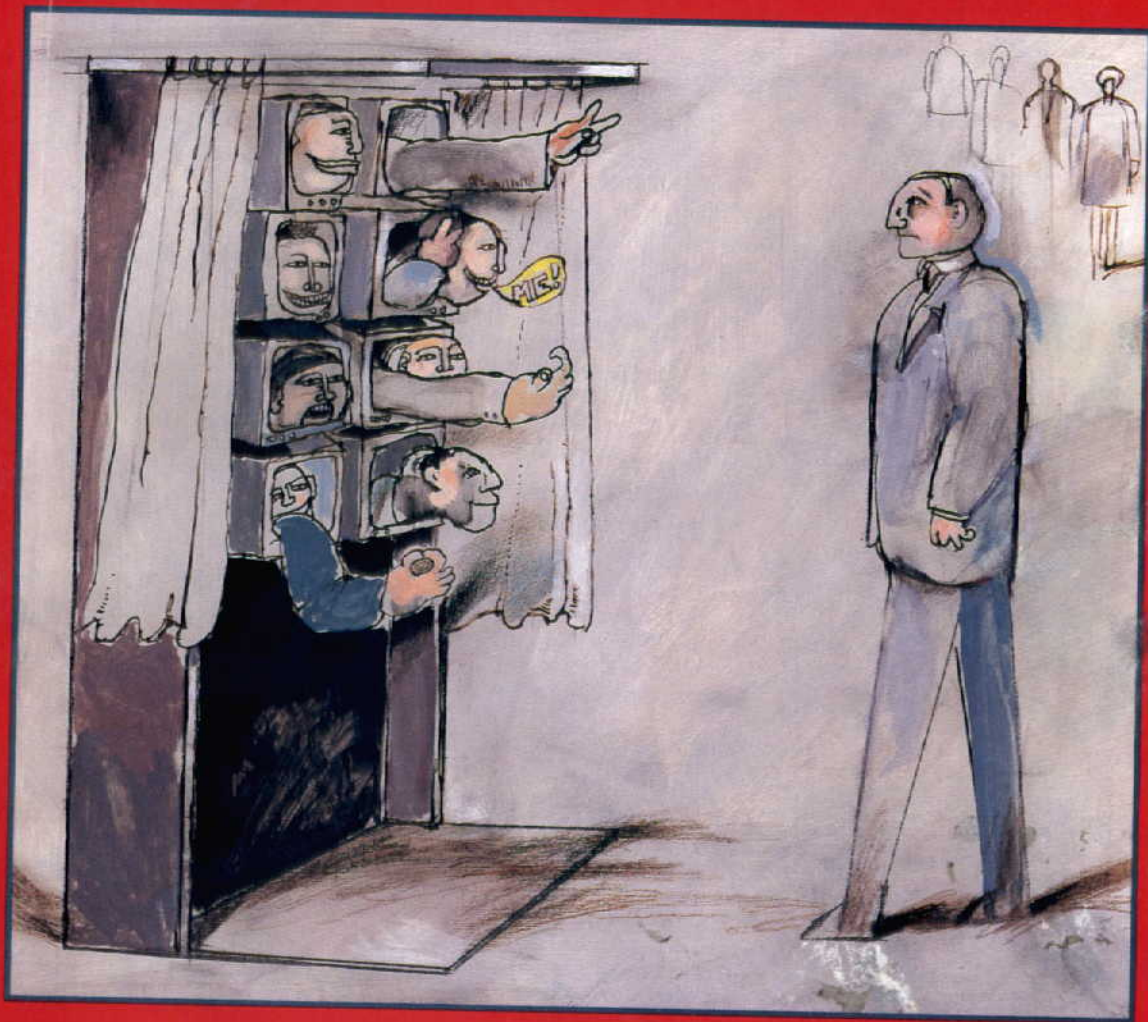


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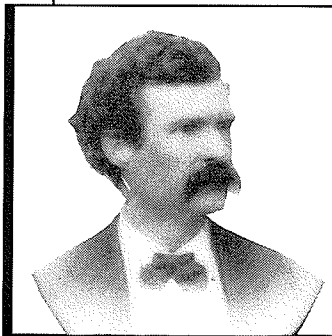
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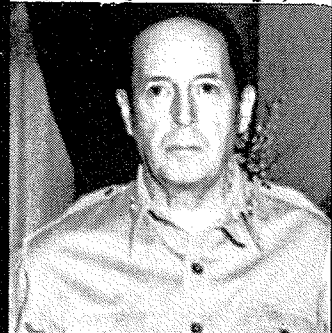
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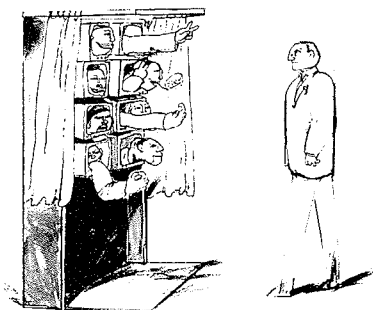
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Editor's Comment

Since its creation in 1988, the Wilson Center's Media Studies Project has been casting a critical eye on the performance of the American press. Under the direction of Philip S. Cook and his successor Lawrence W. Lichty, the Project has supported the work of first-rate journalists and scholars, including William Lanouette on press coverage of nuclear power from 1939 to 1989, Gary Lee on how glasnost changed the Moscow beat, Stephen Klaidman on health and science reporting, and John Fialka on the effectiveness of the press, and of press handlers, during the Gulf War (a study that will appear in book form this spring). In this issue's lead cluster of articles (p. 18), we draw from three Project studies that bear directly on the political process now engaging the collective national consciousness, the presidential campaign. That the media play a crucial role in electing our presidents is a commonplace, viewed by citizens with varying degrees of alarm or nonchalance. Whatever one's feelings, though, it is clear that ignorance of the ways in which the media shape and cover political news may be as disabling to voters as ignorance of the issues. If much that goes on in our highly mediated presidential campaigns seems like a game, it is nevertheless one with serious stakes. With that in mind, and with the help of the Media Studies Project, we take you inside the game for a close-up look at how it is played.

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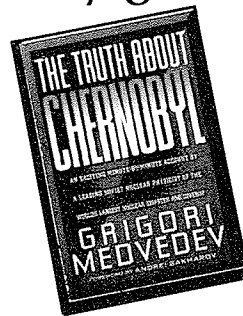
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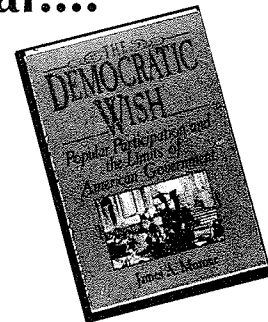
1991: It was a very good year....



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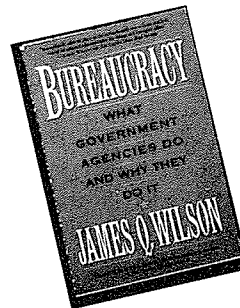
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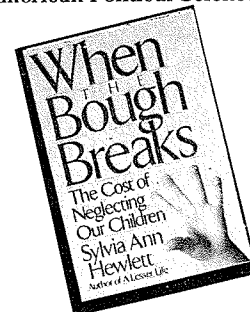
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From the Center

As we rejoice at the emergence of democracy in nearly every part of the world, we would be well advised to reflect on the question of whether the establishment of majority rule adequately fulfills our hopes and wishes for newly liberated nations. Two recent developments put this question in the sharpest possible focus.

The first was vividly captured in a January television interview with Zviad Gamsakhurdia, then the president of the new state of Georgia. When asked by the interviewer about the imprisonment of political opponents, the suppression of opposing political parties, and the censorship of the press, Gamsakhurdia appeared to be genuinely puzzled. After all, he finally replied, he had been elected by a resounding 87 percent of the electorate. In his eyes, it was clear, this was all that needed to be said to justify his actions.

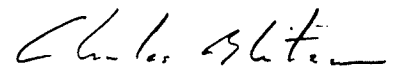
The second and related event was the startlingly strong performance of Islamic fundamentalists in elections held last December in Algeria. I happened to have lunch the day after the election with a French scientist who had worked for many years in that country, a man of the highest intelligence and decency and a staunch supporter of what we loosely refer to as Western democracy. He was deeply disturbed by the results of the election and by the prospect that a freely elected government might establish a regime similar to that of Iran, foreclosing the possibility of future reforms and perhaps of future elections. When I asked what he thought should be done he finally replied, with almost agonized reluctance, that all things considered he would favor a takeover by the army.

As is so often the case, we need look no further than Tocqueville for a characterization of what these two events, like many others one can think of, have in common: the tyranny of the majority. If by "democracy" we mean the unbridled rule of whatever person or group receives the largest number of votes even in the freest of elections, then surely the word does not convey what it is that we hope to see established throughout the world. It is perhaps graceless to say this in a journal named for the president who spoke of making the world safe for democracy; on the other

hand, it is useful to recall that the same president wrote a book entitled *Constitutional Government in the United States*.

It is by combining these two Wilsonian phrases that we come to constitutional democracy, a polity in which government is subject to the will of the majority but confined in its powers and respectful of the rights of its citizens. As Chief Justice Rehnquist reminds us (p. 111), the fate of the thousands guillotined after the French Revolution's resounding Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, and that of the millions sent to the gulags by Stalin after the adoption of the Soviet Constitution of 1936, demonstrate that mere words written on paper are no guarantee of a meaningful constitutional system. Conversely, the British experience demonstrates that such a system can exist and thrive in the absence of any document called a constitution. And although the chief justice correctly singles out the crucial role of an independent judiciary in preserving constitution and rights alike, I am confident he would agree that this is only part of the story.

It is heartening that so many lawyers, judges, legal scholars, and political scientists from the United States—which possesses the oldest written constitution still operative in the world—are advising those in power in places as diverse as Hungary, Nepal, and Nicaragua as they attempt to frame their constitutions. But it remains to be seen whether these noble experiments will in fact succeed. Can a country that lacks the centuries-long intellectual and political tradition upon which our constitution is based, that is teetering on the brink of economic catastrophe, that is riven by age-old ethnic and religious divisions reasonably be expected to exhibit the intellectual and emotional assent, and perhaps even the self-restraint, that are essential to any system that seeks to combine democracy and constitutionalism? The answer to this question will determine whether, or to what extent, our present rejoicing is truly justified.



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India After the Gandhis

A Survey of Recent Articles

Little was expected of Indian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao when he came into office last June. Sixty-nine years old and ailing, with a reputation for caution, the former foreign minister was thrust into office by the assassination of former Congress (I) Party Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in the midst of the nation's parliamentary elections. Yet Rao's government has acted with stunning boldness to deal with India's accumulated economic woes.

"[T]he pace of reforms has been breathtaking," the *Economist* (Mar. 7-13, 1992) reports. "The Rao government has slashed red tape, liberalized trade, made exports attractive through devaluation, wooed foreign investment, loosened interest rates and encouraged private business to replace the public sector as the dynamo of the economy." In just months, University of Pennsylvania economist Alan Heston adds in *Current History* (Mar. 1992), the Rao government "has done more . . . to bring about real reform than other governments have in the previous 45 years."

India's most urgent economic problem, in the view of Mohammed Ayoob, a Michigan State University political scientist writing in *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1991-92), is a foreign debt estimated at \$70-80 billion, up from \$21 billion in 1981. Only loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have staved off default. The balance-of-payments problem, Ayoob says, threatens to "Latin Americanize" the economy.

Seeking to escape the legacy of colonialism, India for decades has shunned foreign trade and investment. But Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, in presenting a free-market reform package to Parliament in February, said it was time for the nation to overcome its fears of foreign domination and join the global economy.

During the 1950s and '60s, protectionism for Indian manufacturers and subsidies for a huge and inefficient public sector seemed to work. But their costs have become increasingly apparent since then, Ayoob notes. They "destroyed the ability of India's manufacturers to compete internationally and to generate sufficient hard-currency earnings through exports."

The Rao government's remedy is promoted by the World Bank, the IMF, and more and more Indian economists. By devaluing the rupee, reducing the budget deficit (from 8.4 percent of gross domestic product in the last fiscal year to 6.5 percent), cutting subsidies, and liberalizing the economy through a reduction of licensing requirements and the promotion of foreign investment, the Rao government has undertaken "a dramatic reversal of the . . . policies of 'the license-permit raj' that were the hallmarks of India's commitment to socialism," writes Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr., of the University of Texas, Austin, in *Current History* (Mar. 1992).

But the reversal has met some opposition—from bureaucrats, intellectuals, and

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politicians who, Alan Heston notes, "believe that some control system is necessary to achieve India's socialist goals." The reforms' links with the World Bank, the IMF, and multinational enterprises give foes a weak point to attack.

India's economic problems, Ayoob says, are ultimately political problems. Rao's Congress (I) Party government is the latest in a succession of minority governments in recent years and the first without a committed majority in Parliament. The party has ruled India for most of the past four decades, Princeton's Atul Kohli observes in *Journal of Democracy* (Jan. 1992), but its electoral victories since 1967 have not come easily. "As the major nationalist party and leader of the successful struggle against British colonialism, the Congress was India's 'natural' ruling party in the 1950s," asserts Kohli. But opposition grew in the 1960s and the party nearly lost its parliamentary majority in 1967. Two years later, the party split. The Congress (I) faction led by Indira Gandhi—who had inherited the mantle of her father, Jawaharlal Nehru—"never acquired the hallmarks of an organized party, such as regular membership, internal party elections, or a lower tier of leaders with genuine grassroots support. Instead, Indira Gandhi adopted a populist slogan, *garibi hatao* ('Away with poverty!'), and appealed directly to India's poor majority." She rode a populist wave to power in 1971. But the party became an organization whose principal purpose was to keep Indira Gandhi and her coterie in power.

This, Ayoob says, was even more destructive to Indian democracy than her imposition of a state of emergency in 1975. "Her era of personalized rule eroded democratic state and party institutions that had been nurtured with great care by modern India's founders," he writes. The same pattern of personalized rule continued when Rajiv Gandhi came to power in 1984 after his mother's assassination at the hands of her Sikh bodyguards. Voters turned him and the Congress Party out of office in 1989. After his murder last year, party functionaries tried to persuade his Italian-

born widow, Sonia, to accept at least symbolic leadership of the party in order to perpetuate the Gandhi magic. When she turned them down, the party turned to Rao.

Rao may be a pleasant surprise, but India's future (and his) remains highly uncertain. In the elections that brought him to power last year, the Hindu revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) muscled past former Prime Minister V. P. Singh's centrist Janata Dal Party to become the nation's principal opposition party. The BJP captured 117 of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha (lower house). Ironically, the BJP owes much to Mrs. Gandhi. In the early 1980s, when her political support was faltering, Kohli writes, she "sought to mobilize support around issues that set India's Hindu majority against various minority groups. For the first time since independence and partition in the late 1940s, religious themes figured prominently in national politics."

Unlike many other observers, James C. Clad of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace contends in the *Washington Quarterly* (Winter 1992) that even a BJP-ruled India would "not necessarily court disaster." In any case, the BJP's rise, Hardgrave points out, could act as "a powerful force to consolidate at least the 'secular' parties of the center. Beyond Congress (I) itself, these centrist parties and their leaders are splinters of the Congress party, alienated by Nehru or by Indira or Rajiv Gandhi, and they could well return to the fold. . . . The dynasty gone, Congress could well reemerge as the majority party."

The Rao government's economic reforms for the most part have won tacit support from the BJP as well as part of the Janata Dal. However, the *Washington Post* (Mar. 1, 1992) reports that the Hindu revivalists "recently have joined leftist groups in loudly denouncing proposals to lay off state workers and open the Indian economy to multinational corporations."

Fate has ended the long reign of the Gandhi dynasty; whether Indians will end the rule of long-held economic ideas is now the question.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

*The End
Of Nationalism?*

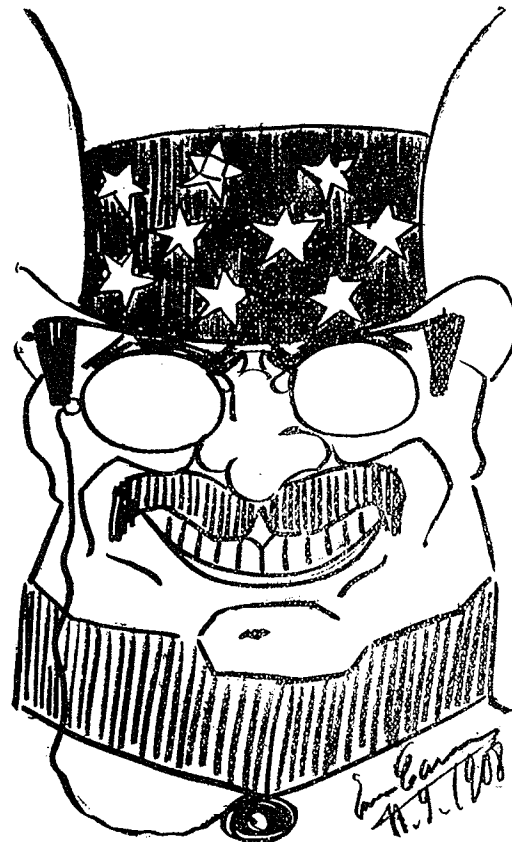
"American History: The Terminological Problem" by John Lukacs, in *The American Scholar* (Winter 1992), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

We are living at the end of an era dominated by the clash of two great ideas—nationalism and socialism. That is the unorthodox view of Lukacs, the noted Chestnut Hill College historian. The implications for American politics, he suggests, are likely to be profound.

American political terminology—*conservative* and *liberal*, *Right* and *Left*—is borrowed from Britain and Europe. There, the century-long struggle between liberals and conservatives began to diminish about 1870, as conservatives accepted the reality of mass democracy and the predominance of industry over agriculture. Moreover, the liberal-conservative struggle was overshadowed by a new one, between nationalism and international socialism.

The first phase of this conflict did not last long because after 1914 the *international* socialism of Marx, with its dream of a working class united across all borders, "melted away in the heat of national enthusiasms." In the ensuing decades, socialism and nationalism were combined, most notoriously in Hitler's Germany but in other countries more peacefully, in the form of the welfare state. Everywhere, nationalism was the senior partner.

While Americans pride themselves on their exceptionalism, Lukacs says, only the timing and terminology have differed here. The conservative-liberal debate that had occupied England and Europe for most of the 19th century had had no counterpart here. The very word conservative had "a pejorative tinge." The turning point came in the 1950s, when the conservative movement emerged. Before long, the Republicans became an avowedly conservative party. By 1980 more Americans were calling themselves "conservative" than "liberal." But the movement that took root in the 1950s was conservative in name only. Its leaders may have argued against ex-



President Theodore Roosevelt was the founding father of modern American "nationalism."

tending the welfare state, Lukacs writes, but they enthusiastically advocated "extending the power and the purse of an imperial presidency." The so-called conservative party became "the advocate of American intervention throughout the globe, and then into space." It was (and is) a nationalist movement first and foremost.

In reality, Lukacs believes, the nationalism-socialism schism has been the subtext of American politics for the past 100 years. Two insurgent parties—the Socialists and the Progressives—failed because of insufficient nationalism, while a third, the Populists, saw its nationalistic heirs Huey Long

In Re: Hill vs. Thomas

A Survey of Recent Articles

The explosive Senate hearings that both fascinated and repelled the nation last October ended with Clarence Thomas a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and University of Oklahoma law professor Anita Hill a feminist heroine. As happened with Robert H. Bork's nomination to the high court in 1987, the Thomas nomination became the setting for a debate about larger cultural issues (in this case, sexism and sexual harassment in American society). That connection to larger issues has fed continuing argument over the proceedings.

The hearings, Brandeis University's Deborah A. Stone argues in the *American Prospect* (Winter 1992), were "a kind of symbolic rape trial. [Hill's] virtue and character were challenged, while Thomas's behavior and motives were taken at his word." That was only natural, author Suzanne Garment writes in *Commentary* (Jan. 1992). The Senate let the proceedings take the form of a quasi-criminal trial, and as there were no witnesses to the alleged offenses, questioning Hill's credibility and motives was "normal courtroom defense."

When Hill told her story, a key question was raised: If Thomas had harassed her at the U.S. Department of Education, why had she followed him to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and later kept up cordial relations? The question just reveals the ignorance of her Senate interlocutors, Stone says. They "simply could not imagine what it is like to try to make it as a young, black woman in a racist, sexist world." They failed to grasp the pervasiveness of sexual harassment, argues Stanford historian Estelle B. Freedman in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Jan. 8, 1992), and "missed the historical pattern in which race and gender discrimination [makes] black women . . . vulnerable not only to sexual assault but also to disbelief and silencing."

Garment has a different interpretation: Hill's behavior was "perfectly plausible—one only added, as Hill did not in her accounts, the notion that she was moved by the ambition to advance her career." Indeed, Garment finds that most of the conflicts in Hill's testimony had to do with precisely that missing element of professional ambition. Her apparent lack of candor on

this may have been by itself "a basis for mistrusting her." But she also had "a great deal of protection from Thomas's whims." Many people found it hard to understand why, if she had been subjected to offensive language, she did not "tell the creep to get lost."

Hill seemed to have no obvious motive to lie about Thomas. But journalist Lally Weymouth presents evidence in the *Wall Street Journal* (Nov. 20, 1991) that Hill was a committed feminist who had opposed "much of what [Thomas] stands for." Hill herself, in *Essence* (Mar. 1992), says she has been mistakenly portrayed as "a staunch conservative." She never opposed affirmative action, she says, and when she worked at the EEOC, she took "an approach consistent with the longstanding policy of the commission, which was often antagonistic to the position of the Reagan administration."

According to a startling theory reporter David Brock sets forth in the *American Spectator* (Mar. 1992), the whole train of events might have been set in motion by a mistaken recollection. The allegations against Thomas were probably first brought to the attention of Senate staffers by a friend of Hill's, Judge Susan Hoerchner. In a deposition, Hoerchner said that in a phone conversation that took place before September 1981 Hill had complained to her of being sexually harassed. But that would have been *before* Hill went to work for Thomas. Hoerchner later recanted and said she could not pin down the date. But Brock thinks that she was right the first time and that Hill's complaint had to do with difficulties she was having at the law firm where she then worked. After Hill went to work for Thomas, Brock believes, Hoerchner mistakenly connected the charge to him and, more than a decade later, brought her confused version to Washington. Eventually, a reluctant Hill supposedly "allowed herself, almost accidentally, to become the secret weapon in the war on Clarence Thomas."

Not many of those who believed Hill are likely to accept Brock's speculative theory or other arguments, while those who believed Thomas will probably only be confirmed in their doubts about Hill. The cultural wars continue.

and Father Charles Coughlin launch what in Lukacs's view were the only real threats to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Today we have the "Republicans, who are more nationalist than socialist, and the Democrats, who are more socialist than nationalist—whence the rise of the former and the decline of the latter during the last forty-odd years."

The future, Lukacs thinks, will be differ-

ent. As "the welfare state is a universal reality now, the conflicts and the compounds of nationalism and socialism have lost much of their meaning." And nationalism all over the world has been devolving into ethnic tribalism. "Given the changing ethnic composition of the American people . . . American nationalism, too, may devolve into tribal struggles of a peculiarly American kind."

Free the Courts!

"Judicial Gridlock: The Case for Abolishing Diversity Legislation" by Frank M. Coffin, in *The Brookings Review* (Winter 1992), 1775 Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Over the past three decades, the burden on the federal court system has grown enormously. The caseload has tripled in federal district courts and increased tenfold in the courts of appeals. And there is no end in sight, notes Senior U.S. Circuit Judge Coffin, given the "unceasing flow of federal statutes and entitlements, resulting in inexorably increasing federal litigation." How can the serious strain on the courts be reduced? One way would be to expand yet again the 837-member federal judiciary. Coffin urges a different solution: Get rid of an anachronism called "diversity jurisdiction."

Thanks to the Federal Judiciary Act of 1789, out-of-state parties involved today in state civil cases (in which the amount at issue is at least \$50,000) have recourse to the federal courts if they fear the state judge will be biased in favor of their home-state opponents. The need for such protection from local passions "has long since disappeared," Coffin says, yet that "diver-

sity jurisdiction" provision survives.

Since the early 1970s, diversity cases have accounted for one-fourth of the district courts' civil docket, one-fifth of their total criminal and civil docket, and almost one-seventh of the appeals courts' total docket. The amount of judicial time and effort consumed is even greater. In fiscal 1990, diversity cases accounted for 40 percent of all trials, jury and nonjury.

In 1990, the Federal Courts Study Committee, which consisted of members of Congress, federal and state judges, and lawyers, recommended abolition of diversity jurisdiction, shifting the cases back to state courts. Many state and federal judges concur, but there is one notable group of dissenters: lawyers who do not want to give up the option of transferring cases to a federal court when that seems advantageous. If diversity jurisdiction is to be laid to rest, Coffin notes, "it will be because of support from beyond the borders of the legal community."

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Waiting for Mr. X

"The Case for Pragmatism" by William G. Hyland, in *Foreign Affairs* (special annual "America and the World" issue, 1991-92), 58 East 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

The end of the Cold War has been a bonanza for the punditocracy. Opportunities

to spin new theories about the proper U.S. role in the world abound. Should America

now return to isolationism, or, as the lone remaining superpower, should it take the lead in creating and enforcing the rules for a new world order? Should the United States now pursue only its own narrow interests as a nation, strive to promote democracy around the globe, or try to do whatever needs to be done in the world, with little thought for its own selfish interests? Casting a skeptical eye on the whole "disappointing" debate, *Foreign Affairs* editor Hyland contends that to search now for "a politically correct concept of the national interest to justify American foreign policy" is "fruitless" because we are in a murky time of transition in world affairs.

While the debate's various protagonists—isolationists, internationalists, and realists—"are quick to prescribe policies," Hyland asserts, they are "reluctant to analyze the new circumstances" in the world. It will take years just to absorb the implications of the radical changes that have already taken place. While the United States is the only superpower left, it "does not have anything approaching the freedom of action it enjoyed in the Cold War decades," he points out. In those years, "even though the lines were sharply drawn, the United States could choose to intervene or not, and much of the world deferred to Washington. Now the political lines are far less distinct, and allies that were almost totally dependent on Wash-

ington seek greater autonomy and, like the United States, are under domestic pressures to assert more nationalistic positions." Moreover, the United States no longer can act abroad without regard to the economic consequences at home.

Hyland is willing to rule out isolationism, however. It is natural for America now to give domestic affairs priority, he says, but a return to pre-World War II isolationism is hardly practical. The same constraints that prevent the United States from dominating world affairs also bar it from withdrawing from them: "The United States is deeply entangled by the world's economy, by global technology, by international politics and institutions, and by half a dozen security alliances." To extricate the United States from world affairs would take years of dedicated efforts by Congress and the president, he says, and the unhappy result would be "a global crisis of unimaginable proportions in a world of a dozen or more nuclear powers."

But while the United States cannot simply withdraw from the world, Hyland says, it still may be a decade "before the outlines of a new world order emerge." And when that happens, he adds, "it will probably be more by trial and error than by design. No overriding principle articulated in advance will be sufficient to handle the burgeoning diversity of the new international agenda."

Was China Just Bluffing?

"The Chinese Threat in the Vietnam War" by John W. Garver, in *Parameters* (Spring 1992), U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pa. 17013-5050.

Did undue fear of Chinese intervention lead the United States in the mid-1960s to adopt a "no-win" strategy during the Vietnam War? Critics have long argued that the U.S. decision to escalate the bombing of North Vietnam only gradually and to confine ground operations to South Vietnam meant fighting (and losing) on Hanoi's terms. The United States, said retired Col. Harry G. Summers, Jr., in *On Strategy* (1982), let itself be "bluffed by China throughout most of the war." Garver, a

professor of international affairs at the Georgia Institute of Technology, is not so sure that Beijing was bluffing.

Just because China "did not react strongly" to the heavy U.S. bombing and naval blockade of North Vietnam in 1972, Garver writes, does not mean that it would have held back in 1965 if the United States had tried, as Air Force General Curtis LeMay famously urged, to bomb North Vietnam "back to the Stone Age." After border clashes between the Soviet Union

and China in 1969, the Soviet threat became foremost in the minds of China's leaders. But in the mid-1960s, Beijing's main global objective was thwarting U.S. imperialism, and support for Hanoi was a key element in Mao Zedong's strategy.

China's commitment was reflected in the amount of diplomatic and military support it gave to Hanoi. In 1962 alone, Beijing supplied 90,000 machine guns and rifles to the Viet Cong. Chinese threats to intervene in Laos were a key factor in the U.S. decision in 1962 to accept Laos's "neutralization." That allowed Hanoi to continue using Laotian supply lines to its forces in South Vietnam. And in August 1964, when the Americans began air attacks against North Vietnam, Beijing launched "a massive crash program to construct a large, self-sufficient industrial base deep in China's interior." This costly and top secret "Third Front" program, Garver says, was not an attempt to send signals to Washington but a serious effort

to get China ready for a major war with the United States.

In 1965-67, Beijing, in essence, threatened openly to enter the Vietnam War on Hanoi's side if the United States "carried the war too far." By the spring of 1966, nearly 50,000 Chinese soldiers were in North Vietnam, although Beijing did not officially acknowledge their presence. Some Chinese People's Liberation Army anti-aircraft units actively engaged U.S. aircraft in combat.

"Most probably," Garver writes, "China's policy toward the Vietnam War was not governed by hard and fast principles, but evolved in response to U.S. actions and other international developments." Nevertheless, during the critical mid-1960s period, when the American commitment to the war was irrevocably made, China's entry was a real possibility. It would have been imprudent—and perhaps disastrous—for U.S. strategists not to take that into account.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Saving Is Not Out of Fashion

"Explaining the Postwar Pattern of Personal Saving" by Alicia H. Munnell and Leah M. Cook, in *New England Economic Review* (Nov.-Dec. 1991), Research Dept., Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, P.O. Box 2076, Boston, Mass. 02106-2076.

The decline of America's personal saving rate is often cited as a cause of the nation's economic decline and even as evidence of its moral decay. Personal saving as a share of disposable income dropped from nearly 10 percent in the early 1970s to a low of 2.7 percent in 1987. That was largely a statistical illusion, reply Munnell, vice president and director of research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, and Cook, senior research assistant. As they see it, there was, in fact, no fundamental shift in attitudes toward saving.

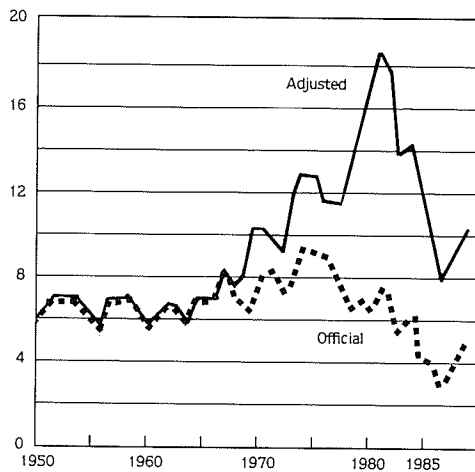
Instead, Munnell and Cook finger two principal culprits behind the apparent reduction of personal saving. One—responsible for about one percentage point of the decline—was a striking drop in employer

contributions to private pension plans, which are counted as personal saving. The tremendous bull market on Wall Street during the 1980s filled pension fund coffers. Employers who sponsored "defined benefit" plans (in which they promise to pay a fixed benefit) stopped paying as much into the funds. Annual contributions to private pension plans, which grew from \$13 billion in 1970 to \$49 billion in 1979, suddenly leveled off and, in nominal dollars, even declined during the 1980s.

The other major culprit, according to the authors, was the spectacular housing boom of the late 1960s and '70s, which occurred as baby-boomers began to establish their own households. Real capital gains on the nation's housing doubled. With

The Real Estate Effect

Personal Saving
As Percent
Of Income



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Official statistics show an alarming decline in personal saving since the early 1970s. But making an adjustment for rising returns to homeowners produces a different story.

their nest eggs thus enlarged, homeowners in the 1980s cut their saving out of current income. Because official accounting severely understates the investment return to housing, the authors say, the personal-saving picture looked much worse than it really was.

Once that flaw in the official accounting is corrected, according to Munnell and Cook, it turns out that instead of falling during the late 1970s, personal saving actually surged higher as a result of the larger return to housing. "When the escalation in housing prices ceased... the return to owner-occupied housing regained more normal levels and saving dropped"—but not as far down as the official picture indicates. "The saving rate appears to have dropped back to levels experienced in the 1950s and 1960s rather than to unprecedented lows." This finding seems to represent a verdict of acquittal, on the spendthrift charge at least, for the oft-lambasted "me-generation."

The Other Tax Bill

"Unhappy Returns" by James L. Payne, in *Policy Review* (Winter 1992), 214 Mass. Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Americans are painfully aware of the toil and trouble that leads up to April 15. Yet Washington seems oblivious. It should not be, contends James Payne, director of Lytton Research & Analysis, in Sandpoint, Idaho. Although the private-sector costs of operating the tax system appear nowhere in the federal budget, he calculates that they are equal to 65 percent of Washington's tax revenue—\$618 billion in 1990.

The lion's share of that invisible burden—\$315.6 billion, equivalent to 33 percent of all tax revenue—comes, according to Payne's analysis, in the form of production lost because of taxation's economic disincentives. Economists may differ over that amount, but about the fact that *compliance* with the tax system has substantial costs there can be little disagreement.

A nationwide survey in 1985 found that individuals spent 1.8 billion hours and businesses spent 3.6 billion hours keeping records, learning about regulations, mak-

ing calculations, and filling out forms. Payne figures that the cost of individual compliance that year was more than \$57 billion and of business compliance, more than \$102 billion. In 1990, he calculates, the total cost of compliance was more than \$232 billion.

Legal and illegal attempts to avoid taxes, along with the burdens of litigation and of having to cope with government enforcement efforts, bring the unofficial tax bill still higher, boosting it nearly \$65 billion in 1990, according to Payne. That year, the IRS not only conducted 1.2 million audits but also sent out 4.9 million computer-generated letters to taxpayers suspected of underreporting their incomes or failing to file required returns. A General Accounting Office (GAO) study found that such computer notices contained errors nearly half the time.

But it is not only computers that err. "As the U.S. tax system has become both more

complex and more insistent in its demands," Payne writes, "individuals and businesses fall by the wayside in keeping up with its demands." Each year, one-third of all U.S. employers are penalized in connection with the payroll tax deposit rules, which are so complicated that even Internal Revenue Service officials apparently don't understand them. The GAO found that 44 percent of the penalties meted out under those rules were wrongly imposed.

Surely, however, simply raising taxes a little should not increase the system's costs. But Payne contends that not only do the economic-disincentive effects go up but so also do the costs of compliance. Higher tax rates provoke increased efforts at tax evasion (legal and illegal), and this prompts policymakers to add still more requirements to the tax code, thus increasing taxpayers' costs as well as their heartburn.

What Is Competitiveness?

"Myths and Realities of U.S. Competitiveness" by Paul A. Krugman, in *Science* (Nov. 8, 1991), American Assoc. for the Advancement of Science, 1333 H St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Lately, the nation's herd of policy "experts" has been bleating loudly about the decline of U.S. "competitiveness." Most of them, says Krugman, an MIT economist, do not know what they are talking about.

The worriers raise the specter of an America overcome by foreign economic competition, suffering perpetual trade deficits, catastrophic unemployment, perhaps even virtual bankruptcy. That, however, is highly unlikely. The disaster scenario is based, writes Krugman, on a faulty analogy between competition among businesses and trade among nations. In business, the market is limited, and firms that lose their foothold do go bankrupt; trade, however, is not a zero-sum game in which one nation's gain must be another's loss.

Strong balancing forces normally see to it that any country, even one with poor productivity, technology, and products, can still sell a range of goods in world markets and generally balance its trade over the long run. Such countries can carve out areas of comparative advantage in fields—farm products or textiles, for example—that nations with, say, high wages do not enjoy. In fact, international trade allows less "competitive" countries to raise their standard of living. It lets them sell their products in world markets and buy others—be they bon bons or computers—more cheaply than they could make them for themselves.

Lagging productivity growth and tech-

nological progress certainly are worth worrying about in their own right, Krugman says, but "the real competitiveness issue" lies elsewhere. It has to do with how U.S. comparative advantage is determined. In theory, the market rules, but recent scholarship shows that history, accident, and, increasingly, government intervention can allow countries to create comparative advantage in new industries. And once such an advantage is established, "it becomes self-reinforcing and tends to persist." There is evidence to suggest, for example, that Japan is trying to develop comparative advantage in the high-technology industries by reserving its home markets for domestic producers: Foreign high-tech firms claimed only six percent of the Japanese market in 1985, the same share as in 1970. In the United States, by contrast, foreign penetration rose from five percent to 16 percent during those years, while in Germany it jumped from 23 percent to 57 percent.

Krugman seems to believe that Japan's actions may deserve a response from Washington, but he is cautious. To begin with, unfair trade practices are not the major source of America's economic woes. In any event, no country can expect to be number one in all areas of economic life. And finally, "competitiveness is one of those issues, like national defense, that can easily be used as a patriotic cloak for special interest politics."

SOCIETY

What 'Cultural Diversity' Means

"A World View of Cultural Diversity" by Thomas Sowell, in *Society* (Nov.-Dec. 1991), Rutgers—The State Univ., New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

"Cultural diversity" is frequently invoked today as a shining ideal. Some of its crusading advocates, notes Sowell, a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, "seem to want to preserve cultures in their purity, almost like butterflies . . . in amber." That, he points out, is not the way in which, over the centuries, cultures and civilizations and indeed the whole human race have advanced. The long history of "cultural diversity," Sowell observes, presents "not a static picture of differentness but a dynamic picture of competition in which what serves human purposes more effectively survives while what does not tends to decline or disappear."

Paper and printing—which originated in China and yet today are integral parts of Western civilization—are but two examples of how cultural advances have been transferred from one group to another and from one civilization to another. Such transfers have marked the entire history of the human race, and they signify much more than just cultural diversity, Sowell argues. They imply that some cultural features were *better* than others.

"The very fact that people—all people, whether Europeans, Africans, Asians, or others—have repeatedly chosen to abandon some feature of their own culture in order to replace it with something from another culture implies that the replacement served their purposes more effectively," he says. For example, Arabic numerals (which actually originated among the Hindus of India) are better than, not

just different from, Roman ones. "This is shown by their replacing Roman numerals in many countries whose own cultures derived from Rome, as well as in other countries whose respective numbering systems were likewise superseded by so-called Arabic numerals." Roman numerals today may be fine for numbering kings and Super Bowls, but they can hardly match the efficiency of Arabic numerals in most mathematical operations.

Some contemporary champions of diversity acknowledge the fact of cultural change but insist that such change should come about only through collective or political decisions. This, Sowell says, "is not how cultures have arrived where they are." Decisions about change are made rather by individuals in the course of their daily lives. "In this way, cultures have enriched each other in all the great civilizations of the world."

No culture has grown great in isolation, Sowell says. Intellectuals who, in the name of "cultural diversity," promote "a multiplicity of segregated ethnic enclaves" are not doing the people in those enclaves any favor, he maintains. "However they live socially, [those people] are going to have to compete economically for a livelihood. Even if they were not disadvantaged before, they will be" if they are confined to what exists in their immediate subculture. The advances made in behalf of the human race belong to all people, and "all people need to claim that legacy, not seal themselves off in a dead-end of tribalism or in an emotional orgy of cultural vanity."

The Incredible Expanding Workweek

"Work and Leisure: On the Reporting of Poll Results" by Richard F. Hamilton, in *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Fall 1991), Inst. for Social Research, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106.

In a 1989 cover story on "The Rat Race," *Time* magazine declared that "America Is Running Itself Ragged" and cited surveys

by pollster Louis Harris to prove the point. The median workweek increased from 40.6 hours in 1973 to 48.8 hours in 1985,

Periodicals continues on page 118



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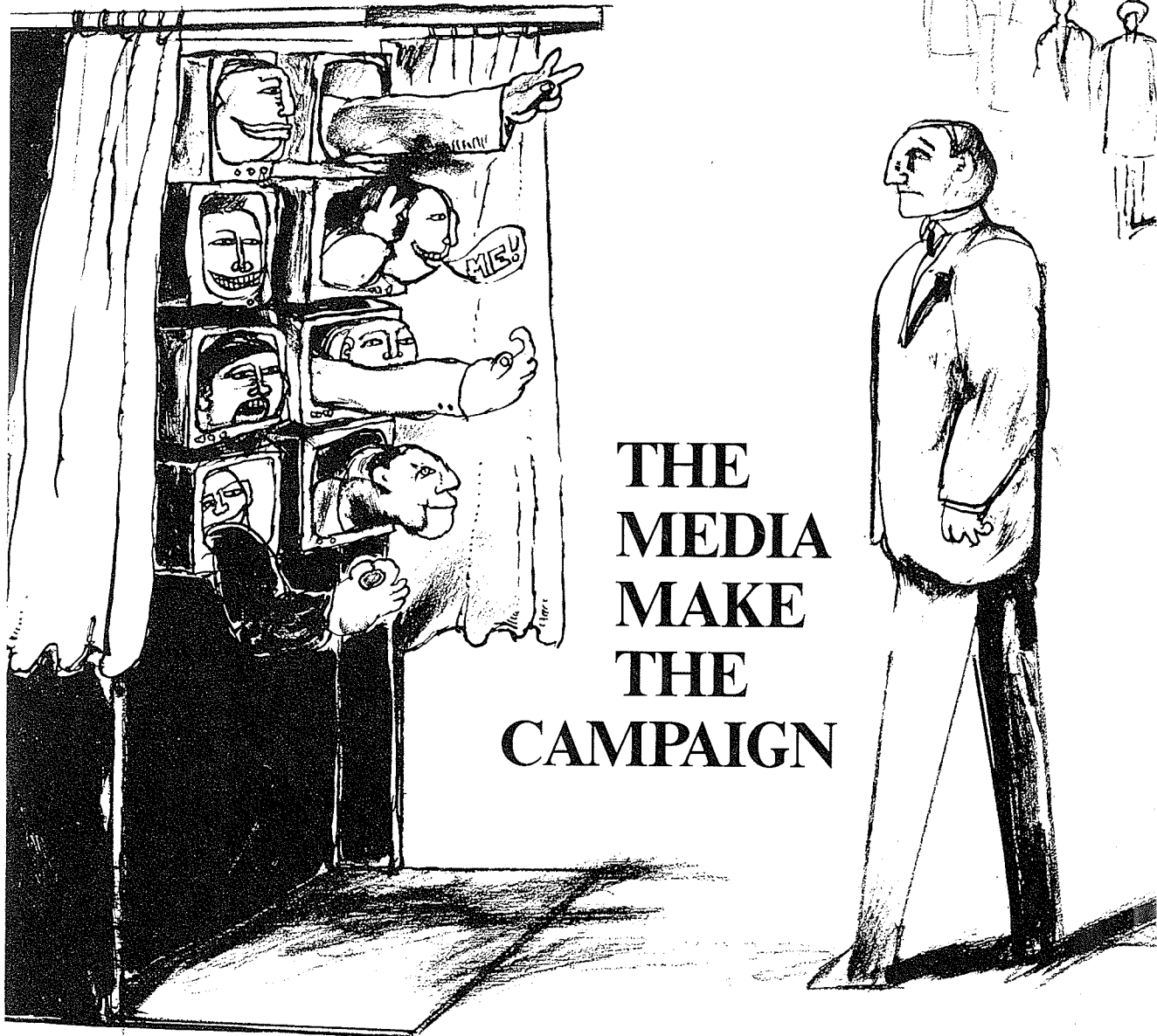
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If this year's presidential campaign is any measure, Americans are becoming a media-savvy people. They are critical of news media "feeding frenzies." They know "spin control" when they see it. They do not fall for every sound bite that comes along. But is this what politics is supposed to be about? Our contributors think not. Exploring the evolution of television's influence since 1952, the odd history of the sound bite, and the formulas that govern today's political reporting, they show how far the media have taken us from the real business of democratic politics—and what it will take to get us back.

POLITICS TRANSFORMED

by Robert J. Donovan and Ray Scherer

As a young reporter for the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Charles McDowell was one of the first inside witnesses to television's impact on politics. By sheer chance he observed at the Republican National Convention in Chicago in 1952 how people's reaction to what they saw on television influenced political decisions—a phenomenon that would profoundly change the workings of the political system.

The Republican convention in 1952 was the first at which television news had the technical resources and the large audience to enable it to exert significant political impact. In 1940, NBC had broadcast scenes of the Republican convention in Philadelphia to a few stations. That year the network also made newsreels of the Democratic convention in Chicago and sent them to New York

for broadcast the next day on a small scale. Although the Democratic and Republican conventions of 1948 in Philadelphia were fully covered by television, few people around the country had sets, and the networks' reach from Philadelphia was limited mainly to the East.

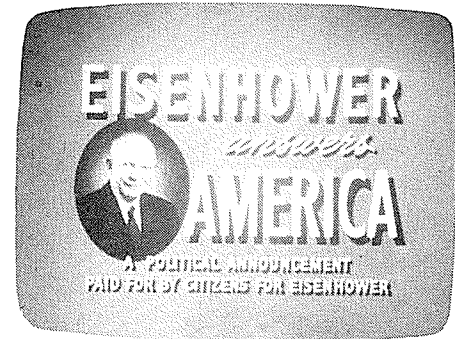
McDowell was in Chicago in 1952 as a member of his newspaper's convention bureau covering the fight between General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio for the Republican nomination. Although it seemed unlikely that the Republicans would reject a war hero of Eisenhower's stature, the Taft forces nominally controlled the party machinery. Before the convention Taft had more delegates committed to him, on paper at least, than did Eisenhower. Sentimentally, most delegates probably preferred Taft, "Mr. Republican," as he was called. A critical issue at the convention was whether

pro-Eisenhower or pro-Taft delegations from Texas, Louisiana, and Georgia should be seated. In these three states pro-Eisenhower delegates had been chosen by precinct conventions. The respective Republican state committees, however, had brushed these actions aside, alleging that Democrats were allowed to vote. The committees selected alternative slates of delegates favorable to the Ohioan and demanded that they be seated at the convention. The whole nominating process thereupon descended into a labyrinth of charges, countercharges, negotiations, and proposed compromises.

Much in need of a decisive issue, the Eisenhower camp seized the moral high ground in the delegate dispute. Shrewdly, Eisenhower's people used television to tell the whole nation that the general was the victim of those who would spurn fair play. On the eve of the convention Eisenhower said that the dispute over southern delegates was "a straight-out issue of right and wrong." He accused the Taft campaign of "chicanery."

According to Edward R. Murrow, one of the CBS staff covering the proceedings, the Taft people wanted to keep the whole convention off television. This would have included a hearing in which the credentials committee was taking up the question of the disputed delegates. In a news broadcast from Chicago, Murrow reported that Eisenhower's staff sided with broadcasters in favor of having television cameras at the credentials committee hearing, and in the end, despite the resistance of the Taft forces, Ei-

Narrator: *Eisenhower Answers America.*



senhower's staff succeeded.

When the hearing opened in the Gold Room of the Congress Hotel, McDowell came to listen. Well known in later years as a stalwart on the PBS television program "Washington Week in Review," he was then a junior member of the *Times-Dispatch* convention staff. Lacking the proper credential for this particular event, he slipped unnoticed into a kitchen just off the main room in the hope of being able to hear what went on. Soon strategists for the Taft side ducked into the kitchen to assess the progress of the hearing. If the politicians noticed McDowell, they evidently assumed he was one of the hotel employees and made no effort to keep their voices low. McDowell's listening post proved to be a good one. He learned, as he later wrote, that "the Taft managers were talking about conceding the Louisiana delegates to Eisenhower." From what the Taft managers were saying, McDowell also learned that the television coverage of the hearing was affecting viewers' opinions of the two candidates.

Robert J. Donovan and Ray Scherer, both former Wilson Center Guest Scholars, are veteran journalists. Donovan, former Washington bureau chief of the New York Herald Tribune and the Los Angeles Times, is the author of several books, including a two-volume history of the Truman presidency, *Conflict & Crisis* (1977) and *Tumultuous Years* (1984). Scherer, a former NBC White House correspondent and anchor, retired as vice-president of RCA. This essay is adapted from their book, *Unsilent Revolution: Television News and American Public Life, 1948-1991*, published in April by the Wilson Center and Cambridge University Press. Copyright © 1992 by Robert J. Donovan and Raymond L. Scherer.

“What was happening,” McDowell explained, “was that people back home, following the debate on television, were telephoning and telegraphing their delegates to say that Taft’s case was coming through as weak. Republicans of consequence were saying that a steamroller approach would look bad on television and hurt Taft more than yielding the delegates.”

The credentials committee awarded the Louisiana delegates to Eisenhower. Taft’s position crumbled. Eisenhower was nominated on the first ballot. Television contributed to the outcome. Over a period of days, it had conveyed the impression that the conqueror of Normandy was getting a raw



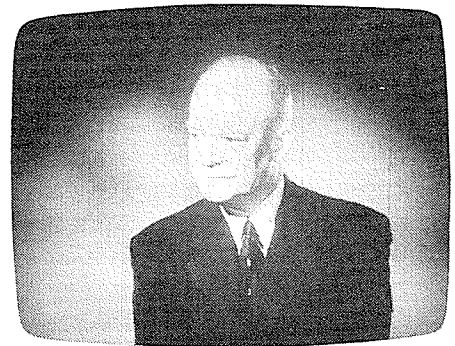
Citizen: General, how would you clean up the mess in Washington?

deal from the Republican Old Guard.

Beginning in 1952, television caused structural as well as superficial changes in American politics. That year, delegates of both parties were warned that the probing television lenses could capture every movement they made in their chairs. They were admonished to be careful about what they said to one another lest lip readers pick up the conversation from the television screen. Women delegates were cautioned against affronting blue-collar viewers by wearing showy jewelry. Another change was so startling that CBS put out a news

release on it: The bald, gruff Sam Rayburn, chairman of the 1952 Democratic convention in Chicago, had agreed to wear makeup from gavel to gavel.

Memories of the 1948 convention had convinced broadcasters to change convention coverage. The traditional style—with the endless nominating speeches, the proliferation of seconding speeches, and hours of parades and whoopee in the aisles—was boring for television viewers. At the disorderly Democratic convention in 1948, the nominee, Harry S. Truman, did not begin his acceptance speech until 2:00 A.M. In 1952, when events on the rostrum grew dull, the networks diverted their cameras to cover interviews or meetings in downtown hotels. For the first time, television producers, not party officials, decided what aspect of the convention would be shown throughout the nation at any given time. Advances in electronics enabled NBC anchors to converse with their reporters and cameramen, who were roving the aisles with hand-held portable cameras, then called “creepie-peepies.” This gave coverage a new range and mobility. Any delegate or other politician trying to strike a deal on the convention floor was fair



Eisenhower: My answer? It's not a one agency mess, or even a one department mess, it's a top to bottom mess. And I promise we will clean it up from top to bottom.

game for an interview. The television audience was provided a broader look at how the politics of conventions worked. The unfavorable side was that in future years roving reporters and camera crews began to clog the aisles in their search for pundits, charlatans, and celebrities of all kinds, as well as delegates. Unfortunately, this generated competition among the networks for often meaningless, not to say misleading, scoops on the floor, sometimes blurring the true picture of the convention proceedings.

When the Democratic convention opened in Chicago in 1952, the party cooperated with the networks. The Democrats limited nominating speeches to 15 minutes and individual seconding speeches to five minutes. Floor demonstrations were limited to 20 minutes for each candidate placed in nomination. At the start, five candidates were in the running for the party's nomination. Almost before the rap of the opening gavel had faded away, however, the field narrowed. It was customary for the governor of the state to give an opening speech on the first day, and the governor of Illinois was then Adlai Stevenson. Truman had once favored Stevenson for the nomination, but the president later backed away. The governor had not tossed his hat into the ring, and he had no pledged delegates. His welcoming speech, however, was so exciting, so filled with music and good sense, that the convention was over almost before it began. The delegates were thrilled. Television viewers around the country sent telegrams. Truman again threw his support to Stevenson.

Before the week was out Stevenson was on his way to a hopeless campaign. The Democrats had been in power for 20 years. The Korean War had shredded Truman's popularity. The electorate was hungry for change, and the voices of the people said, unmistakably, "I like Ike." Stevenson never

succeeded in recapturing the magic of the welcoming speech, and it was the Eisenhower campaign that grasped the new techniques of the television age. Indeed, in their desperation for a winning issue, the Democrats charged that Madison Avenue had taken over Eisenhower. Stevenson said: "I don't think the American people want politics and the presidency to become the plaything of the high-pressure men . . . [T]his isn't Ivory Soap versus Palmolive." Stevenson stood aloof. One of his leading advisers, George Ball, lamented that Stevenson "obstinately refused to learn the skills of the effective television performer."

Eisenhower, however, did learn them. In fact, his campaign used the first spot television commercials in the history of presidential politics. When Eisenhower was president of Columbia University after the war, he became friends with Bruce Barton and Ben Duffy. During the 1952 campaign, Eisenhower trusted Duffy, president of the large advertising agency Batten, Barton, Durstine, and Osborn, and followed his advice and that of professional Republican politicians. They told Eisenhower that the formal set speech of earlier campaigns could not convey the warmth of his public personality. Of course, some such speeches would have to be made, but the new emphasis should be on informal television productions in which the candidate appeared to be talking to Americans individually. Where a set speech was necessary, it should be part of a large drama, a rally staged for paid political television and glittering with all the hoopla of a Hollywood premiere.

In city after city the Eisenhower campaign rolled into auditoriums bathed in spotlights. Arms overhead in his famous V-for-victory sign, he stepped out of the wings as a band was blaring. Mrs. Eisenhower beamed from a box, the crowd roared, and the television cameras caught it all.

Television speeches were held to 20

minutes, with frequent pauses for applause. On the road Eisenhower cut a handsome figure in a double-breasted camel's hair coat and brown fedora. At airport rallies or on the rear platform of a campaign train, he would often pull an egg from his pocket and ask the crowd, "Do you know how many taxes there are on one single egg?" If no one answered, he would reel off a list of levies that would make any good Republican shudder.

The men behind Eisenhower's television commercials were Rosser Reeves, Jr., of Ted Bates and Company advertising, and Michael Levin, a former Bates associate. In the early days of television, Bates had pioneered the clustering of spot advertisements before and after entertainment programs. Reeves was confident that television could market a politician as well as it marketed toothpaste. When he started to work on the campaign, Reeves first watched an Eisenhower political speech in Philadelphia on television. Reeves counted 32 separate points Eisenhower made and then dispatched a research team the next morning to ask people at random what Eisenhower had said. None of those questioned could say. Reeves then read all of Eisenhower's speeches and extracted a dozen important issues, but found them too diverse for sharp focus. From George Gallup he learned that the issues that most bothered Americans were the Korean War, corruption in Washington, and rising taxes and inflation. Thereupon, Reeves drafted 22 scripts and, in mid-September, joined Eisenhower in a Manhattan studio to have him read them from cue cards. What Eisenhower was reading were ostensibly his own answers to questions that had been written by Reeves. Reeves later insisted the answers were framed in words from various Eisenhower speeches. But who would ask the questions? They

would be asked by randomly chosen citizens, reading in front of a camera from the same cue cards. The respective questions and the respective answers would be spliced together. The questioners would never see Eisenhower. On the television screen, however, it would appear that they were face to face. "To think that an old soldier should come to this," Eisenhower commented in the studio as his brother, Milton S. Eisenhower, cleared the scripts.

Executives of NBC and CBS at first hesitated to run such simplistic material, arguing that the commercials were not up to the standards of a presidential campaign. Under pressure from Batten, Barton, Durstine, and Osborn, however, they yielded. Beginning in mid-October, 28 of the commercials were broadcast in 40 states. Commercials faking conversations between a candidate and citizens would be unacceptable today. Yet compared with the ugly commercials of later campaigns, the Eisenhower spots were mild fare. Overall, the campaign was a moderate one. Eisenhower never attacked Adlai Stevenson or Harry Truman. He surely did not need to rely on theatrics to defeat the Democrats in 1952. Unquestionably, the stagings and the commercials enlivened his campaign. More than that, they were harbingers of a style of politics that Eisenhower could not have foreseen and would not have liked.

The year 1952 was also pivotal in another way. Television networks for the first time covered state primaries. The coverage attracted national audiences. In January 1952, President Truman, a product of an era of political bosses and machines, had told a news conference, "All these primaries are just eyewash when the conventions meet." But he was wrong. The victory of the Eisenhower forces over Taft in New Hampshire, the first primary of the year, provided strong impetus for the gener-

al's drive at the Chicago convention. In the years that followed, primaries and caucuses multiplied as a result of democratizing reforms and the decline of party organizations. And to an extent Truman would not have believed, television coverage turned the primaries into crucial stepping-stones for candidates.

Instead of being eyewash, primaries determined the outcome of the nominating process. Once decisive, national conventions were reduced to gaudy gatherings that ratified decisions already made. When the selection of delegates to the conventions was largely in the hands of state party bosses, television had little to cover. But in 1952 the presidential aspirants began to campaign openly for delegates, and television moved in and covered the events for the public to see.

As primaries increased in number, the costs of running for office soared. With incalculable effect on the health of the political system, television advertising required candidates to raise vastly more money than ever before. In 1948, Truman's supporters had to pass the hat to collect enough cash to move his campaign train out of the station in Oklahoma City. By 1990 the amount of money spent just on political advertising was \$227.9 million. "In Washington today," Richard L. Berke wrote in the *New York Times* in 1989, "raising money takes nearly as much time as legislative work."

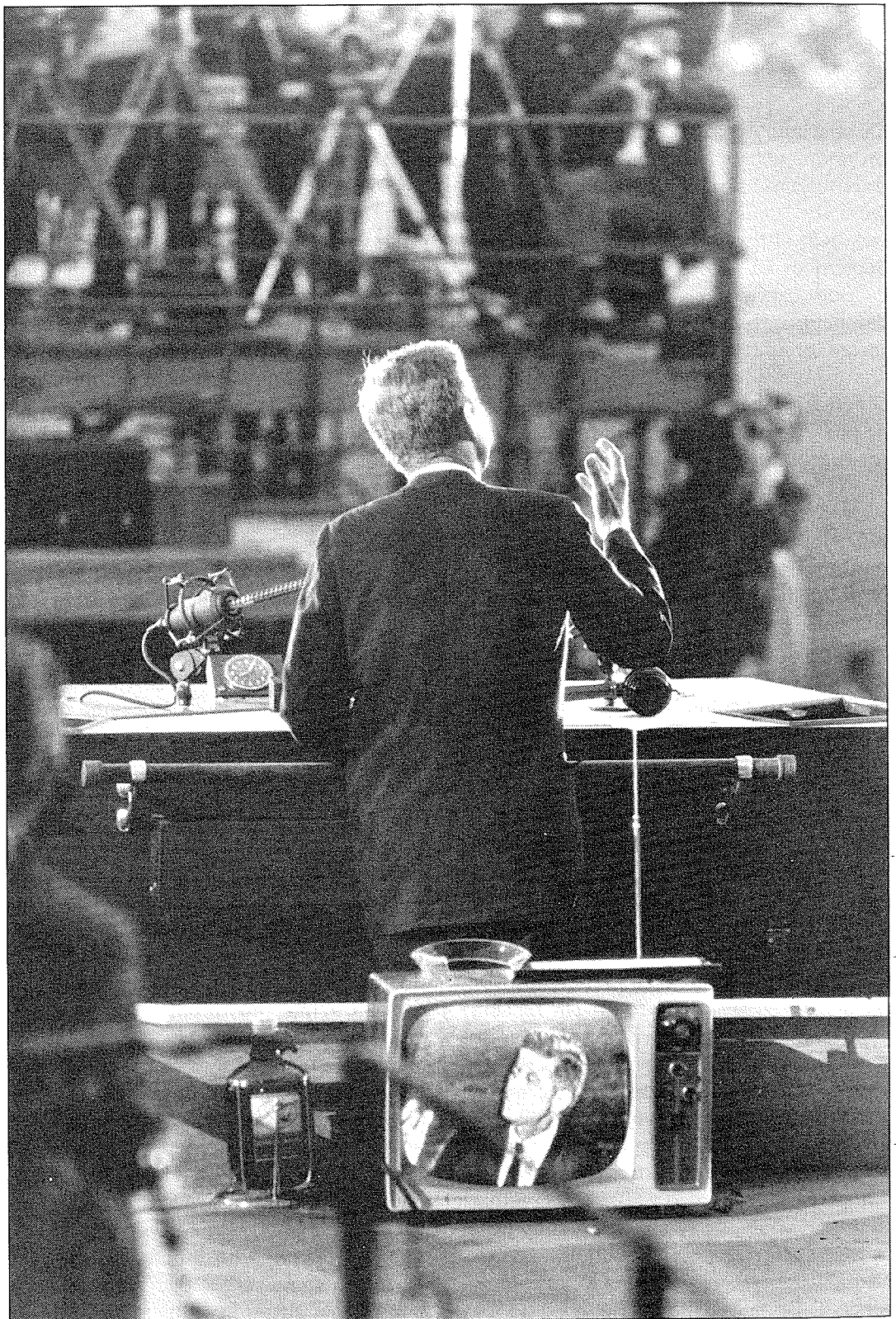


After 1952 the next stage in the magnification of television's role in elective politics came with the televised debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon in 1960. The networks that year were striving to improve

their image and reassure viewers of their dedication to the public interest. Television had just slogged through an embarrassing ordeal resulting from the fixing of weekly quiz programs. Cheating on two highly popular shows—"Twenty-One" and "The \$64,000 Question"—genuinely shocked the American public. Network executives, eager to demonstrate their civic-mindedness, conceived of the idea of televised debates between the Democratic and Republican nominees. In addition to huge audiences, the debates promised another benefit to the networks: a change in the Communications Act of 1934. Section 315 had long rankled broadcasting executives. It required that candidates for the same office be given equal treatment on the air. Long-shot presidential contenders from every party, not just the Democratic and Republican nominees, would have to be included, making the debates, in the networks' eyes, an impractical multilateral affair.

The networks invited Kennedy and Nixon to debate, subject to congressional action on the Communications Act. Kennedy immediately accepted. The debates would give him a great deal of national exposure, which he then lacked and might not readily get otherwise. Although he had less to gain and more to lose, Nixon, proud of his debating skills, agreed to face Kennedy, and Congress suspended Section 315.

Four debates were held at staggered intervals during the campaign. They covered different issues. "Since there was no precedent for this kind of televised debate," Nixon later wrote of the 1960 encounters, "we could only guess which program would have the larger audience. Foreign affairs was my strong suit, and I wanted the larger audience for that debate. I thought more people would watch the first one, and that interest would diminish as the novelty of the confrontation wore off." He was right. Nixon, however, heeded his advisers,



By 1960, when Senator John F. Kennedy addressed the Democratic convention, such gatherings had been largely reduced to elaborate stage sets for addressing a national audience.

all of whom were convinced that the last program, nearest election day, would attract the biggest audience. Domestic issues were the focus of the first debate, which was held at the CBS studio in Chicago on September 26.

Both candidates arrived in Chicago the day before. Kennedy was much the more rested of the two. Ill luck had befallen Nixon at the start of his campaign. In Greensboro, North Carolina, on August 17, he had bumped his knee getting into a car. An infection that set in forced him to stay in the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington from August 29 to September 9. He lost eight pounds—and looked it. As soon as he was discharged, he began campaigning furiously to make up for lost time and caught a cold.

Nixon did not arrive in Chicago on September 25 until 10:30 P.M., and even at that hour he visited some street rallies that kept him up until well after midnight. On the morning of the 26th he had to address a meeting of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. Meanwhile Kennedy rose early and spent four hours with members of his staff preparing for the debate. After lunch he, too, made a brief speech to the same union and then took a nap, while Nixon spent practically the entire afternoon reading in preparation for the debate. Nixon later wrote: "The tension continued to rise all afternoon. My entire staff obviously felt it just as I did. As we rode to the television studio, conversation was at a minimum as I continued to study my notes up to the last minute." When he got out of the car at the studio he painfully bumped his sore knee again. On greeting Kennedy inside, he was impressed by how fit the senator looked. "We could see that Nixon was nervous," Kennedy aide Lawrence O'Brien recalled. "He tried to be hearty, but it didn't come off."

CBS's Don Hewitt was the program's di-

rector. Ted Rogers was present, as Nixon's adviser, as was Kennedy's adviser, Bill Wilson. The vice president's pallor disturbed both Hewitt and Rogers. Aware that Nixon's skin needed makeup under bright studio lights, Rogers had requested that the vice president's makeup artist be brought to Chicago, but the campaign staff declined. Hewitt asked Nixon if he would like to be made up. "No," Nixon replied. Kennedy, well suntanned, did not need makeup. And, according to Hewitt, Nixon did not want to run the risk of having it reported that he was made up (an unmanly advantage) and Kennedy was not. In the end Nixon did use "Lazy Shave," a powder meant to cover his five o'clock shadow, but Hewitt did not think it was satisfactory.

Nixon used poor judgment in wearing a gray suit against the gray backdrop. He did not stand out on television screens nearly as sharply as Kennedy, who was handsomely dressed in a dark suit, blue shirt, and dark tie. Kennedy's manner throughout the debate was serious. By contrast, Nixon smiled often and somewhat nervously. Perhaps because of his sore knee, he sat awkwardly when he was not speaking. His tendency to perspire under studio lights quickly became noticeable, and it caused a quarrel in the control booth during the debate. Rogers was shocked when, without warning, Hewitt called for a reaction shot that caught Nixon apparently off guard. The shot showed Nixon wiping his brow and upper lip. Furiously, Rogers maintained that reaction shots had been disallowed by the rules and that Nixon had been brought into the picture unfairly in an undignified pose.

Many people who tuned into the first debate on radio rather than on television thought that Nixon had the better of it. He was careful about making effective debating points. But, as Theodore H. White, the

shrewd chronicler of presidential elections in the 1960s and '70s, observed, Nixon "was debating with Mr. Kennedy as if a board of judges were scoring points; he rebutted and refuted, as he went . . . Nixon was addressing himself to Kennedy—but Kennedy was addressing himself to the audience that was the nation."

In retrospect, Nixon characterized the first debate as a setback for him. He was in much better health for the last three and at the very least held his own. But those debates did not engage the public to the degree the first one had. Even the first debate failed to cause anything like a decisive swing in either direction in the Gallup poll. Kennedy retained the slight lead he had held through September. Nixon's sense of a setback contrasted with renewed optimism around Kennedy. His staff was ecstatic because when Kennedy resumed campaigning after Chicago, he suddenly seemed to attract more excited crowds, as though people were flocking toward a winner. Certainly, the concerns of Eisenhower and other Republicans had been realized: Kennedy, the younger and supposedly less experienced candidate, had looked more presidential on television than Nixon.

Because no overriding issues defined the 1960 campaign, the importance of the Nixon-Kennedy debates lay largely in the images projected on television. Whether these images determined the election outcome is hard to say. The margin of Kennedy's victory—112,881 votes—was so narrow that it is impossible to single out as decisive any one factor, even one as important as the debates.

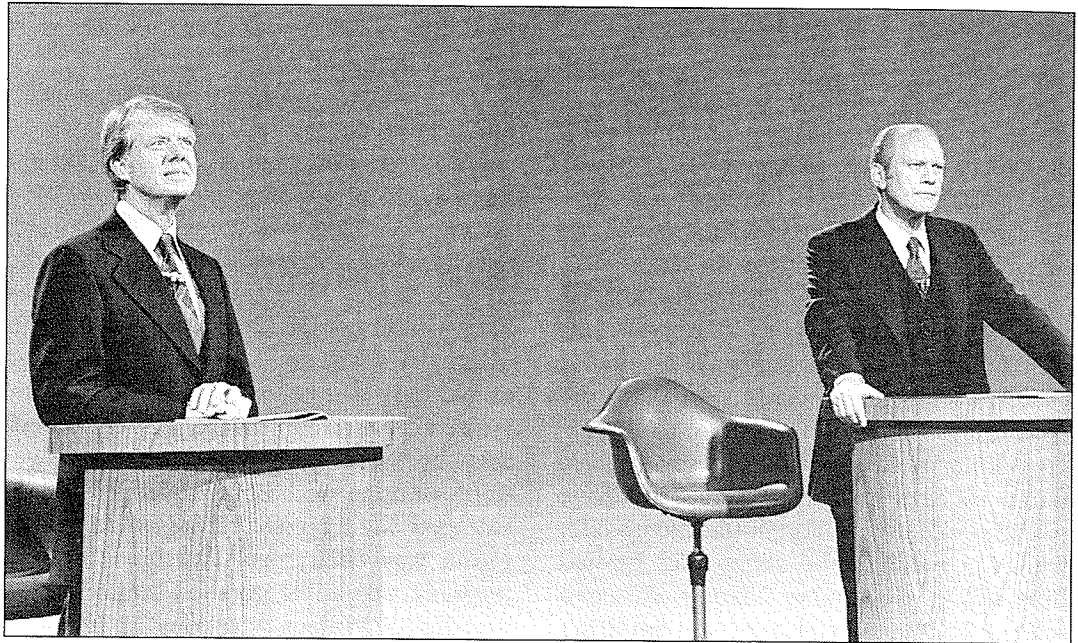
Nixon learned his lesson, though. His campaign against Hubert Humphrey in 1968 marked a radical turn toward reliance on television. From his disastrous debate with Kennedy in 1960, Nixon concluded that "I had concentrated too much on substance and not enough on appearance. I

should have remembered that 'a picture is worth a thousand words.'"

Surrounded by advertising men, consultants, lawyers, and speechwriters, Nixon centered his campaign in 1968 not just on television but on controlled, manipulated television. In this way his election strategy foreshadowed those of Ronald Reagan and George Bush. Nixon's daily appearances were carefully staged to project a certain image of himself and his programs. Vestiges of old-style campaigning, still pursued by Hubert Humphrey, were largely swept aside by Nixon. Only four years earlier Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater had stumped the country tirelessly. As far as Nixon was concerned, that kind of campaigning was as far gone as the torchlight parades for William McKinley in 1896.

Nixon's campaign staff read excerpts from Marshall McLuhan's book *Understanding Media* (1964). "The success of any TV performer," one of the excerpts said, "depends on his achieving a low-pressure style of presentation." Lowering the intensity of Nixon's earlier political behavior was a crucial part of the strategy for Nixon in the 1968 campaign. Reliance on controlled appearances on television facilitated this. He would not debate Humphrey. He avoided reporters. A memorandum to Nixon on November 16, 1967, by Leonard Garment, one of the bright and reputable persons on his staff, said that Nixon must try to get "above the battle, moving *away* from politics and *toward* statesmanship." To this end Garment advocated "a fundamentally philosophical orientation, consistently executed, rather than a program-oriented, issues-oriented, or down-in-the-streets campaign."

The availability and lure of television completely transformed Nixon's customary manner of running for office. This strategy was followed even more rigidly four years later in his reelection campaign. Likening



Power failure: When a short circuit cut off TV coverage of their 1976 debate, President Gerald Ford and Governor Jimmy Carter spoke not a word to each other for 27 minutes.

Nixon to “a touring emperor” rather than a candidate for president, the *Washington Post*’s David Broder declared that the “Nixon entourage seems to be systematically stifling the kind of dialogue that has in the past been thought to be the heart of a presidential campaign.” The age of the “handled” candidate had fully arrived.

The arts of handling were not lost on the Democrats. Well before the presidential election of 1976, Jimmy Carter received a memorandum from his assistant, Hamilton Jordan. Recently retired as governor of Georgia, Carter was thinking about running for president. Jordan gave him this advice: “We would do well to understand the very special and powerful role the press plays in interpreting the primary results for the rest of the nation. What is actually accomplished in the New Hampshire primary is less important than how the press interprets it for the rest of the nation.”

If recognition of that kind was impor-

tant to Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy, both nationally known figures when they ran for president, it was surely essential to Carter, unknown to most of the country in the mid-1970s. Grasping this reality, he made a shrewd decision to focus first on the Iowa Democratic caucuses of 1976, which would precede the New Hampshire primary. It was a testing ground that had been largely ignored by presidential aspirants in previous years.

Carter began cultivating Iowa Democrats in 1975. His strategy clicked. On October 27, the Iowa Democrats held a Jefferson–Jackson Day fundraising dinner at Iowa State University in Ames, at which a straw vote was to be taken. Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn were on hand. Carter’s staff, especially pleased that R. W. Apple, Jr., of the *New York Times* was covering the affair, did their best to pack the place with Carter supporters. When Carter won a definite victory—23 percent of the 1,094 re-

spondents, the largest individual share—Apple filed a story about the Georgian’s “dramatic progress.” Carter, he reported, “appears to have taken a surprising but solid lead” in the race for Iowa delegates.

On January 19, 1976, the day of the caucuses, Carter flew not to Iowa but to New York City, where he talked about his victory on the late-night television specials and the next morning’s network news shows. At one point Roger Mudd said on CBS: “No amount of badmouthing by others can lessen the importance of Jimmy Carter’s finish. He was a clear winner in this psychologically important test.” This was exactly what Hamilton Jordan had had in mind. Carter went on to win the New Hampshire, Florida, and Ohio primaries and was nominated at the Democratic National Convention in New York in July.

Seldom had there been a better time for a Democrat to run. In the previous four years, Vice President Spiro Agnew had resigned in disgrace, Nixon had resigned to avoid impeachment, and Watergate had horrified the country. In 1976 the Republican nominee was Gerald Ford, who had succeeded Agnew as vice president and then Nixon as president. As chief executive he had soothed the nation’s shock over Nixon and Agnew. Yet he had damaged himself with a sudden, surprising, and ill-prepared announcement that he had granted Nixon a presidential pardon. On top of that, in a televised campaign debate with Carter, Ford blundered by asserting, “There is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe.” Run and run again on the networks, in the familiar way television magnifies an incident, it caused people to say, in effect, what Ford himself was to say 13 years later: “I blew it.” Carter won the election.

Ford was an exception among Republicans. Beginning with Eisenhower in 1952,

the Republicans—Nixon (except in 1960), Ronald Reagan, and George Bush—have gotten the better of their opposition on television. These Republican candidates were not necessarily better or more honest than their Democratic opponents, but their appeal to television audiences was somehow more compelling. In experts such as Michael Deaver, Roger Ailes, and Lee Atwater, the Republicans enlisted more skillful tacticians than the Democrats employed. Certainly, the Republican edge was clear in the 1984 campaign between Reagan and former Vice President Walter Mondale. In his book on the campaign, journalist Martin Schram wrote that President Reagan had “skillfully mastered the ability to step through the television tubes and join Americans in their living rooms.” Schram called Reagan and Deaver “pols who understand TV better than TV people themselves.”

Indeed, by 1984 television news executives were striving to keep their news programs from being manipulated by political image-makers. In a picture medium, however, this was not always easy to do. “If Ronald Reagan makes a speech in front of the Statue of Liberty, and the speech has news in it,” Joseph Angotti, then an NBC political director, said, “there is no way we can show Reagan without showing the statue behind him.”

On July 4, 1984, the best shot Walter Mondale could offer television evening news was of himself at home in Minnesota, talking with Mayor Henry Cisneros of San Antonio, a potential vice-presidential nominee. Reagan, aboard Air Force One, was on his way to the annual Daytona 500 stock car race and a picnic with 1,200 of the fans. As the plane, equipped with television cameras inside the cabin to catch the president, swooped down, he picked up a radio-telephone, sang out the traditional “Gentlemen, start your

engines," and then sent the cars thundering down the track. Furthermore, after he arrived at the stands, packed with 80,000 spectators, he sat in for a while as guest commentator on the racing circuit radio network. It was all lively fare on the network evening news.

By October 7, 1984, the date of the first televised debate in Louisville between the candidates, Mondale was trailing so badly in the polls that practically his only hope lay in this confrontation with Reagan. So much aware of it was Mondale that he practiced in the dining room of his house in Washington, which, for the purpose, had been converted into a mock television studio with two podiums. Under bright lights members of his staff fired questions at him before a camera. His answers were played back until he had memorized them. Then, to almost universal surprise, he went to Louisville and so unmistakably carried the day that the polls indicated an incipient turnabout in the campaign. It was not the dining room rehearsals that changed things. Rather, for the first time the Gipper, at the age of 73, blew it on television. He hardly seemed the telegenic master campaigner who had ousted the incumbent Carter four years earlier. He was worn out. He was confused. He was not himself. "Reagan is really old," Mondale told an aide after the debate. "I don't know if he could have gone another 15 minutes."

What had been seen on television suddenly changed the overriding issue of the presidential campaign. Two days later a headline in the *Wall Street Journal* read: "New Question in Race: Is Oldest U.S. President Now Showing His Age? Reagan Debate Performance Invites Open Speculation on His Ability to Serve."

Other newspapers and the networks took up the question. Some television news programs spliced scenes from the debate with shots of the president dozing during

an audience with Pope John Paul XXIII.

By the time of the second debate on October 22 in Kansas City, the drama centered on Reagan's appearance and the state of his alertness. Beforehand, his technicians went to the studio and changed lighting angles and candlepower to give him more of a glow. When the two contenders appeared, the president was poised and wide awake. He seemed more rested than before. His self-confidence was palpable. "They pumped him up with sausage and he looked okay," Mondale recalled long afterward. Reagan knew what pitch was coming. His eye was on the center field stands when, sure enough, a reporter on the panel reminded him of the youthful John Kennedy's ordeal over the Cuban missile crisis and asked Reagan if he himself was "too old to handle a nuclear crisis." Crack went the bat. "I am not," the president replied, "going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience." The whole country watched the ball sail over the fence. "When I walked out of there," Mondale said, "I knew it was all over."



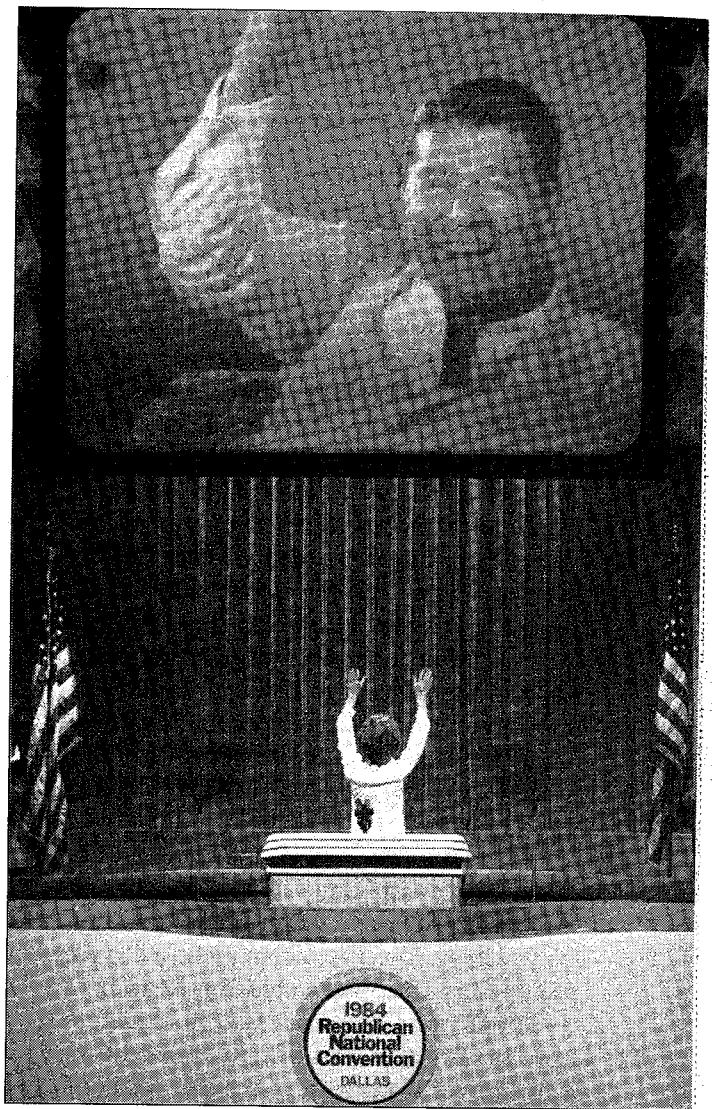
The 1988 campaign was the culmination, in many ways the nadir, of practices, strategies, manipulations, and distortions that had been multiplying in elections almost since the advent of television news. Television spots, or commercials, were more numerous and, on the whole, more unpleasant than in any previous campaign. Discussion of issues was more than ever reduced to sound bites measured in seconds. Mostly, the blame for the tone fell not on the loser, Governor Michael S. Dukakis, but on the winner, George Bush, whose campaign, neverthe-

less, was the more effective.

Bush advocated, among other measures, a day-care program for children. He promised a vigorous attack on the drug scourge. But after he was inaugurated on January 20, 1989, it was evident that the more conspicuous issues with which he had saturated the campaign—which candidate liked the flag better, which disliked murders more—had little to do with governing the country.

The previous June, Michael Dukakis, the Democratic frontrunner, had swept four states, including California and New Jersey, on the last primary day. A *Wall Street Journal*-NBC News survey taken June 9-12 showed Dukakis leading Bush for the presidency, 49 to 34. A Gallup poll of June 10-12 indicated that Dukakis enjoyed a lead of 52 to 38. Then the lead sagged. Dukakis did not do much to sustain it. Bush managed to make more news. Dukakis was nominated in Atlanta in mid-July by a well-unified party. As best he could, he finessed the ambition of Jesse Jackson and, hoping the choice would help him in the South, selected Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas as the vice-presidential nominee. As a climax, Dukakis delivered a good acceptance speech.

For the Democrats it was an uphill struggle after Atlanta. Probably the elements made it a Republican year, willy-nilly. Bush was riding a tide of peace, prosperity, conservatism, and enduring resentment in some regions of the country against the civil-rights reforms of past Democratic administrations. A sharp Republican team knew the rough way to play, and the Democrats did not know how to fight back. Republican veterans created television commercials and photo opportunities on emotional subjects such as blue-collar crime, prisons, patriotism, and the welfare



The master of the medium: President Ronald Reagan greets the 1984 Republican convention in Dallas via television.

cans effectively branded Dukakis a 1960s-style liberal and, *ipso facto*, soft on crime, committed to heavy civilian public spending, and niggardly on defense appropriations. For all the vulnerabilities of the Reagan administration, Dukakis failed to frame a winning issue.

The Bush team had no such trouble. Well before the conventions, Lee Atwater asked Jim Pinkerton, the chief researcher, to make a list of issues that might help bring Dukakis down. Pinkerton returned with a three-by-five card on which he had noted Dukakis's positions on taxes and national defense, his veto of a Massachusetts bill requiring the Pledge of Allegiance in

the classroom, the state of pollution in Boston Harbor, and Dukakis's opposition to the death penalty. The list also contained something Pinkerton had discovered in the text of a debate among Democratic contenders before the April presidential primaries in New York. Senator Albert Gore, Jr., of Tennessee had questioned Dukakis about a Massachusetts prisoner-furlough program. Pinkerton went on to discover that an imprisoned murderer named William (Willie) Horton, Jr., an African American, had received a weekend pass and then raped a woman. After this atrocity Governor Dukakis had the procedure changed to bar furloughs for convicted murderers. Nevertheless, the Bush campaign seized on this tragedy as a way to accuse Dukakis of being soft on crime.

To make, in effect, a market test of issues, Bush consultants had two so-called focus groups of voters organized in Paramus, New Jersey. The participants chosen were Democrats who had voted for Reagan in 1984 but who, four years later, intended to vote for Dukakis. Out of sight behind two-way mirrors, the Bush experts watched with increasing jubilation the reactions of these voters as moderators in each group introduced them to the issues on Pinkerton's card. According to later reports, 40 percent of one group and 60 percent of the other said they would switch to Bush. "I realized right there," Atwater was reported to have said, "that we had the wherewithal to win . . . and that the sky was the limit on Dukakis's negatives."

A conference was held the following weekend at the Bush home in Kennebunkport. According to a report in *Time*, Bush was hesitant about a negative campaign of attacks on Dukakis, but then yielded. Most states had a prisoner-furlough program. The one in Massachusetts had been enacted under former Governor Frank Sargent. The fact that Sargent was a Republican did not

bother Roger Ailes, who proceeded with work on a commercial showing prisoners exiting jail through a revolving gate. A voice said, "[Dukakis's] revolving-door prison policy gave weekend furloughs to first-degree murderers not eligible for parole. While out, many committed other crimes like kidnapping and rape and many are still at large. Now Michael Dukakis says he wants to do for America what he has done for Massachusetts. Americans can't afford that risk." This first commercial did not use a photograph of Horton.

It was a second prison-furlough commercial, sponsored by the National Security Political Action Committee, that used a photograph of a glowering Horton. "Bush and Dukakis on crime," an announcer said. Then a photograph of Bush and the comment, "Bush supports the death penalty." Next a photograph of Dukakis and the observation, "Dukakis not only opposes the death penalty, he allows first-degree murderers to have weekend passes from prison." Finally, a mugshot of Horton. The ad appeared throughout the country on cable television for 28 days. The *New York Times* assigned three reporters to get the story of its production. According to the investigation, the National Security Political Action Committee claimed the quiet support of the Bush staff. Lloyd Bentsen was among the first to label the commercial racist. The Bush people earnestly retorted that Horton was not chosen because of his color. Yet, as a symbol of white fear of African American criminals, his menacing visage could scarcely have been improved upon. At an early point Pinkerton told Atwater, "The more people who know who Willie Horton is, the better off we'll be."

In the history of the republic, political campaigns have at times been so full of strife, libel, nastiness, and brawling that the Willie Horton ad does not stand alone

on the horizon by any means. The resonance and impact of political attack, however, have been magnified beyond measure by the technology that brought the menacing image of Horton into millions of American homes simultaneously. Reaction to people and events can be massive and immediate nowadays. In their book on the 1988 campaign, Peter Goldman and Tom Mathews likened television "in the hands of the new managers" to what napalm might have been in General Sherman's hands. "You could scorch a lot more earth with a lot less wasted time and effort."

After Bush's victory at the polls, NBC called in its campaign reporters and producers for a critical reassessment of the problems of covering the campaign for television. The names of the participants were not disclosed, but here is what one Washington-based reporter said: "The great ugly secret of campaigns is this: Not much happens. The candidates give the same speech over and over again to different audiences. Because we won't report the same speeches over and over again, we are left to do the photo-ops and the inner workings of the campaign." Another reporter complained about the problems of logistics. "[Airplane] coverage involves so much shlepping around from baggage call to staged events and then a frantic race to the television feed-point [that] there is little time and less energy for the kind of research and reporting that shapes a thoughtful report, and that's when it's very easy to accept balloons and sound-bite candy."

The tendency toward an ever more pivotal role for television in presidential campaigns reached new and troubling heights in 1988. The candidates' so-called media managers had become masters of getting

their messages across in television commercials and in events staged for television. For the television industry this produced the deep dilemma of how to use the pictures without becoming entrapped in stagecraft. Television techniques all but displaced old-time political campaigning as the focus of coverage. Reporters began to sound like drama critics.

The waves of changes that began with the televising of the national conventions in 1948 had, by 1988, transformed the mode, mechanics, and theater of elective politics. To be sure, television has not eliminated ethnic, religious, and racial preferences among voters, or the ancient division between Left and Right, or people's tendency to vote their pocket-books. The effect of television is secondary to what ABC's Jeff Greenfield has called "the shaping influences of American political life . . . embodied in political realities." Politicians, more than political scientists and journalists, have exalted the importance of television. They have done so not only in words but in actions. For more than 40 years they have not been able to stay away from television. It is the thing that matters most to them. By listening to their own words it is possible to judge where the dividing line lay between what politics was before 1948, when television news was born, and what politics has been since. The day after his dramatic victory over Dewey in 1948, Truman articulated the essence of the "old politics" when he said, "Labor did it." A mere 12 years later, after defeating Nixon in 1960, Kennedy's comment went to the heart of the "new politics." "It was TV more than anything else," he said, "that turned the tide."

SOUND BITE DEMOCRACY

by Daniel C. Hallin

The tyranny of the sound bite has been universally denounced as a leading cause of the low state of America's political discourse. "If you couldn't say it in less than 10 seconds," former governor Michael Dukakis declared after the 1988 presidential campaign, "it wasn't heard because it wasn't aired." Somewhat chastened, the nation's television networks now are suggesting that they will be more generous in covering the 1992 campaign, and some candidates have already been allowed as much as a minute on the evening news. However, a far more radical change would be needed to return even to the kind of coverage that prevailed in 1968.

During the Nixon-Humphrey contest that year, nearly one-quarter of all sound bites were a minute or longer, and occasionally a major political figure would speak for more than two minutes. Segments of that length do not guarantee eloquent argument, but they do at least allow viewers to grasp the sense of an argument, to glimpse the logic and character of a candidate. By 1988, however, only *four percent of all sound bites were as long as 20 seconds*. The average was a mere 8.9 seconds, barely long enough to spit out, "Read my lips: No new taxes."

The shrinking sound bite is actually the tip of a very large iceberg: It reflects a fundamental change in the structure of news

stories and the role of the journalist in putting them together. Today, TV news is much more "mediated" by journalists than it was during the 1960s and early '70s. Anchors and reporters who once played a relatively passive role, frequently doing little more than setting the scene for the candidate or other newsmaker whose speech would dominate the report, now more actively "package" the news. This new style of reporting is not so much a product of journalistic *hubris* as the result of several converging forces—technological, political, and economic—that have altered the imperatives of TV news.

To appreciate the magnitude of this extraordinary change, it helps to look at specific examples. On October 8, 1968, Walter Cronkite anchored a CBS story on the campaigns of Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey that had five sound bites averaging 60 seconds. Twenty years later, on October 4, Peter Jennings presided over ABC's coverage of the contest between George Bush and Michael Dukakis that featured 10 sound bites averaging 8.5 seconds.

Today's television journalist displays a much different attitude toward the words of candidates and other newsmakers from that of his predecessor. Now such words, rather than simply being reproduced and transmitted to the audience, are treated as raw material to be taken apart, combined with other sounds and images, and woven into a new narrative. Greater use is made of

outside material, such as “expert” opinion intended to put the candidates’ statements and actions into perspective, and “visuals,” including both film and graphics. Unlike their predecessors, today’s TV journalists generally impose on all of these elements the unity of a clear story line. The 1988 ABC report on the Dukakis campaign has a single organizing theme that runs from beginning to end: Dukakis’s three-part “game plan.” By contrast, on the Cronkite broadcast Bill Plante offers some interpretation of Nixon’s strategy, but his report does not have a consistent unifying theme. It simply ends with Nixon speaking. The modern “wrap-up” is another contemporary convention that has put the journalist at center stage, allowing him to package the story in a way that earlier reports normally were not. As a result of these changes, sound bites filled only 5.7 percent of election coverage during Campaign ’88, down from 17.6 percent 20 years earlier.

The transformation of television’s campaign coverage is part of a broader change in television journalism. One reason for that change is the technical evolution of the medium, not only in the narrow technological sense—graphics generators, electronic editing units, and satellites—but in the evolution of television “know-how” and an emerging television aesthetic. It simply took television people—often, until recent times, trained in radio or print—a long time to develop a sense of how to communicate through this new medium. Much of the television news of the 1960s and early ’70s, a period lionized today as the golden age of the medium, seems in hindsight not only technically primitive compared to today’s but less competent—dull, disorganized, and difficult to follow.

Yet technological explanations for political and cultural changes rarely stand by



The Gettysburg Address rendered in the standard of the 1988 campaign: an 8.9-second sound bite.

themselves. They do not explain, for example, why sound bites shrank much more radically for certain types of people than for others. In 1968 the average sound bite for candidates and other “elites” was 48.9 seconds; for ordinary voters it was 13.6 seconds. By 1988 the elites were allowed only 8.9 seconds, voters 4.2 seconds. Film editors in 1968 knew *how* to produce short sound bites, but they did not consider them appropriate or necessary when covering major political figures.

A second reason for these changes has to do with the political upheavals of Vietnam and Watergate, as well as the evolution of election campaigning, which pushed all of American journalism in the direction of more active, critical reporting. Of course it was not only journalism that changed. After hearing some of my conclusions about sound bites and packaging in 1990, NBC’s John Chancellor responded by saying, “Well, the politicians started it.” And there is much truth to this. In 1968 the Nixon campaign hired Roger Ailes, formerly a producer of the *Mike Douglas Show*, to create a series of one-hour television shows in which Nixon would be questioned by “ordinary” citizens. These shows

were built around "production values" of a sort that television journalists had barely begun to consider. According to the memos reproduced in Joe McGinniss's *The Selling of the President, 1968*, Ailes even carefully measured the length of Nixon's answers to questions and coached him to shape and shorten them to the medium's needs.

Responding to alarms about the threat of media manipulation by political image-makers, journalists soon began taking a more adversarial stance toward the candidates, dissecting their statements and describing their image-making strategies. This has made campaign reporting more analytical—and also more negative. Suddenly campaign aides were called "handlers," and by 1988 TV journalists were broadcasting stories of unprecedented toughness, such as this one by Bruce Morton on September 13, 1988:

"Biff! Bang! Powie! It's not a bird; it's not a plane; it's presidential candidate Michael Dukakis in an M1 tank as staff and reporters whoop it up. In the trade of politics it's called a visual.... If your candidate is seen in the polls as weak on defense, put him in a tank."

Still, the turn toward analytical and sometimes more adversarial reporting did not dictate the more staccato pace of news reporting. The third factor behind the change was a major shift in the economics of the broadcasting industry. Until the 1970s, the networks viewed news as a prestige "loss leader." CBS and NBC had expanded their evening news broadcasts from 15 to 30 minutes in 1963 not to make money but to make a show of serious public service in response to criticism by Congress, the Federal Communications Com-

mission, and the public, particularly since the quiz show scandals of 1959. By the early 1970s, however, individual station owners were discovering that local news shows could make a great deal of money; indeed, by the end of the decade, it was common for a station to derive 60 percent of its profit from local news. As competition intensified, stations hired consultants to recommend ways of holding viewers' attention, and the advice often pointed in the direction of more tightly structured and fast-paced news presentations.

Similar competitive pressures began to build at the network level after 1977, when ABC began its successful drive to make its news division equal to those of CBS and NBC. The rise of cable and independent stations in the 1980s crowded the field still more, and the Reagan administration's substantial deregulation of broadcasting reduced the political impetus to insulate the news divisions from ratings criteria. The barriers between network news and the rest of commercial television began to fall. Network TV journalists have since felt increasing pressure to incorporate the same kind of "production values" as local newscasters and the rest of television.

It should be said that TV news is now much better in many ways than it was two decades ago. It is, first of all, often more interesting to watch. It is also more serious journalism. Media critics pressed the networks to be less passive, to tell the public more about the candidates' image-making strategies, and the networks have responded. This is surely an advance. Some of today's more analytical stories also involve a kind of coverage of serious issues that was uncommon years ago, including

Daniel C. Hallin, associate professor of communication at the University of California, San Diego, is currently a Fellow at the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center at Columbia University. This is a shortened version of an essay that won the 1990 Essay Contest in Media Studies, sponsored by the Wilson Center's Media Studies Project. Copyright © 1991 by Daniel C. Hallin.

"truth squad" stories that examine candidates' claims about their records and those of their opponents.

While all of this is to the good, there is still a great deal about recent trends in campaign coverage that should unsettle citizens and journalists. It is disturbing that the public rarely has a chance to hear a candidate—or anyone else—speak for more than about 20 seconds. Showing humans speaking is something television can do very effectively. To be sure, some of the long sound bites in early television news were unenlightening. It is hard to see what viewers gained in 1968 by hearing Richard Nixon ramble on for 43 seconds about his Aunt Olive. But often it was extremely interesting to hear a politician, or occasionally a community leader or ordinary voter, utter an entire paragraph. One gained an understanding of the person's character and beliefs that a 10-second sound bite simply cannot provide. One also had the opportunity to judge matters for oneself, something that the modern "wrap-up" denies.

It seems likely, moreover, that whoever may have "started it," the modern form of TV news encourages exactly the kind of campaigning—based on one-liners and symbolic "visuals"—that journalists love to hate. What greater irony is there than a TV journalist complaining about the candidates' one-liners in a report that makes its points with 8.9-second sound bites? The reality is that one-liners and symbolic visuals are what TV producers put on the air; it is not surprising that the candidates' "handlers" gravitate toward them.

The rise of mediated TV news has bred a preoccupation with campaign technique and a kind of "inside dopester" perspective that puts the image-making and horse-race metaphors at the center of politics and

pushes real discourse to the margins. It has also allowed political insiders to dominate discussion on the airwaves. (Ordinary voters, featured in more than 20 percent of sound bites in 1972 and '76, claimed only three-four percent in 1984 and '88.) Voters now appear in the news essentially to illustrate poll results and almost never to contribute ideas or arguments to campaign coverage. Here again the position of TV news is ironic. Just as TV folk decry "photo-opportunity" and "sound-bite" campaigning even while building the news around them, so they decry the vision of the campaign consultant, with its emphasis on technique over substance, while adopting that culture as their own. There are times, indeed, when it is hard to tell the journalists from the political technicians, as when Dan Rather, in live coverage following the first Bush-Dukakis debate in 1988, asked a series of pollsters and campaign aides questions such as, "You're making a George Bush commercial and you're looking for a sound bite . . . What's his best shot?"

All of this gives television coverage of political campaigns, as sociologist Todd Gitlin has pointed out, a kind of knowing, postmodern cynicism that debunks the image and the image-maker and yet in the end seems to accept them as the only reality citizens have left. There is no reason to wax nostalgic over the politics or the passive television journalism of 1968. But television then did give viewers the notion that the presidential campaign was at its core important, that it was essentially a public debate about the future of the nation. Sophisticated and technically brilliant as it may be, modern television news no longer conveys that sense of seriousness about campaign politics and its place in American democracy.

HOW TO READ THE CAMPAIGN

by Michael Cornfield

An autumn episode of America's most consistently intelligent and fiercely realistic prime-time television series opened with Homer Simpson watching the news. "And, to conclude this Halloween newscast on a scary note," said the anchorman, "remember, the presidential primaries are only a few months away. Heh-heh-heh."

There is no escaping now. Since mid-January, the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* have allocated at least one full inside page to the 1992 campaign every day. CNN has been airing at a minimum a half-hour program every weekday. The newsmagazines and the other broadcast networks have cut back their campaign coverage budgets but not, it seems, on column inches and minutes. "Coverage" seems too mild a word to describe the reports, round tables, polls, predictions, analyses, profiles, rumors, shoptalk, advertisements, call-in shows, and comedy routines geared to the presidential campaigns. This is super-coverage, a Niagara of coverage—or, in the vernacular of television, "our continuing coverage."

Increasingly, this coverage continues by covering itself. Expressions of concern about the power of the media to distort campaign results and to sour the electorate on national politics have become part of the usual campaign clamor. (Such media

self-criticism reached a crescendo, for example, during the controversy over Governor Bill Clinton's alleged adultery.) In the universities and think tanks, critical reports have proliferated; Harvard University alone published three by the end of 1991. Many reform proposals have merit, but their oft-repeated condemnations of the "vicious cycle" of trivialized discourse, as it is frequently called, only serve the literary function of absolving all parties of guilt. To gather journalists, politicians, and scholars around a conference table and emerge with lists of recommendations on improving the process is also to give the screw another downward turn.

The "vicious cycle" also refers to a second problem: the irresistibility of the version of events that media coverage generates. The source of this irresistibility has less to do with the conduct and motives of individual politicians and journalists than with the dynamics of the whole subculture to which they (and thousands in the audience) belong.

Members of this subculture—the self-proclaimed "junkies" of presidential politics—share a language, perspective, and set of priorities. They are the audience for the daily *Presidential Campaign Hotline*, a kind of campaign tip sheet that is sent by fax or computer feed to subscribers. It is a safe bet that many *Hotline* clients grew up reading the books of Theodore H. White, beginning with *The Making of the President, 1960*.

White's great discovery was that the news swapped among campaign insiders could be consolidated into the classic story form of a melodramatic contest. Journalists have long since learned how to weave the foreground events of a campaign (speeches, debates, elections) together with the daily mass of background talk and memoranda to generate White-like narratives on a daily basis. This form of storytelling, however, is a source of the irresistibility that afflicts campaign journalism.

What is it that cannot be resisted? Call it Topic A. At any moment during the campaign, one topic dominates the subculture buzz: the David Duke phenomenon, Mario Cuomo's indecision, the president's bout of stomach flu in Japan, the Clintons' marriage, Patrick Buchanan's surprise showing in the primaries. Topic A is often symbolized by a segment of videotape on which a "defining moment" has been recorded. Whenever the topic comes up thereafter, images and dialogue from the videotape will spring to mind.

Ah, but what meanings will be associated with the defining moment? For the few days a story topic is Topic A, elite members of the subculture rush to shape its most widely accepted connotation. To many people inside the subculture, the identity of the next president seems to hinge on the battles for authority that each Topic A sets off and that each defining moment seems to resolve. There lies the devil's lure. Most journalists do not want to be manipulated; most politicians want to (and do) stake out serious positions on issues; and most academics want to compose scholarly accounts of the election. But each party to the vicious cycle gets yanked along the way-

ward story line that the string of Topic A's constructs. Wherever coverage continues, there all eyes and ears are drawn.

The "vicious cycle" and "defining moment" are recent examples of storytelling conventions that have emerged from this subcultural vortex—alas, with consequences that are not always helpful to the public's understanding. Such conventions enable junkies to quickly encode the latest topic A into a readable account of presidential campaigns.

Sometimes reliance on these conventions—and I shall examine four of them: the "road," "momentum," the "professionals," and "tests of character"—makes for apt descriptions of what is going on in presidential campaigns. Too often, however, an almost unconscious reliance on these stock formulas causes the subculture to miss the real story. And what we get instead, as "The Simpsons" joke suggests, too often resembles a shaggy dog story.

'The Road'

TV reporters who cover the day-to-day workings of government can do stand-ups in front of the Capitol or the State Department, but those who cover campaigns have a problem: Their story may



take them to many places and settings. To make sense of all this, they collectively draw a chronological line through all of the moves of the top candidates and call it the "road to the White House." This enables them to tell a story of a journey with a clear destination.

On the campaign road the race is run, the motorcade passes through, the bandwagon rolls, and the press bus follows. This is where losers come back after a period in the wilderness (Nixon '68), and unknowns come from out of nowhere (Carter '76). Democratic candidates travel the road low to high, carrying the historically marginal groups they personify (e.g., Irish Catholics, southerners, women, Greek immigrants) into the capital city of national respectability. Republicans head down to Washington alone, reluctantly, on leave from the private sector, to right a capital sunk in corruption and mismanagement. The road warriors of both parties are outsiders with new ideas who lead grass-roots movements against entrenched interest groups. It is a simple matter to drop each of this year's contenders into one of these categories; indeed, many have tried to shape their image to fill a particular role.

Journalists hope for a close race to sustain audience interest, and their reports can subtly influence perceptions. In 1979 political scientist C. Anthony Broh noted several ways that reporters stoke the feeling of suspense. They highlight "quotes" from representatives of undecided segments of the populace, adjust the length of the time period in which "recent" results are displayed (to emphasize the narrowing gap between candidates), and provide technical information about the range of error in opinion polls to intimate the unpredictability of the impending election.

Long before it became a journalistic convention, "the road" for Americans was a mythic place where individuals escaped conformity, oppression, and deprivation, where the romance or friendship of a lifetime might be forged, and where pilgrims searched for a higher ground. But the reality of contemporary politics makes it difficult to maintain such a convention. Campaign information from one stop on the road is instantaneously dispatched through an electronic grid to every other potential stop. Primaries and caucuses that occur simultaneously in states—notably "Super Tuesday," which came on March 10 this year—also fracture the sense of a journey. And the political nominating convention, that crucial way station on roads past, now seems as superfluous an institution as the Electoral College. The outcome has already been networked.

In order to reconstruct the road, the campaign story has been stretched back to the weeks and months prior to the first official events, the Iowa caucus and the New Hampshire primary. This change, in conjunction with the rise of primaries as the preferred method of delegate selection (from 17 Democratic and 16 Republican primaries in 1968 to 37 and 39, respectively, in 1992), has led to a "front-loading" of the campaign process.

Front-loading has stirred concern that the news media (and the citizens of Iowa and New Hampshire) exercise undue influence over the nomination process and the election. (To Broh's list of suspense-building techniques, for example, may now be added the quite familiar phenomenon of journalistic swarming around an early front-runner to expose his debilities and perhaps bring about a fall.) Thanks to the long buildup, Chapter One—or even the

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Preface—of the official Campaign Story sometimes delivers the climax.

More generally, front-loading has detracted from the campaign's inherent interest and truncated political debate. The greater story potential of the early stages of the race helps explain why William C. Adams of George Washington University found that Iowa and New Hampshire provided the setting for 32 percent of the coverage that ABC, CBS, NBC, and the *New York Times* devoted to the first six months of the 1984 presidential campaign. In another study, Syracuse University's Thomas Patterson found that voter interest peaked early in 1976 despite dramatic developments during the conventions and fall debates: the hard-fought contest for the GOP nomination and the close race between Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. There is no reason to doubt that these findings have been duplicated in the years since.

The Democratic Party has attempted to avoid an early wrap-up of its 1992 nomination. It mandated proportional, Congressional district-by-district selection of delegates rather than winner-take-all primaries and increased the percentage of appointed "superdelegates," who would presumably not commit to a candidate until late in the primary season. Even if this stratagem delays the emergence of a victor, even if the convention in New York City proves exciting (to say nothing of what happens in the GOP race), much of the story of Campaign '92 will still be resolved too soon. This is because, apart from the potential for a quick resolution of the main conflict, the first sections of the road have most of the fascinating bumps and turns. Early in the campaign the candidates are new faces, with untold biographies and undiscovered characteristics. Interest-group and voter allegiances are up for grabs. The possibility of victories by

ideologically "pure" candidates is greater. There are more shifts in candidates' positions. And there is a real score to update each week (the delegate count), not just media-made opinion poll standings.

In the general election, a tight race is one of the few major story attractions campaign coverage can offer. But the excitement is muted by the fact that the two major party nominees seem by then to be few voters' first choice—a sentiment that spreads whenever "also-rans" or "never-rans" (such as Mario Cuomo) make great speeches at the conventions. And since media scrutiny of the finalists has been going on for months, there is little left to learn about them except how they interact in each other's presence. That inflates the significance of the presidential debates.

The problems with the "road" convention, then, are that it goes "downhill" too early and that it has few stopping places that seem to matter any longer. This makes for misshapen stories. Not least, it often leads to citizen disaffection.

The Fairy Dust of 'Momentum'

In campaign coverage, interpretation ("This is what I think just happened"); explanation ("This is why"), and speculation ("This is what I think will happen next") usually blur together into road race commentary. "Momentum" has become the byword of choice for the commentators. It can be divined from poll results, debate performances, crowd size, Federal Election Commission reports on fund raising, and virtually any news event that catches a commentator's eye (including, of course, the incidents that touch off and define a Topic A). But the beauty of the concept of "momentum" is that it need not be tied to anything whatsoever. Momentum may be conferred upon a candidate on a



hunch—and simply saying that a candidate has momentum sometimes is enough to make it so.

Since 1976, when Jimmy Carter benefited from the momentum of the Iowa caucus results and the exclamations of commentators over his victory, candidates and their teams have been poised to interpret, in the most self-serving way, the momentum-ability of upcoming campaign occurrences. The politicians' entry into this expectations game provides commentators with yet another category of interpretable events: "Momentum" may be awarded to a candidate on the basis of his persuasive publicity. In the world of narrative, every announced shift of momentum whets reader interest whether it correctly foreshadows the action or not. Thus there is a perennial incentive to say the magic word.

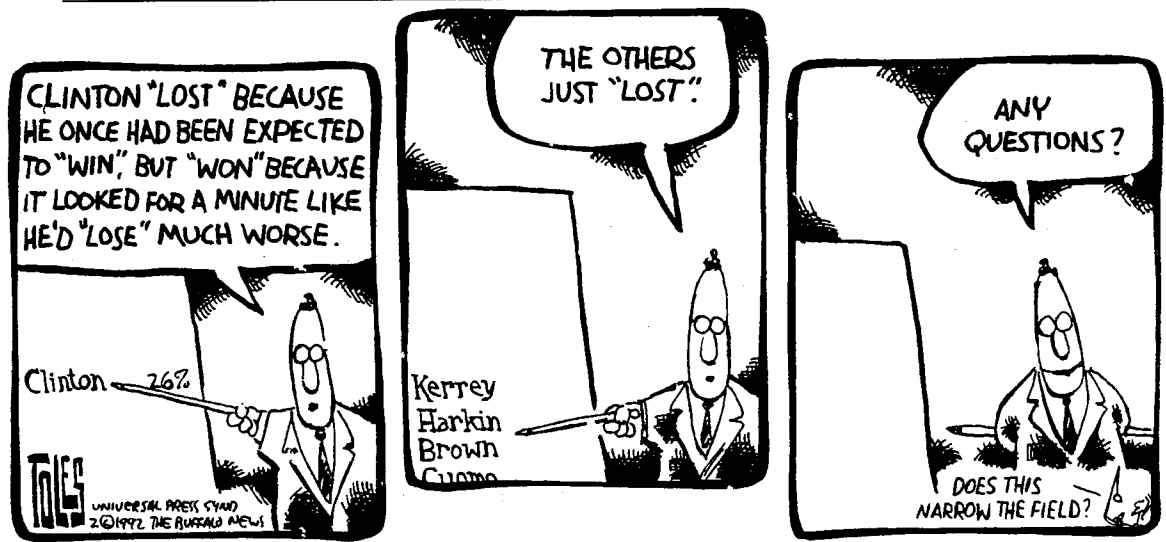
Even when "momentum" accurately refers to a campaign that is gathering (or losing) strength, it is a poor explanatory term. It leaves out too many crucial determinants of electoral results. Off-road events—diplomatic breakthroughs, economic upswings, and other "surprises"—may have more impact. Some of these off-road events do get reported in other sections of the newscast or paper, but even the sharpest observers

tend to slight electoral forces that change too slowly to qualify as news under any category, such as the simple partisan predisposition to vote as one has in the past. And while Theodore H. White thought enough of demographic changes to devote a chapter or two of his campaign chronicles to the latest findings of the U.S. Census Bureau, few of his literary progeny maintain that tradition.

Those Cunning 'Professionals'

The constant invocation of the momentum cliché makes voting appear more volatile and random than most retrospective studies reveal it to be. This, in turn, enhances the mystique surrounding campaign consultants. Continuing coverage endows those who advise winners with shamanistic, momentum-creating powers.

Many stories improve with bad guys on the scene. Campaign stories have few prospects for the role. That leaves campaign advisers, especially paid consultants. These "professionals" are portrayed as shadowy figures, often evil geniuses, who rely on their expertise in campaign law, finance,



organizing, and communications technology to make money off the democratic process. Some professionals have become celebrity Svengalis (Roger Ailes, Pat Caddell), lending their candidates credible deniability for dirty politics. In 1988, James Baker and John Sasso appeared on a *Time* cover proclaiming the election a "Battle of the Handlers." The latest star is James Carville, Bill Clinton's adviser. No doubt some consultants resent the stereotyping. Others relish it, on the assumption that, for client-building purposes, negative publicity is better than no publicity at all.

Campaign professionals, like the "pols" and "bosses" of yesteryear, are conventionally portrayed as meeting in secret. Huddled behind one-way mirrors and airplane curtains, they map out how they can run interference between the press and their candidate, control the flow of information, and thereby hoodwink the electorate. In a front-page Sunday story after the 1988 election, for example, David Hoffman and Ann Devroy of the *Washington Post* attributed George Bush's victory to "an immensely complex, largely hidden machine" maintained by an army of supporters. The lead sentence implied that electoral triumphs are properly won through "a crusade of

ideas." But the only idea advanced by the Bush campaign was "to leave nothing to chance":

Almost everything that could be controlled, influenced, or bargained in favor of Bush was attempted. For example, when he was being photographed outside his home in Kennebunkport, Maine, for the covers of news magazines just before the Republican convention, his aides insisted that photographers aim their lenses above the horizon, and not capture the craggy rocks of the shoreline. Rocks, the photographers were told, would be "elitist." Nearly all the photographers obeyed the rule—no rocks.

In this passage the identities of the consultants were obscured by the passive voice and collective nouns. Vagueness fosters the illusion that professionals have more power than they do. It also cloaks the reality that the consultants are often the primary sources for the very articles that castigate them. Hoffman and Devroy convincingly described the hiddenness and thoroughness of the Bush campaign's stagecraft. But how crucial was it to his election?

The professionals' techniques also come in for narrative mystification and criticism. The black magic roster is now familiar: Spin control. Focus groups. Photo opportu-

nities. Sound bites. Attack ads. Exit polls. Tracking polls. PACs. Such innovations *are* news. Like most instruments, they have been used to confuse, distort, and lie. Even when used honestly, they can make citizens (and candidates) feel like meat. But the usual condemnation of professionalized politics rests on several fallacies. First, campaign stories sometimes imply that if the consultants who vend their mastery of these techniques were replaced by party officials, or regulated by nonpartisan boards, the techniques would be used strictly for good. Second, news stories imply that if the techniques disappeared altogether, candidates and constituents would engage in Platonic dialogues. A third notion, echoing the sentiment distilled into fiction by Edwin O'Connor in his novel *The Last Hurrah* (1956), holds up the previous era of campaigning as a more humane brand of trickery. A fourth fallacy confuses pithiness and effectiveness with evasiveness—as if “Read my lips: No new taxes” belongs in the gutter with the Willie Horton television spot. Finally, many of the same “sinister” techniques the professionals are said to foist upon press and public—such as the sound bite and the focus group—are used by the news media as a matter of course in their own productions.

Tests of ‘Leadership’

The media employ many gauges of campaign strength: endorsements, facility with travel logistics, matching funds won, cleverness at “spin control,” poll numbers. Of these, the indicator with the greatest narrative appeal is the performance of the candidate in a well-publicized—and often well-advertised—stressful situation: the character test. Those who pass such tests are often said to have demonstrated “leadership.”

The rise of the character test is in part a response to the role of consultants, the idea being that character cannot be contrived. The character test also has narrative advantages. Literary theorists teach that the ideal road hero (Ulysses) is a goal-directed person who nevertheless remains open to change and growth. But presidential character-testing makes good political as well as literary sense. After all, character does matter. And while party leaders once monopolized the power to screen presidential aspirants, today, the press presides.

At any time in the process, of course, a campaign crisis may pose a character test. Before and during the primaries, however, the conventional test is for candidate “weight,” or simple viability as a campaigner on a national level.

At the conventions, the criteria shift to how well the nominee controls the show and to the quality of his vice-presidential selection. In the general campaign, stamina moves to the story fore (the road is now the long and winding road), along with broadening of appeal (including the ability to attract the best people from the campaigns of vanquished primary opponents) and a



comparative advantage over the other nominee. Whenever feasible, the press fits character-testing information into the sequence found in a thousand American success stories: "early failure," "learning the lesson," "gathering resolve," "better preparation," and "eventual triumph." In *Newsweek's* special edition on the 1988 campaign, both Michael Dukakis and George Bush gritted their teeth and grew tougher in order to defeat Richard Gephardt and Robert Dole, respectively. Then, Dukakis turned moody (as he had in the past, always a bad sign) and lost his 17-point lead over Bush.

Televised presidential debates loom large as character tests because they are the only occasions on which candidates do battle directly. The "big game" treatment given to the fall debates has overwhelmed some nominees. One can understand why Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford did not move a millimeter for 27 minutes when the power went out in one of their 1976 debates. By contrast, a seasoned Ronald Reagan used the test of his second debate with Walter Mondale in 1984 to recover from his poor performance in the first.

Until 1972, most tests of character hinged on political skills, that is, on the candidate's ability to form and maintain a majority coalition. But the Eagleton affair of that year marks the point when the private side of (vice-) presidential character became legitimate story material. Since then, it has increasingly seemed that testing for how well the candidate keeps together his stable of supporting groups matters less than how well he or she keeps the self together against the onslaught of press exposés and national chatter. Bill Clinton won almost as many plaudits for keeping a smile on his face during his early travails as he did for keeping voters on his side.

The cruelty such personal tests can entail, especially toward a candidate's family,

has produced a backlash against the media, which it has acknowledged through self-coverage and, at times, a moderation of tone. But campaign narrators have shown no signs of pulling away from developments of this ilk. Who can resist a scandal? (Scandals, it should be pointed out, sometimes allow the nation to work out important conflicts over values, such as the fundamentalist and feminist challenges to the Establishment code of conduct.) Excess and tawdriness are not the worst consequences of such "feeding frenzies." The larger civic defect lies in the failure of the media to get beyond Topic A.

There is nothing wrong with the basic news conception of the presidential campaign as a nationwide search for leadership. While it cuts corners somewhat to explain campaign events through stories in which the winning team prevails because leadership suddenly emerged in an incident along a road, attracting followers and creating momentum for the next incident, such tales do serve as adequate summaries of and introductions to political history. The big problem is that continuing coverage induces queasiness. Too much of it no longer rests on a foundation of observational reporting. It now takes skilled effort for a reader or viewer to find authentic political journalism about Campaign '92. Many are employed by the news media to monitor the campaign, but few record what they see and hear of it.

On October 16, 1988, the *New York Times* carried a piece by Andrew Rosenthal entitled "After Third TV Debate, Networks' Policy Shifts." This article announced the television networks' decision to declare George Bush the winner in his third debate with Michael Dukakis, even though they had not picked a winner in the previous two. Rosenthal quoted network personalities who, along with one professor, com-

mented on their own previously televised commentary. He also brought in the results of an ABC poll conducted instantly after the debate. There was not a single reference to anything said in, or about, the debate itself.

This is a shame, and members of the subculture do not even fully understand why. A campaign event may constitute a defining moment. It may involve an eventual winner. But it is, regardless, a living instance of the precious American commitment to democratic governance. The presidential campaign consists, at bottom, of forums in which powerful people must ask for things from less powerful people. When such solicitations occur (and when they do not), that is campaign news. Unfortunately, the political subculture's preoccupations have drawn journalists away from the literal commemoration of such campaign discussions. The emphasis is on sampling the legitimate crosstalk as quickly as possible so that it can be converted into fodder for "Crosstalk" and other insider forums.

Reformers' various efforts to promote campaign discourse have been largely self-defeating. After 1988 the *Washington Post's* David Broder and others called for more newspaper analyses of campaign ads. This has been widely implemented. Yet these "truth squad" boxes are twice removed from political reality. Journalists wind up analyzing the campaigns by watching television. ABC's "Town Meeting" shows, perhaps the best of several pseudo-discourse formats intended to raise the level of debate, tend to sink into speechmaking because of a surfeit of name-brand guests on stage with Ted Koppel. To the degree that covering talk among the people has become fashionable, the people have been

squirreled away in focus groups or reached through pollsters' phone banks and asked to talk about, not with, the politicians.

The irony of American campaign coverage today is that the solution to the problem is so simple. Campaign journalism ought to describe what politicians and people say to each other, and how they look as they talk. (Reporters should also chronicle discussions between voters and the candidates' surrogates—it would have been useful, for example, to have more records of John Sununu's appearances in New Hampshire on behalf of George Bush in 1988.) Perhaps coverage of such encounters seems superfluous to the media. Candidates already make efforts to speak to the people clearly, directly, and as often as possible. But covering these exchanges is also difficult. While less translation is necessary, much campaign conversation needs to be edited out, and the remaining dialogue often requires expository context. Exposition, in turn, often necessitates investigation. (Reporters who accept the duty to check the veracity of candidate claims can never get enough praise.) In short, good campaign journalism may be as simple to describe as it is hard to produce.

Talking with citizens is the best kind of campaign activity that journalists can encourage candidates to do. For no one talks *with* a president. The campaign is the last best chance to talk with the individuals who become president. Americans do not need to elect a great president every time out; they have learned to cope with mediocrity. But year in and year out they need to sense that they can tell the two apart. The narrative conventions of campaign journalism have dulled this sense.

BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE MEDIA MAKE THE CAMPAIGN

Milton Berle once said that criticizing television was like describing an auto accident to the victims. With all due respect to Berle, one might argue that the journalistic and scholarly media analysis spawned by the vast expansion of TV coverage of politics since 1960 is more like preventive medicine.

The news media have been objects of almost constant controversy since the late 1960s, when they were accused of turning the American public against the Vietnam War. In 1969 Vice President Spiro Agnew blasted the networks as a monopoly controlled by "a tiny, enclosed fraternity of privileged men elected by no one." But it was Edith Efron's *The News Twisters* (Nash, 1971) that focused serious attention on TV's presentation of the nation's presidential candidates. Efron argued that all three networks were "strongly biased in favor of the Democratic-liberal-left axis of opinion," and that during the 1968 campaign they had depicted Hubert Humphrey as a "quasi-saint" and Richard Nixon "as corruption incarnate." Several journalism scholars carefully rebutted her analysis. After the Nixon-McGovern campaign of 1972, more than 10 studies of TV's coverage appeared. Their conclusion: Neither Democrats nor Republicans were favored.

Abetted by changing technology, content analysis of TV news has developed into a cottage industry. One Republican in Tennessee, upset at the networks' coverage of the 1968 GOP convention, induced Vanderbilt University to begin regularly taping the network evening news. As a result, researchers now have at their disposal tapes (which may be rented) and the *Television News Index and Abstracts*, which offers monthly outlines of news broadcasts. Indeed, the same videotape technology that enabled the networks to use shorter and shorter sound bites now allows researchers to compile their own inexpensive videotape records for analysis. In addition, two monthly newsletters, *Media Monitor* (published by the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington, D.C.) and *Tyndall Report* (published by ADT Research in New York), now chart the ebb and flow of topics in the network news.

Just as every campaign now yields several journalistic chronicles in the mold of Theodore H. White's famous *Making of the President* series, so it also produces several analyses of the media's performance. Typical of those for 1988 are detailed studies such as S. Robert Lichter, Daniel Amundson, and Richard Noyes's *The Video Campaign: Network Coverage of the 1988 Primaries* (Am. Enterprise Inst., 1988) and *The Media in the 1984 and 1988 Presidential Campaigns* (Greenwood, 1991) edited by Guido H. Stempel III and John W. Windhauser. Comparing the campaign coverage of 1984 and 1988 on TV, in 17 newspapers, and in three newsmagazines, Stempel and Windhauser conclude that "nine-second images dominated not only television coverage but newspaper coverage as well." They add:

Our results leave no doubt that the coverage of issues was minimal. Two-thirds of the stories in newspapers and newsmagazines and on television newscasts dealt with politics and government, candidate strength, and poll results. We believe that the lack of coverage of the economy, education, and science largely reflect what the candidates did with these issues. They didn't get coverage because the candidates did not address them in any significant fashion.

In *Feeding Frenzy* (Free Press, 1991), University of Virginia political scientist Larry J. Sabato argues that the deluge of coverage and the intensifying competition among news organizations have led to more reports about the candidates' personal, and especially sexual, lives. "This trivialization of the public discourse," he warns, "is warping the democratic process." It influences everything, from "the kinds of issues discussed in campaigns to . . . the sorts of people attracted to the electoral arena."

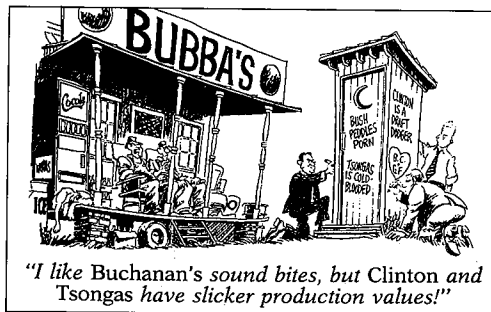
Advertising is another form of TV influence on the campaigns. Although broadcast advertising has been the biggest budget item in presidential campaigns since 1928, only since the Bush campaign's Willie Horton ads in 1988

has the daily press taken a keen interest in the subject. A good history is Kathleen Hall Jamieson's **Packaging the Presidency: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising** (Oxford, 1984).

Today, many newspapers provide detailed accounts of candidate spending for airtime, as well as analysis of the candidates' claims. Spots are also regularly reviewed on the evening news—NBC superimposes "FALSE" for claims it says are unsubstantiated. But all the high technology and big dollars, Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates warn in **The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television** (MIT, 3rd edition, 1992), "may be turning campaigns and elections into a kind of spectator sport . . . to watch and enjoy but not necessarily to participate in by voting."

A bit of perspective on all of this is provided by, among other things, the fact that the decline of voter turnout in U.S. presidential elections began a century ago, long before the invention of TV. The "debasement" of presidential campaigning, notes historian Gil Troy in **See How They Ran: The Changing Role of the Presidential Candidate** (Free Press, 1991), is likewise an old story. During most of the 19th century, the nation's republican tradition made it seem undignified for presidential candidates even to speak on their own behalf. But gradually the democratic demand for "the personal touch" drew candidates to campaign, first from their back porches and later on the hustings. Increasingly, voters were interested not only in the character and ideas of the candidates but in their personality and in details of their personal life. Yet it was not until 1908 that both major party candidates took to the campaign trail.

In **The Reasoning Voter: Communication**



and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns (Univ. of Chicago, 1991), political scientist Samuel Popkin argues that Americans are not bamboozled by today's media barrage. "Voters know how to read the media and the politicians better than most

media critics acknowledge," he writes. Studies since the 1940 election have regularly reminded researchers that voters get much of their information through personal communication with friends, neighbors, and local "opinion leaders." In **The Main Source: Learning from Television News** (Sage, 1986) John P. Robinson and Mark R. Levy conclude that "the good news is . . . the public is far better informed" than "previous studies have suggested," but the "bad news" is that citizens know far less about public affairs "than most news workers" assume.

The Future of News: Television, Newspapers, Wire Services, Newsmagazines (Woodrow Wilson Center & John Hopkins, 1992), edited by Philip S. Cook, Douglas Gomery, and Lawrence W. Lichty, holds out little hope for help from the media. The percentage of the population that reads newspapers is dwindling. Television coverage of day-to-day government, already scant, is likely to suffer as shrinking network market shares force cuts in news budgets. Whatever its defects, TV's coverage of campaigns today is at least plentiful.

The impact is difficult to pin down. Yet with all this coverage it seems safe to say that we will never see any candidate confessing, as Vice President William Howard Taft did at the outset of an 18,000-mile, 400-speech campaign trip for the presidency in 1908, "I am from time to time oppressed with the sense that I am not the man who ought to have been selected."

—Lawrence W. Lichty

Lawrence W. Lichty is director of the Wilson Center's Media Studies Project. He is the author most recently (with James G. Webster) of Ratings Analysis: Theory and Practice (1991).

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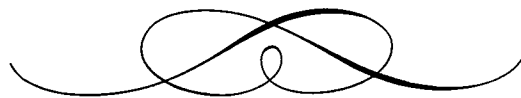
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WOMEN AND POLITICAL POWER

According to most histories, women came into real political power only after they obtained the vote. But Linda Colley here tells how certain determined women played the political game in pre-ballot days—a story with valuable lessons for women today.

by Linda Colley

Two years ago, the young son of a British friend of mine asked a question that astonished and delighted his middle-aged father. "Daddy," the boy inquired, "can a man ever become prime minister in this country?" From the boy's standpoint, it was a perfectly valid inquiry. A child of the 1980s, born after Margaret Thatcher's first election in 1979, entering nursery school around the time of her second electoral triumph in 1983, and old enough to scan the newspapers when she won for a third time in 1987, he had never seen a man claim Number 10 Downing Street. He had grown up accepting that his country's premiership must somehow be closed to people like him. When his father recounted this anecdote, his purpose of course was to make me smile. How ironic it was—how cute even—that his son should believe that women were invariably central to the British political system!

When Mrs. Thatcher resigned in November 1990, the British and American press struck a similar note of bemused surprise at the singularity of her achievement. How astonishing it was that a woman should be elected premier of a Western na-

tion and then go on to dominate and devastate her male competitors for over 11 years. With her departure, though, the natural order would surely be restored. And most commentators assumed that this natural political order was traditionally and unambiguously male. "The masculine ethos of public life can reassert itself," wrote a female journalist acidly, "untroubled by this vexatious business of coming to terms with a woman in power." Watching the collective sigh of relief that went up from the Conservative Party when Thatcher's successor, John Major, chose an all-male cabinet, one knows exactly what she meant. Yet the assumption that Margaret Thatcher was the first nonroyal woman to have exerted substantial political power in the West is historically way off the mark.

Of course, the particular *type* of power that she exercised was unprecedented and would have indeed been completely out of the question for anyone of her gender before the 20th century. The political theorists of the ancient world took it for granted that only those who defended their state in war—namely men—had the right to active citizenship. And courtesy of Niccolò Machiavelli, this rationale for excluding women from political life became part of the men-



A Woman in Politics, 1990. When Margaret Thatcher resigned, the press wondered whether any of her three possible successors was big enough to fill her shoes.

tal furniture of early modern Europeans, just as it did of the Founding Fathers in America. Should their inferior musculature be thought insufficient reason to confine women to the private sphere, there was always their lack of property to fall back on. In most Western nations, it was customary for women who married to lose their independent property rights and, in the process, their separate legal identity. As the great 18th-century English jurist, William Blackstone, put it with damning clarity: "Husband and wife are one person, and that person is the husband." Being *femmes couvertes*—nonpersons in the eyes of the law—women could naturally not expect to vote, much less hold public office. True, by the 1800s, women in both Europe and America were becoming restive under these constraints and in some places were campaigning successfully to modify them. But British women did not win the right to vote in national elections until 1918, and not before 1920 were all adult women in the United States admitted to the franchise.

Before the 20th century, then, there was—in theory and in law—a virtually

complete demarcation between the masculine public sphere and the private sphere in which women were expected to find their only true fulfillment. *He* might stalk the corridors of power and talk of politics in the market place, but *her* place was by the domestic hearth, amid the sacred cares of the nursery and in the more intimate duties of the bedroom. And for many women in the past, this was close to how it was.

For a minority of women, however, the realities of life and politics were very different. Especially in European states such as Great Britain, where power was for centuries confined to a narrow landed elite, the necessary qualification for exercising a political role was not so much possession of the right gender as membership of the right social class—the "top ten thousand" as the Victorians often called them.

There were actually some 11,000 families who together owned about three-quarters of all the land in Great Britain and Ireland before the First World War. But it was the highest echelon of these rich and broad-acre clans—the top one thousand—who mattered most. They supplied the majority

in Britain's House of Commons, just as they made up the bulk of the peers—the dukes, the marquesses, the earls, and the barons—who sat in the House of Lords. And for all of Britain's reputation as a democratic and industrially advanced nation, these aristocrats remained dominant for an extraordinarily long time. In every cabinet until 1905, for example, men with titles outnumbered those without them. Among such a narrow elite, as among the contemporary elites of France, Russia, Germany, and even the United States, intermarriage was almost the rule. Lord Salisbury, prime minister during the late 19th century, was reputed to be related by blood or marriage to half the members of his administration. And since political life was so much a matter of powerful landed families and dynastic marriage-brokering, the female members of these superprivileged tribes were able to play a vital and recognized part in it.

Historian Gerda Lerner put it very well when she wrote that “as members of families, as daughters and wives,” patrician women were often “closer to actual power than many a man.” They did not have to vote or strive for public office to win access to the political center: They were already there by virtue of who they were, of who their families were, and of whom they married. For these women, there was no gulf between the public and private spheres. The two often converged, not least because their social life was an integral part of political life.

Since politicians were fashionable and highborn individuals, and not just grim hard-working professionals, they dominated high society to a degree that would seem strange in London or Paris or Berlin or even Washington today. And the responsibility for initiating and stage-managing the events of high society, which were also political events of a kind, lay emphatically with women. As one famous hostess wrote in the late 19th century: “Society, as well as the tone of society, is not governed or instituted by men; their role in society is a very secondary one Society in its tone and

composition is created by women.”

What did the role of hostess mean for these women? For an ambitious minority, it brought access to high-level political information and an opportunity to participate directly in political intrigue. Emily, Viscountess Palmerston, was the most famous hostess in mid-Victorian London. Her sumptuous parties had such cachet that men from all political parties clamored for invitations. And this proved invaluable for her husband, Lord Palmerston, who had to preside over a coalition administration with very little party organization of the modern type to help him. Emily's parties made him vital contacts, and her own enormous charm and inbred political instincts (one of her brothers also had been prime minister) softened up guests and teased out information. “What superficial observers mistook for indiscretion was eminently useful,” declared her obituarist:

She always understood full well what she was telling, to whom she was telling it, when and where it would be repeated Instead of the secret that was betrayed, it was the feeler that was put forth.

Emily worked for her husband, but her best friend—Dorothea, Princess Lieven, daughter of a Prussian aristocrat—worked for herself. When her husband, Count Christopher Lieven, came to London as Russian ambassador, she used her party-giving skills to meet, influence, and occasionally bed a succession of important Englishmen, from the Duke of Wellington, victor of Waterloo, to Earl Grey, a future prime minister. Banished from England for her intrigues, she promptly set up a salon in Paris and, at the age of 52, won the heart of Guizot, leader of the French administration from 1840 to 1848. Reading the hundreds of letters that passed between her and Emily at this time—Princess Lieven acting as the not-too-secret agent of the French government and Emily serving as the mouthpiece for the British foreign office—is a powerful corrective for anyone who thinks that women were politically unin-

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volved before the vote.

For the political parties themselves, the allegiance of brilliant and charismatic hostesses such as these could be a substantial organizational advantage. Take the case of Elizabeth Vassall, a beautiful, energetic, and intelligent woman, who deserted her first husband to marry Henry Richard Fox, Lord Holland, in 1797. This act made her both an important and a marginal figure: important because Holland was the nephew and political heir of the great Whig leader, Charles James Fox; marginal because divorced women were cold-shouldered by polite society. Excluded from other people's drawing rooms, Lady Holland made them come to hers instead. She converted Holland House, an elegant 17th-century mansion just two miles from Marble Arch in London, into a salon—a familiar instrument of female influence in 18th-century Paris, but relatively new as far as English life was concerned. Almost every week until her husband's death in 1840, she entertained 50 or more guests: politicians, ambassadors, literary figures, and virtually every bright young man who could talk for his dinner. The cooking was indifferent, the conversational pace terrifying, but her rudeness and wit, combined with Lord Holland's great name and geniality, were irresistible. As Emily Palmerston remarked, Holland House kept the Whig Party together. Usually out of office between 1780 and 1830, and with no formal network of party societies and caucuses to sustain them, Whig politicians cherished it as a center of intelligence, as a lavish meeting place, and as a cultural icon.

Of course, women like Lady Holland were the dazzling and flamboyant exceptions. But every political hostess could arrange for individuals she was interested in to meet each other and push forward any bright young man she favored. This is what happens to the hero of Anthony Trollope's novel *Phineas Finn*, which was published in 1869. Phineas is a young, impoverished Irish M.P., who finds it hard to get the great men in London to take notice of him. Fortunately he is handsome and the ladies like him. Lady Laura Standish, who is "related to almost everybody who was anybody among the high Whigs,"

asks him to dinners and house parties so that he can meet powerful men. Another aristocratic heiress, Violet Effingham, uses her contacts to find him a new seat in Parliament after he loses his first. And the Duchess of Omnium, wife of a cabinet minister, nags her husband to give him an official post.

Trollope himself had profoundly conservative views about the proper division between the sexes and probably intended for us to smile at these unwomanly intrigues. Yet the effect he achieves is rather different: Phineas emerges from the text as the creation of so many female Svengalis. And cases like Phineas's occurred in real life. Benjamin Disraeli was an outsider—a baptized Jew but a Jew nonetheless—and as such found it hard to gain a foothold in a traditionally anti-Semitic political world. But his wit, his good looks, and his genuine fondness for women made him a favorite among aristocratic hostesses. They asked him to their soirées and dinner parties, and his acceptance was eased. Of the young Disraeli—who would eventually climb to the top of the greasy pole as prime minister—it could be said, as Trollope said of Phineas, that though he "was excluded from the Liberal government, all Liberal drawing rooms were open to him, and that he was a lion." Only for Liberal, read Tory.

Being able to advance masculine careers gave elite women considerable power. Some of them, we know, demanded favors from their protégés in return, material appreciation of one kind or another, and just occasionally more intimate services. But most women seemed simply to have relished the sense of superiority that exercising patronage always gives, soaking up the flattery and attention that ambitious men showered upon them and enjoying being at the center of things. As late as the 1920s, the very last of Britain's great political hostesses, Lady Londonderry, so captivated the first Labour prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald, that he agreed to give her husband a government post—even though he was a rather unpleasant and not particularly competent Tory!

To be sure, there was always a less gaudy and far more secretive side to female power. Then, as now, the wives of politicians lived with the men who had power on

a day-to-day basis, slept with them, and knew—as no one else was likely to do—the nature of their weaknesses. But before the late 19th century, politicians' wives could be important in ways usually denied to their modern equivalents. The inflated bureaucracies, civil services, and secretariats that keep the business of government moving today simply did not exist in the past. So ministers, senators, M.P.s, and congressmen often had to rely on their wives for secretarial services—and in the process inform them of the nature of their business, however secret and high level it might be. Take the case of George Grenville, the man who tried to inflict the Stamp Act on Americans in the 1760s. His wife, Elizabeth, was the granddaughter of the Duke of Somerset and, as one contemporary commented, “the first prize in the marriage lottery of our century.” She brought Grenville a substantial dowry, which helped him in his career. She had two brothers in Parliament, who became his firm political allies. Best of all, she was astute and the perfect political companion. She drafted the letters that her husband could entrust to no one else, she discussed troublesome issues (such as upstart colonists) with him, and she kept his political diary for him.

Such women were invaluable auxiliaries. But since the precise boundaries of their role were strictly determined by their husbands' needs and wishes, they were also passive and essentially subordinate creatures. A political wife's opportunities for initiative expanded markedly, however, when her husband, while still retaining power or ambition, was removed from the center of events in some way. When Winston Churchill lost his cabinet post in 1915 and stormed off to fight at the Front, for example, he relied on his wife Clementine as never before. It fell to her to seek out political intelligence from his friends and allies still in London and send it on to him in France, so that he would not lose touch with political events. To do this, Clementine had to calculate just whom to talk and listen to, and she had to work out how much of the gossip and rumor she picked up Winston really needed to know.

The balance of power between a politician and his wife was likely to shift even

more dramatically if he fell ill. William Pitt the Elder, the great British war minister of the mid-18th century, was sporadically the victim of acute manic depression. At the height of such attacks, he would shut himself in his room and refuse to come out or talk to anyone. This was when his wife Hester (who was George Grenville's sister) came into her own. She would rearrange his appointments and correspond directly on political matters with Pitt's fellow ministers, employing all the while the polite fiction: “My Lord commands me to write . . .” Since her Lord was in fact locked up in his bedroom, what this meant was that Hester had taken over part of his job for the duration—a fact that Pitt's colleagues tacitly recognized by writing directly to her during such crises. By virtue of what she did behind the scenes, Hester has some claim to be regarded as Britain's first woman prime minister.

But there is no need to go back to distant examples. Twentieth-century America can furnish several cases of politicians' wives moving far beyond the secondary and supportive role that is customarily theirs. When Woodrow Wilson was incapacitated by a stroke from 1919 to 1921, his wife, the former Edith Bolling Galt, stepped in where no woman had gone before. “I studied every paper sent from the different secretaries or senators,” she wrote later:

and tried to digest and present in tabloid form the things that, despite my vigilance, had to go to the President. I, myself, never made a single decision regarding the disposition of public affairs. The *only* decision that was mine was what was important and what was not, and the very important decision of when to present matters to my husband.

In this context, the word “only” seems a touch disingenuous. Choosing exactly what papers the president should get to see and just when he should get to see them gave Mrs. Wilson considerable control over the agenda of government. The defensive tone of her apologia suggests that she recognized this herself. A president's physical or mental fragility, combined with the constitution's complete silence about the role of the First Lady, is always going to be an ambitious and determined woman's opportu-



A Woman in Politics, 1784. The British press depicted the Duchess of Devonshire as indecent in persuading tradesmen to vote for her friend Charles James Fox.

nity. And one need not believe every word of Kitty Kelley's biography to conclude that Nancy Reagan, particularly in her husband's second term of office, made abundant use of the opportunities that were open to her.

The fact that women who were closely related to male politicians could use their positions to obtain power without being responsible to the public or to their country's laws worried some 18th- and 19th-century reformers acutely. John Stuart Mill, for example, devoted part of his essay *The Subjection of Women* (1869) to attacking patrician females who "neither knew nor cared which was the right side in politics, but knew what would bring in money and invitations, give their husbands titles, their sons a place, or their daughters a good marriage." Much better, he argued, that women should have the vote and engage in politics openly than be forced to resort to backstairs intrigues and indirect influence. To

most critics, though, the prospect of such a cure seemed far worse than the disease.

Female politicians—far from campaigning overtly for political rights for themselves—were expected to conduct themselves discreetly and within the accepted limits. Just what those limits were is suggested by the controversy over the participation of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, in the election of 1784. An extremely beautiful and vivacious woman, she had married at 16 on her parents' instructions William Cavendish, fifth Duke of Devonshire, who was undoubtedly grand, but also dull, unfaithful, and completely unambitious. She found herself, as she later wrote, living "in a continual bustle without having literally anything to do." Partly because of this, she became a fervent supporter of the Whig Party, acting as a political hostess in London, passing letters and rumors between great men, encouraging her political friends to vote in the House of

Commons in certain ways, and serving as the (apparently) platonic confidante of Charles James Fox, the Whig leader. In acting this way, Georgiana did no more than many other politically interested women of her class. Then, in 1784, she decided to help Fox campaign for election as M.P. for Westminster. She canvassed for votes, distributed propaganda, and appeared prominently in processions of Foxite supporters. The result was an avalanche of vicious pamphlets and obscene cartoons.

One common attack charged that the Duchess had persuaded plebeian voters to support Fox by granting them sexual favors. But some satirists adopted a more insidious line of attack. A print called *Political Affection* showed the Duchess pressing a fox to her breasts while her hungry child clamored for milk. The obvious implication, that she was neglecting her own realm of private affection to interfere in the public sphere, was made plain in another caricature showing the hapless Duke of Devonshire being forced to change his child's diaper in the absence of its mother.

Such attacks had the intended effect. Although Fox won his election, and although the newspapers of the time calculated that Georgiana's activities made a material contribution to this result, she was sadly demoralized. At the next general election, in 1790, she turned down invitations to campaign again and remained carefully out of town, cowed into silence and private life. Just what was it about her conduct that aroused so much virulence?

The problem was not, I suspect, that she had involved herself in electioneering as such; this was common enough among women of her rank. In the eyes of her opponents, Georgiana's sins were very different. First, the man she had assisted in the Westminster election, Charles James Fox, was not a male relation. He was a well-known rake and a radical—a man who even had the temerity to suggest in the House of Commons that women should have the vote. Moreover, she had made it clear that her efforts on his behalf were prompted by political ideals and not just by personal friendship. Her actions reeked of female initiative, and this was made all the worse by the fact that her actions were in

Westminster, the largest and most democratic constituency in Great Britain and the place where Parliament itself was situated. No other campaign was likely to attract so much publicity as one occurring there. Georgiana was martyred because she had crossed the divide between private female influence on politicians (which was acceptable) and autonomous and public political action (which was not).

This vilification of the Duchess of Devonshire shows some of the limits to the kind of female political power I have been describing. There were many others. The number of women able to participate in politics in this way was always very small. Those who did so had to work through male politicians. What they could achieve was usually determined by the position, the receptivity, and the talent of the men involved. And it should go without saying that such women were not feminist heroines in any contemporary sense. They thought of themselves not as women primarily but as members of a social and political elite. They did not expect to advance others of their own gender or to prove anything about the capacities of women as a whole. Indeed, many of them made no secret of the fact that they would have liked to be men and to have had a man's opportunities for a public career. "I should have been the greatest hero that ever was known in the Parliament House if I had been so happy as to have been a man," wrote one duchess wistfully in the 18th century.

Yet few of the women I have discussed seem to have been in any doubt that, though disadvantaged, they nonetheless had a significant political role to play. "All women of a certain age and in a situation to achieve it should take to politics," Lady Holland wrote breezily. Some 80 years later, just before British women won the vote, Lady Selborne, daughter of a prime minister and wife of a cabinet minister, was in no doubts that a minority of women had long exerted political influence without the vote. "Women can be politicians," she said. "Political ability, a capacity for the science of government, seems to be almost more common among women than it is among men." And the letters and speeches of public men often make the same point, albeit grudgingly. "There can be no more base-

less assumption than [that] the polling booth is the main source of influence in politics," declared a leading M.P. in 1884, "Women already enjoy greater influence in other ways, both public and private, than the franchise would give them."

There are at least two reasons why it is important to establish the dimensions of this kind of influence in the past—not only in Britain but in other countries as well. Most obviously, women such as these have almost always been left out of serious history books. If they turn up at all, it is usually only in the more gossipy accounts of times past or in amateur and unreliable biographies. Lewis Gould has set out the problem in an article on American First Ladies and their historical neglect:

The large body of scholarly literature on the occupants of the White House pays relatively little attention to their wives except in passing. As a result, most writing about the First Ladies has tended to be anecdotal and impressionistic. There are a number of useful memoirs and interesting biographies of individual First Ladies, but the books published before 1980 about these women as a group did not have much intellectual rigor. Nor did such overview studies as there were rest on original sources or attempt to place presidential wives in a broader context of the history of American Women.

It is simply not enough to wheel in these women to illustrate that coy adage "behind every great man, there is a great woman" and then to dismiss them jokingly from the record. We need to establish the precise nature of their influence over their husbands and over other male politicians: what they did exactly, whom they talked to, and what they thought at different times and why. Otherwise, the history of past politics will remain incomplete. Put crudely, historians cannot afford to leave out the likes of Nancy Reagan or to leave them to the likes of Kitty Kelley.



But there is another, and a much broader, reason for taking these women seriously. What they did in the past has some important—though uncomfortable—lessons for would-be political women in the present.

Ever since the 19th century, feminist movements on both sides of the Atlantic have tended to stress two things: first, the importance of collective rather than individual action on the part of women, and second, women's difference from men, not just their equality with men. Whether we like it or not, these two principles still shape the way that women approach politics. In 20th-century America, as in Britain, women have usually been more eager to join voluntary associations and political pressure groups than to invade the political arena as individuals, making speeches, standing for election, and competing for office. Indeed, for good historical reasons, many women, including many feminists, still regard the institutions of government—Parliament, Congress, or whatever—as alien territory uncongenial to women and inappropriate for their endeavors. And the majority of women still behave as though there was a particular "woman's sphere" in the realm of politics. They will agitate over abortion, over birth control, over education, and over street crime. But they tend to steer clear of questions of foreign affairs or economic policy, as though such matters only affected men.

In the realm of politics, then, feminism

has worked to perpetuate separate male and female spheres as often as it has helped to dissolve them. More utopian feminists might well say that this was a good thing: that their purpose was not to infiltrate a man's world so that women could compete in it on equal terms but rather to change the world and make it into something different and something better. Those of us who are not utopians, however, must wonder how far a separate style and agenda of female politics is either feasible or fruitful. In default of a revolution, major changes can only be brought about by securing a substantial presence in the existing corridors of power. At present, very few women walk there in their own right. Women make up less than seven percent of the membership of the House of Representatives and about the same proportion of the British House of Commons. And as the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill affair reminded us, there are still only two women senators.

In the face of these lamentable statistics, we might usefully consider the attitudes and behavior of that minority of privileged women in the past who exercised political power behind the scenes. I am not for one moment suggesting that their essentially indirect power was a substitute for the vote. That would be absurd. But in some respects they were wiser perhaps and certainly more realistic than many of their enfranchised descendants today. To begin with, they did not believe that only collective action was worthwhile or that individual enterprise was somehow politically incorrect. Told that ambition and competitiveness were inappropriate female responses, Lady Holland would have cackled as derisively as Margaret Thatcher, and with good reason. Moreover these women never made the mistake of supposing that their sex should confine itself to a particular set of directly relevant and "softer-edged" issues. To read their letters is to discover that they concerned themselves with foreign policy, with imperial affairs, with war and peace, and with party tactics at home. They may be at fault in our eyes for

not championing the cause of their less fortunate sisters. But they deserve to be commended—and emulated—in their refusal to be parochial.

Finally, these women accepted, however reluctantly, that the political world in which they had to operate was a man's world and adjusted their actions accordingly. Behaving in such a manner sticks in the craw of many women today—indeed it sticks in mine—but at least for the foreseeable future we may have to swallow this same strategy or go hungry. One of the reasons why the Equal Rights Amendment was lost in 1982, some political scientists argue, is that the women who lobbied so hard for it eschewed the recognized organizational hierarchies and acted in their own, more improvised fashion. The result was failure in the masculine world of state legislatures. Many would dispute this analysis. But the Harvard political scientist Sidney Verba makes a good point:

Success in mainstream American politics—the world of partisan electoral politics; of local, state, and national legislative, executive, and bureaucratic policymaking; of interest group lobbying; and of bureaucratic implementation—may be impeded by a style of politics that is principled rather than pragmatic, communal rather than individualistic. Principled communal politics flourishes in social movements outside mainstream politics—and, indeed, that is where the women's movement has grown and where it has a major impact on the policy process. But mainstream politics may demand another style.

As those powerful, if irresponsible, patrician ladies of the past knew very well, if you wish to play a part in the political arena, you must learn its rules and adapt to its conventions or risk remaining on the margins or even outright exclusion. Just how long will it be, one wonders, before a little boy can ask here: "Daddy, can a man ever become president of the United States?"

THE FATEFUL CODE

Genes and Human Destiny



Every day seems to bring fresh news of astonishing discoveries on the frontiers of genetic research. Genes “for” homosexuality, alcoholism, and dozens of diseases. A dazzling array of genetically engineered medicines and goods, from cancer-fighting drugs to coffee plants that yield caffeine-free beans. Now, with the launching of the \$3-billion U.S. Human Genome Project, comes the prospect of unlocking the last secrets of the gene and, some critics assert, the dread possibility of discoveries that will allow scientists to create a super-race. Yet genetic research is surrounded by misunderstanding. Many supposed “breakthroughs” are only beginnings, and some have little more substance than cold fusion. Our authors explore the science behind the headlines, assessing the specter of eugenics and pondering the impact of genetic research on our understanding of human nature itself.

THE DOUBLE-EDGED HELIX

by Joel L. Swerdlow

Over the centuries, medical progress has eased human suffering and prolonged human lives without asking much in return. Vaccinations, antibiotics, and open-heart surgery, to name a few advances, have not generally posed significant moral problems. Today, however, the dawn of an era of gene-based medicine holds out tantalizing promises that carry with them a growing list of new and often disturbing choices for individuals, for physicians and researchers, and for society at large.

Some dilemmas are distant, including the possibility that growing mastery over genes will give us unprecedented power over our children's genetic makeup. Others are upon us already, namely the question of who has a right to possess genetic information about individuals' susceptibility to certain diseases. Some of the more urgent conundrums arise because science is still at an awkward "halfway" point: It offers significant new knowledge about genes but few ways to respond.

One of these halfway points is the discovery of the "genetic marker" for Huntington's disease, an inherited nerve disorder that appears at around age 40 and slowly kills the brain. No one knows why, and no treatment exists. The responsible gene is dominant. When one parent has Huntington's, each offspring has a 50-50

chance of developing it. Before the discovery of the marker, children of such parents could only wait to see if they would die. One of these is Nancy Wexler, a Columbia University psychologist whose mother died of Huntington's. Beginning in 1979, she recruited some 2,000 Venezuelan donors—all of them descendants of a single 19th-century woman who suffered from the disease—whose pedigree and blood samples made possible in 1983 the discovery of the genetic marker for Huntington's. If one of a person's parents had Huntington's and that person's DNA includes this marker, he or she likely will develop the disease.

Wexler was elated when her colleagues discovered the Huntington's marker. But nine years later, researchers are no nearer to developing anything that prevents, treats, or cures Huntington's. That creates terrible dilemmas for people at risk. Imagine a man whose father died of Huntington's. To find that he does not carry the marker liberates him. But if he finds that he does have the marker, he is compelled to count the days until horror and death hit. Faced with this choice, less than 15 percent of those at risk have decided to undergo genetic screening. Wexler herself will not reveal whether she has been screened.

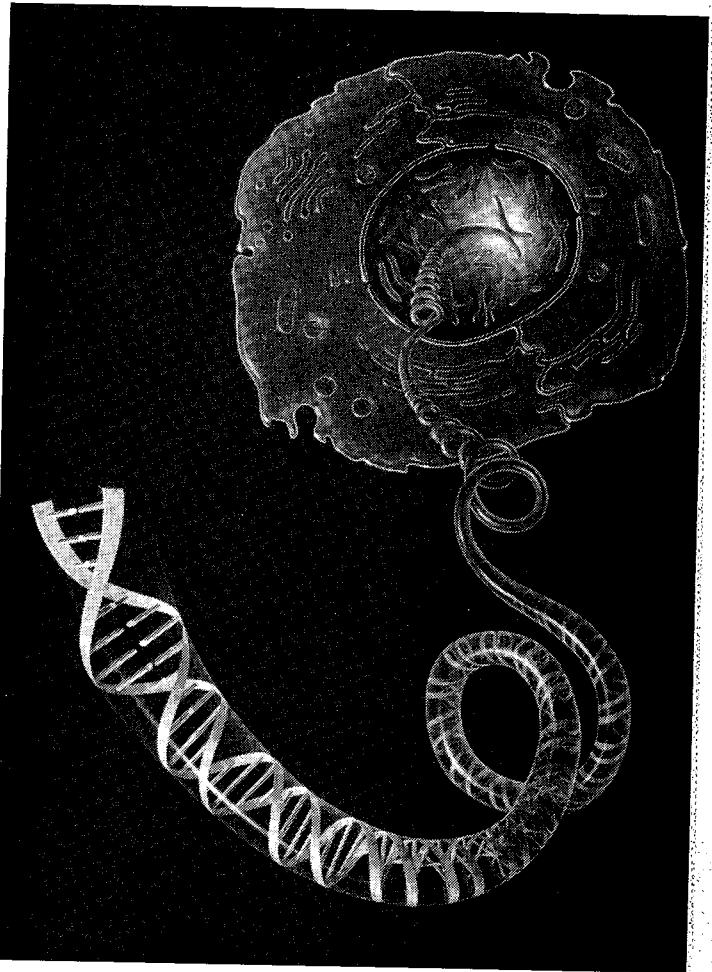
The genetic revolution that is gathering force today, says science journalist Harold Schmeck, can be understood as "scientists' growing ability to read and write in the language of the gene." Modern scientific un-

derstanding of genetics dates from 1866, when an Augustinian monk named Gregor Mendel, who had been experimenting with pea plants in Austria, published a paper laying out the basic laws of inheritance. Mendel made his discovery without knowing about genes or chromosomes, and it was only in 1900, after scientists had, among other things, observed chromosomes through a microscope, that his work was rediscovered.

Advances—such as the recognition by George W. Beadle and Edward L. Tatum in 1941 that the function of genes is to create enzymes and proteins—built steadily. The big breakthrough came in 1953, when James Watson and Francis Crick at Cambridge University deciphered the structure of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), the molecule that carries genetic information. Each cell has six to nine feet of DNA coiled on 23 pairs of chromosomes. The DNA, in the now familiar shape of a double helix, consists of two strands of nucleotides, which are made of sugar, phosphate, and one of four different bases. The strands are joined by either of two pairs of bases: adenine (A) and thymine (T), or cytosine (C) and guanine (G). That base-pair rule means that when cells (and thus strands of DNA) divide, each strand can make a copy of its former partner.

Every genetic instruction is encoded through the linear order of the four bases on a segment of DNA, much as computer information is stored in a binary code of 1's and 0's. In 1959, Crick and others found the intermediary that carries each instruction from the DNA to the ribosomes, where the instruction is translated into action through the creation of proteins. This messenger is a chemical cousin of DNA called ribonucleic acid, or RNA.

That, of course, is only the beginning of the mystery, for each chromosome has as many as 300 million base pairs. In order to understand the human genome (the total of all genetic information), scientists will have to decipher some three billion human base



A double helix of DNA, joined at intervals by base pairs, uncoils from the nucleus of a cell in this artist's conception.

pairs. Listing them would fill 13 sets of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Most of the genes bearing specific instructions vary in length from about 100 to 30,000 base pairs, and even now scientists are not sure how many human genes there are. Estimates generally

range from 50,000 to 100,000. So far, researchers have "mapped" the location of nearly 2,000 genes (up from 579 in 1981) and have identified some 4,000 diseases caused by single-gene defects. Most of these diseases are relatively rare, such as Duchenne muscular dystrophy, retinoblastoma, neurofibromatosis, and one form of Alzheimer's. Most common diseases that have genetic roots probably will be traced to more than one gene.

During the 1960s and '70s, scientists realized that variations in DNA may be associated with diseases and that "markers," patterns of base pairs, appear on the same place of the same chromosome of virtually everyone. A number of technological advances—in microscopy and related areas—dramatically increased researchers' ability to isolate genes and tinker with various genetic components. Yet most of these experiments were performed on bacteria and other simple organisms. Turning their attention to more complex organisms in the late 1960s, scientists discovered that similar methods could still be used. In 1973, these techniques were given the name "recombinant DNA"—popularly known as gene splicing or, more ominously, genetic engineering.

Recombinant DNA involves snipping sections of the DNA molecule from a complex organism using restriction enzymes and transplanting the snips into host bacteria or yeast cells. (The use of yeast cells is actually a more recent innovation, giving rise to yet another of the acronyms so beloved by scientists, YACs, for yeast artificial chromosomes.) The host cells then multiply normally, creating many new "clones" of the transplanted DNA at the same time. These clones contain anywhere from a few hundred to one million base pairs.

Clones created by this method (and others) have a variety of uses. Applying other techniques, for example, scientists found that they could transplant and "turn on" some genes, getting them to produce vital biochemical substances such as human growth hormone and insulin. More significantly, perhaps, cloning meant that researchers could create large "libraries" of DNA fragments for further manipulation or study in the laboratory.

By the mid-1980s, these and other technological advances made the prospect of exploring the entire human genome seem feasible. One of the most important developments was the 1983 discovery by Wexler and her collaborators of the genetic marker for Huntington's disease. Finding such a genetic malfunction is a monumental enterprise, somewhat analogous to locating a broken pipe in a house somewhere on Earth (the cell). You narrow your search first to the United States (a particular chromosome) and then to Pennsylvania (chromosome fragment). Finally you focus on Philadelphia (gene) and begin walking block-by-block looking for signs of the leak. Eventually you get close enough to search each house (nucleotide base pairs). The "leak" is an incorrect nucleotide.

Wexler and her colleagues set out in search of the gene in 1979. Using restriction enzymes, which snip DNA strands at particular locations, James Gusella, Wexler's collaborator at Massachusetts General Hospital, chopped up the DNA from the blood samples she supplied. The fragments were separated by size, using a process called gel electrophoresis. Then the hunt began. The idea was to identify segments of DNA that were different in people with Huntington's. Gusella took advantage of the fact that the segments created by

Joel L. Swerdlow, a former Wilson Center Guest Scholar, is a Washington writer. He is the author of several books, including Matching Needs, Saving Lives: Building a Comprehensive Network for Transportation and Biomedical Research (1990). Copyright © 1992 by Joel L. Swerdlow.

restriction enzymes vary from person to person, resulting in what are called restriction fragment length polymorphisms (RFLPs). He created radioactive RFLP "probes" and added them to the chopped up DNA. The probes then bonded to their complementary segments of DNA and lit up in a banded pattern. Performing this exercise on many samples, Gusella could then compare them to see if all those from people with Huntington's had a pattern of bands distinct from all those without the disease. Still, this was the equivalent of the proverbial search for a needle in a haystack. It could have required the development of thousands of different RFLPs and thousands of tedious tests before stumbling upon the proper segment. But Gusella got lucky. With one of his very first probes, he discovered the variation.

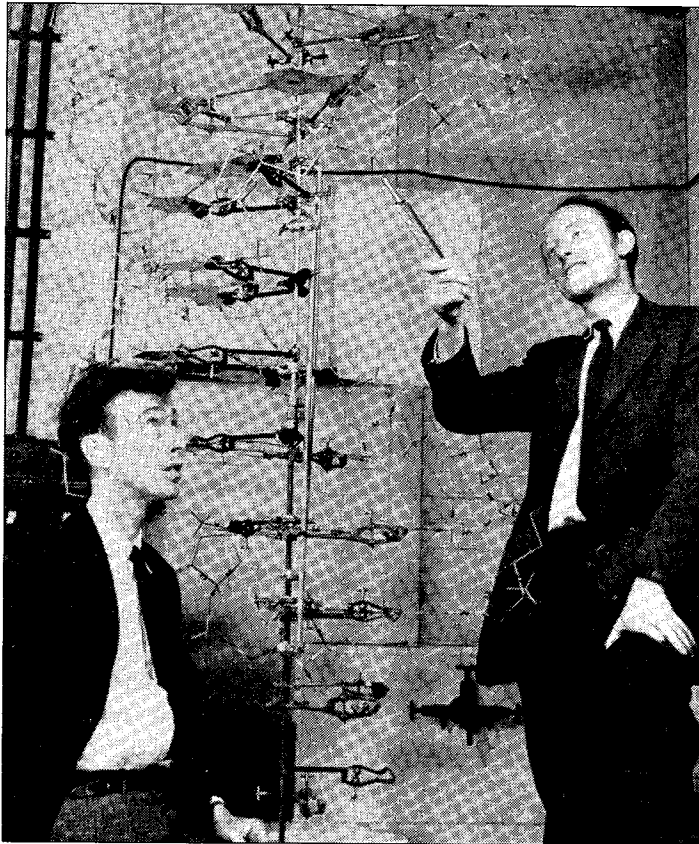
Because *all* of the DNA in each sample had been chopped up, he still did not know which chromosome the culprit snip appeared on. Further laboratory and computer work determined that it was on chromosome 4. The gene for Huntington's disease had been "mapped"—it was within a mere four million base pairs of one end of chromosome 4—but still not precisely located. Indeed, it is a measure of the difficulty of genetic research that, nine years later, researchers still have not found the Huntington's gene. They are, to return to the analogy of the search, still only in Pennsylvania. What Gusella, Wexler, and their colleagues had shown, however, was that RFLP mapping, once dismissed as a fantasy, was feasible.

This and a rapid succession of other developments gave rise to what may be described as a Manhattan Project mentality. The prospect of mapping and sequencing the entire human genome, long a vague dream of a few scientists, now seemed a real possibility. Several leaders of

the scientific community, including Nobel laureate Renato Dulbecco, Harvard's Walter Gilbert, and Robert Sinsheimer, a scientist-turned-university administrator, called for a crash program. In Washington, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) seized upon the idea in 1986, but its leadership was almost immediately challenged by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In 1987, Congress, encouraged in part by the prospect of building an insurmountable U.S. lead in the emerging biotechnology industry, gave the two competing agencies \$29 million. But many issues were still unresolved.

Some biologists feared the encroachment of bureaucratized Big Science, previously restricted to particle physics and a few other fields. "Many of us oppose brute force sequencing of the human genome because we believe it is an inefficient use of scarce research dollars," one researcher wrote in a letter to *Science*. "[B]iomedical research dollars are generally more efficiently spent on investigator-initiated research. We believe that innovation from scientists in the field produces better science than do narrowly targeted, top-down big science projects."

Defenders of the approach replied that costs of piecemeal research are higher and that a human genome project would stimulate technological innovations that would spare even the independent-minded investigator a great deal of tedious and time-consuming labor in the laboratory and speed the pace of research. Since then, researchers have pointed out that the discovery of the gene that causes fragile X syndrome—the most frequent cause of inherited mental retardation—came roughly five years ahead of schedule because of the Human Genome Project. Some 5,000 babies are born every year in the United States with fragile X syndrome. Minimal health-care costs for each are \$100,000. If science can



James Watson (left) and Francis Crick show off the 1953 model of a DNA molecule for which they were later awarded a Nobel Prize.

contrast, says, "There is already clear evidence that specific sequences in introns and in intergenic [noncoding] regions constitute important regulatory signals Are we prepared to dismiss the likelihood of surprises . . . ?"

At a deeper level, there has been a fundamental philosophical disagreement. James Watson argues that studying genes "will provide the ultimate answers to the chemical underpinnings of human existence." Opponents such as Harvard microbiologist Jon Beckwith believe that such views, magnified by the news media, "promote the conception that genetics is all-explanatory," "reinforce a distorted perception of the basis of the human condition," and devalue other biological work.

develop a treatment or cure—admittedly, a big "if"—this discovery alone could allow the Project to pay for itself.

But there was (and continues to be) much disagreement about the need to sequence all of the DNA, since 90–95 percent of it consists of "introns" that do not "code" for genes and may be useless litter left over from evolution. "[T]his vast genetic desert holds little promise of yielding many gems," says Robert A. Weinberg, of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research. "As more and more genes are isolated and sequenced, the argument that this junk DNA will yield great surprises becomes less and less persuasive." Nobel Prize-winning biochemist Paul Berg, by

These larger differences will not likely disappear soon, but in 1988 a committee of the National Research Council that included several critics of Big Biology (such as David Botstein, one of the inventors of RFLP mapping) recommended a 15-year project carried out at 10 major research centers around the country and costing some \$200 million annually. It was not the kind of crash Big Science effort some of these critics had feared, and funds were not merely to be shifted from other areas of biomedical research to pay for it.

At the behest of Congress, the two competing bureaucracies reached agreement in 1988. The NIH will focus on mapping, the Energy Department on sequencing. Watson, named to lead the NIH program, has

become the de facto head of what is loosely called the U.S. Human Genome Project. At a projected \$3 billion over the next 15 years, the U.S. effort dwarfs those of Japan and Europe.

The project's first priority is to create rough maps of the human genome, while working to improve sequencing technology. Phase two, beginning after 10 years, is to determine the exact sequences of the three billion human nucleotides. Sequencing has become fairly routine, but it is tedious and expensive. ("Virtually any monkey can do it," Watson scoffed last fall when an NIH official announced plans to seek patents for sequences.) With today's technology, it would take several centuries to "read" the entire genome. But a proposed DNA computer chip might analyze sequence data 100 times faster than is now possible.

The challenge of the 21st century will be to interpret the cornucopia of raw information produced by the project and to determine how to make use of it. In a sense, the project will provide only the infrastructure for the research of the future. Genes will still need to be located, their functions understood. Knowing that a base sequence is GGATCC, for example, is not enough to reveal what function is served by the protein it encodes. Scientists will need to explore the complex *interplay* among genes that influence or produce human traits and diseases. And they will need to discover how one fetal cell's DNA is told to multiply into brain cells and another's into bone cells.

Even so, practical applications of genetic research already are permeating medicine. On September 14, 1990, for example, Dr. W. French Anderson and two colleagues at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, made medical history by performing the

first sanctioned "gene therapy" on a human being. A *New York Times Magazine* profile noted that Anderson needed political skills nearly as great as his medical ones to win approval from the bureaucracy and Congress. The patient was a four-year-old girl who suffered from adenosine deaminase (ADA) deficiency, an inborn inability to produce an enzyme essential to the immune system. Anderson and his colleagues inserted the gene for ADA into a retrovirus that had been stripped of most of its own genetic material. When mixed with a sample of the girl's own white blood cells, the retrovirus went about its normal business of penetrating the nucleus of each cell, carrying with it the ADA gene.* On that September day, the process reached its historic if undramatic culmination when the girl's "improved" white blood cells were returned to her by transfusion. Since then, she has continued to receive the controversial therapy, and other researchers have won permission to begin similar treatments for cancer, hemophilia, and cystic fibrosis.

The greatest practical benefits from genetic research so far have come in the form of "biotech" drugs. They have spawned a \$12 billion industry—dominated by American firms such as Amgen, Genzyme, and Immunex—that is expected to grow to \$40–60 billion by the end of the decade. Many biotech drugs are substances normally produced in the human body that are synthesized in the laboratory by taking the relevant genes and inserting them into yeast or bacteria cells, then harvesting the natural substances they create. Tens of millions of patients now use these genetic products to combat afflictions such as diabetes, hepatitis, and anemia. The drugs include not only such familiar substances as

*Cell transplantation is a related procedure, cruder in that entire cells are used to correct for genetic defects. For example, researchers can obtain insulin-producing "islet" cells from dead donors and place them in the livers of patients unable to produce their own insulin.

insulin but epogen, which stimulates the production of red blood cells and thus allows kidney dialysis patients to avoid transfusions, and neupogen, which increases the production of white blood cells in cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.

Finally, and most significantly, genetic research has made possible "predictive," presymptomatic medicine. In 1991, for example, researchers discovered a gene responsible for a rare colon cancer. Those with a family history of the disease can be tested for the gene; if they carry it, they can get regular colonoscopies and surgeons can act at the first sign of trouble. However, most predictive medicine lies in the future. A genetic early warning, for example, may some day allow physicians to intervene against juvenile onset diabetes, a disease that afflicts more than one million Americans. By the time it is diagnosed—usually after the appearance of symptoms such as fatigue—most of the victim's insulin-producing islet cells are dead and the patient must begin daily insulin injections.

As in the case of Huntington's disease, however, locating a gene (or marker) and finding a response are two different matters. Researchers discovered dozens of disease-causing genes in the 1970s and '80s without finding the means to prevent or cure the diseases. "We need," says University of California geneticist Paul Billings, "a new physiological revolution. We need new insights and approaches. Until this happens, work with genes can carry us only so far."

Knowledge from the frontiers of genetic research will increasingly pose difficult problems for policymakers and for society at large. Should certain forms of genetic screening be required? Should others be barred or restricted? Most states already require the screening of newborn babies for biochemical disorders such as phenylketonuria

(PKU), a hereditary enzyme deficiency that causes mental retardation but which can be offset by a special diet. Indeed, because of other nongenetic medical advances, the list of required tests may soon extend later into childhood. Some state legislatures are considering laws that require the testing of all children at age one or two for lead poisoning. Such mandatory screening arouses little opposition, largely because it is easy, inexpensive, and effective.

But consider the case of cystic fibrosis, the most common inherited fatal disease of children and young people in the United States. Roughly five in 100 Caucasian Americans—about 12 million people—carry a responsible gene. Since it is recessive, such "carriers" are not affected. If two carriers conceive a child, however, it has a one-in-four chance of developing the disease. In the late 1980s, a test was developed to identify carriers. However, results can be ambiguous, in part because more than 100 known mutations of the gene cause cystic fibrosis. The *New York Times* reports, however, that screening for cystic fibrosis is "quietly creeping into clinical practice." The driving force is physicians' fear of malpractice or "wrongful life" lawsuits. To screen all possible carriers in the United States using current technology would cost billions of dollars every year and would provide limited benefits. To forego screening, however, may require more discipline and understanding than most couples can muster. Must the state set limits?

Some genetic discoveries create moral dilemmas. Each year, about 300,000 pregnant women in America seek fetal tests for certain inherited diseases. In some cases experimental treatment of the fetus through surgery or transfusion is possible if an "abnormality" is found. But usually the options are to continue the pregnancy without treatment or to abort the fetus. Many people choose abortions. Since a fetal test

for Tay-Sachs—a fatal neurodegenerative disease—became available in the early 1970s, the number of children born with Tay-Sachs has declined by 90 percent.

Screening, however, does not always encourage abortion. It can allow couples who have had one genetically abnormal child to feel free to conceive another, knowing that a fetal screening will reveal any problems. Yet fetal screening still makes many ethicists and physicians uncomfortable. In Russia, for example, the medical literature shows that a large number of abortions have occurred because screening has revealed that fetuses *might* have the gene for juvenile-onset diabetes. “I don’t know if a 20 percent disposition to diabetes is a disease or an abnormality,” says Arthur Caplan, director of the Center for Biomedical Ethics at the University of Minnesota. “I’m certainly not sure whether it morally justifies anyone aborting a fetus with that genetic profile. We haven’t thought very much yet about how to draw that line between what is a disease and what isn’t.”

Moreover, many people seem willing to abuse prenatal choices. Demographers have concluded that 100 million Asian females are “missing” from the total population, most presumably aborted because their parents wanted sons. As researchers discover the genetic components of intelligence, will parents abort fetuses lacking Ivy League genes? Will they practice prenatal “heightism,” aborting some male fetuses because they will not grow tall enough?

“At what point,” asks biotechnology critic Jeremy Rifkin, “do we move from trying to cure horrible genetic diseases to trying to enhance genetic traits?” Despite some vocal dissent in professional journals, the scientific and medical communities

have made work on human germ (sperm and egg) cells taboo, but this self-imposed limitation seems destined to end. Experiments with plant and animal germ cells offer enticing prospects—such as no-caffeine coffee beans and “natural” low-fat cow’s milk—while doing no known harm. Advocates of germ-cell research point out that physicians already alter eggs or sperm when exposing cancer patients to some forms of radiation and drugs. And finally the ban on germ-cell research forces us to reexamine our notions of nature itself. Is it “natural” to get sick? Isn’t medicine constantly fighting nature?

What if your physician said, “You have a family history of heart disease. I can offer a painless and safe injection that will correct this defect in your reproductive cells and guarantee that your children and every descendant thereafter will have a significantly reduced chance of heart disease.” Your doctor would explain possible side effects. “It is not clear-cut,” the experts would explain. “Gene defects, including those in recessive genes, may do unknown things or defend the body in undiscovered ways, just as the gene for sickle cell anemia offers protection against malaria.” Yet it is nevertheless hard to imagine people saying no to such an offer.

While the dilemmas of genetic research give many reasons to pause and reflect, they do not justify slowing or stopping the research itself. In many cases, the best way to eliminate dilemmas—and protect human life—is to push back genetic frontiers. Admittedly, there are risks involved. The more we master genes, the more options—many of them morally questionable—we will have. But making choices, after all, is what being human is all about.

CONTROLLING THE GENETIC ARSENAL

by Daniel J. Kevles

In April 1991, an exposition opened in the hall atop Paris's great arch of La Defense under the title, *La Vie En Kit (Life in a Test Tube)—Éthique et Biologie*. Along with the displays about molecular genetics and human genome research were a catalogue and placard by psychoanalyst Monette Vaquin. The latter captured many of the anxieties aroused by this subject:

Today, astounding paradox, the generation following Nazism is giving the world the tools of eugenics beyond the wildest Hitlerian dreams. It is as if the unthinkable of the generation of the fathers haunted the discoveries of the sons. Scientists of tomorrow will have a power that exceeds all the powers known to mankind: that of manipulating the genome. Who can say for sure that it will be used only for the avoidance of hereditary illnesses?

Vaquin's apprehensions, echoed frequently by scientists and social analysts, are a powerful reminder of the shadow of eugenics that looms over human genetic research. Ideas about eugenics can be traced back at least to Plato, but modern eugenics originated with Francis Galton (1822-1911), a younger first cousin of Charles Darwin and a brilliant scientist in his own right. In the late 19th century, Galton proposed that the human race might be improved, in the manner of plant and animal breeding, by eliminating so-called undesirables and multiplying so-called desirables. It was Galton who named this

program of human improvement "eugenics," taking the word from a Greek root meaning "good in birth" or "noble in heredity." Through eugenics Galton intended to improve human stock by giving "the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable."

Galton's ideas gained popular acceptance after the turn of the century, finding large followings in the United States, Britain, Germany, and many other countries. One of the organizations formed to promote Galton's ideas was the American Eugenics Society in 1923, which sponsored exhibits at state fairs and other activities. The backbone of the movement consisted of people from the white middle and upper-middle classes, especially professionals, scientists, and physicians. The movement brought together a variety of prominent figures from all points of the ideological compass, including a number of the progressive-minded, such as sexologist Havelock Ellis, anarchist Emma Goldman, and George Bernard Shaw. ("Being cowards, we defeat natural selection under cover of philanthropy," Shaw wrote, "being sluggards, we neglect artificial selection under cover of delicacy and morality.") Eugenists declared themselves to be concerned with preventing social degeneration, which they perceived all around them in urban industrial society. They took crime, slums, and rampant disease to be symptoms of so-



Taking eugenics to the people: At an exhibit at the Kansas State Fair in the mid-1920s, the high rate of illiteracy among immigrants and blacks was attributed to inferior genes.

cial pathologies that they attributed primarily to biological causes—to “blood,” to use the term for inheritable essence common at the turn of the century.

Eugenically minded biologists were intent on rooting out the causes of social degeneration. Their study of medical disorders such as diabetes and epilepsy was motivated not only by the intrinsic interest of these diseases but by concern over their social costs. A still more substantial part of the research program consisted of the analysis of traits alleged to make for social burdens—traits involving qualities of temperament and behavior that might lie at the bottom of alcoholism, prostitution, criminality, and poverty. These biologists were especially interested in mental deficiency—then commonly called “feeble-mindedness”—which was thought to be at the root of many varieties of socially harmful behavior and which could be identified

through recently invented intelligence tests.

In the hope of explaining these pathologies biologically, eugenic researchers such as psychologist Henry H. Goddard resorted to Mendel’s laws of heredity, which had been rediscovered in 1900. They fastened on the idea that biological characteristics were determined by single elements—only later identified as genes. They generally assumed that not only could certain physical characteristics (e.g., eye color) or diseases be explained in a Mendelian fashion but also characteristics of mind and behavior. Charles B. Davenport (1866–1944), head of the biological laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island, New York—which in 1918 became the Carnegie Institution of Washington’s Department of Genetics—was one of the nation’s more prominent scientists. He searched for Mendelian patterns of inheritance in many supposed be-

havioral categories, including “nomadism,” “shiftlessness,” and “thalassophilia”—the love of the sea that he discerned in naval officers. (He concluded that thalassophilia must be a sex-linked recessive trait because, like color blindness, it was almost always expressed in males.)

While some eugenic investigations into human heredity proved to have merit, most of them were recognized in the end to be worthless. Combining Mendelian theory with incautious speculation, scientists favored relatively simple single-gene Mendelian explanations, neglecting the fact that many traits are influenced by more than one gene. They also paid far too little attention to cultural, economic, and other environmental influences on behavior and mental abilities. And like Davenport’s behavioral categories, many of the traits that figured in eugenic research were vague or ludicrous, filled with class and race prejudice. In northern Europe and the United States, eugenicists specified standards of fitness and social value that were predominantly white, middle class, and Protestant—and identified with “Aryans.” They reasoned that poverty was the result not of inadequate educational and economic opportunity but of the meager moral and educational capacities of the poor, rooted in their biology. When eugenicists celebrated Aryans, they demonstrated nothing more than their own racial and ethnic biases. Davenport, for example, found the Poles “independent and self-reliant though clannish,” the Italians tending to “crimes of personal violence,” and the Hebrews “intermediate between the slovenly Serbians and the

Greeks and the tidy Swedes, Germans, and Bohemians” and given to “thieving” though rarely to “personal violence.” He expected that the “great influx of blood from Southeastern Europe” would rapidly make the American population “darker in pigmentation, smaller in stature, more mercurial . . . more given to crimes of larceny, kidnapping, assault, murder, rape, and sex-immorality.”

Eugenicists like Davenport urged interference in human propagation in order to increase the frequency of “good” genes in the population and to decrease that of “bad” ones. The interference was to take two forms: One was “positive” eugenics, which meant manipulating the human heredity or breeding to produce superior people. The other was “negative” eugenics, the elimination of biologically inferior human beings from the population by discouraging such people from reproducing or by restricting immigration.

In practice, little was done for positive eugenics, although arguments in favor of increasing the number of offspring born of “desirable” types did figure in the advent of family allowance policies in Britain and Germany during the 1930s. It was also an implicit theme of the American Eugenics Society’s Fitter Family contests in the “human stock” sections at state fairs during the 1920s. At the 1924 Kansas Free Fair, winning families in three categories—small, average, and large—were awarded a Governor’s Fitter Family Trophy, presented by Governor Jonathan Davis. “Grade A Individuals” were awarded a medal that portrayed two diaphanously garbed parents, their arms outstretched toward their (presumably) eugenically meritorious infant.

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Judging from the photographs that survive, it is hard to know what made these families and individuals stand out as especially fit, but some evidence is supplied by the fact that all entrants had to take an IQ test—and the Wassermann test for syphilis.

Much more was done in the name of negative eugenics, notably by means of eugenic sterilization laws. By the late 1920s, some two dozen American states had enacted such laws, which, in general, permitted state prisons and other institutions to perform vasectomies or tubal ligations on inmates who were epileptic, insane, or “feeble-minded,” especially if they had been incarcerated for sexual offenses. The laws were declared constitutional in the 1927 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Buck v. Bell*. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., delivered the opinion that “three generations of imbeciles are enough.” The leading state in this endeavor was California, which by 1933 had subjected more people to eugenic sterilization than had all other states of the union combined. By 1941, nearly 36,000 Americans had been sterilized under various state eugenics programs.

The most powerful union of eugenic research and public policy occurred in Nazi Germany. Much of the research in Germany before and even during the Nazi period was similar to that in the United States and Britain, but during the Hitler years Nazi bureaucrats provided eugenic research institutions with handsome support, and their programs were expanded to complement the goals of Nazi biological policy. Ongoing investigations into the inheritance of disease, intelligence, and behavior were plumbed for knowledge that could guide the government’s sterilization policy. Eugen Fischer’s Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics, which included among its staff the prominent geneticist Otmar von Verschuer, trained SS doctors in the intricacies of ra-

cial hygiene and analyzed data and specimens obtained in the concentration camps. Some of the material—for example, the internal organs of dead children and the skeletons of two murdered Jews—came from Josef Mengele, who had been a graduate student of Verschuer’s and was his assistant at the Institute. In 1942, Verschuer succeeded Fischer as head of the Institute (and would serve postwar Germany as professor of human genetics at the University of Muenster). In Germany, where sterilization measures were partly inspired by the California law, the eugenics movement prompted the sterilization of several hundred thousand people. Ultimately, as we know, it helped lead to the death camps.

Since the beginning of the DNA era, many scientists and laymen alike have wondered whether our growing body of genetic knowledge will be exploited for a new program of positive eugenics, for attempts to engineer new Einsteins, Mozarts, or Kareem Abdul-Jabbars. (Curiously, brilliantly talented women such as Marie Curie or Nadia Boulanger or Martina Navratilova are rarely if ever mentioned in the pantheon of superpeople.) Today, hardly a conference is held on human genome research without somebody expressing the fear that the state will seek to foster or enhance desirable human qualities or characteristics. Such apprehensions are not entirely unfounded. In 1984, for example, Singapore’s Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew scolded his country’s educated women, supposedly possessed of above-average intelligence, for their relatively low birth rate. The elite’s reluctance to reproduce, he said, was diminishing the quality of the country’s gene pool. Embracing a crude positive eugenics, Singapore’s paternalistic government—which also recently banned chewing gum as a national nuisance—has since offered preferential

school enrollment for offspring of such women and a variety of other incentives to increase their fecundity. Their less-educated sisters have been offered similar incentives to have themselves sterilized after the birth of a first or second child.

Engineering a super-race in the laboratory, however, is quite a different matter from extending carrots and sticks to parents, and there are many reasons to doubt that advances in genetic knowledge will lead to any serious engineering efforts. While the U.S. Human Genome Project and its counterparts overseas will undoubtedly accelerate the identification of genes for certain physical and medical traits, it is unlikely to reveal with any speed how genes contribute to the formation of the abilities, behavior, or personal qualities that the world admires. It is quite likely that the genetic contribution (if there is any) to, say, a good sense of humor derives in very complicated ways from more than one gene. And of course most such complex traits are probably influenced by much more than inheritance. Equally important, the designing of entire or substantial parts of human genomes is impossible with current technology and will not likely become much easier in the near future. The only kind of human genetic engineering scientists have attempted thus far is a primitive form of gene therapy to overcome a relatively simple, if deadly, immune disorder, adenosine deaminase deficiency. It will be quite a long time before scientists possess the knowledge and technology that would enable them to attempt significantly more sophisticated forms of designer human genetics.

The prospect of a revival of negative eugenics has stirred far more concern, voiced by people like the late Nobel laureate biologist Salvador Luria and rights-for-the-disabled advocate Barbara Faye Waxman. Since it will in principle be easy to identify individuals with genes for "undesirable"

physical or supposedly antisocial traits, the state may intervene to discourage such people from passing them on. Indeed, in 1988, China's Gan-su Province adopted a eugenic law that would—so the authorities said—improve "population quality" by banning the marriage of mentally retarded people unless they first submitted to sterilization. Since then, such laws have been adopted in other provinces and have won the endorsement of Prime Minister Li Peng. As the official newspaper *Peasants Daily* explained, "Idiots give birth to idiots."

Closer to home, the European Commission, the executive arm of the 12-nation European Community, seemed to be motivated by an interest in negative eugenics in its July 1988 proposal for a European human genome project. Billed as a health measure, the proposal was called "Predictive Medicine: Human Genome Analysis." Its rationale rested on a simple syllogism—that many diseases result from interactions of genes and environment; that it would be impossible to remove all the environmental culprits from society; and therefore that individuals could be better defended against disease by identifying their genetic predispositions to fall ill. Predictive medicine, said a summary, "seeks to protect individuals from the kinds of illnesses to which they are genetically most vulnerable and, where appropriate, to prevent the transmission of the genetic susceptibilities to the next generation." The Commission, which apparently had in mind susceptibilities to such illnesses as diabetes, cancer, stroke, and coronary disease, believed that the proposal would make Europe more competitive—indirectly, by helping to slow the rate of increase in health expenditures, and directly, by strengthening its scientific and technological base.

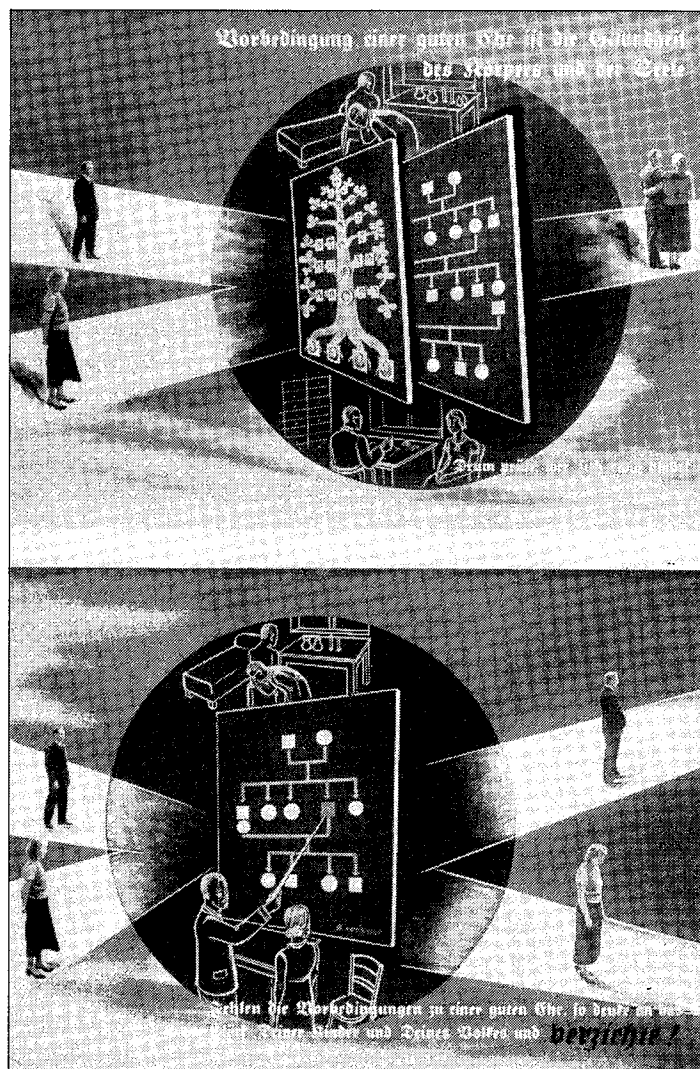
Such economic considerations may

well prove to be a powerful incentive to a new negative eugenics in the future. They clearly played a role in the emergence of the early eugenics movement. At the 1926 Sesquicentennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the American Eugenics Society's exhibit included a board that, in the manner of the population counters of a later day, revealed with flashing lights that every 15 seconds \$100 of taxpayers' money went for the care of persons with bad heredity, that every 48 seconds a mentally deficient person was born in the United States, and that only every seven-and-a-half minutes did the United States enjoy the birth of "a high-grade person... who will have ability to do creative work and be fit for leadership." Such cost-consciousness may have been behind the fact that, in California and several other states, the rate at which eugenic sterilizations were performed increased significantly during the 1930s, when state budgets for the mentally handicapped were squeezed.

In our own day, the more that health care in the United States becomes a public responsibility, payable through the tax system, and the more expensive this care becomes, the greater the possibility that taxpayers will rebel against paying for the care of those whom genetics inclines or dooms to severe disease or disability. Public officials may feel pressure to encourage or

even to compel people not to bring genetically marked children into the world—not for the sake of the gene pool but in the interest of keeping public-health costs down.

All this said, however, there are many reasons to doubt the rise of socially controlled reproduction, let alone a revival of a broad-based negative eugenics. Eugenics profits from authoritarianism—indeed, al-



A Nazi publicity poster (circa 1941) encouraged hereditary screening prior to marriage. Ironically, many German racial hygienists privately considered Hitler an "inferior" un-Nordic East Slav.

most requires it. The institutions of political democracy may not have been robust enough to resist altogether the violations of civil liberties wrought by the early eugenics movement, but they did contest them effectively in many places. The British government refused to pass sterilization laws. So did many American states, and where they were enacted they were often unenforced. It is farfetched to expect a Nazi-like eugenics program to develop in the contemporary United States so long as the democratic process and the Bill of Rights survive. If such a program ever does threaten to take shape, the country will have a good deal more to worry about politically than just eugenics.

Awareness of the barbarities and cruelties of state-sponsored eugenics in the past has tended to set most geneticists and the public at large against such programs. During the 1950s, for example, genetic counselors, fearful of the eugenic taint, made it their standard practice to offer their clients information but no advice. Most geneticists today know better than their early-20th-century predecessors that ideas concerning what is "good for the gene pool" are highly problematic. Then, too, the handicapped and victims of inherited diseases, as well as minority groups, are much more organized and politically powerful than they were in the early 20th century. They may not have enough power to counter all quasi-eugenic threats to themselves, but they are politically positioned, with allies in the media, the medical profession, and elsewhere, including the Roman Catholic Church, a staunch opponent of the eugenics movement, to block or at least to hinder eugenics proposals that might affect them.

The European Commission's proposal mobilized just such an anti-eugenics coalition. Guided by Benedikt Härlin, a West German Green, the European Parliament's Committee on Energy, Research and Tech-

nology quickly raised a red flag against the Commission's approach to genome research. Its report reminded the Community that in the past eugenic ideas had led to "horrific consequences" and warned of the "eugenic tendencies and goals" implicit in the intention of protecting people from contracting and transmitting genetic diseases. Using human genetic information for such purposes would almost always involve decisions—fundamentally eugenic ones—about what are "normal and abnormal, acceptable and unacceptable, viable and non-viable forms of the genetic make-up of individual human beings before and after birth." The Härlin report also warned that the new biological and reproductive technologies could ultimately make for a "modern test tube eugenics," a eugenics all the more insidious because it could disguise more easily than its cruder ancestors "an even more radical and totalitarian form of 'biopolitics.'"

Härlin was not a Luddite, opposed to a genome program in principle. "You can't keep Germany out of the future," he later said about his own country's involvement in genome research. He was searching for a way to make a genome program palatable. Approved by the Committee in January 1989, the Härlin report urged 38 amendments to the Commission's proposal, including the deletion of the phrase "predictive medicine" from the text. In the European Parliament, the Härlin report won support not only from the Greens but from conservatives on both sides of the English Channel, including German Catholics. As a result, Filip Maria Pandolfi, the new European commissioner for research and development, froze Community research subsidies in April 1989. "When you have British conservatives agreeing with German Greens," he explained, "you know it's a matter of concern."

In mid-November, the European Com-

mission issued a revised proposal. It called for a three-year program of human genome analysis as such, without regard to predictive medicine, and committed the European Community in a variety of ways—most notably, by prohibiting human germ cell research and genetic intervention with human embryos—to avoid eugenic practices, prevent ethical missteps, and protect individual rights and privacy. It also promised to keep the Parliament and the public fully informed via annual reports on the moral and legal basis of human genome research. Formally approved the following June, the EC's human genome program will cost 15 million ECU (about \$17 million) over three years, with some one million ECU devoted to ethical studies. (The much larger U.S. Human Genome Project also devotes a share of its budget to such studies; it conducts only basic research and its activities are closely regulated by various review boards and by Congress.)

As this experience suggests, the eugenic past is prologue to the human genetic future in only a strictly temporal sense—that is, it came before. Of course, the imagined prospects and possibilities of human genetic engineering remain tantalizing, even if they are still the stuff of science fiction, and they will continue to provoke both fearful condemnation and enthusiastic speculation. However, the near-term ethical challenges of human genome research lie neither in engineering human genetic improvement nor in some state-mandated program of eugenics. They lie in the grit of what the project will produce in abundance: genetic information. They center on the control, diffusion, and use of that information in a market economy, and they are deeply troubling.

The advance of human genetics and biotechnology has created the capacity for a kind of "homemade eugenics," to use the

term of analyst Robert Wright—"individual families deciding what kinds of kids they want to have." At the moment, the kinds they can choose (if they are willing to abort the fetus) are those without certain disabilities or diseases, such as Downs' Syndrome or Tay-Sachs. Most parents would probably prefer a healthy baby. In the future, even without the development of the means to alter the genome, genetic analysis of embryos may give parents the opportunity to select the "best" of their fertilized embryos, selecting children who are likely to be more intelligent or more athletic or better looking—whatever those terms may mean.

Would people exploit such possibilities? Quite possibly, given the interest that some parents have shown in choosing the sex of their child or that others have pursued in the administration of growth hormone to offspring who they think will grow up too short. A 1989 editorial in *Trends in Biotechnology* recognized a major source of the pressure: "'Human improvement' is a fact of life, not because of the state eugenics committee, but because of consumer demand. How can we expect to deal responsibly with human genetic information in such a culture?"

Even this challenge, however, is distant, since the means of identifying the relevant genes are likely to remain beyond our grasp for a long time to come. More urgent are the questions of social decency posed by the torrent of new human genetic information (and misinformation). There is, for example, the distinct possibility that employers may use genetic screening and seek to deny jobs to applicants with a susceptibility—or an alleged susceptibility—to disorders such as manic depression or illnesses arising from special susceptibility to certain chemicals or other workplace hazards. Around 1970, for example, a single questionable case raised the fear that people with sickle-cell trait—that is, who pos-

sess only one of the two recessive genes needed to develop a full-blown case of the disease—might suffer the sickling of their red blood cells in the reduced oxygen environment of high altitudes. For a time, the U.S. Air Force Academy barred people with the trait from its entering classes, and several major commercial air carriers restricted them to ground jobs. Some people with the trait were charged higher premiums by insurance companies.

As more information becomes available in the future, life and medical insurance companies may well wish to know the genomic signatures of their clients, their risk profile for disease and death. Even national health systems may choose to ration the provision of care on the basis of genetic propensity to disease, especially to families at risk for bearing diseased children.

Should individual genomic information be protected as strictly private? Many critics say so. However, a great deal more thought needs to be given to the rights of individuals to withhold and the rights of insurers to demand such information. Insurance, and insurance premiums, depend on assessments of risk. If a client has a high genetic medical risk that is not reflected in her premiums, then she would receive a high payout at low cost to herself but at high cost to the company. The problem would be compounded if she is aware of the risk—while the company is not—and she purchases a large amount of insurance. In either case, the company would have to pass its increased costs along to other policyholders, which is to say that high-risk policyholders would be in effect taxing others to pay for their coverage. Insisting on a right to privacy in genetic information

could well lead—at least under the largely private system of insurance that now prevails in the United States—to inequitable consequences.

The eugenic past has much to teach us about how to avoid repeating its mistakes—not to mention its sins. But what bedeviled our forebears will not necessarily vex us, and certainly not in the same ways. In human genetics as in so many other areas of life, the flow of history compels us to think and act anew. It is important not to be swept away by exaggerated fears that genetic research will lead to a program to engineer superbabies or the callous elimination of the unfit.

America's state and federal legislatures, those most practical of governmental bodies, have already begun to focus on the genuine social, ethical, and policy issues that the Human Genome Project raises, particularly those concerning the use of private human genetic information. "One of the most serious and most immediate concerns," noted Representative Bob Wise (D.-W. Va.) at a House subcommittee hearing last fall, "is that genetic information may be used to create a new genetic underclass." At about the same time, the California state legislature passed a bill banning employers, health service agencies, and disability insurers from withholding jobs or protection simply because a person is a carrier of a single gene associated with disability. Vetoed by Governor Pete Wilson, it is nevertheless a harbinger of the type of public-policy initiative that the genome project will—and should—call forth. If we do not use our knowledge wisely, it will be a failure not of science but of democracy.

ARE WE THE SUM OF OUR GENES?

by Howard L. Kaye

Appause and a collective sigh of relief greeted the announcement in 1990 that a portion of the U.S. Human Genome Project's budget would be set aside each year for studies of the social and ethical implications of genetic research. Mindful of past experience with the atom and other revolutionary research put to uses that were not fully anticipated, scientists and administrators now seemed prepared to grapple with the possible uses and abuses of their work while it was underway.

Yet amid this celebration, the project's more profound implications are being overlooked. Many of the prominent scientists involved believe that the logical consequence of unlocking the gene's secrets will transcend science, requiring nothing less than a fundamental change in our understanding of human nature. With the mapping and sequencing of the human genome, they believe, will ultimately come knowledge of the genes associated with the whole range of human behavioral, mental, and moral traits. As these putative "genes for" such things as schizophrenia, alcoholism, homosexuality, manic-depression, intelligence, and criminality are "discovered" and publicized, the cumulative effect will be a transformation of how we understand ourselves: from moral beings, whose character and conduct is largely shaped by culture, social environment, and individual

choice, to essentially biological beings, whose "fate," according to project head James Watson, "is in our genes."

This claim of Watson and other scientists is the latest episode in the controversial "return to biology" that began with the ethology of the 1960s and the sociobiology of the '70s and '80s. But whereas behavioral biologists during the past three decades, like the late-19th-century Social Darwinists before them, simply speculated about the possible hereditary bases and adaptive value of human traits and conduct, the geneticists of today believe they are poised to discover such genes and the biochemical pathways by which they shape our lives. To them, the Human Genome Project marks the culmination of more than a century of debate over the "implications" of modern biology that began with Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) and Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius* (1869)—a debate lucidly chronicled in Carl Degler's recent *In Search of Human Nature*.

Yet from the days of T. H. Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce to those of E. O. Wilson, Stephen J. Gould, and James D. Watson, there is a discouraging repetitiveness to the debate, despite the illusion of scientific and moral progress. In the opinion of some (including Darwin himself), biology sanctions traditional moralities and social ideals and provides the necessary tools for their realization. According to others, biology, for better or worse, utterly shatters

such notions. For example, James Rachels asserts in a recent work subtitled *The Moral Implications of Darwinism* (1990) that "Darwinism undermines traditional morality," "religious belief," and "the idea of human dignity," while other writers tell us that its "logical consequences" include eugenics, racism, and totalitarianism.

As for public policy, some declare as self-evident truth that modern biology sanctifies a conservative agenda and social inequalities, while others, such as molecular geneticist Christopher Wills of the University of California, San Diego, claim biology with equal conviction for social activism and liberal reform. Some see in the dogmas of molecular biology and Darwinism the ultimate ground of objective truth, toward which the humanities and social sciences must bow, while others insist on their essential irrelevance to such concerns.

Whatever particular forms it has taken, the debate has always centered on the "implications" and "logical consequences" of the biological sciences for our understanding of human nature and culture. Today, however, faced by the prospect of an increased capacity and desire to intervene in the human genome, I believe that we must change the terms of the debate and give up this misguided quest. To think in terms of "implications" and "logical consequences" is to suggest that certain facts or propositions about human social behavior are so inseparably entwined with certain facts or propositions about biology that if the biological statement is true, the social statement follows necessarily.

"Implication" suggests a connection

that is objective and logical. Yet is this really the case, or do we not thereby grant too much to science—ultimately the ability to tell us objectively who we are by nature—and too little to ourselves? Does any natural scientific proposition logically entail some significant human conclusion, or is this connection derived from other sources? Does relativity in physics, for example, "imply" moral relativity, as was argued earlier in this century? Does Darwinian theory "imply" the falseness of the biblical account of creation, as many have claimed for over a century? Does the proposition that an organism is "only DNA's way of making more DNA" imply that we and our culture are also "survival machines" built by natural selection to preserve and replicate our "immortal genes"? And finally, does the discovery of genetic correlates to the full range of human capacities and conduct truly imply the knowledge that "fate is in our genes"?

The "logical consequences" discerned by the combatants in this debate are more properly understood as *interpretations*, more philosophical, sociological, and psychological in nature than objectively scientific. The theory of relativity in physics may have been seen by some individuals as lending "scientific" support to moral relativity, but the idea of moral relativity long predated 20th-century physics. For all the furor and spiritual anguish that we wrongly believe was experienced by the pious because of Darwin's theory of evolution through natural selection, many readers of Genesis, including many biologists (such as Francis Collins, codiscoverer of the gene for cystic fibrosis), perceive no incompatibility in the respective accounts and thus

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feel no need to redefine human nature or purpose. This is so because the perception of such "implications" depends not simply on knowledge of natural phenomena and scientific theory but on a host of background assumptions, philosophical orientations, and cultural commitments.

Pious Jews or Christians may read the account of creation in Genesis symbolically or as a charming but primitive myth, which, despite its outdated cosmology, contains important truths about life's ultimate

able research. Nevertheless, to argue that the findings reveal "the essence of humanity," as Christopher Wills does, or the "objective criteria" by which human conduct must ultimately be judged, as political theorist Roger Masters does, and the proper means for making ourselves, in Watson's words, "a little better," is an interpretation of nature and of man that is more metaphysical than scientific.

Unfortunately, it is not always clear to either scientists or to their lay audience



Plus ça change . . . From Charles Darwin to James Watson, the argument that biology is destiny has hardly changed at all.

origins and about our own problematic nature. For them, a God who creates by natural selection may be just as believable as one who creates through word and division. Yet to those already alienated from, and hostile toward, such religious visions—as well as their foes, those religious fundamentalists threatened by a "godless" modernity—the implications of Darwinism for biblical religion are obvious.

The recognition that natural selection acting on the genome can affect behavioral characteristics has stimulated much valu-

when such claims are being made. A scientist or naive popularizer like the Pulitzer Prize-winning science reporter Natalie Angier, who tells us that "adultery" and "infidelity" are far more prevalent in the animal kingdom than had been previously thought and serve to increase the "adulterer's" reproductive fitness, appears to be describing only the facts of life. Yet what else is being conveyed by the use of human moral terms like "debauchery," "adultery," and "philandering" to describe nonhuman animals? Does this not imply that these

nonhuman and all-too-human sexual activities are essentially the same in their meanings, motivations, purposes, and consequences? Would it not also appear to be a logical consequence that human adultery is "natural" and our moral condemnation of it unrealistic and even unnatural?

From Pliny the Elder to Saint Francis of Sales, the elephant was held forth as a model of ideal conjugal conduct. Saint Francis wrote:

It never changes females and is tenderly loving with the one it has chosen, mating only every three years, and then only for five days, and so secretly that it is never seen in the act; but it can be seen again on the sixth day, when the first thing it does is go straight to the river and bathe its whole body, being unwilling to return to the herd before it is purified.

Does the apparent faultiness of this ethology (so far only the California mouse has proven to be truly monogamous) mean that the ideal of mutual faithfulness and self-mastery is discredited or less desirable and noble? Would better ethology provide us with a better ideal? I think not. The ideal of fidelity was never put forth *because of* the behavior of elephants but because of the behavior of people. To understand human adultery and proper conjugal conduct, we have far more to learn from literature, religion, philosophy, and our own self-reflection than biology can ever provide.

Or when laypersons read in Wills's *Exons, Introns, and Talking Genes: The Science Behind the Human Genome Project* (1991) that the discovery of "genes for" intellectual abilities and personality traits is as "inevitable as the eventual discovery of genes for manic-depression or schizophrenia," how many will recognize the *a priori* beliefs that lie concealed behind the white coat of science? How many readers will fail to interpret such future "discoveries" as suggesting possible genetic *influences* on

the development of certain traits and capacities in *some* of the individuals manifesting them and instead see the "implication" of genetic determinism?

In confronting such allegedly scientific accounts, we need to ask not what human propositions may be objectively drawn from a given body of biological fact but three other questions: What leads us to perceive, construct, and proclaim such interpretations as objective truths? How adequate are they as interpretations of nature and ourselves, based on *all* of the knowledge available to us? What might be their social and moral impact?

Enthusiasm over the explosion of knowledge about the genome is not the only, nor perhaps the most compelling, motive at work in the perception of implications. Beneath the surface of today's scientific optimism is a profound sense of cultural crisis and moral uncertainty. Thanks in part to challenges posed by science, communally binding and individually compelling religious faiths and moral ideals have long been eroding. For centuries our philosophers and social scientists have sought to unmask our cultures, our politics, and our very selves, presenting them as illusory structures shaped by forces beyond conscious control. In such a cultural climate, the specter of nihilism, cultural relativity, and individual disorientation seems a constant threat. Confused about who we are and how we should live, suspicious of all answers, we can agree on nothing beyond the primacy of individual desires or group demands in both private and public affairs.

For those who do not celebrate such a condition, the seeming certainties achieved by the natural sciences have been powerfully attractive. Ever since Thomas Hobbes, who in horror at the anarchy of the English Civil War turned to geometry for guidance,

the search for a secular morality has dominated social thought, driving us from science to science—mathematics, physics, biology, psychology, sociology—in hope of discovering a stable moral ground or law-generating method. Cut loose from religious traditions and systems of meaning, adrift in a sea of relativity, and buffeted by chance, expediency, and impulse, we continue to find both the “certainties” of scientific “fact” and its power to satisfy human desires alluring.

As our latest attempt at dropping some moral anchor, biology may prove as ambiguous and unsuccessful as previous scientific moralities—and perhaps even more harmful. Our current infatuation with biology, unlike that of a century ago, is occurring at a time when the humanities and social sciences have declared moral bankruptcy, thus depriving us of a vital part of the collective memory we need to regulate and resist our increased capacity for genetic manipulation. This sort of amnesia is painfully apparent, for example, in Wills’s discussion of genetic influences on criminal behavior. Pointing to the common social backgrounds of police and criminals, Wills asks rhetorically, “Why should one group be law-abiding and the other not, if criminal behavior is engendered entirely by the environment?” For Wills, environmental and genetic determinism are apparently the only choices. What the former cannot explain must be attributed to the latter. Wedding a crude sociological determinism to an equally crude biology, Wills, like all for whom “nature and nurture” or “heredity and environment” are the only legitimate categories for understanding human life, utterly ignores the irreducible element of individual will, choice, and responsibility.

How are we to resist such irresponsible assertions—and the actions potentially

sanctioned by them—if our scientists and opinion makers have forgotten what it means to be a moral and cultural being endowed, in Max Weber’s words, “with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude towards the world and to lend it significance”?

Fortunately, most nonacademics have not forgotten. Years ago, while literary and scientific intellectuals were extolling sociobiology’s ethic of survival and “the morality of the gene,” I overheard a doorman (married and the father of three) complain to a co-worker, “I’m not really living, just surviving.” This is a sentiment I suspect we have all heard or experienced, but what was this man really saying? In distinguishing between *human* life and *biological* life was he not expressing the presence of a “self” or “soul” within him that aspired to a higher life, a more meaningful and fulfilling life than the life of biological survival and reproduction he was leading? Unlike our biologists, structural social scientists, and poststructural humanists, he recognized that we are meaning-craving and meaning-creating animals who aspire, however perversely, to the good. To understand such a nature, which desires “the good’s being one’s own always” and which experiences the pain of shame, resentment, and guilt at our inadequacy, Plato’s *Symposium* remains a better guide than E. O. Wilson’s *Sociobiology*. It is not that Plato’s biology is better than Wilson’s but that the question of human nature is not simply a biological one, no matter how many genetic correlates of character are discovered. Our capacity for culture—understood not in the trivial biological sense as all nongenetic means that enable organisms to adapt to their environments, but in its properly human sense as that system of ideals, practices, and prohibitions that comes into being both to protect us from

nature and from ourselves and “for the sake of living well”—may certainly be the product of natural selection. Our capacities for reason, symbolic expression, and imagination; our aspirations for esteem and respect; and our qualities of curiosity and self-consciousness all may have evolutionary origins and may have contributed to our species’ biological success. But they have long since taken on applications and ends that transcend the narrowly biological and may at times contradict it. Indeed this need to dream of, reflect on, and feel shame before goods and ideals detached from and even contrary to both our “innate behavioral repertoire” and our ultimate biological ends is both our greatness and our curse. Nevertheless, it is precisely this capacity that is under attack, now on three fronts, as the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities close in on their quarry: the self or soul.

It is this attempt to redefine fundamentally how we conceive of ourselves as human beings, and thus how we conceive of a good and proper life, that makes contemporary biological naturalism so culturally radical in its potential consequences. Yet however inadequate and even harmful this perspective may be, however unfounded its claim to the status of “scientific implications” for its moral prescriptions, it has indeed begun to alter our self-conception. This is not because scientific knowledge has social *implications* but because it has had and will continue to have social *impact*.

During the 1960s, the writings of ethologists like Konrad Lorenz and Robert Ardrey and evolutionary theorists like Theodosius Dobzhansky, G. G. Simpson, and C. H. Waddington stimulated a return to biologically grounded reflections on human nature and culture. In the 1970s and '80s, the even more reductionist writings of E. O. Wilson and other sociobiologists and of molecular

biologists such as Jacques Monod and Francis Crick reached a surprisingly large audience. If the colleague of mine who told me he decided to have a second child, seven years after his first, because he was worried about investing his genes in a single offspring is any indication, these messages have indeed been heard.

In the years to come, I expect this redefinition of ourselves as essentially biological beings to continue and to have even greater influence on individual actions and public policy. But whereas this once was the work of scientists addressing the public directly in works that were explicitly philosophical and manifestly seeking to convert, its continued development will, I fear, be far more indirect and insidious. The Human Genome Project will play a crucial role, but not simply through its discoveries in the laboratory. Instead, I expect that the cumulative effect of the ways such knowledge is likely to be interpreted for and by the broader public will push us, like sleepwalkers, toward the biologizing of our lives in both thought and practice.

When a scientist such as Harvard’s E. O. Wilson candidly acknowledges that the particular vision of human nature and culture he is advocating is drawn from the “mythology” of scientific materialism, the thoughtful reader is in a position to recognize Wilson’s work for what it is—metaphysical speculation and natural theology—and evaluate it accordingly. Yet when the public reads in the newspaper of “genes for” various human attributes and behaviors and of the means for altering the human “blueprint” in seemingly desirable ways, few are able to recognize the moral and philosophical commitments that lie behind such statements. Yet such commitments are powerfully present, however unconscious or concealed behind “descriptive” language. When George

Cahill of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute asserts that the Human Genome Project is "going to tell us everything. Evolution, disease, everything will be based on what's in that magnificent tape called DNA," the "everything" he means is everything worth knowing about life. When Maynard Olson of Washington University states that "genetics is the core science of biology and increasingly it's going to be the way that people think about life," he is not offering just a prediction but a moral prescription: Genetics is how we *ought* to think about life. When Robert Sinsheimer, the prominent scientist who helped launch the drive for a genome project in 1985, tells us that it will provide "the complete set of instructions for making a human being," he certainly ignores everything else that goes into the making of a human being. More ominous, however, is his emphasis on "making," for this is the same Robert Sinsheimer who in 1973 advocated the conscious direction of human evolution toward a "higher state" through eugenics as the only unifying goal left that could save us from our cultural despair.

Heading the Human Genome Project is, of course, James Watson, codiscoverer of the structure of the DNA molecule. For Watson, the genome project is quite simply the culmination of his reductionist quest for understanding all of life including "ourselves at the molecular level." With this understanding we can and should increasingly control our fate. After all, why not? "A lot of people say they're worried about changing our genetic instructions," Watson acknowledges, "but those [instructions] are just a product of evolution designed to adapt us for certain conditions that may not exist today . . . [So] why not make ourselves a little better suited for survival? . . . That's what I think we'll do. We'll make ourselves a little better."

The point here is not to raise the specter

of mad scientists, hell-bent on eugenics, in charge of a multibillion-dollar government research project with important medical and political potential. Nor is it to suggest that a majority of researchers participating in the project share this metaphysical and social agenda. It is instead to argue that such pronouncements may have an important impact on public perception, public understanding, and ultimately public response to emerging biological knowledge and technologies. So pervasive is this highly reductive and deterministic view of life that it passes for self-evident and unproblematic scientific fact among those science writers and journalists who seek to keep the public informed about developments in biology. Newspapers and other media constantly refer to the genome as "the blueprint for a human being," "the formula for life" that "dictates . . . how an individual confronts the world" and that contains "the very essence" of our lives. They trumpet the discovery of "genes for" cancer, schizophrenia, manic-depression, and other maladies. In the *Philadelphia Inquirer* last fall, it was put quite simply: "Everything about us . . . is determined by genes."

Even those critical of some developments in modern biology find it difficult to escape from its reductive language. Robert Wright of the *New Republic*, in a highly caustic piece on Watson and the genome project, nevertheless adheres to what Watson's colleague Francis Crick dubbed the "Central Dogma" of molecular biology: that DNA makes RNA, RNA makes protein, and "proteins (to oversimplify just a bit) are us." The "implications" of such a dogma appear clear. DNA, as shaped by natural selection and chance, essentially determines who we are and how we live, yet like any "blueprint" can be altered to fit new needs.

That human beings, and perhaps other

organisms as well, are more than their DNA "blueprints" or the sum of their proteins; that DNA, however "magnificent" a tape it may be, does not constitute the "essence" of human life, nor tell us "what we are," in Watson's words, let alone who we are; that it is both incorrect and irresponsible to speak of having discovered "genes for alcoholism" or genes that "cause" schizophrenia, are ideas that have become so strange that they are virtually unthinkable. Yet because they have become unspoken and unthinkable, many will want to take actions and advocate policies on the basis of what passes for scientific fact.

When the news media announced the discovery of a "gene for alcoholism" in 1990, I recall mentioning to a colleague in chemistry that such language was dangerously misleading. After all, the research of Drs. Ernest Noble and Kenneth Blum had only suggested a possible genetic component contributing indirectly to the alcoholism of *some* individuals. To speak of a "gene for alcoholism" both exaggerates the degree of genetic influence and seems to attribute all forms and cases of alcoholism to the same biological cause. The study, moreover, has yet to be replicated by others and involved research on only 70 brains. Much to my surprise, the chemist strongly disagreed: "Now wait a minute! This may be a very important piece of knowledge," he said, "for it might mean that the best way of treating the problem of alcoholism is through its biological causes."

He was hardly alone in making the jump to possible biological interventions. Noble and Blum plan to develop a blood test within five years that would detect the presence of the relevant dopamine recep-

tor gene so that screening and treatment by drugs can begin. Forgetting for a moment that the gene identified seems to be correlated with something vaguely defined as "pleasure-seeking activity" in general and not simply some cases of alcoholism, and ignoring temporarily the potentially devastating, stigmatizing effects of such screening, there is still a shocking lack of awareness that the question of the "best way" to treat a problem such as alcoholism is not purely a question of efficiency, speed, or cost. It is a moral and political question as well, or at least it is if we recognize that we are dealing both with a problem that has important social, cultural, and psychological causes and with a being who possesses a potentially free and responsible soul that ought to be respected. It may even be possible that the "best way" morally to treat such a person may not be the most cost-effective way.

In the years to come cases like this will only proliferate. Regular "scientific breakthroughs" will torment and excite us, yielding genetic "determinants" for dozens of traits and attributes, both desirable and undesirable. Powerful economic and political interests, coupled with the understandable desire of individual human beings to maximize the well-being of themselves and their children, will continue to tempt us to pursue courses of biological intervention that will dehumanize us all, unwittingly, in the name of scientific progress, individual freedom, and compassion. Yet the road to such dehumanization in action begins with our prior dehumanization in thought—our forgetting the kind of beings we are and our construction of a new self-definition seemingly sanctioned by the biological sciences which, in their ignorance and ambition, encourage us to forget.

BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE FATEFUL CODE

The remarkable advances in genetics during the last 50 years have prompted an outpouring of books and articles about the science. Along with journalists, many of the more prominent researchers have weighed in with books for the general reader. This has proved to be a mixed blessing. While throwing considerable light on a complicated science, the array of books can be bewildering. While a number of these may *seem* to be about genetics—including François Jacob's **The Logic of Life** (Pantheon, 1973)—they in fact focus on such matters as human behavior and man's ultimate place in the universe. Many writers skirt the fringes of genetics, discussing the ethics, or implications, or mechanics of their science. Yet few provide a simple history of who, what, when, and how.

Two exceptions are Gunther Stent's **Coming of the Golden Age** (Natural History, 1969) and Horace Freeland Judson's **Eighth Day of Creation** (Simon & Schuster, 1979). Though somewhat dated, both contain a wealth of history. Stent, a molecular biologist at the University of California, Berkeley, offers an excellent thumbnail retrospective, sketching the now-familiar tale of the rise of modern molecular biology from its roots in Gregor Mendel's 19th century pea-plant experiments to Francis Crick and James Watson's 1953 discovery of DNA's structure. (Readers are forewarned that Stent indulges in a rather New Age meditation on the connection between genetic research and the evolution of human intellect.)

Judson, a professor of humanities and science at Stanford University, explains the late 20th-century breakthrough in biology and genetics as a "synthesis of particular lines from five distinct disciplines": x-ray crystallography, physical chemistry, genetics, microbiology, and biochemistry. What sets genetics apart from sciences such as physics or astronomy—each of which had its Newton or Copernicus—is that it evolved not through "great set-piece battles but by multiple small-scale encounters—guerrilla actions—across the landscape." Genetics had no "ruling set of ideas" such as the Ptolomeic system of the universe to overcome.

One event that was truly revolutionary—Crick and Watson's discovery of DNA's structure—is treated in Watson's highly personal account, **The Double Helix** (Norton, 1980). Reading this book, one is struck not so much by the magnitude of Watson and Crick's discovery as by the obsessive and, at times, graceless way they went about achieving it. Locked in a furious race with Nobel Prize-winning chemist Linus Pauling, Watson and Crick repaired to a local pub to drink a "toast to the Pauling failure" when the American published an early but incorrect description of DNA's structure. Recent editions of Watson's book, edited by Gunther Stent, provide further tantalizing glimpses of politics and etiquette inside the laboratory. Stent appends disapproving reviews of the original book, rebuttals, and recriminations, one coming from Crick himself, who calls it "a rather vivid fragment of [Watson's] autobiography, written for a lay audience."

The impression that the expanded book leaves of Watson—now the most visible leader of the U.S. Human Genome Project—is less than flattering. Robert L. Sinsheimer, one of the project's early promoters, talks about Watson and Crick's reliance upon "cadged data...overheard in seminars, pried out in conversations, even provided by Max Perutz from a privileged report." Sinsheimer suggests that others were close to reaching the same conclusions and that the scientists' "ingenuity and clutching ambition bought a year or two in time—and fame."

A common thread running through many recent books is the realization that modern geneticists—like the scientists who unlocked the secret of the atom—are delving into a realm of knowledge that man may lack the ethics to control. This concern echoes through several books that take the Human Genome Project as a point of departure. Among these are **Genome** (Simon & Schuster, 1990) by journalists Jerry E. Bishop and Michael Waldholz, **The Human Blueprint** (St. Martin's, 1991) by chemist Robert Shapiro, and science writer Lois Wingerson's **Mapping Our Genes** (Dut-

ton, 1990). Devoting less attention to past discoveries than to what *might* be discovered, all of these authors frame the various sides of the ethical debate. Shapiro takes the most hopeful view, trusting in our wisdom to reap what is best in genetic research while limiting abuses. By contrast, Jeremy Rifkin, author of *Algeny* (Viking, 1983) and *Declaration of a Heretic* (Routledge, 1985), warns that "with the emergence of genetic engineering, society entertains the prospect of a new and more deadly form of segregation . . . based on genotype."

The dismaying history of eugenics receives full treatment in historian Paul Weindling's *Health, Race and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism, 1879-1945* (Cambridge, 1989) and in Robert Proctor's *Racial Hygiene* (Harvard, 1988). As Proctor points out, the legacy of the abuses of science under the Nazis is not just that Nazi racial policy was allowed to triumph but that "this struggle was played out, at least in part, in the spheres of science and medicine," forever tainting genetic research, at least in the public mind, with a sinister aspect.

One potentially sinister outgrowth of genetic research is the ability to screen individuals for genetic defects. *Ethics and Human Genetics* (Springer-Verlag, 1989), edited by D. C. Wertz and J. C. Fletcher, provides an international survey of such practices as the screening of unborn fetuses for fragile X syndrome and the testing of adults for susceptibility to depression. The authors' findings suggest that the geneticists seem more concerned about the burden of increased demand for such tests than about the possible moral dilemmas they may present individuals. Those wishing to ponder such choices may consult *Dangerous Diagnostics* (Basic, 1989), by Dorothy Nelkin and

Laurence Tancredi; *Backdoor to Eugenics* (Routledge, 1990), by Troy Duster; *Proceed with Caution: Predicting Genetic Risks in the Recombinant DNA Era* (Johns Hopkins, 1989), by Neil A. Holtzman, M.D.; the Office of Technology Assessment's *Genetic Monitoring and Screening in the Workplace* (U.S. Government Printing, 1990); or, in a more visionary vein, Aldous Huxley's dystopian *Brave New World* (1932).

But as Daniel J. Kevles and Leroy Hood remind us in the introduction to their forthcoming collection of essays, *The Code of Codes: Scientific and Social Issues in the Human Genome Project* (Harvard, 1992), "science-fiction fantasies about the genetic future distract attention from the genuine problems posed by advances in the study of heredity"—particularly those that relate to insurers, employers, and the government. Assembling an impressive cast of commentators, including Nobel Prize winners Walter Gilbert and James Watson, the book explores the history, methods, and implications of the Human Genome Project. Readers may sample such exotica as Horace Judson's poetic musings on gel electrophoresis—"molecules of DNA behave in the electrical field like strands of aquatic weed strung out and floating down a flowing stream." Or they may learn how researchers compare the DNA of bacteria and fruit flies to human DNA to find the key to what makes us human, a quest that Gilbert likens to the "grail of human genetics." Part of that knowledge, says Gilbert, is "to realize that genetic information does *not* dictate everything about us." Science can only go so far. Society will still have to decide "how much of our makeup is dictated by the environment, how much . . . by our genetics, and how much . . . by our own will and determination."

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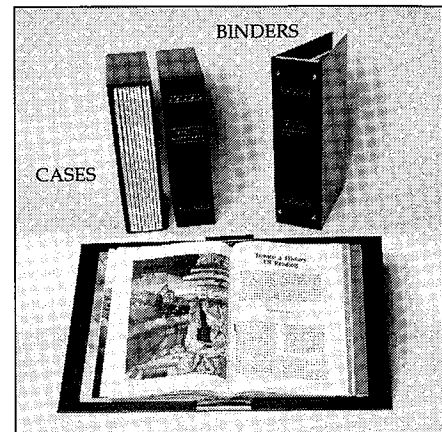
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Space. Edited by Michael Sorkin. Noonday. 252
pp. \$15

During the 1980s, writing from his perch at *The Village Voice*, Michael Sorkin established himself as one of America's more provocative critics of contemporary architecture. *Exquisite Corpse*, a collection of 55 essays from the *Voice* and other periodicals, constitutes Sorkin's "adieu to the journalistic trenches," a parting shot before he returns to full-time practice of the craft he so deftly criticized. His fellows in the trade should welcome Sorkin's return. As Lyndon Johnson once observed, it's better to have your critics "inside the tent pissing out than outside the tent pissing in."

Among other tales, these essays tell about the making of a profession-wide muddle. Coming out of graduate school in the early 1970s, Sorkin and his generation of architects could either go the way of the idiosyncratic masters, the Frank Lloyd Wrights or the Louis Kahns, or follow the money and work in vast corporate firms. The choice seemed clear. Making art meant making sacrifices.

Then Philip Johnson presented a new possibility. Wearing a cape and holding a model of his Chippendale-topped AT&T Building, Johnson became one of the national icons when he appeared on a January 1979 cover of *Time*. America's most celebrated corporate architect, noted for his owlish black glasses, was suddenly impersonating a 19th-century bohemian artist. Fitting historic styles or funny allusions to the facade of a building, he declared flat-topped, steel-and-glass skyscrapers "boring." In one stroke, the perennial in-

sider with his own table at New York's Four Seasons, a close adviser to CEOs, was—could it be possible?—"outside."

Sorkin deems Johnson's example counterrevolutionary. Architects could now have it both ways. Following Johnson's lead, they could play the artist and pay no price. Frank Gehry, Robert Stern, Michael Graves, and others were given large-scale jobs by such deep-pocket patrons as Disney, and architects at big firms like I. M. Pei and Kevin Roche began to be thought of as artists. The Pritzker Prize, called the "Nobel" of architecture, institutionalized the confusion by bestowing its first award upon Johnson. Ever since then, Sorkin notes, the Pritzker has been unable "to decide whether it wishes to recognize persons who are credits to American architectural big business or credits to some higher notion of Architecture."

Sorkin's cast of heroes and villains may be unfamiliar to the general public, but the contest he delineates is easy to follow. On one side are the few surviving individual practitioners—the avant-garde—who still consider architecture high art; on the other are the big firms pursuing architecture as a corporate business.

The individualists did not have an easy time of it during the last decade. As land values became inflated, those smaller buildings and structures, painstakingly designed and detailed by one architect working alone at his drafting board—the type of building that is the bread and butter of small architectural offices—proved increasingly uneconomical. Many dedicated architects were forced to make their living teaching, producing little built work and a great deal of "paper architecture." As Sorkin relates, their drawings became divorced from any possibility of production. Mike Webb's black and white visionary designs or John Hejduk's muted color

renderings of imaginary urban spaces were reclassified as art and sold in galleries. Hejduk, dean of the architecture school at Cooper Union, took to writing mournful poetry, while all the jobs, the best commissions on the best sites, went to large firms with teams of designers, engineers, and marketing departments.

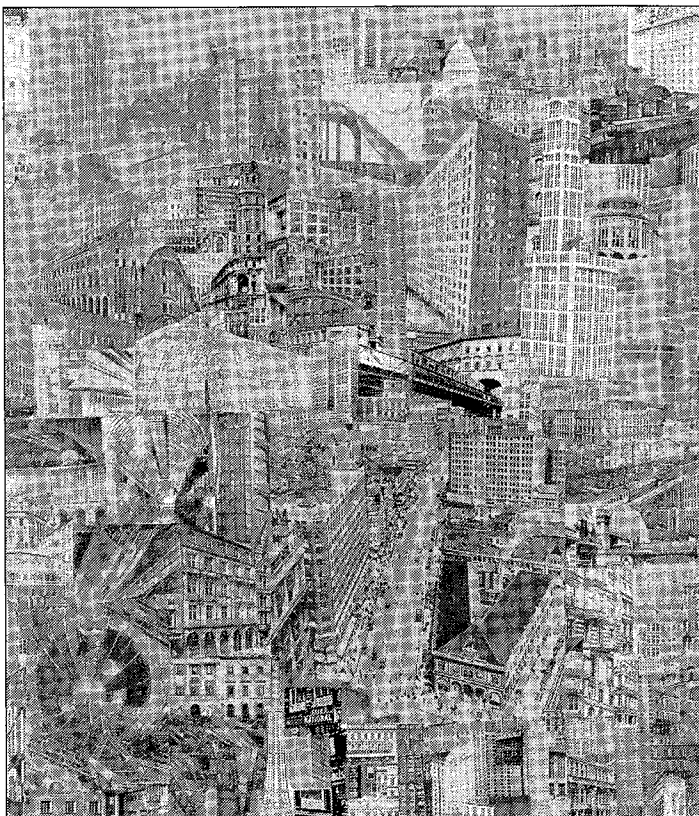
Such firms as Skidmore, Owings & Merrill or Kohn Pederson Fox churned out buildings that looked graceful on the skyline but proved to be awkward and forbidding from the ground. Since the engineering and technology of 1,000,000-square-foot buildings was fixed, there was little for architects to do except to find a suitable style in which to dress them. Cavernous, church-vaulted lobbies ornamented with palm trees and surveillance cameras, multi-story atriums, and pompous winter gardens were built in every ambitious downtown.

Architecture during the 1980s was thus less an act of invention than a matter of application. The "post-modern" grab-bag of historical styles became a way to provide the impression of architectural variety when, in fact, little existed. Sorkin dismisses Johnson's AT&T Building in New York—an undifferentiated slab with cute Chippendale ornamentation—as the "architecture of appliqué, a building of words with no syntax."

Because postmodernism's repertoire was the same from Singapore to St. Louis, a handful of jet-lagged designers, acting much like visiting symphony conductors, dropped in, ignored the local talent, and did the show. Architects in solo practices had to be content to design long-shot schemes for faraway competitions, such as the New Paris Opera or the "Peak" in

Hong Kong, or wait for an enterprising art dealer to find the way to their door.

How recent architectural practice has affected the social environment is the subject of *Variations on a Theme Park*. Here Sorkin and seven other critics study, variously, walled communities in Los Angeles, malls, festival markets, "edge cit-



ies," suburban sprawl, and gentrifying slums. All try to discover why cities have lost their distinctive sense of place.

Starting in the 1960s, as the massive middle-class exodus to the suburbs shrank their tax base, mayors of cities such as Pittsburgh and Chicago enlisted architects and planners to "renew" their downtowns and clean up their slums. To attract necessary operating capital, cities encouraged reinvestment through tax abatements and

zoning variances, and made land available at significant discounts to private developers. These developers in turn hired architects whose job it was to edit out the disquieting details of real cities that had prompted people with money to move out in the first place. They had to find ways to lure taxpayers back downtown. Their answer was to create attractive "theme" cities, transforming their urban centers into Disneyland fantasies.

South Street Seaport near New York's Wall Street typifies this strategy. To bring suburbanites back into a place that they had come to see as dangerous and dirty, the Rouse Company (which had successfully remade historic working districts in Boston and Baltimore) turned the smelly streets of the old district into the sanitized main arteries of a "renewed" shopping area for nine-to-fivers. South Street Seaport was filled with upscale shops built on a nostalgic village scale. Unlike Disney's Anaheim or Orlando, where paste Matterhorns and three-fifths-scale Broadways have a backlot obviousness, architect Benjamin Thompson's South Street Seaport hijacked lower Manhattan for an authentic backdrop to its simulated fronts. For those who travel along this imaginary promenade, writes architectural historian Christine Boyer, "centers of spectacle efface the distinctions between the real cityscape and the show." At South Street and similar places, consumerism replaces production, and the "intimate streets, lined with small-scale facades and shopping arcades" only hide the very loss of work that put the city into crisis in the first place.

It has been more than 30 years since the urbanist Jane Jacobs mournfully declared the "death" of American cities. Her last hopes resided in the sort of easy mixing of classes typified by West Tenth Street in Greenwich Village, with its fresh-baked Italian bread and attentive neighbors. Most such places are now gone for good. Both in the older suburbs, where life in the "country" is separated from work by a car or train trip, and in today's "edge cities," where office and home are closer together, the street that once formed the nucleus of

the city has been abandoned by every form of life except the automobile. In cities such as Minneapolis and Montreal, skyways above and tunnels below connect office towers to sleek inner-city shopping malls, worlds removed from the old potholed cities. Political scientist Langdon Winner even envisions a future "Information City," modelled on Northern California's Silicon Valley, where one will hardly need budge from his or her modem. There will be no streets to bridge over or tunnel under because there will be no need to move anywhere. This brave new world will be one without any true architecture, where everyone is "networked" together without having "to move through a world of people and material things."

Neither Sorkin nor the other contributors offer alternatives to the recent architectural displacements resulting from what Sorkin describes as the "dissipation of all stable relations to local physical and cultural geography, the loosening of ties to any specific place." Perhaps the authors propose no solutions because architecture has typically served and rarely challenged power. While a few large firms are still putting up tall towers—which now have over 20 percent vacancies in most cities—or designing million-dollar vacation homes for the easy money made downtown, the majority of architects are now without work of any sort. Decaying neighborhoods, homelessness, and empty downtowns were not addressed during the building boom, and that boom crashed in 1990. The themed festival markets such as South Street Seaport and the new gentrified slums where young couples educate their children privately to avoid the local public schools are our contemporary Potemkin Villages. Their stage-set prosperity masks the architectural and social failure to reinvest in ourselves.

—Ross Miller, *Resident Fellow at the Chicago Institute for Architecture and Urbanism, is the author of American Apocalypse: The Great Fire and the Myth of Chicago (1990).*

Among the Medievalists

INVENTING THE MIDDLE AGES: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century. By Norman F. Cantor. Morrow. 477 pp. \$28

The most recent period in history may be the Middle Ages. At least the Middle Ages often seems the era most appealing to contemporary audiences. We flock to a film about a medieval bandit (*Robin Hood*). Children read a comic-strip version of the Middle Ages (*Hagar the Horrible*). An ordinary detective story (Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*) is set amid the intrigues of the medieval church, and it becomes an international bestseller. Another book (Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*) makes the farfetched claim that the 14th century is a *Doppelgänger* of our own times, and it becomes a bestseller.

Even on a scholarly level, it can be argued that the Middle Ages is of quite recent vintage. This is precisely the case made by Norman Cantor, an historian at New York University. The Middle Ages, he suggests, did not exist as a proper subject of history before the 20th century. Previously, people might have referred to the Middle Ages, but what they talked about was not a distinct age but their own shadows projected backwards.

The Italian humanists of the 15th century first coined the term "Middle Age" or "Middle Ages" in order to denigrate the thousand years between the fall of brilliant Rome and the rise of their own almost equally brilliant epoch. During the next three centuries, the "Middle Ages" served mainly as a convenient synonym for barbarism and ignorance, superstition and cultural decline.

In the early 19th century, however, John Keats, Sir Walter Scott, Jules Michelet, and Caspar David Friedrich discovered a different, more romantic Middle Ages. In opposition to the sooty, utilitarian world of the Industrial Revolution, they wove an

idyllic tapestry of heroic individualism and intense communal feeling, a Gothic culture steeped in idealism, spirituality, and the adoration of women. After 1840, the Victorians replaced that romantic idealism with their own ideals about nationalism, social determinism, and Darwinian struggle and proceeded to find the Middle Ages brimming with such phenomena. Cantor cautions us not to waste our time considering this early, pioneering scholarship: "No book written about the European Middle Ages before 1895 or so is still worth reading . . ."

The problem facing the Victorians was, curiously, that they had too much raw material to work with. The 19th-century understanding of the ancient world remains highly significant, Cantor says, precisely because the surviving documents from antiquity are relatively few. By contrast, the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library in Collegeville, Minnesota, alone has microfilms of 73,000 medieval books; this represents but a fraction of existing source materials today, most of which had in fact been available—and overwhelming—to



the Victorian scholars, who were largely brilliant amateurs. It was left to the more diligent, professional scholars of the 20th century to penetrate this thicket of sources and to discover, decipher, decode, and finally reveal the true contours of medieval Europe.

Cantor proposes to draw back the curtain and escort us backstage and, amid the hammering and the tinkering with lights and the costuming, demonstrate exactly how an historical era is reconstructed. He boasts that his is, in fact, the first intimate portrait of a group of scholars at work. From him we learn what Phyllis Rose called "the higher gossip"—that is, the tittle-tattle, the scandal, and the juice—but we learn it only for instructive purposes: to understand how an academic's personal life intertwines with the social forces of his time and how, out of that glorious mishmash, true and accurate history can emerge.

Consider, for example, Cantor's own mentor—Joseph Strayer, the chairman of the Princeton history department during the 1950s, whose textbook shaped an entire generation's views on the Middle Ages. Strayer would conduct his late-afternoon seminars in a nearly dark office. When asked why the lights couldn't be turned on, Strayer growled, "So you dummies will not be able to bore us by reading your verbose notes and will have to speak succinctly from memory." For two years, Strayer's graduate students did nothing but read medieval tax roles, and in his own lectures Strayer rarely referred to the colorful kings and prelates who populated the Middle Ages. Strayer's Middle Ages was one in which good administration and law made civil life possible. This vision of medieval Europe, with its centralized political systems governed by a learned elite, Cantor observes, was essentially "a mirror of the New Deal"—"public-spirited, uncorrupted but power-hungry bureaucrats who worked on behalf of society's welfare as they perceived it."

Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that Strayer would telephone Cantor late at

night, instructing him to prepare a lecture and deliver it to Strayer's class the following day. Summoned mysteriously out of town, Strayer, Cantor later learned, was following a second career, working for the CIA and advising Allen Dulles on high-level matters. To Strayer this seemed perfectly normal. Such secret parleys within a bureaucratic elite had been integral to the Middle Ages and had helped ensure a happily ordered society.

Strayer's rational, elitist, but ultimately democratic bureaucracy was, however, hardly the model other scholars found for the Middle Ages. In Germany, the exact opposite image of medieval Europe had earlier taken shape. Percy Ernst Schramm and Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, whom Cantor calls the "Nazi twins," were born shortly after the Second German Empire was created under the Prussian Hohenzollerns. Both projected back into the Middle Ages theoretical justifications for the royal leadership of society. They penned brilliant biographies of royal messianic figures—Schramm of the 10th-century emperor Otto III, Kantorowicz of the 13th-century emperor Frederick II—who brought order to the German nation. In their political life, both men (though Kantorowicz was Jewish) believed they had found such a contemporary political savior in none other than Adolf Hitler.

And so it goes, as Cantor describes how each towering medievalist soldered together an image of the Middle Ages congenial to his own milieu. C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien shaped a vision of romantic traditionalism and medieval spirituality that embodied the typically conservative outlook of Oxbridge dons who found the contemporary world distasteful. The French historian and resistance fighter Marc Bloch projected a social communitarianism to counter the terrible reality of his beloved France falling apart before the invading Germans. Cantor depicts the various medievalists with a liveliness and flair that can vary from the amusing, as when he characterizes the flamboyant Le Roy Ladurie as a "middle-aged David Bowie," to the nearly libelous, as when he

implies that Natalie Zemon Davis is a neo-Stalinist.

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Yet what, finally, do Cantor's descriptions of the various medievalists all add up to, since they don't add up to anything resembling unanimity about the Middle Ages? Ironically, Cantor refutes his own premise. In the end, his great 20th-century scholars, who supposedly wrote real history, are almost indistinguishable from those 19th-century dilettantes who projected their fantasies onto that earlier age. Cantor believes that the 20th-century historians do present a "truer" Middle Ages, but his claim comes down finally to something other than their having perused more documents and burrowed deeper into the archives.

Alfred North Whitehead remarked that all people are either Aristotelians or Platonists, meaning that a person inclines to seeing either the minute particulars or the generalizing essence. In the course of *Inventing the Middle Ages*, Cantor goes from recording the particulars of medieval historiography to glimpsing the Middle Ages in its archetypal wholeness. And, amazingly, the archetypal Middle Ages appears to be an early rough draft of the 20th century. "The 20th century invented for itself a medieval mosaic that was significantly patterned by its own agonizing experiences," Cantor admits, but that mosaic is still valid history because our agony resembles the medievals': "We have met the medievals and recognizably they share our sensibilities and anxieties."

Cantor argues that medieval civilization is "the intriguing shadow, the marginally distinctive double, the secret sharer of our dreams and anxieties" because both periods are obsessed with "the tension between the spiritual and the material, the intellectual and physical." Of course—but

which historical period was not so obsessed? Cantor's arguments here lead almost into anachronisms in which medieval men seem to perform quite trendy stunts. Thus the 12th-century theologian Peter Abelard tries "the radical neo-Freudian approach of high eroticism (copulation makes you free) à la Wilhelm Reich, Norman O. Brown, and Herbert Marcuse." What, one wonders, is the medieval equivalent of "neo-Freudian," the Thomistic formulation for "à la Wilhelm Reich"?

Yet it is this hyperenthusiasm that makes *Inventing the Middle Ages* more than just a dutiful academic study. Indeed, Cantor ends up rather resembling a figure out of the Middle Ages, a monk or visionary who has glimpsed the True Grail. But for Cantor, what will save us is not Christ or God but the Middle Ages itself. He challenges some bold university president to disassemble the anthropology, sociology, literary criticism, and conventional history departments and invest instead in medieval studies, which contain—who would have guessed?—"the key ingredients of the new culture of the 21st century." Cantor closes with a grand neoconservative vision or perhaps hallucination: The retro-medieval world of the next century will turn back "the welfare and regulatory state from impinging drastically upon, or even in totalitarian fashion swallowing up, society . . . Like the Roman Empire, the modern age will crumble . . . and in the murky streets of ruined cities and meeting grounds of a billion humble habitations, our heroes and saints will show us how to begin history anew."

Back to the Future? After presenting his dazzling gallery of brilliant and eccentric scholars, Cantor thus reveals himself the most creative and crotchety medievalist of them all.

—Jeffery Paine is the literary editor of the *Wilson Quarterly*.

OTHER TITLES

History

THE SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA: The White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912. By Thomas Pakenham. Random House. 738 pp. \$32

Africa during the last 100 years is history in fast motion. When the explorer Dr. David Livingstone died in 1873—the incident that opens this narrative—Europeans had established only a few colonies in Africa, including Mozambique and the Gold Coast. By 1912, the entire continent, apart from Liberia and Ethiopia, was in the hands of one European nation or another. In 50 years, those same European powers were gone—or would be soon.

Pakenham, author of the monumental *The Boer War* (1979), has written the first comprehensive account of the European whirlwind that twisted its way across Africa. But that is not the only distinction of his book. Early histories of Africa are mainly Eurocentric accounts based largely upon the records of diplomats and explorers who invaded a continent that, judged by their words, might as well have been unpopulated. More recent African historiography has attempted to recapture the experience of the Africans themselves. Pakenham combines both perspectives into a chronicle that reads with the narrative force of a novel.

But a novel without heroes, black or white. The Mahdi, a Muslim leader who drove the British from the Sudan in 1885, might have served as an African savior, but he initiated such a brutal slave trade that 15 years later, when the British reconquered the country, they were welcomed as liberators. As calamitous as the Mahdi's policies was the British decision to ensure their own control by partitioning the Sudan into north and south—a division that led to civil strife that persists to this day.

Whatever horrors they inflicted, the Europeans justified their presence by invoking the "3 C's"—the Commerce, Christianity, and Civilization that all claimed to advance. At times the

mask of benevolence fell. "I do not want to miss a good chance of getting us a slice of this magnificent African cake," King Leopold II of Belgium declared in 1876. Yet European colonization, if disastrous for the Africans, nearly wrecked Europe too: "By the end of the century," Pakenham writes, "the passions generated by the Scramble had helped to poison the political climate in Europe, brought Britain to the brink of a war with France, and [started a war] with the Boers . . . one of the most humiliating in British history."

A generation ago it was fashionable to denounce European colonialism in terms resembling Joseph Conrad's indictment: "the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience." Pakenham here substitutes understanding for moral indignation, knowing that the worlds of the traditional Africans and of the confident European empire-builders are both gone forever. We live in a different world entirely, one in which last year—as no colonialist ever would have dreamed possible—all but one of the finalists for Britain's most prestigious literary prize were from former colonies. The winner was a Nigerian.

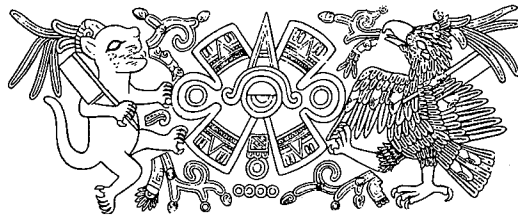
AZTECS. By Inga Clendinnen. Cambridge. 398 pp. \$29.95

When Hernando Cortés entered the great Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán in 1519, he was stunned by a practice that later perplexed students of this once-formidable empire. In the temple of the god Huitzilopochtli, human hearts smoldered in braziers, and a nauseating stench rose from the blood-stained floors and walls. Human sacrifices might have been commonplace in most advanced Mesoamerican societies, but nowhere else was ritual sacrifice combined with so aesthetic a culture and such fastidious social graces as among the Aztecs, "a people notable for a precisely ordered polity, a grave formality of manner, and a developed regard for beauty."

Scholars previously resolved this contradiction by marginalizing Aztec sacrifice, dismissing it as a top-of-the-pyramid affair concerning priests and rulers. Here, however, Australian historian Clendinnen shows that most of the butcher's work was done in full view, with all of society helping to prepare the victims and to distribute their dismembered heads and limbs. Clendinnen studies this "intimacy with victims' bodies, living and dead; [and] how that intimacy was rendered tolerable; what meanings were attached to it," to understand "how ordinary Mexica men- and women-in-the-street made sense of the vital world." Her *Aztecs* not only supersedes Jacques Soustelle's classic *Daily Life of the Aztecs* (1961) but also overturns most scholarly dicta about the Aztecs, from their honoring the elderly (on the contrary) to the role of sorcerers in society (far greater than was supposed).

Aztec sacrifice was intended to initiate human beings into the universe of the gods: Even the sun's rising out of darkness required continual human bloodletting. Young warriors were taught that their destiny was to be as much victim as victor, that their "precious eagle-cactus fruit" (their heart) would one day be "drink, nourishment, food to the sun, the lord of earth." The Aztecs conducted "Flowery Wars" against their allies—perhaps the strangest battles in history—fought not for territory or economic gain but "solely for the mutual taking of prisoners worthy of sacrificial death." With only the highest-ranking soldiers participating and fighting prearranged opponents, these battles involved what often appeared to be the ritual courtesies of a family reunion: The victor would ceremoniously address his captive as "my beloved son" and in turn be addressed as "my beloved father."

Scholars have long struggled to apply the



modern understanding of war, politics, and civil life to the Aztec empire. Clendinnen, by demonstrating that barbaric sacrifice was the defining act of Aztec society, makes such efforts seem misguided. Her approach derives from that of an American anthropologist working in an entirely different part of the world. Studying the Balinese, Clifford Geertz abandoned models from the contemporary social sciences and interpreted his subjects' system of government as a form of ritualized theater. Similarly, Clendinnen reveals a system of political governance that was so much a stylized mythological ritual that it barely seems to us like politics at all. Comparing Aztec researchers to "Ahab's pursuing our great white whale," Clendinnen concedes that it is "our own limitations of thought, of understandings, of imagination we test as we quarter those strange waters."

WOMEN AND GENDER IN ISLAM:

Historical Roots of a Modern Debate. By Leila Ahmed. Yale. 296 pp. \$30

What is the place of women in Islam? The success of fundamentalist movements in many parts of the Islamic world—which today includes some 40 nations and more than one billion people—adds urgency to the question. Countless Western news stories imply that the return to the veil required by Iran and other Islamizing regimes heralds a reign of repression that Muslim zealots will impose on women should their movements take hold in such comparatively "progressive" states as Turkey and Algeria.

For the past quarter century, much of the discussion about women under Islam has followed an argument put forth by the militant feminist, Dr. Nawal al-Saadawi of Egypt: Yes, Islamic women were oppressed, Saadawi conceded, but Islam itself could in no way be blamed. Rather, pre-Islamic conditions or reprehensible Persian or African codifications were smuggled into the essentially nonmisogynous religion of the Prophet. Ahmed, director of the Near Eastern studies program at the University of Massachusetts, brings balance and evidence to what has too often been a polemical debate.

Ahmed frankly admits the sexist,

androcentric character of established—or what she calls “legalistic”—Islam. In many ways, however, she finds the 1400-year-old faith no more inherently misogynous than other religions that originated in the Middle East, including Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. Ahmed’s argument, too, has its apologetic tone—perhaps because, like her predecessors, she believes she is writing for an unsympathetic Western audience. All the same, she makes a strong case that there has always been a powerful ethical and spiritual strain within the faith that affirms the fundamental equality of the sexes. Some 2,210 *hadith* (traditional accounts of the Muhammad’s deeds) are attributed to Aisha, the Prophet’s favorite wife, and many cast women in a favorable light. Among such sects as the Qarmatians (a branch of Shiism) and the mystical Sufis, there have been articulate leaders, men and women, who believed that women were even superior to men.

How this strain became marginalized is a tale of *realpolitik*: The early Umayyad (661–750) and Abbasid (750–1250) caliphates, to establish control and order throughout their growing empires, had to lay down the law in all areas of life. This required giving fixed interpretations of Muhammad’s teachings, including social and political ordinances that might have been nothing more than temporal expediencies in the time of the Prophet and his early successors. By the 10th century, arrangements deemed correct by any one of the four Sunni schools of law—arrangements that consolidated the inferior status of women—assumed the standing of divine law.

Ahmed has no good words for 19th- and early 20th-century Western colonizers who encouraged the unveiling of Muslim women. Their concern was more to Westernize than to liberate—and to Westernize only a small segment of the local elite that helped to manage the colonies. Moreover, many who advocated unveiling in the colonies were fiercely antifeminist in their native countries. (Lord Cromer, the British consul general in Egypt, criticized the degradation of women under Islam, but back in England he was a founding member of the Men’s League for Opposing Women’s Suffrage.) And despite their rhetoric of liberation in the colonies, European administrators often championed policies, including restrictions on gov-

ernment schools, that effectively blocked the advancement of Muslim women.

The only real solution to sexual inequality in the Islamic world lies within the Islamic tradition, Ahmed maintains. If her hope begs a large question—why *hasn’t* Islam’s egalitarian spiritual strain ever found effective political expression?—it poses a challenge to Muslim leaders who may listen.

Arts & Letters

AMERICAN GENRE PAINTING: The Politics of Everyday Life. By Elizabeth Johns. Yale. 250 pp. \$40

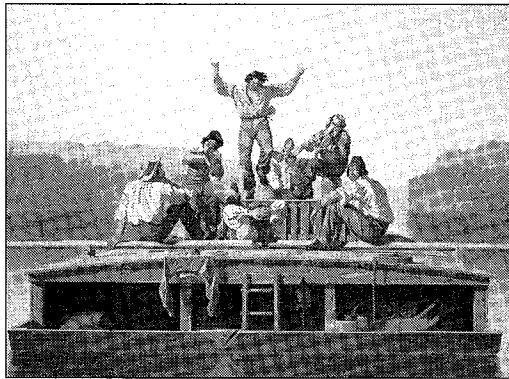
AMERICAN VIEWS: Essays on American Art. By John Wilmerding. Princeton. 357 pp. \$65

American Genre Painting is like an art movie—the production values are great. The reproductions, layout, paper, typesetting, and binding are all beautiful. But Johns, an art historian at the University of Pennsylvania, is anything but “artsy.” She brings sociology and hard politics to her analysis of American painting.

American art during the decades before the Civil War, with its visions of farmers, forthright women, Mississippi boatmen, blacks both slave and free, and other everyday folk, has long been taken “as evidence of a golden age in American culture and in American genre painting.” Johns argues that to see these paintings as “scenes of everyday life” is inaccurate. She asks a pointed question: “What is the relationship of the actors in this ‘everyday life’ to the viewers?” Johns finds that works by George Caleb Bingham (1811–1879) and William Sidney Mount (1807–1868) were not paeans to the common man but cynical put-downs, painted for an audience of New Yorkers ambitious for political and social leadership, who enjoyed seeing other citizens of the new democracy satirized. The Eastern patrons bought this art to “invest in social hierarchies, in their convictions that certain ‘others’ in the community were or should be revealed as deficient. . . . The successful painter, therefore, could be said to be an entrepreneur of the viewers’ ideologies.”

Johns’s argument is persuasive except for one consideration: Bingham’s boatmen, Mount’s blacks, and William Ranney’s trappers

do not *look* like an underclass. Indeed, they appear happy, noble, and at times heroic. By considering these (and other) 19th-century paintings not sociologically but iconographically, Wilmerding, an art historian at Princeton University, reaches quite different conclusions. In his collection of 19 essays, he tries to determine what is essentially "American" about American art. At the beginning of the 19th century, European painters ranked subjects in a definite artis-



tic hierarchy: Mythology, religion, and history were considered loftiest or highest in importance, portraiture next, and landscape and still life at the bottom. American painters quickly reversed this order, and in the romantic landscapes of Sanford Gifford, Frederic Church, and Thomas Cole, the "real" and the "ideal" were brought closer together than ever before in art history. In George Caleb Bingham's *The Jolly Flatboatmen* (1845), Wilmerding finds an affinity between Bingham's geometrics (relying on the stable pyramid) and his subject matter: "Bingham, like America in 1850, held moving forces in balance . . . His artistic vision of stability, centrality, and equipoise perfectly matched its time and place."

Wilmerding produces a closer reading of the paintings themselves; Johns, a more knowing commentary upon the society on whose walls these paintings hung.

TROLLOPE: A Biography. By N. John Hall. Oxford. 581 pp. \$35

Anthony Trollope (1815–82) was a prodigious Victorian, if not a Victorian prodigy. His liter-

ary output was stupendous: nearly 70 books, most of them on the grand Victorian triple-decker scale. The quality of his writing was remarkably even, and this new biography is no doubt right to suggest that Trollope may have left behind him more good novels than any other writer in the language.

More astonishingly, Trollope accomplished most of this in his spare time while pursuing a successful career in the English postal system. (He invented the corner mailbox.) "Real exertion will enable most men to work at almost any season," Trollope observed. To prove his point, he wrote anywhere and everywhere—in trains, boats, and hotels. This larger-than-life man, whom his friend Wilkie Collins called "an incarnate gale of wind," was the embodiment not only of the work ethic but of English common sense. As Virginia Woolf put it, we believe in Trollope's characters "as we believe in the reality of our own weekly bills."

Trollope's reputation rests largely on his "chronicles" of Barchester and the Pallisers. They are suffused with the essence of Victorian politics, the efforts of the ruling class to adjust the political process just sufficiently to contain the restlessness of modern radicalism without losing its own grip. Trollope was an instinctive conservative, and his common sense was of the kind that dismissed John Stuart Mill's prophetic proposal of Irish land reform (which might, if enacted at that time, have solved the "Irish Question") as "visionary, impracticable and revolutionary."

Politics in Trollope's fiction is the great game, and it was also his great unfulfilled ambition. (He dreamed, in vain, of becoming a member of Parliament.) But, as Hall points out, only the unfinished *Landleaguers* is a truly political story in the narrower meaning of politics—in the way, for example, that American novels about presidential campaigns or even Cold War spy novels are political. But in a larger sense, his novels about the Pallisers, aristocrats dedicated to public service, reveal how the structure of politics duplicated the structure of social life in his England. The Palliser novels amply demonstrate that personal contact was the machinery that controlled the impact of ideals. The grand sweep of these novels, however, is in reverse proportion to the narrowness of the elite they portray, and since the



ANTHONY TROLLOPE

disappearance of that limited world, no subsequent novelist has attempted a political *roman fleuve* on the scale of Trollope's. It is Trollope's realized picture of social life resonating with political significance that has ensured that those studying Victorian politics do so in part through his eyes.

FORESTS: *The Shadow of Civilization.* By Robert Pogue Harrison. Chicago. 288 pp. \$24.95

The word *forest* derives from the Latin for outside, and in literature the forest is usually an alien place where customary distinctions lose force. Under cover of the woods, "Rosalind appears as boy, the virtuous knight degenerates into a wild man, the straight line forms a circle, the ordinary gives way to the fabulous." Harrison, a professor of comparative literature at Stanford, takes such examples from medieval romance and Shakespeare—as well as others from classical mythology, the Grimm Brothers, and Thoreau's *Walden*—to fashion a history of the forest in the Western imagination.

The Gamekeeper of Waltham Forest, the appropriately named John Manwood, expressed the premodern attitude toward the forest in his treatise of 1592: Forests were sanctuaries, ruled by their own sacred laws (thus allowing out-

laws like Herewald, Fulk Fitzwarin, and Robin Hood to be honest men and heroes there). Two centuries later, the modern idea of the forest was conceived when the Warden of the Park of Versailles, Monsieur Le Roy, gave it a quantitative definition in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*. Instead of a sacred domain ruled by gods and spirits, the woods were defined as simply so many acres of certain kinds of trees. The use of such places should be determined, Le Roy wrote, not by a religious or otherworldly ethic but only by *l'utilité publique*, the public interest. Today even the most sentimental ecologists speak this language and justify preserving forests by arguing for their social usefulness.

Yet despite using Le Roy's language, contemporaries are hardly filled with sanguine Enlightenment rationality as they watch the remaining great forests being cut down. Harrison takes stock of contemporary anguish, arguing that it is a peculiar anxiety that cannot be entirely explained by the loss of nature or wildlife habitat alone. "Forests mark the provincial edge of Western civilization, in the literal as well as the imaginative domain," he writes. "Underlying the ecological concern is perhaps a much deeper apprehension about the disappearance of boundaries . . . Without such outside domain, there is no inside in which to dwell."

Contemporary Affairs

THE COMMUNISTS: *The Story of Power and Lost Illusions, 1948–1991.* By Adam B. Ulam. Scribners. 528 pp. \$27.50

Why did communism—a survivor of military defeats, famine, and unprecedented bureaucratic incompetence—finally fall with hardly a shot fired in its defense? Ulam, director of the Harvard Russian Research Center, would have us remember Lord Keynes's dictum that it is ultimately ideas that count. The ideology of communism, Ulam argues, was almost untested before 1950. The revolutionary faith of Lenin and his compatriots quickly succumbed, under Stalin, to a cult of personality, "partly military, partly religious." Stalin's regime survived by brutal dictatorial means that made the ideology nearly irrelevant. (The only foreign communists who successfully rebuffed Stalin

were those who established their own personality cults, namely Tito and Mao.)

But after Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, Ulam argues, "it became of great importance for the Kremlin to revive communism as a meaningful creed for its own citizens." For the next 30 years, the Soviet Union's powerful nuclear arsenal, its space program, and its international standing all seemed testimony to a viable ideology. Behind the "Potemkin" posturing, though, the Soviet economy stagnated. By the time Gorbachev obtained power, the Soviet Union could no longer afford to prop up communist regimes in Eastern Europe, much less sustain new expansion in places such as Afghanistan. As a last resort, Gorbachev attempted *perestroika* and *glasnost*, but these involved, Ulam says, "the virtual demolition of the entire edifice" of communist ideology. Once communist regimes had to justify themselves on economic rather than ideological grounds, the handwriting was on the wall.

Ulam has written one of the finer books—and possibly one of the last—in a once-flourishing genre, Kremlinology. With Soviet archives formerly closed to them, Kremlinologists practiced the arcane art by focusing on the top leadership and oversimplifying the complex remainder of society. With the archives now open, Soviet and Russian scholarship could well become as fragmented as the country (or countries) it studies.

THE DISPOSSESSED: America's Underclasses from the Civil War to the Present. By Jacqueline Jones. Basic. 399 pp. \$25

For the past 30 years, when the media or the government reported on poverty, says Jones, a Brandeis historian, they "created the false impression that all black people were poor and that all white people were middle class.... Middle-class Americans in general and policymakers in particular [have] persisted in defining the nature of social distress in racial terms."

Jones examines the history of poverty in America to dispel the popular misperception of the poor as largely the product of a black "culture of poverty," immune to government remediation. In fact, she argues, poor whites and

blacks have often suffered a common lot. After the Civil War, the changing world market for cotton and other southern products drove the South's white yeoman farmers from their land and closed off opportunities for the 3.5 million newly freed slaves. Both wound up with the same narrow choices—tenant farming or wage-labor in the South's mines, farms, and sawmills—and subject to the same economic forces. By and large, Jones maintains, both reacted the same way. Black tenant farmers were commonly stigmatized as "shiftless" because they pulled up stakes and moved from place to place. Yet the 1910 census showed that 42 percent of white tenants and 29 percent of black tenants had moved within the previous year: Far from reflecting a "roving" instinct, Jones says, this was a product of the farmers' ceaseless effort, against all odds, to better themselves.

Unfortunately, Jones's attempt to extend her argument about racist stereotyping and neglect of the poor today is less persuasive. "Postindustrial America," she maintains, "remains colonial Virginia writ large." How else, Jones asks, can one explain the fact that while 21 million of today's poor are white and only nine million black, the specter of a small black "underclass" dominates popular thinking on poverty? A good question. But Jones's dogmatic insistence that the poor are all alike—all merely victims of larger economic and cultural forces—prevents her from attempting a real answer. She may point out that *in absolute numbers* the majority now characterized as poor are "not black, Northern, or urban," but this fact does not so much refute her social critics as miss their point. What excites alarm today is the other poverty, the existence of an urban "underclass" that seems, unlike the rest of the poor, bound to transmit poverty from generation to generation.

Science & Technology

FROM PARALYSIS TO FATIGUE: A History of Psychosomatic Illness in the Modern Era. By Edward Shorter. Free Press. 419 pp. \$24.95

Even medical doctors often cannot tell whether a strange bodily symptom is caused by organic

disease or "merely" by psychological distress. The true test of a medical symptom may be the same as that for a literary classic—longevity. Symptoms of organic disease remain constant over generations, while those of psychosomatic diseases come and go like fads.

Shorter, a cultural historian at the University of Toronto, has researched a vast body of European and American sources to clarify this phenomenon. He shows doctors and patients engaged in a *pas de deux* in which physicians not only diagnose patients' symptoms but indirectly induce them. In the 19th century, for example, clinicians proposed the existence of an "irritable" nervous system, and, as this medical knowledge was disseminated, patients (usually "hysterical" women) began presenting themselves as paralyzed by irritated nerves. Shorter does not blame medicine entirely for creating the immobilized female patients of the 19th century. He turns to culture as well, specifically to the family, as another agent that helped a patient "select" his or her psychosomatic symptoms. Alice James and Elizabeth Barrett Browning may have been "paralyzed," Shorter suggests, not only because their doctors confirmed the symptom but also because their lives were constricted—in a sense, already paralyzed—within the Victorian family.

After the 19th-century model of an irritable nervous system was empirically disproved, Sigmund Freud and his followers proposed a new, psychological explanation to account for nonorganic paralysis. Certain cases of nonfunctioning limbs and shifting pains were shown by psychiatrists to be the corporeal expression of psychological repressions that could not be expressed directly. Psychiatry has succeeded in curing many such psychosomatic complaints, but, according to Shorter, contemporary patients manage to escape into new fashionable symptoms, notably chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome.

From Paralysis to Fatigue stands in the shadow of pathbreaking works like Michel Foucault's interpretation of the interplay between culture and the body, Philippe Ariès's discussion of the family in history, and feminist critiques of the relationship between gender and psychosomatic disorders—none of which, incidentally, Shorter bothers to acknowledge. A more serious flaw is Shorter's rather simplistic

separation of mental and physical disorders, his strict demarcation between the purely organic and the purely psychosomatic. The old doctors may have been truer to life when they shook their heads perplexed, uncertain whether a patient's disorder was physical or mental or, somehow, a bit of both.

CARDINAL CHOICES: Presidential Science Advising from the Atomic Bomb to SDI. By Gregg Herken. Oxford. 323 pp. \$24.95

C. P. Snow defined "cardinal choices" as those "choices that in the broadest sense determine whether we live or die." Snow was writing at the dawn of the atomic era, when mankind had just made the quantum leap into the ability to annihilate itself. To avoid doomsday, sensible people believed, science and government would have to learn new forms of cooperation.

Herken, chair of the space history department at the National Air and Space Museum, traces the beginning of this era to a letter Leo Szilard and Albert Einstein wrote President Franklin Roosevelt in 1939. The two scientists urged FDR to build the atomic bomb before any other country developed the technology. For the next two decades, however, there would be no direct channel of communication between the nation's scientific community and the White House. Only in 1957 did Dwight D. Eisenhower establish the President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC). PSAC's influence waxed and waned, depending on the president, the scientists, and the issues. Finally, in 1972, with numerous scientists criticizing his conduct of the Vietnam War, Richard Nixon disbanded the PSAC—showing how much he valued his critics' views.

Herken suggests that "the question of 'Who advises?' is hardly less important than that of 'Who governs?'" In 1969, physicist Richard Garwin helped convince Nixon, an enthusiast of supersonic transport, that it was too costly and posed serious environmental risks. (Subsequently, the low demand for the Concorde and its hazardous effect on the ozone have justified Garwin's caution.) In 1983, by contrast, adviser George Keyworth failed to inform Ronald Reagan, who wanted to hear no objections, that the SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative or "Star

Wars") would be almost impossible to build and unlikely to accomplish its objectives.

Almost 50 years separate FDR's decision to develop the atomic bomb and Reagan's 1983 announcement to go ahead with the SDI. Yet during this half century, Herken notes, "presidential science advising seems only to have traveled full circle." Reagan acted on the advice of a handful of individuals, operating in secret, with little discussion or debate. Life-or-death decisionmaking by political leaders today resembles, in Herken's account, a dangerous modern machine run by an antiquated motor. Einstein put it better: After the atom bomb was dropped in 1945, he wrote, "Everything has changed, except our way of thinking."

THE MALARIA CAPERS: More Tales of Parasites and People, Research and Reality. By Robert S. Desowitz. Norton. 288 pp. \$21.95

First comes the long struggle to identify the cause, then research to find a cure, and finally eradication: Such is the common idea of how medical science vanquishes a disease. But the history of the fight to conquer malaria hardly conforms to any such comfortable, orderly notion of scientific progress.

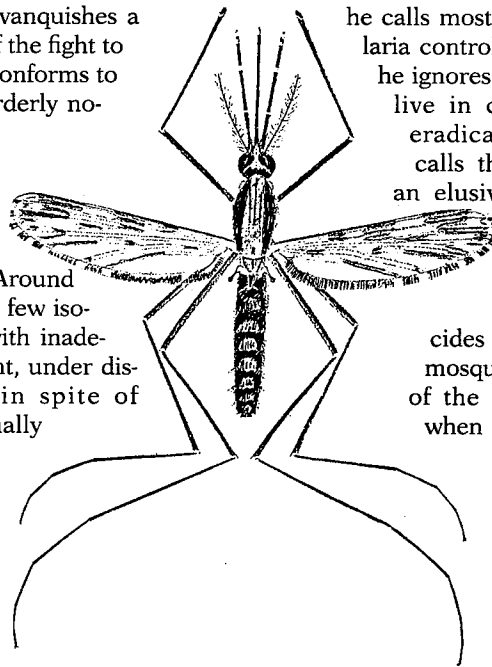
Two thousand years ago, the Chinese had a drug, Qinghaosu, that could treat malaria. Around the turn of this century, a few isolated doctors, working with inadequate scientific equipment, under dismal conditions, and in spite of colleagues' mockery, finally identified malaria as caused by a parasite borne by *Anopheles* mosquitoes. The result? Malaria today, with 100 to 200 million new cases and one to two

million deaths annually, is a more serious killer than it was 30 years ago.

Thirty years ago, says Desowitz, a specialist in tropical diseases, malaria was on the verge of eradication. In 1964, Sri Lanka had only 150 new cases of malaria, a dramatic improvement over the three million cases recorded a few years before. Indian medical statistics contained a similar success story. Yet in both countries the number of cases has climbed back up into the millions again. What happened?

Quite simply, the governments in both countries ran out of funds to maintain the efficient DDT spraying campaigns that once proved so successful. Desowitz becomes a Jeremiah in his denunciation of "malaria politics": Corrupt bureaucrats in both First and Third World countries, intellectual scientists "more concerned with the exquisite intellectual changes of modish science than with seeking practical solutions," and a "drugs-for-profit pharmaceutical industry [that] gives low priority to the diseases of poor people" all come in for his excoriation.

Desowitz may have succeeded in making a dismal situation sound worse than it is. When he calls most recent funds spent on malaria control "money down the drain," he ignores that 1.5 billion people now live in countries with successful eradication programs. When he calls those scientists researching an elusive malaria vaccine misguided, he forgets that when parasites and mosquitoes become resistant to insecticides (as one strain of *Anopheles* mosquitoes has), a vaccine is one of the few possibilities left. Yet when poor, malaria-ridden countries lack sustained funding for control, prevention, or cure, Desowitz's plea is timely: "The malarious are still with us and they still need help."



Mapping the New Reality

If the novel is, in Stendhal's words, a mirror moving along a highway, what is the fate of the novel in our time, when highways are turning "smart" and electronic gadgetry defines the fabric of human communities? Depicting our elusive reality may prove impossible, but Sven Birkerts here lauds the efforts of some of America's more daring novelists.

by Sven Birkerts

It has become a tiresome subject, and I feel more than a little perverse bringing it up. Still, there is more to be said—much more—so let me begin. American fiction, the genre, is in a muddle. I specify "genre" because the problem does not have to do so much with the individual works, which are various and often excellent, but with the form itself. And to contain the generalizing impulse, if only slightly, I will specify still further: It is the American *novel* that is in a state of muddle.

How can I say this? How can I at one and the same time suggest that there is no shortage of worthy works *and* express concern for the art? In the same way, I suppose, that one can point to the large numbers of affluent citizens in this country and still assert that the economy is in trouble. It is a question of the big picture, the center; it involves the disorientation that every serious novelist must feel when he or she tries to get a fix on the meaning or worth of the novelist's enterprise. Simply, there is a pervasive and anxiety-inducing sense of drift, an awareness on the part of reader and

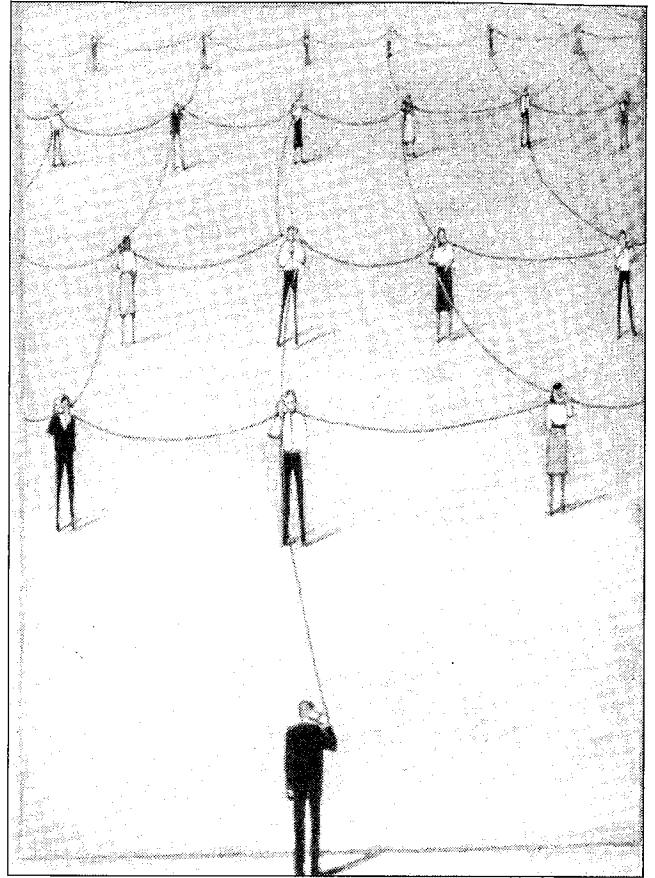
writer alike of an attenuating communication. The reader no longer expects to encounter a challenging vision of life as it is really experienced, and the writer is no longer sure how to present an encompassing and relevant picture of things as they are. The ink on the old contract is fading.

This is not a new or sudden development. My sense is that the current condition has been several decades in the making. As far back as the 1960s we heard laments that the American novel was exhausted, finished; that it had moved into minor and academic modes, had divorced itself from political and social realities, and so on. Indeed, these complaints came at a time when other literatures—Latin American and Eastern European, especially—were burgeoning. We heard the same song with slightly different words during the '70s and '80s, when minimalist modes became the fashion. In a famous 1976 essay, "Plastic Fiction," Gore Vidal lamented that novels had become mere "teaching-tools, artifacts stinking of formaldehyde in a classroom."

The culmination of this disaffection was reached two years ago, when Tom Wolfe

launched his widely discussed broadside, "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast: A Literary Manifesto for the New Social Novel," in the pages of *Harper's*. Wolfe declared in no uncertain terms that American fiction writers—he mainly discussed novelists—had capitulated to reality, that the rough and rowdy facts of the world had driven them into submission, forcing a retreat into self-reflexive, self-indulgent, and generally self-defeating postures. Our writers had handed over their authority to journalists and other purveyors of the documentary—a major mistake. And Wolfe urged as a solution a return to the example of the 19th-century social novel. There he had found inspiration for his own colossally successful *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987), and other writers could help themselves to the same well.

Though he was wrong about the solution—and I hope my reasons for saying so will emerge shortly—Wolfe was, I think, right about the problem, which is a problem of representation. How to render in words a convincing picture of reality? The answer, alas, is not to call for more representation. It is reality that has changed. And the problem is that to this day the aesthetic identity of the American novel remains largely tethered to the basic premise of 19th-century realism. Though a few brave souls have made a go at incorporating modernist approaches—including fragmented or multiple narratives, inward monologues, ambitious referentiality, and the like—the majority have stayed with the staple orientations of realism. Whether this is owing to some peculiar warp in the collective creative disposition or is simply a reflection of the demands of the marketplace—give readers what they want or risk failure—is hard to say. But the fact remains that even now, in the early 1990s, our fiction is overwhelmingly realistic in approach. Whatever other ambition a novel may have, its principal means are a development of credibly rounded characters and a narrative that



would simulate a seemingly coherent exterior order.

This is not, in itself, a problem. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the realist procedure, and in skilled hands the results can still be persuasive. The problem lies elsewhere. It lies in the fact that our common reality has gradually grown out of the reach of the realist's instruments. We live our late-century lives less and less in the four-square world of surfaces and bounded events that realism evolved to depict. Our business is increasingly with a new experiential hybrid. We live among signals and impulses and processes that our language has a hard time capturing. Our consciousness is mapped to a new field, and the contours of that field are determined by the way we spend our days. We don't talk over the fence but over the phone—worse, we leave messages on

machines and check in to see if our messages have been returned. Our professional lives are likewise shorn of clear boundaries—most of us interact more with buttons and digits than with people. We drive, park, drive again, surrounding ourselves during bubble time with a distracting environment of music or talk-show barking. Dinner? Often as not we nuke it in the microwave, before kicking back for a well-deserved night in front of the VCR.

If I present a caricature, it's to drive home a point: that the ambient drift of our dailiness is not exactly fodder for the novelist. We fight traffic, not duels. An accurate depiction of our doings would involve inordinately extensive descriptions of downtime—outwardly dull and routinized movements. And I don't know how much more dramatic interest a cut-away view of our inner lives would provide. The spread sheet, worries about the MASTERCARD bill, a bit of flirtation at the deli counter . . .

What I'm saying is not new or revolutionary, though I don't hear it verbalized all that often. Way back in 1963, in an essay entitled "Mass Society and Post-Modern Fiction," Irving Howe quoted the critic Stanley Kauffmann:

When Vittorio de Sica was asked why so many of his films deal with adultery, he is said to have replied, "But if you take adultery out of the lives of the bourgeoisie, what drama is left?" . . . It is the continuing problem of the contemporary writer who looks for great emotional issues to move him greatly. The anguish of the advertising executive struggling to keep his job is anguish indeed, but its possibilities in art are not large-scale. The writer who wants to "let go" has figuratively to leave the urban and suburban and either go abroad, go into the past, or go into those few pockets of elemental emotional life left in this country.

This was written nearly 30 years ago. Urbanization and suburbanization have been supplemented by the rampant incursions of labor-saving technologies and electronic communications. The problem of the

writer who would represent the world and do so with some artistic tension has become all but insurmountable. It will only intensify as we march deeper into late-modernity (or wherever it is that we are marching). Very few writers have the narrative gifts and perceptual resources to make readable fiction out of the real stuff of our daily experience. John Updike is one of the very few, and it is precisely for this that *Rabbit at Rest* (1990) is important: It is a kind of "limit text" for the contemporary realist.

And the others, those who lack Updike's special alchemizing gifts? Most of the rest have taken one of the available paths indicated by Kauffmann. They have steered to one side or another of the great challenge—to find a shape for the experiences and sensations of our historical moment—in order to find a way to tell a satisfying story. And while many have succeeded at this, it is fiction itself that has paid a price. Fiction is now just an adjunct to the cultural life, an entertainment or a private vice. It is no longer the powerful medium of exploration and reflection that it used to be. And this is a shame.

The much-maligned movement of minimalism may have been the first real signal of the crisis in the genre. What was, or is, distinctive about minimalism, apart from its fetishistic attention to the brand-name specifics of our social environment (as if these, properly decoded, might tell a story of their own) is the use of the gap. Minimalists such as Ann Beattie, Raymond Carver, Frederick Barthelme, and Bobbie Ann Mason have a way of abruptly cutting from one rendered moment or situation to some completely different scene, in order to confer eloquence or suggestiveness to absent or unstated material. It seems clear now that this was a logical first response to the elusive and random-feeling materials of modern life. The plan was to hint at the presence of these great zones of the inchoate—the vacancies and anxious spells of distraction—without

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trying to pin them down. We should note, by the way, the difference between the vaporized minimalism of an Ann Beattie and the laconic repressions of a Hemingway. For the latter, the unstated was a solid presence, a specific emotion or complex of emotions to be avoided. He knew, and we know, what was being left out. For Beattie and her cohorts, however, minimalism became a way of not dealing with that which could not be dealt with—the thousand and one grades of anomie that may not have existed 50 or 100 years ago.

Minimalism, for all the excitement it generated in the workshop communities of the 1970s and 1980s, failed with readers. Although it did catch something of the “feel” of contemporary experience, it offered no purchase. It did not clarify life in the least but simply added its impressions of muddle to the muddle we already were living in.

At the opposite pole, we have the much-honored conclusion of the “Rabbit” tetralogy. Updike appeared to exult in the challenge he had set himself: to make the unremarkable materials of our cultural present resonate with significance. And to a remarkable degree, he succeeded, though the power and poignance of *Rabbit at Rest* arise less from his evocations of the present and much more from their constant, often implicit contrast to the way things used to be. Rabbit’s appetite for nostalgia is mighty; it is what makes him a poet:

Rabbit feels betrayed. He was reared in a world where war was not strange but change was: the world stood still so you could grow up in it. He knows when the bottom fell out. When they closed Kroll’s, Kroll’s that had stood in the center of Brewer all those years, bigger than a church, older than the courthouse, right at the head of Weiser Square there, with every Christmas those otherworldly displays of circling trains and nodding dolls and twinkling stars in the corner windows as if God Himself put them there to light the darkest time of the year.

The *now* has been annexed, but from an angle. We see it always against Rabbit’s private rue at what is gone: The present has not been carried, for its own sake, into the

arena of representation.

But by and large we are back with the options as set out by Stanley Kauffmann in the early 1960s. Most serious American novels fall into one (or several) of a very few categories. Of course, each category is vital in its own way, but each also represents a strategic way of avoiding head-on confrontation with the present, with the world as it has become. Now—and I jump in ahead of myself—I do *not* mean to suggest that rural or small-town settings are not part of the here and now or that family relations are not universally contemporary. But I do believe that there are other energies and currents that we all understand as more essentially of our moment. These intangible and elusive components of our *Zeitgeist* are what pose the problem. They have everything to do with our present situation and what is likely to arise from it. They are what is largely missing from the novels of our most distinguished writers.

As Kauffmann suggested, the menu of options is finally quite limited. Most of our best novelists are writing about either a) rural or smalltown life, b) the near past (the last 50 years, say), c) families, or d) the historical or mythological past. Obviously the categories will combine and cross-fertilize, with family novels having rural settings, and so on.

Now consider this list of American novelists: Reynolds Price, Russell Banks, Annie Tyler, Toni Morrison, Wallace Stegner, Larry Woiwode, Joyce Carol Oates, Louise Erdrich, T. Coraghessan Boyle, E. L. Doctorow, Sue Miller, Andre Dubus, William Kennedy, John Barth, Saul Bellow, Marilynne Robinson, Alice Walker, Jane Smiley, Mona Simpson, Pete Dexter, John Casey, Peter Matthiessen, William Styron, James Salter, Evan S. Connell, Lynne Sharon Schwartz, Gail Godwin, David Bradley, Amy Tan, Joan Chase, David Leavitt . . .

I could go on for at least a few more paragraphs, and with every writer I mention I could evoke for myself a particular density and richness of world: Russell Banks’s rough and flinty New Hampshire towns, Louise Erdrich’s myth-haunted upper Midwest, Toni Morrison’s small-town Ohio, and so on. But I have to say that

when I am disturbed and baffled by the alien structures I glimpse from the car window, or the picture of life I assemble from the evening news, these are not the writers I turn to for understanding. Each presents a world, but none—for me—presents the world as I sense it has become or is fast becoming. This latter is a world of screens and information vaults, with a population ever more distracted from its cultural roots, ever more alarmed about crime, disease, and security, and uncertain about the meaning of an individual existence in a future that promises to be ruled by the spirits of collectivism and bureaucracy.

In a very real sense, then, our fiction is in retreat, and we have every reason to wonder if authors can, or will, find ways to connect the reader with the dominant forces of the age, most of which threaten our public and private myths of coherence. So long as they do not—or do so only in small numbers—our literature must stand removed from the center of relevance; it must be counted minor.

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But of course there are exceptions, which, when considered together, give us some warrant for imagining a different future for our fiction, a renewed connectedness. These are a number of writers who have taken the challenge of representing contemporary experience more to heart, and whose art points toward the future in ways that that of their no-less-gifted peers does not.

The problem, as I have suggested, is not to get the features of present-day reality onto the page—the minimalists accomplished that in their way—but to animate those features and give them some measure of dramatic necessity, to defeat the centrifugal tendency of our postindustrial order. The scatter and distraction of our age are such that even “the anguish of the advertising executive struggling to keep his job” begins to look like a viable subject (or at least one with clearly defined contours). The novelists I have in mind have adopted several different strategies for galvanizing the chaos around us. All are ambitious. And they can, with some flourishes of the crustean knife, be divided into two groups.

In the first grouping are the novelists I will call, with no pejorative intent, the “paranoids.” Paranoia, they used to say in the late 1960s, is just a heightened state of awareness. These writers find not only a propulsive energy but also a principle of connection, of organization, in their vision of a concealed and dangerous other order. They see behind the random shimmer of surfaces and events a set of vested interests who must advance their ends conspiratorially, through political and economic channels. They see the deeper exchanges of our body politic as controlled by the machinations of an elite; the web extends to, and at times embraces, the criminal subculture. And much of the tension in the work of these writers—I am thinking mainly of Robert Stone, Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, and Norman Mailer—arises from the contrast between the banal drift of the ordinary and the operations of conspiracy.

To exploit this particular tension, these novelists must create protagonists who somehow encounter the hidden system (which is visualized differently by each writer). Thus Robert Stone, in *A Flag For Sunrise* (1981), has Frank Holliwell, at once an idle traveler and a reluctant operative, visit Tecan, a fictitious Latin American country that is the site of all the familiar sorts of covert intervention. DeLillo, in *Mao II* (1991), gives us Bill Gray, a reclusive writer who agrees to take part in a hostage-release effort, stirring up a nest of terrorist and antiterrorist intrigue. Pynchon's *Vineland* (1990) features a whole gallery of veterans from the counterculture wars of the 1960s who, working one side of the fence or the other, are still very much caught up in ideological struggles. And Mailer's *Harlot's Ghost* (1991), of course, has the whole CIA family tree shaking in the winds of recent history. Each of these writers, it would seem, has answered the problem of apparent disorder by pushing past the glut of surface signals to claim that whether we know it or not, our fates are significantly controlled by these networks which are, in a sense, the deeper reality of the present.

But these are, naturally, very different kinds of writers, with different aims and techniques. DeLillo's sense of conspiracy, for instance—except for *Libra* (1988), his rewriting of the Kennedy assassination—is

usually deployed more for impressionistic than investigative or didactic ends. In novels like *White Noise* (1985) and *Mao II*, two of his more realized works, the final connections are left dangling; the idea of a hidden order presided over by government cabals and mysteriously employed free lancers is there mainly to impart edgy ominousness to the narrative:

Then action, bodies moving through the night. Because just as she was beginning to doubt and fear and mind-wander, she stepped out of the van on a cloud-banded evening and three men detached themselves from a playground wall and approached, two strangers and her tank-top cousin Rick, a football player with a clean-shaven head except for one wavy lock right on top, dyed y'know like parrot-green. The other guys wore suits and showed a certain weary expertise.

DeLillo is so good at capturing a multiplex culture transected by obscurely meaningful signals ("a football player with a clean-shaven head except for one wavy lock on top . . ."), and so fascinated by its contemplation, that one begins to suspect that the conspiracy elements of the narrative may have been woven in mainly to shape what threatens to become a sprawl of quirkily pointed observations.

Pynchon, especially in *Vineland* (his first novel after a decade-and-a-half hiatus), is likewise mesmerized by the daily surrealism of our culture. But he is also, as much as or even more than DeLillo, gripped by a vision of the ultimate entwinement of capital, ideology, technology, and force. A true paranoid, one might say—but only if one had lived in blissful ignorance of the daily news. Interestingly, he does not, at least in *Vineland*, make conspiracy his central subject. He uses it, rather, to generate situations and to activate the subtly duplicitous interactions between his main players. But he is always ready to strike away from the dominant line of the plot and to insert

absurd, often truncated subplots that serve the function of Boschian detail: They augment the overall impression of reality held in check on the very edge of hallucination.

Moreover, Pynchon—again like DeLillo—is funny. Indeed, he is more willing than any of his cohorts to let a perfectly plausible scene make a sudden U-turn and become preposterous. We can call this a postmodern playfulness or an uncanny insight into the hidden "logic" of situations. This determination to have it both ways is Pynchon's trademark. Though his final ambition may well be to penetrate the underside of modernity and expose its darkest tendencies, he consistently breaks up his hyperrealistic scenarios with passages of comic-book excess:

He taught her the Chinese Three Ways, Dim Ching, Dim Hsuen, and Dim Mak, with its Nine Fatal Blows, as well as the Tenth and Eleventh, which are never spoken of. She learned how to give people heart attacks without even touching them, how to get them to fall from high places, and how through the Clouds of Guilt technique to make them commit *seppuku* and think it was their idea . . .

A curious amalgam, but it works. The reader is anchored in the known world through Pynchon's exquisite depictions of the late-modern (or postmodern) surface—the malls, the motels, and high-tech emporiums—and then pulled away into deep-



sea dives into the incredible, which is always rendered with just enough cool poise to give pause. The political double-dealing of his Brock Vond and Frenesi Gates are out at the limit of the credible, but on this side; his organization of death-loving Thanatoids, while not far away as the crow flies, is nonetheless on the other side of the border. The task of setting out the line belongs to the reader: It is an apprenticeship in cultural studies.

Stone and Mailer engage the hidden hierarchies of power more directly and via more straightforwardly realistic means. Both have a strong grip on the concrete particulars of bureaucratic process and a shrewd sense of how the individual functions psychologically when confused, compromised, or in some other way tested to the limit. Stone, I would say, is more intent upon revealing the evil insidiousness of power systems and in showing just how the hapless are victimized. Mailer, though known as an outspoken critic of recent administration policies, is nonetheless more ambivalent. He finds in the complex deceptions and infiltrations of the CIA a subject worthy of his favored "existential" themes, but time and again his fascination bleeds over into something akin to hero-worship. Nevertheless, like Stone, and unlike DeLillo and Pynchon, Mailer would appear to believe that some sort of ultimate sense can be derived from the whole business. As *Harlot's Ghost* ends with the words "TO BE CONTINUED," however, this assessment must remain provisional.

These power systems, variously interpreted, bind together the often scattered scenarios of our "paranoid" novelists. While not identified too explicitly (the system's complexity and reach prohibit it), they nevertheless form the backdrop against which all subsidiary actions and interchanges take on relief. Whether this paranoia is justified or not—I for one believe it is—it fulfills an essential artistic function. It sponsors a literature that, if read seriously, cuts against our growing sense of social and political inconsequence. It may not cure that inconsequence, but it certainly helps to explain it.

The other promising trend—if it is a trend and not just a collocation of separate works by idiosyncratic talents—is com-

posed of those writers who do not so much seek to provide a picture of the present as to refract an understanding of it through the crystal of the intellect. They are our thinkers, our novelists of ideas, and what is remarkable is not that they should exist but that there should be so few of them in an age given over to abstract pursuits. The sad fact is that America, unlike Europe, has had a deep and abiding hostility to intellectuality, and that our serious arts reflect this no less than does our mass culture.

Our aesthetic climate notwithstanding, we can point toward a hardy group of novelists with a bent toward ideas; many of them, moreover, are fairly young. But where the so-called "paranoids" manifested certain commonalities, these writers are as diverse as can be in their interests as well as narrative strategies.

I need to make one other distinction, and that is that the novel of ideas can engage with the present without necessarily having ideas *about* it. Our thinking writers are thinking differently from, say, novelists like Saul Bellow and Walker Percy, who both orchestrated their best works around conceptual, even philosophical, investigations of how it is with us in America today. I see no writer who takes on the full contemporary agenda in quite the same way. What we find instead are a number of approaches, all of which are less frontal, less totalizing, but which nonetheless carry a high intellectual charge. The novels may not attempt to evoke the full spectrum-panorama of the age, as did, perhaps, the novels of Mann, Sartre, Broch, Beauvoir, or Malraux, but they have other vital uses. For one thing, they can keep the intelligence option alive, and they show how complex ideas and mental processes can still find a place in the novel. For another—and this is linked—they give proof that the novel can successfully escape the straitjacket of conventional plotting and take stock of diverse planes of reality, including the inward. They keep the genre open to the currents of serious discourse. The separate endeavors, while not all uniformly successful, may yet pave the way for the great synthesizing works of the future.

The oldest, and most anomalous, of these novelists is Paul West, a maximalist

modernist of great energy and verbal resource. West's intellectuality is not so much deployed in the creation of complex plots or cerebral characters. Rather, it has been put in the service of his novelistic imagination as a whole, which has carried him from Nazi Germany in *The Very Rich Hours of Count Von Stauffenberg* (1980), to post-war Paris in *Rat Man of Paris* (1986), to Victorian London in *The Women of Whitechapel and Jack the Ripper* (1991). His settings are not lightly garnished but are grasped and held from within. The *Jack the Ripper* novel, for example, is a trove of information about surgical practice, Victorian aesthetics, and prostitution.

While he is at ease with concepts, however, West's real intelligence is stylistic. He is one of a very few novelists committed to the project of translating the densities of consciousness into prose. In his way, West is keeping the Joycean tradition viable. He treats consciousness itself as a subject, and this straightaway makes his endeavor relevant to the present. Here, from *Jack the Ripper*, is West writing about the painter Walter Sickert, whose ambitions for artistic success appear to be somewhat at odds with his appetite for prostitutes:

For several years now, fired into emulation by hearing an Argentine guitarist speak to women after a performance, he had been polishing and practicing his skills at the *piropo*—the spontaneous and hyperbolic compliment men paid to women, perhaps uttered with some pragmatically lustful intent, but most often floated into the air to cause a surprised smile, a slight change in a woman's gait. His first one had been in a theater lobby, said more for practice than for anything else, although, being Sickert, he always expected the unexpected and was ready to profit by it.

And on and on he goes, not so much making thoughts as discriminations of behavior and intention, creating mental atmospheres, weather systems of language. West's verbal range and the demands placed upon our attention by syntax, as well as the cumulative pressure of sustained interiority, qualify him, loosely, for the category of an intellectual novelist.

Norman Rush fills his pages with a far

greater density of references for the intellectually au courant to register with a shock of knowing familiarity. His grand courtship comedy, *Mating* (1991), features an unnamed narrator with impressive strategies of bringing her wit and learning to bear on her narrative. Her idiom is itself a kind of museum of late modernity, with its references, asides, and incessantly modulating ironies. Cohabiting with her lover in an experimental village in Botswana, she is apt to put forth her observations thus:

There was also the matter of our both being pretty much on the sendero leguminoso, dietarily, as he put it, so that there was some flatulence to deal with, simple flatulence . . . We developed a fairly decent modus, I thought. He might say, when I was the author, Also sprach Zarathustra, or Ah, a report from the interior, as though he were an ambassador or proconsul.

Mating is a grand and roomy novel. Though its setting is Africa, and its intellectual debates about Marxism and utopian collectivism are not central to our situation in the 1990s in America, the idiom itself is a revelation. It shows just how our latter-day intellectual movements have imprinted sensibility. The narrator filters the world through a scrim of post-Freudian, post-Marxist, and postfeminist categories and wears her ironic consciousness like a prophylactic.

We find a similar focus upon love among the brainy in the novels of Rebecca Goldstein—*The Mind-Body Problem* (1983) and *The Late-Summer Passion of a Woman of Mind* (1989). Goldstein is a philosopher by training and vocation, as are her female protagonists. Long passages are larded with discussions of language philosophy or Spinoza scholarship. But Goldstein has a way of linking her more scholarly debates with the unfolding crises of feeling in the lives of her characters, so that the novels become pertinent probings into the affective underside of the intellectual class. She investigates the ways in which mental aggression is linked to repression and studies how philosophy can be understood as a compensation for paralyzed emotional drives. The tensions in her

cerebrating characters are strong enough to support the "gray matter" rhapsodies, and the result shows that it is possible for lofty, even abstruse thought to elbow its way into fiction.

A more demanding integration of scholarship and narrative is found in Richard Powers's novel, *The Gold Bug Variations* (1991), where the author not only gives the reader a crash course in genetics and microbiology but flies, as it were, a reconnaissance mission over the moving fringe of experimental science, a heroic effort to locate the terms of its larger general relevance, its place in the psyche's scheme of reference. For all of Powers's brio, however, and despite his inventive ways of making his data reader-friendly, passage after passage is bound to stump the noninitiate. The narrator's musing might typically run as follows: "Might certain codons chemically *fit* their amino acid assignments? How literally should I take the tape analogy? Which half of the double helix is transcribed for reading? Can the tape play in both directions?" When she adds in the next breath, "I am a rookie, a greenhorn, a tenderfoot in this new country," we know how she feels—and then some.

The reader may have difficulties with the layers of scientific speculation and with the mental reflexes of the characters. They think differently from, and more strenuously than, most characters we are apt to have encountered. This reveals, as starkly as any other exposure, how poorly our basic liberal humanism serves us when we come up against the concept-world of the sciences (a world that we will increasingly occupy in the future). The *Variations* thus raises once again the question that was at the heart of the C. P. Snow–F. R. Leavis debate some decades ago: Is there now an unbridgeable abyss between the learning of the humanities and that of the sciences? Powers would appear to find a meeting

ground in the idea of structure itself, and the novel abounds in metaphorical suggestions that sciences and arts, no less than intellections and affections, all ultimately derive from the wizardry within the pattern-making cells. And from the right perspective the breakthroughs in gene-mapping are as much art as science, while Glenn Gould playing the "Goldberg Variations" is as much science as art.

Paranoids" and "Intellectuals"—the pie is crudely cut. The categories are obviously provisional and selective (I lack space to discuss Leslie Marmon Silko, John Wideman, Bruce Duffy, Paul Auster, Nicholson Baker, and others) and are certain to irritate some portion of the public of independent-minded readers. Nor am I even sure that the game of labels and trends has any uses, except to provoke or incite. But maybe it does. Maybe an effort to map the game can in some way affect the game itself, redirecting certain readers, offering a slight encouragement to some isolated writer. I would like to think that could happen. For I am convinced that we are, as a culture, what we believe ourselves to be. And our beliefs are in crucial ways shaped by images and representations. So long as these are mainly domestic or backward looking, we risk a flawed connection to the life of our times. The reader may sometimes feel—I often do—that our present is not adequately plumbed by either the Paranoids or Intellectuals. But they make a beginning. It is vital that we have these markers planted in different parts of the field. In time, we can hope, other writers will venture to set down this or that part of the picture, and the spaces between will slowly be colonized. Perhaps one day we will be able to look to the novel again in order to see ourselves.

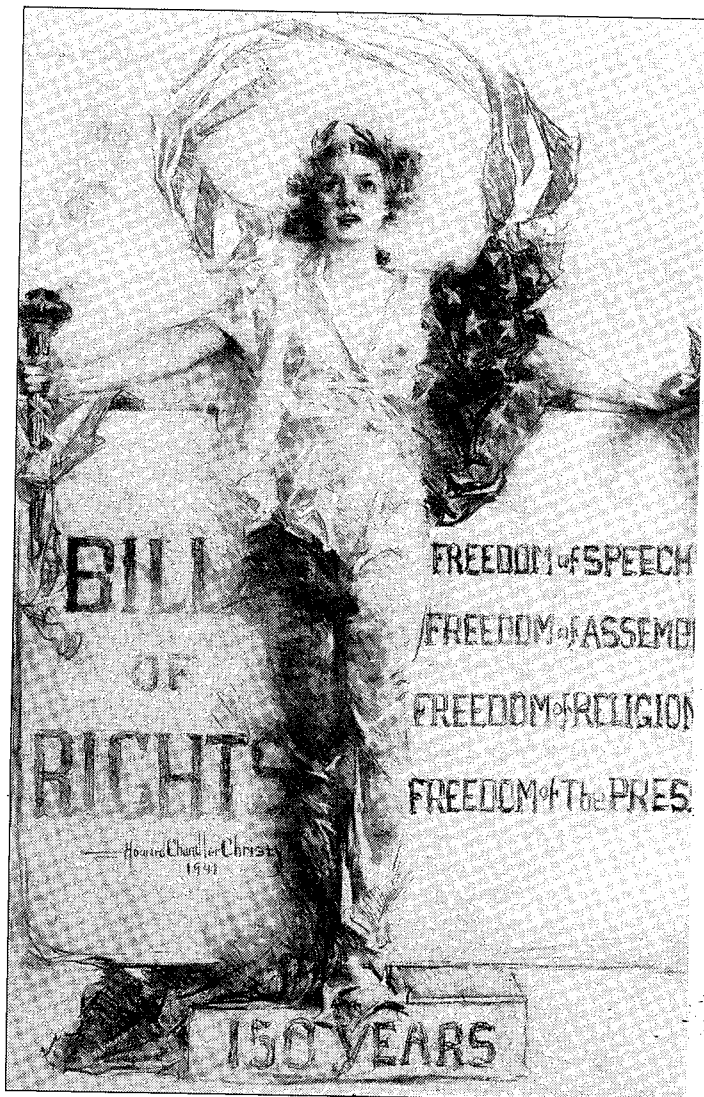
REFLECTIONS

Why a Bill of Rights Is Not Enough

Talk about rights has never been more in the air, and not only because last December marked the 200th anniversary of the ratification of the U.S. Bill of Rights. Throughout the world, among the many emerging democracies, lawmakers are struggling to formulate new constitutions, and foremost among their concerns is the protection of citizens' freedoms. Even one of the world's oldest democracies, the United Kingdom, is today debating whether to adopt a written constitution, including a bill of rights. Chief Justice William Rehnquist here offers a timely reminder that guarantees of rights are meaningless—without an independent judiciary.

by William H. Rehnquist

We who have lived through the recent fanfare surrounding the bicentennial of America's Bill of Rights may find it odd that the centennial of 1891 passed with virtually no ceremony and little, if any, recognition. Newspapers and periodicals, including the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, made no mention of the anniversary.



Even the *Congressional Record* failed to observe the date. Perhaps this lack of attention by 19th-century Americans underscores the greater significance 20th-century Americans have attached to the Bill of Rights.

Americans during the last half-century have certainly been more scrupulous in commemorating anniversaries of the Bill of Rights. In 1941, on the occasion of the document's sesquicentennial, ambitious celebration plans were underway. On December 3, New York Governor Herbert Lehman issued a proclamation declaring December 15, 1941, as "Bill of Rights Day." The governor wanted New York schools "to emphasize the special blessings and benefits that flow from the freedoms guaranteed." Numerous activities were scheduled in the nation's capital. Three Supreme Court justices along with a host of other Washingtonians made plans to participate in a mass meeting on December 15. The evening's festivities were to include speeches by the justices, a round-table symposium, a coast-to-coast radio program, and a speech by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Unfortunately, the December 7 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II led officials to cancel many of those activities. The December 14, 1941, edition of the *Washington Post*, in reporting that the Washington Bill of Rights ceremony had been canceled, reminded readers that the tragic turn of world events should serve as a "sharp reminder of what we are fighting to preserve."

The concept of a bill of rights is hardly unique to the United States. Many nations have constitutions containing similar declarations of rights and liberties. The genius of our system was to create not only a Bill of Rights but also a coequal judiciary, independent of the president and the Congress, to enforce those rights. Lofty-sounding declarations mean little in the absence of an institutional structure to give them meaning. Only an independent judiciary can enforce individual rights and other limits on governmental powers.

Other nations have failed in this respect. The Soviet Constitution of not-so-distant times contained a broad declaration of individual rights and liberties. But from Stalin's show trials of the 1930s to the gulag of more recent years, the pronouncements of that document failed to fulfill their promises. Similarly, the "Fundamental Rights and Duties of Citizens" of the People's Republic of China fell far short of protecting the protesters of Tiananmen Square.

Approximately 200 years ago, in 1789, France produced both a constitution and a "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen." The Declaration proclaimed freedom of religious opinions and the right of every citizen to speak, write, and publish freely. It further provided that a person was presumed innocent until convicted, that no one should be accused, arrested, or imprisoned unless determined by law, and that punishment should only be pursuant to a law "promulgated before the offense." However, the 1789 French Constitution was conspicuous in its failure to create any institution capable of safeguarding these rights.

Four years later, the French Revolution degenerated into the Reign of Terror. One recent French historian has described the trials of this period as "judicial murder," in which not merely hundreds but thousands of people were guillotined. During the Reign of Terror from 1793 to 1795, 300,000 people were imprisoned, about 20,000 people lost their heads to the guillotine, and another 20,000 died in prison or were executed without any pretense of trial. All of this happened because the National Convention—the body composed of representatives of the people—chose to bypass the regular courts for certain criminal offenses. For those offenses, it created a "Revolutionary Tribunal," then, as now, a synonym for a kangaroo court.

The Revolutionary Tribunal had a number of peculiar qualities. Any "political offense" could be tried before it, and, as in old-time court martials, there were only two possible verdicts: acquittal or death.

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The Convention frequently changed the Tribunal's procedures, size, and composition when the "justice" it dispensed was not revolutionary enough. Judges and jurors were added and removed at the Convention's pleasure. It would be difficult to imagine a formula more certain to produce despotism. All of this happened in a country that only a few years before had adopted the ringing Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Obviously, something went terribly wrong between 1789 and 1793.

In the newly formed United States, events proceeded at a less dramatic pace. To be sure, the new nation did not face the same difficult circumstances as did France. It avoided foreign wars, had fewer impediments to reform, and maintained stable local governments in the form of the 13 states. Nonetheless, the successful ratification of the Constitution in 1789 and the addition of the Bill of Rights two years later should not obscure the heated ideological debate that occurred between groups holding two very different conceptions of what the national government should be.

During the entire ratification debate, many participants raised serious questions concerning how secure the basic rights of the American people would be under the new government. They focused on the absence from the Constitution of a detailed bill of rights. Those who believed the states should ratify the Constitution without additional amendments said that a declaration of rights was superfluous. Among them was Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut, who later served as the third chief justice of the Supreme Court. Ellsworth argued that declarations of rights were "insignificant," since all political power was derived from the people. He was joined by a host of Federalists, many of whom argued that the whole constitution was a declaration of rights and, therefore, that no additions were needed. (Federalists also feared that any amendments would open the floodgates to a wholesale revision of the governing structure hammered out at the Constitutional Convention.)

While he refrained from an explicit alignment with either political faction, Thomas Jefferson's views on a bill of rights

placed him in the Anti-Federalist's ideological camp. On December 20, 1787, from his post as the American minister to France, Jefferson wrote to James Madison stating that, "a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth . . ." Samuel Chase, a noted Maryland lawyer and politician who later became an associate justice of the Supreme Court, also initially opposed ratification of the Constitution. During the course of the Maryland ratification convention, Chase cautioned an Annapolis audience to beware of the Constitution, since in his opinion it was certain to abolish the Maryland state constitution and bill of rights. Like Chase, George Mason, author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and sponsor of a defeated resolution to add similar guarantees at the Constitutional Convention, opposed ratification. The first line of his "Objections to the Proposed Federal Constitution," proclaimed, "[T]here is no declaration of rights."

Others took up this rallying cry. Although the state conventions in Delaware and New Jersey ratified the Constitution by unanimous vote, in other states the ratification debate was protracted and acrimonious. Criticisms were particularly severe in Massachusetts and in Virginia. After several caucuses and considerable compromise, both the Massachusetts and Virginia conventions voted for ratification. Nonetheless, both states' delegates attached recommended lists of amendments, thereby initiating a movement toward a bill of rights.

In March of 1789, after the Constitution was ratified by 11 states, the first Congress assembled in New York. Three months later, Virginia Representative James Madison introduced the subject of amendments in the House—one of the first instances of an American politician fulfilling a campaign promise. Initially opposed to a bill of rights during the Constitutional Convention, Madison converted, whether because of political expediency or a true change of heart is not entirely clear. The Senate took up the matter in August. Then, on September 25, 1789, Congress submitted 12 articles of amendment to the states for ratification. The first two proposed amendments addressed the number of congressmen and their salaries. They were rejected and have

passed into the mists of history. Not so the remaining 10. Two years later, by mid-December 1791, the requisite 11 states had given their approval.

At the time of their ratification, the constitutional amendments were little more than contingent promises awaiting the development of governmental institutions to promote and enhance them. Astute statesmen of the era recognized the vital role the Bill of Rights could play, if there existed an independent judiciary to enforce it. Jefferson stated that a bill of rights would place a "legal check" in the hands of the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, which he characterized as the "guardian of citizen rights" whose role was to "resist every encroachment upon those rights."

One particularly illustrative episode early in the nation's history was the 1805 impeachment and trial before the United States Senate of Samuel Chase, then an associate justice of the Supreme Court. Chase's narrow escape from conviction in the Senate exemplifies how close the development of an independent judiciary came to being stultified.

As a young Maryland lawyer and politician, Chase fit the anti-Federalist profile, but by the time of his appointment to the Supreme Court in 1796 he had become a staunch Federalist. Even while he sat on the bench, Chase continued to play an active role in Federalist politics. According to one contemporary account, the opening of the August term of the Supreme Court in 1800 had to be delayed because Chase was absent stumping in the state of Maryland to urge the reelection of John Adams as president. He presided over two controversial trials in 1800, and his conduct during both would later be the subject of articles of impeachment against him.

The political scene in the United States changed dramatically as a result of the presidential election of 1800, in which Thomas Jefferson and his Republican Party defeated John Adams and the Federalists. In what historians call the "second American Revolution," the Republicans, led by Jefferson and Madison, captured both the executive and legislative branches of the federal government from the Federalists, who had controlled them during the first

12 years of the new nation.

Far from being chastened by their defeat, the Federalists determined to strike one last blow at their Republican enemies. Though Federalist control of the executive and legislative branches would cease on March 4, 1801, neither President Adams nor the lame duck Federalist Congress sat idly by during their last days of power. Congress passed the Judiciary Act of 1801, abolishing the circuit-riding duties of the Supreme Court justices and creating 16 new circuit judges and a number of new justices of the peace. In calmer times, the act would have been judged a significant measure of judicial reform. But from the perspective of the incoming Republicans, it looked like a transparent Federalist patronage scheme. It was said that John Adams stayed up until midnight in his last days in office signing commissions to the new judicial positions, and the judges were henceforth referred to as the "Midnight Judges." One of the justices of the peace so appointed, William Marbury, later sued Secretary of State James Madison for his commission, and in the celebrated case of *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), the Supreme Court under John Marshall would establish the doctrine of judicial review.

When the Republicans came into power in March 1801, they set about to undo the work of the Federalists and repealed the Judiciary Act of 1801. But the actions of the Federalists continued to rankle. Thomas Jefferson wrote to a friend that "the Federalists have retired into the judiciary as a stronghold . . . and from that battery all the works of Republicanism are to be beaten down and erased."

Thus when Jefferson heard in May 1803, of a charge that Justice Samuel Chase had given to a grand jury in Baltimore denouncing some of the Republican policies, he quickly penned a letter to one of the Republican leaders in the House of Representatives, Joseph Nicholson:

Ought this seditious and official act on the principles of our Constitution, and on the proceedings of a State, to go unpunished? And to whom so pointedly as yourself will the public look for the necessary measures? I ask these questions for your consideration, for myself it is better that I should not interfere.

The House of Representatives first investigated possible charges against Chase, and then voted to impeach him. The articles of impeachment included not merely Chase's charge to the Baltimore grand jury but also accusations that in 1800 he had shown a high degree of partiality in presiding over the respective trials of John Fries in Philadelphia, and of James Callender in Richmond.

Fries had been the leader of an uprising called Fries's Rebellion, in which farmers in northeastern Pennsylvania had risen up against federal tax assessors and prevented them from carrying out their duties. Today, Fries would probably be charged with obstruction of justice, but then he was charged with treason, tried before Chase, and sentenced to hang. John Adams, to his great credit, and against the unanimous advice of his cabinet, pardoned Fries.

James Callender was tried in Richmond under the hated Sedition Act of 1798. He was indicted for publishing a book entitled *The Prospect Before Us*, in which it was said that he brought President Adams into disrepute by accusing him of being a monarchist and a toady to British interests.

When Chase's trial before the Senate opened on February 4, 1805, in the raw new capital of Washington, D.C., interest naturally focused on the principals in the forthcoming drama. The vice president of the United States and presiding officer of the Senate was Aaron Burr. Burr was a small, dapper man with piercing black eyes and an elegant bearing that belied the fact that he himself was a fugitive from justice. During the preceding summer, in Weehawken, New Jersey, Burr had killed

Alexander Hamilton in a duel. Indictments against him for murder in New Jersey and a lesser offense in New York were outstanding, leading one wag to remark that although in most courts the murderer was arraigned before the judge, in this court the judge was arraigned before the murderer!

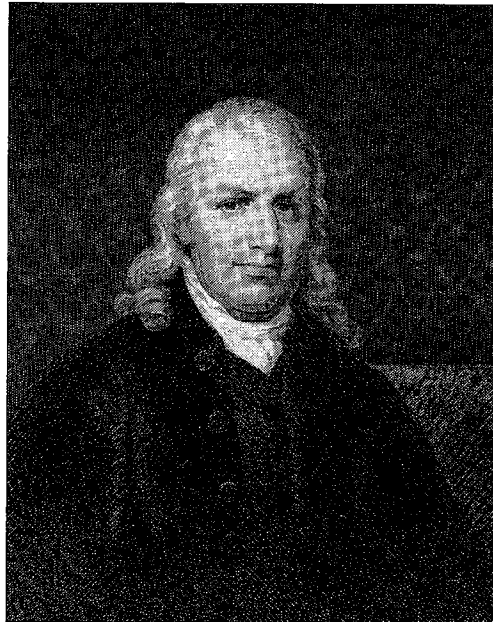
It had been left to Aaron Burr as the presiding officer of the Senate to outfit the chamber in a manner befitting the occasion, and Burr spared nothing to accomplish this objective. On each side of the president's chair at one end of the chamber

were two rows of benches with desks, entirely covered with crimson cloth. Here would sit the 34 senators who would pass judgment on Chase: two from each of the 13 original states, and two each from Vermont, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio. All of this was done in order to recreate as nearly possible the appearance of the House of Lords at the time of the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings in England at the end of the 18th century.

Samuel Chase was more than six feet tall and correspondingly broad; his complexion was brownish-red, earning him the

nickname of "Old Bacon Face." He was hearty, gruff, and sarcastic; one would rather have him as a dinner companion than as a judge in one's case.

Chase had had a distinguished and successful career at the bar, and in 1791 became chief judge of the Maryland General Court. In 1796 George Washington appointed him to the Supreme Court of the United States. His legal ability was recognized by all, but his impetuous nature made him something of a stormy petrel. Joseph Story described him as the "living image" of Samuel Johnson, "in person, in man-



Samuel Chase

ners, in unwieldy strength, and severity of reproof, in real tenderness of heart; and above all in intellect." One of the federal district judges with whom Chase sat had a more negative reaction:

Of all others, I like the least to be coupled with him. I never sat with him without pain, as he was forever getting into some intemperate and unnecessary squabble. If I am to be immolated, let it be with some other victim or for my own sins.

Chase's principal counsel was his friend Luther Martin. One of the great lawyers in American history, Martin was also one of the great iconoclasts of the American bar. He was the first attorney general of Maryland, serving in that office for over 20 years. He was a member of the Continental Congress, member of the Constitutional Convention, and was for a while a state judge in Maryland. He had a weakness for the bottle, but at least in the short run intoxication did not seem to impair his performance in court. He was described by the American historian Henry Adams as "the rollicking, witty, audacious Attorney General of Maryland, . . . drunken, generous, slovenly, grand; bull-dog of Federalism, . . . the notorious reprobate genius."

The last of the *rarae aves* in the cast of characters that assembled for the trial of Samuel Chase was the principal manager for the House of Representatives, John Randolph of Roanoke. He had been elected to Congress from his Virginia district while still in his twenties, and became in effect the administration's leader in the House of Representatives after the Republican victory of 1800. William Plumer described Randolph, not yet 32 at the time of the Chase trial, as a "pale, meagre, ghostly man" who had "the appearance of a beardless boy more than a full grown man." The epitome of the southern tobacco planter, he patrolled the House of Representatives in boots and spurs with a whip in hand.

The presentation of evidence before the Senate took 10 full days, and more than 50 witnesses testified. The charges against Chase with respect to the Fries trial did not, judged from the perspective of history, amount to much. The

charges against him in connection with the Callender trial were a mishmash of minor claims of error together with serious charges of bias and partisanship. In Chase's charge to the Baltimore grand jury, he had criticized the repeal of the Judiciary Act of 1801 and also those pending amendments to the Maryland Constitution that would have granted universal male suffrage without property qualifications.

The closing arguments to the Senate began on February 20 and lasted several days. On March 1, the Senate convened to vote on the counts against Chase; Senator Uriah Tracy of Connecticut was brought into the chamber on a stretcher to cast his vote.

Since the names of the senators were called individually on each of the eight counts, the roll call went slowly. At this time there were 25 Republicans and nine Federalists in the Senate, and it was clear that if the senators voted along party lines, the necessary two-thirds vote to convict Chase could be had.

The first roll call was on the charges growing out of the Fries trial, and on this count the vote was 16 to convict, and 18 to acquit. All nine Federalist Senators voted to acquit, and they were joined by nine of the 25 Republicans. On the next series of counts, growing out of the Callender trial, there was a majority of 18 to 16 to convict, but the two-thirds rule was not satisfied. The final vote was on the charge to the Baltimore grand jury, and on this count the Republicans came the closest to success: 19 Senators voted to convict, and 15 voted to acquit, still not a two-thirds majority.

The significance of the outcome of the Chase trial cannot be overstated. Although the Republicans had expounded grandiose theories about impeachment being a method by which the judiciary could be brought into line with prevailing political views, the case against Chase was tried on a basis of specific allegations of judicial misconduct. Nearly every act charged against him had been performed in the discharge of his judicial office. His behavior during the Callender trial was a good deal worse than most historians seem to realize, and the refusal of six of the Republican Senators to vote to convict even on this count surely cannot have been intended to condone Chase's acts. Instead it represented a

judgment that impeachment should not be used to remove a judge for conduct in the exercise of his judicial duties. The political precedent set by Chase's acquittal has governed the use of impeachment to remove federal judges from that day to this. But the precedent would be sharply tested only two years after the Chase trial.

Presiding over the Chase trial in the Senate was Aaron Burr's last official act as vice president. He left office on March 4, 1805, and rode off into what was then the western wilderness: the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. Historians have never completely agreed on what he was up to in the next two years, but it appears that he was up to no good. In the fall of 1806, President Jefferson issued a proclamation warning Americans in this part of the new nation against a conspiracy to cause the states beyond the Appalachians—Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio—to secede from the Union, or to mount an armed expedition against Spain, which then owned what was called Spanish Florida. Pressed by Congress for information as to the leadership of the conspiracy, Jefferson in January 1807 declared that Aaron Burr was the leader and that "his guilt was placed beyond question."

Burr, then at a place in Mississippi territory near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, sought to flee in disguise but was apprehended and taken to Richmond, Virginia, for trial before Chief Justice John Marshall. Marshall was sitting, as did members of the Supreme Court at the time, as a trial judge. The grand jury in Richmond indicted Burr for treason (a capital offense) and also for a high misdemeanor. But Article III of the Constitution contains very specific limitations on the method by which the government can charge and convict for treason. Treason consists only of levying war against the United States or of adhering to its enemies. Since the United States was not at war at the time, the government had to

show that Burr had "levied war" against the United States. The Constitution also contains an additional evidentiary safeguard: For conviction of treason, there must be two witnesses to the same "overt act" of the defendant.

All of these provisions were laudable protections against the violation of rights, but if the judge trying the case had proved to be a mere minion of the chief executive, the accused would have stood little chance of a fair trial. In this instance, Thomas Jefferson, the chief executive of the United States, had announced that Burr was guilty. Fortunately, John Marshall was anything but a minion of Thomas Jefferson, although like most prominent Virginians of that day they were distant relatives. Marshall had come from the Federalist Party—the opposite side of the political fence from Jefferson—and he and Jefferson had a deep dislike for each other.

Sifting through the evidence offered by the government at Burr's trial, Marshall ruled in effect that the government had not proved an overt act on the part of Burr, and the jury acquitted him on the charge of treason. Marshall went on to rule that Burr should be held to answer on a charge of organizing an expedition against Spain—a mere misdemeanor—but Burr was never brought to trial on the charge. Thomas Jefferson was bitterly disappointed with the result of the Burr trial and in one of his typically ambiguous messages to Congress suggested the possibility of some sort of action against John Marshall. But Congress very sensibly let the matter lie.

This bit of history shows, I think, as no amount of argument can, that a constitution's impressive catalogue of individual rights or limitations on government power is not enough. It took an independent federal judiciary, fought for at the time of the trials of Samuel Chase and Aaron Burr nearly 200 years ago, to make the principles of the Bill of Rights the living reality that they are today.

Continued from page 16

the Harris polls found, before dipping slightly two years later. Meanwhile, the amount of leisure available to Americans shrank from 26.2 hours a week to only 17.7 in 1985 (and 16.6 two years later). Reporting the 1973–85 survey results in his book, *Inside America* (1987), Harris said they pointed to “the fact that *time* has become a premium in the kind of society emerging in America.” Publications from the *New York Times* to *Psychology Today* took up the theme. In a recent, much-publicized book, *The Overworked American* (1991), Harvard economist Juliet B. Schor, despite certain reservations, cited the Har-

ris data to support her contention that Americans have suffered a decline in leisure. Ohio State University political scientist Hamilton, however, after closely examining the Harris findings, says that they are fatally flawed. “There was no dramatic increase in ‘work’ between 1973 and 1985,” he asserts, “nor was there a dramatic decrease in leisure.”

Harris’s striking findings, Hamilton contends, were apparently caused by significant changes in the methodology used in his surveys. In the 1973 survey, the key question was: “About how many hours a week does your job or occupation take, in-

Impoverished Children

A Survey of Recent Articles

There are roughly 64 million children in the United States, about the same number as three decades ago. Meanwhile, the adult (under 65) population has increased by more than half, from 100 million to 152 million, and the number of elderly Americans has risen from 17 to 31 million. That should have been good for the well-being of children, note Victor R. Fuchs and Diane M. Reklis of the National Bureau of Economic Research in *Science* (Jan. 3, 1992). Instead, the lot of American kids generally has grown worse.

One indicator is child poverty, which dropped sharply (along with adult poverty) during the 1960s but has been on the rise since the 1970s. By 1988, 20.3 percent of all American children were living in poverty. Adult poverty, on the other hand, remained largely unchanged at 11 percent.

Writing in *American Sociological Review* (Dec. 1991), Pennsylvania State University’s David J. Eggebeen and Daniel T. Lichter highlight the profound impact that changes in the composition of families during the 1980s—chiefly, the rise in the proportion of female-headed families, produced by divorce and illegitimacy—have had on the economic status of children. In 1987, more than 20 percent of all American children lived with only their mothers, up from eight percent in 1960. If the patterns of family structure in 1988 had been the same as they were in 1960, according to

Eggebeen and Lichter’s analysis of Census Bureau data, the overall child poverty rate would have been 13.8 percent, not 20.3 percent. Indeed, if even the patterns of 1980 had held steady thereafter, the rate in 1988 would have been lower—18 percent. Half of the 1980s increase was due to the breakdown of the family.

It is well known that black children have fared much worse than white children. By 1988, nearly half (45.6 percent) of all black children were poor, as opposed to 15.4 percent of white children. The rapid rise in black female-headed families explains much of the difference. By 1988, half of all black children (compared with 16 percent of white children) lived only with their mothers. If black family breakdown had not increased since 1960, “only” 28.4 percent of black children would have lived in poverty in 1988.

The deterioration of the family cannot be blamed for all of the increase in poverty among black children, Eggebeen and Lichter say, but it “clearly *exacerbated* long-standing racial differences in child poverty. Indeed, if the black family had not deteriorated faster than the white family, the 1960–1988 period would have brought substantial *convergence* in racial differences” in child poverty. The poverty rate declined throughout those decades for black children living with both parents (from 61.2 percent in 1960 to 17 percent in 1988); the rates fell even during the 1980s when the pov-

cluding travel time?" Interviewers were instructed to include students and housewives among their respondents. In the 1980 survey, the question was different: "First, we would like to know approximately how many hours a week you spend at your job or occupation, and that includes keeping house or going to school as well as work for pay or profit. How many hours would you estimate you spend at work, housekeeping, or studies, including any travel time to and from the job or school?" Just this change in wording alone, Hamilton comments, "could easily have generated the 'dramatic' result. It

certainly invites a more generous reading of 'work' than [did] the original question."

Moreover, Harris's findings conflict with data from other sources. The National Opinion Research Center's General Social Surveys (whose question—"How many hours did you work last week, at all jobs?"—has not varied) indicate little change: 39.9 hours of work per week in 1973 and 41.2 hours in '85. Even Schor (whose book Hamilton does not mention) bases her case less on a longer workweek than on an increased number of weeks worked per year. The U.S. Labor Department's *Current Employment Statistics*,

erty rates among corresponding white children were increasing (from 7.3 percent in 1980 to nine percent in 1988).

Of course, remaining above the poverty line does not necessarily mean living well. For some children, black and white, the escape from poverty carried a price: Both parents had to work. Overall, poverty for children in intact families was 10.1 percent in 1988, and it would have been more than one-fifth higher had more and more mothers not taken jobs.

Whether they were poor or not, children by 1988 were likely to enjoy less parental care than children had received only a few decades ago. As Fuchs and Reklis note, the proportion of children under age six whose married mothers worked outside the home went from a mere 18.6 percent in 1960 to a stunning 57.1 percent in 1988. This undoubtedly affected what economists dryly call the "nonmarket production" of goods and services for children. By 1986, Fuchs and Reklis calculate, white parents had about 10 fewer hours per week to spend with their children than they had in 1960, and black parents had about 12 fewer hours.

What can be done? Conservative analysts contend that only a return to the traditional family and to traditional values can provide America's children with the combination of care and discipline that they need. Some have urged more stringent divorce laws or holding parents responsible for the crimes or antisocial acts of their children. But fashioning public policies to try to reverse the cultural changes of recent decades is not easy, Fuchs and Reklis note, in the face of resistance to tighten divorce

laws or other limits on "what many claim are fundamental individual rights." Most children's advocates instead focus on improving children's material well-being, through new or expanded government programs in such areas as education, health, and child care.

Harvard's Mary Jo Bane and David T. Ellwood, writing in *Harvard Business Review* (Sept.-Oct. 1991), note that providing some sort of "children's allowance" to the family of every child is "a practice common in virtually every industrialized trading partner of the United States." There is, to be sure, a U.S. personal tax exemption for children, but its value has been dramatically eroded by inflation over the years. Lately, support for tax credits or larger exemptions for families with children has come from conservatives as well as liberals. The National Commission on Children, created in 1987 by Congress and President Reagan, last year recommended replacing the current exemption with a refundable tax credit of \$1,000 per child. That, Bane and Ellwood observe, is a "children's allowance by another name." What it would require, they add, is "raising the taxes of those without children and of those with very high incomes."

Beyond that, however, there remains a fundamental disagreement between liberals and conservatives about the causes of the plight of children today. "There seems to be some truth to both conservative critiques of the cultural changes that were launched in the 1960s as well as liberal complaints about the uneven prosperity of the 1980s," Fuchs and Reklis point out. "But mutual recrimination does little

based on employer reports from a national sample of firms, indicate the average workweek for production workers even *declined*, from 36.9 hours in 1973 to 34.9 hours in 1985. The Census Bureau's *Current Population Surveys* of households, however, which pick up data missed in the employer reports, show virtually no

change over recent decades in the length of the American workweek.

"No change," Hamilton says, is the best single conclusion to draw about what has happened to the American workweek in recent decades. That may be so, but it is not a finding likely to inspire any magazine cover stories.

The Mother of Mother's Day

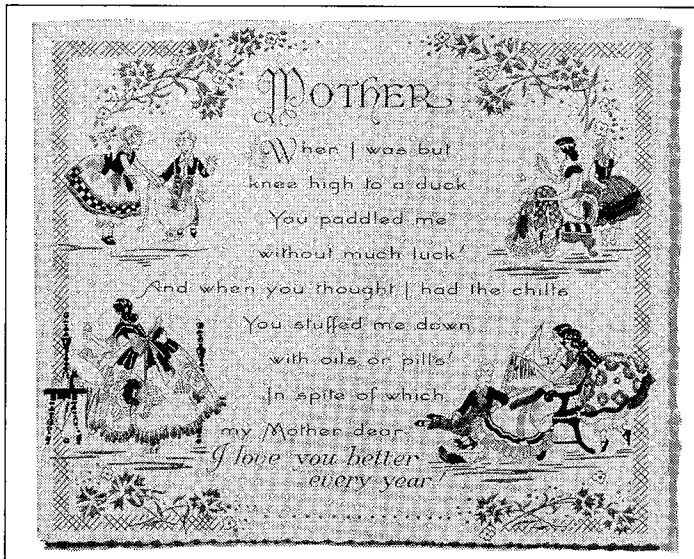
"The Commercialization of the Calendar: American Holidays and the Culture of Consumption, 1870-1930" by Leigh Eric Schmidt, in *The Journal of American History* (Dec. 1991), Organization of American Historians, 112 N. Bryan St., Bloomington, Ind. 47408-4199.

Cynics might assume that Mother's Day was invented by the florist and greeting-card industries. Not exactly, says Schmidt, a Drew University historian. The popular holiday (celebrated on May 10 this year) was actually the brainchild of Anna Jarvis. A schoolteacher who lived in Grafton, W. Va., with her mother (also named Anna) until she was 27, Jarvis was devastated by her death in 1905. "To Jarvis, her mother's life had been one of sacrifice and much suffering," writes Schmidt. Seven of her eleven children died in early childhood, and she had forgone a college education in

order to raise her family.

In 1907, Jarvis began a vigorous letter-writing campaign to promote her cause, sending impassioned missives to newspaper editors, politicians, and church leaders. On the second Sunday in May 1908, the first Mother's Day was officially observed in a number of towns and cities. Jarvis kept up her efforts, and in 1914 they were crowned with success: President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed Mother's Day a national holiday. Yet by then the celebration already had begun to depart from what Jarvis originally had in mind.

She had urged people to observe the first Mother's Day in 1908 by wearing a single white carnation, her mother's favorite flower. That, notes Schmidt, provided "the opening wedge" for the florist industry. First it recommended wearing a bright flower if one's mother were still alive and a white one as a memorial. Then it urged that churches, homes, Sunday schools, and cemeteries be decorated with flowers. Mother herself, the trade suggested, deserved nothing less than a full bouquet. "All the other holidays of the year have features that are taken advantage of by various lines of business,"



"Every mother should receive a card with just the right sentiment," advised *Greeting Cards: When and How to Use Them* (1926).

the *American Florist* observed in 1919, "but the second Sunday in May is purely a floral holiday, which can and should be made of great advantage to the entire trade." Within a few years, confectioners, jewelers, and greeting-card manufacturers were sharing in the bounty.

Glad to have help in promoting her cause, Jarvis initially went along with the

florist industry. "But as it became clear that the florists were molding her 'holy day' to their own ends," Schmidt writes, "she became increasingly angered and alienated." In 1920, she denounced the industry and urged people to wear celluloid buttons. Too late. Against the forces of commerce, the "mother" of Mother's Day never really had a chance.

Why SAT Scores Are Falling

"What's Really Behind the SAT-Score Decline?" by Charles Murray and R. J. Herrnstein, in *The Public Interest* (Winter 1992), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Virtually every year, the announcement of the latest Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores is greeted with alarms over the state of American education. The scores declined sharply during the 1960s and '70s, bottomed out in the early '80s, and have made only halting improvement since. Average scores for college-bound seniors in 1990-91 fell to 422 of a possible 800 on the verbal part of the test and to 474 on the mathematical part. The figures for all test-takers in 1963 were 478 (verbal) and 502 (math). We are worried about the right thing, say Murray, author of *Losing Ground* (1984), and Herrnstein, a Harvard psychologist, but for the wrong reason.

In fact, American high schools are doing as good a job educating the *average* student as they were in the early 1960s. Estimated SAT scores for *all* seniors, based on practice SATs given to nationally representative samples of juniors, were roughly the same in 1983 as they had been in 1960. That is hardly cause for celebration—the average senior's estimated scores were 375 (verbal) and 415 (math)—but at least things did not get worse.

It is not the average senior, however, who takes the SAT. The one million students who do take the test every year are a highly self-selected group, not even representative of the more than two million college-bound seniors (of whom roughly half go on to two-year colleges), let alone all seniors. They are an elite, Murray and Herrnstein note, and in their ranks are "a large proportion of America's most able young people." *Their* deteriorating perfor-

mance on the SAT is alarming.

The SAT decline is often attributed to "democratization"—an expansion of the pool of people taking the test to include students from disadvantaged backgrounds who in the past never would have considered going to college. There was indeed a large change in the ethnic composition of the SAT pool: In 1963, less than two percent of those taking the SAT were black; in 1991, minorities constituted 28 percent of the pool. However, Murray and Herrnstein point out, almost the entire impact of this change had already been felt by 1972—the year when the SAT scores of white students began a free-fall.

What happened, Murray and Herrnstein argue, is that "democratization" of the SAT pool was followed by "mediocritization" of the college track in high school, as more and more academically weak students went on to colleges and other post-secondary institutions. Rather than raising students to traditional academic standards, schools lowered the standards. Textbooks were "dumbed down"; Mickey Mouse electives were added; grades were inflated; less homework was required; multiple-choice exams replaced essay tests. Eventually, this weakened academic environment affected even the better students, who take the SAT.

America has good reason to be especially concerned about its ablest students, the authors say. This is "not because they are more virtuous or 'deserving,' but because of the reality that much [of] our society's functioning depends on them."

PRESS & MEDIA

Sex Without Consequences

"Sex in Primetime Television: 1979 Versus 1989" by Barry S. Sapolsky and Joseph O. Tabarlet, in *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* (Fall 1991), Broadcast Education Assn., 1771 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Every couch potato knows that primetime television is full of sex. How full? To find out, Sapolsky and Tabarlet, both professors of communication at Florida State University, scrutinized a week's worth of 1989 primetime TV. Along with a team of graduate students, they hunted for instances of touching, kissing, hugging, and intercourse as well as sexual violence and sexual references. All told, they found that sex comes up once every four minutes during primetime. (Curiously, however, frequency tails off after 10 P.M.) A 1979 study, by contrast, found one sexual act or reference every five minutes.

To justify all of this on-screen steam, the networks assert that they are only reflecting society's shifting values. Critics, however, say that networks lure audiences with sex to gain higher ratings and more

ad revenue. Indeed, according to Sapolsky and Tabarlet, in 1989 the number one rated network, NBC, had the most sexual content (44 percent of all incidents). The number two network, ABC, came in at 41 percent. In 1979, NBC had the least amount of sex and was in last place, and ABC, with the most sex, was number one.

What bothers Sapolsky and Tabarlet most, however, is what has *not* changed on TV. Although the incidence of (and public concern over) teen pregnancies and dangerous sexual diseases has jumped, in 1989 only a tiny fraction (4.4 percent) of the networks' sexual material touched upon such issues. AIDS went completely unmentioned during the week under study. Television's celebration of sex without consequences, the authors say, reflects neither reality nor good sense.

Personals or Politics?

"Hip Weeklies are Hot!" by Ed Avis, in *The Quill* (Jan.-Feb. 1992), P.O. Box 77, Greencastle, Ind. 46135-0077.

The nation's daily newspapers are reporting the economic recession in their headlines and feeling it in their bottom lines. Advertising revenues have been shrinking; several dailies have folded. Meanwhile, reports Avis, associate editor of the *Quill*, free "alternative" weeklies are thriving.

From Phoenix to Boston, the alternatives have targeted the lucrative 18- to 34-year-old market "by doing what alternatives do best: keeping a skeptical eye on the establishment... providing comprehensive arts and entertainment coverage, concentrating on local issues, and serving heavy doses of wit and sarcasm." They also have succeeded in matching their audience to a strong advertising base of small merchants. Classified ads are an important source of revenue (and reader interest), especially personal ads that many innovative weeklies have tied into telephone voice

Too short, too quiet, too... not cool, and not rich. Now you know what the catch is. But if you can look beyond those shortcomings, you would find a warm, wonderful, sincere, caring human being with lots of love to share. This SBM professional, 33, 5ft.6in., 140lbs., is seeking a SF, 21-35, who still believes in love and enjoys dancing, theatre, music and nature. ☎ 58315.

ARE YOU A SINGLE FEMALE, (black or white, 5-35, intelligent, affectionate, athletic, slender, non-smoking, perhaps a little shy, w a good sense of humor and no dependents) interested in developing a lasting, monogamous relationship? I am a tall, good-looking SWM (6ft.1in., 185lbs., blue eyes, salt and pepper hair, 45, athletic body, creative mind, financially secure w own business) who loves music—jazz, blues, classical as opposed to top-40 and rap—skiing in the winter, loafing by the water in summer, foreign films, ethnic cuisine, champagne, reading, romance, quiet intimate evenings. ☎ 58345.

SBM, 39, businessman, educated, 5ft.9in., very handsome, very healthy, open-minded, enjoys biking, travel, tennis, progressive rock and jazz, classical music, seeking SF, 25-39, with similar interests for friendship, travel and whatever develops. ☎ 59182.

3, no children, successful professional, traditional values, many interests, 18-28 (any race, religion, etc.)

ISO SBF. SWM, blue eyes, a would like to be married and to have children. You're at least 5'10" tall, a non-smoker who loves to music.

Sensitive Latin SWM, romantic, dependable and caring man, 20-30, carinship or relationship.

WM, 41, 5ft.10in., glasses, interested in guitar/piano, rent event, SBF, 18-25, games people, druggies please.

SWM, mid 30s, music (rock, etc.)

In search of profits: Personal ads are a big money-maker for alternative newspapers.

mail systems, allowing lonely hearts to exchange messages by calling a "900" number (and paying 95 cents per minute). Now some dailies are attempting to incorporate facets of the alternatives' formula, such as 900 number personals, and at least one daily, the *Scranton Times*, has purchased its own alternative.

Magazine-length investigative articles are "the real heart, the real soul of an alternative paper," asserts Bruce Schimmel, the *Philadelphia City Paper's* editor. Coverage in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, for example, prompted a successful proposition to limit city development; in many cities the alternative press led the way in reporting the spread of AIDS. The alternatives also act as watchdog of the

mainstream media. "Their press column is a must-read," *Washington Post* media reporter Howard Kurtz says of the alternative *Washington City Paper*.

Yet even among alternative journalists there is no consensus on what makes weeklies go. Jack Shafer, editor of the *Washington City Paper*, takes a skeptical view—papers become financially successful, he says, then concentrate on editorial quality. Readers pay more attention to the personals than to the muckrakers. "News-papers," asserts Shafer, "are advertising flyers with a story written on the back." Avis disagrees, arguing that it is precisely the weeklies' anti-establishment character that will enable them to survive the inevitable ad-poaching of the dailies.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

God Belongs In Public Life

"A New Order of Religious Freedom" by Richard John Neuhaus, in *First Things* (Feb. 1992), Inst. on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Ave., Ste. 400, New York, N.Y. 10010.

Does the constitutional separation of church and state require that religion have no place in public life? Not at all, asserts Neuhaus, editor-in-chief of *First Things*. In a democracy, opinions should not be disqualified from the public realm for being religiously inspired, any more than they should be for being founded on atheism or psychoanalysis. "Ours is not a secular form of government, if by 'secular' is meant indifference or hostility to opinions that are thought to be religious in nature," Neuhaus says. "The civil government is as secular as are the people from whom it derives its democratic legitimacy. No more, no less."

In recent decades, he contends, some scholars and jurists have turned the First Amendment's religion clause ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . .") on its head. "One gets the distinct impression from [them] that no-establishment is the end to which free

exercise is something of a nuisance." He cites the statement of Laurence Tribe in *American Constitutional Law* (1978) that there is a "zone which the free exercise clause carves out of the establishment clause for permissible accommodation of religious interests."

But it is free exercise—not the no-establishment provision—that takes precedence, Neuhaus maintains. "Why on earth should we need a no-establishment provision? The answer is that no-establishment is required to protect the rights of those who might dissent from whatever religion is established. In other words, no-establishment is required for free exercise." Therefore, he concludes, any interpretation of the no-establishment provision that hinders free exercise of religion is a misinterpretation.

That is not to say that anything done in the name of religion should be permitted. "Sometimes—reluctantly, and in cases of supreme and overriding public neces-

Presbyterian Follies

Last year, a special committee of the Presbyterian Church called for radical change in traditional Christian attitudes toward sexual behavior. In the *New Republic* (Dec. 2, 1991), Camille Paglia, author of *Sexual Personae* (1990), found in the committee's report only a new spirit of puritanism.

Keeping Body and Soul Together demonstrates the chaos and intellectual ineptitude in the fashionable liberal discourse on sex that now fills the media and the academic and political worlds. All human problems are blamed on an unjust social system, a 'patriarchy' of gigantic and demonized dimensions, blanketing history like a river of molasses

The report assails the 'influential tradition of radical asceticism' in 'Western Christianity' that expresses 'body-alienation,' 'fear of sex and, in particular, of women.' It assumes that eremites and monks were not contemplatives but killjoys, neurotics, and misogynists, scowling while the rest of the world caroused, footloose and fancy free. The report complains of 'our cultural captivity to a patriarchal model of sexuality and its

ethic of sexual control,' as if sexual rules and taboos were not prevalent in every culture

The committee members seem to have read nothing in their lives but feminist tracts churned out since 1969. Kate Millett and Carolyn Heilbrun, those intellectual giants, are approvingly quoted. Alice Walker is pushed forward to symbolize modern literature. There is no reference to any major writer in history except Dante, whose theory of love is superficially summarized

But there is something deeper at work in the report than contemporary platitudes and ignorance of world history and culture. It is the revival of the old Protestant ethic, masquerading in hip new clothes. Like so much current feminist ideology, this supposedly liberal statement on sexuality represents not progressive thinking but a throwback to pre-'60s conventionalism: rigid, narrow, and puritanical. It is a new tyranny of the group, pretending to speak for individuals while it crushes them. Humanitarian jargon-phrases are used to pin us in pious attitudes of compulsory brotherhood.

sity—the claim to free exercise protection for certain actions must be denied.” But the great danger today, he claims, “is not the threat that religion poses to public life, but the threat that the state, presuming to embody public life, poses to religion.” And that threat is not to religion alone. “When

the American people can no longer publicly express their obligations to the Creator, it is to be feared that they will no longer acknowledge their obligations to one another—nor to the Constitution in which the obligations of freedom are enshrined.”

A Place for Metaphysics

“Metaphysics in Education after Hutchins and Dewey” by René Vincente Arcilla, in *Teachers College Record* (Winter 1991), Teachers College, Columbia Univ., 525 W. 120th St., Box 103, New York, N.Y. 10027.

“How can we consider man’s destiny unless we ask what he is? How can we talk about preparing men for life unless we ask what the end of life may be? At the base of education, as at the base of every human activity, lies metaphysics.” So insisted Robert M. Hutchins (1899–1977), the long-time president of the University of Chicago and a leading advocate of the “Great Books” approach to higher education. Phi-

losopher and educational theorist John Dewey (1859–1952) strongly disagreed—and his argument largely carried the day. Yet the Hutchins–Dewey debate of the 1930s still reverberates today, with Allan Bloom and others taking up Hutchins’s position, and Richard Rorty and others upholding Dewey’s. Arcilla, a professor of philosophy and education at Columbia University’s Teachers College, finds wis-

dom on both sides.

Metaphysics, the study of first principles, is "the highest science," Hutchins maintained, and therefore it should pervade the college curriculum. The social and natural sciences should be taught as the subordinate sciences that they are. To the pragmatist Dewey, however, metaphysics was not a genuine science. Metaphysical ideas, by themselves, did not constitute knowledge in his eyes; their only use was in forming theoretical hypotheses to explain empirical facts. Shaping education according to perceived metaphysical truths, Dewey argued, would mean giving it an authoritarian cast. As he saw it, Arcilla explains, metaphysics "prevents us in principle from investigating whether empirical and practical facts may to some degree also determine, and help us criticize, the meta-

physical truths we hold. Yet we need to criticize these truths in this way in order to cultivate a democratic and liberal society." Aristotelian metaphysics, after all, had countenanced slavery.

In the field of education, Dewey's position is now "common sense," Arcilla says. Yet that ought not to mean that ultimate questions about the nature and purpose of human life should go unasked. "Hutchins may have been wrong to believe that we possess, or could possess, metaphysical truths," but he may well have been right that "the questions that have spurred the quest for such truths" should be taken up. Just because its results are "unscientific," Arcilla says, does not mean that metaphysical speculation must be "in conflict with our scientific interests in education, or . . . that it has no pragmatic value at all."

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Nature's Starring Role

"Starry Messengers: Supernovas, Comets and Sunspots Heralded the Scientific Revolution" by Frederic J. Baumgartner, in *The Sciences* (Jan.-Feb. 1992), The New York Academy of Sciences, 2 East 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

The 17th-century scientific revolution that overturned the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic view of the universe is usually credited to such giants as Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, and to the invention of the telescope. Baumgartner, an historian at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, points out another major contributor: nature itself.

When Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) proposed in *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543) that the planets, including Earth, revolved around the sun, his arguments made not a dent in the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic orthodoxy. The orthodoxy held that Earth was at the center of the universe and that the world beyond the moon's orbit was virtually unchanging. In Copernicus's time, astronomers had found no heavenly evidence that seriously disrupted the Ptolemaic cosmology.

In 1572, however, a new point of light

appeared in the sky and remained there for more than a year. It was what modern astronomers call a supernova, a massive explosion of a dying star. "To astronomers of the day," notes Baumgartner, "the appearance of a new star in the heavens was simply impossible."

Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe's discovery of that "impossible" star was just the beginning. Five years later, a great comet blazed across the sky where it was not supposed to be, far beyond the orbit of the moon, and it dealt an even stronger blow to the traditional wisdom. Nor was that the end of what was an extraordinary succession of dramatic celestial phenomena. Over a 70-year period that began with Brahe's first excited discovery, Europeans witnessed two of only three supernovas ever recorded in Europe, two of the greatest comets ever seen, unusually high sunspot activity, two total eclipses of the sun,



Tycho Brahe, with his pre-telescope instruments.

a great conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, and a transit of Mercury across the face of the sun.

Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) was only eight years old when the first supernova appeared; the appearance of the second in 1604 helped turn his interest to astronomy. He quickly grasped the supernova's cosmological implications. Four years after it faded from view, he took the telescope, which had been invented about 1600, “turned [it] on the heavens for the first time and ushered in a new age of astronomy.” When the second large comet appeared in the heavens in 1618, astronomers across Europe viewed it not only with new telescopes but with new eyes.

The rare celestial show that nature put on over the course of seven decades did not do more than the invention of the telescope to create the revolution in scientific thought, Baumgartner says. But it certainly helped. By the time the show was over, the curtain had been brought down on the traditional theory.

Call of the Tame

“In From the Cold” by Stephen Budiansky, in *The New York Times Magazine* (Dec. 22, 1991), 229 W. 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

Strident animal-rights activists insist that dogs, cattle, horses, and other domesticated beasts have been enslaved by that tireless despoiler of nature, man. And most other people take for granted that man at least imposed domestication on the animals. Journalist Budiansky, author of *The Covenant of the Wild: Why Animals Chose Domestication* (1992), suggests that animals “chose us as much as we chose them.” Far from being a crime against nature, the domestication of animals, he argues, was “a product of nature, an evolutionary process driven by the animals’ own need to adapt to the rapidly changing climatic conditions that swept the earth at the end of the ice age.”

The glaciers that repeatedly swept the continents of North America, Europe, and Asia during the ice age demanded adaptability, Budiansky argues. The million years that preceded the glaciers’ final re-

treat was really a series of small ice ages, marked by enormous swings in climate. Natural selection favored in many animals the “youthful” characteristics of curiosity, an ability to learn, and lack of fear of new situations. These opened the way for them to approach and be approached by humans.

Human efforts to domesticate beasts by force alone would have been impossible, Budiansky says. The ancient Egyptians, for example, tried and failed to domesticate gazelles and other species. And there is mounting evidence to suggest that the rise of agriculture and animal husbandry some 9,000 years ago was not at first “an obvious improvement” for man. Early agriculturalists suffered “an epidemic of injuries, malnutrition and infectious disease” unlike anything experienced by hunter-gatherers. Over the long term, however, the advantages to man and beast alike are plain.

Domesticated animals have enjoyed much more "reproductive success" than they would have in a state of nature. Man, far

from being the oppressor of animals, is upholding "a remarkable evolutionary compact among the species."

Japanese Junk

"What?! Garbage in Japan?" by Phyllis Austin, in *Garbage* (Nov.-Dec. 1991), Old House Journal Corp., 2 Main St., Gloucester, Mass. 01930.

First in autos, first in TVs, and first in the management of solid waste as well. That is the view of a number of environmentalists who have studied Japan and estimate that the island nation recycles about 50 percent of its solid waste. After a visit to Japan, however, journalist Austin reports the reality there is far less rosy.

Second only to the United States as a garbage producer, Japan, she says, is "in a crisis" over what to do with the 4.1 billion tons of waste it generates each year. As Japanese wealth has mounted, so have the junk piles. The newly affluent Japanese jettison "perfectly functional, slightly used" televisions, stereos, bicycles, or furniture as if they were yesterday's newspaper. In just three years, according to a 1990 report from the nation's Ministry of Health and Welfare, waste production increased by more than one-third—to three pounds per person per day.

With 120 million people crammed into a country the size of California, Japan has little landfill space left. The government has resorted to creating garbage "islands" in Tokyo Bay and Osaka Bay. Rural towns are courted, frequently unsuccessfully, by

garbage managers seeking dump sites. "Midnight dumping" by private waste-disposal firms is on the rise. In 1989, there were more than 2,000 arrests for illegal dumping.

Most of what the Japanese cannot recycle, they burn, and the prospects for increased recycling are "negligible, very limited," says Makoto Saito, the ministry's deputy director of waste management. No official estimate of Japan's overall recycling rate is available. But contrary to the extravagant claims made by some U.S. environmentalists, Harold Levenson of the U.S. Congress's Office of Technology Assessment calculates—on the basis of data from the Clean Japan Center, a quasi-governmental agency—that Japan's recycling rate may be as low as 26 percent. That is still nearly twice the U.S. rate—and so would indicate that the United States can do a lot better at recycling. But this modest success, in "a country noted for its dependence on imports of raw materials, its homogeneous culture, and its propensity for citizen cooperation in community activities," suggests that recycling's potential is not as great as some have hoped.

Death Begins At 85?

"How Long Is the Human Life-Span?" by Marcia Barinaga, in *Science* (Nov. 15, 1991), American Assoc. for the Advancement of Science, 1333 H St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

All of us must die, of course, but what is the natural limit to a human life? Against a chorus of critics, Stanford rheumatologist James Fries has argued that the human body is biologically destined to begin falling apart at about age 85.

"It is frailty, rather than disease," that kills people at very old ages, Fries told Barinaga, a *Science* writer. Despite all the medical progress during the past decade, he points out, the remaining life span for

65-year-olds has been constant: 18.6 years, on average, for women, 14.7 years for men. Moreover, if the curves since 1900 for life expectancy from birth and from age 65 are extrapolated into the future, the lines converge early in the next century at about age 85—suggesting, Fries says, that that is roughly the biological limit to life.

Nonsense, say his critics. The recent plateau in life expectancy after 65, Duke University demographer Kenneth Manton as-

serts, is a result of short-lived changes in Medicare in the early 1980s that he contends made it harder for some of the elderly to get medical care. Death rates have since resumed their decline. He notes that killers once regarded as inevitable "frailties" of old age, such as osteoporosis, are now considered treatable diseases.

Fries's converging lines, says University of Chicago demographer Jay Olshansky, are meaningless. The fact is that overall life expectancy is affected by many more things, notably infant mortality, than just the survival of more people beyond 85. There may be a natural limit to life, but it is not necessarily 85.

Indeed, University of Minnesota demog-

rapher James Vaupel has scrutinized unusually accurate Swedish data on 85-year-olds and found drastic improvements in remaining life expectancy during the past 50 years. The same is true for Swedes as old as 100. If there is a biological limit to life, Vaupel suggests, it may be 100 years or more.

The search has taken scientists to other species, notably to fruit flies. Early results from one study suggest that death rates do not rise for elderly insects.

For most of us, unfortunately, all this is largely a theoretical exercise. We will continue to die from "preventable" causes long before we have a chance to test the outer limits of biology.

ARTS & LETTERS

*Corruption
And Democracy*

"*Democracy: Henry Adams and the Role of Political Leader*" by B. H. Gilley, in *Biography* (Fall 1991), Center for Biographical Research, Varsity Cottage, Univ. of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.

In *Democracy: An American Novel* (1880), Henry Adams skewered the post-Civil War breed of political leaders for having abandoned the high-minded disinterestedness of their patrician predecessors. Against the backdrop of corruption in the administrations of Presidents Rutherford B. Hayes and Ulysses S. Grant, the accusation seemed quite plausible. In fact, when the novel was first published anonymously, many American readers took it simply as a *roman à clef*.

Senator Silas P. Ratcliffe, *Democracy's* villain, was actually inspired by James G. Blaine, who as speaker of the House of Representatives had helped to deny Adams's father, Charles Francis Adams, the GOP presidential nomination in 1872. Henry Adams "was not content merely to condemn his Senator Ratcliffe for betraying the people and for enhancing his personal power," observes Gilley, an historian at Louisiana Tech University. Political corruption, in Adams's view, had become a much more complicated matter than that.

Ratcliffe had begun his political career during the Civil War as a well-intentioned governor of Illinois. "The Senator sought power to achieve legitimate political objectives," Gilley notes, "but the quest for political power obscured his goals." His attitude toward politics became calculating and selfish. Means became ends, integrity was sacrificed to expediency. Finally, the senator accepted a \$100,000 bribe to stifle his opposition to a huge government subsidy for the Inter-Oceanic Mail Steamship Company and allow the legislation to emerge from his committee and reach the Senate floor.

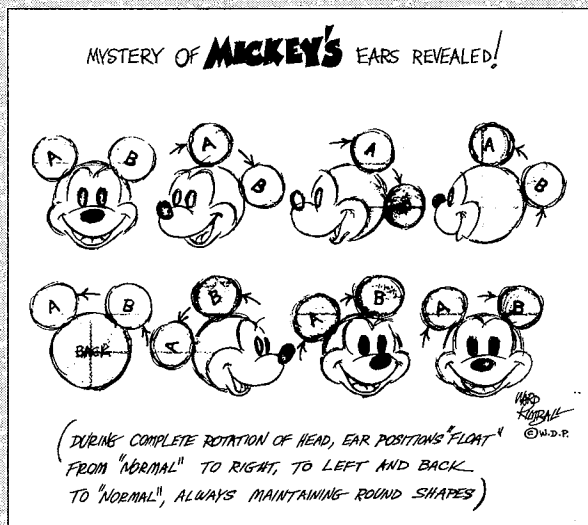
Adams did not excuse Ratcliffe's selfish rationale, Gilley says, but he did suggest that the erosion of Ratcliffe's will was a subtle development that was partly due to the pressures of democratic politics. American society's movement in an egalitarian direction and the rise of political parties had changed the environment in which political leaders had to act. George Washington had been able to stand above

The Mouse That Roared

Novelist John Updike in *Art & Antiques* (Nov. 1991) ponders the enduring and widespread appeal of a plucky little rodent.

His first, iconic manifestation had something of Chaplin to it; he was the little guy, just over the border of the respectable. His circular ears, like two minimal cents, bespeak the smallest economic unit, the overlookable democratic man. His name has passed into the language as a byword for the small, the weak—a "Mickey Mouse operation" means an undercapitalized company or minor surgery. Children of my generation—wearing our Mickey Mouse watches, prying pennies from our Mickey Mouse piggy banks (I won one in a third-grade spelling bee, my first intellectual triumph), following his running combat with Pegleg Pete in the daily funnies, going to the local movie-house movies every Saturday afternoon and cheering when his smiling visage burst onto the screen to introduce a cartoon—felt Mickey was one of us, a bridge to the adult world of which Donald Duck was, for all of his childish sailor suit, an irascible, tyrannical member. Mickey didn't seek trouble, and he didn't complain; he rolled with the punches, and surprised himself as much as us when . . . he showed warrior resourcefulness and won, once again, a blushing kiss from dear, all but identical Minnie. His minimal,

decent nature meant that he would yield, in the Disney animated cartoons, the starring role to combative, sputtering Donald Duck and even to Goofy, with his "gawshes" and Gary Cooper-like gawkiness. But for an occasional comeback like the "Sorcerer's Apprentice" episode of *Fantasia*, and [1990]'s rather souped-up *The Prince and the Pauper*, Mickey was through as a star by 1940. But, as with Marilyn Monroe when her career was over, his life as an icon gathered strength. The America that is not symbolized by that imperial Yankee Uncle Sam is symbolized by Mickey Mouse. He is America as it feels to itself—plucky, put-on, inventive, resilient, good-natured, game.



political factions, but that aristocratic era was gone. "Washington was no politician at all, as we understand the word," Ratcliffe comments at one point in the novel. "He stood outside of politics. The

thing couldn't be done today . . . If Washington were President now, he would have to learn our ways or lose the next election." Reluctantly, Henry Adams had come to the same conclusion.

Inventing Leadbelly

"Our Singing Country: John and Alan Lomax, Leadbelly, and the Construction of an American Past" by Benjamin Filene, in *American Quarterly* (Dec. 1991), Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 701 W. 40th St., Baltimore, Md. 21211.

Leadbelly, the black singer and guitarist (1889–1949) who is now considered

among the most important of America's folk musicians, was first thrust into the

musical limelight by John Lomax and his son, Alan. During the 1930s and early '40s, the Lomaxes traveled tens of thousands of miles and made thousands of recordings for the Library of Congress of obscure songs and singers. In time they won acclaim for preserving America's endangered folk-music heritage. What has not been understood, says Filene, a Yale graduate student, is how much their personal vision, shaped by the left-wing politics of the period, helped to define the very "tradition" they were purportedly just documenting.

The elder Lomax, a widower who had lost his bank job in the Depression, and his son Alan, who was 17 when they made their first expedition in 1933, were looking for "a particular brand of old-fashioned, rural folk music that they felt exemplified the country's creativity and vitality" and which they feared was being overwhelmed by commercial music and urban culture. They looked for "uncontaminated" songs in remote cotton plantations, cowboy ranches, lumber camps, and segregated southern prisons. When they found songs that didn't fit their conception, they simply ignored them.

To enhance folk music's popular appeal, they excluded powerful songs such as "Sistren an' Brethren," in which southern blacks threatened revenge against their white oppressors, from their best-selling

book *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (1934). When the Lomaxes did find the sort of folk music they liked, Filene says, they sought to gain an audience for it, "even if doing so involved rounding off the music's rough edges and creating a false public persona for the singer."

That was what happened in the case of Leadbelly (Huddie Ledbetter), whom they discovered in 1933 in Louisiana's Angola Prison, where he was serving time for murder. In promoting Leadbelly, the Lomaxes "focused on his convict past and depicted him as a savage, untamed animal," while at the same time portraying him as "the voice of people."

The Lomaxes, realizing that Leadbelly's commercial appeal depended upon the perception that his songs were "pure folk," tried to eliminate obvious pop influences from his performances. They also toned down his original songs. Under their influence, Leadbelly removed suggestive lyrics from a song about his youthful desire to enjoy the pleasures of a red-light district and added a new ending to the song in which he "begs his mother to forgive him for his past behavior."

"The Lomaxes claimed to be impartial folklorists who documented an existing tradition," Filene concludes, "but they had a personal vision that has powerfully influenced how Americans remember their musical heritage."

Aliens Capture Sci-Fi Literature

"Big Ideas and Dead-End Thrills" by Thomas M. Disch, in *The Atlantic* (Feb. 1992), 745 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

Science fiction in the past 15 years has entered a whole new dimension of popularity. Starting with *Star Wars* in 1977, Hollywood has turned out one hugely profitable sci-fi extravaganza after another. Meanwhile, in the literary zone, sci-fi books, along with their horror and fantasy kin, have regularly moved onto the bestseller lists. All this might seem cause for great rejoicing among sci-fi enthusiasts, but Disch, theater critic for the *Nation* and author of *334* (1972) and other science-fiction novels, looks upon it as an odious in-

vasion of the book-snatchers. Publishers, he contends, have turned the genre as a whole into "one of the major symptoms of, if not a causal agent in, the dumbing-down of the younger generation."

In the early 1970s, Disch had complained that, as things stood even then, the genre could best be understood as "a branch of children's literature." He deplored the limitations that resulted from the juvenile nature of the readership and favored "an aesthetically and intellectually mature science fiction, written by grown-

ups for grown-up tastes." "New Wave" writers such as Norman Spinrad and Disch himself tried to create such fiction.

But at the same time, powerful editors such as Ballantine's Judy Lynne del Rey had a very different agenda, according to Disch. They saw "an enormous untapped market. Del Rey and those who followed in her footsteps discovered and groomed writers like Stephan Donaldson, Terry Brooks, and Piers Anthony, who could scale down [J. R. R.] Tolkien or [Isaac] Asimov from the seventh- or eighth-grade reading levels of the overeducated [1950s] and create tetralogies suitable to the diminished reading skills of today's children." Other publishers started issuing series of low-grade novels, such as the continuing *Star Trek* series, which could be produced by "hack" writers rather than "name" authors.

The popularity of sci-fi movies and TV

shows has been of little help to writers of original science fiction, Disch says. Most hit sci-fi movies of recent years have been written by "director-writer-producer teams who have dealt with [science fiction] as a pool of imagery, tropes, and plots in the public domain, which can be cobbled together as well by one creative team as by another."

Many veteran science-fiction writers have failed, or refused, to adapt to the changed market situation. A "goodly number" of them have left the field, Disch reports. Samuel Delaney, for example, now teaches at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and writes mostly nonfiction. John Sladek, who wrote novels about robots, now is an executive in a firm that designs real ones. Disch himself does not plan to stop writing science fiction. But he insists that most sci-fi these days is strictly kids' stuff.

OTHER NATIONS

A Different Sort Of Welcome

"Immigration and Group Relations in France and America" by Donald L. Horowitz, in *The Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* (Jan. 1992), Norton's Woods, 136 Irving St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

In France, as elsewhere in Europe today, immigrants have become a major "problem." Yet, despite frequent xenophobic outbursts, France, like the United States, has a long history of welcoming newcomers. The difference, according to Duke University's Horowitz, is that the French have no truck with the usual metaphors about a melting pot or mosaic.

Mass immigration to France began in the mid-19th century. From Belgium, Italy, and later Poland, foreigners came to work in the mines and factories that French peasants shunned. Belgians congregated in French factory towns, and, after World War I, Poles worked in the mines of Lorraine and Languedoc. After World War II, a new wave of immigrants came—from North Africa, the Iberian

peninsula, and Asia. North Africans have been heavily concentrated in and around the major cities of Paris, Lyon, and Marseilles. By 1975, one year after its border was closed to most immigration, more than four-fifths of the [3.7 million] foreigners in France had come from North Africa or Iberia, with Algeria and Portugal each contributing more than one-fifth. France also had, by some estimates, nearly one million illegal immigrants.

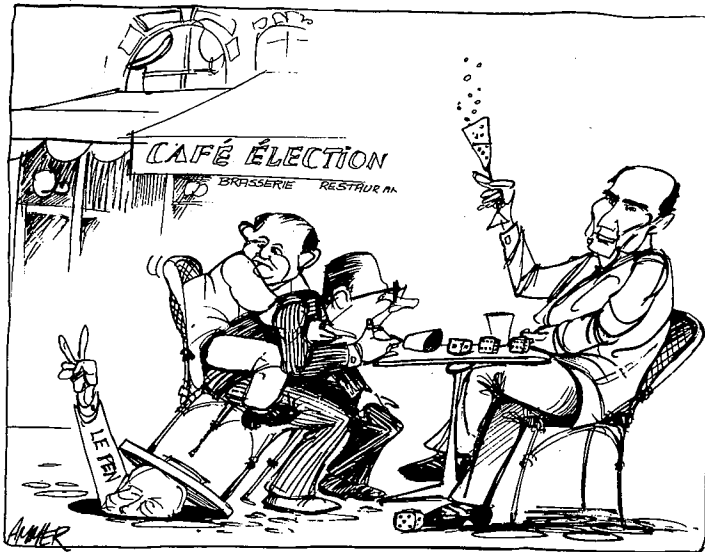
The French census and other official statistics divide the population into just two categories: "French" and "foreigners." There are no hyphenated Frenchmen. "It is possible to be an Italian in France, but it is not possible to be an Italian-Frenchman in the same easy way as it is possible to be an Italian-American," Horowitz notes. For-

eigners who cease being such are presumed to have exchanged that identity for a French one. Unlike in the United States, there has never been a sense that immigrants are in any way creating the nation. "Immigrants could cleave to a France already established, but they could neither make nor remake it."

Whereas in the United States "the recollection of immigration and the exalta-

tion of ethnicity [have become] something of a cottage industry," in France, ethnic interest groups, like other interest groups, are seen as a contradiction of Rousseauian notions of the general will. Until 1981, in fact, a statute prohibited foreigners from forming organizations.

Yet because the central government is so important in France, and because there is no American-style federalism, local conflicts quickly become *national* problems. The fragmented party system is very vulnerable to single-issue movements. Jean-Marie Le Pen's anti-immigrant *Front National*—which has won elections by overwhelming margins in some areas with heavy concentrations of immigrants—has achieved a national importance that a similar extremist party in the United States would find hard to win. Ethnic and racial concerns play no small role in American politics, of course, but "the politics of integration or exclusion" in France, Horowitz says, has "a bluntness and a resonance" that it does not have here.



Jean-Marie Le Pen, of the anti-immigrant Front National, was himself a key issue in 1988 elections in which François Mitterrand (right) won a second seven-year term as president of France.

Africa's New Democracies

"Africa: The Rebirth of Political Freedom" by Richard Joseph, in *Journal of Democracy* (Fall 1991), 1101 15th St. N.W., Ste. 200, Washington, D.C. 20005; "Democracy in Africa" by Carol Lancaster, in *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1991-92), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2400 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037-1153.

Twenty-five African countries—about half of all those on the continent—are now either democracies or else strongly or moderately committed to democratic change, according to the African Governance Program at Emory University's Carter Center. Joseph, the center's director, warns that this is only the beginning of the African quest for freedom. "Unless the new democracies can restore economic growth," he writes, "they will face direct challenges

from the very social forces that are currently undermining authoritarianism."

The democratic movement in Africa first hit the headlines in 1990 in the wake of the democratic upheaval in Eastern Europe, but it is not just an echo of events elsewhere. "Many groups and individuals that are now fearlessly confronting their governments have defied them surreptitiously for years," Joseph notes. The extended anti-apartheid struggle in South Af-

rica turned out to be a catalyst. "African governments long castigated the oppressive policies of South Africa's apartheid regime while indulging in similar practices themselves." As South Africa peeled away its repressive laws, black African regimes felt popular pressure to do the same.

But it was the dismal economic performance of the old autocratic (and typically corrupt) regimes that was decisive in their loss of legitimacy. By the end of the 1980s, some governments, such as then-President Mathieu Kerekou's in Benin, were literally bankrupt; others, as in then-President Kenneth Kaunda's Zambia, tried to fill their empty coffers by simply printing more money (which triggered hyperinflation) or by diverting funds away from productive investment. Austerity measures mandated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank increased hardships and public discontent. Although Africans at first blamed the international financial agencies, they eventually began to hold their authoritarian governments responsible. They will be no less demanding of democratic governments, Joseph predicts.

All will not be lost even if the first democratic governments fail, Georgetown University's Lancaster contends. The result probably would not be "a permanent return" to autocracy and repression, but "periodic shifts between military and elected civilian governments, much as have occurred in Ghana and Nigeria over the past 30 years

PC Among the Latinos

Ever since the Mexican Revolution (1910), it has been *de rigueur* for Latin American intellectuals to be "progressive" and "anti-imperialist." In the 1950s, Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa recalls in *Commentary* (Feb. 1992), a new form of the imperialist menace was discovered: "cultural penetration."

[Its] purpose, we were told, was to pervert native cultures and deprive Latin American countries not merely of their raw materials but also of their "souls." (A richly documented book by the Chilean Ariel Dorfman—now enshrined as a professor at Duke University—purports to show how Donald Duck, yes, Walt Disney's Donald Duck, was the cornerstone of this evil cultural conspiracy.)

From this point on—and even more so after the Cuban Revolution in 1959—denunciation of the United States became a daily professional exercise for a considerable number of Latin American intellectuals. Granted, in more recent years this orthodoxy was practiced rather mechanically and without any real conviction. . . . But the fact remains that anti-Americanism is still one of the indispensable requirements for acceptance in the Latin American intellectual class. Indeed, without it, one can hardly hope to prosper, since the cultural establishment is still, for all practical purposes, a branch of the political Left, regardless of glasnost, perestroika, or anything that has happened since.

Oddly enough, this profession of faith—hatred for the United States disguised as anti-imperialism—nowadays is actually a rather subtle form of neocolonialism. By adopting it, the Latin American intellectual does and says what the cultural establishment of the United States (and by extension, elsewhere in the West) expects of him. . . .

Thus, one of the most exquisite paradoxes surrounding the abundant rhetoric of so many Latin American sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, ethnologists, journalists, poets, essayists, and novelists—all of whom denounce the "cultural penetration" by the giant of the North—is that this rhetoric is the best (and perhaps the only) proof that such "penetration" exists at all. For without it, how could so many learned and creative writers manage to win grants, invitations to speak, subventions, travel expenses, book contracts, stage productions, art exhibits, etc., with which the cultural establishment of the United States subsidizes and enthusiastically stimulates those who have turned anti-Americanism into nothing less than a source of livelihood?

and as have occurred in most of Latin America. And, as in the now largely democratic Latin America, economic development and political experience over the decades may enhance the effectiveness of democratic governments and discourage military intervention in politics."

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

"The Rural Underclass: Examination of Multiple-Problem Populations in Urban and Rural Settings."

Population Reference Bureau, 1875 Conn. Ave. N.W., Ste. 520, Washington, D.C. 20009. 25 pp. \$5.
Authors: *William P. O'Hare and Brenda Curry-White*

The so-called underclass is usually assumed to be a strictly urban phenomenon: a poor, mostly black population living in impoverished inner cities and also displaying assorted social pathologies (e.g., chronic joblessness, out-of-wedlock births, criminality, welfare dependency). O'Hare and Curry-White of the University of Louisville note that there also is a rural underclass, with some of the same characteristics.

In 1990, the authors estimate, the American underclass numbered about three million adults. These were people who had not finished high school, were receiving welfare or some other form of public assistance, and were either never-married mothers or long-unemployed men. Eighty percent of them lived in poverty. Of these three million, one-quarter or more lived in rural areas.

Like their urban counterparts, members of the rural underclass tend to be concentrated in areas with very high poverty rates. That, according to most analysts, is what distinguishes the (urban) underclass. Moreover, the rural poor are even more likely than the able-bodied urban poor to

be sunk in poverty for years. (Among the former, 7.8 percent suffered long-term poverty in 1976-85, compared with 4.4 percent of the latter.)

There are other striking parallels, O'Hare and Curry-White point out. Just as middle-class blacks moved out of the cities, leaving the poor more isolated, so better-educated people have been leaving rural America. In 1986-87, nearly one million more people left than moved in. And just as the decline of manufacturing in cities may have swelled the size of the urban underclass, so the decline of farming and manufacturing in rural areas may have contributed to the rise of a rural underclass.

Despite such similarities, differences between the two groups are striking. Whereas the urban underclass is about evenly divided among the four main regions of the country, two-thirds of the rural underclass is in the South, report O'Hare and Curry-White.

A majority (55 percent) of rural underclass adults are white—compared with only 17 percent of the urban underclass. A majority in rural areas (53 percent) are men—compared with 40 percent in the

central cities. And the rural membership is older. One potential difference the authors do not explore, however, is crime rates of the rural and urban underclasses.

That blacks make up about half of the urban underclass (as the authors define it) but only one-third of the rural underclass is not because urban blacks are more prone to underclass behavior, O'Hare and Curry-White say, but simply a reflection of the fact that blacks form a much larger proportion of the overall population in central cities.

Between 1980 and 1990, according to the authors' analysis, the rate of underclass membership among blacks in large northern cities declined from 9.5 to 8.6 percent, while there was a slight increase (9.6 to 9.7 percent) in the same period among blacks in the rural South. Since the net flow of southern blacks to the North ceased by the mid-1970s, the authors argue, their finding lends support to journalist Nicholas Lemann's thesis in *The Promised Land* (1991) that today's black urban underclass and many of its ills have roots in black sharecropper society in the rural South.

"A Policy Agenda for Famine Prevention in Africa."

International Food Policy Research Inst., 1776 Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. 24 pp.
Author: *Joachim von Braun*

Famine in the late 20th century has been confined to Africa. China, for example, suffered 20 million famine-related deaths after the 1958 Great Leap Forward, but subsequent

agricultural reforms eliminated the threat of massive starvation. Yet such famine-prone African countries as Ethiopia (pop.: 51.7 million) and Sudan (pop.: 25 million)

have not managed to escape the shadow of hunger. The blame is usually put on droughts, loss of productive crop land due to deforestation, and disruptions caused by civil

war. But the International Food Policy Research Institute cites additional reasons: the prevalence of subsistence-oriented agriculture, inadequate roads and transportation, and unresponsive governments.

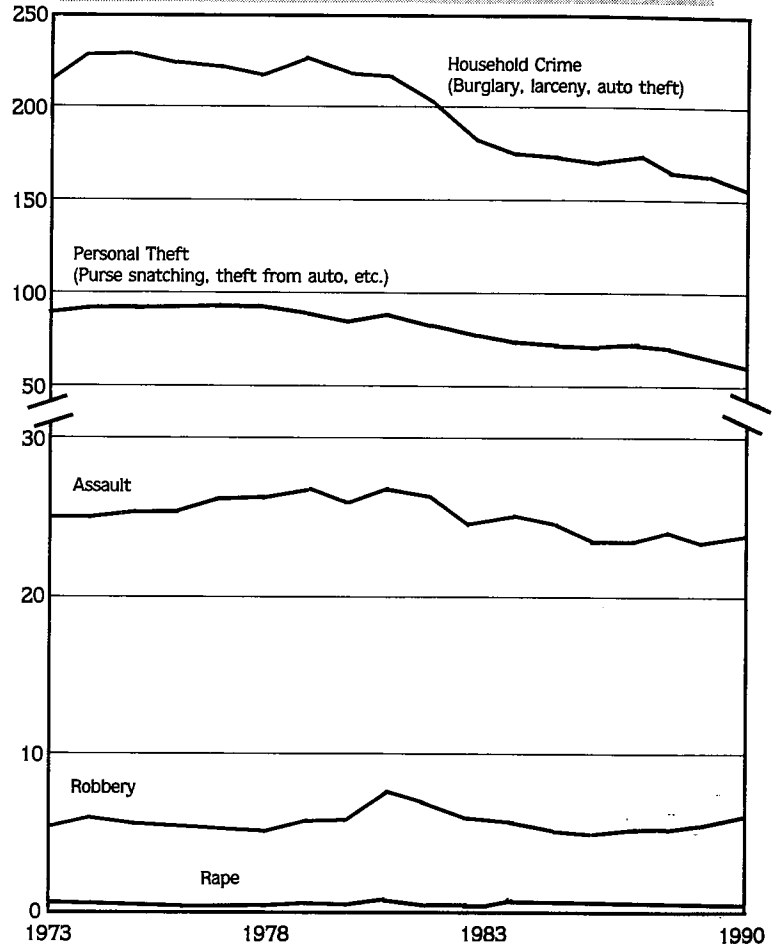
An estimated one million people died from famine in Ethiopia in 1983-86, and more than 500,000 are believed to have died in Sudan in 1984-1990. "Most survivors have been left with fewer assets, and with an increasingly risky agricultural income base that offers little buffer against future crises," writes von Braun. Food production in Ethiopia and Sudan in the late 1980s remained below 1979-81 levels. In Ethiopia's worst-hit regions, net per-capita annual income is less than \$100. Despite the overthrow of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam's Marxist regime last year and an end to the civil war there, much of the country remains vulnerable to famine. In the Sudan, still wracked by civil war between the Muslim fundamentalist regime and its enemies, food shortages worsened last year.

One key to famine prevention, von Braun says, is improved agricultural technology, such as advanced irrigation systems and chemical fertilizers. During the 1984-85 drought, villages taking part in the Jebel Mara Rural Development Project in the Darfur region of the Sudan produced nearly three times as much grain as other villages.

But improved agricultural production is not enough, von Braun says, because many households have been displaced from their land and have lost "productive assets." Public works projects can pay impoverished workers in food or in money to buy it. Building

VICTIMS OF CRIME, 1973-1990 (Victimization Rate per 1,000 persons or households)

Sources: U.S. Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization in the United States: 1973-88 Trends* (July 1991); *Criminal Victimization 1990*, Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, Oct. 1991; *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1990* (1991).



Crime is claiming fewer victims, according to the Justice Department's National Crime Victimization Surveys. In 1981, 41.5 million persons or households were victimized; in 1990, "only" 34.4 million. Murders, not included in the surveys, also fell—from 10.2 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1980 to 8.7 nine years later.

roads and bridges also gives farmers access to larger markets, thus encouraging greater farm output and less dependence on single crops.

During the past decade, Ethiopia and Sudan have become "highly dependent" on outside aid. Ethiopia received more than one million tons of food

in 1988 and 1991. But because the affected populace in both countries had little say in governmental decisions, relief workers encountered many obstacles. "Clearly," von Braun says, "political reform and reform of economic policies would go a long way toward famine prevention."

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.

Recreating the Small Town

In the 1960s Jane Jacobs exploded the myths of modernist urban planning and taught us to look anew at the strengths of the traditional urban neighborhood. What Jacobs did for the cities, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk ["The Second Coming of the American Small Town," *WQ*, Winter '92] are now doing for the suburbs.

Like Jacobs, they can see more clearly than anyone else what is in front of all of our eyes. They translate the deep but inchoate discontent with suburban growth and the automobile into precise and original planning and architectural proposals. And also like Jacobs, they appreciate the enduring relevance of traditional forms and relate them to the larger goals of community building. From the humble alley to the pedestrian-scaled street to the town itself, they have created a vital new model for post-suburban development.

I hope their argument will have an impact similar to what Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* had in its time. But I should add that Duany and Plater-Zyberk have their limitations, which are similarly Jacobean. They have adopted Jacobs's blanket disdain for planners and planning, along with a corresponding faith in what private developers can accomplish—once they have been enlightened by Duany and Plater-Zyberk.

In the 1960s Lewis Mumford attacked Jacobs's proposals in an article called "Mother Jacobs' Home Remedies." (The piece later appeared in a 1986 collection of Mumford's writings under the gentler title "Home Remedies for Urban Cancer.") We have seen to our shame the justice of his critique: Many urban neighborhoods that should have survived and prospered by Jacobs's criteria have been overwhelmed by the larger urban crisis.

I am tempted to call Duany and Plater-Zyberk's proposals "Home Remedies for Regional Cancer." The return of the small town will be indefinitely postponed unless it becomes part of a larger regional policy that provides a context for its innovations. American small towns of the 19th century possessed the coherent form that Duany and Plater-Zyberk rightly admire because limitations in transportation not only required concentration around Main Street but also kept a natural greenbelt of farms at their periphery.

Today the nature of our automobile transportation system leads with far greater force toward deconcentration and sprawl. The only remedy is land-use policies that regulate development and operate at a regional scale, such as the proposed New Jersey Development and Re-development Plan.

Similarly, the new American small town will reach its full potential only in regions that have diverse, productive, great cities at their core. Now more than ever these cities require sustenance from the suburbs to perform their vital functions.

Duany and Plater-Zyberk have performed an invaluable service in their work. But the force and originality they show in their model for the new American small town must now be extended to chart the new American post-suburban region.

*Robert Fishman
Dept. of History
Rutgers Univ.*

Andres Duany has been so accomplished at gaining media attention over the years that he recently had to acknowledge that there were "all sorts of people going around saying that I'm an excellent snake-oil salesman." Lord knows, that assessment is accurate. But I for one genuinely hope that Mr. Duany is right in thinking that he and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk have all the answers to the problems of our built environment. I mean that. We've got a long way to go and a short time to get there. If they have the problem solved, I propose that we all reach deep into our pockets to finance a statue of them for the middle of every single village square they build. We will owe them no less.

Of course, there have been all sorts of "breakthrough" panacea announced over the years, all proposing to tell us how we should build our world with community, identity, civilization, and soul. The creators of the 1960s "new towns" such as Reston, Va., and Columbia, Md., come to mind. It is marvelous that the authors deride such places. They are not wrong to point out flaws. But I wonder whether we should not look to previous such "breakthroughs" to anticipate what someday will be viewed as Duany and Plater-Zyberk's legacy.

The landscape outside the old downtowns that we once thought of as "suburban" is rapidly urbanizing and has become the center of our world. It is

changing so fast that the First Law of its design is the Law of Unintended Consequences. That is: "No matter what you think you're doing, the final result will be something different."

It is instructive that the authors are running smack into this law in their neotraditional small-town project called Kentlands. As documented in the December 1991 issue of *Architecture* devoted to "Edge Cities," the practical result in Kentlands is not matching the plan. The reasons are predictable and, for that reason, important. The neotraditional small town is being knocked around by the market; it is being altered by human beings who insist on acting in ways contrary to those planned for them by the "experts"; and, most deliciously, it is running headlong into the imperious forces of other planners—particularly the legendarily high-handed ones on the lavish payroll of the government of Montgomery County, Maryland, where Kentlands is located. In short, like every town and city ever built, it is evolving in ways that have far more to do with the market and people's expectations than with the drawings of designers. The final result may or may not resemble anything close to the original plan.

This is not to suggest that what Duany and Plater-Zyberk are doing is unimportant. It may be simply that the importance of their work will be other than what they now think.

Again, think about the Unintended Consequences of "utopias" like Reston and Columbia. Their lasting legacy is: (1) No one will ever build "new towns" like those again. Nobody has deep enough pockets to wait 20 years for a return on investment—not even an oil company. (2) "Mixed use"—mingling homes and work places and shopping districts—is not some pipe dream. Done right, it is so profitable as now to be conventional wisdom among developers.

Similarly, the authors' legacy may not be what they wish—a return to the neotraditional small town. For one thing, they undermine their argument simply by being sarcastic about cars.

What is truly revolutionary and correct about the authors' argument is the importance they put on changing all of America's design codes.

Twenty years from now, we'll probably look back with incredulity on just about every number now in the zoning code books. We will find it hard to believe that we once legally insisted on cul-de-sacs so impossibly large and feeder streets so wastefully wide.

This will be comparable to the way we now find it almost impossible to understand why anybody ever thought it was a good idea to try to zone our lives into widely separated distinctions among places to shop, work, and live.

And the shift will come for the same reason. The people who produced these mechanistic codes were largely thinking about such factors as whether a semi-tractor-trailer could easily negotiate even the smallest residential streets. It never entered their minds to consider whether the result would be a place that actually felt warm and inviting and good for humans to live.

And when this shift comes, Duany and Plater-Zyberk will deserve their due, for they are absolutely right in drawing attention to our past follies. There is no inherent reason that the works of man have to be viewed as a scourge upon the land, the way frequently they are now. It was not this way in the past. It may well be possible in the future to build new developments, in harmony with the land, in a way that serves to reconcile our culture's divided sense of what the word "progress" means.

One good start is to allow the authors to convince us that—to the extent that they do not contribute to making our world feel inviting and human—every single architectural, traffic engineering, and urban planning design promulgated for the past half-century is now suspect.

Joel Garreau

*Author, Edge City:
Life on the New Frontier
Broad Run, Va.*

Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk remind us that the deplorable state of the contemporary urban environment is the result neither of neglect (as liberals would have it), nor of the free expression of market forces (as conservatives might argue). We do not have the cities we deserve, only the cities we have built for ourselves.

I wish that I could be as sanguine as they are about the possibility of significant change. Not because the rules and regulations cannot be changed—their own not inconsiderable achievements have already shown that they can be—but because, as they point out, a generation of Americans has come of age that knows nothing except an automobile-oriented way of life in heterogeneous, separated suburban neighborhoods. I would agree that many of these people react positively to old Sonoma and to Georgetown, but do they really see these as viable urban environments, or rather as anomalous distractions, enjoyable, to be sure, but—like Disney World—not quite real? The tragedy of the urban mistakes of the past is that towns, like buildings, are human artifacts that, in turn, affect their makers.

*Witold Rybczynski
Dept. of Architecture
McGill Univ.*



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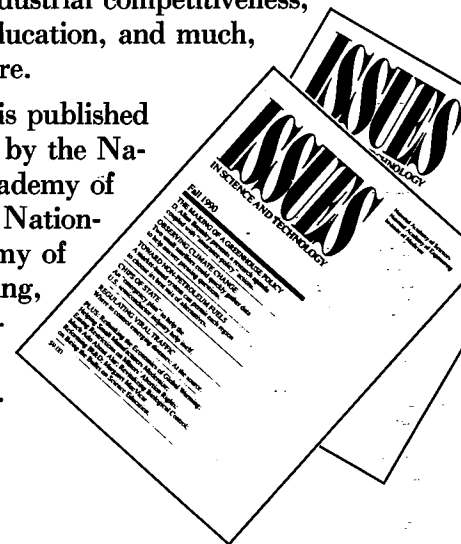
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The authors have taken the heretical step of admitting that the "Old Timers" designed towns better than (most of) today's experts. They are to be applauded for their modesty. All too often, self-proclaimed experts are unwilling to concede any degree of competence to previous generations.

However, there is an insidious force that is overwhelming the return to the small-town concept that the authors espouse. The Philadelphia suburban communities in which I was raised and lived for many years are now a part of the "Boston-Washington, D.C." megalopolis. Originally, these suburban areas resembled small towns and, indeed, offered the same quality of life. Overpopulation has destroyed the small town aspect of these communities. The numerous vacant lots where kids played ball are now occupied by homes. Many of the borough lakes where children skated or fished have been drained to avoid potential law suits. Public swimming pools have been converted to private swim clubs or have been bought by developers for more profitable use. School mergers have erased the pride of individual communities. All of these "advances" are a demonstrable result of overpopulation. No matter where the authors plan their small town communities, rampant population growth will eventually defeat their purpose.

*William C. Merz
Meshoppen, Pa.*

The authors treat cars as if they were monster with wills of their own, and think that only people are pedestrians. Cars are used by people, most of whom would rather drive than walk, even to places within easy walking distance.

I live near a small town with many of the features that the authors recommend. The buildings along the traditional Main Street are architecturally varied yet compatible in style and scale. Many of the proprietors of small shops live upstairs. The sidewalks are safe and inviting. Still, there aren't many pedestrians on Main Street. Most shopkeepers do little business, and their businesses don't last long. People would rather drive to shopping centers, some as far away as Paramus, New Jersey, for lower prices and a wider choice of goods. Town planners and zoning boards aren't to blame for this state of affairs. Back to the drawing board.

*James D. Hoover
Cornwall, N.Y.*

While the criticisms of city planning reflect views that are popular in some circles, they show little relationship to the lives that people actually live. The authors attribute too much to visual aesthetics

and far too little to the utilitarian values by which most people conduct their lives. While complaining that people won't walk on sidewalks that are close to moving traffic, they ignore the fact that most urban travel is purposeful, not recreational. People don't use many sidewalks because they aren't a convenient route to their destination.

The authors argue that traffic should be diverted from collector streets to residential streets, which is precisely what the residents vigorously oppose. The authors deride our emphasis on accommodating motor vehicles. The argument is absurd: We

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design cities to accommodate motor traffic only because people use cars. The object is not to protect the cars, but to provide the ability to move about while protecting both drivers and pedestrians from the pain and cost of accidents.

People who dislike auto-based suburbanization argue that it was caused by bad government policies. Similarly, they argue that different policies are necessary to correct the problem. I think that they entirely overstate the power of government in these areas. In my own field, the bike paths that many planners advise are the most dangerous facilities that we know. Government, even with the power inherent in building new highways, can make only detail adjustments to the process of urban and technological change. True, many of those adjustments should have been different, but we all make mistakes. What we need is a thoughtful analysis of how best to adapt urban areas to the technological change that has occurred, and I see little of that approach in the article.

*John Forester
Cycling Transportation Engineer
Sunnyvale, Calif.*

What seems missing in Duany and Plater-Zyberk's article are solutions. They propose creating neotraditional communities similar to the 1920s-'30s street car suburbs to produce better communities. Such communities *are* physically interesting places. They are attractive to walk and live in, but I wonder if a number of new designs, located here and there in the suburbs, would truly solve the problems that suburban America faces.

First, I believe that it is important to correct the problems in our existing suburbs before building new ones. Duany and Plater-Zyberk's solution involves building "better" new developments, rather than correcting the suburbs we already have. It's an extension of America's classic throwaway mentality—build new rather than repairing the old. What I see happening is the development of enclaves, like the gated golf-course developments of the 1970s and '80s, surrounded by inefficient suburbs. Granted, the enclaves may be better, but won't correct the basic structural problems that our suburbs face.

Second, solutions should address the realities of current American lifestyles. The authors paid little attention to the changes that have occurred since America's small towns and streetcar communities were built. These towns and neighborhoods developed when families had one worker, one car (maybe none), and everyone worked "downtown." Entire cities were developed exactly alike—just as Duany and Plater-Zyberk describe them. Every resi-

dent could reach everyone else on foot or on a streetcar. Streetcars brought commuters to downtown, shoppers to stores, and families to play. When cars were used, they were for short trips. There were no freeways leading to shopping malls, or jobs in outer suburbs. People lived, worked, shopped, and played in their immediate communities. Life was simple, as were the communities.

Life is far more complex these days. Two-worker families are common. Commuters often travel long distances, perhaps in the opposite direction of their spouses. Single-parent families are common. Families have two or more cars, and shop at the mall or the warehouse. Kids are driven everywhere, and frequently! Transit or para-transit travel is inefficient given our low densities and the scattering of jobs throughout the region—caused mostly by automobiles.

I am not suggesting that we are trapped or that these problems are going to be with us forever. However, these new patterns need to be part of our community building process. We need to integrate our complex lifestyles, family forms, child-rearing patterns, communication options, etc. with the designs (or redesigns) of our communities. I am not sure that "better and simpler code" can produce a community that is truly appropriate for today's lifestyles—if it doesn't correct the basic transportation and "community" problems that our suburbs face.

My comments are not meant to deride the authors' idea—I live in a traditional neighborhood and love it. We walk to shopping, restaurants, parks, and community activities. Electric buses take us to everything we need. But it works because the "small town" grid pattern covers roughly 50 square miles, and because most jobs are nearby.

*Richard Untermyer
College of Architecture and Urban Planning
Univ. of Wash.
Seattle, Wash.*

Following World War II, Americans embarked on a puzzling crusade to remake society in a new image shaped by the mobility of the automobile. They passionately embraced the new, vernacular suburban culture which now dominates the landscape. Society blithely threw away the lessons of 5,000 years of urban community life and forged on toward an unknown, but beckoning, future.

The future has arrived. We ignored history, and now we reap the harvest: social dysfunction caused by car-oriented land uses. I'll name just a few negative social consequences of suburbanization. Drunk drivers kill people in record numbers because drinkers cannot walk to and from bars and taverns. Many young people become bored juve-

nile delinquents since they have no places to casually meet their peers, let alone interact with other segments of society. Senior citizens unable to drive are isolated in their homes or are forced to live in nursing homes. Wage earners spend hours commuting that should be spent with their families. These problems directly result from the way automobile-addicted Americans order the landscape.

Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk offer an achievable alternative to this dysfunctional society. Their model is the traditional town, for a simple reason: Small towns grew up organically. Traditional small towns evolved from thousands of years of responding to residents' social needs. Small towns form containers for that increasingly elusive concept: "community."

Prior to 1945, most Americans, other than utopian visionaries, seldom thought about community. It just existed and people believed it would always exist. So, it was easy to unwittingly throw the concept away. Now we must reestablish that fundamental building block of society. Duany and Plater-Zyberk are in the vanguard of the movement to achieve a humane future.

*Ken Munsell
Dir., The Small Towns Institute
Central Wash. Univ.
Ellensburg, Wash.*

Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk's article is extremely important. Terrestrial and aquatic scientists who are studying the effects of man's activities on living resources now recognize that the way we have developed our cities, suburbs, industrial sites, and agrarian endeavors accounts for much of the damage to wildlife and fisheries, and, in many ways, begins to compromise human well-being.

A return to small-town conditions, with mercantile endeavors conducted at the center of each town and village, and with mass transit connecting the various communities, is possible. Such a change will have the effect of reducing pollution resulting from the use of individual automobiles and will result in far better habitats for man and his wildlife companions on Earth. The blueprints are in place in the form of earlier writings of Mumford, Le Corbusier, McHarg, and Gottmann; it remains to be seen if our society has the inclination, courage, and will to follow them.

*Dr. John. B. Pearce
Falmouth, Mass.*

Lacking Confidence and Cooperation

Frank Gibney and James Clad [in "The Promise of the Pacific" and "The Half-Empty Basin," *WQ*,

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Winter '92] have written articulate, complementary essays on the "prospects" for the Pacific Basin as a region, one optimistic, the other skeptical. Yet the issue of how optimistic to be about so diverse a region tends to obscure the complex phenomenon of regionalism itself. Those for whom an Asia-Pacific "region" is a present reality—military planners, diplomats, intelligence analysts, and, above all, business executives—worry less about the "prospects" for regionalism than about its current dynamics.

James Clad is correct in observing that there are pervasive tensions in many parts of Asia that could lead to instability, and some aspects of economic growth are not what they appear (although citing corruption in Southeast Asia is itself a red herring since it no more undermines regional dynamics than does corruption on Wall Street). The underlying phenomenon is simply this: Throughout the region, "domestic" events in one country are much more often interpreted in other nations in terms of their regional implications. In this sense, Pacific regionalism does not have to be "organized" to be real as long as the system remains stable and maintains its current levels of economic interdependence. Initiatives such as APEC and PECC respond to this reality and seek to preserve and enhance it—not create it.

I agree entirely with Clad that America should not "tilt" toward the Pacific at the expense of its ties with Europe, but his is hardly a dissident voice these days in terms of mainstream American views about our "Pacific prospects." Optimism no longer describes the national outlook on Asia, a fact now reflected in protectionist presidential campaign rhetoric as well as sensationalist book titles such as "The Coming War with Japan."

Rather, optimism is in short supply if measured against the past "Pacific" century in which American leadership emerged. American optimism and idealism, beginning most importantly with the vision of Woodrow Wilson, helped transform Asia, even if at times the United States was tragically misinformed and misguided in its actions, and a recovery of American optimism toward Asia remains the real hope for a stable, cooperative Pacific Basin.

Paradoxically, this will require not only the usual forms of international cooperation but a willingness to assert in a non-confrontational manner our differences with Asians when they arise on such matters as human rights and to accept the realities of a separate East Asian regionalism such as that promoted by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir. His proposed "East Asia Economic Caucus" stands more as an expression of centuries-old interactions and interdependencies than a harbinger of a new Pan Asianism. The administration's current vocifer-

ous opposition to his initiative bespeaks, even more than a lack of cultural sophistication, a lack of confidence in ourselves.

Mark Borthwick
Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference
Washington, D.C.

Ideological Inspiration

This sonnet was inspired by George Watson's "The Fuss About Ideology" [WQ, Winter '92]:

Current Testament

Electric charges pierced the cloudy air
Uncertainty possessed me—He—came—down
Seems sympathetic—sad—and wears a frown
As wires whisper and the winds declare

With subtle sounds implying his despair
That murmur softly—spreading through the town
Oblivious of skin—white—black—brown
Or social status—whether clothed or bare

"Your ideologies cause interference
Confusing 'sin' and 'judgments'—
right and wrong—
Assumptions—doubts increase in
marked degree—
Experience and logic lend coherence
Restore morality—where you belong—
For certainty—remember—start with 'Me.'"

Alfred W. Israelstam
Highland Park, Ill.

George Watson, the author of "The Fuss About Ideology" [WQ, Winter '92], claims that ideologies may be as true as positive theories and are justified by the doctrine of coherence. In order to make an assertion of the truth value of any positive statement, one must first identify the phenomenology to which the proposition applies and also, by implication, claim some particular standards of proof used in that particular area. The claim that any ideology may be true because it meets a test of common sense or common experience must be rejected; if that were the case, anyone could claim his ideological views on physics—although he holds no credentials in physics—were as valid as the views of a Nobel Laureate in physics.

Watson also disregards the divide between the positive and the normative. The standards of proof used in the positive disciplines differ from those used in philosophy and ethics, which rely on "justification"—a method of reasoning which includes

coherence. Justification of a philosophic proposition essentially means rational argumentation among peers.

When discussing ideology, it is easy to confuse the positive with the normative. Thus, a person who holds to the ideology that the Japanese are a superior race may be asserting that there is such a thing as a race genotype which produces a superior (in some specific way) phenotype. Or he may intend to assert that the Japanese have a special obligation to be a superior race and ought therefore to behave in a particular (superior) manner.

Monroe Burk
Columbia, Md.

Another Satisfied Customer

What evil spirit made you print such nonsense as Anthony Burgess's "Mozart and the Wolf Gang" (bad pun) and George Watson's "The Fuss About Ideology"? Those two egocentric fantasies rank just below the average "poetry" published in the *New Yorker*. And that's full condemnation! *Quo Vadis, WQ?*

Herbert P. Von der Porten
Santa Rosa, Calif.

India Revisited

A friend from America met me last week and gave me a copy of the Summer 1991 issue of the *Wilson Quarterly*. I have gone through the three articles on Hinduism and must express a sense of distress, even resentment, at the way in which this great religion has been projected in these articles. The very first sentence of John Stratton Hawley's article ["Naming Hinduism"] is obnoxious and unacceptable, and the whole article seems to be directed toward trying to denigrate Hinduism. To suggest that a religion based upon the Vedas, which date to at least three thousand years before Christ, needed modern Western scholars to give it a name and definition is quite absurd. The other two articles also are generally in the same vein.

It is a matter for deep regret that a prestigious journal such as the *WQ* should have thought fit to commission and publish such negative articles. This is certainly no way to bring about a better understanding of this great and complex religion, probably the oldest continuing religious tradition in the world.

Dr. Karan Singh
Chairman, *The Temple of Understanding*
Former Indian Ambassador to the U.S.

John Stratton Hawley replies:

No one doubts the antiquity or greatness of the complex religious tradition that increasingly goes by the name "Hinduism"—certainly not I. The issue is when and how it came to be so named. My main purpose was to describe Europeans' struggle with issues of definition that simply were not issues, it seems, until they came along. If in doing so I have fallen into the trap of seeming to repeat, in a new form, Sir John Strachey's odious dictum that India did not exist before the British made it so, I am truly regretful.

A great part of my own fascination with Hindu religion has to do with its diversity, age, and history of creative adaptation. I also believe, as does Dr. Karan Singh, that its protean perspective makes it an unusually helpful partner in the dialogue of world religions. What I do not believe is that it has possessed a single, well-defined core of either doctrine or practice for millennia. I cannot see how it is "the oldest continuous religious tradition in the world" in that sense. And if one retreats from that claim and focuses on the element of continuity alone, then the Hindu tradition surely has rivals from farther east and west as the seniormost member in the family of living faiths.

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Located on the Mall in Washington, D.C., the Center awards approximately 35 residential fellowships each year for advanced research in the humanities and social sciences. Men and women from any country and from a wide variety of backgrounds (including government, the corporate world, and the professions, as well as academe) may apply. Applicants must hold a doctorate or have equivalent professional accomplishments. Fellows are provided offices, access to the Library of Congress, computers or manuscript typing services, and research assistants. The Center publishes selected works through the Woodrow Wilson Center Press. The Center also helps Fellows locate appropriate housing. Fellowships are normally for an academic year, although a few fellowships are available for shorter periods, with a minimum of four months. In determining stipends, the Center seeks to follow the principle of no gain/no loss in terms of a Fellow's previous year's salary. However, limited funds make it desirable for most applicants to seek supplementary sources of funding such as sabbatical support or grants from other sources: in no case can the Center's stipend exceed \$52,000; the average yearly stipend is approximately \$38,000. Travel expenses for Fellows, spouses, and dependent children are provided.

The application deadline is October 1, 1992. For application materials write to: Fellowships Office, Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC 20560.

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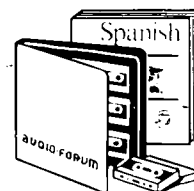
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Chest pains that don't rest... even when you do.

Picture the following situations:

You are sitting at home, relaxed, when suddenly there's a painful tightness in your chest. Minutes later the pain is gone. You find that the same pain comes and goes from day to day. Sometimes the pain occurs under the same circumstances, sometimes not. Like on your walk to work in the morning, but not when you walk home in the evening. Some days you feel the pain, other days you don't. It's a worrying, cramp-like discomfort in the chest.

The pain just described could be mixed angina. It's characterized most commonly by the unpredictable nature of the occurrence of pain. Medical researchers have developed a checklist of clinical clues to help diagnose mixed angina.

For instance, if you experienced chest pains:

- at rest, or even during sleep...
- at varying levels of exertion (your ability to perform the same physical tasks changes from day to day)...
- at specific times each day, usually in the morning...
- upon exposure to cold...
- under emotional stress...

all your symptoms point to mixed angina. A checklist of clues like this could be the most important element in making the diagnosis. Because with mixed angina, it is *when* you feel the pain that is most important. And even if you have already been diagnosed as having angina, you should report any of the above clues to your doctor because treatment can be very different.

What causes the pain of angina?

The pain occurs when the heart muscle does not get enough oxygen-rich blood. In some forms of angina this happens when the heart muscle cannot get all the oxygen it demands because of fatty obstructions that have formed in the coronary arteries, blocking the flow of blood. But mixed angina is different. Because along with fatty obstructions, in a person with mixed angina a temporary squeezing or narrowing of the coronary artery will occur. This narrowing of the vessel wall decreases the flow of blood to the heart muscle causing pain. The medical term for it is *vasoconstriction*. Vasoconstriction blocks the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle. The presence of vasoconstriction explains why mixed angina can occur for no apparent reason—at rest, or even during sleep.

What kind of pain is it exactly?

Most people experience anginal pain as a heaviness, pressure, or fullness in the chest, sometimes extending into the left shoulder and arm, even the jaw. Sometimes it's just a feeling of "indigestion," discomfort, or shortness of breath and/or fatigue.

Can mixed angina be treated?

Yes. There are specific types of treatment for this kind of angina. If you were diagnosed as having mixed angina, your physician may suggest that you lose weight, avoid stressful situations and stop smoking. A program of rest and relaxation, together with correct diet and exercise may be helpful. And there are medicines that both effectively improve the blood supply to the heart muscle and reduce the heart's demand for oxygen. But before your doctor can correctly diagnose mixed angina and begin treatment, he or she needs important information from you.

You'd need to carefully describe precisely when, where and how you felt the pain, and what you were doing when it occurred. Details that may seem unimportant to you could be very important to your doctor. Keep a complete list of the occurrences of pain, because it will help you answer questions when you visit your doctor's office. Remember—the variability of time and circumstances of occurrence of your pain provides the key.

Don't forget, only you can provide your doctor with the necessary information. But you also have an important support system to help you manage mixed angina. We call it...

Partners in Healthcare.

You are the most important partner.

Only you can spot the symptoms and report them to your physician. And it's you who must decide to accept the guidance and counseling of your physician, pharmacist and other healthcare professionals. When medicines are prescribed, only you can take them as directed.

Your doctor interprets the symptoms, orders your tests, and makes the diagnosis.

Your physician also prescribes the best program of therapy for you, including the most effective medication—considering each drug's characteristics—and monitors your progress.

All those who discover, develop and distribute medicines complete the partnership.

Pfizer's ongoing research brings you essential medicines for a wide range of diseases. Through development of these and many other medications, along with providing important healthcare information, we are fulfilling our responsibility as one of your partners in healthcare.

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