

\$6.00

SUMMER 1993

THE WILSON QUARTERLY

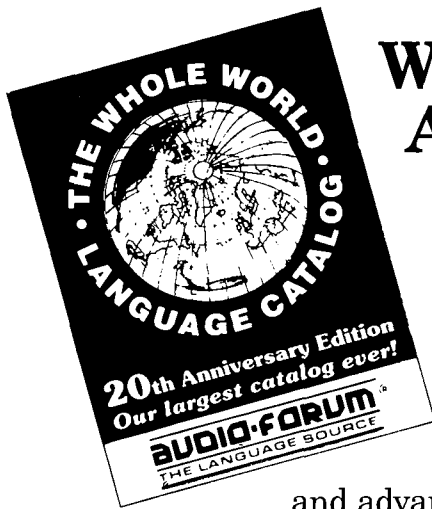


MISSING
THE
BLUES

THE NEW POLITICS OF CLASS

VICO • PHILIP LARKIN • THE DICTIONARY MAKERS

Cassette Courses in 80 Languages



World-Famous Audio-Forum Self-Instructional Language Courses

We offer comprehensive audio-cassette/book courses at beginning and advanced levels, plus many special-purpose programs, including medical and business courses, and courses for young children. We have foreign-language mystery dramas, dialogs recorded in Paris, and ethnic music from around the world. Computer programs and videos also. Our new 52-page catalog is yours for the asking — just call, write or fax. Our 20th year.

Afrikaans	German	Lenape	Slovak
Albanian	Greek	Lithuanian	Southern Sotho
Amharic	Haitian Creole	Malay	Spanish
Arabic	Hausa	Mandarin	Swahili
Armenian	Hawaiian	Moré	Swedish
Bulgarian	Hebrew	Navajo	Tagalog
Burmese	Hindi	Northern Sotho	Telugu
Cantonese	Hungarian	Norwegian	Thai
Cherokee	Icelandic	Passamaquoddy	Tibetan
Chinese	Igbo	Persian	Tswana
Chinyanja	Indonesian	Polish	Turkish
Czech	Irish	Portuguese	Twi
Danish	Italian	Romanian	Ukrainian
Dutch	Japanese	Russian	Urdu
English	Khmer	Sanskrit	Vietnamese
Esperanto	Kirundi	Scots Gaelic	Welsh
Estonian	Korean	Serbo-Croatian	Xhosa
Finnish	Lakota	Shona	Yiddish
French	Latin	Sign Language	Yoruba
Fula	Latvian	Sinhalese	Zulu

Separate English as a Second Language Catalog also available.

AUDIO-FORUM®
THE LANGUAGE SOURCE

Audio-Forum.
Room K735, 96 Broad St.,
Guilford, CT 06437 U.S.A. (203) 453-9794
Tel: 1-800-662-5180 • Fax: (203) 453-9774

SUMMER 1993
THE WILSON QUARTERLY

Published by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars



10

HOLLOW ROCK

by Martha Bayles

American popular music—above all, rock—is in a state of creative exhaustion. To regain its life, Martha Bayles argues, it must return to its roots in the blues tradition.

40

THE NEW POLITICS OF CLASS IN AMERICA

Lawrence M. Mead • Alan Wolfe • Nelson W. Aldrich IV

The perpetual political struggle over “who gets what” continues in America. Yet today, our contributors say, the “what” is not money but moral authority

32. Vico: The Antimodernist

by Mark Lilla

104. The Dictionary Makers

by Anthony Burgess

112. Philip Larkin's Sour Majesty

by Edward Hirsch

DEPARTMENTS

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 4. Editor's Comment | 123. Periodicals |
| 7. At Issue | 150. Research Reports |
| 76. Current Books | 152. Commentary |
| 96. Poetry | 160. From the Center |

Cover: *Autumn Lamp* (1983) by Romare Bearden, Estate of Romare Bearden, Courtesy of ACA Galleries, New York, New York.

Printed in the U.S.A.

USPS 346-670

WPI

VOL. XVII NO. 3

The Wilson Quarterly (ISSN-0363-3276) is published in January (Winter), April (Spring), July (Summer), and October (Autumn) by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at 901 D Street S.W., Suite 704, Washington, D.C. 20024. Indexed biennially. Subscriptions: one year, \$24; two years, \$43. Air mail outside U.S.: one year, \$39; two years, \$73. Single copies mailed upon request: \$7; outside U.S. and possessions, \$8; selected back issues: \$7, including postage and handling; outside U.S., \$8. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. All unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Members: Send changes of address and all subscription correspondence with Wilson Quarterly mailing label to Subscriber Service, The Wilson Quarterly, P.O. Box 420406, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0406. (Subscriber hot line: 1-800-829-5108.) Postmaster: Send all address changes to The Wilson Quarterly, P.O. Box 420406, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0406. Microfilm copies are available from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. U.S.A. newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior Street, Sandusky, Ohio 44870 (for information, call 1-800-221-3148).



photograph by Shonna Valeska

The Albert Einstein Memorial
National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.

ISSUES IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

YES. Please enter my one-year subscription to **ISSUES IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY** at the special Introductory Price of \$29—a savings of \$7 off the regular rate of \$36. (The institutional rate is \$69; the foreign rate is \$75.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

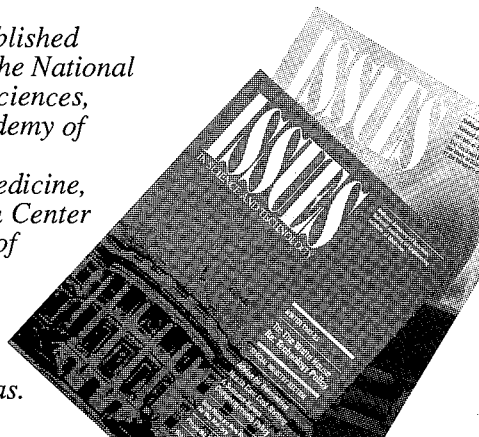
OUR GUARANTEE: Your money back if you are not completely satisfied with **ISSUES**.

Mail to: **ISSUES**, Circulation Services,
P.O. Box 661, Holmes, PA 19043-9961

WQS93

Subscribe now to the nation's only journal to focus on important policy topics in science, technology, and health. Expert authors bring you keen insights and informed opinion on global warming, AIDS research, space policy, industrial competitiveness, science education, and much more.

ISSUES is published quarterly by the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine, and the Green Center for the Study of Science and Society at the University of Texas at Dallas.



HATCHET JOBS



THE SKULKING WAY OF WAR

TECHNOLOGY
AND TACTICS
AMONG THE
NEW ENGLAND
INDIANS

**Patrick M.
Malone**

Patrick Malone shows how the Indians adapted

European military technology to fit their own needs. During the destructive King Philip's War of 1675-77, Indians armed with flintlocks, fire arrows, and steel-edged hatchets proved to be fearsome adversaries, adept in the use of stealth, surprise, and mobility.

"A thorough, clear, and provocative work of scholarship that deserves the attention of anyone interested in the intersection of technology, culture, and warfare in early America."—Fred Anderson, *Journal of American History*

\$13.95 paperback

A SPIRITED RESISTANCE

THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN
STRUGGLE FOR UNITY, 1745-1815

Gregory Evans Dowd

"Angrily reject[s] the Eurocentric assumptions of works that center on big-chief-hero or on isolated tribes. . . [and] departs from such atomized approaches to describe the attempt to combat colonialism through a religiously charged, pan-Indian militant movement."—James R. Kincaid, *New York Times Book Review*

\$14.95 paperback

**The Johns Hopkins
University Press**
Hampden Station
Baltimore, Maryland 21211
To order, call 1-800-537-5487.

OKLAHOMA

A History Book Club Selection

PRISONER OF THE RISING SUN

By William A. Berry
With James Edwin Alexander

"Berry's engrossing memoir . . . adds to our knowledge of Japanese policy toward prisoners of war and reveals how resourceful Americans could manipulate their captors without losing their honor or their lives. Berry is a retired justice of the Oklahoma supreme court."—*Publishers Weekly*.

\$24.95

THE MOST PROMISING YOUNG OFFICER

*A Life of Ranald Slidell
Mackenzie*

By Michael D. Pierce

"Pierce's comprehensively researched academic biography rescues its subject from unmerited obscurity . . . [Mackenzie's] death in 1889 at 43, probably from syphilis, deprived the Army of one of its few brigadier generals who approached brilliance in the post-Civil War years."—*Publishers Weekly*.

\$24.95

From your bookseller, or

University of Oklahoma Press

(Call 1-800-627-7377, or write)

Dept. MA22

1005 Asp Ave.

Norman, OK 73019-0445

Add: \$2.50 Post/hand.

Accept: MC/Visa/AE/Checks.





EDITOR'S COMMENT

Americans grow wary when their leaders expound upon the nation's moral deficiencies. Recall the cold reception of President Jimmy Carter's "malaise" speech of 1979. And witness the unease Hillary Rodham Clinton now inspires whenever she alludes to a crisis of meaning in our national life. Some of this unease may be attributed to the cynicism of cynics, but many earnest souls are also bothered by the First Lady's appeals to moral rearmament; specifically, they wonder whether such appeals are not simply another way of promoting a political agenda, one that puts an activist, reform-oriented government at its center. There is, of course, a long and respectable pedigree attached to this agenda. We call it Progressivism. And while Progressives deserve the nation's gratitude for accomplishments in areas ranging from bank regulation to highway-building, they also merit the suspicion of those who see a flaw at the heart of their creed: the illusion that the doing of good must necessarily transcend the dirty realities of partisan, democratic politics. This is the faith of experts and technocrats, and it is a faith that has come under attack during the last 30 years, first from the New Left and then from the New Right, as Americans realized that they did not want their political—or moral—decisions to be made for them. These years saw a reassertion of *citizen* politics, a politics that was often nasty, partisan, and blunt but nonetheless urgent, local, and, yes, moral. Our contributors to "The New Politics of Class in America" (p. 40) attempt to unravel the strands of this new politics to show how it may shape our nation's future.

Editor: Jay Tolson
Deputy Editor: Steven Lagerfeld
Managing Editor: James H. Carman
Literary Editor: Jeffery Paine
Associate Editor: Robert K. Landers
Poetry Editor: Joseph Brodsky
Copy Editor: Vincent Ercolano
Design Consultant: Tawney Harding
Contributing Editors: Max Holland, Walter Reich, Charles Townshend, Bertram Wyatt-Brown; *Researchers:* Travis M. Johnson, Yeatts M. Jones, Eliza Lowen, Paul W. MacKinnon, Humphreys McGee; *Librarian:* Zdeněk V. David; *Editorial Advisers:* Mary B. Bullock, Robert Darnton, Francis M. Deng, Denis Donoghue, Nathan Glazer, Harry Harding, Elizabeth Johns, Michael Lacey, John R. Lampe, Jackson Lears, Robert Litwak, Frank McConnell, James M. Morris, Mancur Olson, Richard Rorty, Blair Ruble, Ann Sheffield, S. Frederick Starr, Joseph Tulchin; *Founding Editor:* Peter Braestrup.
Publishing Director: Warren B. Syer
Publisher: Kathy Read
Business Manager: Suzanne Napper
Circulation Director: Rosalie Bruno
Advertising Director: Sara Lawrence
 901 D Street S.W., Suite 704
 Washington, D.C. 20024
 (202) 287-3000

WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS

Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D.C.

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

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

William J. Baroody, Jr., *Chairman*
 Dwayne O. Andreas, *Vice Chairman*
 Robert McC. Adams, James A. Baker III, James H. Billington, Warren M. Christopher, Joseph Duffy, Marlin Fitzwater, Gertrude Himmelfarb,

Carol Iannone, Eli Jacobs, Richard W. Riley, S. Dillon Ripley, William L. Saltonstall, Donna E. Shalala, Robert H. Tuttle. *Vacant:* Archivist of the United States; Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities; Designated Appointee of the President from within the Federal Government.

THE WILSON COUNCIL

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

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

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

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

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

T R A N S A C T I O N

The Conscience of Worms and the Cowardice of Lions

Cuban Politics and Culture in an American Context

Irving Louis Horowitz

"From the perspective of those who yearn for a free and democratic Cuba, we could not have asked for a better champion than Horowitz. His long record of distinguished analysis and ethical rage about the Cuban condition is evident throughout *The Conscience of Worms and the Cowardice of Lions*. His work will hasten the coming of a democratic Cuba."

—Sergio G. Roca, Adelphi University

"*The Conscience of Worms* wrestles with the important questions in a clear and concise way. There is no hiding behind ambiguities and problems ill defined. This book is the 'sociological imagination' at work in its best sense."

—Joel H. Rosenthal, Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs

"Horowitz provides an incisive and provocative analysis of the ideological forces driving U.S. attitudes toward Cuba. *The Conscience of Worms* is a must for those interested in understanding the paralysis toward the Castro Revolution." —Jaime Suchlicki, Miami University

ISBN: 1-56000-099-6 (cloth) 92pp. \$24.95

ISBN: 1-56000-681-1 (paper) 92pp. \$14.95

THE BACARDI LECTURES FOR 1992

A North-South Center/University of Miami Book

Order from your bookstore or direct from the publisher. Major credit cards accepted. Call (908) 932-2280 or fax (908) 932-3138.



Transaction Publishers
Department 93AC2
Rutgers—The State University
New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Special Issue

THE BEST OF THE WILSON QUARTERLY available now

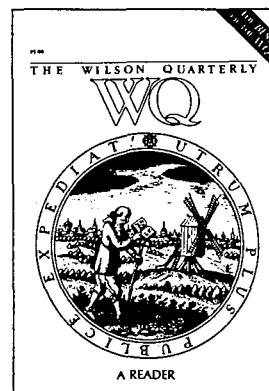
A collection of noteworthy original essays and articles from the last four years of the *Wilson Quarterly*, including *America's New City* by Robert Fishman; *Russia's Fever Break* by James H. Billington; *High-Tech Tantalus* by Edward Tenner; *State and Society Under Islam* by Bernard Lewis; *Woodrow Wilson, Politician* by Robert Dallek; *The Decay of Idleness* by George Watson; *Will Deconstruction Be the Death of Literature?* by Frank D. McConnell; *Adam Smith: Conscience of Capitalism* by Charles L. Griswold, Jr.; and *A History of the Past: Life Reeked with Joy* by Anders Henriksson, plus a 15-year subject index.

\$5.00 at your newsstand

or send \$5.00 plus \$2.25 for postage and handling (\$7.25 total) to

Publisher
THE WILSON QUARTERLY
Suite 704
901 D Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20024

Allow 4-5 weeks for delivery



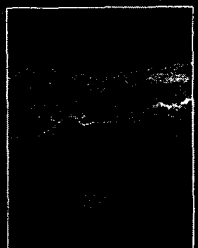
KINDLY INQUISITORS



The New on F
Jon

DAVID NYBERG

Truth Telling and Deceiving
in Ordinary Life



SPEECH, LIES, & CULTURE WARS

Kindly Inquisitors

The New Attacks on Free Thought

JONATHAN RAUCH

"Provides the philosophical defense of free speech and free thought that seems to have been forgotten on most college campuses and in many legislative halls in recent years. . . . A powerful argument."—Diane Ravitch, *The Wall Street Journal*

Cloth \$17.95 176 pages

A Cato Institute Book

Cultural Capital

The Problem of Literary Canon Formation

JOHN GUILLORY

"The very best account I've read of how and why literary canons are formed. . . . A major study in every way and will be discussed for years to come."—Marjorie Perloff

"A brilliant analysis of a debate that has come to define our cultural moment. . . . A landmark work: one that will outrage and inform in equal measure."—Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Cloth \$36.00 408 pages

The Varnished Truth

Truth Telling and Deceiving in Ordinary Life

DAVID NYBERG

"Provocative, original work. . . . A spirited, accessible challenge to basic assumptions about what constitutes moral conduct."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

Cloth \$22.50 254 pages

At your bookstore

The University of
Chicago Press

Victoria's Last Silver Crown



Actual Size

The 1893-1900 "Queen Victoria" British Silver Crown

Late in her reign Victoria ruled over the largest empire in history. In its time, the sun never set on this impressive silver coin. Yet comparatively few were minted, so our well-preserved specimens are genuinely scarce today.

The portrait designed by Sir Thomas Brock is perhaps the most beloved image of Queen Victoria; on the reverse is Pistrucchi's famous "St. George and the Dragon" engraving. The year of Victoria's reign is inscribed in Roman numerals (LVI to LXIII) on the edge of the coin. Our choice of dates. Each coin contains 28.2759 grams of .925 silver, substantially more than U.S. Morgan silver dollars of the period, of which more than 300 times as many were struck. Our guaranteed Fine to Very Fine quality is just \$49 each or 3 for \$139. Order #11723X. To order by credit card, call toll-free 1-800-451-4463 anytime. Or send your check or money order to: International Coins & Currency, Inc., 11 E. State St., Box 218, Dept. 2812, Montpelier, VT 05601. Add \$2 for postage. Money-back guarantee: 30-day home examination. 2812

PUBLISH YOUR BOOK

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

You are invited to send for a free illustrated guidebook which explains how your book can be produced and promoted. Whether your sub-

ject is fiction, non-fiction or poetry, scientific, scholarly, specialized (even controversial), this handsome 32-page brochure will show you how to arrange for prompt subsidy publication. Unpublished

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

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

PUBLISH
YOUR BOOK



The
Vantage Press
Subsidy Publishing
Program

AT ISSUE

The Real Trade Question

In the middle of perhaps the most decisive year in the history of American trade policy—and perhaps foreign policy—since the late 1940s, it is hard to say who is more confused, the Clinton administration or its critics.

The new administration has taken a pugnacious line toward two of America's largest trading partners, Japan and the European Community, and during its first months in office it seemed to be of two minds about the merits of the pair of momentous free-trade measures bequeathed it by its Republican predecessors, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the larger General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Talk of an international trade war, the likes of which we have not seen since the 1930s, was thick in the air, and despite the administration's guarded embrace of the two pacts (pending modifications), the rumors of war have not entirely dissipated. They were stirred up again in June, when the administration announced that it would seek a form of "managed trade" with Japan in some areas of commerce.

The administration's critics, especially those in the press, complain that it cannot make up its mind about trade. On the one hand, they say, government officials threaten America's partners with retaliation for trade practices Washington finds objectionable, while on the other President Clinton repeatedly affirms his commitment to free trade and to completion of a GATT treaty. "Both directions of policy have their own logic," the *Economist* (May 8, 1993) says. "But to combine them has no logic at all."

Such critics assume that the government has only two choices: free trade or protectionism. Yet as administration economists would no doubt be the first to say, there is no real alternative to free trade. The reason is that there is no other theory of how the world economy works—or ought to work. The essence of free trade is the idea of comparative advantage, propounded

more than 200 years ago by Adam Smith and later elaborated by David Ricardo. It says, with blinding simplicity, that the best way for all to prosper is for each region to produce the goods it can manufacture most cheaply and efficiently and to trade them with other regions for the goods that they produce most efficiently. An appreciation of the virtues of unhampered trade across political borders inspired, at least in part, some of the momentous developments in modern history, including the U.S. Constitution and the creation of the European Community (then called the Common Market) in 1957.

One will search in vain through all the recent variants of the protectionist idea, from Clyde Prestowitz's *Trading Places* (1988) to Lester Thurow's *Head to Head* (1992), for a comprehensive alternative understanding of the world economy. There is, of course, much angry discussion of how other nations exploit the weaknesses of a system of open trade and of how the United States might do so—as if it does not do so already.

"Managed trade," advocated by, among many others, the chair of President Clinton's Council of Economic Adviser, Laura D'Andrea Tyson, in her book, *Who's Bashing Whom?* (1993), is a remedial policy but not an economic theory. There may be a case for sheltering certain "strategic" U.S. industries from foreign competition and nurturing them with special federal assistance, as Tyson and her allies argue, but many economists remain unconvinced that anybody can identify the right industries. In any event, "managed trade" is an exception to free trade, not an alternative to it. The only true alternative to free trade is mercantilism, but the world's largest economy cannot be run according to mercantilist principles—nor, as the Japanese are learning, can its second largest economy.

What, then, accounts for the Clinton administration's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde act on trade? The most hopeful interpretation is that it represents an attempt to readjust the cost of

WQ

America's historic leadership role in promoting open trade. The dire interpretation is that it represents a repudiation of American leadership. While many of the government's critics have mistaken a political question for an economic one—free trade versus protectionism—the administration itself seems unclear about the nature of the political choices the country confronts.

The cost of American leadership on trade after the Cold War is what the national trade debate ought to be about, and sometimes manages to be. At a Washington conference, "Toward a New Trade Consensus," cosponsored by Prestowitz's Economic Strategy Institute in March, MIT's Lester Thurow faced off on just such a question against Jagdish Bhagwati, the Columbia University economist whose slim volume, *Protectionism* (1988), established him as perhaps this country's most eloquent defender of free trade. After the two "antagonists" (and other participants) had emptied their guns at each other during a session on GATT, it appeared that they did not fundamentally disagree at all. Thurow argued that the current round of GATT talks (inaugurated in Uruguay in 1986) should be reopened before any treaty ratification so that new agreements prying open foreign markets in services and other areas could be negotiated; Bhagwati favored ratification of the proposed treaty and a new GATT round to take up these issues. A serious argument, yes—and one which Thurow's side has since, in essence, won—but seemingly not the product of irreconcilable differences. It is a political disagreement, it should be pointed out, not an economic one. Each has a different answer to the question of how high a price to pay in order to keep the global free-trade ball rolling. Bhagwati is willing to sacrifice immediate satisfaction of U.S. interests; Thurow is not.

This is a question that, during most of the post-World War II era, did not really need to be asked. As historian Robert Pollard observes in *Economic Security and the Origins of the Cold War, 1945–50* (1985), American officials after World War II believed, as President Harry S. Truman declared, that "Sound and healthy trade, conducted on equitable and nondiscriminatory principles, is a keystone in the structure of world

peace and security." Convinced that the breakdown of international trade was largely responsible for the conditions that led to war, Washington consciously sacrificed short-term U.S. interests to underwrite a series of efforts to ensure a "multilateralist" international system: the Marshall Plan, the Bretton Woods system, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and, in 1947, the first GATT agreement. For three decades, the idea that it was America's unique responsibility as leader of the Free World to foot the bill for creating an increasingly open world economy was seldom questioned.

Under the bargain struck during the 1940s, the United States subordinated its short-term economic interests to its longer-range political interest in a more prosperous and united Free World. It was, however, quite a good deal for the United States, such a good deal that revisionist historians—Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, among others, in *The Limits of Power* (1972)—have argued that it was all a capitalist plot. America was able to meet its commitment on the cheap. Its home markets were largely impervious to foreign competition while its exporters enjoyed enormous advantages overseas. As a result, it could afford to wink at protectionist policies in Japan and Western Europe. Ever since the early 1970s, when the United States began experiencing chronic trade deficits and losing what seemed like one industry after another to foreign competition, the bargain has not looked so good. The Japanese and German Frankensteins were evidence that the American leaders who plotted a postwar world of national competition on economic rather than military grounds had succeeded perhaps too well.

Now that this strategy has helped bring an end to the Cold War, a reconsideration of the price America pays for maintaining the global system is entirely in order. Just as the United States should no longer be expected to bear the lion's share of the burden of Western military defense, so perhaps it should be relieved of the need to sacrifice as many of its economic interests in leading the way toward free trade. In the name of preserving Western unity and momentum toward more open trade, the United States

in the past often refrained from pursuing to the maximum some of its grievances against the trade practices of other nations, allowing negotiations, for example, to drag on for years. A change may require some hard bargaining, some rancor, even some threats, but it is necessary and virtually inevitable. It should not be imagined, however, that the United States is some sort of victimized giant who is now entitled to an enormous payoff for its decades of painful self-denial. At nearly \$6 trillion, the U.S. economy is almost twice the size of Japan's, and it has benefited enormously from the upsurge of world trade. The United States recently reclaimed the status of number-one exporter in the world, ahead of Germany (number two) and Japan (number three). It needs to be careful, moreover, about throwing stones at protectionists abroad. Many American markets, from steel to frozen orange juice, are shielded from foreign competition by tariffs, quotas, and other devices.

Yet there is a popular line of thought in the United States that advocates not merely adjustment of the price of American leadership in the world but rejection of the very notion of American leadership. Advocates of this point of view include Lester Thurow as well as Paul Kennedy, the Yale historian who wrote the *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1987), Clyde Prestowitz, and many others. Even before the end of the Cold War, they argued that political and military power in international affairs is increasingly irrelevant and that economic competition is everything. The United States, as Thurow puts it, will be in the very near future "just one of a number of equal players playing a game where the rules increasingly will be written by others."

It is the perennial American temptation to flee politics, and over the years both liberals and

conservatives have found economics to be one of the more promising escape routes. The imperatives of the corporate bottom line and the national bottom line seem to offer immeasurably simpler guides to action than do political interests, ideals, and values. Certainly it must be tempting for the officials responsible for negotiations with Japan, many of whom have had long and painful experience in the private sector dealing with the Japanese, to conflate America's economic interests with its national interest. But as the United States discovered in Kuwait and (unhappily so far) in Bosnia, and as it will doubtless be reminded many times in the future, even the conclusion of the Cold War has not made the American wish for an escape from politics come true. It has not brought an end to international politics or to "history," as Francis Fukuyama predicted in his famous essay—or to the need for political leadership in the world. If a system of more open trade is in America's interest then it will have to help create one.

Exerting leadership means bearing costs, negotiable costs, to be sure, but costs nonetheless. What remains unclear is whether U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor and the other tough-talking Clinton administration trade negotiators view theirs as a fundamentally political undertaking. Are they aiming to renegotiate the terms of American leadership, or are they repudiating the very notion of such a role and striking out simply to cut the best possible deal? Or are they unsure themselves?

These uncertainties underscore the need for a new debate about trade and the American future, a debate that goes beyond the costs and benefits of particular policies and acknowledges that what is ultimately at issue is the American role in shaping the world after the Cold War.

HOLLOW ROCK

&

The Lost Blues Connection



BY MARTHA BAYLES

It still makes millions of dollars, but rock has lost its soul. While the blame is often placed on crude commerce, Martha Bayles finds that American music went astray when it misunderstood, and then lost touch with, the rich blues tradition.

People used to tap their feet and smile when they listened to American popular music. Now they sit open-mouthed and stare: at "speed metal" rockers with roadkill hair who, despite a certain virtuosity on guitar, treat music as a form of warfare; at "grunge" bands in thrift-shop flannels who throw tantrums and smash their instruments; at "gangsta" rappers in baggy gear who posture as rapists, pushers, prostitutes, murderers, or terrorists. Tune into MTV, and you will occasionally come across something wonderful. But more likely the sonic abuse and verbal-visual ugliness will appall and repel you.

Appall and repel, that is, if you belong to one of two groups of listeners: either to those who have always disliked popular music and regard what they see on MTV as the inevitable outcome of commercialization, or to those who once liked popular music but cannot stomach the current fare. For the latter, among whom I count myself, the main problem is finding a way to articulate objections without echoing earlier gripes about music we relish, whether jazz, swing, blues, rhythm and blues, or rock 'n' roll. "Turn that racket down," we yell, realizing we sound just like our parents.

So we chalk the problem up to age, telling ourselves that people prefer the music of their youth, and that's all there is to it. But this explanation conjures up a most unlikely prospect: today's teenagers 60 years from now attending Saturday-night dances in their retirement communities, their eyes misting over to the sounds of Megadeth, Sonic Youth, and Niggaz With Attitude. Such a future seems unlikely for the obvious but underappreciated reason that much of today's popular music evokes only the more intense, unsettling emotions of youth: anxiety, lust, anger, aggression. In the narrow gauge of its effects, such music could not be more

different from the best of American popular music, which balances such unsettling emotions with tenderness, grace, and wit. Indeed, the great vigor of our music has always been its ability to blend opposites.

What happened to this vigor? The answer, or at least part of it, is found in the undisputed heart of American popular music, the blues. The story of our music's decline, as I shall show, is strongly bound up with the history of what happened to the blues starting in the mid-1960s: how it got bludgeoned into "rock," "hard rock," "heavy metal," and even more grotesque offshoots—developments that you need not be a philistine, prude, or old fogey to deplore.

Defining the blues is itself a vexed question, given the historic conundrum of race and sex that has long distorted white reactions to Afro-American music in general and to the blues in particular. The task is further complicated by the fact that generations of folklorists



ROMARE BEARDEN'S *AUTUMN LAMP* (1983)

have evaluated different blues forms in ideological, as opposed to musical, terms. Many of these earnest souls have engaged in a prolonged but fruitless debate over whether certain changes in blues practice (lyric content, instrumentation, electric amplification) have destroyed blues artistry and reduced the blues to commercialized entertainment. The debate is fruitless because it ignores the fact that the blues has always been commercialized entertainment.

While scholars disagree over many particulars of blues history, most agree in tracing the music to two sources: to Afro-American religion and ritual, including spirituals, ring shouts, field hollers, work chants, sermons, and toasts; and to early forms of American popular culture, including plantation music, minstrel "coon songs," and popular ballads performed by itinerant street singers for the loose change of passersby.

From its beginning, then, the blues was both noncommercial and commercial. The form as we know it—one performer, usually male, singing and playing a guitar—dates back to the years immediately after the Civil War, when emancipation sent former slave musicians on the road to earn a living. This image of the solo, itinerant bluesman appeals to aficionados steeped in the romantic ideal of the lonely artist pitted against a hostile society. But for two reasons, the blues rarely fits the ideal. First, the blues has always been played by groups as well as by individuals. And second, it has never ceased to sell itself. For over a century, the blues performer's motto has been not "art for art's sake" but "make way for the paying customers." The latter have included everyone from travelers waiting at a railroad depot to sharecroppers crowded onto segregated benches for a country "medicine

show," from families gathered for a barbecue on a Mississippi cotton plantation to lowlife rowdies raising hell in a Memphis juke joint, from citydwellers strolling in a public park to transplanted southern factory workers in a hole-in-the-wall Chicago club.

In recent years, the blues performer most frequently forced into the art-for-art's-sake mold has been the renowned Mississippi Delta bluesman, Robert Johnson (1911–38). Because Johnson was a lone wolf who wrote many of his own lyrics, some of them strikingly original, reissues of his 1930s recordings have been greeted with glowing tributes, many of which depict him as the true romantic hero who lived only for the purity of his art. The deflating truth, however, is that Johnson spent most of his career working as a human jukebox. Journalist Peter Guralnick cites one of Johnson's contemporaries, who recalled that the bluesman "was as likely to perform 'Tumbling Tumbleweeds' or the latest Bing Crosby hit as one of his own compositions. 'You didn't play what *you* liked, you played what the people liked. That's what you had to do.'" Had Johnson lived past 1938, he might have been one of the first delta bluesmen to perform on radio. The price of appearing on tiny KFFA in Helena, Arkansas, was singing jingles for the King Biscuit Flour Company and allowing your face to adorn a cornmeal label. But Johnson would have paid it, just as his stepson and protégé, Robert "Jr." Lockwood, did.

To stress this commercial aspect is not to disparage blues artistry. It is only to point out that the leading practitioners of Afro-American music have never drawn a sharp, uncrossable line between commerce and art. The great figures of blues and jazz have understood all too well that commercial

Martha Bayles, former television and arts critic for the Wall Street Journal, has written about culture and the arts for Harper's, The Atlantic Monthly, The New Criterion, and the New York Times Book Review. She is the author of the forthcoming Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music (Free Press, 1994), from which this article is adapted by permission of the Free Press, a division of Macmillan, Inc. Copyright © 1993 by Martha Bayles.

priorities often conflict with artistic ones, and that those who profit from the music are rarely those who create it. But they have nonetheless striven to make commerce and art dovetail. As Duke Ellington remarked about his famous predecessor: "I loved and respected Louis Armstrong. He was born poor, died rich, and never hurt anyone on the way."

Unlike folklore purists, musicians have always defined the blues as a structure, as a way of playing and singing, and (equally important) as a ritualized way of coping with the harshness of life. As crystallized in the early 20th century, the traditional blues is a three-line, 12-bar stanza with lyrics following a variety of rhyme schemes, usually *a a b*. Typically in the key of E or A, the blues stanza starts with four bars on the tonic, with the fourth shifting to the dominant 7th; then it proceeds to two bars on the subdominant, two more on the tonic, two on the dominant 7th, and two final bars back on the tonic. Not all blues have this structure; far from it. The oldest known blues are almost free-form, and many "classic" blues, such as those recorded in the 1920s by Bessie Smith, Mamie Smith, and other female performers, have the familiar structure of the 32-bar popular song.

But blues artistry consists of more than strumming a simple sequence of chords and singing the somewhat constrained melodies that arise from them. First and foremost, the blues is polyrhythmic, meaning it possesses that elusive but essential quality known as "swing." At some point, every critic tries to explain Ellington's famous title, "It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing." The task is not easy, but the French musicologist André Hodeir comes close when he explains that swing depends on five things: "infrastructure" (meaning a regular structural beat, often implied rather than played), "superstructure" (meaning the numerous other pulses sur-

rounding the structural beat, usually given equal, if not greater, accentuation), "getting the notes and accents in the right place", "relaxation", and "vital drive." As Hodeir admits, "The first three are technical in nature and can be understood rationally; the last two are psycho-physical, and must be grasped intuitively."

Blues artists further define their music in terms of distinctive vocal and instrumental techniques, such as "moaning" and "string bending," which produce a rich variety of timbres and microtonal shadings. Like polyrhythm, these techniques are indisputably the heritage of Africa. As a slave musician remarked to a white visitor in the 1830s, "Notes is good enough for you people, but us likes a mixtery." The same "mixtery" is

found in all forms of Afro-American music. In blues, as well as in jazz and gospel, the best performers range across the whole spectrum, from tones pure enough to pass muster in a European concert hall to "impure" textures evocative of every imaginable emotional state.

Emotion brings us to the spirit of the blues, a subject frequently misunderstood, even by its admirers. The music gets its name from the Elizabethan phrase, "the blue devils," meaning a fit of bad temper or melancholy. But bad temper and melancholy are merely the starting point of the blues, not its destination. Of course, some people view the blues as depressing, as would befit "the devil's music." This view prevails in the gospel field, where many agree with Mahalia Jackson that "blues are the songs of despair, gospel songs are songs of hope." It is more sympathetically expressed by blues historian Paul Oliver: "The blues is primarily the song of those who turned their backs on religion." But both evaluations miss the point. If the blues teaches us anything, it is that despair is not the only alternative to faith. For all the emotionalism found in



blues performance, the music's basic philosophy is stoic.

To put the matter another way, "having the blues" is not the same thing as "playing the blues." The former refers to a negative state of mind, such as loneliness or grief, anger or fear, disappointment or jealousy; the latter, to the art of leavening, tempering, or (possibly) transforming such a state. Because it does not expect to achieve heavenly bliss, the blues aims lower than gospel, at what can be achieved in this world—usually enough irony or humor to give a modicum of freedom in even the grimmest circumstances. Novelist and jazz critic Albert Murray explains:

The church is not concerned with the affirmation of life as such. . . . The church is committed to the eternal salvation of the soul after death. . . . But the Saturday Night Function [the blues performance] is a ritual of purification and affirmation nonetheless. Not all ceremonial occasions are solemn. Nor are defiance and contestation less fundamental to human well-being than are worship and propitiation. Indeed they seem to be precisely what such indispensably human attributes as courage, dignity, honor, nobility and heroism are all about. . . . The most immediate problem of the blues-bedeveled person concerns his ability to cope with even the commonplace. What is at stake is a sense of well-being that is at least strong enough to enable him to meet the basic requirements of the workaday world.

Robert Johnson's blues never suggest any hope that coping with trouble in this world will lead to rewards in the next. One of his best-known lyrics goes, "You may bury my body down by the highway side/So my old evil spirit can catch a Greyhound bus and ride" ("Me and the Devil Blues"). Yet Johnson makes it just as clear that if despair is allowed to rule in small things, it will rule in large: "If

you cry about a nickel/You'll die 'bout a dime" ("Last Fair Deal Gone Down"). Like gospel, the blues involves both performer and audience in a communal, ritualized re-enactment of extreme emotional states. The purpose of the blues ritual is, like that of gospel, to *return* from those states—to *survive* trouble, not succumb to it. The difference is that, unlike the preacher, the bluesman tempers every extreme. His stoic stance toward life eschews pain, but his focus on bitter realities also distrusts joy.

Historically, the topics addressed by the blues make for a very long list. Here are just a few, taken from Paul Oliver's landmark study of traditional blues lyrics, *Blues Fell This Mornin'*: employment and the lack thereof; the need to migrate, usually by railroad, and the personal costs of doing so; color prejudice among blacks as well as whites; standards of beauty and dress; flirtation, romance, courtship, and marriage; fidelity and infidelity; sex in all its permutations, including sexual boasting and insult; folk beliefs, magic, and "hoodoo"; gambling; carnivals, juke joints, and vaudeville; liquor, Prohibition, and drugs; conditions in various regions and cities; prostitution and vice; weapons and fighting; gangsters and crime; the Ku Klux Klan; prison and convict labor; the abuses of the criminal justice system; prison escape and family breakup; capital punishment; the Mississippi River; floods, tornadoes, dust storms, and hurricanes; housing, insurance policies, and fires; military service, wars, and veterans; diet, working conditions, injury, and disease; death, funerals, and cemeteries; heaven and hell; bereavement and hero-worship.

Because the blues has long been embraced as an authentic "folk art" by the political Left, its stoicism tends to get overlooked. Old leftists, from Anatoli Lunacharsky (Stalin's commissar of public enlightenment) to the poet-activist Amiri Baraka, have interpreted the blues as a form of coded political protest, thereby foisting upon the music a programmatic optimism about human affairs that is simply not present. And new leftists, from

rock critic Greil Marcus to black nationalist Ron Karenga, have dismissed the blues as passive acceptance of injustice, thereby missing the hard gleam of resistance at its core.

When the rural southern blues moved to the urban North in the 1940s, both its sound and its lyric content changed. In Chicago, practitioners of Johnson's Mississippi Delta style such as Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield) and Howlin' Wolf (Chester Burnett) began using electric amplifiers to make themselves heard over the conversational din of clubs and saloons. At the same time, one theme came to dominate the lyrics: relations between the sexes. There were commercial reasons for this change. As sociologist Charles Keil explains, "Radio stations and other commercial interests have been most energetic in reshaping blues styles." But Keil also sees other factors at work, including the fact that "male roles in the [northern] Negro community are confused, anxiety-laden, and in need of redefinition." In other words, sex became the focus of the urban blues not just because sex sells but also because sex is freighted with meanings about the stability, and instability, of life in the urban North.

Yet too often these larger social and psychological concerns are lost on listeners who are put off by the blues' sexual frankness. Oliver puts it well: "As with all other subjects the blues, when dealing with matters of love and sex, is forthright and uncompromising." Oliver suggests that "polite society" takes "offence" at salty blues language. And so, in its way, does the Old Left. Ever since Maxim Gorky's 1928 essay, "On the Music of the Gross," socialists of all stripes have considered the element of eroticism in Afro-American music proof of "decadent commercialism." To such listeners, there is nothing but a crude leer in the famous



Lynda Barry, *Blues Style* (1986)

Johnson lyric: "You can squeeze my lemon 'til the juice run down my leg."

But they, too, miss the point. Like all blues lyrics, "squeeze my lemon" has to be interpreted in context. The line appears in Johnson's "Traveling Riverside Blues," a song of wry complaint. The singer has a woman in every Mississippi port, but the one in Friar's Point, he laments, has "got a mortgage on my body, now, a lien on my soul." "Squeeze my lemon" expresses lust, of course, but in a deliberately banal way suggestive of what casual sex has become for this heartsick traveling man. The next (and last) line is crucial: "But I'm goin' back to Friar's Point, if I be rockin' to my head."

Unfortunately, this larger context is also neglected by a goodly portion of the 1960s generation, many of whom embraced the counterculture's project of total sexual liberation. Such listeners, who tend to be heavily represented in the ranks of rock critics, seize upon such lyrics as proof that the essence of the blues—the real *truth* of the form—is prurience. And it is this primitivist celebration of prurience, not the puritanical head-wagging of matrons and Marxists, that has fostered the systematic debasement

of the blues in rock.* This primitivism is in turn related to some of the oldest misunderstandings that complicate relations between black and white Americans.

The phrase "blood knot" comes from the South African playwright, Athol Fugard, but it is an apt metaphor for the complex racial-sexual dynamic that has for more than three centuries shaped American culture. To describe this dynamic properly, one must go back to the beginning—to the original clash of world views between black Africans and white Europeans in the New World.

Historian Eugene Genovese suggests that throughout the Americas the puritanical outlook of Anglo-Saxon slaveowners made them more restrained than their Spanish and Portuguese counterparts when it came to the sexual exploitation of slave women. But restraint had a cost, especially in cases where such exploitation might have led to sympathy. Interracial love was thwarted in the English colonies, Genovese argues, not only by the injustice of slavery but also by the white culture's powerful association of sex with sin:

Miscegenation poisoned southern race relations much less through those acts of violence which lower-class women—and their men—have always had to suffer in hierarchical social systems, than through the psychological devastation it wrought. . . . What the white men might have viewed, even if perversely, as joyous and lusty, they generally had to view as a self-degradation.

As for the enslaved Africans, most historians agree that the coherence of their original religions was shattered by slavery. But as

*By "rock" I mean the white-dominated styles of music discussed herein, from the Rolling Stones to such contemporary forms as "speed metal" and "grunge." I do *not* mean the diverse strains of Afro-American music lumped together as "rock 'n' roll" in the 1950s and early 1960s., and I do *not* mean the various black-dominated styles, from Motown and soul to funk and non-"gangsta" rap, now misleadingly classified as "pop."

Albert J. Raboteau notes, it is significant that most North American slaves were not converted to Christianity until the Great Awakening of the 1740s: "In the face of this religious indifference," he writes, "some forms of African religious behavior seem to have continued." Genovese concurs, adding that even after conversion, most slaves had difficulty assimilating the puritanical view of sex.

This difficulty did not stem from the Africans' savage, concupiscent nature, as was commonly believed by white Americans in the 18th century. Instead, it derived from the fact that the religions of Africa (like most pre-Christian religions, including those of Europe) placed sex and fertility at the center of the cosmos. However shocking to 17th- and 18th-century European explorers, the graphic artifacts, dances, and rituals of West Africa symbolized a life force neither wholly material nor wholly spiritual. A recent interfaith study of Christian marriage in Africa captures this delicately balanced view:

In the African world view sex was not biological only; it was also sacred. It was to be "used" with care; it was mysterious and like all mysterious things it belonged to the gods. The pleasure of sex was, of course, legitimate, but its outcome, whenever possible, was to be children. Childbearing was a religious and social duty. It follows, therefore, that in almost all parts and cultures of Africa, rape, homosexuality, bestiality—all sexual acts which did not fulfill both of these conditions—were condemned and severely punished. They could bring nothing but disaster not only to the people concerned but to the whole community.

According to Genovese, this African world view persisted among the slaves, who saw sexual misconduct as "primarily a moral offense to the community rather than to God," and who rejected "the denigration of sex as sinful, dirty or anything other than delightfully human and pleasurable." The slaves were not puritans, but neither did they condone sexual

excess. Premarital intercourse was tolerated, even encouraged, and there was no stigma attached to its issue. But tolerance did not extend to marital infidelity, by husband or wife; the cure for a bad marriage was dissolution, initiated by either partner. Genovese reports that many slaveowners were well aware of this sexual code among blacks. The more intelligent whites even acknowledged it—some with a trace of self-deprecating humor. Mary B. Chestnut, wife of a prominent Virginia planter and politician, wrote in her diary that "Negro women are married, and after marriage behave as well as other people."

Not only did the slaves have their own sexual code. They also held definite opinions about the somewhat different code of whites. Above all, they bitterly condemned white male adventurism among their own women, and many black men were willing even to die in defense of black women. In addition, the slaves took a dim view of certain aspects of the white sexual code, notably its insistence upon the permanence of marriage and its preoccupation with female purity. The slaves were starkly aware of the gap between word and deed in white sexual morality. The majority of North American slaves lived too intimately with whites to believe that the latter always abided by the stern morality they professed. Blacks understood all too well that most whites had two moral standards: a rigid one for themselves, which they frequently fell short of, and a lax one for their slaves, with whom they frequently did their falling short.

The blood knot acquired another twist after the Civil War, when, as Genovese explains, white attitudes shifted from guilt about sex between white men and black women to terror of sex between black men and white women:

The titillating and violence-provoking theory of the superpotency of that black superpenis, while whispered about for several centuries, did not become an obsession until after emancipation, when it served the purposes of racial segregationists.

Sociologist Calvin C. Hernton describes the ensuing dynamic: the ambivalence warping the white man's perennial exploitation of the black woman, the isolation of the white woman atop a pedestal of sexless virtue, the forbidden-fruit syndrome distorting all contact between the mythically potent black man and the mythically pure white woman, the resentments and hypocrisies afflicting relations between the sexes within each group, and, finally, the foul mist of irrational violence enveloping the whole.

Especially astute is Hernton's account of how blacks themselves have strengthened the blood knot. He cites the old southern tale about a group of white men walking through a cornfield, discovering a black couple making love, and joking, "That is another good reason for being a nigger!" Toni Morrison embroiders on this tale in her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, where instead of merely joking, the white men gather around the couple (who are very young) and goad the boy to "get on wid it." Naturally, the boy is too terrified to do anything of the kind. But to keep his tormentors at bay, he fakes it. The effect, of course, is to humiliate him before his girl and add another trauma to his life. Yet Hernton's point is that white voyeurism has caused many black people to believe in their own fakery—or, worse, to put on a genuine performance when the white folks jeer, "Make it good, nigger."

The sad truth is that sexual prowess is one of the few traits for which blacks have received tribute from whites—albeit one of spiteful envy. For a people as systematically vilified as black Americans have been, any advantage over the vilifier is bound to exert a certain attraction. Combine that with a clear-eyed view of white sexual hypocrisy, and it seems inevitable that a certain segment of the black community would come to believe that black sexual "immorality" was superior to white "morality." Hence the strain in Afro-American folklore that regards any restraint as a sham and any license as honest, natural, and

authentic. From this strain comes the folk hero Stagolee (the original "bad nigger"), whose sexual swagger is all too frequently imitated by men (and some women) lacking any other source of pride.

Does this mean that every black performer who pleases a white audience is the same as the boy in the cornfield? Even posing the question is an insult. Yet it needs to be posed, because the blood knot has a way of entangling everyone, white and black, who studies the interaction of black performers and white audiences. Consider this passage from James Lincoln Collier's biography of Louis Armstrong:

Precisely why white Americans have been drawn to black entertainment is not easy to explain, but two factors are evident. First, the black subculture as it existed in the slave cabins and then in big-city ghettos has always seemed exotic to whites. . . . Second, blacks were also seen as more erotic than whites. They were not expected to abide by the sexual proscriptions of white society.

Why should Collier, a white admirer of jazz, find it "not easy to explain" the appeal of black entertainment? No doubt this disclaimer arises from the context, a discussion of the voyeuristic undercurrent of white interest in Afro-American music. Naturally, Collier wishes to distance himself from that undercurrent, with its unflattering image of the white jazz fan as a cold, uptight puritan secretly thrilled by the warm, relaxed sensuality of black performers.

Unfortunately, this undercurrent is real. To be sure, innumerable whites have straightforwardly embraced Afro-American music as an antidote to excessive inhibition—not just in relation to sex but also to emotion, bodily movement, even religious enthusiasm. To appreciate the complex beauties of the music in this way, however, one must sense the difference between the erotic, which preserves the connections between sex and the rest of

life, and the obscene, which severs them. Afro-American music is sometimes erotic, but it is never obscene, because there is always a larger whole—whether spiritual ecstasy, physical exuberance, or emotional catharsis—to which its erotic qualities are joined.

During the 1950s, a great many whites embraced rock 'n' roll precisely because of its erotic component. The rock 'n' roll craze began in the South, when young whites began tuning into black-oriented radio stations to hear the various 1940s hybrids of blues, swing and gospel known as "rhythm and blues." Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, and others added country music to the mix. The rhythm and blues influence remained strong through the mid-1960s, where it can be discerned in Motown, southern soul, and the early music of the Beatles.

Of course, rock 'n' roll elicited many of the same critical reactions that the blues did. To contemporary pundits, many of them influenced by the heavy-handed Freudianism of the day, rock 'n' roll was nothing but decadent trash mass-marketed to teens. To Jack Gould of the *New York Times*, for example, Presley had "no discernible singing ability," and his stardom rested wholly on "an accented movement of the body that heretofore has been primarily identified with the repertoire of the blonde bombshells of the burlesque runway."

Predictably, this prudish response was followed by a primitivist one. Like the prude, the primitivist focused exclusively on the sexual component of Afro-American music. But while the prude would censure, the primitivist would celebrate. Rock critic Greil Marcus, for instance, praised Presley's music purely in terms of sexual liberation, portraying this complex, troubled figure as the first open advocate of a centuries-long "secret revolt against the Puritans."

Reading Marcus, you would never know that most rock 'n' roll lyrics were as sugary as they were salty. Nor would you know that rock 'n' roll was, first and foremost, a *dance* craze. The fans who screamed and fainted for

Berry and Presley were feeling their libidinous oats, to be sure. But that is not all they were feeling. The famous rock 'n' roll deejay Alan Freed once remarked that "rock 'n' roll was merely swing with a modern name." And he was right. By the 1950s, Americans had been driven from the dance floors—first by modern jazz ("bebop"), with its exploration of rhythms too subtle for human feet, and then by postwar "pop," with its preference for midtempo ballads.

Given this dearth of danceable music, it is hardly surprising that young people would seek out whatever dance music was available. Rock 'n' roll was different from swing because it was played by smaller groups in a bluesier, rhythmically heavier style. But it was similar in ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. Bad rock 'n' roll, like bad swing, reduces the basic elements of a steady beat and repeated melodic "riffs" to a formula. Good rock 'n' roll, like good swing, enlivens these elements with rhythmic counterpoint, rich instrumental color, and adventurous solos.

Blues playing and blues feeling persisted right through the rock 'n' roll era. Some critics, patrons, and fans celebrated rock 'n' roll in primitivist terms, but not the musicians themselves. It was not until the mid-1960s, when primitivism became the province of musicians (and would-be musicians), that the loss of vigor really began.

The change took place in Britain, largely because the British admired Afro-American music but found it difficult to accept its commercial dimension. The Beatles' appealing early style drew upon such authentic sources as Chuck

Berry and Buddy Holly, gospel quartets, and rhythm and blues. But because the Beatles did not stress the blues, purist British fans scorned their sound as commercialized "pop." This scorn was reinforced by class bias: The Beatles were working-class pubgoers from Liverpool, while most blues fans were middle-class clubgoers from suburban London. In their anxiety to avoid the taint of commerce, the latter gravitated toward a form of Afro-American music that had never really "crossed over" to whites: the Chicago blues.

In fact, the Chicago blues had never been all that popular with blacks. It sold well among the uprooted Mississippians of the Windy City, but most black listeners preferred other styles, such as the spare Texas blues of Sam



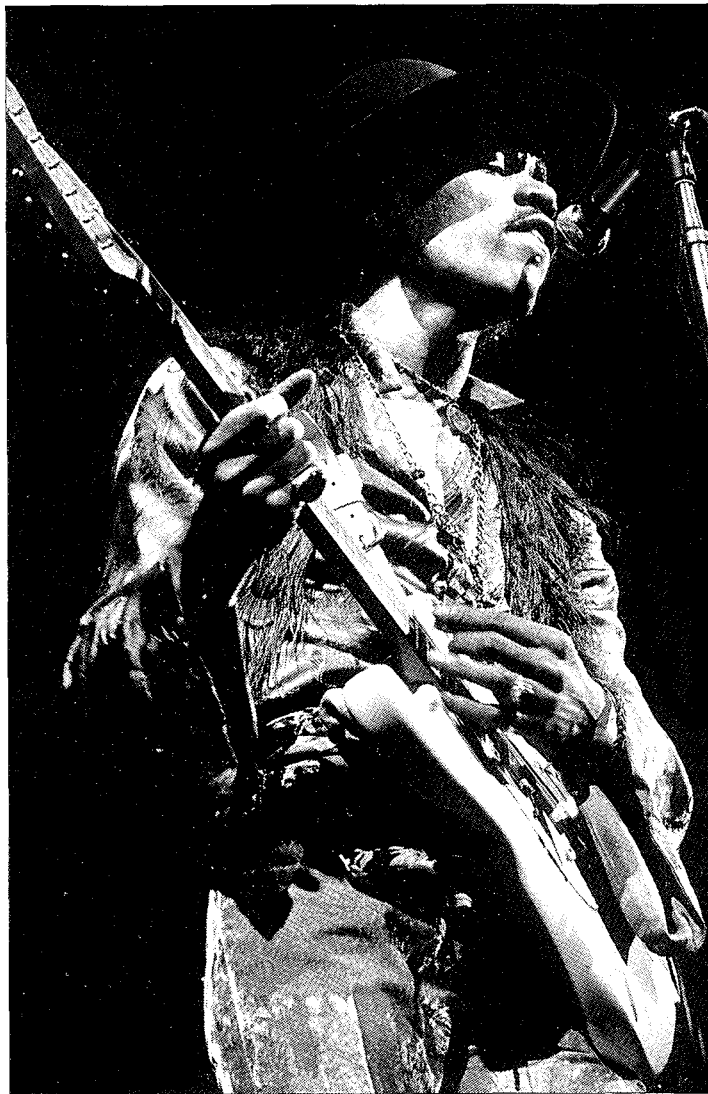
Elvis Presley, photographed here in the 1950s, brought some of the best features of Afro-American music into the white American mainstream.

"Lightnin'" Hopkins, the sprightly boogie-woogie of Jimmy Reed, or the lyrically swinging Memphis sound of T-Bone Walker, B. B. King, and Little Johnnie Taylor. Most of these strains negotiated the musical spectrum from sweet to salty, smooth to rough, pure to gritty, soft to loud, and slow to fast. Chicago blues, by contrast, emphasized the qualities at the cruder end of the spectrum—almost to a fault. Or so thought its leading exponent, Muddy Waters, who grew tired of the Chicago approach in the early 1960s and returned to a broader, mellower style closer to that of his native delta.

Yet while Muddy Waters was broadening the Chicago blues, his British admirers were narrowing it to the point of caricature. The change shows up most starkly in the human voice. Most rock pundits dutifully report that Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones learned to sing from the blues masters. Yet, as Rolling Stones biographer Philip Norman admits, the only black singer Jagger ever came close to imitating was Chuck Berry:

Berry's voice, light and sharp and strangely white-sounding, had a pitch not dissimilar to [Jagger's] own. Singing along to "Sweet Little Sixteen" or "Reelin' and Rockin'," he suddenly felt like something more than a mumbling impersonator.

And Jagger surpassed most of his contemporaries, whose range is aptly summarized by critic Charles S. Murray: "British blues bands



ran the emotional gamut from A (I'm feeling sorry for myself) through B (I'm well 'ard, me) to C (I'm not tough really but I'm going to pretend that I am) to D (I'm pissed off)." Or, as Muddy Waters himself said of the "white kids" who had taken up the blues, "They play so much, run a ring around you playin' guitar, but they cannot vocal like the black man."

Back in America, blues vocalism fared no better. Janis Joplin, the 1960s rock heroine crowned "the greatest white, female blues singer of all time," claimed to have learned her art from Bessie Smith. But vocally Joplin could



Two lost souls: Both Janis Joplin (above) and Jimi Hendrix (left) began as musicians in the blues tradition, but both pandered to the lowest audience expectations and ended up destroying their music and their lives.

not have named a less appropriate model. Smith, whose range barely exceeded one octave, was a stunning practitioner of blues "mixtery," shading every note and beat with elaborate nuance. Joplin had a strong, three-octave voice, but rather than develop its potential, she began her career imitating Smith—only without nuance, in a painfully high register. Yet even this effort sounds better than Joplin in her heyday, when she cauterized her vocal equipment with a style consisting almost entirely of screaming. Reviewing a double bill featuring B. B. King and Joplin in

1969, music critic Henry Pleasants compared King's "consummate musicianship" with Joplin's reliance upon "a sound that little boys of four or five produce when trying to determine just what degree of aural torture will finally drive Mommy or Daddy into giving them a smack in the teeth."

The debasement of vocal artistry was intimately related to a debasement of instrumental artistry. Urban blues bands typically included several instruments—two or three guitars, acoustic bass, drums, harmonica, and piano—all involved in a constantly shifting interplay. Early rock bands, by contrast, stripped down to lead guitar, bass guitar, and drums. To be sure, the Beatles used the same stripped-down lineup, and a few early rock groups, notably the Rolling Stones, often included other instruments. But the rock bands that considered themselves "progressive" used the "power trio" lineup. Unfortunately, their notion of power was one that sacri-

ficed musical interplay to self-indulgent soloing—what Charles S. Murray calls "the fetishization of lead guitar playing as an athletic event."

"Guitar heroes" such as Jeff Beck of the Yardbirds and Pete Townshend of the Who also manipulated the enormous amplification systems developed for stadium concerts in the late 1960s. In such systems, the electromagnetic pickups on instruments (especially guitars) receive two different kinds of signals: those manually produced by the musician and those produced when the pickups recycle the

sound issuing from the huge loudspeakers. The result, familiar to anyone who has ever hooked up an amplifier, is "feedback," a sustained, distorted tone shrieking with high harmonic overtones.

The only person to turn feedback and other electronic effects, such as reverb, into blues was the black American guitarist, Jimi Hendrix. As white Chicago bluesman Mike Bloomfield explains, Hendrix used "an immense vocabulary of controlled sounds, not just hoping to get those sounds, but actually controlling them as soon as he produc[ed] them. I have never heard such controlled frenzy." As Townshend admits, "Jimi took some of our stuff, but he was doing a whole different thing with it. He took what I was doing and turned it into music."

Hendrix's closest rival was Eric Clapton, who, together with Jack Bruce (bass) and Ginger Baker (drums) started the archetypal power trio, Cream, in 1966. Blues devotees though its members were, Cream excelled at sheer virtuosity and volume—"a wall of noise," writes one critic, "that was physically palpable, and . . . almost literally bowled audiences over." But volume was not the only reason Clapton did not achieve Hendrix's "controlled frenzy." As one Hendrix biographer recalls, Clapton was also deficient in rhythm:

Clapton could never seem to understand what Hendrix was getting at when he stressed rhythm accompaniment. Hendrix felt that Clapton was too intellectual about it, . . . insisting the guitar was now an instrument of the virtuoso, just like in classical music. Jimi tried to get across the message that the funk, the feel, and the boogie of the blues came from a subtle rhythmic combination . . . where the guitar put the electric fire crackling over the bass and drums, creating the dynamic that made folks want to dance and shout and get it all out.

Clapton himself agrees. Commenting on

his early days, he admits he "forgot" about "time—when you hit the note and when you stop. How you place it exactly."

The glory days of guitar heroism were brief. Hendrix succumbed to drugs in 1970, leaving his "gauntlet," in Charles S. Murray's phrase, "still lying where he left it." And Cream broke up in 1969, despite its commercial success (its first three albums sold 15 million copies in the United States). To his disappointed fans, Clapton explained that Cream had taken "hard rock" as far as it could go. And he meant it. For all his diverse musical activity since then, Clapton has never returned to the sound that culminated in Cream. I say "culminated" because, although various offshoots of hard rock dominated the 1970s, they did so without progressing musically. To be sure, hard rock has produced a line of guitar virtuosos: from Beck and Townshend to Jimmy Page and Eddie Van Halen, to Steve Vai and Vernon Reid. But for all their virtuosity, the only musical values displayed by these idols are speed, dexterity, and athleticism. Guitar heroes scorn the high-tech music now made by computer, but their own playing sounds almost as mechanical.

Early rock also bludgeoned the spirit of the blues in two crucial areas: in its treatment of the erotic and in the relationship between performer and audience. In the first, the Rolling Stones led the way, understanding all too well that many rock fans were transfixed by the myth of black "hyperpotency." A few black performers were already trading on that myth in the mid-1960s, but the Rolling Stones had the advantage, and convenience, of not actually being black. They could cater to white primitivism without worrying about white self-consciousness. And it worked. One British reviewer exclaimed, "Never before has there been a sound to rival this—Except, perhaps, in the jungles of darkest Africa!" Another critic extolled Jagger as England's best "imitation black blues" singer—not just because he exuded "more aggression, more obvious sexuality," but also because he had "big floppy lips." Yet another admirer called gui-

tarist Keith Richards “the world’s only bluegum white man, as poisonous as a rattlesnake,” and extolled the Rolling Stones for “inciting the crowd to orgasm.”

Hendrix catered to the same fantasies, but for him primitivism was both a ploy and a trap. As Clapton explains:

The English people have a very big thing about a spade. They really love that magic thing, the sexual thing. . . . And Jimi came over and exploited that to the limit. . . . He’d do a lot of things, like fool around with his tongue or play his guitar behind his back and run it up and down his crotch. And he’d look out at the audience, and if they were digging it, he wouldn’t like the audience. He’d keep doing it, putting them on, playing less music.

The Rolling Stones also led the way in transforming the relationship between performer and audience. Unlike the Beatles’ manager, Brian Epstein, who got his start selling records in music-obsessed Liverpool, the Stones’ manager, Andrew Loog Oldham, entered the record business from the tangential fields of fashion and public relations. Thus, Oldham’s ideas about performance came less from Afro-American music than from the visual arts—particularly from the stale avant-garde attitudes that he (along with many other early rock figures, including three members of the Stones) picked up in art college. For Oldham, it was only logical to market the Rolling Stones as the “artistic” alternative to the “commercial” Beatles. Here is the strategy, laid out in the group’s first “official biography,” published in 1964:

Many top pop groups achieve their fame and stardom and then go out, quite deliberately, to encourage adults and parents to like them. This doesn’t appeal to the forthright Stones. They will not make any conscious effort to be liked by anybody at all—not even their present fans if it also meant changing their own way of life.

To prove themselves true artists, the Rolling Stones cultivated a posture of contempt for the audience: Instead of smiling at the camera, they scowled; instead of signing autographs, they spat; instead of ending a show at the London Palladium by greeting the fans, they turned and stalked off.

The irony, of course, is that this posture departed not only from the Beatles but also from the blues. Granted, the crowd-pleasing manner that is part of every bluesman’s stock in trade takes a different form when removed from its original all-black setting. But it always reflects a basically positive disposition toward whatever audience happens to be out there. Even the notoriously moody Howlin’ Wolf never failed to behave courteously when performing for his newly acquired white fans. Like most Afro-American musicians, he lived by the adage, “The people can make you, and the same people can break you.”

It was not long before rock’s “artistic” posture became the whole show, with music taking second place to the spectacle of the superstar slowly destroying himself in an increasingly trite orgy of rampant promiscuity, alcoholism, and drug abuse. Hendrix’s life—and music—sank into chaos while his fans cheered. Joplin dropped all pretense of blues artistry in favor of what *Rolling Stone* writer David Dalton calls “a myth of freedom and a disdain for boundaries.” The “deadpan formality” of the blues may have been good enough for black folks, Dalton writes, but protean beings like Joplin needed to “experience not just the blues but the original impulse that created it: the violence, eroticism, craziness, and sputtering of rage.” And the singer agreed:

Young white kids have taken the groove and the soul from black people and added intensity. Black music is understated. I like to fill it full of feeling—to grab somebody by the collar and say “Can’t you understand me?” . . . I was brought up in a white middle-class family—I could have anything, but you need something in your gut, man.

Unfortunately, all Joplin had in her gut at the time of her death in 1970 was hard liquor, hard drugs, and hard feelings toward the world for not loving her enough. And all she left behind was the widespread impression that singing the blues is the same as throwing a public tantrum.

By the end of the 1960s, a great many people, musicians as well as businessmen, were taking careful note of hard rock's commercial success and proceeding to turn the form into fool's gold. Celebrated guitar solos became codified so that less-gifted players could repeat them fast and loud; hard rock's heavy beat became fixed in a deadly pounding that fits the worst stereotypes of both foes and friends. Focusing on this monotonous pounding, political philosopher Allan Bloom observed that "rock has the beat of sexual intercourse." Steve Tyler of the hard-rock band Aerosmith makes a similar observation, though with pride rather than disdain: "It's rhythm and blues, it's twos and fours, it's fucking." No one seems to notice that this "dinosaur beat" is a travesty of the rich, tireless, complicated rhythms of the blues.

By the early 1970s, dozens of groups, from Steppenwolf and Grand Funk in America to Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath in Britain, had adopted the formula. A few, such as Vanilla Fudge, Iron Butterfly, and Deep Purple, added arty organ noodling. But as the 1970s became the 1980s, a seemingly endless parade of groups—Aerosmith, Judas Priest, Def Leppard, Iron Maiden, Twisted Sister, Poison, Motley Crüe, Guns N' Roses—prospered with a no-frills style described by the critic Jon Pareles as "stylized and formu-



"You don't have to wreck your hotel room this trip—we're on holiday!"

laic, a succession of reverberating guitar chords, macho boasts, speed-demon solos and fusillades of drums." To the first MTV generation, this stuff is "rock 'n' roll," even though it sounds nothing like the music of the 1950s. But sound is no longer the point. To these fans, "rock 'n' roll" isn't music; it's attitude.

And where did this attitude come from? Not, it turns out, from Afro-American music. Instead, it grew out of the decadent, pseudoliterary sensibilities of Steppenwolf and certain other rock groups of the late 1960s and early '70s. The music of these groups acquired the name "heavy metal," a phrase borrowed from William S. Burroughs's fictional celebrations of sadomasochism, drug addiction, and ritual murder—subjects that have over the years come to dominate rock lyrics. The champions of heavy metal may claim that there is no significant aesthetic or moral difference between Presley singing "That's All Right Mama" and a group like Slayer regaling 12-year-olds with simulations of human sacrifice, blood communion, mutilation, and necrophilia. But they are wrong.

To begin with eroticism, heavy metal's main accomplishment has been to polarize the sexes. Instead of the heartsore male-female dialogue found in the blues, heavy metal substitutes a male monologue. Musically and emotionally, it succumbs to an adolescent preoccupation with "hardness"—meaning not "hard singing" in the blues or gospel sense but the compulsion to prove one's masculinity by avoiding sounds and feelings that might be construed as "soft." The change is aptly summarized in Charles S. Murray's comparison of Muddy Waters's and Led Zeppelin's treatments of the same song:

The former is a seduction, . . . warm and solicitous: [Muddy Waters] suggests that the woman to whom he is singing is both sexually inexperienced and starved of affection, and volunteers to remedy both conditions. . . . Led Zeppelin, by contrast, come on like thermonuclear gang rape. . . . The woman is strictly an abstract, faceless presence; she is an essential part of the intercourse kit, but not as an individual. 'Love,' in this context, is a euphemism for something measurable with a ruler.

And that was back in 1970. By the 1980s, heavy metal had quit bothering with euphemisms—or with intercourse, for that matter. Good old promiscuity went the way of the dodo bird, as "speed metal" and "death metal" groups beefed up their acts with bloody sadism. The mid-1980s were the heyday of rock videos depicting female victims chained, caged, beaten, and bound with barbed wire, all to whet the appetites of 12- and 13-year-olds for onstage performances such as the famous one in which the group W.A.S.P. sang their hit song, "Fuck Like A Beast," while pretending to batter a woman's skull and rape her with a chain saw.

Offstage, performers regaled fan magazines with tales of strange sex acts with groupies involving wine and beer bottles. Metal stars bragged about having intercourse during performances, recording sessions, or video tapings. Heterosexual dancing disappeared, and metal concerts became all-male workouts consisting of "head-banging" (snapping the head up and down to the beat), "slam-dancing" (violently jostling one another), and "moshing" (pushing and shoving in the "pit" below the stage).

Then there was the semiofficial religion of heavy metal: Satanism and the occult. Every rock fan knows about Altamont, the 1969 rock concert during which a spectator was brutally murdered by members of the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang, hired to provide "security." Altamont is commonly viewed as the last gasp of the 1960s, the turning point after which the counterculture slipped from "peace and love"

into a darker, more pessimistic phase. This view is accurate enough; Altamont certainly took the investment bloom off massive outdoor rock festivals. But the change did not happen in a day. The Rolling Stones had already darkened rock's mood with songs like "Sympathy for the Devil"—which in fact they had performed at Altamont just before the murder occurred.

A mere flirtation for the Rolling Stones, Satanism became a passion with Led Zeppelin's lead guitarist, Jimmy Page. So fond did Page grow of Aleister Crowley, Britain's most famous modern Satanist, that he purchased a former Crowley estate, the reputedly haunted Boleskine House on Scotland's Loch Ness. Next in line was Black Sabbath, a British group derided by critics for their "anguished screeching about war pigs, rat salads, iron men and similar gloomy topics set to an endlessly repeated two-chord riff," but capable of filling football stadiums with crowds eager to see lead singer Ozzy Osbourne do something vile—as when, later in his career, he bit off the head of a bat.

As every rock fan knows, Old Nick is also present in the blues—witness the many legends about blues performers (Robert Johnson, for one) gaining their talent through Faustian pacts. But the very extremes to which heavy metal carries Satanism suggests a radical break. For the fact is that Afro-American culture takes a very different attitude toward the devil than did a turn-of-the-century English decadent such as Crowley, who courted the London press with self-advertised sex orgies, drug marathons, and black masses. Reflecting its folk origins, the blues depicts Satan as a conjurer or trickster—wicked but also vain, mercurial, and susceptible to human wiles. Historian Lawrence Levine reminds us that, during slavery, "songs of the Devil pictured a harsh but almost semicomical figure (often, one suspects, a surrogate for the white man), over whom [the blacks] triumphed with reassuring regularity." Hence the strain of wry humor toward

the devil and his works that pervades the blues, including Johnson's.

The other part of heavy metal's semi-official religion is pre-Christian mythology, especially Celtic and Norse. When first touted by Led Zeppelin, this interest fostered a moody, quiet phase in hard rock's otherwise deafening sound. But overall, the main impact has not been musical. Led Zeppelin reverted to its "wall of noise," and its half-digested mythology set what biographer Stephen Davis calls "the tone of overwrought Dark Ages fantasy . . . that would be the standard psychic backdrop for all the heavy metal bands to come."

It is difficult, now that heavy metal is the theme music of Europe's neo-Nazi youth movement, to ignore the chillingly fascist flavor of this blood-and-soil backdrop. Equally troubling is metal's longstanding posture as an aggressively "white" music, in hostile opposition to whatever "black" music it happens to be competing with. To be sure, heavy metal started out paying homage to the blues. But in a way, that was exactly the problem. Nothing breeds resentment like homage. Rolling Stones biographer Stanley Booth remarked to Mick Jagger in the late 1960s that "we all want to be black, what we think black is." Jagger replied, with characteristic coolness, "I don't. I'm not black and I'm proud of it."

This reply speaks volumes about the transition from early rock to heavy metal. Jagger himself was never smitten with "blackness" so much as skilled at manipulating others who were. But those others were legion, and by the end of the 1960s it is likely that they were tired of the whole musical, folkloric, and (especially) sexual mystique of "what we think black is." What a relief, then, to recast primitivism as an affair of wild white savages lurching through the primeval mists of Europe!

Unlike heavy metal and its grotesque progeny, the blues comes by its supernaturalism naturally. Songs like Robert Johnson's "Hell Hound on My Trail" and "Me and the

Devil Blues" emerged from a living tradition; they were not dug out of a source book for the self-conscious purpose of shocking the public, as when Motley Crüe adopted the Satanic pentagram in the hope that, as one band member allowed, "it would be able to get a rise out of normal citizens." Nor does the supernaturalism in the blues lead to a cult of obscenity and brutality, as in heavy metal and such unspeakable offshoots as "death metal," "grindcore," and (arguably) "gangsta" rap.

To some apologists, this cult of obscenity and brutality is justifiable as ritual, if not as art. To sociologist Deena Weinstein, heavy-metal concerts offer nothing less than "epiphany"—Dionysian ecstasy, brilliant theatrics, organizational genius, and idealized community, all in a perfect balance. Rock critics agree. To Mikal Gilmore of *Rolling Stone*, heavy metal is "a vital and reliable rite of passage." To Jon Pareles of the *New York Times*, "heavy metal concerts are theatrical events, community rituals." Of like mind, unsurprisingly, is heavy-metal producer Tom Werman, who reminds us that young people "need to be angry, they need to have music they can clench their fists by, to pump themselves up by. They're not always happy. They're confused and alienated. . . . They need an outlet."

Given my own account of the blues as a ritualized way of coping with harsh realities, I have a certain sympathy for this line of argument. But only up to a point. Werman says that heavy metal helps young people "feel angry." Yet he also implies that they are already angry, that society has made them angry. Does heavy metal offer a release for anger that is already there? Or does it whip up even more anger? Does whipping up more anger offer greater release? And what happens afterward? Does the head-banger go home after the concert with his troubled emotions under control, having experienced what Albert Murray calls "a ritual of purification and affirmation"?

Somehow I doubt it. As Albert Murray explains, the blues ritual is intended to help

people "meet the basic requirements of the workaday world." The same cannot be said of heavy metal. To the contrary, the young people most deeply involved with metal, such as the dropouts, runaways, and "throw-aways" who congregated in places like Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles during the 1980s, seem incapable of coping with anything. As a number of observers have noted, these young people display a bizarre combination of vaulting ambition and drooping despair, based on the conviction that the only alternative to stardom is death in the gutter. Nor do the stars provide guidance. They are just as nihilistic as their followers. But instead of being punished for self-destructive behavior, they are rewarded.

At some point, even apologists for metal quit praising its cathartic powers and say that most head-bangers grow out of their obsession anyway. This is the apologists' final argu-

ment, and it may very well be true. But it fails to explain how those same young people are supposed to make up for the months and years they wasted in the grip of something so ugly and useless.

I have no doubt that the youthful (and not-so-youthful) champions of rock and metal will ignore the substance of these arguments and dismiss them as the complaint of an aging flower child longing for the music of her youth. My reply is simple: The blues is not the music of my youth. It was not created by my generation or by any single age cohort. Quite the opposite: It is an American perennial, whose flowering and withering does not fit easily into the tidy decades so beloved of some pundits, critics, and historians. That is why serious attention to the blues is not a sign of regression but rather of renewal—that is, of hope for an imminent improvement in the quality of the music we hear. At the moment,



Willie Nelson, the "outlaw" country musician, is only one of many contemporary songwriter-performers who are helping to return blues to its central place in American popular music.

such signs are appearing all over.

Take jazz, long considered defunct but recently revitalized by the so-called "neoclassical" movement, which seeks to identify with both the greater jazz past and the greater jazz audience. The name topping the charts is Wynton Marsalis, the New Orleans trumpeter who dazzles listeners with his facility in both the European classics and bebop. But there are many other names, and, as Marsalis would be the first to point out, neoclassicism is nothing new. Indeed, his heroes are those figures who over the past 40 years have exerted a steady counterpressure against such tendencies as free jazz and rock fusion. When Charlie Parker died in 1955, many of his fellow beboppers decided that the best way to move jazz forward was to reach back—into the blues. Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, John Coltrane, and Sonny Rollins did just that, and they were only following in the footsteps of Ellington.

Or take country music, currently the best-selling form of popular music behind the amorphous category "rock." In the mid-1960s, when rock first appeared on the scene, its fans considered country music a lily-white bastion, altogether hostile to the blues. And, indeed, country was dominated by the unbluesy "Nashville Sound," aptly summarized by Robert K. Oermann: "The procedure was to smooth over the roughness of the country style of a singer with violin sections, soft background voices, sophisticated arrangements, and studio technology. A typical Nashville Sound record features a high jangling guitar strum, country instruments overlaid with a soaring violin section, vocal background 'ooohs' . . . and a slight echo effect on the lead singer's voice."

Yet this image of country music blots out the memory of those legendary performers, from Jimmie Rodgers to Bob Wills to Bill Monroe, who learned their craft partly from bluesmen. It also obscures the importance of honky-tonk, the Texas strain of country heavily influenced by rhythm and blues during the 1940s. During the 1950s, the most re-

spected names in country—Ernest Tubb, Lefty Frizzell, Hank Williams, George Jones—retained those rhythm and blues influences, even when besieged by violins. And by 1959, honky-tonk was poised to make a comeback, as the commercial success of Buck Owens's swinging, bluesy sound enabled him to build a recording empire in Bakersfield, California, and foster the 1960s careers of such honky-tonk stalwarts as Merle Haggard.

The abiding weaknesses of country music are two: love of sentimental cliché, rooted in its turn-of-the-century link with Tin Pan Alley, and an aversion to the rhythmic counterpoint of Afro-American music. The blues influence provides a welcome tonic for both ills, as proven most forcefully by "outlaw" country musician Willie Nelson. A successful songwriter who left Nashville for his native Texas in 1971, Nelson is an iron-willed character who proceeded to use country as a base from which to explore everything from jazz to gospel, blues to boogie-woogie, spirituals to swing. If the term "outlaw" means musical freedom, then Nelson is responsible for the happy fact that country music today contains more outlaws than law-abiders.

As for the lily-whiteness of country, I cannot assert that any part of the record industry, including the Nashville establishment, operates without white racism. But there is more than one kind of racism in popular music. After all, what is more degrading to blacks: country music's apparent exclusiveness or metal's (and "gangsta" rap's) increasingly sick primitivism? Moreover, it is not evident that the country audience rejects black performers out of hand. Beginning in 1965, black country star Charley Pride sold more records than anyone on the RCA label, except Elvis Presley. It is also true that, despite the fondness for country music expressed by such legendary black artists as Ray Charles and Charlie Parker, the genre's pale complexion is partly the artifact of black attitudes. In 1992, rising black country singer Cleve Francis made an astute observation: "Maybe Nashville

did discriminate against black singers, but in the black community, nobody encouraged you to sing country music—it's a two-way street."

Of course, both Pride and Francis avoid injecting blues into their country music. In this one respect, at least, country audiences resemble rock audiences: They are more tolerant of musical freedom in white performers than in black. But here again, the charge of racism is too easy because the best country musicians use their eminence to reaffirm their blues roots. And these reaffirmations—whether Nelson doing a TV special with Ray Charles or Randy Travis recording a duet with B. B. King—contain none of the leering condescension found in many rock tributes. It may seem odd to discuss country music in the same breath as neoclassical jazz, since their aims and accomplishments are so different. But they belong to the same family, and in their own ways they both provided a safe haven for the blues when the blues was under attack.

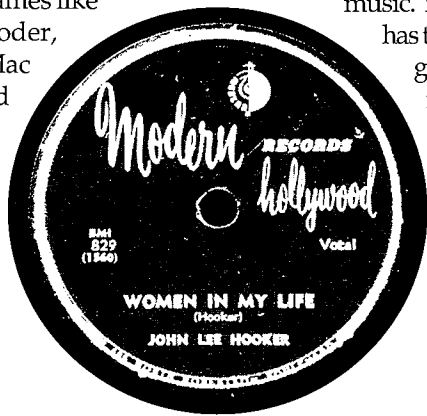
Finally, there are the musicians I call root doctors, those members of the 1960s generation who fell in love with the blues and, despite many changes, have remained stubbornly loyal ever since. Now in their forties or older, these people are as seasoned, in their way, as the blues performers they first admired. Their careers have been swamped, sometimes capsize, by the upheavals of their times. But the familiarity in the 1990s of names like Mike Bloomfield, Ry Cooder, John Mayall, Bonnie Raitt, Mac "Dr. John" Rebennack, and Jimmie Vaughan suggests that maybe these people have been doing something right all along. The

salient fact about these root doctors is that, unlike such 1960s rock icons as Mick Jagger, they are not perceived as "old." They are not getting any younger, to be sure. But their music is not "old," at least not in the sense of being stale, repetitious, or anachronistic. Instead, it occupies a special niche only slightly below that of the masters. Most listeners, young and old, understand that these root doctors have paid their dues.

Back in the 1960s, Muddy Waters tactfully passed judgment on his young British acolytes:

I think they're great people, but they're not blues players. Really, what separates them from people like Wolf and myself, we're doing the stuff like we did way years ago down in Mississippi. These kids are just getting up, getting stuff and going with it, you know, so we're expressing our lives, the hard times and the different things we been through. It's not real. They don't feel it. I don't think you can feel the blues until you've been through some hard times.

Note well that Muddy Waters does not find the source of blues feeling in skin color, geography, social class, or relationship to the means of production. Rather, he sees it as the product of long, hard experience with life as well as with music. Yet once achieved, blues feeling has the power to transcend race, sex, generation, and most other human divisions. That is the source of its vigor, and that is why, if the blues does not return to our music, our music will remain in trouble.



AFRO-AMERICAN MUSIC AND THE MAINSTREAM

The story of how Afro-American music conquered the world lies behind so much of our culture that most everyone accepts its basic outline. West African ideas of pitch and rhythm enter the New World, encounter both repression and appreciation from white society, and emerge transformed in a family of sounds—blues, jazz, and rock—capable of expressing the essence of modern life with moving force. But the tale is so intertwined with America's ever-festering racial problems that the authors who have tried to write it down disagree, sometimes vehemently, on the details. Is it a history of exploitation—of black creators repeatedly ripped off by pale imitators and their record companies—or artistic triumph, as African-American musicians permanently reshaped the mainstream culture that tried to exclude them? For that matter, is Afro-American music fundamentally African or the hybrid its name suggests?

Simply describing the music or its history can mean taking sides. In **The Music of Black Americans: A History** (Norton, 1971), Eileen Southern, a professor emerita of music and Afro-American studies at Harvard, shows little interest in questions of artistic ownership, probably because she is too busy documenting an immense musical tradition. She meticulously traces lines of descent from West African music to slave songs and field hollers and on to ragtime, jazz, and rock 'n' roll, assembling a staggering catalogue of movements and ideas. But while the scope of Southern's work may leave little room for political questions, she cannot avoid them entirely. Her assertion that jazz sprang from the union of African music and European instrumentation and ensemble playing is a highly disputed point, not a matter of record.

Certainly others would agree about the music's mixed heritage. For jazz critic Albert Murray—**Stomping the Blues** (McGraw-Hill, 1976)—the blues is a distinctly American creation, "a synthesis of African and European elements, the product of an Afro-American sensibility in an American mainland situation." Eu-

ropean and African cultures met elsewhere in the world, Murray notes, and produced "calypso, rumba, the tango, the conga, the mambo, and so on, but not the blues." The blues idiom, therefore, "is not West African, nor is it European . . . it is Afro-U.S." Murray's sentiments echo those expressed by French musician and critic André Hodeir in **Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence** (Grove Press, 1953). Writing from the perspective of a musician who loves jazz and European classical music and can discuss both with passion and precision, Hodeir defines jazz as the product of blues and military marches. He even insists that "a comparison between the Negro-American music of the oldest recordings in the New Orleans style and the different varieties of African music shows immediately that they have fewer points in common than differences."

These are not, however, universally held beliefs. They would likely draw fire from historian Lawrence Levine and author/musician Ortiz M. Walton. In **Black Culture and Black Consciousness** (Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), Levine admits that black and white Americans living around the turn of the century sang many of the same songs, but he describes the blues themselves as thoroughly African, showing white cultural influence mainly in their emphasis on the solo performer—a rarity in African music. Walton, in **Music: Black, White, and Blue** (Morrow, 1972), goes one step farther, insisting that the blues and jazz have been tempered by "the American experience" but draw little from white American culture. Walton sees the relationship between black musicians and the mainstream as a steady pattern of exploitation and artistic theft. If his analysis unfairly brands white jazz musicians as, at best, record company tools and, at worst, shameless plagiarists, it is hard to deny his contention that the music industry has always preferred to promote fresh white faces, no matter who played the music first.

In fact, it may be more surprising that any chronicler of African-American music could go

on paper supporting the record industry, but sociologist Charles Keil manages to. In **Urban Blues** (Univ. of Chicago, 1966), he states that for all their faults, the record companies have introduced mainstream America to a vital piece of black culture and given a select few bluesmen an audience beyond the dreams of their musical ancestors. "Is the opportunity to tell your story to hundreds of thousands of people an exploitation?" he asks. Considering the impoverished, nomadic lives of such blues pioneers as Robert Johnson, detailed by journalist Peter Guralnick in **Searching for Robert Johnson** (Obelisk, 1989), Keil's answer that "many bluesmen would pay for the privilege" sounds like the poignant truth.

Questions of exploitation have dogged rock 'n' roll to a far greater extent than blues or jazz, in part because of the belief that rock 'n' roll was merely black music played by whites (or, as Walton would put it, the blues played badly). But in **The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll** (rev. ed., Pantheon, 1984), writer and independent record label executive Charlie Gillett argues that while rock 'n' roll may have begun life as repackaged rhythm and blues, it soon blended with country, swing, and other musical styles to create something truly new.

Others, such as rock critic Greil Marcus in **Mystery Train** (Dutton, 1975), have made the same case by focusing on Elvis Presley and his country roots. Although Gillett acknowledges Presley's role, he is far more interested in the career of Bill Haley, whose popular cover versions of such rhythm and blues tunes as "Shake, Rattle and Roll" left him open to charges of stealing riffs from lesser-known black musicians. Gillett shows how Haley carefully assembled his sound from elements of dixieland, rhythm and blues, and western swing, tinkering for years before finding the right mix. Haley didn't create rock 'n' roll, of course, but Gillett suggests that his willingness to experiment—shared by countless black and white contemporaries—did.

If the rock 'n' roll of Haley's day was inter-

racial, performed by blacks and whites for a mixed audience, its offspring, rock, was not. So it is no surprise that one of the few black musicians to gain entrance to rock's mostly white pantheon, Jimi Hendrix, should have had such a complicated relationship with the mainstream. Poet and biographer David Henderson, in **'Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky: The Life of Jimi Hendrix** (Bantam, 1981), pays close attention to the role race played in shaping Hendrix's career—from his manager's decision to launch him first in Britain, where the locals were in love with Afro-American music and desperate for an "authentic" source, to the racial conflicts within Hendrix's band. But rather than view Hendrix as an isolated figure, a lone black musician surrounded by whites imitating blacks, Henderson sees him as part of a larger music, as "essentially" a blues man. While it was necessary for the publicists to put the rock banner on Jimi's music," Henderson writes, "the funky syncopated foundation and wide choices of phrasings and colorings rested in the blues tradition." Nor does Henderson present his subject as the sole modern disciple of that tradition. He describes the affinity Hendrix felt for such diverse but closely related artists as jazzman Roland Kirk and soul/funk groups War and Sly and the Family Stone. To Henderson, Hendrix was one black artistic hero out of many, all able to win acceptance through the sheer strength of their music.

If few authors can agree on how to interpret the relationship between Afro-American music and the mainstream, neither can many of the musicians. Witness the recent debates over white rappers such as Vanilla Ice, Marky Mark, and Snow. But that disagreement, within the musical community and among the authors who write about it, should be recognized for what it is—a sign of life. After all, the only artistic traditions that provoke no debate are static and dead.

—David Baker

David Baker, a former assistant editor of Campus Voice Magazine, writes about music and the arts.



G. B. VICO

THE ANTIMODERNIST

BY MARK LILLA

Many great minds of the modern world, from Karl Marx to James Joyce, have claimed Giambattista Vico as an intellectual forefather. But Mark Lilla finds that these admirers usually misread the arguments of the West's first antimodernist.

Giambattista Vico was born in Naples in 1668 and died there in 1744. The son of a modest bookseller, he received an unconventional education, tutoring himself in his father's shop between short and difficult periods in Jesuit schools. At the age of 19 he left the city to tutor the sons of a minor aristocrat and spent much of the next nine years studying Latin and writing mediocre poetry. On returning to Naples he began to frequent scientific and philosophical circles with ties to those in other European capitals, but he never traveled again or mastered another European

language. His professional advancement was blocked at almost every turn. Although trained in law, he failed to win a highly prized university chair in that discipline and remained instead an ill-paid professor of rhetoric for more than 40 years, supplementing his income by writing Latin inscriptions and court histories. The audience for his own philosophical writings—on metaphysics, jurisprudence, and finally a "new science concerning the common nature of the nations"—hardly extended beyond Naples during his lifetime. He admired Leibniz and Newton as "the two foremost minds of our age," but all his efforts to

engage their pan-European intellectual circles ended in bitter, embarrassing failure. He died at home in poverty and obscurity, a provincial curiosity having left no apparent trace on the European thought of his time.

As the English historian of ideas Isaiah Berlin has remarked, "Vico's life and fate is perhaps the best of all known examples of what is too often dismissed as a romantic fiction—the story of a man of original genius, born before his time, forced to struggle in poverty and illness, misunderstood and largely neglected in his lifetime, and all but totally forgotten after his death." It is indeed a romantic story, and in more than one respect. For the fact that we read Vico today, that many consider him an undiscovered genius or even a prophet, must be credited to his rediscovery during the 19th century in the cultural upheaval that has come to be called Romanticism. Indeed, Vico's works, including the now-famous *New Science* (1744) were virtually unknown to educated Europeans until the Romantics happened upon them. The most important was French historian Jules Michelet, who reported a "frenzy caught from Vico" in 1824, which soon became an "incredible intoxication with his great historical principle." Eventually Michelet declared that "I have no other master than Vico." Upon the appearance of

Michelet's abridged French translation of the *New Science* in 1827, Vico gained immediate renown as the first thinker to have stumbled upon the historical, political, and aesthetic ideas then sweeping the continent. Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce's later judgment of Vico, that he was "neither more nor less than the 19th century in germ," was confirmed time and again by those who claimed to find in his writings what Michelet called the "principle of man's self-creation."

To those touched by the Romanticism of the age, Vico's works appeared to offer scientific grounds for a Promethean view of human nature and society. Through his analysis of poetry and early religion, Vico seemed to have discovered that human beings make their own social arrangements through language, that

the moral truths of those arrangements change with language, and that they might be rejuvenated by our returning—through a historical *ricorso*—to the pagan and poetic beginnings of the first societies.

The Vico we read today is, in most respects, the same figure we inherited from this Romantic rediscovery. Even now he is esteemed as a pioneer by many who possess only a passing familiarity with his writings. These admirers believe he discovered new philosophical principles essential to the modern outlook: namely, that man transforms his own nature in history and that truth changes in different cultural or linguistic contexts. If anything, increased aware-



Frontispiece of Vico's *Scienza nuova* (1744)

ness of Vico's historical background has heightened the popular sense of his originality. Edmund Wilson expressed the view of many readers when he wrote in 1940 that "it is strange and stirring to find in the *Scienza nuova* the modern sociological and anthropological mind waking amid the dusts of a provincial school of jurisprudence of the end of the 17th century and speaking through the antiquated machinery of a half-scholastic treatise." The 19th century, which produced poets and revolutionaries, looked to the *New Science* for a celebration of the imagination and of national liberation. (James Joyce was the last of these poets.) The late 20th century, which produces scholars and critics, has taken a cooler view of that work but still finds it seductive. Today Vico is the domesticated property of the university, where he is honored by modern sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and social historians for his theories of language and culture.

To those who devote more careful study to Vico's philosophy, it is tempting to dismiss these readings out of hand as naive or anachronistic, since it is a rule of intellectual history that we not visit upon our forefathers the sins of their children. Yet there are cases in which this rule must be bent, and Vico's is one of them. It is not uncommon for a thinker who stands above his time to be ignored by it, nor for his aims to be recovered and exploited in a later period through the workings of what might be called intellectual "action at a distance" or, better still, "elective affinities." Indeed, a work's ability to elicit such affinities across centuries may even reveal important clues about a thinker's original motivations which a too-narrow conception of geographical and temporal context can cause us to miss. In Vico's case, the contrast between the frigid reception his works received during his lifetime and the enormous

interest they generated in the 19th and 20th centuries is so striking, so out of the ordinary, as to raise an intriguing set of questions: Could it be that the Romantics were on to something? Did they see something essential to Vico's philosophy that his contemporaries were unprepared to understand? And might the "elective affinities" between Vico and the intellectual revolution of the 19th century in turn reveal something fundamental about the latter?

These are the forceful and highly influential questions that have been posed by Isaiah Berlin. More than any other contemporary historian of ideas, Berlin has given the affinities between Vico and the intellectual movements growing out of 19th-century Europe a central place in the interpretation of both. It is to him that we owe our current awareness of how Vico's philosophy anticipated the important current of modern thought that has been called the "Counter-Enlightenment." Although Vico has never lacked partisans and promoters since his rediscovery at the hands of Michelet, most have used his ideas as stalking-horses for their own (be they Hegelian, Marxist, Catholic, nationalist, or other). Isaiah Berlin has taught us to see Vico as an early participant in a much grander quarrel between the two most important schools of modern thought: one that finds its roots in the French Enlightenment and one that developed as a Counter-Enlightenment reaction, especially in 19th-century Germany. At the head of one school stand the great French philosophes: Descartes, Voltaire, Diderot, d'Alembert, and Helvetius. At the head of the other school stands the lonely figure of Vico, whose forgotten books of the early 18th century anticipated those of the great German Counter-Enlightenment writers—Johann Georg Hamann, Johann Gottfried von Herder, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, and the Romantic poets. It is Berlin's further conten-

Mark Lilla is assistant professor of politics and French studies at New York University. He is the author of *G. B. Vico: The Making of an Anti-Modern* (1993), from which this article has been adapted. Copyright © 1993 by Mark Lilla.

tion that this quarrel has never been settled to the satisfaction of either intellectual party, each of which still has partisans today. Understanding the debate between the Enlightenment and its critics is therefore a precondition for mapping the intellectual landscape of our own age.

This assessment of Vico's place within modern thought depends on an interpretation of the Enlightenment that was first popularized by the Counter-Enlightenment itself. In this view, the philosophes were radical rationalists who dogmatically held all truths about nature and man to be universal, objective, timeless, and transparent to reason. As a movement they propounded essentially ahistorical philosophical and political doctrines that proved to be (as Berlin described them) utopian, inflexible, deterministic, arrogant, unfeeling, homogenizing, and intolerant. Vico was the first thinker to sense that the modern rationalism of Descartes carried within itself the seeds of just such errors. And it was this insight into Descartes that put Vico on a new path, one that would later be widened into the high road of Counter-Enlightenment.

In important respects, German thinkers of the 19th century only exploited and applied ideas that Vico had already articulated (however confusedly) in the early 18th. Isaiah Berlin has identified seven such "time-defying notions" that Vico first offered as alternatives to Enlightenment dogma. They are: that human nature is changeable, and that humans themselves contribute to this change; that man only knows what he creates; that therefore the human sciences are distinct from and superior to the natural sciences; that cultures are wholes; that cultures are created essentially through self-expression; that art is a major form of such expression; and that we may come to understand the expressions of other cultures, in the present or past, through the exercise of reconstructive imagination. However disorganized this catalogue may be, its drift is clear enough. For Berlin, Vico's writings represent the first significant effort to

derive a modern philosophy of knowledge free from rationalism. More important still, they unveiled a new approach to other cultures, permitting us to understand foreign peoples in their own terms, rather than judging them, as the Enlightenment allegedly had, in the high court of inflexible, eternal reason. Berlin calls this new epistemological and cultural outlook "pluralism," and he has championed it against the "monism" he detects in the Enlightenment.

This interpretation of Vico as a pluralist goes a long way toward explaining the enduring interest in his writings ever since their rediscovery in the early 19th century. The reaction against the Enlightenment in the aftermath of the French Revolution was profound and focused precisely on this issue of monism. The universal political doctrines of the philosophes were held to be responsible for the butchery of the Terror and Napoleonic imperialism: On this, if on nothing else, the new intellectual parties of "right" and "left" born during these events agreed. In place of those doctrines they proposed more particularist ones, rooted in ethnic nationalism, religion, or radical communitarianism (and, in several cases, a combination of these elements). More thoughtful critics of the Enlightenment understood, quite rightly, that the pursuit of universal political standards was itself driven by the assumption that the natural light of reason shines equally in all human beings—that, like fire, it burns in Greece and Persia alike. The Counter-Enlightenment philosophers sought to deny this assumption, charging that the priority given reason in the 18th century had driven out feeling and imagination and that its presumed universality ignored the traditional and prejudicial background of all human understanding. These ideas about feeling, imagination, prejudice, and tradition then became central elements in the Counter-Enlightenment case for epistemological and cultural pluralism.

The mark left on our political and intellectual landscape by this philosophical turn would prove to be enduring, as would the

periodic return to Vico's writings. The reason is that the Counter-Enlightenment did more than offer an alternative to the philosophy of the Enlightenment. It also managed to give intellectual form to an inchoate dissatisfaction with modern life by focusing that dissatisfaction on the Enlightenment—which now was charged with defacing nature in the name of scientific and technological progress, with destroying traditional communities in the name of cosmopolitanism and individualism, and with encouraging political extremism in the name of social engineering. To the extent that Vico is a philosophical forerunner of the Counter-Enlightenment, his works will remain as timely as this distaste for the modern age. Berlin has made it abundantly clear in his writings that he does not share this general distaste for modernity, that only the political excesses of our century attracted him to the Counter-Enlightenment, and that he recognizes the many political dangers latent in this alternative tradition (especially nationalism). Still, it is the Enlightenment he blames for the political disasters of our time, and it is to Vico that he turns in building his case against the Enlightenment heritage. Berlin is not alone. For a century and a half now, from the Romantics down to the present, the party of Vico has consistently attracted those who see in the Enlightenment the source of modern problems and who have sought a more humane teaching in the baroque edifice of the *New Science*.

The problem with this view is that, although Vico may indeed have numerous affinities with the Counter-Enlightenment, he was hardly a pluralist. An attentive reading of his entire philosophical corpus reveals that he was a far more profound critic of the modern age than has previously been supposed and that his departure from the premises of modern thought led him in a new and disturbing direction—not toward a more humane tempering of Enlightenment doctrines but toward a highly novel appeal to order and authority made in the new language of mod-

ern science. Vico's first philosophical works, his *Orations* (1699–1706) and his *Metaphysics* (1710), are written in a theological idiom; his final *New Science* (1744) appears to be a modern scientific treatise. It is precisely this combination of premodern theology and modern method that is the key to understanding his thought. Vico is the father of the first anti-modern social science, and it is in the light of this new science that the intellectual heritage of the Counter-Enlightenment deserves reconsideration.

This conclusion is quite out of keeping with the standard interpretations of Vico's philosophy, especially those current in the Anglophone world. The usual approach to Vico in the United States and England has been to focus attention almost exclusively on his final masterpiece, the *New Science*, and to plunder the earlier (and generally untranslated) works selectively for premonitions of his science. This has led to a highly selective reading of that treatise, one which tends to heighten its "modern" or "forward-looking" character. Such an approach is understandable, for even in the remarkable translation by Thomas G. Bergin and Max H. Fisch, the *New Science* remains a highly perplexing book. More than one reader has opened it expectantly in the hope of discovering the key to modern pluralism, only to become lost in what seem to be interminable archaic digressions on biblical chronology, philology, Greek myth, the history of Roman law, and fine points of Christian theology. Vico's late writing style alternates between that of Francis Bacon and Isidore of Seville, the seventh-century author of the wildly idiosyncratic Latin sourcebook, *Etymologies* (which Vico often cites). Modern readers understandably latch on to Vico's more Baconian pronouncements as the source of his philosophical novelty and ignore the rest as unessential. They find it unimaginable that the spirits of Bacon and Isidore could coexist in the breast of one man. Yet such coexistence is not only possible but absolutely essential to what Vico hoped to achieve.

To understand Vico we must begin where he began, and that is with God. Vico did not begin writing as a historian or as a scientist. He began as a theological metaphysician defending his craft against the onslaught of modern philosophical skepticism. All of Vico's first writings are concerned with the relation between "things human and divine" and are directed against the impious curiosity he sees at work in the modern philosophy of Descartes. Vico believes that human beings are fallen, and that their fall imposed certain limits on their activities, which they transgress at their peril. "*Homo neque nihil neque omnia est*," Vico wrote in 1710: "Man is not nothing nor everything." He therefore criticizes Descartes' impious ambition to subject all revealed and commonsensical truths to the test of doubt and reason, since such analysis can only produce a generation of skeptics. In response to this skepticism, and as an alternative to Descartes, Vico developed his own theological-metaphysical vocabulary. The concepts he begins using in these early writings remain present in everything he later writes because they reflect his most fundamental motivation: to defend modern man against the skepticism that modern thought instills and to restore in him the prudence and moderation of an earlier age.

From Descartes, Vico then turns his sights on the founders of modern political philosophy—Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, and Bayle. The issue is once again skepticism. In his rarely studied jurisprudential treatise, *Universal Right* (1720–22), Vico asserts that the real social threat of modern skepticism is to be expected from the new political theories, which are materialistic, individualistic, and atheistic, and which instill doubt about traditional political and theological truths. Once again, Vico does not appeal directly to those truths as means of combating skepticism. Nor does he revive a theological conception of politics. Instead he develops a highly original jurisprudential theory that combines modern and premodern elements.

That theory of "universal right" turns out to be a direct political application of his early metaphysical and theological principles. Political man is fallen, Vico repeats, but God remains the divine "origin" of all political right and sets out the developmental "cycle" to guide fallen nations to natural justice. This treatise serves as a necessary link between Vico's metaphysical writings and his *New Science* and even contains his first attempt at writing such a science.

But the real novelty of the *Universal Right* is to be found in its treatment of Rome. The history of Roman law, as Vico understands it, offers a sharp contrast to the growing decadence of European life under the influence of modern thought. Authority and superstition protected the early Romans from the skepticism of Greek philosophy and permitted them to build a great city, then a great empire. Modern political philosophy is actively destroying these irrational foundations of European society, treating them with contempt and denying that man is fallen and therefore limited. Vico's writings from this point on represent a single continuous effort to explain the providential genius behind Roman politics in terms that modern thinkers would find acceptable and thus to make Rome once again a political exemplar for the nations. He begins in the second volume of the *Universal Right* by announcing a new science of philology demonstrating God's providential "constancy" throughout Roman history. But he soon abandons this effort and, in the several editions of his *New Science* written over the next two decades, takes up the more ambitious task of showing how providence guides all nations through an "ideal eternal history" resembling that of the Romans. All nations once were as Rome and therefore can return to their "Roman" roots as an alternative to modern political life. Ancient Rome is thus transformed into a universal model for the development of all nations, by means of modern science. And this science is, in Vico's phrase, a "rational civil theology of divine providence."

Once these three central elements of Vico's early writings are recognized—theol-

ogy, politics, and Rome—the aim and achievement of his final *New Science* can be better understood. That aim is unswerving: to defend pre-rational man and traditional society against the acids of modernity, especially of modern thought. His achievement is extraordinary—although it is not the achievement that many of his readers since the 19th century have attributed to him. Vico is the first European thinker to have presented a profoundly antimodern political theory in the guise of a modern social science. He does not use the reactionary language of later antimoderns to defend traditional societies; instead, he speaks analytically of the subrational “common senses of mankind” which science reveals to be the foundations of every society and which deserve support. He does not present a dogmatic defense of customary societies against developed republics; rather, he uses his science to reveal the hidden glories of all nations’ “divine” and “heroic” ages before they pass into republicanism. Finally, rather than attack directly the subversive skeptical doctrines of modern philosophy, he implies that modern Europe is passing through a cycle, or *ricorso*, of Roman decadence and decline, which was brought about by free thought, individual liberty, and the withering of tradition—in short, by pluralism. He calls this decadence the “barbarism of reflection,” a barbarism brought on not by the abandonment of reason but by the abandonment of “ancient wisdom” in the name of reason. The social futility of philosophy, and especially rational political philosophy, is now demonstrated through a modern science of society.

What Vico understood perhaps more profoundly than any of his predecessors was that the debate over the legitimacy of the modern age is fundamentally a debate about modern philosophy. The standard charge against modern philosophy, from the Counter-Enlightenment down to the present day, has been that of excessive rationalism. Early-modern thinkers, it is asserted, showed too much faith in reason’s

capacities and imposed its dictates on men and nature, often with disastrous results. Vico also makes this charge, which is why he has so frequently been considered a modern “pluralist” resisting the encroaching “monism” of enlightened philosophy. But his charges carry with them certain theological and social presuppositions that have received too little attention. The effect of philosophical rationalism, Vico insists, is not to produce a cold, rationalized, technology-obsessed world. Rationalism brings on social decline by means of religious and political skepticism. And it is his fear of skepticism, of the disorder and decadence that radical doubt could bring about, that animates his long campaign against the modern thinkers. Vico is worried less by what reason is capable of achieving—it is, after all, a thin reed in fallen man—than by what it is capable of destroying.

Vico saw modern thought and modern freedom as mutually reinforcing and therefore as suspect. The modern philosophers taught that man was free from any natural hierarchy and that the only legitimate authority is one he imposes on himself through his own reason. But by teaching men to be skeptical of all authority, especially religious authority, they rendered their own modern societies permanently fragile. Man needs more than reason and freedom to govern himself; he needs belief, tradition, custom, order. Writing before the peak of the French Enlightenment, Vico had anticipated how the antireligious and anti-authoritarian tendencies already present in early-modern thought would manifest themselves fully after his death.

Vico was a conservative, as were many but certainly not all of his 19th-century followers. Although he was read with sympathy by scores of revolutionaries, he attracted an equal number of readers nostalgic for “the world we have lost” after the French Revolution. Revolution and nostalgia were not incompatible sentiments in the 19th century; nor have they been since. Still, it was not a superficial cultural

conservatism that attracted Vico's most important followers. It was rather the well-articulated theory of human nature underlying his conservatism that found such a sympathetic reception, especially among those opposed to the French Enlightenment. Prodded by his encounter with Descartes' philosophy, Vico managed to translate his theology into the language of modern social science. Both his theology and his science teach that man is born a fallen, ignorant creature and cannot develop under his own unassisted power; that he is first a creature of subrational drives and passions rather than of reason; and that he is also a product of language, which speaks through him in history. From the moment Vico turns to historical science to confirm his theology, man is revealed as the object rather than the subject of history. Whether man retains any freedom within history remains uncertain. What is certain is that philosophy does not offer that freedom, since philosophy is itself a historical product. Only science seems, miraculously, to escape history's grasp, and the only freedom Vico's science offers is that of serving and conserving religious wisdom.

Religious wisdom and modern social science are Vico's proposed alternatives to the political liberty and free philosophical reflection offered by the modern age. It is unclear, however, that such a science can always be expected to serve traditional religious wisdom. The history of the social sciences as they developed after Vico certainly offers good reason to question this assumption. Certain great 19th-century social scientists such as Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx turned their sciences directly against religion. Others, like Henri

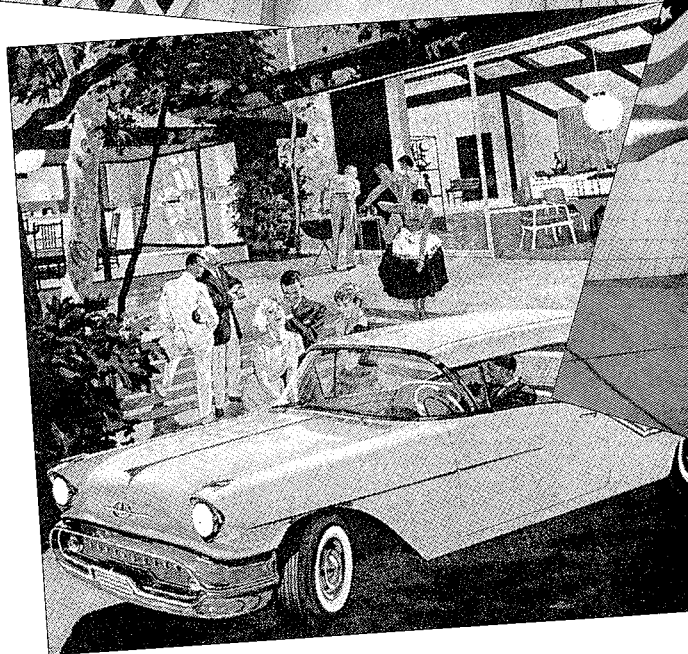
Saint-Simon and August Comte, spoke openly of the need for order and authority, even of the need to create new religions—a conveniently forgotten, but extremely revealing, chapter in modern intellectual history.

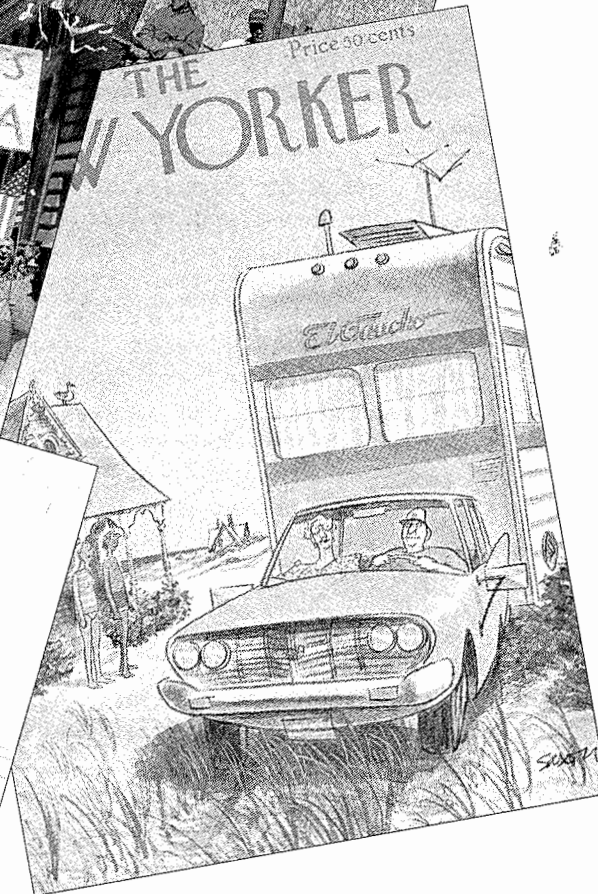
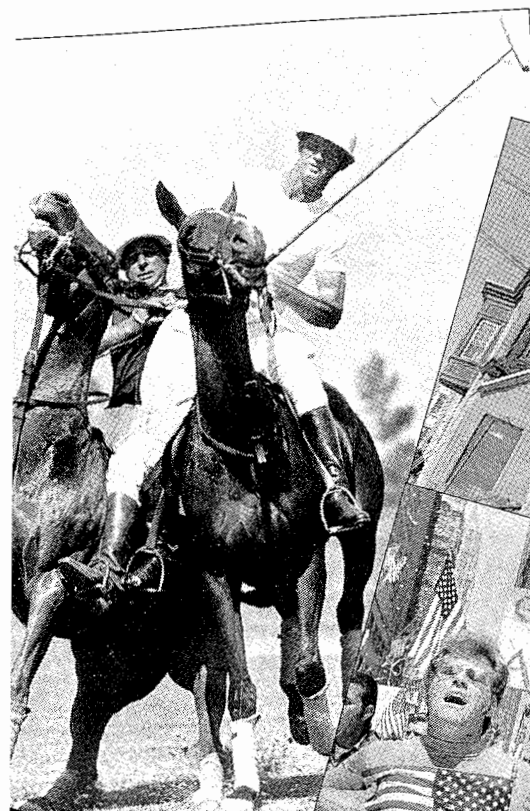
An important part of Vico's legacy to the 19th and 20th centuries is his discovery that modern social science could serve antimodern political and religious ends. More remarkable still, however, was his intuitive sense that a science of man as a subrational creature could be an effective tool for silencing what little reason man has. Vico saw that the liberation of reason in philosophy implied the liberation of man *tout court*, which he rejected. What still deserves explanation is how Vico's scientific conquest of reason could, in the centuries that followed, be construed as a victory for human freedom.

The contemporary attempt to revive aspects of Counter-Enlightenment thought (notably the suspicion of human reason) while retaining selected features of the Enlightenment outlook (notably liberal politics) may be understandable. But it is philosophically and historically naive. Vico, his 19th-century followers, and their adversaries all understood that modern thought carries within itself two tendencies moving in opposite directions, and that one must choose between them. 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.

The New Politics of Class in America

Judging by the nightly news, class conflict in America has been reduced to a tussle over the tax code: Are the rich paying their "fair share" of the nation's taxes? To press the question of class much beyond such dollars-and-cents discussions is to evoke a distinct feeling of unease in most Americans. Yet as our three essayists argue, the nation's social classes have undergone a transformation. During the past 30 years, the moral status attached to being poor, middle class, or rich has been drastically altered. And these changes are directly responsible for many of today's most furious political battles—over gay rights, welfare, and other issues.





The Poor Pre-eminent

BY LAWRENCE M. MEAD

When the problem of entrenched poverty suddenly appeared on the public agenda during the mid-1960s, it transformed the character of political debate in America. Since then we have seen nothing less than a sea change in our national politics.

From the turn of the century to the mid-1960s, the most contentious issues in American politics concerned how best to secure more of the good things of life for working Americans. The dispute was rooted in a conflict between economic classes. The central question was whether to accept the unequal rewards meted out by the marketplace or to try to equalize them by forcing wages higher or giving public benefits to workers and their families. The working class and its representatives, the labor unions, made the most divisive demands on government. In the new era that began three decades ago, however, the most highly charged issues concern the poor and dependent, most of whom do not work. The leading issue today is how to respond to the disorders of the inner city, including crime, welfare dependency, and homelessness.

Many of the older issues of class and economic interests survive, and new issues have emerged, but they do not occupy center stage. Even during the severe recessions of the late 1970s and early '80s, which crushed entire industries and drove unemployment to levels not seen since the Great Depression, workers and farmers were never able to capture Washington's undivided attention. The focus of politics is now on poverty instead of in-

equality, on conduct and not class. This represents a sharp break from American politics as it was practiced during most of the 20th century, and it helps explain two of our current perplexities: the rise of divided government, with Democrats dominating Congress and Republicans prevailing in the executive branch, and Americans' general disaffection with politics.

American politics during the first six decades of this century could be understood as a long-running debate about the proper size of government. This was the era of what I call progressive politics. Liberals and conservatives assumed that all Americans, rich and poor alike, were able to get ahead by seizing the opportunities that came their way. The debate was over how best to create those opportunities—through more government or less. The rhythms of national political life followed the ebb and flow of public opinion on this basic issue, with periods of liberal expansion punctuated by times of conservative consolidation, such as the 1920s and '50s.

This pattern of politics was disrupted during the early 1960s by the appearance of entrenched poverty as a national political preoccupation. The prosperity of the postwar era had made poverty seem an anomaly in need of explanation and redress. However, the entrenched poor of Appalachia, the rural South, and the northern inner cities seemed fundamentally different from the destitute of the Great Depression. According to Michael Harrington's landmark book of 1962, *The Other America*, these poor were "maimed in

body and spirit" by lives of disadvantage and thus unable to "help themselves." Above all, they were incapable of meeting society's expectation that they work regularly. Their poverty was chronic rather than episodic, and it might persist for generations, even in the midst of prosperity. To many Americans, if not to Harrington, such destitution seemed to reflect the personal limitations of the poor themselves or a "culture of poverty"—even if these problems ultimately had their source in a historic lack of opportunity.

Of course, much of this "new poverty" was not really new at all. It merely became more visible to affluent Americans when black farm laborers and sharecroppers migrated from the rural South to northern cities, later followed by Puerto Ricans and others from Latin America. It is true that many of the new arrivals were able to follow members of earlier ethnic groups in the long climb out of the ghettos, but a larger share of blacks and His-

panics than earlier migrants remained behind, entangled in dependency and the other plagues of the inner city.

The otherness of the poor only increased with time. An economic boom and major civil-rights reforms during the mid-1960s led not to social peace but to riots in the ghettos, beginning with the Watts conflagration in Los Angeles in 1965. The riots were followed by a welfare boom. Between 1965 and '75, the number of recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) more than doubled, jumping from 4.4 to 11.4 million, the result mainly of looser eligibility standards and an erosion of the stigma against welfare. During the same period, crime rates soared. The usual progressive mechanisms—enhancing opportunity and economic growth—no longer seemed sufficient to promote advancement by those at the bottom of society. The welfare surge occurred during good times, not bad, and it was greatest not in areas with the most hardship but in northern cities with the most liberal welfare policies.



The poor whites of Appalachia loomed large in the public imagination when poverty was rediscovered in the 1960s. Today, while two-thirds of the poor are white, poverty is seen as largely a black problem.

The welfare boom sharply reduced work effort by the urban poor. In New York City, seven percent of all adults, or 318,000 people, were on welfare by 1970, and the massive growth of the welfare rolls between 1960 and 1973 coincided with the disappearance of as many as 65,000 people from the city's labor force. By 1988, according to Senator Daniel P. Moynihan (D.-N.Y.), there were 64,000 adults living on welfare in New York City who had never worked at all, and 45 percent of the city's schoolchildren lived in welfare households. The trends were similar in the nation at large. In 1975, half of all heads of poor families did not work at all during the course of the year, up from 31 percent in 1959.

Much of the decline in work effort was linked to the rising number of households headed by women, since poor single mothers seldom work. But work effort dropped among two-parent poor households as well. [See chart, p. 47.] Meanwhile, work levels rose among the nonpoor—including single mothers who were not on welfare. Nonworking poverty could no longer be excused by the idea that mothers were supposed to raise children without working. More than any other change, these trends in employment made poverty and dependency into explosive national issues.

Welfare enrollments reached a plateau during the mid-1970s, but attention shifted to a more disturbing manifestation of poverty: the underclass. The term refers to the urban poor who lead the most disordered lives, not only long-term welfare families but youths and men detached from both school and work, many of them high-school dropouts involved in street crime and drugs. From the beginning, it was clear that a lack of opportunity was not the chief handicap of the underclass but, as *Time* put it in 1977, the absence of "schooling,

skills and discipline to advance." The underclass is not large—at between two and eight million people, it constitutes only a fraction of the poor population of 36 million and at most 3.5 percent of the total national population.* It may or may not be growing. But because of its immersion in crime and welfare, it has come to dominate Americans' image of the social problem.

During the 1980s, the homeless gave dysfunctional poverty a still more unsettling face. This group was even smaller than the underclass—600,000 or fewer by the best estimate—but even more painfully obtrusive. Now the poor no longer stayed, for the most part, in low-income areas. Middle-class Americans were forced literally to step over them as they passed through railroad and bus stations on their way home to the suburbs. Despite what advocates contend, the homeless are seldom "ordinary people down on their luck" who just need housing. Very few of them work—the immediate source of their homelessness—and many have serious personal problems, such as substance abuse and mental illness.

The nonworking poor defied the basic assumptions of New Deal politics and the original welfare state. The Great Depression had lifted much of the moral taint from poverty by demonstrating that many of the poor were victims of economic forces beyond their own control. "Anybody who is unemployed isn't necessarily unemployed because he's shiftless," declared Gardner C. Means, an adviser to Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace. The New Dealers established the notion that it was government's responsibility to manage the

*In recent years, the national poverty rate has been close to 14 percent. Poverty is a transient experience for most of the poor. But six to seven percent of Americans—and four or five percent of employable Americans—remain poor for more than two years at a stretch.

Lawrence M. Mead, an associate professor of politics at New York University, is currently a visiting professor at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He is the author of Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship (1986) and The New Politics of Poverty (1992). Copyright © 1993 by Lawrence M. Mead.

economy so that jobs would be available to the unemployed, who, it was assumed, would jump at any opportunity.

But the Great Depression did not remove the taint from "relief." Although the public demanded that the jobless be put back to work, it remained powerfully averse to the idea of a dole. President Franklin D. Roosevelt hastened to replace his early emergency relief efforts with public-employment programs such as the Works Progress Administration, and even these were suspect. The permanent welfare programs that were created were hedged with moralizing restrictions. AFDC benefits, for example, were chiefly restricted to widows and their children, and AFDC was markedly less generous than programs that were funded by worker contributions, such as unemployment insurance and Social Security. The architects of the contributory programs—as well as the New Deal subsidies extended to agriculture, transportation, and other industries—assumed that the beneficiaries would receive their main support through employment. These benefits are sometimes called "middle-class welfare," but the New Deal programs never just *gave* people money. Instead, they raised the incomes of working people.

During the Depression, no more than a quarter of working Americans were jobless at any one time, but in four elections much of the middle class joined the working class to give FDR a mandate to reshape American society. The New Deal redistributed power and income and subjected business to unprecedented controls. Beginning in the 1960s, however, most Americans found much less to identify with in the plight of the less fortunate. "During the Depression, we were all more or less engulfed," recalled one artist quoted in Studs Terkel's oral history of the Great Depression, *Hard Times* (1970). "Today when people say poverty, they turn their head." Above all, it was the welfarism of the new poor that set them apart. The poor of the Depression "had to work 16 hours a day," remarked a restaurant owner, while the new poor were "paid by people that works [sic]." They were not

"guilty" about it, "just sick, mentally sick." The poor were no longer seen as workers in economic trouble but as people entirely outside workaday society, even a threat to it. The new poverty thus destroyed the alliance between the needy and better-off Americans that had sustained both the New Deal and the Democratic Party's dominance in presidential elections.

One great force behind the emergence of a new politics of dependency was the appearance of this new, more passive variety of poverty. The other was the failure of progressive-style reforms to overcome it. The earliest efforts followed in the progressive tradition. The "Kennedy tax cut" of 1964, along with growing federal spending, maintained full employment, while the civil-rights reforms opened up more opportunities to minorities who were employed or in school. These measures drove destitution down sharply, particularly among blacks, who were heavily represented among the working poor. The poverty rate among blacks fell from 55 percent in 1959 to only 30 percent in 1974.

But this turned out to be the last success of progressive reformism. Progress against poverty largely halted by the mid-1970s. A faltering national economy was partly to blame, but it was clear even during the 1960s that traditional reforms could not compensate for the rise of social maladies such as family breakup and withdrawal from the work force. Neither liberals nor conservatives could fully explain the decline of work. Liberals argued that the problem was a lack of jobs, low wages, or racial bias, while conservatives blamed welfare, which seemed to reward those who did not work or marry. But little evidence has been found to support these theories. The retreat from work seems to have its roots not in any lack of opportunity but in the demoralization of the poor in the face of their troubled histories as individuals and as a group—as well as government's failure to require welfare recipients to work.

The very ability of the poor to function

increasingly became an issue. As early as 1965, in a speech at Howard University, President Lyndon Johnson declared that social policy had to move "beyond opportunity to achievement." It was not enough to secure equal rights for blacks if they did not have the capacity, because of the nation's racist legacy, to compete equally with whites. They had to be assured "not just legal equity but human ability." Widely applauded at the time, the speech nevertheless had sobering implications, for it amounted to an admission that the ability of the poor to seize opportunity could no longer be taken for granted.

This changed the face of social policy. The last American social programs with a progressive, redistributive cast were enacted in 1964–65: Medicare and Medicaid, which provided health care to the elderly and poor, and food stamps, which provided low-income Americans with coupons to buy groceries. The main purpose of LBJ's War on Poverty and the Great Society, rather, was to improve individual skills through programs such as Head Start and the Job Corps. The critical policy question was no longer whether to control or decontrol the economy, or how much to tax and spend, but rather how to restore order and effort among the poor themselves.

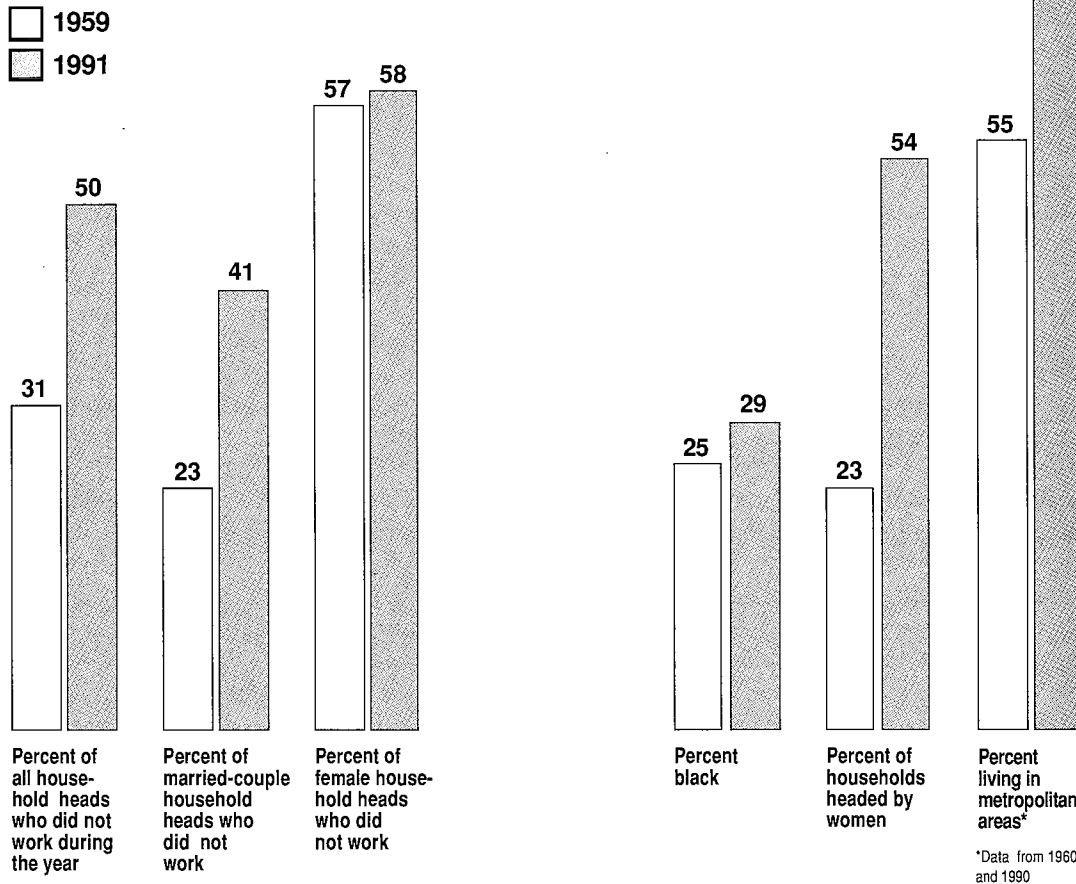
By the late 1960s, it became obvious that LBJ's compensatory programs were having little effect. Federal planners briefly embraced the idea of defeating poverty by transferring more money to the poor through expanded benefit programs. Increased transfer payments did in fact help reduce poverty. Above all, rising Social Security benefits sharply reduced need among the elderly. But to try to help the nonworking, employable poor this way proved politically impossible. Presidents Nixon and Carter both proposed plans to expand the welfare system, but these were defeated, mainly because they did little to require welfare recipients to work. During the 1970s, various plans to extend health-care coverage or child-care also died. What discredited lib-

eralism was not so much the cost of these programs as the painfully apparent fact that benefits alone could not stem the tide of urban crime, dependency, and failing schools.

As the social problem festered, the public lost the faith in government it had acquired during the progressive era. The feeling was expressed not only in a turning to the Republicans but in signs of disillusionment with politics generally. Fewer American voters were willing to declare an allegiance to either major political party: Between 1960 and the '70s, the proportion of voters claiming to be independents rose from one quarter to over one third. Turnout in presidential elections dropped, from 63 percent of eligible voters in 1960 to little more than half in recent contests. These changes are sometimes blamed on the economic turmoil of the 1970s—the energy crisis, double-digit inflation, and "stagflation"—but they began in the prosperous 1960s.

Washington's inability to solve the poverty problem after 15 years and billions of dollars lent credence to Ronald Reagan's indictment of big government during the presidential campaign of 1980. As president, Reagan was able to win deep cuts in education and training programs for the poor. Indeed, many liberal analysts and congressional staff members had come to share his belief that such programs achieved little while isolating the poor in a separate world of agencies and care givers. But the poverty problem blocked Reagan's larger agenda just as it had stymied that of liberals before him. Congress, reflecting public opinion, was as unwilling to dismember the welfare state as it had been to expand it. Much as Americans resented the chaos in the cities, they were not about to force the poor to shift for themselves. Reagan was compelled to preserve a "safety net" for the poor, trimming AFDC, Medicaid, and food stamps only slightly. The modest cuts in antipoverty spending he did achieve—through 1985, social spending was 10 percent less than what had been projected—earned him more public censure than anything else he did. He was accused of heartlessly neglecting the

The Changing Portrait of the Poor, 1959-91



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Between 1959 and '91, the poverty rate dropped from 22.4 percent to 14.2 percent, and the number of poor people fell from 39.5 million to 35.7 million, but the number of nonworking poor rose sharply.

needy, and half of the American public believed, falsely, that he had left the poor entirely unprotected.

In the end, the Reagan Revolution's social policy was no more successful than the Great Society. The administration claimed that it was better to overcome poverty through economic growth than with government hand-outs. As John Kennedy had said, "A rising tide lifts all boats." During the eight-year boom that began in 1982, most working Americans did increase their income (though the rich claimed a larger share than the middle class). The poor benefited much less, however, because most of

them were no longer in the work force. Between 1982 and '89, unemployment fell by nearly half, from nearly 10 percent to just over five percent, but the poverty rate fell only from 15 to 13 percent. While a boom occurred in the rest of the country, the inner cities were devastated anew by the crack epidemic. The continuing deterioration of the ghetto discredited the idea of a smaller government just as it had the liberal hope of a larger one. By the end of the 1980s, there was talk in Washington of a need for a renewed effort to help the poor.

From the bankruptcy of the progressive reformism practiced by Left and Right a new

politics arose. Some analysts say that the rise of poverty as a political issue has made the nation more conservative, but this is too simple. It is true that under Ronald Reagan and even the "kinder, gentler" George Bush, the poor received less attention from Washington than they did during the 1960s and '70s, but the nation did not move very far to the right in the traditional sense. For all of Ronald Reagan's persuasion, big government remained popular with voters, and overall social spending—for the poor and middle class alike—went right on growing during the Reagan years, albeit more slowly than before.

The weight of the poverty problem has changed the very meanings of Right and Left. The two sides now differ not so much over the scale of government as over how to use government to combat the dysfunctions of the ghetto. Conservatives still want smaller government, but they also want to use public authority to repress crime, require welfare recipients to work, and set stiffer standards for children in the schools. Liberalism still means bigger government, but above all it means resistance to enforcing "values." Liberals, too, deplore crime and welfare, but they seek to assuage the "underlying causes" of poverty with new benefits and services without trying to govern behavior.

The main bone of contention is no longer how much to do for the poor, but whether to require them to do anything *in return* for support. The question is, Should adult welfare recipients have to work or stay in school as a condition of aid? Typically, conservatives want work programs to be mandatory, while liberals want them to be voluntary. During the debates on the Family Support Act of 1988, Republicans and Democrats compromised their differences on cost and benefits but remained bitterly divided over work requirements. Democrats finally accepted stiffer standards for work programs only because President Reagan threatened to veto any bill that did not contain them.

The main reason Republicans have won most presidential elections since 1968 is that the voters are more conservative on dependency issues than they are on the economic issues of progressive politics. The public wants government used vigorously to restore order in the city. Many conservatives are willing to do that. Liberals, while regretting urban disorders, show greater tolerance for them. The only Democrats to win the White House recently—Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton—were well to the right of their party on crime and welfare. Clinton won the election of 1992 in part because the recession brought pocket-book issues to the fore, but also because he promised to "end welfare as we know it."

The Clinton reform plan, still known only in outline, is to limit welfare recipients to two years on the rolls and to require them to work thereafter, in a government job if necessary. A proposal of this kind may prove politically unworkable because many Democrats in Congress will think it too severe, or it may be impractical because the cost of the public jobs would be high. But even to propose such a change is far removed from the spirit of the New Deal, or even the Great Society, when people still believed that extending opportunity was enough to overcome destitution.

The current trend is toward paternalism—a social policy that not only helps the poor but attempts to manage their lives. Under the 1988 Family Support Act, for example, states are required to involve rising proportions of clients in work programs; the operators of homeless shelters, meanwhile, are increasingly trying to regiment the lives of their clients. For the seriously poor, obligation, not freedom, seems to be the way forward. This is a radical departure from what both liberals and conservatives have advocated in the recent past. The debate over how to balance obligation and benefit in such programs is now the central issue in American politics.

Middle-Class Moralities

BY ALAN WOLFE

America was born the world's first bourgeois republic and has proudly defined itself ever since as, above all, a middle-class nation. Yet the 1992 election was the first in recent memory in which both parties wrapped themselves unambiguously in middle-class symbols. The Democrats, who once seemed to champion every group that was too poor (or too unconventional) to qualify as middle class, nominated a Southern Baptist of modest Arkansas beginnings for the presidency, and he, after carefully consulting with party elders, chose another Southern Baptist as his running mate. Neither, it seemed, was ever photographed without an American flag in the background. The Republicans, whose economic policies during the 1980s worked to the benefit of everyone above the middle class, fell into a Keystone Kops scramble to find an issue that would rally middle-class voters. And even as the two parties redoubled their efforts to woo the mighty middle, a Texas billionaire attracted millions of disaffected suburbanites to his quixotic campaign.

Middle-class anxieties about the economy, crime, and social issues seem certain to dominate American politics for years to come. Yet it has become very difficult to define clearly what it means to be middle class. The nation's images of bourgeois life are increasingly obsolete: yeoman farmer, small-town merchant, independent entrepreneur, male breadwinner, stay-at-home mom, well-paid factory worker, hard-working school teacher, self-employed lawyer, family physician. Is Zöe Baird, whose name was never mentioned without note of her \$500,000 income, middle class? Are the mostly blue-collar Reagan Democrats? Is a former executive

who is struggling to start a new business but in reality living on his wife's income as a social worker? Is anyone without health insurance, whatever his or her income? Are blacks who have made it to the suburbs? Korean grocers? Divorced mothers of small children? An assistant professor of anything? As we watch more Americans fall from the middle class, we ought to know at what point we should begin to roll out the nation's safety net. But even spelling out a formula in dollars and cents is nearly impossible. We cannot even decide at what point we consider people rich. Candidate Bill Clinton pledged to make the rich pay a larger share of the nation's taxes, but the definition of rich has bounced around. President Clinton's tax plan now calls for higher income taxes on couples earning more than \$140,000, and a special "millionaires'" surcharge on those earning more than \$250,000.

It may be hard to determine where the economic boundary lines of middle-class life should be drawn, but it is not that difficult to figure out what has happened to the core of the middle class during the 1980s and '90s. Most sensibly defined, a middle-class job is one that makes it possible to afford certain basics: a home of one's own, a car or two, and some child care. By this definition, middle-class jobs have most definitely disappeared over the past 15 years. There is much truth to the notion that the middle class, as economists Frank Levy and Richard J. Murnane write, has been "hollowed out": More people have moved to points where the middle class blends into the class above or the class below.

This change has its roots in the economic turmoil of the 1970s. In 1973, the year the first

oil crisis began, the country entered an era of slower economic growth, and in 1979 income inequality began a comparatively rapid increase. Because of this relatively clear turning point in time, one can picture two middle classes in America: one that rose to its status when economic growth was assumed and opportunity abundant, and one that achieved its status at a time when very little could be taken for granted. What divides these two groups is not how much money their members make but the different degrees of effort involved in making it. So different are the experiences of these two middle classes that, for all their economic similarity, they have little in common culturally or morally. There is no longer one thing called "the middle class" in America, and there is no longer a single middle-class morality. It is far more accurate to say that we have at least two middle-class moralities, each defined by different opportunities, expectations, and outlooks.

II

For those whose income and status began to rise in the 1950s, passage into the middle class was nearly as automatic as the progress through the seven ages of man. Each step seemed preordained: the breadwinner's income rose, the family moved to a larger apartment, then bought its first house, along with a car, a television, and a few other accouterments of the good life. The children were sent off to college, perhaps the first in their families to go, and the parents could look forward to spending their retirement years in Florida or Arizona. Dad might have been a middle manager with Prudential, the owner of a small business, a salesman, or a shopkeeper with an expanding clientele. He might have worked incredibly hard or he might have worked nine to five, but the robust economy guaranteed at

least minimal affluence. Mom stayed home, though after the kids were grown she might have taken a job as a receptionist or gone back to school. Many people in this generation became middle class simply by being there. To be sure, one had to be of the right race. At least some initiative and hard work were needed—everyone knew people who were left behind. But for more Americans than ever before, the goal was in reach, and never before had so many reached it.

Money, for this generation, was always an awkward proposition. With the Great Depression never far from consciousness, income was something to be saved, not spent. Yet this generation was willing to share with those left behind some of the surplus generated by the economy. The Democrats did rather well during the go-go years of the 1960s, in part because middle-class prosperity was compatible with, if not fueled by, activist government. In neither lifestyle nor politics did this generation flaunt its good fortune, understanding very well how unreal its prosperity was. Anything won with so little effort could be lost with even less. *Security* became the watchword for the first postwar middle class, as if the right combination of public policy and private behavior could make permanent what was too good to be true.

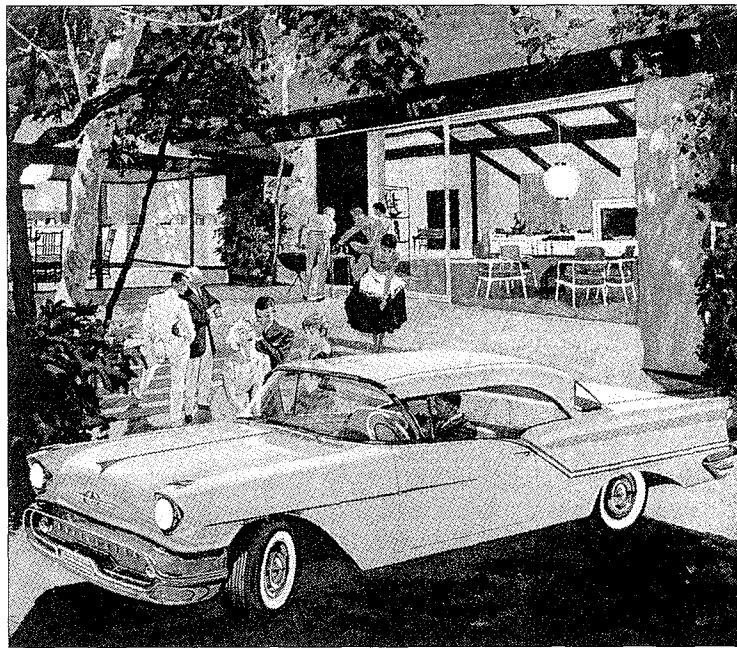
The postwar generation maintained its liberalism through old age; the elderly living in Florida still vote on the basis of who will best protect the government programs that will guarantee them economic security until they die. At the same time, this generation passed on some aspects of its liberalism to its children. Although all of America turned more conservative in the 1980s, young urban professionals—those whose privileged educations or first home purchases were made possible by the advantages of their parents—remained culturally liberal. More tolerant than their parents—they came of age, after all, in

Alan Wolfe is a professor of sociology at the New School for Social Research. He is the author most recently of The Human Difference: Animals, Computers, and the Necessity of Social Science, published this year by the University of California Press. Copyright © 1993 by Alan Wolfe.

the 1960s and after—the children of the immediate postwar bourgeoisie reacted against what they saw as the overly materialistic concerns of their parents' generation. What eventually became support for multicultural education, instinctive identification with feminism, and tolerance of diverse lifestyles had its origins in the committed cultural libertarianism of the 1960s. It was not that the younger generation's views on religion, the family, or love of country were well thought out. It was more that to many of its members, these were issues that never arose. One of the things that made being middle class so delightful during the 1960s was that you never had to think much about the obligations of community or the need to contain the libido for the sake of civilization.

The long national economic downturn that began around 1973 did not destroy the middle class, but it did halt the postwar escalator that automatically carried millions of fortunate Americans upward into affluence. Everyone knew someone who was no longer assured of the house in the suburbs, the new car, the good schools. Downward mobility was no longer merely a term in sociology textbooks. But just as large numbers of people saw the American Dream slip away, a surprising number of newcomers grabbed onto it. Some were urban white ethnics—policemen, civil servants, unionized blue-collar workers whose jobs were spared—who were driven from the cities by crime and who, with the aid of a second paycheck from the wife's new job, moved out beyond the established suburbs in search of a middle-class lifestyle they could afford. Others were freshly minted

graduates of the state universities and community colleges—vastly expanded during the good years—who took jobs in engineering, insurance, and other flourishing service industries. An unprecedented number of African Americans joined the middle class. The tide of upward mobility was powerful enough to transform neighborhoods and regions. In New York City, Asians pushed out into urban neighborhoods beyond Manhattan, bringing new vibrancy to once-thriving Jewish neigh-



For two decades after World War II, America's vision of the good life was a palpable dream accessible to all, and the struggle to "keep up with the Joneses" was the only major social conflict most Americans experienced.

borhoods such as Flushing. The middle-class accent of Miami became Spanish, while Iranians installed themselves in the tonier sections of Beverly Hills. The second postwar middle class, though smaller than the first, was certainly more diverse.

Middle-class status, when no longer automatic, became more of a commodity, something one purchased through hard work and sacrifice. The new arrivals came to see merit, rather than position on a growth curve, as the

prerequisite for a middle-class lifestyle. Under such competitive conditions, money moved to the center of people's consciousness. A class once known for saving began to spend. Often there was little choice. Even with the two (often rather high) incomes needed just to purchase a house with access to decent schools, there was little left over to put away for the future. In some major cities, even people with six-figure incomes and boasting only the normal trappings of suburban life learned to live with a certain sense of precariousness about their existence. With less of the security that comes from having money in the bank, the middle class became much more wary of government-led altruism. The tax revolts and attacks on waste in government that began in the late 1970s were symptoms of a new politics of increased self-concern. It had taken some time, as well as a shift in generations, but finally the middle class was living up to the cliché that money breeds increased conservatism.

This second middle class, like its predecessor, is moved by considerations of security, but its concerns are more psychological than economic. They try to save moral capital rather than economic capital. Uncertain that they can maintain their economic privileges, these newcomers to the American Dream are determined to hold on to their social and cultural ones. They look to government not to intervene in the economy to help workers and minorities get ahead but to reinforce the rules of civil order. The control of crime becomes more important than the control of business. Government, they believe, ought to regulate sexuality (teen access to abortion, for example) and the display of dirty pictures, and it ought to keep its own house in order as well. Even if families have trouble balancing their budgets, government should balance its own, and politicians had better not get the idea that they are better than the people who elected them or they will be humbled.

For those who achieved middle-class sta-

tus the hard way, the cultural enemy is the old middle class already encamped in the tonier inner suburbs, and especially those of its descendants in the baby-boom generation who have embraced far more liberal and culturally libertarian views: the "new class" of attorneys, journalists, managers, and other professionals who make their living by manufacturing and manipulating information. For its part, this more cosmopolitan middle class looks down its collective nose at the tastes and sensibilities of the newcomers in the tract homes and townhouses on the fringes of suburbia.

Hence ariseth the new class war.

III

At a time when America lacks visible symbols of an upper class—who can believe that third- and fourth-generation Rockefellers embody monied evil?—it is not a struggle between classes over economics that shapes American politics but a struggle within one class over morality. The cultural war that now dominates American politics is a civil war within the middle class. This cultural war has become the defining feature of American political life. If the political parties at one time in the recent past took the middle class for granted, now they find themselves trying to appeal to one of its wings without alienating the other. As bourgeois prosperity wanes, bourgeois morality grows in importance. Each wing has a stake in defining membership in the middle class as a belief in its morality. This is what makes American politics in the 1990s so unforgiving. The economic surplus can always be divided up, but the moral symbols of society tend to be indivisible. The older middle class is tolerant of everything except the moral views of the newer middle class. And the moral views of the newcomers leave little room for the kind of relativism and skepticism that leads the older middle class to become Unitarians or to enlist in the American Civil Liberties Union.

Each middle class is moved by moral symbols, but each attaches dramatically differ-

ent meanings to them. The following six symbols are hardly exhaustive, but they starkly illustrate how completely the middle-class worldview has been cut in two.

1. *Productivity.* Work is not only a way of making things but a way of making meaning. At least since the early 19th century, but probably originating some time before that, Americans have been attracted to ideologies of production as much as to production itself. In making things, they came to believe, people made themselves.

Classical republican ideals about production are the heart of the moral worldview of the more newly arrived middle class in America, an ideal strengthened, rather than weakened, by the increasing difficulty its members have in finding productive work. For those who believe in the sanctity of work, morality is defined by the perception that those who do not make things—lawyers, stockbrokers, “bureaucrats”—deserve a lower place in the moral hierarchy. This is as it has always been, but with one crucial difference: For over a century, the foil that helped define middle-class ideas about the importance of work was the idle rich, with their coupon-clipping frivolity and conspicuous consumption. Now that high society has all but disappeared from America’s consciousness, the urban underclass increasingly bears the burden of comparison. There, bourgeois propriety finds the same defining symbols: uncontrolled sexuality, flamboyant spending, money without work, and the appearance of government protection. Nothing is more certain to arouse the fury of the new middle class than the “welfare mother,” whose seemingly irresponsible behavior not only goes unpunished but is in fact rewarded with money taken from the pockets of hard-working taxpayers like themselves.

If one middle class believes in work, the other believes in career. These contrasting beliefs also imply different ways of thinking about time and space. Because work involves producing things, it takes place within boundaries. Not only is it tied to a specific neighbor-

hood, employer, or industrial quarter, it is time-bound and regulated by hours or weeks. Careers, by contrast, tend to be loosened from the constraints of space and time. People who have careers are prepared to move anywhere in search of the next stage, either within the firm or within the country. They are not, however, prepared to punch a clock. Process, not output, counts as the measure of success. Those who follow careers manage rather than produce. Indeed, one of the things they devote a great deal of time to managing is the transition to an economy that produces less.

Career-followers tend to view those bound to specific hours and places as slow-moving and backward, “time-servers” lacking in cosmopolitan sophistication. They work at jobs that pollute the environment and belong to hidebound unions that are bastions of conservatism and special privilege. Working people vote against the higher taxes needed to keep the local schools in the right loops for the right colleges. From the perspective of the wealthier middle class, Americans who produce things put tacky sculptures on their front lawns, ice cubes in their (sweet) white wine, pictures of their children on their walls, sugar in their (disgustingly weak) coffee, cigarettes in their ashtrays, and dirt bikes in their driveways. The career-followers are undisturbed by the decline of industrial America—old factories can be converted into attractive shopping malls and offices, after all—and tend to believe that given a choice the country would turn every industrial community into a Silicon Valley. Visions of postindustrial society may no longer preoccupy social scientists, but they lie behind the dreams of the older, more entrenched, middle class.

Unappreciative of productive work, this middle class is hardly prepared to insist that the underclass be required to submit to its rigors. Unlike the more recently arrived middle class, which tends to move to the outer suburbs, the older middle class lives closer to the city and even, on occasion, “gentrifies”

urban neighborhoods in the city itself. From this position of greater proximity to the poor, being unproductive is seen not as a sin but as a condition. It can even, in more sophisticated understandings, be seen as a kind of career. Youngsters in the gang business, for example, work pretty hard at what they do. They, too, are liberated from the constraints of space and time—they certainly keep irregular hours—and often possess an entrepreneurial flair. Even welfare can be understood as a career. Welfare recipients, like many urban professionals, are creatures of the bureaucracy. And while they may not be producing anything at the moment, welfare is something like a career interlude, necessary before work can be resumed.

The virtue of productivity, once a crucial American symbol, is now contested. For those wishing no more than to say good-bye to all that, unproductive behavior, while not necessarily appealing, is also not especially threatening. But to those who labor in traditional jobs, urban loitering, always unforgivable, approaches anathema. The more Americans are forced to compete for a diminishing number of good jobs, the more they will also differ over the meaning of jobs themselves.

2. *Saving.* The Protestant ethic—the package of psychological and cultural attributes associated with the rise of capitalism—was long ago split along two often-conflicting dimensions. Nearly a century ago, Max Weber described the classic dispositions associated with early capitalism: hard work, a willingness to forego pleasure in the short run, and a focus on long-term results. But as capitalism matured, shifting its focus from production to consumption, a new set of values emerged, brilliantly analyzed by sociologist Daniel Bell in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976). An economy that required mass consumption in order to grow, Bell observed, fostered a new emphasis on immediate gratification, hedonistic pleasures, and short-term outlooks. A scholar looking for signs of the old Protestant rectitude today would have better luck looking at museum walls in New En-

gland than in the board rooms of Dallas and Los Angeles.

These two ethics describe rather well the cultural divide of the middle class with respect to saving and spending. Old-fashioned ideas about creating and preserving wealth no longer have much currency in the politically liberal mainline Protestant churches of the old middle class, which seem to view the making of money more as a source of shame than of virtue. Yet if mainline Protestants no longer sustain the Protestant ethic, some Protestant evangelicals do, as well as other recent arrivals to the middle class—including Catholics, Buddhists, and Muslims. The fact that the Protestant ethic flourishes today among Korean shopowners and merchants makes many white Americans ask why it is not as strong among inner-city blacks.

Homeownership has always been the most significant symbol of thrift, one more sign that it is not how much you make but what you do with your money that matters. Renting is understood as a temporary state, an impermanent and unfortunate condition. Yet homeownership is declining in America. Although mortgage rates have recently come down to levels not seen in decades, high prices and high taxes still make it difficult for young couples to purchase their first home. In the affluent suburbs of Westchester County near New York City or in DeKalb County outside Atlanta, no amount of scrimping and saving seems sufficient to accumulate a down payment. The loan provided by affluent (old middle class) parents has become the norm. The new middle class, which cannot obtain such help or can obtain only relatively small sums, must look elsewhere for its first homes, including places 60 to 100 miles from the cities they surround: Orange County (New York, not California), Prince William County, Virginia, near Washington, D.C., or Simi Valley, California, site of the first Rodney King trial. Time spent commuting to and from work can be used as a rough guide to the dividing line

between America's two middle classes—although the standard has been reversed since the days when wealthier Americans were the ones who traveled great distances to the ex-urbs beyond the suburban fringe.

The symbols of saving are closely linked to those of productivity. Saving, like work, is time-bound; a certain amount per pay period adds up to a larger amount over time. Only one middle class in America uses such time-bound forms of saving as Christmas club accounts, U.S. savings bonds, and ordinary pass-book savings accounts. Traditionally one saved knowing full well that there were other ways of investing money that paid higher returns but also carried greater risks. Now the once-firm line between saving and speculation has been breached. Banking deregulation, by allowing banks to take greater risks with the money of depositors, has confused the moral compass of the more conservative middle class. America is awash with schemes to get rich quick, from Publishers Clearinghouse sweepstakes to state-sponsored numbers rackets. Convinced that the inner-city poor spend every cent that comes into their hands, the hard-working middle class now finds itself tempted by its own forms of speculation, hoping that a down payment might fall from the sky. Watching the loss of jobs, members of this class also watch the loss of savings accounts; both the Protestant ethic as they understand it and the economy that supported it seem to them to be giving way to a new economy and a new ethos, each of which seems alien to them. And, as in the case of the decline of productive work, the psychology

works in the opposite direction from the economics, intensifying the moral importance of precisely those economic practices that are disappearing.

3. *Children.* Thinking about the long-run is inevitably connected to children. It is for them that we save. Helping them grow up is the closest we mortals come to immortality. For as long as anyone can remember, middle-class morality has been about raising a family.

There have been two significant changes in the symbols associated with childhood in America during the past 30 years. One is that a large family is no longer the norm. Technology has made it possible to regulate family size, with the result that some families choose



Vietnam and the counterculture split the middle class. In 1970, New Yorkers angered by antiwar protests staged a demonstration of their own.

to have many children while others choose to have few. The split runs right through the middle class.

The career-minded tend to find the Clintons an attractive role model. Having one child enables them to join the American mainstream, while not having too many children permits careers to go forward without interruption, and even leaves enough money (and time) left over for evenings out, a cleaning woman, and possibly a February dash down to a sunny spot, as well as the usual August stay in the Vineyard. For those who want to find them, there are an unusually large number of practical reasons to limit family size: housing prices, the high cost of private school and college, balancing two careers, long working hours, delayed marriages, and the always-looming possibility of divorce. As often happens, a symbolic code emerges to rationalize the practical. Having too many children seems untidy—all those runny noses and scraped knees—and tacky, like linoleum floors or a Florida room. People should learn to control themselves better.

America's other middle class perceives the obstacles facing large families as another symptom of the decline of middle-class morality, similar to the disappearance of jobs and savings accounts. No matter how large their families eventually become, they nearly always seem too small. There are limits in the symbolic world of these people as well, for they react instinctively against those who have more children than they can support. Still, larger families ensure that life, like work, has a structured course, organized around the development of each child. Although the economic costs of large families are great, the psychological rewards more than compensate.

Public life for such people is organized around the schools. All politics for them is local because all schools are local. Civic activity means participation in little leagues and PTAs, not voting in elections or contributing to candidates for the state legislature. Except for

Catholics and some Jews, most members of the late-arriving middle class would like to keep their children in public schools; the option of buying out of inferior education through private schools is often not available to them. They worry more about crime, drugs, and sex in the schools than they do about declining academic standards, although they connect the latter with the former. (When it is their own boys who are found to be sexually active in school, however, often in ways that resemble the gang behavior they associate with the underclass, they tend to rally to the defense of their children.) Moving as far away from the city as possible vastly increases the time and money spent commuting, but it cuts the costs of schooling relative to private schools. Yet the fact that even as simple a matter as sending one's child to school is now filled with moral dilemmas and difficult choices is one more piece of evidence that the world is not like it was in the good old days.

Besides the large family's loss of status, at least one other significant change has occurred in the symbolic world of children. Homosexuality, once barely mentionable, now is routinely discussed on the evening news and in newspapers. As it is, middle-class Americans are asked virtually every day to reflect on whether the world can properly be understood to revolve around the needs of children anymore. Gays tend to be as middle class as anyone—indeed they are more likely to be middle class if income is the definition of class status. And there are, of course, many gay parents—even if it is not generally as parents that gays demand political and civil rights. Despite all of these considerations, however, gay liberation challenges bourgeois propriety at its most essential point: that marriage is about restraining desire for the sake of the next generation. No wonder gay rights is an issue that divides the middle class.

The more liberal wing of the American middle class understands such demands as the logical next step in an expansion of civil

rights that began with the legislation of the 1960s. America is a big enough place for all kinds of people, lifestyles, and choices. Besides, gay people are suffering from a horrendous pandemic and are entitled to all our altruism and support.

Not so fast, one can hear America's other middle class saying. We never voted on whether homosexuals deserve special protection against discrimination. Civil rights for racial and ethnic minorities is something else. To be sure, we have our reservations there too, but we have accepted the idea that America should strive for colorblindness. (That is why we have our doubts about affirmative action.) But homosexuals choose their lifestyle. The idea that what they do is sinful is not one we are fully prepared to dismiss, in part because we want to retain at least some religious ideas in an overwhelmingly secular age. We do not want to have our young children taught about sex at all, let alone about sodomy. Like everyone else, we are moved deeply by the tragic deaths of so many young people, which is why we have allowed our tax dollars to be spent in surprisingly generous amounts on AIDS treatment and research. But when we are forced to make a choice, we think families with children should stand higher in the moral hierarchy than gay couples living in New York and San Francisco.

Increasingly, even the middle-class idea of the family, once incontestable, seems under siege. The American middle class is asked to give recognition not only to homosexual couples but to step-families of every shape and description. The federal government, meanwhile, grants more of its largesse to the elderly, who stopped caring for children long ago, than to hard-working middle-class parents with small children, and it steps in and provides welfare when fathers in poor families fail to live up to their responsibilities. This middle class agrees that abortion ought to be permitted under some circumstances, but it views the broad acceptance of abortion as one more sign

of how we devalue children. More traditional families are not viewed by those who live within them as one alternative among many. From their point of view, economics, culture, and moral relativism have ganged up to make the traditional family seem obsolete. America's moral world will not be made right again, they believe, until a place is found within it for children to be children.

4. *God.* According to some interpreters, such as sociologist James Davison Hunter of the University of Virginia, America's cultural wars are at bottom religious wars of a new kind. Once Americans fought over doctrine: Protestants, Catholics, and Jews each had a different vision of humanity's relationship with God. Now the battle lines cross theological boundaries, as liberal Protestants join liberal Catholics and Jews in contests with their more conservative brethren. And these new religious fault lines, it turns out, closely parallel the divisions between the two middle classes.

God remains a meaningful symbol for both groups, but in different ways. Those who moved to the suburbs in the 1950s and '60s did not so much give up religion as they gave up orthodoxy. They still wanted to have their children experience the structure that organized religion can provide, but they also wanted the advantages of secular modernity. Fortunately for them, America pioneered "lite" religion: quasi-secular beliefs that merged ideas born in sectarian quarters with a generalized belief in America, modernity, and progress. The God that was produced by this mixture was not an especially fearsome one. His teachings constituted a set of moral beliefs rather than a moralistic code, the "10 suggestions" rather than the 10 commandments, as fundamentalists like to charge. Growing up at a time when theology was on the backburner, the fortysomethings of the liberal middle class believe that people of different faiths can live together, which makes America different from the rest of the world.

Old-time religion, by contrast, conveys all the distasteful symbolic imagery of the world

left behind in the quest for middle-class status. From the standpoint of those who rose into the middle class in the 1950s and '60s, neither the Lubavitchers nor the Bakkers are the kind of people one would want as neighbors. They are both, in their own ways, stamped with the features of a specific place: the Lubavitchers with the city neighborhoods from which escape to the suburbs became necessary, the Bakkers with a distinct regionalism that is at odds with the homogenized mobility of American middle-class life. Fundamentalists, moreover, are too literal-minded to understand the moral ambiguities that make middle-class life tolerable. They take their religion too seriously. How, after all, can one bring up children to respect their parents but also to be popular among their friends without recognizing that a little hypocrisy can go a long way? The thing about religion is to take its commands seriously in public while ignoring them in private, a balancing act the overly devout consistently fail to appreciate.

Beyond the comfortable inner suburbs, however, religion lives a very different life. While fundamentalist churches sprout along the roads where the new malls go up, Korean Baptists have converted former synagogues into churches and Protestant evangelicals have found new converts among the Hispanics of Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. Newer arrivals to the middle class are far less likely to view fundamentalism as antagonistic to their moral objectives. They may even be willing to be led by fundamentalist activists on some issues, as were the opponents of the plan by New York City schools chancellor Joseph Fernandez to teach greater tolerance of homosexuality as part of a new "rainbow curriculum." The newer middle class is quite disturbed by what it perceives to be the immorality of secular humanism run rampant. Religion, for it, is only partly a matter of personal belief; it is also about the character of American life. If the schools paid a little more attention to God, there would be less criminality

and homosexuality, two trends vaguely linked in their minds. The troubles of the inner city are surely due to lack of faith. A more God-fearing society would pay more attention to hard work and its rewards.

While this longing for a little more religious backbone in American life persists, passage to middle-class status, even today, means leaving behind unforgiving moral strictures and increasingly awkward rituals. This middle class is uncertain about whether it would want America to be a theocracy; most of its members, to the degree that they reflect on this issue, believe it should not be. Its alliance with fundamentalism, then, is most likely a temporary one that could easily fall apart once a proper balance between faith and freedom is re-established.

Neither middle class has yet found the right line between church and state. The ways in which each balances the spiritual and the secular are not dissimilar in principle; each simply prefers to draw the line in a different place. It is even possible to imagine that the distance between these lines will shrink at some point. But there are still two lines; God remains real for one of America's middle classes, even while He is understood more symbolically by the other.

5. *Politics.* The political differences between the two middle classes can be only partly understood in the conventional sense of Left versus Right. The more important political division between the two occurs not over questions of government regulation or economic policy but over the purpose and meaning of politics itself.

Many of those who move to the far suburbs are fleeing crime, crowding, poverty, and the other dangers and irritants of the city. One of those other irritants is politics. Traditionally, city neighborhoods were organized by party machines that provided favors in return for various tokens of obligation from citizens, from voting to illegal contributions. While the machines today are largely defunct, their legacy remains powerful. As corrupt as they may have been, such organizations provided

a public structure that complemented private life. Urban life brought people together for the expression of collective purpose. So long as America was chiefly an urban nation, it was also a political nation: People voted and candidates mattered.

The escape from the public is one of the great temptations of middle-class life in America, and the two middle classes have dealt with it differently. Suburban politics is diffused and irregular. It does not ask for support in return for favors. The favors—good schools, pothole-free roads, regular trash collection, sewers—are viewed as entitlements, irrespective of whether people vote or even pay taxes. In a suburban world, therefore, individuals can easily elevate the private over the public. So long as they can drive to work, educate their children, and afford occasional vacations, the political system works for them. They tend to be unconcerned with what happens in other parts of the country, let alone in Bosnia or Somalia. If Jefferson once opined that government is best that governs least, many Americans believe that politics is best when it politicizes least.

By and large, these apolitical Americans are members of the new middle class. To them, political activists and ideologues look much like fundamentalists do to the old middle class: They seem to take their beliefs too seriously. Political “causes” of any sort, conservative or liberal, are suspect. One gets one’s political cues as well as one’s ideas and the language for expressing those ideas from television. The mass media are an almost perfect invention from the standpoint of middle-class privatism. They offer an opportunity to feel as if one is in touch with the world without ever leaving one’s couch—a truly irresistible combination. People who leave politics behind therefore do not necessarily leave political opinion behind. Indeed, they may have stronger opinions the more removed they are from political realities—much as immigrants often hold more violent opinions about poli-

tics in their native country than those who stayed behind. When they feel moved to express themselves, they expect a political system to be in place to respond to their views. Otherwise, they generally fail to pay much attention to the civic virtues, including active involvement with issues once thought essential to the cultivation of a healthy political system.

The inner suburbs of the old middle class tend to be not only more liberal, but also more politically active and concerned. In his important book, *The United States of Ambition* (1991), journalist Alan Ehrenhalt points out that many conservative states contain some remarkably liberal counties. Politicians in these areas are often single or have grown children. Policy wonks fascinated by the techniques of getting things done, they provide in time what they often lack in personal fortune. As Ehrenhalt points out, those who believe in using government to promote the good life have an advantage in politics. They win elections, even when their neighbors may be more conservative than they, because they outhustle everyone else. It is as if their political zeal is a by-product of energy displaced from their private dissatisfactions. If one wing of the middle class finds happiness in private life and the public realm a chore, the other finds liberation in the public sphere and private existence confining.

These differences over the meaning and purpose of politics give politics a liberal bias. Noting the result, conservatives have begun to mobilize around causes that move their particular middle-class constituency, especially opposition to gay rights. Yet conservative activists probably face a more uphill struggle, for their middle class wants above all else to be left alone, and joining together with others in order to be left alone is a difficult contradiction to overcome. One form of middle-class morality will always tend to view politics apolitically, the other professionally. The differences between them are unlikely to be overcome soon.

6. *Country*. Since everything associated



Worlds in collision: The New Yorker, long the arbiter of old-middle-class taste, is one of the few places in America where class differences (and biases) are allowed out of the closet.

with what it means to be a middle-class American seems to be up for grabs, it can hardly be surprising that the meaning of America itself is too. Loyalty to country and its duties inevitably means very different things to people whose fundamental perspectives on place and time are as different as those of the careerist old middle class and work-oriented new bourgeoisie are. Loyalty means above all else the acceptance of spatial constraints. This is where we are. This place has meanings that no other place has. To be loyal to it means that we cannot wish we were somewhere else, nor can it mean that we bring somewhere else here. The only alternative to liking it is to leave it.

Symbols of national unity are far more

important to those who believe that loyalty is a pre-eminent moral virtue. No other conflict could have posed more clearly for them the stakes in the cultural war than the issue that bedeviled the Clinton administration during its first 100 days: the question of gays in the military. The military remains for many Americans the unique symbol that makes all other symbols possible, and one therefore that ought to remain above conflict. In their mind, the controversy over homosexuals in the military is not really about fighting ability, AIDS, or the seduction of innocent teenagers. It is about the future of the one institution that ought to remain immune to divisiveness, for if the symbol of unity is divided, then everything else must be as well.

Ethnic allegiances throw an interesting twist into the idea of loyalty. Loyal members of middle-class America think they take their ethnicity seriously, making a great show of how proud they are to be Italian or Irish or Polish. But sociologists know better. Extraordinarily large numbers of Italian Americans cannot even speak a complete sentence in Italian. These Americans become Italian or Irish only when

it is convenient. Chicago's fiercely anticommunist Polish-American enclaves, after all, did not empty out when communism fell, nor is it likely that Miami will become a ghost town when Cuba is out from under Fidel Castro.

Because their ethnicity is more symbolic than real, these members of the American middle class are not being hypocritical when they express opposition to bilingualism and some of the more exotic forms of multiculturalism favored by the Left. Only they know whether in their heart of hearts their opposition to Spanish-language instruction and Afrocentric curricula are inspired by racism. They would like to believe otherwise. Their Irish, Italian, and Jew-

ish parents and grandparents were not taught by teachers who were Irish, Italian, and Jewish. They did not insist that the schools teach about what they left behind—why come to America just to get Jewish history? Learning English was often the crucial rite of passage that defined the family's new loyalties. Dual loyalty is, simply put, something such people cannot understand. If you are no longer living in Mexico or Puerto Rico, why do you think about going back? If you are black, would you not rather learn what it takes to make it here? We are not being racist, they proclaim. 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.

If anything, the more established and more liberal middle class is even less ethnic than the one that came after it. Its ethnic identity, in fact, is so weak that it broadens into a lack of any identity at all, save for being middle class. When identity is relatively unimportant, one can, paradoxically, be more sympathetic to those who are asserting their identity. For the more liberal middle class understands that the struggles of gays, blacks, and others for public recognition is a cry of pain over exclusion, a demand to be acknowledged.

Not terribly concerned about symbols of national unity, this more-established group sees little wrong with allowing homosexuals to serve in the military. On the one hand, the military is not really a symbol of national unity at all; it is simply a large bureaucracy, even a source of possible careers. On the other hand, gays are anything but a symbol of disunity, and their agenda does not amount to a demand for special privileges. They are merely asking for their rights. Politics ought to be about rights, not about symbols. The trouble with loyalty is that its demands can trample on individual rights. By insisting on the right of gays to serve in the military, we are defending the rights of all people to be treated as

autonomous individuals by the institutions that frame their lives.

In a similar way, demands for recognition by the nation's ethnic and racial groups are not seen as especially troublesome symbolic attacks on national unity. If America is politically and economically pluralistic, why can it not be culturally pluralistic as well? No one is harmed if Hispanic children are taught in Spanish as well as English. If learning more about Africa instills pride in inner-city youth, who can object? America is capacious enough to include equal time for all. All this talk about symbols, from this modern and progressive point of view, sounds suspiciously anachronistic. And the last thing we should do at a time when we are about to enter a world in which capital and labor will flow freely across borders is to argue over the symbols that distinguish those on one side of a border from those on the other.

Some of America's cultural wars are struggles over the meaning of particular symbols. Both sides claim to believe in family, for example, but disagree over what a family is. But the struggle over country is a struggle over symbols themselves: how compelling they should be, how much they should override rational action, how inclusive or exclusive should be their meaning. The great sociologist Emile Durkheim once wrote that the soldier who dies for the flag is literally dying for the flag, not for the country the flag represents. The major difference between America's two middle classes is that one believes, like Durkheim's soldier, that symbols become synonymous with the things they represent, while the other believes that symbols are constructions to be accepted when convenient and replaced when obsolete.

IV

Although both the Democrats and the Republicans have recognized that they can no longer afford to ignore the middle class, both have adopted flawed strategies for responding to

middle-class moral concerns. Democrats seek the votes of people hurt by Reaganomics, but, if President Clinton's actions on gays in the military are any indication, they do not want to take the moral views of these people too seriously. Republicans, on the other hand, respond to the middle-class morality of the newly arrived but pursue economic policies that heighten their material insecurities.

Believing that economics still matters most, both parties try to rationalize away the moral views that stand in inconvenient opposition to their economic programs—the Democrats through what might be called an ideology of modernization, the Republicans through a variety of populism.

Modernizers believe that history moves ineluctably toward greater enlightenment and that enlightenment is invariably associated with material prosperity. The politically incorrect moral views of the recently arrived middle class are, to them, unfortunate by-products of the incomplete transition from working-class or immigrant status to second- or third-generation suburbanite. People who think that homosexuality is a sin simply have not matured in their views. As they learn more about the world, they will come to see that all forms of bigotry are irrational prejudices. Time often takes care of such prejudices, and even if people do not themselves change, their children tend to be more liberal. Of course, we cannot rely only on time, for some forms of discrimination are so invidious that it is unjust to wait. We ought, therefore, to use the schools and, on occasion, the courts, to teach a more elevated morality. (When all else fails, there are always sensitivity groups.) But we can be fairly certain that views that strike us as racist, homophobic, sexist, or just plain backward will fall before the pressure of progress.

The problem with this point of view—which is to say one of the chief problems that has faced the Democratic Party since the 1960s—is that it can convey an unrelenting smugness and elitism. Dismissive of the

deeply held beliefs of large numbers of people, Democrats impose antidemocratic solutions, seeking to cut off debates about divisive moral issues and refusing to recognize that people can quite legitimately disagree over, say, whether condoms should be given out in schools or whether affirmative action is the best way to integrate society. When modernizers are unable to get what they want through undemocratic means, such as court orders or administrative decrees, they tend to lose, especially in popular referenda. It is always instructive when the majority votes against them to watch modernizers account for their defeat; they tend to blame everything but their own ideas.

Populists approach the problem of middle-class morality from the opposite point of view. Populists and pseudopopulists—George Bush eating pork rinds, Rush Limbaugh talking about anything—strive to convey the notion that they possess a gritty, reality-based morality. The views of ordinary people are genuine, from their perspective, precisely because they violate the conventions of what we are “supposed” to think and express what, in the privacy of their homes, people really do think. The populist sees human nature through a glass darkly: People are selfish, shortsighted, sometimes mean. The world is a Hobbesian battleground pitting us against them. The liberal elitists may not like it, but you cannot really change human nature. Those who manage to tap public anger, therefore, are not demagogues but practitioners of true democratic politics.

The modern Republican Party owes its success, at least in presidential elections, to its adoption of full-blown moral populism. Yet the populists' understanding of middle-class morality is no less flawed than the modernizers'. They do not, for example, understand their constituents as well as they claim to. Surely Patrick Buchanan and Marilyn Quayle thought they had the American people on their side during the Republican convention of 1992, yet they barely had their own party on their side. Populists think of themselves as tell-



Some of America's newest arrivals are now the staunchest guardians of its oldest values. Among Asian Americans, the "model minority," many now enjoy far incomes above the U.S. average.

ing it like it is, when in fact their politics are as artificially constructed as those of the modernizers. Despite Ronald Reagan's message of restraint and responsibility, the 1980s were years of free-spending hedonism. And most people know there are two sides to most issues. They feel that political leaders who speak as if there is only one are patronizing and not worthy of their trust, even when they lean toward the leader's views. Populists can only repeat what they think people want to hear, but not everyone wants to look in a mirror all the time.

Confronted by two antagonistic world views, one might be tempted to find ways to reconcile them. Perhaps this temptation should be resisted, at least for a while. It is best if we face up to the major political and moral issues before us. We ought to do so not by siding with one side in its dismissal of the other but instead by stressing the importance of the processes and institutional arrange-

ments that can permit individuals with strong differences of opinion nevertheless to feel as if they belong to the same political system. The battle over middle-class morality presents a good opportunity to remember the importance of the rules that make politics possible.

One such rule is that neither side in the struggle is allowed to trump the other by appealing to fundamental constitutional principles. This is a rule that immediately suggests its own exceptions, for surely it would violate the Constitution to forbid one group to express its point of view. But with a new administration in power, we have a chance to stop using the Constitution as a weapon in the hands of one or the other side in our cultural wars. This will not be an easy task for Bill Clinton. Because the Republicans made opposition to abortion a litmus test for Supreme Court membership, for example, Democrats may well be tempted to turn the tables now that they have a chance. They should not. When public opinion is deeply divided on moral questions, the Supreme Court cannot make up

our moral minds for us. It can, and should, set the standards that enable a fair debate to take place. But if it tries to resolve the debate, it will only engender the kind of furious and determined opposition that arose after *Roe v. Wade*.

Second, we ought to experiment a bit more with moral federalism. Both sides in our moral debates want to universalize their positions: Condoms should be distributed to teenagers in each and every school or they should be distributed in none. In reality, different localities and different states will try different approaches, and this is how it should be. There was no reason why all New York City children needed to be instructed under the controversial "Curriculum of the Rainbow" favored by the head of the city's school system. Let Queens keep it out and Manhattan keep it in. A policy of encouraging particular rather than universal moralities violates consistency and philosophical principle. It also makes a good deal of political sense. Ultimately, universal moral principles may even emerge as people learn that their particular moralities are more problematic than they had realized.

Finally, both sides in the war over middle-class morality have to recognize that politics is a two-way street. Liberals cannot expect government to be in the business of helping people without recognizing that the beneficia-

ries have an obligation to behave responsibly. Conservatives cannot go around telling people how to behave if they are unwilling to make the plight of the unfortunate their business. Liberals are surely correct when they remind us that without rights we lose our freedom. But conservatives are also correct when they point out that without obligations, we have no rights. Thinking about politics as the art of balancing rights and obligations does not tell us what to do in situations of moral complexity, but it does at least force us to consider the positions of those with whom we disagree.

No one expects the war between the head and the heart of the American middle class to end soon. To be middle class in America is to reap all the satisfactions of making it while simultaneously assuming the obligations that come with success. Middle-class Americans ought to be generous to those who have been left behind. But it is foolish in this less-benign economic era to expect them to gloss over the increasing importance of the hard work involved in becoming middle class. It is impossible to predict the next step in American politics, but it does seem plausible that our public life over the next few decades will be preoccupied with watching the middle class make up its mind.

The Upper Class, Up for Grabs

BY NELSON W. ALDRICH IV



Easily the most conspicuous building in the flossy New York neighborhood of Madison Avenue and 72nd Street is the blown-up replica of a High Gothic reliquary whose original, one suspects, is to be found in some unvisited room of the Metropolitan Museum, eight

blocks to the north. Built in 1895, the mansion is now the flagship emporium of lifestyle outfitter Ralph Lauren, and it teems with visitors every day of the week.

But it is no less a reliquary for that.

The relics purveyed at Polo HQ are those of a social elite, now dispersed, called the

WASP upper class. The marketing pitch is faithfully echoed in the decor, which recreates a perfect period of the WASP ascendancy, those last few years before the Crash of 1929 when WASPs reigned supreme in the spiritual—that is, upward striving—aspirations of their fellow citizens.

It was a period not unlike our own recent past. For three presidencies in succession, all rich Americans had enjoyed the capital's heartfelt indulgence, the old-money Buchanans quite as much as the new-money Gatsbys. More to the point that Ralph Lauren wants to make, the WASP upper class before 1929 held undisputed sway over America's *stylistic* imagination. The celebritocracy had not yet spread its firmament over our heads, its stars twinkling in and out of existence like lights in a pinball machine. Thus the advertising industry had no imagery to work with to capture middle- to lower-class consumers, except images of wealth and social ease—in a word, "class." (The absence of the qualifier "upper" is a typical American hypocrisy, a ploy to arouse covetousness without arousing resentment.) By 1929 every opportunity-seeking American in the land of opportunity was being assailed by idealized visions of the haute WASPoisie at home, at play (often at polo, in fact), or on their way to work at the command posts of capitalism and democracy. WASPs in those latter days were still where Thorstein Veblen had located them in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), at the "radiant center" of American society.

So powerful was this imagery that it survived the Great Depression, the greatest blow to a group of upper-class status-bearers since the age of Jackson. Even during its depths, polo players such as the great Tommy Hitchcock—the model in part for Jay Gatsby's rival, Tom Buchanan—used to draw thousands of quite ordinary spectators to the fields of Meadow Brook to watch them play. (Today,

while almost no one watches polo, virtually everyone buys Polo polo shirts.) The imagery also got a boost, possibly, from the ebullient WASP in the White House; it certainly got one from the fantasists of sophisticated comedy in Hollywood.

But the radiant center could not hold after 1941. The vast democratization of social life during World War II dealt it one blow, the great democratization of prosperity that came after the war dealt it another, and the rise of the celebritocracy finished it off. The imagery dimmed and faded out. Beginning in the 1950s, consumers were tempted by a whole new range of stylistic options. Some were proudly middle class (Scandinavian furniture, "sportswear"), some were generational (kids and teens), some were geared to "leisure" lifestyles (most of these styles, ironically, were former working-class uniforms: the woodsy, the marine, the western), some manipulated racial consciousness (black fashions), but all pandered to an impeccably democratic aesthetic of self-expression, not class-expression. It was not until the early 1970s, with Watergate and the oil crisis, the gray dawn of the age of diminishing expectations, that pre-World War II WASP imagery began to return to consumer awareness. Retrieving it was Ralph Lauren's great idea.

It came, of course, like all lifestyles, with a specific ideological aura—in the WASP case, the aura of almost metaphysical belonging. After all, theirs was a class whose peculiar fortunes were *given*, not earned; chosen for them, not by them. And this given-ness, or fate, or Providence, or destiny entailed a particular, indeed an obligatory, role in American life: the stewardship of the nation's assets. WASPs were to "deserve" their privileges after the fact, as it were, by serving their countrymen as the trustees, the custodians, the curators of all that was good, true, and beautiful in this New World (including, needless to say, much of its wealth).

Nelson W. Aldrich IV is an editor of Lear's Magazine and the author, most recently, of Old Money: The Mythology of America's Upper Class (Vintage). Copyright © 1993 by Nelson W. Aldrich IV.

Here is the deeper significance of that sense of easy grace captured in the shop windows of Polo HQ. One has only to look at the men and women in Lauren's ads, at the stoic set of their mouths and eyes, at the touch of melancholy in their *sprezzatura*. These are people in whom beauty is allied with power—no greater grace than this!—but in whom power is tempered by responsibility. If WASPs belonged socially, even transcendently, it was at the grave price of being obliged truly to take care of what belonged to them.

And this was only fitting. WASPs came by this "higher" calling rather as motorists who knock down pedestrians, rushing over to see what they have done, often find that the circle of bystanders around the victim parts to let them through. As WASPs were the first to profit by the march of free markets and technological progress, so they were the first to understand that while it is always necessary to destroy this village, habitat, way of life, etc., in order to save it, it is not always necessary to destroy absolutely everything. Some of it can indeed be saved. To the spoils, as Fitzgerald once remarked, belong the victors.

It is by their curatorial care, at any rate, that WASPs are now remembered. Private schools and colleges, art and natural-history museums, hospitals and parks, zoos and botanical gardens, historical societies and libraries, Nature herself in all Her conservancies—all testify to the WASP conversion from pillagers to preservers of the past. Nowadays, however, even this contribution is obscured. At the country's museums and libraries, for example, the commemorative plaques of WASP benefactors may soon be outnumbered by those of other ethnics. Hollywood has taken on the environmentalist duties of conserving Nature. No old-money WASP today puts together a museum-quality collection of anything. Boards of directors and of trustees look for bigger bucks, and more resonant minority status, than WASPs can provide. In short, there is little left to mark the place where WASPs once stood, stewards

of all they surveyed, except Ralph Lauren's store at Polo HQ.

What happened to the WASPs? Does it matter? These questions are significant enough to have generated a steady trickle of writings and readers. (And a river of customers for the Ralph Lauren lifestyle. "Belonging," if only the image of it, is not easily given up.) Unsurprisingly, it turns out that what happened depends entirely on one's point of view. The task of understanding, as Nietzsche once mocked, makes us all into Don Juans of the multiple perspective.

WASPs have two perspectives on the matter. One view, beginning with Henry Adams's lament about his kind of people going the way of the buffalo, is more or less Darwinian. Successive waves of immigrants surged onto our shores, the Adams theory holds, leaving behind masses of struggling ethnics any one of whom was better equipped to survive in America, on America's terms, than those who came here first, like the Adamases. Adams had in mind "a furtive Yacoob" from Warsaw; today's younger WASPs, who are scarcely alone in this, have in mind a Lee Chung from Hong Kong, or even, thanks to that forced inner immigration known as affirmative action, a Mustapha Jones from Harlem.

Of course, as Adams would have been the first to point out, this account of WASP decline says more about America's terms of success than it does about WASPs, or even about ethnics. These terms were set with Andrew Jackson's humiliating defeat of Adams's grandfather, or perhaps even earlier than that, with the passing of the Founding Fathers, including Adams's great-grandfather. Thereafter, the noble ideals and practices of the American republic were forever swept away by the unbounded appetites, the unappeasable restlessness, the narrow selfishness, the brutal rationalism, and the technological wizardry of the one truly American democracy—the democracy of the marketplace.

In this democracy Adamases lose out to immigrants (including in-migrants like Gatsby) for the simple reason that immigrants, unlike Adamases, are unburdened by the dogmas of an earlier democracy. Then, in the Adamases' perspective, the pursuit of purely individualistic visions of the good was supposed to be conducted with all due respect to the past and to posterity, and in a properly democratic spirit of civility, candor, and (social) conscience.

'Twas never thus, perhaps, but these dogmas of an earlier America, an exclusively white Anglo-Saxon Protestant America, did at least occasionally disturb the orgiastic worship of the free market. Now, according to the Adams theory, it is the orgy itself that is dogma, and American history consists entirely in a pleonastic ("more, more") struggle for advantage, one individual over another, one interest group over another, one immigrant group over another, at the trough of economic opportunity. In this perspective, shared with Adams by countless WASPs after him, America's elite is now just another defeated "group," slightly better off than the Indians, perhaps, but spiritually quite as irrelevant.

This is a not-implausible account of what led the WASPs to their dismal pass. The trouble with it is that it leaves no room for WASP responsibility in their fate, apart from their vague ineptitude at moneymaking, or for the continuing appeal of the Polo shop windows. For it seems unlikely, really, that WASPs should be entirely without blame for their decline, any more than they should be entirely without virtue in their lifestyle. Another WASP perspective, whose best-known expositor today is the novelist Louis Auchincloss, goes some way toward illuminating these issues.

Auchincloss's master theme is the loss of WASP authority. WASPs were not deprived of their stewardship; they lost it. They lost it through a fatal narrowness and flabbiness of character that sapped, and finally destroyed, the qualities of self-command required of

stewards. Auchincloss is not alone in this view. It was held before him, with varying degrees of envy, disappointment, and contempt, by Edith Wharton, F. Scott Fitzgerald, J. P. Marquand, John O'Hara, and James Gould Cozzens, among our novelists. It was also the view of the two Roosevelts, among recent WASP presidents, and of John F. Kennedy, among recent hereditarily rich presidents. It is the view, as well, of E. Digby Baltzell, among sociologists and sociologizing journalists. It is a very common view.

It is also very often disputed—most recently by Andrew Del Banco in a recent review of Auchincloss's life and works in the *New Republic*. Del Banco faults the novelist's theory primarily on the grounds that it does not cut deeply enough, or painfully enough. First, says Del Banco, Auchincloss fails to establish that the WASP sense of public responsibility ever existed "in more than a handful of exceptional men." In fact, says Del Banco, if there was ever a time when the WASP elite exhibited in any depth the civic, never mind the domestic and pecuniary, virtues that Auchincloss imputes to them, Auchincloss himself has not found it. Second, Del Banco alleges that Auchincloss fails to establish that the WASP brand of public responsibility was ever "capacious," by which he means inclusive, welcoming, *widely* responsible, "before it became merely tribal." The most scornful thrusts of Del Banco's argument, in fact, go straight to this point: that the novelist himself, in his attitudes toward the "newer" ethnics, in his valuations of family and boyhood friendships, in his prissily archaic language, far from having transcended tribalism, has positively wallowed in it.

This, it must be said, is also a very common view. WASP critics of WASPs are always being attacked by non-WASP critics of WASPs for being insufficiently ruthless toward—nay, for harboring some slight tenderness or affection for—the sorts of people among whom they were born, educated, and made their earliest friendships. Ambivalence may be absolutely mandatory in other stories of betrayed

or abandoned "background" (who would read Amy Tan if she had turned on her mother's ways with pure contempt?), but WASPs, to other ethnics, are not just any other ethnic group. They are the ethnic group that fancied itself steward of its country's fortunes.

But bad stewards—bad because (unlike other ethnics, presumably) they behaved as a "tribe." For critics such as Del Banco, the custodians, all but a few exceptional men, were a stifling association of blood, breeding, and inordinate (that is, unearned) wealth and influence. In this view, WASPs have always done their evil best, for as long as they could get away with it, to hog all of America's economic resources, all of its awards of status and privilege, all of its cultural amenities, and all of its political influence. WASPs were bad, in short, because they stood against the essence of America itself, the promise of individual opportunity. Thus they deserve all the opprobrium they get, no less from one of their enlightened own, such as Auchincloss, than from their justly indignant victims.

Behind these charges, without question, is a true historical experience—the blackball—and a serviceable sociological generalization. WASPs blackballed at the loan desk, at schools and colleges, at trustee meetings, on boards of directors, in the conduct of public (especially foreign) affairs—wherever and whenever they were in command. The generalization is that, in blackballing people, the WASP ascendancy brought *social* considerations, specifically the right to choose one's friends and associates according to one's elective affinities, into business, political, economic, and cultural or educational realms where America-as-Opportunity declares they do not belong—where only merit, or only a Whitmanesque democracy, belongs.

This charge, growing out of that experience, seems accurate enough as far as it goes. Blackballing did happen (still does, in clubs), and the principle behind it is the social principle of elective affinity. The question occurs,

however, whether WASPs might not have been able to claim that *their* elective affinities, and therefore their blackballing, were governed by "higher" moral principles than govern the affinities of other Americans, either as individuals or as groups. And this claim, horribly invidious though it is, WASPs did make. There is something in the atmosphere at Polo HQ, WASPs would argue, that goes deeper than personal adornment.

But to be persuasive here, WASPs would have to answer one of Del Banco's questions: Was there ever a time when WASPs conducted themselves as a group according to "their brand of public responsibility"? I would argue that there was such a time, not indeed in the history of the country but in the lives of individual WASPs. This was when they were in boarding school. If I am right about this, then the "boarding-school moment," as one might call it, provides a standard by which to measure the extent of the WASPs' failure, both individually and collectively, of moral authority. This standard was set by their schoolboy, and schoolgirl, ideals.

That the issue is an educational one should be no surprise. In a culture of no culture (or of one, two, three, or many cultures) such as ours, education is always the issue. Thus by far the most arresting story Del Banco tells us about Auchincloss concerns an educational effort made by the novelist's late wife. It seems she was trying to set up a summer program for poor children in the New York City park system. "We saw kids . . . playing baseball in the bird sanctuary," Mrs. Auchincloss told an interviewer, "so we had to teach them what a bird sanctuary was, so they would play elsewhere."

Del Banco's gloss on this story (appropriately enough in a professor) is more ambivalent than what most non-WASP critics of WASPs would offer. Mrs. Auchincloss, he says, more or less approvingly, was acting out her class's most cherished values—"discipline, duty, and, in some half-sacrificial, half-

narcissistic way, a kind of American noblesse oblige." The trouble comes with the assumption that people like Mrs. Auchincloss actually had something to teach these "kids" about duty, discipline, and civic obligation. For if she did, it means that she and the kids were not on the same moral footing. And that way, as a professor knows better than most, lies the wrath of the people.

For whether the people are populists or Reaganite individualists—and most Americans are one or the other, or some combination of both—Mrs. Auchincloss's assumption is not, most emphatically not, PC. As a result, Del Banco must hedge his already mild approval by sneeringly imputing to her a sneer. Mrs. Auchincloss, he says, is giving in to an "impulse to lift the lowly out of their moral squalor;" she is indulging the old WASP habit of "teaching the barbarians to behave."

But leaving aside the sneers for a moment, it is clear that the lady is acting according to the educational ideals of the "boarding-school moment." I do not know whether playing baseball in bird sanctuaries is actually so hard on the birds, but if it is, then most American boys, not only poor boys, need to be taught that it is. Judging by the self-help shelves, they need to be taught just about everything else, from how to be men to how to how to argue with their spouses; so it stands to reason that they would need to be taught about how to behave ecologically correctly around birds. This is what is meant by growing up in a culture of no culture: Education has to do everything.

So the question then becomes, By what right of education do WASPs like Mr. and Mrs. Auchincloss arrogate to themselves the public responsibility of teaching their fellow Americans how to behave in bird sanctuaries? Or in banks, for that matter? By what moral reasoning was Clark Clifford led to advise his BCCI clients to get themselves a WASP president? Could it have been because Clifford supposed that WASPness still signifies to bank examiners and other such Americans some sort of su-

perior stewardly probity? Could WASPs ever claim, at any time, that this reputation was deserved?

Whether they could or not, they did. And if there were any grounds for WASP arrogance in these claims, they lay in the WASP boarding school. By this I mean chiefly the St. Midas schools, as Fitzgerald called them: Groton, St. Paul's, St. Mark's, and the like for boys, and Foxcroft, Madeira, and the like for girls. I do not mean the so-called Academy schools—George Bush's Andover, for example. The distinction, now blurred, was once vital. The Academy schools were governed by much the same ethos as governs most American high schools—most American life, for that matter. They are governed, that is, by a sink-or-swim, individualistic liberalism.

At the St. Midas schools, this was not at all the case. There, from the 1850s to the end of the 1960s, the most favored little children of the rich got an education the likes of which was nowhere else to be found in the New World. At St. Midas the reigning spirit was a decidedly un-American, unliberal, *paternalistic communitarianism*—a stewardship, so to say, of moral futures.

There is a surprisingly large literature concerned with these schools. Much of it, the stories and memoirs especially, is horribly, fascinatingly ambivalent—quite as much so as Amy Tan's work. For the writers of these works, Auchincloss among them (as in his best-known novel, *The Rector of Justin*), the tension between the ideological training "at school" and the experience of "the real world" would seem to have been almost unbearable. The "world," when these WASP boys and girls finally got out into it, was a place of liberation, of experiment and self-experiment, of constant perspectival adjustment, and of the headiest (because well-endowed) individualism. In a word, the "world" was a place of modernity.

"School" was something else again. From

the age of 13, these children were sequestered on vast country estates, far from the sinful cities, far from their parents' wealth, far from all consumerist temptations and media corruptions, for nine months of the year. There, they were not free to experiment; there, the perspective was *given* and *good*; there, individualism was a peril to the common welfare. At St. Midas, children were subjected to the most intense, unrelenting training in social consciousness and social conscience. Of course, the schools demanded individual performance as well—continuous, arduous performance that measured the children against all the norms of the "well-rounded man (or woman)." Students had to perform socially (manners and morals), aesthetically (looks, dress), athletically (team sports only), and, last and not least, academically—least, of course, because serious intellectual work is for loners, and loners might become moral experimentalists. Moreover, these performances had to be sustained day in and day out, without rest, without privacy, without let-up.

But it was the community, its past and posterity, that mattered most at these schools, far more than any individual. The community, under the paternal guidance and care of the rector, was the school's alpha and omega: the ground of its morality, the object of its care, and the warm viscous medium of every individual performance, for good or ill. This communitarianism had its sources in Plato and Aristotle, the Stoics, and in Anglican Christianity (though this last was mostly for a gentling aesthetic effect, stiffened somewhat by elements of the Social Gospel). Its didactic purpose, however, by which I mean its dialectical opponent, was thoroughly contemporary—the unfettered liberal individualism which in the economic realm had produced the inherited fortunes of these children, but which in the moral realm was always threatening to produce that ineffable carelessness, both private and public, which is the perennial weakness—and the charm, oh yes, the charm!—of the socially secure.

If the "boarding-school moment" was as

significant in the lives of WASPs as I think it was, then we have an answer to Del Banco's question. WASPs *were* once, and in depth, the avatars of their own brand of public responsibility—at boarding school. They failed then, as a class and as individuals, when they entered the "world" of modernity—with its liberations, its multiple perspectives, the wonderful optionality of its notions of the good, and the primacy, over the community, of the idea of the individual self. There were of course those "exceptional men"—few, according to Del Banco, thinking perhaps of stewards on a national scale like the Roosevelts; disproportionately many, I would argue, thinking of more local stewardships. But of most WASPs, judged by St. Midas' ideals, it has to be said that they've been "letting the old school down" from the beginning.

Actually, what most WASPs did was more complicated, and worse, than that. One must understand that St. Midas is in one sense a perfectly familiar place. It is the old ethnic neighborhood, the homogeneous small town, from which all Americans have chosen to flee. (All Americans, that is, except blacks, who had no choice in the matter.) In this perspective, St. Midas is just another of those ghettos that play such a powerful role in today's politics as "America's lost sense of community." But there is a grave difference in the relationship that WASPs ultimately establish with their "lost" communities and the relationships that other groups establish with theirs. The others can't go home again; they can't afford to. WASPs can afford to, and most of them do.

Their movement on leaving "school" is one step forward, followed by two steps backward. The forward step is, as I have suggested, a sort of emancipation, both in the modern sense of a liberation from oppression, and in the ancient sense of a banishment from all moral security. But then, even before 1929, many WASPs discovered that neither their ineffable belongingness, nor their superior

sense of the national interest, helped buoy them up, either spiritually or financially, in the eyes of their non-WASP countrymen. This came as a shock, as any reader of *The Education of Henry Adams* will remember, and it came again and again as each new generation of WASPs grasped its American birthright of freedom, and its family birthright of inherited wealth, and ran with them into the "world."

The two steps backward were taken soon thereafter. Other Americans who fail to "make it," either on their terms or the market's, are left to take what consolation they can from the thought that their failure was theirs alone—"alone" being the operative word here. Not so, thanks to their inheritances, the WASPs. They could salve their wounds by the simple expedient of retreating into the "tribalism" that evokes Del Banco's sneer. And there, in ethnically pure neighborhoods, they took their second step, back beyond the moral rigors of "school" to the soft certainties of childhood.

WASPs were hardly alone in wanting these havens in a heartless (I mean, free) world, but they were alone in bumping up against a humiliating contradiction at the heart of their havens. I mean that to get to Greenwich and Siwickli, even once there, WASPs had to pass through the reproaches of St. Midas. "School" might have been an ethnic ghetto, but it was also what few other ethnic ghettos manage to be, a training ground in universal, or at least national, ideals. Graduates were not supposed to end up huddled together like so many squeamish, frightened children, lamenting the vulgarity and obtuseness of the big, powerful, grown-ups. On the contrary, like Mrs. Auchincloss, they were supposed to translate their adolescent experiences and principles into a more worldly language of what might be called civic conserva-

tism. Americans quite properly love liberty, WASPs were taught at St. Midas, but most of them are badly in need of tutors to tell them what to do with it.

This was the historic role of the WASPs, to teach their fellow Americans at last what WASPs had learned first—that individual freedom is just another phrase for civic responsibility. No one at St. Midas ever assumed that this "school spirit" would be an easy lesson to get across in liberal, individualist, sink-or-swim America. But it was assumed that the sort of man or woman produced at St. Midas—strong, cultured, sure in his sense of what constitutes both the good life and the common good—would never give up trying to teach it. And indeed those "few" who did not give up found that there was a place for them, even in America, especially in educational, conservationist, and welfare (human conservation, as it were) undertakings.

Meanwhile, however, a curious cloak of invisibility has settled upon the WASPs, concealing their lives but projecting their lifestyles. They are a defeated people, much as Adams said they were, but a people defeated by their own failures, as Auchincloss and Del Banco say they are. They fail first to become what all good Americans are supposed to become, independent entrepreneurs of the sovereign self; and they fail, second, to be what St. Midas trained them to be, unAmerican tutors of the civically responsible self. All that remains of them is what Ralph Lauren chooses to let us know about them through his "authentic reproductions" of their personal adornments. Yes, a vague sense of belonging does emanate from these artifacts, but whether the ideals of civic conservatism emanate along with it, let the visitor to Polo HQ be the judge.

THE NEW POLITICS OF CLASS IN AMERICA

It is now such a cliché that America is a middle-class society that few stop to ask how it came to be one. Historian Gordon S. Wood of Brown University suggests in **The Radicalism of the American Revolution** (Knopf, 1992) that it was almost an accident. Wood argues that the Revolution was not only a war for independence but a radical attack on the social order inherited from England—a social order in which most colonists “still took for granted that society was and ought to be a hierarchy of ranks and degrees of dependency and that most people were bound together by personal ties of one sort or another.” In place of this rigid society, the Founding Fathers proposed to create what Thomas Jefferson called a “natural aristocracy” of talented men like themselves—liberally educated gentlemen of the Enlightenment who had risen from modest circumstances yet had been excluded under the old order. “For many of the revolutionary leaders,” Wood observes, “this was the emotional significance of republicanism—a vindication of frustrated talent at the expense of birth and blood.”

But many of the Founding Fathers, including Jefferson, were dismayed by what the Revolution wrought. Americans took all too seriously the idea that they (or at least the white males among them) were free and equal, and in their egalitarian enthusiasm they blurred the once-vital distinction between gentlemen and plain people. By the 1820s, writes Wood, “in the North at least, already it seemed as if the so-called middle class was all there was. . . . By absorbing the gentility of the aristocracy and the work of the working, the middling sorts gained a powerful moral hegemony over the whole society.”

It was easy for the middle class to dominate national life because the United States in its early years was spared the worst extremes of wealth and poverty. Industrialization changed that, especially as it accelerated after the Civil War, creating both vast fortunes and crushing poverty. The change is chronicled in **Three Centuries of Social Mobility in America** (Heath, 1974), an anthology edited by Edward Pessen, a sociologist at the City University of New York.

Out of middle-class anxieties about these developments, historian Richard Hofstadter argues in his classic study, **The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.** (1955), the Progressive movement grew. “The newly rich, the grandiosely or corruptly rich, the masters of great corporations, were bypassing the men of the Mugwump type—the old gentry, the merchants of long standing, the small manufacturers, the established professional men, the civic leaders of an earlier era,” Hofstadter writes. Beginning in the 1870s, the old-stock Americans responded by taking up the reform cause, hoping to limit the power of the newcomers in the political and economic realms.

A slightly different tack is taken by E. Digby Baltzell, a University of Pennsylvania sociologist, in **Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class** (1959; reprint, Transaction, 1989). Baltzell shows how local nouveaux riches and old families were cemented into a self-aware national upper class through marriage and various institutions created precisely for that purpose in the late 19th century, including New York’s *Social Register* (1888) and prep schools such as Groton (1884).

An advocate, like Thomas Jefferson, of a “natural aristocracy” (though perhaps more willing than Jefferson to admit a hereditary factor), Baltzell harshly criticizes the WASP upper class of his day for succumbing to the temptation to act like a caste rather than an aristocracy, excluding Jews and other talented ethnics from the institutions it still controlled. “While the socialist faiths, on the one hand, have centered on the vision of equality of condition in a classless society,” he writes in **The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America** (1964; reprint, Yale, 1987), “our own best traditions have stressed equality of opportunity in a hierarchical and open-class, as opposed to a classless, society.” In **The Protestant Establishment Revisited** (Transaction, 1991), a collection of essays, Baltzell reflects that within a few short years of his book’s publication, not only the WASP establishment but the very idea of social author-

ity exercised by any group was all but gone.

It is a typically American irony that an era that gave birth to a cohesive upper class did little for the working class except increase its numbers. The absence of class consciousness among the American proletariat has puzzled observers for decades. In **Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?** (1906; reprint, Macmillan, 1976), German economist Werner Sombart tried out several of the now-familiar explanations—the availability of cheap western farmland, the relative affluence of American workers, the American belief in political and social equality—before settling on one that Americans themselves hold dear: American workers do not consider themselves a proletariat because they do not feel condemned to be workers forever. For “a far from insignificant number,” Sombart observed, the rags-to-riches saga was no myth.

Subsequent research has shown, however, that by the late 19th century opportunity was about as abundant in Europe as in the United States. What explains the attitudes of U.S. workers, Seymour Martin Lipset and Reinhard Bendix write in **Social Mobility in Industrial Society** (1959; reissued, Transaction, 1992), is the fact that getting ahead is actively encouraged in America, while the country’s democratic ethos prevents inequality in income from being directly translated into inequality in other areas of life.

In a fluid society such as the United States, the very idea of social class tends to make people uncomfortable. During the Great Depression, several public-opinion surveys showed what Americans deeply wanted to believe—that theirs was in effect a classless society—and a myth was born. Vast majorities—88 percent in one case—told pollsters that they considered themselves middle class. Some years later, Richard Centers pointed out in **The Psychology of Social Classes** (1949; reprint, 1961)

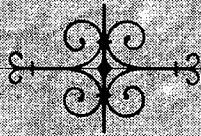
that those polled were given only three choices: lower, middle, or upper class. Given the choice, Centers said, 51 percent of the people he surveyed in 1945 identified themselves as *working class*.

The nation’s economic irregularity since 1973 has bred a whole new set of anxieties about class, expressed in a raft of articles and books on “the decline of the middle class,” including **The Great U-Turn: Corporate Restructuring and the Polarizing of America** (Basic, 1988), by Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone; Frank Levy’s **Dollars and Dreams: The Changing American Income Distribution** (Russell Sage, 1987); and Kevin Phillips’s **Boiling Point: Democrats, Republicans, and the Decline of Middle-Class Prosperity** (Random, 1993). Interestingly, however, Americans queried about their class status over the years by the National Opinion Research Center seem to tell a different tale. The proportion calling themselves middle class has been on the rise since 1983, reaching a record-high 49 percent in 1991. The survey data appear in the *American Enterprise* (May/June 1993).

The woes of the great American middle will very likely prove to be momentary tribulations. A development of far greater import may be the discovery of an urban underclass. Although it has been scrutinized in volumes ranging from Ken Auletta’s journalistic **The Underclass** (Random, 1982) to Christopher Jencks’s **Rethinking Social Policy: Race, Poverty, and the Underclass** (Harvard, 1992), much about the underclass—how long it has existed, how big it is, whether it is growing larger—remains unknown or debatable. But the existence of a sizable group of Americans more or less permanently mired in poverty and perhaps passing its disabilities on to its children poses a monumental challenge to the ethos of opportunity that has from the beginning animated American life.

"Walker Percy could not
have been more fortunate
in his biographer."*

Pilgrim in the Ruins



A LIFE OF
Walker Percy

JAY TOLSON

"A vivid, beautifully organized
and written account of the
existence of a particular man
and artist, living out his
unique life as he pursues
his vocation."

—Sally Fitzgerald*, editor of
*THE HABIT OF BEING:
Letters of Flannery O'Connor*



SIMON & SCHUSTER
A Paramount Communications Company



G.B. VICO

THE MAKING OF AN
ANTI-MODERN

MARK LILLA

The Italian scholar Giovanni Battista Vico is widely viewed as the first modern philosopher of history. In this new study Mark Lilla complicates this picture by presenting Vico as one of the most troubling of anti-modern thinkers.

By combing Vico's neglected early writings on metaphysics and jurisprudence, Lilla reveals the philosopher's deep reservations about the modern outlook and shows how his science of history grew out of these very doubts. Vico emerges as a profoundly political and theological thinker who contrasted the authoritative traditions of an idealized Rome against the corrupting skepticism endemic in modern life. Placed in the context of his critique of skepticism, Vico's "new science" of history appears in a wholly new light.

This first truly comprehensive introduction to Vico puts all the elements of his theories of authority, politics, and civil religion in their proper relationship with his theory of history. As such, it raises provocative questions about the subsequent intellectual development of the anti-modern tradition as it relates to the historical and social sciences of our time.

\$39.95 cloth

Available at bookstores or directly from

Harvard University Press

Cambridge, MA 02138
Call toll-free. Credit Cards Accepted:
1-800-448-2242

CURRENT BOOKS

Is Liberalism Dead?

THE ANATOMY OF ANTILIBERALISM. By Stephen Holmes. Harvard. 330 pp. \$29.95

THE LOSS OF VIRTUE: Moral Confusion and Social Disorder in Britain and America. Ed. by Digby Anderson. *The Social Affairs Unit and the National Review*. 258 pp. \$22.95

There is much to be said for the thought that liberals are happiest when under fire. As a positive doctrine for the good life, liberalism—especially American liberalism—can look pretty thin. Its deference to the principle of freedom of choice sometimes reduces liberalism's moral vocabulary to "you choose, dear." Harvard political philosopher Michael Sandel has achieved fame and fortune by complaining that this "voluntarism" is, indeed, all that liberalism amounts to and that something sterner, more "republican"—with a small *r*—is needed for liberalism, both as a theory of political freedom and as a theory of how to motivate the citizenry. Yet when liberals try to escape this communitarian complaint by claiming that they have a positive vision of this good society, they find themselves assailed by libertarians such as Robert Nozick, who espouse precisely rip-roaring voluntarism. Happier, then, the liberal who finds him- or herself assailed by the Right, whether in its lugubrious, moralizing, or counterrevolutionary guise. If liberals do not know quite what they are for, they are pretty clear about what they are against.

This is not a frivolous point. The late Judith Shklar wrote a memorable essay on the "liberalism of fear," in which she argued that the beginnings of liberalism lay in the need to avoid the horrors of the religious wars of the 17th century. An antipathy to cruelty, and a strong suspicion that all of us are capable of it when under the influence of religious or ideological passion, underpins a basic liberal response to politics. In *Political Liberalism* (1993), John Rawls argues for the virtues of the liberal separation of the political and the theological

that our forebears contrived in the late 17th century. Liberals of Rawls's stripe are keenly aware of the nasty potentialities of the human race. When others speak of religious conviction, they see the fires of Smithfield, and when others speak of communal ties, they see ethnic cleansing. Thus Stephen Holmes, a political scientist at the University of Chicago, can argue here that it is very far from true that liberals are absurdly optimistic about human nature—a familiar charge ever since the days of Joseph de Maistre. Indeed, Holmes argues, liberals have taken over and even generalized their critics' pessimism.

Elitists of all kinds are ready to agree that humanity has fallen, but they invariably exempt their favorite ruling class from the worst effects of original sin. Liberals, by contrast, think that we have no reason to suppose that anyone is exempted from the corrupting effects of power, the blinding effects of vanity, and the human disposition to wishful thinking, impatience, and imprudence. Chastened Madisonian liberalism, according to Holmes's account of it, needs no lectures from anyone on the need to defend ourselves against human imperfection.

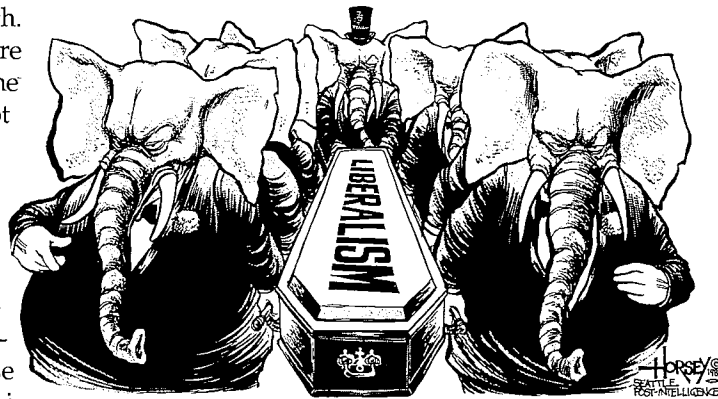
Instead of composing a defense of liberalism, however, Holmes analyzes those who attack it, those who have made liberalism, in certain political circles, almost a dirty word. In exposing the philosophical underpinnings of antiliberalism, Holmes examines the theoretical doctrines associated with some great (and not so great) names in modern political thinking. The names are those of de Maistre, Carl Schmitt, Leo Strauss, Alasdair MacIntyre, Christopher Lasch, and Roberto Unger, all of whom become targets of his wonderfully uninhibited assault. (Readers who like their uninhibition really raw can chase down early versions of several of these chapters in the pages of the *New Republic*.) Underlying what these figures have in common is what Holmes calls the "permanent structure of antiliberal

thought." Not putting too fine a point on it, Holmes finds that antiliberalism usually combines elements of mythical thinking, ethical anti-individualism, and the diluted American version of *völkisch* thought generally labeled "communitarianism."

Antiliberalism varies a good deal according to the antiliberal who is writing. Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) wrote in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and the salient feature of his hatred of the modern world was its sanguinary quality. He could never be quite sure that he was opposed to the French Revolution, since the very things he loathed about it—its destructive, violent quality, its resort to regicide and mass murder—might, he thought, be a particularly emphatic demonstration of God's justified wrath. The execution of Louis XVI bore several possible meanings. One might be that Louis XVI got what was coming to him for his folly in compromising with the forces that overthrew him.

Holmes admits that de Maistre had rational moments and that in those rational moments he made the case against wholesale social engineering that Burke had made and that good liberals like Karl Popper would make 150 years later. It was absurd to think that one could uproot habits that had taken centuries to instill and demand that people forget them overnight. Social custom became second nature, and although it was only second nature, it was no easier to alter than first nature. This insistence on tradition could easily tip over into the thought that no new beginnings were possible. And that was precisely de Maistre's thought when he announced that it was extremely unlikely that the United States would survive at all, while the odds against anyone building a capital city called *Washington* were 1,000 to one. It all smelled too much of human contrivance.

Nobody in the 20th century goes quite so far. Still, Holmes has a good time tearing Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss to pieces. Schmitt in particular was a very peculiar case. Although he seems to have behaved well enough to individual Jewish colleagues, he was a fierce anti-Semite even before the Nazis came to power. A ferocious opponent of the Weimar Republic, he later became a loyal servant of the Nazis. Doctrinally, he held that liberal democracies were incapable of governing themselves, of producing leaders, and of making decisions. Schmitt's antiliberalism rested on the conviction that the Weimar Republic was, you might say, wimpishness expressed as politics. As a theory, Schmitt's suffered from



a terrible flaw: It could not explain why the British and French had emerged victorious in the First World War.

The more local brands of antiliberalism offered by Leo Strauss, Alasdair MacIntyre, Christopher Lasch, and Roberto Unger are dealt with more delicately but not much more kindly. Holmes is, in fact, in the happy position of being able to play off the critics against one another, and, in the case of Lasch, against himself. Unger criticizes liberalism for breeding conformity; MacIntyre for breeding a lack of authority. It seems unlikely that both can be right, and perhaps unlikely that both are looking at the same thing. Lasch invokes Georges Sorel to complain that

liberalism is too peaceful and Edward Bellamy to complain that it is too *mouvementé*, too unsettling. Holmes nicely characterizes Lasch's various points as "disheveled eclecticism."

In general, of course, liberalism is likely to look a lot like an unsatisfactory compromise to an awful lot of people—too secular to the religious and too accommodating of the susceptibilities of the religious to the friends of Bertrand Russell, too sociable to the disciples of Nietzsche and too anomic to Robert Bellah and his friends, and so on indefinitely.

It is, however, no use just saying that. Something may be attacked from all directions and still be quite other than a good thing in itself. Because Stephen Holmes has such a good time smiting the assailants of liberalism, his positive defense of liberal values, the liberal polity, and the liberal worldview has to be gleaned from the edges of the field of battle. Holmes's liberalism, in fact, is not relentlessly high-minded like John Stuart Mill's; it more resembles the liberalism of Benjamin Constant (1767–1830), about whom Holmes has written a good deal elsewhere. Mill thought, as Socrates had, that the unexamined life was not worth living, and he often wrote as though anyone not constantly engaged in public-spirited good deeds was wallowing in piglike insensibility. You would be safe enough from coercion in the society Mill imagined, but you would not be safe from censorious philosophers.

Constant, a Franco-Swiss novelist and political writer, defended a more relaxed liberalism. One of the blessings of the modern world, he thought, was the variety of things it offered for our enjoyment. Although he agreed that the liberal state needed a good deal of public-spirited activity to keep it going, he did not give political activism the highest place among the human virtues. In his famous *Essay on the Liberty of the Ancients Compared with That of the Moderns* (1819), he defended modern society's emphasis on the pleasures of private life against the ancient belief that freedom consisted *only* in active citizenship. In part,

Constant's argument was that ancient society depended on slavery for many in order to give citizenship to some; in part, that the ancient world was rather boring, so naturally politics bulked larger. Constant's neatly deflationary account of why we mind about privacy he balanced by the observation that, unless we mind enough about politics also, we shall be governed by crooks and tyrants. Like Constant's, Holmes's liberalism is a defense of private happiness, not privatized indifference to public affairs. And this is a defense of the modern world against its detractors, and thus exactly what you would expect to find Stephen Holmes offering.

The authors of *The Loss of Virtue* are perhaps fortunate to have published their work too late to have come within range of Holmes's guns. Their contributions add up to an odd little volume. Its oddity begins with the striking disparity between the claims the book makes for the bracing and unorthodox attitudes of its sponsors—the Social Affairs Unit in Britain and the *National Review* here—and its editor's obsessive insistence upon the doctoral and professorial status of his contributors. It used, indeed, to be true that some Thatcherites were rather lively and aggressive critics of liberal good causes, and the *National Review* is famous for the jokey antiliberalism of its founder, William F. Buckley, Jr., but this volume is not antiliberal. It is merely wet and gloomy.

The drift of the volume is indicated by its subtitle: *Moral Confusion and Social Disorder in Britain and America*. (The "America" is a bit of a fraud, since all the authors are British and most of the moral confusion and social disorder under review is either British or located somewhere in the imagination of the writers.) The general line taken here is familiar enough. Theft, violence, fraud, illegitimacy, family breakdown, illiteracy in school, and many other gloom-inducing phenomena seem to have risen inexorably over the past 40 years. Their rise, according to the authors, has nothing to do with the objective conditions of those who lie, steal,

murder, speak back to their teachers and occasionally beat them up into the bargain, and thereafter break their marriage vows, neglect their kids, and otherwise contribute to social breakdown. Life has grown nastier as prosperity has increased.

What accounts for the rising rate of assorted misbehavior? The only plausible view, or rather the only view offered here, is that we have abandoned our traditional moral codes. The various contributors do not, however, focus on *all* traditional morality. Their common theme is that we set too little value by self-control. Too many people have ceased to believe that they *must* control their own behavior. Too many others have ceased to believe that they *can*. This is not a theme that liberals are altogether likely to resist. Certainly one strand in modern liberalism is an antipuritan strain of thought that resists the repressive, life-denying overtones of terms like "self-control." That is not the only strand, however. Liberalism developed out of Protestant Christianity as well as in opposition to it. The liberal defense of toleration, for instance, has never been a defense of mere intellectual *laissez faire*. It has always been a defense of the individual's right (and duty) to find his or her *own* way to salvation.

Indeed, one of the easier conservative criticisms of liberalism has always been that it places too much weight on the individual's capacity for moral reasoning and self-control. Edmund Burke feared to set each man to trade upon his own stock of reason because the individual's resources are small. *The Loss of Virtue* is un-Burkean, however. Its authors content themselves with bemoaning the low moral state into which we have fallen, without saying much about how we might lift ourselves out of it.

What they do have to say usually has to do with the family, about its importance in teaching its members how to behave decently. The thought that the family is the most important socializing agent we encounter, and that any weakening of its authority will result in

children who range from idle to thoroughly antisocial, is not only plausible in itself but the common coin in discussions among current liberals, too. William Galston's *Liberal Purposes* (1991) is only one of several recent attempts to show that a sensible liberalism is not to be identified with a wild Nietzschean individualism but with the politics of a pluralist society. Galston was one of Bill Clinton's campaign advisers on family policy and now works in the White House on the civilian national-service program. He is a liberal who shares the anxieties of many of the authors of *The Loss of Virtue* and is now trying to reverse that loss by instilling in teenagers some sense that they are entitled only to ask from society a return commensurate with what they are ready to contribute.

One curious thing about the contemporary debate among liberals, as well as between liberals and their opponents, is the extent to which *everyone* is in favor of community, family, and individual virtue. The two figures who are wholly in disrepute are those arch-individualists, the bearded hippie of the 1960s mumbling "do your own thing" and the bond trader of the 1980s shouting "greed is good." Of course, liberals disagree with conservatives over the extent to which community, family, and the pursuit of individual virtues license the state to invade our bedrooms, censor our reading, and encourage prayer in the classroom. Nonetheless, it has become increasingly clear that the "communitarian" critics of liberalism have mostly been internal critics, liberals themselves.

It is no wonder that so many writers have rediscovered the virtues of John Dewey and the arch-communitarian liberals of the 1920s and '30s, while John Stuart Mill and Bertrand Russell are relatively in decline. Professor Holmes, however, usefully reminds us that the accommodation between liberalism and communitarianism can go only so far. A community attached to liberal values is, as they say, nice work if you can get it. When you can-

not, the familiar division between conservatives backing loyalty and stability and liberals backing individuality and imagination simply reappears. That is hardly surprising. If any cleavage is a permanent feature of the

political landscape, this is it.

—Alan Ryan teaches politics at Princeton University and is the author of *Bertrand Russell: A Political Life* (1988).

Preaching to the Converted

RACE MATTERS. By Cornel West. Beacon Press. 105 pp. \$15

No one would likely dispute the claim that coming to grips with "race matters" is fundamental to understanding American politics, history, or culture. But an argument is certain to arise if one ventures to be more specific. There is no common definition of the problem, no consensus on a historical narrative explaining how we have come to this juncture, no agreement about what now should be done. Perhaps most important, Americans lack a common vision of the future of our racial relations. We seem no longer to know what it is we are trying to achieve—with our laws, through our politics, in our classrooms, from our pulpits—as we struggle with the legacy of African slavery. Indeed, Americans of all races seem to be confused about who "we" are.

In *Race Matters*, Cornel West, professor of religion and director of Afro-American studies at Princeton, tries to bring order to our collective intellectual chaos on this vexing question. Sadly for all of us, he does not succeed. A philosopher, theologian, and social activist, West has emerged in the last decade as an important critical voice on the Left in American public life. Though it may be an exaggeration to say, as one admirer boasts, that he is "the pre-eminent African-American intellectual of our generation," there is no arguing that he is a thoughtful, articulate, and quite influential social critic. His analyses of our "American dilemma" are studied in universities and seminaries across the country. His opinions on social and cultural policy were

solicited by then President-elect Clinton just after last year's election. And shortly after his installment at Princeton, West acquired official academic celebrity status when he was profiled in the *New York Times Magazine*.

This new book is a collection of eight short essays. Taken together, they sketch the outlines of an interesting if problematic vision of race in America. West offers a stunning array of propositions about our economy, politics, and culture, each one elegant and provocative, and some possibly true. But because West writes more in the manner of the prophet than of the analyst, he never stays long enough with any one point to convince us that he has got it right.

West believes the public discourse about race matters in this society is pathetically impoverished. In this he is surely right. But his explanation is a good deal more controversial: The absence of an effective public dialogue on the race question, he believes, derives from the fact that not all Americans are equal members of the national community. This is a failure for which he holds both liberals and conservatives responsible. Both mistakenly define the "racial dilemma" in terms of the problems that black people pose for white people. Liberals see poor blacks as the historical victims of American racism, needful of government assistance, while conservatives see in the behavior of the black poor the need for moral reform. Both, however, look upon lower-class urban blacks as a people different in some elemental way from themselves. The problem for both is how to transform "them" so they will be more like "us." But this, West believes, tragically misconstrues the problem:

To engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must begin not with the problems of black people but with the flaws of American society—flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes. How we set up the terms for discussing racial issues shapes our perception and response to these issues. As long as black people are viewed as “them,” the burden falls on blacks to do all the “cultural” and “moral” work necessary for healthy race relations. The implication is that only certain Americans can define what it means to be American—and the rest must simply “fit in.”

West is talking here about hegemony, though (we may be thankful) he avoids the word. He has in mind the historical fact and ongoing reality of the oppression of black folk—our separation from the mainstream of American life for generations, even after the end of slavery, as well as the horrible conditions under which many blacks continue to live. The “cultural stereotypes” he mentions are negative ideas—about the beauty, intelligence, moral worth, and even the humanity of Africans—which, given the need to rationalize slavery in a putatively Christian democracy, evolved over the years into an ugly antiblack ideology. He is asserting that we will get nowhere in our discussions of race until we unburden ourselves of the remnant of this ideological legacy. It is a superficially appealing position. But is it right?

Is it, in fact, true that racial progress depends upon a more ecumenical, less judgmental approach to the question of which ways of life embraced by various groups of American citizens are worthy of tolerance and respect? Is it entirely obvious that certain Americans have no right to say to others that inclusion—if not in terms of legal rights, then in social, cultural, and moral terms—is contingent upon “fitting in,” that is, upon adopting values more or less universally agreed upon. Surely this was what “we” said to segregationists during the civil-rights movement. Should it not also be “our” message to-

day to an Afrocentric spokesman who insists on the moral superiority of blacks (“sun people”) over whites (“ice people”); or to the black mayor of a drug-ridden metropolis who, when caught in the act of illegal drug use, declares himself a victim of racism in law enforcement?

Criticism of offenses such as these—offenses not simply against whites’ sensibilities but against what should constitute core American values—are hard to find in *Race Matters*. This, in no small part, is due to the fact that West is usually “preaching to the choir.” His words collected here serve an emblematic function; they constitute for the like-minded reader banners of progressive sentiment. Few among the students and teachers of the humanities at the many universities where this book will be on the reading lists this fall will need to be persuaded of the correctness of West’s views. But out in the “real” America—the blue-collar districts of the industrial states that elected Bill Clinton last November; the suburban rings around the core cities where whites (and blacks) have fled from the problems of urban decay; in the South, where interracial coalitions still must be built—few doubts will be dispelled or souls converted to the cause by these essays. My concern is that these essays fail in their task of persuasion because they are too “politically correct,” too imbued with the peculiar ethos of the contemporary academy, to serve as a healing vision for our racial problems.

One instance where West does challenge the conventional progressive wisdom is in his discussion of the spiritual condition of the urban underclass. His willingness to confront the phenomenon head-on, and to place it at the center of the crisis of urban black life, is quite admirable. He dares to peer into the vast emptiness and nihilism of the spirit that characterizes life at the bottom of our society, where one youth can kill another over a pair of sneakers or a disrespectful gaze, where children give birth to children amid multigenerational poverty and dependency, where the alienation is

radical, the violence random, and despair rampant. West understands that these conditions announce the arrival of "postmodern poverty," a truly new phenomenon on the American scene.

But what he has to say about the causes and the cures of these problems makes very little sense to me. The spiritual problems of the black poor, it turns out, are due to the predations of market capitalism. The black underclass has been infested, as have we all, West says, with a materialistic acquisitiveness fueled by profit-seeking manufacturers, distributors, and marketers of consumer goods. The poor have borne the brunt of this capitalistic onslaught on cultural stability because their civil institutions—churches and families and community structures—are too weak to provide a counterweight to the dictates of television advertising.

One cannot dismiss this claim out of hand. There is a respectable tradition, on both the Left and the Right, that is skeptical about the cultural results of capitalism. But it is far from clear, given the historically unprecedented severity of the problems that have emerged in urban black society during the last three decades, that West's explanation explains enough. After all, a television commercial may lead a youngster to desire a pair of sneakers, but only a pathological deprivation of moral sensibility will allow him to kill for them. In any event, placing responsibility on "market-driven corporate enterprises" tells us nothing about what must be done to reverse the decay.

West's answer to the underclass problem is rather to advocate an all-too-predictable "progressive" policy agenda—more money from the government for schools; investment in infrastructure; the creation of good jobs at good wages; the continuation of affirmative action. But there is no serious inquiry into why such efforts, which have been tried repeatedly, have had so little impact on the deteriorating condition of the urban black poor. To counter this decline, West proposes a "politics of conversion." As I understand it, he is implying a kind of communitarian democratic so-

cialism, built from the grassroots. In advocating this "politics of conversion," West, a professor of religion and sometime preacher of the gospel, oddly makes no reference to the role of religious faith. The spiritual malaise is to be transcended not by a vertical relationship with the Almighty but through horizontal relationships with fellow combatants in the struggle against white supremacy and corporate greed. This sounds just a bit romantic. West offers little useful advice about how to put this new politics into effect, even as he ignores the ongoing ministries in the inner cities that are managing to "turn the souls" of some of those at the bottom.

About some of the more difficult questions that must be asked and answered if real change is to occur, West has even less to say. Why *are* the relations between black men and women so difficult? Why *does* black academic performance lag so in comparison with that of other students, even recent immigrants, and not just among the poor but at all levels of the income hierarchy? How *can* effective engagement in the lives of the alienated urban poor be promoted and achieved by middle-class Americans of any race, when the poor are seemingly so divorced from the social and political commonweal? And what practical political program, implementable in the here and now of American public life, *can* secure enough consensus to support concerted action on these problems?

Questions such as these cannot be answered by sloganeering or with the clever deconstruction of our "patriarchal society" whose "machismo identity is expected and even exalted—as with Rambo and Reagan." It is no political program to call for the emergence of "jazz freedom fighter(s)" who will "attempt to galvanize and energize world-weary people into forms of organization with accountable leadership that promote critical exchange and broad reflection." It is an insufficient argument for affirmative action, which must be sustained by courts and electoral majorities, to invoke the need for an "affirmation of black humanity, especially

among black people themselves, . . . [that] speaks to the existential issues of what it means to be a degraded African (man, woman, gay, lesbian, child) in a racist society." This may be the rhetoric prescribed in the multiculturalists' handbook, but it is a rhetoric, I fear, that is largely irrelevant to the serious racial problems that continue to beset American society.

West talks about transcending race as, he asserts, blacks should have done when instead we rallied in large numbers behind the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. Yet he mires himself in an essentially racist vision that makes it difficult to see how such a transcendence can be achieved. Why, one wonders, does he find it necessary to equate the violence-promoting lyrics of rap performer Ice-T with the public statements of former Los Angeles police commissioner Darryl Gates? More disturbing, how can a man whose claim on our attention here rests upon the morality of his denunciation of racism speak of "visible Jewish resistance to affirmative action and government spending on social programs"—as if the fact that some American Jews hold some ideas can be used

to ascribe these ideas to the entire group? West would certainly, and rightly, be offended by a similar-sounding charge that blacks as a group should be judged as engaged in an "assault on Jewish survival" because some criminals who are black have murdered some victims who are Jews.

In the end, the moral authority of Cornel West's voice in these pages must be supplied by the reader. If you come as a true believer, you will be entertained and energized by the eloquence and commitment of this "pre-eminent black intellectual of our generation." The rest of us perhaps must take our lead from the current fashion in literary criticism and read this text not for what it appears to be arguing but, indirectly, for what it can be understood to say about the curious disposition of influence and moral authority in the contemporary American academy.

—Glenn Loury is professor of economics at Boston University. His *One by One* from the *Inside Out: Race and Responsibility in America* will be published by the Free Press later this year.

The South Rises Again

THE PROMISE OF THE NEW SOUTH: *Life After Reconstruction.* By Edward L. Ayers. Oxford. 572 pp. \$30

When C. Vann Woodward entered graduate school at the University of North Carolina in the 1930s, southern history writing, he later recalled, consisted chiefly of references to injured sectional pride and pretensions to glories that never existed. Slogging through text after text, the man who would become the leading southern historian of his time quickly realized that he had never before read "prose so pedestrian, pages so dull, chapters so devoid of

ideas, whole volumes so wrongheaded or so lacking in point." With a succession of brilliant works, including his popular *Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955), Woodward rectified the problem. His classic work, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (1951), covers those years after the Civil War that others had disregarded in favor of the southern golden age from Jefferson's inauguration to Lee's surrender. Woodward demonstrated that, by comparison with a prospering North, the South possessed a distinctively tragic past—a historical record of poverty, defeat, and internal strife that was not uncommon to most nations but to which the Yankee conquerors were the lucky exceptions.

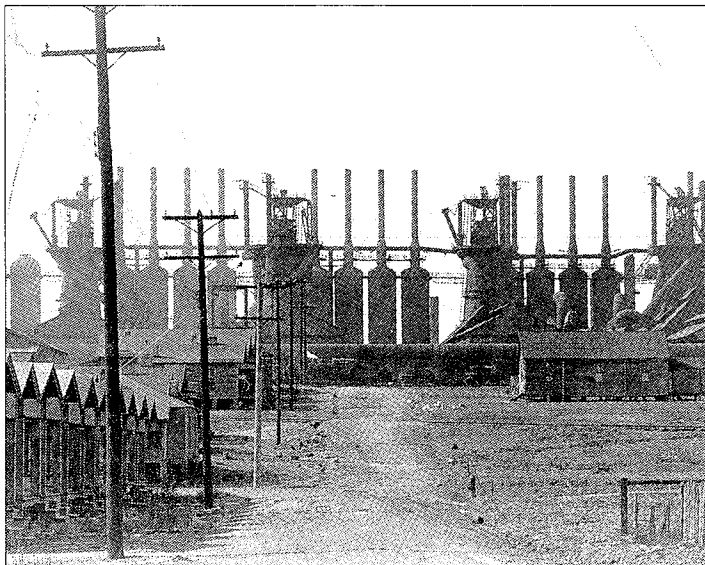
The hapless heirs of the Confederacy, in Woodward's story, staggered into the 20th century ill-prepared for the economic setbacks of the 1920s and 1930s.

In *The Promise of the New South*, Edward Ayers, a professor of history at the University of Virginia, offers a new narrative strategy, appropriate for our times. To be sure, we recognize many of the themes that Woodward introduced—the crop-lien system that ravaged the countryside and paid subsistence wages, and a ramshackle political system that

fers no unifying thesis, no memorable summation that helps the reader remember the findings. Indeed, as a young scholar influenced by the “new history” of our day—that is, by a historiography that highlights social, ethnic, and multicultural themes—Ayers is fortunate to be able to assume what Woodward had to prove: the South's distinctiveness. Thanks to Woodward's identification of southern uniqueness in the pre-World War I era, Ayers is free to range widely, and he does so with genuine relish. He fashions a visual and oral tapestry of many Souths, particularly through deployment of quotations from people of separate walks of life and subregions, and of different ages and colors. He discovers—from God knows where—diaries of black tenant farmers, petitions of poor white women with husbands in jail, expletives from mechanics, a suicide note from a lonely Texan, and reminiscences of shoe salesmen and of drummers on their dreary rounds. He has combed mail-order catalogs, patent-medicine pitches, and partisan broadsides for often-humorous reflections on the events of the hour. An eye-catching advertisement in an Arkansas newspaper sought

“two good hustlers, either sex, to introduce and sell Lightning Vermin Destroyer.” In this range of voices, Ayers discovers the movement of people seeking a better life, the restlessness and energy of the inhabitants.

Woodward painted a South hobbled by economic stagnation, with only a few places like Atlanta, Birmingham, and Richmond developing an urban vibrancy. Ayers's South, by contrast, is a land of growing settlements, large and small, where the frustrated farmer could leave the unsubmissive soil and clerk at a store before opening a shop of his own. Devoting a lengthy chapter to “Dry Goods,”



Birmingham steel mill, c. 1930

rewarded mediocrity and incited racial mistrust while ignoring real social and economic needs. Yet Ayers's post-Reconstruction South is headed not for the Great Depression but for the Sun Belt era. The title itself gives the clue. “Promise,” which suggests hope for the future, replaces Woodward's “Origins,” which, in the author's hands, implied an irony about a region of broken hopes, missed opportunities, and inclinations to self-deception.

Perhaps in reaction to what Harold Bloom has called the “anxiety of influence,” Ayers does not directly challenge Woodward (who was his dissertation adviser). Unlike Woodward's *Origins*, *The Promise of the New South* of-

Ayers explains how the South developed a consumer economy. Country merchants with their ready-made products not only eased the lot of overworked farm wives but excited rural aspirations to a better life. Such dreams led many into the textile-mill hamlets of the Middle South—a release from agrarian drudgery for some and a new enslavement of whole families to arrogant bosses for others. For Woodward, mine and mill owners and country storekeepers were still largely the rapacious creditors and cold-eyed employers who held the dependent classes in almost permanent bondage.

In Ayers, however, we find the beginnings of the current South—both its tackiness and its vitality. The post-Reconstruction South, for instance, took to baseball, football, and prizefighting as if they had been native sports, when in reality they were all imported from the North. In fact, Ayers's analysis of popular culture overwhelms the more orthodox concerns of politics and economics found in Woodward's *Origins*. While Woodward was trained as a political scientist, Ayers is primarily a social historian who seems a little off-balance in the political realm. He is more comfortable narrating lively vignettes about how John Heisman of Auburn inflamed the collegiate football craze or how Scott Joplin transposed banjo syncopation to the piano in the late 1880s. He even makes comprehensible the religiously tinted prohibition movement in a South where "Red Eye" and mellowing bourbon had reigned so long. With heavy female participation, the crusade sought to civilize a pervasive culture of male license in barroom and cathouse, check a serious problem of substance abuse, and solidify what we now call family values (references to which excited more southern than northern enthusiasm in the 1992 presidential election). Although the South remained behind the North in wealth, cultural refinement, and skilled workers, Ayers shows the section slouching toward a secular modernity that would have amazed

and probably appalled the honor-conscious fathers of the slaveholding era.

Two areas of *The Promise of the New South* deserve special mention. The first is Ayers's new and somewhat problematic approach to the region's economic record. The South between the wars (Civil and Great) was burdened with farm foreclosures, sharecropping, convict leasing on plantations and in the forests, and the lowest wages for farm labor in the country. To his credit, Ayers does not ignore these matters. Even "the growing southern cities," he writes, "were not so much signs of urban opportunity as of rural sickness." Cotton farmers were generally so encumbered with debt that they had fewer resources for crops to feed their livestock and themselves. Nor were those engaged in diversified husbandry necessarily better off than their cotton-growing cousins. Freight rates discriminated against the lightly populated rural South, and competition with midwestern farmlands was keen. Yet Ayers does not dwell sufficiently on the post-Reconstruction South's intractable woes. Like Chaucer, he rejoices in God's plenty, but he fails even to mention the medical problems of the rural poor—pellagra, rickets, typhoid, rheumatic and yellow fever, and syphilis. These were psychologically and physically depressing maladies that seemed to substantiate northern contempt for a "lazy" and woebegone section. Their omission from this account signals Ayers's preference for themes leading toward the more strutting Sunbelt of today.

A second theme, the relationship of black and white, Ayers handles with much sympathy and perspicacity. Some of today's troubles in the black family, he reveals, had their roots in this period rather than in slavery, under which the two-parent family was normal, despite forced separations by sale and bequest. Between 1880 and 1915 close to a third of black households consisted only of a mother and children, thanks largely to the low rate of employment for black men in the small towns where black women could at least earn a pittance as domestics.

As for southern racial violence, Ayers reveals that the lynching of blacks occurred less frequently in areas where blacks had large majorities, as in the Mississippi Delta or Alabama Black Belt, than in areas of economic dislocation and collective stress, into which smaller numbers of blacks had recently moved. Motives for a lynching were less likely to be retribution for the rape of a white woman than a desire to settle a particular score with an allegedly "uppity-minded" black homeowner or entrepreneur. Ayers has an eye for the telling detail. He relates, for example, how at a carnival in 1896 a white schoolboy unsuspectingly put on earphones and heard an Edison recording of a lynching. To his horror, the boy heard the crackle of the flames and the victims "asking God to forgive their tormentors." The pitchman, noticing the boy's distress, dismissed it: "Too much cake, too much lemonade. You know how boys are at a picnic."

Inevitably, perhaps, Ayers has lost some of the coherence that Woodward's more schematic and morally driven account provided. After all, Woodward wrote when the American giant patrolled the world against communism. Ever a skeptic, Woodward set before an unheeding nation seemingly bent on a career of world domination and world policing the example of post-Reconstruction southerners, who understood from the defeat of 1865 the cost of overbearing greed and national hubris.

By contrast, Ayers shuns moral prescriptions of any kind. He belongs to the post-Vietnam War generation, which recoils from the moral imperatives of irony, places faith in the voices of ordinary people, not of authorities, and prefers readers to draw their own conclusions without much authorial direction. At times Ayers's sheer piling up of unfailingly fascinating details has the effect—in the absence of an overarching motif—of leaving the reader intellectually benumbed.

Ayers's accomplishments, however, far outweigh such deficiencies. He has permanently altered our understanding of the New South by revealing a region with many faces, a region where the tackiest, cruelest, and most human moments are all jumbled together. Above all, he has produced a work of frequently stunning beauty. The elegance and sensitivity that he achieves are typical of few historical works, most of which retain a measure of the pedantry that the young Woodward found so disheartening 50 or so years ago.

—Bertram Wyatt-Brown, a former Wilson Center Fellow, holds the Richard J. Milbauer Chair of History at the University of Florida. His most recent book is *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (1986).

OTHER TITLES

Contemporary Affairs

PREPARING FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. By Paul Kennedy. Random House. 428 pp. \$25

Paul Kennedy's best-selling *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1987) was, for all its imposing size, a fundamentally simple book. Kennedy's unit of analysis remained the sovereign state, which by

the 1980s already looked to be distinctly old-fashioned—the currency of imperial *Weltpolitik* rather than of the modern world economy. The Yale historian never offered a definition of state power but seemed to assume that it was ultimately measurable in military terms. With disarming frankness, Kennedy now recounts the criticism he received on this point, and his new book is presented as a corrective. Here he turns his attention to larger, transnational develop-

ments such as demography, global warming, biotechnology, and robotics that are bound to influence, if not dictate, the shape of a future social life—a life in which the sun becomes an enemy rather than a friend and nature a victim instead of a challenge, and in which babies are not only weighed but measured by the “environmental damage” they represent. (An American baby represents 280 times the damage of a Haitian one, which, Kennedy soberly observes, is “not a comfortable statistic for anyone with a conscience.”)

Of course, futurology is a hazardous trade, never more so than in the aftermath of the Cold War. While some changes may be somewhat predictable—population growth is the most important of these—others, such as ecological shifts, are much more uncertain, and political, religious and intellectual revolutions lie outside the range of every crystal ball known. Historians are typically opponents of prediction. Yet they are exceptionally well-equipped to grasp the parameters of the possible. Kennedy’s careful inquiry is a good example of this. At one level he might appear merely to be offering a prodigious digest of everything from genetic engineering to the origins of the nation-state, but that digest is informed by sober realism and held in focus by his governing question: How can people prepare for the future?

It is in attempting to answer this question that Kennedy’s analysis runs out of steam. Who is capable of systematically “preparing” on such a scale? Corporations, within their limits, maybe, but states are becoming ever less capable of solving major problems whose causes lie outside their borders. On Kennedy’s showing, indeed, the state is already obsolete in a technical sense. People’s thinking, however, has not begun to catch up with this fact: National sovereignty is still defended and pursued (as in Bosnia) with unremitting, even mounting, ferocity. Meanwhile, the logically necessary vehicle for preparing for the 21st century, the world-state, remains as unlikely as it has ever been. In its absence, the familiar disparate list of competing structures—countries, social groups, societies, states—jostle inconclusively through Kennedy’s final pages.

Within the context of nationality, Kennedy concludes with a poignant historical parallel. He

suggests that Britain a century ago was in something like the position of the United States today: uneasily aware that its supremacy was fast eroding, but still too mesmerized by faith in its uniqueness to learn lessons from others who were setting the new pace. He is right to fix on that sense of exceptionalism. Plenty of influential people in turn-of-the-century Britain could see what needed to be done, “but nobody was capable of getting it done. The British people thought it better to ‘muddle through,’ ” Kennedy writes. But even this implies a more deliberate strategic choice than is conceivable in a mass democracy. What present historians say about Britain’s failure to adapt, future historians (if any) may well repeat about America’s incapacity, for example, to tolerate a 50-cent gasoline tax. As Kennedy bleakly concludes, “Humankind will have only itself to blame for the troubles, and the disasters, that could be lying ahead.” Who else?

MEXICAN AMERICANS: The Ambivalent Minority. By Peter Skerry. Free Press. 463 pp. \$27.95

Americans tend to have one great concern about the millions of Mexican Americans who have crossed the border in recent years: Will they join the mainstream? Will they learn English, recite the Pledge of Allegiance, move to the suburbs, and adopt a pro football team as their very own? They almost certainly will, says Skerry, Washington director for the UCLA Center for American Politics and Public Policy. Unfortunately, he reports, that is not the important question. Mexican Americans face a collective *political* choice about their identity in America. They will be forced to decide whether to define themselves as a traditional ethnic group, like the Irish or Poles, or to adopt the status of a minority group, like the African Americans, and seek special protection under the law.

These alternative futures are already embodied in two cities. San Antonio, Texas, has a large and stable Mexican-American community, with relatively few newcomers and a modified machine-style politics rooted in the city’s churches, neighborhoods, and community organizations.

United in their resentment of the Anglos, San Antonio's Mexican Americans nonetheless eschew racial rhetoric for the politics of "getting ahead and getting even." Los Angeles offers a much quicker route to the American Dream. The city's Hispanic households had average incomes of \$33,500 in 1990, nearly \$10,000 greater than those of Hispanics in San Antonio, despite the California city's heavy influx of poor immigrants. Yet Skerry believes that San Antonio's political style promotes a healthier kind of assimilation.

Los Angeles politics, scrubbed clean of "machine" excrescences by Progressive-era reforms and dominated by the news media, discourages grassroots politics. Political organizing is made nearly impossible by the never-ending stream of new immigrants, which makes life in many Mexican-American neighborhoods highly unsettled even by Los Angeles standards. The city's Mexican-American politicians have little real connection to their constituents; instead, they attract media attention by playing the race card—raising issues such as bilingual education and immigration policy. The leaders who emerge from this system tend to be ineffective, with political careers as ephemeral as sound bites. The grittier San Antonio style has yielded more skilled leaders (including Henry Cisneros, now secretary of Housing and Urban Development), more municipal jobs for Mexican Americans at city hall, and twice as big a share (14 percent) of seats in the state legislature. Mexican Americans in Texas have what used to be called a stake in the system.

Skerry suggests that the San Antonio model offers Mexican Americans their best hope of political assimilation. But he fears that the American system today is rigged in favor of politics as practiced in Los Angeles.

PANDAEMONIUM: Ethnicity in International Politics. *By Daniel Patrick Moynihan.* Oxford. 221 pp. \$19.95

Plato's idea of a philosopher-prince seemed to acquire, after the Soviet empire broke apart, an artistic twist: Czechoslovakia elected a playwright president and Lithuania a musician. In



America the closest approximation to a philosopher-prince may be New York's senior senator. His politics and scholarship have certainly long reinforced each other. Thirty years ago Moynihan wrote (with Nathan Glazer) an influential study of ethnicity, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, and his awareness of ethnic conflicts has made him a shrewder observer of international realities than many Cold War "realists." Even a decade ago, when Henry Kissinger still defined world politics as an abiding conflict between communism and the free world, Moynihan was predicting that ethnic unrest would soon unravel the Soviet empire. Understanding ethnicity, however, left Moynihan with no illusions that the end of the Cold War could mean the end of history.

Expanding on his Oxford lecture of 1991, Moynihan here explains how ethnicity, conjoined with nationalist ambitions, has produced a recipe for endless conflict. It was Woodrow Wilson—with an addiction to phrasemaking that his secretary of state Robert Lansing privately criticized—who made "the self-determination of peoples" an active principle in world politics. Until recently, Moynihan says, Americans have tended to overlook the difficulties and dangers of this noble-sounding ideal. Conceiving rights in terms of individuals, not groups, Americans believed that governments, not people, caused all the world's problems. Now that international politics is no longer a Manichean struggle between good and evil governments, but rather an infinitely complex network of ethnic and national ambitions, Moynihan worries that America will retreat into a disenchanting isolationism. His main point, indeed, is that American participation is essential if there

is to be "order in an age of chaos." "Sovereignty has become more permeable," Moynihan argues, in such places as the Balkans, where external intervention in domestic politics constitutes not aggression but humanitarian necessity. "Just how much horror can be looked upon with indifference, or at least inaction?" he asks. "To which the answer, of course, is plenty. But," Moynihan concludes, "civilizations with claims to universal values do, in general, try to uphold them, if only after a point."

DEATH WITHOUT WEEPING: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil. By Nancy Scheper-Hughes. Univ. of Calif. 614 pp. \$29

Anthropology during the 1980s, inspired by the deconstructionist vogue in literary criticism, grew painfully self-conscious. Dissecting ethnographic writing, practitioners dispelled the notion that the anthropologist was a neutral observer. Yet after a decade, such textual self-scrutiny became repetitive and threatened to turn anthropology into an armchair discipline.

It may seem odd that a book titled *Death Without Weeping* augurs new life in what looked like a moribund discipline. To Scheper-Hughes, an anthropologist at Berkeley, the convulsions of history are not simply material for aesthetic critique. The sugar plantations of the Brazilian Northeast were born in slavery, and, as she puts it, they are now maintained by slavery of another kind. The region never experienced Brazil's "economic miracle." Quite the contrary. Today its landless peasants suffer from the combined effects of deforestation, regional decline, and agricultural mechanization—a fate shared with much of the Third World.

In Bom Jesus da Mata, where Scheper-Hughes studied everyday life for more than 25 years, a rural worker's average daily caloric consumption is less than that of an internee in Buchenwald. A medical anthropologist, the author describes how the local clinics treat the symptoms of hunger and malnutrition by prescribing medication, thus indirectly helping to maintain terrible social conditions. She goes beyond the usual denunciations of the role of conservative Catholicism in maintaining this status quo; in-

deed, she shows how the progressive liberation theology, which promulgates the church's teachings about female sexuality and reproduction, leaves poor mothers who cannot raise all the children they conceive in a state of "moral and theological confusion."

Scheper-Hughes is most original in her discussion of motherhood. Much recent feminist theory—as expressed in Nancy Chodorow's *Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982), and Sara Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking* (1990)—promotes a nostalgic, almost mystical image of the mother-infant relationship. The behavior of the poor in Bom Jesus is a living—and dying—refutation of any universalist myth of motherhood. With resources too scarce to support all their children, shantytown mothers not only do not mourn the death of sickly babies; they hasten the dying of those unlikely to survive. These undernourished mothers make cold-blooded judgments about their children's chances in a slum environment, practicing what Scheper-Hughes describes, with both shock and sympathy, as "selective neglect" or "passive infanticide."

Scheper-Hughes makes some use of anthropology's recent self-conscious turn, employing critical theory to justify her role as an advocate for real people in real troubles. Her own voice—by turns womanly, muckraking, passionately engaged, and analytical—does not crowd out the many voices of her subjects, but it does contribute to a multitextured, experimental ethnography. Her work, in fact, stands as an invitation to fellow anthropologists to quit their armchair critiques and return to the field.

Arts & Letters

WHERE THE BLUEBIRD SINGS TO THE LEMONADE SPRINGS: Living and Writing in the West. By Wallace Stegner. Random House. 227 pp. \$21

In 1964, a middle-aged Wallace Stegner declared the West to be "the New World's last chance to be something better, the only American society malleable enough to be formed." This pronouncement was characteristically self-effacing.

Stegner would never have presumed to take on the responsibility of shaping the society of the West. Yet, in spite of himself, he did—more so than any other modern writer.

Stegner was born in rural Iowa in 1909 and grew up all over the West, dragged about by a shiftless father. The only member of his family to obtain even a high-school education, Stegner went on to earn a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. In the decades that followed, he published more than two dozen novels and historical works as well as short stories and essays; he founded the creative writing program at Stanford University, which spawned a galaxy of western superstars; and he championed environmental causes long before the fight became fashionable, eventually serving as special assistant to the secretary of the interior in the early 1960s.

This collection of essays, published shortly before his death last April, shows Stegner in all his different roles. In "Living Dry," he is the environmental activist explaining why the region's climate simply cannot sustain excessive development. In "Striking the Rock," he is the historian charting the rise and fall of the various federal institutions that control more than half of the West's acreage. In "Variations on a Theme by Crèvecoeur," Stegner calls for a new western literature, enjoining writers to forget the glorified cowboy myth and get down to the hardscrabble business of describing an actual region. And in "Finding the Place: A Migrant Childhood," he is again a boy of the West recalling his dad, whose version of the American dream—getting something for nothing—sent him on a quest through western landscapes that would serve as his son's most formative education. Unlike Jack Kerouac and others, however, Stegner never romanticized the "on the road" quality of western life: "Our migratoriness has hindered us from becoming a people of communities and traditions, especially in the West," he notes. "It has robbed us of the gods who make places holy." In the early 1940s, he quit teaching at Harvard to forge over the next half century a bond with the western landscape and its society.

Linking these 16 essays is a knowledge of

what it takes to appreciate the West: "You have to get over the color green; you have to quit associating beauty with gardens and lawns; you have to get used to an inhuman scale; you have to understand geological time."

Out of his appreciation of vast spaces and the small human struggles for self-reliance set against them, Stegner created a body of writings that has become identified with the contemporary West. In one essay, he posits (in typically low-key style) that "it wouldn't hurt if some native-born writer . . . was around to

serve as culture hero—the individual who transcends his culture without abandoning it, who leaves for a while in search of opportunity and enlargement but never forgets where he left his heart." Stegner himself is no longer "around," but to numerous readers he is that hero he so offhandedly envisioned.



WHAT REMAINS and Other Stories. By Christa Wolf. Trans. by Heike Schwarzbauer and Rick Takvorian. Farrar Straus. 295 pp. \$25

THE AUTHOR'S DIMENSION: Selected Essays. By Christa Wolf. Ed. by Alexander Stephan. Trans. by Jan Van Heurck. Farrar Straus. 336 pp. \$27.50

These stories and essays by the former East Germany's most famous writer arrive here under a cloud: the recent revelation that from 1959 to 1962 Wolf was an *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* (I. M.), an informal collaborator for the East German secret police, the dreaded Stasi. Suddenly Christa Wolf, who was once considered her country's dissident Joan of Arc, appears to be a quisling who slept with the enemy. With this knowledge, how should a reader respond to her novella "What Remains," which evokes the life of a person living under constant Stasi surveillance?

Wolf recently said she fears "being reduced to these two letters"—I. M. Although Wolf did not confess her Stasi connection until police records were made public, those records suggest that the secret police found her ultimately of little use. Indeed, her role changed when she became the object of Stasi surveillance between 1969 and 1980. The year 1969 is significant. It was

the year after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, an event that caused many behind the Iron Curtain to rethink their positions on communism. Wolf, a strong believer in the possibilities of a true socialist state, retreated into her writing, trying to transcend through literature the evil she now suspected lay around her. She watched as other writers opted to leave, staying on herself, apparently deciding that it was better to try to change things from within the country, however muted her voice might become as a result of government censors.

Now that East Germany is no more, can it be said that Wolf chose wisely? Can her writing survive the dual cataclysm of that regime's collapse and the stain of her former collaboration?

The evidence of her nonfiction, collected in *The Author's Dimension*, suggests that it cannot. In a final essay written just three months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, her pain is evident: Wolf lobbied briefly for the creation of a post-communist, democratic East German state; seeing her efforts frustrated, she abandoned her literary crusade, declaring that "the politicians and the economists have the floor now." In earlier pieces, Wolf's insights are occasionally brilliant, but the effect of the whole is that of a dated, sometimes self-serving historical document. By contrast, the fiction in *What Remains* may outlive the situations that inspired it. The poignant story "June Afternoon," for example, is intriguing precisely because it vividly brings to life a world that has passed out of our knowing. In it, the narrator is enjoying an idyllic afternoon in East Berlin, a peaceful moment that is interrupted by the sudden appearance of an American helicopter patrolling the border. Such intrusions, where the personal is forfeited to harsh social realities, are typical of Wolf's stories. The "forbidden fruit" her characters have eaten is not that of good and evil but the knowledge that they cannot escape living at a particular moment in history.

CULTURE OF COMPLAINT: *The Fraying of America.* By Robert Hughes. Oxford Univ. Press/New York Public Library. 210 pp. \$19.95

Hughes, a native Australian, has resided in the

United States for the last 23 years. A busy man, he has managed to write weekly art criticism for *Time* while producing several excellent books on subjects ranging from Modernism to Australian history to the city of Barcelona. A largely unabashed "pale patriarchal penis person," Hughes now jumps into the middle of America's current cultural war. The result is a witty, often rebarbative attack on the various inanities spewed forth by the two "PCs"—the patriotically correct and the politically correct. These three essays, originally delivered as lectures at the New York Public Library, might be described as an attempt to construct an unwimpy cultural liberalism, a bolder middle ground. With almost equal force, he swings right ("With somnambulistic efficiency, Reagan educated America down to his level") and left ("The world changes more deeply, widely, thrillingly than at any moment since 1917, perhaps since 1848, and the American academic left keeps fretting about how phallogocentricity is inscribed in Dickens's portrayal of Little Nell"). Hughes, moreover, rightly detects a symbiosis between the warring sides, characterizing them as "two Puritan sects, one plaintively conservative, the other posing as revolutionary but using academic complaint as a way of evading engagement in the real world." In his shrewdest essay, "Moral in Itself: Art and the Therapeutic Fallacy," he looks through the silliness of the Robert Mapplethorpe controversy. Drawing on historian Jackson Lears's critique of America's therapeutic culture, Hughes sees the elevation of Mapplethorpe's photography to the status of High Art as a secular variant of the view of art as "quasi-religious uplift," a notion grounded in the Puritan distrust of art that has no overtly moralizing purpose.

Useful and entertaining as all this is, Hughes might have subjected his own philosophical foundations—and his own middle ground—to closer scrutiny. A certain glib *Time-Life* phraseology—colorful, compact, and contrapuntal—can too easily substitute for real engagement. Yet when Hughes does reveal his own values—his veneration for craftsmanship, his belief in standards of artistic excellence—he does so with passion and conviction.

History

PASSIONATE SAGE: The Character and Legacy of John Adams. By Joseph J. Ellis. Norton. 277 pp. \$25

In 1801 an embittered John Adams, defeated at the polls by his rival, Thomas Jefferson, exchanged the White House for his family home in Quincy, Massachusetts. There he would remain in near-seclusion for the next 27 years. Ellis, a professor of history at Mount Holyoke, uses this period of retirement to bring into focus the entire career and character of that "misfit" among the Founding Fathers.

Adams lacked the Olympian calm of George Washington, the good humor of Benjamin Franklin, the "eternal taciturnity" of Jefferson. Possessed of an "ungovernable temper" and susceptible to "gusts of passion," he was the only president not to attend his successor's inauguration. It thus comes as little surprise that Adams spent much of his retirement trying furiously to vindicate himself. For five years he wrestled with a never-finished autobiography, an incoherent "open wound" in which he excoriated his enemies. Between 1809 and 1812 Adams wrote a series of lengthy, vituperative essays in the *Boston Patriot*, touting his accomplishments in foreign policy and answering his critics. These disjointed writings, Ellis suggests, served as a kind of therapy for the aging Adams.

His most significant retirement writings, however, were the lengthy letters he exchanged with Jefferson, his former rival. "You and I ought not to die before we have explained ourselves to each other," Adams wrote in 1813, a year into their epistolary dialogue. The 14 years of correspondence between the "North and South Poles of the American Revolution," as Benjamin Rush dubbed them, cover history, political theory, and current issues—though never slavery. Throughout, the differences between the two are apparent. Unsympathetic to the prevailing thought of his day, Adams never made room in his vast lexicon for such key words of American liberalism as *freedom* and *equality*—the very pillars of Jeffersonian thought. The rather shocking argu-



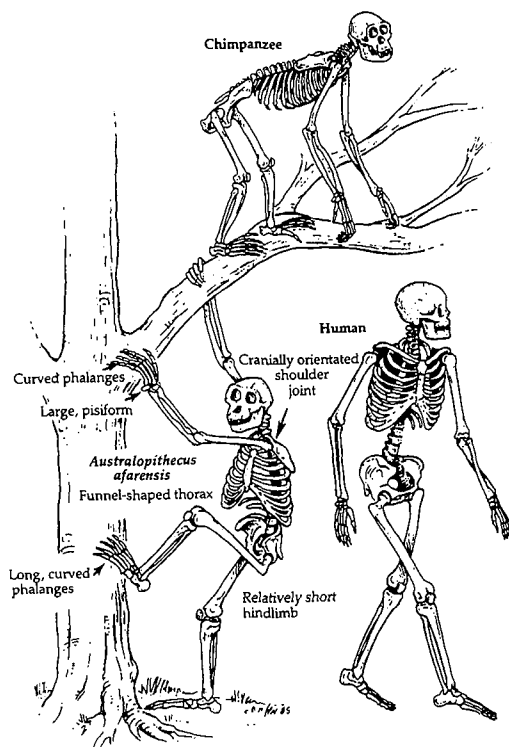
ment of Adams's early *Discourses on Davila* (1790)—that irrational rather than rational forces shape history—was heresy in the Age of Reason.

As one after another of the Founding Fathers died, Adams and Jefferson lived on. Exactly 50 years to the day after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, on July 4, 1826, Adams passed away, uttering his last words, "Thomas Jefferson survives." Unknown to him, in the most startling coincidence in American history, Jefferson had died earlier that same July 4th at Monticello. After their deaths, the two men's stars followed different trajectories: Jefferson was enshrined in the pantheon of America's civil religion, while Adams faded further in popular esteem. Ellis attributes this to the fact that Adams was too skeptical about American exceptionalism. His prognosis for the American republic has proved right at least as often as Jefferson's, but Jefferson's language was celebratory while Adams's was always cautious. "The glass was always half-full at Monticello and half-empty at Quincy," Ellis concludes. For this reason, the Mall—and our national conscience—has room for monuments to Washington and Jefferson but none for the hard, passionate, and idiosyncratic president who came between them.

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy. By Robert D. Putnam, with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. Princeton. 258 pp. \$24.95

Toqueville never wrote a *Democracy in Italy*. Now someone has. Putnam, a Harvard professor of government, began studying Italian regional politics two decades ago, shortly after Rome established 20 semi-autonomous regional governments throughout the country. Putnam was curious to discover why some of these governments were faring better than others. Now, 20 years later, his conclusions resonate with implications that extend far beyond the Italian peninsula.

Although the formal structure of all the regional governments is identical, their performances are anything but. Those in northern Italy work far better than those in the south. Why? Putnam puts forward many plausible explana-



with a dispirited blandness and no desire to write, paint, or compose. Many artists have responded as did the painter Edvard Munch, who resisted medical treatment when he was hospitalized for psychiatric illness: "It would destroy my art," he insisted. "I want to keep those sufferings."

Along with the promise of newer medicines that may eliminate the worst side effects is the prospect that, by the year 2000, there may be prenatal testing for the manic-depressive gene—and the possibility of aborting a fetus at high risk for the disease. Twenty years ago, in his psychiatric study of Edgar Allan Poe, John Robertson asked, "Who could, or would, breed for . . . a club-footed Byron, a scrofulous Keats, or a soul-obsessed Poe?" Such idle speculations, Jamison writes, may demand real decisions tomorrow.

ORIGINS RECONSIDERED: In Search of What Makes Us Human. By Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin. Doubleday. 375 pp. \$25

How far back can you trace your family tree? A

million years? Three million years? The answer you give will embroil you in the fiercest controversy in paleoanthropology today.

In *Origins Reconsidered*, Leakey, director of the Kenya Wildlife Service and a leading paleoanthropologist, has written (with science writer Lewin) an entertaining introduction to a discipline that studies early primates and, by extension, what makes us human. To explain human origins, Leakey draws on disciplines as diverse as geology, archaeology, primatology, comparative anatomy, molecular biology, and psychology. But it is clear that in his heart Leakey is a *bone man*—most at home hunkered down over a table of fossils at Kenya's Lake Turkana. There, he says, "in the arid sediments around that magnificent lake, answers were to be pieced together that went beyond the questions normally asked in science."

No point in paleoanthropology is more in contention than when to date the origins of the human race. Leakey's long-time antagonist (and one-time friend) Donald Johanson, discovered in Ethiopia a small, three-million-year-old fossil skeleton that Johanson believes is the earliest-known representative of our species. The implications Johanson drew from this skeleton (dubbed "Lucy") are, first, that all humans are descended from a single branch, and, second, that what distinguishes human beings is bipedality. Leakey, however, finds "Lucy" still too apelike, and asserts that a human Rubicon was crossed only with "Turkana boy," a 1.6-million-year-old skeleton he himself discovered in 1984. Had Turkana boy survived into adulthood, he would have stood over six feet tall, his physique molded by a life of hunting and tool use. By dating humankind's emergence from this much later specimen, Leakey can describe a human species that at its origins was less violent and characterized by cooperation and a more complex social life. "At the real beginning," he says, "was the burgeoning of compassion, morality, and conscious awareness that today we cherish as marks of humanity."

If cooperation marks the human species, one would be hard-pressed to find it among paleoanthropologists today. Recalling his entry into the field years ago, Leakey writes: "If I'd known then what bitter academic and personal

battles lay ahead, maybe I would have dropped the whole enterprise and gone off to do something more peaceful—like being an army general.”

HEISENBERG’S WAR: The Secret History of the German Bomb. *By Thomas Powers. Knopf. 610 pp. \$27.50*

The great riddle of World War II is why Germany never developed an atomic bomb. The physicists who fled from Nazi Europe—Niels Bohr, Hans Bethe, Leo Szilard, Robert Oppenheimer—warned American authorities that Germany lacked nothing necessary for developing nuclear power. Besides being the birthplace of modern physics, Germany had ample stores of uranium seized from Czechoslovakia. It also had a Führer who would find such a destructive bomb appealing. Most important, it had Werner Heisenberg—winner of the Nobel Prize, discoverer of the uncertainty principle in physics, and the scientist most capable of single-handedly engineering such a bomb. Fear of Heisenberg fueled the U.S. Manhattan Project in its furious race to beat Germany to the bomb. Yet when Americans scoured German military installations after the war, they discovered to their astonishment only a small research reactor, hardly even the first step toward an atom bomb.

We are now in a better position to understand this puzzle. After the war, Heisenberg and other German scientists were interned in England near Cambridge, where hidden electronic devices recorded their conversations. From recently released transcripts, Powers, a

Pulitzer Prize-winning authority on American intelligence agencies, has pieced together a version of the story. The principle reason Germany did not develop the bomb—and the hero of Powers’s story—is Heisenberg himself. Simply stated, he was afraid to give Hitler such a potentially decisive weapon. Heisenberg said he “falsified the mathematics in order to avoid development of the atom bomb.” “Heisenberg had the luxury and the burden of choice,” Powers writes, “since no one could challenge him with anything weightier than a contrary opinion.” Heisenberg’s scrupulous conscience, in Power’s narrative, almost puts to shame the physicists of the Manhattan Project, who were largely untroubled by the terrible bomb they were building.

But a closer reading of Powers’s materials reveals a more ambiguous story. After the war it was clearly in Heisenberg’s interest to exaggerate his opposition, yet during the war he at times expressed his hope for a German victory. Fritz Houtermans, a Heisenberg confidant, in 1941 leaked a message to American scientists, warning that “Heisenberg will not be able to withstand longer the pressure from the government . . . [for] making of the bomb.” But the German government oddly never applied that pressure—in part because Hitler expected too swift a victory to justify the long-term research and expense. Heisenberg’s luxury was, in fact, that of a Hamlet, indecisive, wavering, his conscience never put to the test. Fortunately for the Allies, Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle extended beyond matters of physics.

POETRY

C . P . C A V A F Y

Selected and Introduced by Joseph Brodsky

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, Egypt. So was, some 2,000 years later, one of the greatest poets of our century, Constantinos Phanariotis Cavafis, or C. P. Cavafy, as his name is rendered in English.

Some 2,000 years ago Alexandria—founded by Alexander the Great, conqueror of all that became known as the Hellenistic world—was that world's pre-eminent city. Apart from being the seat of power of the ruling Ptolemies, it was the locus of the spiritual, cultural, and scientific life of the entire Hellenistic world, stretching from Egypt to India and from the third century B.C. to the third century A.D. What held together a world so large for so long was not troops but *Magna Lingua Graecae*—the great Greek language. Strictly speaking, the Hellenistic empire was a cultural rather than a political reality.

Compared to the epic and drama of the so-called archaic and classical periods of Greek history, the literature of the Hellenistic period dealt in relatively small forms. However, as is the case with every evolution, the smallness was the smallness of compression and condensation. The net result of such a process is an extraordinary intensity and durability.

Something similar, although in a far more diverse manner, occurred in the spiritual make-up of the Hellenistic world, as its polytheist metaphysics was pared down to philosophy. Always a marketplace of ideas, Alexandria by the first century B.C. was a virtual county fair of creeds, cults, doctrines, and faiths. Translated into social terms, polytheism meant tolerance.

That could not last. Politically, the curtain fell upon Alexandria when the Hellenistic empires were supplanted by the Romans. Spiritually and culturally, the end came when Rome herself went monotheistic, i.e. Christian. Alexandria died and lay buried. Until 1864, that is, when the wife of a well-to-do merchant in that city gave birth to her ninth child. He was christened Constantinos.

The name suits the poet remarkably well. There is perhaps no better word to describe the mode of his existence and his thematic concerns than constancy. He lived most of his life in the same city, held the same job (at the Egyptian Ministry of Irrigation), and, in his poems, addressed the same subjects. One might be tempted to suggest that he had only two subjects: the past of Alexandria, and his own. On closer inspection, they may amount to the same thing.

Cavafy called himself a "historical poet." This means, for one, that he identified completely with the place of his birth, with its place in history, and with its insignificant, indeed shabby, present. Alexandria and its Hellenistic realm (the eastern Mediterranean in particular) were for him what Yoknapatawpha

County was for Faulkner, Dublin for Joyce, New England for Robert Frost. He knew everyone and everything that had transpired there between 300 B.C. and, say, A.D. 600 thoroughly. Characters and events of that period—and not the most illustrious among them—were what the bulk of his poems addressed. However, Cavafy is not a poet of the heroic past, of the Greek cultural patrimony. As one of his critics aptly remarked, it is impossible to put his poems into high-school textbooks. The trouble is not so much his subject matter (although I imagine it is that, too) but his tonality.

For Cavafy was a historical poet not in the thematic or factual sense only. The term “historical” in his case has to do, above all, with his diction. This calls for some explanation.

Virtually every poet in this century appears to be extremely concerned with the possible existence of some sardonic reader who just might smirk and scowl at the poet’s raptures and reveries. Every poet therefore tries to forge a diction that will shield him from the charge of emotionalism.

There are several strategies available here. The common one is the use of irony. By poking fun at oneself, a poet, as it were, pulls the rug from under his critic’s feet. That, however, is dangerous, because irony is a reductive metaphor: It wins you laughs but lowers your plane of regard. The next time you want to produce an epiphany (not to mention obtain a revelation), you have to start your climbing upward from the rung the laughs you won have lowered you to. Plenty of good poets have driven themselves into the ground with their sense of humor.

The other option is objectivity. It is awfully hard to forge, still harder to sustain. Inclined that way, a poet often borrows terminology and pitch from either science or medicine. In the end, though, dispassionate or clinical diction bores the readers just the same, for they justly take it either for posturing or another kind of rhetoric.

Cavafy, I believe, made a discovery. His reading of chronicles, annals, ancient authors, and inscriptions gave him not only an idea of tonality but the realization that whether a man reviews the past of his nation or of himself, he uses the same mental faculty, he applies the same prism. Hence, his poems dealing with the history of Alexandria and the Hellenistic realm have the poignancy and intensity of intimate self-scrutiny. Likewise his intimate, personal works addressing the vicissitudes of homoerotic love display, for all their autobiographical nature, the detachment of a historian.

His was a highly uneventful life. He never, for instance, published a book of his poetry in his lifetime. He circulated his poems in the form of pamphlets or broadsides among those few whose judgment he was prepared to reckon with. It appears as though he had no ambition or was very finicky. But, then, he may have been right. Few things are less palatable than praise from an inferior intelligence.

Perhaps the same goes for criticism. Shortly after his death in 1933, a prominent critic reviewing the first edition of Cavafy’s work likened his poems to pedestals with the statues gone. That had to do, I imagine, with the fact that Cavafy’s poems are indeed stripped of any poetic paraphernalia;

there is nothing ornate about them, nothing visually stimulating or metaphorically striking. He uses the simplest epithets, such as "beautiful," "young," "good"; the same goes for verbs and nouns.

Yet an expression like "beautiful face" invites the reader to use his own imagination, to fashion that face according to his own notion of beauty. In other words, the poems result in their reader's complicity. A statue on the pedestal confines your imagination to its features; its absence awakens your imagination and makes you build it. This way, Cavafy's Alexandria becomes your own.

One of Cavafy's favorite themes was the tug-of-war that took place between the culture of Greek polytheism and Christian monotheism during the first six centuries of our era. To Cavafy, that period's main hero is the Emperor Julian, known as the Aposate, who, having ascended to the throne as a Christian, tried to return his empire to polytheism. There are about half a dozen poems about him in Cavafy's corpus, as well as many others treating in an absolutely remarkable fashion the fateful choice that humanity believed it had to make at that time.

What our poet from Alexandria shows us some 2,000 years later is that the choice was unnecessary. That man's metaphysical potential was (and is) substantial enough to accommodate or fuse two systems of belief. That by making that choice, humanity hopelessly robbed itself of enormous riches to which it was entitled.

In a world splitting more and more at its ecclesiastical and ethnic seams, there is hardly a better cure for the vulgarity of the human heart than the voice of this poet from Alexandria promising a better civilization, still available.

Ionic

That we've broken their statues,
that we've driven them out of their temples,
doesn't mean at all that the gods are dead.
O land of Ionia, they're still in love with you,
their souls still keep your memory.
When an August dawn wakes over you,
your atmosphere is potent with their life,
and sometimes a young ethereal figure,
indistinct, in rapid flight,
wings across your hills.

Waiting for the Barbarians

What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?

The barbarians are due here today.

Why isn't anything happening in the senate?
Why do the senators sit there without legislating?

Because the barbarians are coming today.
What laws can the senators make now?
Once the barbarians are here, they'll do the legislating.

Why did our emperor get up so early,
and why is he sitting at the city's main gate
on his throne, in state, wearing the crown?

Because the barbarians are coming today
and the emperor is waiting to receive their leader.
He has even prepared a scroll to give him,
replete with titles, with imposing names.

Why have our two consuls and praetors come out today
wearing their embroidered, their scarlet togas?
Why have they put on bracelets with so many amethysts,
and rings sparkling with magnificent emeralds?
Why are they carrying elegant canes
beautifully worked in silver and gold?

Because the barbarians are coming today
and things like that dazzle the barbarians.

Why don't our distinguished orators come forward as usual
to make their speeches, say what they have to say?

Because the barbarians are coming today
and they're bored by rhetoric and public speaking.

Why this sudden restlessness, this confusion?
(How serious people's faces have become.)
Why are the streets and squares emptying so rapidly,
everyone going home so lost in thought?

Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.
And some who have just returned from the border say
there are no barbarians any longer.

And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
They were, those people, a kind of solution.

Thermopylae

Honor to those who in the life they lead
define and guard a Thermopylae.
Never betraying what is right,
consistent and just in all they do
but showing pity also, and compassion;
generous when they are rich, and when they are poor,
still generous in small ways,
still helping as much as they can;
always speaking the truth,
yet without hating those who lie.

And even more honor is due to them
when they foresee (as many do foresee)
that in the end Ephialtis will make his appearance,
that the Medes will break through after all.

Kaisarion

Partly to throw light on a certain period,
partly to kill an hour or two,
last night I picked up and read
a volume of inscriptions about the Ptolemies.
The lavish praise and flattery are much the same
for each of them. All are brilliant,
glorious, mighty, benevolent;
everything they undertake is full of wisdom.
As for the women of their line, the Berenices and Cleopatras,
they too, all of them, are marvelous.

When I'd verified the facts I wanted
I would have put the book away had not a brief
insignificant mention of King Kaisarion
suddenly caught my eye. . .

And there you were with your indefinable charm.
Because we know
so little about you from history,
I could fashion you more freely in my mind.
I made you good-looking and sensitive.
My art gives your face
a dreamy, an appealing beauty.
And so completely did I imagine you
that late last night,
as my lamp went out—I let it go out on purpose—
it seemed you came into my room,
it seemed you stood there in front of me, looking just as you would have
in conquered Alexandria,
pale and weary, ideal in your grief,
still hoping they might take pity on you,
those scum who whispered: "Too many Caesars."

Ithaka

As you set out for Ithaka
hope the voyage is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope the voyage is a long one.
May there be many a summer morning when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you come into harbors seen for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you are destined for.
But do not hurry the journey at all.
Better it lasts for years,
so you are old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you would not have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

A Byzantine Nobleman in Exile Composing Verses

The frivolous can call me frivolous.
I've always been most punctilious about
important things. And I insist
that no one knows better than I do
the Holy Fathers, or the Scriptures, or the Canons of the Councils.

Whenever he was in doubt,
whenever he had any ecclesiastical problem,
Botaniatis consulted me, me first of all.
But exiled here (may she be cursed, that viper
Irimi Doukaina), and incredibly bored,
it is not altogether unfitting to amuse myself
writing six- and eight-line verses,
to amuse myself poeticizing myths
of Hermes and Apollo and Dionysos,
or the heroes of Thessaly and the Peloponnese;
and to compose the most strict iambics,
such as—if you'll allow me to say so—
the intellectuals of Constantinople don't know how to compose.
It may be just this strictness that provokes their disapproval.

The Bandaged Shoulder

He said he'd hurt himself against a wall or had fallen down.
But there was probably some other reason
for the wounded, the bandaged shoulder.

Because of a rather abrupt gesture,
as he reached for a shelf to bring down
some photographs he wanted to look at,
the bandage came undone and a little blood ran.

I did it up again, taking my time
over the binding; he wasn't in pain
and I liked looking at the blood.
It was a thing of my love, that blood.

When he left, I found, in front of his chair,
a bloody rag, part of the dressing,
a rag to be thrown straight into the garbage;
and I put it to my lips
and kept it there a long while—
the blood of love against my lips.

One of Their Gods

When one of them moved through the marketplace of Selekia
just as it was getting dark—
moved like a young man, tall, extremely handsome,
with the joy of being immortal in his eyes,
with his black and perfumed hair—
the people going by would gaze at him,
and one would ask the other if he knew him,

if he was a Greek from Syria, or a stranger.
But some who looked more carefully
would understand and step aside;
and as he disappeared under the arcades,
among the shadows and the evening lights,
going toward the quarter that lives
only at night, with orgies and debauchery,
with every kind of intoxication and desire,
they would wonder which of Them it could be,
and for what suspicious pleasure
he had come down into the streets of the Selekia
from the August Celestial Mansions.

The God Abandons Antony

When suddenly, at midnight, you hear
an invisible procession going by
with exquisite music, voices,
don't mourn your luck that's failing now,
work gone wrong, your plans
all proving deceptive—don't mourn them uselessly.
As one long prepared, and graced with courage,
say goodbye to her, the Alexandria that is leaving.
Above all, don't fool yourself, don't say
it was a dream, your ears deceived you:
don't degrade yourself with empty hopes like these.
As one long prepared, and graced with courage,
as is right for you who were given this kind of city,
go firmly to the window
and listen with deep emotion, but not
with the whining, the pleas of a coward;
listen—your final delectation—to the voices,
to the exquisite music of that strange procession,
and say goodbye to her, to the Alexandria you are losing.

All poems are excerpted from *C. P. Cavafy: Collected Poems*, edited by George Savidis. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Copyright © 1975 by Princeton University Press (rev. ed. 1992). Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

THE DICTIONARY MAKERS

*President Andrew Jackson said he hoped never to meet
a man so dull he could think of only one way to spell a word.
But the establishing of the proper way to spell, and define,
a word—the making of a dictionary—constitutes
an anything-but-dull chapter in mankind's intellectual history. Here
Anthony Burgess shows how we got from A to Z.*

BY ANTHONY BURGESS

No reader or writer of any seriousness can do without a good dictionary. This, anyway, is the modern view. With some awe we have to remind ourselves that writers like Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton had no access to what we would call dictionaries. Spelling did not much worry them, as it worries a modern author who runs to his dictionary to check on difficult words like *hemorrhage* (my personal blind spot). Milton spelt in his own creative manner, preferring *mee* to *me* when he wished to be emphatic. Shakespeare went the free and easy Elizabethan way, leaving his own name to be juggled with in a variety of orthographical fantasies. With Chaucer the encoding of speech-sounds was logical and required no checking. As for meaning, an empirical consensus prevailed, with no tablet of the law to lay down definitions. The ques-

tion as to whether a word existed—that is, was authorized by some remote linguistic authority—never arose. If Shakespeare required a word and had not met it in civilized discourse, he unhesitatingly made it up. There was a fund of Latin and Greek (not that Shakespeare knew much of the latter) to be drawn on for what is called neologizing, as indeed there still is.

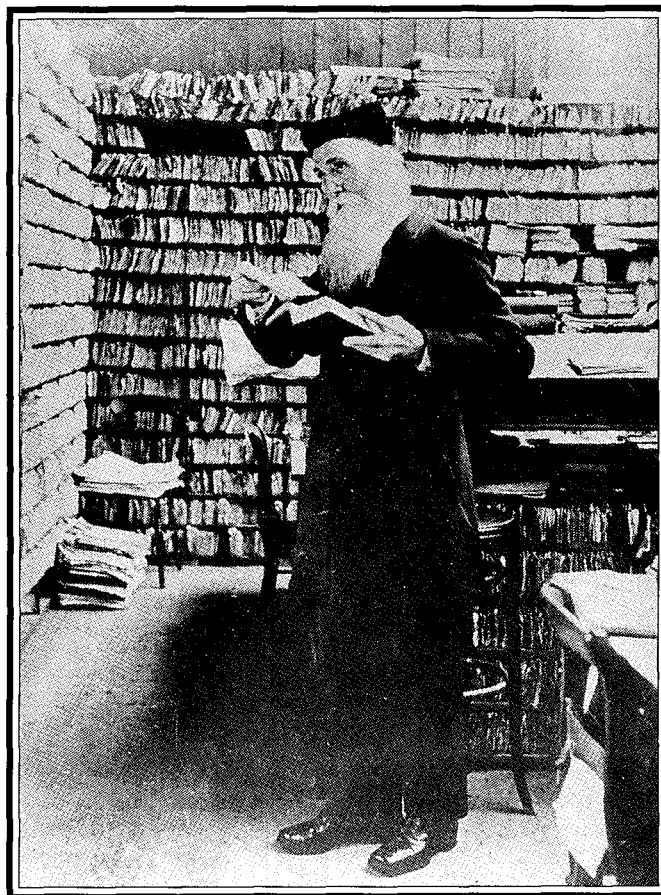
During the English Renaissance, attempts admittedly were made to line up the English vocabulary. Bilingual dictionaries—Latin-English, French-English, Italian-English—at least arranged it in alphabetical order. But the emphasis in the first solely English dictionaries was on very difficult words, as in John Bullokar's *English Expositor* (1616—just too late for Shakespeare to use) and Henry Cockeram's *English Dictionarie* (1623). These defined what could be called “inkhorn terms”—*commotrix* (“a maid that makes ready and unready her-

Mistris"), *parentate* ("to celebrate one's parents' funerals"), and *gargari* ("to wash or scowre the mouth with any Physicall liquor")—far too learned for everyday discourse. It was assumed that the consultant of the dictionary already knew the simple words.

We are, of course, waiting for Dr. Samuel Johnson's magisterial work to appear (1750 onwards), but it is unwise to neglect the now-forgotten pioneer work in serious dictionary making upon which Johnson was able to build. Edward Phillips has 11,000 items in his *New World of English Words* (1658), but he was not sure whether to be a lexicographer or an encyclopedist. Until recently, it was not proper for a dictionary to deal in proper names, but Phillips includes, for instance, "California—a very large part of Northern America, uncertain whether Continent or island." In 1702, J. Kersey's *New English Dictionary*—"chiefly designed for the benefit of young Scholars, Tradesmen, Artificers, and the Female Sex, who would learn to spell truly"—brought the word count up to 28,000, and in 1721 Nathan Bailey's *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* raised it to about 40,000. The question of word origin was, as the title indicates, now becoming important. Bailey's dictionary was the most popular before Johnson's: William Pitt the Elder is said to have read through it twice, as if it were a novel. This is a legitimate way to approaching a dictionary. If it is not too bulky, it makes a suitable bed companion for insomniacs. It may also cure insomnia.

In 1747, Samuel Johnson published *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language*, in which he de-

clared his intent "to preserve the purity and ascertain the meaning of the English idiom." He implies profound prescriptivism—a dogmatic assertion of what is acceptable in speech and writing—and this is in keeping with the nature of the man himself, bulky, formidable, a convinced Tory and Anglican, and also immensely learned. Johnson, it was said, knew more books than any man alive. As the value of his *Dictionary* lies as much in its literal illustrations of usage as in its (occasionally quirky) definitions, the bookishness is the most important of Johnson's qualifications after those he shares with other lexicographers—energy, doggedness, and a clear brain. The astonishing thing about the making of the *Dictionary* is



James Murray, pictured here amid the 5,000,000 quotation-slips that, by 1898, he had collected for the Oxford English Dictionary.

that it was a one-man effort. Jonathan Swift and others had cried out for an academy on the French model that could fix English forever in a pure mold. French academicians (40 of them) had been working for 40 years on the first definitive French dictionary. Johnson saw that committees meant dissensions and delays, that a dictionary, even one of 2,300 pages, was only a book, and a book was a thing that a writer wrote.

Johnson signed his contract for the enterprise in June 1746. The bookseller Robert Dodsley was to take charge of the printing and selling (there were no real publishers in those days) and undertook to pay Johnson £1,575 in installments. Out of this he had to pay assistants—six in number, five of them Scottish—and set up a work room, apart from buying books. The work was completed in 1755, having been printed at intervals from 1750 onward, a compendium of more than 40,000 words, their usage illustrated by more than 114,000 quotations dating from the Elizabethan age to his own time. If Johnson could not go earlier than the Elizabethans, this was because so few of the old texts were available to the inquiring scholar, being shut up in the libraries of the mansions of the nobility. Limited in time, he also limited himself in space, paying little attention to the development of English in the American colonies. He imposed no limitation on his prejudices, as is well known from definitions like that of *oats*—"A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people"—and *patron*—"One who countenances, supports or protects. Commonly a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid with flattery." Hating Bolingbroke, he could not keep him out of his definition of *irony*—"a mode of speech in which the meaning is contrary to the words: as, *Bolingbroke was a holy man*." He made inexcusable errors, such as giving *leeward* and *windward* the same meaning. Be-

rated by a lady for defining *pastern* as "the knee of a horse," he offered no elaborate defense, merely saying: "Ignorance madam, pure ignorance." (One might add to that anecdotal snippet that Johnson had just beaten a young lady in a race over a lawn in Devonshire. The victory made him complaisant.) In defining *pension* he wrote: "In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country." Though himself granted the modest affluence of a state pension, he never changed that definition.

Johnson's *Dictionary* remains a great work, but it had no hope of fixing the language and decreeing linguistic decorum. In Thackeray's novel *Vanity Fair* (1848), Becky Sharp, a sort of new woman of the Napoleonic era, leaves Miss Pinkerton's academy for young ladies and throws away the copy of Johnson's *Dictionary*—that invariable gift to departing students—she has just received. It is not the least of her gestures in the direction of modernity. That great book now seemed to be a dog walking on its hind legs and, moreover, walking backward. It was not a dictionary for the scientific age that would start to bloom after Waterloo. Noah Webster in America (starting in 1828), Charles Richardson in England (1836–37), and Joseph Worcester (1846 and 1860), again, in America, were all to learn from Johnson what not to be—namely subjective and eccentric. But they were to learn too that no scholarly dictionary—as opposed to the pocket word-list you bought for a penny—could do its work without ample citation. That had been Johnson's real achievement. Richardson was so taken by this aspect of the *Dictionary* that he relied totally on citation, dispensing with definition. It is doubtful whether this can really be called lexicography.

The year 1876 was a momentous one for British lexicography, though the impulse that

Anthony Burgess is the author of more than 50 works of fiction and nonfiction. This essay is adapted from A Mouthful of Air by Anthony Burgess. Copyright © 1993 by Anthony Burgess. Reprinted by permission of William Morrow & Co., Inc.

made it so came from America. All the English-speaking world then had in the way of dictionaries (apart from Johnson's door-stop) was Webster, Worcester, and Richardson, and none of them was suitable for the age which had already seen Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859) and Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867), to say nothing of the publications of the British Philological Society. Harper, the American publisher, wished to cooperate with the publisher Macmillan in London in the production of a new dictionary "like Webster, in bulk, and as far superior in quality as possible." Webster's dictionary, intended for the American people and establishing spellings that the Americans have used ever since, was no small achievement in 1828, but in the huge and authoritative edition of 1864 it was a masterpiece. So Harper's conception was bold enough. The fulfillment of the proposal depended on the finding of an editor (not a single polymath like Dr. Johnson) who could lash a team of lexicographers (subdefined by Johnson as harmless drudges) into doing the work not merely efficiently but expeditiously. There was only one possible man for the task, and he was James Murray.

Murray was the consummate example of the self-made scholar. Born near Hawick in Roxburghshire, his father a small tailor of Covenanter stock (a Covenanter was a person who upheld the National Covenant of 1638 or the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 between England and Scotland, with the end of establishing and defending the Presbyterian faith). Himself a God-fearing, teetotaling, non-smoking, family-begetting, bizarrely learned teacher ("dominie" is a more fitting word for a Scot), Murray was at that time a master at Mill Hill School near London. This was a dissenting academy, that is to say, an establishment set up for pupils who were not baptized members of the Church of England. Great public schools such as Rugby, Winchester, Eton, and Harrow admitted Anglicans but no others. Murray was suffused by a passion for learning which, if it ever needed

justification, could find it in the duty to serve God through useful action and to honor him by trying to understand his creation. But Murray's temperament was naturally that of a man infinitely curious, especially about language. He seems to have had at least a theoretical knowledge of almost every language, living and dead. When the exiled Hungarian patriot Lajos Kossuth visited Hawick—a town passionate about national liberties—he was met not only by the town band but by a banner inscribed in Magyar *Jöjjön-el a' te orszagod*, meaning "Thy kingdom come." James Murray had been at work. He always learned his modern languages from translations of the Bible. He tackled a Chinese Book of Genesis as a boy, and he could still cite its characters in whitebearded old age. He was a man intended for whitebeardedness; he had a lot of the Old Testament prophet about him.

Brought up as he was on the English-Scottish border, he was struck while still a very young child by the failure of political boundaries to coincide with linguistic boundaries. Language was a continuum, in time as well as space. Old English still existed. Dialects were not "incorrect" speech but survivals of earlier forms of the language. He became—passionately, as with everything he did—a member of the movement dedicated to the study of the English language as a totality. There were great men in the movement, and they joined together to form the Philological Society. One of them, Henry Sweet, was transformed by George Bernard Shaw and, later, by the makers of *My Fair Lady*, into a world figure of romantic myth. Shaw admired him as a phonetician and was determined to make phonetics a subject suitable for popular drama. Sweet's nature belied his name. He had a right to be sour and prickly, especially in his attitude toward the scholarly establishment of Great Britain. Oxford and Cambridge despised the study of English. The new linguistic scholars were in a Catch-22 situation, for they could not propagate the new learning without a degree in it

had been left behind in an empty vicarage at Harrow. *H* was found with the American consul in Florence. Fragments of *Fa* were found in a stable in County Cavau, Ireland, but most of the slips had been used for lighting fires.

So little of the material inherited from the enthusiastic but slapdash Furnivall was of value that Murray had to start all over again, appealing for volunteer readers all over the English-speaking world, laying down rules of admirable clarity for the making of slips, and playing the dominie in letters of inordinate length to his colexicographers. Murray's children, who had fine old Anglo-Saxon names like Wilfrid, Hilda, Oswyn, Ethelwyn, Elsie, Harold, Ethelbert, Aelfric, and Rosfrith (there was a bow to Wales with Gwyneth), got their pocket money from slip sorting and, inevitably, acquired precocious vocabularies. In the Scriptorium the editor sat a foot higher than his fistful of assistants, doing with skill and delicacy the work he alone could do—contriving definitions of wonderful terseness, indicating pronunciation through a system that has only now, in the second edition, been replaced by the International Phonetic Alphabet, and demonstrating, by means of a brief historical procession of quotations, the semantic complex that we call a word. Despite his uprightness of life, reflected in a great chasteness of speech, Murray did not believe in omitting words because they were substandard or taboo. His approach to language was totally scientific: One could not apply moral judgments to words. But he yielded to the prejudices of the middle class, and nothing in the original edition of the OED could bring a blush to the cheek of innocence.

The story of the setbacks, scholarly blindness, tyrannous demands, spurts of official indifference, and unworthy commercialism that beset the road from *A* to *T* (as far as Murray got) makes painful and infuriating reading, and it is best read in Elisabeth Murray's book on her grandfather, *Caught in the Web of Words* (1977). Murray's transfer of home and Scriptorium from Mill Hill to Oxford, as much in the hope of a university appointment as out of a fancy

A
DICTIONARY
 OF THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE:
 IN WHICH
 The WORDS are deduced from their ORIGINALS,
 AND
 ILLUSTRATED in their DIFFERENT SIGNIFICATIONS
 BY
 EXAMPLES from the best WRITERS.
 TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,
A HISTORY of the LANGUAGE,
 AND
AN ENGLISH GRAMMAR.
 BY SAMUEL JOHNSON, A. M.
 IN TWO VOLUMES
 VOL. I.

Cum tabulis animorum certiora sunt bonella:
 Auditis quatenus parum splendens habebim.
 Et sine potestis erant, et hinc indeque ferunt.
 Verba movete loco: quanto usque succedit,
 Et verborum alioque usque peruenit. Velle:
 Oportet deus quibus bonis erant, ante
 Proferre in lucem speciosa verborum remora.
 Quae perita remotaque Clavibus, sicque Vestigia,
 Nam sua nomina praesert et dicitur veritas. H. O. A.

L O N D O N,
 Printed by W. STRAHAN,
 For J. and P. KNAPTON; T. and T. LONGMAN; C. HITCH and L. HAWES;
 A. MILLAR; and R. and J. DODSLEY.
 MDCCLXXVII.

Johnson's Dictionary, distinguished by its shades of definition, offered 124 meanings of the verb take.

that Oxford would be more lexicographically nourishing than Mill Hill, is an episode in life wholly pathetic. But no less self-pitying character than Murray ever strode the new terrain of philology. Complaining to the cook that his porridge was (or were: "parritch" is a plural) "too waesh" or "too brose," shouting for his wife Ada (a heroine of the age) with "Where's my lovey?," stern but loving with the children, a great man to be with on holiday (he knew all about marine biology and could make a life-size Grendel out of sand), he is a supreme example of the virtues of the poor ambitious dissenting class. Samuel Johnson, poor, ambitious, but also Anglican and Tory, besides a hater of the Scots, would have entertained very mixed attitudes toward him.

The study of language may beget madness. The rogue-god Mercury presides over philology as well as over thievery. It is true that Murray's preoccupation with the OED begot a kind of monomania, but it must be regarded as a beneficent or at least an innocuous one. It became hard for him to make aesthetic judgments on literature: Words kept getting in the way. Murray got into correspondence with Robert Browning but only to ask about the meaning of *apparitional* in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*. When his son Oswyn later said how much he admired Browning's poetry, Murray's grave response was, "Browning constantly used words without regard to their proper meaning. He has added greatly to the difficulties of the Dictionary." He was conceivably thinking of that misuse of *twat* in *Pippa Passes*.

Murray died in 1915 at age 78. It took another 13 years—under first Henry Bradley, later William Craigie and Charles Onions (to whom the Murray children would derisively sing "Charlie Is My Darling")—to bring out the final volume. The work continues to be Murray's monument, a thing he never sought and did not want: "It is extremely annoying to me to see the Dictionary referred to as Murray's English Dictionary." He wanted anonymity:

I wish we knew nothing of Carlyle but his writings. I am thankful we know so little of Chaucer & Shakespeare. I have persistently refused to answer the whole buzzing swarm of biographers, saying simply, "I am a nobody—if you have anything to say about the Dictionary, there it is at your will—but treat me as a solar myth, or an irrational quantity, or ignore me altogether."

Since the death of Murray a great number of new technical resources have eased dictionary making—above all the computer—but the heroism remains, the sheer dedication and slog. *The Oxford English Dictionary* was, in its first form, a remarkable engineering feat, but, unlike the works of Brunel, it was seen from the start that it could never be finished. A dictionary is obsolete as soon as it appears, in the sense that it cannot keep up with the influx of new words into the language. It requires periodic supplementation, and the OED has had four massive volumes added to it, under the editorship of R. W. Burchfield. Thanks to the computer, it has been possible with great speed to incorporate these many additions into the existing body of the original work. In 1989 the second edition of the OED comprised 20 large volumes, but it by no means represents the totality of the English language, since about 400 new words come into it every year. Murray was selective in a way that the new lexicographers may not be, but the principle of selection remains. Some words—"nonce-words" (neologisms coined for a particular occasion but destined to die soon), trade names, cant, and terms heavily technological—present problems and require long discussion. The new OED is a liberal triumph that includes the taboo terms and all the slang and argot that formerly were reserved to specialist dictionaries.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* is perhaps too great a work, as well as too bulky, for the casual consultation of someone reading a book and finding a word he does not know, or wishing to be put right on a spelling or pronunciation. When you take down a volume of the OED, it is for deeper, wider instruction—of the sort we moderns need.

Examine the Past...

The State and Social Investigation in Britain and the United States

Michael J. Lacey and Mary O. Furner, Editors

Contributors: Michael J. Lacey, Mary O. Furner, Donald Winch, Lawrence Goldman, Roger Davidson, Donald Critchlow, W. Elliot Brownlee, Barry Supple, Robert Cuff

Woodrow Wilson Center Press Series

0-521-41638-8 Hardcover \$49.95

Industrial Democracy in America

The Ambiguous Promise

Nelson Lichtenstein and Howell John Harris, Editors

Contributors: David Montgomery, Howell John Harris, Joseph A. McCartin, Ronald W. Schatz, Nelson Lichtenstein, James B. Atleson, David Brody, Sanford M. Jacoby, and Mike Parker.

Woodrow Wilson Center Press Series

0-521-43121-2 Hardcover \$44.95

Now in paperback...

Manufacturing Knowledge

A History of the Hawthorne Experiments

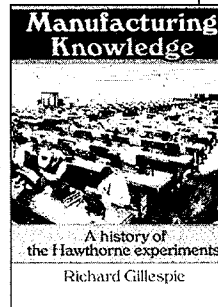
Richard Gillespie

"Richard Gillespie has written a masterly account of how scientific knowledge is produced."

— Science

0-521-45643-6

Paper \$15.95

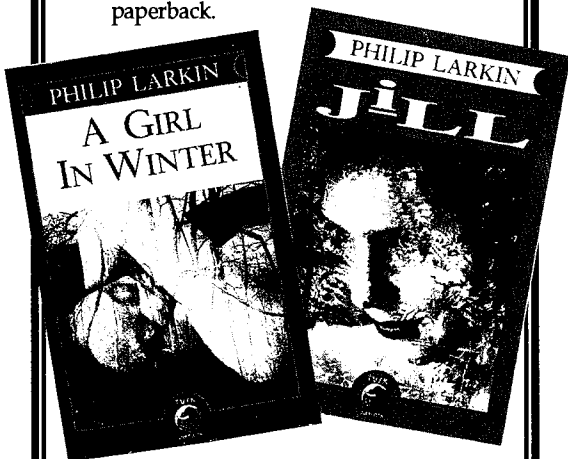


Available in bookstores or from **CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS**, 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211. Call toll-free 800-872-7423. MasterCard/VISA accepted.

Books in the *Woodrow Wilson Center Press Series* are available to Woodrow Wilson Center Associates at a 20% discount.

LARKIN

Philip Larkin's two acclaimed novels, *Jill* and *A Girl in Winter*, are now available again in paperback.



At your bookstore, or send \$11.95 per book, plus \$2.95 shipping and handling (\$1.00 extra for both books) to: The Overlook Press, 2568 Route 212, Dept. WQ, Woodstock, New York, 12498.

Free Catalog

Bargain Books

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

Choose from up to 8,000 titles monthly including 800–1,500 new arrivals.

Over 40 subject areas: Biography, History, Literature, Politics, Philosophy, Sports, Art, Nature, Gardening, Health and more from yesterday's best-sellers to titles you never knew existed!

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

Send me your FREE Catalog of Bargain Books.

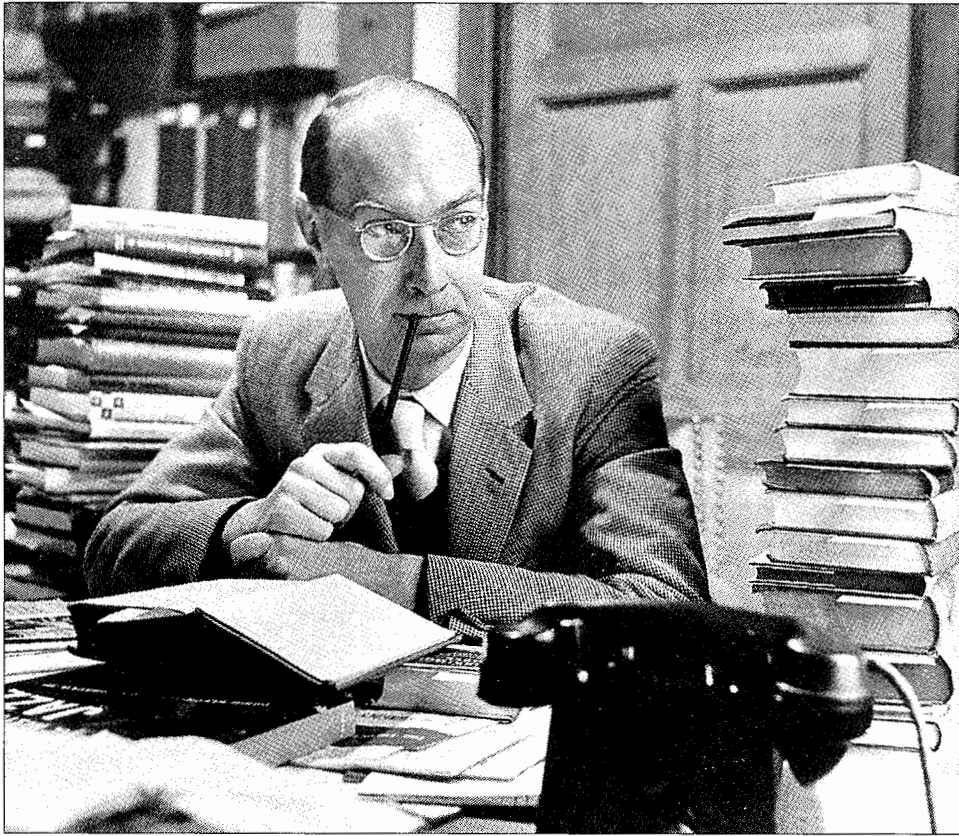
Name

Address

City Zip

HAMILTON Box 15-830
Falls Village, CT 06031

PHILIP LARKIN, 1922–1985



SOUR MAJESTY

BY EDWARD HIRSCH

Revealing the dark side of the best-loved English poet of his generation, the recently published biography and selected letters of Philip Larkin sent shock waves through the literary world. How might readers respond to the work of a man who gleefully raved against women, minorities, and almost everybody else, including himself? Edward Hirsch ponders the question.

Philip Larkin has increasingly come to seem the greatest English poet after W. H. Auden, though the word "great" is perhaps mildly inapplicable to a writer of such slender output and narrow range. Yet he was, as Auden himself said in a 50th-birthday tribute, "a master of the English language," a poet whose near-perfect phrasing, emotional honesty and directness, and clarity of artistic purpose permanently stamped his generation. Larkin essentially wrote from personal experience, his verbal antennae precisely attuned to unhappiness—"happiness writes white," he said, quoting the French novelist Montherlant. He understood poetry as "emotional in nature and theatrical in operation," and his carefully honed style combined a self-deprecating, razor-like wit with an unshakable sense of worldly disappointment, of desires unfulfilled and dreams thwarted. His famous remark to an interviewer that "deprivation is for me what daffodils were for Wordsworth" is both funny and acute since the misery of diminished and unfulfilled experience is his enduring subject. Indeed, it is difficult to think of him as young—this man who seemed to have been born middle-aged, regretting a past that never took place and terrified of oncoming death. The tone of sour majesty, of sardonic resignation infused with wordless romantic yearning, is something we might call Larkinesque.

During his lifetime Larkin became one of the best-loved English poets, a reclusive figure at the heart of the English sensibility. His formidable reputation basically rests on three thin, irreplaceable volumes whose combined contents come to 85 poems: *The Less Deceived* (1955), which made his mark and established his voice; *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964), which made him famous in England ("It turned his voice into one of the means by which his country recognized itself," his biographer Andrew Motion writes); and *High Windows* (1974), which converted him into something of an English national treasure and made him internationally known. These were gathered together and chronologically rearranged in An-

thony Thwaite's edition of the *Collected Poems* (1988), which also includes Larkin's early poems, written from his teens up to the publication of his first book, *The North Ship* (1945), as well as previously unpublished and uncollected lyrics. The arrangement dilutes Larkin's scrupulous effects and well-ordered individual collections, but it also gives a fuller sense of the writer at work, his clustering themes and chronological development. Larkin's bibliography also contains two early novels, *Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947), written in his early twenties (his first overriding ambition was to be a novelist), and two nonfiction miscellanies, *All What Jazz: A Record Diary 1961–1971* (rev. ed. 1985) and *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955–1982* (1983). Larkin's reputation was further enhanced by the controversial success of his edition of *The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse* (1973), which succeeded Yeats's *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936). Larkin's edition gave canonical authority to his traditional poetic values and anti-Modernist tastes, his commitment to formal poetry written for a general readership. The voice of disillusion was also a conservator of English traditions.

After the death of his friend Sir John Betjeman in 1984, Larkin was generally expected to become the next poet laureate of England. The rumor persists that he was passed over because of the profanity in his work satirizing family values ("They fuck you up, your mum and dad"), but in truth he was offered the position by Mrs. Thatcher and turned it down. Larkin always refused to be in any way publicly involved with poetry. (He once said about poetry readings, "I don't want to go around pretending to be me.") He found appearing in public an ordeal, jealously guarded his privacy, and suffered what would turn out to be a near-terminal writer's block. ("Poetry has deserted me," he was already complaining in 1967.) He thought the laureateship had become "showbiz" and was not surprised when Ted Hughes,

whose work he disliked, accepted the position. But if Hughes, a romantic primitivist who glories in preindustrial Albion, became the official laureate, then Larkin remained until his death, as Donald Davie suggested, "the effective unofficial laureate of post-1945 England." Davie observed that "we recognize in Larkin's poems the seasons of present-day England, but we recognize also the seasons of an English soul."

Larkin drew a thick curtain between his private life and his public persona. He dismissed his childhood in the smallish Midlands city of Coventry as "a forgotten boredom" and encouraged the notion that nothing had ever happened to him. At Oxford during the war years ("Oxford terrified me," he admitted later) he wrote both poetry and prose and was associated with the generation of Kingsley Amis and John Wain. Afterward, he worked as a librarian in Wellington, Leicester, and Belfast before settling down at the University of Hull. For the last 30 years of his life he cultivated his disguise as an ordinary person—a working chap, a bachelor, a middle-brow. "Whatever a poet is supposed to look like, it's not me," he said typically. He was, by all accounts, unflinchingly courteous, bald and bespectacled and increasingly deaf, formal in a dark suit and tie ("death-suited"), stern but amiable, quiet and shy, but also droll and at times wickedly funny. He obviously took a great deal of pleasure in expressing himself as Philip Larkin, in his own playful articulate refusals and his unyielding posture of bleakness. He liked turning his dislike of things into a spectacle for his friends and delighted in comic exaggerations. "To say that he had a sense of humor," the novelist A. N. Wilson cautioned about Larkin's antic humor, "would be to imply that he sometimes said things which it was safe to take wholly seriously."

Not many detected the level of rage that

seethed inside him. Larkin never hid his negative opinions of others, but he parceled them out and displayed them with a witty tact. In *Required Writing*, for example, one encounters his offhanded sense of other people ("Everyone envies everyone else"), his commitment to bachelorhood ("I see life more as an affair of solitude diversified by company than as an affair of company diversified by solitude"), his distaste for children ("Until I grew up I thought I hated everybody, but when I grew up I realized it was just children I didn't like"), his ideas about being abroad ("I wouldn't mind seeing China if I could come back the same day"), and his conservative political views ("I adore Mrs. Thatcher"). He was right-wing and said, "I identify the Right with certain virtues and the Left with certain vices." He was also a monarchist and one of his last poems, dated March 2, 1978, is a quatrain written to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee. He called it "a lapidary lark":

In times when nothing stood
but worsened, or grew strange,
there was one constant good:
she did not change.

The poem is now inscribed on a memorial stone in Queen's Square garden.

Larkin believed that "the impulse to preserve lies at the bottom of any art," and many of his poems preserve the memory of a fading England. "Never such innocence,/Never before or since," he writes in his hymn to old England, "MCMXIV." In a sense, Larkin's mature tone settles down into a knowing acceptance of Englishness, of what it means to be English. The poem "The Importance of Elsewhere," which he wrote after living in Belfast for five years, begins, "Lonely in Ireland, since it was not home,/Strangeness made sense," and concludes,

Edward Hirsch is a professor in the creative writing program at the University of Houston. He is a frequent contributor to the New Yorker, the Nation, and the New Republic, and the author of four books of poetry, For the Sleepwalkers (1981), Wild Gratitude (1986), The Night Parade (1989), and Earthly Measures, to be published by Knopf in January 1994. Copyright © 1993 by Edward Hirsch.

Living in England has no such excuse:
These are my customs and establishments
It would be much more serious to refuse.
Here no elsewhere underwrites my existence.

There is a Larkin of cricket and English seaside holidays, of country churchyards, native coastlines, and small market towns. But he catches the country at a point where it is endangered, hemmed in on all sides, on the verge of disappearing. The stately cadences of "Going, Going" are explicit:

And that will be England gone,
The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
The guildhalls, the carved choirs.
There'll be books; it will linger on
In galleries; but all that remains
For us will be concrete and tyres.

Larkin's England is an Edwardian pastoral that has been desecrated by a relentless encroaching modernism ("greeds/And garbage are too thick-strewn/To be swept up now"). It is a provincial glory, besieged and vanishing.

Larkin's anxiety about the social and political developments of the 1960s was directly expressed in such satirical poems as "Naturally the Foundation Will Bear Your Expenses," "Take One Home for the Kiddies," and "Homage to a Government," which takes up the subject of Britain's withdrawal from a dominant military role on the world stage. "Homage" publicly articulates what Larkin told Barbara Pym privately—that he was "deeply humiliated at living in a country that spends more on education than on defence." Here is the last stanza:

Next year we shall be living in a country
That brought its soldiers home for
 lack of money.
The statues will be standing in the same
Tree-muffled squares, and look nearly
 the same.
Our children will not know it's a
 different country.
All we can hope to leave them now is money.

The sadness associated with Britain's loss of power is not just a personal neurosis; it reflects the pessimism of Larkin's class facing its reduced place in the world. Larkin is not usually such an overtly political poet; rather he presents himself as a lyricist of dwindled prospects, of leaves falling away from their trees and seasons fading, of people being pushed to the side of their own lives. But the politics associated with Larkin's personal sadness are encoded in his work since his autumnal feelings of disappointment continually point to a national feeling of cultural decline and decreased imperial power. Larkin was the unofficial laureate of a gray, postimperial, postwar England.

He cultivated a stellar, anti-intellectual pose as one of the lesser deceived. Larkin made no secret of his anti-cosmopolitanism, his anti-Americanism, his hatred of "the aberration of Modernism, that blighted all the arts." He took every opportunity to whack the Modernist giants (Pablo Picasso, Ezra Pound, Charlie Parker). He also made much of his literary conversion from Yeats to Hardy, which he defined as a rejection of grand rhetorical gestures and an acceptance of human limits. Hardy gave him confidence in his own authoritative pessimism. Thereafter Larkin always insisted on an empirical, antiheroic, antitranscendental poetic. He took a skeptical, commonsensical approach to poetry, ridiculed anything that smacked of "literature," and pretended to be a nonreader. One of his best-known poems, "A Study of Reading Habits," concludes, "Books are a load of crap." Or, as he told an inquisitive interviewer, "I read everything except philosophy, theology, economics, sociology, science, or anything to do with the wonders of nature, anything to do with technology—have I said politics?"

Of course this is absurd coming from a university librarian. The pose is belied both by the quality of Larkin's writing—you don't get to write the way Larkin did without being an acute reader—and by the sly, mostly buried range of references in his work, especially to

French Symbolism. In another format he admitted, "I've always been a compulsive reader," and acknowledged keeping 12 poetic exemplars within reach of his working chair: Thomas Hardy, William Wordsworth, Christina Rossetti, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Siegfried Sassoon, Edward Thomas, William Barnes, Winthrop Praed, John Betjeman, Walt Whitman (!), Robert Frost, and Wilfred Owen. Many of Larkin's opinions seemed part of an elaborate put-on, a vast private joke. Yet there was also a truth expressed in Larkin's stance against reading that may, after all, suggest an anxiety about the "unmanliness" of literary activity. As his work progressed, he increasingly fenced off more and more of the outside world, eventually excluding other people's thoughts and ideas entirely, dispensing with other people's passions by filing them away according to the Dewey decimal system.

This past year, however, a "national treasure" became, to judge by the ferocious debates in the English press, a national problem. The carefully erected barrier between Larkin's private life and his public persona was breached by the publication of two books by his literary executors: Anthony Thwaite's voluminous edition of the *Selected Letters of Philip Larkin*, which contains over 700 letters to more than 50 recipients, and Andrew Motion's judicious biographical account, *Philip Larkin: A Writer's Life*. In England the *Letters* appeared first and the biography afterward; in the United States the process has been mercifully reversed. The biography is out this month, and the *Letters* will be published in December. Late in his life Larkin reviewed lives of Auden and Cecil Day-Lewis and declared he was "rather depressed by the remorseless scrutiny of one's private affairs that seems to be the fate of the newly dead. Really, one should burn everything." That "remorseless scrutiny" has now turned in his direction. Larkin was constitutionally unable to burn anything himself—he was as ambivalent about this as about almost everything else—but on his deathbed he instructed his long-time companion, Monica Jones, to destroy the

30-odd thick volumes of his diary, which she subsequently did. The rest of his papers survived, and the damage is profound.

The publication of Larkin's *Letters* created a controversy in England that has not yet subsided and will go on echoing for years. Almost all of the discussion has focused on the most repellent aspects of the correspondence: Larkin's racism, his xenophobia, his misogyny. It is as if he had exposed the sewer of the English soul. Certainly that is not what the editor of these *Letters* had intended. "What is remarkable," Anthony Thwaite writes in his tactful, somewhat hopeful introduction, "is how consistently Larkin emerges, whoever he is writing to. Books, poems, jazz, cricket, drink, the daily grind of 'the toad, work,' exasperation with colleagues and friends, gossip about them, depression at the state of the world and of himself, concern with whatever concerned the person to whom he was writing, occasional delights in the occasional delight he experienced—all are here, in the vividly speaking voice of someone who, even when he was joking, told the truth as he saw it." After this mild description, it is a shock to turn to the often foul-mouthed letters themselves. These letters, especially the ones to his male cronies Kingsley Amis, Robert Conquest, and Colin Gunner, were a time bomb that has now exploded. Many readers suspected Larkin's prejudices all along—his attitudes kept seeping into his poems, reviews, and interviews—but not many were aware of the virulence with which they were privately expressed. What began as a set of grim jokes and biases slowly hardened into a catalogue of intense hatreds. Larkin never pretended he enjoyed being Larkin—"Life is first boredom, then fear," he summarized in "Dockery and Son"—but the *Letters* indicate the depth of his self-absorption and self-disgust, his ever-deepening misery and despair, his rancid view of other people.

Many of the letters are uncontroversial. There is an exemplary, well-known correspondence with Barbara Pym—one of the few

writers he truly admired—and a friendly series of letters to his editors at Faber & Faber, in particular Charles Monteith. There are youthful, exuberant letters to his schoolmates in which he talks about his ambition to be a novelist, his early enthusiasm for Auden and Lawrence, his devotion to jazz. He writes chatty letters to female friends, carries on a savvy business correspondence relating to his poems, and writes warmly to other writers who are promoting his work. But Larkin's misanthropy is always lingering and gives a decided cast to the correspondence. "Bugger everything & everybody," he says. His scorn begins at home. Near the end of his life he calls himself "a pregnant salmon" and describes his "sagging face" as "an egg sculpted in lard, with goggles on." "I hated myself so much I was trying to disappear altogether," he jokes in italics at the bottom of one letter. "So now we face 1982," he confesses in another, "gargantuanly paunched, helplessly addicted to alcohol, 'tired of livin' and scared of dyin', world famous unable to write poet."

Larkin's self-disgust quickly spilled over to others, and not many escaped his bile. He especially mocked anyone connected to literature. "I have a huge contempt for all 'groups' that listen to and discuss poetry," he wrote. In his characterizations, Emily Dickinson becomes "Emily Prick-in-son," the poets David Jones "a farting prick" and W. D. Snodgrass "a dopy kid-mad sod." The critic H. E. Bates becomes "H. E. Bastard," and in a splenetic catalogue Larkin asks, "When will these sodding loudmouthed cuntin' shitstuffed pisswashed sons of poxed-up bitches learn that there is something greater than *literature*?" Nor are Larkin's friends exempt. Anthony Powell was taken aback to find himself described as a "creep" and a "horse-faced dwarf." About Kingsley Amis, to whom he is permanently linked, Larkin says, "The only reason I hope to predecease him is that I'd find it next to impossible to say anything nice about him at his memorial service."

The letters show that Larkin's poetics of preservation were countered by an equal need

to mock and denigrate. Hence the lifelong undergraduate prank that he shared with Amis of signing off with the word "bum" at the end of letters: "Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to bum," "The Tories may lose the election owing to Mrs. Thatcher's bum," and so forth. Larkin moves easily from irreverently joking about individuals to lacerating groups. He calls the Irish "driveling slack-jawed blackguards," and exclaims, "What dreary no-good cunts these foreigners are." His racism is especially repellent. He advises Amis to "keep up the cracks about niggers and wogs"; he speaks of "fat Caribbean germs pattering after me in the Underground." He announces, "And as for those black scum kicking up a din on the boundary—a squad of South African police would have sorted them out to my satisfaction." Here is a little ditty on "How to Win the Next Election" that he sent to Conquest, Gunner, and Monteith:

Prison for strikers,
Bring back the cat,
Kick out the niggers—
How about that?

Larkin's letters sometimes make a spectacle of being offensive, at least partially for the shock effect—"Ooh, Larkin," he feigns, "I'm sorry to find you holding these views"—but that makes his opinions no more funny or palatable.

Here is the "unwritten" Jubilee poem to Her Majesty that Larkin sent to Thwaite:

After Healey's trading figures,
After Wilson's squalid crew,
And the rising tide of niggers—
What a treat to look at you!

This is the "unofficial" quatrain buried under the "official" one, the political undertow, the racist joke that should be inscribed on the backside of the stone in Queen's Square garden. The shadow-side of Larkin's right-wing politics was a fury against everything Other: Jews, blacks, women, immigrants, academics, trade unions. He despised everything and

everybody, especially himself.

The letters are only the tip of the iceberg. "Please believe me," Larkin told an adolescent friend, "when I say that half my days are spent in black, surging, twitching, boiling HATE!!!" It is no longer possible to discount this aspect of Larkin's character, which was so inextricably tied to his creativity. His wretchedness was extreme. Apparently, the letters are mild in comparison to the diaries. The evidence suggests, as Andrew Motion says, that "even his most candid letters only hint at their intensity." The one person who glimpsed some of the diaries, his friend Patsy Strang, reported that they were sexual logbooks ("very masturbatory") and, in Motion's characterization, "a gigantic repository for bile, resentment, envy, and misanthropy." Larkin may have hated the Modernists, but he had more in common with them than he supposed. He now takes his place in a line of reactionary 20th-century writers—from Yeats, Pound, and Eliot to D. H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis—whose lives (and works) were fueled by repulsive right-wing hatreds. But what was for an earlier generation a rising tide of democracy and leveling modern values was for Larkin a flood that had already taken place. He has just about drowned. His defense, in "This Be The Verse," was a tone of sardonic chuckling, a grim, half-comic misery:

Man hands on misery to man.
It deepens like a coastal shelf.
Get out as early as you can,
And don't have any kids yourself.

Motion's biography is helpful in deciphering the clues to Larkin's character and in creating a context for his opinions. Larkin led an outwardly uneventful life—he was so self-divided and focused on writing that he mostly kept from doing anything—but a secretive, tumultuous inner life. He thrived off his own refusals and flourished on his own pessimisms. Motion locates Larkin's problems somewhere among his repressed homosexuality (never acknowledged), his latent anti-

Semitism (which scarcely figures into the correspondence), and the definitive influence of his parents, especially his beloved father, who was a prewar Nazi sympathizer. Far from forgetting his childhood in Coventry, Larkin remembered it all too well. He never recovered from his parents' cramped, loveless marriage, a "bloody hell" he vowed never to repeat. He seems to have combined something of his mother's excruciating timidity (as a child he was nearsighted and stammered badly) with his father's authoritarianism, thus trapping himself between opposing impulses. Larkin always attributed his negative feelings about travel ("filthy abroad" he calls it in the letters) to two trips he took to Germany with his father. Motion acutely speculates on the ambivalence and shame Larkin must have felt—"embarrassment at best, humiliation at worst"—about being in Germany in the late 1930s. By the late 1920s Larkin's father had already become, as one acquaintance said, "an active and impenitent admirer of Germany's postwar recovery, and of Hitler's role in achieving this." Larkin vehemently denied that his father was a fascist, acknowledging that Sydney Larkin was "the sort of person democracy didn't suit." Larkin sometimes mocked his father's opinions, but, as Motion notes, he "never actually disagreed with him—never sympathizing with the suffering of others, and sometimes even making a few mildly anti-Semitic and pro-German remarks of his own." Larkin's anti-Semitism surfaces in his late poem "Posterity," where his satirically named biographer, Jake Balokowksy, laments:

"I'm stuck with this old fart at least a year;
I wanted to teach school in Tel Aviv,
But Myra's folks"—he makes the money
sign—
"Insisted I got tenure."

Larkin's anti-Semitism is rarely this overt, but his attitude toward the Jew as the despised Other magnetized many of his other hatreds.

Larkin also picked up many of his father's

negative opinions about women. He had little or no contact with girls during his childhood and adolescence, and prejudice replaced knowledge. Women became for him remote and unimaginable. They sent him, as he confessed to his schoolmate James Sutton, "rigid with fright." Larkin's sexual anxiety and diffidence soon turned to sneering: "Women (university) repel me inconceivably," he told Sutton. "They are shits." "FUCK ALL WOMEN!" he writes elsewhere. "I am quite fed up with the whole business. . . . Sex is designed for people who like overcoming obstacles. I don't like overcoming obstacles." Those obstacles were mostly insurmountable and lifelong since Larkin's personality exquisitely balanced sexual attraction with sexual revulsion. Motion narrates the story—or nonstory—of Larkin's handful of stalled love affairs, especially with Monica Jones and Maeve Brennan ("Yes, life is pretty grey up in Hull," he wrote to Robert Conquest in 1966, "Maeve wants to marry me, Monica wants to chuck me."). His contradictory feelings left him at a permanent standstill.

Larkin thought of marriage as a "revolting institution," and his intense physical and emotional needs were countered by an equally intense fear of connection and commitment. He was convinced women used sex to snare men into marriage, which he thought of in the most conventional domestic terms. In the cartoonish situation of "Self's the Man," for example, poor, emasculated Arnold is run ragged because of his "selflessness":

He married a woman to stop her getting
away
Now she's there all day,

And the money he gets for wasting his
life on work
She takes as her perk
To pay for the kiddies' clobber and the drier
And the electric fire,

And when he finishes supper
Planning to have a read at the evening paper
It's *Put a screw in this wall*—
He has no time at all. . . .

Revolted by the idea of family responsibilities, Larkin also felt victimized by his own desires and often turned to pornography for consolation. The fact that his letters carry on a steady stream of casual, pornographic, and misogynistic remarks obfuscates but does not obliterate his sexual frustration and alienation, his sexual envy, bewilderment, and fear. It was largely because of his feelings about women that he came to define life as "an immobile, locked,/Three-handed struggle between/Your wants, the world's for you, and (worse)/The unbeatable slow machine/That brings what you'll get." ("The Life with a Hole in It"). Women became for him symptomatic of the life he would never lead, the incarnation of unfulfilled, unfulfillable desires.

Larkin's sexual conflicts were repeatedly played out in his work from the earliest poems in *The North Ship* to his final lyrics. In "Reasons for Attendance" he opposes "the wonderful feel of girls" to his own solitary calling to "that lifted, rough-tongued bell/(Art, if you like)." The problem was that he was still beset and bewildered by his own desires, terrorized by a solitude he had chosen but could not entirely tolerate ("Only the young can be alone freely," he concludes in "Vers de Société") and desperately needed to defend. He felt victimized for having chosen "a life/ Reprehensibly perfect" ("Poetry of Departures"). Hence the bitter resentment of the first stanza of "The Life with a Hole in It":

When I throw back my head and howl
People (women mostly) say
But you've always done what you want,
You always get your own way
—A perfectly vile and foul
Inversion of all that's been.
What the old ratbags mean
Is I've never done what I don't.

Larkin's work charts the forms of his deprivation in terms of women: the turmoil of losing the girl, of desiring the beautiful girl he cannot have and not desiring the unattractive, problematic one he might get, of being too

middle-aged for the sexual revolution. Larkin is known as a great poet of mortality, of aging and death, but, as his biographer suggests; "Reading his poems in chronological sequence, it is clear that his obsession with death is inextricable from his fascination with love and marriage." What Motion calls "fascination" is more accurately described as fascinated revulsion.

The specter of the white male poet turning reactionary in later life is hard to face and even harder to think about clearly. What are its implications? English poetry is not inevitably aligned with reactionary politics—one thinks of Byron and Shelley—and there is no reason that lyric sadness and disappointment cannot be linked to a democratic and progressive social action. It is rare but possible. In Larkin's case, however, as in many others, the poet's narcissistic wounds found outlet in a hierarchical politics of exclusion. It is not sufficient to say, as the *London Times* did, that "what matters about Larkin is the handful of melancholy and funny poems that captured the mood of his times." The problem is that Larkin's attitudes, now made explicit in the *Letters* and biography, are shot through his work. They are not "accidental" or merely unworthy of him. They shadow his poems like an unwelcome aura. They are stitched there like threads that we suspected were present all along and now can see. Naturally, this affects our unraveling of his work. Larkin's need to preserve was balanced by an equally intense desire to desecrate, and hatred was the flip side of his gloomy tenderness. "What will survive of us is love," he wrote in "An Arundel Tomb," but rage was the underbelly of his art.

Larkin's late personal lyrics show us the world from the point of view of someone who feels that love has been completely withdrawn from him. Hatred is one reaction to that withdrawal, an ugly solace and refuge in a place where privation reigns. He feels cheated and blames others for his

misery; he is imprisoned with his own inexcusable desires. Rather than express blame directly, the poems tend to celebrate and exacerbate the wound of lovelessness. Larkin's poems are not introspective. They do not lead him to "greater understanding." They are clenched, acerbic, unforgettable—the voice of bitterness itself. They are brokenhearted and utterly perfect and defensively armored. At times they are irresistibly funny and highly quotable, and many readers have found themselves reciting them from memory. Their lyric melancholy, splendid phrasing, and corrosive brilliance are like a magnet to poetry readers. But what is being magnetized? The poems move from the wry irony of "Annus Mirabilis"—

Sexual intercourse began
In nineteen sixty-three
(Which was rather late for me)—
Between the end of the *Chatterley* ban
And the Beatles' first LP.

to the grander resentment of "Sad Steps"—

. . . a reminder of the strength and pain
Of being young; that it can't come again,
But is for others undiminished somewhere.

to the putrefying envy and jealousy of "Love Again"—

Someone else feeling her breasts and cunt,
Someone else drowned in that
lash-wide stare,
And me supposed to be ignorant,
Or find it funny, or not to care,
Even . . . but why put it into words?

Here the voyeuristic fury turns to helplessness and then to frustrated silence. By the end of his life's work, Larkin's world had been hopelessly reduced; all that was left was the open sore of lovelessness and the prospect of "unresting death," endless oblivion.

Larkin made no secret of his final bafflement and dread. It was all he had left, his concluding weapon. He despised other people but

could not bear to be alone ("Vers de Soci t "); he was disgusted by "the whole hideous inverted childhood" of aging ("The Old Fools"); he felt his mind going blank from the blinding glare of death "not in remorse," he said, for "the good not done, the love not given," but at the thought of total emptiness, "the sure extinction that we travel to/And shall be lost in always" ("Aubade"). He went on complaining but knew that complaints wouldn't save him ("Death is no different whined at than withstood"); he raged against others but knew that rage devoured itself. He had found his last wrenched place in an unloved, unlovable universe. His viewpoint narrowed further and further until in the end all that remained of the heart's knowledge was a clear lens for viewing unacceptable death:

Where has it gone, the lifetime?
Search me. What's left is drear.
Unchilded and unwifed, I'm
Able to view that clear:
So final. And so near.
("The View")

The view into oblivion was so chillingly personal, painful, and direct that ultimately the poet wanted only to obliterate it. He longed for obliviousness itself, an end to the old wound, the agony of consciousness:

It will be worth it, if in the end I manage
To blank out whatever it is that is doing
the damage.

Then there will be nothing I know.
My mind will fold into itself, like fields,
like snow.
("The Winter Palace")

This poem is dated November 1, 1978, and it is no surprise to discover that from then on the mind folding back entirely into itself would not be able to sustain more than a handful of occasional lyrics. There was nothing left

for it in poetry. Resentment had run dry.

It is altogether remarkable then to turn back to a poem such as "High Windows" and find the same self-damaging rage transfigured, the same constellation of feelings remade. The unrelieved arc and movement of this poem with its crafty mix of dictions and characteristically ironized longings is Larkin at his artistic peak. It moves from a sardonic and profane bitterness about sex and religion to a final wordless perception of high windows:

When I see a couple of kids
And guess he's fucking her and she's
Taking pills or wearing a diaphragm,
I know this is paradise

Everyone old has dreamed of all their lives—
Bonds and gestures pushed to one side
Like an outdated combine harvester,
And everyone young going down the
long slide

To happiness, endlessly. I wonder if
Anyone looked at me, forty years back,
And thought, *That'll be the life;*
No God any more, or sweating in the dark

*About hell and that, or having to hide
What you think of the priest. He
And his lot will all go down the long slide
Like free bloody birds. And immediately*

Rather than words comes the thought of
high windows:
The sun-comprehending glass,
And beyond it, the deep blue air, that shows
Nothing, and is nowhere, and is endless.

The visionary clairvoyance at the end of this poem points to an eternal realm, a Pascalian emptiness beyond the confines of language. It is rapturous and terrifying and free. "High Windows" reminds us that art exists beyond biography, that Larkin, too, was a vehicle for his feelings, that the sourness of his life could also be transformed into the spirit's majesty.

S

ummertime—and the listening is lively! Help keep your mind in shape this summer with thoughtful conversations on key international and domestic topics.

Look for these upcoming programs on "Dialogue":

- "Security and the Single Superpower"
- "Yugoslavia: Was It Inevitable?"
- "Japan: Looking for Change"
- "Perfect Cities: Chicago in the 1890s"

For broadcast information call your local public radio station.

*"Dialogue" is a production of the Woodrow Wilson
International Center for Scholars in association
with Radio Smithsonian.*



American Public Radio

"DIALOGUE," THE WOODROW WILSON CENTER
1000 JEFFERSON DRIVE, S.W., WASHINGTON, D.C., 20560
TELEPHONE: (202) 287-3000 EXT. 325

THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

Why Did Soviet Communism Fall?

A Survey of Recent Articles

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985, Soviet communism, for all its obvious failures, did not seem to be at death's door. Yet six years later, the oppressive system collapsed and the Soviet Union expired. The 74-year-old "experiment" in socialism was over. What brought about this momentous development? Was it the West's doing? Was Gorbachev responsible? Did communism's inability to deliver the economic goods do it in? Or was there something more, something in the very nature of the communist system that led to its sudden demise? These questions, along with others about conduct at home during the long twilight struggle, are bound to be debated for years to come. Some of the emerging lines of thought were surveyed recently in the *National Interest* (Spring 1993).

The West did play a critical role in communism's demise, maintains Stephen Sestanovich, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington. Just as external events—defeat by Japan and then World War I—set off the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, respectively, so they led to change in this case. The U.S. defense buildup and hardline policies of the Reagan administration during the early 1980s, Sestanovich argues, prompted the Kremlin to rethink its policies. "By showing that past policies had led nowhere, Western toughness altered the internal power balance of Soviet politics in favor of fundamental change." Then, after Gorbachev embarked on change, Western toughness turned to conciliation. The warming of U.S.-Soviet relations created "a relaxed setting" in which Gorbachev's reforms "steadily expanded and eventually became uncontrollable." Western influence should not be exaggerated, Sestanovich says, but neither should it be denied.

Francis Fukuyama, author of *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), agrees, but notes that changes within Soviet society were also influential. The ending of the Stalinist terror by the late 1950s, he says, meant a shift in power from

the state to society. Ministers, plant managers, and workers could relax their work efforts, which made it harder for the command economy to function. And while central planning worked adequately in the age of heavy industry, it was unsuited to the information age, with its demand for continual technological innovation.

Nonsense, says Vladimir Kontorovich, an economist at Haverford College. The Soviet Union was always slow in responding to technological change, but that did not stop it from becoming a superpower. It simply focused on one field—the military—and acquired the necessary technology by "stealing, reverse engineering, ingenious domestic adaptations and shortcuts, and massive allocation of resources." With a reasonably good manager, the Soviet economy could still have functioned adequately, he maintains. "While decidedly inferior to capitalist economies, it was compatible with modern industrial society and capable of technological change, increasing consumption, and taking on the rest of the world in military hardware."

Some observers insist that economic failure led to the collapse of the Soviet system. But that explanation, Kontorovich points out, is at best

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT	125
FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE	127
ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS	130
SOCIETY	132
PRESS & MEDIA	135
RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY	137
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY	140
& ENVIRONMENT	
ARTS & LETTERS	143
OTHER NATIONS	147

incomplete. "Poor economic performance is commonplace in the world, while the peacetime collapse of a political system is quite rare." The reason the government lost control of the economy in 1989, he argues, was that it had lost political authority. That authority began to disappear in 1986, "with media criticism of managers, officials, and 'bureaucrats.' . . . The boss-bashing campaign was accompanied by attacks on the official ideology. Starting as mere hints, these attacks steadily gained depth and ferocity, until by 1989 there was little left unattacked." This "delegitimation" of the regime, Kontorovich maintains, was, in the final analysis, "the main reason for the collapse of the whole system." Its downfall was "the unintended result of a small number of disastrous decisions by a few individuals," Gorbachev chief among them.

His movement toward revolution, notes Myron Rush, a Cornell professor of government emeritus, "was not forced on [Gorbachev] by an aroused society or by compelling circumstances; it stemmed from his highly individual perceptions and experimental bent, his openness to the ideas of intellectuals . . . and the erosion of his commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideology and the Stalinist institutions to which it had given rise." Chance had brought this "aberrant figure" to power in 1985. He "was a brilliant tactician, blindly self-confident without realizing where he was headed, a decent and humane man who at each critical juncture refused to return to the repressive ways of the past."

As the failure of his first economic program "became increasingly apparent in early 1987, Gorbachev began to favor more radical policies." To overcome conservative resistance, he sought to mobilize intellectuals, particularly in the media. To get them to speak out and to encourage officials to take more initiative, however, he found that he had to reduce their fears. In the spring of 1988, Gorbachev went further, launching "an attack on the Party apparatus. . . . These two revolutionary moves—the abatement of fear and the holding of real elections—culminated in the televised sessions of the newly elected Congress of Peoples' Deputies (June 1989), when delegates openly criticized the regime's performance." Then, Rush says, Gorbachev showed his true revolutionary colors. In-

stead of retreating and renewing his ties with the Party apparatus, he made new attacks on it, "further discrediting it and pushing it into a decline from which it never recovered."

Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., a Johns Hopkins professor of international relations, takes a less generous view. "Gorbachev . . . forced his own movement to commit suicide, as Jim Jones forced the other members of the People's Temple to drink poisoned Kool-Aid. The Communist Party lost its power in a Soviet Jonestown." The Bolshevik doctrine of democratic centralism, requiring unquestioning obedience from below, left the Party powerless to resist. Fairbanks sees Gorbachev as a Bolshevik true believer who strove to make communism young again and in his utopian fervor destroyed it. One reason Sovietologists never saw the crackup coming, he suggests, is that they never imagined that "the revolutionary spirit" might have been at work continually throughout Soviet history.

Several contributors—including Robert Conquest and Richard Pipes—speculate about why most Sovietologists failed to anticipate the collapse, while two veterans of the Cold War's intellectual battles, Irving Kristol and Nathan Glazer, reflect upon the American domestic scene. Glazer expresses a certain regret about the history of Cold War liberals like himself. In the fight against communism, he writes, intellectuals often lost their sense of proportion. For example, in beating back "the lies and falsehoods that insisted on [the Rosenbergs'] innocence," anticommunist intellectuals such as himself did not question vigorously enough whether the death penalty was appropriate punishment. Too often, these intellectuals reduced "a various and complex world . . . to 'us' and 'them.' "

Kristol takes a different view: "I was indeed a 'Cold Warrior' . . . but I was not engaged in any kind of crusade against communism. It was the fundamental assumptions of contemporary liberalism that were my enemy." It was only the liberal ethos among intellectuals, he believes, that turned the Cold War into anything other than what it was: "a raw power conflict between totalitarian tyranny and constitutional democracy." In his mind, the real cold war continues.

Parchment Barriers?

"The Bill of Rights in Its Context" by Oscar Handlin, in *The American Scholar* (Spring 1993), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Americans revel in their rights. Every educated American knows what the First Amendment says and even children know what it means to "take the Fifth." But nobody seems to know the Ninth Amendment, observes Handlin, the noted Harvard historian. They should, he argues, for it holds the key to a different, and wholly superior, notion of rights from what we know today.

The Ninth Amendment states: "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." It reflects, says Handlin, the Revolutionary era belief that rights "were not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records." Citizens looked not to the courts but to "their own experience and reason" to define their rights. The Founders worried that listing some rights would make it easier for the government to trample others that were not explicitly protected. And they did not have much faith that "parchment barriers" would defend the rights enumerated. As James Madison pointed out, the states repeatedly violated their own bills of rights. They added the Bill of Rights to the Constitution only at the insistence of some of the state ratifying conventions.

History has borne Madison out, Handlin says. The federal government stamped out Mormon polygamy in the 19th century without giving a thought to religious freedom, and neither the Constitution nor the courts saved Japanese Americans from being "hustled off to concentration camps" during World War II.

In Handlin's view, the most disturbing consequence of the modern view of rights is the rise of judge-made law, especially during the past four decades. It has transformed the First Amendment, for example, into an object of idolatry. Before the 20th century, Handlin says, "Americans assumed that the protection served reasonable citizens capable of persuasion by rational argument, not flag burners blowing off steam or artists letting it all hang out." The Founders themselves did not imagine that the rights to free speech and a free press were abso-

lutes. As president, John Adams won enactment of a sedition law, and his successor, Thomas Jefferson, prosecuted a number of cases under it.

A major defect of judge-made law is its impermanence. Abortion-rights advocates, for example, are acutely aware that *Roe v. Wade* (1973) provides a fragile foundation on which to base such rights. The ruling rests on a "right to privacy" that Justice William O. Douglas discovered in the "penumbras" of the Constitution. Americans, of course, vaguely believe in a right to privacy, but the judicial confection we have today may be expanded in controversial directions—or it may be utterly erased overnight. Small wonder, Handlin observes, that 20 years after *Roe*, abortion remains a matter of passionate controversy for millions of Americans. The court's ruling, after all, is only a parchment barrier.

The New Gay Politics

"The Politics of Homosexuality" by Andrew Sullivan, *The New Republic* (May 10, 1993), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036; "Straight Talk About Gays" by E. L. Pattullo, in *Commentary* (Dec. 1992), 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

The love that once dared not speak its name now will not shut up—and that fact is changing the way in which "the homosexual question" is being approached politically. So argues Sullivan, the editor of the *New Republic* and an avowed homosexual.

The "conservative" approach, which insists that homosexuality as such does not exist in nature, and which seeks to discourage and "cure" it, is undermined, Sullivan contends, by "the testimony of countless homosexuals" who say they have not chosen their orientation and by indications from scientific research that homosexuality may be, in part at least, genetically determined. Whether the proportion of homosexuals in the populace is 10 percent, as the oft-cited 1948 Kinsey report claimed, or one percent, as a recent study has it, the fact that "a small but persistent part of the population is involuntarily gay" makes the conservative position untenable, Sullivan says.

The "radical" approach, taken by such homo-

sexual groups as Act-Up and Queer Nation, also insists that homosexuality is not a natural condition; rather, it is a cultural construction (as is heterosexuality). In their "queer" activism, the radicals seek to subvert this oppressive construct by abandoning all shame at being "queer," demanding an end to all restrictions on homosexuality, and attacking the heterosexual monopoly on "normality." But their approach also is being undermined, Sullivan says, by "the gay revolution that has been quietly taking place in America. . . . As the closet slowly collapses, as gay people enter the mainstream . . . the whole notion of a separate and homogeneous 'queer' identity will become harder to defend."

Pattullo, who until his retirement in 1987 was director of Harvard's Center for the Behavioral Sciences, takes (in Sullivan's terminology) a "moderate" approach. He contends that while many people may never have wavered in their sexual orientation, many others have a capacity

to become either "straight" or "gay"—and that the social environment almost certainly plays a part in determining their orientation. Homosexuals should be treated with dignity and respect, Pattullo argues, but "to the extent that society has an interest both in reproducing itself and in strengthening the institution of the family—and to the extent that parents have an interest in reducing the risk that their children will become homosexual—there is warrant for resisting the movement to abolish all societal distinctions between homosexual and heterosexual."

In Sullivan's view, the "moderate" approach is also being undercut by the loud public argument over homosexuality: "For those who privately do not believe that homosexuality is inherently evil or always chosen, it has become increasingly difficult to pretend otherwise in public."

But Sullivan does not embrace the "contemporary liberal" approach, either. This would use government regulation to prevent employers or

Remaking American Politics

Washington correspondent Michael Kelly explains in the *New York Times Magazine* (May 23, 1993) Hillary Rodham Clinton's call for "a new politics of meaning."

She is 45 now and she knows that the earnest idealisms of a child of the 1960s may strike some people as naive or trite or grandiose. But she holds to them without any apparent sense of irony or inadequacy. She would like people to live in a way that more closely follows the Golden Rule. She would like to do good, on a grand scale, and she would like others to do good as well. . . .

The First Lady's vision is singular, formed by the intellectual passions and experiences of a life. But it is also the most purely voiced expression of the collective spirit of the Clinton administration, a spirit that is notable both for the long reach of its reformist ambitions and the cocky assurance of its faith in the ideas of its own design. It is very much a work in progress, but its emerging shape is,

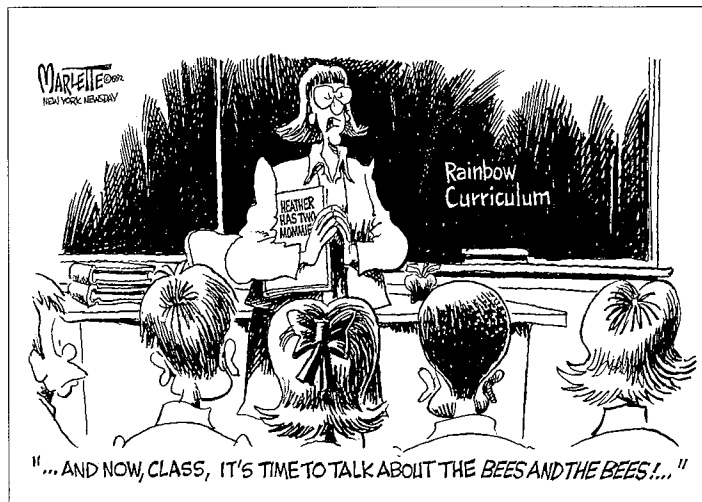
even by the standards of visions, large. . . .

She is, it develops in the course of two long conversations, looking for a way of looking at the world that would marry conservatism and liberalism, and capitalism and statism, that would tie together practically everything: the way we are, the way we were, the faults of man and the word of God, the end of communism and the beginning of the third millennium, crime in the streets and on Wall Street, teen-age mothers and foul-mouthed children and frightening drunks in the parks, the cynicism of the press and the corrupting role of television, the breakdown of civility, and the loss of community.

The point of all this is not abstract or small. What Mrs. Clinton seems—in all apparent sincerity—to have in mind is leading the way to something on the order of a Reformation: the remaking of the American way of politics, government, indeed life. A lot of people, contemplating such a task, might fall prey to self doubts. Mrs. Clinton does not blink.

property owners from discriminating against homosexuals. The trouble with this strategy, Sullivan argues, is that it treats homosexuals as permanent victims, infringes on the liberties of heterosexuals, and only scratches the surface of the problem. "[The] real terror of coming out . . . is related to emotional and interpersonal dignity."

The only viable political stance remaining, Sullivan concludes, is not to try to legislate private "tolerance" of homosexuals but to insist that all public discrimination against them by the state be brought to an end. That means, in his view, ending the ban on homosexuals in the military and allowing people of the same sex to marry. "These two measures . . . represent a politics that . . . makes a clear, public statement



Going aggressively beyond tolerance, school administrators in New York City promoted an elementary-school curriculum portraying homosexuality as a morally legitimate way of life, until outraged parents objected.

of equality, while leaving all the inequality of emotion and passion to the private sphere, where they belong."

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Vietnam: Who Served and Who Did Not?

A Survey of Recent Articles

Eighteen years ago, a young journalist named James Fallows described in the *Washington Monthly* (Oct. 1975) how, as a Harvard student during the Vietnam War, he and others like him had dodged the draft. Fallows starved himself sufficiently so that, although standing more than six feet tall, he weighed only 120 pounds when he and others from Harvard and MIT, most of them chanting, "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh/NLF is gonna win," reported to the Boston Navy Yard for their physicals on a spring day in 1970. When the doctor asked Fallows if he had ever contemplated suicide, he replied, "Oh, suicide—yes, I've been feeling very unstable and unreliable recently."

He was rewarded with an "unqualified" verdict, as were most of his Cambridge friends. "I was overcome by a wave of relief . . . and [a] sense of shame," he wrote. Later in the day, buses began to arrive at the navy yard, bearing "the boys from Chelsea . . . the white proles of Boston. . . . They walked through the examination lines like so many cattle off to slaughter." This same scene was repeated all across the country, Fallows maintained. The "mainly-white, mainly-well-educated children of mainly-comfortable parents" took advantage of "this most brutal form of class discrimination" and allowed "the boys of Chelsea [to] be sent off to die." By doing so, Fallows argued, he and his friends helped pro-

long the "immoral" war: "As long as the little gold stars kept going to homes in Chelsea and the backwoods of West Virginia, the mothers of Beverly Hills and Chevy Chase and Great Neck and Belmont were not on the telephones to their congressmen, screaming *you killed my boy*." Only 12 men from Harvard College, not one of them from Fallows's class, died in Vietnam. During World War II, by contrast, 35 men from Harvard's Class of '41 fell before the war was over.

Of course, Vietnam was not World War II. Of the 26 million Americans eligible by age for military service between 1964 and 1973, only 8.4 million served in the armed forces and only 2.1 million—eight percent of the cohort—went to Vietnam. There is no doubt that this relatively small group was not perfectly representative of U.S. society, but how unrepresentative was it?

A recent study of a random sample of the 58,152 Americans killed in Vietnam suggests that the Fallows thesis exaggerated the class gulf between those who went and those who did not. Arnold Barnett, a professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management, and two recent graduates of the school, Timothy Stanley and Michael Shore, writing in *Operations Research* (Sept.–Oct. 1992), conclude that rich and poor communities bore nearly equal burdens. Poor communities suffered 30 deaths per 100,000 population; affluent ones, 26 deaths. The four affluent communities cited by Fallows—Beverly Hills, Chevy Chase, Great Neck, and Belmont—together suffered 29 deaths, which relative to their population was *higher* than the national average, according to Barnett and his colleagues.

Defending (and qualifying) his "class-war" thesis in the *Atlantic* (April 1993), Fallows says that no one contends that Vietnam was a "poorest-of-the-poor" war: "Many of the poorest Americans were disqualified from service . . . because they couldn't meet medical, educational, or disciplinary standards." The U.S. Army in Vietnam, however, "was principally made up of men from working-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds, and the American elite was conspicuously absent."

Barnett and his associates disagree. Few afflu-

ent Americans may have been infantry "grunts" in Vietnam, they contend, but that does not mean "that well-off Americans were out of harm's way." Indeed, they appear to have gone to Vietnam "in sizable numbers," mostly as officers. And more than 13 percent—7,874—of the Americans killed in Vietnam were officers. These dead may not have included many sons of the Ivy League, but almost all, notes Bill Abbott in *Vietnam* (June 1993), were graduates of the service academies, the college Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program, or Officer Candidate School (OCS). Three out of five were in the Army—most of them warrant officers, who served as helicopter pilots, or second lieutenants, first lieutenants, or captains, who served as combat platoon leaders or company commanders.

Did whites shift the burden of Vietnam to blacks? Black casualties did soar early in the war to more than 20 percent of the total, but protests by Martin Luther King, Jr., and other black leaders prompted President Lyndon B. Johnson to order black participation in combat units reduced. In the end, black officers and enlisted men constituted 12.5 percent of all the dead, at a time when blacks constituted 11 percent of the nation's young male population.

"[The] widely held notion that the poor served and died in Vietnam while the rich stayed home is simply not true," writes Abbott, who is working on a book about American military casualties. Some enlisted men who died in Vietnam did indeed come from "poor and broken families in the urban ghettos and barrios, or were from dirt-poor farm homes in the South and Midwest." Most, however, came from "solid middle-class and working-class families."

As Abbott points out, the greatest unfairness was the pre-1969 draft system. Realizing that the limited war would quickly become unpopular if the children of the privileged were forced to fight (and not needing vast numbers of conscripts), the Johnson administration instructed local draft boards in 1965 to defer the college-bound, undergraduates, and postgraduates. That, it seems, is where what has been construed as "class" bias really entered in. The "privileged and influential" were, by and large, not *compelled*

to enter the military. Those of the affluent who did enter usually were volunteers. Indeed, of all the personnel, officers and enlisted, who died in Vietnam, 70 percent were volunteers. (Many would not have volunteered, of course, had it not been for the draft.) As the war went on, and the casualties and criticism mounted, however, this system was changed. In 1969, a draft lottery

was instituted. Fallows and some others who got low numbers then resorted to starvation and other devices to escape service in the "immoral" war. President Richard M. Nixon in 1969 began withdrawing U.S. troops from Vietnam, and in 1973, the draft was ended. Twenty years later, the debate about who served in Vietnam, and who did not, still goes on.

The Balkan War's Shallow, Deadly Roots

"Invitation to War" by William Pfaff, in *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Many in the West believe that war in the Balkans stems from ancient and immutable hatreds, and that barbarism is somehow a natural state of affairs in that corner of the world. This fatalistic view has served to rationalize Western inaction in the former Yugoslavia, notes Pfaff, a columnist and author. Indeed, some of the combatants *do* see themselves as avenging ancient wrongs, starting with the Battle of Kosovo of 1389. But Pfaff argues that today's Balkan antagonisms are actually of relatively recent vintage. The "ethnic war" in the former Yugoslavia is being waged "among three communities possessing no distinct physical characteristics or separate anthropological or 'racial' origins. They are the same people," Pfaff writes, although they do have distinct histories.

After their liberation from the Ottoman Empire in the early 19th century, the Serbs claimed primacy among the South Slavs—Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims—and tried to unite them. Serbia was chiefly responsible for the creation of Yugoslavia (the Kingdom of the South Slavs) in 1918, under a Serbian monarch. That, French historian Paul Garde has observed, was when the gulf between the Serbs and the Croats really opened. In the new state of Yugoslavia, the Serbs held absolute sway. Even so, Pfaff points out, from then until 1991—except during World War II, when Croatia's collaborationist regime made "a genocidal assault" on the Serbs—coexistence was the reality in Yugoslavia.

That long history is ignored by the Serbian nationalists, who contend that it is now impossible for Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims to associate in a single state. Serbia is seeking an ethnically pure nation, a Greater Serbia embracing all ethnic Serbs beyond Serbia's current borders. The government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the other hand, "is formally committed to the principles of the nonethnic, secular democratic state" in which the various groups could continue to live together. This makes the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Pfaff says, "a war of political values"—and, as such, important to the rest of Europe.

The very idea of an ethnically pure nation—a product of 19th-century German romanticism—is "a permanent provocation to war," he declares. In reality, no nation in Europe is "ethnically pure."

The Balkan war now threatens to draw in nearby countries, such as Hungary, which is concerned about the fate of several hundred thousand ethnic Hungarians inside Serbia. But the greater danger to the West is "moral and political, since [the aggression and ethnic purges] contradict the reign of order and legality produced in Western Europe . . . since the end of the Second World War." Pfaff thinks the Vance-Owen plan would only perpetuate existing evils and "intensify insecurities," and he dismisses as unworkable other proposals to protect various ethnic enclaves. The United Nations has lost its military credibility in the course of the Yugoslav affair, Pfaff says, but he urges that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization "guarantee against forcible change of those political frontiers in Eastern, East-Central and Balkan Europe that have not yet been violated but are threatened because of ethnic claims and rivalries."

How I Learned To Love the Deficit

"Measure, Theory, Fact, and Fancy: The Case of the Budget Deficit" by Robert Eisner, in *The Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* (April 1993), Norton's Woods, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

The sense of alarm over the nation's mounting national debt is now so widespread that it is refreshing to read the occasional dissenter. One of these is Eisner, an economist at Northwestern University, past president of the American Economics Association, and a long-time critic of what might be called the "sky is falling" school of economics.

To whom is the government in debt? he asks. To the American people, largely through pension funds, insurance companies, and banks that have invested much of their wealth in government bonds. (Contrary to popular impression, only a small portion of the federal debt, about 12 percent, is owned by foreigners.) Indeed, Eisner asserts, the annual deficit "makes people in the private sector feel richer and spend more," and consumer spending fuels the economy. Such spending would cause inflation if the economy were operating near full capacity, but it is not.

Efforts to require a balanced budget are misguided, in Eisner's view. He suggests that the government instead ought to follow this "simple rule: The amount of debt you can reasonably sustain depends on your income." When mortgage lenders evaluate potential home-buyers, they use the debt-to-income ratio as a guide. With an estimated 1992 debt of \$3 trillion (not including about \$1 trillion held by the government itself) and gross domestic product of \$6 trillion, the government's ratio is currently about 0.5. That is less than half of what it was at the end of World War II, he points out. Yet "we had a substantial postwar economic boom."

"The one seemingly sensible argument for reducing the deficit . . ." Eisner says, "is that if you reduce the deficit, you'll have more saving and investment. . . ." This is the logic behind the warning of Ross Perot and many others that "we're spending our children's money." But

when the deficit is properly adjusted for inflation, its delayed impact on the economy, and that part of it due to recession, Eisner says, it turns out that over the last 30 years, bigger deficits have been associated with *more* subsequent private investment.

In any event, he argues, the conventional measure of saving and investment is much too narrow. "It does not include government construction of roads, bridges, airports, sewage disposal systems, and the like, let alone investments in environmental protection." If an airline buys new planes, that is counted as investment, but if a new airport is built, that is counted only as government spending.

Washington, Eisner says, "does its accounting in a way that would horrify any businessperson. Other governments and virtually all private businesses separate capital expenditures from current expenditures." If capital spending were taken out (and depreciation put in), the \$269-billion deficit of 1991 would have shrunk by an estimated \$70 billion. If the \$67 billion used for the savings-and-loan bailout—which really had nothing to do with that year's deficit, but simply made good on past guarantees—were also removed, the federal government's 1991 deficit would have been \$132 billion. Adjusting that amount for inflation would have further reduced it by \$85 billion.

But that is not all, says Eisner. State and local governments had a *surplus* of \$30 billion in 1991. The total government deficit, therefore, was really only \$17 billion. Which may explain why the sky has not yet fallen.

A New Golden Age?

"A Case for Gold" by David P. Goldman, in *Audacity* (Spring 1993), Forbes Building, 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

Persuaded by his economic advisers that it was an obstacle to prosperity, President Richard Nixon in August 1971 severed the last link between the dollar and gold. No longer would the United States back its dollars in the international marketplace with a commitment to convert

them into gold. Two decades later, contends Goldman, vice president of an economic consulting firm, the precious metal is creeping back into the monetary system "through the back door, as one of the Federal Reserve's price targets for monetary policy."

In deciding whether to expand or contract the nation's money supply, and by how much, the Federal Reserve Board can follow various policies. These include: aiming for a fixed percentage for growth of the money supply (as

monetarists advocate); establishing interest-rate targets; or tying the dollar to the price of gold or other commodities. Using a gold standard means expanding or contracting the money supply to keep prices stable. When the price of gold goes up, for example, the money supply must be shrunk: The dollar is getting too cheap. Testifying before the Reagan administration's Gold Commission in 1981, economist Alan Greenspan said the only apparent remedy for inflation is "to create a fiscal and monetary environment which

(M)ediocre (B)ut (A)rrogant?

The Harvard Business School and other institutions award some 75,000 Masters of Business Administration (MBAs) every year. Some critics say the initials should stand for "mediocre but arrogant." A lively debate about how well business schools are serving the needs of business raged recently in the *Harvard Business Review* (Sept.-Oct., 1992; Nov.-Dec., 1992). Henry Mintzberg, a professor of management at McGill University in Montreal, was one of the 23 participants.

I am increasingly convinced that the more Harvard and similar business schools succeed, the more U.S. business fails. That is because these schools confer important advantages on the wrong people. They parachute inexperienced people with mercenary pretensions into important positions. For the most part, these people are committed to no company and no industry but only to personal success, which they pursue based on academic credentials that are almost exclusively analytic, devoid of in-depth experience, tacit knowledge, or intuition. . . .

Stanford takes people, many with a minimum of experience, and pumps them full of theory, which they cannot possibly understand in context, because there is no context, neither personal nor in the classroom nor in the professor's head. That is bad enough. But Harvard goes one step further. It takes people who know nothing about a particular company and then insists, based on 20 pages

of verbalized and numerical abstractions, that they pronounce on it in the classroom. The students have never met any of the company's customers, never seen the factories, never touched the products.

But because good managers are decisive, good Harvard Business School students must take a stand. . . . After you have done this several hundred times, what kind of a manager do you become? Glib and quick-witted, to be sure, just the kind to race up the fast track. But to what effect?

Out come these students, committed not to particular industries or companies but to management itself as a means to personal advancement. They are parachuted into companies at middle levels, with authority over people who know the customers, the factories, the products. In effect, two tiers of employees are created, the ones who know the situation but have no MBA, and the others with the opposite credentials—as their bosses! Why should anyone be surprised at what has been happening in U.S. businesses these past years?

Let's stop pretending to train non-managers to be managers through the use of detached case studies and disconnected theories. We do have good things to teach in management schools, in particular, our understanding of how organizations function, developed through the research of the past 25 years. Let's convey this understanding to real managers in real contexts, to people who can assess the values of the theories by applying them to living problems.

in effect makes the dollar as good as gold, i.e. stabilizes the general price level and by inference the dollar price of gold bullion itself." Greenspan, who has been chairman of the Federal Reserve Board since 1987, was giving advance notice of what his agenda as chairman would be, Goldman maintains.

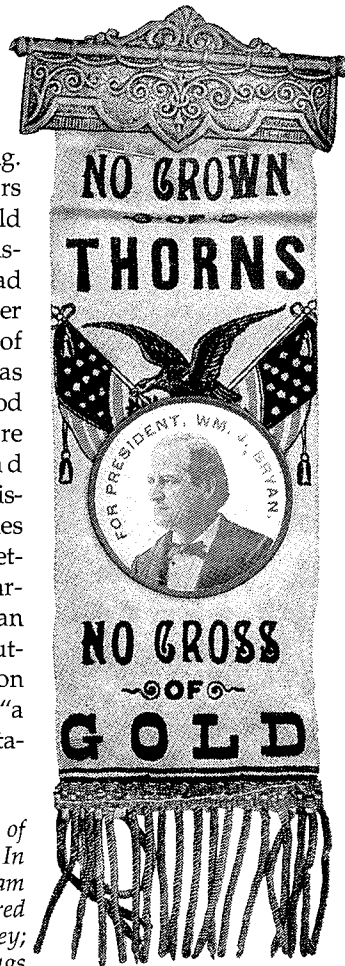
During the past year, Goldman says, the Federal Reserve Board increasingly looked to the price of gold and other commodities as an indicator of what to do about the nation's money supply. Wayne Angell, a senior member of the board, seems to have acknowledged this: "The Federal Reserve prefers to have sound money, and sound money generally means that the currency will be stable against gold [and certain other] commodities. . . ."

That is not quite the same as using gold alone as the standard, of course. And the Fed is under no legal obligation to follow the policy. Even so, most academic economists, and, indeed, most economists on the Fed's own staff, Goldman says, are hostile to any comeback by the "barbarous relic," as John Maynard Keynes called it. Both liberal Keynesians and conservative monetarists have long insisted that to tie the dollar to gold is to handcuff the government. Gold, they say, is not a reliable monetary standard. Its price is influenced not only by the value of the dollar but by other factors, such as the supply of gold itself.

Goldman argues that the experience of recent

decades has proved the Keynesians and monetarists wrong. Private investors have bought gold when they saw rising inflation ahead and sold it at other times. The price of gold therefore has remained a good predictor of future inflation—and lately it has been rising. Taking its cues from the marketplace, Goldman argues, the Fed can prevent a new outbreak of inflation and inaugurate "a new era of price stability."

Gold is a perennial of U.S. politics. In 1896, William McKinley favored "hard" money; William Jennings Bryan, a more expansionary policy.



SOCIETY

Two Parents, One, or None?

A Survey of Recent Articles

Social scientists have gathered masses of evidence that confirm what was once considered common sense about families, writes Barbara Defoe Whitehead in the *Atlantic* (April 1993): Children in single-parent families

are more likely to be poor, to have emotional or behavioral problems, to drop out of high school, to become pregnant as teenagers, to abuse drugs, to get in trouble with the law, and to be victims of physical or sexual abuse.

And new research suggests that remarriage does not repair the damage done to children by divorce. "Contrary to popular belief, many children do not 'bounce back' after divorce or remarriage," says Whitehead, a research associate at

New York's Institute for American Values. "[The] research shows that many children from disrupted families have a harder time achieving intimacy in a relationship, forming a stable marriage, or even holding a steady job." The seem-

Where Memory Meets History

The designers of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, which recently opened near the Mall in Washington, realized that recollection of the catastrophe is not enough, reflects Leon Wieseltier, literary editor of the *New Republic* (May 3, 1993).

Memory . . . is not only authentic, and radiant, and poetic. It is also hurtful and fragile . . . and, in a strict sense, untransmittable. Therefore it needs the fortifyings of history: the corrections, the comparisons, the conclusions. . . . The first of the many accomplishments of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum . . . is the paradox of its name: a memorial museum, a house of memory and history. Here the vividness of recollection joins the sturdiness of research. The stinging subjectivity of the testimonies of the survivors is met in these galleries by the tart objectivity of photographs, films, maps, statistics, and objects.

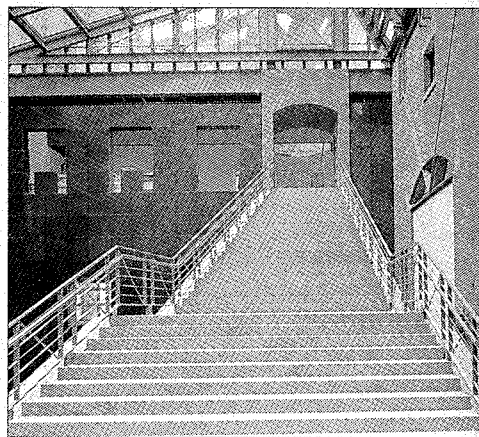
In the creation of a memorial, moreover, there is another reason that memory must be accompanied by history, and feeling must be annotated by fact; and that is the fickleness of memorials themselves. These things shed their meanings with almost cynical alacrity. . . .

Remembering saves; but it also salves. Too little memory dishonors the catastrophe; but so does too much memory. In the contemplation of the death camps, we must be strangers; and if we are not strangers, if the names of the killers and the places of the killing and the numbers of the killed fall easily from our tongues, then we are not remembering to remember, but remembering to forget. . . .

Between 14th Street and 15th Street in Washington, the memorial will be saved from the fate

of memorials by the museum, and the museum will be saved from the fate of museums by the memorial. The designers of this institution have made a provision for shock. One of the achievements of the Holocaust Memorial Museum is that it leads its visitors directly from history to silence. Its exhibition ends in a Hall of Remembrance, a six-sided, classically proportioned chamber of limestone, a chaste vacancy, 70 feet high, unencumbered by iconography, washed in a kind of halting light, in a light that seems anxious about its own appropriateness. There are steps all around the cold marble floor that will most likely serve as seats. The least that you can do, after seeing what you have just seen, is sit down and be still.

The Hall of Remembrance is a temple of infidelity. This, then, is the plot, the historical and spiritual sequence got right, of the infernal display on the Mall: memory, stiffened by history, then struck dumb.



ingly inescapable conclusion is that children in families with the two natural parents present tend to do better than children in single-parent or stepparent families. Yet, strangely, Whitehead observes, many researchers are hesitant to say so.

Their reluctance does not stem from mere scholarly uncertainty. "What is at stake, of course," writes UCLA's James Q. Wilson in *Commentary* (April 1993), "is the role of women. To defend the two-parent family is to defend, the critics worry, an institution in which the woman is subordinated to her husband, confined to domestic chores with no opportunity to pursue a career, and taught to indoctrinate her children with a belief in the rightness of this arrangement." The critics' emphasis, also seen in much of the writing about marriage and families during the 1970s and '80s, is on the "rights" of women, not the welfare of children.

The "Ozzie-and-Harriet" model may seem laughably outmoded to cultural sophisticates, but most Americans still embrace at least parts of it, according to survey data published in the *American Enterprise* (Sept.-Oct. 1992). Seventy-one percent in a 1992 survey agreed that "it's better for children if one parent does not work, even if it means less money." Fifty-three percent of the women—and 64 percent of the married women—responding to a 1991 survey said that if they were free to do so, they would prefer to stay home and take care of the house and family.

Yet there has been a sea change in certain attitudes toward marriage and family, notes William A. Galston, a research scholar at the University of Maryland's Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy before he joined the Clinton White House staff, in the *Aspen Institute Quarterly* (Winter 1993). As various studies have documented, "Americans today are much more accepting of . . . sex before marriage, birth out of wedlock, and divorce. Far more Americans value marriage primarily as a means to personal happiness; far fewer say that parents in an unhappy marriage should stay together for the sake of the children."

This cultural shift is not confined to a "cultural elite." One survey after another, Barbara Whitehead notes, has shown "that Americans

are less inclined than they were a generation ago to value sexual fidelity, lifelong marriage, and parenthood as worthwhile personal goals." Between 1957 and 1976, the percentage of fathers who said that providing for children was a life goal dropped by more than half, and the percentage of working men saying they found marriage and children burdensome more than doubled. "Fewer than half of all adult Americans today regard the idea of sacrifice for others as a positive moral virtue," Whitehead reports.

At some point during the 1970s, she says, a majority of Americans decided that the well-being of adults was more important than the well-being of children. Divorce rates began their sharp rise in the 1960s, and out-of-wedlock births in the early 1970s. This cultural shift is the main source of family decline, Whitehead and others maintain, and it "explains why there is virtually no widespread public sentiment for restigmatizing either of these classically disruptive behaviors."

Is the economy to blame for the family's decline? Certainly, says William Galston, two decades of slow economic growth have hurt job prospects of young, poorly educated men and made it difficult for them to serve as sole breadwinners. University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson, in his much-noted 1987 book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, blamed the dramatic rise in mother-only families among black Americans on joblessness among black males, which left young black women faced with "a shrinking pool of 'marriageable' (i.e. economically stable) men." However, James Q. Wilson, writing in the *Aspen Institute Quarterly*, points out that in 1940, after a decade of the worst economic depression in U.S. history, "the crime rate was down, drug use was trivial, and single-parent families were barely a topic of conversation."

Whatever the cause, by 1991, more than two-thirds of all mothers with children under 18, and more than half with children under age three, were in the labor force. This is part of a profound—and irreversible—historical transformation that is taking place in the very organization of society, University of Chicago sociologist James S. Coleman maintains in the *American Sociological*

Review (Feb. 1993). Over the past two centuries, since the Industrial Revolution began, there has been a shift away from the family as the basic unit of social organization. "As . . . many of its functions have moved outside the household [e.g., to the workplace], child rearing has moved increasingly out of the household as well. Constructed social organization, in the form of the school, the nursery school, and the daycare center, [has] taken over many components of child rearing." These are now the "primary child rearing institutions." They have not yet been "well designed" to fulfill their expanded responsibilities, however.

For millennia, children have received the support and guidance that they need from "available, cohesive families in relatively small, stable communities that characterize most of human history," David A. Hamburg of the Carnegie Corporation of New York writes in *Teachers College Record* (Spring 1993). He believes that children can now get these vital things from other sources—"from responsible, caring adults in schools, in community and youth organizations, in religious organizations, and many more." Harvard's Lisbeth B. Schorr, writing in the *Aspen Institute Quarterly*, shares Hamburg's confidence. The effective programs go against the grain of large bureaucracies, she

says, and are relatively rare. What is needed, she says, is "a new culture" in "human-service systems" and government bureaucracies.

To conservatives, that smacks of utopianism, and they are no longer so alone. Government may or may not have some modest role to play, but more and more Americans seem to be re-emphasizing family. "Over the last 25 years, we have seen the future, and it is not a wholesome one," says Amitai Etzioni, of George Washington University, in *Utne Reader* (May-June 1993). "If we fervently wish for our children to grow up in a civilized society, and if we seek to live in one, let's face facts: It will not happen unless we dedicate more of ourselves to our children." Whitehead, in the same publication, says she thinks that a new shift in the culture may be starting to take place, "a shift away from an ethos of expressive individualism and toward an ethos of family obligation and commitment. . . . Today, a critical mass of baby boomers has reached a new stage in the life cycle. They've married. They are becoming parents. And they're discovering that the values that served them in singlehood no longer serve them in parenthood."

A return to Ozzie and Harriet? Not exactly. But, after a detour of several decades, a fresh appreciation of the two-parent family and a new commitment to marriage and children may be in the offing.

PRESS & MEDIA

The Mystique That Wasn't

"Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958" by Joanne Meyerowitz, in *The Journal of American History* (March 1993), 1125 East Atwater Ave., Bloomington, Ind. 47401-3701.

In her influential 1963 book, *The Feminine Mystique*, feminist Betty Friedan argued that the nation's popular magazines, particularly

women's magazines, persuaded the women of postwar America that they could "find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and [providing] maternal love." This "feminine mystique," she claimed, confined women to the role of mere housewives and denied them "careers or any commitment outside the home." University of Cincinnati historian Meyerowitz, however, contends that the magazines were not the antifeminist Frankensteins that Friedan—and historians who have taken their cues from her—portrayed them as.

Friedan focused mainly on short fiction in *Ladies' Home Journal* and three other women's magazines, Meyerowitz points out. Meyerowitz surveyed 489 *nonfiction* articles about women that appeared between 1946 and '58 in eight monthly magazines, ranging from *Reader's Digest* to *Woman's Home Companion*. She found that the magazines "did not simply glorify domesticity or demand that women return to or stay at home." They "advocated both the domestic and the nondomestic, sometimes in the same sentence."

More than 60 percent of the articles dealt with individual women and their achievements. (Other articles concerned more predictable subjects, such as women's paid work, marriage, and domesticity.) The individual women profiled included prominent entertainers and others in the public eye, such as "star reporter" Dorothy Kilgallen and athlete Babe Didrikson Zaharias. "In general, [these] articles suggested that the noteworthy woman rose above and beyond ordinary domesticity." Many such articles saw women "both as feminine and domestic and as public achievers." In an article by journalist (and future senator) Richard L. Neuberger, for example, Dorothy McCullough Lee was portrayed as both an "ethereally pale housewife" with a "frail, willowy" appearance and the hard-nosed mayor of Portland, Oregon, who had successfully fought organized crime and was "headed for national distinction."

The magazines that set the tone of postwar America did not pretend that women were creatures only of hearth and home. In reality, Friedan, herself a veteran magazine writer when *The Feminine Mystique* was published, elaborated on a conflict in women's lives that magazines had been exploring for years.

Bad Business

"Hollywood's Dirty Little Secrets" by Michael Medved, in *Crisis* (March 1993), 1511 K St. N.W., Ste. 525, Washington, D.C. 20005.

A majority of Hollywood movies these days (61 percent in 1991) are rated R, barred to children

under 17 unless accompanied by a parent. Is that because the American public craves flicks full of profanity, sex, and violence? Not at all, says film critic Medved. Hollywood is insistently giving the public what it *doesn't* want.

Some R-rated films, such as *Basic Instinct* (1992), do well at the box office. But most do not. Only one (*Beverly Hills Cop*) of the 10 top money-making movies of the 1980s was R-rated. In 1991, movies aimed at families—those rated PG (parental guidance advised) and G (general audience)—reaped, as a whole, three times the median box-office gross of R-rated films. These family movies ranged from *Beauty and the Beast* to *City Slickers*. A recent analysis by Paul Kagan Associates found that of 1,187 films released between 1984 and '91 (and shown, at their peak, on at least 100 screens), those in the PG category were most successful. Since 1983, Medved says, there has not been a single year in which R-rated movies did as well as those rated PG—and yet the proportion of "adult" films on Hollywood's menu has increased every year.

The film industry violates its own business interests, Medved argues, because of Tinsel Town's peculiar culture. "There is a sense in Hollywood that in order to be . . . serious . . . one must be an alienated artist convinced that life is bleak and meaningless and dishonest and hypocritical," he says. Even though a moviemaker may have a Rolls Royce in the garage and a per-picture paycheck in the millions, he still needs "to attack conventional institutions" to show that he has kept faith with his artistic roots. Hence, the filmmakers have produced a raft of movies, such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Agnes of God*, and *The Pope Must Die*, casting organized religion in an unfavorable light—even though all such films have bombed at the box office.

With a desperation born of insecurity, moviemakers want the respect of their peers. "Their pretentiousness, their preening, their desperate desire to be taken seriously runs very deep," Medved says, "and even leads to financial risk-taking on a grand scale, as the industry shows its 'integrity' by ignoring—and even assaulting—the sensibilities of much of the public." Among the politically correct film projects bubbling away today are *five* about the radical Black Panthers of the 1960s.

"We look upon the Black Panther movement as a very positive one, but one that was re-

pressed by white society," explained a Warner Brothers vice president.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

The Secret Cabinet of Dr. Foucault

A Survey of Recent Articles

Little known outside the academy, Michel Foucault (1926–84) is an exemplary figure to many tenured radicals within it and an influential one to many other scholars. "Whatever else Foucault was, he was a great Nietzschean hero," Princeton's Alexander Nehamas writes in the *New Republic* (Feb. 15, 1993). That is just what the French historian and philosopher, who died of AIDS at the age of 57, ardently tried to be, contends James Miller, author of *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (1993). Foucault struggled all his life "to honor Nietzsche's gnomic injunction, 'to become what one is,'" Miller says in a *Salmagundi* (Winter 1993) symposium occasioned by his controversial book, which details, among other things, Foucault's homosexuality, sadomasochism, drug-taking, and attempts at suicide.

"The inner logic of [Foucault's] philosophical odyssey, and also of his public political statements and actions," Miller contends, "is unintelligible apart from his lifelong, and highly problematic, preoccupation with limiting the limits of reason, and finding ways—in dreaming, at moments of madness, through drug use, in erotic rapture, in great transports of rage, and also through intense suffering—of exploring the most shattering kinds of experience, breaching the boundaries normally drawn between the unconscious and conscious, order and disorder, pleasure and pain, life and death; and in this way, starkly revealing how distinctions central to the play of true and false are pliable, uncertain, contingent."

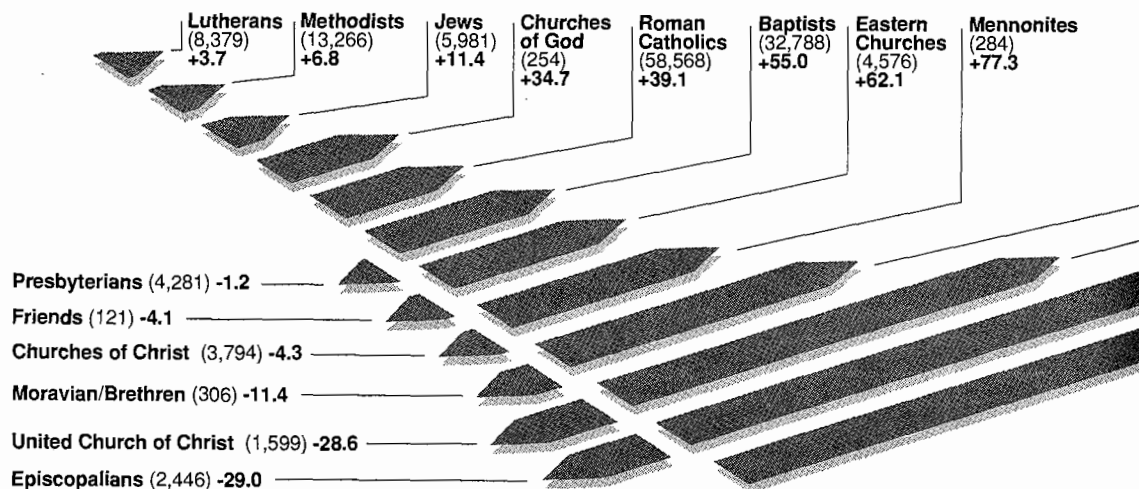
Foucault, who occupied the chair of History of Thought at the prestigious Collège de France in Paris and lectured widely on both sides of the Atlantic, contended that what is deemed

"knowledge" at any one time is little more than the dominant interests' convenient fiction. Those in power manipulate social attitudes so as to define such categories as insanity, illness, sexuality, and criminality, in ways that allow them to oppress "deviants." "More often than most people dream," Miller adds, "we can *change* the rules of the game . . . even if few of us ever will, inhibited as we are by the conventions of ordinary language, common sense and conscientiousness, reinforced by the threat of punishment and a more diffuse, hence insidious set of fears: of being branded as queer, crazy, abnormal."

Foucault's thought had two basic components, Alexander Nehamas explains. "The first, derived from Nietzsche and never abandoned, was that every human situation is a product of history, though we may be convinced that it is a natural fact." Insanity, for example, has no fixed character but has been "constructed" in different ways throughout history. The second component, which Foucault modified in later years, "was a relentless suspicion of 'progress.' He had an uncanny ability to see the dark side of every step toward the light, to grasp the price at which every advance had to be bought. And he believed that the price was never a bargain."

Power was Foucault's obsession, observes Roger Kimball, managing editor of the *New Criterion* (March 1993): "He came bearing the bad news in bad prose that every institution, no matter how benign it seems, is 'really' a scene of unspeakable domination and subjugation; that efforts at enlightened reform—of asylums, of prisons, of society at large—have been little more than alibis for extending state power;

Change in the Churches (Percent change in membership, 1960-90)



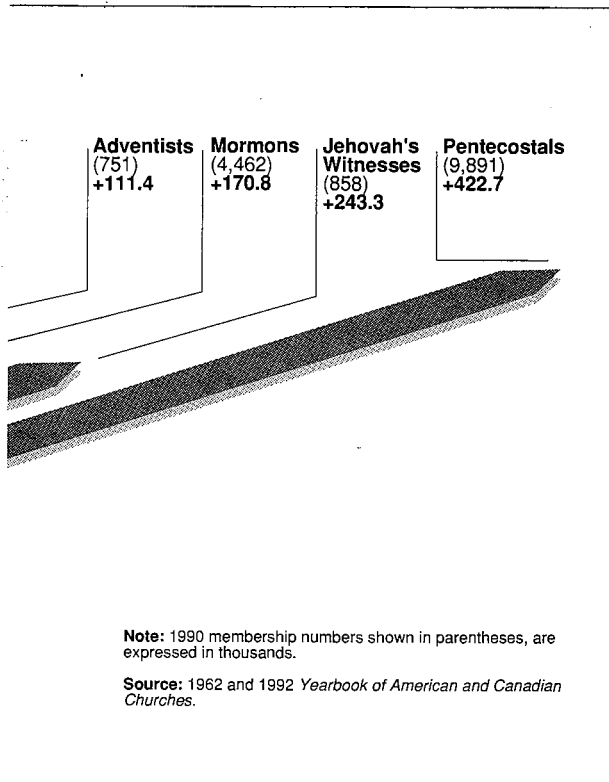
U.S. population grew by 39 percent between 1960 and 1990, and overall church membership rose by 37 percent, reports the Roper Center's Public Perspective (March-April 1993). But while membership in the evangelical denominations mushroomed, the "mainline" Protestant churches lost ground.

that human relationships are, underneath it all, deadly struggles for mastery; that truth itself is merely a coefficient of coercion." Asked Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1977): "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?"

Of all Foucault's books, *Discipline and Punish* was the most influential in America, "where its allusions to hidden 'power' fit so well with the paranoid style of American politics," New York University's Mark Lilla observes in the *Times Literary Supplement* (March 26, 1993). In France, however, where it was published in 1975, Foucault's book was received with less enthusiasm. The preceding year, "a far more influential work on the modern prison was published, [Aleksandr] Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*. . . . In the face of this compelling account of physical and mental torture directed by a regime many in France still considered the vanguard of social progress, it was difficult to maintain that Western classrooms were prisons and still re-

main within the bounds of good taste."

"Discontinuities" are also evident in Foucault's political career, as Princeton's Alan Ryan notes in the *New York Review of Books* (April 8, 1993): "He was a member of the French Communist Party for three years in the early 1950s, and an ardent anti-Communist thereafter; he was *persona* sufficiently *grata* with governments of the Fourth and Fifth Republics to be appointed to posts in Sweden and Poland that were both cultural and diplomatic in nature." He "missed" the French students' rebellion of May 1968, when he was teaching in Tunis, but "made up for lost time by siding with the 'Maoist' ultra-left in the early 1970s." He shocked even some of the Maoists with his notion that the working class and its allies should punish their class enemies without even bothering to create "people's tribunals" to find them guilty of anything in particular. He supported the Iranian Revolution, even after the draconian nature of the Ayatollah Khomeini's regime had become evident. "In his



last years he spoke out on behalf of gay rights, and against the abuse of human rights in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. The skepticism of his philosophical account of personal identity and individuality made no difference to his political

rhetoric. . . . What positive conception he possessed of a less oppressive society remains mysterious."

Some of Foucault's admirers fear that Miller's book will have an unwholesome effect. It vividly demonstrates "why it is that whenever those of us who feel ourselves to be in Foucault's embattled position, or who share his political vision, hear those who don't do either invoke the notion of 'truth,' we reach for our revolvers," complains David M. Halperin, an English professor at MIT, in *Salmandi*. The idea of "truth," in his view, as in Foucault's, is only a tool of the oppressor.

Should Miller have refrained from reporting the seamier details of Foucault's life? "At issue here," notes *Dissent's* (Spring 1993) Richard Wolin, "is something much larger than how to understand Foucault's life and work—it involves a clash of world views. Poststructuralists, following Nietzsche, do not believe in something like 'the truth.' Instead, there exist only 'points of view' that are backed by determinate interests. . . . The poststructuralist standpoint invites an ominous practice: where 'truth'—however one chooses to define it—fails to coincide with the agenda of political radicalism, it should be suppressed. Yet, when truth becomes solely a matter of pragmatics or interest, as it was for Foucault . . . we risk losing the capacity to distinguish right from wrong, the just from the unjust, good from evil."

Will Televangelism Be Reborn?

"The Rise and Fall of American Televangelism" by Jeffrey K. Hadden, in *The Annals* (May 1993), the American Acad. of Political and Social Science, 3937 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19104.

Since the sex scandals of the late 1980s that brought down TV preachers Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart, evangelical religious broad-

casting seems to have gone into a tailspin. Whereas in 1986 more than 15 million households a week tuned in to religious broadcasts, by early 1992 only 9.5 million did. Contributions have fallen off sharply. Yet, says Hadden, a University of Virginia sociologist, "televangelism" may well rise again.

Before their recent decline, evangelicals dominated the religious airwaves for two decades. Passionately eager to proselytize, evangelical ministers did not hesitate to go on the air and plead for money to spread their message.

Most of their mainline Protestant and Catholic counterparts were reluctant, and they were gradually squeezed off the airwaves after 1960, when the Federal Communications Commission dropped its requirement that public-service air time be provided free of charge to churches and others.

Technological advances soon strengthened televangelists: Videotape made it possible to air a program in hundreds of cities at the same time, and satellite transmission permitted live broadcasting. Televangelists created new religious networks—Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, Paul Crouch's Trinity Broadcasting Network, and Jim Bakker's PTL Network. Between the late 1960s and the mid-'80s, the audience for syndicated religious TV shows soared, from an average of about five million per program to nearly 25 million. Related ventures, such as cathedrals, universities, and theme parks, also flourished.

Then, in 1987, with the revelation of Bakker's past tryst with a church secretary, came the fall. Scandal was only part of the reason for evangeli-

cal broadcasting's decline, Hadden argues. The market already had become saturated. Televangelist Rex Humbard, for example, left the air in 1985 after the number of stations on which he appeared fell by 36 percent over 10 years. The televangelists' forays into politics also hurt. In 1985, when talk of a presidential bid by Pat Robertson started to be heard in public, Robertson's TV audience began to shrink. Even before the Jim Bakker scandal broke in 1987, the audience for *The 700 Club* had fallen by 21 percent over two years.

But the nimble entrepreneurs of faith have readjusted. Robertson, for example, restructured his Christian Broadcasting Network to present family-entertainment programs along with religious broadcasts. He also exploited cable television. By the end of 1991, his Family Channel reached 92 percent of all cable households in the country. In addition, the number of *local* religious TV stations has steadily grown, from 25 in 1980 to 339 in 1990. All in all, Hadden concludes, it is much too early to conclude that televangelism's run is over.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Superfund: The Continuing Calamity

"Stop Superfund Waste" by Bernard J. Reilly, in *Issues in Science and Technology* (Spring 1993), Univ. of Texas at Dallas, P.O. Box 830688, Mail Station AD13, Richardson, Texas 75083-0688; and "Environmental Policy and Equity: The Case of Superfund" by John A. Hird, in *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* (Spring 1993), John Wiley & Sons, 605 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10158.

The federal Superfund program was created in 1980 in the aftermath of the Love Canal scare as a \$1.6-billion effort to clean up the nation's abandoned hazardous-waste sites. It has since evolved into "an open-ended and costly crusade" that wastes money and fails to target the sites that pose the greatest risks to public health or the environment, argues Reilly, cor-

porate counsel at DuPont.

There are more than 1,200 sites on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) so-called national priority list, and more than 30,000 sites being considered for addition to the list. So far, fewer than 100 sites have been completely cleaned up. To do that for all of the 1,200 sites now on the priority list will cost an estimated \$32-\$60 billion, and much more if, as planned, the EPA adds 100 sites a year, at an average cost per site of \$27-\$50 million.

The legislation is intended to make the polluter pay the costs of cleanup, adds Hird, a University of Massachusetts political scientist. But that frequently fails to happen. The public often foots the bill. When a polluter is made to pay, moreover, it can be just a minor polluter. The courts have ruled that firms that contributed only a small portion of a dump's hazardous con-

tents nevertheless can be forced to bear the full costs of a cleanup. And not surprisingly, this prompts a lot of litigation—and delay.

There is no guarantee, moreover, that EPA is putting the riskiest dumps on its list. A 1991 report by a committee of the National Research Council, Reilly notes, “said that EPA has no comprehensive inventory of waste sites, no program for discovering new sites, insufficient data for determining safe exposure levels, and an inadequate system for identifying sites that require immediate action to protect public health.”

“The existence of toxic wastes at a site does not necessarily mean that they pose a threat to nearby residents,” Reilly notes. Recent research has shown, for example, that even at Times Beach, Missouri, where the whole community was evacuated, the potential health risks were relatively minor. The 1991 National Research Council report, however, said that while “current health burdens from hazardous-waste sites appear to be small,” prudence demands “a margin of safety.” The EPA’s failure to link costs with benefits, Reilly says, means that will not always happen. When Superfund comes up for reauthorization next year, Reilly says, Congress should direct EPA to end the “crusade” and “focus the program on practical risk reduction.”

A Venusian Catastrophe?

“Did Venus Hiccup or Just Run Down?” by Richard A. Kerr, in *Science* (March 5, 1993), American Assoc. for the Advancement of Science, 1333 H St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Geophysicists have generally assumed that Earth and its companion “terrestrial” planets (Mercury, Venus, and Mars) share a basic design—a planetary geology shaped by the steady escape of heat from the interior, its amount only slowly diminishing over the eons. Radar images from the Magellan spacecraft, which has been orbiting Venus since 1990, reports *Science* writer Kerr, have upset this cozy image of the four rocky planets. Venus, it appears, may be a planetary black sheep, “a dramatic exception to the

rule of a smoothly running, steadily slowing planetary heat engine.”

By combining counts of the craters revealed by Magellan with estimates of how frequently meteorites have rained down on the surface, planetary geologists have calculated that the Venusian surface’s average age—the time since it was last wiped clean of craters—is about 500 million years. As an *average*, the figure is not in dispute. According to the controversial interpretation of the Magellan data by Gerald Schaber of the U.S. Geological Survey and Robert Strom of the University of Arizona, Kerr writes, a catastrophic “paroxysm of volcanic outpourings” wiped the face of the planet clean of landmarks some 500 million years ago. “Then, in less than 100 million years—abruptly, in geological terms—the planetary heat engine was throttled back, leaving a barely detectable trickle of lava.”

Many geophysicists remain skeptical. Roger Phillips of Washington University, Kerr notes, sees in the Magellan data not “one global episode of resurfacing [but] a patchwork, in which smaller regions were renewed at different times over Venusian history.” That would suggest that the planet’s internal heat engine kept working slowly and steadily.

Yet another explanation of the Magellan images has been offered by Sean Solomon of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. Like Phillips, he still thinks Venus’s heat engine is intact.

What sets Venus apart, according to his theory, is its blistering surface heat of 475 degrees C., caused by the greenhouse effect of the planet’s thick atmosphere. That heat, when combined with the additional heat flowing from a hotter interior in the distant past, Kerr writes, “could have kept near-surface rock soft well into Venus’ history.” The planet’s shifting surface would have remained smooth, without any catastrophic volcanic outburst. Eventually, perhaps 500 million years ago, as the planet’s interior slowly cooled, the temperature of the crust could have fallen enough to allow the rock to stiffen and resist stresses. No longer would new meteor craters be smoothed over. If that is what really happened, Kerr observes, “Venus could keep its flamboyant reputation—and still be pretty conventional at heart.”

The Forest for The Trees

"Poplar Front: The Rebirth of America's Forests" by Jonathan H. Adler, in *Policy Review* (Spring 1993), the Heritage Foundation, 214 Mass. Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4999.

At the turn of the century, Gifford Pinchot and other leaders of the emerging conservation movement warned that the United States would soon destroy the last of its once-vast forests. Their pessimistic forecasts were not without foundation, notes Adler, an environmental-policy analyst at the Washington-based Competitive Enterprise Institute. The 19th and early 20th centuries saw the deforestation of vast tracts of land. By 1920, only 600 million acres of forest remained of what had been one billion acres.

In the decades since then, however, Adler observes, "American forests have been reborn." The area of forestland in the lower 48 states remains roughly what it was in 1920, but there are more trees now: an estimated 230 billion.

Reforestation has been especially notable east of the Mississippi, where nature has reclaimed vast tracts of abandoned farmland. During the last 40 years, timberland in the eastern United States has expanded by 3.8 million acres; in addition, nearly

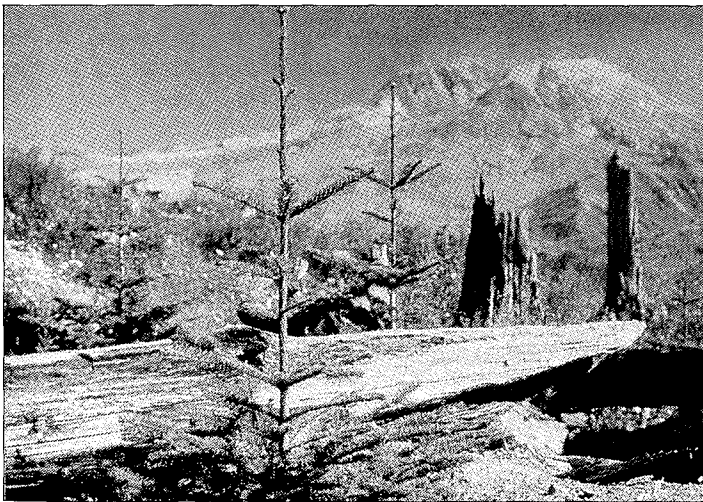
three million acres have been declared wilderness and protected by the federal government. By 1980, New England's forests covered more land than they had in the mid-19th century, thanks mostly to the decline of farming. Although forest regeneration in the West has not been as dramatic, there has been net forest growth there, too.

What accounts for the recovery of America's forests? A major factor, Adler says, has been the development of better forest-management techniques, particularly fire control. "At the turn of the century, forest fires consumed as many as 50 million acres annually . . . and were responsible for hundreds of deaths. . . . Today, wildfire rarely consumes one-tenth of its turn-of-the-century highs." Protection against fires, moreover, encourages private landowners to plant more trees.

Technological change has also helped the forests. The rise of the automobile, for example, meant that rural communities no longer had to depend on rail transportation, with its enormous need for wood. The decline of draft animals eased the pressure to convert forest into pastureland. Advances in farm productivity left more room for oak, hickory, and pine. The shift to oil and gas for cooking and heating meant a big reduction in the demand for wood. Even such seemingly small things as the development and use of wood preservatives following World War II have helped.

The market economy has been another major factor in the forests' recovery, according to Adler. As timber resources became scarcer, prices rose, giving private landowners the incentive to increase the timber supply by replanting. Over 80 percent of the nation's annual forest planting—covering approximately three million acres—now occurs on private land.

Deforestation remains the rule in much of the developing world. "[The] best hope for the world's forests," Adler believes, "lies not in bureaucratic control and multilateral agreements, but rather in the replication of what has worked in the United States."



A six-year-old Noble Fir grows in forest land that was replanted after it was devastated by the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, Washington.

Wasted Words

Packaging in the '90s" and "Demographics & Discards," in *Garbage* (Dec. 1992-Jan. 1993), Dovetale Publishers, 2 Main St., Gloucester, Mass. 01930.

America the Wasteful could be the title of a hit song on the environmentalist jukebox. The lyrics would tell how Americans in 1990 each threw away about four pounds of solid waste—about a pound more apiece than they had discarded 20 years earlier. The villain of the piece: excessive packaging, especially plastic packaging such as the foam clamshells McDonald's used to use to hold hamburgers.

Discarded packaging does make up one-third of the nation's waste, the editors of *Garbage* note, but much of it consists of items used in shipping, such as pallets, crates, stretch wrap, and cardboard cartons. It is strictly functional and reduces waste due to breakage. Even consumer-product packaging, the sort which so arouses the ire of environmentalists, usually serves legitimate purposes. "Certainly, offensive packaging exists, and it gets the lion's share of attention," the editors write. "But most packaging is both necessary and efficient, the result of years of improvement." Packaging, for example, protects meat and dairy products from bacterial contamination and helps keep the spoilage rate of food in the United States extremely low—less than three percent.

So why is packaging regarded as an environmen-

tal crisis? Because it is assumed that it is growing by leaps and bounds, "that we will be buried in plastic microwave trays if we don't do something." But the assumption is incorrect. The increase in garbage during recent decades, the editors assert, is due not to packaging but to demographics.

Between 1972 and 1987, the U.S. population increased 16 percent, but, thanks to delayed marriages, more divorces, and the growth of the elderly population, the number of households increased 34 percent—and total discards (after recycling) went up 28 percent, according to a study by Franklin Associates. More households meant more grass clippings and other yard waste, a big component of garbage (up 34 percent), more junked dishwashers, refrigerators, and washing machines (up 74 percent), and more home-furnishing discards (up 80 percent between 1970 and 1988).

The massive entry of women into the workplace, along with the shift toward a service economy, also had a large impact on garbage, the editors point out. Office paper increased 87 percent and copier paper, 150 percent. With less time for cooking and cleaning, Americans increased their consumption of time-saving products, such as dishwashers and prepackaged food.

Even so, the editors say, the weight of food packaging and utensils in the nation's trash was up only seven percent during the years its population rose by 16 percent. Reduced packaging and recycling apparently made a difference. Now that may be something to sing about.

ARTS & LETTERS

Democracy's Portraitist

"Rembrandt Peale: Citizen Portraitist of the New Republic" by Stephen May, in *American Arts Quarterly* (Winter 1993), P.O. Box 1654, Cooper Station, New York, N.Y. 10276.

Art historians traditionally have looked upon Rembrandt Peale (1778–1860), son of the early American artist Charles Willson Peale, as little more than a solid, competent craftsman. But

lately his stock has been rising. The National Gallery of Art paid a record \$4.07 million in 1985 for *Rubens Peale with Geranium*, an 1801 portrait of Peale's brother. The painting, in the view of art historian John Wilmerding, is "one of the most original images in the history of American art" and has "the power of a profound national icon." More recently, the National Portrait Gallery mounted an exhibition of some 75 works selected from Peale's massive oeuvre of more than 1,200 paintings and drawings. The exhibition's catalogue, by Lillian B. Miller and



Rubens Peale with *Geranium* conveys the intellectual and scientific bent of Peale's brother and suggests the New World's fertile environment.

Carol Eaton Hevner, was the first full-length study of the artist. "It is now clear," Washington-based writer May says, "that over many decades of painting Rembrandt Peale produced an outstanding portrait gallery of his generation of Americans."

As a young boy in 1787, Peale watched with fascination as his father painted a portrait of George Washington, under whom the elder Peale had served. Under his father's tutelage, Rembrandt at age 13 did his first oil painting, a self-portrait; three years later, he was a professional painter. In 1795, Peale joined his father for another session with Washington. "Charles, filled with sentiment for his old friend, depicted Washington as a dignified and benevolent hero," May writes, "while his son, intent on portraying exactly what was before his eyes, painted a direct, vivid likeness of an aging subject with a lined face and uncomfortable teeth."

In 1800, supporters of Vice President Thomas Jefferson's presidential aspirations asked Peale to produce a portrait of the candidate that showed him to be other than the wild-eyed radical of Federalist imaginations. Peale obliged with

a "simple but sophisticated likeness conveying Jefferson's calm intelligence and commanding presence," and copies of the portrait were used in the successful presidential campaign. Peale's empathy for his subject was manifest. For Jefferson's second inaugural, in 1805, Peale did another portrait, this one "depicting the President as a contemplative sage ready to continue national leadership."

It has sometimes been said that Peale did all of his best work around 1800, but "[a] series of strong, perceptive portraits, executed in the 1830s, gives the lie to [that] notion," May says. Portraits of Senator John C. Calhoun and Chief Justice John Marshall, done in 1834, show the officials as "wise and controlled statesmen capable of managing the affairs of a dynamic republic."

When Peale's subject was someone who seemed to stand for "what he admired most in his native country," art critic John Russell wrote, "his talents took wing. When he wasn't, he often came on like a privileged journeyman." At his death in Philadelphia at age 83, several unfinished portraits of George Washington were on his easel.

A Classics Controversy

"Classics Illustrated" by Donna Richardson, in *American Heritage* (May-June 1993), 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

"Mutilations!" howled critic Fredric Wertham in 1954. The object of his ire was *Classics Illustrated*, 15-cent comic-book versions of such classics as Homer's *Iliad* and Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*. The controversial series was launched in 1941 by Albert Kantor, a Russian immigrant who believed that it would be a way of "wooing youngsters to great books." Sales peaked during the 1950s but petered out by the 1970s, done in by paperbacks and television. Now the series is being revived—and so is the controversy. Do these comic books, asks Richardson, an English professor at St. Mary's College of Maryland, get kids to read classics or "merely help students avoid tough reading assignments"?

Officials at First Publishing of Chicago—best-known for introducing *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*

to the world—instant that the revived series will be a “contribution to literacy.” And while some have questioned the preponderance of male-oriented titles in the series, the 27 titles produced thus far have been lauded by the Literacy Volunteers of America.

Critics warn of the comics’ insidious effects. *Village Voice* writer Geoffrey O’Brien charged in 1988 that the original *Classics Illustrated* sensationalized literary works by emphasizing passages with violence and sex, used language that strayed wildly from that of the original, and employed artwork that “tended toward the primitive.” The comics, admits Richardson, were sometimes ludicrous. The protagonists of *Wuthering Heights*, for instance, are, seemingly,

transported from the late-18th-century setting of the original into Victorian England. Raskolnikov’s murder confession, the climax of *Crime and Punishment*, occurs without any depiction of his inner psychological struggle, which makes it the equivalent of eggs Benedict without the eggs. Any reader relying solely on the comic version to understand a classic, she notes, will “miss half the story and most of the meaning.”

Though it is unclear how often young readers may follow the suggestion in the comics to seek out the original, Richardson thinks the comic versions could help those who do. The compression that O’Brien abhorred “sometimes clarified style that was simply bad,” and the plot lines, though flawed and

Orwell’s ‘Inheritance Plot’

Down and Out in Paris and London, first published in 1933, was George Orwell’s first book. Reconsidering it in *Partisan Review* (No. 1, 1993), Columbia University’s Steven Marcus is struck by not only how good and original the book is, but how deeply rooted in a tradition of British writing it is, too.

It is a distinguished work in the line of English writing about poverty, urban immiseration and homelessness, and is its most important modern representative. But it is also an extremely literary piece of work and belongs to a tradition of English fiction and documentary writing that uses and modernizes the classical “inheritance plot” as a means of social exploration and a device for social commentary and criticism. We find this plot in such works of fiction as Tom Jones and Oliver Twist, in which the hero, born into penurious, deprived, and lowly circumstances, discovers himself in the end as actually a gentleman by right of birth as well as character. It is further updated, as it were, in such novels as Samuel Butler’s The Way of All Flesh. . . . And it is there as well, in its most significant variant form, in the 19th-century tradition of the investigation of urban slum life, a line . . . to which such diverse

writers as Pierce Egan, Dickens, Engels, L. C. Greenwood, Jack London, and Beatrice Webb made contributions.

In this kind of writing, the middle-class explorer-investigator also, as often as not, dresses and behaves as a member of the oppressed, outcast, exploited, and penniless in order to find out how they lived and felt, and to be able to testify sympathetically about them. I call this the “inheritance plot” because there is never any doubt that these writers and characters are continually aware of their “genuine” middle-class identities. . . . The inheritance plot is, among much else, a means for dramatizing both upward and downward social mobility, for achieving perspective on the relations and differences among the classes, for asserting friendly identification between the comfortable middle and disadvantaged lower classes on the one hand, and for the reassuring devices that sustain the substantial and harsh distinctions between them on the other. In Down and Out in Paris and London, in The Road to Wigan Pier, and in Homage to Catalonia, as well as in some of his great essays on English society and culture, Orwell demonstrated that he was one of the supreme masters of these forms of social and literary representation and its last important modern practitioner.

oversimplified, allowed a young reader to navigate language that might otherwise be daunting. *Classics Illustrated's* version of *Hamlet*, for example, includes the full text of important soliloquies in side panels, with difficult words glossed at the bottom of the page.

In the video age, Richardson argues, "all means are justified that make any remotely respectable texts appear exciting and accessible." The new *Classics Illustrated* have upgraded the art, employing Gahan Wilson, for example, to illustrate Edgar Allan Poe, but to make the comics truly irresistible, Richardson suggests, First Publishing should arrange to have them "condemned from the pulpit, or sold in back alleys."

The Two Worlds Of Satyajit Ray

"Satyajit Ray: The Plight of the Third-World Artist" by Chandak Sengoopta, in *The American Scholar* (Spring 1993), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

When filmmaker Satyajit Ray (1921–92) died last year, not long after being awarded a special Oscar, it was said that his films were more appreciated in the United States than in his native India. That is empty self-congratulation, says Sengoopta, a Calcutta psychiatrist and journalist studying at Johns Hopkins. Ray's limited appeal in the West dramatizes the plight of the Third World artist who wishes to celebrate and explore his own culture without being imprisoned by it.

During the late 1950s and '60s, thanks to the crusading efforts of American distributor Edward Harrison, Ray's *Apu* trilogy and later *Two Daughters* (1961) were seen by sophisticated American audiences. The trilogy—*Pather Panchali* (1955), *The Unvanquished* (1956), and *The World of Apu* (1959)—chronicled the daily lives of a middle-class Bengali family across three generations, and showed the interplay of tradition and modernity, of the village and the city. *Film Quarterly* called *The World of Apu* "probably the most important single film made since the introduction of sound."

After Harrison's death in 1967, however,

commercial distribution of Ray's films in the United States petered out. Only *Distant Thunder* (1973), set during the worst famine in recent Bengali history, and *The Home and the World* (1984), about an amoral nationalist agitator, were screened in this country. Most of Ray's American admirers have actually seen only a handful of his 40-odd films.

Almost all of his films were in Bengali and explored Bengali culture—and through it such grand themes as the conflicts between tradition and modernity, the nature of religious superstition, and the position of women. As Sengoopta notes, Ray believed "that a truthful portrait of any human group . . . would bear some meaning for all human beings, across national and cultural boundaries." Although it is a cherished notion in the West that Ray and others like him are rescued by Western patronage, "this kind of audience cannot, by itself, sustain a filmmaker economically," Sengoopta observes.

That the technique of Ray's films was Western did not change the fact that they were about Bengal. "All that such a film can hope for in the West (or in other parts of India) is critical appreciation and the support and interest of a small, somewhat elite audience," Sengoopta says.

"Even within India, a regional language film is, practically speaking, a foreign film in regions other than its own," he points out. India's 20 different major languages seldom share even the same alphabet. Films in Bengali, such as Ray's, "have only one big audience: the natives of West Bengal," a small section of the vast subcontinent. It was his Bengali audience that sustained Ray financially. "This audience grew with him and to this audience the annual Ray film became the cultural event of the year." Most of his films ran for months in Calcutta.

Ray looked to the West, however, for informed criticism, Sengoopta says. But while Western reviewers appreciated his technique and style, much of the content of his films was inaccessible to them. The synthesis of East and West that Ray attempted could be fully grasped, as he himself realized, "only by someone who has his feet in both cultures." Adds Sengoopta: "In a fragmented, provincial world, the price of psychological and cultural universality"—especially for the Third World artist—"is incomplete appreciation."

OTHER NATIONS

An Irish Peace?

"The Patriot Game" by Conor Cruise O'Brien, in *National Review* (Apr. 26, 1993), 150 E. 35th St., New York, N.Y. 10016.

During more than two decades of terrorism in, and from, Northern Ireland, the prevailing political wisdom has been that patient negotiations will eventually lead to a general solution, which will then isolate the terrorists and render them harmless. This approach—exemplified by the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985—has failed, Irish historian and politician Conor Cruise O'Brien argues. It is time, he contends, for more radical measures.

There is now, O'Brien notes, very little support in the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic Republic of Ireland for the predominantly Catholic Irish Republican Army (IRA) and its armed struggle against Britain. In the general election last November, Sinn Fein, the IRA's political arm, won less than two percent of the vote. After IRA bomb explosions in Warring-

ton, England, killed two children last March, thousands in the Irish Republic joined in demonstrations against political violence and the IRA.

In Northern Ireland, however, which is part of the United Kingdom, about one-third of the Catholic minority regularly votes for Sinn Fein, and many other Catholics, O'Brien says, "live in a condition of ambivalent neutrality between the IRA and the security forces, and in some fear of both. The Protestant (Unionist, Loyalist) majority there is strongly hostile to the IRA, from which its members have been under lethal attack for more than 20 years now." Northern Ireland's condition increasingly resembles civil war.

Under the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, the Republic acknowledged British sovereignty over Protestant-dominated Northern Ireland so long as that was desired by the majority of its inhabitants, and in return Dublin was to be given an advisory role in the devolution of power from London to Northern Ireland. However, O'Brien observes, not only did IRA violence become "even more audacious and spectacular," but the Loyalists, feel-



Supporters of the Irish Republican Army in Derry, Northern Ireland. The IRA and its violent campaign against Britain have very little support across the border, in the Republic of Ireland.

ing betrayed, prepared for their own campaign of violence, which erupted in 1992. "The Protestant backlash . . . is now a grim and sustained reality." In Northern Ireland last year, the earlier pattern was reversed: More Catholics were killed by Protestants than vice versa. Immediately after the two children in Warrington were slain, Protestant paramilitary forces killed six Catholics, including an acknowledged

IRA member, in Northern Ireland.

"The peace movement in the Republic, laudable and welcome as it is in itself, will not end the smoldering civil war in Northern Ireland," O'Brien writes. What is needed, he says, is for the British government to begin "selective internment of the terrorist leaderships, both Nationalist and Loyalist, who intimidate their own communities, dominate them, and then use them as bases for murderous attacks

The Dead of Kolpashevo

Adam Hochschild, writing in *The New York Times Magazine* (Mar. 28, 1993), looks at how the people in one town are dealing with the legacy of Stalin's rule, which left some 20 million dead.

In May 1979, swollen by melting snow, the Ob [River] began eating away at its banks at a Siberian town called Kolpashevo. As the flood waters gnawed deeper into the base of the river bank, the earth and sand that crumbled into the water disclosed a mass of human skeletons. Beneath this strata of bones was another layer: whole corpses. Buried in dry, cold sand that lay just on top of permafrost, they had not decomposed; they had been mummified. Embedded in the river bank were more than a thousand skeletons and bodies in all.

The horrified townspeople of Kolpashevo knew why the dead were there. This spot had been the site of the regional headquarters of the NKVD, the Stalin-era secret police. In the preserved corpses, some Kolpashevo residents recognized people they knew, still wearing the same shoes and clothes they had been arrested in some 40 years earlier. . . .

Kolpashevo was a small town—everyone knew each other. One person they all knew was Stepan Marton. Born in Budapest and trained as a physician, he served in the Austro-Hungarian forces in World War I. He was a prisoner of war in Russia when the revolution broke out. Released, Marton remained in the young Soviet state, first working as a Red Army doctor. Then he joined the secret police. . . . During the dread year of

1937 . . . he was chief of the N.K.V.D. regional headquarters in Kolpashevo. . . .

Anatoly Spragovsky [who joined the secret police a decade after the Kolpashevo killings] does not blame Marton any more than he does anyone else. "If he hadn't done all this, he would have been shot." When he was working on rehabilitations in the '50s [of victims of Stalin's Great Purge], Spragovsky says, he went over cases with other officers who, like Marton, had been active in the purge. "When I would present them with proof they had fabricated a case, they wouldn't even bother to look, since they already knew that everything was a lie. But they'd say to me . . . 'If you had been in our shoes at that time, you would have done the same.' " . . .

In trying to come to terms with the ravages of Stalinism, many Russians ask: after what point in history did the worst of the tragedy—the famines, the mass executions, the gulag—become inevitable? The October Revolution? Stalin's selection as Communist Party secretary? One can ask the same question about a person's life. For Stepan Marton, doctor turned executioner, what was his point of no return? As a prisoner of war in a senseless, bloody conflict between two dying empires, Marton must have felt himself to be a victim. But at what point did he become a persecutor instead? When he took part in the Russian civil war? When he joined the secret police? When he took up his post in Kolpashevo? You would have done the same.

on the other community." Efforts to get at these "paramilitary godfathers" through the courts are of no use, he says, because evidence against them is always unobtainable.

Internment did not work in Northern Ireland in 1972, when it was applied on a mass scale but only to Catholics. That led to Catholic mass protests throughout the world. But now, O'Brien argues, the circumstances are very different: "Today, there are two terrorist campaigns, equally ferocious and indiscriminate, which between them hold the whole of Northern Ireland in fear, and can strike far beyond the borders of that province. There is every reason to believe that the great majority of people in Northern Ireland, in both communities, would rejoice to learn that both sets of godfathers were safely under lock and key." All terrorism would not end, O'Brien acknowledges, but "a sustained and determined counter-terrorist effort" will eventually bring peace.

Israel Returns To Its Roots

"Israel and the End of the Cold War" by Shlomo Avineri, in *The Brookings Review* (Spring 1993), 1775
Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The end of the Cold War has transformed politics in the Middle East. The radical Arab forces have lost their Soviet patron, and the Israelis feel less threatened. But a second, less obvious consequence of the Soviet empire's collapse is also making for greater stability in the region, according to Avineri, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This development is the reforging of cultural ties between Israel and Central and Eastern Europe.

The Jewish people and the Zionist movement, which gave birth to Israel as a nation in 1948, have deep roots in the region, Avineri points out. "Before 1882, when the great mass of Jewish immigration from the Russian Empire to the West and to Palestine started, more than 80 percent of the world's Jews lived in two countries:

the czarist Russian Empire and the Hapsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire. And the great national and social upheavals in these areas gave rise to the cultural and intellectual renaissance, the Jewish *Haskala* (Enlightenment), that later led to Zionism."

Budapest-born Theodor Herzl and other Zionists were greatly inspired by 19th-century Polish, Czech, and Hungarian nationalism. The revival of Hebrew literature in Eastern Europe owed much to Polish romanticism and the Russian literary tradition. The revival of Hebrew as a literary and spoken language, not just a sacred tongue, owed much to the central role that language played in Polish, German, Czech, and Hungarian nationalism. Even the Israeli national anthem, *Hatikva* (which begins, "Our hope is not yet lost") was fashioned after the Polish anthem (which begins "Poland is not yet lost.")

The Holocaust and then the explicitly anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish communist regimes in Eastern Europe cut off Israelis from their heritage, Avineri says. In the minds of many Israelis, Poland became identified with Auschwitz and the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. "That Jews have lived in Poland for almost a thousand years, have survived despite repeated persecutions, and have created a rich Jewish culture that to a large extent became the defining factor in modern Jewish identity, was mostly forgotten."

Now, many Israelis are returning to their roots. "Younger Israelis are traveling to Eastern Europe to find the villages and *shtetls* of their parents or grandparents—not out of nostalgia, but out of keen interest to understand better their own origins, their own family history, their own identity," Avineri says. The removal of the immense barrier, in part psychological, that for decades prevented this rediscovery of European cultural roots may not have immediate political consequences, he acknowledges, but it is likely to be significant in the long run. Although many Jews in Israel are from other traditions (Yemeni, Moroccan, Kurdish, Iraqi), those with roots in Central and Eastern Europe predominate. As their ties to their heritage are re-established and strengthened, the eventual result is likely to be an Israel "less alienated . . . from some of the formative elements of its own identity." That in itself, Avineri believes, is likely to be a contribution to peace in the Middle East.

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

"Understanding and Preventing Violence."

National Research Council, National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Ave., Box 285, Washington D.C. 20055.

464 pp. \$49.95

Editors: *Albert J. Reiss, Jr., and Jeffrey A. Roth*

The United States needs to find new weapons to fight the war on crime. Its latest effort, increasing the prison population, apparently has not been much of a deterrent. While average prison time served per violent crime roughly tripled between 1975 and 1989, notes a National Research Council (NRC) panel, corresponding crime rates, after declining during the early 1980s, went up after 1985. The panel of 19 scholars and scientists, headed by Yale sociologist Albert J. Reiss, Jr., concludes that efforts to *prevent* crime eventually may prove as valuable as police work, prosecutions, and prisons.

Gun control is one often-debated crime-prevention measure. Research has not shown any link between the availability of guns and the number of violent incidents or injuries, the panel says. But since guns tend to be more lethal than other weapons, keeping them out of the hands of unsupervised juveniles and out of homes with histories of family violence may reduce the number of violent incidents that end in death.

A better understanding of why

some individuals behave violently, while others do not, the panel believes, is essential.

Those who commit violent crimes are overwhelmingly male (89 percent of those arrested), disproportionately drawn from racial and ethnic minorities, and likely to be in their late twenties. The profile of their victims is much the same.

Aggressive behavior in childhood is linked to a greater likelihood of adult violent behavior; but little is known about why a few aggressive children turn into violent adults while most do not. Some individuals, it is thought, may have a biological or genetic predisposition to violence. As yet, no biological patterns have been found that are precise and specific enough to serve as reliable "markers" for violent behavior. But the NRC panel says that research may discover such patterns, and preventive treatments could be devised.

That prospect alarms some critics, who fear that black Americans will be branded as inherently violence-prone and that "problem" black children will be forced to take pacifying drugs.

The statistical fact making research extremely sensitive is that black Americans account for a disproportionate share of those arrested for violent crimes (45 percent), especially for homicide (55 percent) and robbery (61 percent). Blacks are also more likely to be *victims* of violent crime.

Data from Scandinavian studies, reports the NRC panel, strongly suggest that "antisocial personality" in adults has a genetic link; however, evidence of a genetic tie specifically to *violent* behavior is mixed.

There is no indication that any simple "crime gene" exists. "If genetic predispositions to violence are discovered," the NRC panel notes, "they are likely to involve many genes and substantial environmental interaction rather than any simple genetic marker." Not just a genetic inclination to violent behavior but other factors—how parents responded to such behavior in their children; how available weapons were, and what punishments (and rewards) were meted out by society—would help to determine whether the individual finally turned to violence.

"Interim Findings on a Welfare Initiative to Improve School Attendance Among Teenage Parents: Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting Program."

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 3 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016. 22 pp. \$12

Authors: *Dan Bloom, Veronica Fellerath, David Long, and Robert G. Wood*

Since mid-1989, Ohio has been using a straightforward incentive to encourage teenage mothers on wel-

fare to attend school. It has been paying them hard cash. The hope is that they will graduate, find jobs, and get off welfare. The

state's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) program already appears to be having a significant impact, according to a

preliminary study by the non-profit Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

All Ohio teenage mothers and pregnant women under 20 who do not have a high-school diploma or the equivalent and are on welfare are obliged to take part in the program (which is only the second such effort in the nation). The teenagers attending school get an additional \$62 in their monthly welfare check; those who fail to enroll or have too many unexcused absences lose \$62. Thus, a teenage mother living on her own with one child, who is eligible for a monthly welfare check of \$274, can instead get \$336—or, with a sanction, only \$212. Each

LEAP teenager is assigned to a case manager, who monitors compliance and helps her overcome barriers to school attendance.

The 18-month MRDC study (part of a six-year evaluation) began in 1989 and focused on some 7,000 youths in Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati, as well as suburban and rural areas. The teens involved were assigned, at random, to a LEAP group or to a control group whose members received no incentives or help from LEAP staff.

Among teenagers already enrolled in school when they became eligible for LEAP (about half), 61.3 percent of those in the program stayed in school,

compared with only 51.1 percent in the control group. Among teens who were dropouts when they became eligible for LEAP, 46.8 percent of those in the program enrolled in a high school or adult-education program, compared with only 33.4 percent in the control group. Even with the LEAP incentives and help, however, more than half of the dropouts did not go back to school.

Early evidence, MRDC says, suggests that LEAP's success may eventually translate into comparable increases in high-school graduation. But then, of course, will come the big test: whether that translates into more work and less welfare.

"Casualties and Damage from SCUD Attacks in the 1991 Gulf War."

Defense and Arms Control Studies Program, Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 292 Main St., Cambridge, Mass. 02139. 51 pp. No charge.
Authors: *George N. Lewis, Steve Fetter, and Lisbeth Gronlund*

During the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Iraq fired more than 80 Scud missiles at Israel and Saudi Arabia, causing 31 deaths. Twenty-eight of those deaths, and injuries to 98 people, resulted from the single missile that struck an American barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Otherwise, the casualties from the Scud attacks were surprisingly low. At that time, much of the credit for neutralizing the Scuds was given to the U.S. military's Patriot missile-defense system. After examining what happened in Israel, however, Lewis, a Fellow in MIT's Defense and Arms Control Studies Program, and his colleagues conclude that the Patriot's role was not very significant.

The Scud attacks in Israel killed two people, seriously injured 11, and slightly hurt 220. (In addition to the casualties at the U.S. barracks, Scud attacks in Saudi Arabia killed one person and injured at least 77.) Of the 39 Scuds that reached Israel, 12 were fired before the first Patriot battery became operational. These caused 52 casualties, or 4.3 per Scud. Seventeen Scuds later fell into areas protected by Patriots, causing two deaths and 179 other casualties (or 6.6 per Scud). Ten other Scuds fell outside the areas covered by the Patriots. They produced few casualties. According to revised U.S. Army estimates, the Patriots brought down only seven, at most, of the 17 Scuds they engaged.

If the Patriot system was not responsible for keeping the casualties so low, what was? Lewis and his associates say that a big factor was the inaccuracy of the Iraqi missiles. Also, the Scud warheads were small, and at least four of the warheads that landed in Israel were duds.

Defensive measures helped, too. U.S. satellites able to detect missile launches in Iraq gave the Israelis a few minutes' warning in which to take cover. Use of reinforced concrete in modern apartment buildings in Tel Aviv reduced casualties. Another major factor, according to the authors, was sheer luck. "Even a single direct hit on a densely occupied residential building could have drastically altered the casualties in Israel."

COMMENTARY

We welcome timely letters from readers, especially those who wish to amplify or correct information published in the Quarterly and/or react to the views expressed in our essays. The writer's telephone number and address should be included. For reasons of space, letters are usually edited for publication. Some letters are received in response to the editors' requests for comment.

The Knowledge Society

Peter Drucker's interesting article ["The Rise of the Knowledge Society," *WQ*, Spring '93] encourages one to look at the book from which it was adapted. I was particularly interested in exploring his views on what it means to be an educated person in the "Knowledge Society."

It was a shock, therefore, to read the brief interview accompanying the article. There Drucker says that, compared to the public schools in the United States, the parochial schools, both Catholic and Protestant, "do a reasonable job." This assessment leads him to conclude that "we have *no choice* (emphasis mine) but to go ahead with voucher plans that allow parents to put their children in schools of their choice," presumably including parochial schools.

Question: Does Drucker include the teaching of creationism in his evaluation of the parochial schools that "do a reasonable job" of educating American children?

Question: Does the failure of many public schools in the United States justify putting in jeopardy the First Amendment to the Constitution?

We must find a way to revamp our schools without destroying one of the more important principles in the Constitution: the separation of church and state. For an educator to suggest otherwise puts in question his authority to determine what it means to be an educated person.

*Lois K. Porter
Washington, D.C.*

In his provocative essay, Peter Drucker again demonstrates the sweep of his learning and the power of his mind to distill profound insights from the swamp water that usually laps at our ankles.

He's right, of course, that knowledge has become our key resource and that preparing our children for its effective management is perhaps the premier challenge for education in the United States and other modern societies.

My head nodded in agreement with Drucker

almost to the end. In the final paragraphs, however, as he endeavored to characterize tomorrow's "educated person," I found myself less persuaded.

Yes, knowledge has grown more specialized, has split into "disciplines," and has become so complex that a corresponding degree of specialization or expertise is needed on the part of people who seek effectively to manage any of what Drucker aptly calls the "knowledges."

Yes, tomorrow's adults need to be at home in the cultures of both the intellectual and the manager.

Yes, schools and universities (and much else) will need to change quite dramatically for this to happen.

But what about the rest of it? What about citizenship—voting intelligently, perhaps even running for school board? What of coaching Little League, comforting the troubled, bettering one's community? What of responsible parenthood? The replenishing, consuming, and transmitting of culture? There's so much we ask of an educated person besides competent participation in the economic side of society. And we look to our schools and colleges to help people prepare for those roles, too.

Perhaps we might better say that tomorrow's educated person will "have to prepare to live and work simultaneously in *three* cultures": the managerial, the intellectual, and the civic. Yes, that lays an even heavier burden on the education system. But it's a system that needs—and is starting to show signs of—radical change anyway. Best we do it all and try to do it right.

*Chester E. Finn, Jr.
Senior Scholar
The Edison Project*

Peter Drucker is to be congratulated on a most lucid essay. Such clarity is an object lesson for young thinkers and writers hoping to work inside the world of ideas.

Robertson Davies's "A Reading Lesson" was a happy juxtaposition, providing a balancing dimension to Mr. Drucker's vision, the dimension of wisdom. Peter Drucker's idea of the meaning of knowledge, for all its accuracy and proper preoc-

cupation with the future, seems oddly narrow.

Two small points, then on to a central concern. First, when Peter Drucker writes, "Now there is virtually no access to a good income without a formal degree attesting to the acquisition of knowledge that can be obtained only systematically and in school," I hear a description of a closed system, a system that excludes those whose native intelligence and energy would bring much to industry and society. I hear higher education described as, "craft monopolies, and membership in them largely restricted to sons or relatives of members." An encrusted guild practice.

Second, there is no habit more likely to be the salvation of the specialists, more likely to keep them a vital, living contributor to society than knowing what are their "important areas of ignorance," knowing what they do not know, cannot know.

A true knowledge society will know we can come closer to the truth in fiction than in nonfiction, for in fiction there is greater liberty for reaching the final circumstance.

I am a poet. And as poetry is meant to defeat language, to say what words cannot say, so a true vision of knowledge is designed to move outward, toward an illumination of that final circumstance.

And that is? Well, it is that which the institution of liberal education and poetry have divorced themselves from (thereby earning the indifference of young people); it is the reality of mystery, that aspect which imbues everything before our eyes.

Reading "The Rise of the Knowledge Society," it is possible to see the history of knowledge as an implosion. If so, we need to listen closely to Robertson Davies: "No disease is so fatal to an adequate understanding of life as over-refinement."

*James Scofield
Olympia, Wash.*

Peter Drucker is undoubtedly brilliant in the field of management, but his genius does not seem to extend to the field of education, despite his years in academe. It is astounding that he would embrace such a simplistic and untenable notion as free choice of schools through a voucher system.

The proponents of free choice see their approach operating in much the same way that consumer behavior works in the marketplace. If one doesn't like the quality, style, or price of a product or service, one simply takes one's business elsewhere. In like fashion, the voucher system would offer parents the opportunity to make a choice of

schools. This competition for patronage would, in keeping with the concept of free choice, promote improved schools and better-educated children.

But the process may not be that simple.

Who would decide which are the better schools? Will parents of differing cultures, semiliterate parents, or literate parents with little knowledge of the educational process be capable of making critical judgments that will affect not only their children but also society as a whole?

And the criteria? What will be important to parents and children—SAT scores, modern buildings, better neighborhood locations, winning athletic teams, the availability of dancing classes, peer preferences?

How will supply and demand function? If a manufacturer prospers, he may speed production, add workers, expand facilities. Such options seem less practical when the task is the training of children. Will the "better" schools be able to respond to increased demand, or will they more likely attract greater resources and more-qualified students?

Could free choice be counterproductive? Given the current pattern of local funding of schools, it is reasonable to assume that the "better" schools will be found in those locales of higher socioeconomic status. The children of the inner cities, the children of minorities, and the children of limited backgrounds may well find themselves in learning environments of even fewer resources and lower levels of achievement.

Education is too basic a social function to be subjected to the rules of the marketplace. It is not commerce; it is a cultural responsibility. Its achievements will be enhanced by an Olympian admiration and pursuit of excellence, not by a balance-sheet philosophy.

*Robert A. Wilson, past Rector,
Board of Visitors
Virginia Commonwealth University*

China's Future

Anne Thurston ["The Dragon Stirs," *WQ*, Spring '93] has with great integrity and a vivid pen portrayed the two contradictory realities that are today's China. One is an astonishingly dynamic economy which is the world's pacesetter in rate of growth; the other, a dark side, is a cynical and demoralized world, in particular of intellectuals but also of a growing segment of the mass public that is driven by opportunism and is not guided by any

strong ideals or fundamental values. Although most China-watchers wishfully hope that the country's awesome economic successes will carry in their wake a process of peaceful evolution that will inevitably transform China into a healthy, modern society, Thurston's tentative conclusion is one of cautious pessimism. She is simply too honest to ignore the implications of widespread moral decay.

The test of whether she is right or wrong will be if the Chinese can find a new basis of legitimacy to replace the eroded Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought, which for four decades guided them from one sorrowful tragedy to another, but which they dare not now abandon for lack of any alternative. In the past the Chinese expected that from the ranks of its intellectuals would come the ideals and vision necessary to direct the country, but today, as Thurston documents, the intellectuals are in a state of demoralized paralysis. Salvation is not going to come from the creativity of individual writers, for China is much too complex a society to be held together by the words of a few individuals. It has to come from a larger interplay of political forces, based in turn on a broad dialogue of the people freely articulating their concerns and interests.

Unfortunately, the combination of a pell-mell rush to get rich by some and a depressed mood of cynicism among others has muted China's public voice, and there is no sign as yet of the lively exchanges so essential to pounding out a new vision for political China. Thurston is thus right in warning us that the dark side of today's China could prevent its economic success from becoming the seed of political progress. Those who optimistically believe that economics can drag politics along have to assume that those Chinese who are now joyfully getting rich will become the voices in the necessary dialogue. So far, however, they have chosen to ignore politics, and if this should continue much longer, Anne Thurston's pessimism will sadly prove to be well placed.

*Lucian W. Pye
Dept. of Political Science
Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

China specialists soon will face a day of reckoning about their widely varied predictions on China's future after the Tiananmen massacre of 1989. Deng Xiaoping and other old guards will be dead shortly, posing a political-succession crisis of major proportions. Optimists in the China-watching

community have predicted that the crisis will be handled relatively smoothly, that China's Communist Party will hold together, and that the regime will evolve into a quasi-authoritarian state supporting greater economic change and incremental political reforms. Others see the passing of Deng and remaining members of the Long March generation as the death knell of the old regime, but they are optimistic that, after a brief crisis that overturns the communist order, a more democratic and free-market-oriented China will emerge.

Anne Thurston's article provides a sobering reminder of just how difficult and chaotic the transition might be. No balanced observer of China can dismiss her argument. At the same time, it is important to note that it is just as easy to become mesmerized by the negative features of contemporary China as by the positive ones (e.g., the 12-percent annual growth rate). Seasoned U.S. observers of China, who are required to give advice to their clients and to accept the consequences—positive or negative—of their predictions, tend to avoid extremes. In particular, they are well aware that in China today there is plenty of evidence on the positive as well as the negative side of the ledger—remarkable economic growth, unprecedentedly secure and favorable international surroundings, and an obvious self-interest on the part of the current elites to preserve their influence. There obviously will be many bumps on the road, but leaders and common people in China, as well as all of China's neighbors and the major world powers, generally see their interests better served by a transition that sustains order, avoids excess, and focuses on the chores of nation building. It seems reasonable to assume that this trend will act to balance some of the darker possibilities vividly depicted in Thurston's essay.

*Robert Sutter
Senior Specialist in International Politics
Congressional Research Service*

Anne Thurston's description of a China now in the early days of "the process of expiation and atonement" is prompted by Sydney Carton's speech just before his beheading. Considering the timing of his words—less the fact of his execution than when it occurs—steers us toward a more profound understanding of China's current disorientation, both political and cultural.

The epoch following the French Revolution was no interregnum linking kindred eras; nor should

73¢ Is All It Takes to understand politics, the economy, the arts, and the inner workings of Washington.*

Every week the editors of THE NEW REPUBLIC put together the best ideas and boldest commentary available on the political, social, and cultural scene.

**For Fastest
Service Call
1-800-
827-1289**

Andrew Sullivan,
Michael Kinsley,
Fred Barnes,
Mickey Kaus,
Jake Weisberg,

Anna Husarska and Michael Lewis focus in on the true stories behind the headlines. Writers like Al Gore, Germaine Greer and Norman Mailer contribute to the powerful prose in this unpredictable newsweekly. Stanley Kauffmann and Robert Brustein cover the latest in film and theater.

Discover the world of THE NEW REPUBLIC where politics, art, culture, and opinion all collide with powerful impact.

**THE
NEW REPUBLIC**

1220 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

FREE ISSUE RESERVATION

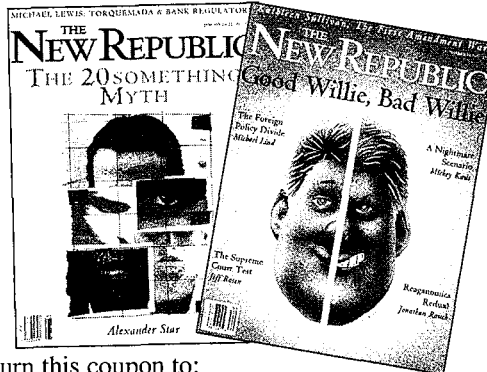
Yes, please send me the next issue of THE NEW REPUBLIC - absolutely free. If I like it, I'll pay just \$34.99 for a full year's subscription (47 more issues for a total of 48). That's a savings of 50% off the basic subscription price.*

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED:

If I choose not to subscribe I'll write "cancel" across your invoice, return it, and owe nothing at all. Either way the free issue is mine to keep.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

* Introductory offer valid for first time subscribers only. Please call for foreign rates.



Return this coupon to:

The New Republic
P.O. Box 602
Mt. Morris, IL 61054

AWQJUN

* Less than the cost of a cup of cappuccino

post-Mao China be equated with a period of traditional dynastic decline, a mere hiatus before the rise of a new imperial house. For it was the Confucian continuum providing the moral link between the rulers and the ruled that not only accounted for the passing of a moribund dynasty but assured the coming of a successor as well. Thus, the fall of the Ch'ing dynasty in 1911 is rendered particularly significant in that the Confucian system of government did not survive it.

Traditionally, as authority ebbed away from a weakening dynasty, the slack could be taken up by the talent pool of eligible local officials *not* serving in official positions. With the Confucian examination system enjoying broad esteem throughout society, candidates who had successfully passed the test naturally commanded the respect of the citizenry. But when society's philosophical glue gave way, the abiding stability provided by scholar-officials could no longer be brought into play.

Both Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong have already been judged by recent history as lightweight when it comes to replacing what the modern world has left behind. And neither totalitarian thuggery nor conspicuous consumption holds the key to a successor worthy of China's past. That "beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from [the] abyss" envisioned by Sydney Carton remains well beyond our grasp.

*Peter Rupert Lighte
London, England*

In Defense of Jefferson

After reading the first three pages of Gordon Wood's sly article on Jefferson ["Jefferson in His Time," *WQ*, Spring '93], I wanted to clobber him with John Randolph of Roanoke's put-down of Livingston. In every age we have puny men who try to destroy the reputation of great men—Gore Vidal against Washington and now Gordon Wood against Jefferson.

The bill Jefferson introduced prohibiting the importation of slaves was passed in 1778. Jefferson believed freed slaves should be repatriated to Africa or elsewhere. So did Abraham Lincoln and the founders of Liberia.

If my memory serves me, Sally Hemings, his housekeeper, was not a mulatta but an octaroon with a black great-grandparent. Wood relates the gossip of Callender, Shelton, and Brodie that Hemings was Jefferson's mistress while acknowledging that it was

unfounded. Why then put it in the article?

Wood sneers at Jefferson's father as an "uneducated and ungentle planter" Why? He was genteel enough to marry an aristocratic Randolph of Virginia and took her to the western frontier where a man had to have "the bark on" to survive. He was a civil engineer, a justice of the peace, a colonel of the militia, and a burgess.

Wood also sneers at Jefferson's "parvenu behavior." With a Randolph mother, Jefferson was of the elite socially. (Wood should look up the definition of parvenu.) We can only wonder at Jefferson's achievements—his thirst for knowledge, his eloquence, his continual striving to improve himself in many diverse fields. What better mentor could be found for this age of ignorance?

*Dr. Maxwell R. Berry
Panama City, Fla.*

The Milken Question Revisited

Regarding "Maybe Milken Was Right" (but more likely wrong) [*WQ*, Spring '93, "Commentary," p. 155]: It is not surprising that Lorraine Spurge wishes to have high-yield securities "seen as solid revenue producers and as real sources of capital." As one of the band of Milken associates enriched by the intricate manipulations in which junk bonds played such a major role, Ms. Spurge would of course like to see the stigma removed from the high-yield (junk) securities.

Her evidence is that "since the market's downturn in 1990, returns of over 40 percent have been achieved by investors in 'junk bonds.'" It is astonishing that she cites this fragment of history, ignoring what preceded it. Untold billions of savings of individuals were wiped out, and the domino effect on S&Ls, banks, companies, institutional investors, developers, and countless others damaged our whole economy. The remarkably high default rate of the Drexel bonds has been studied by Richard Lehmann of the Bond Investors Association. He found that defaults on Drexel's refinancing of acquisition debt were almost 50 percent, because they were carefully chosen to allow Drexel friends to cash out before the original deals collapsed. The bonds that survived were bought at the bottom by those who reaped the 40-percent returns.

Then comes Professor Glenn Yago, who also cites the recent "extraordinary return of the high-yield market" and goes on to join the league of

puzzled pundits: "We cannot understand why we were unable to keep economic growth alive by the end of the 1980s." When he does his "more developed analysis," Professor Yago should give some attention to the *trillions* of dollars moved into the hands of the top one-half percent of the U.S. population from 1983 to 1989 (according to data in the Federal Reserve Board's "Surveys of Consumer Finances"). This movement of wealth is a direct consequence of the new system of manipulating money invented by Milken and quickly copied by large segments of the investment community. It is almost beyond belief that apologists can even hint that "Maybe Milken Was Right."

Murray Burdick
Branford, Conn.

Did Freud Hate America?

I write to respond to Howard L. Kaye's "Why Freud Hated America" [WQ, Spring '93] and to comment on his reference to my recent book.

To the best of my fairly extensive knowledge of Freud's life and work, he was not "an eager admirer" of the United States who changed his attitude after coming to this country in 1909. Freud did have some reservations about the sexual mores of America which, he thought, were more puritanical than those of Europe, but it is, I think, incorrect to say that his visit changed admiration to disdain. In fact, his experiences in this country during the weeks of his visit were, in general, gratifying.

My book, *Freud, Jung and Hall the King-maker* (Rana House, 1992), contains a section, "Freud and America," which, perhaps for the first time, indicated that Freud's unfriendly relationship with his brother-in-law Eli Bernays may have influenced this unfavorable attitude to the United States. In attempting to visit his sister Anna, Mrs. Eli Bernays, Freud encountered some difficulties. But Kaye's statement that "he was angered when his brother-in-law made it difficult for him to visit his sister in New York" does not reflect my view of the facts. When Freud first attempted to visit on arriving in the city the Bernays family was on vacation; on his way back to Europe from New York, when Freud did succeed in completing the visit, Eli was not at home.

The important point, however, is that Freud

probably would have regarded these developments as a natural result of what he deplored in 1909 as exemplified in the behavior of his sister's husband.

Saul Rosenzweig
Professor Emeritus
Departments of Psychology
and Psychiatry
Washington University
St. Louis

Punching Tickets in Insurance

I was impressed by your inclusion of the short piece by Pat C. Hoy II from the *Sewanee Review* ["Punching Tickets in Vietnam," *The Periodical Observer*, Winter '93, p. 14]. Your phrase "when management took the place of leadership" aptly describes a phenomenon which is pervasive in our culture. I have observed something similar in the real-estate investment trust industry. When the financial institutions first decided to get into the highly speculative field of acquiring land and building on it, they failed to understand the war-like nature of the business. Instead, they produced bureaucratic organizations which studied and planned until the window of opportunity was gone. After they built their projects, they wondered why everyone was down the road working on something else. The flip side to the bureaucrat's ticket-punching attitude of self-preservation is not sticking to the basics of the activity that one is supposed to be engaged in.

In the insurance industry it is easy for a bureaucrat to lose contact with his customers and concentrate on other things. The obvious cop-out is to insist that stock performance is the most important objective. The citizens then demand regulatory protection from the problems created by callous indifference to the needs of customers. The following year the companies have to cope with the economic results of punishing regulations that restrict the marketplace.

Unfortunately, stockholders reward short-term profits and often discourage the opposite while decrying the short-term view. Don't you know someone who hits his dog and then tells it to "Sit!"? You get the behavior you reward.

Bob Calder
Calder Insurance Agency, Inc.
Lake Worth, Fla.

That's Po' Biz

Thank you for having a poetry section and for the recent selection of the poems of Weldon Kees (new to me). So much poetry in this country is now not accessible to lay readers yet there is more and more of it published.

Please keep at it. And at all costs do not let academics muddy the waters with their (now) so esoteric language.

John Sweet
Pittsboro, N.C.

Ditch the poetry!

Dennis Virzi
Duncanville, Texas

Nostra Culpa

I hate to tell you this, but on page 154 of this year's Spring issue, the correction of the Latin sentence of the previous issue contains another error.

"Lapsus Lingua" is a lapsus "of the tongue," a form that requires the genitive; hence *linguae*, not

lingua as printed.

If you have gone so far as to correct your first error, a credit to the *Wilson Quarterly* (the journal of culture) indeed, you should have been careful not to make another. Latin may be dead as a language, but when we resurrect it for its wisdom, let us bring it out in its entire splendor.

Dr. Saro Palmeri
West Hartford, Conn.

Corrections

In Joseph Brodsky's introductory essay on Weldon Kees ["Poetry" section, *WQ*, Spring '93], the last paragraph on p. 93 describes Kees's "spiritualistic imagery." The phrase should have read "sur-realistic imagery."

The author of the Background Books section of "China at Dynasty's End" [*WQ*, Spring '93, p. 35], David Shambaugh, was incorrectly identified as a former director of the Asia Program here at the Wilson Center. Dr. Shambaugh actually served as acting director.

We regret the errors.

Credits: Cover, p. 13, *Autumn Lamp* (1983) by Romare Bearden, Estate of Romare Bearden, Courtesy of ACA Galleries, New York, New York; pp. 1, 15, *Blues Style* (1986) by Lynda Barry. Photo courtesy of Real Comet Press; p. 10, Copyright © 1985 by Larry Hulst/Retna Ltd.; pp. 13, 29, Taken from *Blues Fell This Morning: Meaning in the Blues*, by Paul Oliver, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990; p. 19, Greensmith/FPG International; p. 20, Copyright © Elliott Moss Landy/Magnum Photos, Inc.; p. 21, Copyright © Joe Stevenson/Retna Ltd.; p. 27, Copyright © Beth Gwinn/Retna Ltd.; p. 24, Cartoon by Ray Lowry taken from *The Penguin Book of Rock & Roll Writing*, ed. by Clinton Heylin, Penguin/Viking 1992; p. 32, Vico medallion photograph by F. Lomonaco from "Contributo all'iconografia vichiana (1744-1899)," *Bolletino del Contro di Studi Vichiani* 19 (1984): 120-121. Courtesy Mark Lilla; p. 33, Taken from *New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Arnold Risch, Cornell Univ. Press, 1948, pp. 40, upper left, 43, Copyright © Nathan & Harris/Magnum Photos, Inc.; pp. 40, bottom left, 51, The Advertising Archives, London; pp. 40-41, top center, 65, UPI/Bettmann; pp. 40-41, bottom center, 63, Copyright © Alex Webb/Magnum Photos, Inc.; pp. 41, top left, 55, Copyright © Charles Gatewood/Magnum Photos, Inc.; pp. 41, top right, Copyright © Eugene Richards/Magnum Photos, Inc.; pp. 41, bottom right, 60, Cover drawing by Saxon, 1973, *The New Yorker Magazine*, Inc.; p. 79, Reprinted courtesy of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*; pp. 84, 92, Reproduced from the collection of the Library of Congress; p. 88, Cartoon by TROG, courtesy of Cartoonists & Writers Syndicate; p. 90, Copyright © Paul Fusco/Magnum Photos, Inc.; p. 93, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York PML 63139; p. 94, Taken from *Origins Reconsidered: In Search of What Makes Us Human*, by Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin, Doubleday 1992; p. 105, Courtesy of Oxford Univ. Press archives and Miss K. M. E. Murray; p. 108, UPI/Bettmann; p. 109, Granger Collection; p. 112, Rogers/RBO Camera Press, London; p. 127, Reprinted with the permission of Doug Marlette, *New York Newsday*; p. 132, Courtesy of National Museum of American History; p. 133, Photograph by Robert Lautman; p. 144, *Rubens Peale With A Geranium*, 1801, by Rembrandt Peale, Patrons' Permanent Fund, 1993 National Gallery of Art, Washington; p. 147, Copyright © Gilles Peress/Magnum Photos, Inc.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

For information on an ad in the Wilson Quarterly Classified Section, please write to Advertising, The Wilson Quarterly, 901 D Street, S.W., Suite 704, Washington, D.C. 20024, or call (202) 287-3000, ex. 223.

BOOKLOVER'S SMORGASBORD for a pittance! Tempting book bargains to enrich your library. Write for free catalog. IRON KETTLE BOOKS, 85 Hancock Road, Williamstown, Mass. 01267.

JUNEAU RIGGING'S POSTULATE—IF: People who are dull, ignorant and prone to irrational beliefs don't read *Turmoil*, then people who are bright, well-informed and immune to irrational beliefs read *Turmoil*. **Therefore:** Which category are you in? *Turmoil*, 5 stories about a most unusual fellow. Fiction for the policy wonk. \$15, Turmoil Publishing, P.O. Box 781, Davis, CA 95616.

BOOK ASSOCIATES: Specialists in out-of-print books. World-wide search—No fee. Contact: Bob Snell,

P.O. Box 687, Orange, Conn. 06477. (203) 795-3107. Catalogs issued.

HOME STUDY COURSE in economics. A 10-lesson study that will throw light on today's baffling problems. Tuition free—small charge for materials. Write Henry George Institute, 121 E. 30th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016.

If you are a serious reader who wants to stay informed, subscribe to THE WILSON QUARTERLY today. One year/\$24, two years/\$39. Use the postage-paid card in this issue or write to THE WILSON CENTER, Membership Department, P.O. Box 420406, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0406.

ATTENTION WILSON CENTER ASSOCIATES: Are you aware that as a subscriber to the *Wilson Quar-*

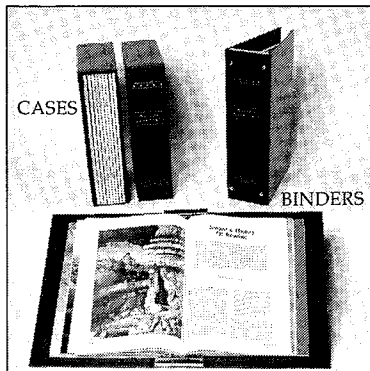
terly you are entitled to many exciting benefits? Write to the addresses listed below to obtain the desired items. Please include your membership number or a copy of your membership card.

The Wilson Center Calendar of Events, The Wilson Center Reports, Publishing Program, Calendar/Reports, 901 D Street S.W., Suite 704, Washington, D.C. 20024.

Smithsonian Foreign and Domestic Study Tours, Associates Reception Center, Department WCA, Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D.C. 20560.

Smithsonian Gift Catalog, Smithsonian Institution, Gift Catalog, Department 0006, Washington, D.C. 20560.

Organize and Protect Your Copies of Wilson Quarterly



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

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

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

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

PRINT NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

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

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

SATISFACTION IS GUARANTEED

FROM THE CENTER

When I first moved to Washington in 1965, the federal fiscal year began on July 1. Once it became embarrassingly evident to all concerned that appropriations for a substantial part of the government frequently were not being enacted until several months into the fiscal year for which they were intended, Congress and the executive agreed, in 1975, upon what seemed a simple and sensible solution: Move the start of the fiscal year ahead to October 1. This attempted solution was based upon the assumption that the problem was a lack of sufficient time between the convening of Congress in January and the passage of the 13 appropriations acts required to fund the government.

As we have since discovered, neither the assumption nor the solution was valid. Even with the extra three months, nearly every appropriations act still tends to be passed quite literally at the 11th hour, if not later. As the process became even more complex with the addition of government-wide targets and ceilings such as the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings amendment, the problem was simply exacerbated. No one who was around is likely to forget the three occasions on which the federal government ground to a halt on the first day of a new fiscal year. Everyone now routinely expects the night of September 30 to be one of frenzied activity in Congress and the White House, and that expectation is never disappointed.

The high (or low) point of the process was probably best symbolized by the discovery of a mysterious seven-digit number in an appropriations act that had been passed by the Congress and signed by the president. Brilliant detective work revealed that it was the telephone number of an attractive young woman that had been jotted down by a congressional staff member.

If the failure of the 1975 plan could be attributed simply to its failure to provide *enough* additional time, the solution would be more or less self-evident. But it is perfectly clear that time is not the problem. To some extent the difficulty can be attributed to the human tendency to postpone action until the last possible moment. At least equally important, and surely more disturbing, is the realization by all involved that the chances of getting what they want are vastly increased in the now-chronic atmosphere of urgency and confusion. Some paid "consultants" specialize in adding appropriations for their clients at precisely the

moment when committees writing the bills are most eager to get the whole thing over with. Similarly, senators and representatives and presidents have learned that the value of their votes or their signatures grows in direct proportion to the closeness of the deadline. Moving the deadline would do nothing to change that fact.

It is encouraging to note that task forces, both within Congress and outside it, are engaged in studies of ways in which the operations of Congress can be improved; one can only hope that they will look long and hard at the appropriations process. If they do, I would offer one modest suggestion: Change the appropriations cycle from one year to two, with appropriations made in alternate years to cover a two-year period.

This change would not correct the basic problems, but it would bring important benefits both to the appropriators and to those who receive appropriations. The chairman of one of the 13 House appropriations subcommittees recently told me that he spends about two and a half months each year working on annual appropriations and agreed

that the time required to prepare a two-year appropriation would be on the order of perhaps only 10 percent more. The same economy of scale would apply to agencies that receive appropriations, and a two-year appropriation would also allow for more

orderly planning. I am aware that such a change would involve the other parts of the complex process of paying for our government, but I foresee no insuperable difficulties in this.

The budget resolution is already a multiyear affair; the authorization of appropriations can be for as long a period as the authorizing committees choose (only appropriations for the army are limited by the Constitution to two years); and the Reconciliation Act already accommodates a multiyear cycle.

Everyone both in Congress and in the executive branch to whom I have made this suggestion has responded with enthusiasm. It is utterly non-partisan and serves no special interest. It would save thousands of people in both branches considerable time and effort, and would make possible a degree of longer-range coherence. While it will not wipe out our annual deficit or reduce our national debt, perhaps it can at least be a small candle that we light rather than curse the darkness.

—Charles Blitzer
Director



Depression.

It can affect you in ways you would never suspect

- a loss of interest or pleasure in your job, family life, hobbies or sex
- difficulty in concentrating or remembering
- physical pains that are hard to pin down
- sleep disturbances
- appetite loss (or overeating)
- unusual irritability
- a loss of self-esteem or an attitude of indifference
- a downhearted period that gets worse and just won't go away
- frequent or unexplainable crying spells

A combination of the above symptoms, persisting for two weeks or more, can be an indication of depressive illness and a warning to seek the advice of a doctor.

Because depression can be a lot more than just "the blues."

Over 10 million Americans today may suffer from depression. Unfortunately, it often goes unreported, and therefore undiagnosed and untreated, because people don't recognize the symptoms for what they are. Yet, depression can be diagnosed and treated in most cases. It's most important to realize that you are not alone by any means.

Do something for yourself and for those you love. See your doctor.

For a poster-sized reprint of this message, write: Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, P.O. Box 3852, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

A message
in the interest
of better
health from



U.S. Pharmaceuticals

A PARTNER IN HEALTHCARE™



POLITICS IN BLACK AND WHITE

Race and Power in Los Angeles
Raphael J. Sonenshein

In this timely new book Raphael Sonenshein provides a compelling political history of Los Angeles, focusing on relations between blacks and whites.

"If Los Angeles has been the home of Hollywood and two historic riots, it has also pioneered in interracial politics. . . . Sonenshein deftly shows how blacks and whites built coalitions, shaping new patterns of leadership and structures of power."—Andrew Hacker, author of *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*

Cloth: \$29.95 ISBN 0-691-08634-6

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK

Civic Traditions in Modern Italy
Robert D. Putnam

With Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti

"Here is a book that masquerades as a routine study of Italian regional government but is actually a great work of social science, worthy to rank alongside de Tocqueville, Pareto and Weber. . . . The implications of this book are enormous."

—*The Economist*

Cloth: \$24.95 ISBN 0-691-07889-0

New in paperback

ACTS OF COMPASSION

Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves
Robert Wuthnow

Robert Wuthnow finds that those Americans who are most involved in acts of compassion are no less individualistic than anyone else—and that those who are the most intensely individualistic are no less involved in caring for others.

"Elegant, illuminating, and of significant interest in this decade of need and limits."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

Now in paper: \$14.95 ISBN 0-691-02493-6



PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

41 WILLIAM ST., PRINCETON, NJ 08540 ORDERS: 800-777-4726 OR FROM YOUR LOCAL BOOKSTORE