

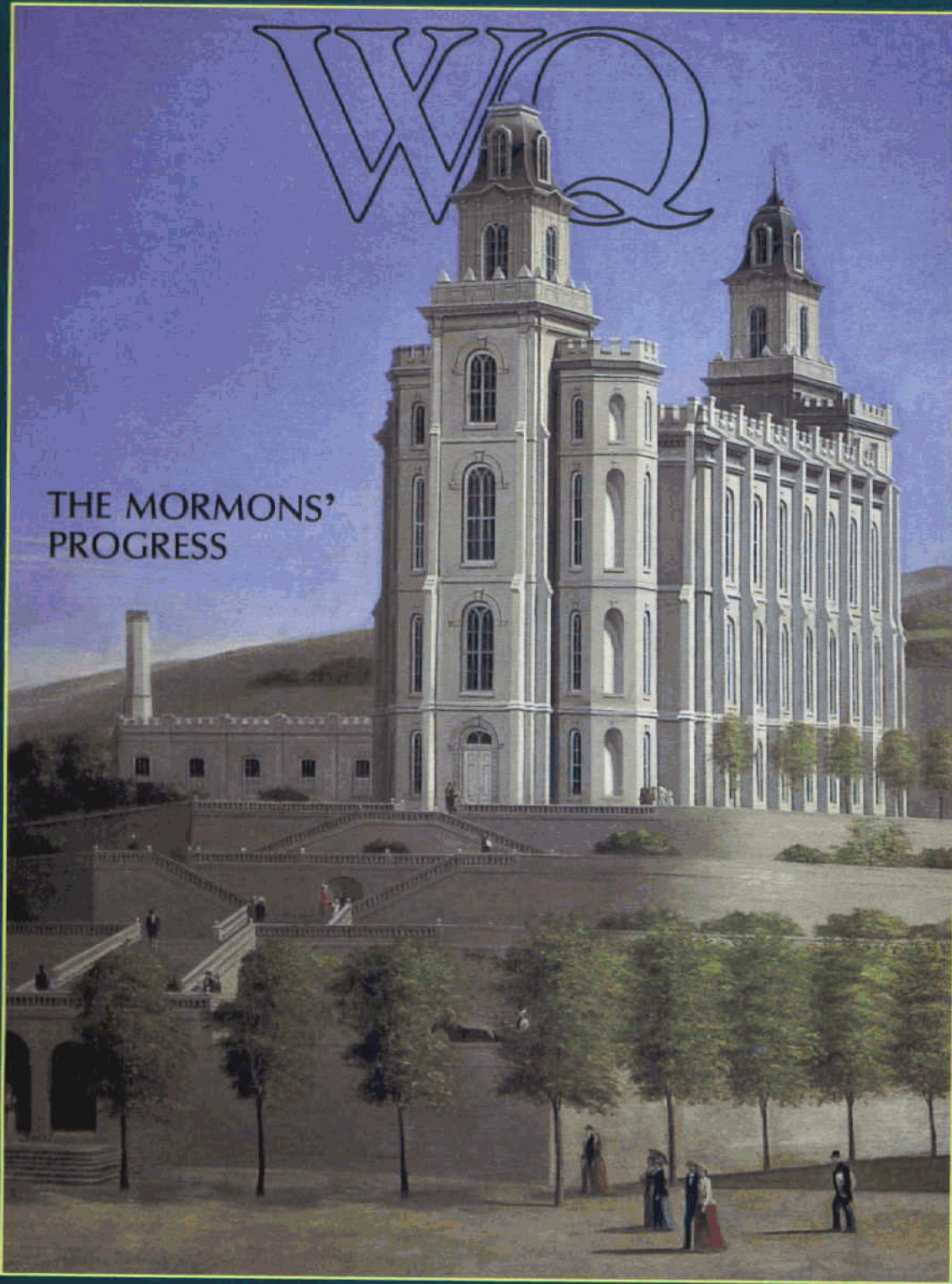
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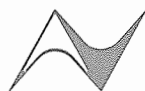
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Cover: *The Manti Temple* (1889), an oil painting by Mormon artist C. C. A. Christensen (1831–1912). The temple is located in Manti, Utah, about 120 miles south of Salt Lake City. Lent by the Church Office of History and Art, Salt Lake City.

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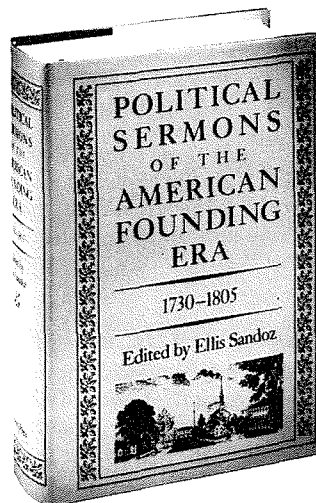
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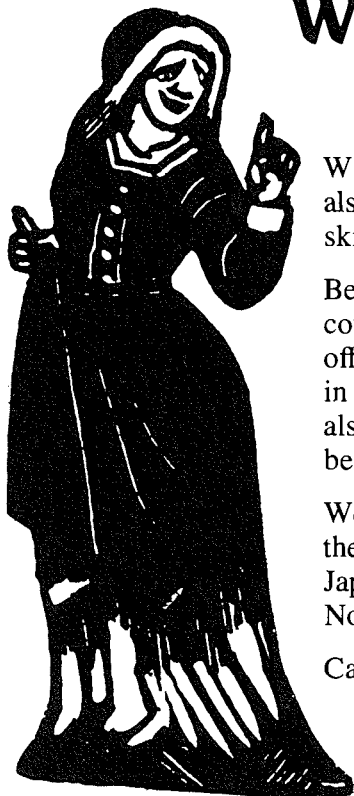
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From the Center

Every now and then a single sentence compresses so many facts, and evokes reflection upon such a wide circle of related topics, that it deserves more than fleeting attention. Such a sentence appeared in a recent *New York Times* editorial:

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, British imperial strategists uprooted the Hashemite dynasty from its native Arabian soil and transplanted it to Jordan, an entity carved out of Britain's original Palestine Mandate.

This sentence tells us most of what we need to know to understand the high-wire act that Jordan's King Hussein has been performing for nearly 40 years. The descendant of an alien dynasty, ruling over a country invented by a European power and inhabited by a population (now predominantly Palestinian) that owes him none of the traditional allegiance monarchies are built upon, the king has somehow managed to survive in perhaps the most dangerous region on Earth. One cannot understand his precarious situation—and his choice to side with Iraq in the Gulf War—without first understanding the historical circumstances that created it.

Jordan's dilemma, significant though it may be for the Middle East, is only one of the products of a vastly broader phenomenon: the arbitrary creation of states in areas ruled by defeated or depleted empires in the aftermath of decisive wars.

Only the Western Hemisphere seems to have been spared this phenomenon in recent decades, which may help explain our lack of adequate attention to it. Almost everywhere else one looks, "successor states," as they are called, abound. And they share with Jordan and all of its neighbors save Egypt several salient characteristics: geographical arbitrariness, economic incoherence, and, most menacing of all, explosive mixtures of religions, traditional beliefs, and ethnic groups.

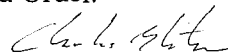
Perhaps least noticed but most dramatic is the checkerboard of states in sub-Saharan Africa created by departing colonial powers, by their conquerors, or by

generally opportunistic indigenous peoples, in defiance of tribal, economic, linguistic, geographical, or any other rational criteria. More ironic, given the victors' Wilsonian dedication to national self-determination when they were created at the conclusion of World War I, are the cases of the multinational states of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. The former now seems more than likely to fragment into its ethnic and linguistic parts, and the latter is by no means secure.

Nor did all such cases follow on the heels of World War I. An exhausted Britain withdrew in 1947 from both the Indian subcontinent and its Palestine Mandate. In Asia, two new states, India and Pakistan, were created, joined by a third in 1971 when East Pakistan won its independence as Bangladesh. In the Middle East, Israel was established—by the British, by the United Nations, and finally, following rejection by its Arab neighbors, by the force of its own arms. In both regions, the results were the same: the creation of essentially artificial states containing significant hostile (or potentially hostile) ethnic and religious minorities.

To some extent the tensions and bloodshed that might have been expected in these areas were tempered during the Cold War by client relationships with the superpowers. As we have learned in the Persian Gulf, will soon learn in Central Europe, and may possibly even learn on the subcontinent, those days are over. Indeed, it even seems reasonable to wager that fragmentation is the fate that awaits one of the superpowers, as many if not all of the Soviet Union's national minorities go their own way.

We are now witnessing what might be called the "return of the suppressed"—the complex amalgam of nationalism, tribalism, language, and self-identification that we think of as ethnicity. It is a phenomenon that we must learn to understand if we are to cope with a new world—to say nothing of a New World Order.



—Charles Blitzer
Director

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Securing Europe

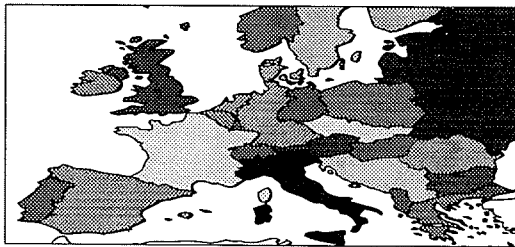
Richard H. Ullman

What should be the security arrangements for the new Europe of the 1990s now that the world is no longer afraid a significant "hot war" might begin there? Who needs to be secure against what kinds of threats? What roles will be played by the United States and the Soviet Union? What place will nuclear weapons occupy—not only the weapons of the superpowers but those of the two European nuclear "middle powers," the United Kingdom and France? And how will the task of making Europe secure be affected by the processes of economic integration?

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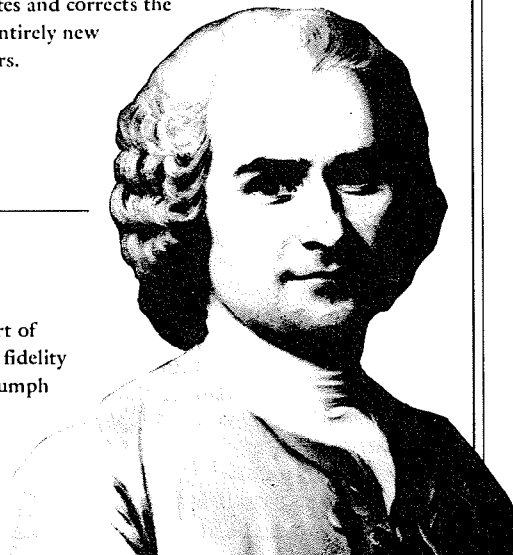
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POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Presidential Greatness

“‘Greatness’ Revisited: Evaluating The Performance of Early American Presidents in Terms of Cultural Dilemmas” by Richard Ellis and Aaron Wildavsky, in *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Winter 1991), Center for the Study of the Presidency, 208 E. 75th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Historians have been playing the game of grading the presidents ever since 1948, when Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., asked a panel of colleagues to award them all A's (great), B's (near-great), and so on, down to the ignominious E's (failure). No standards of evaluation were specified, however, and the criteria of later surveys often favored activist presidents. But now Berkeley political scientists Ellis and Wildavsky think they've come up with an improved game board and set of rules.

All presidents, they argue, face various dilemmas arising from the fact that America has what in reality are three competing political cultures, each with a different outlook toward leadership. The relatively strong *individualist* culture wants leaders only when they are really needed. The *egalitarian* culture, whose strength in America waxes and wanes, does not want leaders at all, since leadership implies inequality. And the relatively weak *hierarchical* culture expects leaders to lead, and shores up authority at every opportunity.

How well presidents do in resolving the cultural dilemmas society presents them, Ellis and Wildavsky say, provides a standard for judging their performance. Thus, presidents in the “hierarchical” mold such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln—who both still get A's, under the new rules—had to reconcile their own preferences with the dominant anti-hierar-

chical ethos. Operating in a society in which individualism predominated, Washington faced “severe limits on the substance of power,” and so had to make do with the appearance of power. To enhance the government's image, he used a military force far larger than necessary to put down the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion, a force which, behind the impressive façade, was just “a disorganized conglomeration of state militias.”

Washington was so successful at this sort of deception that his successor, John Adams, was left with the false impression that he was in a hierarchical political system. He consulted no one before announcing his decision early in 1799 to reopen negotiations with France in the hope of avoiding war, and so threw his party into an uproar. Adams has often been rated “near-great” in past surveys, but he fares less well in the new game. Ellis and Wildavsky say that like his son, John Quincy Adams, and, indeed, like President Jimmy Carter, Adams was a “hierarchically disposed [leader] unable or unwilling to make allowances for the anti-leadership nature of the American political system.” All three served but a single term.

In contrast with the hierarchs' sort of conflict is the type faced by presidents such as Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson (who both also still get A's). These presidents, harboring individualist and

egalitarian propensities, have had "to square their own and their followers' anti-authority principles with the exercise of executive authority." Jefferson used the "hidden-hand" style of leadership later employed by Dwight Eisenhower. Jackson solved the dilemma by justifying presidential activism "in the name of limiting the activities of hierarchical institutions," such as the "monster" National Bank of the United States.

Although Ellis and Wildavsky give the modern presidents no formal grades, they do note that the performances by chief executives in recent decades have provided grounds for praise as well as criticism. "Reports of failed presidencies have risen along with egalitarian movements (civil rights, feminism, environmentalism, children's rights, and the like) because dedication to reducing differences among people leads to rejection of leadership."

Limitation's Limits

"The Uncharted Realm of Term Limitation" by Jeffrey L. Katz, in *Governing* (Jan. 1991), Congressional Quarterly, 1414 22nd St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

Launched last year, the movement to limit the number of terms congressmen and state legislators can serve has already scored successes in citizen initiatives in three states: California, Colorado, and Oklahoma. But the reality of term limitation in the states may not turn out to be all that its proponents hope, warns Katz, a *Governing* staff writer.

Reformers such as Lloyd Noble II, a Tulsa oilman who led the fight for Oklahoma's new law, contend that term limitation is needed because incumbents' fundraising ability and other advantages make them almost invulnerable at the polls, with the result being row upon row of lifetime legislators badly out of touch with the public. With term limitation, reformers promise, fresh citizen-legislators will sweep into

state capitals and legislatures will at last behave rationally. Legislative leaders will be chosen on the basis of ability, not seniority, and the lawmakers will keep lobbyists and bureaucrats where they should be kept—at arm's length.

Not everyone finds this idealistic vision plausible. "This notion that you're going to get citizen-legislators is silly," Gary C. Jacobson, a University of California political scientist, told Katz. "You're going to get those people who can afford to interrupt their careers for a few years, and that precludes people who have a normal job or family life."

It's also possible, Katz points out, that instead of *more* turnover in the term-limited legislatures, there will be *less*. Over the 12-year period from 1977 to 1989, according to a study by the National Conference of State Legislatures, the lower houses of California, Colorado, and Oklahoma all experienced membership turnover of 89 percent or more. With term limitation, however, much of the competition for legislative seats within the prescribed period of terms could dry up, as potential challengers simply wait for the seat to open up automatically.

Nor will selection of legislative leaders necessarily be as "rational" as reformers imagine, with more competition and people chosen for their abilities and stands on issues. With nobody having much seniority, Katz says, it might become *more* precious. "Awarding key positions on an auto-



In the 1990 election, 97 percent of incumbent U.S. senators seeking new terms and 96 percent of incumbent congressmen were reelected.

The Culture War

Why did Ronald Reagan so dismay liberals? It was not so much what he did, writes Midge Decter in *Commentary* (Mar. 1991), as what he symbolized.

People spoke of the "Reagan Revolution," but no revolution ever came to pass . . . Still, in Ronald Reagan's case, for good and ill, it was the intention that counted. The mere articulation of each of [the] uncompleted missions of the Reagan agenda—that peculiar amalgam of old conservatism and new anti-liberalism—had set off a response in the liberal community ranging from deep confusion to panic. The reason was that the two decisive Reagan elections bore testimony not so much to a wish for radical new policies as to an open declaration of war over the culture. And a culture war, as the liberals understood far better than did their conservative opponents, is a war to the death. For a culture war is not a battle over policy, [but] rather a battle about matters of the spirit . . . The underlying and all-enveloping and finally non-negotiable issue is this: are the citizens of the United

States entitled, constitutionally, morally, or socially, to rights without limit, or must the rights of truly free and equal people be realized, enriched, and safeguarded by their assumption, individual as well as collective, of the very heavy responsibilities pertaining thereto? In short, are all Americans to be paid the minimal respect owing to a free people of being appropriately rewarded or penalized for their actual conduct? This is the real question at the center of the controversy between so-called conservatives and so-called liberals. It touches everything, from crime to poverty, from the schools and universities to religion and the arts; and it even affects our relations with other nations. Whether held consciously or unconsciously, the proposition at the heart of the late-20th-century American liberalism is that when it comes to rights, some individuals and groups are more "equal" than others . . . [Given] how far our society has strayed from a properly grounded, life-enhancing definition of the word freedom, the culture war is apt to be a long and bloody one.

matic basis to the least inexperienced people might be hard to avoid."

Moreover, with so many unseasoned members, legislatures may well find themselves *more* dependent on lobbyists for information and *less* able to deal with state bureaucrats, not to mention governors.

In the end, reformers may be pursuing the wrong remedy. "It isn't just a swarm of special interests that block[s] the enactment of sound public policy," Katz writes. "[It is] also the absence of any public consensus on major issues. Term limitations wouldn't change that."

Isn't That Special?

"The Rise and Fall of Special Interest Politics" by Paul E. Peterson, in *Political Science Quarterly* (Winter 1990-91), Academy of Political Science, 475 Riverside Dr., Ste. 1274, New York, N.Y. 10115-0012.

The Tax Reform Act of 1986, which eliminated a host of valuable tax loopholes, represented a defeat of the special interests that many analysts thought would never happen. Can it be that special interests have lost much of their renowned influence in Washington? Exactly, argues Peterson, a Harvard political scientist. "Special interests may have been steadily gaining in influence throughout the 1960s and 1970s," he writes, "but both during the Reagan years and during the initial

years of the Bush administration, these groups lost much of [their] clout."

Peterson has his own rather special definition of a special interest: It "consists of or is represented by a fairly small number of intense supporters who cannot expect that their cause will receive strong support . . . except under unusual circumstances." Peterson names no names, but examples might be the Consumer Bankers Association or the National Tire Dealers and Retreaders Association. Excluded

from Peterson's definition are those powerful groups—no matter how self-serving or undeserving they may be—"that can command the attention of major political figures and help shape the main political strategies of the two political parties." By this standard, for example, retirees are not a special interest.

To estimate the influence of special interests, Peterson measures the percentage of the gross national product (GNP) spent by the federal government on activities "not of paramount interest" to the two major political parties. That means all federal outlays *not* spent on the public debt, defense, benefits for the elderly, "safety net" programs for the poor, and agricultural subsidies important to the farm states (and so to the political parties battling for control of the U.S. Senate).

By this carefully defined measure, Peterson finds that the power of special interests grew substantially between 1962 and 1980, as they increased their slice of GNP from 3.6 to 5.6 percent. That increase represented three-fourths of the growth in the

whole budget. "It was a great time to be a special interest," Peterson says. During those decades, inflation kept bumping taxpayers into higher income brackets; there was a "peace dividend" after the Vietnam war ended, and Congress became "more decentralized, fragmented, policy-minded, and sensitive to constituent concerns."

But then President Ronald Reagan in his first year in office so altered "the terms of the debate that the power of special interests was transformed overnight." In 1980, special interest spending peaked at 5.6 percent of GNP; by 1989, it had fallen to 3.7 percent, about what it had been in 1962. (Total federal spending in 1989 claimed 23 percent of GNP.) The chief factors in the decline were: a major tax cut, made permanent by indexation of tax rates; the defense build-up and the increasing centralization of power over the budget, both within the executive branch and on Capitol Hill. When political debate revolves around retrenchment rather than expansion, Peterson says, "the special interests do not stand much of a chance."

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Chairman in Chief

"All Rise for Chairman Powell" by Kurt M. Campbell, in *The National Interest* (Spring 1991), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

General Colin L. Powell's catapult into national prominence during the Persian Gulf War was not just a result of his impressive personal abilities. It was at least equally as much the product of a relatively obscure military reform measure that dramatically strengthened the position of chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). This measure, the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, "stands as one of the most important, yet unheralded, military reforms in U.S. history," says Campbell, a former special assistant on the Joint Staff who now teaches at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Before the 1986 reform, the Joint Chiefs of Staff—consisting of the chiefs of staff of the Army and Air Force, the chief of naval

operations, the commandant of the Marine Corps, and the chairman—made decisions by committee and could act only by consensus. "The result was often the worst kind of military decision and advice," Campbell says, with conflicting interests and interservice rivalries producing joint advice so broad as to be useless. The rivalries also "seriously handicapped" military planning. That was especially apparent, Campbell says, in the failed attempt in 1980 to rescue the American hostages in Iran. There was no single military commander in charge of the overall mission, but instead an Army commander for the ground portion, a Marine in charge of helicopter operations, and a separate Air Force commander.

Coping With Victory

A Survey of Recent Articles

The brilliant military victory won by the United States and allied forces in the Persian Gulf made President George Bush's quest for a "New World Order" suddenly seem quite plausible. But the next stage—bringing stability to that perennially unstable corner of the world—is sure to put the whole idea to a severe test.

Indeed, the first challenge may be just to reach agreement at home on how much of the intractable Middle East problem to try to solve. The war with Iraq, writes Charles William Maynes, editor of *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1991), "will settle very little except the immediate fate of [Iraqi President] Saddam [Hussein] and [Kuwait's] al-Sabah family." The United States, he argues, should take advantage of its new influence to pressure the Kuwaiti and Saudi governments to accept the existence of Israel within its pre-1967 borders. It should pressure Israel to suspend all new settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and to reaffirm its support for U.N. Resolution 242, which calls for its withdrawal from the occupied territories as part of an overall peace agreement.

But Daniel Pipes, director of Philadelphia's Foreign Policy Research Institute, warns that it would be "a terrible error" for the U.S. government now to turn its attention from Iraq and Kuwait to the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. After the military victory, he writes in the *National Interest* (Spring 1991), the U.S. government "can count on a period of months, but not much more, to stabilize the Persian Gulf." To focus now on the Arab-Israeli conflict would be "like neglecting Germany and Japan in late 1945 to solve the Irish problem."

Whatever the U.S. and its allies accomplish—or fail to accomplish—in the Middle East in the months ahead is likely to bear on the fate of Bush's vision of a New World Order, which he often invoked in justifying the U.S. response to Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait. According to the administration, says Morton Kondracke, a senior editor of the *New Republic* (Feb. 25, 1991), the New World Order "means good things: promotion of democracy, collective security, arms reductions, settlement of regional disputes, cooperation among industrialized nations, and free trade. But many Americans fear

that this country will become the world's policeman, and many foreigners see it as a post-Cold War American grab for hegemony."

The assertion of American leadership is entirely appropriate and necessary in the post-Cold War world, some analysts contend. "The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery will constitute the greatest single threat to world security for the rest of our lives," writes columnist Charles Krauthammer in *Foreign Affairs* (special annual "America and the World" issue, 1991). "That is what makes a new international order not an imperial dream or a Wilsonian fantasy but a matter of the sheerest prudence." The Persian Gulf crisis underscored the fact that there is now just one superpower. "Our best hope," Krauthammer says, is in "American strength and will . . . to lead a unipolar world, unashamedly laying down the rules of world order and being prepared to enforce them."

The *Economist* (Feb. 23, 1991) points out that America can lead only if others are willing to follow. In the Persian Gulf, for example, if America "wants to bring a reconstruction bank into being, it will have to convince the Saudis and other Gulf states to cough up most of the money."

Whatever arrangements do emerge in the Persian Gulf are not likely to be worth all that much, in the pessimistic view of *New Yorker* (Jan. 28, 1991) writer William Pfaff. Islam over the last three centuries has suffered repeated political and military defeats, which "have produced cultural anxiety and frustration and have involved a form of intellectual and moral subjection to the West"—and this, Pfaff says, is what the larger crisis in the Middle East is fundamentally about. "It follows that the present conflict cannot settle anything worth settling, except who controls certain oil sources and who rules a given country. These may be matters that require settling, but they should be understood as the relatively small matters they are, and such settlements as they produce should be understood as assuredly insecure ones, productive of further chains of consequence which are very likely to leave all those involved worse off than they are now."



The flaws evident in that disaster—and in the 1983 Marine barracks explosion in Lebanon, as well as in the “fiasco of uncoordinated brute force” used in the U.S. invasion of Grenada that year—led to the 1986 reform. Sponsored by Senator Barry Goldwater (R.-Ariz.), and Representative Bill Nichols (D.-Ala.), the measure was enacted over opposition from the services. It made the JCS chairman the “principal military adviser” to the president, the National Security Council, and the secretary of defense. The other service chiefs were relegated to secondary roles and put directly under the chairman. The military chain of command now runs from the secretary of defense through the chairman and then out to the commanders in the field, “completely eliminating the other chiefs in the chain.”

Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., the JCS chairman when the office was beefed up, used his new powers to good effect. He “pioneered military-to-military contacts with the Soviet Union, often over the ob-

jections of other administration officials.” He also designed the 1987 mission in which U.S. vessels reflagged Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf to protect Iraq’s supply line from attack during the Iran-Iraq war. Powell, formerly President Ronald Reagan’s national security adviser, took over in 1989 and raised the office to “a new and higher level.”

As chairman, Campbell writes, Powell “has played a crucial role in reshaping U.S. military commitments to [the North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and in developing fledgling contacts with the reformed national militaries of Eastern Europe.” He also was intimately involved in the decision to invade Panama in 1989, and, of course, in overseeing Operation Desert Shield/Storm.

In the past, Campbell writes, the chairmanship usually provided a “quiet end to a distinguished military career.” Now, he says, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs must be viewed as one of a president’s most important appointments.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Disaster Guaranteed

“Understanding the S&L Mess” by John Steele Gordon, in *American Heritage* (Feb.-Mar. 1991), 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

“We do not wish to make the United States government liable for the mistakes and errors of individual banks, and put a premium on unsound banking in the future.” So said President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 in explaining his opposition to federal bank deposit insurance. FDR eventually gave in on the issue, and the reform turned out to be among the most significant of the New Deal era. But Gordon, author of *The Scarlet Woman of Wall Street* (1989), contends that the savings-and-loan (S&L) disaster of the 1980s showed that Roosevelt’s fears were well founded.

From the banking reforms of the 1930s, Gordon says, there emerged what amounted to “a government-sponsored banking cartel.” Commercial banks, sav-

ings banks, and S&Ls “carved up the banking business among themselves.” Without the protection from competition this arrangement afforded, the S&L industry could not have survived that time of upheaval.

But the “cartel” eventually broke down. Depositors struggling to keep up with soaring inflation in the 1970s began taking their money out of banks’ low-paying savings accounts and putting it into Wall Street’s high-paying money market funds. The commercial banks could tolerate this, but the savings banks and S&Ls—which held mainly long-term real-estate loans at low, fixed interest rates—could not. They sought government help—and got it.

Washington’s main concern, Gordon

contends, was not "the integrity of the American banking system as a whole." Had it been, he says, the weaker savings banks and S&Ls would have been merged with commercial banks, and the stronger ones would have become commercial banks on their own. Instead, the government gave the interest of the bankers themselves priority. "The presidents of the 4,613 S&Ls in business in 1980 wanted to continue being bank presidents," Gordon notes. "The Chevy dealers and shoe-store owners on the boards of those S&Ls wanted to go on being bank directors." The government obliged with quick fixes.

Congress in 1980 not only removed the ceiling on the interest rates that S&Ls could pay, but also raised the federal guarantee on deposits from \$40,000 to \$100,000. In addition, the government dropped a restriction on Wall Street's so-called brokered deposits in thrift institutions, which allowed "the rich to have as much of their savings under [the federal] guarantee as they wished." S&Ls were

thus able to offer "every capitalist's dream: a high-interest, zero-risk investment."

The trouble was that as S&Ls competed among themselves for the new "hot money," they had to offer higher and higher interest rates—and they had no way to earn the money to pay the promised rates. "They were still stuck with their old loan portfolios of low-paying, fixed-interest single-family home mortgages." Still more quick fixes followed. Congress in 1982 permitted S&Ls to make many high-risk commercial real-estate and consumer loans—without being restricted by most of the capital and reserve requirements to which commercial banks were subject. States followed the federal government's lead. California, with the largest system of S&Ls, went even further, letting its thrifts "invest in whatever they pleased, from junk bonds to alternative energy schemes." Those thrifts thus became de facto venture capitalists—with the only difference being that any losses were guaranteed by the government. Disaster was unavoidable.

Growth Factors

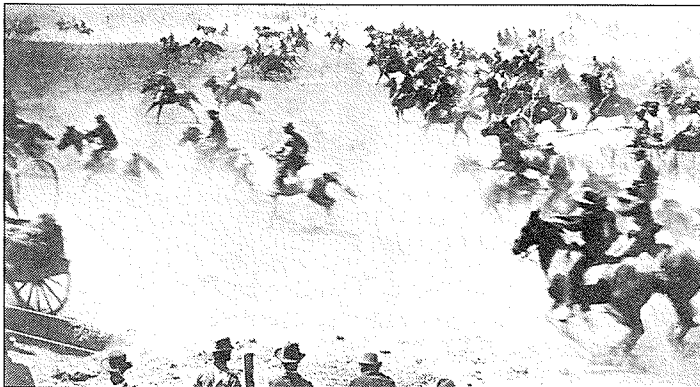
"Free Land and Federalism: A Synoptic View of American Economic History" by Peter Temin, in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (Winter 1991), Tufts Univ., 26 Winthrop St., Medford, Mass. 02155.

From the mid-19th century to the mid-20th, U.S. economic growth was among the wonders of the world. The modern business enterprises that emerged here

served as a model for other nations. But now, says Temin, an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "the special quality of American economic life is fast disappearing."

The country's economic experience was shaped by two "uniquely American" factors, he contends. The first was the abundance of rich farmland, located in favorable climates and relatively accessible to overseas markets. The second—an outgrowth of America's federal system of government—was the limitation on large landholders' political power.

When land is abundant and freely available, Temin



Congress, opening two million acres of Indian Territory to settlers in 1889, brought on the Oklahoma land rush. The abundance and availability of land was a key factor in U.S. economic growth.

maintains, a land-owning aristocracy can sustain itself only by turning other people into serfs or slaves. That happened in the American South, but not in the North. There, free land led instead to free labor, which, in turn, led to the rise of manufacturing (and to the development after the mid-19th century of the "American System," a production process based on the use of interchangeable parts).

Thanks to a protective tariff against foreign competition, American industry was able to pay both interest rates high enough to attract investors and wages high enough to draw laborers away from farming. American manufacturing, Temin says, "owed its vigor partly . . . to the structure of the federal government which could support a favorable commercial policy," despite the influence of Southern plantation owners. The different economic paths taken by North and South had led to a divergence of interests. Whereas Northern congressmen favored tariffs to encourage industrial growth, Southern representatives wanted free trade to encourage export of raw cotton.

The showdown between the agricultural and the industrial regions came with the Civil War. The North's victory "showed the dominance of the society based on free labor," Temin notes. It also resulted in a national government "strongly sympathetic to the growth of industry."

The big industrial corporations that emerged as the American System was be-

ing transformed into mass production were "an American phenomenon," Temin says. Large companies in Europe were limited to a much narrower range of industries. The American firms flourished in a favorable legal setting. Court decisions, for instance, blunted the impact of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. The Supreme Court in 1895 in effect left much of the antitrust policy to the states, which then were busily competing for the charters of new firms. Federalism thus played a role in gutting the antitrust policy.

Today, however, federalism "is ever more tenuous in its economic effects," Temin writes. With economic problems national, rather than regional, in scope, it is chiefly Washington that now regulates and supports business activities. Other key elements in America's extraordinary economic growth also are much diminished now, he says. Free land, of course, disappeared long ago. "And, although the modern business enterprises that grew from this fertile soil are still dominant economic institutions, there is a suspicion that they are becoming obsolete," with other sorts of organization and management now having the advantage. He believes that the future lies not with hierarchical Big Business but with flexible specialization and "matrix management." The conditions that enabled the industrial behemoths to flourish—and to produce America's unrivaled economic growth—now belong, in Temin's view, to the past.

SOCIETY

Canon Fodder

"The Storm Over the University" by John Searle, in *The New York Review of Books* (Dec. 6, 1990), 250 W. 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10107.

Much ink has been spilled in the debate over the status of the "canon" of the great books of Western civilization. But Searle, a professor of philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley, contends that the underlying issues that divide the members of the "cultural Left" and the defenders of

traditional liberal education are seldom brought out into the open.

Cultural leftists such as Mary Louise Pratt, a comparative literature professor at Stanford, argue that the canon is unrepresentative, inherently elitist, and covertly political. But their underlying objection,

Searle says, is that the canon consists of the "official publications" of the "system of oppression" known as Western civilization. As they see it, this civilization subjugated women and ethnic and cultural minorities, and fostered imperialism and colonialism. These critics won't be satisfied by the addition of a few works by blacks or women to the canon. Many of them believe that the primary purpose of teaching the humanities should be to help transform or revolutionize society.

Unless their underlying assumptions are accepted, Searle says, the cultural leftists' explicit arguments seem weak. "From the point of view of the tradition, the answers to each argument are fairly obvious," he observes. Thus, "it is not the aim of education to provide a representation or sample of everything that has been thought and written, but to give students access to works of high quality. [Education therefore] is by its very nature 'elitist' and 'hierarchical' because it is designed to enable and encourage the student to discriminate between what is good and what is bad, what is intelligent and what is stupid, what is true and what is false." And the fact that the humanities, like everything else, have a political dimension, doesn't mean that ef-

forts to teach the humanities should be assessed primarily by political standards.

Yet the defenders of tradition have their own failings, in Searle's view. Roger Kimball, author of last year's *Tenured Radicals*, for instance, "simply takes it for granted that there is a single, unified, coherent tradition, just as his opponents do, and he differs from them in supposing that all we need to do to rescue higher education is to return to the standards of that tradition." But, Searle says, there never really was a fixed canon, just "a certain set of tentative judgments about what had importance and quality. Such judgments . . . were constantly being revised."

The debate over the canon, Searle observes, is mainly concerned with what is usually just "a single required freshman course in the humanities, together with other courses in literature which the scholars who describe themselves as the 'cultural Left' may seek to control, and which may (or may not) therefore be vehicles for promoting ideologies of 'social transformation.' Most undergraduate education . . . is largely untouched by this discussion. Neither side has much to say about what actually happens in most college classrooms."

The Rat Race

"The Pace of Life" by Robert V. Levine, in *American Scientist* (Sept.-Oct. 1990), P. O. Box 13975, Research Triangle Park, N.C. 27709.

Everyone knows about Type-A individuals, but are there Type-A cities, too? Apparently so, according to Levine, a California State University psychologist.

Levine and his colleagues examined the "pace of life" in 36 U.S. cities—nine in each of four regions—by taking careful note of: how fast folks walked along a main downtown street on a clear summer day; how long bank clerks took to change two \$20 bills; how long postal clerks took to explain the differences among regular, certified, and insured mail; and what proportion of men and women observed in downtown areas during business hours were wearing a wristwatch.

As expected, the researchers found that

people in the Northeast walk faster, make change faster, talk faster, and are more likely to wear a watch than people in other parts of the country. A little surprisingly, perhaps, New York City did not head the list of fast-paced urbs; Boston held that honor, followed by Buffalo, N.Y. (!), and then Gotham. The slowest urban pace was on the West Coast, with mellow Los Angeles taking slowest city honors. L.A.'s laid-back denizens ranked 24th of the 36 cities in walking speed, next to last in quickness of tongue, and dead last in making change. Their "only concession to the clock was to wear one," Levine observes. (The city was 13th highest in the proportion wearing a timepiece.)

AMERICAN

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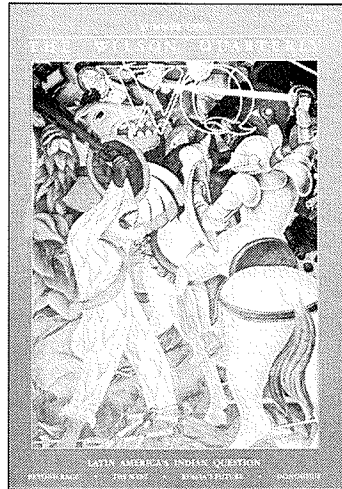


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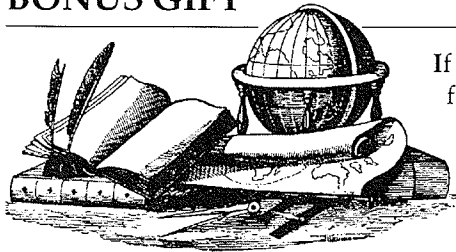
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Family Troubles

A Survey of Recent Articles

It's no secret that Americans have become less attached to the institution of marriage and the traditional family in recent decades. In 1970, families with husband, wife, and children living together under one roof accounted for 40 percent of all U.S. households; now, according to the 1990 census, they account for only 26 percent. It is not so much that there are fewer traditional families than before; it is more that other kinds of households are growing faster.

Americans are not unique. "The pace and timing of change differ from country to country, but the general direction is the same practically everywhere," reports U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics economist Constance Sorrentino in *Monthly Labor Review* (Mar. 1990). "Families are becoming smaller," and there has been a shift toward "more single-parent households, more persons living alone, and more couples living together out of wedlock."

The Scandinavian countries—where women are overwhelmingly in the work force—have set the pace in out-of-wedlock births (nearly half of all births in Sweden in 1986 versus 23 percent in the United States) and in cohabitation (about one in every five Swedish couples is unmarried). But the United States has been the leader in other important respects: Americans have the highest divorce rate (20.8 per 1,000 married women in 1987) in the industrial world, and also the highest incidence of single-parent households (24 percent of all households with children in 1990).

Tradition-minded Japan has been the major exception to these trends. There, notes Karl Zinsmeister, consulting editor at the *American Enterprise* (Mar.-Apr. 1990), divorce rates are extremely low, as are illegitimate births. "Amazingly," he writes, "95 percent of Japanese children live in married, two-parent households (and in nearly a third of these, there is the additional presence of a grandparent)."

In the United States, by contrast, 24 percent of all children (and 54 percent of black children) lived with only one parent in 1988—double the percentage in 1970. An estimated 60 percent of the children born today will spend at least part of their child-

hood living with only one parent.

That is bad news for children. "There is a mountain of scientific evidence showing that when families disintegrate, children often end up with intellectual, physical, and emotional scars that persist for life," Zinsmeister writes. Children in mother-only families are more likely to do poorly in school, to drop out, and to become single parents themselves. They also are more likely to be living in poverty. Nearly 45 percent of such families were living below the official poverty line in 1988, compared with only about 7 percent of two-parent families.

Contributing to the general rise in single-parent families has been the major change over recent decades in Americans' attitudes about adherence to the traditional ideals of marriage and family. Although most people still value and desire marriage, parenthood, and family life for themselves, writes University of Michigan sociologist Arland Thornton in *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (Nov. 1989), they have become more accepting of departures from the norm. For example, whereas 81 percent of the women 30 or older in a 1965 survey said that premarital sex was always or almost always wrong, the figure seven years later fell to 61.8 percent—and stood at 45.4 percent in 1986. Among younger persons, the move away from the traditional viewpoint has been even more pronounced.

Many of the changes in attitudes and behavior took place in the 1960s and '70s. But certain trends, including those toward cohabitation and out-of-wedlock births, grew even stronger in the 1980s. So did the movement into the work force of wives and mothers. More than half of the mothers of very young children now hold jobs outside the home. This trend, which may be one of the main factors behind some of the others, has brought to the fore such matters as parental leave and child care.

Liberals and conservatives generally have taken sharply different views on these issues. Liberals and feminists, observes Sheila B. Kamerman, a professor of social policy and planning at Columbia University School of Social Work, writing in the *American Prospect* (Winter 1991), have favored policies

In the 1959 study in which Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman introduced the Type-A man to the world, they reported that men who have a sense of urgency about time and who are inclined to be competitive and hostile, are twice as likely to have a heart attack. Following up on that, Levine and his colleagues examined the rates of death from ischemic heart disease (a decreased flow of blood to the heart) for their 36 cities. After adjusting for the median age of each city's population, they found "a significant correlation" between the rates and the cities' pace-of-life scores. New York, for instance, ap-

pears to be "heart-attack city." Indeed, the correlation was greater than that usually found between heart disease and measures of Type-A behavior in individuals.

It may be, Levine speculates, that fast-paced cities attract Type-A individuals, who then sustain and promote their preferred way of life. Many of the slower, Type-B people probably recoil from the rat race and move to more congenial settings. But the Type-B's who remain in the fast-paced cities are compelled to act more like Type-A's. And the real Type-A's, meanwhile, keep striving "to accelerate the pace still more."

PRESS & TELEVISION

Watching the White House

"Inside the White House: Pecking Orders, Pack Journalism, and Other Stories of the People Who Cover the President" by Owen Ullmann, in *The Washingtonian* (Jan. 1991), Ste. 200, 1828 L St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The White House is still among the most prestigious beats in journalism. But for reporters intent upon ferreting out the "inside" story, it now can also be among the most frustrating. Ullmann, after six years at the White House for Knight-Ridder Newspapers, says that in recent decades it has become very hard for reporters there to find out "what's really going on and what makes the president tick."

Part of the new difficulty is a result of the increased size of the White House press corps. When there is a major news event involving the president, several hundred reporters and photographers cram themselves into a press room built for 50. The correspondents all have access to daily briefings, written announcements, and presidential press conferences and speeches, but reporters in search of the inside story need to be able to talk more intimately with the president or his key aides. "There are so many more reporters clamoring for the attention of [the] relatively few staffers who know anything that it is a constant battle for meaningful access," *Newsweek's* White House correspondent,

Tom DeFrank, told Ullmann.

Heightened security measures also keep the press away from "what's really going on." Once White House reporters were free to roam the halls of the Old Executive Office Building, in which many presidential assistants have their offices; now journalists can enter the building only after making an appointment, and then they are escorted to their source's office.

"Because White House reporters are forced to work in a pack, they tend to produce pack-mentality journalism," Ullmann says. "Peer influence and second-guessing by editors, who can decide a story line by watching TV or reading the wire services, [encourage] conformity."

After "a small group of influential columnists and reporters" decides what to think about a political figure, everyone else pretty much falls into line. "Going against the consensus can be dangerous," Ullmann says, "because editors and colleagues begin to question your judgment." For instance, the orthodox (albeit not necessarily truly informed) opinion among White House reporters about Vice Presi-

dent Dan Quayle is that he is "a fool." As a result, Ullmann says, nearly every story about Quayle highlights his gaffes. "To treat him seriously is to invite charges that you are either crazy or in the tank with Quayle. I wrote what I thought to be a balanced article on Quayle in 1989, but a fellow reporter castigated me for a major lapse in judgment."

Few members of the huge White House pack get to see the president on a regular basis. Most rely on a rotating pool of reporters for their knowledge of what goes on at "photo opportunities" and the like.

Even some reporters who travel overseas to cover a presidential trip do not see the president in person. But gazing directly upon the presidential person is simply not a necessity any more—not when reporters can glean just as much from watching him on television. Indeed, thanks to Cable News Network and the availability of electronic transcripts of official briefings, "reporters can now cover the White House in absentia," Ullmann observes. He does not recommend the practice, but it would apparently make all too little difference in the press's coverage of the presidency.

Radio Wars

"The Battle for the U.S. Airwaves, 1928-1935" by Robert W. McChesney, in *Journal of Communication* (Autumn 1990), University of Pennsylvania, 3620 Walnut St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19104-6220.

In retrospect, commercial broadcasters' near-monopoly over the radio airwaves seems to have been almost inevitable. But it did not seem that way back in the 1920s and early '30s, says McChesney, a journalism professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Although scholars have not stressed the fact, there was opposition to the network-dominated, advertising-subsidized system of radio broadcasting that was then emerging.

During much of the 1920s, most radio stations were owned and run by newspapers, department stores, or other businesses, and were used mainly just to generate favorable publicity. But there were also nonprofit broadcasters—most of them affiliated with colleges or universities. By 1925, there were more than 200 nonprofit stations—about two-fifths of all the radio stations in the country.

Few people at the time foresaw the rapid rise of the commercial networks—the National Broadcasting Company was established in 1926 and the Columbia Broadcasting System a year later—or the expanded role of commercial advertising. The Radio Act of 1927, hurriedly passed by Congress after a federal judge ruled the Commerce Department's licensing of stations unconstitutional, created the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) to allocate

broadcast licenses. The commission was told only to favor applicants that best served the "public interest, convenience or necessity."

When the FRC's allocation plan emerged in 1928, however, the networks were the big winners. The commission set aside 40 channels nationwide for use by powerful 50,000-watt stations, and left the other 50 available channels for simultaneous use by some 600 weaker stations across the country. Broadcasters in the same region had to share (and fight over) the frequencies. In 1927, NBC and CBS held less than seven percent of all broadcast stations; by 1931, the networks, after the number of hours broadcast and the level of power used are taken into consideration, accounted for almost 70 percent of U.S. broadcasting. And by 1934, radio commercial advertising had mushroomed to \$72 million a year.

The immediate losers in all this were the indigent nonprofit broadcasters. The FRC has "taken away all of the [broadcast] hours that are worth anything," complained the director of a station at the University of Arkansas. Between 1927-34, the number of nonprofit stations fell by two-thirds.

As this was happening, the "displaced and harassed" nonprofit broadcasters, par-

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In the 1890s, the Mormons renounced polygamy and took the road to All-Americanism.

THE MORMONS' PROGRESS

Unlike other religions, whose origins are half lost in remote centuries, Mormonism is relatively young. The Mormons began building their Kingdom of God on Earth little more than 150 years ago, and their history—so relatively brief, so fully documented—has scarcely known a moment free from controversy. From their espousal of polygamy in the 19th century to their advocacy today of conservative politics, the Mormons have lived at the center of disputes. Yet Mormonism has always seemed, as Tolstoy observed, *the* particularly American faith. Here Malise Ruthven charts the Mormons' remarkable progress from outsiders of the 19th century to "super-Americans" today, and explains why this American church is now the fastest-growing religion in the Third World.

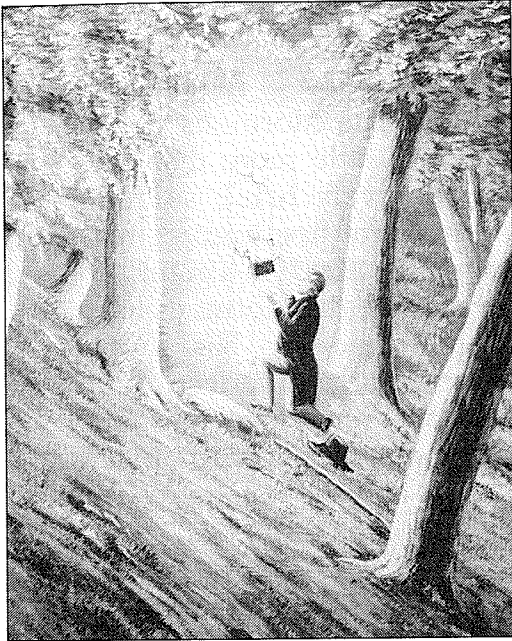
by Malise Ruthven

Late one evening in May 1989, in the narrow, cobble streets of La Paz, Bolivia, two Mormon missionaries were shot and killed by three terrorists in a yellow Volkswagen. In a handwritten statement delivered to local newspapers, a little-known group inspired by a 19th-century Indian hero claimed responsibility for the murders. There had already been more than 60 attacks on the Mormon church by revolutionary bands in Latin America. This, however, was the first—but not the last—time that missionaries were singled out for assassination.

That Mormons should find themselves targeted as agents of "Yankee imperialism" is hardly surprising in light of the church's recent past. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is one of the wealthiest and most powerful institutions in the

United States, with investments amounting to billions. Its clean-cut, youthful missionaries in their white shirts and black ties seem as representative of American values as the executives of Citibank and other American institutions that have been attacked by guerrillas. Nor is this simply a matter of arbitrary association. Mormon missionaries are widely suspected of having connections to right-wing, authoritarian governments in Latin America. Returned missionaries, with their knowledge of foreign languages and experience of living abroad, are known to be preferred material for recruiters of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. In their rare public pronouncements on political questions, LDS leaders invariably speak the language of conservative patriotism.

It was not always so. Despite their present-day image as archetypal Yankees, the Mormons were long perceived as un-



Joseph Smith receives the golden plates from the Angel Moroni in September 1827. Smith later translated the plates into the Book of Mormon.

American in their clannishness, in their utopian socialism, and in the hard battle they fought, and eventually lost, to preserve the sacred principle of polygamy or plural marriage. It is ironic that this 19th-century folk religion of primitive Christian "seekers" should now be practiced by people who by virtue of their education and prosperity belong to the American elite.

Today the Mormons are regarded—and regard themselves—as bearers of classic American values: thrift, self-help, industriousness, sobriety. "Super-capitalists" and proselytizers for free enterprise that they are, they nevertheless seem to reject the individualism upon which American capitalism is predicated. If the Mormon church is as American as McDonald's or Disneyland, it is also as un-American in its collectivist instincts as the very communist menace its

leaders have been wont so earnestly to denounce. Indeed the word "church" in the usual sense of a body of believers that meets on Sundays for common worship seems wholly inadequate to convey the reality of this vast corporate enterprise embracing both the living and the dead.

Throughout its history, wrote the Catholic sociologist Thomas O'Dea three decades ago, Mormonism has been "both typical of the larger American setting in which it existed and at the same time peculiarly itself." The Mormons' bland, super-American image covers, but does not quite conceal, an astonishing story of mystery and persecution, violence and deceit, license and ecstasy that links the Mormons of today to their founder, Joseph Smith (1805–44). To understand the Mormons of the present, it is necessary to open again the pages of that peculiar and fascinating history.

History is a problem for all religions. The canonized account of a religion's origins is frequently at odds with versions obtained from alternative sources or inferred through textual analysis. In the case of the Mormons, the problems of origins are unusually acute, since the religion emerged in the third decade of the 19th century, during the age of print. The controversies surrounding its origins therefore are not safely lost in the myths of antiquity. From the beginning, there were opposing Mormon and anti-Mormon views about the founding of the church and the career of the founding prophet, Joseph Smith. Today, through the work of scholars both inside and outside the church, the two lines of historical narrative have come closer together.

The authorized *History of the Church* that Joseph Smith dictated in 1839 when he

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had established himself as the leader of a thriving religious community differs on significant points of chronology and detail from earlier writings of Smith, his mother Lucy, and his contemporaries, both Mormon and anti-Mormon. (Mormons, incidentally, retain a familiar relationship to Joseph Smith, still today referring to him as Joseph or the Prophet Joseph, never as Smith.) In the canonized history, the 14-year-old Joseph, a virtuous seeker after religious truth, prays for guidance in a wood near his upstate New York home in 1820 and is rewarded by a vision of the Father and the Son. After being told that his sins are forgiven, he is warned against joining any of the existing sects, "for all are wrong." In a subsequent theophany, on September 21, 1823, Joseph claimed to have been visited by an angel named Moroni (a name that Mormons tactfully refrain from rendering in its adjectival form).

Moroni, Joseph would learn, was the last of a great race of Nephites, descendants of the ancient Hebrews who had crossed the ocean and landed in the Americas in biblical times. In due course Moroni led the young man to a nearby hill where he found a book "written upon golden plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the source from whence they sprang." After some setbacks due to his own disobedience, Joseph was permitted to take the plates home, where in the spring of 1829 he "translated" them using a pair of sacred stones called the Urim and Thummim. The "translation" eventually appeared as the Book of Mormon, which Joseph, with financial assistance from a local farmer, arranged to have printed by a local press in 1830.

The account emerging from the labors of revisionist historians reveals a picture that is at once more complex and more plausible. Mormonism had its origins among settlers in western New York State,

most of them poor farmers who had migrated from New England in search of cheaper, more productive land. Among them was the Smith family. The Smiths belonged to a class of religious seekers whose search for the gifts of the spirit included treasure digging and various occult activities. The folk religion of New England, transplanted to New York, had roots that extended back to the 16th century and the age of radical Puritan dissent, when many people held that all existing churches were irredeemably corrupt. Unlike the 19th-century followers of Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone, two leading "restorationists" whose followers eventually merged to form the Disciples of Christ, these seekers remained attached to noninstitutionalized religion in which magic, condemned by the clergy, was a major element. Although Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph's mother, briefly flirted with Presbyterianism, the family remained attached to its occult practices. Joseph had a seerstone that he used to divine buried treasure; he could pronounce spells which invoked spirits (as distinct from angels), including one that led him to the golden plates that duly appeared as the Book of Mormon. The date of Moroni's visitation—the night of the autumnal equinox—was of crucial occult significance.

Whatever the provenance of the plates (and Joseph sensibly returned them to their angelic custodian before any antiquarians could examine them), there are scholars within the Mormon community who no longer believe that Joseph Smith translated them according to the normal meaning of the word. It is now widely accepted that Joseph sat, his face buried in a hat with his "peepstone" inside it, while his scribes sat on the other side of a blanket draped across the room so they would not be able to see the plates.

The Book, when published, was equipped with two lots of testimonials—

that of the Three Witnesses (Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris), who claimed to have seen the plates through the "grace of God the Father," and that of the Eight Witnesses (all members of the Smith and Whitmer families), who claimed not just to have seen but to have "hefted" them as well. Of the Eight Witnesses, Mark Twain remarked: "I could not feel more satisfied and at rest if the entire Whitmer family had testified."

To the reader who encounters it without benefit of faith, the Book of Mormon appears to be a rather inexperienced attempt at biblical pastiche, with characters modeled on the kings, judges, and prophets of the Old Testament engaged in moral and physical battles in the New World. These struggles reach their apotheosis in Christ's visit to the Americas, where he preaches, performs miracles, and lays the foundations for the church. The Book foretells a new prophet whose coming will herald the Millennium: The whole human race will then be redeemed and the Native American "Lamanites," whose dark skins are the mark of sin, will be rendered a "white and delightsome" people again. (Recent editions of the Book of Mormon substitute the less offensive word "pure" for "white.") The Book contains large portions of the King James Bible, including 12 chapters from Isaiah and three from Matthew. The style is extremely repetitious and the command of 17th-century English style is decidedly weak in places. ("And it came to pass that I did make tools of the ore which I did molten out of the rock," records the Prophet Nephi in one of the books bearing his name.) Mark Twain, taking his cue from the Book of Ether, called the whole production "chloroform in print."

For an ancient book there are some embarrassing anachronisms, such as references to horses, sheep, cattle, and pigs that

were not present in the Americas prior to the Spanish conquest. A number of scholars inside the Mormon community now concede that Joseph's "translation" reveals a variety of contemporary influences. The account of American origins reflects the widely held view among 17th-century Protestants that Native Americans must be descended at some point from peoples mentioned in the Bible. The legend of Christ's visit to the Americas goes back to the Spanish conquistadors.

Yet for all its borrowings and obvious infelicities, the Book of Mormon is a remarkable work. Couched in the language of the King James Bible, it places the Western Hemisphere at the center of the plan of divine redemption and emancipates the United States from the sacred history of the Old World. Although there are vestiges of Calvinist notions of depravity, the theology is optimistic. In almost Manichaean terms, the Book of Mormon suggests that evil is only the necessary corollary of good, existing independently of God. The notion that the fall from the Garden of Eden (which Mormons believe was located in Missouri) was a tragic event is alien to Mormonism, as is the notion of original sin. If Adam had not transgressed, there would have been no human race: "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy."

To Smith's immediate family and some of his contemporaries, the Book itself—and the speed with which it was dictated (75 working days)—was proof enough of its divine provenance. It was not just the Book, however, that persuaded numerous contemporaries that Smith was the "restorer" of the true church of Christ after a lapse of 18 centuries. America's Jacksonian Age, when a "common man" could become president, saw in the religious revivals a movement directed against the professional clergy. Popular, emotional preaching responded to, and abetted, changes in work-

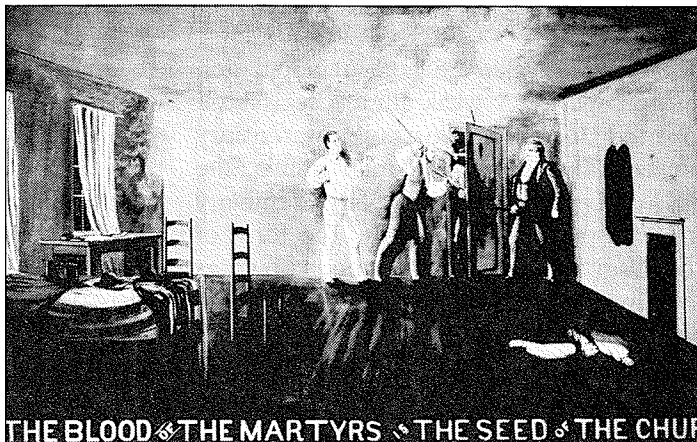
ing patterns, especially in western New York, which was opening up to industry after the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825. There were so many revivals in this area that the Methodist circuit riders, despairing of new conversions, named it the Burned-Over District. Expectations of the Millennium—an abiding theme since the first Puritan settlers had landed in Massachusetts, confident that God was about to destroy the Babylons of England and Rome—were growing. William Miller, who carefully correlated all the begettings in the Bible to Archbishop Ussher's date of Creation (9 A.M., October 26, 4004 B.C.), concluded that the Second Coming would take place between March 1843 and March 1844. Thousands of Christians put on their ascension robes and gathered outside Rochester and other cities, awaiting the Rapture. The failure of Jesus to meet this rendezvous with the faithful became known as the Great Disappointment.

Unlike Miller, Smith was sensibly imprecise about dates. He articulated the prevailing millennial anxieties while taking practical steps to assuage them. Like his forebears in Massachusetts, he prepared for Kingdom Come by building Kingdom Now. Joseph Smith, observes historian Klaus Hansen, "out-Jacksoned the Jacksonians by proclaiming that the common man could become a god."

Paramount in Smith's thinking was a concern with authority. In 1829, he inquired of God who had the authority to baptize—a question that concerned many other primitive Christians at the time. As an answer to his prayers, he and Oliver Cowdery claim to have received the two or-

ders of priesthood, the Aaronic and Melchizedek, which were bestowed upon them by heavenly messengers who identified themselves as John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John. The following spring Smith officially launched the Church of Christ, which later changed its name to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, underscoring the imminence of the Second Coming. Shortly thereafter, a divine revelation commanded him to move (in 1831) to Kirtland, Ohio, where a dissident Campbellite preacher, Sidney Rigdon, was baptized along with his group of Christian communitarians. The conversion gave the Saints a much-needed boost, bringing their number to more than 2,000. The first missionaries were soon sent to England, where the prospect of a new Zion in America had a special appeal for distressed millworkers in Lancashire, Wales, and the West Country. By 1850, the Mormon community in Britain had grown to 30,000.

To convert the "Lamanites" (Indians) a number of Saints moved to Jackson County, Missouri, where Joseph dedicated the site for the restored Temple of Zion in 1831. Here, however, the Saints encountered serious and systematic persecution:



THE BLOOD ♦ THE MARTYRS ♦ THE SEED ♦ THE CHUR

A persecuted people: Joseph Smith (in white) and his brother were murdered by a mob in Carthage, Illinois, on June 27, 1844.

Other settlers despised their weird theology and feared their collectivist social ideals (which they expressed by voting for candidates en bloc). In 1838, Joseph and his fellow elders were arrested and charged with treason, Mormon property was confiscated, and a number of Mormons were massacred. After compliant jailers allowed the Prophet and his companions to escape, he rejoined the Saints at the city of Commerce on the Illinois shore of the Mississippi, near the confluence with the Des Moines River.

This second Zion, which Joseph renamed Nauvoo, became a thriving city of

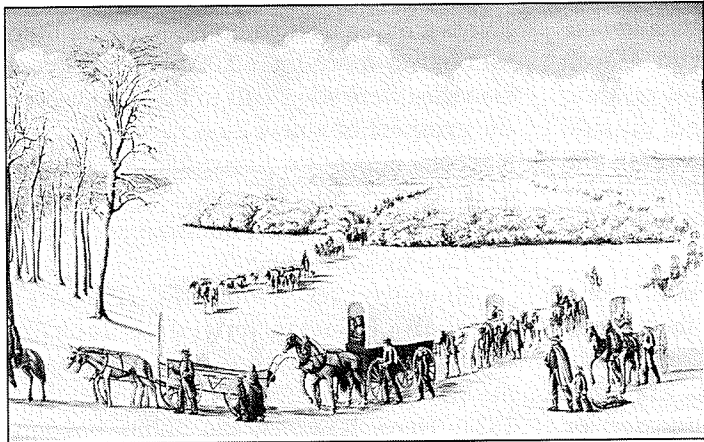
temple rituals that lead to life in the hereafter. (Nowadays, the temple recommend takes the form of a card that one must produce to be admitted to a temple.)

At Nauvoo, the Prophet built a neoclassical temple high on the bluffs overlooking the river. He also became Nauvoo's largest individual proprietor: the owner of its hotel and store, treasurer and trustee-in-trust for the church, as well as mayor and lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion—a rank he celebrated by wearing resplendent gold-and-blue uniforms. At Nauvoo, as the Prophet, he perfected the esoteric temple

rites, adapted in part from freemasonry, that linked the living with generations of the dead in a vast continuum that stretched from before Creation into a timeless future in which men would become gods. Ancestors were baptized by proxy so that the living could be joined to them in the afterlife. This practice is still conducted by the Mormon church, aided by a fully computerized genealogical data bank—the world's largest. About 350 million dead people are believed to have

been posthumously baptized, including kings and emperors, all the signatories to the U.S. Constitution, all the presidents of the United States, not to mention some of the denizens of Hollywood.

At Nauvoo, Joseph also codified the theocratic church organization that persists, with modifications, to this day. The Mormon church is a lay church, which combines the Catholic gradations of hierarchy with the Protestant idea of the priesthood of all (male) believers. Boys make up the lesser Aaronic priesthood, men the higher Melchizedek priesthood. A bishop is



During the exodus from Nauvoo in February 1846, the Mississippi River froze over solidly enough to allow wagons to cross. Mormons liken the event to the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea.

12,000 that rivaled Chicago in population and prosperity. A weak Illinois legislature granted Joseph almost plenipotentiary powers. The city's 2,000-man militia, the Nauvoo Legion, became the largest military force in the state of Illinois. The form of socialism practiced in Missouri, known as the Law of Consecration and Stewardship, was replaced by the "lesser"—but more practical—law of tithing, which still stands today. Only Saints of good standing who regularly pay their tithes, normally 10 percent of pretax income, are granted the "recommends" that ensure access to the

in charge of the ward or congregation; the larger unit, equivalent to a Catholic diocese, is the stake—a term taken from the Book of Isaiah, which likens Zion to a tent and its people to stakes. Presiding over the church are the General Authorities, consisting of the Quorum of the Seventies, the Twelve Apostles, and the president. As “Prophet, Seer and Revelator,” the president is entitled to receive revelation. The church’s structure reflected a shift in Joseph Smith’s vision from that of a restored apostolic church toward the notion of a restored People of Israel.

There was never much chance that 19th-century American society would tolerate a polity so inimical to its institutions. Small utopian religious experiments—such as John Humphrey Noyes’s free-love community in Oneida, New York, where all were saved and hence unable to sin—could be left alone since they threatened nobody. But during Joseph Smith’s lifetime Mormonism was becoming a power in the land. Aware of this, Smith began to cast around for uninhabited territories where the Saints might build their Kingdom unmolested by the “Gentiles”—a term that Mormons have only recently dropped from their lexicon. He tried to maintain his autonomy by selling Mormon votes to the highest bidder: This worked for a time but ultimately antagonized both Whigs and Democrats. Joseph then launched his own bid for the presidency of the United States. His campaign was cut short by his assassination in 1844 at the hands of a lynch mob in Carthage, Illinois, where he and his brother Hyrum (who was also killed) were being held on charges of treason.

It was not just politics, however, that brought Joseph down, but polygamy. Although the Book of Mormon denounces polygamy—“Behold David and Solomon truly had many wives and concu-

bines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord”—the principle of celestial or plural marriage seems to have been practiced by Joseph himself even before he moved to Nauvoo. The recollections of Saints who later left the church, as well as of some women who became his plural wives, leave little doubt that the tall, young, good-looking, charismatic leader had a roving eye. This tendency was bitterly fought by his wife Emma, who would never accept that “the principle” came from God. Joseph, however, was not simply exploiting his prophetic charisma for personal gratification. Like more recent cult leaders, he used sexuality to bind his followers to him. For women who entered “the principle,” there could be no turning back in Victorian America; likewise for the select group of leaders who took plural wives, loyalty was virtually guaranteed. Rumors of polygamy that began in the anti-Mormon press culminated in a major exposé within Nauvoo itself. Smith was taken into custody in 1844 for ordering destruction of the press on which this exposé had been printed.

From the first, it was remarkable how Joseph Smith managed to incorporate the “celestial order of marriage” into his theological design. The justification of polygamy involved the Mormons in a theology radically unlike any other Christian sect’s—indeed, so different that many outsiders, from the 19th century to the present day, have charged the Mormons with not being Christians at all. Even the Mormon conception of divinity is radically different from the God of the New Testament. Joseph Smith spoke of God as having once been a person with “a body of flesh and bones as tangible as a man’s.” The most famous Mormon aphorism says, “As man is, God once was; as God now is, man may become.”

God too, so Joseph taught, had been polygamous and had had carnal relations with virtuous women and together they had

MORMONISM AND FEMINISM?

At the naming ceremony for my infant daughter, I called myself a "feminist" and was chastised by my family and other congregants. I mention my Mormon faith to feminist friends and am met with scoffs of "Isn't that the church that defeated the Equal Rights Amendment?" Both camps, then, agree: "Mormon feminist" is an oxymoron. But is it?

Mormon women today seem in many ways like their conservative counterparts in evangelical Christianity. We are encouraged to marry young, to honor husbands and fathers as the head of the household, to devote our lives primarily to the task of childbearing and childrearing. We are not encouraged to develop a career (except as a safety net against widowhood) and are positively discouraged from working outside the home.

But historically, socially, and theologically, we are fundamentally different from, even antithetical to, evangelical Christians. Nineteenth-century Mormonism was a radical critique of Christianity, just as it was of American culture: My ancestors rejected individualistic enterprise for communalism, democracy for theocracy, monogamy for polygamy.

Ironically, although polygamy was viewed with profound disgust or pity (one East Coast observer remarked that a polygamist's wife was "either an oriental doll or a domestic drudge, with neither impulse nor impetus towards an individualized existence"), it actually helped produce some of America's earliest feminists. Mormon women in Utah published their own newspaper, the *Woman's Exponent*, and they ran their own independent organization, the Female Relief Society, without interference. Utah women were the first women in the United States to vote in a public election. Inside the church, they preached, gave healing blessings, led organizations, and voted

with men to sustain the leaders. Outside the church, they attended medical school and were among the first to join the National Council of Women. I recall stories of my great-great-grandmother, Rachel Ivins Grant, who converted to Mormonism, left her wealthy New Jersey family, and made the trek west on her own. She became the sixth wife of Jedediah Grant, raised her son Heber J. Grant (a future church president) by herself, and later was president of her local Relief Society for 40 years while almost entirely deaf.

To be sure, 19th-century Mormonism had its patriarchal doctrines and practices. A man's religious standing was measured by the number of his wives and children, as if they were his possessions. Nonetheless the combination of absent or shared husbands and the many practical necessities of pioneering life freed these polygamous wives from the stultifying roles of typical Victorian women.

A subservient role for women was, in fact, not native to Mormonism but was grafted on from outside. After the Great Accommodation beginning in 1890, Mormonism was transformed (slowly but dramatically) from a prophetic condemnation of fallen society into a self-preserving embrace of American society in all its conventions. In the 20th century, Mormon women—now in the typical monogamous marriage—were encouraged to retreat into the domestic sphere. The ecclesiastical leadership (read: men) began reducing all independent operations of female churchmembers. Women could no longer give blessings, and the Relief Society was placed under the authority of the priesthood's leadership. Those elements of Mormon theology were stressed that emphasized an eternal division of roles.

During the 1970s, when the feminist movement reemerged in earnest, young female Latter-day Saints began to look to their

procreated "spirit children." The Supreme Being, the Godhead, in Mormon theology is thus a kind of divine man, rather resembling Jesus in Christianity—a more connubial and carnal Jesus. Jesus himself, in Mormon theology, is more like an elder brother

who, for all his compassion and suffering, is insufficient by himself to ensure human salvation—which is why Mormon temples are not adorned with crosses but with angelic trumpeters. (Later Mormon theologians have also suggested that Jesus was polyga-

foremothers for role models. A group of Boston women launched *Exponent II*, consciously modelled after the 19th-century women's journal, to comment on political and theological questions. And in 1978 when blacks were given the priesthood, women began to ask the next logical question: Why not us?

So what does the future hold? There is an increasingly vocal minority of educated American women urging more leadership roles for women. Unlike other Christian women, Mormon feminists have a theological rallying point in the Mormon belief that God has a cocreator, a Mother God. As it is in heaven, we ask, why not on Earth? And, finally, simple economics may accomplish what feminism and theology fail to do. Childrearing in America is expensive today, and Mormons generally have more than the average number of children. In addition, Mormons tithe to the church, and they support their children on proselytizing missions. Such realities are requiring that many women work outside the home just to survive. The number of Mormon women in the workforce is rapidly approaching the national norm of 50 percent.

In response to these pressures, there have been some significant changes. In 1990, the temple ceremony was changed so that women can now pray at services. There is an annual all-church women's meeting; there are more professional women among the Relief Society leaders. The church leadership urges men to recognize the needs of their wives, including intellectual and emotional needs.

On the other hand, the church is growing



fastest in the Third World, where, as LDS sociologist Marie Cornwall noted, "The patriarchy of Mormonism is a gentler, kinder form of [already existing patterns of] male dominance." Indeed, the traditional Mormon roles, which have the husband successful at work and the wife raising children at home, seem quite desirable to Third World women—a reason for joining the church.

I struggle to balance competing ideas and impulses in myself. There are days when I sit in adult Sunday school class seething while a teacher compares marriage to a smoothly run corporation. ("Every good organization must have a president, and that would be the husband, and a vice-president, and you know who that would be.") I rankle when I hear the regional representative (parallel to a Catholic bishop) suggest over the pulpit that our drug addiction problems are caused by the existence of day care. At such times I daydream how very pleasant it must be to be a Quaker. But then I hear the voices of six generations of Mormon foremothers whispering to me of their struggles and their endurance, and I know I will never leave. How ironic all this is: It is precisely my Mormon desire to reform the world into a "kingdom" that makes me chafe at the typical Mormon view of women; it is my Mormon optimism that makes me believe that change, even heroic change, is possible. Indeed, it is my Mormonness that makes me a feminist and makes it hurt to be one.

—Peggy Fletcher Stack

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mous, "united" with Martha and the two Marys.) Salvation and entry into heaven depend less upon Jesus' martyrdom, or upon God's grace, than upon how man uses his free will while on Earth. This belief in free will, writes the University of Utah's Sterling

M. McMurrin in *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (1965), "exhibits the affirmative qualities relating to the capacity of human reason and the possibility of free moral endeavor that characterized Enlightenment thought in the early

part of the 19th century [and] that today lie at the foundations of the typical secular humanism that has issued from American intellectual life."

Mormon theology was thus in tune with the music of 19th-century America. A popular idea of the time portrayed a "New Adam," a new American free of Old World sin and born to fresh chances. Likewise the Mormons, in this same optimistic spirit, envisioned a race of "spirit children" who would be born not depraved and sinful but free and good. The Jacksonian common man was beginning to feel in himself a manifest destiny, the power to conquer the entire continent. Mormon theology went one better: Its spirit children would not simply master a new continent but could become gods too. To do so, however, it was first necessary to get born, that is, for the spirit children to acquire mortal bodies.

For this reason, polygamy was a virtue, and virtuous were the men who practiced it. Having more wives meant siring more children and bringing more spirit children into this world, thus earning greater "exaltation" in the afterlife. There, in the Mormon scheme of things, humans retain their personalities and, reunited with their spouses, continue to grow in knowledge and purity until they achieve godhood, organizing new planets and spawning spirit children of their own. This bit of theology also helps to explain the heavy Mormon emphasis on traditional family values today.

Mormonism may today resemble a conservative Christian sect, but its 19th-century theology smuggled into Christianity some strange notions indeed: a materialistic God, a carnal Christ, and, of course, polygamy. It was to rebut the century-old charge that Mormon theology hardly constitutes a form of Christianity that the church, in 1985, added to the Book of Mormon the subtitle "Another Testimony of Jesus Christ."

Given the turmoil engendered by poly-

gamy, Joseph's assassination probably saved the movement. A martyred Prophet was much more valuable than a living impostor, which was what a growing number of apostates had come to consider him. The martyrdom, however, brought a struggle for leadership in its train, in which the issue of polygamy was decisive.

To escape the increasing hostility of anti-Mormons, a majority of the Nauvoo Saints followed Brigham Young on his epic hegira across the Great Plains during 1846 and '47 to found another Zion in the Great Salt Lake Valley. Unreconciled to polygamy, Joseph's widow Emma remained with her children in Nauvoo, and her son Joseph Smith III became president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS). The RLDS church has remained a relatively small group; today it has a membership of about 250,000, based in Independence, Missouri. Like the Shiites of Islam, the Reorganites are legitimists who feel that their Prophet's progeny were cheated of the leadership. Still led by a member of Joseph's family, Wallace Smith III, they say of their Utah rivals: "They have the Kingdom, but we have the King."

Brigham Young (1801-77) was a very different character from Joseph Smith. Stern, authoritarian, and patriarchal, he had little of the Prophet's captivating charm or charismatic wit. When ordered by Joseph to take a second wife, he vehemently objected, saying that he "desired the grave." One of his daughters, who became a prominent suffragette, described him as a "Puritan of the Puritans." Nevertheless, he quickly recognized the value of polygamy in binding the Saints to him politically. Before he left Nauvoo he had married 12 women, including several previously "sealed" to Joseph Smith. Eventually he would marry 16 "connubial" wives who

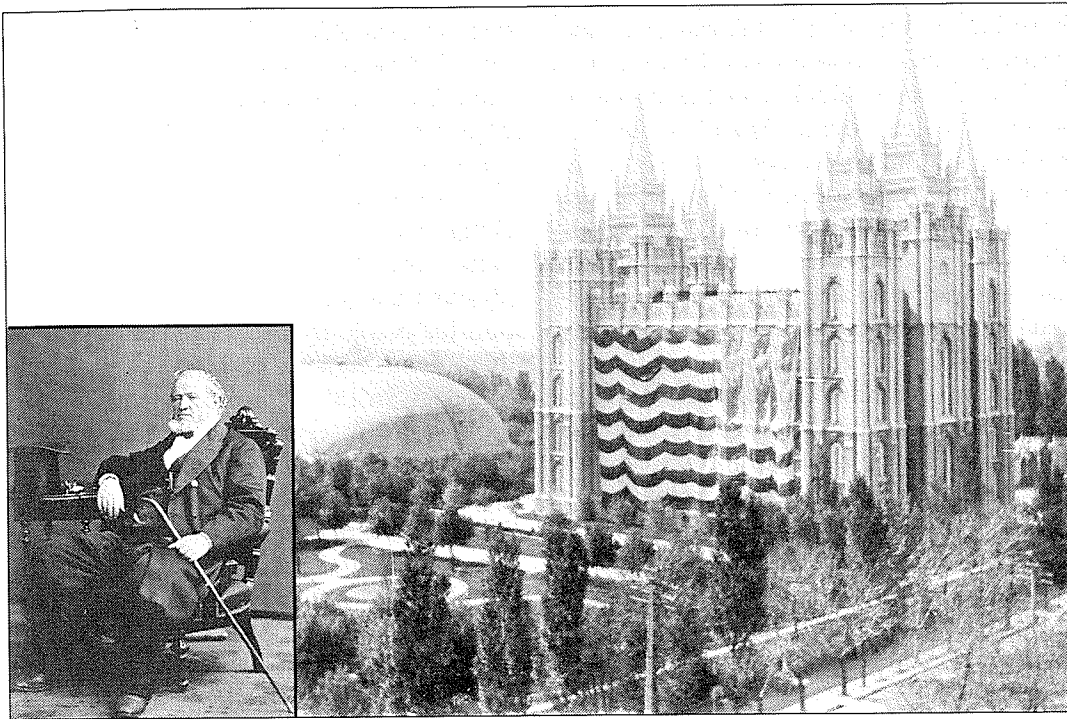
bore him a total of 57 children and nine "nonconnubial" wives whom he took into his household; in addition, he had about 30 women "sealed" to him. Apart from his formidable administrative and practical skills, he appears to have had a talent for mimicry. During the struggle over the succession, before a meeting of 5,000 Saints, he used the accents and mannerisms of Joseph to such effect that many testified they saw the Prophet's mantle fall upon him.

Under Brigham Young's leadership (1844-77), the Utah Mormons rebuilt the Kingdom. Young adopted Joseph Smith's imaginative priestly system to colonize the desert. Through the Perpetual Emigration Fund he brought new Saints from Europe up the Mississippi and across the Plains to the Great Basin. There were serious setbacks when hundreds perished through hunger, disease, and the onset of winter. Young also had to abandon his plan for a Mormon State of Deseret comprising all of present-day Utah and Nevada and parts of Idaho, Wyoming, Arizona, and southern California. But in general the Mormon he-gira proved the most successful attempt at centrally organized settlement since the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony: By the end of the 19th century it had brought in about 90,000 immigrants, mainly from Scandinavia and Britain. During the Mexican-American War of 1848, Young shrewdly offered Washington the services of Mormon volunteers. In 1850, after Mexico ceded Utah and other lands to the United States, he was named governor of the new Utah territory. His generosity was no small factor in the appointment.

This halcyon period of complete autonomy under Young's governorship was not to last. The Prophet's introduction of polygamy had placed his followers in an impossible dilemma. By 1852, the church was no longer able to conceal polygamy from the monogamous majority of the faithful nor

from federal officials, and leaders began to preach "the principle" openly for the first time. Yet once it was out in the open, any hope for autonomy within the Union was doomed. In 1856, the new Republican Party demanded the abolition of polygamy along with slavery as "twin relics of barbarism." The Democrats, not wishing to imply that their support for slavery meant support for polygamy, became equally shrill in their denunciations of Mormon marriage practices. In 1857, convinced that the Mormons were in rebellion, President James Buchanan appointed a new governor of Utah, whom he sent out with an escort of 2,500 troops. Brigham Young called up the Mormon militia, and for several weeks the so-called Mormon War was a stalemate. The whole community began moving by wagon train toward southern Utah until a compromise was reached. The soldiers were posted away from Salt Lake City.

While the U.S. Civil War took the pressure to abandon polygamy off the Mormons, its outcome ensured that the Republicans would eventually address the second of barbarism's "twin relics." As early as July 1862, President Abraham Lincoln had signed the Morrill Anti-bigamy Act into law. In *Reynolds v. The United States* (1879) the Supreme Court stated that religious belief did not allow disobedience of the law. When the Mormon leaders defiantly refused to abandon the practice, Congress passed the Edmunds Act (1882), providing severe penalties for polygamy and "unlawful cohabitation." Though only a minority (about 20 percent) practiced "the principle," and some even hated it, the Saints were unanimous in upholding it. To have done otherwise would have been tantamount to declaring Joseph Smith a false prophet. And when nearly 1,000 men, and some women, were jailed for "unlawful cohabitation," the Saints' memories were stirred, recalling the old anti-Mormon cru-



In 1896, a huge flag was draped across the Salt Lake Temple to celebrate Utah's statehood. Brigham Young, who led the Saints to Utah, is shown in 1876, a year before his death.

sades in Missouri and Illinois.

Yet the church was becoming wealthy. The California Gold Rush and the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad brought thousands of Gentiles into the Great Salt Lake Valley. The Mormons' highly restrictive economy, combining the advantages of private enterprise with those of communal solidarity, fostered community cooperatives, cooperative railroads, textile mills, clothing factories, tanneries, ironworks, furniture factories, and wholesaling and retailing establishments such as ZCMI (Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution)—a name that survives in Salt Lake City's best-known department store. In many of these enterprises the church was a corporate investor. The main source of its wealth, however, was tithing: By the mid-1880s, tithing receipts from the faithful had reached an impressive \$500,000 a year.

It was Zion's worldly wealth that made it vulnerable. In 1887 the antipolygamists in Congress seized the church by the financial and economic jugular: They passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act which, in addition to harsh civil and criminal penalties for polygamists, ordered the dissolution of the Mormon church as a legal corporation and the confiscation of most of its property. The leadership capitulated. In September 1890 President Wilford Woodruff issued the famous Manifesto, in which he stated that the church had stopped teaching plural marriage and would not allow anyone to enter into the practice any more. The Manifesto, which Woodruff privately stated to be a revelation from God, was reluctantly endorsed by the church's General Conference a few days later. The Manifesto finally opened the way to Utah's achieving statehood in 1896.

The surrender was for some years in-

complete: Church leaders continued to practice polygamy in secret, and a number of Mormon colonies were established in Mexico to keep polygamy alive. But the Manifesto marked the beginning of a radical shift in Mormon self-identification during which the Mormons remade themselves into archetypal Americans. In 1904, in order to quell rumors that were threatening to unseat Utah's Senator Reed Smoot, the president of the church, Joseph F. Smith, announced that any member of the church who continued to practice polygamy would be excommunicated. The principle of polygamy was preserved in Mormon theology, but it was reserved for heaven, where all faithful men may enjoy several wives. But state authorities in Utah took the lead in prosecuting earthly polygamists. The campaign reached its climax in 1953, when Arizona officials, allegedly bribed by a \$100,000 payment from the Utah church, raided a polygamous community in southern Utah just across the state line. Fathers were jailed; children were torn from their mothers and placed in foster homes. Most of the nation's press was outraged—except for the church-owned *Deseret News*, which insisted that intervention was justified “both for the welfare of the children and society.” This was an astonishing comment on a divine principle that had been taught by the Prophet and his successor, and for which two generations of Mormons had paid with blood and anguish.

In recent times, the more relaxed sexual climate prevailing in the United States has rendered the prosecution of polygamists much more difficult. There are now said to be at least 20,000 Mormon “fundamentalists” who practice polygamy in Utah, with a smaller number in the neighboring states of Idaho, Arizona, and Montana. The church still excommunicates them and takes steps to ensure that plural marriages are not contracted in the temples.

This *volte face* on polygamy was not the only accommodation the Mormons made. On the economic front the socialist, cooperative enterprises that had been such a major feature of Zion were gradually abandoned. Former objections to the selfishness encouraged by the capitalist system were forgotten. Thus while the 1899 edition of James E. Talmage's authoritative *Articles of Faith* could still describe the church's plan to establish “without force or violence . . . a natural equality, to take the weapons of despotism from the rich, to aid the lowly and the poor,” in later editions these passages were watered down to vague references about “the misuse of wealth.”

By abandoning socialism as well as polygamy—the two shibboleths that had defined the church—the Mormons were able to change from a millennial experiment into a model of the American Dream. The pariahs of the 19th century, after the Great Accommodation of 1890, steadily and by degrees turned themselves into the super-Americans of today.

A century further on, the Mormon conversion to All-Americanism is virtually complete and is perhaps best symbolized by the fact that Brigham Young University (BYU) is a perennial contender in that most American of all pursuits, college football. The Cougars appear to the public at large as perhaps a bit unnaturally squeaky-clean, but no stigma attaches to the school's Mormon character, and indeed one might say that it is barely remarked. To think of the Cougars as, say, the Fighting Mormons, would be absurd.

As the experience of countless other faiths and sects attests, the achievement of affluence and a degree of comfort and acceptance is often achieved at the price of diminishing zeal among the believers and even a marked falling away from the faith. The Mormons have not been immune to

PORTRAITS OF ZION

In its promotional literature, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints carefully projects a clean-cut image of its members: Mormons are presented as hard-working, middle-class folk, with mothers who stay at home to care for their children and youngsters who shun drugs and premarital sex. They lead a life of "quiet competence and self-assurance . . . envied for its closeness," as one Mormon ad put it. Everyone is "always smiling, always happy."

Certainly there is much that is appealing about this vision, promulgated over the years in the church's regular *Reader's Digest* advertising campaign. Converts are streaming to Mormonism—at an average rate of about a quarter of a million annually during the 1980s. (However, researchers believe that up to one-half of all new members become inactive within five years of joining.) The post-World War II era has witnessed a sevenfold increase in membership. The church now claims more than seven million adherents worldwide, four million in the United States alone, where Mormons now outnumber the mainline Episcopalians and Presbyterians. Almost one-third (1.3 million) of the American Saints live in Utah, with other concentrations in California (716,000), Idaho (293,000), Arizona (236,000), Washington (184,000), and Texas (148,000). The largest foreign groups are in Brazil (302,000), Chile (266,000), Peru (159,000), and the Philippines (213,000).

Some of Mormonism's superior qualities are unambiguous. The Word of Wisdom, the official church guidelines governing the behavior of members, contains strictures against alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine that clearly improve quality of life. Studies show that the average Mormon male lives six years longer, and the average Mormon female three years longer, than their Gentile counterparts. The state of Utah (which is at least 70 percent Mormon) ranks 49th in rates of death from cancer and heart disease and dead last in deaths due to cirrhosis of the liver.

But some of the same facets of Mormonism that provide its strength—the obligations to the church, the rigid framework of morality, the strong sense of community—can also be sources of frustration for Saints.

At home, the dual demands of career and church are sometimes a cause of strain. In addition to the many hours of church service each family member is expected to perform,

the pressure to procreate and bring "spirit children" into the world places economic burdens on home life. There are indications that Mormons may be resisting the church's call to have large families. Since 1980, Brad Barber, Utah's state director of data, resources, and demographics, told the *New York Times*, Utah has experienced a "dramatic decline in fertility," from 3.2 to 2.5 births per woman. (The average for all U.S. women remained steady at 1.8.) Mormons are also delaying starting families. During the same period, the mean age of a Utah woman at the birth of her first child increased by more than a full year, to 23.3. But Mormons still tend to have large families: The average Mormon family size is 4.61, more than twice the national average.

Part of the reason for the fertility decline is that Mormon women are joining the general march into the workplace. In 1987, Church President Ezra Taft Benson cautioned women against postponing motherhood, saying that "material possessions, social convenience, and so-called professional advantage are nothing compared to righteous posterity." But the church also urges its members to tithe (10 percent of pretax income) and to foot the bill for their children's two-year mission service (about \$350 monthly per child). As University of Utah business professor Karen Shepard puts it, "When economic imperatives say, 'You work, you work.'" Today, about half of all married Mormon women (compared with 57 percent of their non-Mormon counterparts) work at least part-time outside the home.

The Mormons are, by and large, a prosperous people. Their loyalty and strong work ethic, their "team-player" attitude instilled by long years of experience in church organizations, make Mormons good employees. But the many hours a week devoted to church duties can limit the amount of extra time that can be devoted to a job, thus limiting prospects for promotion. The church does not disclose much data on members' income, but a survey was conducted in the early 1980s and summarized in the Mormon *AMCAP Journal* in 1986 by Kristen L. Goodman and Tim B. Heaton, of the LDS Correlation department and Brigham Young University (BYU), respectively. It showed that almost 47 percent of Mormon households had incomes over \$25,000, and more than nine percent brought in over \$50,000. In the United States as a whole, only

39.5 percent of all households made over \$25,000, and just six percent were in the over-\$50,000 bracket. Thus, while it may not be the norm for a Mormon to achieve the breakthrough success of Kay Whitmore, president, chairman, and CEO of Eastman-Kodak, or U.S. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, it is certainly common for individuals to at least gain the quiet respectability of the middle class.

As Goodman and Heaton point out, the Mormons have not been entirely spared poverty: Like the rest of the nation, they have experienced the "feminization of poverty." Female-headed families, about one-third of them poverty-stricken, are not as rare as one might expect. They comprised five percent of all Mormon households in the early 1980s, compared with about 10 percent of all households nationally. The church does not condone divorce, but it does not excommunicate members if they split up. Utah's divorce rate (4.6 per 1,000 population) is about the same as the national average (4.8). According to the Goodman-Heaton survey, however, about one-third of all Mormon marriages will end in divorce; the national average is 50 percent. Another study, by retired Purdue University sociologist Harold T. Christensen, suggests

that the level of devotion to church practices is closely tied to a given marriage's chances of survival. Christensen found that among couples who married "for time and eternity" in a Mormon temple, the divorce rate was only two per 1,000 couples. By contrast, 13 of every 1,000 marriages performed in civil ceremonies ended in divorce. Christensen believes that puritanical upbringings and the emphasis on early marriage and large families are to blame for many of these failed marriages.

The church devotes a great deal of effort to encouraging the faithful to follow the proper course. From the time they are children, for example, Mormon males are taught to anticipate their mission, usually undertaken at the age of 19. As then-president of the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, Joseph J. Christensen, explained in 1981, "Attraction between the sexes is as strong as ever between the

ages of 19 and 21. We set these young people apart as missionaries and they learn that they can control these drives." The mission also helps to instill Mormon values. LDS statistics indicate that 97 percent of returned missionaries pay tithes and conform to the church's high standards of moral purity. Moreover, 95 percent go on to seal their marriages in temple ceremonies. (Mormons who marry in temple ceremonies tend to be older and better-educated than those who do not, another factor that contributes to the strength of these marriages.) Mormon women don't always see former missionaries as ideal mates. "For two years they have been mouthing canned sentences like programmed mannequins," complained one female BYU graduate student in *Newsweek*, and J. Bonner Ritchie, a psychologist at the university, agrees that many "have a hard time analyzing complex issues or coping

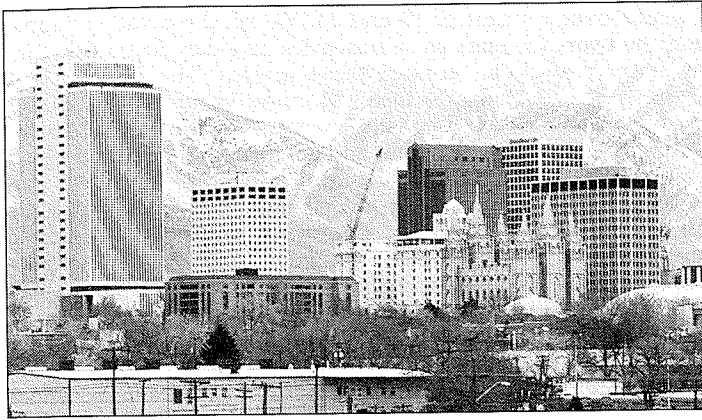
with intellectual ambiguity." Nevertheless, 64 percent of the men marry within three years of completing their mission, nearly one-third within 12 months. Many of them find mates at BYU, where half the upperclassmen are returned missionaries. Not surprisingly, about 45 percent of BYU's freshman women don't return for sophomore year, many

because they have married and begun having children.

How close to reality the ideal promoted in *Reader's Digest* finally seems largely depends on which group of Mormons one looks at. Robert Gottlieb and Peter Wiley, in their 1984 book *America's Saints*, identified at least eight distinct segments of Mormon society, ranging from Iron Rodders, who "see God's hand, through the Prophet, in everything and search for the right way to enter the Celestial Kingdom," to "ex-Mormons, not necessarily excommunicated Mormons, but all those who have made their break in one form or another, both with the church and with their cultural birthright." In between lies a vast group of adherents who "maintain a delicate balance between the church and the outside world, between faith and knowledge, change and compromise, expectation and reality."



Pioneer Park, in Salt Lake City.



The Salt Lake City skyline: The tower at left houses the church's administrative headquarters; at right is the Salt Lake Temple.

this tendency, yet it is remarkable how successfully the church has sustained itself and grown. Now, however, its very strength is stirring up problems of a different kind. The church's phenomenal success in finding new converts to the faith in the Third World may eventually threaten its efforts to sustain itself at home.

All of this, however, seems far away from the clean, well-tended streets of Salt Lake City. Here in the Mormon heartland, the All Mormon—Utah is perhaps 70 percent Mormon—and the All American seem to coexist comfortably. Yet there are just enough pieces that do not fit to remind one that the merger is not quite complete—the oddly futuristic neo-Gothic and neo-Baroque mélange of the Salt Lake City Temple, the recorded bird songs that accompany the WALK signs at pedestrian crossings to inform the blind that they may proceed in safety, and the almost Swiss tidiness of the downtown area.

It is instructive to compare the Latter-day Saints with members of other conservative American sects or denominations. Superficially, there does not seem to be much to distinguish them. The style of dress is not very different from what one might find among Southern Baptists, for example, ex-

cept perhaps that it is a little more formal: suits for men, with button-down collars and ties; print dresses for women with short sleeves and high necklines designed to cover the mysterious temple garments—a kind of body stocking stretching from below the neck to above the knee and embroidered with cabalistic symbols—that both genders must wear to protect them from evil. The antiseptic look one encounters in Mor-

mon homes, with everything just right and few objects suggestive of personal idiosyncrasy or supererogatory pleasure, is not far from the “sparkling linoleum and perfect teeth” that journalist Frances FitzGerald found in Lynchburg, Virginia, the power base of TV preacher Jerry Falwell.

The values of Mormons and Christian fundamentalists are virtually identical. Mormons support the family, hard work, sobriety, and patriotism. They are against anything that smacks of “permissiveness”—such as abortion, homosexuality, premarital sex, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and gambling. Dress and honor codes at BYU, Mormondom's intellectual bastion, would, with minor changes, fit Jerry Falwell's Liberty University: short hair for men, modest garb for women, no drink, drugs, homosexuality, or sex outside marriage.

BYU's students, however, appear a good deal more chic and confident than Liberty's: Smart shirts, designer jeans, and elegant midlength dresses fall within the code. About 30 percent of BYU's 27,000 undergraduates are married, which helps solve the problem of sex. In fact, many Mormons from the diaspora attend BYU primarily to choose the mates to whom they shall be sealed unto eternity. The BYU

undergraduates receive a much better academic education than their counterparts at Liberty University. "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge," the Prophet Joseph said, and Mormons want to be saved. The nation of farmers Brigham Young created in the intermountain West is now one of the most highly educated denominations in the United States, along with Jews and Episcopalians. This is one of the larger reasons for the Mormons' notable material success in this world. In the race to join the ranks of the middle class, they are well ahead of the fundamentalists.

It is here, in fact, that a second crucial difference between Latter-day Saints and conservative Christians lies. When members of other conservative churches move up the social and economic ladder, they often switch denominations in a liberal direction: Southern Baptists now living in the affluent parts of Dallas become Methodists or Presbyterians; middle-class Catholics in Massachusetts suburbs forsake their Irish priests for Congregationalist ministers. Some middle-class, educated Mormons do drift away from the church, but they rarely apostasize to the extent of joining another denomination. A person who ceases to attend sacrament meetings or to visit the temple may still remain a "cultural" Mormon, just as a nonobservant Jew will confidently continue to regard himself as a Jew.

This distinctive Mormon cultural identity is partly sustained by kinship. Between 1880 and 1960, after the first wave of convert-immigrants had settled down in Utah, Mormonism grew less by conversion than by natural increase. By 1960, there were still only 1.7 million Mormons, an increase of slightly more than tenfold stretched over 80 years. (The Mormons now number 7.3 million thanks to an energetic global proselytizing effort.) Bounded by geography and the sense of being a persecuted people apart, the Saints created a kind of nation

within the United States in which the ties of culture and faith were reinforced by intermarriage. Most of the General Authorities were the sons or grandsons of pioneer stock. Families of pioneering stock tend to be interrelated, constituting an elite that runs the church and dominates the wider community. One may almost speak of a Mormon patrician class that regards Zion as its fiefdom.

In this patriarchal society, family authority is contained within and buttressed by the church. Other churches are conservative in their attitude toward male-female relations: Christian fundamentalists everywhere cite St. Paul's directive to the Ephesians (5:22,23) that wives must submit to their husbands "for the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church." But Mormon theology takes female subordination a step further by denying women the priesthood of all believers and by insisting that Mormons gain "exaltation" primarily from their roles as parents. "Unsealed" or childless men and women have an inferior status in the afterlife, where they will act as ministering angels to their more fortunate brethren and sisters. The stress on homemaking is compounded by the perfectionism into which fundamentalists, secure in God's grace, may sometimes lapse: Homes must be super-clean, meals must always be wholesome and regular, children well-behaved and perfectly turned out. Not surprisingly, as occasional newspaper and television stories attest, for some Mormon women the stresses endured at home finally become intolerable.

The church's authority is maintained by a strong set of obligations imposed upon the Saints. Until recently, the average Mormon household had duties that would engage at least one family member every day of the week: the Women's Relief Society, the Young Women's or Young Men's Mu-

tual Improvement Association, ward, priesthood, Sunday School, and sacrament meetings. In addition to these regular duties adult Mormons are required to make "home teaching" visits to other LDS households at least once a month; by these means "weaker brethren" who are lagging in the faith have every possibility of being led back into the fold by their peers. All told, an observant Mormon family may still devote about 14 hours a week to church-related activities.

Mormons are expected not only to participate, but to administer and lead. "If anyone gets to be 35 and hasn't been president of something, there's something wrong with him," observes Sterling McMurrin. "The church puts a great deal of stress on standardization and organization The administrative ability of the average Mormon is very strong because a Mormon kid starts to be an administrator when he is six or seven years old."

The communal, village traditions of the 19th-century Saints survive in the Mormon ward, which has been successfully adapted

to the suburbs where most Mormons now live. The average ward consists of about 250 people—a small enough group for members to know each other by name. In the Utah heartland, most members are fourth- or fifth-generation Mormons, all from the same vicinity. Ward houses serve as community centers. They are equipped with basketball courts and other recreational facilities for the young. The ward bishops have their offices there, where they hear confessions; counsel parents, children, divorcees, and singles; and conduct the annual interviews for temple "recommends." Many social and leisure activities are built around the ward: fundraisers, scouting expeditions for the boys, high school graduation parties. The ward is an extended family; through it, people share their triumphs, their anxieties, and their aspirations.

At a ward Sunday sacrament meeting an outsider can taste Mormonism in both its blandest and most bizarre manifestations. The chapel or meeting house is usually plain, clean, and somewhat Scandinavian

THE WORLD BEYOND SALT LAKE CITY

Mormon missionaries, as seen by James Fallows, in U.S. News & World Report (May 2, 1988).

The most forlorn-looking foreigners in Japan are the Mormon missionaries. Apart from sumo wrestlers, they're the easiest people in the country to pick out. Shorthaired and typically blond young American men, dressed in dark pants and plain white shirts, usually pushing a bicycle with one hand while holding religious books in the other, can't exactly melt into the Asian mass.

At first I was inclined to view the Mormons the way the Japanese seem to: as well-meaning young people whose perseverance was admirable, but who should stop trying to convert the natives since the natives were plainly uninterested. I would still lay heavy odds against Mormonism's ever becoming a force in Japan.

But I've come to respect what the mis-

sion experience does for the young Mormons. Soon after their 19th birthday, most Mormon young men spend two years as missionaries. (Very few young women went on missions until the 1970s; now they make up about one-eighth of the total.) About two-thirds go to other countries, while the rest work in the United States. Nearly all live on family savings—in addition to saving for college, Mormon families put money away for their sons' mission years.

Many of the missionaries are from small towns in the most inward-looking parts of the United States; they are plunked into a foreign society and, unlike most American businessmen or soldiers, are expected to deal with foreigners in the local language all day, every day. Language skill is the most

(in marked contrast to the temples, where a blend of more ornate styles of futurism hold sway). The pews are filled with children, neatly dressed, the girls in frocks, the boys in shorts and socks. There are hymns and prayers, of course, but individuals also address the meeting: A music student plays her instrument; a leader from a Mormon Boy Scout troop gives a halting account of a weekend camp; a visitor from the capital says how happy he is to be back among kin. It all seems strangely unspiritual, yet typically American in the celebration of success and achievement, in the open, sometimes sentimental, expression of feeling in public. But suddenly Mormon peculiarity appears. A bereaved parent expresses, without apparent signs of grief, the certainty that a lost child is happily ensconced in the Celestial Kingdom; a man testifies that he "saw" and "spoke with" his deceased great-grandfather. Saints speak of the dead as if they were living, in a way that reveals the Mormon worldview in all its concreteness and materiality.

Of necessity, the extraordinary bonds of

faith and collective cultural identity that make Mormon networks so effective also separate the Saints from even their neighbors. The formal boundaries between Mormon and Gentile are drawn by the Word of Wisdom, an advisory revelation from Joseph Smith that counsels the Saints not only against alcohol and tobacco but also tea and coffee. Sainly indulgences tend to focus on ice cream and other sweet things. At Christmastime the windows of ZCMI, the church-owned department store in Salt Lake City, are filled with displays of Utah's canyons and mountains done in sugar and sweets.

The Word of Wisdom may inhibit close social contacts between Mormon and Gentile, but it allows Mormon communities to flourish in the most unlikely places. Thus a substantial community of Saints thrives in the midst of the Babylonian glitter of Las Vegas. On the other hand, the church's evangelical agenda encourages friendship with the unsaved. Mormons are urged to use their social contacts with Gentiles to proselytize, by doing such favors as baby-

obvious result of their foreign exposure. Of the Americans I've met in Asia who can operate deftly and successfully in the local language, a disproportionate number have been Mormons. The country's highest density of foreign-language skills is not in Cambridge or Berkeley but on the BYU campus. Brigham Young University, where 95 percent of the students are Mormon, teaches 46 languages. Of the 27,000 students, an astonishing 1,000 can speak Chinese, Korean, or some other Asian language. If the U.S. is worrying about how to cope with a confusing, multilingual, Asian-ascendant world, the Mormons are well equipped to help.

But the missionaries learn something more than language. Like most Peace Corps veterans, returned missionaries often seem to have changed when they come home. Mormonism is of course an evangelical faith. But compared with members of other

true-believer religions, former Mormon missionaries are in my experience more tolerant, less preachy, more willing to listen and gently persuade. It would be hard to be preachy after living among Chinese or Indians who have gotten along for thousands of years before Christ with their own gods and see no reason to change now.



The former missionaries also seem deepened simply because they've had to give two years of their lives to a cause other than advancing their own careers. I think that their missions make America a wiser, more competitive country and certain Americans stronger, better people.

sitting, running errands, and lending lawnmowers.

Mormons are inclined to speak two languages, one for Saints, the other for Gentiles. Insider discourse may indirectly question dogma while celebrating it with a common fund of jest and allusion; outsider discourse tends toward affirmation and apology. When argument is exhausted, even Mormon intellectuals will startle outsiders by stating that the Book of Mormon is true because they have received a personal testimony to that effect. The ramparts of Zion may be invisible, but they still form a barrier between Mormon and Gentile. Few non-Mormons are aware of the extent to which, behind the glass walls that separate them from Gentiles, sacred nostrums may be questioned by the Saints or ironically celebrated. Cartoonists such as Calvin Grondahl of the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* and Pat Bagley of the *Salt Lake Tribune* (see p. 45) mercilessly satirize Mormon life in books that sell thousands of copies. Nothing is treated as sacred, from the flour that Mormon housewives store in their cellars in preparation for Armageddon to the eternal destiny awaiting overweight sundae guzzlers in the Cholesterol Kingdom.

As fulcrums of authority and personal ties, the wards and stakes of Zion support formidable human networks. In 1977 and '78, for example, Mormon Relief Society ladies were bused in droves to states all over the Union to help defeat the Equal Rights Amendment. When a sudden thaw in the spring of 1983 caused massive flooding (and \$200 million in damages) in Utah, Mormon volunteers rushed forward to fill sandbags, build makeshift barriers, and remove mud. Governor Scott M. Matheson boasted: "The Mormon church has the best grapevine in the world. One phone call to the church . . . [and] the people come out in droves."

The church's grapevine is also highly ef-

fective in business (see box, p. 43) and politics. In Washington, D.C., Saints have been prominent since one of Utah's first senators, Reed Smoot, became the trusted friend of Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover. The Saints in the nation's capital may be less numerous than members of other denominations, but they are more tightly organized. Using the jargon of their profession, CIA officers speak of a "sisterhood" of personal connections among the 50,000 Latter-day Saints in the Washington area with links in all branches of the administration. The network came to attention during the Watergate scandal, when it was found that E. Howard Hunt, one of President Richard Nixon's "plumbers," had recruited some young BYU graduates as spies. Three Mormons have held influential posts in the Bush administration: National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, Roger Porter, presidential assistant for domestic and economic policy, and the president's former scheduler, Steve Studdert. All three are reputed to be workaholics.

As one would expect, Mormon influence is generally exercised on the right. On Capitol Hill the voting records of Jake Garn and Orrin Hatch, Utah's two Mormon (and Republican) senators, testify to a consistent support for conservative causes, though Hatch has recently begun to concern himself with child-care issues. But when a conflict arises between the clarion calls of Mormondom and patriotism, Zion may prevail. A classic example occurred during the early 1980s when the U.S. Air Force wanted to place 200 MX nuclear missiles on underground railroad tracks in the Utah-Nevada desert. Normally hawkish Mormons rebelled. President Spencer Kimball complained that "one segment of the population would bear a highly disproportionate share of the burden . . . in the case of attack." President Ronald Reagan appointed a special committee to study the

LDS, INC.

In Salt Lake City, the church headquarters building towers over the temple. It is a bit of symbolism that few have missed.

The church publishes no annual budget, but it is clearly a massive economic enterprise. John Heinerman and Anson Shupe estimate in *The Mormon Corporate Empire* (1985) that the church had total assets of \$7.9 billion in 1983 and income of \$2 billion. That would put it on a par (in terms of income) with the likes of DuPont and Mobil Oil. Yet Mormon leaders draw salaries more like those of Japanese corporate executives than American ones: Then-President Spencer W. Kimball was paid perhaps \$75,000.

The church's assets include temples and lesser meetinghouses around the globe; Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, and other educational facilities; historical properties such as the original Joseph Smith farm in Manchester, N.Y.; a large portfolio of stocks and bonds; massive cattle ranches and other agribusiness enterprises in Utah and other states; commercial real estate; and various media properties. Besides the Salt Lake City *Deseret News*, which serves as a "house" newspaper, the church owns two major television stations in the West, KSL-TV in Salt Lake City and KIRO-TV in Seattle, and profitable radio stations in Salt Lake City, Seattle, New York City, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, and San Francisco.

But by far the largest source of income for the church is still the tithes and offerings of the faithful. These accounted for about 75 percent of the church's income in 1983, according to Heinerman and Shupe. Despite an apparent decline in the proportion of Mormons who pay the full 10 percent tithe, giving still "amounts to a large share of church revenues because many [Mormons] give beyond their tithe share. Such dedicated members believe that if they give more, the Lord will be more generous in return." The church can also count on the generosity of a number of wealthy members, such as hotel magnate J. Willard Marriott.

The church's prosperity helped fuel the past decade's enormous growth in membership, and some believe that the impoverished converts of Latin America will strain the church's financial resources, especially if they rely upon the church's generous charities. But Mormon values may also do for the converts what they did for the founders. "Among the Mormons," scholar Leonard J. Arrington writes, "things temporal have always been important along with things eternal, for salvation in this world and the next is seen as one and the same continuing process of endless growth. Building Zion, a literal Kingdom of God on Earth, has therefore meant an identity of religious and economic values."

matter, and it was decided that Wyoming would be a more suitable site. The committee's chairman was Brent Scowcroft.

In Utah, the church's political influence is so pervasive that it does not even need to take a public stand on certain issues. The Utah state legislature, which is virtually all male and Mormon, recently passed the most restrictive antiabortion law in the United States. The church said nothing: The legislators knew where it stood.

One should not imagine, however, that Mormonism remains monolithic and unchanging. Affluence and education have taken a certain toll of Mormon certitude, as some Saints retreat

from the obligations of Mormon worship—it is said (though this is difficult to confirm) that fewer than half of the Mormons in Salt Lake City are tithing—while others question the lore and legends upon which the faith is built.

Official church history, for example, has come under increasingly skeptical scrutiny. In 1966, a group of Mormon scholars established the Mormon History Association and sought access to the thousands of historical documents that the church had placed off-limits. In 1972, the hierarchy appointed Leonard J. Arrington, a Utah State University economist and one of the founders of the association, as church historian. With a team of historians, Arrington set out to pro-

duce a detailed, 16-volume history of the church, using all the documents that had been hidden away in the church's archives. Before many years had elapsed, as Robert Lindsey writes in *A Gathering of Saints* (1988), "Word was passed to Arrington's historians that they were going too far, that some of their research was bordering on betrayal of the church . . . [T]he General Authorities complained directly to the historians that their scholarship too often depicted early leaders of the church in ways that they said would diminish their stature in the eyes of contemporary Mormons." In 1980, the General Authorities canceled the plans for the multivolume history. The church's history department was transferred to BYU, where it could be more closely controlled, and important archives were closed. "Those of you who are employed by the church have a special responsibility to build faith, not destroy it," conservative Apostle Boyd K. Packer told the historians. "If you do not do that, but in fact accommodate the enemy, who is a destroyer of faith, you become in that sense a traitor to the cause you have made covenants to protect."

The depth of the hierarchy's anxiety over historical matters was revealed later in the 1980s, when church leaders became entangled in an embarrassing case involving forged documents. One of these documents was a letter purportedly written by a close friend of Joseph Smith's indicating that magic (in the form of a white salamander) rather than revelation had led Joseph to the golden plates that he translated into the Book of Mormon. Church officials acquired the so-called salamander letter and other documents, apparently fearing that they might be real and intending to conceal them from the inquiring eyes of scholars. The incident came to light when Mark Hofmann, the man who sold the letters, began trying to cover his tracks by killing off the

intermediaries with letter bombs. He murdered two people and seriously injured himself.

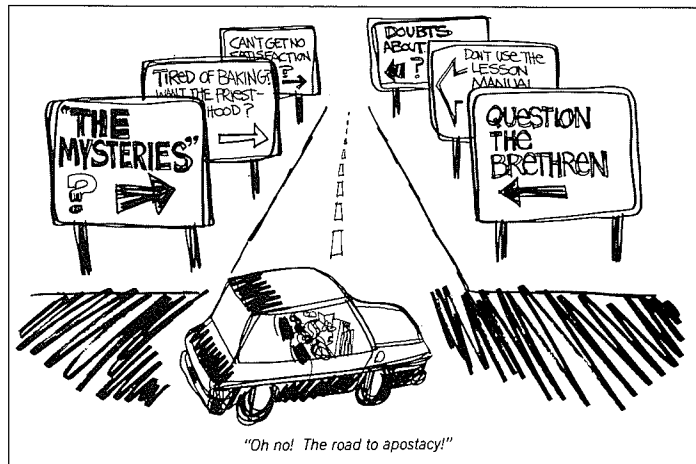
Yet the church has also continued to accept, and, at arm's length, to endorse, the New Mormon History, which still flourishes, though it is more restricted than in the past. The church seems to prefer to have it both ways. After all, the combined circulation of *Sunstone* and *Dialogue*, the principal magazines of the Mormon intelligentsia, is only some 10,000; the church puts the number of converts entering the church each year at more than 300,000. The church's evangelical organs are inclined to treat potential converts to a version of the Mormon saga that overlooks the more complex historical facts. Visitors to Hill Cumorah, where Joseph claimed to have found the golden plates, are treated to the "world's largest pageant" where a thousand Mormon volunteers re-enact a Disneyland version of the Joseph Smith story using a battery of special effects, including an audio system that digitally processes the voice of God to 15,000 megawatts.

In Protestant churches where the demands of the liberal elite conflict with the more populist, evangelical agenda, the tensions have usually led to denominational splits. Such problems are now dividing the Southern Baptist Convention. The Mormon church, however, is much stronger institutionally than any Protestant church of comparable size. Ecclesiastically, it combines the congregational ballast of Protestantism—the priesthood of all (male) believers—with the elasticity that Catholicism derives from tradition and hierarchy. Priesthood in Mormonism is not confined to a sacerdotal class somehow independent of society, like the celibate Catholic priesthood. It is distributed through the whole active male membership. Power in

Mormondom is both authoritarian and democratic, elitist and populist. Faced with the competing claims of the liberal intelligentsia and the evangelical wing represented by the missionary program, the church has a strategy of trying to honor both. Thus in response to a low-key campaign by Mormon women and a desire to gain more ecumenical acceptance from other Protestant churches (many of which regard Mormonism as a non-Christian "cult"), the church recently amended the temple ceremonies. Women are no longer required to pledge obedience to their husbands. A ritual in which non-Mormon clergy are portrayed as the hirelings of Satan has been eliminated. These measures have been welcomed by liberals, without seeming to cause too much disquiet among conservatives.

The strategy seems, by and large, to work. In an article some years ago, the *Denver Post* quoted a Salt Lake City Mormon named Kathy Vernon, who said, "The problems of history and doctrine are interesting and amusing, but they are not earth-shaking and they do not affect the fact that my Young Women's girls are making decisions in high school on whether or not to go to college, or on how to be a good person, or on how to make a contribution in society. And that is the level that my religion takes in my life."

Yet her approach was not one of pure pragmatism. Every month, the *Post* reported, Vernon went to the Salt Lake City Temple, showed her identity card, changed in a basement locker room to clothes of purest white, and took part in Mormon ceremonies for the dead.



Inside humor: Mormons frequently have a few laughs at their own expense thanks to Salt Lake Tribune cartoonist Pat Bagley.

"To me," she said, "going to the temple is one of those things I do because I believe in the church—maybe not understand it completely—but believe in it."

Typical of the church hierarchy's shrewd handling of change was the "correlation" drive of the 1970s. Partly in deference to the increasing number of Mormons living in the diaspora who found it hard to meet their commitments, correlation reduced the demands on Mormon leisure time. Activities formerly spread over the week were consolidated into a three-hour "block" session on Sundays. A Monday Family Home Evening, in which parents and children gather for prescribed prayer and family activities, was instituted to ensure that Mormon men, who devote much of their free time to church-related activities, spend time with their families. But correlation also reduced the autonomy of the wards and the scope of their activities, limiting, in the eyes of many, freedom of action for women as well as the range and diversity of the "cultural Mormonism" that some of the elite lean on to reinforce their faith. Sunday school lessons from the scriptures were coordinated for the whole church. More recently, the changes have been fol-

lowed up by a turning of the financial screws: Wards no longer raise part of their own budgets but instead receive a fixed per capita subsidy from Salt Lake City.

Ironically, the church's successful navigation through the perils of its material success in this country may be most jeopardized by its spiritual success abroad. Since the 1970s, the church has aggressively sought converts in the Third World. Unlike missionaries from other churches, career professionals who devote as much money and energy to caring for the needy as to the saving of souls, Mormon missionaries are all volunteers, mostly young men aged 19 or 20. For them the two years of missionary work, with the rigorous boot-camp-style training preceding it, is a rite of passage between graduation and marriage, adolescence and adult life. Their remit is conversion, not the elimination of suffering. The number of missionaries continues to grow—about one-third of the eligible males volunteer. There are now some 40,000 in the field, and they produce results, especially in Latin America.

The astonishing revelation that was vouchsafed to President Spencer Kimball in 1978, admitting blacks to the priesthood after years of bitter controversy, opened the way toward a radical shift in the church's composition. In 1970, 82 percent of church members resided in the United States or Canada; by 1989, the proportion had declined to 59 percent. At the current rate of growth, only 43 percent of Mormons will live in North America by the turn of the century. More than half will reside in the Third World, 40 percent of them in Latin America.

The "browning" of the church has serious financial implications. Because of the decline of tithing in the heartland, more of the money for the church's growing evangelical efforts abroad will have to be pro-

vided by income from investments. The shift of focus toward the newly converted also has theological consequences. As the young Mormon missionaries compete for souls in the religious marketplace with evangelists from other churches, the uniqueness of the Mormon tradition—its primitivist heterodoxy, its 19th-century progressive humanism dressed in biblical garb—seems likely to come under increasing strain. Already, faced with hostile religious propaganda from evangelical Protestants, the church is de-emphasizing the more heterodox aspects of Mormon theology, such as the progress toward godhood and the carnality of Jesus. Emphasis is placed on the Book of Mormon, which belongs to the earlier more "Christian" phase of Joseph Smith's career, before his inventiveness, and that of his more imaginative followers, took Mormon theology into more exotic realms.

As it approaches the Christian bimillennial, the LDS church can expect to face tensions in several areas. The most pressing is likely to be the conflict between ethnic Mormons and the nonwhite converts, especially in Latin America. Some ethnic Mormons, secure in an identity buttressed by culture and kinship, are beginning to demand liberalization of practice and doctrine. As in other American churches, the issues of women in the priesthood, the rights of gay people, and the needs of the growing number of singles in the church are coming to prominence. It cannot be long before awkward questions about marriage, sexuality, and even social justice are raised in sacrament meetings and Sunday school.

Like the conservatives in Rome around Pope John Paul II, the white-haired Mormon leaders around 91-year-old President Ezra Taft Benson know that theological liberalism, especially in sexual matters, must weaken the moral hold that bishops have

over their wards. And liberalization in these areas would run counter to the requirements of an expanding Third World church. While a sizable proportion of the ethnic Mormon elite may want a Mormonism that no longer seems stuck in the 1950s, the Latin converts want something closer to the version in the church's *Reader's Digest* advertisements. They are, to continue the Catholic analogy, more Catholic than the pope.

The Mormons' Yankee image may invite the distrust and enmity of some Latins, but it is also a source of attraction: For every Mexican or Bolivian who hates America, there is someone who wants to make it across the fence to El Norte. Although the church can no longer offer the benefits of physical transportation to Zion through the Perpetual Emigration Fund, it can appeal to these sentiments vicariously—offering clean, American-looking meeting houses, exotic futurist temples equipped with high-tech video displays, and a theology that above all else canonizes the family, providing the convert with a sense of kinship.

The sexual differentiation at the heart of the temple ceremonies and the exclusion of women from the priesthood are far from being obstacles to conversion in a culture

steeped in machismo. To relinquish these distinctions would make Mormonism more liberal than the Catholicism from which most of the Latin converts are refugees. It is not liberalism—with its ethic of individual choice in politics, lifestyle, or destiny—that converts in Latin America seek when they join the LDS or other evangelical churches. What they want, like the new fundamentalists everywhere, is certainty and the sense of community that certainty brings. Nor are the new converts, as they grow in the church, likely to be interested in recovering the socialist legacy of Mormonism that intrigues some of the faith's intellectuals. The supercapitalist image of Mormonism, the hope it offers of wealth and worldly betterment, is precisely its appeal.

Will the ethnic Mormons loosen their leverage on power, allowing the newly converted to rise to the top? Short of a major institutional upheaval, this seems unlikely, at least for the foreseeable future. In a new spiritualized version of the church's teaching, "Zion is wherever there are Saints." But for the gerontocrats and corporation men who run the church, Zion is still as concrete and tangible as the church offices that rise above the Salt Lake Temple, dwarfing its granite pinnacles.

BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE MORMONS' PROGRESS

For Latter-day Saints, "once upon a time" was yesterday. Perhaps a majority of today's adult Saints grew up in a different universe, one insulated from the larger culture, a world that was divided between "them" and "us." Young Saints learned how to recognize "the other" before they learned their ABCs. Today much of this has changed: "By 1980," writes religious historian Martin Marty, "the Mormons had grown to be...like everyone else in America."

That earlier Mormon-Gentile dichotomy dominated the literature of Mormonism until the middle of this century. Works about the Saints could be conveniently divided into pro- and anti-Mormon categories. Joseph Smith, the founder of the faith, was either a prophet or a profiteer—a religious genius, divinely called to lead a new dispensation, or a humbug, an outright fraud. Those who responded to his call were either progenitors of a new chosen people, called out from among the nations, or simply followers of a compelling charismatic figure whose message was nothing but a Christian heresy.

After World War II, a new type of Mormon literature came into existence: Well-trained Mormon scholars started examining critically their own history and culture, and non-Mormon scholars began investigating Mormonism without preconceptions. This new age in Mormon studies was ushered in by the publication between 1945 and 1958 of four remarkable books: **No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet** by Fawn McKay Brodie, **The Mountain Meadows Massacre** by Juanita Brooks, **The Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900** by Leonard J. Arrington, and **The Mormons** by Thomas F. O'Dea. Taken together, they illustrate the change that occurred in Mormon studies as the "olden days" slowly started to pass away.

Fawn Brodie was reared in Utah. As a niece of David O. McKay, who became president of the LDS Church in 1951, she had grown up among the LDS elite. But she departed from Zion when she went to study literature at the

University of Chicago. Her beautifully written biography of the prophet was published in 1945 when she was only 25, but it was the work of a mature scholar and represented the first genuine effort to come to grips with the contradictory evidence about Smith's early life. The canonized history of LDS beginnings is contained in the first six volumes of the **Documentary History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** (edited by B. H. Roberts, 1907–1930). Brodie used non-Mormon sources as well as the evidence in the *Documentary History* to reach a noncanonical conclusion: Smith was a gifted young farmer who dabbled in folk magic and made up a story about golden plates that he himself later came to believe. The Saints were exceedingly offended by this interpretation, and Brodie was excommunicated. But the influence of her book could not be expunged.

Mormonism, unlike other modern religions, is a faith cast in the form of history. Thus, at one time, any "profane" (i.e. secular) investigation of that history was like trespassing on forbidden ground. Causing nearly as much stir as Brodie was Juanita Brooks in her investigation of *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (1950). In 1857, during the Utah Mormon War, a group of Mormons and Indians had murdered every adult in a California-bound wagon train as it tried to pass through southern Utah. Brooks came to distrust the official LDS accounts, which denied complicity in the terrible tragedy. She retrieved the story piecemeal from pioneer letters and diaries and interviews with Saints whose ancestors had participated in the tragedy. She explained the actions of both victims and perpetrators in terms of wartime hysteria, which vividly evoked the intensity of the "them" and "us" mindset on both sides.

Unlike Brodie, Brooks continued to affirm her faith in public and, perhaps for that reason, managed to maintain her standing in the church. She became living proof that a Mormon historian need not ignore evidence that placed individual Mormons and their church in a bad light.

Leonard Arrington's *The Great Basin King-*

dom (1958) explained much of Mormon history up to 1900 in terms of the marketplace. The Saints were able to make "the desert blossom as the rose" not because "the Lord caused his face to shine on them," nor even because they were worthy and hardworking, but because Salt Lake City became an entrepôt for would-be miners traveling to the California gold rush. Arrington's interpretation sounds hardly shocking to non-Mormons now, but Church Apostle Boyd K. Packer even today instructs Mormon students to "see the hand of the Lord in every hour and every moment of the church from its beginning till now." Despite being an active churchman, Arrington told the Mormon story using the kind of explanations that would have described ordinary human beings just as well as they did chosen people living in the promised land.

Brooks and Arrington thus set the pattern for "the New Mormon History," which has now become the standard academic approach to the Mormon past. The independent university presses—particularly the University of Illinois Press—became the usual publishers for this approach that did not question the legitimacy of Mormonism but required scholars to place the

movement in context and to use the full range of available resources and analytical techniques. Two outstanding

general histories written in this new objective vein were James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard's **The Story of the Latter-day Saints** (Deseret Books, 1976) and Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton's **The Mormon Experience** (Knopf, 1979).

The remaining work in the original quartet of studies, Thomas F. O'Dea's *The Mormons* (1957), was not history so much as it was a cul-

tural inquiry. O'Dea, a Roman Catholic sociologist, analyzed the Mormon belief system, arguing that, as Tolstoy had asserted years before, Mormonism is "the American religion," impossible to understand apart from the culture of its time. "Mormonism represents a theological version of the American attitude of practical activism," O'Dea wrote. It "elaborated an American theology of self-deification through effort, an active transcendentalism of achievement."

The new era in Mormon studies was thriving by the mid-1960s when *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* was launched. This independent periodical treated controversial topics and welcomed Mormon and non-Mormon points of view. Church officials were obviously uncomfortable when *Dialogue* intellectuals confronted issues such as the prohibition against black priests, but they did not interfere. Their policy of toleration was further tested when a group of Brigham Young University students started the more radical *Sunstone*, which was willing to publish articles about the subservient role of Mormon women and the murky origins of the Book of Mormon.

Today, one of the controversial areas in Mormon studies follows in the tradition started by Thomas O'Dea, trying to fit Mormon history into the context of American culture. Lawrence Foster's **Religion and Sexuality** (Oxford Univ., 1981), for example, shows that in 19th-century America the Mormons were far from alone in sexual experimentation. From the Shakers, who tried to give up sex altogether, to the Oneida community, which practiced a complex free-love system, there was in the new democracy a general search for alternatives to traditional family structures.

Foster's (and O'Dea's) question—where do Mormons fit in the spectrum of American culture and history?—is one of the great controversies among the historians of Mormonism today. At one end of the debate is Mark Leone's **The Roots of Modern Mormonism** (Harvard, 1983), which makes the Marxist argument that Mormonism is "a religion for subordinates which serves to maintain their condition intact." At the other end is Kenneth H. Winn's **Exiles in a Land of Liberty** (Univ. of N.C., 1989), which sees the Saints and their opponents as siblings in a new republic, both claiming to embody republican ideology, both decry-



ing "the growing economic inegalitarianism of Jacksonian society."

Klaus J. Hansen's **Mormonism and the American Experience** (Univ. of Chicago, 1984) makes the interesting and important point that Mormonism was merely temporally "out of step with [American] social reality." Although the early Mormons were "building their antimodern kingdom of God," Hansen says, even in the 19th century they were already developing "those modern habits of initiative and self-discipline that helped dig the grave of the kingdom and ushered in a new breed of Mormon thoroughly at home in the corporate economy of America." Hansen concludes that it is "nothing less than a modern miracle" that "within a generation a people that had been the very epitome of an antibourgeois mentality became one of the mainstays of the American middle-class culture."

A final important category of Mormon studies is that which considers Mormonism first and foremost as a religion. Sterling M. McMurrin's **Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion** (Univ. of Utah, 1965) compares Mormonism to other religious movements in the Western world. McMurrin describes Mormonism as a form of Christianity that could well have emerged in ancient times

if St. Paul had not challenged the Jewish Apostle Peter for leadership of the Christian community. My own **Mormonism: The Story of A New Religious Tradition** (Univ. of Ill., 1985) argues that Mormonism is related to existing forms of Christianity (and Judaism) in much the way that early Christianity was related to the Hebrew tradition of its day.

When we compare Mormonism to other religions we can see why the historical transformations within the church were not the "fault" of the U.S. government or any other agency. Those transformations are changes that take place in every religion as it learns to live "in the world but not of it." The Saints are no longer all gathered into their own kingdom in the West. They are everywhere and, like the early Christians, they have had to learn to live in the world. As late as midcentury, being born a Mormon was analogous, in relation to the larger American society, to being born Jewish; today it is perhaps not much more different than being born into any Protestant sect. Within the sacred space of the Mormon temple rituals, the Saints remain a chosen people. Outside, in everyday life, they are simply members of a church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The rest of us are no longer even Gentiles. We are merely nonmembers.

—Jan Shippo

*Jan Shippo is professor of history and religious studies at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. She is now completing **Being Mormon: The Latter-day Saints in the Past Fifty Years** (to be published by Indiana University Press).*

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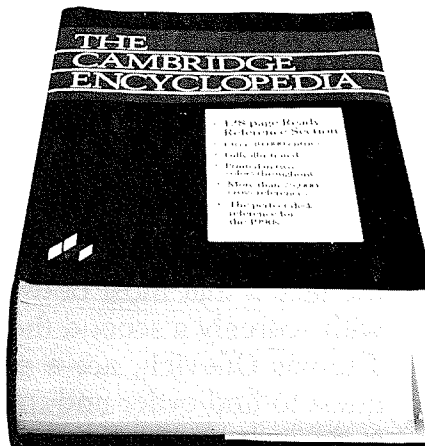
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THE 'HOT HAND' AND OTHER ILLUSIONS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Who among us does not scoff at UFOs, astrology, and ESP? But the fact is that most of us also embrace dozens of other illusions with scarcely a second thought. These illusions, says psychologist Thomas Gilovich, are a product of the human mind's ceaseless quest to find order and meaning in the world—even where there is no order, even if the mind gets the meaning wrong. Many of these erroneous beliefs are harmless; others can lead to bias, prejudice, error, or, in the case of wrongly perceived threats to health or the environment, panic. Here Gilovich explores some commonly held illusions and suggests some antidotes.

by Thomas D. Gilovich

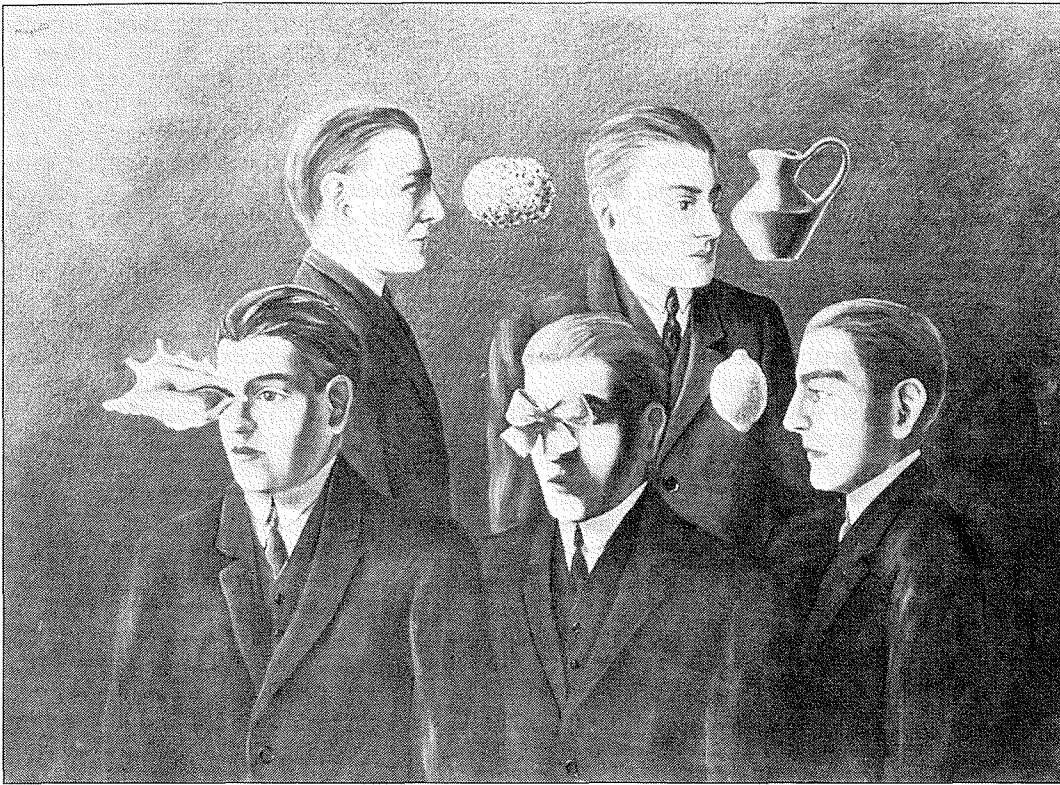
**If I'm on, I find that confidence just builds
You feel nobody can stop you. It's important to hit
that first one, especially if it's a swish. Then you
hit another, and . . . you feel like you can do any-
thing.**

—World B. Free

Known as Lloyd Free before he legally changed his first name, World B. Free was a professional basketball player during the 1970s and '80s. His statement reflects a belief held by nearly everyone who plays or watches the sport, a belief in the "hot hand." After making a couple of shots, players are thought to "get the hot hand" and to be more likely to hit their next few shots. But if a player misses several shots people say that he has "gone cold" and conclude that he is less likely to make his

next few attempts.

The belief in the hot hand is really just another version of the common conviction in our daily lives that "success breeds success" and "failure breeds failure." In certain areas this is certainly true. Financial success, for instance, usually promotes more of the same because initial good fortune provides more capital for wheeling and dealing. However, there are other areas—roulette and other forms of gambling immediately come to mind—where the belief is just as strongly held, but where the phenomenon simply does not exist. What



The Familiar Objects (1928), by Belgian surrealist René Magritte (1898–1967).

about basketball?

My colleagues Amos Tversky, Bob Vallone, and I have conducted a series of studies to answer this question. First we translated the idea of the hot hand into a testable hypothesis. If a player is subject to periods of hot and cold shooting, then he should be more likely to make a shot after making his previous shot (or previous several shots) than after missing it. This implies, in turn, that a player's hits (and misses) should cluster together more than one would expect by chance.

To find out whether this is so, we obtained the shooting records of the Philadelphia 76ers during the 1980–81 season. (The 76ers are the only team that keeps records of the order in which a player's hits and misses occurred.) Contrary to the hot hand hypothesis, players were *not* more likely to make a basket after making their last shot. In fact, there was a slight tendency for players to shoot better after *missing* their last shot. They made 51 percent of their shots

after making their previous shot, compared to 54 percent after missing it. They also had a better chance of making a basket if they missed their previous two or three shots. These and other more detailed analyses flatly contradict the notion that basketball players shoot in streaks.

But when we interviewed that year's team, Julius "Dr. J" Erving and other 76ers were firmly convinced that they shot in streaks. (When confronted with our findings, in fact, most people continue to insist that the hot hand exists.) Dr. J and his colleagues suggested that perhaps a hot player cools off because opponents begin guarding him more closely, or because he becomes overconfident and takes harder shots. The easiest way to test this idea is to look at players' "free throw" records—penalty shots taken from the same distance and without defensive pressure. Our analysis of two seasons of free throw statistics from the Boston Celtics showed that, on average, the players made 75 percent of their second

free throws after making their first, and 75 percent after missing their first.

Why do people continue to believe in the hot hand? The best explanation involves a very basic psychological phenomenon. Research psychologists have discovered that people have faulty intuitions about what chance sequences look like. People expect sequences of coin flips, for example, to alternate between heads and tails more than they actually do. Because chance produces less alternation than our intuition leads us to expect, truly random sequences look too ordered. Streaks of four or five heads in a row clash with our expectations, even though in a series of 20 tosses there is a 50 percent chance of getting four heads in a row, and a 25 percent chance of a streak of five. The law of averages (in fact, statisticians call it the "law of large numbers") ensures the expected even split only after a large number of tosses.

It is not uncommon for a player to make 50 percent of his shots and to take nearly 20 shots per game, so he stands a decent chance of making four or five shots in a row, and thus looking like he has a hot hand. With this in mind, we showed basketball fans a sequence of X's and O's—OXXXOXXOXXOOOXOOXXOO—that we told them represented a player's hits and misses in a basketball game. We also asked them to indicate whether this sequence constituted an example of streak shooting. Even though the order of hits and misses in this sequence is perfectly random, 62 percent of our subjects thought that it constituted streak shooting.

It is easy to see why they thought this. The sequence above does *look* like streak shooting. Six of the first eight shots were hits, as were eight of the first 11! Basketball players do shoot in streaks, but the streaks do not exceed the laws of chance. They have nothing to do with "hot hands." The mistake made by players and fans lies in how they interpret what they see.

Red Auerbach, the brains behind what is arguably the most successful franchise in American sports history, the Boston Celtics,

had this to say upon hearing about our results: "Who is this guy? So he makes a study. I couldn't care less." Another prominent coach, Bobby Knight of the 1987 NCAA champion Indiana Hoosiers, responded by saying "there are so many variables involved in shooting the basketball that a paper like this really doesn't mean anything." Disheartening reactions, perhaps, but not surprising. We would expect the belief in the hot hand to be held most strongly by those closest to the game. Because random sequences of hits and misses *look* like streak shooting, a gargantuan effort would be required to convince players, coaches, or fans that it is an illusion.

In the grand scheme of things, of course, whether or not basketball players shoot in streaks is not particularly important. What is important is that people chronically misconstrue random events, and that there may be other cases in which truly random phenomena are erroneously thought to be ordered and "real." However, the story of our research on the hot hand is only partly about the misperception of random events. It is also about how tenaciously people cling to their beliefs even in the face of hostile evidence. Our research—and the reaction to it—has implications for phenomena that affect our lives far from the parquet floors of the Boston Garden. Most broadly conceived, it touches on processes that have to do with the persistence of racial prejudice, with the assumptions of workers that their workplace is safe, with the blind adherence some people have to dangerous cults.

It ain't so much the things we don't know that get us into trouble. It's the things we know that just ain't so.

—Artemus Ward

It is an article of faith for some people that infertile couples who adopt a child will later be more likely to conceive. The usual explanation is that the couple stops trying so hard and their new-found peace of

Thomas D. Gilovich, associate professor of psychology at Cornell University, teaches courses on statistics, social psychology, and beliefs. This essay is adapted from his forthcoming book How We Know What Isn't So. Copyright © 1991 by Thomas D. Gilovich. Reprinted by permission of The Free Press, a division of Macmillan, Inc.

mind boosts their chances of success. On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the question is not why adoption increases a couple's fertility; clinical research has shown that it does not. What needs explanation is why so many people hold this belief when it is not true.

The officials who oversee admissions to distinguished undergraduate institutions, prestigious graduate schools, and select executive training programs all think they can make more effective admissions decisions if each candidate is seen in a personal interview. They cannot. Research shows that decisions based solely on objective criteria—such as academic credentials—are at least as effective in predicting future performance as those aided by subjective impressions formed during an interview. Why then do these people believe that interviews are so important?

Maternity ward nurses swear that the number of deliveries jumps during a full moon. They are mistaken. Again, why do they believe it if it "just ain't so?"

Today, more people believe in ESP than in evolution; there are 20 times as many astrologers as astronomers. Opinion polls reveal widespread acceptance of astral projection, "channeling," and the spiritual and psychic value of crystals.

How can such dubious beliefs be so widely and passionately held? Several things are clear at the outset. First, people do not hold these beliefs simply because they have not been exposed to the relevant evidence. Erroneous beliefs are found among experienced professionals and laypeople alike. The admissions officials and maternity ward nurses should "know better," since they are in regular contact with the pertinent data. Nor do people hold dubious beliefs simply because they are stupid or gullible. Quite the contrary. Humans possess powerful intellectual tools for processing information with accuracy and dispatch; the problem is that we sometimes misapply or misuse these tools in characteristic ways. Just as the extraordinary perceptual capacities of human beings occasionally give rise to optical illusions, so can our powerful intellectual abilities sometimes lead to erroneous beliefs.

People cling to many dubious beliefs, in other words, not because they satisfy some

important psychological need, but because they seem to be the most sensible conclusions consistent with the evidence before them. They are the products, not of irrationality, but of flawed rationality. Such flawed thinking might never surface under ideal conditions, but the world does not play fair. Instead of providing us with the clear information that would enable us to "know" better, life presents us with messy data that are random, incomplete, unrepresentative, ambiguous, inconsistent, or secondhand. It is our imperfect attempts to deal with precisely these difficulties that cause us to believe things that just ain't so.

So it is with the notion that infertile couples who adopt are more likely to conceive. We've all heard about couples who conceive after adopting, because their good luck grabs our attention. The fate of couples who adopt but do not conceive, or those who conceive without adopting does not jump out from the backdrop of everyday life. Thus, the fertility of couples who adopt a child becomes a "fact" that follows naturally and inexorably from the available information. As we shall see, however, there are inherent biases in the way people absorb and interpret data, biases that must be recognized and overcome if we are to arrive at sound judgments and valid beliefs.

People seem compelled to see order, pattern, and meaning in the world, and they find randomness, chaos, and meaninglessness unsatisfying. We tend to "detect" order where there is none, and to spot meaningful patterns where only the vagaries of chance are operating. This tendency to organize the things we see may have been bred into us through evolution: Noting patterns and making connections is what leads to discovery and advance. The problem, however, is that the tendency is so strong and so automatic that coherence is sometimes detected even when it does not exist. So it is with the example of the hot hand. And even in instances where some statistical regularity exists, we may still read too much meaning into what we observe.

One of the most telling examples of this concerns what statisticians call the "regression effect." When any two variables are related, but imperfectly so, extreme values of one tend to be matched by somewhat less

extreme values of the other. As a result, very tall parents tend to have tall children, but not as tall (on average) as they are themselves; a company's disastrous years tend to be followed by more profitable ones. The heights of parents and children are related, but the relationship is not perfect—it is subject to variability and fluctuation. The same is true of a student's grades in high school and in college, a company's profits in consecutive years, a musician's performance from concert to concert, etc.

Most students in a statistics course can learn to answer correctly questions about the heights of fathers and sons, the IQ's of mothers and daughters, and the SAT scores of college students. People encounter two problems, however, when they venture out in the world and deal with less familiar instances of regression.

First, they tend to be insufficiently conservative or "regressive" when making predictions. Parents expect a child who excels in school one year to do as well or better the following year; shareholders expect a company that has had a banner year to earn as much or more the next. Some management specialists have suggested that this tendency to ignore regression effects may contribute to the high rate of business failures, as optimistic executives, thinking that good times will continue, expand too fast and overextend their companies.

A second difficulty, known as the regression fallacy, occurs when people fail to recognize statistical regression, and instead concoct superfluous theories to explain what they are seeing. An illuminating example is the famous "*Sports Illustrated* jinx." Many pro and amateur athletes firmly believe that it is bad luck to be on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*; they view an invitation to appear with a mixture of eagerness and dread. Olympic swimmer Shirley Babashoff, for example, reportedly balked at getting her picture taken for *Sports Illustrated* before the 1976 Olympics because of the jinx. (She was eventually persuaded to pose when reminded that a cover story on Mark Spitz did not prevent him from winning seven gold medals in 1972. Babashoff went on to win a gold medal as part of a relay team, as well as silver medals in four other events.)

It is easy to see how regression effects

may be responsible for the so-called jinx. Athletes appear on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* when their performance has been extraordinary. But due to regression alone, we would expect an athlete's stellar performance to be followed by somewhat poorer performances. Those who believe in the jinx, therefore, like those who believe in the hot hand, are not mistaken in what they observe, but in how they interpret what they see. [See box, p. 57.]

With characteristic insight, John Stuart Mill once remarked that "every erroneous inference involves the intellectual operation of admitting insufficient evidence as sufficient." One pervasive example of this is that people tend to be more impressed by evidence that seems to confirm some relationship than by that which is contrary to it. Thus many people are convinced that their dreams are prophetic because a few have come true; they fail to notice or disregard the many that have not.

"Confirmatory events" often seem sufficient to establish a relationship in part because we tend to explain away any exceptions: A dream that did not come true never felt like a "real" premonition. But quite apart from these mental sanitizing operations, supporting evidence may have disproportionate impact because it is generally easier for the human mind to grasp than disconfirmatory information. Disconfirmations are often expressed negatively, and negatives simply are harder for the human brain to process. We have less trouble with "All Greeks are mortal" than "All non-mortals are non-Greeks." This tendency to focus on the positive is more pronounced, of course, when someone prefers or expects the belief to be true. Theists justify their faith by pointing to the number of times people have prayed for things that later came true; atheists cite the number of prayers that have gone unanswered.

It would make no sense, of course, to go through life weighing all facts equally and reconsidering one's beliefs anew each time an opposing fact was encountered. If a belief has received a lifetime of support, one is justified in being skeptical of an observation or report that calls the belief into question. It made sense for scientists to be

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The regression fallacy plays a role in shaping parents' and teachers' beliefs about the value of reward and punishment in childrearing. All adults like to hand out rewards for good behavior, courtesy, and promptness. However, regression guarantees that on average, such extraordinary performances will be followed by deterioration. The reward will thus appear ineffective or counter-productive. In contrast, regression also tends to ensure that bad performances will be followed by improvement, so any punishment meted out after a disappointing performance will appear to have been beneficial. As psychologists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman put it, regression effects serve "to punish the administration of reward and reward the administration of punishment."

This phenomenon was demonstrated by an experiment in which the subjects played the role of a teacher trying to encourage a

student to arrive for school on time. A computer displayed the hypothetical student's arrival time, which varied from 8:20 to 8:40, for each of 15 consecutive days, one at a time. School was supposed to start at 8:30. On each day, the participants were allowed to praise, reprimand, or issue no comment to the student. Predictably, the participants elected to praise the student whenever he was early or on time and to reprimand him when he was late. The student's arrival time, however, was pre-programmed and thus was not connected to the subject's response. Nevertheless, due to regression alone the student's arrival time tended to improve after he was punished for being late, and to deteriorate after being praised for arriving early. As a result, 70 percent of the subjects incorrectly concluded that reprimands were more effective than praise.

—T. D. G.

skeptical of the reports of cold fusion at the University of Utah in 1989 because they possessed a theoretical knowledge that suggested the reports were unlikely. Each of us is equally justified in looking askance at claims about UFOs, levitations, and miracle cancer cures.

But how do we distinguish between the legitimate skepticism of those who scoffed at cold fusion and the stifling dogma of the 17th-century clergymen who, doubting Galileo's claim that the Earth was not the center of the solar system, put him under house arrest for the last eight years of his life? In part, the answer lies in the distinction between skepticism and closed-mindedness. Many scientists who were skeptical about cold fusion nevertheless tried to replicate the experiment in their own labs; Galileo's critics refused to examine the evidence. Equally important, however, is the foundation upon which a person's pre-existing beliefs and theories rests. Well-supported beliefs and theories have earned a bit of inertia, and should not quickly be modified or abandoned because of a few hostile "facts." But ethnic and gender stereotypes rest on flimsy or non-existent information, and should quickly be cast off.

Scientists, of course, are not always innocent of groundless biases. The French craniologist Paul Broca (1824–1880) could not accept that the German brains he examined were on average 100 grams heavier than his sample of French brains. So he adjusted the weights of the two brain samples to take account of extraneous factors that are known to influence brain weight, such as body size. However, Broca never made the same adjustment in his much-discussed comparison of the brain sizes of men and women.

Scientists' most serious biases tend to be overcome by the discipline's insistence on replicability and the public presentation of results. Findings that rest on shaky ground do not usually survive in the intellectual marketplace. To a lesser extent, the same is true with regard to beliefs formed in everyday life: Our wackiest beliefs are probably weeded out on the playground or, as we get older, by the corrective influence of society at large. The biggest difference between science and everyday life is that scientists use formal procedures to guard against bias and error—a set of procedures of which the average person is little aware. They use statistical tools to guard against

the misperception of random sequences; control groups and random sampling avoid the dangers of drawing inferences from incomplete and unrepresentative data. And they use "blind" observers to eliminate the biasing effects of their preferences or expectations.

But perhaps the most fundamental safeguard of scientific inquiry is the requirement that the meaning of various outcomes be precisely specified and objectively determined. This is something we rarely do in everyday life. Instead, we often allow our expectations to be confirmed by any of a set of "multiple endpoints" after the fact.* When a psychic predicts that "a famous politician will die this year," it is important to specify then and there the range of events that will constitute a success. Otherwise, we may be overly impressed by tenuous connections between the prediction and a "confirming" event. Is a Supreme Court justice a politician? Should an unsuccessful assassination attempt count as a successful prediction? This is the stuff that sustains belief in horoscopes, fortune cookies, and the prophecies of Nostradamus.

We tend to believe what we want to believe. That old saw, at least, is true, and considerable evidence has been gathered to support it. Much of the evidence comes from research on people's assessments of their own abilities. For example, a majority of Americans think that they are more intelligent, more fair-minded, less prejudiced, and more skilled behind the wheel of an automobile than the average man in the street. This phenomenon is so reliable and ubiquitous that it has come to be known as the "Lake Wobegon effect," after Garrison Keillor's fictional community, where "the women are strong, the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average." Part of the reason we

*An interesting analogue of the problem of multiple endpoints is seen in the common belief that things like plane crashes, serial-killing sprees, or birth announcements "happen in threes." Such beliefs stem from the tendency for people to allow the occurrence of the third event in the triplet to define the period of time that constitutes their "happening together." If three plane crashes occur in a month, then the period of time that counts as their happening together is one month. If three plane crashes occur in a year, then the relevant period of time is stretched. By allowing the window of opportunity to be sufficiently flexible, such beliefs can only be confirmed.

view ourselves so favorably is that each of us uses different criteria to evaluate our standing on a given trait—criteria that work to our own advantage. As economist Thomas Schelling explains, "Everybody ranks himself high in qualities he values: careful drivers give weight to care, skillful drivers give weight to skill, and those who think that, whatever else they are not, at least they are polite, give weight to courtesy, and come out high on their own scale. This is the way that every child has the best dog on the block."

Another reason we hold such favorable views of ourselves is that we are prone to self-serving assessments when it comes to apportioning responsibility for our successes and failures. Athletes attribute their victories to themselves, but blame their losses on bad officiating and bad luck. Students who perform well on an examination generally think of the test as a valid measure of their knowledge; those who fail tend to think of it as arbitrary and unfair.

But our desire to believe comforting things about ourselves and about the world does not mean that we willy-nilly believe what we want to believe; such flights of fantasy are reined in by the existence of a real world and the need to perceive it accurately. Rather, our motivations have their effects more subtly, through the way we process information. What evidence do we consider? How much of it do we consider? What criteria do we use as sufficient evidence for a belief? For things we want to believe, we ask only that the evidence not force us to believe otherwise—a rather easy standard to meet given the equivocal nature of much information. For propositions we want to resist, however, we ask whether the evidence *compels* such a distasteful conclusion—a much more difficult standard to achieve. For desired conclusions, in other words, it is as if we ask "Can I believe this?" but for unpalatable conclusions we ask "Must I believe this?" The evidence required for affirmative answers to these two questions are enormously different. By framing the question in such ways, we can often believe what we prefer to believe and satisfy ourselves that we have an objective basis for doing so.

There are times when our mistaken beliefs about ourselves or about the world

around us cost us little or nothing. For most people, a belief in the curse of the Bermuda Triangle has no immediate consequences. It is not so much that they hold such a belief, but that they entertain it—and are entertained by it. Other, more serious beliefs can also be without negative repercussions. Some people believe in one god, some in many, and others in none; all of them can't be right, yet many derive comfort from their beliefs. But these isolated examples aside, there are often real costs of failing to perceive the world accurately. One hears from time to time of cases in which someone dies because an effective medical treatment was ignored in favor of some quack therapy. Can there be anything more pitiful than a life lost in the service of some unsound belief?

Tolerating the occasional eccentric notion is harmless enough, but by attempting to turn our critical intelligence off and on at will, we risk losing it altogether. "When people learn no tools of judgment and merely follow their hopes," observes Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, "the seeds of political manipulation are sown."

The complexity of modern life does not

yield clearcut answers to many of our most pressing problems. In a world which bombards us daily with conflicting reports about a variety of issues—the destructive effects of acid rain, the cancer risk from inhaling "secondary" cigarette smoke, the threat of AIDS to the heterosexual population—we must increasingly grapple with probabilities rather than certainties. Clear thinking about issues with "messy" evidence becomes more important even as it becomes more difficult.

We are battling against the tendency of the human brain to impute structure and coherence to random patterns, to be more impressed by confirming evidence than by contradiction, and to be overly influenced by our preferences and preconceptions. There may be strategies we can develop to compensate for these tendencies, strategies not to be found in the "deterministic" sciences such as chemistry, but rather in the more "probabilistic" sciences such as economics, psychology, and statistics. Wider education in these fields surely can help check the worst excesses of wrong thinking. But the mind's quest for order does seem to condemn us, ironically, to a certain degree of folly.



The state of nature: Scientists are now revising old notions of natural harmony and order.

Rethinking the Environment

The United States stands on the threshold of its third great era of environmentalism. The new age lacks heroes like the conservationists who put their stamp on the first, or a signal event like Earth Day 1970, which defined the second. It may be a pivotal moment in history. Today's opportunity to forge a genuine environmental ethic could well be wasted, for Americans are as confused about the environment as they are eager to protect it. As Stephen Klaidman writes here, they are alarmed by exaggerated crises such as Love Canal and distracted by minor environmental threats, even as larger ones go unattended. At a deeper level, biologist Daniel Botkin says, they hold ancient and sentimental misconceptions of nature, and of man's place in it, that could stifle the emerging new environmentalism.

A NEW BALANCE OF NATURE

by Daniel B. Botkin

Last June, California voters tried to strike a blow for the state's endangered mountain lions when they passed Proposition 117, protecting all but the most aggressive cats from human beings. Anybody caught killing, trapping, or transporting a mountain lion in the state now faces one year in jail and a \$10,000 fine. The Wilderness Society, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Sierra Club all lined up behind the measure, and there was nothing in the debate (such as it was) to suggest that Proposition 117 was anything but the epitome of the "good cause." State Attorney General John Van de Kamp invoked an emotional roll call of vanished species in support of the proposition, writing, "Although our state symbol, the grizzly bear, no longer roams the wild lands of California and the condor no longer soars over our mountains, we still have areas where one remaining symbol of our wilderness heritage, the mountain lion,

is free to live . . . Mountain lion hunting is cruel and unnecessary."

Americans at the end of the 20th century seem to believe that they have finally learned to confront environmental problems such as the threat to the mountain lion rationally, that only a lack of information and political consensus limits their ability to solve problems. The logic of Proposition 117 seems self-evident: Mountain lions will do best if left completely alone. Their population will grow to an optimum size, then stabilize, threatening neither their own existence nor that of other species. But the general view on Proposition 117, like much of our thinking about the environment today, is based on a myth, the myth that nature left to itself will find a perfect balance, that "nature knows best." It is a myth that has led to unfortunate, sometimes even disastrous, results.

A classic example of the failure of the balance-of-nature myth is Kenya's Tsavo National Park. Landsat satellite images

taken over Kenya in the late 1970s show a curious geometric feature—two straight lines stretching 50 miles or more and converging at an obtuse angle. To the east, inside the 5,000 square miles of the park, a dull brown signifies vegetation so thin that most of the light detected by Landsat is reflecting off bare soil. Outside the park, a garish red signifies dense vegetation. A visitor at Tsavo would have seen that the park was indeed desert-like, a thin scattering of live and dead shrubs and trees surrounded by dense thickets of vegetation beyond its borders. Tsavo was a photographic negative of one's expectation of a park: barren inside, green outside.

After Tsavo became a park in 1948, its first warden, David Sheldrick, spent years building roads, providing year-round water for wildlife, and eradicating poaching. Sheldrick apparently was convinced that he was only giving nature a benign helping hand. Indeed, the elephants flourished. So much so that they began consuming leaves, fruits, and twigs so quickly that the trees and shrubs started to die off. By 1959, much of the park began to resemble a "lunar landscape," Sheldrick's wife Daphne later wrote in *The Tsavo Story* (1973).

In the mid-1960s, a Ford Foundation study concluded that some 3,000 elephants should be shot to keep the population within limits of its food supply. Sheldrick at first agreed, but then reversed himself. He decided, as his wife put it, that "the conservation policy for Tsavo should be directed towards the attainment of a natural ecological climax, and that our participation towards this aim should be restricted to such measures as the control of fires, poaching, and other forms of human interference." To conservationists, the phrase

"natural ecological climax" meant nature in a mature condition, which, once attained, persists indefinitely without change. Sheldrick and other specialists regarded the "climax" condition as the truly natural and most desirable state of wilderness. It is much the same idea that underlies California's Proposition 117: Left to itself, nature will achieve a balance.

But Tsavo was struck by a severe drought in 1969 and '70, and as some 6,000 elephants starved to death, they destroyed many of the park's remaining trees and shrubs, producing the devastation still painfully visible from space many years later. (Lately, the park has enjoyed the beginnings of a recovery.) Elephants and human beings together had drafted the lines on the Landsat image.

The elephants at Tsavo, like California's mountain lions and virtually all wildlife today, live in a fragment of what used to be large, often continuous habitats. In today's "ecological islands," a species can easily increase rapidly, exhaust its food supply, starve, and suffer a rapid decline, meanwhile causing many kinds of harm, sometimes even endangering the survival of other species.

The final act of the tragedy at Tsavo was being played out even as the first Earth Day in 1970 was bolstering the comforting illusion that there are only two sides to any environmental issue, pitting environmentalists against their pro-development foes. But the disagreement at Tsavo was among conservationists who shared basic goals.

Sheldrick's views were consistent with contemporary theories about population growth and the development of forests and

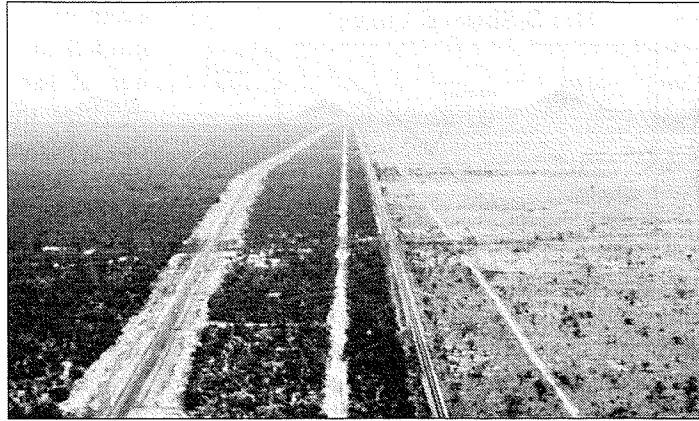
*Daniel B. Botkin, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is professor of biology and environmental studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He recently published *Discordant Harmonies: A New Ecology for the Twenty-first Century* (1990), and is the 1991 recipient of the Mitchell Prize for Sustainable Development.*

other communities of organisms. From these theories come such concepts as "carrying capacity" and "maximum sustainable yield," terms that are now regularly bruited about in newspapers and popular magazines. The theories have their origins in the mid-19th century, when the new science of ecology was born amid—and influenced by—the flowering of the machine age. Until recently, population theory relied almost exclusively on two formal models that were heavily influenced by machine-age thinking. One, called "the logistic," which was first proposed in 1849 by a Belgian scientist named Pierre-Francois Verhulst, described the growth of a single population; the other, called the Lotka-Volterra equations, cast predator-prey relationships in terms of predictable oscillations of population.

The logistic was explained by Alfred Lotka in his 1925 book, *Elements of Physical Biology*: Keep a population of flies in a cage with a constant food supply, he said, and a predictable pattern will be followed. When there are few flies, food is not a limiting factor and the flies will reproduce rapidly. But eventually they begin to exceed their food supply; deaths gradually rise to equal births and the population arrives at a steady size, its "carrying capacity." These ideas can be expressed with a simple equation in calculus that produces an elegant, S-shaped growth curve.

The logistic had another elegant quality: If a population at carrying capacity strayed from that balance, it would smoothly return to it. In short, the logistic seemed to show once again that there is a balance of nature.

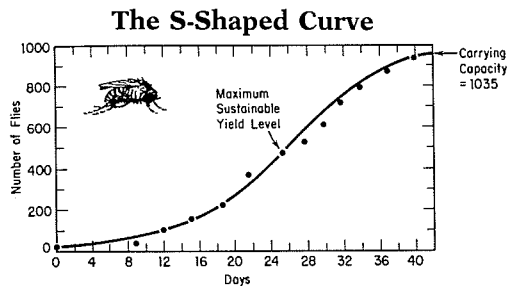
The logistic had another elegant quality: If a population at carrying capacity strayed from that balance, it would smoothly return to it. In short, the logistic seemed to show once again that there is a balance of nature.



A photographic negative of our expectations: A view from the air in 1977 of Kenya's Tsavo National Park (at right), a virtual desert after nearly 30 years of careful conservation efforts.

It also relied upon assumptions that have proved to be false. The logistic assumes that all flies or elephants or mountain lions are identical, each contributing equally to reproduction, mortality, growth, and reduction in available resources. And although the logistic is supposed to be an ecological formula, it does not explicitly take account of changes in environment, such as variations in the availability of food and water. According to the logistic, the elephant population at Tsavo should have grown smoothly to an equilibrium.

It is one thing to err in the management of African elephants or California mountain lions. But the logic of the S-shaped curve has also been taken literally by, among others, the specialists who manage the world's fisheries directly, such as those at the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service, and through international treaties. From the logistic comes the concept that wildlife biologists call the "maximum sustainable yield population," which says that a population grows fastest when it is at exactly one-half of its carrying capacity. So fisheries managers the world over have made it their goal to allow just a large enough catch every year to maintain this ideal population.



Then, they believe, the fish population will grow at its maximum rate every year, like a jet engine at "best power" cruising speed.

A classic example of the failure of this idea is the Peruvian anchovy fishery, once the world's largest commercial fishery. In 1970, fishermen caught eight million tons of anchovies off Peru, but two years later the catch plummeted to only two million tons, and it continued to shrink. Yet this fishery was actively managed according to international agreement for a maximum sustainable yield. This failure has been repeated over and over again.* When Congress enacted a forward-looking piece of legislation to "save the whales" in 1972, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the effort fell victim to the same faulty concepts during international negotiations to determine the permissible whale catch. Gradually, however, administrators have since remedied that mistake.

I have searched the scientific literature for 10 years and found no cases where a population outside a laboratory followed the S-shaped curve. Only microbes or flies or bees grown in a laboratory do that. And the regular oscillations predicted for predator and prey by the companion Lotka-Volterra model have *never* been sustained,

*Likewise, Pacific sardines, once a major species off the California coast, suffered a catastrophic decline in the 1950s that continued through the 1970s. The Atlantic menhaden catch peaked at 785,000 tons in 1956, and dropped to 178,000 tons in 1969. Atlantic herring and Norwegian cod experienced the same kind of decline. The North Atlantic haddock catch, which had averaged 50,000 tons for many years, increased to 155,000 tons in 1965 but then crashed, reaching a mere 12,000 tons by the early 1970s.

even in the laboratory. Yet these flawed models are still used by a surprising number of fish and wildlife conservation authorities throughout the world. They are not products simply of flawed mathematics or incorrect calculations but of a fundamentally mistaken view of how nature works, a view that, as we shall see, is increasingly being undercut by new findings.

Forestry is a very different field, but the underlying mythology is the same. George Perkins Marsh (1801-82), the intellectual father of conservation in America, was struck while serving as U.S. Ambassador to Egypt and Italy by the impact of man on the environment in these ancient countries. "Nature, left undisturbed," he wrote in *Man and Nature* (1864), perhaps with his native Vermont in mind, "so fashions her territory as to give it almost unchanging permanence of form, outline, and proportion, except when shattered by geologic convulsions; and in these comparatively rare cases of derangement, she sets herself at once to repair the superficial damage, and to restore, as nearly as practicable, the former aspect of her dominion."

From Marsh and others came the idea of "ecological succession": A clearing in a forest would grow back through a series of regular and predictable stages to a final, constant, stable "climax" forest. The climax forest was believed to have the greatest amount of organic matter, the greatest diversity of species. Although forest biologists have rarely relied upon mathematical formulas, the climax forest had the elegant qualities of a logistic population: undisturbed it was constant, and when disturbed it grew back to its prior constant condition. The climax forest represented the balance of nature.

It was, in a sense, a walk in the woods as a graduate student during the 1960s that led me to question this idea of a climax forest and all that it implied. The woods was

New Jersey's Hutcheson Memorial Forest, established as a natural preserve in 1954 when Rutgers University was given a 65-acre tract of woodland known to have been intact—not clearcut or burned—since 1701. The creation of the preserve became a minor media event. Sinclair Oil, which had helped purchase it for Rutgers, placed a major national magazine advertisement that made much of the conventional wisdom, referring to the woods as a place where “nature has been working for thousands of years to perfect this ‘climax’ community in which trees, plants, animals, and all the creatures of the forest have reached a state of harmonious balance with their environment. Left undisturbed, this stabilized society will continue to perpetuate itself century after century.” *Life* and *Audubon* also took note of the remarkable “climax forest.”

But like the Peruvian anchovy fishery and Tsavo National Park, Hutcheson Memorial Forest did not remain constant. Originally filled with oaks, hickories, and chestnuts, it was by the 1970s becoming a forest of sugar and Norway maples in the mature stands, with Japanese honeysuckles and Asian trees of heaven in the gaps. It now appears that the sugar maple was artificially suppressed in the climax forest prior to 1701 by frequent fires, which were probably started by Indians. Two hundred years after these outbreaks of fire ceased, the woodlands began to change. Modern human influences, of course, contributed: The Norway maple, for example, was introduced into North America by Europeans.

Hutcheson Forest is not unique. Written histories, fire scars in trees, and fossil pollen deposited in lakes provided evidence in the 1960s and '70s to show that all forests are continually changing, and have done so since the ice ages. But ecologists and conservationists continued—and, to a surprising extent, still continue—to use the old

theories to write laws, set policies, and manage natural resources.

One reason for our reluctance to part with these theories is that they grow out of very deeply rooted notions about nature. “Everything in the world is marvelously ordered by divine providence and wisdom for the safety and protection of us all Who cannot wonder at this harmony of things, at this symphony of nature which seems to will the well-being of the world?” wrote Cicero in *The Nature of the Gods* (44 B.C.). The idea is repeated throughout Western history. Nature was perceived as perfectly ordered and stable, constant unless disturbed, and tending to recover from disturbance by returning to its former condition. This perfect order was also a primary argument for the existence of God, for only a Supreme Being could create a perfectly ordered nature.

How, then, could one explain the occasional absence of order? Western culture traditionally has given two answers, both pointing at human beings. The first blames human beings for what they have done; the second blames them for what they have *not* done. Although casting humans as the despoilers of nature may have seemed like a new idea to the environmentalists of the 1960s, who were prone to see in the West only a tradition of exploitation of the environment, it is actually quite ancient. Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23–79) long ago contrasted the beauty and bountifulness of the Earth without human interference with the imperfections of people who abused the Earth. He speculated that there was a divine purpose for beasts of the wilderness: They guarded the Earth, protecting it from human actions.

The second explanation for the absence of order—blaming humans for what they have not done—emphasizes human stewardship of nature. God put us here to com-

THE FIRST ENVIRONMENTALISTS

Most historians see early environmentalism as a reaction to Western industrialization. Britain's Richard Grove, in an essay adapted from Nature (May 3, 1990), proposes a new view.

Anxieties about soil erosion and deforestation are to be found in the literature of classical Greece, imperial Rome, and Mauryan India, and in a sporadic fashion in the annals of the early Spanish and Portuguese empires. But it was not until the mid-17th century that awareness of the ecological price of capitalism started to grow into a fully fledged theory about the limits of the natural resources of the Earth.

Some historians have argued that European colonialism was not only highly destructive in environmental terms but that its very destructiveness stemmed from "imperialist" attitudes toward nature. But that hypothesis does not stand up. Ironically, a new sensitivity to the environment developed as a product of the specific, and ecologically destructive, conditions of the commercial expansion of the Dutch and English East India Companies and, a little later, of the *Compagnie des Indes*.

Colonial expansion also promoted the rapid diffusion of new scientific ideas by a coterie of committed professional scientists and environmental commentators. In India, for example, in 1838, there were over 800 surgeons. During the early 18th century the need to understand unfamiliar floras, faunas, and geologies, both for commercial purposes and to counter environmental and health risks, propelled many erstwhile physicians and surgeons into consulting positions and employment with the trading companies as fully fledged professional and state scientists long before such a phenomenon existed in Europe. By the end of the 18th century their new environmental theories, along with an ever-growing flood of information about the natural history and ethnology of the colonies, quickly diffused through the meetings and publications of a whole set of academies and scientific societies throughout the colonial world.

The first of these societies appeared in the island colonies. This was no accident. In many respects, the isolated oceanic islands stimulated a detached self-consciousness and a critical view of European origins and behavior, of the kind dramatically prefigured by Daniel Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Such islands became, in practical as

well as mental terms, an allegory of a whole world, and observations of their ecological demise were easily converted into premonitions of environmental destruction on a wider scale.

It was on the French island colony of Mauritius that the early environmental debate came to a head. Between 1768 and 1810, the island was the location for some of the earliest experiments in systematic forest conservation, pollution control, and fisheries protection. These initiatives were carried out by scientists who, characteristically, were both followers of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and adherents of the kind of rigorous empiricism associated with mid-18th-century French Enlightenment botany. Their conservation measures stemmed from an awareness of the potentially global impact of modern economic activity, from a fear of the climatic consequences of deforestation and, not least, from concern over species extinctions. The "Romantic" scientists of Mauritius, and above all Pierre Poivre, Philibert Comerson, and Bernardin de St. Pierre can, in hindsight, be seen as the pioneers of modern environmentalism.

After the British annexed Mauritius in 1810, these environmental prescriptions were transferred to St. Helena and eventually to India itself. From 1820, they were strongly reinforced by the writings of Alexander von Humboldt, who strove in successive books to promulgate a new view of the relations between man and the natural world which was drawn almost entirely from the holist and unitary thinking of Hindu philosophers. His subordination of man to other forces in the cosmos formed the basis for a wide-ranging and scientifically reasoned interpretation of the ecological threat posed by the unrestrained activities of man.

This interpretation became especially influential among the Scottish scientists employed by the East India Company. Several of them, in particular Alexander Gibson, Edward Balfour, and Hugh Cleghorn, became enthusiastic proselytizers of a conservationist message which provided the basis for the pioneering of a forest conservancy system in India. For example, in 1847 the directors of

the East India Company indicated their conversion to the need for conservation with a remarkable circular on the dangers of artificially induced climate change. The subject, they said, "is one having strong practical bearing on the welfare of mankind, and we are anxious to obtain extensive and accurate information in regard to it."

Time and again, from the mid-18th century onward, scientists discovered that the threat of artificially induced climatic change, with all it implied, was one of the few really effective instruments that could be employed in persuading governments of the seriousness of environmental change. The argument that rapid deforestation might cause rainfall decline and, eventually, famine, was one that was quickly grasped by the East India Company, fearful as it always was of agrarian economic failure and social unrest. Unfortunately, the argument often required an initial famine to lend credibility to scientists. In India, for example, serious droughts in 1835-39, the early 1860s, and 1877-78 were all followed by the renewal of state programs designed to strengthen forest protection.

The question of climatic change had thus become international in scope by the mid-1860s. It was reinforced by more detailed research that raised the possibility that the very constitution of the atmosphere might be changing. Such views found an early supporter in J. Spotswood Wilson, who presented a paper in 1858 to the British Association for the Advancement of Science on "The General and Gradual Desiccation of the Earth and Atmosphere." Wilson stated that upheaval of the land, "destruction of forests and waste by irrigation" were not sufficient to explain the available facts on climate change, and that the cause lay in the changing proportions of oxygen and carbonic acid in the atmosphere. Their respective ratios, he believed, were connected to the relative rates of their production and absorption by the "animal and vegetable kingdom." The author of this precocious paper concluded with a dismal set of remarks. "As inferior races preceded man and enjoyed existence before the earth had arrived at a state suitable to his constitution," he warned, "it is more probable that others will succeed him when the conditions necessary for his existence have passed away."

The raising, as early as 1858, of the spec-

ter of human extinction as a consequence of climatic change was clearly a shocking psychological development. But it was consistent with fears that had been growing within the scientific community. Awareness of species rarity and the possibility of extinction had existed since the mid-17th century as Western biological knowledge started to embrace the whole tropical world. The extinction of the auroch in 1627 in Poland and the dodo by 1670 in Mauritius had attracted considerable attention.

The appearance in 1859 of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, with its emphasis on the place of extinction in the dynamics of natural selection, helped make species protection a



New Guinea, 1776.

more valid concept in the eyes of government, and the period 1860-70 produced a flurry of attempts to legislate for the protection of threatened species. Once more, the initial locale was an island colony, Tasmania, where a comprehensive body of laws, designed mainly to protect the indigenous birds, was introduced in 1860.

So, by the early 1860s, anxieties about artificially induced climatic change and species extinctions had reached a climax. The subsequent evolution of the awareness of a global environmental threat has, to date, consisted almost entirely of a reiteration of a set of ideas that had reached full maturity over a century ago. The pity is that it has taken so long for them to be taken seriously.

plete the perfect harmony of nature. If there was disharmony, we had failed to carry out God's work. "For whom then shall we say the world was made?" asked Cicero. Why would the gods labor for trees or plants, which are "devoid of sense or feeling," or for animals, "dumb creatures who have no understanding"? Stewardship is the main idea that animates such older mainstream conservation groups as the National Wildlife Federation (founded in 1936) and the Conservation Foundation (founded in 1948, and since merged with the World Wildlife Fund).

Before the rise of modern science in the 17th century, people explained the structure of nature in terms of divine order, but they had only organic metaphors, derived from plants and animals and especially the human body, to describe its workings. The first person to descend into an active volcano and return to write about it, a 17th-century Jesuit priest named Athanasius Kircher, began his analysis by citing Virgil, who believed that the "belching rocks" of volcanoes were the torn entrails of the mountains. Water mixed with ashes, Kircher wrote in *Mundus Subterraneus* (1638), produced a continual "conception and birth" of fires in Vesuvius and Aetna. The fires grew and matured until, becoming ripe, they erupted. To Kircher, a volcano was like a rose growing into flower.

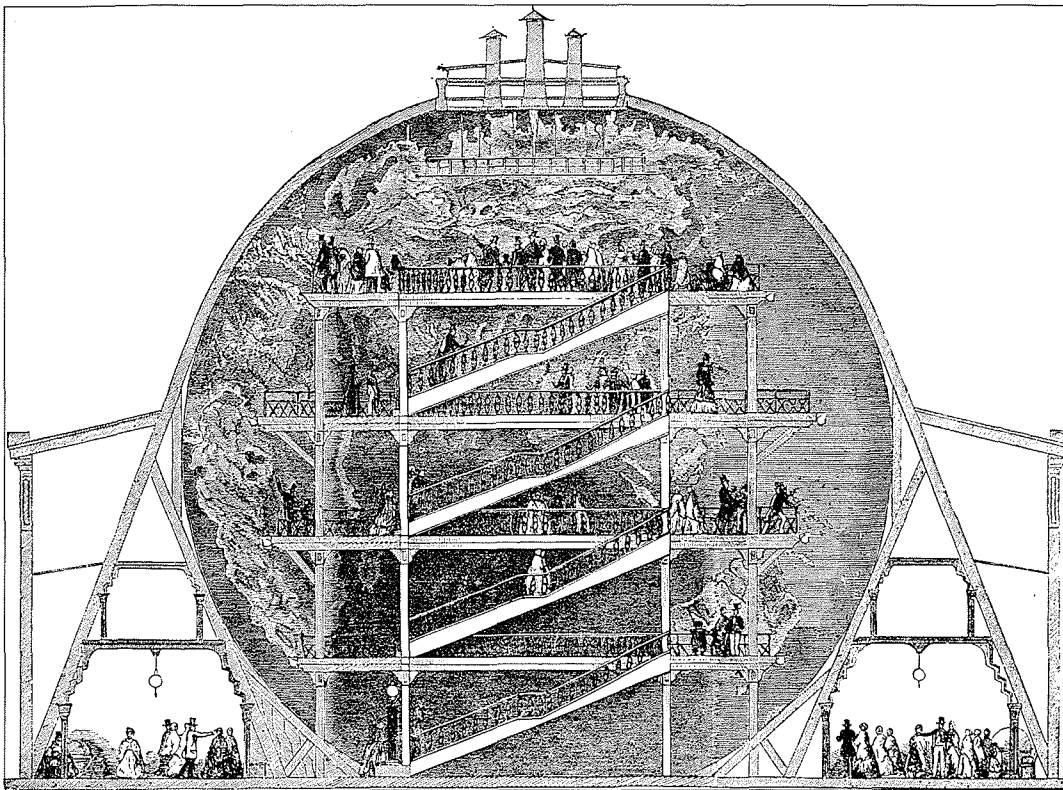
The organic view suggested that the imperfections of the environment were manifestations of the aging of Mother Earth. Mountains were her warts, infertile farmland her wasted skin. Christians tended to believe that these organic processes, the chaos of nature itself, had been set in motion by the expulsion of man from the Garden of Eden and the Flood. One of Kircher's contemporaries, a theologian named Thomas Burnet, wrote that the

Flood created "the ruins of a broken world" where before had existed perfect order and harmony, a world "smooth, regular and uniform; without Mountains and without a Sea."

Beginning in the 17th century, the rise of Newtonian mechanics and the work of scientists such as Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), along with the invention of such marvelous devices as the steam engine, created a new understanding of the universe. They also bred new metaphors, fostering the idea that the Earth and the solar system operate like clockwork, like a machine. Scientific discoveries, such as the recognition that the planets do not orbit in perfect circles around the sun, overwhelmed arguments that there was a perfect order in the observable architecture of the universe. No longer was the existence of God proved by the perfect and fixed structure of the world. Now, the *dynamism* of nature came to be seen as a demonstration of God's power. The visible physical order of old was replaced by a new conceptual order. A perfectly working, idealized machine could be seen as the product of a perfect God. "These Motions of Generations and Corruptions," wrote Sir Anthony Hale in 1677, "are so wisely and admirably ordered and tempered, and so continually managed and ordered by the wise Providence of the Rector of all things," that "things are kept in a certain due stay and equability."

The idea of order survived but the organic view of nature did not fare as well. True, in all of the arts, scientific discoveries bred a new aesthetic appreciation of the irregular and the asymmetric. English essayist Joseph Addison (1672–1719), for example, now found an "agreeable horror" in ocean storms. Later, William Wordsworth and the other 19th-century romanticists took custody of the organic metaphor.

But it was the mechanistic view that prevailed after the 17th century. A mecha-



The public's fascination with the natural world during the machine age made Mr. Wyld's Giant Globe, or Model of the Earth, a noted London tourist attraction from 1851–61.

nistic nature—except in our own age, an oxymoron—would have the attributes of a well-oiled machine, including the capacity to keep operating, replaceable parts, and the ability to maintain a steady state, and thus to be in balance. Births and deaths, immigration and emigration, the input of sunlight and the loss of energy as heat, the intake and loss of nutrients, would always maintain life in a constant state of abundance and activity. This is the view reflected in the writings of George Perkins Marsh, in the elegance of the S-shaped population curve, and in the management of Tsavo National Park.

But if nature is a machine, then the flip-side is that human beings ought to be able to re-engineer nature and improve it. This is the side that has dominated much of our

management of natural resources and the environment during the 20th century. It is reflected in the approach of the lumber company that clearcuts a diverse tropical forest and replants it with a single species of tree, and in a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project that makes a meandering river into a straight canal. The ultimate irony is that the mechanistic view unites the most extreme preservationists, who believe that the machinery of nature functions perfectly without human intervention, and nature's most extreme exploiters.

I believe that we are living through a time of change, a transition from the mechanical age to a new era that appears to us as the space and computer age. We are gradually moving away from the

mechanical view of nature, toward a different set of perceptions and assumptions that will blend the organic and the inorganic. But we have not yet settled on the right metaphors, images, and symbols.

The scientific basis of this new understanding was prepared almost a century ago by a Harvard biological chemist named Lawrence Henderson in *The Fitness of the Environment* (1913). Henderson was struck by the unique set of circumstances that made life on Earth possible. The planet is endowed with water, for example, which "possesses certain nearly unique qualifications which are largely responsible for making the earth habitable." Its high specific heat means that oceans, lakes, and streams tend to maintain a constant temperature; such bodies of water also moderate summer and winter temperatures on land.

During the last two decades, scientists such as James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis have begun to appreciate that the environment is "fit" for life in part because life has evolved to take advantage of the environment and has also altered the environment. Lovelock and Margulis have taken this insight to an extreme, reviving organic thinking about nature. Lovelock argues in *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979) that "the biosphere is a self-regulating entity with the capacity to keep our planet healthy by controlling the chemical and physical environment." The Gaia hypothesis—named after the Greek goddess of the Earth—suggests that nature is akin to a sentient being. One problem with this view—as with the mechanistic view of old—is that nature never achieves the self-regulating "steady state" of perfection that Gaia's advocates imagine.

But the notion that life and environment interact is important. The traditional view in science is that the Earth changes slowly and evenly, and is very little affected

by the life—plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, and protists—that it hosts. After all, the total mass of all living things on Earth is a tiny fraction—two-tenths of one part in one billion—of the mass of the planet. But now even geologists, who study the least changeable face of the planet, are seeing connections. The theory of plate tectonics shows that the gradual shifting of plates has redistributed life around the globe, and that some forms of life have evolved to capture the benefits of geologic change. The Earth's major iron ore deposits are, in turn, the result of global environmental changes caused by bacteria on the early Earth. Likewise, atmospheric scientists have found that the evolution of plant life has greatly influenced the composition of the atmosphere.

From these and other findings a new view of nature is gradually emerging. No longer is it possible to see nature as a stately clock-like mechanism, slow, deliberate, static. Nature as we are coming to know it is a patchwork of complex systems with many things happening at once and with each system undergoing changes at many scales of time and space. Human beings, far from being alien interlopers who disturb the timeless rhythms of nature, are intrinsic elements of the natural order. Chance events seem to play an important role.

This is a very different nature from the simple, one-thing-at-a-time, nothing-left-to-chance, everything-calculable-exactly nature of the machine age. Complexity, chance, simultaneity of events, history, and change are the qualities of nature.

Perhaps the hardest of these ideas for us to accept is that of natural change. Do we open a Pandora's Box by admitting some kinds of change? How do we manage something that is always changing? If we concede that some kinds of change are good,

how can we decide which kinds are not?

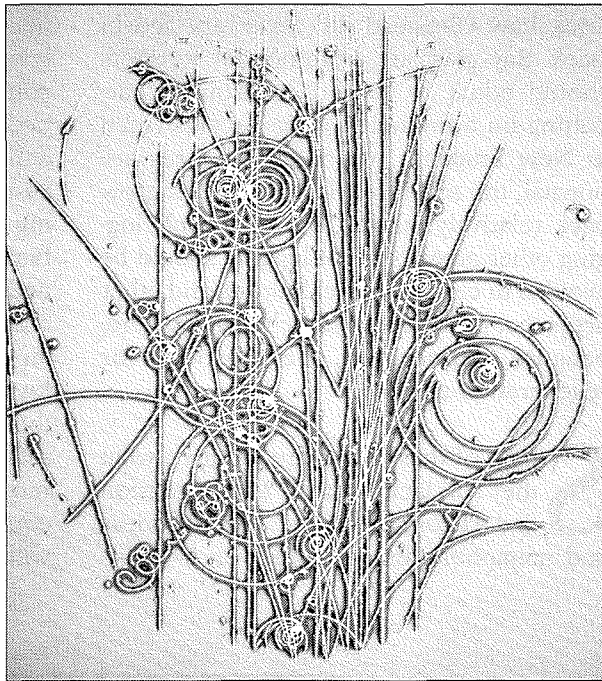
We are learning, however, that we have no choice but to accept change and to distinguish the good from the bad. Nature itself must be our guide. Changes that we impose on the landscape that are natural in quality and speed are likely to be benign. Rapid changes, or those that are novel in the history of biological evolution—such as the introduction of many new chemicals into the environment—are likely to cause problems. Global warming, for example, poses a challenge to us not so much because of the size of the change that is in the offing but because of the unprecedented speed with which it may occur.

On a practical level, this new view of nature leads to several possibilities for the management of natural resources. Consider the Kirtland's warbler, a small songbird that nests only in young jack pine woodlands in the coarse, sandy soils of Central Michigan. A friendly, pretty animal once proposed as the state bird, the warbler was the first songbird subject, in 1951, to a complete census. By the early 1960s, the population had fallen by half, leaving only about 200 males. Conservationists and scientists realized that the warbler was in trouble because its habitat, the jack pine forest, was disappearing. The reason, ironically, was that well-intentioned authorities were suppressing forest fires in Central Michigan. But jack pines require such blazes to reproduce; their cones release seeds only after they have been heated by fires, and the seeds germinate only in the sunny clearings created by fires.

It was not easy for scientists to persuade government conservation authorities that they would have to start controlled forest fires to save the warbler. That flatly contradicted

cherished beliefs about the pristine balance of nature. Learning to manage the environment is in many cases like learning the lesson Alice did in trying to reach a looking-glass house in the Lewis Carroll classic: Sometimes the only way to reach a thing is to walk away from it.

Conservationists in Michigan learned that lesson. Today, the warbler survives in a preserve of 38,000 acres where since 1976 it has been government policy to set controlled fires periodically. This small episode may mark a turning point in the modern understanding and management of nature. The warbler population is not managed to obtain some magical number—a carrying capacity or maximum sustainable yield—but merely to be sizeable enough to minimize the chance of extinction. The idea is to move beyond constancy and static stability—to manage for the recurrence of desir-



The shape of things to come? The tracks of subatomic particles, as revealed here by false-color bubble chamber photography, suggest the randomness and irregularity that scientists are now discovering in nature.

able conditions.

Another goal can be the persistence over time within some desirable range. We could manage elephants at Tsavo so that they are reasonably visible to tourists yet allow their number to vary with changes in climate and other conditions. Gone are the stringent goals of a single carrying capacity, a perfectly constant climax ecosystem, a maximum sustainable production.

This emerging perspective can be applied to a variety of environmental problems. For example, it suggests that on the nation's farms, integrated pest management, with its mix of biological controls and some benign artificial chemicals, should be preferred over intense use of chemical pesticides. Flood control projects should no longer include the straight-line canals of machine-age surveying; designers should try to maintain the mixture of habitats that a natural flood plain has (as Frederick Law Olmstead did a century ago in Back Bay Boston). Commercial foresters should adapt to local conditions, clear-cutting on a limited scale in regions (such as New England) where disturbances are normal, the soil is fertile, and forests grow back relatively quickly, but selectively logging other areas. And all logging should be avoided in certain tropical forests and other areas that have been untouched and where, because of poor soil, the prospects for regeneration are bad.

Some of these ideas are familiar; what they still lack is a truly unifying vision and rationale. At the level of ideas and metaphors, our culture is in a transi-

tion, and where we will come out cannot easily be foreseen. The science of ecology lacks the equivalent of a Newtonian physics—a coherent set of laws that explain the *dynamics* of nature rather than its structure. It awaits a genius on the order of Newton or Einstein to create a new “mathematics of complex systems” that renders nature in all of its complexity, capturing the play of chance, randomness, and variability. And ecologists are hardly alone in appreciating the need to come to terms with such factors. Some physicists, astronomers, paleobiologists, climatologists, and others recognize that the natural processes they study are not simple, regular, or certain, that what some now call “chaos” is ever present.

As we search for new ways to understand nature, we need not throw out the machine and organic metaphors completely. From the machine metaphor we need the notion that systems can be analyzed, cause and effect understood, and repairs made. From the organic metaphor we need the idea of history, and of a beginning and end, of individuality. Computers suggest one avenue toward a new understanding. Computer games children play make familiar complexity, surprises, randomness, and the simultaneity of events in a rapidly changing situation. Our children will have an easier time conceiving of the nature we know from scientific observations than those of us who grew up building erector-set towers and cranes driven by electric motors—simple machines with a single equilibrium. Perhaps one of these children will become the Einstein of ecology.

MUDDLING THROUGH

by Stephen Klaidman

Two weeks into the Middle East War a distraught *Atlanta Constitution* editorial writer declared on a television news broadcast that the Iraqi oil spill in the Persian Gulf had thrown her into "despair." The same day, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* published equivocal news stories about a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decision to require an Arizona utility company to spend \$2.3 billion at one power plant to try to eradicate a seasonal blue haze that sometimes obscures views of the Grand Canyon. A week earlier the *Times* and the *Post* carried lengthy reports under sharply conflicting headlines on the cancer risk posed by dioxin. "High Dioxin Levels Linked to Cancer" said the *Times*; "Extensive Study Finds Reduced Dioxin Danger" said the *Post*.

These are the actions of an environmentally conscious but confused nation. Environmentalists are responsible for most of the consciousness and much of the confusion (although there is plenty of blame to pass around). Because it takes a real cancer scare to make Americans buy less-than-perfect-looking apples, and because it will take an imminent threat of floods and parched earth to make them take the greenhouse effect seriously (not to mention the fact that taking such challenges seriously means spending a lot of money), environmentalists have always felt forced to manufacture crises and exaggerate risks to provoke political action. The news media leap on the story in its most dramatic form, rarely clarifying the issues. And so a crisis is born.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that puzzled Americans have a hard time sorting out serious environmental threats from trivial ones. As EPA surveys regularly demonstrate, Americans misjudge these risks. "The remaining and emerging environmental risks considered most serious by the general public today," an EPA panel reported last year, "are different from those considered most serious by the technical professionals charged with reducing environmental risk." The regulators and scientists stress global warming and the depletion of the ozone layer, the public worries about hazardous waste dumps and groundwater pollution. And in general it is the public's concerns that shape policy.

There is, of course, a vague awareness among the public that environmental choices mean trade-offs: A better view of the Grand Canyon, for example, will mean bigger utility bills for citizens of Arizona. But neither public opinion nor public policy is guided by a comprehensive vision that is consistent with the broader economic and social goals of American society. In a survey conducted by the *New York Times* in 1989, an astonishing 80 percent of those polled agreed with the proposition that "Protecting the environment is so important that requirements and standards cannot be too high, and continuing environmental improvements must be made regardless of cost." *All environmental standards? Regardless of cost?* Such sentiments, in a nation that already spends \$90 billion annually on pollution control, cannot be the product of a rational approach to environmental problems.

Science cannot be relied upon to extricate us from our dilemma over what to do about environmental challenges. Advances in ecology, toxicology, and other fields have contributed to our relatively new-found solicitude toward the Earth. But despite the increasing sophistication of the environmental sciences—including the perfection of highly precise measurement technologies such as gas chromatography—there is much that we do not know. Scientists often alert us to potential risks long before they can quantify and assess them. Uncertainty plagues researchers over a whole range of phenomena: low-level radiation; oil and chemical spills; air pollution (indoor and outdoor); and water pollution (groundwater and drinking water). How does one assess the risks posed by doses of carcinogens measured in parts per billion, or of natural toxins and man-made toxins measured in parts per trillion?

Officials who favor doing nothing more than additional research usually have two imposing allies: inertia and powerful economic interest groups. Environmentalists, on the other hand, must create a sense of urgency to motivate the public and put pressure on policymakers. To do this they create crises, not out of whole cloth, but often based on evidence that is meager, at least by the standards of science. This process does not necessarily lead to bad policy. Indeed, in some cases—global warming comes to mind—it may be the only way to get action in time to make a difference. But this haphazard lurching from crisis to crisis frequently leads to costly errors, and always leaves us woefully ill-informed about the ecological and health issues that confront us. We have become environmentally

aware without developing a true environmental ethic.

Modern environmentalism was born a mere three decades ago when Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* (1962), an eloquent warning about the destruction wrought by synthetic chemicals such as DDT, Aldrin, Chlordane, and Heptachlor. Carson took aim not only at industry, but at much of the existing conservation movement in America, founded more than a century earlier by the lawyer-legislator-diplomat George Perkins Marsh. Marsh lamented man's destruction of the environment, but he was equally clear about humanity's right to use the Earth for its own purposes. Man, he reminded his readers, is "a power of a higher order than any of the other forms of animated life, which, like him, are nourished at the table of bounteous nature."

Carson attacked this notion head on. "The 'control of nature,'" she declared, "is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal Age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man. The concepts and practices of applied entomology for the most part date from that Stone Age of science. It is our alarming misfortune that so primitive a science has armed itself with the most modern and terrible weapons, and that in turning them against the insects it has also turned them against the earth."

Carson's outrage was deeply felt, but Marsh, too, was motivated by a concern for the environment. The question of whether humankind should assume stewardship of nature, managing it prudently for human

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benefit, as implied by Marsh, or accommodate itself to the Earth's natural order, as Carson believes, is not laid to rest by invective. Marsh's perspective sees humans as paramount and is strongly grounded in scientific evidence and argument. It encourages reasoned debate on the most compelling of all grounds: human self-interest. Carson's argument is nature-centered and polarizing. Even James E. Lovelock, the British scientist who speaks of nature in near-mystical terms in *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979), notes, "When Rachel Carson made us aware of the dangers arising from the mass application of toxic chemicals, she presented her arguments in the manner of an advocate rather than that of a scientist. In other words, she selected the evidence to prove her case."

Lovelock notes that the chemical industry responded to Carson in kind, a response, he wrote, that may have set the pattern of self-serving environmental argument. Industry generally has been refractory, for the unsurprising reason that environmental protection cuts profit margins: Despite the public's professed concern for the environment (see box, p. 80), catalytic converters don't sell cars.

Undoubtedly, good things came out of *Silent Spring*. It awakened the environmental consciousness of the nation and led to controls on DDT and other pesticides and herbicides (some of which, however, turned out to be excessive). But the echoes of Carson's clarion call over these past three decades have drowned out cool discussion and helped prevent us, ironically, from arriving at a meaningful environmental ethic and sensible environmental poli-



Earth Day 1970: Media event?

cies that reflect it. Instead, we lurch from crisis to crisis.

How this happens, and what it costs us, can be appreciated by reviewing three recent "crises": one exaggerated, one virtually an illusion, and one likely all too real.

I

In 1953, when the Hooker Chemical Company turned over its Love Canal property to the Niagara Falls, N.Y., Board of Education for \$1, the canal (by then covered over) held roughly 21,000 tons of chemical wastes, ranging from benzene to trichlorethylene.* The deep, clay-lined waste dump was considered adequate by the standards of the day, but because the board insisted upon building a school on the site, the deed specified that the board would accept all risk and liability. In 1957, despite warnings by Hooker officials, the board also traded land with developers, who built houses in the area.

Over the years, a few people near the

*Much of what follows is drawn from Martin Linsky's excellent account in *How the Press Affects Federal Policymaking* (1986), of which he was co-editor.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESS REPORT, 1970-91

Since 1970, the United States has spent some \$700 billion on the war against pollution and billions more in related fields, such as conservation. The results so far are mixed.

AIR Since the 1970 Clean Air Act, emissions of many pollutants have dropped: lead by 96 percent, sulfur dioxide by 28 percent, particulates by 61 percent. But increasing use of automobiles (there was one car for every 2.5 Americans in 1970; one for every 1.7 in 1990) has pushed up emissions of ozone, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen oxides. Some 150 million Americans breathe air considered unhealthy by the EPA, costing an estimated \$40 billion annually in health-care outlays and lost productivity. New on the EPA's most wanted list: "greenhouse" gas carbon dioxide, emissions of which have grown by 1.4 percent annually since 1970, and airborne toxic chemicals.

WATER One of the rallying points for Earth Day 1970, then-dirty and dying Lake Erie has made a rally of its own. As a result of the 1972 Clean Water Act, 400,000 lake acres and 47,000 miles of rivers and streams are cleaner today. Some 8,400 miles of waterways have been added to the National

Wild and Scenic Rivers System's "protected" list, a twelvefold increase. "Non-point" pollution (runoff from streets and farms) and groundwater contamination are a big concern; one study found 46 pesticides in the groundwater of 38 states, tainting the drinking water of half the populace.

TOXICS Cleanup work has begun on only 261 of the approximately 31,000 hazardous waste sites discovered by the EPA as part of the \$8.5 billion Superfund program.

PESTICIDES More worrisome to the EPA than hazardous waste dumps or air pollution, pesticide residues on food have come to public attention, ironically, as a result of the false alarm over Alar. Another concern: Ninety percent of pesticides end up as runoff in waterways. Over four billion pounds of pesticides are sold worldwide each year.

SOLID WASTE Between 1970 and 1988, annual U.S. output of solid waste (i.e.

canal suffered burns, itchy skin, and blisters, and a number of trees mysteriously shrivelled up and died, but little was made of these incidents. Then, in 1976, the *Niagara Gazette* reported that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation was investigating the canal as a source of a flame retardant called Mirex, which had been found in Lake Ontario fish. From that point, the crisis built rapidly. The *Gazette* jumped on the story (and reporter Michael Brown later helped make it national news with articles in the *Atlantic* and the *New York Times Magazine* in 1979); Representative John LaFalce, the district's congressman, also took up the cause. Both looked for links between Hooker, a suitable corporate villain, and the health complaints of the Love Canal residents. By August 1978, based on tests that revealed the presence of several chemicals in the Love Canal

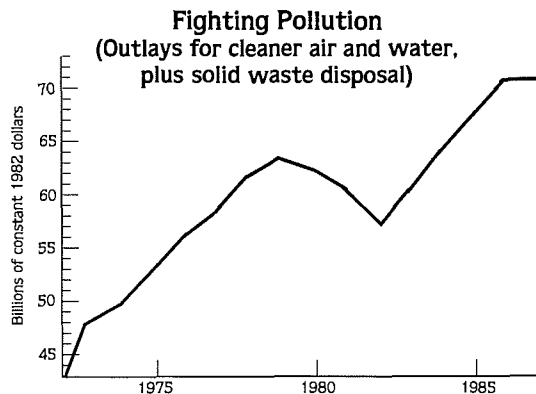
area, state Commissioner of Health Robert Whalen was announcing a "great and imminent peril" to Love Canal residents and recommending the evacuation of pregnant women and very young children from one part of the Love Canal site; President Jimmy Carter designated it an emergency area and Governor Hugh L. Carey announced that the state would buy the houses of 236 Love Canal families. There still were no studies demonstrating any threats to health.

By December 1979, the federal government had filed a \$124.5 million lawsuit against Hooker and local authorities. According to Jeffrey Miller, who headed an EPA hazardous waste task force, the agency launched the suit with two main goals in mind: to get Congress to pass hazardous waste legislation and to get the press off its back for inept handling of hazardous waste

garbage) rose by nearly 25 percent, to 160 million tons, or 1,455 pounds per person. Castoff plastics, up by 14 percent annually since 1960, now account for 20 percent of U.S. waste by volume. Nearly 75 percent of American garbage still ends up in landfills, with half the remainder incinerated and half recycled. Ten U.S. states have mandatory recycling laws; more than 1,000 communities have started curbside pickup programs.

LAND CONSERVATION Since 1970, U.S. national parks have expanded by 50 million acres (up by 167 percent), national wildlife refuges by 60 million acres (up threefold), the national wilderness preservation system by 81 million acres (up ninefold), and national forests by 4 million acres (up 2.2 percent). But most growth occurred during the 1970s and early '80s. Meanwhile, some 300-400,000 acres of wetlands, irreplaceable habitats for many fish, birds, and plants, are lost annually to development.

ENDANGERED SPECIES During the 1980s, 28 American animal species were put on the threatened list, 32 on the endangered list. The number of plant species on the lists jumped from 58 in 1980 to 205 in 1989. Six



species have become extinct in this period, among them Sampson's pearly mussel. Five species have recovered and been removed from the list since 1985, most recently the purple-spined hedgehog cactus.

OZONE DEPLETION In the 1987 Montreal Protocol, the major industrial nations agreed to a 50 percent cut in production of the chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that erode the Earth's protective ozone layer. In 1989, the U.S. and other countries vowed to halt all production by the year 2000. Yet CFCs already in the atmosphere will continue to do harm.

problems. The EPA still had no scientific evidence to establish Hooker's liability, so it commissioned a pilot study to look for chromosomal damage. The results seemed to show some deviations, but the study lacked a control population and was not conclusive. Nevertheless, the results wound up, through a leak, on page one of the *New York Times*.

The alarming story unleashed a media blitz—and a quite understandable panic among local residents. At one point, an angry crowd held two EPA officials hostage, demanding action from Washington. On May 21, 1980, the EPA ordered the emergency evacuation of 2,500 Love Canal residents from their homes, and the Carter administration later announced that the state and federal governments would foot the bill for the permanent relocation of more than 400 Love Canal families.

Ultimately, Love Canal cost the taxpayers some \$50 million, not to mention untold anguish. And all, apparently, for naught. Indeed, within a year the *New York Times* ruefully concluded that "it may well turn out that the public suffered less from the chemicals there than from the hysteria generated by flimsy research irresponsibly handled." Later studies by the Centers for Disease Control (1983) and in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (1984) have shown no elevated levels of chromosomal damage among Love Canal residents compared with other people in the Niagara Falls area. Since cancer has long latency periods, these results are not conclusive either. But to date, little or no scientific evidence has been produced to justify the Love Canal panic. Indeed, several hundred people have moved back to the area, since renamed Black Creek Village.

II

Before Christmas 1983, American farmers used about 20 million pounds of a chemical known as EDB annually to fumigate grain milling machinery and citrus and other crops. There was evidence that EDB was a potent carcinogen in laboratory animals, but none that it caused cancer in humans. Moreover, it was not believed to leave significant residues in fields and orchards that might leach into groundwater. When William Ruckelshaus took over as administrator of the EPA for the second time in 1983 (he had served as its first administrator in 1970-73), however, traces of EDB had been found in groundwater in Georgia and California. This discovery was noted in the appropriate offices at EPA, but did not rise to Ruckelshaus's attention; not, that is, until he went to Florida to spend Christmas with his mother.

The discovery of EDB in Florida groundwater, which Ruckelshaus learned about from local television and newspaper coverage, gave the story a whole new twist. Doyle Conner, the state commissioner of agriculture, was being accused by the *Orlando Sentinel*, the *St. Petersburg Times*, and other Florida newspapers of permitting the pesticide to be injected into the soil in amounts greater than federal standards allowed, raising the specter of groundwater contamination. A diversionary action was needed to get the heat off. So Conner had a few popular supermarket items tested for EDB residues, and lo and behold, they were found. Overnight, EDB was national news.

Between December 21 and December 23, 1983, all three television networks carried stories about EDB in food on their nightly newscasts. On the 21st, NBC anchor Tom Brokaw posed the portentous question: "How dangerous is it?" No one knew, but all three broadcasts showed packages of well-known foods such as Duncan Hines

muffin mixes and Pillsbury cake mixes being removed from supermarket shelves. There was no mistaking the message: This stuff is really bad for you.

Ruckelshaus spent most of the winter dealing with the snowballing panic over EDB, and finally ordered a ban on its use. The ban hamstrung U.S. grain sales to the Soviet Union, which had agreed to buy 7.1 million tons of U.S. wheat and corn in fiscal year 1984; it also hurt several Caribbean nations whose sales of tropical fruits to the United States were compromised. The ban even wreaked havoc on the personal lives of a handful of EPA employees, one of whom suffered a nervous breakdown as a result of the pressure he was under during the storm over EDB. Yet the ban was unnecessary and Ruckelshaus, as he later said in an interview, knew it. There was little or no evidence that it was harmful to humans in the amounts at which they were being exposed to it. Indeed, the most likely replacement for EDB, methyl bromide, was possibly more dangerous than EDB. Why did Ruckelshaus do it? Never mind that no one had proved that trace amounts of EDB in food could cause cancer in humans; no one could prove that they didn't. News media misrepresentation of this uncertainty made enough people deeply fearful that political prudence left the EPA administrator no real choice.

III

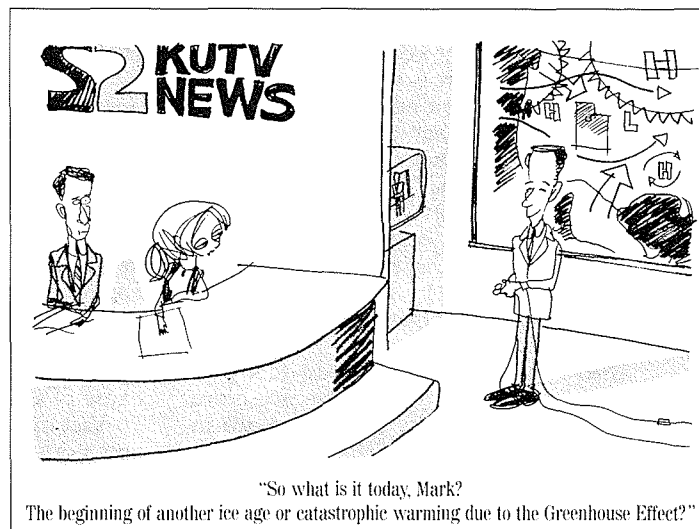
This nation, along with the rest of the world, is deeply engaged in what could turn out to be the most important environmental debate in history. And then again, maybe it won't. The debate is over global warming and what, if anything, to do about it. It is not over the greenhouse effect, which is real: Greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, meth-

ane, and chlorofluorocarbons do trap heat in Earth's atmosphere and do increase the planet's air temperatures. There is also little doubt among qualified scientists that there will be some global warming eventually, probably in the next five to 10 years. But no one is sure how much temperatures will rise and what effect the increases will have. Predictions range from 1.5 to 4.5 degrees Centigrade. At the low end, effects would be minimal, but the high end leads to some frightening scenarios—flooding of coastal lands, crop-destroying droughts, and massive deforestation. With so much uncertainty about what might happen, and at least an equal amount of uncertainty about how much it will cost to contain the warming, what is a poor policymaker to do?

On June 23, 1988, a bright and socially conscious climatologist named James Hansen decided to lend a hand. Hansen, the director of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, told a U.S. Senate committee chaired by Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) that the mean global temperature had risen by one degree Fahrenheit during the previous century. Moreover, Hansen said that he could say with "a high degree of confidence" that there was "a cause and effect relationship between the greenhouse effect and the observed warming." This circumspect-sounding bit of jargon meant there was now something dramatic for the media to talk about (during what happened to be a particularly tropical summer). Global warming, Hansen had announced to the world, is here, right now. It is not coming in five or 10 years. It

has arrived. Never mind that none of his colleagues agreed.

Hansen's judgment carried more weight because he was cloaked in the garb of the scientist and was speaking as an impartial government expert. According to Richard Kerr, a reporter at *Science* magazine with a Ph.D. in chemical oceanography, "had it not been for Hansen and his fame, few in public office, and certainly not the public itself, would have paid much attention to a problem that everyone . . . agrees threatens social and economic disruption around the globe." In this case a scientist with an environmentalist bent, James Hansen, was the crisis-maker. Time may prove that he was right. The public often responds radically to environmental threats that seem to pose a direct and dramatic threat to individuals—toxic waste dumps in the backyard, Alar on apples, and EDB on oranges—but it sleeps through warnings about threats that seem diffuse and indirect, even if they are ultimately much more serious. Hansen woke us up, and if the greenhouse effect assumes the dimensions many scientists believe it



Some climatologists warned during the 1970s of an impending new Ice Age, which has not helped win great public credibility for their more recent predictions of global warming.

THEORY VERSUS PRACTICE

In opinion surveys, most Americans talk a good pro-environment game. Watch what they do, not what they say, caution editor Joe Schwartz and Thomas Miller, a vice president of the Roper Organization, in American Demographics (Feb. 1991).

Saving the environment is a high priority for most American citizens. But as consumers, most of us are not willing to act on our beliefs. Over three-quarters (78 percent) of adults say that our nation must "make a major effort to improve the quality of our environment," according to a recent study commissioned by S. C. Johnson and Son and conducted by the Roper Organization. But at the same time, most say that individuals can do little, if anything, to help improve the environment.

Public concern about the environment is growing faster than concerns about any other issue monitored by Roper—at least before the Persian Gulf crisis and the softening of the economy. Businesses are tuning into this trend by producing "green" products, services, and advertising campaigns. But banking on environmental awareness can backfire, because the majority of Americans are already convinced that businesses are not environmentally responsible

Americans tend to blame businesses for the environmental problems they see at global, national, and local levels. More than eight in 10 Americans say that industrial pollution is the main reason for our environmental problems, and nearly three-quarters of the public say that the products businesses use in manufacturing also harm the environment. Six in 10 Americans blame businesses for not developing environmentally sound consumer products, and an equal share believes that some technological advancements made by businesses eventually produce unanticipated environmental problems.

Americans blame themselves, too. Seventy percent say that consumers are more interested in convenience than they are in environmentally sound products, and 53 percent admit that consumers are not willing to pay more for safer products.

In theory, almost every American is pro-environment. But the ardent environmental attitudes that come out in opinion polls cool

down significantly when you look at consumer behavior. Perhaps bad-mouthing businesses is easier than making important lifestyle changes and accepting some of the blame.

Consumer behavior usually affects the environment at two points. First, consumers can either buy or reject environmentally unsound products. After the purchase, they affect the environment by either recycling products or sending them to the dump.

At the moment, recycling appears to be the most rapidly growing pro-environmental behavior. Between March 1989 and February 1990, the share of Americans who say they regularly recycle bottles and cans rose from 41 percent to 46 percent, and the share who regularly recycle newspapers rose from 20 percent to 26 percent. Those who sort their trash on a regular basis rose from 14 percent to 24 percent of all adults.

Altruism isn't the only force behind the recycling boom. Many states and municipalities have passed "bottle bills" and other mandatory recycling laws. People may be complying with the new rules and may even be doing more than is required. But in many cases, legislation stimulated their behavioral changes.

More than half of all adults (52 percent) never recycle newspapers. Only 16 percent say they avoid products that come from environmentally irresponsible companies, and just seven percent regularly avoid restaurants that use foam containers. Only eight percent of Americans say they regularly cut down on their driving to protect the environment. More than three-quarters (76 percent) say they just motor on as usual, even though most acknowledge that emissions from private automobiles are a leading cause of air pollution.

Vast majorities of Americans are worried about our environmental future. So far, only a minority have adopted more environmentally responsible lifestyles. But attitudinal changes generally precede behavioral ones. The stage, it seems, is finally set for the "greening of America."

may, we will thank him for it. But time may also make Mr. Hansen a villain.

What makes these three cases typical is that scientists, politicians, and journalists used inconclusive scientific data to advance their own agendas. Our adversarial, interest-group-dominated politics lends itself to this kind of manipulation, as does our commercial news media, whose only consistent bias is for a dramatic, conflict-filled story. (It is this story bias, not any ideological bias, that drives the news media.)

The real failure of the environmental movement has been the extent to which it has contributed—along with industry, Congress, and the news media—to national confusion and misunderstanding about the comparative risks posed by different hazards. Environmentalists would have us believe that many deaths and much illness can be attributed to the nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island, Davis-Besse, and Brown's Ferry, to Love Canal and Times Beach, to living near high-tension power lines, to agricultural chemicals such as DDT, EDB, and Alar. But there is virtually no reliable evidence to support these charges. Environmentalists, along with journalists, portrayed the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Prince William Sound as a calamity on the order of a small war. Environmentalists know that there is nothing like 30 seconds of television network news footage of dying, oil-soaked sea gulls and seals to stir the nation's environmental conscience: It was just such disturbing images of an oil spill in Santa Barbara, California in 1969 that helped create the momentum behind the first Earth Day. But apart from the sad drama surrounding creatures in the area at the time, how much long-term damage to ecological systems is done by oil spills? Relatively little. In Prince William Sound, for example, spawning of some fish species

may have been disturbed, but the salmon catch this year set a record.

Environmental advocacy, which is meant to serve the public interest, has gotten out of hand. It is arguable, indeed probably correct, that 20 years ago hyperbole was the only way to make industry and government begin protecting the nation's health and environmental patrimony. In many cases, however, the science has caught up with these exaggerations, resulting in a loss of credibility for environmentalists. Moreover, public interest in the environment today is high. In the 1990s, a more straightforward approach might yield better results. Environmentalists should learn the lessons of Alar and dioxin. They should stick to the facts. They should seek to educate rather than merely alarm the public.

Uncertainty remains the most difficult obstacle to public understanding. For example, a recent study by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment found that it is possible to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 35 percent over the next 25 years. Would that slow the onset of global warming? Perhaps. The study also says that the economic effect of this reduction might be anything from a net annual gain of \$20 billion to a net annual expenditure of \$150 billion. How can one respond to expert disagreement of this magnitude?

But where science fails to provide answers—and it often does—a prudent, common-sense calculation of the public interest can lead to a conclusion. It would pay, for example, to reduce carbon dioxide emissions produced by the burning of fossil fuels even if the global warming payoff is minimal because there are sufficient collateral benefits—such as reducing dependence on imported oil. On the other hand, research shows that dioxin, only recently billed as one of the great killers of the 20th century, poses no significant threat at the trace levels of exposure that exist outside

the workplace.

Scientific uncertainty by itself need not paralyze policy. But we are still struggling to develop a real environmental ethic that allows us to confront those very serious problems that don't make good headlines and to confront others before they do become headlines. Certain basic questions must be faced. How much do we care about the environment? Who should pay the costs of addressing our concerns? How much? Take the blue haze over the Grand Canyon. It's not clear how much of it is caused by emissions from the Navajo Generating Station. But even if most of it is, is the removal of the haze worth the price? Should the operators of the plant bear the full \$2.3 billion cost? Should a decision of this kind be made by administrative fiat? Should the utility be allowed to pass on to its customers any or all of the cost? Should the general public share the cost?

The fact that 80 percent of those answering the *New York Times* poll of 1989 said that no price is too great to pay in the name of environmental quality shows that we have yet to confront such questions. Our approach now recalls an old slogan with many painful associations: We are saying that we are willing to pay any price and to bear any burden for the environment. That is not a serious position at a time when, for example, \$70 billion will be needed over the next 30 years simply to repair leaking underground storage tanks nationwide. Increasingly, we will need to put aside our anxieties over such high-profile but relatively trivial risks as Alar and EDB and begin to take cognizance of such submerged—not only literally but figuratively—threats as the storage tanks. This

falls under the unexciting but essential category, "rational ordering of risks."

There is good reason to doubt, however, whether we are yet capable of such changes. Consider the Navajo Generating Station again. Environmentalists hailed the EPA decision; business decried it. The news media presented the claims and counter-claims of the utility, the government, and the environmentalists, but usually without adequate background to allow intelligent public participation. Traditionally, reporters and editors have maintained that they are not qualified to resolve scientific controversies; the most they say they can do is to give a balanced presentation of what the parties are saying. What is required, however, is not resolution but enough investigation to separate facts and reasonable beliefs from half-truths and misleading constructions, and enough information for a reader or viewer to make an informed judgment.

Biology, epidemiology, ecology, climatology, and other sciences will continue to offer mostly inconclusive answers to questions about environmental risks. And despite years of experience, dozens of mistakes, and a high level of concern, the public remains woefully ignorant about the environment. For better or worse, neither can one expect much change in politics as practiced in the United States. A politics based on compromises hammered out through a televised clash of interests does not encourage environmental statesmanship. For these reasons, despite whatever good intentions we might have, America is likely for the foreseeable future to continue lurching from crisis to crisis.

BACKGROUND BOOKS

RETHINKING THE ENVIRONMENT

Two years ago the *New Yorker's* Bill McKibben published a well-publicized book whose title offered a blunt warning: **The End of Nature** (Random, 1989). It was, more precisely, the idea of nature as wild and untouched that McKibben saw vanishing. "The idea of nature will not survive the new global pollution—the carbon dioxide and the [chloro-fluorocarbons] and the like We have changed the atmosphere, and thus we are changing the weather. By changing the weather, we make every spot on earth man-made and artificial. We have deprived nature of its independence, and that is fatal to its meaning. Nature's independence is its meaning; without it there is nothing but us."

The End of Nature caused quite a stir; some suggested that it would have the same galvanic impact on public opinion that Rachel Carson's **Silent Spring** (also first published in the *New Yorker*) had had 27 years before. But while many were titillated by McKibben's violent obituary for nature, few seemed to pay much attention to his rescue plan. Man, he suggested, should submit to nature and do what is best for "the planet." He proposed an "atopia" where "our desires are not the engine." Human happiness, he said, "would be of secondary importance. Perhaps it would be best for the planet if we all lived not in kibbutzes or on Jeffersonian farms, but crammed into a few huge cities like so many ants."

The End of Nature is but one example of a strand of environmental thinking called "deep ecology." When scholars look back at deep ecology years hence, they will doubtless make much of what is probably its only "atopian" novel, Ernest Callenbach's **Ecotopia** (Bantam, 1977). Originally self-published by Callenbach in Berkeley in 1975, *Ecotopia* went on to become a cult classic. It tells of a visitor's adventures in 1999 in the new nation of Ecotopia—carved out of Northern California, Washington, and Oregon—an ecologically correct land of hanging plants and natural fibers from which plastic and all other symbols of the modern consumer society have been banished. Conformity to the new Green ethos is enforced by a

sort of genteel authoritarianism.

But there are also serious works in deep ecology. One of the best is Roderick Frazier Nash's **The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics** (Univ. of Wisc., 1989). The historian from the University of California, Santa Barbara, believes that history can be seen as the gradual widening of the scope of rights from the time of Magna Carta, which applied only to English noblemen, to the American Declaration of Independence, to the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1957 to, most recently, the Endangered Species Act of 1973. What he calls "environmental ethics" are in his view only a logical, though admittedly radical, next step in the development of liberal thought. Wolves and maple trees do not petition for rights, he acknowledges, so "Human beings are the moral agents who have the responsibility to articulate and defend the rights of the other occupants of the planet. Such a conception of rights means that humans have duties or obligations toward nature." Nash likens today's "biocentrists" to the crusading anti-slavery abolitionists of the early 19th century.

As Nash shows, deep ecology is a product of a partly submerged, second strand of American environmental thought. That strand had its origins in John Muir, the founder (in 1892) of the Sierra Club, who broke with Theodore Roosevelt and other late 19th-century conservationists by emphasizing the need for preservation of untouched wilderness. Stephen Fox's **John Muir and His Legacy: The American Conservation Movement** (Little Brown, 1981) is one of several recent studies. But the biocentrists look to another man, University of Wisconsin forestry professor Aldo Leopold, as the intellectual father of their movement. In **A Sand County Almanac** (1949), Leopold first proposed a "land ethic" that explicitly suggested that humans were just one of many species with rights on Earth, that other species have something like a right to life, "as a matter of biotic right, regardless of the presence or absence of economic advantage to us." At first ignored, *A Sand County Almanac* enjoyed a major vogue beginning in the 1960s.

Leopold, like Muir, was a dissenter from the mainstream conservation movement. As University of Pittsburgh historian Samuel P. Hays writes in **Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency** (1959), the conservationists may have revered nature but they were not about to endow it with rights. In keeping with the Progressive faith in professional management, Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, and other founding conservationists advocated wise "stewardship" of natural resources for the benefit of mankind. They were optimists about the environment and "emphasized expansion, not retrenchment; possibilities not gloom."

Perhaps because the conservationist ethic so naturally became America's ethic, it was not greatly elaborated after this early period. That began to change with the work of bacteriologist René Dubos, who, in **A God Within** (Irvington, 1972) and other books, developed the notion of "enlightened anthropocentrism." Dubos accomplished a hybridization of the two major strands of environmental thought, arguing in effect that a holistic attitude toward nature is in man's own best interest.

Even as Dubos wrote, old-fashioned conservationism was in fact being transformed into contemporary environmentalism. In **Beauty, Health, and Permanence** (Cambridge Univ., 1987), Samuel P. Hays attributes the change to a general shift in values growing out of the nation's unprecedented mass affluence after World War II. As Americans satisfied their craving for homes, cars, washing machines, and other material goods, their attention turned to "environmental amenities." In the age of Pinchot and Roosevelt, these had been available only to the wealthy few who were able to travel to national parks and private retreats. But now, since the private market could not satisfy the broader public's desire for clean air and water, "there was increasing demand that public and private nonprofit institutions do so." Hays makes a similar argument in **Government and Environmental Politics** (Wilson Center, 1989), edited by Michael J. Lacey, a thorough history of many areas of envi-

ronmental policy.

Journalist William Tucker offers a far less sympathetic version of the change in **Progress and Privilege: America in the Age of Environmentalism** (Anchor/Doubleday, 1982). Today's environmentalists, he argues, are a "nouveau aristocracy" who are "far more concerned with preventing others from climbing the ladder behind them, than in making it up a few more rungs themselves." Tucker contends that a disproportionate share of the costs of this aristocracy's pet "environmental amenities," from suburban zoning regulations to air pollution controls on factories, are borne by the lower middle class.

Another interesting explanation of the movement is offered by Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky in **Risk and Culture** (Univ. of Calif., 1982). They argue that there are three strands of American political culture (the hierarchical, the individualistic, and the sectarian or egalitarian) and that the rise of environmentalism reflects the recent strength of sectarianism. Because sectarianism regards all people as equally valuable and of infinite worth, there is no limit to the price that it demands that society pay for protection from carcinogens and other environmental risks. The result: environmentalism run amuck.

Neither environmentalists nor polluters get much sympathy from biologist Garrett Hardin in his latest book, **Filters Against Folly** (Viking, 1985). A self-described "ecoconservative," Hardin is best known for his "tragedy of the commons" thesis. He believes that environmental harm most often results when the principles of private property are compromised. People who own the resources they use are good stewards; those who shift the costs of their private interests to the public—be they polluters who foul the air, nomadic herdsmen who graze common lands, or even, in a sense, environmentalists themselves—have no incentive to be moderate. "The greed of some enterprisers in seeking profits through pollution," Hardin suggests, "is matched by a different sort of greed of some environmentalists in demanding absolute purity regardless of cost."



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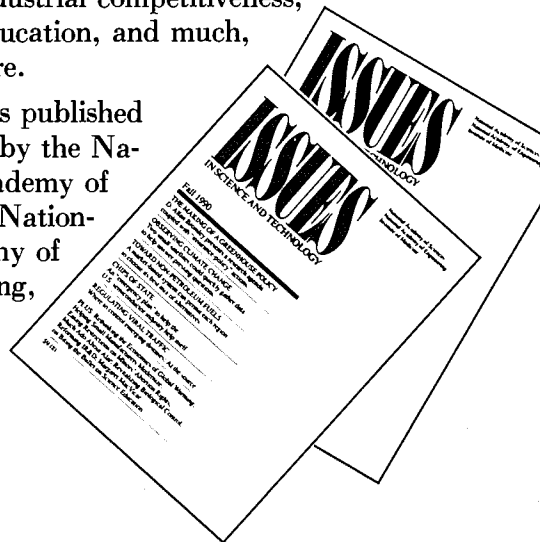
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CURRENT BOOKS

SCHOLARS' CHOICE

The South African Conundrum

THE MIRROR AT MIDNIGHT: A South African Journey. By Adam Hochschild. Viking. 309 pp. \$19.95

A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society. By David L. Horowitz. Univ. of Calif. 293 pp. \$20

Traveling around South Africa (as I do most years), one gets used to meeting different waves of visiting Americans. They come for many reasons. Ten and 15 years ago you met a lot of "Southeast Asia experts" who were anxiously retooling themselves and keen to move on to the latest crisis zone. For the most part, this lot exited fairly rapidly once it became clear that South Africa weighed a great deal less in the global balance than cruise missiles, the Japanese challenge in laptop computers, or whatever came after that. Mingling with them were many who saw in South Africa a sort of action replay of the American civil-rights struggle of the 1960s. Such characters were there because they wanted to re-live the dramas of their youth, dramas in which most of the whites were villains—Orval Faubuses, Lester Maddoxes and Bull Connors—and the blacks came out of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Others came simply as political tourists, confidently handing out prescriptions to the world's most complex and divided country. There have also been, let it be said, good and serious scholars such as Gwendolen Carter and Stanley Greenberg, whose work has made a genuine contribution to thinking about the South African conundrum.

One phenomenon I have grown particularly wary of is the instant American book about South Africa. The author of one such book proudly pushed his product

in front of me last year. One sentence, I remember, went, "Even at the end of our third day in Durban, Betty and I were still struggling to come to terms with the complexities of the place." Give it time, boy, I thought. What would Americans think of such instant authorities about, say, Mexico? They'd laugh, surely. So what's different about South Africa? The answer has to be that for most Americans South Africa is still like Mars: To have been there at all is remarkable; to return with moral or political insights, twice so.

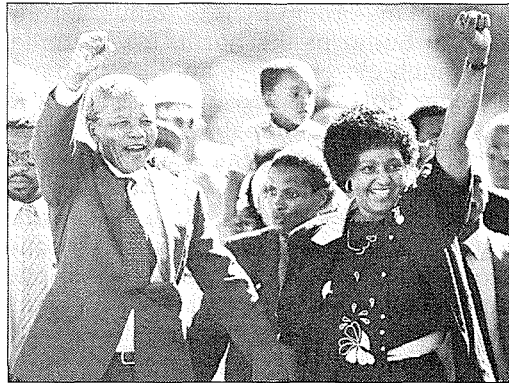
Adam Hochschild's *The Mirror at Midnight* is more acute than many of these instant concoctions. The editor of *Mother Jones*, Hochschild has visited South Africa several times and read more than just the newspapers. A reader looking for an introduction to contemporary personalities and events in South Africa could do worse than read this book. But such books date quickly—and already Hochschild seems too romantically committed to "the struggle" to be a reliable guide to South Africa in 1991. That ubiquitous catch-phrase, "the struggle," was born when Nelson Mandela was serving a life prison sentence and almost every opposition group was banned. But a new era of reasonableness began on February 2, 1990, when President de Klerk announced, among other reforms, the pardoning of Mandela after 27 years and the lifting of the ban on proscribed groups. At the opening of Parliament this year, de Klerk announced the repeal of the Group Areas Act, which had made residential integration punishable by law. Such developments have rendered semi-obsolete many old assumptions about "the struggle."

This "new South Africa" has created a psychological problem for those within the

liberation movement who have, over decades, fallen in love with their own posture of romantic militancy against the forces of darkness. This subculture was self-consciously that of the victim. It identified with, and thus represented, "the oppressed." Since the oppressed were just that, they enjoyed the moral high ground—indeed, could do no wrong—while their opponents were simply "the oppressor," for whom no fate was bad enough.

Hochschild is a little too much of a pushover for this point of view, a little too unaware that this self-romanticization of the oppressed actually serves a variety of personal and political ends. He manages to mention some of the appalling crimes with which Winnie Mandela is associated, but then rushes to somehow blame the government even for them. Similarly, he mentions the subject of the South African Communist Party (SACP) only in order to mock the government for its wild McCarthyism. Yet the fact is that the SACP is probably the third most Stalinist party in the world, after its Chinese and Cuban counterparts. It controls a majority on the national executive of the African National Congress (ANC), and it dominated the first negotiations between the ANC and the government. Like it or not, the SACP is not just a figment of the government's overheated imagination. Hochschild tries hard to play down the party's power not because he is a communist sympathizer but precisely because he is a liberal and wants awkward matters like the SACP not to impair his romantic sympathy with "the oppressed." The oppressed, let it be said, are in general keenly aware of the openings this sort of determined gullibility affords them, and they take full advantage of it.

After Hochschild's book, it is a treat to turn to Donald Horowitz's eagerly awaited *A Democratic South Africa*? Horowitz, a professor of law and political science at Duke, points out a crucial fact: Intelligent analysis of South Africa has been bedeviled by a virtual conspiracy of silence over the significance of ethnicity.



Historically, white racists used divisions and antagonisms among black tribal groups to serve their own ends. "Black tribalism" became the excuse for creating "bantustans" or ethnic homelands—that is, for setting aside sparse patches of lands that tribal groups were told to regard as their homes. Tribal divisions also furnished the rationale for closed ethnic employment, whereby companies, if they wished, could employ members from only one ethnic group.

In response to this use of tribal antagonisms, liberals and radicals from the 1950s onward asserted that divisions between, say, Zulus and Xhosas, were either unimportant or merely the product of white manipulation. The ANC has declared war on all modes of acting or thinking on ethnic or racial grounds and said it will use "liberatory intolerance" (which ranges from legal suits to public humiliations) to end it. As Horowitz points out, such tactics have often been seen before in Africa: In the 1960s, Ugandan President Milton Obote, for example, under the pretext of ending ethnic conflicts, attacked the Buganda people and then set up a one-party police state. Nowhere have such tactics reduced ethnic conflict, but in every case they were successful in stifling democracy.

The fact is that only a minority of South Africans identify themselves as South Africans. As Horowitz's survey data show, the identities that matter are overwhelmingly ethnic or racial. Moreover, when the various groups are asked to specify which other groups they feel close to, a very defi-

nite pecking-order emerges. Zulus, Tswanas, and Sotho in the north, for example, feel much closer to one another than any of them do to Xhosas in the south. And despite all the fashionable black rejection of white (English-speaking) liberals, all black groups feel far closer to English-speaking whites than to Afrikaners. Strikingly, Jews were the group disliked second most, ahead even of Indians—this despite the fact that Jews have played so prominent a part in anti-apartheid politics.

Horowitz feels, surely rightly, that a peaceful and democratic future for South Africa depends on the recognition not only of the reality of these ethnic groups but of the inevitability of stress and rivalry among them. Fights between the ANC and the Zulu-based Inkatha have made headlines around the world and led to more than 5,000 deaths, but the ANC has also clashed with every other black liberation group. To accommodate such rivalries, Horowitz argues, Pretoria must adopt a federal structure of government.

There are many obstacles in the way of such a rational political course. As Horowitz admits, he found that ANC activists have for so long repeated their mantra about a unitary state—just as they have insisted upon inheriting the same state apparatus their oppressors used—that even those who concede the value of federalism have not thought it worth the immense effort that would be required to change the movement's mind about it. And indeed,

there is such ready recourse to violence within many black communities that it is not clear that elections of any kind are going to be at all easy to conduct.

Yet despite such difficulties Horowitz is still right, even right about federalism, whatever the resistance to it within the ANC. South Africa is probably the most fiercely divided society on earth. Its racial cleavages are infamous, but it is also deeply divided along ethnic, linguistic, regional, class, and religious lines. Everything we have learned from the experience of other nations suggests how easy it is for such societies to collapse into civil war, and South Africa could, all too easily, provide the world with the spectacle of a giant Lebanon. Such mosaic societies can be ruled for a time by authoritarian elites—Afrikaner or African—but violence will break through in the end. The only hope for long-term peace (and the economic growth which is probably indispensable to it) lies in a truly open-minded search for supple, enabling democratic institutions. The danger is that some will feel that the arrival in power of African nationalists will be the happy democratic ending South Africa needs. The point of Horowitz's work is that that ending has to be merely a part of a new democratic beginning.

—R. W. Johnson is a fellow in politics at Magdalen College, Oxford University, and the author of *How Long Will South Africa Survive?* (1977).

The Writer Without Certainties

PRECISION AND SOUL: Essays and Addresses. By Robert Musil. Ed. and trans. by Burton Pike and David S. Luft. Univ. of Chicago. 301 pp. \$29.95

Among the great modernist writers only Robert Musil's name has failed to become a household word in the English-speaking world. His mind was as original

as the philosopher Wittgenstein's, and his fiction shrewder than Mann's or Proust's in its analysis of a world without certainties. Yet one obstacle stands in the way of Musil's reputation. His most celebrated work, *The Man without Qualities* (1930–43), is one of the longest novels ever written, and, despite its wit and brilliance, no one ever quite seems to finish it. Indeed,

Musil never finished it himself. The novel, with all its exploration of tenuousness, doubt, and moral formlessness, was not so much unfinished as unfinishable. (A new translation, to be published by Knopf early next year, may finally bring the novel wider recognition in America.)

Robert Musil was born in Austria in 1880, and thus he belongs to that exceptional generation of German-speaking novelists—Mann, Kafka, Hesse, Hermann Broch, and Alfred Döblin—who came of creative age in the decade before World War I. Son of a professor of mechanical engineering, he was educated, mostly in Berlin, on the assumption that science provided the most reliable access to reality and that the best hope of philosophy lay in positivism. When Musil moved toward psychology, literature, and forms of philosophy other than positivism, he found himself unable to make up his mind about anything. Musil's intellectual uncertainty became the creative provocation of *The Man without Qualities*. His fictions hover above certain feelings—doubt, misgiving, equivocation—without settling upon any of them as the basis of life. Of course most people, even writers, do not consciously establish a “basis of life” but simply accept or fight the facts of their life as they occur. But Musil proposes an intriguing question: What would one's life be like if one attached no particular privilege or meaning to the fact that something exists? Something else might have existed instead of it. Then what?

Musil had the genius to see that this predicament was not his alone. Like many of his generation, Musil found the social world encumbered by “outworn ideologies such as Christianity, monarchism, Liberalism, and Social Democracy.” These ideas were no longer actually put into practice, Musil said, yet people acted as though they still believed in them, thus lending those ideologies “the illusion of meaning and sacredness, which in addition to everything else is also a sin against the spirit.” In his essays, collected in *Precision and Soul*, Musil was trying to understand a civilization that was just then com-

ing into being and that no ideology had begun to describe.

The title of this collection comes from *The Man without Qualities* and points to one of Musil's constant preoccupations: “We do not have too much intellect and too little soul, but too little precision in matters of the soul.” These essays treat such subjects as Austria and Germany, the nature of a nation as distinct from a state or a civilization, the sociology of film, the question of ideas and ideologies, the status of women, and the hope for a new world after the Great War. All are connected by Musil's attempt—after the crisis of European culture that had led to the catastrophe of World War I—to develop new ways of thinking to enhance an individual's flexibility in responding to an uncertain civilization.

The editors of this volume claim that Musil was a great essayist, and so he was if the essay as a genre is best found among fragmentary perceptions, spurts of enthusiasm, broken flights. Musil wrote most of his essays upon invitation, and when he saw them in print he thought them merely occasional pieces. He felt about his writings what his character Ulrich in *The Man without Qualities* feels about his own life:

For a long time there had been a faint air of aversion hovering over everything that he did and experienced, a shadow of helplessness and isolation, a universal disinclination to which he could not find the complementary inclination. At times he felt as though he had been born with a gift for which at present there was no function.

Musil's great theme was indeterminacy: His characters are invariably found among choices they are unwilling to make, rival vocations between which they scrupulously dither. *The Confusions of Young Törless* (1906), Musil's first novel, is appropriately a story of adolescent wavering. In later stories—in *Unions* (1911), *Three Women* (1924), and the endlessly postponed *Man without Qualities*—even when adolescence is left behind, the wa-

vering continues. In that last book Clarisse says: "A Man without Qualities does not say No to life, he says Not Yet, saving himself up." No wonder Musil often felt disgusted with storytelling, an art that can't avoid making the local commitment of saying that something happened and then something else happened. If you believe that these happenings are arbitrary, you are bound to think their recital a specious affair. In any case, Musil discovered his genius behind the appearances he could hardly bring himself to narrate. His characters stare at events without really participating in them, and the interest of the events lodges itself in the stare more than in the actions. In *The Man without Qualities* we read of Claudine:

What attracted her in the unintelligible passage of events was all there was in it that did not pertain to herself, to the spirit: What she loved was the helplessness and shame and anguish of her spirit—it was like striking something weaker than oneself, a child, a woman, and then wanting to be the garment wrapped about its pain, in the darkness alone.

Mostly, the unintelligible passage of events took the form—or the formlessness—of the crowd, the masses. In 1912 Musil wrote that "the fundamental cultural difference between this and any other age" was one's experience of dissolving in the crowd; he speaks of "the loneliness and anonymity of the individual in an ever-increasing mass." The same motif recurs in the essay on Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1918–22), where the individual mind is seen bewildered by the multiplicity and chaos of the images—the facticity, as Musil calls it—it has to confront:

What characterizes and defines our intellectual situation is precisely the wealth of contents that can no longer be mastered, the swollen facticity of knowledge (including moral facts), the spilling out of experience over the surfaces of nature, the impossibility of achieving an overview, the chaos of things that cannot be denied.

Musil's answer was partly Nietzschean: Perhaps we can overcome the facticity "by becoming a spiritually stronger type of human being." But he couldn't bring himself to accept the other part of Nietzsche's answer: Lighten the burden by consulting only those facts that bear upon our future. Nietzsche had urged his readers to seek "a past from which we may spring, rather than that past from which we seem to have derived." Musil felt a scruple, and yet another misgiving, about this stratagem. "It makes no sense," he writes, "to try to remove from the facts, through a false skepticism, the weight of their facticity."

In 1938, after the *Anschluss* of Nazi Germany and Austria, Musil left Vienna and settled in Switzerland. He died in Geneva on April 15, 1942. There is a certain propriety in his having removed himself to neutral Switzerland. The essays in *Precision and Soul* show that virtually every social or political position he adopted was overwhelmed in the event. He derived dire satisfaction from the notion that events are arbitrary and therefore interchangeable. Hitler acted upon a different notion. Musil's Switzerland was fiction, not fact: There, if nowhere else, he could ordain things differently, dissolving the sinister forms of reality and projecting a "second state of being" from his choice feelings and desires. Not that he was content with fictions of utopia. He continued to believe, or rather to hope against hope, that genius could somehow float free of every limiting condition. Rainer Maria Rilke was his example—a poet released from the ordinariness of ordinary thinking.

The emergence of a Rilke could not indeed be explained, but Musil derived from the naturalist Baron Alexander von Humboldt the idea that "significant individuality" is "a power of the spirit that springs up without reference to the course of events and begins a new series." Humboldt saw "nodal points and points of origin in creative people who absorb past things and release them in a new form that can no longer be traced back past their point of origin." Unfortunately, a theory of free-floating genius is just as applicable to Hit-

ler as to Rilke. Musil hoped that such genius would commit itself "to purely intellectual endeavors," but he lived long enough to see that it did not.

The essays in *Precision and Soul* are mostly a record of bewilderment, including self-bewilderment. Some of them—the critique of Spengler, the obituary on Rilke—have the desolate and desolating beauty of a noble mind at the end of its tether. Musil's mind was always there. He

was never content. As in the novels, so in the essays, he thought he could make a new world by talking it into existence; coaxing, cajoling, threatening, summoning. And then he broke off, his novel incomplete, knowing that the magic would not work. Not yet, anyway.

—Denis Donoghue, a Wilson Center Fellow, holds the Henry James Chair of Letters at New York University.

King Oil

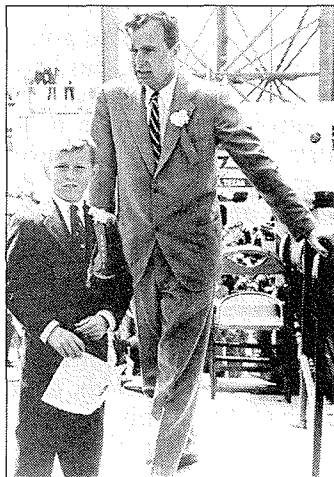
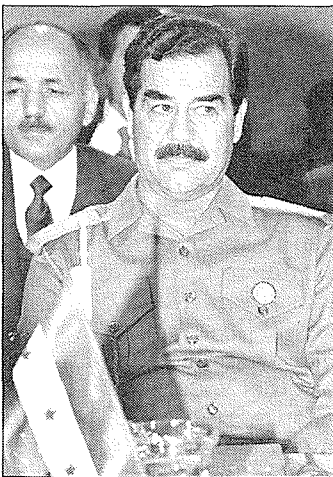
THE PRIZE: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power. By Daniel Yergin. Simon & Schuster. 877 pp. \$24.95

Every author dreams about good timing, some stroke of luck that will distance his book from the pack of 50,000 titles published annually in the United States. During the seven years he worked on *The Prize*, Daniel Yergin may have imagined some sort of crisis in the oil-rich Middle East that would make his book a hot property when it was published. But

even in his wildest reverie Yergin could not have dreamed that publication of his oil saga would coincide with the greatest American military expedition since the Vietnam War.

But coincide it did. Five days after Yergin delivered his epilogue to Simon & Schuster, Saddam Hussein's troops invaded Kuwait. The publisher immediately embarked on a crash publishing schedule. In four months, or one-third the time it normally takes to publish a book, *The Prize* was in bookstores.

Critics of the war have pointed to a base motive behind American policy ever since George Bush uttered the words, "This will not stand." If Kuwait exported, say, artichokes instead of oil, the United States would have cared considerably less about the fate of the emirate. But readers of *The Prize* will recognize an enduring principle at stake. In our century, oil begets national wealth, which begets state power. Americans differed over whether the resort to force was premature or wise. But unless one had been a pacifist or consid-



Two oilmen: Iraq's Saddam Hussein; George Bush (with George, Jr.) in 1956, when he was president of Zapata Off-Shore Company.

ered Saddam Hussein a benign force, the case for doing nothing would have been hard to make. American inaction would have been as grievous a miscalculation as was its involvement in Vietnam. A nation's foreign policy is, after all, a matter of making distinctions.

But no one should conclude that Yergin's book lets the United States off the hook. Many of the loudest advocates of force had earlier dismissed the criticism, popular in the mid-1970s, that indiscriminate arms sales to the Persian Gulf would eventually come to haunt America. Yergin also reminds us that, even as U.S. forces battled in the Middle East, Americans were consuming far more gasoline per capita, and paying far less for the privilege of doing so, than anyone else in the world.

Yergin, the author of *Shattered Peace* (1977) and *Energy Future* (1982), here sets himself his most ambitious task to date: nothing less than a history of petroleum, and all that oil has achieved and despoiled since its modern discovery in the Pennsylvania hills. The word *modern* is significant because black ooze seeping up through the ground has been used since at least 3000 B.C., mostly as a medical nostrum. But the Industrial Revolution found new and ever more uses for petroleum—beginning with artificial lighting—until oil has become the key ingredient that makes modern society work.

At the outset, Yergin announces the three themes that he will explore in *The Prize*. These are the ways petroleum has been perceived in this century: first as a business, then as a strategic resource, and finally as a factor affecting the environment.

Oil became a big business and fortunes were made almost from the day that first Pennsylvania well hit pay dirt in 1859. Speculators in one early well earned \$15,000 in profit for every dollar they invested. By the 20th century oil had become the world's biggest business, virtually inextricable from modern capitalism, multinational enterprise, the international economy, and business-government rela-

tions. Seven of today's top 20 Fortune 500 companies are oil conglomerates.

World War I, with its new petroleum-powered fleets and tanks, transformed oil from merely a commodity that generated immense wealth into an essential resource for nation-states. A young Winston Churchill was among the first to realize that strategic mastery itself was the prize conferred by control over oil. Churchill's insight sounds the second theme of *The Prize*, in which Yergin correlates national power with control of oil resources. Oil-rich Iraq seems to prove this proposition: With a population of only 17 million, Iraq was able to support the fourth largest military force in the world. Yergin also reminds the reader how much American power is oil power. After World War II, in crises extending from the Korean War to the Six Day War in 1967, America's capacity to maintain its oil supply through internal production and its ability to guarantee the international transport of oil to its allies played a major role in cementing the Western alliance under U.S. leadership.

Yergin makes this argument correlating oil and power persuasive, perhaps too persuasive, because he fails to treat what seem significant exceptions. His thesis does not explain, for example, why the Soviet Union, the world's largest oil-producing country, has failed economically or why Germany and Japan were able to become great powers without oil resources. (It can be argued of Japan and Germany, however, that their defeat in World War II was in no small part due to oil shortages.)

The struggle for control of oil has created, paradoxically, an environment out of control: The follies and shortsightedness of Hydrocarbon Man is Yergin's final theme. From global warming to the pollution and congestion in cities from Mexico City to Eastern Europe, oil has contributed to conditions of life that threaten human health, endanger other species, and possibly imperil the planet. Yergin's look at the high-energy way of life is, in many respects, the most sobering aspect of the entire book. What emerges, after putting aside all the struggles for individual, cor-

porate, or national wealth and power, is an unflattering picture of human incapacity to manage a nonrenewable resource with even a modicum of enlightenment.

With such themes, and a cast of characters ranging from John D. Rockefeller to the Shah of Iran, Yergin could hardly have produced a dry, lifeless book. Yet for all its detail, *The Prize* leaves several important threads dangling, never fully exploring what the oil saga tells us about business-state relationships or the mix of oil money with politics. It is only after 100 pages of discussion that the reader is informed, almost incidentally, that John D. Rockefeller's great success as an oilman depended in no small part on Standard Oil's ability to pass and block legislation.

Yergin's narrative becomes more politically oriented when it comes to the Depression. He shows why the Roosevelt administration agreed to ration production and keep oil prices at or above \$1 per barrel during the 1930s. Grateful oilmen responded by becoming the only major industrialists to back the Democrats. Even if, eventually, more dollars from oil flowed to the Republican Party, the Democrats continued to receive competitive contributions. (Certainly virtually no other industry was as generous to the Democratic Party in the period from the 1930s to the '60s.) Oklahoma and Texas campaign contributions were a financial pillar of the New Deal coalition. They made the infamous oil-depletion allowance politically invincible. Yet even here Yergin expends more words on petroleum's contribution to the rise of the motel than in explaining this stunning tax break.

Even when Yergin seems ready to get down to business, he often drops the ball. He devotes deserved space to one of the most revealing episodes in the entire post-war era: that struggle which began in 1951 when Iran's new prime minister, Mohammed Mossadegh, nationalized British oil holdings. After a British-imposed embargo failed to deter Mossadegh, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency sponsored a coup in

1953 that overthrew him and placed the Shah in power. The previous year, when Truman had sent Averell Harriman to negotiate with Mossadegh, the prime minister had claimed he could not compromise because of the power of Ayatollah Seyed Kashani. Harriman had then sought out Kashani, only to be told—in words that anticipate a later ayatollah—that all foreigners were evil and foreigners interested in oil were candidates for butchering. Yergin fails to do justice to the lawyer and democrat Mossadegh, who quite legitimately wanted Iran to have control of its own resources. Mossadegh is portrayed here as something of an unreliable clown, irrational in his obstinacy.

The ramifications of Mossadegh's defeat still resound today. The coup, its supporters say, bought 25 years of stability in Iran and provided America a key ally in the Cold War. But others note the irony with which this episode has come full circle: American opposition to Mossadegh ushered in the regime of the Shah; internal Iranian opposition to the Shah eventually brought about the theocracy of the Ayatollah Khomeini. The United States, to oppose Khomeini's Iran, supported and built up Saddam Hussein during the 1980s—and the rest is history. Ironies and tragic elements abound in the all-too-human struggle over petroleum and all it confers, but too often they are missing from Yergin's account.

Some early readers criticized *The Prize*, feeling that Yergin had ascribed too much significance to oil, inflating its importance in events big and small. In fact, his opus omits too much of the real history. One is left with the sense that, while *The Prize* sketches the outlines of the complex tale, neither Yergin nor anyone else has completely mastered this epic drama.

—Max Holland, a Wilson Center Fellow, is writing a biography of John McCloy. He is the author of *When the Machine Stopped: A Cautionary Tale from Industrial America* (1989).

NEW TITLES

History

THE PROMISED LAND: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America. By Nicholas Lemann. Knopf. 320 pp. \$24.95

After World War II, more than five million southern blacks, mostly farmers, moved to northern cities. Suddenly race relations ceased to be a "regional matter" and started affecting everything from joblessness in big cities to the successes of the New Right in politics.

Lemann, a contributing editor of the *Atlantic*, has a novelist's gift for folding this epic history into the stories of a few black families. During the 1940s, these families moved to Chicago from the small Mississippi Delta community of Clarksdale (birthplace of the late bluesman Muddy Waters). Displaced by mechanical cotton pickers, they streamed north in search of a better way of life. Yet big-city ghetto society reproduced the social ills of sharecropper society—widespread illiteracy, terrible schools, large numbers of unwed mothers and broken homes—and stirred in some new ones as well, notably high crime rates. Lemann shows how "panic peddlers" and machine politicians fostered residential segregation and overcrowding in order to stabilize their ethnically balkanized city. Like other northern cities, Chicago built mammoth housing projects to deal with the influx. Lemann calls Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes "among the worst places to live in the world," and living in such places "a fate that no American should have to suffer."

Miraculously, many black migrants and their children did manage—in project vernacular—to "clear," that is, to climb out of the ghetto and into the middle class.

How African-Americans divided into two economic strata is one of the ironies of the civil-rights movement. The War on Poverty emerged from the embittered rivalry between Robert Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. Johnson's overreaching ambition was to do something on a grand scale. So he bypassed job programs for community action and community development. Lemann argues that this was a blunder because "it presumed a link between political empowerment and individual economic advancement that doesn't exist." The fatal flaw in the community-development ap-

proach was its assumption that ghettos could be converted into middle-class neighborhoods. In fact, most residents left the ghetto as soon as they were economically able. The inner-city blacks who staffed the various Office of Economic Opportunity or Housing and Urban Development programs used their paychecks to move up and out.

But "the idea that the government can't accomplish anything [in ghettos]," Lemann says, is "a smokescreen" obscuring the very real advances that were made by Head Start and other programs. Additional government programs—education, birth control, job training—could change the worst aspects of ghetto culture, but they would be expensive: anywhere from \$10 to \$25 billion a year. Lemann points out that these figures are still less than one-thirtieth of the federal budget and far less than the cost of the savings and loan bailout. Furthermore, such programs would ultimately save money currently spent on welfare and incarceration. Lacking now, he argues, is "a strong sense of national community," "a capability for national action," aimed at healing the problem of the ghetto.

Lemann, however, is not fatalistic. Race relations in America are the history of things once thought impossible—from emancipation to the ending of legal segregation. Even the story told in *Promised Land* would have once been unthinkable: "That black America could become predominately middle class, non-Southern, and nonagrarian would have seemed inconceivable until a bare two generations ago."

MAKING SEX: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud. By Thomas Laqueur. Harvard. 313 pp. \$27.95

The announcement that there happen to be two sexes is hardly going to astound anyone. Yet, according to Laqueur, an historian at Berkeley, until the 18th century, science postulated that there was in effect only one biological sex. Laqueur's contention—and that of a new school of historians who are bringing "sex" into history—is that our notion of what male and female are is culturally imposed. Sociobiologists, who assume that physiology is constant, evidently have had it wrong—and

easy. But if "anatomy" varies from culture to culture and period to period, then the study of sex—adding history to sociology and biology—becomes so complicated that even a scholar like Laqueur has trouble sorting out all the strands.

Through most of Western history, Laqueur believes, anatomists were either establishing or responding to a philosophical debate over man's dominant position in society. The one-sex model, first popularized by the Greek anatomist Galen and later refined by Aristotle, posited that the female sexual organ was merely an interior version of the male's. "The one-sex model," Laqueur argues, "displayed what was already massively evident in culture more generally: *man* is the measure of all things."

Until the Renaissance, anatomists followed the lead of their classical forebears in interpreting genital structures. Then, in 1559, matters became problematic when Renaldus Columbus "discovered" the clitoris. The significance of this discovery, Laqueur says, was that "the relationship between men and women was not inherently one of equality or inequality but rather of difference that required interpretation."

For the next three centuries, a great controversy about conception, orgasm, and passion was waged in order to preserve the one-sex model. Anatomists resorted to dubbing the clitoris a "female penis." Even after scientists gave in to the two-sex model, there was little doubt about which sex was "first." In 1865, for example, the urologist William Acton wondered whether "the majority of women are not much troubled by sexual feeling of any kind." Sigmund Freud transferred the female orgasm from the clitoris to the vagina, and, not surprisingly, was left with the question, "What does woman want?"

Laqueur's history of sexuality seems slightly too uniform to be entirely convincing. There is evidence that people long before the 18th century were aware—how could they not be?—of men and women as separate beings; even pas-



sages in Aristotle suggest this. What Laqueur fails to acknowledge is how differences between the sexes were formerly expressed in metaphysical and even cosmological terms, which were as persuasive then as biological and scientific facts are now. The real nature of the revolution in the 18th-century thinking was that biology and medicine began supplying evidence for what had been previously understood on a spiritual level.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE BRITISH ARISTOCRACY. *By David Cannadine.* Yale. 832 pp. \$35

Last Christmas, British newspapers were running an acid little story about Mrs. Thatcher's final "honors list." Mrs. Thatcher wanted to use aristocratic honor to reward new-made wealth and loyal party service. So she proposed to make the media tycoon Rupert Murdoch a knight and pot-boiling novelist Jeffrey Archer a lord. But she had to withdraw their names after the committee that scrutinizes the lists on behalf of the Queen objected. This minor fracas nicely illustrates the fact that aristocratic title still maintains a complex symbolic presence—a spectral afterlife of prestige without power—in British political life. Behind such contradictions lies the century-long social transformation that British historian David Cannadine traces in this exhaustively researched book.

One hundred years ago, the landowning classes were Olympians: stupendously wealthy, immensely privileged, the arbiters of taste and politics alike. Their decline began in a distant and unlikely place, the American Midwest. There, farming began to be practiced on such a large scale that the English landlords could not compete. In England agricultural prices fell, as did the landlords' rents from property. In the century from 1880 to 1980, they were gradually forced to sell off much of their landholdings. Today there are still around 2,000 landed estates, but a century ago they covered half the land in Britain and now they cover only a quarter. The reduction of the great aristocrats' estates—such as the Duke of Devonshire's from 133,000 acres to 40,000 acres—is of less significance, though, than the disappearance of almost the entire class of lesser landlords. Of the

the squirearchy of 1880—those gentlemen who owned from 1,000 to 10,000 acres and who propped up the whole system—only 16 percent have descendants who possess land today.

The aristocrats' social decline paralleled their slide from economic affluence. Tocqueville had predicted that democracy would undermine aristocracy everywhere, and in England electoral reform loosened the great landlords' hold on national power. Today, a few hereditary nobles are still immensely wealthy; the Duke of Westminster's worth is estimated at anywhere from 400 million to one billion pounds. Most aristocrats, however, long ago found themselves unable to keep up their great houses, let alone imitate the influence of their ancestors.

Along this melancholy trail, Cannadine dwells on the multifarious individuals' reactions to their decline. On one side are renegades such as Jessica Mitford and Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who renounced the values of their class for various socialistic creeds, although often with aristocratic disdain for the plutocrats who were emerging as the new power brokers. On the other side is an amazing panorama of diehards and doomed grandees, patricians who fought a long and hopeless battle against the 20th century. In between are all the diplomats and lord-lieutenants, governors of colonies, chancellors of universities, mayors and local worthies who, with all the dignity they could muster, settled into the positions of ornamental figureheads. Today some of them claim the role of custodians of the national heritage and open their houses to the paying public. Reduced, in effect, to living as tenants in their own ancestral properties, "the lions of yesteryear" (in Cannadine's words) "have become the unicorns of today."

Arts & Letters

MYTH AND METAPHOR: Selected Essays, 1974–1988. By Northrop Frye. Edited by Robert D. Denham. Univ. of Va. 386 pp. \$35

WORDS WITH POWER: Being a Second Study of the Bible and Literature. By Northrop Frye. Harcourt, Brace. 342 pp. \$24.95

On January 24, the most famous literary critic

in North America died.

For nearly 60 years, in 23 books and 850 articles, Northrop Frye had consistently argued that reading was not merely an intellectual activity but also an act of moral self-definition. This is hardly a popular attitude in the current academic establishment, where "deconstruction" and the "new historicism" foster a criticism in love with its own theoretical intricacies. While Frye is aware of the post-modernist style wars—a quarter of the essays in *Myth and Metaphor* allude to deconstructionist kingpin Jacques Derrida—he calmly insists on what we can learn from the basic, enduring myths.

"Myth" is the term that has been most closely associated with Frye ever since his revolutionary overview of literary theory, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). To Frye, any work of literature is a variation or incarnation of mythic thinking. By "myth," Frye does not mean mere fantasy or even folktales—and certainly not the overvaluation of the primitive associated with Joseph Campbell. He means *mythos*, a story or narrative which relates basic human needs to things their hearers need to know about their religion or their society. The primary question about a myth, Frye writes, "is not Is it true? . . . The primary question is something more like Do we need to know this?"

In *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (1982), Frye—above all else, a teacher (at the University of Toronto) and an ordained preacher—admitted that this was the book he had been trying to write all along: a discourse on the Book of Books as a lesson in reading mythic narratives. Now, in *Words With Power*, the sequel to *The Great Code*, Frye concludes his argument about how the Bible can teach us how to read all books. "The organizing structure of the Bible and the corresponding structures of 'secular' literature," he says, "reflect each other." The Bible contains a finite number of myths (creation, fall, exodus, destruction, and redemption) and also a limited number of metaphors (e.g., garden, mountain, cave, and furnace), and these are the principal myths and metaphors of secular literature, too. The myths deal primarily with events in time, the metaphors arrange them in space—which is why learning to decode both is so valuable a skill. "I come up against the fact that our ordi-

nary experience rests on unreal and fuzzy experiences of time and space," Frye writes, "and that myth and metaphor are among other things techniques of mediation, designed to focus our minds on a more real view of both."

ALBRECHT DÜRER: A Biography. By Jane Campbell Hutchinson. Princeton. 247 pp. \$25

Early in the 16th century, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian paid a visit to Albrecht Dürer. Dürer was straining to draw on a high wall, so the Emperor ordered a courtier to let the painter stand on his back. When the nobleman protested, Maximilian snorted that he could easily turn any peasant into a nobleman, but no nobleman could be remade into a Dürer. This legend (possibly apocryphal) suggests how Dürer raised painting in Germany from a manual, often anonymous craft into an intellectual and noble pursuit.



painter stand on his back. When the nobleman protested, Maximilian snorted that he could easily turn any peasant into a nobleman, but no nobleman

Hutchinson, an art historian at the University of Wisconsin, narrates Dürer's progress from a goldsmith's son to an artist whose international renown was equaled only by that of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Titian. In 1494, at age 23, Dürer set off for Italy, becoming the first northerner to make the trip that would soon become an indispensable part of an artistic education. Dürer was determined, he said, "to learn the secrets of the [Italian] art of perspective." In Italy he also observed the respect that was accorded to artists there: "Here I am a gentleman," he wrote, "at home only a parasite."

When he returned to Nuremberg a year later, Dürer integrated the modern Renaissance technique—the rationalization of space through mathematical perspective—into the descriptive naturalism of his northern heritage. Immediately he was in great demand for his psychologically penetrating portraits. But the portraits that interested him most were those of himself. In an age of heightened individuality, he forged his artistic identity by painting and drawing more self-portraits than anyone before Rembrandt. As a young man, he drew himself as a

brooding melancholic; after Italy, as a learned, cosmopolitan gentleman in elegant attire; and in his famous self-portrait of 1500, as Christ himself, thus uniting his religious and artistic longings.

Dürer's most important contribution to the history of art is, arguably, not his paintings but his prints and woodcuts. Masterful at religious propaganda, Dürer understood perfectly how to exploit the newly invented printing press to reach a broad audience on the eve of the Reformation. He ardently supported Martin Luther, whose portrait he desired to engrave "for a lasting remembrance of this Christian man who has helped me out of great distress."

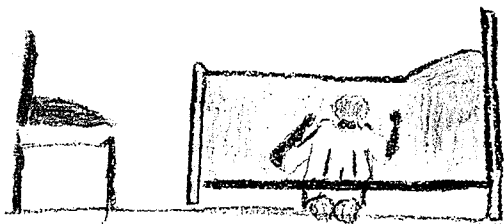
Dürer presents a complex, contradictory figure, pointing at once forward and backward: Rationalistic *and* religious, he believed in both Renaissance humanism and old superstitions. These contradictions underscored the argument of Erwin Panofsky's *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (1943). Panofsky showed a melancholic Dürer suffering from an "interior tension" that could not reconcile the medieval (Gothic Germany, his religious mysticism, his essential naturalism) and the Renaissance (the rationalism and classicism he found in Italy). Panofsky's commanding study has long discouraged other scholars from approaching Dürer, and it must be admitted that Panofsky's Dürer remains a more convincing figure than the good-natured, gregarious painter whom Hutchinson limns. Hutchinson, however, has documented Dürer's life more fully than ever before, and her biography provides the material for the first reevaluation of Dürer in almost half a century.

Contemporary Affairs

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF CHILDREN. By Robert Coles. Houghton Mifflin. 358 pp. \$22.95

The nature of children's "spirituality" is frequently speculated upon but rarely investigated. Do their ideas about God and religion reflect a genuine impulse, or are children merely parroting their parents?

Coles, a Harvard professor of psychiatry, explores these and other matters in this culmination of 30 years of writing about children. Prac-



tically inventing the discipline of children's oral history, Coles set a standard in his *Children of Crisis* series that psychologists, sociologists, and historians have all attempted to equal.

The hundreds of children from age eight to 13 whom Coles interviews here allow for some interesting, if tentative generalizations. The Muslim children tend to accept Allah and their religion without question. Jewish children are taught to question, but mainly as a learning device within the context of their religious studies. Christian children, struggling with the strange paradox of an omnipotent God somehow connected to the child Jesus, freely ask the most questions of all.

Coles's respect for the children's beliefs shows how far he has travelled since he was a young psychiatrist and accepted the dictates of his profession's god, Sigmund Freud. Freud put religion on a par with "childhood neurosis," but Coles refuses to reduce his young subjects' spiritual concerns to neuroses or complexes. Children, he says, ask the same "questions our philosophers and theologians and novelists have asked over the centuries and ordinary human beings have posed to themselves."

Some critics have objected that Coles has focused almost exclusively on the brighter, more elevated aspects of religion, and that he ignores those religious feelings of guilt and inadequacy that, for example, torment Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*. Coles, however, believes it a mistake to emphasize demeaning, helpless, or passive images of the person, which is what he feels psychiatry and the "healing professions" do. In recent years, his interest has turned to literature, and, in *The Call of Stories* (1989), he suggests that stories of active, struggling human beings have a power to heal. What Coles has elicited in *Spiritual Life* are really stories by and about children—stories that are often as affecting as any in religious literature.

ETHNIC IDENTITY: The Transformation of White America. By Richard D. Alba. Yale. 374 pp. \$35

ETHNIC OPTIONS: Choosing Identities in America. By Mary C. Waters. Univ. of Calif. 197 pp. \$32.50

What does it mean, in 1991, to say you are Irish-American, Italian-American, or Jewish-American? Two sociologists, Richard Alba and Mary Waters, use different methods to reach the same conclusion: In most matters today, ethnicity counts for very little.

Alba at the State University of New York and Waters at Harvard are the latest to join in a debate that has continued since the turn of the century. Mass immigrations created fears that the new immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe would overwhelm "true" American culture. Reassurance came from the new "science" of sociology, notably from Robert Park and Ernest Burgess of the "Chicago School," who argued that residence here would eventually lead to complete assimilation.

This "melting pot" theory has been challenged often over the years, never more powerfully than in Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1963). Glazer and Moynihan contended that complete assimilation had not and would not take place because each group establishes a new ethnic identity within America: Italian-American culture, for example, is not Italian culture in America but a new creation that has become part of a pluralist American society.

For two decades, this "pluralist" interpretation dominated sociological thinking. But during the 1980s, Herbert J. Gans revived the old assimilationist theory, arguing that Glazer and Moynihan were discussing "symbolic ethnicity," an "ethnicity of last resort" in which individuals identified with superficial practices that could be retained or dropped at their pleasure.

Alba and Waters test this argument with sophisticated fieldwork and quantitative analysis. Alba interviewed hundreds of people of European descent living around Albany; Waters studied 60 people from the suburbs of San Jose and Philadelphia. Only two percent of the people Alba interviewed had received help in business from their "ethnic network"; only four percent had suffered discrimination because of

ethnicity; only one percent ate ethnic food on a daily basis. Young Catholics more often than not marry Protestants, and almost one out of three Jews marries a non-Jew. For most whites, moreover, the old urban "ethnic neighborhoods" no longer exist. Ethnicity, Alba concludes, represents only "a small portion of the identity 'masks' individuals present to others."

But both sociologists find that there is a Brand-X or generic European-American identity emerging in America. This vague new "white ethnicity" began as a reaction to the civil-rights movement and has increased as the new waves of immigration come to America from Third World countries. (Paradoxically, at the very moment that white European "ethnics" are sloughing off their historical ancestries, African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans—who, judging by length of time spent here, should be the most assimilated of all—are loudly recalling their racial roots.)

In this latest round of the old debate, Waters and Alba offer no new model of assimilation. The melting pot is out; adaptation (to a largely Anglo-American prototype) is out. These two studies show that new immigrants are greeted more tolerantly now than were those of the late 19th century. Yet this tolerance may have been purchased at the price of national self-definition. New immigrants often seem somewhat puzzled—as Waters and Alba are—about what it now means to become an American.

Science & Technology

A LITERARY COMPANION TO SCIENCE.

Ed. by Walter Gratzer. Norton. 517 pp. \$24.95

Thirty years ago C. P. Snow launched a public debate by claiming that science and the humanities are two cultures, separate and irreconcilable. An entertaining example of the two mind-sets appears in this anthology: When the mathematician Charles Babbage read Tennyson's famous line, "Every minute dies a man,/Every minute one is born," and noted that it failed to account for increasing population, he wrote Tennyson, suggesting an improvement: "'Every moment dies a man,/And one and a sixteenth is born.' I may add that the exact figures are 1.167 but something must, of

course, be conceded to the law of meter."

Gratzer, a cell biologist at King's College, London, has gathered 216 pieces, ranging from fiction to biography to journalism, to show what happens when the two cultures do meet. At certain moments, as when Primo Levi is writing, they appear to be kin: Both science and literature, Levi argues, rely upon observation to construct hypothetical models of behavior; both set problems and solve them.

Yet most contributors to this anthology lack Levi's intimate knowledge of science. The picture that they collectively paint of scientists at work is a stereotype—actually two stereotypes. The more familiar one portrays the scientist as a pure, disinterested observer who collects facts and formulates theories to fit them: a scientist who is free, Gratzer says, "from the crises of purpose and identity that have afflicted Western music, literature, architecture, and painting." The classical scholar Maurice Bowra evokes this image when he says that scientists make dangerous allies on university committees because "they are apt to change their minds in response to arguments."

But contemporary scientists have another reputation, this one more blemished. Gratzer admits that "emulation and jealousy among scientists have become sanctified as the motives that drive scientists forward." Gary Taubes, the author of *Nobel Dreams*, shows the Harvard physicist Carlo Rubbia politicking unabashedly for the Nobel prize and skewing the work of a large team of researchers to further his own effort. And when politics gets coupled to science—as happened, to take an extreme example, under Stalin's regime in Russia—the manipulative scientist becomes the stereotype, and results get further skewed.

Gratzer's anthology succeeds in making scientists and their work interesting to the layman, yet it oddly perpetuates the very cultural division it would close. Gratzer includes no scientific papers, which, at their best, can condense years of work into a few pages of unrivaled utilitarian lucidity. And as for literature, Gratzer makes no distinction between first-rate writing and third-rate science fiction. In his principle of selection, Gratzer seems to suggest that science is science and literature is literature, with a simple boundary running between them. C. P. Snow would have agreed.

ORIGINS: The Lives and Worlds of Modern Cosmologists. By Alan Lightman and Roberta Brawer. Harvard. 563 pp. \$29.95

"Search for the origins of the universe and contemplate its demise." That would make a droll job description, but it is exactly what cosmologists do. Their field is the Big Picture: Cosmologists work in time frames of billions of years, in distances measured in light years, and in media that consist of subatomic particles and microwaves from outer space. They get into heated debates over what happened in the universe during its first 10^{-43} second, which they even have a name for—the Planck Era. Another age might have called their work an act of faith: Cosmologists elaborate theories based on particles whose existence has yet to be proved. "Cosmology is about as different as it can be from our laboratory sciences," writes cosmologist Margaret Geller. "You have to have a sense of humor about it because the likelihood of ever being right is so low."

In *Origins*, physicists Lightman and Brawer interview prominent cosmologists about their sense of humor as well as their professional accomplishments and their theories. Their goal is to understand a profession that obtained its scientific legitimacy scarcely a generation ago. In 1965 Robert Dicke predicted the existence of, and then found, background radiation coming from every direction in space. The big bang theory—which holds that the universe was born around 10 billion years ago, when all matter was compressed to extreme density and extreme temperature, then exploded, expanded, and cooled—offered an explanation for this radiation. This, along with the fact that the big bang theory accounted for the known hydrogen/helium composition of the universe, Lightman and

Brawer write, "convinced many scientists for the first time that cosmology had some contact with reality, that cosmology was a legitimate science."

It is hard for a mere mortal to hear about the big bang theory without immediately wondering: Yes, but what was going on in the second right before the big bang? The cosmologists whom Lightman and Brawer interviewed express more technical reservations. Alan Guth of MIT discusses the "horizon problem." According to the big bang theory, the universe should be more random than it is: Recent discoveries reveal all galaxies to be neatly organized in patterns that resemble bubbles. Then there is the "flatness problem"—the universe's mass seems to be just the amount needed to balance it between endless collapse and endless expansion—a freaky coincidence for which big bang theory offers no explanation.

Given such quandaries, Lightman and Brawer attempt to find where inspiration and personal preference influence theories that are as yet unprovable. (One interesting speculation is how the two posters of Marilyn Monroe on Stephen Hawking's wall have shaped his work.) Dicke, for example, whose discovery seemed to substantiate big bang theory, actually prefers a competing theory—that of an "oscillating universe" without beginning—and his reasons seem quite personal: "I wasn't impressed with the thought that you could suddenly make all that matter that we see around us in 10^{20} seconds A universe that is suddenly switched on I find highly disagreeable." Or as Guth says,

"If you can't explain the beginning [of the universe], it's not *nice* to have a beginning."

Lightman and Brawer have provided us with an intellectual portrait of 27 *nice* human beings, explaining a science and indeed a universe no human being will ever see, hear, or touch.



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REFLECTIONS

Mr. Kundera, The European

The Unbearable Lightness of Being seemed a fitting title for a novel by Milan Kundera. In Kundera's fiction, experience is elusive, never quite what it seems: The grim political realities turn out to be laughable and the jokes to have terrible consequences. Although readers automatically identify Kundera with Eastern Europe, in his new novel, *Immortality*, not even the characters come from there. Ivan Sanders uncovers what is unchanging in Kundera: his exploration of what it means to be a writer today—especially a European writer.

by Ivan Sanders

Eastern Europeans have so often bemoaned the lack of recognition of their cultures that when one of their artists does achieve world standing, they are quick to proclaim him a genius who speaks for the entire region. A Yugoslav writer, Dubravka Ugrešić, recently recalled attending a lecture in Belgrade by a "world-famous" American author who, when asked if he had ever heard of Ivo Andrić, Miroslav Krleža, or Danilo Kiš (all three of them widely translated, and Andrić is a Nobel laureate), replied with a calm "No." And how about the Czech Milan Kundera? his hosts inquired. The much-admired visitor smiled confidently: "Why yes, of course." "The audience breathed a sigh of relief," reports Ugrešić. "As a matter of fact, they would have agreed right then and there to change the name of their country to Yugoslavia, just so they could continue to claim Kundera as their own."

Paradoxically, the same people who

feel vindicated by even a single Eastern European literary breakthrough may look askance at the celebrity scoring the successes. Writers from small countries who make a name for themselves abroad are frequently accused by their countrymen of "internationalizing" their art, of blurring their deepest, most authentic creative impulses. And it is hard to say whether the hostility stems from national insecurities, genuine concern, or plain envy.

For years Czechs have had an uncomfortably ambivalent relationship with Milan Kundera. What they seem to resent is not the fact that he left his native land some 16 years ago and chose France as his new home. Nor are they primarily bothered by the anticommunism of a writer who was himself a vocal party member in the late 1940s. After all, a number of noted Czech émigrés have a similar history. It is his unprecedented success in the West that they have a hard time coming to terms with. A Czech journalist, in a *New Yorker* report last year on the Prague scene,

lashed out at Kundera in a by now familiar manner: "His books are famous. Everybody reads them and thinks they are true." Yet he "writes completely outside of reality here Actually, Kundera is not a Czech author anymore. He's become something like a French wit. He should write about France rather than about Czechoslovakia." (Interestingly enough, as we shall see, Kundera does just that in his latest novel, *Immortality*.)

Clearly, though, not everyone in Czechoslovakia is hostile to Kundera's art. Another urban intellectual in the same Prague report defends Kundera by quoting Oscar Wilde:

'The only thing that cannot be forgiven is talent They also cannot forgive him for having had a life for 16 years. They profess to prefer the novels of [Josef] Škvorecký, who hasn't a tenth of Kundera's talent but has devoted his life in exile to the cause of dissident Czech writing This is admirable, of course, and Škvorecký is a splendid fellow, of course, but it doesn't make him a great writer; it doesn't even make him a 'truer' writer than Kundera.

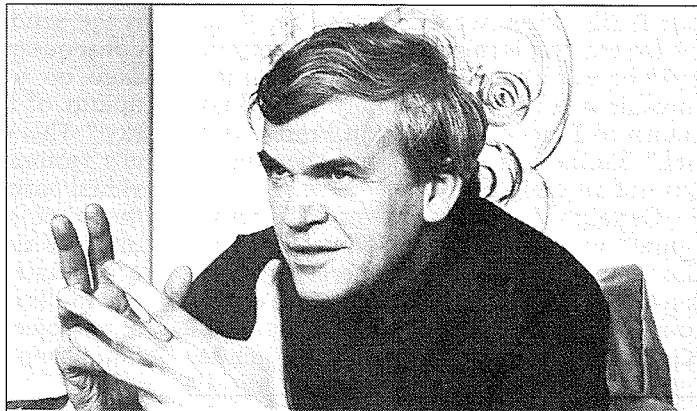
Actually, Milan Kundera is an atypical Czech novelist, and he would have remained atypical even if he had never left his native country or his native city of Brno (Brünn). There he was born in 1929 on April first—a rather suitable birthday for a writer whose first novel is *The Joke* and who has two other books with the word "laugh" in the title. The influences that helped shape his writing career were, from the start, unusual. His early interests were not literary but musical. His father was a pianist and a well-known musicologist, the foremost expert on Czech composer Leoš Janáček. Janáček and other musical influences like jazz would shape Kundera's conception of the novel.

After his schooling in Brno, Kundera went to study in Prague, the city of writers and artists from Mo-

zart to Kafka. Prague has long been a European cultural capital, and its residents believe there is a unique "spirit of Prague," which Kundera characterized thus: "An extraordinary sense of the real. The common man's point of view. History seen from below. A provocative simplicity. A genius for the absurd. Humor with infinite pessimism."

When Kundera arrived in Prague in 1948, however, its spirit was under siege by the new Stalinist regime. He took the surprising step of enrolling in the Prague National Film School. Music and poetry were too close to his heart, he later said; he studied script writing and film directing precisely because they didn't exert such an attraction for him—because cinema was an "art which serves the people." Kundera had joined the Czech Communist Party at the age of 18 in 1947. Although he continued writing poetry, the three volumes he published in the 1950s adhered, more or less, to the Marxist tenets in literature: *The Last May* (1955), for example, celebrated a Czech communist hero who had opposed the Nazis. Yet Kundera had already begun his quarrel with socialist realism in art, and even these early volumes, which were deemed cynical, barely escaped the censor's disapproval.

In the early 1960s Kundera returned to the film academy as a professor of literature; among his students were budding filmmakers such as Miloš Forman (director of *Amadeus* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*) who would bring about the



A candidate for Immortality? This photo of Kundera, taken by his wife, shows the author in a bearably light mood.

extraordinary resurgence of Czech cinema. Prague in the late 1960s was beginning to feel the liberalizing effect of Alexander Dubček's attempt to establish "socialism with a human face." By 1968 the Czechs were behaving independently enough to cause the worried Russians to send tanks into Czechoslovakia. "Prague Spring" was a seminal event in Kundera's life as it was in the life of his country. For his participation in the events leading up to it—most notably, for his speech to a writers' congress in which he lamented the fate of Czech culture under Stalinism—Kundera was stripped of his position at the film institute. A year later he lost the right to publish in his own country. All of his previous works were removed from bookshops and library shelves.

For the next seven years Kundera was, by his own description, "a corpse, someone who no longer existed." Earnings left over from his enormously successful *The Joke* (1967) helped him scrape by. His wife Vera gave English lessons, and Kundera wrote a play and radio scripts using other authors' names. Meanwhile, he finished two novels in Czech (*Life Is Elsewhere* and *The Farewell Party*), convinced no Czech would ever possibly read them. "But I was happy," Kundera later said and explained why: Czechoslovakia was like a village, and he no longer needed to worry what the villagers would think. Yet even as Kundera disappeared from the Czech literary world, he became more and more known in the West, where *The Joke* in translation had already established his reputation. In 1973 *Life Is Elsewhere* won France's Prix Médicis for the best foreign novel of the year. In 1975 he was allowed to accept a guest lectureship at a French university. He did not return to Prague. "My stay in France is final," Kundera has said, "and therefore I am not an émigré."

Certainly Kundera is a more "international" writer than, say, Bohumil Hrabal, the man considered to be the greatest living Czech storyteller and a far more down-to-earth literary figure. Hrabal has praised Kundera extravagantly as a "great gentle-

man," "a magnificent novelist," a "complex, cerebral artist," but then added with coy modesty: "I live in another world . . ." Although Kundera feels a definite kinship with the great Central European modernists—Kafka, Robert Musil, Jaroslav Hašek, Hermann Broch—his true literary forebears are more removed, both in space and time.

Kundera has often said that the reason he feels so much at home in France is that he is enamored of French culture—but not its contemporary culture so much as older French literature. His real inspirations are the prose writers of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment—Rabelais, Diderot, as well as England's Laurence Sterne. What Kundera admires in them is the relish with which they experimented with the malleable building blocks of a still-new literary form. The novel to these writers was a free-for-all, a "wonderful game with invented characters." As its formal components solidified and the genre itself became more respectable, it lost this zaniness. Realism, to Kundera, is simplistic; romanticism, the source of all kitsch. Still, unlike many literary critics, he does not for a moment believe that the novel has exhausted its possibilities. Indeed, Kundera has helped revitalize fiction by being true to the brazenly inventive spirit of its 17th- and 18th-century innovators.

Kundera's innovation is already evident in his first novel, *The Joke*, where he uses a familiar narrative device with a new twist. The central occurrence of the novel is the sending of a jocular—though in its consequences disastrous—political message on a postcard: "Optimism is the opium of the people . . . Long live Trotsky!" This event is recounted by the novel's various characters, and as each individual narrative completes and contradicts the other, it becomes clear that Kundera's ultimate aim is not to piece together parts of a puzzle (as it is when most writers utilize multiple narrators). Rather than arrive at an objective "reality," he offers different tantalizingly plausible interpretations of it.

Ivan Sanders holds the Soros Lectureship in Hungarian Literature at Columbia University. He is the author of numerous essays on Eastern European literature, translator of novels by George Konrád and Milan Füst, and co-editor of Essays on World War I: A Case Study of Trianon (1982).

This subjective understanding of experience is a far cry from official Marxist dogma, in which history has one meaning and one meaning only.

Already in *The Joke*, and even more in Kundera's later fiction, the influence of cinema and music is on display. He borrows the quick cuts and montage of film editing, and he relies on the musical devices such as theme and seven-part inventions to break up the narrative of conventional fiction. Too many novels, Kundera has complained, are "encumbered by 'technique,' by rules that do the author's work for him: present a character, describe a milieu, bring the action into its historical setting, fill up the lifetime of the characters with useless episodes." Kundera has adapted a style based on modern musical composers such as Janáček, who created "brutal juxtaposition, instead of transitions; repetition instead of variation—and always [went] straight to the heart of things: Only the note with something essential to say is entitled to exist." "My purpose," Kundera said, "is like Janáček's: to rid the novel of the automatism of novelistic technique, of novelistic word-spinning."

Kundera has perfected the novel of broken narratives, discontinuities, and contradictory exposition. In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1978), Mirek is a character who lives in a world governed by none of the old novelistic certainties. In 1971, in a halfhearted attempt to avoid official harassment, Mirek tries to retrieve a bundle of love letters written to a one-time girlfriend, Zdena, whom he had known when they were both young and ardent communists. He believes the real reason he wants these letters back, in addition to avoiding possible arrest, is that he is angry at Zdena for remaining an orthodox communist, while he gave up his illusions about the system long ago. But after seeing her again in Prague he realizes he wants to erase all traces of their relationship because Zdena is—and always was—an incredibly ugly woman. As the story progresses, though, Mirek discovers that his affair of old was motivated by mere self-interest: At the time he was a young man on the make and she was useful to him. But then an even more devastating realiza-

tion hits him. The truest reason he has to destroy all evidence of his affair with this ugly, rigid woman is that he had in fact been in love with her. Each possible motivation is highly believable and also highly suspect. As in *The Joke*, the meaning no longer adheres to the event itself but instead resides in the individual who must interpret it fittingly.

The Book of Laughter and Forgetting is also Kundera's most political novel. In it he illustrates the effects of totalitarian rule, in particular the brainwashing, the "lobotomizing" of an entire nation. He quotes a famous Czech historian: "The first step in liquidating a people . . . is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was." In public statements, too, Kundera has been quite specific about the evils of state-inspired mind control, of "organized forgetting." Since the post-1968 crackdown, he reminded Philip Roth back in 1980, "Two hundred Czech writers have been proscribed. One hundred and forty-five Czech historians have been dismissed from their posts. History has been rewritten, monuments demolished."

And yet Kundera cannot resist taking a skeptical attitude toward political pieties or challenging firmly held views. In an episode in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, a woman in her seventies experiences disturbing memory lapses and begins to shift her order of priorities in odd ways. When Russian tanks occupy Czechoslovakia in 1968, all she can think about is the pear tree in her garden, which because of all the commotion remains unpicked. Her son Karel and her daughter-in-law are infuriated. "Everybody's thinking about tanks, and all you can think about is pears, they yelled . . . But are tanks really more important than pears?" the narrator muses. "As time passed Karel realized that the answer was not so obvious as he had once thought, and he began sympathizing secretly with Mother's perspective—a big pear in the foreground and somewhere off in the distance a tank, tiny as a lady bug, ready at any moment to take wing and disappear from sight. So Mother was right af-

IMAGOLGY

From Immortality:

Imagology! Who first thought up this remarkable neologism? It doesn't matter, after all. What matters is that this word finally lets us put under one roof something that goes by so many different names: advertising agencies; campaign managers of politicians; designers who devise the shape of everything from cars to gym equipment; fashion stylists; barbers; show-business stars dictating the norms of physical beauty that all branches of imagology obey

All ideologies have been defeated: In the end their dogmas were unmasked as illusions and people stopped taking them seriously. For example, communists used to believe that in the course of capitalist development the proletariat would gradually grow poorer and poorer, but when it finally became clear that all over Europe workers were driving to work in their own cars, they felt like shouting that reality was deceiving them. Reality proved stronger than ideology. And it is in this sense that imagology surpassed it: Imagology is stron-

ger than reality, which anyway has long ceased to be what it was for my grandmother, who lived in a Moravian village and still knew everything through her own experience: how bread is baked, how a house is built, how a pig is slaughtered and the meat smoked, what quilts are made of, what the priest and the schoolteacher think about the world; she met the whole village every day and knew how many murders were committed in the county over the last 10 years; she had, so to say, personal control over reality so that nobody could fool her by maintaining that Moravian agriculture was thriving when people at home had nothing to eat. My Paris neighbor spends his time in an office, then he sits in his car and drives home, turns on the TV and when the announcer informs him that in the latest public opinion poll the majority of Frenchmen voted their country the safest in Europe (I recently read such a report), he is overjoyed and opens a bottle of champagne without ever learning that three thefts and two murders were committed on his street that very day.

ter all: Tanks are mortal, pears eternal."

It is precisely such provocative perspectives that have moved Kundera's critics to label him brilliant but frivolous. His Czech detractors are especially disturbed by his unrelenting irony, his deraciné relativism and cynicism. To them Kundera is just too clever, too cool a writer, too caught up in his cerebral games.

We ought to find Jaromil, the artist-hero of *Life Is Elsewhere* (1973), for example, downright despicable. He is an opportunist, a hack, who after the communist takeover in Prague turns from flaming avant-garde poet to Stalinist versifier without missing a beat. Yet Kundera has his anti-hero express some rather profound ideas on revolution. He even suggests that propaganda literature can be deeply felt and that the Stalinist period in Czechoslovakia "was not only a terrible epoch but a lyrical one as well: It was ruled by the hangman, but by the poet too."

Of course, Jaromil is a fictional character and *Life Is Elsewhere* a novel. But, like Jaromil, Kundera was a young surreal-

ist poet before the communist takeover, and afterward he turned out volumes of (almost) correct Marxist-Leninist verse. Kundera would soon do a *volte-face*, oppose communist rule, and eventually be forced into exile. Yet—unlike less sophisticated writers—he never repudiated that youthful version of himself. Instead he attempted to understand the initial appeal of communism in Czechoslovakia. The literary critic Jan Kott has said that communism "was that most diabolical of temptations—to participate in history, a history for which both stones and people are only the material used to build the 'brave new world.'" But Kundera recalls, besides such temptations, the idealism. The communists took over in Czechoslovakia, he reminds us in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, "not in bloodshed and violence, but to the cheers of about half the population. And please note: The half that cheered was the more dynamic, the more intelligent, the better half. Yes, say what you will, the communists were more intelligent. They had a grandiose program, a plan for a brand-new world in which ev-

everyone would find his place. The communists' opponents had no great dream; all they had was a few moral principles, stale and lifeless, to patch up the tattered trousers of the established order. So of course the grandiose enthusiasts won out over the cautious compromisers."

Other commentators have pointed to some such combination of idealism and opportunism to explain the initial appeal of communism in Eastern Europe. But Kundera has gone further and discovered something not only about himself but about the 20th-century European intellectual. Recalling a debate in his Brno *gymnasium*, Kundera remembered arguing that he would support socialism even if the consequence was a transitional period of cultural darkness. Coming from a politician, such a remark would sound like utter cynicism; coming from a student totally devoted to culture, as Kundera was, the words suggested something else. They signified mistrust of oneself, and intellectuals, Kundera said, are very good at doubting and rejecting themselves. But, in this case, the intellectual was soon to find himself rejected not only by himself but by the new communist regime; "rejected theoretically, practically, even economically." And so this particular Eastern European writer finally had "no alternative but to begin to understand his own importance, his own lot, to start defending his own liberty."

In *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), Kundera describes an Eastern European world where the possibilities for human action have become flat and limited, yet Kundera, through his style, slyly adds to that flat world nuance and multidimensionality and irony. The novel is the story of Tomas, a modern-day Don Juan whose hedonism is tempered, made more somber, by the realization that constancy and commitment can be as irresistible as the pull of total freedom. Of his two loves, Sabina is associated with lightness, unconventionality, playfulness, but also lack of commitment, rootlessness, and sterility; the earthbound Tereza connotes inertia, rootedness, and provincialism. Tomas ultimately chooses not the self-sufficient Sabina, a kindred spirit, but the hopelessly faithful Tereza. For all his worldliness, Tomas, unlike Sabina, cannot endure the

agonizing "lightness of being." One would have thought that Kundera, the puckish ironist, would have a deeper affinity for unfettered, free-floating existence. But Kundera, after all, comes from Czechoslovakia where—as in Poland and Hungary—culture is not free-floating but is rooted in quite specific local and national conditions. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* anticipates, in a sense, the events in Eastern Europe not of 1989 but of 1990, when freedom could not in itself provide the answers.

In his new novel, *Immortality*, Kundera, while playful as ever, is bent on advocating the chastening proposition that freedom is no guarantee against spiritual impoverishment. Human values can shrivel in a democracy, too: They can be trivialized by a different kind of crassness and coarseness, like the popular media. His emancipated, urbane characters can experience the same sense of abandonment, the same *Angst*, as can the harried subjects of political dictatorships. (In the past, Kundera has been taken to task by American neoconservatives for not making the proper distinction between the oppressed life in Eastern Europe and the free life in Western Europe.)

The plot line of *Immortality* involves a curious game of musical chairs played with incestuous infatuation. A graceful and enigmatic Parisian woman named Agnes discovers that the important man in her life has been her taciturn father and not her gregarious lawyer husband. The husband in turn is erotically attracted to Agnes's sister, the high-strung Laura, whom he winds up marrying after his wife's death. What could have been, in other words, a conventional French comedy of manners is made into something else by the interruptions of an intrusive and unabashedly manipulative narrator. He tells stories and anecdotes and injects *bon mots* of his own, which supply variations on such themes as the impoverishment of contemporary culture, the pre-eminence of "imagologues" (i.e. image-makers and propagandists), and above all, immortality. Kundera uses "immortality" not in any religious sense but to refer to fame, the afterlife of the famous and not-so-famous in posterity's memory. He even



Art imitates terrible reality. The film *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* portrays the 1968 Russian invasion of Prague—an important event in the novel and the crucial event in Kundera's life.

invents a meeting between Goethe and Napoleon and, in a sheer flight of fancy, a dialogue on immortality between Goethe and Ernest Hemingway.

In *Immortality*, even more than in his other recent works, Kundera the intellectual, the man of culture, often obscures the novelist. One need not be a devotee of old-fashioned realism to be bothered by the thinness of novelistic textures. When plot and character are pretexts, a means to an end, as they are in *Immortality*, reading becomes an abstract pleasure, and we find ourselves longing for the denser air of beguiling fiction.

And for all its playfulness, the new novel seems grimmer than Kundera's other fictions. The central character, Agnes, gradually discovers that for her the world is an alien place: She feels her solitude when confronted by the ugliness and unlivability of 20th-century urban life. Whereas the heroine of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* suffered from that awful lightness of being, Agnes realizes that "what is unbearable in life is not being but being one's self." Agnes is driven to suicide when she becomes convinced that her life has reached a dead end. She sits down on a busy highway and stays there until killed by a speeding car, though not before she causes the death of several driv-

ers who swerve their vehicles to avoid hitting her.

Today, there is a feeling abroad that after the revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe the works of hitherto dissident writers have lost their urgency, their luster, indeed their very reason for being. In Kundera's novels (at least until *Immortality*)—the argument goes—so much creative energy is spent on the absurd contortions of the oppressors and the sly evasions of the oppressed that one can't help wondering if all of that is not passé. For many readers, the once breathtaking pronouncements of Eastern European intellectual heavyweights such as

Bronislaw Geremek, George Konrád, and János Kis are now mainly of historical interest. Communism may in retrospect turn out to have been (in the words of Polish critic Jaroslaw Anders) "little more than another cruel, but also vulgar and stupid, political system—no longer a subject, that is, for great moral drama."

Certainly if Kundera's novels are read—as many of his new readers in his homeland now read them—less as fiction than as political exposés, they are, or soon will be, passé. Yet as the precarious new democracies of Eastern Europe reveal a worrisome degree of inward-turning and xenophobia, Kundera may prove pertinent for a different reason.

Kundera has always viewed his writings as contributions not just to Eastern (or Central) European life but to the culture of Europe generally. The great modern age in Europe which began with Descartes and Cervantes—when cultural values filled the place left vacant by religion—is now, Kundera argues, in danger of coming to an end. He indicates what shall replace it in *Immortality*: the tissue-thin world of "imagology," a pseudo-reality created by media executives, political campaign managers, and ad agencies.

This "bowing out of culture" is why Kundera thinks that the fate of Prague

Spring in 1968 was, ultimately, a tragedy less of Russian oppression than of European indifference. Because Europe no longer valued its own culture, it could blithely concede the loss of a key element in it, its eastern realm—the one-time home of Kafka, Rilke, Husserl, and Bartók—as though it had never mattered. “By virtue of its cultural history,” Kundera wrote in *The New York Review of Books* in 1984, Central Europe “is the West. But since Europe itself is in the process of losing its own cultural identity, it perceives in Central Europe nothing but a political regime.” Kundera, the novelist-historian of the Russian tragedy in Czechoslovakia, is a dated writer; Kundera, the cultural commentator, who discounted the old political chasm between Eastern and Western Europe, and who now dismisses Dostoevsky as a non-European mystifier, remains as controversial a critic as he ever was.

In *Immortality* Kundera again returns to the notion of “Europe,” by focusing on the grand figure of Goethe, who was always better appreciated in Central Europe than, say, in the Mediterranean or the Anglo-Saxon world. Kundera is not the least bit interested in offering an idealized portrait of the German poet, but he is certainly wistful about Goethe as a quintessentially European phenomenon. “Goethe,” he writes, “is a figure placed precisely in the center of European history Not the center in the sense of a timid point that carefully avoids extremes, no, a firm center that holds both extremes in a remarkable balance which Europe would never know again Goethe was the greatest German of all, and at the same time an antinationalist and a European.”

Is there an implied comparison in *Immortality*? Not that Kundera would claim to be a contemporary Goethe, but rather that he too would write from the same central point in European culture. What Kundera means by Europe—and writing from the central point of it—he made clear in his stormy debate in 1985 with Nobel Prize-winner Joseph Brodsky

over the Russian writer Dostoevsky. To be a European writer, Kundera argued, means holding a playful balance between feeling and rationality; it demands enough skeptical detachment so that emotion doesn’t supplant rational thought. “What irritated me about Dostoevsky,” he said, “was the *climate* of his novels: a universe where everything turns into feelings; in other words, where feelings are promoted to the rank of value and of truth.” Brodsky mistrusted any definition of culture that would exclude Dostoevsky. But he had no doubt that “Mr. Kundera is a Continental, a European man,” in fact trying “to be more European than the Europeans”: “These people are seldom capable of seeing themselves from the outside,” Brodsky said. “If they do, it’s invariably within the context of Europe, for Europe offers them a scale against which their importance is detectable.”

In any case, one thing is certain: Kundera—the writer from whom many Western readers took their sense of Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe under communism—is obviously no longer interested in speaking for his “region.” He demands to be judged as a European writer. The old objection that he has internationalized his art he would hardly consider a criticism at all. Several years ago he even had his novels removed from Penguin Books’ prestigious “Writers from the Other Europe” series. When Kundera emigrated to France, he was 46—an age, he said, when one’s time and energy are limited, and he had to choose: Either he could live looking over his shoulder, to where he was not, in his former country with his former friends, or he could make the effort to profit from the catastrophe, starting over at zero, beginning a new life right where he was. “Without hesitation,” Kundera said, “I chose the second solution.”

What Milan Kundera wished for has, with *Immortality*, come to pass. In France, and now in the United States, he is no longer seen as an author in exile, an Eastern European émigré, but as a writer who is at home in Europe and in the world.

The Decay of Idleness

"Every man is, or hopes to be, an idler," Samuel Johnson observed two centuries ago. Alas, laments George Watson, few modern men (and now, women) would admit to such a languid ambition. Hereon, his complaint against the Achievement Society.

by George Watson

Why is nobody idle any more? I mean openly, totally, cheerfully idle, and by choice. The industrial world is no doubt full of people who could work harder, and know it, full of procrastinators and easy riders. But no one seems content to achieve nothing any more, whether at school and college, or in industry or the professions. When I first taught at a university—in the Midwest during the 1950s—a good fifth of the students, it was widely accepted, did no work, or next to none, and were content to drop out, fail, or pass at the bottom of the scale. That experience was duplicated a year or two later when I began to teach at British universities. The student militancy of the 1960s, which thought itself the beginning of something, now looks in retrospect like its end, the last gasp of a fun-loving mood of endless leisure, since it was accompanied by a marked disinclination to read books or write papers, at least in any systematic way. But since the collapse of the New Left in the early 1970s no one seems to want to be totally idle. For better or worse, work is definitely in.

This is a mood hard to parallel in hu-

man history. In former civilized ages there has always been at least an Idle Rich class, based on inherited wealth or riches newly made, and it included idle women and idle youth. In the last century, for example, and early in this, ladies did not work at all, as a defining characteristic of their class. They had never worked and were never expected to work, from birth to death, and their lofty status was guaranteed by that simple fact. Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, daughter of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith (1908–16), used to tell how as a little girl at the turn of the century she asked her nanny what her life would be. "Until you are 18 you will do lessons," came the reply, "and after 18 you will do nothing." Such a life was then entirely normal for one of her class and sex. It would be hard to convey to the modern mind, and especially to the modern woman, the sheer prestige in that age of Doing Nothing. Needless to say, Doing Nothing could include a lot of frantic activity. "How can you say such a thing?" a young lady exclaims in Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* (1899), when the young man of her choice is denounced by his father as idle. "Why, he rides in the Row at 10 o'clock in the morning, goes to the Opera three times a week, changes his clothes at least five



times a day, and dines out every night of the season. You don't call that leading an idle life, do you?"

Most people would. Americans have no great tradition of elegant indolence, but they know about it from plays such as Wilde's, novels such as those in John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* (1906–29), and stories such as P. G. Wodehouse's Jeeves series, where Bertie Wooster is the immortal high-class drone. One way to describe the change that has recently occurred, then, would be to say that Europe has now joined the American condition of esteeming work and nothing but work and of knowing about elegant indolence only from literature.

Perhaps there is now a case for arguing the charms of idleness, not to mention its uses. It can be elegant, which is a virtue in itself. It can be notably charitable, on a personal or on an international scale. It can be a civilized influence providing a sympathetic market of readers and collectors for literature and the other arts. And it can be amusing, and can sustain a valued tradition of conversational wit. The lazy, one often notices, talk well.

But for whatever reason, that world of total idleness, along with the values that once informed it, is dead. During the

1950s, early in her reign, Queen Elizabeth II abolished the ritual of presentation at court, for example, which once marked the "coming out" of a young lady of good family and her readiness to attend balls and entertain offers of marriage: after which, it was understood, in a domestic world based on servants, she would do nothing. As mothers noted with despair at the time, the young simply ceased to be interested in the traditional prospect of genteel and unending leisure. Nowadays work has an indispensable prestige, at least if it is non-manual and part of a professional hierarchy such as finance, higher education, medicine, or law. We live in what the Germans call an Achievement Society, and to be idle is to be uninteresting and to have failed.

Why is this? Since it is the first such society in the history of civilization, it presumably derives from a moral assumption that is itself new. The assumption cannot be Judeo-Christian, since that tradition, as Scripture tells, allowed full credit to Mary over Martha, to the values of pure contemplation and to Solomon's lilies of the field that neither toil nor spin. It is equally unlikely to be socialist, whether Marxist or some other variety, since socialism is yesterday's work ethic and one that inspires

only a small and dwindling band of the never-say-die. It is not, so far as I know, the creation of any single sage, though it smacks of a certain sort of guru-guide that used to figure in American bestseller lists, with titles like *How to Succeed in Business*—books which nobody nowadays wishes to be found reading. But then why should they? The mood of work is so omnipresent that there is no need, by now, to read about it. One hears no other view but to get on. Private schools ceased to train gentlemen a generation and more ago, and on both sides of the Atlantic they have become places where parents send children as a preparative for worldly success. The modern women's movement, unlike previous brands of feminism—the pre-1914 suffragettes in Britain, for example—knows no other assumption. Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), for example, simply took hierarchical success for granted as the only goal of the new woman, enthusing over the heroines of the new cause—"the first woman judge," "her own brokerage firm"—lamenting over earlier generations of women who had missed their professional chances. Neo-Marxism, too, which despised the worship of the golden calf, has gone down utterly before the mood, and the remnants of the New Left have mostly yielded to the new ethos and taken fat jobs in business and the media, hoping to make them fatter still. When Donald Trump remarked that, as he saw the immediate future, money is king, he may have fancied he was summing up a personal philosophy. In fact he was speaking for an age.

If the new mood is without a prophet, it is also without analysts. The Germans, for example, live in the most successful Achievement Society in Europe—indeed, they invented the term *Leistungsgesellschaft* to describe it—yet theirs is a nation once notorious for its credulity of abstractions, mysticisms, and extreme dogmas in religion and politics. The Germans note the contemporary monopoly of modera-

tion and get-rich-quick thinking in the land that invented first Marxism and then Nazism. But they only smile if you ask them how it happened. Since there is no other view, they imply, the reigning view hardly calls for any explanation, interpretation, or defense. That notable incuriosity about the age now extends all the way from California to the newly liberated lands of Eastern Europe, and nobody is suggesting to President Gorbachev that he should try to revive the Russian tradition of the hermit-mystic or the religious contemplative. It pervades education, too. Students who lack advice about how to get good grades or find good posts can turn anxious, importunate, or bitter; and very few young women are heard to say they would be content to marry and raise children. To be outside this competitive game, apparently, is to be outside life itself. When I recently announced my retirement from an academic post, friends and colleagues stopped me in the street and asked with a sense of concern what I was going to do, as if the enjoyment of leisure was a possibility that had not entered into their minds. Even the British royal family works, and works hard, and is photographed by the press doing so, as an example to others. "I like to be busy," a retired colleague remarked to me the other day, and I did not dare ask him why, in that case, he had retired.

The causes of the decay of idleness as an ideal may be several, and it might be helpful to list them.

1. *Inflation*. Hippies flourished, for a brief age, on cheap food and cheap rents, much as the religious hermit once depended on alms. They largely vanished in the 1970s with hyperinflation, and failed to return in the 1980s, with inflation in the Western industrial world still registering an uncomfortable 5–10 percent. A year off may be a youthful aspiration for some, a time to cultivate friendships and see the world. But no college-leaver doubts that he is going to need to lock himself quickly into a pattern of rising income and eventual pension

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rights if he is to live a life of stable relationships away from the cardboard jungles of the city streets.

If inflation is the main determinant here, then private enterprise may be said to have secreted within itself an ingenious self-adjusting mechanism not yet fully noted by political philosophers. It runs, in outline, like this: Anti-commercial dissent breeds militancy, militancy breeds industrial unrest, unrest breeds high prices, and high prices make for a return to office and factory. It is observable that the contradictions of capitalism are seldom spoken of today, even by Marxists. The system is to that extent self-adjusting, more or less, and seen to be so, at least on a long view. It is the contradictions of socialism, which depended in its day on exhortation and terror to achieve better services and higher productivity, that will be the theme of historical analysis by philosophers with a taste for fallacies.

2. *Achievement.* It is not enough to live: one must live for something. "No pilot," as Montaigne remarks in one of his *Essais* ("Against Idleness"), "can perform his duty on dry land." Work is more than a chance to do your thing: It is a way of showing you have a thing to do. "I do not love a man who is zealous for nothing" was a sentence which, to Samuel Johnson's regret, Oliver Goldsmith deleted from *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and the sentiment has since become universal. The Achievement Society cannot love a man or woman who is without zeal. The quest for achievement is as much a hunger for admiration as for wealth, and a competitive age knows nothing of what Wordsworth once called "a wise passiveness." It esteems creative activity above all, something to point to, to echo, and to touch. The late British architect Basil Spence was once asked what the chief motive of his life had been, and he replied: "I should like to have designed a building so good that I would want to pat it."

3. *The fear of boredom.* "Work is the scythe

of time," Napoleon is reported to have said on his way to St. Helena, wondering if he might not while away the tedium of exile by writing his memoirs. Memoir-writing, especially by retired statesmen, is well known to be highly characteristic of the age, and behind it, and much other work, lies a terror of vacancy and the dread of a wasteland with nothing to do. Television, a cynic has remarked, is driving people back to life; modern household equipment makes housekeeping, at least for the better off, almost childishly easy; and children who abandon the habit of obedience as early as the age of 12 have made the role of parental responsibility look trivial, unrewarding, and short. Meanwhile the advance of longevity stretches the gap between the end of parental responsibility and death. Of course women want to work, in such a world: It would be surprising if they did not.



ing if they did not. Their real compulsion is not oppression, as feminist propaganda sometimes suggests, but the simple fact that by historical standards the life of a housewife is boringly easy. The male, in any case, has no interest (to speak generally) in

keeping women out of the professions. Since about half the workers of the Western world are now female, the wealth of that world depends solidly on women going out to work; if they did not go, men as well as women would be dramatically impoverished. I do not imply that feminism was a male trick to get women into the factory or office. Men are nothing like clever enough to have thought of that. But now that it has happened, the situation has some evident advantages to the male, and boredom may have been a prime impulse behind it.

4. *Leisure.* The wealth and variety of leisure activities in the present age—television as well as cinema, videos as well as TV programs—should have made leisure more attractive. No one, I believe, predicted that it would make work more attractive. But then the media are lavishly



involved in culture propaganda—Kenneth Clark's famous TV series *Civilization* was a classic instance—and watching movies that extol achievement in the sciences, art, and exploration can make people want to achieve something too, or at least make them want to take a course to learn more about the achievements of others. Even the performances of pop stars such as Madonna, lacking as they may be in musical virtues, can be seen as an incentive to action. They extol success. The Achievement Society can be faintly perverse in its judgments, and what it esteems above all else is fame. I once stumbled over this truth in a manner little short of farcical by attending a concert in the Royal Albert Hall in London which happened to be televised. Sitting by chance behind the piano soloist, I was caught by the cameras and found myself congratulated for weeks afterwards as never before. Even being famous for nothing is apparently a great achievement.

The decay of idleness, genteel or otherwise, has led to certain strains in the new morality that has engendered it.

The first is a fear of failure. Never, surely, can the unemployed and the unpromoted have felt so humiliated, in a social sense, as they do in the Achievement Society of recent years. Alexis de Tocqueville perceived that unhappy effect of liberty when he visited the United States in 1831–32. To make individuals freely responsible for their own lives, he observed,

leads inevitably to a sense of personal guilt. In unreformed Europe, he wrote in *Democracy in America* (1835–40), he saw happy faces about him, whereas Americans had “a cloud habitually upon their brow” and took their pleasures sadly, “forever brooding over advantages they do not possess.” Such is the burden of liberty, which Eastern Europe is about to discover for itself. To be free to choose is to be free to get it wrong; and to get it wrong can mean a life of self-reproach. The principal task

of the modern mind, in that event, is self-forgiveness, and it is an undertaking highly characteristic of the age we are in. Other ages have asked God, or other people, to forgive them: Nowadays we ask it of ourselves.

The second demand is that work should be interesting. This is a recent development in human history, and workers in field or factory over the centuries would have been greatly puzzled by it. Work used to be something you did because you had to do it. Now it is supposed to be interesting. That lies at the heart of the vogue for higher education, which cannot chiefly reflect a longing for riches, since plumbers and mechanics can easily be paid more than college graduates, not to mention their professors. Education is a demand to be interested. All that reverses a traditional assumption of mankind, by which leisure was supposed to be interesting and work, almost by its nature, dull. Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* (1866), for example, tells of a governess who marries a prosperous widower whom she likes well enough, her principal motive, however, being her own comfort and security—“she was tired of the struggle of earning her own livelihood.” She gladly gives up teaching to live a life of leisured ease, serving tea to her friends in a household with servants. Her modern equivalent would be more likely to insist on keeping her job as a stepping-stone to a better one. The industrial revolution, once blamed for

creating the drudgery of the factory bench, is now more sensibly seen as the instrument by which mankind released itself from mechanical operations. Compared with work, leisure can be a bore.

The demand that work should be interesting is very unevenly spread through the Western industrial world, with the Germans and the Dutch minding commendably little about boredom, the French and the British minding a good deal more. America, in my experience, comes out well out in this comparison—on the assumption that a high boredom threshold is a merit and an advantage, both morally and materially. I am impressed, when I teach in the United States, by the readiness of students and colleagues to perform boring tasks like reading ill-written but essential texts and spending long hours in highly undiverting classes and committees, and I hope I have not exploited that virtue too relentlessly. British academic life, by contrast, is markedly less tolerant of tedium; French too. A low threshold of boredom is a considerable disadvantage in modern life, and one wonders what the ultimate cost will be.

A third strain is the phenomenon of the workaholic. The word, invented in the United States as recently as 1968, may be less than a quarter of a century old, but the type itself cannot be much older, and it would be difficult to think of instances in European or American fiction or life before the present century. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon* (1941) shows such a character, for whom failure is disgraceful, work interesting, and the work-habit a drug that drives out all other thoughts. Fitzgerald's hero is a Hollywood producer called Monro Stahr, and he is a type new, I suspect, to civilized mankind. In earlier ages people overworked, to be sure, but commonly because they were forced by poverty or impelled by a sense of duty. Now work can be a neurotic addiction. The temptation lies in the fact that, all too often, there is nothing more interesting to do. Work, as Noel Coward said, is much more fun than fun.

The danger now is ultimately to sanity itself. The great Victorians, like Dickens and Trollope, disqualified themselves as workaholics by playing as hard as they

worked, and Trollope jokingly observed in a letter of May 1871 that he regretted the Old Testament should have called labor "the *evil* consequence of the Fall of Man," since it was self-evidently its greatest blessing. On the other hand, though he rose early to write fiction before spending all day at the office, he often hunted in the afternoon and enjoyed dinner parties in the evening, and his last illness was caused by laughing too heartily over a new novel. That sounds like a balanced diet of living. "My only doubt as to finding a heaven for myself at last," he wrote in the same letter, "arises from the fear that the disembodied and beatified spirits will not want novels." That cheerful view of work is nothing like the black pit of compulsive labor into which Scott Fitzgerald's hero falls. Workaholic is a 20th-century word, one suspects, because it is a 20th-century type.

The decay of idleness is not a disaster, and the Achievement Society, by and large, is no bad place to be. Its puritanical contempt for drones and parasites may look faintly grim, at times, or absurdly monomaniacal, but it is still a more rational view than the respect for the unproductive and the useless that reigned in many an *ancien régime* or the worlds of P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster and Evelyn Waugh's Brideshead. It is not, however, a tolerant world, and not everyone has noticed that the Permissive Age, which once seemed here to stay, has vanished almost without a trace. The new age is naturally censorious. The parent obsessively worrying about the education of offspring, the careerist agonizing over a lack of promotion, the professional who finds it hard or impossible to stop—these are all its children, and one can only wish them the gift of whimsy and a good night's rest.

Odd that a century that began in full confidence that Victorian values were dead and buried should have ended by resuscitating them so willingly and so ardently, and at something more than full strength. The Victorians, after all, never suggested that work was the only life there is. Capitalism, in the event, did not die: it was reformed and reinforced, and it is spreading across the globe. The welfare state did not kill entrepreneurial skills, as

many predicted: It turned welfare, by cheapening it, into a dirty word, and made worldly success look all the more prestigious and imperative. The sexual revolution did not lead to license, for long: It made millions more than ever conscious of the hazards, physical and emotional, that lie outside monogamy. A wheel has come full circle, and moved perhaps a little further on.

Such is the world we are in. As Tocqueville rightly foresaw, the Achievement Society has brought wealth but not joy. He remarked in the 1830s that the English have the enviable faculty of looking downward with complacency, whereas the French look upward with envy. (Hence the French propensity, he argued, to violent revolution.) The Achievement Society characteristically does both. Its players look both upward and downward, applauding and reproaching themselves daily and hourly for their success in having climbed so far, their failure in having climbed no farther.

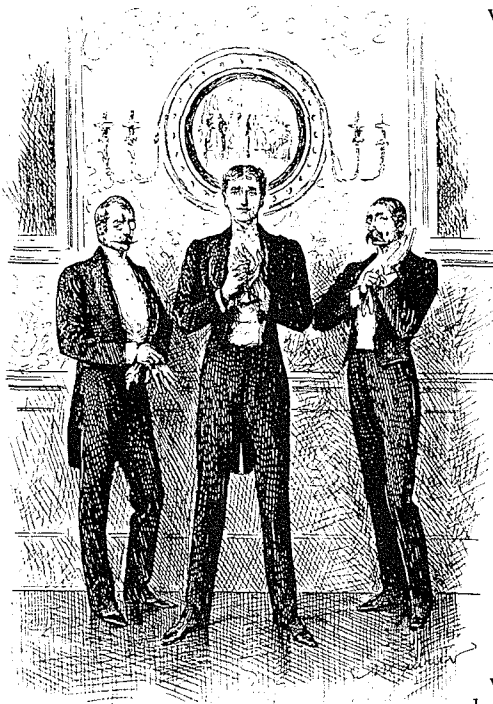
But then it is a world they have chosen, after all; and often, in lands where the achievement ethos reigns supreme, such as Germany or southern California, one feels this is the first race of mankind to live as it wishes to live, the first generation unencumbered by tradition and free to prosper by choice. Their very discontents are something they have chosen; they select and cherish their anxieties with the discrimination of a connoisseur. They would be far sadder if they had everything they wanted, and they know it.

What they have lost, in all this, is a sense of style that naturally belongs to those

who know how to be richly, deeply, and totally idle, who have never done a day's work or thought to do so. Such beings, by the 1990s, are rarer than rubies, even among English ladies or Balkan counts, and by now one can only plunder literature and memory for hints of the lost secret of their idleness. In a radio reminiscence Sir John Gielgud has told how, as a young actor-director between the wars, he once visited a society hostess in London and watched in wonderment as she entertained her guests in an elegant sitting-room, mixing their teas, directing her servants, and maintaining a dazzling flow of conversation as she did so; and he returned to the theater, where he was rehearsing a period comedy, determined to persuade a young actress in his charge to adopt those manners and that style. He urged in vain: Such behavior, even in the 1930s, was already part of a way of life whose secret had been lost.

Such elegant and animated indolence is not the note of the age, and it lies outside its competence and even its ambition.

We are content to live without style and to admire it, if at all, across footlights. A British academic visitor to the United States, puzzled by the frequency of campus revivals of Wilde's *Importance of Being Earnest*, was told: "I guess it has everything we don't have." If that means style, then it is almost the only thing we do not have. The gap is to be felt. The Achievement Society has already done much, and in the future may be expected to do far more. But a stylish indolence, one suspects, is one thing it will not achieve. It will be too busy.



REFLECTIONS

Death Sentences

Erudite, witty, and prolific, Anthony Burgess is known to American readers as the author of *A Clockwork Orange* (1963), *Earthly Powers* (1980), and several dozen other works. But his long career as a professional writer had a beginning which, even by the dire standards of the literary world, must be considered inauspicious. He was 42, with a few novels and a desultory career as a college lecturer in Malaya and Borneo behind him, when doctors told him he had only a year to live: brain tumor. In this essay he renders with characteristic humor what might be called a portrait of the artist as a condemned man.

by Anthony Burgess

I sighed and put paper into the typewriter. "I'd better start," I said. And I did. Meaning that, unemployable since I had less than a year to live, I had to turn myself into a professional writer.

It was January of 1960 and, according to the prognosis, I had a winter and a spring and a summer to live through and would die with the fall of the leaf. I felt too well. After the long enervation of the tropics, my wife Lynne and I were being stimulated by the winter gales of the Channel. Chill Hove sharpened the appetite, and we no longer had to feed ourselves on Singapore Cold Storage carrion and the surrealistic tubers of the Brunei market. The stay-at-home British did not realize how lucky they were. We ate stews of fresh beef, roasts of duck and chicken, sprouts and cauliflowers and Jersey potatoes. There were also daffodils from the Scilly Isles in the flower shops. England was really a demi-paradise. But the serpent of the British state had to flicker its forked tongue.

The departments of the British state

knew where I was. I was summoned to the local National Insurance office and asked what I proposed doing about sticking weekly stamps on a card. I replied that it hardly seemed worthwhile to enter the state scheme, and that the cost of my funeral would far exceed any contributions I could make to it. What was I living on? I was dying on cached Malayan dollars invested in British stock. I was writing vigorously to earn royalties for my prospective widow. When the Inland Revenue got onto me they found nothing, as yet, to tax. My coming death provoked no official sympathy. It was a statistical item yet to be realized. The coldness of the British was something that Lynne and I had become used to seeing as a property of colonial officials. We had forgotten that it was here at home as well.

Also mannerlessness. I worked out a little speech that I proposed delivering to the chinny woman who ran the news-agent-tobacconist's shop round the corner. "Madam, I have been coming here every morning for the last three (or six or nine)

months in order to buy the *Times* for myself, the *Daily Mirror* for my wife, and 80 Player's cigarettes for us both. I have meticulously said good morning on approaching your counter and on leaving it. I have also said 'please' and 'thank you' and made amiable comments on the weather. But not once has there been a reasonable phatic response from your unesteemed chinniness. It is as though bloody Trappists ran the shop." This was an intended valediction on leaving Hove, but it was never made. At the greengrocer's shop my good morning was met only by a head-jerk of inquiry as to what I wanted. Perhaps the unwillingness to say good morning had something apotropaic about it: Say the morning is good and it will turn out not to be. This must be true of American airline ticket agents, who are otherwise friendly enough.

"Good morning."

"Hi."

"Good morning."

"It sure is."

"Good morning."

"You'd better believe it."

We had been living in a region where the uneducated natives had been profuse with *tabek*, *tuan* and *selamat pagi*, *mem* and athletic with bows and hands on hearts. It was unnerving to be settling down in double cold, also to be surrounded by so much pinko-grey skin, as E. M. Forster called it. It was like being in a windy ward of the leprous. Like so many repatriates from the East, we found that the tropical past was becoming the only reality. We were in danger of turning into ex-colonial bores and eccentrics. In the winter cold I sometimes put on my suit over my pajamas: Lynne usually chose these occasions to drag me to a reach-me-down tailor's. We also drank as though we were still sweltering under a ceiling fan. For me, if I was really dying, it did not much matter. For Lynne, ingesting two bottles of white wine and a pint of gin daily, it would matter a great deal.

I got on with the task of turning myself into a brief professional writer. The term

professional is not meant to imply a high standard of commitment and attainment: It meant then, as it still does, the pursuit of a trade or calling to the end of paying the rent and buying liquor. I leave the myth of inspiration and agonized creative inaction to the amateurs. The practice of a profession entails discipline, which for me meant the production of 2,000 words of fair copy every day, weekends included. I discovered that, if I started early enough, I could complete the day's stint before the pubs opened. Or, if I could not, there was an elated period of the night after closing time, with neighbors banging on the walls to protest at the industrious clacking. Two thousand words a day meant a yearly total of 730,000. Step up the rate and, without undue effort, you can reach a million. This ought to mean 10 novels of 100,000 words each. This quantitative approach to writing is not, naturally, to be approved. And because of hangovers, marital quarrels, creative deadness induced by the weather, shopping trips, summonses to meet state officials, and sheer torpid gloom, I was not able to achieve more than five and a half novels of moderate size in that pseudo-terminal year. Still, it was very nearly E. M. Forster's whole long life's output.

Time also had to be expended on finding a house to live or die in. I did not propose meeting my maker in furnished rooms. And so, as spring approached, Lynne and I searched for a cottage in East or West Sussex. We also prepared to furnish it, wherever it was. This meant buying and storing Jacobean and deuterio-Caroline commodes and dressers at very reasonable prices. These, to me, were pledges of continued life. They were also the solidities of widowhood. When I died (but the when was being slowly modified to if), Lynne would be able to offer gin or white wine to possible suitors in a polished lonely home of her own. She was only in her late thirties and the beauty eroded by the tropics was returning. Meanwhile, in one of our two rented rooms, I worked at a novel called *The Doctor is Sick*.

Anthony Burgess is the author of more than 50 works of fiction and nonfiction. This essay is excerpted from his forthcoming You've Had Your Time. Reprinted with permission from Grove Weidenfeld, a division of Grove, Inc. Copyright © 1991 by Anthony Burgess.

I clattered carefully at the dining table. To my right, dingy lace curtains occluded the view of an overgrown garden under a murky marine sky. To my left was a shabby sofa on which, before the shilling-in-the-slot gasfire, Lynne lay reading the *Daily Mirror* or a trashy novel. She had lost whatever literary taste she had ever had, except that she still adored Jane Austen, and one of my duties was to fetch her fictional garbage from the public library. If I brought Henry James or Anthony Trollope, the book would be viciously hurled at my head. It was her fault that I could not take Jane Austen seriously; it was a matter of association. If she could read trash and Jane Austen indifferently, Jane Austen had to be close to trash. But she used my ignorance of that scribbling spinster to trounce my own literary pretensions. In our cups I was catechized:

"How many daughters have Mr. and Mrs. Bennet?"

"Four, or is it five?"

"Who does Emma marry?"

"A man of decent education, appearance and income. I've forgotten his name."

"What is the play that is put on in *Mansfield Park*?"

"Something by Kotzebue, I think."

Lynne would never read any of my own books, but she would ask for selected passages from my first, *Time for a Tiger*, to be read to her when she was ill. She was not concerned with savoring literary quality; she merely wanted evocation of her own Malayan past.

I thought at first that her debased taste was a gesture of conformity to our landlady's furnishings. On the walls were pictures of monks fishing and then feasting on fish. All the friars had the same face, as if they really were brothers, which meant that artistic poverty was matched by real penury: The painter could afford only one model. There were odd knickknacks (strange that the Hebrew *naknik* should mean sausage)—ceramic buttonboxes, shell ashtrays from Brighton, all my stepmother's paraphernalia. The carpets, blankets, and sheets had holes in them. The radio with the sunburst fascia, relic of the 1930s, worked sporadically. Winds blew under the doors. Above us dwelt a young

couple living in vigorous sin: They slept heavily and let the bath overflow through our bedroom ceiling. They could not be awakened.

I apologize for the irrelevance of that *naknik*. I am evoking a time when I was composing a novel about a man drunk on words, any words, and shoving him against his will into a world of things. Elias Canetti has a novel, *Auto da Fé*, in which an aging philologist, expert in Chinese, is thrust among criminals. *The Doctor is Sick*, more Britishly and perhaps less ponderously, exploited the same situation. The hero is Edwin Spindrift, a Ph.D. whose speciality is a philology which, in the 1960s, was already out of date, and he is sent home from a college in Burma where he has been teaching phonetics. He has, as I myself had, a suspected tumor on the brain. He also has a dark-haired unfaithful wife named Sheila. In the same neurological clinic as the one where I had been probed, his tests prove positive and an operation is proposed. But he escapes from the hospital and goes looking for his wife, who he suspects is fornicating vigorously all over London. He has had his head shaven in preparation for the scalpel; he wears a woolly cap. He has no money. He gets mixed up with the same lowlife characters I had encountered in a Bloomsbury unknown to Virginia Woolf—the big man who worked in Covent Garden (mornings in the market, evenings sceneshifting in the Opera House) and kept a Tangerine mistress, the vendors of stolen watches known as the Kettle Mob (among them a masochist who paid to be flagellated), the Jewish twins who ran an illegal drinking club.

These Jewish twins, Ralph and Leo, paid a surprise visit to Hove just as I was ready to transfer them to fiction. They wanted to start a small clothing enterprise and needed 200 pounds to hire sewing machines and pay first week's wages to a young seamstress who was also, they frankly admitted, a shared doxy. We paid the money, though we foreknew the business would fail. All their businesses had failed. Their only stock in trade was their identical twinhood, useful in alibis. As for libeling them in a novel, they, or one of

them, said: "You can't say nuffink worse of us van we done already." We took them to a pub which a handlebar-moustached ex-squadron leader entered with great laughter. "Musta sold two cars today," Ralph or Leo said. When the superior barmaid served our gin, Leo or Ralph said: "Chip a couple of cubes off yer aris, iceberg." Aris was short for Aristotle, itself rhyming slang for bottle, meaning bottle and glass, meaning arse. They went back to London with a check for 200 nicker, having ensured that there were at least five Hove pubs we could no longer visit. But they were a pledge that life was going on somewhere, if not in Hove. I went back to the novel with appetite.

Spindrift is forced (by the twins) to enter a competition for handsome bald heads. He wins first prize but disapproves of the vulgarity of the contest. He shouts a filthy monosyllable on television and, anticipating Kenneth Tynan, makes history. In 1960 it was not possible to spell the word out on the page. I had to describe it as an unvoiced ladiodental followed by an unrounded back vowel in the region of Cardinal Number 7, followed by an unvoiced velar plosive. Finally Dr. Spindrift meets an old Greek acquaintance, a vendor of wine named Mr. Thanatos. Thanatos means death, but we are not sure whether Spindrift dies or recovers from his operation. Nor are we sure whether his picaresque adventures are dreams or reality. He has lived in a world of words but has ignored their referents. The referents get up to bite him, perhaps kill him. Or conceivably they only pretend to.

Spindrift is a very improbable name. I do not think it is to be found in any telephone directory. Spin is a distortion of spoon, and spindrift is seaspray. It is meant to connote the frivolous insubstantial thrown off by the reality of life's heavy water. Dr. Spindrift gained his doctorate by writing a thesis on the Yiddish prefix *shm*, as used derisively in New York Jewish English or Yidglish. I doubt if such a thesis would be possible. I doubt if Spindrift ever went, as he alleges, to Pasadena to take his doctoral degree. He is insubstantial to his creator. He is useless to his wife, as his libido has failed him, and it is in order for her to seek sexual sustenance in a London

of layabouts and failed artists only too ready to give it. He offers words instead of love. Even the small criminals he is thrown among are vigorously transacting in a world of realities. The whisky sold in the illegal drinking club may be watered, and the kettles sold on building sites by the mobsters may cease to tick after a day or so, but they are more substantial than words. Spindrift is only spindrift, a feeder of philological pobs, and he deserves to die. He has a neural disease, but this is only a confirmation of a psychical disease—the morbidity of a useless specialization. Giving a pair of improvident Jewish twins a check for 200 nicker was a recognition, on Spindrift's creator's part, that life was more than words, that Spindrift could not have been fabricated except by somebody dangerously like him. To fail at treading cloth was better than succeeding with words.

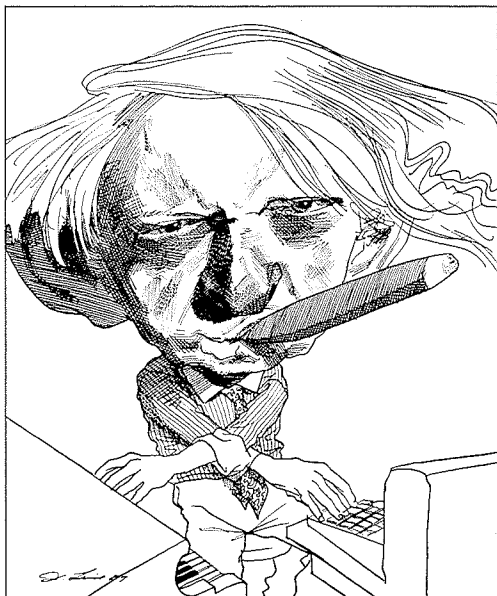
On the other hand, a work of fiction is a solidity that can be handled, weighed, sold, and its task is to present or distort the real world through words. Words are real things, but only if they evoke real things. But things become real only when they are named. And we can only know reality through our minds, which function through structural oppositions, typically realized in phonemes and morphemes. But there is only one knowable mind, and that is mine or yours. The solipsism suggested in *The Doctor is Sick*—the external world can be confirmed only by one perceiving mind, even if it is deranged, but what do we mean by derangement?—is a tenable metaphysical position, but I was, am, trying to be a kind of comic novelist playing with a few ideas. Perhaps it was inevitable that the Germans should make more of this particular novel than the British. There have been two translations—*Der Doktor ist Üebergeschnappt* and *Der Doctor ist Defekt*—and a number of scholarly dissertations from the universities of the free Republik. The British have taken it as mere, rather demented and certainly tasteless, entertainment.

Dr. Spindrift is not altogether myself, but some of his experiences are based on my own, not least the failure of the libido. A Pakistani doctor at the Hospital for

Tropical Diseases had lilted the term with relish and regret when questioning me about my sexual life. Whether it was part of a neuropathological syndrome was never made clear. The fact was that sexual relations between my wife and myself had practically ceased in 1959, and I did not need a clinical report to tell me why. If, at night, I was too drunk to perform the act and, in the morning, too crapulous, it was probable that I soaked myself in gin in order to evade it. I wanted to evade it because of my wife's vaunted infidelity, intermitted in valetudinarian Hove but, I suspected, ready to erupt again when, if, we settled in a randier ambience. I was prepared to accept the discipline of love but not the abandon of sex—neither in marriage nor, for the moment, elsewhere. Sex, but not too much of it, could be reserved to my novels.

No husband can object to his wife's infidelities if she does not blab too much about them. But to hear about the prowess of a Punjabi on Bukit Chandan or a Eurasian on Batu Road is the best of detumescents. Marital sex develops a routine, but the routines of a stranger are a novelty. Infidelities are a search for novelty, and *dongiannismo* is more properly a woman's disease than a man's. Don Juan's tragedy is that he finds all women the same in the dark and that they, finding novelty in his routine, are innocent enough to believe that the physical revelation is love. His tragic flaw is to choose the innocent, who pursue him to death. Women thrive on novelty and are easy meat for the commerce of fashion. Men prefer old pipes and torn jackets. Women love gifts (finding novel presents for Lynne on her birthday and at Christmas was strenuous work), and, given the chance,

they love amorous variety. The dissatisfaction of wives unable to find it has become, since Flaubert, one of the stock themes of fiction. The flesh of my wife was honeycolored and sumptuous, but I could not be attracted. She told me how often it had been handled by others, and how well some of them had handled it. I was perhaps better than A and B but not so good as X or Y. I could not subdue my pride, which was a grievous fault, and I preferred to put myself out of the running. This was marital cruelty, though not according to the Catholic church, which blessed chaste unions. I was always ready to call on my abandoned faith when I lacked the courage to make my own moral decisions.



There was never any argument about the deeper value of our marriage, which could be viewed as a miniature civilization or micropolis. Or, put it another way, it was complex semiotics. There was a fund of common memories to draw on, a series of codes, a potent shorthand. It was the ultimate intimacy, except that it was no longer physical. I had reacted to infidelity by

condoning it; if, as there was, there was to be more of it, that would not affect the intimacy. But the resentment would be all on her side, and it would take forms unrelated to sex. One form would be unwillingness to read my work and to take malicious pleasure in bad reviews of it. Another, not really anomalous, would be to spread the rumor that she herself had produced it, myself not being quite clever enough. "Anthony Burgess" was, after all, a pseudonym, and it need not be mine. George Eliot and the Bell brothers were women. If she fought for the work, which she did, if insulting agents, publishers, and reviewers could be termed fighting, she would be fighting for

herself. She cried out for notice while doing nothing to earn it. What she had achieved, which she seemed to me to overvalue, all lay in the past—head girl of her school, hockey and tennis player for her county, swimmer for the principality, pet of Professor Namier, minor star of the Board of Trade and the Ministry of War Transport. She identified with her father, successful headmaster of a minor Welsh grammar school, the more so as she could not quell guilt over the death of her mother. Our marriage was bristling with tensions, but it was still a marriage. It was sustained by love, which I do not have to define.

I wrote *The Doctor is Sick* in six weeks. As Lynne never read it, it was otiose to wonder whether she would have seen anything of herself in the character of Sheila Spindrift, erring wife. Sheila was dark, anyway, and Lynne was blonde, and, to a woman, the dichotomy is temperamental. All women, with the exception of Ann Gregory, might accept that blondness is a reality that cosmetics cannot efface. Lynne saw herself in the heroine of my Malayan books, what she knew of them, and accepted the blonde, chaste, patrician lady as an adequate portrait. The patrician aspect was important in itself, besides relating her to a writer more important than I. A family tree, engrossed by her primary-schoolteacher sister, was imported, and the name of Lady Charlotte Isherwood of Marple Hall was writ large in gold. The aristocratic heresy is convenient to those too lazy to develop talent or bitterly aware that they have none. Blue blood is a fine substitute for genius: To Evelyn Waugh his own genius was little more than a calling card for the houses of the great. Class is the great British reality, and the more books I wrote the more Lynne termed me an unregenerable guttersnipe. Many critics agreed with her. As for all my fictional women after Fenella Crabbe, these were to Lynne mere interchangeable mannequins for whom she kindly devised wardrobes. But she was not interested in how these women, dressed by her, looked, nor in what they did. I had, with *The Doctor is Sick*, completed a book that she hoped was saleable. Now stop reading Richard

Ellmann's life of Joyce, just published, and get on with the next.

It had been suggested to me by James Michie of Heinemann that I take a literary agent. He recommended one, Peter Janson-Smith, and I took the train to Charing Cross to see him, the typescript of the new novel under my arm. I would prove small beer to Janson-Smith, who was to handle the work of Ian Fleming, Professor C. Northcote Parkinson, and Gavin Maxwell, but of his goodness he took me on. He began by selling *The Doctor is Sick* to Heinemann, which had already contracted for it, but with a slightly enhanced advance that covered the agent's commission. Janson-Smith was, I suppose, a good agent, but I am not sure what a good agent is. The best agent, it seemed to me at the time, was the one who would try to place a first novel, but I do not think there were many such agents around. When I had published *Time for a Tiger* in the 1950s, received many encouraging reviews, and seen the work go into a second impression, I began to receive letters from agents: I had cranked up the car in freezing weather, and now they would drive from the back seat. What I wanted from my agent was publishers' commissions, foreign sales, film options. They were slow to come. I was, it must be remembered, trying to make a living from literature.

I was to do better when I ceased to have an agent. I now gravely doubt the value of a literary middleman. The publisher himself, when you come to think of it, is not much more than that. In the 18th century Mr. Dilly, a bookseller, could commission a dictionary from Samuel Johnson and not have to be persuaded to display the book in his window. The essential trinity is the author, the printer-binder, and the vendor with a cash register. In the United States this trinity has become a unity. A young writer, despairing of a publisher's acceptance of his work, will type and copy his book and then sell it on the street. There was, I remember, a young Californian who wrote an interesting but, in publisher's terms, uncommercial trilogy in which the characters of the Popeye cartoons became figures in a theological allegory. He printed his work on an IBM machine and hawked his copies. He sold only

about 400 of each volume but registered an 80 percent profit. He managed to live. Later he took drugs and died, but this does not invalidate his practice. With both agents and publishers hungry for bestsellers, literature will have to end up as a cottage industry.

When bestsellers are boosted, the number of languages into which they are translated is proclaimed with pride. But multiple translation is no index of anything. It is the agent's task to find foreign publishers but not to choose the translator, and many translations are very bad. They cannot be all that bad with what I have termed Class 1 novelists—those in whom language is a discardable quality—but with Class 2 writers, those who are given to poetic effects, wordplay, and linguistic ambiguity, the translator himself must be a committed writer. I have achieved a reading knowledge of a fair number of the Indo-European languages, and I insist on seeing translations before they are published. This is the kind of time-consuming work which few agents would be willing or qualified to take on, but it is essential if howlers or total misrepresentations are to be avoided. A lot of translations have to be rejected as inept. In a novel of mine, *Earthly Powers*, the injunction "Go to Malaya and write about planters going down with DT's" was rendered into Italian to the effect of writing about planters committing fellatio with doctors of theology. A self-respecting author will never boast about the number of foreign countries that know his work: He will consult accuracy and elegance of translation and pride himself, often in old age, on having assembled a limited but reliable stable. Agents will sell to anyone, if the money seems right. They are quantitative people.

They are buffers between authors and publishers, but, to the author, they often

seem closer to the publisher than to himself. They will quarrel with an author and even reject him as a nuisance, but they dare not make an enemy of a publisher. They will push saleability more than literary merit, which can sometimes creep into a publisher's list because of a package deal: I will let you have this undoubted bestseller if you will accept this unprofitable pastiche of Henry James. Done. Agents dare not be overconcerned with literary merit, as opposed to adequate literacy, when they have many typescripts to sell. They usually disclaim the higher critical competence. Janson-Smith cautiously made a literary judgment of *The Doctor is Sick* and suggested a change. I snarled, and he withdrew. He knew he was exceeding his brief.

The trip to London to meet Janson-Smith, in an office of which I can remember only a large can of lighter fuel, should also have been crowned by a visit to the Neurological Institute for a spinal tap. I did not go. I feared that there would be such an increase in the protein volume of the cerebrospinal fluid that the year to live might be curtailed and discourage a new novel. My failure to turn up seems to have been translated into a negative report from the laboratory, for I received a letter from Sir Alexander Abercrombie informing me that the protein content of my spinal liquor had gone down dramatically and I was now kindly allowed to live. This did not provoke elation but rather new caution: I had to be more careful when crossing the street. If, as I wished, I were to start a very long novel about a minor poet living in a lavatory, the gods might contrive pernicious anemia or galloping consumption to thwart me. Now that death from a cerebral tumor was crossed off the list, there was still a limitless list of ailments to draw on, all lethal. Life itself is lethal but, we hope, not yet.

Continued from page 21

ticularly those associated with colleges and universities, began to organize in opposition. Educational broadcasters formed the National Committee on Education by Radio (NCER) with the aim of getting Congress to reserve 15 percent of the broadcast channels for educational use.

But the opposition movement faced in NBC, CBS, and the National Association of

Broadcasters, "one of the most powerful lobbies in Washington." FDR had more important battles to fight, and on June 18, 1934, he signed into law the Communications Act of 1934 which created the Federal Communications Commission and marked the effective end of the war over the airwaves. The commercial networks had won.

Elite No More

"Reporters Who Cover Congress" by Stephen Hess, in *Society* (Jan.-Feb. 1991), Rutgers—The State University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

Washington reporters not so long ago bore little demographic resemblance to journalists elsewhere in the country. The scribes and newscasters in the nation's capital appeared to constitute (for better or worse) something of an elite. Overwhelmingly male, overwhelmingly white, disproportionately from the Northeast, they boasted more formal education than other journalists. Most held undergraduate degrees in the liberal arts rather than journalism, and one in three had gone on to earn an advanced degree. In recent years, however, according to Hess, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, the Washington press corps has lost much of its elite cast, especially with the influx of TV reporters from stations in the hinterlands.

For one thing, Washington reporters' Northeastern "slant" has disappeared. In 1978, more than one-third of them came from the Northeast, although only a fourth of the U.S. population lived in that part of the country. A decade later, however, according to a survey of 190 reporters who cover Congress for state, local, or regional audiences, the proportion of Northeasterners in the press corps almost matched their proportion in the population.

The difference in formal education has diminished, too, as more reporters outside Washington have come to possess sheepskins. In 1971, only 63 percent of daily newspaper reporters nationwide were college graduates; in 1988, 85 percent were.

Washington reporters also have changed, with their educational background becoming more like that of those

beyond the Beltway. In 1978, 62 percent of all Washington reporters had majored as undergraduates in the liberal arts. Among journalists elsewhere in the land, the preferred major was less intellectual—journalism. Now, that is true among many of the Washington types, too, especially the TV ones. In part, Hess says, this may reflect "the recent drive of women and minorities to get into journalism" through the proven track of professional education.

Women especially have increased their presence in Washington journalism. Whereas one-fourth of the reporters accredited to the congressional press galleries in 1979 were female, one-third were a decade later. "It can now be assumed that Washington has caught up with the rest of the news industry, which [still] lags behind the rest of the nation's professional population by about 10 percent," Hess writes. Among Washington's regional reporters who worked for radio or TV in 1988, nearly 40 percent were women.

The influx of TV reporters from local stations has opened a new breach within the Washington press corps. Unlike the network reporters of old, today's TV reporters tend to be younger than the print ones, are less likely to have graduate degrees, and are more likely to have majored in journalism. Unlike such giants of television journalism as Eric Sevareid and David Brinkley, few of the new TV reporters ever worked for newspapers or the wire services. The absence of such rigorous reporting experience clearly is no bar to membership in today's Washington press corps.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Marketing God

"'Pedlar in Divinity': George Whitefield and the Great Awakening, 1737-1745" by Frank Lambert, in *The Journal of American History* (Dec. 1990), 1125 Atwater, Indiana Univ., Bloomington, Ind. 47401.

"Great and visible effects followed his preaching. There was never such a general awakening, and concern for the things of God known in America before." So wrote Anglican evangelist George Whitefield in 1740 in a third-person account of his own revivalist activities, cleverly advertising them by means of an "objective" newspaper article. But his puffery actually was not far from the truth. The Great Awakening that began in 1739 and lasted through the ensuing decade was America's first mass movement, and Whitefield (1714-70), a proto-Billy Graham, was its catalyst.

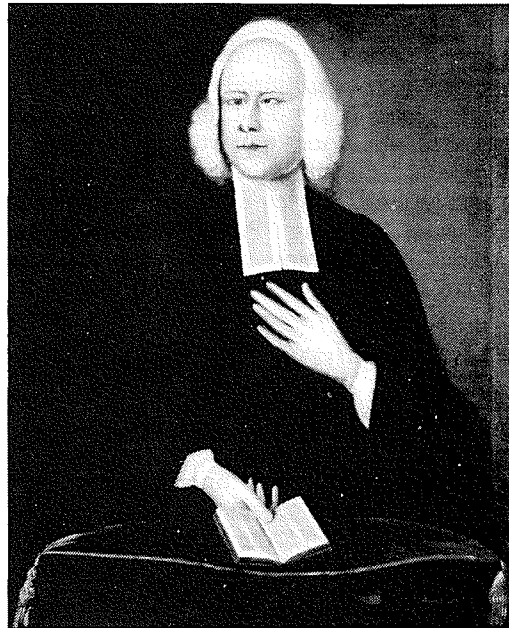
His message was of the need for a spiritual "new birth," an emotional experience of conversion and salvation, and he preached it in the open air to large, enthusiastic crowds in Philadelphia in 1739 and in New England the following year. The message itself was not new—Jonathan Edwards, Yale graduate and Congregationalist minister of Northampton, Mass., had powerfully delivered a similar one in an earlier, regional "awakening." What was new, according to Lambert, a Northwestern University historian, was Whitefield's aggressive use of advertising and other marketing techniques to promote the message of revivalism.

Drawing upon 18th-century merchants' experience in selling their wares at great distances, Whitefield used advance publicity, especially newspaper advertising, to prepare the way for his revivalist visits. Before his New England tour in 1740, for instance, newspaper readers in Boston were treated to glowing accounts of the evangelist's successes in the Middle and Southern counties, accounts that had been written by Whitefield himself or by his traveling companion.

Besides reports of his successes and itineraries, colonial newspapers also provided reprints of Whitefield's publications and

ads for his collections of sermons and journals. Publishers such as Ben Franklin found that Whitefield's tracts were hot commodities. In certain cities, such as Charleston, S.C., and Newport, R.I., Whitefield's works generated more revenue for Franklin than even his own *Poor Richard's Almanack* did.

Whitefield—despite his belief in the Calvinist doctrine of election—deliberately aimed his writing at a mass audience. He viewed the reader as a consumer. "I wrote short," he said about one of his pamphlets, "because I know long compositions generally weary the reader." Cheap serial publication of his sermons and journals also helped him get a large readership—and gave people, Lambert says, "a heightened sense of anticipation as [they] followed the evangelist's progress toward their own communities."



Whitefield inspired the Great Awakening.

Beyond Pragmatism

Americans characteristically shun theory and opt for "what works." But historian Forrest McDonald, in *Chronicles* (Feb. 1991), suggests that this pragmatic approach does itself not work. Americans, he says, "must learn, anew, how to think non-scientifically in dealing with nonscientific things."

It was fashionable, for a time, to ask the silly question, "If we can put a man on the moon, why can't we solve our social problems?" The reason we cannot solve our social problems is precisely the reason we can put a man on the moon. That is to say, it was our pragmatism in general and our scientific and technological mentality in particular that made our great material achievements possible. The essence of this mentality is the problem-solving approach. The scientific method isolates problems and solves them: It cannot take the broader view, for anything beyond the immediately demonstrable, testable, measurable, and provable is by definition unscientific. Americans are parodies of the scientific mentality: when anything goes wrong, we fix it, and do not take into account the possibility that our principles may be unsound. We have, for instance, been appalled

to learn in recent years that our children are reaching college without having learned to read. Some people responded to the discovery by seriously proposing that we should reorganize the entire educational system from kindergarten upward—and they were branded elitists, racists, or reactionary dodos. Far fewer people considered the possibility that the commitment to universal education is inherently futile, and that other means of civilizing children should be explored. Instead, the nation did what it always does: It tackled the immediate problem by instituting remedial reading classes in college and by dispensing with literacy tests. This [pragmatic inclination] enabled the United States to become the most proficient exploiter of technology the world has ever known; but the same mentality is a barrier to perceiving or dealing with human relationships. In sum, the trouble with pragmatism is that it no longer works.

Before it is too late, we must abandon our specialized, fragmented, problem-solving approach to knowledge and cultivate instead a holistic view, or what might be styled an ecological approach to human affairs. Doing so . . . will require nothing less than escaping the boundaries of our culture; but, however difficult it is, it can be done.

Not everyone approved of Whitefield's aggressive promotional efforts, however. Methodists John and Charles Wesley, for instance, deemed advertising religion a tasteless "sounding [of] a trumpet." Boston minister Charles Chauncy objected to Whitefield's giving "Public Notice" of his preaching activities. And an anonymous

correspondent suggested in the *Boston Weekly News-Letter* in 1742 that just as there already was "a very wholesome law in the province to discourage Pedlars in Trade," there ought to be a law "for the discouragement of Pedlars in Divinity also." Needless to say, that was one law that was never enacted.

Learning from Saints

"The Lives of the Saints and the Pursuit of Virtue" by Robert L. Wilken, in *First Things* (Dec. 1990), Inst. on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Ave., Ste. 400, New York, N.Y. 10010.

Virtuous deeds "implant in those who search them out a zeal and yearning that leads to imitation," declared Plutarch (A.D. 46–120), whose *Parallel Lives* of noble Greeks and Romans offered just such moral instruction. By the time Christianity made its appearance in the Roman Em-

pire, the use of written narratives of noble lives to teach virtue was well-established, notes Wilken, a University of Virginia historian. "Yet Christian hagiography . . . does not emerge until the end of the third century and does not burst into luxurious bloom until the fifth." The early Christians,

it seems, preferred precepts to examples.

"You know what *precepts* we gave you through the Lord Jesus," says Paul in I Thessalonians. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity; that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself. . . . that no man transgress and wrong his brother in this matter." Other lists of precepts can be found throughout the New Testament. Often the precepts stand alone, but sometimes they are supported by illustrations, as when James cites Job for his patience. But such examples hardly constituted comprehensive biographies.

"Why, then, no lives?" asks Wilken. "The most obvious reason was that the gospels stood in the way. The supreme model for Christian life was Jesus. . . . At this early stage of Christian history, it would have been presumptuous to bring other persons into competition with the primal model." That changed, however, with the Council of Nicaea, called in A.D. 325 to settle the question of whether Christ was different in substance from God. The council's (and Christian orthodoxy's) an-

swer was that Jesus as the Son of God was "begotten not created, one in being with the Father." By making Jesus seem less "human," Wilken says, this created "a vacuum . . . that could be filled with other human faces."

The publication of *The Life of Antony*, a biography of the founder of Egyptian Christian monasticism written by Athanasius (A.D. 293–373), bishop of Alexandria, marked the beginning of a new era. A multitude of lives of saints appeared during the next three centuries. "The hagiographers, for the first time in Christian history, turn to living persons, or those who have recently died, as models of the virtuous life," writes Wilken. "By displaying men and women from their own time, and often from their own communities, these lives proclaim that holiness is possible, virtue is attainable, perfection is within your grasp. They teach, in [Henri] Bergson's phrase, a morality of aspiration, not of obligation." They also, in their diversity, implicitly suggest "that there is no single standard, no one catalogue of virtues, no one way to serve God."

Tocqueville's Faith

"Tocqueville on Religious Truth & Political Necessity" by Cynthia J. Hinckley, in *Polity* (Fall 1990), Northeastern Political Science Assoc., Thompson Hall, Amherst, Mass. 01003.

In his classic *Democracy in America* (1835–40), Alexis de Tocqueville contended that the influence of religion was very important to society, but whether it was a true faith was not. "Society has no future life to hope for or to fear; and provided the citizens profess a religion, the peculiar tenets of that religion are of little importance to its interests," he wrote. Many scholars have concluded that Tocqueville favored convenient myth rather than genuine religion. But Hinckley, a political scientist at California State University, San Bernardino, disagrees. "Tocqueville never thought that belief in the social utility of religion could substitute for faith," she says.

The French visitor was struck by the usefulness of religion to American democ-

racy. "[I]f it does not impart a taste for freedom, it facilitates the use of it," he wrote. Religion imposes "a salutary restraint" on the human intellect, which makes men less likely to submit, in fear, to servitude. It also checks certain "very dangerous propensities"—toward self-absorption and "an inordinate love of material gratification"—fostered by "equality of conditions."

But, Hinckley observes, it was Christianity as practiced in America that provided "the type of moral climate that Tocqueville found so favorable to liberty," and he "gives every indication [of thinking] that truth and utility converge in Christianity." In his view, she says, society, particularly American society, had no need to determine which of the many religious sects

possessed the truth, because they all were within what he called "the great unity of Christendom, and Christian morality is everywhere the same."

Tocqueville may or may not have been a believing Roman Catholic, Hinckley says, but "he unequivocally accepted as true the essential Christian teachings, such as the existence of a God, the immortality of the soul, the sacredness of the Gospels, and the rightness of Christian ethics." Tocqueville, however, was plagued by religious doubt, and some scholars have concluded he was a religious skeptic. But Hinckley says his correspondence makes clear that his anguish was not that of "a skeptic trying to believe in God, but [that] of a believer deprived by his Creator of the unwavering certitude that characterizes faith of the highest order."

Tocqueville thought that only a very few

men—persons of rare intellect such as Blaise Pascal—"are capable of genuine belief," Hinckley writes. "The rest of humanity has no choice but to accept religious dogma on faith, summoning as much belief as one can for that which one can never know." Most people thus turn to organized religion, which renders "eternal truths . . . intelligible to the crowd." Although it "may not be the highest form of religion," organized religion, "unlike genuine religion, . . . links the many to the divine." Tocqueville's distinction between genuine religion and its lower reflection has been misconstrued by scholars as "a distinction between organized religion and civil (mythical) religion," Hinckley contends. Tocqueville's real message, she says, "is that liberal democracy needs religion, that is, citizens who believe to the extent they are capable of belief."

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Collision Course

"Accidents of Birth" by Willy Benz, in *The Sciences* (Nov.-Dec. 1990), 2 E. 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Scientists hoped that the 1969-72 Apollo moon missions would yield piles of new information about the solar system. And they have. We now know that the moon is some 4.4 billion years old (about the same age as Earth) and that it once had a magnetic field. But the 700 pounds of rocks that astronauts scooped off the moon's surface have provided no answer to a fundamental puzzle, writes Benz, a Harvard astronomer: How was the moon formed?

The relatively small moons orbiting most other planets in the solar system probably are debris left over from the planets' formation, Benz says. But the Earth's moon is too large to be a "left-over." Scientists have speculated that it is, variously, a piece of the Earth's mantle that was flung into orbit long ago; a "companion planet" formed alongside the Earth; or an interplanetary wanderer captured by the Earth.

Each of these theories has major flaws,

however. If the moon was a wanderer, for example, how was it forced to settle into orbit? Now, a surprising new consensus is forming about the origins of the moon. It grows out of a new theory of planetary formation called "catastrophism."

Aided by computer models developed by George W. Wetherill of the Carnegie Institution and others, scientists came to realize during the 1980s that the creation of the solar system was much more violent and chaotic than anybody had previously imagined. Some 4.6 billion years ago, Benz writes, a vast cloud of gas and dust rotating around the galaxy became unstable—"perhaps jostled by the shock wave of a nearby supernova"—collapsed under its own weight, and burst out again, forming the sun. The remaining dust and gas circled the young star, much like the rings that now girdle Saturn. The tiny particles stuck together, eventually forming trillions of "rocky conglomerates," many of them

as much as a kilometer around. Over the next 250 million years, Benz writes, these objects, known as "planetesimals," collided and combined, forming the nine planets of the solar system.

Benz's own computer model suggests that the moon is the wreckage resulting from a collision between the Earth and a Mars-sized planet. He argues that his collision hypothesis accounts for several mysteries about the moon: Its rocks were left without volatile materials, for example, by

the intense heat of collision. And it provides an explanation of the moon's origins that does not require a series of events unique to the moon.

Until recently, Benz notes, scientists were reluctant to accept any theories that invoke catastrophes. Gradualism was the watchword in all fields. But astronomers are now joining biologists and geologists in creating a new understanding of the importance of accidents and catastrophes in the universe.

Mystery Drug

"Aspirin" by Gerald Weissmann, in *Scientific American* (Jan. 1991), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

"There is a bark of an English tree, which I have found by experience to be a powerful astringent, and very efficacious in curing anguish and intermitting disorders," wrote the Reverend Edmund Stone to the president of the British Royal Society in 1763. Although he did not know it, Stone had discovered salicylic acid—better known today as aspirin.

Weissmann, a professor of medicine at New York University, reports that "Americans consume 16,000 tons of aspirin tablets a year—80 million pills—and spend about \$2 billion a year for nonprescription painkillers, many of which contain aspirin." We all know that aspirin reduces headaches, soothes sore muscles, brings down fevers, and can even help prevent heart attacks. Less well-known, however, are some of its other uses.

Weissmann notes that aspirin and other salicylates—found in such plants as willow trees, meadowsweet, and wintergreen—can be used to dissolve corns and provoke uric acid loss from the kidneys. They also inhibit the clotting of blood and induce peptic ulcers. "Cell biologists use aspirin and salicylates to inhibit ion transport across cell membranes, to interfere with the activation of white blood cells," he continues, and botanists even use it to induce plants to flower.

A half century after Stone tasted the bitter willow bark, French and German pharmacologists began competing to unlock salicylate's secret. Although at the time the

French and English had an edge over the Germans in natural chemistry, by the mid-19th century Germany led the world in synthetic chemistry. In 1874, Friedrich von Heyden established the first factory devoted to the production of synthetic salicylates. In 1898, another German chemist, Felix Hofmann, discovered a much less acidic derivative of the substance, creating aspirin as we know it.

But it was not until the 1970s that scientists began to understand how aspirin works. In 1971, British scientist John R. Vane argued that aspirin inhibits the body's production of prostaglandins, hormones that induce pain and swelling around damaged tissue. Although Vane's "prostaglandin hypothesis" became widely accepted, it has deficiencies. For example, acetaminophen, the most widely used aspirin substitute, works without suppressing prostaglandins at all. And prostaglandins also have important *anti-inflammatory* effects. The hypothesis is dealt a final blow, Weissmann says, by studies of species of ancient marine sponges, which react to aspirin much as humans do, even though they do not produce prostaglandins.

Weissmann says that Vane's hypothesis explains some of aspirin's mysteries, and he has his own idea: Aspirin works partly by interfering with "neutrophils," cells that cause damage when triggered by inflammatory agents. But "much remains to be learned" about this seemingly simple drug, Weissmann concludes. At least it is

nice to know, he says, that research into its mysteries has alerted us to the existence of biochemical pathways that we share with

the sponges, "creatures from which humans have been separated by a billion years of evolution."

The Human Machine

"A Chip You Can Talk To" by Rachel Nowak, in *Johns Hopkins Magazine* (Dec. 1990), 212 Whitehead Hall, Johns Hopkins Univ., 34th and Charles Streets, Baltimore, Md. 21218.

If scientists at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory have their way, it won't be long before telephones dial numbers on spoken request, tape recorders transcribe conversations directly onto paper, and cars drive themselves. Nowak, a writer for *Bio World*, reports that researchers at the lab are making their first breakthroughs on computer chips that will enable machines to hear and see.

Today's digital and serial computers are ill-equipped to understand language or interpret light signals, Nowak explains. Signals entering a microphone, for example, are "analog." That is, they are recorded in fluctuating voltage levels. But computers can't read analog signals. They must first be converted into a "digital" string of ones and zeros—a clumsy, time-consuming process.

To get around this problem, the team has developed a "basilar membrane" computer chip, which interprets analog signals directly by imitating the human ear and brain. Each of the chip's 30 microscopic filters responds to a particular frequency range and then works with the others to interpret the signals. The researchers hope that all 30 filters soon will be contained on an even smaller chip requiring only a minuscule battery. It will process sound instantly, in "real time." Conceivably, the chip could be connected to the auditory nerve in a deaf person's ear. The ultimate goal, however, is to create a chip that can

change sounds into language a computer can understand.

There are many obstacles, Nowak writes. While humans are able to separate meaningful sounds from noise (a humming refrigerator, for example, or droning traffic), computers can't. But researcher Marc Cohen has developed a prototype of a microchip that may be the first step toward a solution. The chip separates blended signals by detecting distinctive frequency patterns and separating them.

Work on chips that "see" is slower going. So far the team has fabricated a three-layer "silicon retina," which, while not as complex as the human eye, can "detect edges, as well as automatically adjust . . . to different light intensities." One such chip, which is one centimeter square, will soon replace a refrigerator-sized computer in a solar observatory in Sacramento.

Eventually, the goal is to link the "seeing" and "hearing" chips through an "associative memory" chip, Nowak notes, so that "the *sight* of an object, say a cup sitting on a table, triggers the *name* of the object."

How long will it be before we can expect a "perceptive computer, obedient to our slightest utterance?" At least 10 years, the researchers predict. The deepest mysteries confronting them do not involve fabricating new microchips but understanding the human organ the chips are supposed to mimic—the brain.

Ants in Bondage

"Slave-making Ants" by Howard Topoff, in *American Scientist* (Nov.-Dec. 1990), P.O. Box 13975, Research Triangle Park, N.C. 27709.

For centuries scientists have been fascinated by the complex social structure of ant colonies. Charles Darwin made de-

tailed studies of ant societies and noted their remarkably efficient division of labor. In recent years, writes Topoff, a psycholo-



Polyergus ants, led by the scouts who discovered the site, invade a nest of *Formica* ants to capture and carry off hundreds of pupae. Some of them are eaten; the rest are enslaved.

gist at Hunter College, entomologists have discovered more than 200 species of ants that do no work at all—they have slaves to do it for them.

As an example he points to the ants of the *Polyergus* genus, which regularly raid nearby nests of *Formica* ants, secreting a toxic acid that scares off the adults and then carrying the *Formica* pupae back to their own nest. A typical raid yields 600 pupae. "Although a portion of the raided brood is eaten," Topoff writes, "some of the *Formica* pupae are reared to adulthood. The *Formica* workers then assume all responsibility for maintaining the permanent, mixed-species nest: foraging for food, feeding the colony members, removing wastes, and excavating new chambers as the population increases." When the colony becomes too large for the nest, the *Formica* slaves scout out a new nest and "carry all the *Polyergus* eggs . . . as well as every adult and even the *Polyergus* queen, to the new nest." *Polyergus* ants have become so dependent on their slaves that they have lost the ability to care for themselves.

Why don't the slave ants revolt or wander back to their colony? Topoff says that

the young *Formica* ants "identify the smell of the parasitic *Polyergus* ants as their own; moreover, the *Formica* slaves do not recognize brood of their own species and will often destroy them." A *Polyergus* queen ant sometimes will take over an entire *Formica* nest, covering herself for several minutes with the dead *Formica* queen and fooling the workers. In as little as 15 minutes, Topoff says, the newly installed *Polyergus* queen is already being groomed by *Formica* workers.

Charles Darwin believed that slave-making species of ants evolved from predatory ancestors, Topoff writes. "Because the pupae could not always be entirely consumed, however, some individuals of the abducted species would emerge to adulthood." But Topoff contends that this theory fails to explain how the queen became dependent on slaves. He favors another theory, the "brood-transfer hypothesis." In simple terms, this hypothesis suggests that slave-making evolved out of much more common territorial contests between ant species. *Polyergus* queens at some point invaded *Formica* nests, took over, and both experienced "olfactory imprinting." The result: the two genera have difficulty

distinguishing each other. Today's *Polyergus* raiders believe they are kidnaping *Polyergus* eggs.

Although a relatively new entomological subdiscipline devoted specifically to slave-making ants has produced many new theo-

ries, Topoff concedes that there is still much to be learned. And considering that there are hundreds of species of slave-making ants, he concludes, "it is conceivable that no one theory will be universally satisfactory."

RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

The Perils of Pesticides

"Cancer Prevention Strategies Greatly Exaggerate Risks" and "Natural Plant Pesticides Pose Greater Risks Than Synthetic Ones" by Bruce N. Ames and Lois Swirsky Gold, and "Exposure to Certain Pesticides May Pose Real Carcinogenic Risk" and "Arguments That Discredit Animal Studies Lack Scientific Support" by James E. Huff and Joseph K. Haseman, in *Chemical & Engineering News* (Jan. 7, 1991), American Chemical Society, 1155 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

In her influential 1962 book *Silent Spring*, naturalist Rachel Carson warned of the dangers to the environment, and ultimately to human beings, from the widespread and indiscriminate use of DDT and other chemical pesticides. Nearly three decades later, the debate about the hazards pesticides present still goes on.

Chemical pesticides are employed extensively in American agriculture. In 1988, more than one billion pounds of pesticides and related chemicals were used—more than four pounds for every American. But Ames and Gold, of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Center at the University of California, Berkeley, contend that the risks to consumers of developing cancer from pesticide residues on their food have been greatly exaggerated. Indeed, they say, by lowering the cost of fruit and vegetables and so increasing their consumption, the use of synthetic pesticides may even indirectly *reduce* the danger of cancer. After all, eating more fruits and vegetables and less fat may be the best way of lowering the risk of cancer, next to giving up smoking.

Pesticides that cause cancer in laboratory rats or mice when administered in extremely large doses don't necessarily do the same in humans when taken in much, much smaller amounts, Ames and Gold point out. Moreover, they say, the minus-

cule quantities of synthetic pesticides that Americans take in with their food are vastly outweighed by the "natural pesticides" they consume every day. These are the toxins plants produce to protect themselves against fungi, insects, and animal predators. Cabbage, for example, contains 49 natural pesticides. While relatively few such natural chemicals have been tested on rats and mice, about half of those that have been have caused cancer. Ames and Gold calculate that Americans eat about 1.5 grams of natural pesticides per person per day—about 10,000 times more than the amount of synthetic pesticide residues they ingest.

But such comparisons, because they don't take into account the pesticides' carcinogenic *potencies*, have little scientific value, argue Huff and Haseman, of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. And the rodent studies of synthetic pesticides, they say, do have significant value in the eyes of most scientists. Such studies indicate "that exposure to certain pesticides may present real carcinogenic hazards to humans."

One point on which both sides seem to agree is that there is reason to be concerned when people are exposed to large amounts of certain pesticides. Haseman and Huff say that the potential risks to food consumers shouldn't be minimized, but

"we are more concerned about the farmers, occupationally exposed workers, pesticide applicators, weekend gardeners, and

others who may be repeatedly exposed to much higher levels of pesticides and therefore are at greater risk."

False Fixes

"Sense and Nonsense on the Environment" by Warren T. Brookes, in *The Quill* (Jan.-Feb. 1991), Society of Professional Journalists, P.O. Box 77, Greencastle, Ind. 46135-0077.

When McDonald's Corp. agreed last fall to abort its program to recycle the polystyrene cartons it uses for its hamburgers, and to go back instead to using coated paperboard, some environmentalists and journalists hailed the decision as "good news for the planet." In reality, says Brookes, a Washington-based editorial writer for the *Detroit News*, the hamburger chain's decision was "on balance, *bad* news, because it will at least double the net adverse impact on the nation's environment."

That's because coated paperboard, unlike polystyrene, is not recyclable, and because producing it takes 40-50 percent more energy and results in two to three times the air pollution and at least 70 percent more waterborne wastes.

Why, then, did McDonald's decide to switch? Brookes suspects that the firm was concerned less about the environment than about its corporate image. McDonald's was under pressure from the Environmental Defense Fund, and the foam packaging had simply become "a public relations liability."

But the "Big Mac" threat is hardly the only environmental peril that's been greatly exaggerated in recent years, Brookes maintains. For example, he points to the "ecological disaster" of the March 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Alaska's

Prince William Sound.

"Contrary to the hysteria generated by the news media and environmentalists," Brookes writes, a report published last year by James Mielke of the Congressional Research Service found that the ecological effects of such spills are relatively modest and short-lived. The chemicals in petroleum, Mielke noted, "have long been part of the marine environment and physical impacts are likely to be temporary in the dynamic natural flux of the coastal environment." As an example of how little lasting ecological damage was done in Alaska, Mielke said that 40 million pink salmon—an all-time record number—were caught in Prince William Sound last year, and most of the fingerlings had been released into Sound hatcheries *after* the *Exxon Valdez* spill. In Mielke's view, the \$2 billion spent on the cleanup there was "money that could have been better spent."

Who's responsible for all the exaggerated environmental fears? Brookes says that the news media deserve much of the blame. Journalists are properly skeptical of environmental claims made by industry, he says, but they also need to be skeptical of claims made by the Environmental Protection Agency and by "self-styled public-interest groups, many of which misuse or abuse scientific data to arouse fear."

ARTS & LETTERS

Flag Revolution

"Waving the Red Flag and Reconstituting Old Glory" by Albert Boime, in *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* (Spring 1990), Oxford Univ. Press, 2001 Evans Rd., Cary, N.C. 27513.

When young radicals burned the U.S. flag during the antiwar protests of the 1960s, the venerable Socialist leader Norman

Thomas (1884-1968) was appalled. He thought the protesters "should be washing the flag, not burning it." Little more than

two decades later, however, a conservative U.S. Supreme Court took a more permissive view. In a 5-4 decision, the Court held that burning the flag was an allowable form of free speech. "We do not consecrate the flag by punishing its desecration, for in doing so we dilute the freedom that this cherished emblem represents," said then-Justice William J. Brennan, Jr.

That 1989 decision (reaffirmed last year when the court struck down a new federal law making it a crime to burn or deface the American flag) was "the end result of a cultural revolution" that began in the mid-1950s, according to Boime, an art historian at the University of California at Los Angeles. Jasper Johns fired the revolution's first shot, with *Flag* (1954) and other images of the Stars and Stripes. "Sometimes painted monochromatic gray or white or painted on bright backgrounds, Johns's flags served to neutralize the grand metaphor of Old Glory by holding it up to close scrutiny in the secularized space of [an] art gallery," Boime says. With the flag's image "completely divorced from those sites in which the ritual of respect or

decorum is normally played out," it became possible to see the flag "as a depersonalized, flat image," like the Campbell's soup cans that Pop Art later immortalized.

Soon Claes Oldenburg and other Pop artists were using the flag as an element in their collages, montages, monoprints, and other creations, and thus inadvertently contributing to the "desacralization" of the flag as the era of Vietnam protest drew near. Celebrity protester Abbie Hoffman, perhaps inspired by the work of the Pop Art masters, made a shirt out of the flag in 1968. Many, less "hip" people, however, continued to regard the flag as sacred. Hoffman was arrested in Washington, D.C., for wearing his flag shirt.

It was significant, Boime contends, that Johns, Oldenburg, and other artists whose flag images contributed to the cultural revolution filed a friend-of-the-court brief against flag-desecration laws in the 1989 Supreme Court case. "Once the flag could be viewed as just another object in the visual field," he says, "it could no longer be seen as either a record of conquest or a universally accepted patriotic symbol."

Looking Backward

"Tomorrow Never Knows" by Gail Collins, in *The Nation* (Jan. 21, 1991), 72 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011.

In 1935, historian Charles Beard, philosopher John Dewey, and editor Edward Weeks were asked to name the 25 most influential books published in the preceding 50 years. Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* topped each man's list, but right behind it, in all three cases, was a utopian novel—*Looking Backward* (1888).

Written by Edward Bellamy (1850–1898), a minister's son from Chicopee Falls, Mass., *Looking Backward* told the story of Julian West, a wealthy Bostonian who went to sleep in 1887 and awoke 113 years later to discover that the world had been greatly changed, and entirely for the better. The novel was all but devoid of action, but late-19th-century readers didn't mind, notes Collins, co-author of *The Millennium Book*. They "were fascinated with

[Bellamy's] picture of society in the year 2000—from the day-to-day practicalities ('Our washing is all done at public laundries at excessively cheap rates, and our cooking at public kitchens') to his grand vision of an economy in which all business has been swallowed up into one Great Trust run by the state and the work force transformed into an eager industrial army of patriotic citizens."

The novel appeared at a time when middle-class Americans were alarmed by labor strife and violence, and by the flood of new immigrants into the country. They also were resentful of the Gilded Age rich, who flaunted their wealth with gaudy displays of conspicuous consumption. Bellamy and his "Nationalist" vision of social organization seemed to offer a solution. Sixty thou-

sand copies of *Looking Backward* were sold in the first year, more than 100,000 the next. "Bellamy Clubs" began to spring up all over the country, their members intent upon turning Bellamy's vision into a reality.

Looking Backward also inspired dozens of other utopian novels. Fictional heroes in increasing numbers began falling asleep and waking up, to their wonderment, a century later. The hero of Paul DeVinnie's *Day of Prosperity*, found himself in New York City in the year 2000 and saw around him "only these 10-story palaces, varied in decoration, surrounded by fruit trees, flower beds, vases, statues, and marble seats." Some utopian authors were provoked by Bellamy's work. British Marxist William Morris pronounced *Looking Back-*

ward "a horrible cockney dream"—and then proceeded to set down, in *News From Nowhere* (1890), his own vision of the future, an arcadian community of artisans and craftsmen.

Bellamy's age, Collins writes, "was the last in which futuristic novels would take such an optimistic bent." Although the 20th century brought far more technological progress than Bellamy and his contemporaries anticipated, it also brought world wars and other previously unimagined horrors that have soured most futuristic novelists on the future. "Looking backward now from Bellamy's future," Collins says, "the saddest thing is not that we have failed to create the utopia he imagined but that we have stopped dreaming up utopias of our own."

Latin Heroes

"Literature and Politics in Latin America" by Mark Falcoff, in *The New Criterion* (Dec. 1990), 850 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019.

The Latin American writer is often thought to cut a heroic figure. As an independent critic of a corrupt society, he stands up in defense of humane and liberal values against an established order of greed and violence. But that familiar image is much exaggerated, says Falcoff, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. Most writers in Latin America, he says, "have been unusually drawn to power, for reasons both of economic necessity and cultural predisposition," and in this century, they've been especially drawn to non-liberal or anti-liberal ideologies.

Popular indifference has been a more powerful enemy of literature than has censorship, and Latin American writers have often relied upon the state for economic sustenance. Many governments, Left and Right, have kept writers on the public payroll. Successive Chilean governments, for example, rewarded poet Pablo Neruda with minor diplomatic posts in Spain and elsewhere. Short-story writer Jorge Luis Borges was appointed director of Argentina's National Library after having worked for years at the Buenos Aires Public Li-

brary. When individual writers were persecuted or driven into exile, Falcoff says, it was usually "due to their affiliation with the party out of power, not to the allegedly subversive content of their work."

Devotion to democratic principle has not been characteristic of Latin American writers, on the whole. Many older writers were attracted to Marxism at one time, and few allowed any disillusionment with it to lead them to embrace liberal democracy. Since the late 1960s, younger New Left writers, such as Chile's Ariel Dorfman and Uruguay's Eduardo Galeano, have taken as their themes protest, revolution, repression, solidarity, and North American consumerism's threat to the "authenticity" of native cultures.

The literary establishments in Western Europe and the United States, Falcoff says, have encouraged the writers' "anti-liberal bias." Not all of Latin America's writers have responded with political themes, but "the more ambitious (or unscrupulous) among them could not help noting that revolutionary posturing was the most expeditious route to success in the North At-

lantic publishing and literary worlds.”

The most important development in Latin American letters in recent years, Falcoff says, has been the emergence of writers who have made “a decisive liberal

and democratic commitment, explicitly denouncing totalitarian regimes and utopian ideologies.” The most prominent examples are Mexican poet and diplomat Octavio Paz and Peruvian novelist (and

Seeing Norman Rockwell

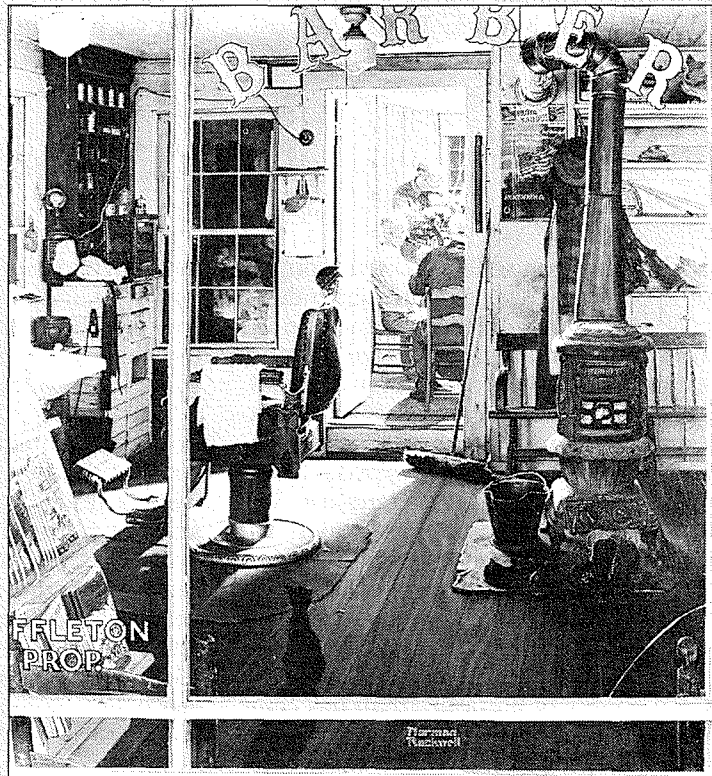
An appreciation of the works of Norman Rockwell (1894–1978) by novelist John Updike in *Art & Antiques* (Dec. 1990).

For a number of years now, a poster-size reproduction of Norman Rockwell's Shuffleton's Barber Shop, originally a cover for the April 29, 1950, issue of the Saturday Evening Post, has hung over the water closet of my office toilet, where I cannot help but look at it . . . several times a day. After perhaps . . . 5,000 such absent-minded examinations, I am still finding new things to see in it. The boots and rubbers, for instance, in front of the stove, with its red-hot coals, and, in the diagonally opposite corner, the ghostly row of old shaving mugs in the top cells of the obsolete cabinet, between the ceiling fixture of frosted glass and the little gooseneck lamp . . . [T]he illustration is saturated in every corner with an avid particularizing that allows us to forgive the cuteness of the cat and the stogy quaintness of the whole, the idealization of small-town life.

In the Fifties twilight of the slick magazines, before television had quite stolen away their audience, their advertisers, and their kitschy energy, Rockwell, always zealous in his pursuit of visual anecdote, put the stylizations of J. C. Leyendecker and Maxfield Parrish far behind him and let his attention range across the entire plane of

the picture, overflowing the margins of the anecdote . . . In the ocean of commercial art, his always stood out by virtue of an extra intensity, a need (bred, psychology inevitably will say, of insecurity) to provide a little more than the occasion strictly demanded . . .

As small-town America and its family magazines faded around him, his painterly excess



became more apprehensive and lavish—a preservative varnish, a nostalgic greed, a self-satisfying perfectionism, an art for art's sake. Widely loved like no other painter in America, yet despised in high-art circles, he pushed on, into canvases that almost transcend their folksy, crowd-pleasing subjects.

1990 presidential candidate) Mario Vargas Llosa. Paz says that socialism in underdeveloped countries swiftly turns into despotic "state capitalism." Vargas Llosa, once an enthusiastic backer of Fidel Cas-

tro, has since concluded that sacrificing freedom is not the way to overcome injustice. Perhaps there may be something to the heroic image of the Latin American writer after all.

OTHER NATIONS

Going Halfway

"The Vietnam Communist Party Strives to Remain the 'Only Force'" by Charles A. Joiner, in *Asian Survey* (Nov. 1990), Univ. of Calif., Room 408, 6701 San Pablo Ave., Oakland, Calif. 94720.

Communist leaders in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have taken two big steps toward revitalizing their moribund economies. One is to move toward free markets, the other is to surrender the communist monopoly of political power. Many analysts believe that both steps are essential for the nations' economic health. But not everyone has agreed. Kim Il Sung in North Korea and Fidel Castro in Cuba have refused to take either step. Others have not been quite so steadfast in their Marxist-Leninist faith. In Vietnam, Nguyen Van Linh and his colleagues, like their counterparts in China, have decided to go halfway—they're taking the economic step, but not the political one.

Since the Sixth Party Congress in December 1986, says Joiner, a Temple University political scientist, Vietnam has tried to free up the command economy. "The 'new way of thinking' (*doi moi*), 'renovation' (*canh tan*), and 'openness' (*cong khai*) have become the entrenched party line," he says. Despite some limited gains, however, the country's enormous economic difficulties remain. Among them: low productivity, inadequate public services, and continued dependence on subsidized loans and trade with the Soviet

Union and the nations of the former Soviet bloc. Declines in the loans and trade are sure to worsen Vietnam's problems.

Overcoming them requires political, as well as economic, reform, one member of the party's Politburo dared to suggest last year. Tran Xuan Bach, who was a leader in party ideological affairs, warned that "You can't walk with one long leg and one short leg and you can't walk with only one leg." His "erroneous views" were not well received by his colleagues. He was expelled from the Politburo and the party's Central Committee. Linh, the party's general secretary, said in a major address in 1990 that the Vietnam Communist Party must remain the "only force" because "ours is a party of the people, by the people, relying on the people and for the people."

Vietnam's "ubiquitous security system" is, of course, "a major deterrent to most forms of dissenting behavior" by the 67 million Vietnamese, Joiner notes. Perhaps it and "renovation" will be enough to enable the party to maintain its monopoly of political power. Still, he says, "whether it is possible to walk with one long leg and one short one throughout much of the 1990s is far from being definitively resolved."

A Swedish Dilemma

"Sweden: Social Democrats in Trouble" by Stefan Svallfors, in *Dissent* (Winter 1991), 521 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

During the early 1930s, when the United States and Europe were trying to cope with the Great Depression, many progres-

sives looked to Sweden's social democracy as a successful "middle way" between dogmatic free enterprise and doctrinaire so-

cialism. Now, with the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and the new enthusiasm even there for free markets, some progressives once again have turned their eyes toward the "Swedish model." What they are finding, however, is a model in danger of cracking up.

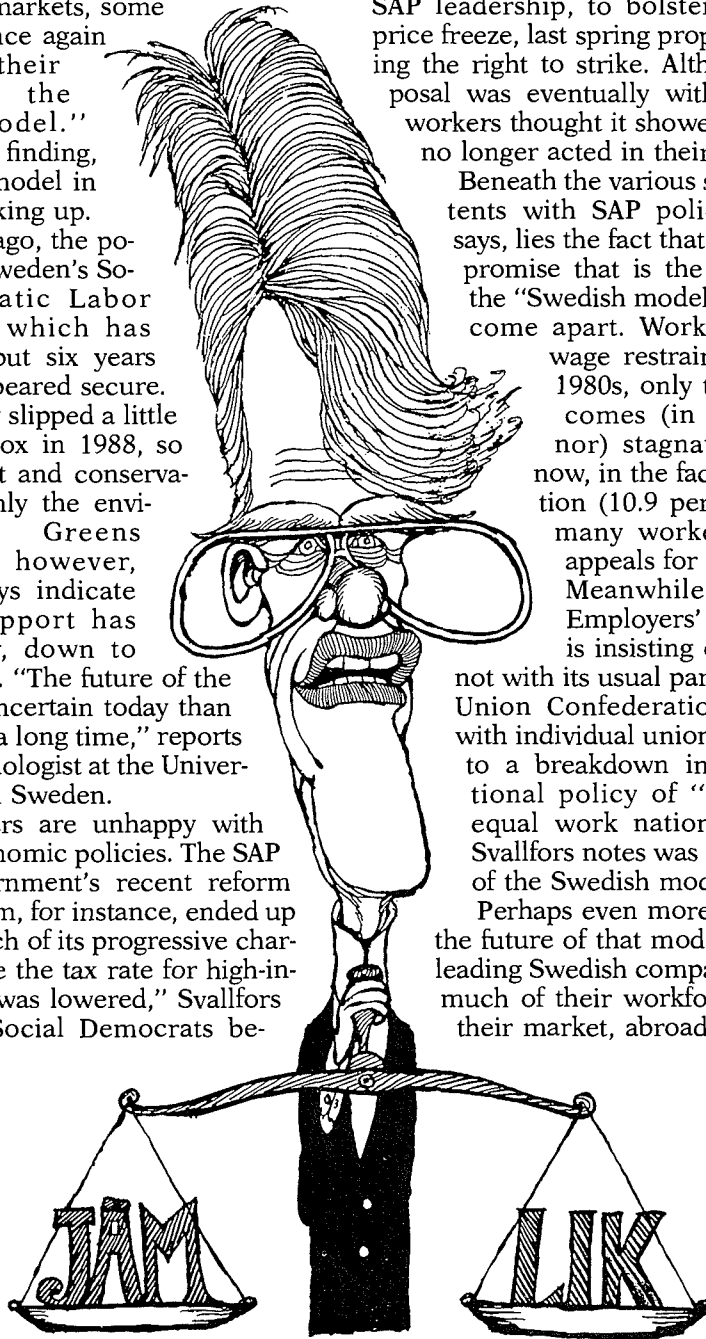
Three years ago, the political grip of Sweden's Social Democratic Labor Party (SAP), which has ruled for all but six years since 1932, appeared secure. While the party slipped a little at the ballot box in 1988, so did the centrist and conservative parties; only the environmentalist Greens gained. Now, however, opinion surveys indicate the SAP's support has fallen sharply, down to just 35 percent. "The future of the SAP is more uncertain today than it has been for a long time," reports Svallfors, a sociologist at the University of Umea in Sweden.

Many workers are unhappy with the party's economic policies. The SAP minority government's recent reform of the tax system, for instance, ended up destroying much of its progressive character. "Because the tax rate for high-income earners was lowered," Svallfors says, "many Social Democrats be-

lieved that a fundamental principle was discarded." But backsliding on income redistribution isn't the only grievance. The SAP leadership, to bolster a wage-and-price freeze, last spring proposed suspending the right to strike. Although the proposal was eventually withdrawn, many workers thought it showed that the SAP no longer acted in their interests.

Beneath the various surface discontents with SAP policies, Svallfors says, lies the fact that the class compromise that is the foundation of the "Swedish model" has begun to come apart. Workers agreed to wage restraint in the early 1980s, only to see their incomes (in constant kronor) stagnate or decline; now, in the face of high inflation (10.9 percent in 1990), many workers reject any appeals for wage restraint. Meanwhile, the Swedish Employers' Confederation is insisting on negotiating, not with its usual partner, the Trade Union Confederation, but rather with individual unions. That has led to a breakdown in labor's traditional policy of "equal pay for equal work nationwide," which Svallfors notes was "a cornerstone of the Swedish model."

Perhaps even more significant for the future of that model is that many leading Swedish companies now have much of their workforce, as well as their market, abroad. Volvo, for in-



Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson and his Social Democratic Labor party favor jämlik (equality), but their economic policies of late have made many workers unhappy.

stance, recently announced that it was going to cut back production in its Swedish facility because its factory in Ghent, Belgium is more profitable. In the end, Svallfors concludes, it will be not the

SAP's domestic policies but rather "the character of Western Europe's integrated market and the future direction of Eastern Europe [that] will largely determine the fate of the Swedish model."

Bolshevik Czars

"Czars and Commiczars" by Robert C. Tucker, in *The New Republic* (Jan. 21, 1991), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Most Western sovietologists have long regarded the October Revolution of 1917, in which Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks seized power, as marking a decisive break with the Russian past. But many Soviet intellectuals, free now in the glasnost era to speak their minds, have been taking a very different view, Princeton political scientist Tucker reports. As they see it, he says, czarist absolutism and historic Russian statism simply returned in a new guise during the Soviet period.

This was true from the regime's very outset, Soviet thinkers such as historian A. Mertsalov and *Literaturnaya Gazeta* editor Fyodor Burlatsky contend. The retention of the minority-inhabited territories on the periphery meant the Russian empire remained intact in all but name. And, also under a different name, a new line of de facto czars emerged, starting with Lenin.

The dark, final years of Stalin after World War II, Tucker observes, were strikingly similar in many ways to the repressive 1830s and '40s under Czar Nicholas I. When the Marquis de Custine visited Russia in 1839, Tucker writes, he found "not the civilized monarchy he had imagined, but a true tyranny, a serf state with a czar-cult upheld by officialdom." The form of government, as Custine wrote in his book *Russia in 1839*, was "absolute monarchy moderated by murder."

The Soviet Nicholaian period, Tucker says, extended through the reign of Leonid Brezhnev and the early 1980s. And then, just as the "czar-liberator" Alexander II (who abolished serfdom) succeeded the tyrant Nicholas I, so a new "czar-liberator," Mikhail Gorbachev, came to power in 1985. What has happened under Gorba-

chev, according to Soviet historian Vladen Sirotkin, is not unlike what happened under Alexander II in the 1860s and 1870s. "It was then," writes Tucker, "that a schism opened up within the czarist *no-menklatura* [ruling elite] between reformers who supported Alexander II's perestroika and conservatives who opposed it." That czar's rule ended in 1881 when he fell victim to a revolutionary extremist's bomb, and under his successor, Alexander III, reaction set in.

As the Soviet era appears now to be coming to an end, Soviet intellectuals are divided as to what "time" in Russian history it is. Some think that the country is entering a period like the one that afflicted Muscovy in the early 17th century, when the death of Czar Boris Godunov brought on disorder, civil war, and intervention by Poles and other foreigners. That *smuta*, or Time of Troubles, ended only with the crowning of Mikhail Romanov in 1613 and the establishment of a new dynasty that was to last for three centuries. But other Soviet intellectuals contend that Russia is in a revolutionary period like that of the early 20th century, with the country in crisis and the question being whether a new October 1917 can be avoided.

Tucker suggests that the alternative "times" are really, in essence, the same. The revolutionary period was actually a new Time of Troubles, and from it, too, a new dynasty emerged. So the crucial question now is: Can Russia finally escape from the cycles of its own history? If the answer is to be yes, Tucker says, "much time and much effort, no little good fortune, and maybe substantial assistance from the United States" will be required.

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

"Unfulfilled Expectations: Home and School Influences on Literacy."

Harvard Univ. Press, 79 Garden St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138. 251 pp. \$29.95.

Authors: *Catherine E. Snow, Wendy S. Barnes, Jean Chandler, et al.*

In 1982, Snow, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and her colleagues, ended an 18-month study of how children from low-income families learn to read and write on an optimistic note. "Only a few of them were in serious academic trouble then," the researchers recall, "and even those scoring the lowest on our tests showed the capacity to make great gains under the influence of excellent teachers."

But when the researchers did a follow-up study four years later, their hopes were dashed. "Few of the students . . . had continued to make gains in literacy consonant with their abilities. Only a small minority were taking courses that would qualify them for . . . college. Several were high school dropouts."

During 1980-82, Snow and her colleagues went into the homes and classrooms of 32 grade school children of average ability and various backgrounds.

Two facets of literacy—word recognition skills and vocabulary—were strongly influenced by the "literacy environment" of the home, the mother's own

level of education, and her educational expectations for the child. (The father's background mattered much less.) The quality of schools also made a difference, but a considerably smaller one.

A third facet, reading comprehension, is more complicated. But schools and families seemed to be able to compensate for each other's failings. In the 1980-82 study, all children—including those from the worst homes—who had excellent teaching for two years made the expected gains in reading comprehension.

The schools provided very little instruction in how to write. And parents did have a big impact there, the researchers found. The "good writers" tended to live in more organized households, and to have more positive relationships with their parents.

Parental involvement in the schools bolstered student literacy, the researchers found, but was often stymied by miscommunication. The parents expected to be notified by the teachers when academic problems arose. But report cards often painted a rosy—and inaccurate—picture. During the

study's first year, nearly three-fourths of the children got A's and B's in reading, even though about half were reading below grade level. But when parents did contact teachers, children did better.

As the years went by, however, that happened less and less. Parental involvement declined as the children advanced into adolescence. Many parents, because of their own academic shortcomings, did not feel competent to help their children. Schools simply could not compensate for parental withdrawal.

Parents who continued to try to help and support their children, though, apparently made a difference. Asked to write essays about a person they admired, adolescents who were doing well in school tended to write about parents (or others) who gave them academic or psychological support. Youths who were not doing well typically admired those who provided for their basic physical needs. One ninth grader wrote: "I admire my mother and father because they feed me and give me a roof over my head."

That, sadly, is not enough to nurture a literate citizen.

"Peace Corps' Challenges in the 1990s."

Editorial Research Reports, Congressional Quarterly, 1414 22nd St. N.W., Washington, D.C.

20037. 15 pp. \$7.

Author: *Richard L. Worsnop*

The Peace Corps, born 30 years ago March 1 during the presidency of John F. Kennedy, still projects an image of youthful "vigah" and idealism—and that image still bears some resemblance to reality.

But today's Peace Corps fields less than half as many volunteers (6,100) as the Corps of 1966. Its budget (\$186 million) is also down, in constant dollars, by more than half, says Worsnop, associate editor of

Editorial Research Reports.

Some other changes may be for the better. During the 1960s, up to 85 percent of the volunteers were under age 26; today, only about half are. In the early years, nearly 60 per-

cent of volunteers were young generalists possessing only bachelor's degrees in the liberal arts; today, generalists account for only about 30 percent of volunteers, with most of the others being specialists in business, engineering, health, or social work. Although the Peace Corps today has many fewer volunteers than it did in its '60s heyday, they are spread more widely: Volunteers are in 73 countries, more than ever before. And more countries are seeking volunteers now than did in recent decades.

After the 1989 revolution in Eastern Europe, the Peace Corps sent 84 volunteers to Poland, 53 to Hungary, and 22 to Czechoslovakia. Many more were due to go to the region this year. Poland is scheduled eventually to have 213 volunteers, one of the largest Peace Corps contingents in the world. Honduras, with 339 volunteers as of January, has the largest number, followed by Botswana (306), Guatemala (244), Thailand (219), and Zaire (210).

The move into Eastern Europe brought the Peace Corps

new public attention, but it also aroused concern among those committed to the agency's traditional mission of helping poor people in poor countries. Thanks to a \$17.4 million budget increase for 1991, however, the agency's expansion is not now being made at the expense of its programs in the Third World.

Over the decades, one Peace Corps veteran observed, the Corps has shown it "can adapt itself to different countries and different situations," which helps to explain why it has survived adversity at home.

"Energy in Developing Countries"

Office of Technology Assessment, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402-9325. 148 pp. \$7.

Developing countries have been fast increasing their consumption of oil and other commercial sources of energy—from 17 percent of total global consumption in 1973 to 23 percent in 1985. By 2020, their demand for commercial energy could triple, increasing their share to 40 percent.

But many of these countries are already deeply in debt and are going to be very hard-pressed to pay for this increase. The Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) thinks it has a way to help: make technological improvements to boost efficiency. That would not only reduce the need for energy, it would cut pollution, too.

Five developing countries—China, India, Mexico, Brazil, and South Africa—are now among the world's largest consumers of commercial energy (oil, gas, coal, and electricity). China alone accounts for

nearly 10 percent of world use. Africa's 50 countries, by contrast, use less than 3 percent.

Most people in the developing world—in particular, the 2.5 billion living in rural villages—use noncommercial energy: firewood, charcoal, crop wastes, or animal dung. Developing countries account for 85 percent of the world's biomass fuel consumption, and use is growing; it generates air pollution, as well as carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases."

As developing countries become more industrialized and urbanized, they shift toward using oil and other types of commercial energy—and their energy needs grow. Three-fourths of developing countries rely on energy imports; many are almost completely dependent on oil imports.

To increase the energy supply on the scale required "would severely strain financial, manpower, and environ-

mental resources," OTA says. But if enough energy does not materialize, economic and social development could be thwarted. OTA looks to technological improvements to help to resolve the dilemma.

For example, switching from wood stoves to more efficient kerosene or liquefied petroleum gas ones could cut energy use (and pollution) significantly, since cooking is the largest single use of energy in many countries. Another potential place to save energy, OTA says, is in steel production. Plants in India and China use twice as much energy as those in the United States and Japan. Some developing countries have already cut energy use in steel production. South Korea's steel industry is the world's most efficient. Other promising technologies for improving energy efficiency are to be explored in a later OTA report.

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.

African Realities

Kwame Anthony Appiah's article ["Altered States," *WQ*, Winter '91] develops in a readable way the reasons that one's hopes for the reconstitution of African polities lie in a vibrant civil society. We are confronted in the 1990s with both African and Eastern European societies trying to deconstruct bloated, bureaucratic, kleptocratic, centralized states to free up the energies and initiatives of civil society. In much of Eastern Europe civil society has to be reconstituted as well, but in many associations, marketing societies and educational institutions survive to reclaim their autonomy from malfunctioning military and authoritarian regimes.

Two points jump out of Dr. Appiah's articles. The first, historical. While the British practice of "indirect rule" was a disaster for centralized nationalism and the transfer of power, it may in retrospect be closer to the multistranded fabric of African polities than we thought in the 1960s. The second, prospective. What seems to be required in the arduous task of African nation-creation is a new kind of constitutional convention. The key parties at interest—such as ethnic groups, churches, trading associations, universities, labor unions, farmers' groups, urban political parties—have to come together to determine for themselves what are the reciprocally necessary characteristics of the state they want. A larger state cannot survive if its citizens always think of themselves, and therefore shape their civic and kin obligations principally as Ashanti or Yoruba or Luo. The African state has to be rebuilt from the bottom up by its own people who can articulate the realities of common interest. Much the same is true of Yugoslavia—or, it appears, of the badly fraying bonds of the Soviet Union. That there are people as perceptive and articulate as Dr. Appiah provides ground for a modest hope that this large and critical task can be pushed forward in Ghana and other parts of Africa.

*Prosser Gifford
Director of Scholarly Programs
The Library of Congress*

Lessons Learned

I welcome Robert Dallek ["The President We Love

To Blame," *WQ*, Winter '91] to the multiform historical inquiry concerning Lyndon Johnson's career and what we can learn through that subject about the United States since the 1930s. I hope Dallek discovers what the rest of us miss and teaches what the rest of us fail to understand.

Dallek firmly establishes his moral superiority over Robert Caro and me by stating that we, Caro and I, "have merely vilified" Johnson. I put aside that accusation until some other time. Here, it is more apposite to point out that in the course of Dallek's reflections, although they occupy only seven pages of the *Wilson Quarterly*, Dallek himself vilifies Johnson, as any Johnson loyalist will already have observed. Dallek tells us here once again about Johnson's "reputation as a political operator who lied to the public throughout his career," his "own corrupt campaign practices," and his "few qualms about misleading the Congress and the public" as he waged war in the Dominican Republic and Vietnam.

I believe it is correct to say that the beneficial effects of Johnson's Great Society programs have been dismissed, distorted, ignored, and denied by journalists and policy analysts, many of whom have been running with the pack during the Reagan-Bush period and that Johnson must be credited with his real contributions to social policy in the United States. However, this statement, this orientation, will come as no surprise to anyone who has been paying attention to the relevant studies of Great Society programs by scholars who are true to the data. Elsewhere I have expressed my opinion that Johnson was the greatest civil rights president since Lincoln, and I am glad to see that, judging from his sketch, Dallek is thinking along compatible lines.

I was hoping we might derive from Dallek's presentation of his views some solid indication of his own fresh perspective on our subject. But no: reasonably enough, we will have to wait for those books. I wish him the best of luck. However, the next time he condemns those others of us who have been occupied with this subject for indulging "our sense of moral superiority," his point will be more logically made if he can keep his own weakness for that indulgence under better control.

*Ronnie Dugger
Wellfleet, Mass.*

Polling History

In his perceptive essay on Lyndon Johnson, Robert Dallek emphasizes the very low standing of LBJ in the eyes of the general public. Dallek cites a 1988 Harris poll in which people ranked Johnson near the bottom of all recent American presidents, behind even Richard Nixon. He goes on to argue that historians, by their neglect of Johnson, have allowed journalists like Ronnie Dugger and Robert Caro to send "his already tarnished reputation into a free fall."

What Dallek fails to note is the mounting evidence that historians and political scientists hold a much higher opinion of Lyndon Johnson than do the American people. Three polls of scholars taken in the early 1980s ranked him among the top dozen American presidents. In David L. Porter's survey of 41 American historians in 1981, LBJ finished an impressive 11th, among the "near great," while Steve Neal's poll of 49 historians and political scientists who had written extensively on the presidency listed Johnson in the 12th position, just ahead of Kennedy and far ahead of Nixon, who ranked next to last. The most extensive poll of historians, conducted by Robert K. Murray and Tim H. Blessing in 1982, placed Johnson 10th, just behind John Adams among the "above average" presidents.

The explanation for this startling gap between the way scholars and the general public view Lyndon Johnson lies in the very nature of presidential popularity. Leaders such as Harry S. Truman and John F. Kennedy invariably do well in broad public opinion polls because people tend to admire them as human beings. There was nothing likable about Lyndon Johnson. Yet historians who have in the past probed beyond personal characteristics for more tangible evidence of presidential leadership have discovered many of the positive traits that Dallek finds praiseworthy.

It is fashionable to write about the "tragedy" of Lyndon Johnson—his rapid fall from grace between 1964 and 1968, his doomed effort to try for both guns and butter, even his apparent awareness as early as 1965 that Vietnam would become his downfall. But perhaps the greatest tragedy of all for Johnson was the fact that he followed the charismatic Jack Kennedy. No matter what he did, LBJ could never duplicate JFK's hold on the public imagination. As a loyal successor, he pursued Kennedy's policies to their logical conclusion. Yet LBJ never received the adulation that would have been heaped on Kennedy for the Great Society; instead he became the scapegoat for the failure of Vietnam. Historians know better and with the publication of books such as Dallek's forthcoming biogra-

phy of Lyndon Johnson, perhaps LBJ will finally win some measure of public redemption. But don't count on it.

Robert Divine
University of Texas-Austin

Songs of Praise

I was introduced to the *Wilson Quarterly* several years ago by a friend. Since then I have learned to appreciate it more with each issue. I just finished the summer issue today. I had the impression of having listened to a masterful symphony. There's always so much in the *WQ*! So, thank you all for a very cogent, reliable, readable journal.

Dean Holt
Columbia, Maryland

Protest

I wish to record my grave concern regarding the quality of the *Wilson Quarterly* review of recent articles on Cuba [Autumn '90, pp. 134-135]. The reviewer grossly misrepresented my article in the Summer issue of *Foreign Policy*. Among the most serious errors were: the statement that my article "sees only strength" in the Cuban government's position; the claim that I forecast "reductions in Soviet aid are unlikely"; and the suggestion that I believe "the fall of Ortega and Noriega strengthened Castro." Either the reviewer did not read my article carefully, or he/she intentionally misrepresented my position.

In my article I state that "Cuba's economy is ailing and will suffer still more as a consequence of stagnating or declining aid from the USSR." I also state that "immediate collapse" of the Cuban system is not likely, a statement vindicated by the continuation of the regime many months after my article appeared, but that the "longer term outlook remains less certain." I then list a range of possible scenarios, one of which is "either violent or peaceful overthrow" of the government.

I never mention the fall of Ortega and contrary to suggesting that Noriega's removal strengthened Castro, I state that the change of government in Panama "may soon shut down" Cuba's embargo-circumventing operations there.

Gillian Gunn
Senior Associate
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Editor's note: We believe our summary was fair, but it should have said that Gillian Gunn sees "mainly" strength in Cuba.

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