Berlin, W. E. B. Du Bois confided to his diary his plans "to make a name in [social] science, to make a name in literature and thus to raise my race." That simple declaration foretold both the promise of academic achievement and the secular messianism that characterize Du Bois's entire

career. Lewis, the Martin Luther King, Jr., professor of history at Rutgers University, here describes the first half of a long and eventful life in which Du Bois fulfilled his youthful promise.

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was born to free-born parents in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 1868. A child prodigy—he contributed to black newspapers while still in his teens—he attended Nashville's Fisk University when he was only 16. He subsequently studied with Harvard University philosophers William James and George Santayana and became Harvard's first black Ph.D. Simply by pursuing an academic career, Du Bois defied the conventional wisdom of the time about black progress. Its foremost advocate, Booker T. Washington, believed blacks should forswear the pipe dreams of book learning or even of civic equality and instead strive for economic independence. Du Bois was not one to suffer this "racial humility." Already in 1891, he had written complaining to former U.S. president Rutherford B. Hayes, who had offered promising African-American students scholarship money but then had gone back on his word: "I find men willing to help me use my hands before I have got my brains in working order . . . but I never found a man willing to help me get a Harvard Ph.D."

Booker T. Washington was initially well disposed toward Du Bois. In 1900 he encouraged the younger man, then an Atlanta University professor, to come to Tuskegee Institute. The two large egos, however, soon clashed. Du Bois turned down Washington's offer, and Washington's powerful Tuskegee machine dashed Du Bois's prospective appointment as superintendent of Washington, D.C.'s black schools. As southern blacks increasingly suffered disenfranchisement, lynchings, the effects of Jim Crow laws, and race riots, Du Bois grew impatient and at last furious with Washington's accommodationist stance. In the summer of 1905, he convened a meeting on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls to launch the "first collective attempt by African Americans to demand full citizenship rights in the 20th century." That organization would become the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People five years later. By then the Wizard of Tuskegee was eclipsed, and it was clear that the 20th cen-

tury would belong to Du Bois. When he died a half century later at age 95, it was the day before Martin Luther King, Jr., marched on Washington—an event which, in effect, culminated the long march Du Bois had started in the darkest days of post-Reconstruction America.

Du Bois was prolific as a young scholar. He wrote 16 research monographs between 1897 and 1914, including *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), the first case study of an African-American community. Four years later he published his classic *Souls of Black Folk*, with its rending words: "One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." Du Bois gained more renown, though, for the *Crisis*, the magazine he founded in 1910 and edited with a strong hand for decades. Du Bois was an agnostic among a people whose bedrock institution was the church. But in the *Crisis*, he found his own bully pulpit, and, as its circulation topped 100,000, Du Bois became one of the more influential African-American secular preachers of this century.

Lewis's graceful, compelling narrative takes Du Bois up to the year 1919. The second half of Du Bois's life—in which he lost faith in integration, flirted with communism, and surrendered his American nationality to become a citizen of Ghana—promises to make, if anything, an even more stirring, tumultuous volume.

NATIONALISM: Five Roads to Modernity.
By Liah Greenfeld. Harvard. 581 pp. \$49.95

Nationalism is a big subject that has been illuminated by small books: Elie Kedourie's pungent *Nationalism* (1960), for instance, and Benedict Anderson's luminous *Imagined Communities* (1983). *Five Roads to Modernity* is an equally important study but one that comes in the large economy size, encompassing five centuries of nationalism in five countries. Curiously, during the last century most observers believed that nationalism's days were numbered, to be replaced by an era of liberal states operating on universal principles (according to John Stuart Mill) or on the precepts of international socialism (courtesy

of Karl Marx). Here Greenfeld, a Harvard University sociologist, locates the historical detail that Marx and Mill overlooked in order to show why "it is nationality which has made our world, politically, what it is."

"God's firstborn" among nationalists were the English. The new English aristocracy of the 16th century, often commoners by birth, inherited a world view that did not allow for upward mobility; so they justified their aristocratic claims by identifying the English as a chosen people. (If, instead of invoking this embryonic nationalism, they had forged genealogies for themselves, history might be different today.)

The success of the English national idea proved irresistible when, two centuries later, French aristocrats were searching for a way to oppose royal power. Copying the English, they evoked a national authority greater than the crown's, even while they developed what Greenfeld calls *ressentiment*, a hostile envy, of the English themselves. The French thus established a precedent (which has been followed in every case but America's), according to which a dissatisfied or displaced group adapts a successful foreign example of nationalism but rejects the foreigners who inspire it. In France, Greenfeld writes, instead of the people delegating authority to the nation's representatives, as they did in England, "it was the nation from which authority emanated and it empowered individuals." Eighteenth-century France already possessed those characteristics that today make nationalism appear so dreadful: xenophobia, the subjugation of the individual to the group, and a subsequent recourse to violence or a reign of terror to solve its problems.

Five centuries of nationalism have supplied Greenfeld so many facts and facets to explore that they may obscure how iconoclastic her underlying thesis is. Historians and sociologists have usually assumed that modernity precedes nationalism, that the alienation and materialism of modern life necessitate a nationalistic state to hold together the forces let loose. Greenfeld, however, reverses that chronological order. Not only in England and France but in Germany, Russia, and the United States, she argues, the development of nationalism—the changing from a religion- or estates-based interpretation

to a national interpretation of the social order—was what allowed the peculiarly modern arrangements of power and production to come about.

Corroborating Greenfeld's thesis, Gordon Wood, in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1992), shows that the civic ideology of the Founding Fathers transformed America from a feudal land to a modern state. And in fact America is Greenfeld's example of a benevolent nationalism, a nationalism that is "civic" rather than "ethnic." In the early American republic, she argues, nationalism did not need to rely on ethnic appeals (as it would in Russia and Germany) but could identify itself with universal Enlightenment principles of citizenship. Yet today America is preoccupied with ethnic questions in ways it never was before. Indeed, on the eve of the 21st century, America is itself uncertain what it is: a model for the world's future, or the heir to a decaying mythology from a more fortunate past.

Arts & Letters

THE SIXTIES: *The Last Journal, 1960–1972.*
By Edmund Wilson. Ed. by Lewis M. Dabney.
Farrar Straus. 968 pp. \$35

When Alfred Kazin published *On Native Grounds* (1942), a study of American literature, he was invited to the home of Edmund Wilson. Amid formalities and drinks, Wilson's then-wife, novelist Mary McCarthy, let Kazin know that contemporary criticism was her husband's property. For all the presumption in such a remark, Edmund Wilson (1895–1972) possessed the intelligence, range, and determination to be *the* American critic. He wrote copiously about everything, from Civil War literature to the Iroquois. He was also the author of fiction, poetry, plays, and, not least, a 3,310-page journal.

Wilson kept this journal for 60 years, using as models the stylistic precision of Flaubert and the Goncourts, the expository thoroughness of the historian Macauley, and the revealing personal intimacy of Boswell. Readers entering into it will find themselves backstage among a goodly portion of the makers of 20th-century American literature. For example, Wilson describes a dinner

at the White House in 1962 at which Tennessee Williams misbehaves, André Malraux waxes pompous, and John Kennedy tells yet another assemblage that the White House has never seen so much talent together except when Jefferson dined alone.

As well as retailing gossip and wide learning, Wilson's journal may also provide an answer to why his works are less read today. Even Wilson's best books often seem motivated by an interest somewhat extrinsic to the subject, above all by social and political concerns that now seem outdated. Read today, many of Wilson's pronouncements sound strange, such as his comparison of Lincoln's keeping the Union together to Lenin's great achievement of "binding Russia, with its innumerable ethnic groups scattered through immense spaces, in a tight bureaucratic net."

But the journal itself is usually intimate rather than didactic, and here, rather than in his novels and plays, Wilson creates his most indelible character. How revealing the old seducer is, even poignant, when he describes himself resting his head in a woman's lap and yet so deaf that, when she utters an endearment, he has to lift himself up and "put my ear to her mouth and ask her to repeat it." These journals could well carry some 1960s-style title like "Eros versus Death," as Wilson—resembling an enormous bald frog, aging, his health failing (his exercise regimen was confined to downing strenuous quantities of alcohol)—records his heroic struggle to live a full life both off and on the page. His productivity during the final decade, from *Patriotic Gore* (1962) to *Upstate* (1971), was by any standard impressive. The last journal entry is dated July 11, 1972. The next morning at his desk, attached to an oxygen machine, he was found dead at his worktable.

MOZART AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT:
Truth, Virtue, and Beauty in Mozart's Operas.
By Nicholas Till. Norton. 371 pp. \$29.95

For contemporary audiences, Mozart's operas too often pass in a blur—a most pleasurable blur, to be sure. One opera seems much like another because there is so little intellectual engagement with the matter of each opera, with its libretto,

its words. The dramatic action is usually dismissed as too trivial and contrived to warrant close attention, the words serving as little more than an excuse for the music. Isn't the music the point?



Well, not entirely. Or so argues Till, who has staged Mozart's operas at the Glyndebourne Festival, and who proposes to understand Mozart by explicating the texts of the operas. To do so, he examines the intellectual currents that ran through 18th-century Europe and places Mozart firmly in their grip. Although Mozart did not write his own librettos, he chose them with great care, and he inadvertently commented upon many of the moral and political debates of the age as he emended the librettos to his liking.

By attending to seemingly inconsequential aspects of the 18th century, Till provides greater insight into Mozart than do more ambitious studies such as Norbert Elias's *Mozart: A Study in Genius* (1991). Till brings up the 18th-century marriage contract, for example, to show its relevance to *The Marriage of Figaro*. Mozart composed during a time when contractual agreements had assumed a novel and distinctly modern character. Once traditional bonds were loosed, contracts became an essential prop for saving society from dissolution. Marriage in bourgeois society was, Till notes, the central nonpolitical contractual institution of the new order, and *The Marriage of Figaro* celebrates its ability to mediate conflicting interests among the individual, the family, religion, and the state. In contrast to the luminous universe of *Figaro* is the dark world of *Don Giovanni*, where the contractual agreements and promises that sustain society are no longer respected. Giovanni, who makes a point of breaking promises, is a harbinger of chaos, a destructive force who embodies all of the more profound social contradictions underlying the Enlightenment. He is freedom become license, and it is Giovanni's contempt for the marriage contract that finally rouses the

statue of Commendatore to action.

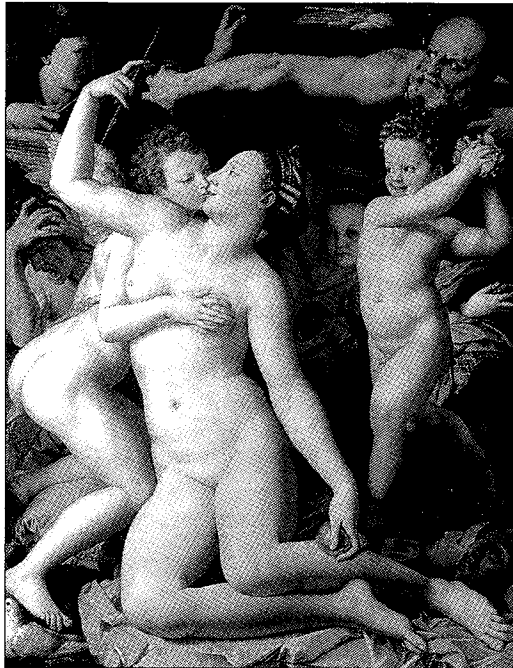
About other seemingly small details within Mozart's operas—the confusions of identity, the disguises, and the incongruous, harmonically skilled servants—Till is consistently acute. After reading *Mozart and the Enlightenment*, an opera lover may return to Mozart eager to hear as well what prompted the composer to set each particular text. Till knows the full range of scholarship about Mozart, yet in one respect he is not only unacademic but refreshingly old-fashioned. He writes, without apology, of faith, moral passion, and spiritual growth. No skeptic's quotation marks hedge the *beauty, truth, and virtue* in his title. Nor did they in the composer's art.

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP. By Allan Bloom. Simon & Schuster. 590 pp. \$25

Allan Bloom (1930–92) is known most widely for his best-selling diatribe, *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), but the University of Chicago philosopher enjoyed a somewhat quieter reputation as an outstanding teacher. *Love and Friendship* suggests why. While the polemical edge that marked his best seller is not absent here, *Love and Friendship* is much more a teacher's book, in the best sense. It is a deeply learned and strongly opinionated exploration of what our finest poets, novelists, and philosophers have said about the subject of love and friendship and of the force that drives both—eros.

Or at least once did. Bloom, in his feisty introduction, argues that eros is now a much diminished thing, thanks in part to the triumph of scientific-reductivist ideologies (such as Freudianism and, more recently, "Kinseyism") and assorted degradations of the democratic dogma.

To show how powerful a force eros once was, Bloom conducts a reverse-chronological tour of its place in the Western imagination. He begins with the foremost thinker of early modernity, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose notions of sublimity, combining the "purest longing with the fullest bodily satisfaction," provided the basic text of Romanticism. To be sure, Bloom notes, this ideal of the sublime could not survive the skepticism of the modern age: "The high began to appear to be merely moralism, whereas the



low looked like what really counts and what had been covered over by Romanticism." But doomed though his ideal was, the Swiss thinker's exploration of the human heart inspired countless artists who came after him, notably such novelists as Stendhal, Gustave Flaubert, Jane Austen, and Leo Tolstoy. Their better works unfailingly recur to the Rousseau-delineated conflicts between claims of the heart and the rules of society, and Bloom shines in his explication of these various elaborations.

Following Rousseau is Shakespeare, whose plays Bloom credits with depicting the greatest variety of erotic expression—"love's promise of unity, its mysterious attraction to beauty, and its hope to overcome even the ugliness of death," as well as its "folly and disappointment." Bloom also makes a compelling case for Shakespeare as the first philosopher of history, eager to know how the "permanent problems of human nature" are colored by the "typical circumstances of their particular place."

Bloom ends his book with the thinker who has longest engaged his interest, the great Socratic pupil, Plato. In Plato's dialogues, Bloom finds a rare merger of rational reflection and art,

a combination that allowed the Greek thinker to range widely across the subject of love: "He explores the tensions between love of one's own and love of the good, and between the politically necessary subordination of eros to the family and the liberation suggested by such questionable erotic phenomena as incest, pederasty, and promiscuity. He sees in eros the possibility of both individual happiness and true human community."

Illuminating as Bloom's explications always are, they leave the reader with a curious sense of incompleteness. Is it because Bloom moves so exclusively in the realm of ideas, never touching ground in the historical conditions that might have occasioned major shifts in the (ever-diminishing) imaginings of eros? Or is it because he never takes too seriously the claims to truth of those beliefs, such as Christianity, that gave definitive shape to notions of love? One ends up wishing that Bloom had a little more of the large historical curiosity he so admired in Shakespeare. That failing aside, Bloom's last legacy is a triumph of humanistic reflection, and a reminder of what constitutes real education.

Contemporary Affairs

LENIN'S TOMB: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire. By David Remnick. Random House. 576 pp. \$25

BLACK HUNDRED: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia. By Walter Laqueur. HarperCollins. 317 pp. \$27.50

In a decade or two, it will probably seem inevitable: The collapse of the Soviet Union led to a) the reimposition, after a fleeting democratic experiment, of traditional Russian authoritarianism; b) Russia's gradual, steady, albeit painful emergence as a democratic, free market society; or c) a bloody descent into all-out civil war. At this moment, all these (as well as d and e and f) seem possible. Two excellent studies use recent events in Russia to project two quite divergent futures for that country in its latest "time of troubles."

Mixing the perspective of a historian and the street smarts of a journalist, Remnick recreates the final days of the communist era, on which he earlier reported as a correspondent for the *Wash-*

ington Post. Remnick attempts something more ambitious than the court history that Michael Beschloss and Strobe Talbott presented in *At the Highest Levels* (1993), or the straightforward political analysis of John B. Dunlop's *Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (1993). He hopes to make comprehensible and alive what happened in the Soviet Union by narrating the story through the voices and experiences of the people there. He paints an immense, vivid canvas, crowded with characters and events from every corner of the collapsing empire. Remnick's account deals, of course, with the "fall of Marxism"; in his explanation, Marxism suffers, as it were, a second kind of fall. Perhaps most observers, in one good Marxist tradition, have written about the Soviet Union's collapse in terms of economics—that is, of economic corruption and inefficiency too extreme to deliver even the minimum of goods to keep a cowed populace in its place. This economic framework is largely missing from Remnick's account; instead he focuses on what he calls the "revenge of history." For decades, history (or rather its interpretation) had been a servant of the Communist Party, which shamelessly rewrote textbooks and airbrushed photographs to support the current party line. But then Gorbachev decreed that the "blank spots" of history be filled in. By admitting the crimes committed by Stalin (the purges, the famines, the Nazi-Soviet pact, the Katyn Forest massacre), Gorbachev hoped indirectly to cleanse the socialist system of its crudest and cruelest features. But once Gorbachev dropped the myth of party infallibility and the threat of physical punishment for historical heresy, people quickly advanced beyond Stalin's tattered image to criticize the very state and system that had enabled that tyrant to rule. "When history was no longer an instrument of the Party, the Party was doomed to failure," Remnick writes. "For history proved precisely that the Party was rotten at its core."

Remnick is optimistic about a "gradual and painful rise from the wreckage of communism," confident "that the former subjects of the Soviet experiment are too historically experienced to return to dictatorship and isolation." In *Black Hundred*, Laqueur presents a darker possibility. A prolific historian of modern Europe who earlier traced the parallels between Russian and

German right-wing extremism, Laqueur acknowledges that the demise of the Soviet empire was "probably inevitable" but laments that the "way it did unravel was a disaster." Parliamentary democrats like Boris Yeltsin are still too weak, Laqueur maintains, and they are being challenged by a "nationalist movement firmly believing that Russia can be saved only by a strong, authoritarian government that restores law and order and pursues a conservative policy." In a restrained, pedestrian tone, Laqueur discusses the born-again incarnations of long-suppressed right-wing groups and that stewy concoction of chauvinism, anti-Semitism, anti-Westernism, racism, conspiracy theories, yearning for dictatorship, and messianic interpretations of history that bubbled over in tsarist times and is now on the boil again. The simultaneous collapse of empire, economy, and prestige has caused many Russians to look for easy explanations and identifiable scapegoats. Laqueur can never quite resolve, though, whether the current crop of extremists is merely a local variant of fringe groups that arise in most societies or a unique and grave threat to Russia. Certainly, after Remnick's stirring optimism, *Black Hundred* is a sobering reminder of the ugliness that might prevail should the post-Soviet democratic effort falter.

LIFE'S DOMINION: An Argument about Abortion, Euthanasia, and Individual Freedom. By Ronald Dworkin. Knopf. 273 pp. \$23

The United States needs a great book about abortion. Such a book, written perhaps by one of our more eminent political thinkers, would illuminate what may be the leading moral issue of our time for the mass of Americans, who are less "pro-choice" or "pro-life" than confused, troubled, or ambivalent about abortion.

Dworkin, who is the author of *Taking Rights Seriously* (1977) and who divides his time between Oxford University and New York University's law school, is certainly qualified to write such a book. And he very nearly succeeds. He argues that very few "pro-life" advocates actually believe in a "right to life." If they did, he notes, then logically they would insist on prohibiting abortion under all circumstances. The fetus,

after all, would have the same right to life no matter if rape or incest or marital intercourse were the cause of conception, and no matter if bearing the fetus to term might endanger the mother's life. But most abortion foes, Dworkin points out, are willing to make certain exceptions.

Dworkin argues that people on both sides of the issue are secretly united by a devotion to "the sanctity of life" but divided by their different understanding of the sacred. Opponents of abortion see the biological "gift of life" itself as sacred; more liberally inclined folk tend to think that life is made sacred by human "investments" in it. In this view, writes Dworkin, "it may be more frustrating of life's miracle when an adult's ambitions, talents, training, and expectations are wasted because of an . . . unwanted pregnancy than when a fetus dies before any significant investment of that kind has been made." The "pro-choice" position, he argues, is thus really a spiritual view.

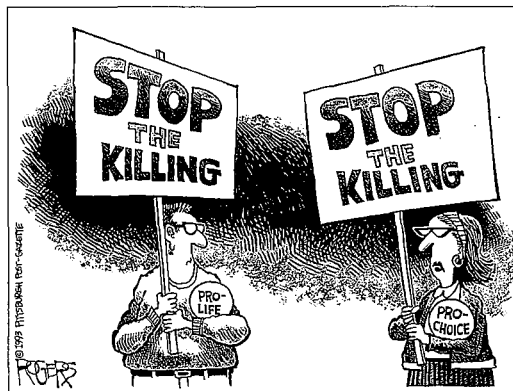
Unfortunately, Dworkin soon abandons his provocative venture into moral philosophy for the familiar terrain of rights and interests and constitutional law. For him, as for many other liberal thinkers, abortion (like euthanasia, to which he devotes far fewer pages) ultimately comes down to a clash over individual rights. The pregnant woman, in other words, has them; the fetus does not. Arguing that the "pro-choice" position is religious in character, he adds a new twist, contending that a woman's right to an abortion is grounded not in the sketchy right to privacy cited in the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973 but in the First Amendment's protection of the free exercise of religion. (For

similar reasons he insists that "any honorable constitution" will guarantee individuals their right to die.) Dworkin's provocative case would have been stronger, however, had he subjected his own assumptions—especially those concerning what is sacred—to the same penetrating scrutiny he gives here to the "pro-life" position.

SYSTEMS OF SURVIVAL: A Dialogue on the Moral Foundations of Commerce and Politics. By Jane Jacobs. Random House. 236 pp. \$22

What is it that binds society together? Why don't corporations and governments descend into corruption and lawlessness? Jacobs, in a book as ambitious as her landmark *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), ponders this question by examining various commercial and political systems throughout history. Unlike many philosophers who have tried to rest society on a single moral foundation, Jacobs uncovers two separate "systems of survival." On the one hand, a "commercial syndrome," which covers dealings in the marketplace, values working easily with strangers, respecting contracts, and promoting "inventiveness and novelty." The "guardian syndrome," on the other hand—represented by the military, the police, or any other organization of control—prizes obedience, discipline, loyalty, and shows of force. The alternating compatibility and conflict between the two systems allow society to function.

When people stay within their own syndromes—when corporations engage in free trade or when police concentrate on fighting crime and not, for example, meeting an arrest quota—the result, according to Jacobs, is overall success and prosperity for the society. But problems arise when the lines become blurred. The Mafia, for instance, is one of these "monstrous hybrids," a commercial entity that operates under a guardian mentality, adhering to a strict code of discipline, honor, and loyalty. The former Soviet Union, a guardian bureaucracy, strayed disastrously into the commercial syndrome when it undermined local officials by accepting kickbacks for not exposing shoddy workmanship or engaged in the falsification of production figures.



Jacobs's method of argument is peculiar, if not off-putting. Her book is framed as a modified Socratic dialogue whose characters are, among others, a novelist, a lawyer, a biologist, and an environmental activist. At first they doubt the existence of the two syndromes, but gradually through their discussions they come to agree that Jacobs is right and that these two systems do dictate human behavior.

Some readers may be slow to join in this celebration. So much of Jacob's book is taken up with establishing her two systems that she fails to notice all the kinds of human behaviors and actions that they cannot explain: altruism, paternalism, ethnic solidarity, religion, and rituals, to name a few. Nor does her theorizing account for why system abuses occur or indeed for much of what else transpires in the real world. Why is there, for example, insider trading or a savings-and-loan debacle? In interviews, Jacobs has faulted President Clinton's plan to jump-start the American economy as an inappropriate mixing of guardian and commercial syndromes. But when she proposes her own solutions—"Government's role is to create a good climate for new ideas and honest trade"—she sounds like a campaign stump politician afraid to discuss specifics. And, ironically, for a self-professed champion of democratic values, Jacobs seems inadvertently to have ruled out the democratic possibility: Constitutions, political parties, or individual rights, after all, are intrinsic to neither of her systems of survival.

Science & Technology

THE END OF PHYSICS: The Myth of a Unified Theory. By David Lindley. Basic. 275 pp. \$25

Ancient astronomers, Pythagoras among them, found it aesthetically pleasing that the heavenly bodies orbited in perfect circles—so pleasing, indeed, that they interpreted their observations

to support this "truth." Not until the work of Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton (who showed such orbits to be elliptical) did scientific observation consistently produce theories, instead of the other way around. Today, however, physicists are once again formulating elegant theories with little regard for observation or at least without the benefit of empirically verifiable data. As Lindley, a senior editor at *Science*, points out, the existence of such phenomena as the quark, dark matter, and a finite universe can be established only mathematically.

"How can it be that mathematics," Einstein once asked, "being a product of human thought which is independent of experience, is so admirably appropriate to the objects of reality?" That question, even more now than when Einstein was alive, vexes contemporary physicists. Today they contrive ever more arcane theories in pursuit of a "unified theory" or "Theory of Everything"—a grand set of metaprinciples that will account for the complete contents of the universe. The more purely mathematical the pursuit becomes, the more postmodern particle physics seems to resemble premodern science: that is, less an empirical science and more a kind of mathematical aesthetics. Noted Cambridge University physicist Stephen Hawking predicated his "quantum cosmology" on the model of a closed universe because, at bottom, he feels that finiteness is neater than infiniteness. But, as Lindley asks, what can be the utility of a "theory that looks attractive but contains no additional power of prediction, and makes no statements that can be tested?" Lindley is not completely dismissive: "Perhaps physicists will one day find a [unified] theory of such compelling beauty that its truth cannot be denied." Even so, he adds, "this theory of everything, this myth, will indeed spell the end of physics, not because physics has at last been able to explain everything in the universe, but because physics has reached the end of all things it has the power to explain."

POETRY

SEXTUS PROPERTIUS

Selected and Introduced by Joseph Brodsky

Very little is known about Sextus Propertius except that he was born circa 54 B.C. at Assisi in Umbria and died, most likely in Rome, circa 16 B.C. That adds up to too many *circas* for anyone's liking. Nevertheless, from this uncertain chronology we learn that Propertius was a few years younger than Virgil and Horace and a bit older than Tibullus and Ovid. Whether he was personally acquainted with them is of little import. Presumably he was, since he lived most of his life in Rome and shared with some of those poets the patronage of Maecenas. It has also been argued that Propertius's work prefigures Ovid's love poetry.

The little that is known about Propertius is gleaned chiefly from his own verses, that is, from the one book of his which is extant. The book is called *Cynthia Monobiblos*. All in all, it contains 92 poems called "elegies," partly because of their subject matter and tonality and partly because of their form, the so-called elegiac couplet, a combination of hexametric and pentametric lines that was the main poetic medium of the time.

The book owes its title to the addressee and heroine of some of these elegies. "Cynthia" was what you might call a society girl who apparently belonged to a social group inferior to our poet's own equestrian class. This class difference decisively colored the character of their interplay by ruling out the possibility of marital union. She was red-haired and slightly older than Propertius, of delicate constitution, in fact quite sickly, like the poet himself. She also had a number of admirers (the Illyrian praetor is not the poet's invention), was well read, and led a life that could be characterized as financially and emotionally independent. The same could be said of the poet himself.

C*ynthia Monobiblos* is essentially a book of love poetry. By the time Propertius was writing, this genre was highly developed, and the love lyric had become practically a conceit. Every poet worth his salt would produce a sequence of love elegies offering a description of the sentiment itself as well as of jealousy, rejection, regret, remorse, and so forth, accompanied by the necessary admixture of pastoral imagery and highly erudite classical exempla. It is the latter—rather than the emotional investment in the subject—that furnished the criteria by which love poetry of the period was judged.

Propertius's elegies are extraordinary because they modify the pastoral element by intermixing urban imagery. However, what truly sets Propertius apart from his far better-known contemporaries is the intensity of his actual sentiment for his heroine. His is genuine love poetry: The story

it tells is not so much that of passion as that of pure obsession. The Cynthia of these elegies is not a point of departure for an eloquent journey, as was the customary heroine in the Roman poetry of that period, but both the destination and the very means of transportation. She is the raw nerve of this poet's verses, as well as his own neurosis and its panacea. Toward the end of Part One, one develops a sense that, for all her and his numerous side shows, Cynthia was the one to show him the light.

Propertius openly acknowledges his indebtedness to the Greek poetry of the Hellenistic period and to Callimachus in particular: The anxiety of influence apparently did not cloud his agenda. But more interesting than his usage of Alexandrian tropes and mythological references is the fact that each of the elegies treating the subject of love invariably winds up in a discourse on death. Speak of Eros and Thanatos—Propertius could be used as a case study of their mutual affinity as well as of their affinity with the art of poetry. You may put this affinity down to the state of the poet's health or to his awareness of his medium's essential morbidity; you may also consider the possibility that the grip of one of these deities may suggest—by its strength—the other. Tradition, of course, calls the postcoital condition *petite mort*, but *petit amour* for the postmortem won't do. You also have to bear in mind that, as many of the elegies indicate, Cynthia herself was of a sickly disposition.

Toward the end of Part Two, Cynthia's presence diminishes. Evidently both she and her poet are embarked on different and diverging pursuits. In Part Three she is hardly there; nor in most of Part Four also. Finally, at the end of Part Four, the poet suddenly learns that Cynthia has died. This news results in the famous "queen of elegies": Elegy Number Seven in Part Four. This poem will never die, for here Eros and Thanatos indeed overlap. This poem is about an apparition: Charred by the funeral pyre, the soul of Cynthia visits the poet one night, shortly after her death. What distinguishes this poem from all the works in a similar vein throughout the history of literature is the stated reasons for this visitation. Cynthia's instructions to Propertius are so pragmatic that you end up believing the encounter indeed took place, that this is not so much a poem as a record of what transpired, of words actually spoken by a shade.

I hope that this elegy will whet readers' appetites for Sextus Propertius. His standing with the American public is either nonexistent or incomprehensibly low. This may in part have to do with a singular disservice done him by Ezra Pound's "Homage to Sextus Propertius"—the moronic pastiche of our eternal sophomore enamored of foreign name-dropping. Largely, though, this is so because, as regards the literature of antiquity, we are the true barbarians. The shorter shrift we give it, the deeper we bury our imaginations and the greater the desert of the human heart. Propertius can make it more habitable. By reading him, we may at least learn what it takes to endure 2,000 years, without being a messiah. Without the knowledge of what it takes to so endure, our run is bound to be short indeed.

Sunt Aliquid Manes; Letum non Omnia Finit . . .

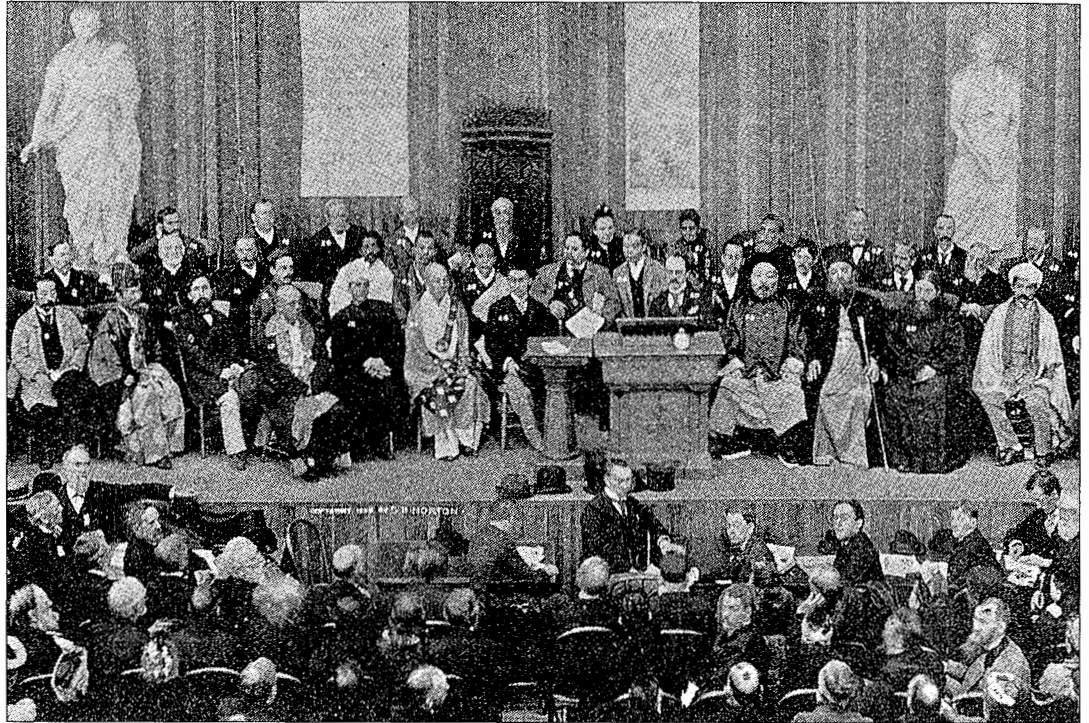
There are ghosts after all, then; death is not the ending;
the soul, like smoke, escapes from the funeral flame.
Beside my bed I saw the wraith of Cynthia.
From that new grave by the noisy road she came
to me who, shaken, still, by the rites, lay restless
in the bed that was once our kingdom and was no more.
Her eyes, her hair, were the same as I had known them;
fire had charred one side of the robe she wore
and had eaten away the beryl ring on her finger;
her lips were withered from water drunk underground.
Her spirit, her voice, were living, but as she stood there
her brittle finger bones made a rattling sound.
"You forget so soon?" she said. "No woman ever
had a truer lover, yet sleep can erase the sight
of the little room we shared in the noisy Subura,
my window worn by ruses of the night,
the rope tossed over the sill where I'd hang for a moment
and hand over hand climb down into your embrace.
Under our cloaks the earth has been warmed by our bodies
as we lay by the crossroads in some shadowy place.
Our pledge was wordless, but our lies, our cheating,
the deaf southwestern wind has brushed away.
When I came to death, no man's voice called my name out,
though yours would have kept me alive another day;
for me no watchman troubled to sound his cleft reed;
a broken tile props up my fallen head.
Who has seen you stand by my grave grief-stricken?
Who has seen your robe grow wet with the tears you shed?
If you could not bear to pass beyond my doorway,
could you not have begged them to carry me slowly here?
Could you not have prayed for a wind to fan the flames high
or made them fragrant with nard? If you held me dear,
would a handful of hyacinths have been too costly
for my grave, or wine poured out of a broken urn?
It was Lygdamus the slave—I knew he was guilty
when I drank the wine. Let him feel the brand-iron burn!
As for Nomias, my woman, she may hide her poisons;
that burning jar will tell her crime to the town—
she, that cheap whore, that lowest of streetwalkers,
now trails in the dust the hem of her golden gown!
And if she hears that a slave has praised my beauty,
loads her shoulders with tasks she must faint beneath—
Petale's chained to a log, that poor old woman,
because she dared to bring to my grave a wreath;
Lalage's hung by her hair, whipped till she's bleeding,
for having asked Nomias a favor in my name.
And you—you let her melt down my golden image
to win her dowry from the fruit of that flame!
What reason I have to berate you!—yet I cannot;
in all your poems, it is my story you tell.

By the immutable chant of the Fates I swear it
(I tell the truth. Be silent, O dog of hell!):
I was faithful to you. If this is false, let adders
hiss on my tomb and coil through my bones, as well.
Beside the river of death there stand two mansions,
and to one or the other the dead must point the prow.
Adulterous Clytemnestra moves toward this one,
and Pasiphae in the wooden guise of the cow.
Toward the other in rose-decked boats go the blest, the godly,
where flowers are stirred by the softest airs of spring
and the air is full of the sound of harp and cymbal,
and turbaned dancers move to the plucked string.
Andromeda is there, and Hypermestre,
telling their stories of suffering and reward—
one as the scapegoat for her mother's boasting,
chained to the rock and rescued by Perseus' sword;
the other the single one of those fifty sisters
not guilty of murder on her wedding night.
Only death's tears can heal the wounds love dealt us;
I would hide your fickleness from all men's sight.
Listen—if your new mistress gives you leave to;
if you can hear my dead voice as I plead—
take care of my nurse Parthenie. You remember
she treated you well: see that she is not in need.
And that best of servants, Latris—do not expect her
to hold the mirror before your new love's face.
The poems you wrote to praise me—burn them, burn them.
Do not seek glory through my vanished grace.
But come to my tomb, and clear away the ivy
whose roots twist 'round my bones in a living mesh,
here where the Anio dawdles past the orchards
and ivory does not yellow, the air is so fresh.
Write a fitting phrase on some random pillar,
brief enough to catch the hurrying eye:
GOLDEN CYNTHIA LIES IN TIVOLI'S EARTH HERE:
NEW REASON TO HALLOW THIS LAND AND THE STREAM NEARBY.
You will have dreams, and you must learn to trust them;
through holy dreams the truth may be revealed.
At night we dead can wander—even Cerberus,
his chain cast off, will stray through forest and field,
until with dawn hell's law returns us to Lethe
where Charon the ferryman counts over his own.
Take your new love. I shall share you with no other
when you come to me here, and bone shall grind on bone."

And suddenly, her sad complaining ended,
she was gone, and I stood with my empty arms extended.

Poem excerpted from *The Poems of Propertius*, translated by Constance Carrier.
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IN THE NAME OF RELIGIONS



The World's Parliament of Religions, 1893

The World's Parliament of Religions convened in Chicago exactly 100 years ago, its members boldly proclaiming the "end of national religions" and resolving that their traditions would henceforth make war "not on each other, but on the giant evils that afflict mankind." Since then, Diana Eck shows, vast global transformations and major new understandings derived from the comparative study of religions have challenged—but not destroyed—that earlier spirit of conciliation and cooperation.

BY DIANA L. ECK

Several worldwide interfaith organizations, including the World Conference on Religion and Peace, have named 1993 the "Year of Interreligious Understanding and Cooperation." The occasion is the centennial of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, a landmark event that took place in Chicago in connection with the World's Columbian Exhibition. There, for the first time in modern history, some would say for the first time ever, Hindus, Buddhist, Jains, Jews, Protestants, Catholics, adherents of the Shinto and Zoroastrian traditions—all met together to speak of their faith. The gathering was planned and hosted by Protestant Christians. As the chairman of the Parliament, Presbyterian minister John Henry Barrows, observed, "It was felt to be wise and advantageous that the religions of the world, which are competing at so many points in all the continents, should be brought together not for contention but for loving conference, in one room."

The Parliament convened for 17 days of meetings and more than 200 presentations. Thousands packed into the Art Institute of Chicago, hearing for the first time the voices of Hindus, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians. India's eloquent Swami Vivekananda spoke of Hinduism as the religion that has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance and described the diversity of religions as "the same light coming through different colors." Together, the assembly recited the Lord's Prayer as a universal prayer, and Rabbi Emil Hirsch of Chicago proclaimed, "The day of national religions is past. The God of the universe speaks to all mankind!" At the closing session, Chicago lawyer Charles Bonney, one of the Parliament's chief visionaries, declared, "Henceforth the religions of the world will make war, not on each other, but on the giant evils that afflict mankind."

In 1993 one reads these words with considerable skepticism. On the surface at least, most people see little evidence of a cooperative religious alliance against the ills of the world. Indeed, the past 100 years have provided ample evidence that religions are still

powerful producers of symbolic weaponry for the strife of humankind. In the late 20th century, religious rhetoric and the communal power of religious identity have been employed in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and Sri Lanka, in the Sikh separatist movement in the Punjab, and in the competition between Muslims and Christians in sub-Saharan Africa. As 1993 began, communal violence returned to India, sparked by the controversy over a 16th-century mosque said to stand on the ruins of an ancient Hindu temple honoring Lord Rama. "Ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia, the flaring of anti-Semitism in Europe, the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York—all were replete with religious overtones and undertones. The fear of losing ground to the "other" or to "secularism" seems to lodge equally in the hearts of majorities and minorities, and fanning that fear is the strategy of religious communalists the world over, from India's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party to America's Christian Coalition. In the 1990s the politics of identity is reshaping the globe, with religion forming an important part of ever more narrowly construed ethnic and national identities.

So what about this Year of Interreligious Understanding and Cooperation? Is it the pipe dream of those who never read the newspapers, or is there also another, more hopeful story to be told? After all, extremism captures public attention in a way that cooperation and understanding do not. When a mosque is destroyed in Ayodhya or a Hindu temple is toppled in Lahore, the news reports do not mention the Friendship Circles of Hindus and Muslims who work tirelessly for interreligious harmony in Kanpur or the peace brigades of Bombay. When fearful citizens of Milton, Massachusetts protest plans for a new mosque, we are more likely to hear about it than when a spirit of cooperation prevails, as it did in Sharon, Massachusetts, where Muslims, Christians, and Jews from all over New England gathered to break ground for a new

Islamic Center. Extremism and contention constitute news; cooperation seldom does.

Yet a careful observer of the religious world today would have to conclude that if religious extremism and religious chauvinism has had an upswing in the late 20th century, so has interreligious dialogue and cooperation. The last two decades have seen the genesis of countless interfaith activities. There are local efforts—interfaith councils in Hong Kong and Los Angeles, in Lincoln, Nebraska, and Syracuse, New York. There are Christian-Buddhist dialogues on nonviolence, on humanity's relation to nature, and on the meaning of Christian "God" language and Buddhist "Emptiness" language. There are interfaith forums on AIDS, refugees, and the environment. And today, 100 years after the Chicago Parliament, there are five major international interreligious organizations—the International Association for Religious Freedom, the Temple of Understanding, the World Congress of Faiths, the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and the Global Forum.

Are we then at the beginning of a new era of religious extremism, chauvinism, and fundamentalism, or one of religious pluralism based on the recognition of interdependence and the necessity of interreligious cooperation? While the georeligious world today is too complex to assert that either of these two powerful currents predominates, one can safely say that fundamentalism and pluralism pose the two challenges that people of all religious traditions face.

Both fundamentalism and pluralism are responses to modernity, with its religious diversity and competing values. Fundamentalists reaffirm the exclusive certainties of their own traditions, with a heightened sense of the boundaries of belonging that separate "us" from "them." Pluralists, without giving up the distinctiveness of their own tradition, engage the other in the mutual education and, poten-

tially, the mutual transformation of dialogue. To the fundamentalist, the borders of religious certainty are tightly guarded; to the pluralist, the borders are the good fences where one meets the neighbor. To many fundamentalists, secularism, seen as the denial of religious claims, is the enemy; to pluralists, secularism, seen as the separation of government from the domination of a single religion, is the essential concomitant of religious diversity and the protection of religious freedom.

Both movements are compelling reminders to those of us in universities that the history of religions, as the comparative study of religions is sometimes called, is not over but is happening before our very eyes. We who make it our business to study religion cannot imagine a more interesting or demanding time to be about our work. The Fundamentalism Project, launched at the University of Chicago's Divinity School with the cooperation of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, has spent three years organizing scholars to assess the movements that might be termed fundamentalisms—those Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, and even Hindu movements that are characterized by certain family resemblances: a hostility toward modernity and secularism, an insistence upon the exclusivity of truth claims, and a clear sense of the boundaries that set the community apart. More recently and more modestly, the Pluralism Project, an undertaking of Harvard University's Committee on the Study of Religion, has engaged student researchers throughout the United States to map the virtually unknown terrain of America's new religious landscape with its immigrant and indigenous Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh communities. It is also studying the emerging mediating institutions, such as interfaith councils, and asking how religious diversity is reshaping the meaning of

Diana L. Eck, professor of comparative religion and Indian studies at Harvard University, is the author of Banaras: City of Light (1982) and Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras (1993). Copyright © 1993 by Diana L. Eck.

American pluralism.

To understand the unfolding history of religions, scholars have to study the new forms of religious exclusivism and pluralism. At present, the greatest religious tensions are not those between any one religion and another; they are the tensions between the fundamentalist and the pluralist in each and every religious tradition. Novelist Salman Rushdie recently observed that the "great struggle for the soul of the Muslim world" is underway. He called for a corrective to the media fascination with the fundamentalist agenda, pointing to the Muslim thinkers, artists, and theorists whose courageous resistance to extremism is unmarked and unstudied. As Rushdie made clear, part of the strategy of religious extremism has been to magnify the perception of its power and to silence not only the voices of pluralism and secularism within the faith but the moderate voices as well. Moderate Sikhs who resisted the call for a Sikh state of Khalistan were murdered in the Punjab; the head of the Belgian Muslim community was killed a few days after he challenged Khomeini's death sentence on Salman Rushdie. Hindus in India who espouse old-fashioned Vivekananda-style tolerance scarcely dare speak of themselves as Hindus in India today, so identified has the term become with religious extremism. And many American Christians have been disappointed by the failure of liberal or even mainstream churches to compete successfully with right-wing fundamentalists for the public's attention.

At the Parliament of 1893, neither fundamentalism nor pluralism in their modern forms were much in the air. But there were hints of the kind of exclusivism that would rise again in so many religious traditions in the late 20th century. The Sultan of Turkey, Abdul Hamid II, refused an invitation to attend; whether from active disapproval or sheer lack of interest is unclear. The Archbishop of Canterbury declined to attend because, as he put it, "the Christian religion is the only true religion." The Reverend E. J. Eitel, a Hong Kong missionary, wrote accusing the organizers of

"playing fast and loose with the truth and coquetting with false religions." The headline in the *Chicago Tribune* on September 16, 1893, would have confirmed his suspicions: "Wells of Truth Outside." It underlined the realization, to some a blasphemy, that there was indeed religious truth outside the Christian tradition.

Despite these rebuffs, the prevailing spirit of the Parliament was a kind of welcoming universalism or inclusivism on the part of the Western and largely Christian hosts. The spirit of universalism was very popular in the late 19th century. As Oxford University professor Max Müller put it, "The living kernel of religion can be found, I believe, in almost every creed, however much the husk may vary. And think what that means! It means that above and beneath and behind all religions there is one eternal, one universal religion." Some version of this affirmation was integral to the world view of the Unitarian movement, the Theosophists, the Swedenborgians, and the reformed Hindu movements of the 19th century such as the Brahma Samaj. One of the goals of the Parliament was to "unite all religions against irreligion."

For many of those at the Parliament, however, the universal gathering in of the religions was nothing more than an extension of the vision of a united Christendom. Chairman Barrows addressed the assembly as children of One God and asked, "Why should not Christians be glad to learn what God has wrought through Buddha and Zoroaster—through the sages of China, and the prophets of India and the prophet of Islam?" The God of whom all were children and who spoke through the Buddha, however, was clearly understood to be the God most of the Christian audience already knew and whom was addressed in the Lord's Prayer. While Barrows truly believed that all were there as members of a Parliament of Religions over which flies no sectarian flag, it is clear that his very conception of the universal was but a larger and more expansive Christianity.

General knowledge of the world's reli-

gious traditions was scant 100 years ago. One of the planners of the 1893 Parliament called it "the first school of comparative religions wherein devout men of all faiths may speak for themselves without hindrance, without criticism, and without compromise and tell what they believe and why they believe it." And they did. When the Sri Lankan Buddhist reformer Dharmapala asked the assembly, "How many of you have read the life of the Buddha?" only five raised a hand. "Five only!" he scolded. "Four hundred and seventy-five millions of people accept our religion of love and hope. You call yourselves a nation—a great nation—and yet you do not know the history of this great teacher. How dare you judge us!"

The comparative study of religion was relatively new as an academic subject in the late 19th century. Studying one's own religious tradition was one thing, but the attempt to enter into the disciplined study of another faith, to understand a world view and transcendent vision one does not share, was something new in the academic world. And beyond the study of another particular tradition was the attempt to discern what religion is as a human phenomenon. At the time of the Parliament, only a handful of American universities attempted such study at all. Today there are nearly 1,000 four-year colleges and universities, public and private, with departments of religious studies. To some extent the genesis of academic interest in the religions of the world, especially in the United States, can be traced to the Parliament.

Six European scholars of religion, including F. Max Müller, C. P. Thiele, and J. Estlin Carpenter, sent messages to the Parliament. Müller even sent a second letter, regretting deeply that he had been unable to come and referring to the Parliament as "one of the most memorable events in the history of the world." Müller (1823–1900) is often seen as a father of comparative religion, which he referred to as the "science of religion." He set an early standard for this study when he said, "He who knows one, knows none." Müller used lan-

guage as an analogy, arguing that it is only by becoming fluent in another language that one is able to gain some perspective on the peculiarities and distinctiveness of one's own and thus gain a more general sense of the structure and workings of language.

In the 19th century, it was common in the West to speak of Judaism and Christianity as revealed religion and the others as natural religion. However, emerging philological scholarship challenged this distinction. Müller, a scholar of the religions of India and translator of the Rig Veda, was the major force behind the publication of the series called "The Sacred Books of the East," which brought major sacred texts of the "Eastern" religious traditions into English translation. Müller's colleague at Oxford, J. Estlin Carpenter, wrote to the Parliament of the significance of this for the future of religion:

Philology has put the key of language into our hands. Shrine after shrine in the world's great temple has been entered; the songs of praise, the commands of law, the litanies of penitence, have been fetched from the tombs of the Nile, or the mounds of Mesopotamia, or the sanctuaries of the Ganges. The Bible of humanity has been recorded. What will it teach us? I desire to suggest to this Congress that it bring home the need of a conception of revelation unconfined to any particular religion, but capable of application in diverse modes to all.

The "key of language" did indeed make available to Western readers sources that could roughly be called scripture—the Avesta of the Zoroastrian tradition, the Vedas, Brahmanas, and Upanishads of the Hindu tradition. It also made possible the historical and critical study of the Bible. Both would eventually provoke the antagonism of 20th-century Protestant fundamentalism.

Just as the spirit of universalism dominated the Parliament and the religious outlook of the late 19th century, so did it dominate the emerging study of religion. Müller's sense that "above and beneath and behind all religions

there is one eternal, one universal religion" generated a spirit of reification—something called *religion* and various bounded entities called *the religions*. The other side of the visionary hope for an emerging universal religion was the strong impulse in the wake of Darwin to discover the origins of religion—in the primordial response to nature, as Müller contended, or in what E. B. Tylor called animism, or in Emile Durkheim's description of totemism as the germ of that "eminently collective thing" called religion, or in Freud's primordial struggle of the sons against the fathers, or in Jung's "myth-forming structural elements" of the unconscious psyche he called archetypes.

Naming the religions gave Müller pause. Confucianism seemed to be known in Chinese as "the teaching," Taoism as "the Way." None seemed to have a name for itself or a word for religion. Nonetheless, describing these teachings and ways as the great religions became commonplace. For example, in his *Ten Great Religions* (1871), Harvard professor James Freeman Clarke discusses 10 religious "systems" such as Brahmanism, Buddhism, and the religion of ancient Rome, all described as ethnic religions, and compares each with Christianity, which, by contrast, is not ethnic but catholic or universal in nature, and therefore holding promise of becoming the "religion of all races."

The power of definition and representation, so much a part of the Orientalist enterprise lately criticized by Edward Said, was wielded by early scholars of comparative religion in both Europe and America. During the 19th century the names emerged for the first time with "isms" tagging the reifications—Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism. The idea that a Chinese merchant might "belong" to three of these "religions" at once did not seem to discourage this way of thinking, which was, in fact, in need of considerable amendment. Long before the deconstructionist phase of recent intellectual history, the Buddha's revolution in thinking in the sixth century B.C. pointed to the ways in which human beings

continually ascribe solidity and fixity to what is inherently dynamic by affixing nouns or names. Yet the comparative study of religion has produced countless books dedicating a chapter to each of the world religions, each a species of a common genus called religion.

As the 20th century moved toward middle age, scholars began to challenge this way of thinking about religion. Wilfred Cantwell Smith deserves credit for insisting on a dynamic understanding of religion, a word which he suggests might well be abandoned as a noun in favor of the cumulative "religious tradition" (*The Meaning and End of Religion*, 1962). Religious traditions are historical, constantly changing in relation to one another and in response to each era. They are not fixed systems or circumscribed entities but dynamic, cumulative historical traditions, more like rivers than monuments; they are not best understood by uncovering their origins. As Smith puts it, "time's arrow is pointed the other way." What has emerged in the course of the history of religious traditions—from Bach to Barth, from the Delhi Sultanate to the Dalai Lama—is certainly as significant as what can be discerned of their beginnings. And the ways in which they have diverged are as significant as their similarities.

The language employed to speak of religious life posed another problem. A century ago, scholars would commonly write of the creeds, scriptures, revelation, worship, and ways of salvation of various religious traditions without stopping to investigate the adequacy of such categories of thought, all derived primarily from Christian experience. For example, the idea that a religion should have a creed, a concise set of beliefs, was so taken for granted that one could speak of people of many races, languages, and creeds as if creed were simply another locution for religion. Having delimited Hinduism, British missionaries and civil servants were concerned to find out what Hindus believe. It simply did not occur to most observers 100 years ago that the

very notion of creed as a significant religious category was distinctly Christian. Of course, one could compare the Jewish *shema* or the Islamic *shahada* as formulas of central affirmations, but what a Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain believes is not a direct or even very fruitful entry into the understanding of these traditions, which are orthopraxies—correct practices—more than orthodoxies.

During the 20th century, the school loosely called the phenomenology of religion, following the Dutch scholars W. B. Kristenson and Gerardus van der Leeuw, focused attention not on historical religious traditions but on religious phenomena as they appear across traditions and times. They proposed typologies and categories of understanding that, in their view, did not give special place to the language of a single religious tradition. The phenomenologists moved away from the tacitly Christian theological presuppositions of earlier scholars to observe what was termed *epoché*, a bracketing of one's own judgment and presuppositions in order to examine groups of phenomena—types, patterns, and morphologies—of human religious life. Rather than speak of "God" or the "gods," van der Leeuw used the category of "power," Rudolph Otto spoke of "the holy," and Mircea Eliade spoke of "the sacred."

Romanian scholar Mircea Eliade did much to shape this stream of religious studies in North America, breaking in his own way from a concern with origins and the world religions to a concern with *homo religiosus* and the encounter with the sacred, which Eliade saw as a "universal dimension" of human experience. He called his approach a "new humanism," aiming to "decipher and explicate every kind of encounter of man with the sacred, from prehistory to our day." The sacred "shows itself" in hierophanies, or appearances, which bear striking resemblance to one another across cultures and history. The study of myths, symbols, and rituals reveals deep forms and patterns of religiousness—the yearning for

the center, the *axis mundi*; the nostalgia for the time-of-beginnings, *illud tempus*.

But with the ongoing contributions of scholars steeped in the study of the traditions of Japan or India, for example, the problem of such an enterprise became clear: This interpretive language—whether scripture, prayer, and sacrifice, or myth, symbol, and ritual—also comes out of particular Western traditions of experience. The very terms bear the categories and codes of the West and cannot be used as if their semantic resonances were germane to the whole of human experience. What exactly is the sacred in India? Is this universal dimension to be discovered in the concern with what is pure (*pavitra*) or in the concern with what is auspicious (*mangala*)? Is *ritual* a useful term? Perhaps, but not without the scholar's conscious reflection on terms with similar and yet very different semantic range—the Chinese *li* with its dimensions of propriety and order, the Sanskrit *dharma* with its resonances of cosmic order and ethics, or the Sanskrit *kriya* coming from the word family that signifies action. Is mysticism a valid way of thinking about a particular stream of religious experience? Perhaps, but not without pointed reflection upon *which* stream. From the standpoint of Indian religious traditions, is *bhakti*, the devotional tradition of love, mysticism? Or is *yoga*, the tradition of what one might call spiritual discipline, mysticism? And again, is worship a good way to describe the purpose of a Hindu's visit to a temple, when the Hindu would use the term *darshan*, "seeing," to speak of that experience?

The question of whose language and forms of representation are to be employed as categories is much discussed today. The scholarly world is global, and the task of hermeneutics is increasingly a task of mutual interpretation. The point, however, is not to decide that the language of either the insider or the outsider has priority but to recognize that it is the very task of the comparative study of religion to bring these into dialogue so that they may inform each other.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith has been at the

forefront of those rethinking the categories of interpretation. He uses the term *faith*, for example, to refer to the personal affective quality of engagement through which a person appropriates a particular religious tradition, but he does so only after a careful study of the historical and contemporary meanings of both faith and belief in the West and after a rigorous study of the Hindu term *sraddha*, with its sense of setting one's heart, and the Muslim understanding of *iman*, self-commitment. In both traditions, as in early Christianity, faith is something one does rather than something one has (*Faith and Belief*, 1979). Smith does not propose giving up the use of generic concepts or of Western scholarly vocabulary, but rather insists that the interpretive language of the study of religion come in for more rigorous analysis, that it not be unthinkingly used but self-consciously developed out of the overlapping and diverging semantic terrain of comparative studies.

Miriam Levering and the other authors of a recent work, *Rethinking Scripture* (1989), for example, begin not by analyzing the term *scripture* but by considering the meanings of *canon*, *classic*, *sacred text*, and *word* from the perspectives of many religious traditions. The act of comparison is essentially dialogical, and so is the development of the language of comparative study. If universals are to be found, they cannot be propounded or assumed but must be won from the dialogue of the particulars.

The Parliament of 1893 obviously lacked the benefits of the current rethinking of the language of comparison. But the spirit of the Parliament did anticipate another kind of dialogical dimension in the comparative study of religion. As the Parliament's chairman put it, those for whom the various traditions are vibrant and meaningful should speak for themselves. The view implicit here, while not spelled out, was that one could not understand a religious tradition from textual study alone. Worshippers' voices are also important to disciplined understanding. In the course of the past century both the philological tools of the

textual scholars and the anthropological tools of the fieldworker have become indispensable. Scriptures take on meaning in relation to a community of people, and scholars of living religious traditions cannot work as if those adherents have no voices and do not read what scholars say about them. Religious traditions are not fixed in amber and passed intact from generation to generation but are changing historical movements, constantly appropriated and reformulated by the people for whom they are meaningful and who speak for themselves.

One fascinating irony of the ongoing history of religions is the emergence among some Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and others of explicitly more rigidified formulations of their own traditions. For example, the fluid and polyphonic Hindu tradition has developed forms that are more creedal and systematized, such as the World Hindu Organization's formulation of *Hindutva*, "Hinduness," or the Northern California Hindu Businessman's Association's publication of "Ten Commandments of Hinduism." No longer is Hinduism simply the representation of Orientalists and their 19th-century Indian respondents; it is also the articulation of communalist Hindus in India and of Hindus in diaspora seeking a simplified form of explaining who they are and what they believe. For Western scholars now to call Hinduism a false construction is a kind of neo-Orientalism, denying the legitimacy of the continuing development of the Hindu tradition that has, in this century, begun to produce a reification called Hinduism. The new systems of 20th-century religious chauvinism are as much a part of the history of religions as new forms of 20th-century pluralism.

Teaching comparative religion in 20th-century North America poses the challenge of dialogical study pointedly. Today the world of scholars and interpreters of religion is multi-religious and international. In addition, because of new immigration in the United States, the classroom is multireligious, with a wide range of observance and nonobservance, of

religious literacy and illiteracy. The habit of speaking about the other as exotic must perforce be broken, for the "other" is among us. We are other to one another.

The religious demography of the West has changed radically during the past century, and especially the past quarter century, making the questions of the World's Parliament of 1893 increasingly the questions of every city council in 1993. When the delegates from Asia came to the Parliament, they traveled halfway around the world by boat. Vivekananda, coming from Calcutta, arrived in Chicago too early for the Parliament, ran out of money after 10 days, and by chance met a woman from Boston who put up the young Hindu at her farm in the Boston area for several weeks. He quickly became the toast of the North Shore, where scarcely anyone had met a Hindu before. In 1893, one could have counted the number of Hindus in this country on the fingers of one hand. One hundred years ago, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains lived in Asia; Muslims, in the wide stretch of the Islamic world from Indonesia to Morocco.

Today, however, the religious landscape of the United States alone displays the diversity of traditions that were present at the World's Parliament. Had Vivekananda come to this year's centennial celebration of the Parliament, he would have been welcomed by a Hindu host committee in the Chicago area (a group that organized a fund-raising dinner that netted \$45,000 for the centennial gathering). Had he traveled to Boston he would have found tens of thousands of Indian immigrants—engineers, doctors, and businesspeople—and he would have been greeted at Bengali picnics, Tamil festivals, and Hindu summer family camps. He would have visited the Sri Lakshmi temple in Boston, consecrated in 1991 with the waters of the Ganges mingled with the waters of the Mississippi and the Missouri.

At the time of the Parliament, the Statue of Liberty raised her torchbearing arm of refuge in New York harbor, facing the Atlantic.

In San Francisco, however, at least after the railways were built by using cheap Chinese labor, the language of welcome for the tired and the poor was replaced by the language of exclusion. The first Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882 and revised regularly for several decades, gradually dilating to include other Asians. In 1923, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Bhagat Thind, a Sikh who had settled in California and married an American woman, could be stripped of his naturalized U.S. citizenship because he was a Hindu, by which the court meant his race, not his religion. Such was the disposition of America toward Asia. At the Parliament, a Buddhist delegate from Japan called attention to the "No Japanese" signs posted at establishments on the West Coast. "If such be Christian ethics," he declared, "we are perfectly satisfied to remain heathen."

Since the Immigration Act of 1965, however, immigrants from throughout the world have entered the United States in greater numbers than ever before. According to the 1990 census, the "Asian and Pacific Islander" population is by far the fastest growing, having increased more than sevenfold since 1965. This group includes Hindus, Muslims, Jains, and Sikhs from South Asia, Christians and Muslims from the Philippines, and Buddhists and Christians from Southeast and East Asia. From refugees to voluntary immigrants, from unskilled workers to highly trained professionals, these newcomers have changed the cultural and religious landscape of the United States.

A century ago, the monks in the Japanese temple of Engaku-ji tried to dissuade their leader, Soyen Shaku, from attending the Parliament, arguing that it would not be fitting for a Zen monk to set foot in such an uncivilized land as America. He insisted, however. (The young monk who drafted his letter of acceptance in English was D. T. Suzuki, later to become the greatest translator of the Zen tradition to the West.) Were Soyen Shaku to arrive in San Francisco today, he would find headquartered in a multistory office building the

Buddhist Churches of America. He would find not only immigrant Buddhist communities from Japan, China, and Vietnam but a multitude of Euro-American Buddhists, including *roshis*, or teachers, initiated by Asian mentors. He would find American Buddhist newspapers and magazines, feminist Zen sitting groups, and a Zen AIDS Hospice Project.

In 1893, the Sultan of Turkey declined to send delegates from the Muslim world to Chicago. Today, the United States is part of the Muslim world. Even if a conservative estimate of three to five million is used, Muslims outnumber Episcopalians in the United States. Within a short time there will surely be more Muslims than Jews. In June 1991, Imam Siraj Wahaj of Brooklyn opened a session of the U.S. Congress with Islamic prayers, the first imam ever to do so. On Labor Day weekend each year, more than 5,000 American Muslims attend the annual convention of the Islamic Society of North America. There they discuss American public schools and American politics. The youth network organizes summer camps and Islamic leadership workshops. The Islamic Medical Association discusses ethical issues in medical practice.

The symbolic diversity of the 1893 Parliament has today become the reality of its host city. Chicago's yellow pages list dozens of entries under the headings "Churches: Buddhist" and "Churches: Islamic." The Muslims of Chicago say there are more than 70 mosques in the metropolitan area and nearly half a million Muslims. The suburbs of Lemont and Aurora boast two impressive Hindu temples—both built from the ground up by Hindu temple architects cooperating with American engineers and contractors. There are 50 Buddhist temples in the Midwest Buddhist Association. There are Jain temples and Sikh *gurudwaras*, a Zoroastrian temple, and a Bahai temple. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, the local Chicago planning team for the centennial, is more representative of the diversity and complexity of the world's religions than the Parliament itself was.

The interreligious encounter that was engineered by visionaries in Chicago in 1893 is today an American main street affair. A parliament of sorts could be duplicated in almost every major American city. There are five mosques in Oklahoma City (none, incidentally, with a sign saying it is a mosque) along with four Hindu temples, one Sikh *gurudwara*, two Vietnamese Buddhist temples, and one Thai Buddhist temple. And Oklahoma City is far from unusual. Denver has 11 Buddhist temples serving its immigrant Asian population, including an older Japanese Jodo Shinshu temple, and more recently Thai, Cambodian, Korean, and Laotian temples have been established as well as six Vietnamese Buddhist temples. Denver also has three mosques, two Sikh *gurudwaras*, two Hindu temples, and a Taoist temple. All of this new diversity burgeoned in the years between 1970 and 1990.

These changes are not unique to the United States. Today's unprecedented economic and political migration of peoples—the United Nations has recently estimated that two percent of the world's population now lives outside its country of origin—has changed the map of the world. Hindus live in Leicester, Buddhists in Boston, and Muslims in Heidelberg. The new immigration has produced a spate of neonativist movements in North America and Europe, but it has also produced a whole range of new religious, cultural, and intellectual encounters. It has brought interfaith relations from the international to the local scene. It has drawn attention to the stereotypes which, for many, constitute the extent of their knowledge of other religious traditions. And it has heightened the significance of religious literacy as a basic component of education.

The interaction of peoples and traditions in the 20th century has produced much that is new—distinctively Balinese or south Indian forms of Christianity, distinctively North American Hindu communities, marriages between Christians and Muslims, Jews for Jesus, neopagan environmentalist movements, and many forms of religious syncretism. The wide

variety of religious life in the 20th century seems, to some, to threaten and blur the boundaries of identity—which is one reason for the resurgence of religious exclusivism and fundamentalism.

The universalism so dominant 100 years ago is now challenged by fundamentalists and pluralists alike, though for different reasons. For the fundamentalist, the very idea that all religions have a common kernel and core undermines the particularity of one's own faith and reduces those well-defended boundaries to mere husks. For the pluralist, universalism poses a more covert problem. As the Parliament so clearly demonstrated, and as the early phases of the comparative study of religion confirmed, the universal is usually somebody's particular writ large. Pluralism, however, is a distinctively different perspective. The pluralist does not expect or desire the emergence of a universal religion, a kind of religious Esperanto. Nor does the pluralist seek a common essence in all religions, though much that is common may be discovered. The commitment of the pluralist is rather to engage the diversity, in the mutually transformative process of understanding, rather than to obliterate it.

Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities* (1983), investigates the ways in which nations envision themselves. Even when citizens do not know one another, "in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." The imagined community of religious traditions is even more deeply rooted than that of the nation-state. Religious communalism, both national and international, is a powerful force in today's world, but one might suggest that religious exclusivism or chauvinism that depends for its survival upon the isolation of one people from another is bound, finally, to fail. In the late 20th century, the old imagined communities are in the process of tumultuous change. East and West are no more. We speak of the "former Soviet Union" and the "former

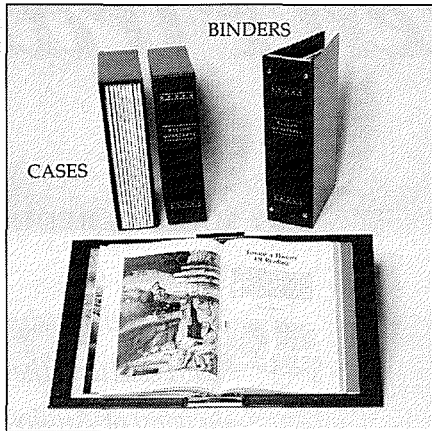
Yugoslavia." "Christendom" and "the Islamic world" have no identifiable geographical borders. There are Sikh mayors in Britain and Muslim mayors in Texas. The Buddha would smile at the collapse of our reifications.

Recently, Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington spoke of the new geopolitical reality of "the West and the rest" and proposed that "civilizational identity" will have a major role in the coming political realignment. He contends that the Confucian, Islamic, and Hindu worlds will be forces to reckon with. But where exactly are these worlds? With mosques in every major Western city and a thriving panoply of Asian-American subcultures, it is difficult to know what he means. It is precisely the interpenetration and proximity of ancient civilizations and cultures that is the hallmark of the late 20th century.

Finding new forms of imagined communities—national and international, religious and interreligious—is one of the more challenging tasks of our time. The worlds of technology, business, and communications have put concerted effort into the imagining of transnational networks of activity and loyalty, for better or for worse. Even the political and military implications of our global situation have received attention. Yet the careful construction of forms of interreligious communication and cooperation that might be considered part of the basic infrastructure of the world of the 20th century lags behind. And in academia, the comparative study of religion, still in its infancy in many parts of the world, is just beginning to develop the dynamic and dialogical models adequate to the interpretive task. The centennial of the World's Parliament of Religions, however, gives evidence of a radically new multireligious social reality—in Chicago and throughout the world. The move in the past century from idealized Protestant universalism to the difficult dialogue of real pluralism is a step in the right direction.



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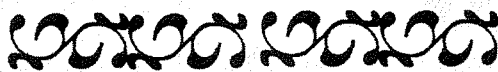
The idea that religion has undergone a radical change since the Christian Reformation—from totalitarian and socially repressive to private and relatively benign—is a familiar part of the story of secularization. It is often invoked to explain the liberal politics and world-view of modernity. And it leads to the view that “politicized religions” threaten both reason and liberty. Talal Asad’s essays explore and question all these assumptions. He argues that “religion” is a construction of European modernity, a construction that authorizes—for Westerners and non-Westerners alike—particular forms of “history making.” Asad examines aspects of this authorizing process in the so-called fundamentalism of Saudi Arabia, in the Rushdie affair in Great Britain, and in other phenomena.

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When Women Pirates

BY MARCUS REDIKER



Mary Read

During the early 18th century, the heyday of Anglo-American piracy, two women, Anne Bonny and Mary Read, joined the crew of Calico Jack Rackam, a notorious Caribbean pirate.

As historian Marcus Rediker relates, their choice was not unique.

It placed them in the company of others of their gender—sailors, soldiers, adventurers—who “seized liberty” from society by disguising themselves as men.

Sailed the Seas

In late 1720 Jamaica's most powerful men gathered at a court of admiralty in St. Jago de la Vega for a series of show trials. Governor Nicholas Lawes, members of his Executive Council, the chief justice of the Grand Court, and a throng of minor officials and ship captains confirmed by their concentrated presence the gravity of the occasion. They had recently complained of "our Coasts being infested by those Hellhounds the Pirates" and they were not alone. Pirates were attacking and plundering merchant shipping throughout the British Empire and beyond. The great men came to see a gang of pirates "swing to the four winds" upon the gallows. They would not be disappointed.

Eighteen members of Calico Jack Rackam's crew had already been convicted and sentenced to hang, three of them, including Rackam himself, afterward to dangle and decay in chains at Plumb Point, Bush Key, and Gun Key as moral instruction to the seamen who passed their way. Once shipmates, now gallows mates, they were meant, according to *The Tryals of Captain*



Anne Bonny

John Rackam, a contemporary account of the proceedings, to be "a Publick Example, and to terrify others from such-like evil Practices."

Two other pirates were also convicted, brought before the judge, and asked "if either of them had any Thing to say why Sentence of Death should not pass upon them, in like manner as had been done to all the rest." These two unusual pirates, in response, "pleaded their Bellies, being Quick with Child, and pray'd that Execution might be staid." The court then "passed Sentence, as in Cases of Pyracy, but ordered them back, till a proper Jury should be appointed to enquire into the Matter." The jury inquired, discovered that they were indeed women, pregnant ones at that, and gave respite to these two particular "hell-hounds" named Anne Bonny and Mary Read.

Much of what is known about these extraordinary women appeared originally in *A General History of the Pyrates*, written by a Captain Charles Johnson and published in two volumes in 1724 and 1728. Captain Johnson (who may or may not have been Daniel Defoe) made Bonny and Read leading figures in his study, boasting on the title page that the first volume contained "The remarkable Actions and Adventures of the two female Pyrates, Mary Read and Anne Bonny." Johnson's book proved a huge success. Translated into Dutch, French, and German, published and republished in London, Dublin, Amsterdam, Paris, Utrecht, and elsewhere, it carried the tales of the women pirates to readers around the world. Their stories were doubtless told and retold on countless ships and docks, and in the bars and brothels of the sailor towns of the Atlantic.

Mary Read was born an illegitimate child outside London; her mother's husband, who had died at sea, was not her father. In order

to get support from the husband's family, Mary's mother dressed her to resemble the recently deceased son she had borne by her husband. Mary grew "bold and strong" and developed, reported Johnson, "a roving Mind." She apparently liked her male identity and decided by the time she was 15 or 16 to become a sailor, enlisting aboard a man-of-war, then signing up as a soldier, fighting with "a great deal of Bravery" in both infantry and cavalry units in Flanders. She fell in love with a fellow soldier, "a handsome young Fellow," allowed him to discover her secret, and soon married him. But he proved less hardy than she, and before long he died. Mary once again picked up the soldier's gun, this time serving in the Netherlands. At war's end she sailed on a Dutch ship for the West Indies, only to be captured by pirates. Before long she threw in her lot with the freebooters, plundering ships and exhibiting great boldness. When her new lover one day fell afoul of a pirate much more rugged than himself and was challenged to go ashore and fight a duel "at sword and pistol," Mary saved the situation. She picked a fight with the same rugged pirate, scheduled her own duel two hours before the one to involve her lover, and killed the man "upon the spot."

Anne Bonny was also born an illegitimate child (in Ireland), and to hide this fact she too was raised in disguise, her father pretending that she was the child of a relative entrusted to his care. Her father eventually took her with him to Charleston, South Carolina, where he became a merchant and planter. Anne grew into a woman of "fierce and courageous temper." Once, "when a young Fellow would have lain with her against her Will, she beat him so, that he lay ill of it a considerable time." Ever the rebel, Anne soon forsook her father

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and his wealth to marry "a young Fellow, who belong'd to the Sea, and was not worth a Groat." She ran away with him to the Caribbean, where she dressed "in Men's Cloaths" and joined a band of pirates that included Mary Read and, more important, Calico Jack Rackam, who soon became the object of Anne's affections. Their romance too came to a sudden end one day when she and her mates fell into battle with a British vessel sent to capture them. When the ships came to close quarters, "none kept the Deck except Mary Read and Anne Bonny, and one more;" the rest of the pirates scuttled down into the hold in cowardice. Exasperated and disgusted, Mary Read fired a pistol at them, "killing one, and wounding others." Later, as Calico Jack was about to be hanged, Anne said that "she was sorry to see him there, but if he had fought like a Man, he need not have been hang'd like a Dog."

Of the existence of two women pirates by the names of Anne Bonny and Mary Read there can be no doubt, for they were mentioned in a variety of historical sources, all independent of *A General History of the Pyrates*. A rare official pamphlet, *The Tryals of Captain John Rackam and other Pirates*, paints Anne Bonny and Mary Read as fierce, swashbuckling women, genuine pirates in every sense. One of the witnesses against Bonny and Read, Dorothy Thomas, had been captured and made prisoner by Rackam's crew. She claimed that the women "wore Mens Jackets, and long Trousers, and Handkerchiefs tied about their Heads, and that each of them had a Mchet[e] and Pistol in their Hands." Moreover, they at one point "cursed and swore at the Men," their fellow pirates, "to murder the Deponent." "[T]hey should kill her to prevent her coming against them" in court, as was indeed now happening before their very eyes. Bonny and Read were at the time dressed as men, but they did not fool Thomas: "the Reason of her knowing and believing them to be Women was, by the largeness of their Breasts."

Other captives testified that Bonny and Read "were very active on Board, and willing to do any Thing." When Rackam and crew "saw

any vessel, gave Chase or Attack'd," Bonny and Read "wore Men's Cloaths," but "at other Times," presumably times free of armed confrontation, "they wore Women's Cloaths." According to these witnesses, the women "did not seem to be kept, or detain'd by Force," taking part in piracy "of their own Free-Will and Consent." A captured master of a merchant vessel added that they "were both very profligate, cursing, and swearing much, and very ready and willing to do any Thing on board."

Historians in recent years have discovered that these two bold women pirates were not entirely unusual cases. Women had long gone to sea, and in many capacities—as passengers, servants, wives, prostitutes, laundresses, cooks, and occasionally as sailors, serving aboard naval, merchant, whaling, privateering, and pirate vessels. They also made their way into armies. An anonymous writer insisted in 1762 that there were so many women in the British army that they deserved their own separate battalions, not unlike the women warriors who fought for the African kingdom of Dahomey during the same period.

Bonny and Read were part of a deeply rooted underground tradition of female cross-dressing, pan-European in its dimensions but especially strong in early modern England, the Netherlands, and Germany. Like other female cross-dressers, they were young, single, and of humble origin; their illegitimate births were not an uncommon characteristic. They had, in other words, little or nothing to lose, and a society that offered few opportunities for women to break out of their sharply defined positions had little to offer them. Bonny and Read perfectly exemplify what historians Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol have identified as the two main reasons why women suited up as men: Read did it largely to escape poverty, while Bonny, turning her back on her father's fortune, followed her instincts for love and adventure.

Other famous women in the cross-dressing tradition include Mrs. Christian Davies,



Ann Mills

who, dressed as a man, chased her dragooned husband from Dublin to the European continent during the early 1700s, survived numerous battles, wounds, and capture by the French, and returned to England and military honors bestowed by Queen Anne. Hannah Snell's picaresque life as a soldier and sailor during the 1740s and '50s was chronicled in the *Gentlemen's Magazine*, the *Scots Magazine*, and in books long and short, in English and Dutch. Ann Mills, according to an 1820 English account, went to sea "as a common sailor" in 1740 and distinguished herself in hand-to-hand combat against "a French enemy." She "cut off the head of her opponent, as a trophy of victory."

Women such as these were celebrated around the Atlantic world in popular ballads sung and heard by common men and women. Soldiers, sailors, dockworkers, farm laborers, washerwomen, servants, and others sang of the glories of "warrior women" at the fairs, on the wharves, around the street corners, and amid the throngs at hangings and other public events. Anne Bonny and Mary Read came of age in an era when female warrior ballads

soared to the peak of their popularity—even if some of the women celebrated in those songs did not, like Bonny and Read, commit mayhem on the high seas.

So the two women rigged themselves out in men's clothes and gained entry into the always rough, sometimes brutal world of maritime labor, into the very line of work long thought to "make a man" of anyone who entered. Cross-dressing was necessary because women were not, as a rule, allowed to serve on the crew of deep-sea vessels of any kind. One reason for this division was the sheer physical strength and stamina required for shipboard labor—loading and unloading cargo (using pulleys and tackle), setting heavy canvas sails, and operating the ship's pump to eliminate the water that oozed through the seams of chronically leaky vessels. Some women, obviously, did the work and did it well, earning the abiding respect of their fellow workers. But not everyone—certainly not every man—was equal to its demands. It was simply too strenuous, too hard on the body, leaving in its wake lameness, hernia, a grotesque array of mutilations, and often premature death.

A second and perhaps more important reason for the segregation of the sexes was the widespread belief that women and indeed any reminder of sexuality were inimical to work and social order aboard ship. Officers of the British Royal Navy, for example, ruthlessly punished all homosexual practice throughout the 18th century, thinking it subversive of discipline and good order. Many merchants and captains believed with minister John Flavel that the death of "the Lusts" among sailors was "the most *Probable Means* to give *Life* to your Trade." Some version of this view apparently commanded acceptance at all levels of the ship's hierarchy. Many sailors saw women as objects of fantasy and adoration but also as the cause of bad luck or as dangerous sources of conflict, as potential breaches in the male order of seagoing solidarity. Early modern seafarers seem to have agreed that some kind of sexual repression

was necessary to do the work of the ship.

The assumption was strong enough to command at least some assent from pirates, who were otherwise well known for organizing their ships in ways dramatically different from those of the merchant shipping industry and the navy. Pirate Bartholomew Roberts and his crew, contemporaries of Rackam, drew up articles of conduct specifying that "No Boy or Woman to be allowed amongst them." Another article stated that, should a woman passenger be taken captive, "they put a Centinel immediately over her to prevent ill Consequences from so dangerous an Instrument of Division and Quarrel." William Snelgrave, a slave trader held captive by pirates off the west coast of Africa in 1719, explained: "It is a rule amongst the Pirates, not to allow Women to be on board their Ships, when in the Harbour. And if they should Take a Prize at Sea, that has any Women on board, no one dares, on pain of death, to force them against their Inclinations. This being a good political Rule to prevent disturbances amongst them, it is strictly observed."

Black Bart Roberts was more straight-laced than other pirate captains (he banned gambling among his crew, this too to reduce conflict), so it may be unwise to hold up his example as typical. But while a few pirate ships willingly took women on board, such exceptions were rare, and they existed only because exceptional women such as Bonny and Read created them.

The harsh reality of working women's lives, which could encourage physical strength, toughness, independence, fearlessness, and a capacity for surviving by one's wits, made it possible for some women to disguise themselves and enter worlds dominated by men; the same reality then assured that such women would be familiar enough within early working-class culture to be celebrated. Bonny and Read represented not the typical, but the strongest side of popular womanhood.

Their strength was a matter of mind as

well as body. Captain Johnson reports the testimony of their shipmates, who stated that in "times of Action, no Person amongst [the pirates] was more resolute, or ready to board or undertake any Thing that was hazardous" than Bonny and Read, not least because they had, by the time they sailed beneath the Jolly Roger, already endured all manner of hazard.

Bonny and Read were well prepared to adopt the ways of the sailor and even the pirate. They cursed and swore like any good sailor. They carried their pistols and machetes like those well schooled in the ways of war. That they eventually wore women's clothes among the pirate crew, as some witnesses observed, is evidence of the acceptance they won, despite their gender.

Courage was traditionally seen as a masculine virtue, but Mary Read and Anne Bonny proved that women might possess it in abundance. As evidence Captain Johnson quoted Read's response to one of her captives, who asked if she feared "dying an ignominious Death, if she should be caught alive":

She answer'd, that as to hanging, she thought it no great Hardship, for, were it not for that, every cowardly Fellow would turn Pyrate, and so infest the Seas, that Men of Courage must starve: That if it was put to the Choice of the Pyrates, they would not have the Punishment less than Death, the Fear of which kept some dastardly Rogues honest; that many of those . . . would then rob at Sea, and the Ocean would be crowded with Rogues . . . so that the Trade, in a little Time, would not be worth following.

Bonny and Read added an entirely new dimension to the subversive appeal of piracy by seizing what was regarded as male "liberty." In so doing they were not merely tolerated by their male compatriots, for they clearly exercised considerable leadership aboard their vessel. Although not formally elected by their fellow pirates to posts of command, they

nonetheless led by example—in fighting duels, in keeping the deck in time of engagement, and in being part of the group designated to board prizes, a right always reserved to the most daring and respected members of the crew.

Did Anne Bonny and Mary Read, in the end, make their mark upon the world? Did their daring make a difference? Did they leave a legacy? Dianne Dugaw, associate professor of English at the University of Oregon, Eugene, has argued that the popular genre of ballads about warrior women such as Bonny and Read was largely suffocated in the early 19th century by a new bourgeois ideal of womanhood. Warrior women, when they appeared in this new milieu, were comical, grotesque, and absurd since they lacked the now-essential female traits of delicacy, constraint, and frailty. The earlier “gender-conflating ideal” became largely unthinkable. The warrior woman, in culture if not in actual fact, had been tamed.

But the stubborn fact remains: Even though Bonny and Read did not transform the popular conception of gender, even though they apparently did not see their own exploits as a symbolic blow for rights and equality for all women, their very lives and subsequent popularity nonetheless undercut the gender stereotypes of their time and offered a powerful alternative image of womanhood for the future. The frequent reprinting of their tales in the romantic literature of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries captured the imaginations of many girls and young women who, even if they were not about to imitate the pirates’ lawless ways, felt imprisoned by the 19th century’s ideology of femininity and domesticity. Feminists used the examples of female soldiers and sailors to disprove dominant theories that stressed women’s physical and mental incapacity.

Anne Bonny and Mary Read also had an impact on what are now considered higher forms of literature. They were, after all, real-life versions of Moll Flanders, the heroine of Daniel Defoe’s 1721 novel of the same name.

The three had no small amount in common. All were illegitimate children, poor at birth and for years thereafter. All were what Defoe called “the offspring of debauchery and vice.” Moll and Anne were born of mothers who carried them in the womb while in prison. All three found themselves on the wrong side of the law, charged with capital crimes against property, facing “the steps and the string,” popular slang for the gallows. All experienced homelessness and transiency, including trips across the great Atlantic. All recognized the importance of disguise, the need to be able to appear in “several shapes.” Moll Flanders, too, cross-dressed: Her governess and partner in crime “laid a new contrivance for my going abroad, and this was to dress me up in men’s clothes, and so put me into a new kind of practice.”

Moll Flanders suggests the truth of Christopher Hill’s observation that “the early novel takes its life from motion.” The novel, he con-



tinues, "doesn't grow only out of the respectable bourgeois household. It also encompasses the picaro, the vagabond, the itinerant, the pirate—outcasts from the stable world of good householders—those who cannot or will not adapt." Thus for John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, as for Defoe and other novelists such as Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and Tobias George Smollett, the experiences of the teeming, often dispossessed masses in motion—people like Anne Bonny and Mary Read—were the raw materials of the imagination. The often desperate activity of working-class women and men in the age of nascent capitalism helped generate one of the world's most important and durable literary forms, which indeed is inconceivable apart from them.

Anne Bonny and Mary Read may have influenced posterity in yet another, more indirect way, through an illustration by an unknown artist used as the frontispiece of the Dutch translation of Captain Charles Johnson's *General History of the Pyrates*. It featured a bare-breasted woman militant, armed with a sword and a torch, surging forward beneath the Jolly Roger. In the background at the left hangs a gibbet with 10 executed pirates dangling; at the right is a ship in flames. Trampled underfoot are an unidentifiable document, perhaps a map or legal decree; a capsizing ship with a broken mainmast; a woman still clutching the scales of justice; and a man, possibly a soldier, who appears to have his hands bound behind his back. Hovering at the right is a mythic figure, perhaps Aeolus, Greek god of the winds, who adds his part to the tempestuous scene. Bringing up the rear of the chaos is a small sea monster, a figure commonly



Delacroix's *Le 28 juillet: la Liberté guidant le peuple*

drawn by early modern mapmakers to adorn the aquatic parts of the globe.

The illustration is an allegory of piracy, the central image of which is female, armed, violent, riotous, criminal, and destructive of property—in short, the very picture of anarchy. It seems almost certain that Bonny and Read, the two real-life pirates who lived, as their narrative claimed, by "Fire or Sword," inspired the illustrator to depict insurgent piracy in the allegorical form of a militant, marauding woman holding fire in one hand, a sword in the other.

This allegory is strikingly similar to Eugène Delacroix's famous painting, *Le 28 juillet: la Liberté guidant le peuple*. Compositionally, both works feature a central female figure, armed, bare-breasted, and dressed in a Roman tunic, looking back as she propels herself forward, upward, over and above a mass of bodies strewn below. The humble social status of each woman is indicated by the bulk, muscle, and obvious strength of her physique. (Parisian critics in 1831 were scandalized by the "dirty" Liberty, whom they denounced as a whore, a fishwife, a part of the "rabble.") Moreover, flags and conflagrations help to

frame each work: the Jolly Roger and a burning ship at the right give way to the French tricolor and a burning building in almost identical locations. An armed youth, a street urchin, stands in for the wind maker. Where the rotting corpses of pirates once hung now mass "the people." Two soldiers, both apparently dead, lie in the forefront.

There are differences: Liberty now has a musket with bayonet rather than a sword and torch. She leads but now takes her inspiration from the living rather than the dead. "The people" in arms have replaced "the people"—as a ship's crew was commonly called in the 18th century—who are hanging by the neck in the Dutch illustration. More important, Delacroix has softened and idealized the female body and face, replacing anger and anguish with a tranquil, if determined, solemnity. His critics notwithstanding, Delacroix has also turned a partially naked woman into a partially nude woman, exerting over the female body an aesthetic control that parallels the taming of the warrior woman in popular balladry. Liberty thus contains her contradictions: She is both a "dirty" revolutionary born of action and an other-worldly, idealized female subject born of a classical artistic inheritance and perhaps a new 19th-century definition of femininity.

It cannot be proven definitively that Delacroix saw the earlier graphic and used it as a model. But there is a great deal of circumstantial evidence to suggest that the allegory of piracy may have influenced Delacroix's greatest work. It is well known that Delacroix drew upon the experiences of real people in his rendition of *Liberty Leading the People*, including Marie Deschamps, who during the hottest of the July days in 1789 seized the musket of a recently killed citizen and fired it against the

Swiss Guards, and "a poor laundry-girl" remembered as Anne-Charlotte D., who was said to have killed nine Swiss soldiers in avenging her brother's death. These real women, like Anne Bonny and Mary Read, were bound to appeal to the romantic imagination.

Moreover, Delacroix himself noted that he often studied engravings, woodcuts, and popular prints as he conceptualized his paintings and sought to solve compositional problems. Finally, and most important, it can be established that piracy was on Delacroix's mind at the very moment he was painting *Liberty*. The English romantic poet Lord Byron was an endless inspiration to Delacroix, who engaged the poet's work intensely during the 1820s, exhibiting three major paintings on Byronic subjects in 1827 and executing several others on the Greek civil war, in which Byron ultimately lost his life. More crucially still, Delacroix was reading Byron's poem, "The Corsair"—about piracy—as he was painting *Liberty* between October and December 1830. At the very same salon at which he exhibited his greatest painting in 1831, Delacroix also entered a watercolor based on Byron's poem.

The image of piracy (1725) preceded the image of liberty (1830) by more than a century, and the two pirates who inspired that image were by then long since dead. Read died in prison of what was probably typhus soon after her trial; Bonny was eventually reprieved and released, but what became of her after that is lost to history. Yet it seems that the pirate's liberty seized by Anne Bonny and Mary Read may have taken a strange and crooked path from the rolling deck of a ship in the Caribbean to the wall of an art salon in Paris—a peculiar and perhaps fitting testament to two very exceptional women.

THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

The Uncertain State of the Nations

A Survey of Recent Articles

In the disorienting world that emerged after the end of the Cold War, both *subnational* ethnic groups and *supranational* organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the European Community (EC) seem to have become more important. Several major multi-ethnic nation-states—the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia—have split apart, peacefully or violently. Others—including India, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia—seem threatened by ethnic or religious conflict. Meanwhile, the UN has intervened, on humanitarian grounds, in Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, and elsewhere. What is the future of the supposedly sovereign nation-state and of the modern international system that emerged three-and-one-half centuries ago? Are national loyalties giving way to others—allegiances to ethnic groups, to religions, to civilizations?

"The multiplication of different types of actors, loyalties, and conflicts," Pierre Hassner, director at the Centre d'Études et de Recherches Internationales, Paris, writes in *Survival* (Summer 1993), is leading "to a return in some respects to the 16th century, to the power of merchant towns and religious wars. In other respects, it is a return to the Middle Ages when, in contrast to the modern nation-state and its monopoly of violence, order was based on a variety of actors, of authorities, territorial and not territorial, of loyalties, and of rivalries." Instead of the medieval emperor and pope, there are "an ambivalent emperor of sorts—the United States . . . and an aspiring pope and church—the United Nations." But they lack sufficient legitimacy, not least in each other's eyes, and sufficient resources "to impose order on the system as a whole," Hassner says.

During the Cold War, most international conflicts "tended to be seen through the prism of East-West confrontation," he notes. "Today, principles are much more universal—and universally accepted—but conflicts are more idiosyncratic." The small community, based on fam-

ily or family-like ties, "feels threatened by modern society with its constant flow of people, goods and messages, with its bureaucratic and technological constraints, with its economic and cultural appeals." The nation-state represents a compromise between ethnic communities and the demands of that increasingly global society. "Through its language, its education, its shared memories and myths, [the nation-state] retains some relation to its roots and some elements of warmth and community. Yet, through its bigger size, its impersonal laws, its bureaucratic organization, it comes closer to fulfilling the requirements of modern society." The more the nation-state accommodates modernity, however, Hassner says, the more people shift their loyalties to ethnic communities. So, paradoxically, as the idea of "world order" becomes more popular, the world itself becomes more fragmented.

Nationalism emerged in England during the 16th century, writes Liah Greenfeld, a professor of social sciences at Harvard University, in an issue of *Daedalus* (Summer 1993) devoted to "Reconstructing Nations and States." Upwardly mobile commoners who had reached the top of the English social ladder "found unacceptable

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the traditional image of society in which social mobility was an anomaly, and substituted a new image for it, that of a *nation* as it came to be understood in modern times." The word had referred to a political and cultural elite, but these new social leaders "made it synonymous with the 'people' of England." Thus, "every member of the people was elevated to the dignity of the elite, becoming, in principle, equal to any other member."

"It is this quality that recommended nationalism to European (and later other) elites whose status was threatened or who were prevented from achieving the status they aspired to," she avers. It "ensured the spread of nationalism throughout the world in the last two centuries." Today, she says, the dignity conferred by nationality remains a potent force, and she sees no substitute capable of replacing it.

But Eastern and Western concepts of nationhood differ, Pierre Hassner insists. The Eastern concept, manifested in the breakup of several formerly communist multiethnic nations, is "an ethnic one (based on common culture defined in terms of race, language, tradition, or religion) rather than a constitutional one (based on state, territory, citizenship, and political principles) as in the West." Turning multiethnic nations into ethnically homogeneous ones, however, is all but impossible in the modern world. Borders are too permeable and ethnic populations too intertwined.

Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington maintains that nation-states will continue to be "the most powerful actors in world affairs." The chief force that will direct nations and other political "actors" in the new age will be not ideology or economic interests but culture, he argues in a much-noted essay in *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993): "The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics."

Throughout the world, he observes, economic modernization and social change "are separating people from longstanding local identities" and weakening the nation-state as a source of identity. They are also bringing people from different civilizations together, making them more aware of their differences and more conscious of their own civilizations. The revival of religion, often in fundamentalist forms, "provides a basis for identity and commitment that transcends

national boundaries and unites civilizations."

There are "seven or eight" major civilizations, by Huntington's count: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and "possibly" African. They have fundamentally different views of "the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife." They also differ strongly on "the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy." The "central axis of world politics," Huntington predicts, will be "the conflict between 'the West and the Rest' and the responses of non-Western civilizations to Western power and values."

Responding along with a half-dozen others to Huntington in *Foreign Affairs* (Sept.-Oct. 1993), Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, a political scientist at Georgetown University and former U.S. ambassador to the UN, points out that the most violent conflicts in this century have taken place, not *between* civilizations, but *within* them, including "Stalin's purges, Pol Pot's genocide, the Nazi holocaust and World War II." Likewise, she notes, "the first target of Islamic fundamentalists is not another civilization, but their own governments." Modernization is "eroding the strength of local and national cultures and identifications," making identification with civilizations more important. But "the great question for non-Western societies," she says, "is whether they can be modern without being Western."

The power of Hindu nationalists, Islamic fundamentalists, and other traditionalists should not be exaggerated, argues Fouad Ajami, a Johns Hopkins professor of Middle Eastern studies, in *Foreign Affairs*. The lines between civilizations are far less sharp than Huntington believes, Ajami says, and the voices of tradition are often loudest "when people no longer really believe."

"The things and ways that the West took to 'the rest' . . . have become the ways of the world," Ajami says. "The secular idea, the state system and the balance of power, pop culture jumping tariff walls and barriers, the state as an instrument of welfare, all these have been internalized in the remotest places. We have stirred up the very storms into which we now ride."

In the Shadow Of JFK

"The Lines of Control Have Been Cut" by Richard Reeves, in *American Heritage* (Sept. 1993), 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

President Bill Clinton's White House has been likened to a college dorm, complete with bull sessions and all-nighters. His general style of management is informal. Veteran political writer Reeves, author of a new study of John F. Kennedy's presidency, fears that Clinton may be following a very bad example—the disorderly



JFK, who in 1963 shook 17-year-old Bill Clinton's hand at the White House, remains an important model for him.

approach to management taken by his idol.

JFK came into office in 1961 wanting "to open up the White House to new information" and to break up "the old bureaucracies and systems" that he thought had isolated his predecessor. Believing, as he explained at the time, that general meetings of the National Security Council were "a waste of time," he opted instead, says Reeves, for "small ad hoc task forces, their number rising and falling with the president's perception of crises," and all of them, ideally, under his direct control. President Dwight D. Eisenhower "had built up what amounted to a military staff apparatus to methodically collect and feed information [to him] and, at the same time, had created separate operations to coordinate and implement his decision making." Kennedy wanted to be in the center of all the action, not at the top of an organization chart.

But Kennedy-style openness carried its own

risks. National security adviser McGeorge Bundy warned JFK in April 1961 that the task forces set up to deal with the most important foreign-policy crises—Laos, the Congo, and Cuba—had "nobody in particular in charge" and no "clearly focused responsibility." Two weeks later came the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion. Kennedy had approved the Central Intelligence Agency plan, notes Reeves, after "a series of unstructured meetings" with the CIA director, the secretaries of defense and state, "and pretty much whoever else happened to be around."

During the Eisenhower-Kennedy transition of 1960–61, the two men had discussed decision-making in foreign affairs. Ike came away, Reeves says, privately worried "that the new man did not understand the complexity of the job." Kennedy seemed to think that it just entailed getting the right people in the right positions.

Some historians have argued that Kennedy "grew" in the job. They cite his handling of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 and the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty negotiated in 1963. "But without gainsaying those achievements," Reeves writes, "it seems clear that after two years in office Kennedy was moving the United States into combat in South Vietnam in a slow and drawn-out replay of the Bay of Pigs invasion. He still seemed unable to sort through bad information. He focused on political appearance rather than military reality and continued to think the key to the problem was finding the right man—which meant eliminating the wrong one." In Cuba, the man to be eliminated was Fidel Castro; in South Vietnam, it was Ngo Dinh Diem. Castro survived while Diem did not. In both cases, the Kennedy style of management had the same outcome: disaster.

Reforming Congress, Again

"Thinking About Reform: The World View of Congressional Reformers" by John Roos, in *Polity* (Spring 1993), Northeastern Political Science Assoc., Thompson Hall, Amherst, Mass. 01003.

Talk of reforming Congress is once again in the air. A number of conscientious lawmakers have resigned in frustration over the institution's ap-

The New Generation Gap

In *New Oxford Review* (Sept. 1993), historian Christopher Lasch defends the supposed "lost generation" of the 1980s and '90s.

Abbie Hoffman and other relics of the 1960s spent the latter part of their careers, and incidentally made a good deal of money in the process, berating college students for their lack of political commitment. Instead of marching and picketing and protesting and generally making themselves obnoxious, they were grinding away at their studies in the hope of getting jobs. The truth of the matter, however, which people like Hoffman never understood, is that today's students are deeply skeptical of the kind of ideological appeals that inflamed and still inflame so many of their elders. They have inherited a perfectly terrible world, in many ways a terrifying world, and they have no illusions about making it dramatically better in the short run, or maybe even in the long run.

Commentators on the current scene often describe the younger generation as holding their parents responsible for leaving the world in such a mess. But this is a baby boomer's way of looking at the issue. The point about the new generation is that they just aren't terribly interested in the politics of blame and recrimination: the only politics the boomers seem to understand. They recognize that the sorry state of the world can't be blamed on any particular generation any more than it can be blamed on any political party. This

is what often makes them the despair of their elders—they can't be mobilized, can't be pressed into the service of prefabricated political or ideological causes and crusades. And it is this radical skepticism about movements and causes and slogans that invites the false charge of political indifference.

I must say I find this skepticism more attractive than not, especially when it is contrasted to the ideological politics that has played such a prominent part in American life since the '60s and is still pathetically playing itself out, the second time as farce (as usual) in university departments of literary and cultural studies and other centers of the most self-consciously advanced academic thought—I use this last word with a lively sense of its limitations. . . .

An absence of illusions, of course, carries with it the danger of cynicism, but even here, it seems to me, the cynicism that pervades our culture is more likely to come from people who once had big illusions than from people who never had any illusions to lose. What I sense in my best students is better described as a cold-eyed realism that is by no means incompatible with warm hearts. . . . [The] best of our students . . . have a much better grasp than many of their so-called role models of the things that really matter in life—love, useful work, self-respect, honor, and integrity. When [their] voice begins to get a hearing, I think we can look forward to a marked improvement in the quality of our public conversation.

parent inability to function effectively. Fourteen states decided in referenda last year to join Colorado and impose term limits on members of Congress. (The tenure of 156 of the 435 representatives is eventually to be subject to limits.) The recommendations of a Senate-House joint committee on reorganization are expected in December. Roos, a political scientist at the University of Notre Dame, warns that the failure of past reforms holds important lessons.

In the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, he notes, liberal reformers aimed to make Con-

gress a full partner in the activist government that had emerged from the New Deal and World War II. The act streamlined the committee structure, expanded the staff on Capitol Hill, and increased funds for the Congressional Research Service and for Congress's investigative arm, the General Accounting Office. The tenor of the times, Roos says, was reflected in an influential 1945 report by the American Political Science Association, with its Progressive and "good government" "touchstones [of] modernization, rationality, efficiency, and democratization." The

reformers, however, underestimated the power of the congressional "barons" who controlled most of the important committees, and the power of the shifting conservative coalition of Republicans and southern Democrats.

After years of frustration with their own institution, compounded by suspicion of the executive branch during the Johnson and Nixon years, congressional reformers of the 1960s and '70s looked, naively, to "the American people" as a *deus ex machina*. Strip "the anti-democratic barons" of their powers and make them responsible to rank-and-file Democrats, thought reformers such as Representative Donald Fraser (D.-Minn.), and the "will of the people" would push desirable (liberal) legislation through Congress. The House reforms of 1970-74 included limiting the powers of committee chairs and weakening the important House Ways and Means and Appropriations committees.

Was it realistic to assume "that rank-and-file Democrats want to and will balance budgets, allocate scarce resources within limits, and make hard and unpopular choices"? The decades since have given the answer, Roos says. If Congress is "to regain its crucial role as an equal constitutional partner," it will not be enough to make it more rational, more efficient, or more democratic. Today's reformers will have to devise changes in the institution that permit its titular leaders once again to lead.

Schoolhouse Politics

"The Quagmire of Education Finance" by Charles Mahtesian, in *Governing* (Sept. 1993), 2300 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

In state politics, few issues are more explosive today than school finance. Since 1989, when state courts struck down school financing systems in Montana, Texas, New Jersey, and Kentucky, leaving governors and legislators to grope desperately for replacements, legal challenges have multiplied. Roughly half the states now find themselves in court. The issue is almost always the same, reports Mahtesian, a *Governing* staff writer: disparities in per-pupil spending between rich and poor school districts.

Court-mandated efforts to equalize outlays have been marked by bruising political fights and increasingly, says Mahtesian, a sense of futility. After the Texas Supreme Court threw out the state's funding system in 1989, it rejected three substitutes enacted by the state legislature; the voters vetoed a fourth. A fifth system adopted last spring faces another court challenge.

What makes the politics of equity so murderous, writes Mahtesian, is the fact that in most states the only fiscally practical road to parity "involves capping the expenditures of the wealthier districts—promoting mediocrity by 'leveling down.'" Such remedies stir angry opposition in those districts. Parity may not even be the right goal, some liberals have come to think: Do not inner-city and rural schools have special needs that make them *more* equal than others?

Now legislators and others are moving away from equity and embracing "adequacy." The concept comes from a 1979 case in which the West Virginia Supreme Court ruled that the schools of Lincoln County were not providing the "thorough" and "efficient" education guaranteed by the state constitution. Adequacy focuses on what comes out of schools rather than what goes into them, and thus meshes neatly with the national trend toward uniform educational standards and goals. It does not necessarily involve robbing Peter to pay Paul. In Oklahoma, a group of poor districts is suing the state on the grounds that they lack the resources to meet the standards set in the state's comprehensive school reform of 1990.

Adequacy may take some of the poison out of the politics of school financing, but it creates its own controversies: What is "adequate" and what is the best way to achieve it? However it is defined, adequacy does not seem to come cheap. Voters in Illinois last year rejected a constitutional amendment that would have made adequacy cases easier to win—and thus would have cost taxpayers \$1.8 billion to \$3 billion. Of course even the best ideas are worthless if the political will to implement them is lacking. In Lincoln County, Mahtesian writes, people are still waiting for the big improvements in schooling they thought they had won back in 1979.

Fateful Misinterpretation

"America and Bosnia" by Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, in the *National Interest* (Fall 1993), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Does the United States have a stake in the Balkans? It does, insist Tucker, author of *The Nuclear Debate* (1985), and Hendrickson, a political scientist at Colorado College, but it is not based on the abstract principles most advocates of intervention have cited: repelling aggression, preserving recognized borders, and maintaining "world order." The "great interest" is "order and stability in post-Cold War Europe." But from the beginning, they argue, Washington—and most Americans—misperceived both the stakes and the situation in Bosnia.

The common view is that the war is a case of illegal aggression by one state, Serbia, against another, Bosnia. It rests, the authors say, mainly on the fact that the Yugoslav republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina gained recognition as an independent state from the European Community and the United States in early April 1992. Thus, the support given by the rump Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) to the armed Serbs of Bosnia has been seen as illegal. In fact, the authors say, the circumstances of Bosnia's independence were themselves "highly questionable."

The February 29–March 1, 1992, referendum in which a majority of the Bosnians who cast ballots voted to secede from Yugoslavia (but which the ethnic Serbs in Bosnia boycotted) was a violation of the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, Tucker and Hendrickson assert. That document required the mutual agreement of Yugoslavia's republics to any secession, which Bosnia did not obtain. As a result, the authors conclude, the international recognition of Bosnia's independence was itself a violation of international law.

"The true cause of the war," Tucker and Hendrickson maintain, "was the structure of reciprocal fears" within Bosnia. The Bosnian Muslims feared that they would suffer oppression in a Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia; the Bosnian Serbs (31 percent of the population) feared oppression in an independent Bosnia dominated by Muslims (44 percent).

The event that triggered the war, the authors write, was the repudiation by Bosnia's Muslim

president, Alija Izetbegovic, of a draft constitutional agreement, worked out in February 1992. Bosnia would have been divided into Muslim, Serb, and Croat areas. The United States, however, apparently advised Izetbegovic to reject the accord.

Partition is the only basis for a workable settlement, the authors believe. But the United States, laboring under the illusion that repelling "Serb aggression" and protecting the sanctity of Bosnia's borders were the imperatives, long opposed all such proposals. In August, the Clinton administration apparently shifted, urging Izetbegovic to endorse a plan for partition. Whether this betokens a new American understanding of the situation in Bosnia, however, is unclear.

Adieu to the West

"The Collapse of 'The West'" by Owen Harries, in *Foreign Affairs* (Sept.–Oct. 1993), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

The West is being summoned to guarantee the peace in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. But there is a fundamental problem, asserts Harries, editor of the *National Interest*, with the premise that "the West" still exists as a political and military entity.

The Western countries, to be sure, do share a common history and culture, as well as political values. But until the Cold War provided a great common danger, Harris says, that shared heritage was not enough to create a united West. Indeed, "fratricidal warfare might well be offered as one of the distinguishing characteristics of Western civilization of the past."

Americans traditionally have had "a moralistic distaste for European power politics," Harries observes, and with the demise of the Soviet Union, many now feel that it is time to turn to domestic matters. Many Europeans, meanwhile, have long viewed the United States as "unsophisticated" in international affairs, and once the Soviet threat was gone, many of them began dreaming of a United Europe "that would supplant the United States as the dominant economic—and ultimately political—force in the world." Europe's self-confidence has been hurt by its economic woes and its disunity in foreign affairs—but only temporarily, Harries believes.

With the disappearance of the common en-

emy, he concludes, the concept of the West as a unified entity is likely to disappear, too. But, he adds, it may return, "when things go seriously bad and individual countries or restricted alliances are unable to cope on their own. One must assume—unless one has come to accept the fatuous nonsense that war as an institution is dead—that such circumstances will again return to haunt us one day, perhaps sooner rather than later."

Casualties of War

"The Middle East Scholars and the Gulf War" by Norvell B. DeAtkine, in *Parameters* (Summer 1993), U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pa. 17013-5050.

As war in the Persian Gulf neared two years ago, many Middle Eastern specialists warned of disaster for the United States. Rashid Khalidi of the University of Chicago and Charles Doran of the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins, among others, predicted massive upheavals in every Islamic country, Americans slaughtered in Arab cities, airliners blown out of the skies, Arab soldiers turning their weapons on their Western allies, and Saudi Arabs emerging from their villas to toss Molotov cocktails at U.S. tanks.

Have these experts since been reflecting on where they went wrong? Not at all, says DeAtkine, a retired Army colonel who is director of Middle East studies at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg. In articles and books such as *George Bush's War* (1992) by Jean Edward Smith, they have launched a new revisionist attack. They maintain that the war was unnecessary; or that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was strictly an Arab problem, calling for an exclusively Arab solution; or that the Iraqis had a jus-

tifiable claim on Kuwait; or that Kuwait was insignificant and Saudi Arabia was in no danger of invasion by Iraq.

All of this is absurd, says DeAtkine. There was no political unity among the Arabs, and there would have been no Arab solution. Nor did the historical origins of the boundary between Iraq and Kuwait justify Iraq's action. Until its attempt to take over Kuwait, "the boundaries imposed by colonial powers, while universally proclaimed [to be] an evil legacy of imperialism, were nevertheless generally accepted." Iraq may have had no intention of invading Saudi Arabia, but an intimidated Saudi royal family inevitably would have adopted a policy of appeasement toward the Iraqis. Nor would economic sanctions have been effective enough to dislodge Saddam Hussein, DeAtkine adds.

Why have Middle Eastern scholars and jour-

The Corrupt and the Clean

"The bipolar world dominated by the communist-capitalist dichotomy has been replaced with a politically unitary one, divided between the corrupt and the clean," writes Daniel Bell in the *New Republic* (Aug. 23 & 30, 1993).

It is hard to avoid the larger moral question that is tied up with the fate of democracy and capitalism—of capitalism as a system of economic reward, and democracy as a system of civic loyalty and trust. . . .

In Japan, Tasushi Mieno, the governor of the Bank of Japan, who pricked the bubble of the inflated Japanese boom, has been quoted as saying that the giddy expansion of the late 1980s "undermined the stability and soundness of Japanese society by weakening the ethos of labor, the notion of working by the sweat of your brow." The boom, he said, hastened "a decline in morals," and fostered "inequalities in the distribution of wealth."

If capitalism is still to confront the ethos of "greed," democracy has to confront the problem of trust. In almost every society, the distrust of the political order and of politicians is rising, often feeding reactionary forces that seek to channel the resentments of a population into religious fundamentalism or a rising nationalism. The money corruption becomes the symbol of the breakdown of trust in democracy. The rebuilding of trust can only begin with the rectitude of the politicians and the moral authority of a political class. That is the great task that confronts democratic societies in the years ahead. It is not one of technique, but of virtue.

nalists been so wrong about the Gulf War? DeAtkine offers no definitive answer. But he says that the field is highly politicized. The specialists tend "to justify every inanity, every brutality, every outrage" by invoking cultural rela-

tivism. Many have a "distinctly anti-Western ideological agenda." They are obsessed with the Arab-Israeli dispute. And "area studies" enclaves in universities very often fail to breed detached, critical judgment.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

A New Business Ethics?

"What's the Matter with Business Ethics?" by Andrew Stark, in *Harvard Business Review* (May-June 1993), Boston, Mass. 02163.

Business ethics is hot in academia: More than 500 courses in the subject are taught at American business schools and there are three scholarly journals and more than 25 textbooks in the field. But this academic boom is largely irrelevant to most business managers, contends Stark, of the University of Toronto's Center for Corporate Social Performance and Ethics. It is not that managers are against business ethics, he says, but rather that too many business ethicists have occupied "a rarefied moral high ground," far removed from most managers' daily concerns.

For decades, enlightened self-interest was the rule recommended by advocates of corporate social responsibility. Ethical behavior might prove costly over the short term, they maintained, but it would pay off in the long run. During the 1970s, however, when business ethics emerged as a full-fledged academic discipline, this perspective came under attack. Ethical behavior, the new ethicists maintained, is not always in a company's best interests, however enlightened. Indeed, they insisted, self-interested acts *cannot* by their very nature be ethical. Mixed motives were given no moral credit. Business ethicists, Stark observes, developed "a kind of moral absolutism." In a recent essay, for example, University of Kansas ethicist Richard T. DeGeorge declared: "If in some instance it turns out that what is ethical leads to a company's demise, so be it." Such glib advice is of little practical help.

"Any business ethics worthy of the name should be an ethics of practice," Stark asserts.

"But this means that business ethicists must get their hands dirty and seriously consider the costs that sometimes attend 'doing the right thing.' They must help managers do the arduous conceptual balancing required in difficult cases where every alternative has both moral and financial costs."

Recently, Stark notes, some business ethicists have begun to do just that. In *Ethics and Excellence* (1992), Robert C. Solomon "goes back to Aristotle's conception of 'virtue' to devise an ethics of practical value to managers. . . . Throughout his book, Solomon discusses toughness (and other morally complex managerial virtues such as courage, fairness, sensitivity, persistence, honesty, and gracefulness) in the context of real-world situations such as plant closings and contract negotiations."

The new thinkers take the fact that ethics and interests can conflict as a beginning, not an end. "The really creative part of business ethics," ethicist Joanne B. Ciulla writes, "is discovering ways to do what is morally right and socially responsible without ruining your career and company."

The Futility Factor

"It's Not the Economy, Stupid!" by Charles R. Morris, in *The Atlantic* (July 1993), 745 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

The economy dominated the 1992 presidential contest: George Bush was accused of having mismanaged it, Bill Clinton promised to do better. But there was one big problem with the debate, contends Morris, a principal in a technology consulting firm. Presidents, he asserts, are not really able to "manage" the economy.

The "economy," Morris observes, is not a

thing but a metaphor for an inscrutable mass of transactions. "The deceptively precise numbers that purport to measure 'savings' or 'growth' or 'income' are crude approximations compounded from a slag heap of samples, surveys, estimates, interpolations, seasonal adjustments, and plain guesses. It takes months, even years, for economists to . . . figure out what really happened—if they ever do. There is still no consensus on what caused the Great Depression." Forecasting the economic future is even more difficult than understanding the past.

The discipline of economics has achieved the status of something like a religion in America, infiltrating our thinking about everything from schooling to political philosophy, even though its most fundamental commandments are subject to instant reversal, Morris observes. Economics textbooks long maintained that if the Federal Reserve Board increased the money supply (by loosening the credit reins), interest rates would drop. During the 1970s, however, after the Ford and Carter administrations greatly expanded credit to cushion the oil-price shocks, inflation soared. Investors decided that loose credit caused inflation. Interest rates rose. "Almost overnight," Morris writes, "the financial headlines executed an about-face: if the Federal Reserve loosened credit, it was thenceforth taken for granted that interest rates would rise, not fall."

The federal government, to be sure, does have a great influence on the economy. "About one out of every four dollars spent in the land is spent by, or put in the pocket of the spender by, the federal government," Morris notes. But the federal behemoth is far from a precise surgical instrument. It lurches and lumbers largely under its own power. Vast sections of it—such as Social Security and other entitlements—are virtually immune to short-term tinkering.

Presidents cannot do without an economic policy, but they, and the nation, Morris suggests, can do without the sham. "Skepticism about one's own cleverness is usually a good policy starting point. In America, at least, markets mostly work, after their fashion." And when presidents do find it necessary to take economic action, they—and we—should keep in mind that any important consequences are not likely to be apparent for many years.

Voodoo Works

"Wealth and Poverty Revisited" by George Gilder, in *The American Spectator* (July 1993), P.O. Box 549, Arlington, Va. 22216-0549.

The tax cuts of the 1980s are often blamed for today's soaring national debt and a widening gap between rich and poor. Supply-side economics, it is said, was really just "voodoo economics" after all. Gilder, whose bestselling tract *Wealth and Poverty* (1980) served as a bible for the Reagan Revolution, argues that, on the contrary, supply-side economics has been vindicated by history.

"[Despite] widespread political claims to the contrary," Gilder points out, "U.S. revenues rose steadily at every government level following implementation of the 1980s tax cuts." Until the late 1980s and early '90s, when the federal government and 35 states levied new taxes and imposed "sweeping" new regulations, the total government deficit declined nearly 50 percent as a share of gross national product.

As for "the huge surge of inequality constantly bewailed in the media," Gilder contends that it actually happened during the late 1970s, when, according to the Congressional Budget Office and the Federal Reserve Board, some 62 percent of income gains went to the wealthiest one percent of the population. Between 1980 and '89, their share of income gains fell to 38 percent. In "the inflationary, high-tax environment" of the late 1970s and early '80s, Gilder says, those who were already rich did well. "High taxes, after all, do not stop you from being rich; they stop you from getting rich and challenging existing wealth." The Reagan administration's move to lower tax and inflation rates after 1982, he says, "reversed" the concentration of financial power. After the tax cuts went into effect, some 60 percent of the incumbents were pushed by "insurgent new wealth" off *Forbes* magazine's 400 Richest Americans list. After 1983, "when the Reagan tax cuts unleashed America's entrepreneurs," the wealthiest one percent's share of income gains went down to 20 percent. Thanks to an "explosion" of new and expanded small businesses, there was "more income mobility than in any previous era."

"The same pattern of radically increasing equality that occurred in incomes can be also found in the distribution of wealth," Gilder says. "The largest increases in real wealth in the 1980s accrued to mostly middle-class holders of corporate and public-employee pension plans." Badly in the red in 1980, these plans gained some \$2 trillion in real worth during the rest of the dec-

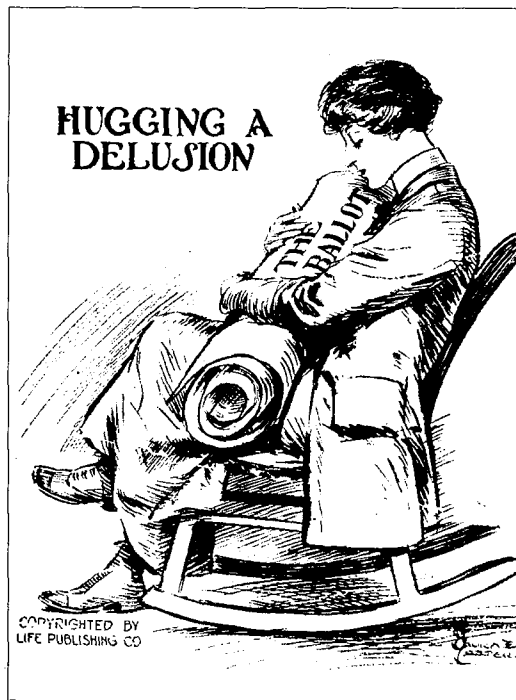
ade. Meanwhile, the creation of more than 20 million new jobs "was crucial in wiping out" the Social Security system's \$4-trillion deficit. Focusing on stock and real estate gains by the rich but neglecting this \$6-trillion windfall in middle-class net wealth, Gilder says, is like making "a topographical survey of the American continent that leaves out the Rocky Mountains."

SOCIETY

Women Against Suffrage

"'Better Citizens without the Ballot': American Anti-Suffrage Women and Their Rationale During the Progressive Era" by Manuela Thurner, in *Journal of Women's History* (Spring 1993), History Dept., Ballantine Hall 742, Indiana Univ., Bloomington, Ind. 47405.

Writing under the spell of late-20th century feminism, most recent scholars have depicted



Some women who fought against female suffrage did suggest that a woman's place was in the home.

the Progressive-era women who fought against women's suffrage as backward-looking adherents of the notion that a woman's place is in the home. Thurner, a doctoral candidate at Yale, says that this picture needs radical revision.

Committed to public activism by women and to social reform, most of these women thought that gaining the vote would hurt, not help, female reformers, Thurner says. The unofficial creed of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage was articulated by its president, Josephine Dodge, in 1916: "We believe that women according to their leisure, opportunities, and experience should take part increasingly in civic and municipal affairs as they always have done in charitable, philanthropic and educational activities and we believe that this can best be done without the ballot by women, as a non-partisan body of disinterested workers."

Casting ballots, the antisuffragists reasoned, meant that women would have to align themselves with political parties. Thus robbed of their nonpartisanship and their position of moral superiority above the fray, women would lose much of their considerable influence with legislative and other governmental authorities—and much-needed reform legislation would go unenacted. "For me," declared social worker Mary Ella Swift in a 1913 issue of the *Woman's Protest*, "the vital argument against suffrage for women is that it would hamper them in their more effective work in social and political lines."

Leading suffragists, such as Anna Howard

Shaw, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association from 1904 to 1915, refused to take their female adversaries or their arguments seriously. The antisuffragists, Shaw declared, "were like vultures looking for carrion" and were the dupes of powerful male forces—"liquor interests, food-dopers, child-labor exploiters, white slavers, and political bosses." Many later historians, when they have troubled to notice the antisuffragists at all, have echoed the suffragist line.

Contemporary sketches of the antisuffrage movement, however, indicate that it was "founded, staffed, and led by women," Thurner says. Most of the leading antisuffrage tracts—including Helen Kendrick Johnson's *Woman and the Republic* (1897), Ida Tarbell's *The Business of*

Being a Woman (1912), and Grace Duffield Goodwin's *Anti-Suffrage: Ten Good Reasons* (1915)—were penned by women. The role of men in the movement appears to have been marginal.

Suffragists portrayed the women who worked against their own enfranchisement as "a little band of rich, ultra society women," and "butterflies of fashion." In fact, the antisuffragists were not all that different socially from their opponents, Thurner says. Most "would have had no difficulty in embracing the label of the 'New Woman' as an appropriate designation for themselves. A college education, professional employment, and a life without a husband and children were not necessarily infallible indicators of a woman's prosuffrage stance."

Multiculturalism For Fun and Profit

Real-world multiculturalism, says Harper's (Aug. 1993) contributing editor David Rieff, is just the opposite of what its academic advocates imagine.

For the multiculturalist, notions such as 'quality' are tainted; their real purpose is to preserve the privileges of a dominant group: in the American context, dead white males. And the multiculturalists are in command—sort of—of a couple of truths: Western culture has excluded many things; art in the traditional sense is anti-egalitarian, in that it demands that people judge a given work to be not only subjectively but objectively superior to another. It is the innately hierarchical nature of art, or even, as they used to say, art appreciation, that sets the multiculturalists' teeth on edge. . . .

The mistake the multiculturalists make is in imagining that their efforts are in some crucial way bound to undermine the fundamental interests of capitalism. The contrary is surely closer to the truth: the multiculturalist mode is what any smart businessman would prefer. For if all art is deemed as good as all other art, and, for that matter, if the point of art is not greatness but the production of works of art that reflect the culture and

aspirations of various ethnic, sexual, or racial subgroups within a society, then one is in a position to increase supply almost at will in order to meet increases in demand.

Instead of being a rare and costly thing, culture becomes simultaneously a product, like a car—something that can be made new every few years—and an abundant resource, like, well, people. The result is that the consumption of culture can increasingly come to resemble the consumption of goods. . . .

Are the multiculturalists truly unaware of how closely their treasured catchphrases—"cultural diversity," "difference," the need to "do away with boundaries"—resemble the stock phrases of the modern corporation: "product diversification," "the global marketplace," and "the boundary-less company"? . . .

The market economy, now global in scale, is by its nature corrosive of all established hierarchies and certainties, up to and including—in a world now more than 50 percent non-white and in which the most promising markets are in Asia—white racism and male domination. If any group has embraced the rallying cry "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western culture's got to go," it is the world business elite.

The Black Family In 1910

"Racial Differences in Household and Family Structure at the Turn of the Century" by S. Philip Morgan, Antonio McDaniel, Andrew T. Miller, and Samuel H. Preston, in *American Journal of Sociology* (Jan. 1993), 5835 S. Kimbark, Chicago, Ill. 60637.

More than half of all black children today live in female-headed families, while nearly four in five white children live in two-parent families. In recent years, many conservatives and some liberals have concluded, as Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D.-N.Y.) presciently put it in his then-controversial 1965 report, *The Negro Family*, that "the weakness of the family structure" was "at the center of the tangle of pathology" in the black community. But some influential specialists have argued otherwise. University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson, in his much-noted 1987 book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, depicted the rise of the mother-only black family as a result of joblessness among black males and other developments since World War II. Historical research, Wilson claimed, "demonstrates that neither slavery, nor economic deprivation, nor the migration to urban areas affected black family structure by the first quarter of the 20th century."

But Morgan and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania report that data recently made available from the 1910 U.S. census show that a clear black-white difference in family structure did exist. Whereas an estimated 22 percent of black mothers living with children did not have husbands present in 1910, only seven percent of white mothers were without husbands. In addition, some 15 percent of black children under age 14 were not living with their mothers, compared with less than seven percent of white children. (Presumably, the mothers were unmarried or widowed, and the children were living with relatives or friends.)

Most African Americans in 1910 lived in the rural South. In the 13 cities with the largest numbers of blacks, the proportion of female-headed families was larger: 35 percent of black mothers lived without husbands, com-

pared with 11 percent of white mothers.

"The cultural, social, and economic history of African Americans is radically different from that of white Americans," the authors conclude. "It should not be surprising that their family structures have persistently reflected some measure of those differences throughout the 20th century."

The Date Rape Debate

"Date Rape's Other Victims" by Katie Roiphe, in *The New York Times Magazine* (June 13, 1993), 229 W. 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

The national campaign against "date rape" has had its share of conservative and centrist critics, who warn that the definition of this new crime often includes many instances of what used to be called seduction. Roiphe makes a similar complaint—but on feminist grounds.

"By viewing rape as encompassing more than the use or threat of physical violence to coerce someone into sex," the Princeton graduate student writes, "rape-crisis feminists reinforce traditional views about the fragility of the female body and will."

Campus feminists who crusade against "date rape" and "sexual harassment," Roiphe says, "produce endless images of women as victims—women offended by a professor's dirty joke, women pressured into sex by peers, women trying to say no but not managing to get it across." In short, it seems, women are delicate creatures—just as the 1950s ideal of woman held them to be, Roiphe says. It was that ideal of the passive and innocent female that her mother (Anne Roiphe, author of the 1971 novel *Up the Sandbox*) and other feminist women of her generation fought against.

"There would never be a rule or a law or even a pamphlet or peer counseling group for men who claimed to have been emotionally raped or verbally pressured into sex," Roiphe points out. "And for the same reasons—assumption of basic competence, free will, and strength of character—there should be no such rules or groups or pamphlets about women."

The Forgotten Medium

A Survey of Recent Articles

During its heyday in the 1930s and '40s, radio was a *national* entertainment medium. Local stations belonged to networks—the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System—that offered comedy programs, action dramas, soap operas, and variety shows, and America listened, notes Boston College professor Marilyn J. Matelski in a special issue of *Freedom Forum's Media Studies Journal* (Summer 1993) devoted to the “forgotten” medium. But with the arrival of television, radio's character changed. Switching their attention to the new medium, networks stopped providing radio stations with entertainment fare aimed at a general audience. The stations turned to prerecorded music and “disc jockeys,” and soon began to specialize in different formats to appeal to selected target audiences, such as rock 'n' roll for teenagers. Radio became a *local* medium—and so it has largely remained. In recent years, however, there has been an increase in radio with national appeal, observes Sean Ross, associate editor of *M Street Journal*, a radio-industry newsletter.

Conservative talkmeister Rush Limbaugh, the self-described “Doctor of Democracy,” now is heard on almost 600 radio stations and reaches nearly 16 million people each week. Garrison Keillor, the creator of “A Prairie Home Companion,” is also a national star, thanks to public radio. (Of the nation's 11,338 radio stations, 1,592 are noncommercial.) Networks that distribute programming by means of Earth-orbiting satellites now cover about 20 percent of America's stations and are proliferating, Ross says. Once digital audio broadcasting (DAB) wins Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approval and becomes a reality, “the end of commercial radio as we know it” may be at hand, Ross says. DAB will carry compact-disc-quality audio but on only a limited number of channels. The commission already has five applications for DAB satellite systems.

This will not be the first upheaval in radio-land. AM radio, with slightly more than half (4,961 in 1992) of the nation's 9,746 commercial

stations, had most of the listening audience just 20 years ago; now, however, AM may be on the verge of extinction, according to Michael C. Keith of the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago. “Beginning in the late 1960s, AM's listenership declined as FM fine-tuned its sound. AM signals have wider geographic reach, but FM stereo sound is better. In 1977, AM still had over half of the radio audience, but listeners ‘voted with their ears,’ as one media historian put it, and migrated to FM.” In many markets today, AM claims barely 15 percent of the audience.

The rise of talk radio has been a kind of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation for some AM stations. All but five of the 591 stations on which Limbaugh's mighty voice is heard are on the AM band. Yet many of these are in financial trouble, reports Skidmore College English professor Tom Lewis; several have filed for bankruptcy.

“Unlike newspapers or television, radio is a fiercely competitive business with little financial margin for error,” Richard J. MacDonald, a media analyst for a New York investment firm, points out. From 1982 to '86, trading in radio stations was intense: More than half of all commercial radio stations changed hands. But many buyers lost out. The value of stations crashed after 1987, with the average station price nationwide plummeting from \$4.3 million in 1988 to \$1.3 million in 1992. Advertising spending dried up and banks stopped lending to potential buyers of radio stations. By mid-1992, more than half of all stations were losing money.

Two actions by the federal government have eased the radio crisis. Lighter bank regulation has saved some station owners from bankruptcy. And in 1992 the FCC lifted a rule imposed during the 1930s that prevented an individual operator from owning more than one station in the same market. These two actions, MacDonald says, “already are driving the radio industry to consolidation. Inevitably, market forces will ensure that radio groups will become larger and more corporate. In the end the

stand-alone station in a small market with a singular personality, a unique voice, a quirky and

even risky format will be absorbed, forgotten, or left to public funding."

Up in Flames

"It Didn't Start with *Dateline NBC*" by Walter Olson, in *National Review* (June 21, 1993), 150 E. 35th St., New York, N.Y. 10016.

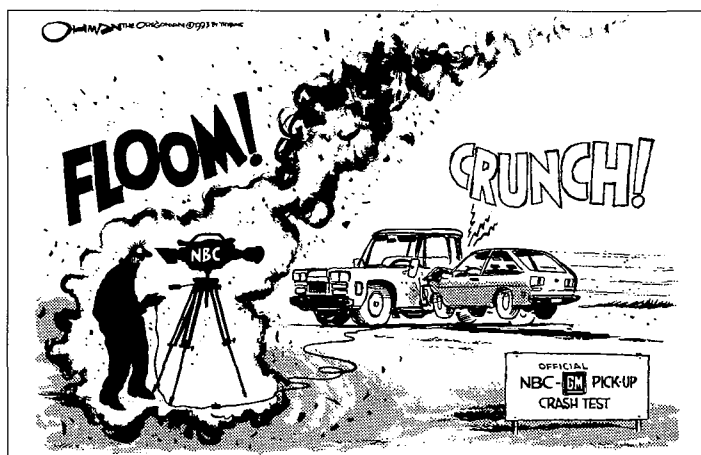
When NBC News admitted earlier this year that the dramatic crash test shown on a "Dateline NBC" broadcast last November had been rigged, the fiasco was widely portrayed as, in the words of the *Los Angeles Times*, "an unprecedented disaster in the annals of network news." The use of hidden toy-rocket engines to ensure that the GM truck burst into flames was "not something anybody at '60 Minutes' would do," declared Don Hewitt, executive producer of the long-running CBS news show. Olson, a Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, maintains that in fact the same sort of thing *has* happened on "60 Minutes" and other network news shows.

Fourteen years before the "Dateline NBC" broadcast, viewers of ABC's "20/20" saw a crash fire and explosion—and were not told it was started with an incendiary device. It was June 1978 and the outcry about the Ford Pinto was at its height. "20/20" reported "startling" evidence that many full-size Ford models could also explode when hit from behind. Film was aired from "secret" tests done at UCLA in 1967 by researchers working under contract to the automaker, and it showed "a Ford sedan being rear-ended at 55 m.p.h. and bursting into a fireball." Viewers were not told that in a published report 10 years earlier the testers explained that they had wanted to study the effect of a crash fire on a car's passenger compartment and, since crash fires happened very rarely, they had used an incendiary device to produce one.

"Perhaps the best-known

and best-refuted auto-safety scare of recent years," Olson says, was a "60 Minutes" attack in 1986 on the Audi 6000. "The Audi, it seemed, was a car possessed by demons. It would back into garages, dart into swimming pools, plow into bank-teller lines, everything but fly on broomsticks, all while its hapless drivers were standing on the brake—or at least so they said." The Audi's accelerator and brake pedals were closer together and farther to the left than those in many American cars, but "60 Minutes" investigators did not think that drivers were simply hitting the wrong pedal. Film was shown of an Audi mysteriously accelerating while reporter Ed Bradley told viewers to "watch the pedal go down by itself." The demonstration had been prepared by a man who testified as an expert witness against the carmaker and who was quoted by "60 Minutes" as saying that "unusually high transmission pressure" could build up and cause problems. Bradley did not tell viewers, however, that the expert "had drilled a hole in the . . . car's transmission and attached a hose leading to a tank of compressed air or fluid."

That was not the only time "60 Minutes" stooped to conquer, according to Olson:



NBC News was ridiculed when it was revealed that a "Dateline NBC" crash was rigged. But NBC was the last network to get into "dubious safety journalism in a big way," Olson says, and the only one to apologize.

• In March 1981, "60 Minutes" "reveal[ed] how the most common type of tire rim used on heavy trucks can fly off, killing or maiming tire mechanics and other bystanders." Film showed an exploding rim shredding two dummies, but viewers were not told that the rims' locking mechanism had been shaved off for the test.

• In December 1980, "60 Minutes" disclosed that Chrysler/AMC's small "CJ" Jeep was apt to roll over, "even in routine road circumstances at relatively low speeds." Footage of tests was shown which appeared to support the conten-

tion. Viewers were not told, Olson says, that testers had to put the Jeeps through 435 trials to get eight rollovers. (Chrysler says the repeated skids wore down the tire tread and contributed to the rollover.) Nor were viewers told that the testers had hung weights in the vehicles' corners, inside the body and out of camera view. An investigative engineer at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration later concluded that the tests were of "questionable" validity. The same, it seems, might be said of some TV "news" shows.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Robbing Bakhtin's Grave

"Prosaic Bakhtin: Landmarks, Anti-Intelligentsialism, and the Russian Counter-Tradition" by Gary Saul Morson, in *Common Knowledge* (Spring 1993), School of Arts and Humanities, Univ. of Texas at Dallas, Box 830688-JO 31, Richardson, Texas 75083-0688; "Bakhtin and the Present Moment" by Gary Saul Morson, in *The American Scholar* (Spring 1991), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), perhaps the leading Russian literary and cultural critic of this century, has suffered a strange fate in America, according to Northwestern University's Morson, co-author of *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (1990). He was hostile to structuralism, Marxism, and some forms of relativism—yet American proponents of these doctrines have claimed the great thinker as one of their own.

Bakhtin, who apparently "spent the better part of his life hiding from the [Communist] Party to escape arrest," wrote a great deal but published very little. Although *Dostoevsky's Creative Art* came out during the 1920s and was a success, Morson says, it was not until a collection of Bakhtin's work "for the drawer" appeared in 1975 that "his range and greatness" was revealed. Various tribes of American academics then began "an intense and unseemly competition" to "package" this new find.

"Despite his unremitting attacks on formalism and structuralism, followers of Roman

Jakobson—who had been active in both groups—initially claimed Bakhtin for both." Then, as structuralism began to fall out of fashion, Morson says, "a new poststructuralist, postmodern, deconstructionist Bakhtin was born. Thus, a thinker who spent his life trying to understand personal ethical obligation was presented as an antinomian or nihilist."

In two essays that Bakhtin wrote about Tolstoy, Morson acknowledges, he did "ape Marxist rhetoric"—but "so unsuccessfully that it is uncertain whether they are merely his worst work or an attempt at parody and oblique political critique." Marxism is conspicuously absent from his early essays on ethics and aesthetics, Morson says, yet Michael Holquist, the editor of most American translations of Bakhtin, "labors [in an introduction to those essays] to render the great thinker acceptable" by giving him Marxist credentials.

Most of Bakhtin's intellectual career, Morson writes, "was devoted to developing the contrast of theory and daily life, of abstractions and particulars, of philosophical systems and what he called 'prosaic intelligence.'" Wary of the narrowness and sense of superiority that often afflict the intelligentsia, Bakhtin belonged instead to a Russian countertradition that included Anton Chekhov. In the eyes of Bakhtin and the countertradition, Morson says, "systems [of thought] at best mislead and at worst justify cruelty in the name of a higher ideal."

Homosexuality And the Jews

"Homosexuality, the Bible, and Us—A Jewish Perspective" by Dennis Prager, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 1993), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

"Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is an abomination" declares the Bible (Leviticus 18.22). The language is so clear and direct, in the view of Prager, the author and publisher of his own quarterly journal, *Ultimate Issues*, that one need only be a serious Jew or Christian to be influenced by it. Nevertheless, he says, in the larger scheme of things, biblical sexual values are more "deviant" than homosexuality.

Homosexuality was, in a sense, an invention of Judaism and the Bible, Prager writes. "Before the Bible, the world divided sexuality between penetrator (active partner) and penetrated (passive partner)," and the partner's gender was not considered morally significant. Homosexuality was an accepted practice in Egypt, Greece, Rome, and throughout the ancient world. "When Judaism first demanded that all sexual activity be channeled into marriage, it changed the world," Prager writes.

The sexual revolution that Judaism initiated and Christianity later carried forward, Prager argues, forced "the sexual genie into the marital

bottle. It ensured that sex no longer dominated society, it heightened male-female love and sexuality (and thereby almost alone created the possibility of love and eroticism within marriage), and it began the arduous task of elevating the status of women." The sublimation of the sex drive made it possible for Western civilization to advance beyond the level set by ancient Greece and Rome.

Marital sex remains the Jewish sexual ideal, Prager says. "There is . . . a continuum of wrong which goes from premarital sex, to adultery, and on to homosexuality, incest, and bestiality." Opening the Jewish door to homosexuality, he says, would mean opening the door to all other forms of sexual expression: "Once non-marital sex is validated, how can we draw any line?"

The Judeo-Christian development of Western civilization required deferral of gratification and a rechanneling of natural instincts. The family has served as the basic unit. "But the family is not a natural unit so much as it is a *value* that must be cultivated and protected. The Greeks assaulted the family in the name of beauty and Eros. The Marxists assaulted the family in the name of progress. And, today, gay liberation assaults it in the name of compassion and equality." Well-meaning Jews and Christians who have joined in this assault, Prager believes, do not realize what is at stake.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Hubble's Universe

"Edwin Hubble and the Expanding Universe" by Donald E. Osterbrock, Joel A. Gwinn, and Ronald S. Brashear, in *Scientific American* (July 1993), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017-1111.

For centuries, astronomers used the term *nebulae* to designate faint, cloudy objects in the heavens that seemed not to change in position or appearance. In 1755, Immanuel Kant suggested that some nebulae might be "island universes"—self-contained systems of stars like our own Milky Way. Nearly two centuries later, an American named Edwin Hubble proved the philosopher correct.

During the 1920s and '30s, the Missouri-born Hubble (1889-1953) "changed the scientific understanding of the universe more profoundly than had any astronomer since Galileo," write Osterbrock, of the Lick Observatory at Mount Hamilton, California, and his two colleagues. Hubble not only proved that the Milky Way is just one of millions of "island universes" (or galaxies), but also played a crucial role in establishing "the startling view that the entire universe is expanding."

Improved telescopic observations during the 19th century showed that while many nebulae were only clouds of luminous gas, there were

other, spiral-shaped nebulae that seemed different. By the beginning of the 20th century, astronomers were divided over whether these were distant galaxies. In 1924, when Hubble turned his attention to what is now the famous Andromeda galaxy, he himself "had not yet fully accepted the notion that these objects are galaxies outside our own." But using the giant 100-inch telescope at Mount Wilson Observatory in Pasadena, California, Hubble was able to bring into distinct resolution six stars in the Andromeda nebula. The brightest one was about 60,000 times fainter than the dimmest stars visible to the naked eye, Osterbrock and his associates note,

but Hubble "managed to make 83 measurements of its brightness, an impressive feat at the time." From these data, he determined that the star's brightness rose and fell in a way characteristic of a class of stars called Cepheid variables. He then was able to deduce that the star and its surrounding galaxy were about 930,000 light-years away—far beyond the known bounds of the Milky Way.

Hubble's experience measuring cosmic distances helped him perform more trailblazing research. A 1929 paper he wrote "sent shock waves through the astronomical community." Measuring galaxies' distance from Earth and the

In the End Was the Word

Move over, virtual reality. Paul Saffo, a Research Fellow at the Institute for the Future in Menlo Park, California, announces in *Wired* (May-June 1993) the arrival of a hot new medium.

[The] written word . . . is flourishing like kudzu vines at the boundaries of the digital revolution. The explosion of e-mail traffic on the Internet represents the largest boom in letter writing since the 18th century. Today's cutting-edge infonauts are flooding cyberspace with gigabyte upon gigabyte of ASCII musings. . . .

In fact, our electronic novelties are transforming the word as profoundly as the printing press did half a millennium ago. For starters, we are smashing arbitrary print-centric boundaries among author, editor, and audience. These categories did not exist before the invention of moveable type, and they will not survive this decade. Just as monk scribes at once wrote, edited, and read, information surfers browsing online services today routinely play all three roles: selectively scanning, absorbing, editing, and creating on-the-fly in real time. The printing press gave life and reach to the word, but at the terrible cost of making text formal and immutable. . . . Electronic text has become a new medium that combines print's fixity with a manuscript-like mutability. Flick a key and volumes of text disappear in virtual smoke; flick another and they are replicated over the Net in a

flash. Severed from unreliable paper, text has become all but inextinguishable. E-mail passed between Oliver North and his Iran-Contra conspirators, survived numerous attempts at expungement, and now resides in the National Security Archives for all to inspect, even as historians naively lament that the switch to electronic media is depriving them of important research fodder. They needn't worry; paper may be on the skids, but text is eternal.

Immortality may be the least of the surprises that this new medium of electronic text will deliver. Video enthusiasts are quick to argue that images are intrinsically more compelling than words, but they ignore a quality unique to text. While video is received by the eyes, text resonates in the mind. Text invites our minds to complete the word-based images it serves up, while video excludes such mental extensions. . . .

Video suffers from a deeper problem, one of ever diminishing reliability in the face of ever more capable morphing [image-altering] technologies. . . . The age of camcorder innocence will evaporate as teenage morphers routinely manipulate the most prosaic of images into vivid, convincing fictions. We will no longer trust our eyes when observing video-mediated reality. Text will emerge as a primary indicator of trustworthiness, and images will transit the Net as multimedia surrounded by a bodyguard of words.

velocities at which they were moving away, he found that the velocities at which the galaxies receded were proportional to their distances. The Hubble law implies, the authors note, "that the universe is expanding: velocities seem to increase as one looks progressively farther outward from any point within the universe." The tall and handsome astronomer with a movie star's "compelling personality" had shown that the cosmos could no longer be regarded as static, and he pointed the way toward the "big bang theory" of the origins of the universe.

Aristotle's Paternity Claim

"Seeing Biology Through Aristotle's Eyes" by Robin Dunbar, in *New Scientist* (Feb. 20, 1993), Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS.

The intellect and greatness of Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) spanned many fields; but he seldom is regarded as the father of modern science. That honor usually goes to Francis Bacon (1561–1626), who denounced Aristotle's metaphysics and influence. Yet the credit for establishing genuine empirical science should go to Aristotle, contends Dunbar, a biological anthropologist at University College, London. In the philosopher's long-neglected work in biology, Dunbar says, he departed from the abstract cogitation favored by the ancient Greeks and pioneered the careful observation and deduction of causal explanations that became the foundation of empirical science.

"Aristotle's biology has stood the test of time in a way that his physics (which very conspicuously lacked an empirical dimension) has not," Dunbar observes. Aristotle's major biological works—*The Parts of Animals*, *The Natural History of Animals*, and *The Reproduction of Animals*—"read almost like modern textbooks." Some of his findings were not improved upon until recent decades.

"Time after time, Aristotle gets it right," Dunbar says. "He recognized the distinction between homologous and analogous parts—that some features of unrelated animal species are similar because they derive from the same common ancestor (like feathers and scales), whereas others represent convergent evolution from unrelated ancestors (like the wings

of birds and insects)." From his detailed studies of anatomy, Aristotle grasped that dolphins are mammals, not fishes, something that even the great Swiss naturalist Charles Bonnet, at the end of the 18th century, did not understand. Aristotle discovered that some sharks gave birth to live young—which was not apparent to later scientists until the 1650s. He was the first to realize that the seed of a plant is equivalent to the embryo in animals, and that the mammalian fetus is fed directly through the umbilicus.

Aristotle had no theory of evolution; he thought that species were more or less fixed for all time. But he did understand adaptation. "Nature," he observed, "makes the organs to suit the work they have to do, not the work to suit the organ."

As a purely descriptive anatomist, Dunbar writes, Aristotle was first-rate. He correctly described the Eustachian tube that connects the middle ear with the throat; the next scientist to do so was the Italian Bartolomeo Eustachio in 1550, and he got the credit.

Even Aristotle made mistakes, of course. He contended, for example, that fleas and bugs are created out of mud. But in case after case, Aristotle did caution his readers: "The facts have not yet been sufficiently ascertained. If at any time in the future they are ascertained, then credence must be given to the direct evidence of the senses rather than to theories." Spoken like a true father of science.

Ferris At The Wheel

"The Ferris Wheel on The Occasion of Its Centennial" by Henry Petroski, in *American Scientist* (May–June 1993), Sigma Xi, P.O. Box 13975, Research Triangle Park, N.C. 27709.

A century ago, when the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago celebrated the quadricentennial of Columbus's landing in America, the exposition's organizers faced a challenge: how to outdo the Eiffel Tower, the centerpiece of the French Exposition Universelle of 1889. "American pride was at stake," as one observer commented.

The episode, writes Petroski, a professor of engineering at Duke University, is a vivid reminder that engineering achievements are often driven by the needs of the day, not simply by the implacable advance of technical knowledge. The man who took up the challenge to American pride was George Washington Gale Ferris, a Pittsburgh engineer. Inspiration, he later said, struck him at a dinner in a Chicago chophouse: "I would build a wheel, a monster."

Ferris's wheel was not entirely original. An English traveler wrote of seeing a "pleasure wheel" in 17th-century Bulgaria, and there were pleasure wheels some 50 feet in diameter in 19th-century America. The 250-foot diameter of the Ferris wheel, however, *was* new. At the fairgrounds, eight 20-foot-square holes, each 35 feet deep, had to be dug and filled with concrete to support the legs of the wheel. The wheel's components were shipped from Detroit in 150 railroad cars. The 45-foot axle—the longest steel shaft ever forged—weighed 45 tons. The wheel had 36 cars, each the size of a trolley car and each capable of seating 40 passengers. The Ferris wheel was a great success. Excited fairgoers were undaunted even by the extravagant price: 50 cents for a 20-minute, two-revolution ride. (A carousel ride cost only a nickel.)

The original Ferris wheel's moment of glory was brief. After the exposition, it was moved to a small Chicago amusement park, but the park did not attract enough visitors to keep the wheel turning. The Ferris wheel was re-erected for the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, then abandoned.



Published in 1893 while the Ferris Wheel was still under construction for the world's fair, this sketch provided an advance look at the technological marvel.

The "rusting eyesore" was dynamited in 1906. Ferris himself had died of typhoid fever 10 years earlier. But today Ferris wheels "remain a staple of midways," and Ferris's engineering achievement has given birth to a whole new breed of carnival wonders, including the Wonder Wheel, the Zipper, and the Sky Whirl.

ARTS & LETTERS

Boswell's Botched Life

"The World's Worst Biography" by Donald Greene, in *The American Scholar* (Summer 1993), 1811 Q Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Two centuries have passed since the publication of James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), and scholars of 18th-century literature, as well

as many other educated people, continue to look upon the work with reverence. Many consider it the finest biography ever written. Greene, a Johnson scholar, emphatically does not.

Boswell (1740–95), he complains, devoted only one-sixth of his *Life* to Johnson's first 54 years, the period of his greatest intellectual activity. Boswell instead preoccupied himself with the final 22 years of the renowned poet, critic,

essayist, and lexicographer—the period after Boswell crossed his path. Even during those years before Johnson's death in 1784, Boswell was hardly the Johnson intimate he is often taken to have been. During eight of the 22 years, the two men did not see each other at all, and the rest of the time they got together an average of only 16 days per year.

How could Boswell "compose primarily from personal recollection the biography of a man whom, for months or years at a time, he never saw or heard from"? His solution was to fill the gaps with "anecdotes of no particular date, picked up from anywhere. . . . Boswell seemed to feel that one of his chief duties was to assemble as many of Johnson's 'smart sayings'

In Defense of the Essay

Novelist Cynthia Ozick laments in *Partisan Review* (No. 2, 1993) that that "shabby" thing, the journalistic article, has all but displaced the literary essay.

Defined, definite, specific—how, what, when, where: the journalist's catalogue and catechism. Naming generates categories and headings, and categories and headings offer shortcuts—like looking something up in the encyclopedia, where knowledge, abbreviated, has already been codified and collected. [Henry] James's way, longer and slower, is for knowledge to be detected, inferred, individually, laboriously, scrupulously, mazily [sic]—knowledge that might not be found in any encyclopedia.

"I had rather be a journalist, that is the essence of it"—hark, the cry of the common culture. Inference and detection (accretion heading toward revelation) be damned. What this has meant, for literature, is the eclipse of the essay in favor of the "article"—that shabby, team-driven, ugly, truncated, undeveloped, speedy, breezy, cheap, impatient thing. . . .

Now and then you will hear a writer (even one who does not define herself as a journalist) speak of her task as "communication," as if the meticulous making of a sentence, or the feverish uncovering of an idea, or the sting of a visionary jolt delivered by what used to be called the Muse, were no more artful than a 10-minute telephone conversation. Literature may "communicate" (a redundancy, even a tautology), but its enduring force, well past the routine of facile sending and receiving, is in the consummation, as James tells us, of

life, interest, importance. Leviathan rises to kick away the pebble of journalism.

Yet the pebble, it seems, is mightier than Leviathan. The 10-minute article is here, and it has, by and large, displaced the essay. The essay is gradual and patient. The article is quick, restless, and brief. The essay reflects on its predecessors, and spirals organically out of a context, like a green twig from a living branch. The article rushes on, amnesiac, despising the meditative, reveling in gossip and polemics, a courtier of the moment. Essays, like articles, can distort and lie, but because essays are under the eye of history, it is a little harder to swindle the reader. Articles swindle almost by nature, because superficiality is a swindle. Pessimists suppose that none of this is any longer reversible. That the literary essay survives in this or that academic periodical, or in a handful of tiny quarterlies, is scarcely to the point. It has left the common culture. . . .

Poetry and the novel will continue to go their own way, and we can be reasonably confident that they will take care of themselves. But the literary essay needs and merits defense: defense and more—celebrants, revivification through performance. One way or another, the literary essay is connected to the self-conscious progression of a culture, whereas the essay's flashy successor—the article, or "piece"—is in every instance a pusher of Now, a shaker-off of whatever requires study or patience, or what used to be called, without prejudice, ambition. The essayist's ambition is no more and no less than that awareness of indebtedness . . . indebtedness to history, scholarship, literature, the acutest nuances of language.

as he could lay his hands on, with little concern, by modern biographical standards, for verifying their authenticity." Often, Boswell sought to "improve" Johnson's remarks. One of Johnson's best-known "sayings," as reported by Boswell in the *Life*, is, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life, for there is everything in London that life can afford." But according to Boswell's own journal, all that Johnson actually said was, "You find no man wishes to leave it."

Boswell did not trouble himself to indicate the sources of many of his assertions. "Were I to detail the books which I have consulted and the inquiries which I have found it necessary to make by various channels," Boswell proclaimed, "I should probably be thought ridiculously ostentatious. Let me only observe, as a specimen of my troubles, that I have sometimes been obliged to run over half London, in order to fix a date correctly." Such proclamations have persuaded many readers of what Virginia Woolf called Boswell's "obstinate veracity." But skepticism is warranted, Greene maintains. Boswell, for example, did not bother to "run over" to Oxford University to check the enrollment records, and so he wrote that Johnson left Pembroke College in 1731, when he actually left in 1729.

Boswell, in short, was no Boswell. His *Life* may not be the world's worst biography—it is certainly beautifully written—Greene concludes, but it is "[the] worst among major biographies still used as serious guides to their subjects' lives and works."

Two Unnaturalists

"Farrell's Ethnic Neighborhood and Wright's Urban Ghetto: Two Visions of Chicago's South Side" by Robert Butler, in *Melus* (Spring 1993), 272 Bartlett Hall, Dept. of English, Univ. of Mass. at Amherst, Amherst, Mass. 01003.

Critics have often pigeonholed novelists James T. Farrell (1904–79) and Richard Wright (1908–60) as "naturalistic" writers, who employ documentary techniques in the service of grimly deterministic visions. Examining their best-known works—Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* trilogy (1932–34–35), and Wright's *Native Son* (1940), both set in Chicago—Butler, a professor of English at

Canisius College, Buffalo, New York, concludes that the label does not fit.

In *Native Son*, Butler points out, Chicago appears as "a gothic mindscape reflecting the fear and horror that dominate [the] life" of Wright's black protagonist, Bigger Thomas. Because Wright wanted to filter "external experience through Bigger's radically alienated consciousness," he substituted grotesque imagery for naturalistic description of the city's streets, houses, stores, schools, and other landmarks. On his way to draft a ransom note, Bigger perceives street lamps as "hazy balls of light frozen into motionlessness"; after a brutal murder, deserted buildings look like "empty skulls," their windows "gap[ing] blackly like . . . eye sockets." Wright's Chicago, Butler writes, "is a place defined by absences, dark nights, empty streets and abandoned buildings that become a powerful symbol of 'a world whose metaphysical meanings had vanished.'"

The South Side of Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, which is about an Irish-American youth's tragically wasted life, is very different, "an ethnic neighborhood presented in a complexly ambivalent way," Butler notes. "While it can indeed be a dead end to those who succumb to what Farrell . . . called 'spiritual poverty,' it can also be the setting for human liberation." Farrell uses standard realistic techniques that present the city, in all of its harshness, in concrete detail, and also uses poetic techniques that "lyrically suggest the surprisingly rich human possibilities contained in such a world." At the end of *Young Lonigan*, the first novel in the trilogy, Studs Lonigan looks out his bedroom window, "watching the night strangeness, listening. The darkness was over everything like a warm bed-cover, and all the little sounds of night seemed to him as if they belonged to some great mystery." The better angels of Studs's nature still find encouragement in the city. "Thus," Butler writes, "the street corners, pool rooms, and bars that threaten to trap Studs Lonigan are consistently contrasted with the parks that allow him to relax, free his mind, and envision a better life for himself."

As Studs's prospects narrow, Butler observes, Farrell's "realistic descriptions of the city become more prevalent to dramatize Studs's plight." Yet lyrical images persist "to suggest

that Studs is not a simple victim of a hostile environment." Farrell's Chicago, Butler says, "drew more from Sherwood Anderson's lyrical stories than it did from [Theodore] Dreiser's naturalistic novels."

Unraveling Shylock

"Who Is Shylock?" by Robert Alter, in *Commentary* (July 1993), American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

The Merchant of Venice may not be Shakespeare's best comedy, but historically it has been his most popular. Not only has it been produced thousands of times on both sides of the Atlantic, it was the first of Shakespeare's plays to be performed in Armenian, the first entirely in Chinese, and the first by a Japanese Kabuki troupe. Why all this should be is a bit of a puzzle. There are livelier (*The Taming of the Shrew*), funnier (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), and lyrically richer (*Twelfth Night*) plays, yet *Merchant* seems to have a special appeal. Its source, suggests Alter, a Berkeley professor of comparative literature, lies in the play's most famous—or infamous—character, Shylock.

Although Shylock is neither the merchant of the title nor the romantic lead, he is usually regarded as the play's central character. There are really two Shylocks, says Alter, who draws extensively from John Gross's recently published *Shylock: A Legend and Its Legacy*. The first, dominant in productions until the 19th century, feeds on the worst anti-Semitic fantasies: the greedy, cold-hearted, and unmerciful Jew—"the very devil incarnation," as his servant Launcelot Gobbo says. In

the early 19th century, however, a sympathetic Shylock emerged. Victorian actor Henry Irving called Shylock "the type of a persecuted race; almost the only gentleman in the play, and the most ill-used." Since the 1920s, however, both Shylocks have been presented on stage. But while Shylock's position in the plot relies on one of these two readings, Alter suggests, the ultimate power of the play has always resided in the "explosively unstable" character of Shylock, in the interplay between his two roles. There is "something about the transgression of boundaries," he writes, "that gives the play its peculiar fascination."

Shakespeare the 16th-century Englishman may have cast Shylock as a stereotypical Jew of his day—"the archetypal alien in the mind of Christian Europe"—but Shakespeare the dramatist could not help giving Shylock a considerable degree of humanity. As the audience tries to define itself against the Jew, then, it meets with an undeniably sympathetic figure—a man betrayed by a heartless daughter and persecuted by a merciless society. The most famous testament to this perspective is, of course, the "Hath not a Jew eyes" soliloquy.

Yet Shylock's negative characteristics are inescapable, and if an audience connects with his human anguish, it may just as well connect with his human cruelty; "Hath not a Jew eyes," after all, ends with a promise of revenge. Christian audiences, Alter says, are invited to "a kind of out-of-self experience. If the looming, sinister other embodies all the hateful qualities that Christian culture would like to think are alien to it, there are also brief but powerful intimations . . . that the self may harbor the fearsome attributes it habitually projects on the other."



Shakespeare's Shylock, here depicted in 1785, prepares to extract his "pound of flesh."

The End of the European Dream?

A Survey of Recent Articles

When the leaders of the 12 member nations of the European Community (EC) signed the Treaty on Monetary and Political Union in the Dutch city of Maastricht in December 1991, the effort at European integration that Jean Monnet launched in the 1940s seemed close to fruition. Although the Persian Gulf War demonstrated Europe's continued dependence on U.S. leadership, and the unfolding tragedy in the former Yugoslavia showed Europe's inability to stop a civil war in its own backyard, the EC appeared then to be moving rapidly toward monetary and eventual political union. Customs and other barriers were to be removed by January 1, 1993, and a common monetary policy, a single European currency, and an independent central bank were to be established by the end of the decade. Today, however, it is clear that that schedule will not be kept. Europe's borders are now largely open, but the rest of the ambitious project is shrouded in doubt.

Monnet's heirs reached the depths of despair in early August when EC finance ministers took a giant step *away* from monetary union. Seeking to stop frenzied selling of the French franc after the Bundesbank, Germany's central bank, refused to lower its interest rates, the ministers agreed to loosen the restrictions of the exchange-rate mechanism and let most currencies fluctuate widely against one another. The official communiqué insisted that the measure would be of only "limited duration" and would not nullify plans to achieve a common European currency. But there was no denying that long-submerged political and economic barriers to unity had reappeared. The currency crisis, the *Economist* (Aug. 7, 1993) comments, "marked the death of Europe's federal illusions . . . that the [exchange-rate mechanism] could evolve smoothly into a monetary union and that the Franco-German alliance could spearhead a full political union for the European Community."

The leaders of the EC nations are looking inward now, not outward. Among the main EC economies, only Britain's is growing. By the end

of this year, unemployment is expected to rise to 11 percent of the EC work force. The difficulties are not everywhere the same. Indeed, divergent economic needs are responsible for most of the problems. Germany, bearing the high cost of unification and fearful of repeating the inflationary experience of the 1920s, is reluctant to reduce interest rates. Elsewhere in Europe, however, recession is the number one problem.

But economic woes are not the only source of the new Europessimism. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and of the communist threat it symbolized has fundamentally changed the setting in which the European Community was born and nurtured. Europe is no longer united by a common enemy. Suddenly, after 35 years, the *Economist* (July 3, 1993) observes in one of its trademark surveys, what was a cozy West European club "finds itself with one uncozily enlarged member (united Germany) and all of Eastern Europe clamoring to get in." The logic of European integration has been drastically revised.

Jean Monnet and the other European founding fathers, with the support of the United States, made heroic efforts to create a united Europe, Godfrey Hodgson, a British journalist, observes in *World Policy Journal* (Summer 1993). "They did not, however, carry the European peoples along with them. . . . The European institutions and the European project have remained remote, inaccessible, a little elitist, more than a little suspect. The collapse of communism has made them seem a little less necessary."

The Maastricht treaty has weathered severe storms already. In a referendum last May, the Danes gave it their qualified blessing after earlier rejecting it, and the British House of Commons followed suit, 292-112, albeit with 246 abstentions. All the member nations except Germany (where the Reichstag's approval faces a court challenge) have ratified the treaty. But there is much less to these upbeat developments than meets the casual eye, Martin Feldstein, an economist at Harvard University, points out in the *National Interest* (Summer 1993).

The treaty is now saddled with explicit and implicit escape clauses: Britain may opt out of the single currency, Germany may preserve the cherished deutsche mark, and Denmark was granted even more significant exemptions. Even before the currency crisis of the summer, Feldstein found "widespread agreement" among informed observers and officials (speaking privately) that the prospect of monetary and political union will remain remote.

One reason for the popular opposition to Maastricht, Harvard's Stanley Hoffmann notes in the *New York Review of Books* (May 27, 1993), was that the text of the treaty was "nearly incomprehensible . . . written by and for lawyers and bureaucrats." Few Europeans really grasp how the EC works, Hoffmann points out, and there is a widespread complaint about a "democratic deficit." The Council of Ministers is the Community's chief lawmaker, while the popularly elected European Parliament has very limited powers. Regulations are drafted by the European Commission, which is not accountable to the parliament. The EC Commission's president, currently Jacques Delors of France, is chosen by the council.

Germany, with a preference for federalism, would like to see the European Parliament given much more power, the *Economist* notes. France

and Britain, however, "think true legitimacy rests with elected governments, acting through the Council of Ministers." From the beginning, Hoffmann says, the European Community has been characterized by a "deliberate ambiguity that . . . has allowed it to proceed despite the different conceptions that exist among and within its members about its goals. Is the EC destined to become a federal state, more or less on the American model, or is it to be a particularly active regional organization, governed by its members?"

In the past, Hoffmann points out, the French, who dominate the Brussels bureaucracy, looked upon the EC as "a vehicle for French influence and for imposing restraints on the power of West Germany. Today, and for good reasons, the fear of Germany dominating the Community has replaced . . . the old fear of an unshackled Germany outside the Community." All the old arguments for surrendering national sovereignty to the Community have changed.

This summer's currency crisis brought the EC back to earth but the aims of monetary and political union remain worthy ones, the *Economist* believes. "[A] politically united Europe would be a fine thing; the intellectual case for monetary union remains powerful. [But] the political will to make either of these happen does not exist; in truth, it has never yet existed. It may one day; but to think that it already did was an illusion."

Arab Nationalism: Out of Gas

"Withered Arab Nationalism" by Mahmud A. Faksh, in *Orbis* (Summer 1993), Foreign Policy Research Institute, 3615 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

Once an ideological force to be reckoned with in the Middle East, Arab nationalism has long been little more than a fig leaf used by Arab regimes to cover their particular interests. Now, as a result of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, even the fig leaf has been discarded, contends Faksh, a political scientist at the University of Southern Maine.

Born during the late 19th century in reaction to Turkish domination of the Arab world, Arab

nationalism asserts the existence of one Arab nation stretching from Morocco to the Arabian Peninsula. It had its heyday during the 1950s and '60s, when it was promoted by Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-70) and the Ba'ath party in Syria. "Arab nationalism became increasingly associated with anticolonialism and Third World nonalignment; the defeat of Israel and the restoration of Palestinian rights; the toppling of pro-Western, conservative monarchic regimes; and the establishment of revolutionary socialism," Faksh writes. "Nasser became the Arab voice, speaking to the masses over the heads of their rulers."

Egypt and Syria joined in 1958 to form the United Arab Republic (UAR). But this move to-



Mourners at the 1970 funeral of Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, symbol of Arab nationalism.

ward Arab unity, like all subsequent ones, was thwarted. Revolutionaries who overthrew the Iraqi monarchy that same year refused to participate in "the common Arab destiny." Three years later, Syrian officers staged a coup and restored their country's independence. And then the Arabs' defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war demonstrated the weakness of the pan-Arabist forces and the emptiness of nationalist rhetoric. Nasser himself died three years later. Arab nationalism became "a facade" behind which authoritarian regimes hid their particular interests.

"Hoping to bring about a revival of unified Arab will and purpose (as well as to win back the territories lost in the 1967 war)," two pragmatists, Egypt's Anwar al-Sadat and Syria's Hafiz al-Asad, launched a combined assault against Israel in 1973. Their defeat "ushered in a new age of realism in the Middle East," Faksh says. Sadat abandoned his last pan-Arab pretensions. He pursued *infitah* (economic and political liberalization) at home and realigned Egypt with the West. This led to the Egyptian-Israeli peace

treaty of 1979, which "struck at the core of one of the unifying principles of Arab nationalism: the defeat of Israel and the defense of Palestinian rights," Faksh writes.

The new wealth of conservative oil-rich Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79, and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism during the '80s further undercut Arab nationalism. The death blow came with Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, launched in the name of pan-Arabism. In the subsequent Persian Gulf War, several Arab nations joined the West to free Kuwait and humble Iraq and the putative Arab standard-bearer, Saddam Hussein.

The struggle in much of the Arab world today is between "modernists" favoring a secular state and Islamic fundamentalists. Arab nationalism today is nowhere to be seen. The modernists no longer try to hide the fact that, like leaders elsewhere, they act mainly in terms of their distinct national interests. This new realism, Faksh suggests, may ultimately lead to a "New Middle East Order."

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

"Medicaid Financing Crisis: Balancing Responsibilities, Priorities, and Dollars."

Kaiser Commission on the Future of Medicaid, AAAS Books, P.O. Box 753, Waldorf, Md. 20604. 224 pp. \$22.95

Editors: *Diane Rowland, Judith Feder, and Alina Salganicoff*

The cost of the nation's Medicaid program, which finances health-care for low-income Americans, has soared in recent years, rising from \$51.6 billion in 1988 to \$88.6 billion in 1991. Before the late 1980s, the program's cost had risen about 10 percent annually, but in 1989, it jumped 13 percent; in 1990, 19 percent; in 1991, a whopping 26 percent.

The explosion in costs is usually attributed to federal mandates to expand Medicaid coverage for pregnant women and children. However, an analysis by the Kaiser Foundation's Commission on the Future of Medicaid indicates otherwise.

Between 1988 and '91, Medicaid enrollment increased from

22.2 million to 27 million. But only half of the new beneficiaries were pregnant women or children, and the costs of covering them accounted for only about 11 percent of the total increase. The other new enrollees, such as families on welfare and the aged and disabled poor, accounted for nearly one-fourth of the total increase in Medicaid spending. The recession may have pushed an abnormally large number of these people into the program.

Two other major factors were behind the upsurge of Medicaid costs between 1988 and '91. Medical price inflation—higher prices for prescription drugs, hospital and nursing-home stays, and other items—accounted for nearly one-third of the growth.

The other factor, responsible for 28 percent of the total Medicaid spending growth, was increased average expenditures per beneficiary. This, the Kaiser analysts say, reflected a rise in home health care for the elderly and chronically ill; improved services for children; higher payments to health-care providers due to litigation; and deliberate efforts by New York and other states to shift eligible persons out of state-only funded programs and into Medicaid, with its federal matching dollars.

Medicaid is a program for the poor, but its ballooning costs, the commission concludes, have less to do with poverty than with the larger problems of the nation's health-care system.

"Cuba After the Cold War."

Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15260. 383 pp. \$49.95; paper, \$19.95

Editor: *Carmelo Mesa-Lago*

Fidel Castro's Cuba, almost the only country left in the world that has both a communist regime and a command economy, is on the skids. The economic deterioration began even before the Soviet Union and its empire collapsed, notes Mesa-Lago, a professor of economics and Latin American studies at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1986, after a decade in which some modest market-oriented reforms had been tried and the island nation's Soviet-subsidized economy had grown vigorously, Castro reversed

course and, in the face of Soviet *perestroika*, launched the so-called Rectification Process, bringing the economy back under his direction. Whereas Cuba's "global social product" (GSP, based on a Soviet measuring system) had grown by nearly 42 percent between 1981 and '85, it shrank by six percent between 1986 and '90. Since then, the decline has greatly accelerated. A sympathetic American scholar estimated that national income fell by 35–40 percent between 1989 and '91 and by a further 7–12 percent in 1992.

Cuba under Castro was extremely dependent on the Soviet Union, much more so than Moscow's other socialist allies. The Soviets provided all of Cuba's oil in 1987, 91 percent of its fertilizer, 94 percent of its grain, and 70 percent of its trucks and light vehicles. The Soviets also imported more than 3.7 million tons of Cuban sugar. Between 1981 and '85, Cuba received nearly \$15.8 billion in Soviet subsidies for the sugar, oil, and nickel trade, and \$6.3 billion in loans. Between 1986 and '90, it got \$10.1 billion in

subsidies and \$11.6 billion in loans. During the attempted coup in the Soviet Union in 1991, Castro remained neutral. After the coup's failure, all economic aid from the former Soviet Union ceased, and trade was dramatically cut. Cuba's trade with Eastern European countries, meanwhile, has slowed to a trickle.

The result, Mesa-Lago says, is Cuba's worst crisis since Castro came to power in 1959. "Rationing has been extended to virtually all consumer goods, and current quotas are the most stringent since the revolution,

barely at a subsistence level. . . . Food scarcity has provoked an increase in crime."

In response to the crisis, Castro has increased repression. The steps taken, Mesa-Lago writes, have included "purges in the army and internal security forces, organization of rapid action brigades to physically attack the regime's opponents, [less toleration] for human-rights activists, imprisonment of dissidents, announcement of reinstatement of popular tribunals, [and] warnings and threats to church leaders and opponents." In July 1992, the 1976 constitution was

(illegally) amended to give Castro the power to declare a state of emergency and suspend the constitution.

The 66-year-old Castro remains the undisputed Maximum Leader. Since 1990, he has ended all of his speeches with the slogan, "Socialism or death." He has opposed market-oriented reforms—though some change has occurred lately—and vehemently rejected any move toward a multiparty political system. In Mesa-Lago's view, Cuba's plight is only going to get worse—and a military coup seems the most likely outcome.

"Scientific Opinion vs. Media Coverage of Environmental Cancer."

Center for the Study of Social and Political Change, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. 01063; Center for Media and Public Affairs, 2101 L St. N.W., Ste. 405, Washington, D.C. 20037. 27 pp. Free
Authors: S. Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman

Nuclear power plants, alar, and exposure to sunlight. Which are important causes of cancer? All of the above, report the nation's news media; only one, say most scientists.

The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research interviewed 401 scientists, all members of the American Association for Cancer Research, and asked them to rate various cancer risks and the mass media's news coverage of those risks. The results, say Lichter, of the Center for Media and Public Affairs, and Rothman, of the Center for the Study of Social and Political Change, show that media coverage of cancer risks is often skewed.

Ninety-six percent of the scientists considered tobacco

smoke a major environmental cause of cancer; majorities also put diet and sunlight in that category. Large numbers viewed smoking tobacco (95 percent of those polled), chewing tobacco (66), and asbestos (56) as major hazards. But majorities of the scientists regarded other oft-publicized environmental perils as of only "minor" concern: medical drugs (54 percent of those polled); food additives and preservatives (57); chemicals in the home (62); and medical or dental radiation (67). And large majorities of the scientists rated saccharin (75 percent) and other sweeteners (83), alar (64), and nuclear power (73) as also of only minor concern in terms of their cancer-causing risks. Fifty-two percent viewed DDT as a minor peril.

Most of the specialists thought the media fairly depicted the cancer-causing risks posed by sunlight (60 percent), tobacco (59), and radon (50). But they said the media overstated the risks from nuclear power plants (61 percent), pollution (54), and food additives (53).

Only six percent of the scientists thought TV network news was a "very reliable" source of information about cancer causes. More surprisingly, perhaps, only 22 percent put the *New York Times* in that category. More than half of the scientists, however, expressed faith in the *Scientific American* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and 72 percent held the *New England Journal of Medicine* in high regard as a source of reliable information.

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.

Hearing the Blues

Rock is indeed the cultural triumph of Puritanism, as Martha Bayles cogently argues [*"Hollow Rock & The Lost Blues Connection," WQ, Summer '93*]. The original Puritans severed sex from the rest of life and banished it; the children of the 1960s Puritan revival returned sex from exile but failed to reconnect it to the rest of life. Rock music perfectly expressed—and continues to express, with increasing virulence—the resultant view that sex is evil but desirable. As Bayles points out, this attitude was only strengthened by racial stereotyping of black sexuality.

I take some exception to Bayles's implication that the blues is the only legitimate source of American popular music. Operetta and European folk musics are also part of our heritage. While the blues provides a subtler and more varied rhythmic vocabulary, these other forms are richer harmonically. The Beatles, barely touched upon by Bayles, owed their sound essentially to modal folk harmonies refreshed by rock 'n' roll rhythms.

Bayles has done the great service of discussing an issue that music scholars and critics are usually reluctant to address, for fear of offending what for them amounts to a religion.

*Kenneth LaFave
The Phoenix Gazette
Phoenix, Ariz.*

Martha Bayles's essay was a fascinating read, both for what it did and for what it did not do. The first part of her article I found to be an exceptionally erudite exposition on the blues. I enjoyed it immensely. However, I have some difficulties with the second part, wherein she explores the relationship between the blues and rock 'n' roll and condemns what allegedly has "been done" to the blues via heavy metal, grunge, and gangsta rap.

It always puzzles me when reading essays about music that it seems obligatory to find how the music relates to its environment, how various musical forms are required to evoke aspects of society or ideology or emotion that in themselves have little to do with music. Bayles quite accurately refers to this attribute of criticism in her paragraph about defining the blues and points out that "generations of folklorists have evaluated different blues forms in ideological, as opposed to musical terms." Later in

her dealings with contemporary popular music she seems to forget that she made this observation. Music is an aesthetic phenomenon. It affects our senses first and foremost and, in the hands of master composers and musicians, finally. Taken on those terms, musical criticism that attempts to define one form by tracing it back to another more often than not fails to recognize when a new form stands free of its putative forbears.

Rock 'n' roll is such a form. While there can be little argument that the initial forms came from the blues, specifically rhythm and blues, with a dash of country and maybe a touch of bebop, it is a mistake to assume that rock 'n' roll never broke free of these forms to become a form all on its own, with a capacity to spawn new forms all by itself. The Beatles are the best artists to show this. Certainly a great deal of rhythm and blues is represented on their early albums—after all, they began in the late 1950s playing skiffle, which is a British styling of American rhythm and blues—but if it is not clear by "Rubber Soul" it must be obvious on "Revolver" that the Beatles were doing something quite apart from rhythm and blues. From that point on they made rock 'n' roll, and while blues appeared on many of their albums afterward it appeared *as blues*—most especially the samples on the "White Album." There is no blues on "Sergeant Pepper" or "Magical Mystery Tour" because the Beatles were doing rock 'n' roll as a separate musical form.

Bayles seems to have missed this fact. Perhaps that is why she neglected a huge slice of rock history and opted for a bombastic—albeit deserved—attack on the subsequent form of heavy metal.

A list of the groups that did rock 'n' roll as a separate form and included blues as blues may serve to demonstrate my point: the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Chicago, Jethro Tull, the Nice, Crosby, Stills & Nash, Traffic, Yes, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, the Moody Blues, King Crimson, and Quicksilver Messenger Service.

Cream is an interesting case in point. As a musician (and a writer) I have never cared for the blues, not even in the more contemporary and sophisticated manifestation of rhythm and blues, yet I relished Cream. I never thought they played the blues, even though Clapton claimed he was (Jack Bruce claimed he wasn't). I identify Cream as rock 'n' roll, not blues, and it is a distinction that has entirely to do with aesthetics.

I agree entirely with Bayles that we need to return

to our roots to regain musical vitality. But I would not return to blues. The blues are alive and well and have no relation to Heavy Metal. The roots I would return to are the roots of rock 'n' roll's birth in 1966, '67, and '68. I mark that as the point at which rock 'n' roll became its own form and not simply an amalgam of older forms.

I would also suggest that good rock 'n' roll is not dead, either, but has simply been overlooked or has left the country. U2, for instance, is exemplary. On this side of the Atlantic, Dada is carrying on quite admirably. But I suppose one has to be willing to regard rock 'n' roll as something other than the bastard child of the blues.

Mark W. Tiedemann
St. Louis, Mo.

In her zeal to exalt the blues tradition—about which she makes a number of shrewd points—Martha Bayles exaggerates and oversimplifies.

"... *sadomasochism, drug addiction, and ritual murder—subjects that have over the years come to dominate rock lyrics.*" That's the kind of assertion more worthy of a record-burning religious zealot. Such topics dominate only a specialized, commercially insignificant branch of this genre ("death metal"). More generalized themes such as lust, youthful frustration, and even social commentary—less romanticized variations on the typical fodder of pop lyrics in general—are far more common.

"... *the semiofficial religion of heavy metal: Satanism and the occult.*" Unless your definition of devil worship encompasses titles such as AC/DC's "Hell's Bells," you'll find serious obsessions with the occult quite scarce and then only after a diligent prowling of the genre's fringes.

"... *now that heavy metal is the theme music of Europe's neo-Nazi youth movement.*" This one's just plain wrong. The music of choice for young right-wingers is hardcore punk (a stripped-down antithesis to the pretentious bloat that characterizes much metal), featuring Nazioid lyrics sung by bands in the movement whose records are pressed and distributed through underground channels. (Lest another sweeping generalization surface, a greater number of hardcore punk artists adopt a leftist political perspective.)

Bayles's essay has innumerable strengths. But exaggerations and misstatements like those cited above mar its overall credibility.

Ken Barnes
Radio & Records
Los Angeles, Calif.

In general, I agree with much of what Bayles says. But I do have problems with many of the generalizations in the essay.

I think the essay needed a thorough historical account of minstrelsy, the musical form that prefigured American musical theater and American popular music and also forged much of the psycho-cultural relationship between the African American and the white world. For not only did the African American become a mask of release for white males from the pressurized white world of a growing, industrialized, capitalistic society, he became a mask-wearer himself in two ways: First, he was forced to wear the mask that whites created for him, and second, he was forced to "colorize" the mask of whiteness. I think Bayles would have been helped enormously had she read Ralph Ellison's discussion of minstrelsy in *Shadow and Act* as well as Nathan Huggins's discussion of the same subject in his *Harlem Renaissance*. Without some analysis of minstrelsy, the entire essay seems a bit simplistic in its account of black-white relations.

Nor does the essay deal in a compelling way with the nature of commercialization—white institutional control—and its impact on black artists and black music.

On the whole, beating up on hard rock, which this article does well, strikes me as a relatively easy chore; analyzing black-white relations, which this article does not do well, is a great deal harder.

Gerald Early
Dept. of English
Dir., African and Afro-American Studies
Washington Univ.

Bayles's primary audience—right-thinking/leaning academics who'd rather read theory than listen to music—will no doubt embrace her criticisms. No one else should be fooled by her disingenuous manifesto.

Bayles's intentions are revealed in a footnote on page 16, with the ambiguous disclosure that she's limiting her disappointment in "our" music to the "white-dominated styles of music discussed herein, from the Rolling Stones to such contemporary forms as 'speed metal' and 'grunge.'" One could end it all with her very first and worst of all possible examples. If Bayles doesn't hear the "vigor" in the Rolling Stones' music from *Aftermath* through *Exile on Main Street* (and sporadically thereafter), she's not listening. These records contain topical breadth in the lyrics, a musical range that extends far beyond the blues, and a drummer who can be as subtle or as rock-solid as anyone who ever played with Muddy Waters.

She lets Motown, soul, funk, and "non-gangsta" rap off the hook. This will no doubt allow many musicians and listeners to sleep comfortably and inspire *Billboard* to alter its charts, but it blows her conclusion out of the water. If she's only stating that heavy metal, grunge, gangsta rap, and a few other rock variations suffer by losing the musical vigor and/or the

topical and emotional range of the blues, she's probably right, though there are exceptions even in those limited categories. That's neither a fresh nor a particularly useful insight. These "white dominated styles" don't even dominate the "pop" charts, and there is a lot of other good music being made out there.

What about all the white folks—from the late 1960s through the early '90s—who have, for various reasons, little or no connection to the blues but who manage to make good pop music anyway? I'll limit myself to a dozen: the Byrds, Neil Young, Velvet Underground, Elvis Costello, the Pretenders, REM, U2, Los Lobos (does being Mexican American exempt them?), Nick Lowe, X, Bruce Springsteen, the Ramones.

Bayles comes up with a narrow band of rock music and gives some older fans and, more to the point, a narrow band of culture critics, a well-argued rationalization for hating it. The old fans don't need it. They know the music that is bad and are either seeking alternatives or sticking with the music of their youth. The record companies and artists are happy to accommodate them. Fans of heavy metal, grunge and gangsta rap won't pay any attention to her. The next generation will take care of itself; if Bayles really wants to help those who spent years "in the grip of something so ugly and useless," she should either seek out a more mainstream outlet or open a teen center.

*Eric Shepard
New City, N.Y.*

Class Politics

Among the articles on "The New Politics of Class" [WQ, Summer '93], I take most issue with Lawrence Mead's elevation of poverty as the new Rosetta stone of American politics. His deep understanding and passion for the subject lead him to make some unrealistic political judgments. Americans' alienation from their government, Republicans' domination of the White House, and the election of Clinton cannot be ascribed to poverty politics.

That Nelson Aldrich knows Amherst is pronounced with a silent "h" no doubt helped make his article an arch and entertaining exegesis of WASP decline. The questions he poses and answers are the important ones. I was left wondering whether the wholesale and drawn-out retreat from civic responsibility is not even more damaging than the acute abuse of power and privilege witnessed during the 1980s. Left unsaid is whether it will be possible to fashion an ethnically diverse class of stewards, particularly if, as Aldrich says, education must do everything in a country devoid of culture.

Alan Wolfe's portrait of the middle class enables him to isolate the issues that divide it with great insight, though it seems more plausible that the post-

1973 economy brought to the surface cultural and moral differences in the middle class that were latent rather than nonexistent. Almost certainly this middle-class struggle will preoccupy public life. There may be some early grounds for optimism, since both Mead and Wolfe suggest that a synthesis of rights and responsibilities may be in the making.

*Max Holland
Washington, D.C.*

Alan Wolfe vividly identifies the conflicting world views of two American middle classes ["Middle-Class Moralities," WQ, Summer '93] and accurately describes the substance of the cultural conflicts each of us experiences daily. He richly reports some of the rhetoric each side employs. But let me suggest that his explanation of why the two views exist is wrong. He writes, "What divides these two groups is not how much money their members make but the different degrees of effort involved in making it."

But is not Wolfe's very real cultural gulf, instead, the consequence of different exposure to quite different ideas? Does it not reflect the consequences of where the members of the two groups were educated, how seriously they took formal education, and what they do for a living? Is not Wolfe actually describing the gulf between persons educated at highly "intellectual" institutions who earnestly accepted the verbal formulae offered by their academically distinguished teachers and who themselves entered "verbalizing," symbolic, or other "intellectual" professions, versus, on the other hand, people who were educated under more average circumstances, who regarded professors realistically and skeptically, and who work mainly with other (non-verbal) skills rather than with verbal skills, e.g., engineers, businessmen, physicians, skilled artisans, etc.? Has Wolfe not actually described the American gulf between the theoretical "talking and writing" culture and the much older, practical "building" culture?

Some would argue that the middle-class gulf so eloquently described by Wolfe is a late-20th-century consequence of the rise to extraordinary influence of professional "intellectuals" in America. The views he ascribes to the "old middle class" are, in fact, some of the attitudes of persons who take (some) "intellectuals" very seriously. A few persons would argue that the passionate disputes between the two middle classes have occurred because "intellectuals" have destroyed—at least, for those who accepted their teachings—the older, unifying senses of traditional morality and obligation that almost all middle-class Americans at one time accepted. A few persons might even describe this powerful and state-supported "intellectual" influence as approaching

systematic moral subversion. I would agree.

Ideas are acquired independently of "the degree of effort" required to earn money. The interesting question is: Where did the ideas that so fundamentally divide middle-class Americans come from?

Peter B. Clark
Palm Desert, Calif.

Isn't it time for a moratorium on the acronym "WASP"? It is a silly redundancy. Are Anglo-Saxons other than white?

One misses in all three of the contributions to your symposium on the subject any mention of the two determinants of social class—diction and humor. The latter in particular constantly suggests the humbler origins of most people in or near the government, who are wedded to one-liners and canned jokes. Upper-class humor is almost always inferential and much more elliptical. Also, each social class has its own form of nonsense regularly employed to cope with the tendency of language itself to reach for ultimates. The differences among them are very large.

Andrew Gray
Washington, D.C.

Kudos for the three essays on class in America. I agree with what I think is the position of the authors, i.e. that older notions of class are no longer as relevant to political and social conflicts in the society as they once were. Today's conflicts do involve economic issues but they are inexorably tied up with issues of ethnicity and lifestyle.

Let me offer just a few caveats. Despite some of the current literature, I am not persuaded that middle-class jobs have declined so markedly in the past 20 years, at least for college-educated people. Though pre-tax economic inequality has been on the increase since at least 1977, on both ends of the scale, the per-capita income of the middle deciles kept rising until the recent recession. However one defines middle class, most college-educated people today will live longer, have better medical care and own more goods, have better housing, and take more vacations than their parents did at a comparable age, though given a variety of factors this may not hold true in the future.

I don't think that the major value conflicts within the middle class today are between an older and newer middle class. The big clashes have more to do with where and for whom middle-class individuals work and, to some extent, their ethnic backgrounds.

America faces many serious problems in the next two decades, many of them stemming from changing demographic patterns brought about by the arrival of new immigrants. Asians are generally successful and conservative. However, the story on the largest new immigrant group is not yet in. If Mexican Americans do substantially

better than blacks (and intermarry at rapid rates), there is little hope of a "rainbow coalition" ever succeeding, and blacks may find themselves relatively isolated by groups that feel little or no guilt about or sympathy for them. The implications for politics are hard to predict.

Stanley Rothman
Mary Huggins Gamble Professor of
Government Emeritus
Smith College

In his excellent article, Alan Wolfe summarizes a familiar attitude among certain Americans which I feel deserves comment. He says:

We are not being racist. . . . We would welcome black Americans who share our point of view; it is not our fault that there are so few who do. And we take pride in those minorities, especially those from Asia, who understand the struggle to become American the way we do.

There is a great difference between people who come to this country voluntarily to find a better life, whether or not it is to escape repression, and people who are brought forcibly and treated as sub-human for hundreds of years. Asians and other immigrants have come here with a vision, or at least with determination. Blacks were abducted, denied their humanity, their culture, their individuality, their families. Is it any wonder they've had trouble "adjusting" to American life? It's easy to criticize if you oversimplify, take things out of context, and have no empathy.

Paula Berinstein
Woodland Hills, Calif.

Nelson Aldrich, in his fine and erudite article ["The Upper Class, Up for Grabs," *WQ*, Summer '93] reached out and grabbed the wrong word on page 68, then compounded the error by defining *pleonastic* as meaning "more, more." *Pleonastic* refers only to a redundancy of words to express an idea, a very apt word in some cases. Further down the page of a dictionary is the word *plethoric*, which would have expressed better his precise idea of engorged redundancy, but even better yet, to express an orgiastic feeding at the trough of commerce, the more common and well-known word *gluttonous* fits perfectly.

Barbara Hill
Bagdad, Fla.

Defining Vico

In "Vico: The Antimodernist" [*WQ*, Summer '93] Mark Lilla sets out to do with Vico what Isaiah Berlin

did with Joseph de Maistre; namely, to establish Vico as a reactionary out to secure the earth for God and King. Berlin's task was relatively easy since de Maistre was almost a caricature of reaction and not given to the kind of theoretical analysis that characterizes Vico's work. Lilla's job is much more difficult because Vico cannot be fitted as easily into the narrow trinities defined by Lilla as "theology, politics, and Rome" leading to "order, authority, and certainty." Vico's oeuvre is too complex and his theoretical exertions too respectful of reason and historical dynamism to reduce to an ideological apologia of tradition and authority.

Lilla is correct to admonish those who would press Vico into the service of pluralism, multiculturalism, and other obsessions of the present and to call attention to the conservative dimension of the early work. But to conclude from an examination of the early work that "Either one resigns oneself to living within the broad Enlightenment tradition that values reason, skepticism, and freedom, or one sets off with the Counter-Enlightenment thinkers who abandoned those principles in the pursuit of order, authority, and certainty. The modern world offers no third alternative," is simply to err in the opposite direction. It is to impose ideology upon what should be an objective study. Unfortunately, both Lilla and Isaiah Berlin write with a single political objective: to clearly distinguish the enemy (the Hedgehog in Berlin's terms) from enlightened friends (the Foxes), which is to defend the pluralistic if fuzzy fox against the apocalyptic clarity of the hedgehog. To his credit, Berlin has tried very hard to overcome his bias for the fox, and he certainly realizes that both styles of thought coexist in the same human breast (Tolstoy's, to cite Berlin's example) and in society at large. Mark Lilla, like much of academia, has yet to move into the postideological world.

For one of the most incisive and balanced analyses of Vico's work, the researcher should become aware of Eric Voegelin's treatment in the "History of Political Ideas," due for publication in eight volumes three or four years hence as part of the complete works being done by Louisiana State University Press. The work is available in microfilm form in the Voegelin archives at the Hoover Institution.

Ken Whelan
San Francisco, Calif.

Taken to Task

Joseph Brodsky's curious notion that "Poetry as we know it today—that is, its main genres of short lyric, elegy, pastoral, narrative, or didactic poem—was born around the third century B.C. in the city of Alexandria" [Poetry section, WQ, Summer '93] has the limited merit of making that city an appropriate

birthplace for the modern poet Cavafy. I am reminded of the seven cities that claimed to be the birthplace of Homer, according to Cicero in his defense of the poet Archias. But Brodsky's assertion ignores too many of the Greek poets of the preceding three centuries to be credible—poets that Cavafy himself would be the first to acknowledge. To mention merely the names of Alcaeus, Sappho, Stesichorus, Hesiod, Ibycus, Anacreon, Theognis, Simonides, and Pindar is sufficient indication that only pastoral, of the five genres Brodsky listed, may have had as late an origin as the third century.

By the way, the "great Greek language" in which all these poets worked was *magna lingua Graeca* (not "Graecae").

Harold C. Cannon
Greenfield Center, N.Y.

Falsely Accused

An item in The Periodical Observer section of your Summer '93 issue ["A Classics Controversy," p. 144] reiterates the drastically inaccurate account of my views previously given by Donna Richardson in her *American Heritage* article on *Classics Illustrated*. To set the matter straight: In 1988 I published in the *Village Voice* a memoir of how the childhood reading of "classic comics" powerfully influenced my early perceptions of literature and history. My interest was in the process by which cultural properties are recycled and transformed, and in the inadvertent radicalism of some of the formal devices employed by *Classics Illustrated*.

The tone of my piece, which might be characterized as affectionate irony, was entirely misrepresented by Ms. Richardson, who interpreted it as a high-minded attack on *Classics Illustrated*, and characterized a zealous *Classics* fan as "defending the series against the Geoffrey O'Briens of the world."

In recapping Richardson's article, you classify me with "critics" who "warn of the comics' insidious effects," and describe me as "charging" the comics with sensationalism and "abhorring" their compression. This becomes ludicrous. What I actually wrote was this: "By reducing a long and elaborate novel to a frantically speeded-up sequence of tableaux vivants, *Classics Illustrated* produced something more than illustration. They diagrammed a culture. A 20th-century medium served to lay bare the ghosts of the previous century." Abhorrence?

As someone who has written at length and with deep enthusiasm about many aspects of popular culture, I rather resent being lumped with anti-comics crusaders of the 1950s.

Geoffrey O'Brien
New York, N.Y.

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FROM THE CENTER

In Vienna last June some 5,000 delegates from 111 countries assembled for the first World Conference on Human Rights in 25 years. Even before the conference convened, the representatives of 1,000 nongovernmental organizations gathered to express their views and to monitor the proceedings. They were greeted by the news that the United Nations, at the insistence of China, had prohibited the Dalai Lama from addressing them, an act that caused 12 winners of the Nobel Peace Prize to walk out. Worse was to follow. Loud protests by one-third of the thousand were designed to prevent Jimmy Carter from addressing the closing session of the unofficial meeting—protests characterized by an Argentine participant as “the cries of thousands of people killed with American guns sold to Latin American armies.” In the words of the director of Human Rights Watch in New York, it was “a terrible irony” that the very group that had deplored the banning of the exiled Tibetan leader should have attempted to silence the American president most consistently devoted in word and deed to the cause of human rights.

After this inauspicious beginning, the conference proceeded to address a congeries of the more vexing issues confronting the world today. Unfortunately, this convocation may be remembered as the first meeting at which the representatives of a number of states—China, Cuba, Syria, Iran, Vietnam, Pakistan, Malaysia, Singapore, Yemen, and Indonesia—explicitly challenged the very idea of universal human rights, arguing that the traditional catalogue of such rights represents nothing more than a pretext for imposing “Eurocentric” values upon the entire globe. Although the UN had promulgated in 1948 a Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the foreign minister of Indonesia now maintained that definitions of human rights must reflect differing historical, cultural, religious, and developmental realities and remain “the competence and responsibility of each government.” In other words, spare us your preaching, and even more your intervention, and leave us to pursue our own ways. As a character in Philip Roth’s most recent novel says of the Middle East, “informing is a way of life here, no less deserving of your respect than the way of life indigenous to any society.”

“Informing” perhaps, but even in an age enamored of diversity and prone to moral relativism, many among us find it impossible to dismiss

officially sanctioned repression, torture, rape, and murder as no more (or no less) than interesting local folkways. The argument that such abominations are deserving of our respect—or at least our forbearance—is simply unacceptable.

This having been said, however, the question of what (if anything) outsiders should do about these practices is deeply troublesome. The spectrum of possible responses ranges from verbal condemnation through the imposition of economic and diplomatic sanctions to military intervention. The first of these has never proved effective, though it may soothe the conscience of those who condemn. The second may be marginally effective, but even as I write the United States continues to extend “most favored nation” status to the butchers of Tiananmen Square, moved by economic and political rather than moral considerations.

The third possible response—outright military intervention—runs headlong into a principle cherished since the appearance of the sovereign state in the 17th century: nonintervention in the domestic affairs of others. When the forces of Saddam Hussein violated a national boundary, a great U.S.-led United Nations coalition drove him back. But for years before, the members of that same coalition stood idly by—and on occasion even assisted—while Saddam’s government used chemical weapons

against the Kurds in the north of Iraq and other means of repression against the Shiites in the south.

It would be comforting to conclude with an unequivocal statement of who should do what about the egregious violations of human rights throughout the world. The end of the Cold War, and the technology that brings us unbearably close to the victims of these abuses, have clearly joined to create a novel situation. Yet the muddled UN mission in Somalia (justified by anarchy?), and even more the inaction of the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the UN when faced with the carnage of Bosnia (justified by calling it a civil war?), cannot fail to impress upon us how urgent it is for the world community, and for the United States in particular, to formulate policies to deal with what is certain to remain one of the more agonizing but also intractable phenomena of our time. To paraphrase the ancient rabbi: If not now, when? If not us, who?

—Charles Blitzer
Director



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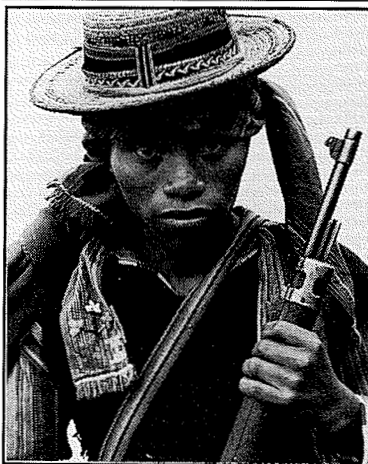
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