

25th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

WQ

THE  
WILSON QUARTERLY

Surveying the World of Ideas

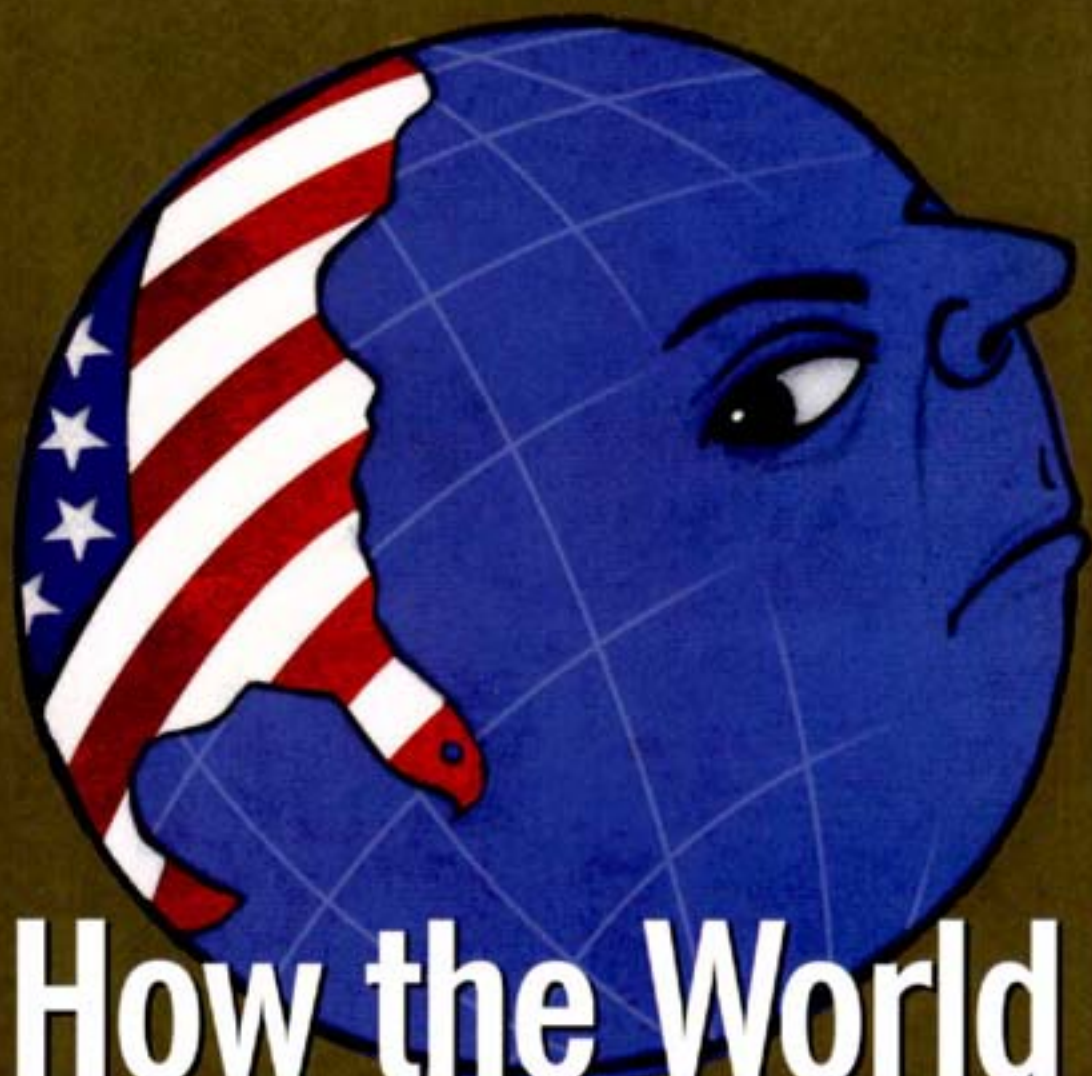
SPRING 2001  
\$6.00 / CAN \$7.00  
www.wilsonquarterly.com

The KGB and the Hunt  
For a JFK Conspiracy

A New World Underground

The Black Book of Communism

What Does It All Mean?



# How the World Views America

*Essays by*

SERGIO AQUAYO, FOUAD AJAMI, DENIS LACORNE, YURI LEVADA,  
PETER SCHNEIDER, ALLISTER SPARKS, AND WANG JISI

## Wilson Center Events

### **“Globalization: The Agent of Good Governance?”**

**Chai-anan Samudavanija**, President, Institute of Public Policy Studies,  
Bangkok, Thailand, **April 25**

### **“Trafficking in Women from the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to Bosnia”**

**Martina Vandenberg**, European Researcher, Women’s Rights Division, Human  
Rights Watch, **April 30**

### **“The Poles, Their Past, and Their Neighbors: Remembrance and Reconciliation”**

**Wlodzimierz Borodziej**, Warsaw University; **Leon Kieres**, President of the Institute  
of National Remembrance, Warsaw; **Pavol Lukac**, Senior Analyst, Slovak Foreign  
Policy Association, Slovakia; **Ceslav Okincic**, Adviser to the President of Lithuania;  
**Andrzej Paczkowski**, Fellow, Woodrow Wilson Center; **Timothy Snyder**, Executive  
Secretary, Harvard Academy. Cosponsored by the Embassy of Poland, **May 2**

### **“From Zaibatsu to Bit Valley: Tracking Japan’s Progress in the IT Revolution”**

**Zenji Nakazawa**, Senior Attorney/Advisor, Federal Communications Commission,  
**Marie Anichordoguy**, Professor of International Studies, University of Washington.  
Cosponsored by the Mansfield Center for Pacific Affairs, **May 9**

### **The Director’s Forum**

#### **“Welfare, Children, and Families: The Impact of Welfare Reform in the New Economy”**

**William Julius Wilson**, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geysler University Professor,  
Harvard University, **May 17**

### **“Lobbyists and the Public Interest”**

Congressman **David Price** (D-NC), invited; former Congressman **Vin Weber** (R-  
MN), invited; **Jonathan Rauch**, *National Journal*; **Rick Hall**, Associate Professor of  
Political Science, University of Michigan. Sponsored by the Congress Project, **May 18**

### **“Supercomputing and the Human Endeavor”**

**James Burke**, host of the television program “Connections”; **James Billington**,  
Librarian of Congress; **Michael Capellas**, President and CEO of Compaq  
Corporation; **Bernadine Healy**, President of the American Red Cross; **Richard  
Rhodes**, Pulitzer Prize-winning author; and many others. Cosponsored by the Los  
Alamos National Laboratory. By invitation only; those interested in attending  
should e-mail Rinelda Bliss at [Rineldab@aol.com](mailto:Rineldab@aol.com), **June 13–15**

This calendar is only a partial listing of Wilson Center events. For further information on these  
and other events, visit the Center’s Web site at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org>. The Center is in the  
Ronald Reagan Building, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. Although many  
events are open to the public, some meetings may require reservations. Contact Maria-Stella  
Gatzoulis at (202) 691-4188 to confirm time, place, and entry requirements. Please allow time  
on arrival at the Center for routine security procedures. A photo ID is required for entry.



**Woodrow Wilson  
International  
Center  
for Scholars**



SPRING 2001

## THE WILSON QUARTERLY

Published by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

WQ Online: <http://www.wilsonquarterly.com>

---

### 45 HOW THE WORLD VIEWS AMERICA

Americans tend to think of themselves as the unalloyed global good guys. Why doesn't the rest of the world see things that way? Seven views from abroad.

*Essays by Allister Sparks, Denis Lacorne, Fouad Ajami, Wang Jisi, Peter Schneider, Sergio Aguayo, and Yuri Levada*

### 10 THE DEMON IN JIM GARRISON

*by Max Holland*

Did the popular belief that the CIA was involved in the Kennedy assassination grow from a seed planted by the Soviet KGB?

### 18 THE EMPIRE UNDERGROUND

*by David W. Wolfe*

An Illinois scientist is only now being recognized for what he discovered 25 years ago: a new life form whose existence challenges our understanding of evolution and the origins of life.

### 28 THE STORM OVER *THE BLACK BOOK*

*by Andrzej Paczkowski*

A scholarly effort to tally the human cost of communism around the world has stirred enormous controversy. One of its authors explains why.

### 35 WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

*by Mark Kingwell*

Human beings can't help but ask the big philosophical questions, even if they know that the answers will come up short.

## DEPARTMENTS

---

2	EDITOR'S COMMENT	110	CURRENT BOOKS
3	CORRESPONDENCE		<i>Max Byrd</i> on Robert E. Lee
7	FINDINGS		<i>David J. Garrow</i> on 1960s activists
	Classrooms for Sale		<i>James Morris</i> on American popular song
	The Downside to the Upside		
	Fading Fingerprints		
81	THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER		<i>Reviews by Amy Bloom, Michael Malone, Michael Novak, Charles Seife, and Martin Walker</i>
	The Morally Perplexed Academy		
	Is Nanotech Getting Real?		
107	RESEARCH REPORTS	128	FROM THE CENTER

COVER: Illustration by Edel Rodriguez. Design by David Herbick.

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

# Editor's Comment

**T**oday's debate about the U.S. role in the world is as fateful as the ones that occurred at the end of the two world wars. After World War I, the United States chose isolation; after the next war, it chose the Marshall Plan and a commitment to contain communism around the world. Now, without the Cold War to structure global relations, there are new choices. Our cover "cluster" of essays is designed to illuminate the alternatives by giving a sense of some of the realities overseas.

Four main schools of thought have emerged in the American debate—although there are different currents within each and significant points of overlap among the four:

"Realists," including many in the Bush administration, call for the preservation of U.S. leadership through a traditional balance-of-power strategy by which the United States maintains links with all the world's major powers in order to play a central "balancing" role.

"Multilateralists" argue that America's interests are best served by channeling its energies into multilateral institutions, which constrain America's power but advance its goals.

"Universalists" believe that the United States, as the wellspring of universal democratic rights, should pursue the global triumph of liberal democratic values.

"Neo-isolationists" or "nationalists" are wary of U.S. involvements overseas and critical of globalization and free trade.

As always, our essays are offered in the spirit of furthering public debate rather than advancing any particular point of view. But the time for that debate is now. This moment of maximum American power grows out of Japan's long economic stagnation, Europe's slow consolidation, and China's halting transformation. It likely will not last.

---

EDITOR: Steven Lagerfeld  
DEPUTY EDITOR: James M. Morris  
MANAGING EDITOR: James H. Carman  
SENIOR EDITOR: Robert K. Landers  
LITERARY EDITOR: Stephen Bates  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Justine A. Kwiatkowski  
EDITORS AT LARGE: Ann Hulbert, Jay Tolson  
COPY EDITOR: Vincent Ercolano  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Martha Bayles,  
Linda Colley, Denis Donoghue, Max Holland,  
Stephen Miller, Jeffery Paine, Walter Reich,  
Alan Ryan, Edward Tenner, Charles Townshend,  
Alan Wolfe, Bertram Wyatt-Brown  
RESEARCHER: Robert J. Yule  
LIBRARIAN: Zdeněk V. David  
EDITORIAL ADVISERS: K. Anthony Appiah,  
Robert Darnton, Nathan Glazer, Harry Harding,  
Robert Hathaway, Elizabeth Johns,  
Michael Lacey, Jackson Lears,  
Seymour Martin Lipset, Robert Litwak,  
Wilfred M. McClay, Richard Rorty,  
Blair Ruble, Martin Sletzinger, S. Frederick  
Starr, Joseph Tulchin, Martin Walker  
FOUNDING EDITOR: Peter Braestrup (1929–1997)  
PUBLISHER: Kathy Read  
BUSINESS MANAGER: Suzanne Napper  
CIRCULATION: Cary Zel, ProCirc, Miami, Fla.

THE WILSON QUARTERLY (ISSN-0363-3276) is published in January (Winter), April (Spring), July (Summer), and October (Autumn) by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004-3027. Complete article index now available online at <http://wwics.si.edu/WQ/WEBIND.HTM>. Subscriptions: one year, \$24; two years, \$43. Air mail outside U.S.: one year, \$39; two years, \$73. Single copies mailed upon request: \$7; outside U.S. and possessions, \$8; selected back issues: \$7, including postage and handling; outside U.S., \$8. Periodical postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. All unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Members: Send changes of address and all subscription correspondence with *Wilson Quarterly* mailing label to Subscriber Service, *The Wilson Quarterly*, P.O. Box 420406, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0406. (Subscriber hot line: 1-800-829-5108.) Postmaster: Send all address changes to *The Wilson Quarterly*, P.O. Box 420406, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0406. Microfilm copies are available from Bell & Howell Information and Learning, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. U.S. newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 2020 Superior Street, Sandusky, Ohio 44870 (for information, call 1-800-221-3148). ADVERTISING: Kathy Read, TEL.: (202) 691-4018, FAX: (202) 691-4036. PUBLISHER/MAIL ORDER: Kalish, Quigley & Rosen, TEL.: (212) 399-9500, FAX: (212) 265-0986.

# Correspondence

Letters may be mailed to One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004-3027, or sent via facsimile, to (202) 691-4036, or e-mail, to wq@wwic.si.edu.

The writer's telephone number and postal address should be included. For reasons of space, letters are usually edited for publication. Some letters are received in response to the editors' requests for comment.

---

## *The Gulf War's Legacy*

Andrew J. Bacevich argues that the Persian Gulf War, like the Spanish-American War, was a turning point in U.S. history ["A Less than Splendid Little War," *WQ*, Winter '01]. He claims that the conflict transformed American views about the nature of war (it can be bloodless), the determinants of success (a huge military budget), and the expectations of when and how U.S. forces should intervene (frequently, and in a limited fashion).

But surely this overstates the case. First, the Gulf War did not lead to blind interventionism under either the Bush or the Clinton administration. During its last days in office, the Bush administration felt it had to choose between intervention in Somalia and intervention in Bosnia. As one National Security Council member put it, foreign-policy officials saw pictures every day of atrocities coming from two different places, but only had the resources to do something in one of them. They chose not to act in Bosnia and to act in an extremely circumspect way in Somalia. The Clinton administration decided against intervention in Rwanda, although it used military force on several occasions in Bosnia and, eventually, in Kosovo.

Second, it is more likely that changed circumstances, not the legacy of the last great tank battle of the 20th century, are what policymakers have in mind when they confront new crises. The world has clearly changed since 1990, and with change have come new challenges and conundrums. Wars motivated by ethnic and religious hatred are more common and more vicious than they used to be. They challenge our moral and ethical creeds. Precisely because we are not at risk of imminent destruction, Americans ask, "What can be done with the means available to us, and for little cost?"

This is not far different from how Dean Acheson framed the question confronting the United States when North Korea invaded the South in 1950. Given our ability to respond, he said, inaction would have been a terrible

blow to American credibility. That Acheson and the rest of the government misestimated the challenge, and that neither the Bush administration nor the Clinton administration completely understood the challenges in Somalia or Bosnia when it committed the United States are beside the point. The issue is how the challenges looked at the time. In the post-Cold War world, Americans and others still look to see what can be done within the limits of reason and at a relatively low cost. Are Americans under the illusion that war can be bloodless? If they are, there should be little debate about sending troops to places like Rwanda, Bosnia, or Kosovo. Invocations of Vietnam have arisen in all these cases. This cannot mean both that Americans are fearful of casualties and that they think war can be bloodless.

Americans desire that little American blood should be shed in nonvital battles. This may be selfish, but it is not stupid or irrational. If Bacevich means to say that this kind of limited intervention often cannot accomplish lasting settlements, he is correct. There is a great deal that relatively bloodless battles *can* accomplish, however. Air strikes have kept Saddam Hussein at bay, brought the Serbs to the negotiating table, and halted (although quite late) ethnic cleansing in southeastern Europe. Bloodless, if overprotected, military operations kept tens of thousands of Somalis from starving to death and have prevented an untold number of deaths in Bosnia.

Efforts should be made to reform such military operations. America should not always face a choice between major war, unconditional victory, and rebuilding a country on the one hand, and inaction on the other.

*John Garofano*

*Senior Fellow, International Security Program*

*John F. Kennedy School of Government*

*Cambridge, Mass.*

While the two essays in "The Gulf War's Legacy of Illusions" [*WQ*, Winter '01] are complete as they stand, one might suggest



Woodrow Wilson  
International  
Center  
for Scholars

Lee H. Hamilton, *Director*

**Board of Trustees**

Joseph A. Cari, Jr., *Chair*

Steven Alan Bennett, *Vice Chair*

**EX OFFICIO MEMBERS:** James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress, John W. Carlin, Archivist of the United States, William R. Ferris, Chair, National Endowment for the Humanities, Roderick R. Paige, Secretary of Education, Colin L. Powell, Secretary of State, Lawrence M. Small, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution, Tommy G. Thomson, Secretary of Health and Human Services.

**PRIVATE CITIZEN MEMBERS:** Carol Cartwright, John H. Foster, Jean L. Hennessey, Daniel L. Lamaute, Doris O. Matsui, Thomas R. Reedy, Nancy M. Zirkin.

**The Wilson Council**

B. B. Andersen, Cyrus A. Ansary, Charles F. Barber, Lawrence E. Bathgate II, Joseph C. Bell, Thomas J. Buckholtz, Conrad Cafritz, Nicola L. Caiola, Raoul L. Carroll, Scott Carter, Albert V. Casey, Peter B. Clark, William T. Coleman, Jr., Michael D. DiGiacomo, Donald G. Drapkin, F. Samuel Eberts III, I. Steven Edelson, J. David Eller, Sim Farar, Susan R. Farber, Barbara Hackman Franklin, Morton Fungler, Chris G. Gardiner, Eric Garfinkel, Bruce S. Gelb, Jerry P. Genova, Alma Gildenhorn, Joseph B. Gildenhorn, David F. Girard-diCarlo, Michael B. Goldberg, William E. Grayson, Raymond A. Guenter, Verna R. Harrah, Carla A. Hills, Eric Hotung, Frances Humphrey Howard, John L. Howard, Darrell E. Issa, Jerry Jasinoski, Brenda LaGrange Johnson, Dennis D. Jorgensen, Shelly Kamins, Anastasia D. Kelly, Christopher J. Kennan, Michael V. Kostiw, Steven Kotler, William H. Kremer, Harold O. Levy, David Link, David S. Mandel, John P. Manning, Edwin S. Marks, Robert McCarthy, C. Peter McColough, Stephen G. McConahey, James D. McDonald, J. Kenneth Menges, Jr., Philip Merrill, Jeremiah L. Murphy, Martha T. Muse, Della M. Newman, Gerald L. Parsky, Michael J. Polenske, Donald Robert Quartel, Jr., J. Steven Rhodes, John L. Richardson, Margaret Milner Richardson, Edwin Robbins, Philip E. Rollhaus, Jr., Otto Ruesch, B. Francis Saul, III, J. Michael Shepherd, George P. Shultz, Raja W. Sidawi, Deborah Siebert, Thomas L. Siebert, Ron Silver, William A. Slaughter, Timothy E. Stapleford, Mark C. Treanor, Christine M. Wamke, Pete Wilson, Deborah Wince-Smith, Herbert S. Winokur, Jr., Joseph Zappala.

THE WILSON CENTER is the nation's living memorial to Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States from 1913 to 1921. It is located at One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004-3027. Created by law in 1968, the Center is Washington's only independent, wide-ranging institute for advanced study where vital cultural issues and their deep historical background are explored through research and dialogue. Visit the Center on the World Wide Web at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org>.

adding a fifth element to Andrew Bacevich's penetrating analysis. That element is the impact of the war upon the image of America in the world's eyes. Throughout most of its history, the United States was viewed as a reluctant giant: slow to react militarily until persuaded that it had little alternative. There were, to be sure, occasional imperialistic adventures, such as the 19th-century wars against Mexico and then Spain. But these were exceptions; the slow immersion into the European wars of the 20th century, including the Cold War, was the rule. America "goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy," in John Quincy Adams's ringing phrase. "She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own."

Such a claim would be widely challenged, and even scoffed at, since the end of the Gulf War a decade ago. The reasons do not derive entirely from the nature of that conflict. They also rest powerfully upon the fact that the war against Iraq virtually coincided with the collapse of the Soviet empire. Quite suddenly, the United States became not only the most powerful nation in the world, but the only hyperpowerful one. A palpable sense of triumphalism seized the governing classes and the national security bureaucracy. The Gulf War was the first major military initiative of the United States in the post-Cold War world. It could not have happened earlier, when the Soviet Union was able to offer protection to its client states. The fate of Kuwait might have been quite different had Saddam Hussein moved several years earlier.

The sheer weight of American military power, balanced by that of no serious rival, has unsurprisingly provoked resentment, and not only among potential challengers. Cold War allies, less dependent on American protection, complain nervously about "hegemony." By this they mean not just military and economic dominance but a certain self-righteousness of the sort exemplified in Madeleine Albright's extolling of the "indispensable nation," with motives unsullied by narrow self-interest. There has always been a strain of crusading messianism in American foreign policy. At times it has turned inward into a disillusioned isolationism, and at other times into campaigns to remake the world in its

own image. The Gulf War changed not only America's perception of itself but the way that others perceive America. The result has been to inspire, even among traditional dependents, an increasing self-assertion and resistance to a world order based on American blueprints.

Ronald Steel  
Professor of International Relations  
University of Southern California  
Los Angeles, Calif.

---

### *Russia's Meltdown*

Murray Feshbach's critical assessment of Russia's demographic problems ["Russia's Population Meltdown," *WQ*, Winter '01] is timely, and even more alarming when put in a larger context.

The years 2001 and 2002 may provide Russia with its only window of opportunity to begin desperately needed structural reforms. Changes of this magnitude require a period of positive economic performance, not only to create a friendly political environment but to supply funding for reform measures. The time is short. "Most analysts," reports the Russian news summary *Politruk*, "are predicting a general crisis in 2003."

In that year, Moscow's payments on Russia's external debt will peak, adding greatly to the strain of demographic and other ills. Russian leaders predict that making the required payments will require a choice between eliminating reform-friendly additions to the federal budget and defaulting on the debt. The debt burden is already exacting a heavy price. The crumbling of the components of Russia's infrastructure, such as transport and communications, may spur a rash of critical shortfalls and bottlenecks. The crippling shortage of electric power that now afflicts the Primorskii Krai of Siberia may, alas, be a harbinger of many more regional power disasters.

As Feshbach warns, Russia's mounting demographic and health problems—its declining population, rising incidence of infectious diseases, and environmental degradation—pose a unique challenge to the nation's survival. Not only do they deprive Russia of the full energies of its people, but they strain its limited resources. Russia's grossly inadequate hospitals and clinics are already

**transaction**

**Books By Mark J. Osiel**

**Obeying Orders**

*Atrocity, Military Discipline, and the Law of War*

"...Osiel transcends the genre of legal analysis entirely to ground his ethical appeal in the very nature and basis of the military profession itself."

-Martin Cook, *Naval Law Review*


0-7658-0798-X 2001 (paper) 407 pp. \$29.95/E22.95

**Mass Atrocity,  
Collective Memory, and the Law**

"This is a timely and persuasive work based on a great range of recent cases."

-Charles S. Maier, *Harvard University*

0-7658-0663-0 2001 (paper) 317 pp. \$24.95/E18.95



Visit our web site for  
online specials  
[www.transactionpub.com](http://www.transactionpub.com)

---

**Transaction Publishers**  
Rutgers—The State University of New Jersey,  
Department A00JD  
35 Berrue Circle, Piscataway, New Jersey 08854  
Call Toll Free in U.S. 1-888-999-6778

**Transaction Publishers (UK) Ltd.**  
C/o EDS, 3 Henrietta Street  
Covent Garden, London WC2E 8LU  
Tel: +44 (0)171 240 0856 or Fax: +44 (0)171 379 0609

overwhelmed. This raises yet another specter: the possibility of health crises that require such vast outlays that reform measures are crowded out.

John P. Hardt  
Senior Specialist  
Post-Soviet Economics  
Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.

---

### *Europe's Way*

Does Europe have an existential crisis, as Martin Walker suggests ["Europe's Existential Crisis," *WQ*, Winter '01], or does it simply have an existentialist existence? Jean Paul Sartre used to say that "Existentialism is a humanism." After reading Walker's article, I am tempted to say that "Europeanism is a humanism." European integration is an existentialist phenomenon. It is the most exciting thing that could happen to Europeans. And it should be welcomed by the United States. Is it not better for Europeans to sound their hearts and minds, cultivate their values, and

## Correspondence

respect their diversity, than to fight wars, burn women and children, and call upon America for help every once in a while? The new Europe is shedding its old skin and growing a new one. Such things do not happen without pain, but America should be ready to deal with a new animal.

Is it true, as Walker says, that “Europe’s progress toward becoming ‘whole and free’ has been disappointing”? I don’t think so, when you consider that, in the past 10 years, Europe has managed to establish a single (however imperfect) market, transform its institutions, introduce a single currency, start the negotiations for the European Union’s enlargement to include up to 27 countries, and create the foundation of a new European Defense Identity. What else would you like?

Of course, nothing is perfect. The single market has shortcomings, the institutions are complex, the euro goes down and up, enlargement proceeds relatively slowly, and it will take a long time before the European defense pillar of NATO is as strong as some would like. A lot remains to be done.

But it is wrong to criticize Europe for not doing enough for Central Europe when its contribution is the equivalent of a new Marshall Plan. It is wrong to make fun of the multiplicity of institutions and fail to say that it is now one single European Central Bank that is responsible—like it or not—for managing the currency of a eurozone that encompasses 12 countries and is growing. True, several countries manipulated some of their pension debt accounting to meet the conditions necessary to be part of the euro system, but it is more important to note the incredible performance by countries—including Italy and Greece—that managed to bring their budgets, their debts, and their whole financial systems into compliance with rigorous criteria, even if some did so “creatively.” And while it is true that a number of Europeans are not necessarily comfortable with some of the grandiose assignments that the United States is urging them to fulfill, the reason is that they are not willing to pay anonymously for initiatives that others have designed and will reap the credit for.

But in many cases our American and British friends are as ambiguous in their attitude toward the EU as the European institutions seem to be in their evolution. Much of the criticism springs

less from a desire to see the EU become a more integrated entity than from the fear that it just might succeed.

*Jacqueline Grapin  
President, The European Institute  
Washington, D.C.*

Casual observers might assume that acrimonious disputes with America are the preoccupation of most Europeans. Fights over national missile defense, genetically modified foods, and the banana trade are among the latest in a seemingly endless list of controversies. The deepening of the EU, creation of the euro, and planning for a rapid reaction force, along with the expectation of up to 13 new EU member states, have been heralded as indicators that Europe might soon surpass the United States, and that traditional imperatives of national identity and accustomed modes of thinking about foreign policy are becoming things of the past. But Martin Walker’s essay brings a reminder that Europe’s real crisis is internal and that national priorities and outlooks still exert a tenacious hold.

To cite just one example, the proposed 60,000-strong all-European military contingent is unlikely to provide an alternative to NATO anytime soon. Domestic political pressures within Europe run almost entirely in the direction of decreasing rather than increasing defense budgets, and political differences, especially between France and Britain, remain deep. In reality, the EU’s aggregate totals of troops and defense spending are almost irrelevant, since these are divided among 15 member states and are not the coherent, effective instruments of one federated state.

Even during the Cold War, the relationship between Europe and America was marked by frequent quarrels; the current era is no exception to that pattern. The EU may well widen and deepen in the coming years, but its intrinsic limits and its essential need to retain close ties with the United States as a source of stability and as insurance against unforeseen security threats remain very real. In short, the continuing prospect is for trouble but no divorce in the Atlantic relationship.

*Robert J. Lieber  
Professor of Government and Foreign Service  
Georgetown University  
Washington, D.C.*



# Findings

---

## Classrooms for Sale

Corporations direct \$12 billion of marketing cash at American children each year, and more and more of that money is going directly into classrooms, where the captive audience numbers some 53 million students.

For decades, businesses have promoted themselves through “sponsored educational materials” (SEMs)—unsolicited “curricular supplements.” Consumers Union reported in 1995 that almost 80 percent of SEMs contained biased or incomplete information. The most infamous SEM is probably Procter & Gamble’s *Decision: Earth*, from the early 1990s, which proclaimed that clear-cut logging is good for the environment because “it mimics nature’s way of getting rid of trees.”

Some companies don’t bother with educational trappings. Drink distributors such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi, and Dr. Pepper have offered millions of dollars to schools that agree to sell their products exclusively. In 1998, Colorado Springs School District 11 became one of the first to take the bait. It granted “pouring rights” to Coca-Cola in exchange for \$8.4 million over 10 years. But the district had to consume 70,000 cases of Coke products to keep its end of the deal, and students just weren’t downing drinks in that volume. According to the *New York Times*, alarmed district administrator John Bushey asked school officials to place soda-vending machines in more conspicuous locations. He instructed principals to give students virtually unlimited access to the machines and told teachers to let the students drink up during class.

Critics such as the Center for Commercial-Free Public Education (CCFPE) call pouring rights a perversion of education. They also point out that pouring rights promote poor nutrition at a time when childhood obesity is on the rise in America. And the cash rewards are small: the \$8.4 million that Colorado Springs

School District 11 expects to reap over 10 years represents only 0.5 percent of its budget over that period. Nonetheless, in the past three years, some 240 school districts have granted pouring rights, and hundreds more, according to CCFPE, are preparing to do so. At least one soft-drink company, however, has begun to backpedal. Coca-Cola recently announced that it would discourage its bottlers from seeking such deals.

Some brands have achieved such status that they don’t have to buy their way into the classroom. In 1994, Barbara Barbieri McGrath, a nursery school teacher in Massachusetts, landed a deal with a small company to publish *The M&M Brand Counting Book*, a poem that uses the chocolate morsels to teach children how to count. It was a runaway success. She has gone on to produce eight M&M editions, five Cheerios editions, and at least seven other books of the same edible bent. Big publishing houses soon cooked up snack-food children’s books of their own. Some have sold more than a million copies.

The lesson has not been lost on textbook publishers. The newest edition of *Mathematics: Applications and Connection*—used by students in 16 states—makes math “relevant” by using branded goods in the math problems and in full-color photos. The textbook’s publisher, McGraw-Hill, says that it received no payment for including the brand names. Still, critics ask, why promote brand-consciousness among children at all?

Philip Morris may deserve the prize for stealth. The company has distributed 28 million textbook covers to 43,000 schools as part of a court-ordered anti-smoking educational campaign. The problem? The snowboarder on one cover looks as if he’s riding a match. And are those billowing clouds behind him subliminal clouds of smoke? Watchdog groups have raised a ruckus, and even *Advertising Age*, an industry magazine, has noticed that some images look “alarmingly like a colorful pack of cigarettes.”

---

## The Downside to the Upside

With both launch dates for the new millennium now behind us, we can safely thumb our noses at the doomsayers, whose visions of a Y2K apocalypse went



Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (1498), by Albrecht Dürer

unfulfilled. But though our lives go on much as before, those false prophets of cataclysm are having a rough time of it. Their authority is suffering the consequences of the no-show Armageddon.

What happens when the Earth doesn't explode on schedule? That depends, says Robert Royalty, assistant professor of religion at Wabash College. In Uganda, the leader of a cult called the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments feared mass defection after a failed prediction, and killed more than 900 of his followers last year rather than lose them. But that, Royalty notes, was a bit extreme. Most cults simply disappear, their belief systems too shaky to withstand the loss of a central tenet—apocalypse.

The cults that survive have one thing in common, explains Royalty: “a rich religious ideology.” To become an established religion or faith, a cult must “broaden,” and transfer power from a charismatic leader to a sturdy body of institutionalized doctrine. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church is a classic example. The church is now a mainstream religious group with a worldwide membership of some 9.7 million, but it began as an apocalyptic sect. The founder, William Miller, predicted the second coming of Christ—and a devastating fire—on October 22, 1844. When the time came and nothing happened, thousands of “Millerites” abandoned the movement. But others devised a biblical explanation for the non-event and went on to fashion the theological doctrine that has sustained them.

Such resilience is rare. Marilyn Agee, a biblical soothsayer with a web page, has successively predicted that the end of the world would occur on no fewer than four different dates—in 1998, 1999, and 2000, and on the still-untested

day of May 28, 2001. A prediction: the end of her e-site will come before the End of Days.

---

## Good Sports

Had Dante ever been in a high-school gym class, he would not have had to imagine the rest of hell. But the days of PE as “physical embarrassment” in American schools may be numbered. The *Harvard Education Letter* (Nov.–Dec. 2000) reports that schools around the country are adopting new physical education curricula to persuade kids that exercise can be fun, and, more important, that it should be a permanent and satisfying part of life. The new PE benches no one—and sends no one wriggling up a rope.

SPARK (Sports, Play, and Active Recreation for Kids), for example, is a K-6 program that uses small teams to build both athletic and social skills and teach kids to accept personal differences. A SPARK softball team has only five players, and when someone gets a hit, the fielders have to toss the ball to every player before the batter reaches home. CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Child Health) includes a substantial classroom component on nutrition and smoking prevention. EPEC (Exemplary Physical Education Curriculum) teaches students to set up a personal exercise program and to monitor their own progress. As with SPARK, there's an emphasis on social skills, including compassion, flexibility, and responsibility. For homework kids may teach a family member to skip.

If Captain Bligh had a hand in devising the PE classes of yesteryear, the spirit of Oprah smiles on the changes.

---

## Their Way

Baby boomers are not going any more self-effacingly into that good night than they've gone through their allotted portion of sunshine. That's the word from Stephen Protero, a professor of religion at Boston University, who in *Purified by Fire* (2001) reports that the boomers, accustomed to getting their way, now want more options regarding death. They can't forgo death altogether—at least, not yet—but they can make departure a more stylish and idiosyncratic occasion than it used to be. So they're ordering tombstones shaped like beer mugs and Harley-Davidsons, and the traditional generic inscriptions (“Sweet Rest in Heaven,” “Not Dead but Sleeping,” “Loving Husband, Devoted Son,” and such) are giving way to custom-tailored epitaphs (“World’s Greatest Truckdriver,” “High-Jumping in Heaven,” and, for a diamond cutter’s wife, “She Was a Gem”). Anything goes with cremains as well. There’s already a patent on the “Personalized Face Cremation Urn.”

“In Orlando, Florida,” writes Protero, “the ashes of a fireworks expert were blasted along with Roman candles into the night sky. The cremated remains of a Marvel Comics editor were mixed with ink and made into a comic book. Villa Delirium Delftworks made cre-

mains into commemorative plates, and another firm (Eternal Reefs, Inc.) offered to turn ashes into ‘ecologically sound’ coral reefs.” The generation that turned recycling into an expensive art form and honed its skills on lesser materials has found the debris of its dreams.

---

## Fading Fingerprints

“No two fingerprints are alike.” That claim has enjoyed the unquestioning faith of the public for almost a century. It may be true, but it’s not the whole story, argues Simon Cole, whose *Suspect Identities: The History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification* has just been published by Harvard University Press. Since the early days of fingerprinting, practitioners have concealed gaps in the logic of the fingerprint identification process. As more and more cases of incompetence by the experts come to light, however, a pillar of forensics may be on the verge of crumbling.

Among the difficulties smoothed over by examiners is the difference between the whole fingerprints taken by police officers under optimal conditions and the “latent” fingerprints—smudged, partial, or otherwise imperfect—likely to be found at crime scenes. The former are easily read and matched, but the identifications made in forensic investigations use fingerprint fragments. That makes it a much dicier business. Moreover, there are no standard criteria for matching prints.

In 1995, the International Association of Identification (the main professional organization of fingerprint examiners) hired the Collaborative Testing Service to conduct the first independent proficiency tests of American police fingerprint laboratories. The results, Cole says, were “astonishing.” Only 44 percent of the 156 examiners were able to match correctly all the fingerprints they were shown. Twenty-two percent reported false positives: they declared prints identical that were not. Mistakes of that kind can lead (and probably have led) to the conviction of innocent people. After nearly a century of examining the crimes of others, fingerprint examiners bear a little scrutiny themselves.

# The Demon in Jim Garrison

What drove the New Orleans district attorney's destructive crusade to prove that CIA conspirators killed President John F. Kennedy? New evidence suggests that Garrison was inspired by a piece of KGB disinformation.

by Max Holland

On March 1, 1967, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison arrested a prominent local businessman named Clay Shaw and charged him with masterminding the crime of the century: the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy. It was a bizarre and groundless accusation by a supremely ambitious prosecutor, but Shaw was not its only victim. This terrible miscarriage of justice was to have immense, if largely unappreciated, consequences for the political culture of the United States.

Of all the legacies of the 1960s, none has been more unambiguously negative than the American public's corrosive cynicism toward the federal government. Although that attitude is commonly traced to the disillusioning experiences of Vietnam and Watergate, its genesis lies in the aftermath of JFK's assassination. Well before antiwar protests were common, lingering dissatisfaction with the official verdict that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone broadened into a widespread conviction that the federal government was incompetent or suppressing the truth or, in the worst case, covering up its own complicity in the assassination. Today, national polls consistently show that a vast majority of Americans (upward of 75 percent) do not accept that Oswald alone killed President Kennedy. Many also believe that a co-conspirator lurked in Washington, with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) always the prime suspect.

No individual was more responsible for fomenting these beliefs than Shaw's nemesis, Jim Garrison. There were other critics of the Warren Commission's official report on the assassination, but none had the authority of a duly elected law enforcement official; none could match the flamboyant Garrison's skill in casting himself as the archetypal lone hero battling for the truth; and none was more adept at manipulating the zeitgeist of the 1960s. His audacity and lack of scruple were breathtaking, though camouflaged by lean good looks that made Garrison appear like a prosecutor ordered up by central casting. Not since Senator Joseph McCarthy had America seen such a cunning demagogue.

Initially, Garrison explained that, in indicting Shaw, he was only assuming an unsought, even unwanted, burden. The federal government's bungling of the case left an honest prosecutor no other choice, he asserted. Soon that rationale was replaced by a far darker fable. Within two months of Shaw's arrest, Garrison began articulating a truly radical critique that challenged not only the veracity of the Warren Report but the federal government's very legitimacy. Ultimately, he would claim that the people's elected leader had been removed in a CIA-led mutiny, and that the plotters had been allowed to walk away unscathed. As he wrote in his 1988 memoir, *On the Trail of the Assassins*, "What happened at Dealey Plaza in Dallas on



*District attorney Jim Garrison looked the part. Here, in December 1968, he announces Shaw's trial date.*

November 22, 1963, was a coup d'état. I believe that it was instigated and planned long in advance by fanatical anticommunists in the United States intelligence community."

The fact that a New Orleans jury delivered a resounding verdict of "not guilty" after Shaw's 1969 trial barely hindered Garrison's ability to market this myth of CIA complicity. He would argue that the "validity" of his investigation ought not to be judged on its technical, legal results. And one has to admit that, in the court of public opinion at least, Garrison (who died in 1992) by and large succeeded, albeit with Hollywood's help.

Until recently, it was impossible to revisit this episode as a historian would, by examining primary documents. Garrison's records were in the possession of his descendants and his successors in office; Shaw's papers were in the hands of his attorneys and friends; the CIA's records were secured in agency vaults. But all that began to change after Oliver Stone's controversial 1991 film, *JFK*, which breathed new life into Garrison's decades-old charges. As the

end of the Cold War eased concerns about secrecy, Congress in 1992 passed the far-reaching JFK Assassination Records Collection Act. It not only freed highly classified documents from government bureaucracies but authorized the gathering of primary materials from nongovernmental sources.

What emerges from these papers, and from other, unexpected quarters, is an altogether new view of the Garrison story. The district attorney who legitimated the notion of CIA complicity emerges as an all-too-willing accomplice to a falsehood. Garrison allowed himself to be taken in by a lie, a lie that may well have been part and parcel of the Soviet KGB's relentless propagation of disinformation during the Cold War.

To begin unraveling the complicated tale, one has to go back to February 17, 1967, when the *New Orleans States-Item* broke the sensational story that Garrison had opened a new investigation into the Kennedy assassination. A media firestorm erupted, with New Orleans at its center.

Stunning as this story was, it had to compete for attention with another dramatic revelation. Earlier that same week, *Ramparts*, a radical, San Francisco-based magazine, revealed that the National Student Association, the oldest and largest college student organization in the country, had knowingly accepted cash subsidies from the CIA since 1952. A rash of stories quickly followed as elite news outlets raced to outdo the upstart *Ramparts* by exposing a variety of covert CIA subsidies to private organizations in the United States and abroad. The agency seemed to have its tentacles inside every sector of American society: student and teacher groups, labor unions, foundations, legal and business organizations, even universities. The disclosures lent substance to the criticism that the CIA was nothing less than an invisible government.

Amid the furor over the *Ramparts* scoop, Garrison ostentatiously announced the first result of his investigation: the apprehension of Clay Shaw, the alleged “evil genius” behind the assassination. Shaw, the former head of New Orleans’s International Trade Mart, was a socially prominent retired businessman who also dabbled as a playwright (Tennessee Williams was a friend) and had won local renown as an advocate of restoring the city’s French Quarter.

It would take a book to explain how Shaw came to be charged (and Patricia Lambert’s 1999 work, *False Witness*, is a very good account). Suffice it to say that Garrison did not arrest Shaw because he suspected a link to the CIA. Indeed, Garrison’s theory of the crime at this stage was that Shaw, a homosexual, had been involved because of his sexual orientation. “It was a homosexual thrill-killing,” Garrison explained to a reporter shortly after Shaw’s arrest. John Kennedy, averred the district attorney, had been assassinated because he was everything the conspirators were not: “a successful, handsome, popular, wealthy, virile man.”

In Western Europe, both Shaw’s arrest and the exposé of the CIA made for riveting headlines, especially in the left-wing, anti-American newspapers subsidized directly or indirectly by

the national communist parties. One of them was a Rome daily called *Paese Sera*. On March 4, 1967, three days after Shaw’s arrest, *Paese Sera* managed to weave both stories together in one arresting falsehood. Shaw, *Paese Sera* reported, had been involved in mysterious, “pseudo-commercial” activities in Rome during the early 1960s while serving on the board of a defunct company called the Centro Mondiale Commerciale (CMC). The CMC, founded as the first steps were being taken toward a European common market, had been dedicated to making Rome a hub of West European commerce. But trade promotion was a façade, *Paese Sera* claimed. The CMC had been “a creature of the CIA . . . set up as a cover for the transfer to Italy of CIA-FBI funds for illegal political-espionage activities.”

*Paese Sera*’s lie was swathed in enough truth to make the “exposé” seem plausible in the context of the time, or at least not completely absurd. The disclosures about covert CIA subsidies had shown that anticommunist elements in Italy were among the largest beneficiaries of the agency’s overseas largess, and other aspects of *Paese Sera*’s scoop were verifiable: The CMC had existed in Rome before going out of business in late 1962, and Shaw had joined its board of directors in 1958. Consequently, *Paese Sera*’s allegation of a link between Shaw and the CIA spread rapidly, parroted by like-minded media in Western Europe and the controlled press in the Soviet bloc. Significantly, more sober-minded newspapers in Italy treated the story quite differently because the Italian ministries of defense, foreign affairs, and foreign trade all vigorously denied the core allegation that CMC was a CIA front. Rome’s mainstream newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, limited itself to a matter-of-fact report on Shaw’s Roman connection.

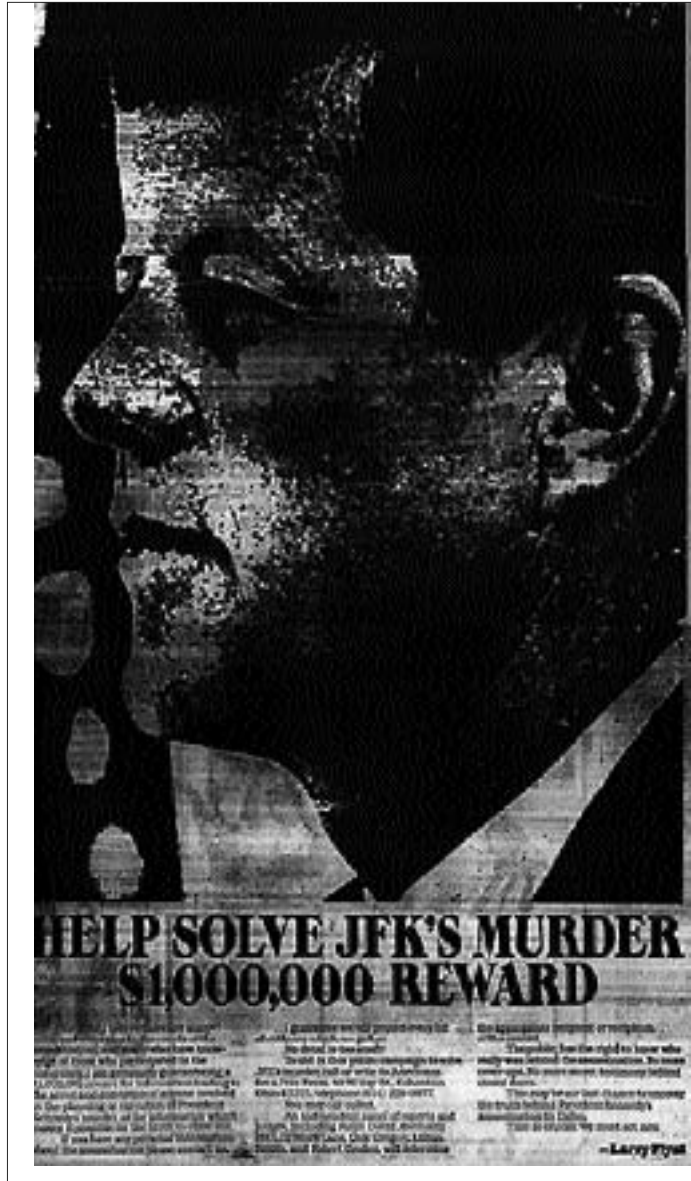
Thirty-four years after reliable Italian newspapers discounted the allegation, we have support for their position from official U.S. sources. In compliance with the JFK Assassination Records Collection Act, the CIA released highly classified records pertaining to the assassination and its aftermath. Included are dozens of agency documents generated in direct response to *Paese Sera*’s 1967 “scoop.”

>MAX HOLLAND, a former Wilson Center Fellow, is the author of *When the Machine Stopped* (1989). Currently a Research Fellow at the University of Virginia’s Miller Center of Public Affairs, he is completing a history of the Warren Commission. Copyright © 2001 by Max Holland.

These documents show that, when the allegations about Shaw's link to the CIA surfaced in communist party organs, including *Pravda*, they immediately grabbed the attention of the agency's top counterintelligence officers. These anxious officials promptly ran traces on the CMC to see what, if anything, agency files revealed about the trade organization and its corporate parent, a Swiss-based company called PERMINDEX (Permanent Industrial Exhibition). No links whatsoever to the CMC or its parent were found. Nor was there any evidence that Shaw had ever been asked by the CIA to exploit his CMC board membership for any clandestine purpose.

The allegation was a lie. But who concocted it and for what possible reason? The obvious explanation is that the scoop was a journalistic flight of fancy by mischievous *Paese Sera* reporters. In addition to its close identification with the Italian Left, *Paese Sera* was famous (or infamous) for its colorful exclusives, stories that often provoked sarcastic comments in other publications and protests from Italian officials. In American terms, *Paese Sera* was a heavily politicized version of the *National Enquirer*.

Yet there are ample grounds for suspecting that something more was involved than tabloid opportunism. In the 1960s, *Paese Sera* figured in a number of *dezinformatsiya* schemes instigated by the KGB, including one spectacularly successful effort that is a matter of public record.



By 1978, when this full-page ad appeared in the *New York Times*, skepticism toward the Warren Report was deeply ingrained in American opinion.

*Paese Sera*'s role as a conduit for disinformation was first exposed in June 1961, during a U.S. Senate hearing on "Communist forgeries." The sole witness was Richard Helms, then an assistant director of the CIA, and the first exhibit in his testimony concerned *Paese Sera*. The afternoon daily had been instrumental in a disinformation scheme alleging CIA involvement in an April coup attempt against French president Charles de Gaulle—though, in fact, President Kennedy had gone to extraordinary lengths to defend de Gaulle against the plotters. Helms summed up the episode, which almost

caused a breach in Franco-American relations, as an "excellent example of how the Communists use the false news story." And it had all started with *Paese Sera* and its then sister publication, *Il Paese*, observed Helms. The two Italian papers belonged "to a small group of journals published in the free world but used as outlets for disguised Soviet propaganda. . . . Instead of having this originate in Moscow, where everybody would pinpoint it, they planted the story first in Italy."

*Paese Sera's* 1967 scoop about Clay Shaw matched the earlier story in the speed and pattern of its dissemination. The KGB itself may not have concocted either story, according to several experts on disinformation. Ladislav Bittman, deputy chief of the KGB-tutored Czechoslovakian disinformation section until his 1968 defection to the West, observes that newspapers like *Paese Sera* often had one or more journalists on their payroll who were, in effect, agents of influence. Some were paid, and some were simply ideological sympathizers. Occasionally, a journalist/agent would be instructed to write specific articles, or receive KGB forgeries of classified U.S. or North Atlantic Treaty Organization documents. But many were schooled to develop independently "certain themes" of enduring interest to the KGB, such as stories about CIA malfeasance. Thus, an agent of influence inside *Paese Sera* who was "well acquainted with the Soviets' propagandistic interests" might act on his own, notes Bittman. Nonetheless, the story would still "qualify as a Soviet disinformation effort."

The odds in favor of a more direct KGB provenance rose sharply in the fall of 1999, when the so-called Mitrokhin archive became available in the West. Literally a treasure trove of information about Soviet "active measures," the archive consists of 25,000 pages of handwritten notes about highly sensitive Soviet documents, taken obsessively over a 12-year period by a former KGB archivist named Vasili Mitrokhin. He defected to Britain in 1992, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, along with his family and six cases of his painstakingly compiled notes. Mitrokhin arrived in London dead set on inflicting as much damage as possible on his hated former employer by exposing the KGB's subversive activities worldwide.

Mitrokhin's archive included notes about 250 IMPEDIAN reports, IMPEDIAN apparently being the code name for active measures instigated by the KGB's outpost in Rome. His note on report number 222, only one paragraph long, seems vague and not very interesting at first glance. Titled "Disinformation Operations of the KGB through *Paese Sera*," the note states in part, "In 1967, Department A of the First Chief Directorate conducted a series of disinformation operations. . . . One such emplacement in New York was through *Paese Sera*."

An exhaustive search of 11 nationally significant American periodicals and newspapers published in 1967 turns up only one significant reference to a story from *Paese Sera*. On March 18, the *National Guardian*, an influential left-wing weekly, published a front-page article about Shaw's arrest. It included information from Rome that had yet to appear in any other American publication, despite the extensive coverage of Garrison's doings in New Orleans: "The *Guardian's* Rome correspondent, Phyllis Rosner, quoting the Rome daily *Paesa Serra* [sic], reported that from 1961 till 1965 Shaw was on the board of directors of the Centro Mondiale Commerciale, which the paper said was engaged in obscure dealings in Rome. . . . *Paesa Serra* said it is believed that the CMC was set up by the CIA as a cover for channeling funds into Italy."

The *Guardian* billed itself as a "progressive newsweekly," proudly independent of American Communist Party orthodoxy. It identified with the burgeoning New Left during the 1960s, and was nowhere more influential than in the city where it was edited and published: New York.

Trying to determine with precision what happened inside *Paese Sera* in March 1967 and who was responsible, however, may be missing the point. Regardless of whether the hoax was intentional and malevolent, or simply a case of journalistic opportunism, the truly significant part of the saga is what transpired after this particular "revelation" reached the district attorney of Orleans Parish.

In his memoir, Garrison flatly denies learning about *Paese Sera's* scoop in 1967. "We had no inkling that Clay Shaw was much bigger and more powerful than his New Orleans persona indicated," writes Garrison. "It was not until much later, well after the [1969] Shaw trial when it could



have been of any use to us, that we discovered Shaw's extensive international role as an employee of the CIA."

**T**estimony from a variety of sources proves that this version of what happened could not possibly be true. The most indisputable evidence comes from a diary that has long been available to researchers. It was kept by Richard Billings, a senior editor at *Life* magazine who was one of Garrison's closest confidants during the initial phase of the investigation.

Billings's entry for March 16, 1967, 12 days after the publication of the first *Paese Sera* article, notes, "Garrison now interested in possible connections between Shaw and the CIA. . . . Article in March issue *Humanities* [*l'Humanité*, the organ of the French Communist Party] supposedly mentions Shaw's company [CIA] work in Italy." Six days later, according to Billings's diary, Garrison had at least one of the articles in hand. "Story about Shaw and CIA appears in *Humanite* [sic], probably March 8 . . . [Garrison] has copy date-lined Rome, March 7th, from *la presse Italien* [sic]," noted Billings on March 22. "It explains Shaw working in Rome in '58 to '60 period."

Verifying the impact on Garrison of the *Paese Sera* scoop is a simple matter of juxtaposing the district attorney's private and public statements with Billings's entries. Once one does so, a heretofore hidden truth emerges. Though Clay Shaw never deserved to be indicted in the first place, Garrison relentlessly pursued him because by late March 1967 he believed he had in his clutches an important covert operative of the CIA. Undoubtedly encouraged by conspiracy buffs who had flocked to New Orleans (none of whom had yet accused the CIA of being involved), Garrison now thought he was on the verge of exposing a scandal that would make the controversy over the CIA's secret funding of private groups in the United States and abroad look minuscule by comparison. It would also elevate Jim Garrison into a national hero. "I didn't know exactly how Shaw was involved," said Garrison years later, in an unguarded but revealing comment. "But with Shaw I grabbed a toehold on the conspiracy. I wasn't about to let go because of technicalities."

In May 1967, just as the first critical stories about his investigative methods had begun to appear in the national press, Garri-



*Clay Shaw, shown here in custody at the time of his arrest in 1967, endured a 34-day trial in 1969. The jury deliberated for only 54 minutes before acquitting him.*

son launched a barrage of fresh accusations that dominated national headlines for weeks. Though the facts were subject to daily revision, the theme was constant: The CIA was an unwitting accomplice to the assassination, because some of its agents and ex-agents had acted on their own—which the agency then tried to cover up. After the shock value of this allegation wore a bit thin, Garrison dropped the “unwitting” and alleged foreknowledge and complicity as well. It was a KGB dream come true. Here was an elected American official claiming that Washington knew who killed President Kennedy, but that the CIA called the tune in America. “The CIA has infinitely more power than the [Nazi] Gestapo and the NKVD [Soviet internal security police] of Russia combined,” Garrison told the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* in May 1967.

Louisianans have long been accustomed to a certain amount of theatricality in their politicians, and one Bourbon Street store catering to the tourist trade mocked Garrison by publishing a gag newspaper headlined: DA STOPS CIA IN USA TAKEOVER. Elsewhere in the United States, though, where district attorneys are taken more seriously, the cumulative impact of Garrison's allegations was dramatic. This was the moment in time when the Orleans Parish DA altered forever the terms of the assassination controversy.

A Louis Harris poll in May 1967 revealed that for the first time since 1963, a sizable majority of Americans (66 percent) believed that a conspiracy was behind the assassination. A few months earlier, before news of the Garrison probe broke, only 44 percent had expressed such a view. But the qualitative change, which Harris did not measure, was of even greater and more lasting significance. In the space of a few weeks, Garrison had legitimated the fable that the CIA was complicit in the assassination of President Kennedy—and that American democracy itself was an illusion.

One of the most astute observers of this transformation was none other than Clay Shaw. He discerned earlier and more clearly than most that Garrison had found a perfect foil. The average American was ambivalent about the super-secret agency, which was unlike anything that had ever existed in peacetime America, and because of its very

nature, the CIA could not respond forthrightly to public attacks. It was a made-to-order “whipping boy and chief villain,” as Shaw later put it.

Shaw finally had the chance to rebut his accuser in January 1969, in a trial that lasted 34 days. Despite pretrial boasts of testimony that “will rock the nation,” Garrison produced not a scintilla of evidence of CIA involvement in the assassination. Indeed, the district attorney never even mentioned the agency in court. Garrison may have been a demagogue, but he was no fool, and he certainly realized that Italian newspaper clippings, seconded by *Pravda*, were nothing more than inadmissible hearsay. The closest he came to articulating his theory was during the summation, when he exhorted the jurors to strike a blow against the government's “murder of the truth.”

**I**t took the jury just 54 minutes to render a unanimous verdict of not guilty. Never one to admit defeat, Garrison now adopted the position that the prosecution had failed only because a district attorney, no matter how dedicated, could not overcome a secret organization as powerful as the CIA. As Shaw's ordeal receded into history—he died in 1974, nearly destitute after the trial and a subsequent effort by Garrison to convict him of perjury—the *Paese Sera* articles took on the status of a sacred text, an inner secret shared by Garrison's shrinking band of true believers. Within this circle, *Garrison* was considered the martyr, victimized, ironically, by the vast but hidden power of the CIA and its “disinformation machinery.”

In 1979, the Garrison sect received an unexpected boost when Richard Helms, who had gone on to head the CIA from 1966 to 1973, gave a deposition in a court case. Under oath, Helms divulged a fact that the CIA had struggled mightily to keep secret during Shaw's two-year ordeal, fearing that it would be distorted by Garrison and misconstrued by the jury: Clay Shaw had had a relationship with the CIA, beginning in 1948, though it was utterly unlike the one attributed to him in *Paese Sera*. Like 150,000 other Americans during the darkest days of the Cold War, Shaw had volunteered information to the CIA that he routinely gathered during his frequent trips abroad, mostly to Latin America, during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The information was no more secret

than what could be gleaned from a close reading of the *Wall Street Journal* (Shaw's reports are among the CIA documents recently declassified), and the relationship ended in 1956.

Helms, in his deposition, accurately described Shaw's innocuous link with the CIA: At "one time, as a businessman, [Shaw] was one of the part-time contacts of the [CIA's] Domestic Contact Division." Still, the disclosure gave the hoax new life. Garrison seized upon Helms's deposition and claimed it represented "confirmation . . . that Clay Shaw had been an agent."

By the late 1980s, Garrison's pursuit of Shaw was widely regarded as a legal farce, yet despite his defeat in the courts, he had achieved a powerful conceptual triumph. A majority of Americans no longer believed the Warren Report, and CIA complicity of one kind or another was widely presumed. Revelations of agency misdeeds by the U.S. Senate's Church Committee during the mid-1970s had inadvertently made Garrison appear to be a prophet, though without much honor. When the former district attorney attempted to sell his memoir, it took him more than four years to find a publisher, though he promised to reveal, for the first time, the actual CIA hand in the assassination.

Garrison's 1988 memoir forged the penultimate link in a grotesque chain that had begun in New Orleans, stretched to Rome, and ended in Hollywood. More than 25 years after first appearing in *Paese Sera*, the lie about Shaw's activities in Rome became the basis for a pivotal scene in Oliver Stone's *JFK*. Without this encounter, there simply was no way to link Shaw with a vast conspiracy involving the highest levels of government.

The fictional scene (which occurs 88 minutes into the film) depicts a meeting in the district attorney's office between Garrison (played by Kevin Costner) and Shaw (played by Tommy Lee Jones):

*Garrison shows Shaw a newspaper clipping.*

**Garrison:** Mr. Shaw, this is [an] Italian newspaper article saying that you were a member of the board of Centro Mondiale Commerciale in Italy—that this company was a creature of the CIA for the transfer of funds in Italy for illegal

political-espionage activity. [The article] says that this company was expelled from Italy for those activities.

**Shaw:** I'm well aware of that asinine article. I'm thinking very seriously of suing that rag of a newspaper— . . .

**Garrison:** Mr. Shaw, [have] you ever been a contract agent for the Central Intelligence Agency?

*Shaw glares at him. Silence.*

To drive home the point, just before the credits roll, the film refers to Richard Helms's 1979 deposition. Instead of directly quoting Helms, or accurately characterizing Shaw as an unpaid, sporadic source whose last significant contact with the agency occurred in 1956, Stone fills a black screen with these words: "In 1979, Richard Helms, director of covert operations in 1963, admitted under oath that Clay Shaw had worked for the CIA."

**I**n the gross miscarriage of justice and history that Jim Garrison engineered, Oliver Stone was only a skillful and energetic accessory. Years before the filmmaker supplied the megaphone, Garrison's radical critique had prevailed in a larger cultural sense. The film reflected and exploited that critique; it did not create it. Garrison's real legacy was not his investigation, but the public memory of his allegations. During a tumultuous, lurid time, he capitalized on gnawing public discontent with the Warren Report, legitimated a critique based on a hoax, and insinuated a false notion about CIA complicity that has grown in the public imagination ever since.

That much at least is true. If one also accepts the circumstantial corroboration that suggests the hoax was KGB-inspired disinformation, then the ramifications go considerably further. In that case, IMPEDIAN report number 222 lifts the veil on the single most effective active measure undertaken by the KGB against the United States.

But there is an old saw in the world of intelligence, which also applies to history, especially as portrayed by Hollywood. We are never truly deceived by others. We only deceive ourselves. □

# The Empire Underground

Twenty-five years ago, Illinois scientist Carl Woese identified an entirely new form of life. His discovery upended the traditional notion that all living things on Earth fall into five kingdoms and challenged our understanding of evolution and the origin of life. All he had to do was persuade his fellow scientists.

*by David W. Wolfe*

Late one evening about a quarter-century ago, in a dimly lit laboratory in Urbana, Illinois, a middle-aged scientist sat crouched over a lightbox that illuminated a large sheet of translucent photographic film. Imprinted on the film were rows of dark bands representing the nucleotide sequence of genetic material that had been isolated from several microbes. The bluish glow from the lightbox filled the room, casting giant shadows on the walls and revealing the man's face. His brow was wrinkled as he focused intently on various details of the film. He lifted his head momentarily and shook it as if in disbelief, rubbed his eyes, then looked again.

The bar code-like pattern exposed on the photographic film was the culmination of many days of tedious preparatory work. Each row represented RNA (ribonucleic acid) fragments from a different organism, and by quantifying the similarity in the location and width of the bands in each row, the scientist could gauge the genetic similarity among the organisms. This was in fact the repetition of an analysis he had performed some days earlier. He couldn't believe the results the first time, but here they were again. He had checked and double-checked all aspects of the procedure. This was not some aberration caused by a mix-up in the chemicals he had used or the accidental switching of

samples. The results, if they could be confirmed by additional tests, could mean only one thing—he had made one of the most important scientific discoveries of the 20th century: he had identified not merely a new species, but an entire new kingdom, or super-kingdom, of organisms.

The scientist was Dr. Carl Woese (pronounced “woes”) of the University of Illinois, and the year was 1976. In reality, the discovery unfolded over many days, nights, and weeks. The microbe that revealed its secret and eventually sparked a revolution in biology was considered at the time to be nothing more than an obscure type of bacterium known as a methanogen. The organism draws its name from the methane, or “natural gas,” it produces as a byproduct of its metabolism. Indeed, it is now believed that much of the methane gas beneath the Earth's surface has been produced by methanogens. These soil organisms also produce the combustible “marsh gas” that sometimes hovers over swamps and rice paddies.

What Carl Woese conclusively established in 1976 was that, although the methanogens look like common bacteria under a microscope, genetically they are as distinct from bacteria as bacteria are from plants or animals. In fact, on a genetic basis, the methanogens have less in common with bacteria than a redwood



*Spirostreptid with Brood (1999), by Timothy Chapman*

tree or fungus has with you or me. If plants, animals, and bacteria were to be considered separate kingdoms, Woese reasoned, then so must the methanogens.

As Woese expanded his analyses, he soon found that the methanogens were not the only “bacteria” that should fall into the unique genetic category he had discovered. He began referring to the new category as a “domain” and gave it the name “Archaeobacteria,” or “ancient bacteria.” Later this would be changed simply to “Archaea” to more sharply distinguish the domain from bacteria and other forms of life. Woese recognized that these findings would shake our concept of the evolutionary “tree of life” down to its roots. What he could not foresee were the personal and professional battles he would have to fight within the world of science to gain acceptance and understanding of his revolutionary discovery.

I first met Woese in the fall of 1998. I arrived in Urbana on a Sunday afternoon, although our meeting wasn’t scheduled until the following morning. I decided to try calling him to confirm the time and get specific directions to his campus office. I had only an office number, but I had a hunch he would be at work. Sure enough, he picked up the phone. As I

already knew from his steady stream of publications, he was by no means slowing down, although he was near retirement age.

The next morning, I got up early and found my way to campus. On the lower level of the building that housed the microbiology department, I stopped for a moment to look at a large hallway display dedicated to Woese as recipient of the prestigious Leeuwenhoek Medal, named after Anton van Leeuwenhoek, a pioneer microbiologist of the 17th century. I then continued upstairs to Woese’s office, which was actually a small converted laboratory. Much of the bench space held antiquated laboratory equipment—perhaps items he did not have the heart to throw away. There were stacks of papers, journals, and books everywhere, and a few strategically placed computer monitors, keyboards, and printers. As I entered the room, I could see a gray-haired man leaning back in a swivel chair, his feet up on the lab counter, crossed at the ankles. He looked very much at home; it had to be Woese.

One of my first thoughts was how very different a visit to a scientist at the top of his or her profession was from a visit to, say, a successful politician or business leader. There was no penthouse view, no leather chair, no large desk made of exotic woods, and no wet bar (unless the couple of old lab sinks with leaky faucets

## The Empire Underground

could serve that purpose). Woese wore old tennis shoes, loose-fitting khaki pants, and a flannel shirt with rolled-up sleeves. Here is someone on the short list for the Nobel Prize, I reminded myself.

As is often the case with revolutionaries, Carl Woese entered the field whose paradigms he would challenge—biology—with a background in another discipline. His undergraduate training during the 1950s was in physics at Amherst College in Massachusetts. He crossed the bridge to biology some years later, earning a doctorate in biophysics at Yale University. After graduate school, a postdoctoral research project revealed to him for the first time the molecular wonders of the microbial world, and the secrets that world might hold for unraveling the origin of the genetic code. After brief periods of employment with General Electric and the Louis Pasteur Institute in France, he landed a tenure-track professorship in the microbiology department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1964. Finally, with the freedom afforded by the university, Woese could get down to serious work on the questions that most intrigued him.

From the beginning, Woese's major interest was the origin and evolution of life's most important molecules—the DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) and RNA that make up the genetic code. The double-helix DNA provides the master copy of an organism's genes, and RNA, a single-stranded version of DNA, translates the genetic code into life's essential processes, beginning with the synthesis of protein-enzymes that catalyze life's biochemistry. Woese recognized that the essential first step would be to build a more complete and accurate tree of life, one that encompassed the early evolution of the microbial world. By identifying those present-day microbes that are the most direct descendants of our most ancient ancestors, he was bound to gain insight into the mother of all cells, and into the origin of the genetic code itself. It was clear to Woese that the existing tree, emphasizing plants and animals, was artificially skewed toward large, recently evolved surface organisms such as humans, and so would be of little use to him.

A turning point for Woese came in 1965, when he read a paper titled "Molecules as Documents of Evolutionary History" in the *Journal of Theoretical Biology*. It was written by one of the pioneers in quantum chemistry and molecular biology, Linus Pauling, and a colleague, Emile Zuckerkandl. They had been gathering data on the amino acid sequence of biologically important protein molecules for many years, and they noticed that when they compared the same protein isolated from different species, the similarity of aligned sequences of amino acids of the proteins coincided with the amount of evolutionary time that separated the species. Organisms that evolved at about the same time showed nearly identical sequences, while those that evolved at very different times had noticeable differences.

These proteins, moreover, were like a "molecular clock" because they accumulated random changes in their amino acid sequences over evolutionary time. The changes were apparently "neutral" in that they did not affect the function of the proteins, and so got carried along, harmlessly, generation to generation. Pauling and Zuckerkandl's discovery confirmed the rationale for Woese's plan to determine the evolutionary histories of the bacteria—except that Woese decided to use the nucleotide sequence of genetic material, RNA molecules, rather than the amino acid sequence of proteins, as his molecular clock.

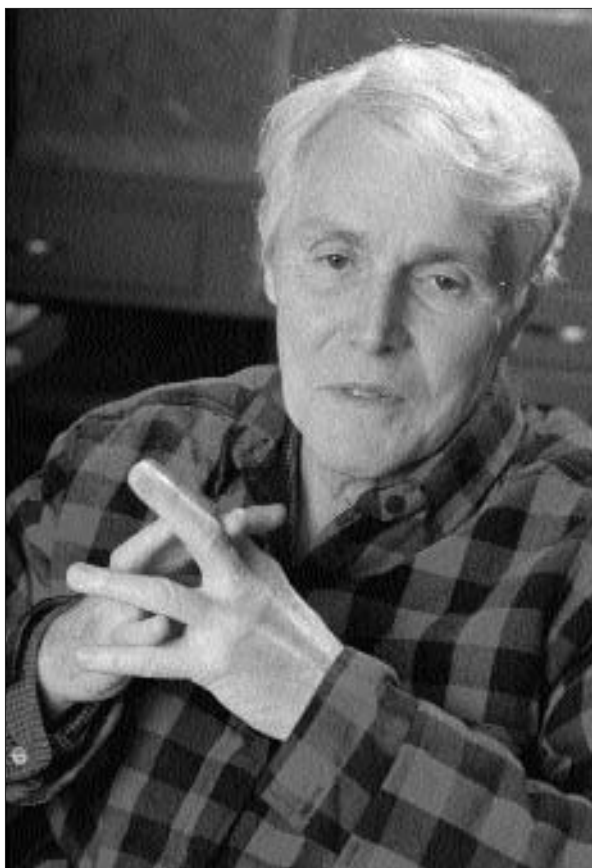
The discovery of such molecular clocks showed that expensive fossil-hunting expeditions, the kind that make such great *National Geographic* covers, are not the only, or even the best, approach to exploring the biological history of life on Earth. Investment in more powerful electron microscopes is not the answer either. Woese and a handful of others at the time were convinced that within every living cell, at a level beyond the view of microscopes, there would be clues to our evolutionary past, tucked away in the structure of long, chainlike molecules such as proteins and genes. This approach could not even have been imagined earlier because scientists did not have the techniques for examining the structure of proteins or genes in detail. Indeed,

>DAVID W. WOLFE is an associate professor of ecology in the Department of Horticulture at Cornell University. This essay is adapted from his forthcoming book, *Tales from the Underground*. Copyright © 2001 by David W. Wolfe. Reprinted by permission of Perseus Publishing. All rights reserved.

it was only a dozen years earlier that James Watson and Francis Crick had described the structure of DNA. Woese's plan was to use the newly emerging tools of molecular biology to reach back in time, beyond the oldest fossils, to the period when all life was microbial. He would not need to travel to exotic lands to seek out the past; he would do all of his digging in a modest laboratory in Urbana.

Woese decided that a small subunit of a type of RNA called ribosomal RNA (rRNA) would be the best molecular clock for his purposes. Ribosomal RNA draws its name from its association with cellular structures called ribosomes, which are part of the protein-building machinery of every cell. The particular subunit Woese selected is involved in the synthesis of protein-enzymes that no organism can do without. Because of this, it is found in all creatures, from bacteria to begonias, from mushrooms to humans. The ubiquity of rRNA would allow comparisons of all of Earth's genetic diversity on the same terms, and the construction of a truly universal tree of life. Much like the changes in amino acid sequence studied by Zuckerkandl and Pauling, the random neutral changes in nucleotide sequence in rRNA serve as a reliable counting mechanism, the "ticktock" of evolutionary time.

In the early days, Woese worked in almost total anonymity, ignored by most of the scientific community. Many of those who did pay attention considered him a crackpot who used an excruciatingly tedious technique that could never answer the big questions in which he claimed to be interested. But Woese carried on. His first step was to isolate the rRNA subunit from cells. Then he tackled the sequencing problem. Today, with automated equipment, an entire 1,500-to-1,800-nucleotide rRNA subunit might be sequenced in a couple of days. But when Woese began his work in the late 1960s, sequencing would take half a year or more. Sidestepping the problem, he decided to focus on only a few fragments, each



*Carl Woese, here at the University of Illinois in 1998, is widely seen as a candidate for the Nobel Prize.*

some 20 nucleotides long. Although it would be ideal to chart the entire nucleotide sequence, Woese knew it was extremely unlikely that any fragment longer than about six nucleotides would repeat itself within the same rRNA subunit.

The shortcut enabled Woese to compare analogous fragments of rRNA from any two organisms, and quantify their relative evolutionary age and degree of relatedness based on the proportion of nucleotides that matched up. His laboratory shelves became jammed with boxes of the large film sheets containing genetic information for hundreds of organisms. Visually translating these films into "bar codes" that represented nucleotide sequences and evolutionary relationships, he constructed simple "dendrograms," or "trees," and determined which organisms belonged on the same branch or twig, and where the important branching points were located. Gradually, a new universal tree of life began to emerge.

## The Empire Underground

Woese's tree was the first recognition that "invisible" microbes, which constitute much of the genetic diversity and living biomass on our planet, were on an equal footing with multicellular creatures on the tree of life. Indeed, it is possible that there is more living matter within the microscopic pore spaces of the soil and rock beneath our feet than on the entire surface of the Earth.

During my visit with Woese, he took me into a large room lined with shelves from ceiling to floor that had been completely dedicated to the storage of these film sheets—thousands of them—now of historical significance. I was awed by this monument to the hours, weeks, and years of relentless pursuit of a scientific objective—the search for a pattern in the relationship among organisms. The sight brought home that leading a scientific revolution takes much more than genius. It also takes the stamina and tenacity of a bloodhound.

**B**efore the Woesian revolution, our tree of life was essentially an "eye of the beholder" version of reality—based primarily on what creatures looked like, and what we could guess their ancestors looked like from the fossil record. Our evolutionary tree had advanced surprisingly little from the time of the ancient Greeks.

In the fourth century B.C., Aristotle described a *scala naturae*, or "ladder of life," which was a hierarchy that began with inanimate matter at its base and ascended through plants and animals to, of course, man at the top. About 2,000 years later, in 1735, Carolus Linnaeus published his masterpiece of taxonomy, the *Systema Naturae*, or *Natural System*, which has as its two great branches the same plant and animal kingdoms Aristotle described. Linnaeus's important contribution was his hierarchical classification scheme, still used today, that divided each of the kingdoms further into phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species.

The discovery of single-celled microbial life forms in the 17th century by Anton van Leeuwenhoek complicated things. Were they plants or animals? Most biologists and taxonomists took the easy way out and simply ignored Leeuwenhoek's microbes until, in the 19th century, Louis Pasteur demonstrated the important role they play in causing disease. After that, they could no longer be ignored.

The problem was, and still is, that most living microbes and their fossils appear as nondescript rods or spheres, thereby preventing accurate classification. Even with the aid of powerful electron microscopes, the incredible diversity of the microbial world does not easily come into focus.

Rather arbitrarily, scientists decided to put the larger, motile single-celled organisms, named "protozoa," into the animal kingdom, and the relatively immobile fungi and tiny single-celled bacteria into the plant kingdom. That is the classification scheme I was taught in high school in the 1960s, even though by then many scientists had decided to lump the protozoa and bacteria into a third kingdom of their own. When I entered the University of California at Davis as a biology major a few years later, I learned the very latest dogma of the scientific community—a five-kingdom classification system proposed by Robert Whittaker of Cornell University in 1969. It raised the protozoa, bacteria, and fungi each to the status of individual kingdoms, alongside animals and plants.

By that time, detailed comparisons of organisms made possible by powerful scanning electron microscopes had revealed that all of Earth's life forms could be grouped into two "superkingdoms" based on cellular structure: the eukaryotes, which have cells with a well-formed nucleus, and the prokaryotes, whose cells lack a nucleus. Within the five-kingdom scheme, all multicellular plants, animals (including humans), and fungi, as well as the single-celled protozoa, are within the superkingdom of eukaryotes; only the bacteria are prokaryotes.

That is where things stood when Woese arrived on the scene. But Woese was not satisfied with the five-kingdom tree. He knew that the prokaryotes, the bacterial branch, represented most of the evolutionary history of life on the planet, and their living members had the metabolic diversity to survive in a wider range of ecological niches than the other four branches. Bacteria and their relatives have been evolving for at least 3.5 billion years, while the multicellular creatures emphasized in the five-kingdom tree have been around for less than one billion years. A tree based primarily on the visible characteristics of organisms would never do justice to the genetic diversity of the prokaryotes,



or to the unicellular organisms that were at the base of the other branches.

So Woese pursued his molecular approach. One by one, he isolated the rRNA of individual bacterial strains and compared fragments for differences in nucleotide arrangement. During his first 10 years of effort at the University of Illinois, Woese gathered enough rRNA data on some 60 types of bacteria to begin publishing their genealogies—the shape of the prokaryote branch. Occasionally he would dabble with the eukaryotes, members of the other four branches of the five-kingdom tree. What became apparent from his comparisons was that within the bacterial branch there were sub-branches that differed as much from each other as plants differed from animals. In other words, if the difference in rRNA nucleotide sequence between plants and animals was to be used as the variable that would define separate kingdoms, he had evidence that required the bacterial branch itself to be divided into several separate kingdoms.

This was mind boggling enough, but Woese was in for an even bigger surprise. One day in 1976, his colleague Ralph Wolfe (no relation to the author) supplied him with a few colonies of methanogens. Not much was known about the methanogens at the time, except that they appeared to be bacteria; that they often inhabited subsurface soils, waters, and other places deficient in oxygen; and that they produced methane gas as a byproduct of their metabolism. Wolfe was one of the few well-established microbiologists who believed in Woese's approach, and he was curious as to where the methanogens might fit in the bacterial genealogy Woese was constructing.

Woese put the methanogen sample through his rRNA sequencing mill. When he examined the film that resulted, the sequences did not match up with anything he or anyone else had ever seen in a bacterium. They also differed from the nucleotide sequences of every kind of eukaryote—the protozoa, fungi, plants, and animals. For Woese, one of the few who could interpret and fully appreciate the rRNA sequence data, it was as startling as stepping into the backyard and seeing an alien.

Any scientist would be thrilled at discovering a new species, but Woese had unexpectedly dredged up an entire superkingdom. For the next several months, Woese put in even more

hours at the lab to confirm his results. He examined other methanogens, and, on the basis of the rRNA data, they also turned out to belong in the unique group he eventually named Archaea.

Day by day the evidence accumulated, and soon it was abundantly clear to Woese that all life on Earth could be divided into three primary superkingdoms, or “domains,” as they are now called: Bacteria, Archaea, and Eukarya (the last being the crowded home of the former kingdoms of plants, animals, fungi, and protozoa). These domains have “signature” nucleotide sequences in certain parts of their rRNA which establish that they represent the deepest, most fundamental branches of the universal tree of life.

Within a year of the initial discovery, Woese and Wolfe published their results in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The findings did not go unnoticed by the popular press, and in November 1977 the discovery of the archaea made front-page news not only in Woese's hometown paper, the *Urbana News Gazette*, but in the *New York Times*.

What shocks people most about Woese's discovery is the implication that the vast diversity of life we see all around us, the multicellular plants, animals, and fungi, represents only three small twigs on one branch, the eukaryotic branch, of the universal tree of life. The discovery clarifies how our reliance on visual evidence has for thousands of years warped our perspective on the evolution of life on our planet. Most high school and introductory college textbooks on biology today continue to perpetuate this thinking by emphasizing the plant and animal kingdoms. The rRNA analyses tell us that within each of the three domains of life there are dozens of other kingdoms. And most of those kingdoms, representing most of Earth's genetic diversity, are microbial.

The prokaryotes, previously thought to be a single branch of primitive creatures within a five-kingdom tree dominated by large multicellular life forms, are now recognized as representing fully two-thirds of Earth's genetic diversity—the Archaea and Bacteria domains. By several orders of magnitude, there are greater diversity and evolutionary distance within the new

## The Empire Underground

domain of Archaea discovered by Carl Woese than exist among the plants, animals, and fungi combined.

Throughout the 1990s, the pace at which biologists sequenced the rRNA of new organisms and filled in the tree of life accelerated. By 1998, more than 5,000 organisms had been classified in this way. Researchers also sequenced the complete genome (not just rRNA fragments) of one methanogen, *Methanococcus jannaschii*, reporting their results in *Science* in 1996. Parts of the *M. jannaschii* genome were similar to bacteria, but other parts were more similar to eukaryotes. Overall, the results verified that archaea are a unique third domain, even though they look like bacteria. Since then, the complete genomes of several other archaea have been sequenced, and all of these findings tend to support the conclusion reached much earlier by Woese in his analysis of just fragments of rRNA.

The universal tree provides a molecular-genetic approach to the study of the origin of life on Earth. The fact that single-cell thermophiles have the oldest evolutionary history (that is, are at the base of the universal tree) is weighty evidence in support of the hypothesis that life originated not in a shallow body of water on the surface, as conventional wisdom long held, but in a high-temperature habitat, such as the deep subsurface or within sediments near oceanic volcanic vents. The rRNA data suggest that all three domains—the Archaea, Bacteria, and Eukarya—arose from a common community of primitive life forms long ago, rather than one branch from another. This is a radical departure from the centuries-old belief that the multicellular eukaryotes represented “higher” life forms that had evolved from the more primitive prokaryotes.

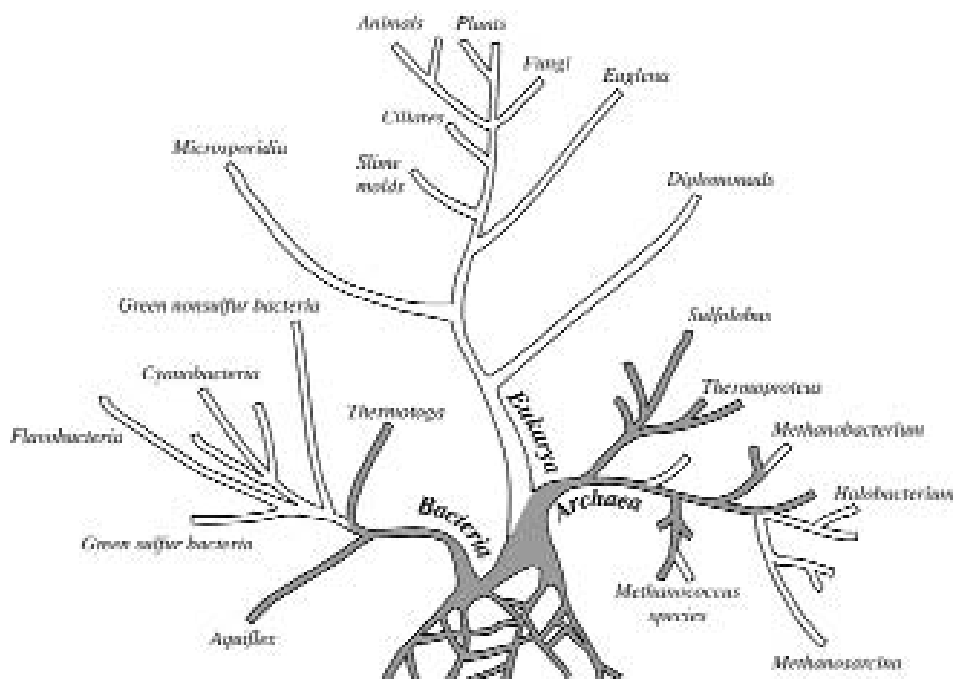
It now appears that the three domains branched apart long ago and have for the most part evolved independently. However, near the very base of each domain within the universal tree the relationships get messy. These most ancient single-celled creatures are capable of “laterally” exchanging genetic material with distantly related organisms, even across domains. What occurs at this primitive level is like a 1960s “free love” festival of gene swapping, although it is all done in G-rated asexual fashion. Loose genetic material released by

damaged cells of one species can be engulfed like food by active cells of another species and incorporated into their genome. It’s a “you are what you eat” method of gene transfer. As we gradually fill in the base of the tree over the next decade or two, it may come to resemble a network more than a simple branching pattern. And even with the powerful tools of molecular genetics, the precise location of the root of the tree may remain a mystery.

Many of the archaea are thermophilic. These amazing “extremophiles” eke out a living in environments in which no other organism can survive. Some species live thousands of feet underground, where they have been cut off from sunlight for hundreds of millions of years but have found other sources of energy, such as hydrogen gas, or perhaps other substances in the rocky layers. The apparent independence of these underground communities flies in the face of that lesson we learned in high school—that all life is ultimately dependent on solar energy. Some scientists now believe that the microbial organisms at the base of the “dark food chain” may be the direct descendants of Earth’s first life forms.

Archaea are also being discovered in other environments, some of them cold rather than hot, and others not very extreme at all. For example, scientists have found a very diverse and numerous group of archaea thriving in the cold ocean waters off Antarctica. Deep in the North Atlantic, archaea live among the bacterial communities devouring the *Titanic*. These microbial communities extract iron from the steel superstructure, producing huge, iron-rich “rusticles” that hang from the sunken ship. Scientists have also found that topsoils—previously considered to be an unlikely place to find archaea—are rife with these organisms. But the precise ecological role of the soil- and ocean-dwelling archaea is still largely unknown.

Carl Woese brought the study of evolution into the molecular age, and in so doing brought microbes of the underground into the Darwinian fold. In 1977, when Woese first went public with his findings about the methanogens, he knew that he had made a contribution most scientists can only fantasize about. He had, after all, discovered a third domain of life! But what



*The Woeseian tree of life, in which bacteria, eukarya, and archaea are shown to have evolved from a common set of ancestors. Dark branches represent thermophilic organisms, while the complex root system symbolizes the intricate, and still mysterious, genetic relationship among Earth's first life forms.*

happened next, or rather, what did *not* happen, was discouraging.

After the initial few weeks of attention and newspaper reports, the requests for interviews dwindled. As the months passed, Woese's struggle to find funding to continue his work did not get any easier, nor was there a flood of eager graduate students clamoring for a post in his laboratory. Worst of all, Woese recalls, most microbiologists simply ignored the mountain of evidence he had so painstakingly accumulated. Some openly criticized his work; others privately scoffed at his conclusions and warned Woese's supporters that they were jeopardizing their own careers by remaining associated with him.

**W**hen I visited Woese, the battle to convince the scientific community of his revolutionary ideas was still being fought in some quarters. I asked him whether he felt there was something wrong with the scientific process, something in need of repair. To my surprise, he answered, "It's appropriate that science move cautiously on matters as profound as this. Corroboration from other laboratories just took time. Now that we have faster automated

methods, and we're sequencing the entire genome of organisms, things should move more quickly; maybe some of the puzzles and inconsistencies can be resolved."

In retrospect, Woese recognizes that a significant part of the problem was his isolation. He loved his work, but he did not get much satisfaction from attending scientific conferences. With his background in physics and his molecular perspective, he spoke a different language than others involved in microbiology and evolutionary studies at the time. Only a small number of scientists were doing similar work and could comprehend the rationale of his approach or the implications of his results. Data from other labs to confirm or refute what he was finding were hard to come by. He preferred to be in the lab sequencing the rRNA for a new organism rather than socializing with fellow scientists and lobbying for them to support his interpretation of the data.

Fortunately, Woese's credentials and scientific methods were impeccable, and a slow but steady stream of his publications made it through the peer review process. He gained a



*Dutch naturalist Anton Van Leeuwenhoek discovered the first microscopic organisms in 1674.*

handful of well-respected and influential supporters, including Norman Pace, an evolutionary biologist at the University of California at Berkeley, Otto Kandler, a noted German microbiologist, and, of course, Ralph Wolfe, his University of Illinois collaborator. This small support group stood by him, its members often putting their own reputations on the line. The cold shoulder from the scientific community did little to dissuade Woese. Stubborn and self-confident by nature, he dug in his heels. He read Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1976), and gained some comfort from learning that his struggle to introduce an unconventional new idea was not unique in the history of science.

**W**oese's story in many ways parallels that of Anton van Leeuwenhoek. In the 17th century, while Galileo was searching the sky for planets and stars, Leeuwenhoek, a cloth merchant by trade, was exploring droplets of pond water for microscopic "animalcules" and "wretched beasties," as he called them. Leeuwenhoek had a handful of supporters, most notably the famous British naturalist Robert Hooke, but

for the most part he worked in anonymity, his findings receiving a lukewarm, at times even hostile, response. This may in part have been a consequence of his isolation from much of the scientific community. He was not a bona fide member of the academic club. Another problem was that Leeuwenhoek's lenses (which he ground himself) and technique were so superior that no one could duplicate his results. Leeuwenhoek took his rejection gracefully. In a letter to a friend, he wrote: "Among the ignorant, they're still saying about me that I am a conjuror, and that I show people what does not exist; but they're to be forgiven, they know no better. . . . Novelties oft-times aren't accepted, because men are apt to hold fast by what their Teachers have impressed upon them."

Luckily for us, Leeuwenhoek pursued his work and documented his findings. After he died, bacteria—those "wretched beasties"—would not be seen by human eyes again for at least another century. Finally, in the 19th century, others came along who were able to match his skills with a microscope and confirm his observations—and we began to rec-

ognize the potential significance of a microbial world.

Like scientists before him who have had the fortune, or misfortune, to be at the helm of a scientific revolution, Woese has had to take a lot of heat. But no scientific revolution can be credited to a single man or woman. This one, a revolution still in progress, is no exception. Carl Woese owes a great debt to Linus Pauling and other pioneer molecular biologists who preceded him. And by the late 1970s, Woese was no longer alone. There were others who independently recognized the advantages of the molecular approach to the study of microbial evolution. Kandler, for example, was making his own discoveries about the uniqueness of the methanogens by analyzing their cell walls, and was as convinced as Woese that the archaea represent a third unique domain of life thriving on our planet.

Gradually, during the 1980s, the tables turned, and the number of microbiologists who belittled the efforts of Woese began to diminish. The rRNA of several hundred organisms, representing all three of the major domains, was characterized. By the end of the decade, most scientists had at least come to accept that archaea represented the discovery of a unique life form, although many continued to dispute that the archaea deserved their own branch on the evolutionary tree. Woese, once shunned by many microbiologists, had become one of their leaders, and even a hero to some. His universal tree of life has entered into dogma among microbiologists, and the number of skeptics in other fields is dwindling. Virtually all of the scientific community now acknowledges the genetic uniqueness of the archaea, and most researchers would agree that rRNA analysis has become an important tool for clarifying evolutionary relationships.

During the plane ride home after my visit with Woese, I reflected on the modern scientific process. We are seeking truth, a deeper understanding of the world around us, but no one wants a wild-goose chase. The vast majority of the criticisms Woese has faced, and continues to deal with, are based on legitimate concerns of dedicated scientists. Peer review of grant proposals and publications, along with many other subtler barriers, has

been established to prevent one renegade scientist from leading us all over the cliff and into the dreaded Abyss of False Theories. This is a good thing, of course, but for the scientist with a new perspective on an old problem, the process of convincing colleagues that he or she is right can be not only grueling and painfully slow, but a serious career risk.

Woese had recalled for me some of the things that kept him motivated all these years. Chiefly, it was the work itself, he said, and the confidence that he was making progress in tracing the genetic code back to its roots. But there were some pleasant surprises, too. In 1980, Kandler invited him to the first international conference on the archaea, in Munich, and Woese was treated like royalty upon his arrival. He found that, thanks largely to Kandler's considerable influence, his ideas were enthusiastically accepted in much of western Europe. And when the moment came for Woese to speak, a full choir and brass orchestra broke into celebratory music. Kandler had arranged the fanfare as an antidote to the emotional toll that criticism and lack of recognition were taking on Woese.

Just a decade after this event, Woese won worldwide recognition—at least within the field of microbiology. In 1990, he flew to Amsterdam to receive microbiology's highest honor, the Leeuwenhoek Medal, awarded by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. The medal is not given lightly or often. There have been only a dozen recipients in the past 125 years, among them Louis Pasteur in 1895. One is inclined to imagine that no name on the prestigious list of recipients would have pleased Leeuwenhoek more than that of Carl Woese.

I asked Woese whether receiving the Leeuwenhoek was his most gratifying moment. He thought briefly, then shook his head. "Here, let me show you something." He walked to a nearby office shelf and pulled down a 1991 edition of *The Biology of Microorganisms*, a widely respected textbook in microbiology that has gone through many editions. He opened the book, and there, on the inside front cover, was a complete diagram of his three-domain universal tree of life. "That," he said, pointing at the page, "that did it." □

# The Storm over *The Black Book*

Communism had horrific consequences in the 20th century, but many intellectuals are still reluctant to face up to them.

by Andrzej Paczkowski

On November 7, 1997, in Paris, a book was published that was substantial in every sense. *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* contained almost 900 pages, weighed about two pounds, and was very expensive.

By the end of 1997, it had sold more than 100,000 copies in France, and by the spring of 1998, about 150,000. That May, the first translations of the book appeared—in Italy and Germany—and they were also successful. To date, the book has had editions in Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Sweden, Bosnia, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Holland, Russia, Lithuania, Turkey, England, and America, and it is expected to appear in Ukraine, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. The total number of copies sold now exceeds 800,000.

Why has *The Black Book of Communism*—a sober work of history and not the sort of sensational volume that might win easy popularity—found a universal audience, far beyond the community of professional historians?

The book owed its initial popularity to a political incident. Soon after its publication in France, a member of a center-right party asked the Socialist prime minister, Lionel Jospin, in the National Assembly to justify the presence in his cabinet of Communist ministers. Arguing

that communism is a “criminal ideology,” the objecting member cited *The Black Book*. Jospin responded that there had been a Liberation coalition between Gaullists and Communists and that he was “proud” to govern with Communists too. He then praised the Russian Revolution, the 80th anniversary of which had recently been observed. That prompted certain members of the non-Gaullist Right to walk out of the National Assembly. Television cameras recorded the whole incident, and it was shown to the public. The next day, people could not wait to flock to the bookstores.

*The Black Book of Communism* was not only bought, it was read (and is read still), and it won widespread media attention around the world. Among the American publications that wrote about it were the *Washington Post*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *New Republic*, the *National Interest*, and the *New Criterion*. What’s more, it provoked a great and heated debate among historians, political scientists, and intellectuals. On the first anniversary of its publication, a book titled *Le pavé dans l’histoire* (The cobblestone thrown into history) described that debate in France, and a book with the provocative title *Der rote Holocaust* (The red holocaust) appeared shortly thereafter in Germany.

*The Black Book* had become a social, political, and intellectual event across



In the NKVD's Dungeon, by Nikolai Getman. The artist, once a prisoner in the Gulag, imagines the scene when his brother was taken to his death by the Soviet secret police.

Europe and in the United States, and the phenomenon merits attention.

Let me begin by describing *The Black Book*. As Martin Malia, an eminent historian of Russia and the Soviet Union, writes in his foreword to the American edition, which was published in 1999, "*The Black Book* offers us the first attempt to determine, overall, the actual magnitude of what occurred, by systematically detailing Leninism's 'crimes, terror, and repression' from Russia in 1917 to Afghanistan in 1989. This factual approach

puts communism in what is, after all, its basic human perspective. For it was in truth a 'tragedy of planetary dimensions' (in the French publisher's characterization), with a grand total of victims variously estimated by contributors to the volume at between 85 million and 100 million." In one sense, then, the book is a tally of the dead.

Eleven scholars, a number of them former Communists and fellow travelers, contributed to the volume. The various international editions of *The Black Book* also include forewords (or afterwords) by local specialists, as the

## *The Black Book of Communism*

American edition, for example, has the foreword by Malia. To some editions, appendixes were added. The German *Black Book*, for example, has almost 100 pages analyzing the East German system of terror and the Stasi—the Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Ministry for State Security).

The work proper opens with a 30-page introduction, “The Crimes of Communism,” in which the main editor, Stéphane Courtois, a director of research at the National Center for Scientific Research, in Nanterre, and editor of the review *Communisme*, compares communism with other 20th-century criminal regimes, particularly Nazism. This introduction, and Courtois’s 30-page conclusion to the book, titled simply “Why?,” provoked the greatest controversy. Apart from the introduction and the various forewords and appendixes, *The Black Book* has five principal parts.

**T**he first, and longest, “A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union,” is by Nicolas Werth, a specialist at the Institute for Contemporary History, in Paris. Werth covers the period from the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 to the death of Stalin in 1953 and its immediate aftermath. Criticized for stopping at that point, he responded that there was insufficient documentation to go further.

The second part, “World Revolution, Civil War, and Terror,” by Courtois, Jean-Louis Panné, a specialist on international communism, and Rémi Kauffer, a specialist on the history of terrorism and clandestine operations, examines the role of the Soviet Comintern (especially during the Spanish Civil War) as an exporter of communist revolution, along with the activities of non-ruling communist parties, such as those in France, Greece, and Italy.

Karel Bartošek, a Czech historian at the Institute for Contemporary History, and I wrote the third part, “The Other Europe: Victim of Communism.” In it, we describe the situation in central and southeastern Europe. We devote a separate chapter to Poland, and we discuss Stalin’s repressions in the 1930s and during World War II. But we are particularly concerned with the postwar era.

The fourth part, “Communism in Asia: Between Reeducation and Massacre,” by Jean-Louis Margolin, a lecturer at the University of Provence, and Pierre Rigoulot, a researcher at the Institute for Social History, in Paris, focuses principally on China, but with consideration as well of developments in North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge.

The fifth part of the book, “The Third World,” by Pascal Fontaine, a journalist, Yves Santamaria, a historian, and Sylvain Boulouque, a researcher at the University of Paris, Nanterre, deals with communist regimes in Latin America, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, and Afghanistan.

*The Black Book* also contains several excerpts from recently declassified documents and from the memoirs of victims, and dozens of photographs, dating from the time of the Russian civil war and the famines in Russia to the 1995 trial of the Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng.

So why all the controversy?

The problem, I believe, is not that the cobblestone was hurled at history or the practice of historiography, but that it was thrown into a large lake of leftist stereotypes. The consequences rippled inexorably outward because that cobblestone scored a direct hit on the social and historical sensibilities of individuals in a number of intellectual and political circles. They found it extremely painful to have to confront not only the collapse of communism as a state system but, in many countries, its easy transformation—by the likes of Gennady Zhiuganov in Russia and Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia—into national Bolshevism and xenophobia.

The Italian writer Ignazio Silone once wrote, “Revolutions, like trees, should be judged by their fruit.” Many intellectuals tried (and continue to try) to judge the communist revolution not by its reality but by their illusions. “As Courtois points out,” writes Alan Ryan in his *New York Times* review of *The Black Book*, “the observation that you can’t make an omelet without broken eggs may be true, but it was long ago destroyed as a justification of the Soviet tyranny by the fact that we

> ANDRZEJ PACZKOWSKI, currently a Wilson Center Fellow, is the author of several books on Polish history in the 20th century. In Warsaw, he teaches at Collegium Civitas and is head of the unit for research on contemporary political history at the Institute of Political Studies. Copyright © 2001 by Andrzej Paczkowski.



had all seen the broken eggs but nobody had ever seen the omelet.”

The justifications of communism are psychologically motivated and deeply rooted. It is never easy to bid farewell to the hopes and dreams of one’s youth, especially after one has defended them courageously over many years against strong opposition. I believe that the historian Jeffrey Herf, writing in the *Washington Post*, is correct to observe, “In Western academia, scholars who chose to focus on the crimes of communism were and remain a minority and face the career-blocking danger of being labeled as right-wingers.” It is as if, by definition, anticommunists cannot speak the truth—and, indeed, are against the truth.

Let me say something here about the different reception accorded *The Black Book* in various countries, depending on their political and intellectual beliefs and traditions. In western European countries with a strong communist presence, like France and Italy, *The Black Book* has been the subject of intense debate, and the arguments have been largely political. That has been the case in Germany as well, a country without a significant communist party but with an influential Left—and with an interest in communism arising naturally from the experience of East Germany. Thanks to those countries, the book has been a great commercial success.

As I mentioned earlier, *The Black Book* has also been published in almost all the previously communist countries in Europe. Some readers in those countries are simply indifferent to the book, because they believe that the personal experience of communism many of them have had is more significant than the most accurate description of the experience. In Poland, which I know best, the audience for the book seems to be composed principally of two groups: young people (students, for example) and very old men and women, former prisoners or “siberians,” who were deported in the time of war. Perhaps the same holds true in other postcommunist countries.

The “Euro-Atlantic” countries, such as Great Britain and the United States, form a third readership bloc. In those countries, professionals are the audience for the book, and the debate is markedly less heated. In America, especially, communism was viewed as a

state—a rival, hostile superpower. So when the Soviet Union dissolved, and China opened itself to profound change, communism was thought to have sunk largely into history. That lessened the impact of the book in the United States. But in much of the rest of the world, *The Black Book* inflicted many wounds.

After Courtois’s introduction, Nicolas Werth’s chapter flings the first cobblestone at history. It’s the assertion that the terror, the mass blind terror, was proclaimed at the very beginning of communist rule—and announced even before the revolution. In September 1917, some weeks before taking power, Felix Dzerzhinsky—the sword of the revolution, the man with the clean hands and the warm heart—wrote of the need to change the structure of the classes “by extermination of the enemies of the labor class.” Five years later, Nikolai Bukharin, who is often presented as a Bolshevik liberal, said, “The party must liquidate all exploiters with all means that the proletariat has at its disposal.” He spoke those words after the civil war, the regime’s consolidation, the White Guard’s flight abroad, and the Soviet Union’s official recognition by Poland and Germany. When he spoke, the revolution was no longer under attack; it could claim no mitigating circumstances. Citing such sentiments, Courtois coined the term “politicide,” on the analogy of “genocide,” in his introduction to *The Black Book*. Politicide is a crucial concept in his thesis about the crimes of communism and their extent and persistence.

Werth’s conclusions were obviously anti-Leninist, and as such they challenged the old—and broadly accepted—thesis that “errors and distortions” were introduced into communism only by Stalin. If the sanctified (by the Western Left) Lenin and his followers in fact planned the politicide—and we have a lot of evidence that they did—we are led to ask a question of Marx and Engels, the grandfathers of communism: is terror inherent in Marxist ideology as such?

A second, and heavier, stone figures explicitly in Courtois’s introduction and conclusion and implicitly throughout the entire *Black Book*. Sooner or later, but sooner rather than later, the communists introduced a phase of mass terror wherever they took power. The par-

## *The Black Book of Communism*

ticular geographic location (Czechoslovakia, Germany, or Hungary; China, North Korea, or Cambodia) and the particular religious or cultural tradition of the location (Orthodox in Russia and Romania, Catholic in Poland and Cuba, Buddhist or Confucian in Asia) made no difference. Wherever, whenever communists took control, a phase of mass terror followed. In 1956, Nikita Khrushchev sharply condemned the atrocities of Stalin's years, and the terror ceased—or was diminished—in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But it showed the old intensity thereafter in China, Cuba, North Korea, and—a special case—Cambodia. Wherever, whenever such Marxist regimes came to power, they introduced terror, fear, and a total control of social and personal life. We are led once again to

ask the somber question: is terror an inherent part of the ideology?

The third stone is weightier still. It is the comparison made between the two cruelest regimes of the 20th century, communism and Nazism. Only Courtois addresses this issue, because all the other sections of *The Black Book* are, in effect, narrowly focused monographs, which do not pretend to offer overarching explanations.

The dispute is over the nature of the two murderous ideologies. Can we apply the same standard of judgment to, on the one hand, an ideology that was destructive at its core, that openly planned genocide, and that had an agenda of aggression against all neighboring (and not just neighboring) states, and, on the other hand, an ideology that seemed clearly



*A totalitarian face-off at the 1937 Exposition Internationale: the eagle atop the Nazi pavilion (left) confronts the gigantic images of workers atop the Soviet pavilion (right).*

the opposite, that was based on the secular desire of humanity to achieve equality and social justice, and that promised a great leap forward into freedom?

It is indeed a good question, but an inappropriate one, I think, to ask of *The Black Book of Communism*, which is not about communism as an ideology or even about communism as a state-building phenomenon. Moreover, the question is hardly new. Two eminent intellectuals, Marcel Mauss and Elie Halevy, were perhaps the first to attempt the comparison, in the 1930s, and they had a long line of successors—most notably, Hannah Arendt, Raymond Aron, and François Furet.

The question has large philosophical implications, and it should be discussed in the framework of the debate on totalitarianism. I

do not want to involve myself here in that passionate discussion, except to say that asking the question seems to me entirely justified, and that any apology for communism cannot ignore it. Let me cite only two short comments—by Kenneth Minogue, writing in the *National Interest* in 1999—relevant to the debate about totalitarianism: “The essence of totalitarianism is the project of transforming human life by making people . . . conform to some single overriding idea,” and “What makes Marx central to the totalitarian project is his clear recognition that it was incompatible with the . . . idea of the individual as a unique soul or self capable of bearing rights.” It is odd to observe many intellectuals and politicians defending the right of individuals to be different even as they also defend the utopian notion of a perfect society. And it is no less odd when the particular utopia is 150 years old.

The range of *The Black Book* is limited, for it considers only one aspect of com-

munist. But when we speak about the mechanisms and tools of the terror, or when we conduct research on the role of the terror in social life, we surely have a right to compare things that, if not homogeneous, are too analogous for their many similarities to be ignored. Of course, there are also many differences between Nazism and communism, and one of them, I believe, is especially significant and puzzling. The Nazi terror, after the early years, was directed almost exclusively against those made out to be “foreigners”—Jews, Slavs, and other *Untermenschen*. The communist terror, by contrast, was directed principally against “its own”—in Werth’s words, “the state against its people.” Russian Communists most often tortured other Russians; Poles, other Poles; Khmers, other Khmers. One may well ask: Which of the two courses of action was worse? Which was the more unexpected and the more irrational?

Some critics contend that *The Black Book* is the fruit of a political agenda, which automatically calls into question its validity as a work of history. Those same leftist critics argue that, “at a time when one can hear in the streets of our cities the clatter of the boots of Le Pen’s militiamen, *The Black Book of Communism* offers them support”—and they repeat the old slogan: “No enemy on the left!” The words are evidence that the critics have a political agenda of their own.

The fourth stone is perhaps the heaviest of all, and it has stirred the most fervent controversy. Believing that the politicide in the Soviet Union was planned as part of the communist takeover and consolidation of power, and that the genocide of a “class” may well be tantamount to the genocide of a “race,” Courtois wrote the following: “The deliberate starvation of a child of a Ukrainian kulak [peasant] as a result of the famine caused by Stalin’s regime ‘is equal to’ the starvation of a Jewish child in the Warsaw ghetto as a result of the famine caused by the Nazi regime.”

For writing that, Courtois was accused of anti-Semitism and of denying the uniqueness of the Holocaust. But Courtois did not invent that particular comparison between communism and Nazism. To defend himself, he cited the great Russian-Jewish writer Vasily Grossman, who wrote many years ago: “To



## *The Black Book of Communism*

massacre them [the kulaks], it was necessary to proclaim that kulaks are not human beings, just as the Germans proclaimed that Jews are not human beings.” What’s more, Grossman wrote, the killing of the kulaks’ children “is exactly how the Nazis put the Jewish children into the Nazi gas chambers: ‘You are not allowed to live, you are all Jews!’” No one dares call Grossman an anti-Semite. Why, then, attach that label to Courtois?

Grossman’s support was an insufficient defense for Courtois, and the temperature of the debate reached the boiling point. The notorious single sentence of Courtois—or rather, of Grossman—was seized on as reason to reject all of *The Black Book*, and to call it a crudely anticommunist, anti-Semitic work.

The observation by Courtois that proved so wounding has its roots deep in his tendency to stress the moral aspect of human actions. Peter Rutland has written that many of the questions that arise in the course of *The Black Book* “cannot be answered within Courtois’ moralistic model of an Evil Idea triggering an apparatus of repression.” I agree that excessive moralizing makes objective analysis of the past difficult—and perhaps impossible. On the other hand, writing history without a moral sense, or without a clear system of values, yields no more than a simple chronological record of the events and leads to relativism about the significance of the facts and about the past in general. Courtois’s critics certainly bring a moral sense to their consideration of the Holocaust.

**T**he *Black Book* has weaknesses. The overall format of the sections is not uniform. Some chapters have footnotes and a bibliography; others do not. There are significant omissions: East Germany, Yugoslavia, and Albania, for example, are not considered. Moreover, the objectivity of some of the data is open to question: the authors of the sections on China, Korea, and Cuba clearly draw on information gathered from the memory of witnesses, from the communist-censored press, and from the rarely precise observations of foreign visitors—whereas other sections draw on the far-more-reliable kinds of information available in official archives.

Some critics complained that Courtois was “hunting” for the highest possible number of victims, which led him, as J. Arch Getty wrote

in the *Atlantic Monthly*, to include “every possible death just to run up the score.” To an extent, the charge is valid. Courtois and other contributors to the volume equate the people shot, hanged, or killed in prisons or the camps with those who were victims of calculated political famines (in the Chinese and Soviet cases), or who otherwise starved for lack of food or died for lack of drugs. In his criticism, Getty went so far as to write the following of Stalin’s camps: “Rations and medical care were substandard, but were often not dramatically better elsewhere in Stalin’s Soviet Union and were not designed to hasten the inmates’ deaths, although they certainly did so.” That seems to me no less an instance of denial than what in Poland is called the “Katyn lie”—the denial of the reality of the Katyn massacre in World War II.

The problem is deciding not just how to classify the forms of persecution but how to count the victims—and that, you’ll forgive me for saying coldly, is a practical problem, involving the methodology and techniques of historical research. But what can we do? Give up, simply because the numbers cannot be absolutely precise? All the figures for China and North Korea, for example—and even for Cambodia, about which we know more—are mere approximations. Margolin calculates the number of victims in China at between 40 and 60 million. An opposing estimation puts the number at—bagatelle!—20 million. Perhaps it’s significant that most of the dead were the victims of famine, and perhaps one may call those victims “indirect fatalities,” or say, as Getty does, that their deaths were caused by “stupidity and incompetence” and not deliberately. But I doubt that it mattered to the starving whether their agony was a consequence of stupidity or of deliberation.

I believe that *The Black Book of Communism* has had at least two profoundly positive effects. It has stirred a deep and important debate about the implementation of totalitarian ideologies, and it has given the world an exhaustive balance sheet about one aspect of the worldwide phenomenon of communism. Henceforth, historians cannot overlook that balance sheet. The information in *The Black Book* is indispensable to a proper evaluation of the history of the 20th century. □

# What Does It All Mean?

There's more meaning in life than we can possibly make sense of. But not to worry. We need only make sense of the life we shape for ourselves.

by Mark Kingwell

Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer.

—Immanuel Kant,  
Preface to *Critique of Pure Reason*

I take as my title a question that outlines the modest theme I will pursue: the nature of meaning itself. Like many philosophers, I am fond of titles that are questions—or, at least, of titles that end with question marks, which is not always the same thing. A colleague of mine was once advised that everything in his book called *The End of Metaphysics* could be rendered true, or anyway less false, if he added a question mark to the end of it. The end of metaphysics? Could be, could be. Indeed, why not? But we have to be careful with those face-saving question marks, because they can look like a failure of nerve—the functional equivalent of a scholarly book's subtitle, which, broken over the crisis of faith symbolized by the two-story full stop of a colon, tempers the enthusiasm of a bold, snappy title with some dull, informative, backpedaling phrase. You know the kind of thing I mean. Title: *A Civil Tongue*. Subtitle: *Justice, Dialogue, and the Politics of Pluralism*. (That one is mine.)

The question at hand, you'll notice, has not

been weakened with a soapy subtitle. It is, to all appearances, a genuine request for information, a question it is possible to hear actual people actually asking. True, those people are very likely to be, variously, children, the mad, the anguished, the ironic, and the damned. Moreover, the question is an uneasy question, shot through with anxiety. But one of the duties of a philosopher is to ask questions that, for good reasons and bad, are pushed to the margins of everyday life by the pressures of time and routine sanity. I say that as if I had a firm grasp on what it means to be a philosopher, and as if I were confident that I have a good answer to the question I'm asking. But like so many members of my odd profession, I am ever only half-convinced—if that—that I know what I'm up to.

The professional philosopher is a walking paradox because he is doing most acutely whatever it is he does precisely when he is most plagued with doubt, covered in confusion, mired in ramifying banks of questions. The philosophical task is not so much self-defeating as baffling, a sort of Moebius strip of the mind. Indeed, philosophy is an impossible profession because the idea of a profession of philosophy is a contradiction in terms. As the philosopher Jonathan Lear notes, "We want to pass on fundamental truths, and in our attempts to do so truth becomes rigid and dies." Philosophy, as a project of critical openness, is fundamentally opposed to the defensive, closed structure of a profession.

## What Does It All Mean?

In the popular imagination, philosophers are the masters of meaning. They know what they're doing, and can tell others how to do it too. But in my experience, that's really not true, though there are often good reasons for pretending it is. Professional philosophers are not, as a group, wiser or deeper than other people. The tools we possess are, like all tools, limited in their application by good will and insight. Logic, for example, is effective and worthwhile only if wielded with compassion and a sense of proportion. And much of what makes philosophy interesting is not tool-like at all, which is one reason the profession can't possibly have the structure of other professions, such as medicine or actuarial science.

So there's reason to be anxious about the question we've chosen to ask if the people we habitually consider its guardians may not really be up to it. Meaning cannot be professed. We may go out on a limb now and then and say what this or that means, though even that probably constitutes a certain kind of hubris and folly. Yet, even impossible pursuits have their pleasures. So let us pursue the question of what it all means by considering, as a first step, what it means to ask a question, any question at all.

Questions have many rhetorical uses, and requesting information is only one of them. Even apparently straightforward questions are, in many contexts, bearers of hidden agendas, as lawyers' and politicians' questions often are. The same is true of questions that might be called philosophical, especially when they are asked in a certain kind of way. There are also questions that fall into the category of what might be called "drive-by objections"—questions that are meant not to elicit information or establish agreement but to demand an answer so that the answer may be found wanting. If, realizing this, one resists the demand for an answer, one is labeled evasive. If one provides a paradoxical answer ("The good life is the life spent seeking the good life," "Virtue is its own reward," "The essence of being is the being of essence," etc.), one is labeled obfuscatory as well as evasive. In all cases,

the questioner and his audience go away feeling better because none of their deep-seated convictions have been challenged. In fact, they have been reinforced. Philosophy: every bit as useless as we always suspected!

There is a profound difference between the questioner who cares about an answer and the one who cares only to dismiss the answer. The drive-by objector lacks the quality the ancient Greek philosophers associated with the beginning of wisdom. I mean wonder—bare astonishment before the world. The close-minded are not moved by the fact of the world; they do not find it amazing. They have lost their capacity for bafflement, and hence lost their ability to imagine the world as other than it is. They are reluctant to slow down in their relentless ingestion of the passing scene for fear, ironically, that something will pass them by. Meanwhile, of course, everything is passing them by. That is what everything does—if you let it.

Perhaps I'm being a little unfair. Perhaps such people do not know what to make of the vestigial wonder they do feel, and the feelings of unease that come with it. There is no wisdom without that unease, and no chance to do anything but leave the world of meaning exactly as we find it. The world without wonder is not a world entirely without meaning. On the contrary, everything means exactly what we already thought it did. But this is meaning that never goes beyond the glib certainty of a newspaper column, the depressing sameness of a situation comedy. By contrast, it takes a certain kind of courage—or just a certain kind of perversity—not to "understand" everything, but instead to welcome unease and put it at the center of one's life.

One feature of this unease is the realization that, as Kant reminds us, we are equipped to ask questions we may not be equipped to answer. That is to say, we can give answers of a kind, but they may not do the sorts of things we have come to expect of answers. They may lead to more questions, or throw us back upon ourselves, or reveal that we are bound up

> MARK KINGWELL, a professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto, has written for Harper's, the New York Times Magazine, and Utne Reader. He is the author of four books, including *Dreams of Millennium: Report from a Culture on the Brink* (1997) and *In Pursuit of Happiness: Better Living from Plato to Prozac* (1998). Copyright © 2001 by Mark Kingwell.



*El Sueño de Sor Juana (1979), by Carlos Castañeda*

by linguistic and conceptual confusions—or all of the foregoing. And that is not a condition to which most people readily submit.

**A**t this point, you may well be wondering why I'm taking up your time in this manner and tying the issue in knots. But before you pass a death sentence on philosophy (or this philosopher), let's return to the initial question: "What does it all mean?" Well, first of all, what does it mean to ask such a question? I said earlier that it was a real question, in the sense that we might actually find people asking it. But I was being a little disingenuous. In fact, it is a decidedly odd question—one we rarely hear articulated in anything like an ordinary context. One might ask it in a dramatically exasperated manner—say, after viewing yet another round of senseless action-movie trailers or breathless fashion pointers. More

seriously, one might ask it in a dejected way, after viewing yet another round of anonymous human suffering on the nightly news. But curiously enough, when asked with true seriousness, the question is most often asked silently, as are others like it ("Am I happy?" "Is that all there is?") We speak them to ourselves, not to someone else.

We have to be on our guard for these silent questions, asked outside the usual contexts of meaning. We are alone with them, wrestling with them in our nakedness, the way the ancient Greeks practiced the sport. No wonder we feel so uneasy when they arise. No wonder we seek an array of distractions to keep them at bay most of the time. No wonder that for some people they are simply too big to admit of meaningful answers.

That latter group includes some philosophers. Ordinary-language philosophers, who ruled the roost of meaning during most of the



Ludwig Wittgenstein in 1929, when he was awarded a scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge.

past century, would tell us that the oddness of the questions reveals the basic problem with them. Meaning, these philosophers say, is an engagement of mind with world via the necessarily shared medium of language. A question that has no ordinary context of usage is not a real question, for, as the eccentric Cambridge philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein put it, meaning is use. If you want to know what something means, look at the way it actually arises in language.

A key reason why meaning is use is that language is necessarily shared. Words mean nothing—they are literally nonsense—if they are not stable enough to be understood by at least one other person. That is the sense in which language is normative: we can't just decide that a sound will mean anything at all. In his book *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), Wittgenstein asks: "Can I say 'bububu' and mean 'If it doesn't rain, I shall go for a walk'?" Well, no, because "bububu" doesn't mean anything. You might conceivably intend for it to mean "If it doesn't rain, I shall go for a walk," but it doesn't mean that unless and until at least one other person, and normally a whole lot of people—all the

competent users of the natural language you normally speak, in this case English—can parse that intention.

The point cannot be emphasized too much: Meaning resides in the shared practices of what Wittgenstein called a language-game. And a game is not a game if everyone is playing by different rules. The rules needn't be explicit, or specify every possible move within the game. But they must enable us to make sense of any move at all. Otherwise, there is no such thing as meaning. Meaning has to be shared to be real.

The bluff good sense of this view is appealing. Ordinary-language philosophy is, in its way, a response to the impossible nature of philosophical inquiry. It purchases conceptual success at the cost of drastically lowered expectations. We can say what things mean, one at a time and with close attention to the details of context, but we cannot say what it *all* means, because the question does not really arise meaningfully. It arises only in odd contexts—

call them philosophical in a pejorative sense—where it lurks and glowers like a mythical beast, impossible to slay.

**I** call this view appealing, and of course it is. It allows us to get on with the business of shaping and exchanging meaning in the shared medium of language, and does so, moreover, by wanting to cure us of the lingering ills we suffer in the form of unanswerable (metaphysical) questions. But the view is also mistaken in thinking that these questions can so easily be laid to rest, or that we would give them up even if we could. Wittgenstein, to his credit, did not believe any such thing. There is a point to asking what it all means—even if we have not yet seen the point.

Don't worry; this essay will keep its promise. Promises, after all, are themselves acts of meaning, forged in the medium of a shared language. They are what J. L. Austin, one of the early masters of ordinary-language philosophy, called performative utterances—that is, not just words but actions. To say "I promise" is to do something as well as to say something, and promises don't mean anything unless they're kept most of the time.



Still, let's not be too hasty in our pursuit of the answer to the big question.

**A**t the opposite extreme from ordinary-language minimalism about meaning is a form of maximalism that is, in its own way, just as appealing. I mean the desire, with us since at least biblical times, to find not an ordinary language of meaning but a perfect or universal one. That is the dream of the post-Babel world, the world of multiple and messy meanings, and it comes down to us in various forms, from the medieval Scholastic attempt to translate all teachings into the terms of the one true faith, to the 20th-century project of deriving all meaning from first principles of logic and mathematics.

Cyberfeminist Donna Haraway echoes this desire for a perfect language (and signals its danger): "Communications sciences and modern biologies are constructed by a common move, the translation of the world into a problem of coding, a search for a common language in which all resistance to instrumental control disappears and all heterogeneity can be submitted to disassembly, reassembly, investment, and exchange."

Haraway is right to see the far-reaching ambitions of universal coding in those terms. If everything were translatable into, say, digital code—including the idiosyncratic clusters of genetic information we call persons—then everything would be made disposable, not in the sense of being destined to be thrown away, but in the sense of being available for any kind of redeployment. Binary code is not fussy. From the point of view of the code, there is no difference between a text document, a film, a sequence of events, or an entity. The more our lives and experiences are fused into the play of this code, becoming chunks or nodes of code in an ever-fluid sea of information transfer, the more likely it is that the transition from a partially coded to a completely coded world will begin to make sense to us.

Notice that Haraway uses the word *translation* to describe this transition. Before there is universal translatability, there is a metalevel translation of all systems of meaning into a single, all-encompassing one. It is this meta-level translation that we have to keep an eye on. Universal languages are reductive, obviously. But what is reductive about reduction-

ism is not that it reduces the number of entities or substances in the world, but that it reduces the number of meaningful ways we have to talk about the world. And that makes the world a poorer place.

Meaning lodges in the community-based structure of our engagements with the world. It resides neither entirely in language nor entirely in the world, but in the complex, codependent relationship that exists between the two and in the complex web of speech-acts to which we commit ourselves every day. Seekers after a perfect or universal language see this codependent relationship as dysfunctional (which, of course, it often is), but then meet that condition with a strategy of maximalist translation—all dialects rendered into one supertongue. They think this move will solve everything, but it solves everything the way any totalitarian regime does—by ruthlessly eliminating diversity and possibility.

**B**inary code is not the only maximalist solution we are being peddled these days. Sociobiology, the bastard child of evolutionary theory, sometimes appears in the guise of a final explanation, as does physics in its less nuanced forms—a blithe explanation of everything, based on the unified field theory. Meme theory, which explains human culture entirely in terms of inherited replicator units, and other forms of reductive cultural determinism are currently fashionable examples of the same way of thinking. We are here, these theories say, as part of a grand design to transmit genetic information, or increase complexity, or build more intricate machines. Religious fundamentalism is another kind of maximalist final explanation: we are here to be judged by God. All these explanations of final purpose are suffused by the close-mindedness that comes when one believes (a) that there is a master key to meaning, and (b) that one has it. Most dangerous of all, of course, is the person who also believes (c) that nobody else can have it.

Most of the time these forms of maximalism function on a time scale, or a level of abstraction, that renders them pointless. They have no pull with us, down here on the ground. Even so, they often exert a malign influence and encourage a certain kind of passivity, a list-

## *What Does It All Mean?*

lessness that is easily mistaken for “philosophical” wisdom. The biggest problem with all of them is that, in explaining what it all means, they somehow still fail to explain why meaning moves us in the first place. Thus, their weirdly self-contradictory quality: in its effort to explain everything—to dispel all mysteries in one fell swoop of meaning—maximalism misses the deepest mystery, which is that things mean anything at all.

Consciousness, as materialist biologists know, is functionally redundant. That’s the bad news, for you conscious beings out there. There is simply no reason that our genetic transfers, even our cultural constructions, should be accompanied by subjective experiences such as love, triumph, dejection, or happiness. But they are—and that’s the compelling mystery at the heart of meaning. There is no need for meaning, yet here it is. Indeed, we might begin to suspect that the answer to our big question is not genetic persistence, or cultural complexity, or biological diversity, but what all those forces seem to serve: meaning itself.

The world of meaning is, in that sense, not unlike a work of art. We can speak of how it came to be, what it’s made of, even how it functions. We can talk about its place in our lives and about the things we try to express when we say that it matters to us. What we cannot do is reduce it to propositional content. And that suggests a different kind of answer altogether to the question we’ve been pursuing. At the risk of descending into what a drive-by objector would view as evasive paradox, the answer is this: the meaning of meaning is meaning itself.

**W**hat am I getting at by saying something so strange? Let me begin to explain in terms of a familiar example. The combination of empty success and hidden failure in maximalism is not unlike the peculiar conjunction of stimulation and boredom that is endemic to the modern age, when most people have finally had enough free time to escape from the drudgery of work—only to face the drudgery of leisure. The condition is too common to need a detailed description here. Who among us has not felt the creeping ennui of overstimulation, the dull paralysis of having too much time and too

many options? Entertainment, like so many things, contains its own negation: an excess of it, paradoxically, is boring.

But we should not try to dispel the boredom with further rounds of frantic distraction, for our boredom has something to tell us. In precisely such a condition we may be most inclined to ask, desperately but usefully, “What does it all mean?” This feeling of too-muchness is not, in fact, a recent phenomenon, or one restricted to the modern era of democratized leisure. It is more basic than that, linked intimately to our relations of meaning with the world. It is a function of mind itself, of our vast, plastic capacity to find things significant. We have evolved as creatures with brains both decentralized and task-generic. That is, while certain actions can clearly be associated with certain parts of the brain, the human brain itself has a generalist architecture. It is not built to do one thing, or even a few, but to do a vast number of different, often complex things, which is why so many things strike us as interesting—from puns to madrigals, from cave paintings to the internal combustion engine, from folksongs to the Doppler effect, from baseball to chess.

A generalist brain is both a blessing and a curse. For creatures like us, there is always too much meaning to make sense of—not simply because we have evolved tools of reminder, like books and techniques and institutions, but because each of us is every day creating more meaning than we can ourselves comprehend. Wishes and fantasies, dreams and visions—here and elsewhere, surplus meanings escape the bounds of the daily routine of trying to make sense.

Which means that to ask the question “What does it all mean?” is to set oneself up for constant disappointment. For there is no adequate general answer, no maximalist translation, equal to its scope. We may fool ourselves with the translations, or use them to overpower others, but at heart they are all corrosive of meaning. That is not to grant the field to the minimalists, however, because the question is still a real question, even if a rather odd one. And its real import is this: it sounds a cry of frustration, not with too little meaning but with too much. That is what makes us uneasy, because so little of the meaning in the world seems to mean

anything in particular. It does not matter, and that lack of mattering troubles us. And so, paradoxically, a surfeit of meaning (in the world, in ourselves) seems to be matched by a dearth of meaning, or of the right kind of meaning (in the world, in ourselves).

Our anxiety about meaning is really an anxiety about ourselves, therefore, or, more precisely, about ourselves as we engage with the world. When we ask, “What does it all mean?” we are raising another question: “How should I shape my life?” Socrates knew this, and labored under no professional delusions that, in the end, metaphysics and epistemology, which concern the nature of reality and knowledge, respectively, could be separated from ethics. All inquiry, whatever its subject, has as its final object the matter of how to go about living. Philosophers have lost sight of this idea so often over the centuries that it sounds a trifle bizarre today, when most people, perhaps, would be incredulous if you were to suggest that all questions ultimately point to the one question: How ought I to live?

Before expanding on this crucial point, let me enter certain caveats. First, we’re still addressing a question, not an answer. That is very important. Plato’s mistake was to think that Socrates’ questions as to how we should live could be worked up into a system, a web of ultimate meaning, a super-answer. Ingenious and beautiful though his answer was, Plato could not finally escape the looming reductionism of his project. In the final analysis, Platonism is not in the Socratic spirit.

Second, I’m by no means entirely confident that I myself am pursuing the question well (though I hope I am). This point is worth emphasizing, because the drive-by objectors among you will perhaps be inclined to dig for dirt. But anything you might find to discredit me, however amusing, is beside the point. If Plato’s mistake was trying to systematize a deep insight, ours too often is failing to distinguish an insight from the person who reports it.

Third, though my emphasis is on the individual, because I want to throw the question back onto each one of us, I do not mean to defend meaning as individual or idiosyncratic. It is not the case that “each of us has his own meaning.” The ordinary-language philosophers are right that meaning, to be meaning-

ful, has to be shared by a group of language users.

The whole point, and the problem, of meaning is that it reveals the complex isomorphic relationship between us (as readers, or perhaps slaves, of meaning) and the rest of the sociocultural world (as the site, or reflection, of meaning). We are always both creating and being created by the world around us—which includes, crucially, other creatures in the same fix. It is the condition of being so stranded, of being both trapped inside our heads and able (sometimes) to fashion meanings that other meaning creators can parse, that makes the whole question of meaning so unsettling. If we arrive at different answers to the question of what this or that means—and we will—that does not mean meaning is whatever each one of us thinks it is. It means merely (merely!) that we have ahead of us an even harder task than we thought.

**T**here remains, then, one issue for us to consider: What practical import, if any, does the question “What does it all mean?” have for our lives? It is one thing to say that asking how we ought to live is central to human life, and quite another to explain how this cashes out in day-to-day terms. I want to track the application of insight that arises from confrontation with our unanswerable question. If the cry of frustration elicited by the question remained at the level of frustration, if it did not change anything at all, we would be in desperate straits indeed. The question is not a request for information. All right. And it cannot actually be answered in full without doing violence to itself. Fine. But if it had no purchase at all on the world of our actions and experiences, it would not be worth our attention. Immersed in meaning, awash in content, how best can we cope?

There are at least five principal responses. First, we have to recognize the enduring temptation of what were above called maximalist solutions, the attempts to find a universal code, to command and control our engagements of meaning with the world. The temptation does not go away, and its dangers are manifold. In its worst and most obvious form, it issues in knowingness, a sense that we know exactly what’s going on. Knowingness is mur-



*The Death of Socrates (1787), by Jacques-Louis David*

derous of wonder and of insight, and ultimately it does a violent disservice to that which it sought to serve, the vast array of meaning itself. It sucks the meaning out of meaning.

**T**hat might lead to a second kind of temptation, which is really minimalism taken to an extreme (if logical) conclusion. I mean the tendency to avoid engagements of meaning with the world—often by diminishing one’s world by stages to a tiny ordered corner where meaning is rigid, a corner safe from the myriad complications and ramifications that lie just outside the sacred space.

In the right circumstances, of course, that orientation can be productive, as, for example, when the protected space is a specialist discourse—say, quantum physics or baseball. But anyone who begins to think that quantum theory or baseball exhausts the meaning in the world is on the fast track to madness. Eventually, avoidance collapses into a form of command and control; its responses and anxieties are the same. And minimalism becomes a form of mad maximalism. Its triumph is not to expand a particular language to encompass the world, but to shrink the world to fit a particular language.

The third response is to attempt to accept and ingest the endless variety of

meaning-engagements. It’s popular in our day, partly because we have so many shiny new toys that make it possible, and partly because we are training successive generations in a greater facility for it. But as a response to the vastness of meaning, this option, too, is self-defeating. There is no velocity that can take us beyond the limits of mortal life, and the speed merchants of the current mediascape are no better than any of us at knowing the meaning of meaning. Arguably, they are much worse off, for their hasty engagements soon begin to lack texture and depth. Expanding intake does not satisfy the need for meaning, because there is always more volume to accept and ingest, and a great deal of that volume is trash. The mind becomes an Augean stable, with too much manure to move about. Beware the simple growth of volume in meaning; it makes what is precious harder to find. Great art and great philosophy are rare, and always have been.

A fourth response to the array of meanings is defeatist or nihilist (or maybe simply bored). It follows hard on the heels of the speed merchants’ restlessness. This response says of every meaning, large or small, rich or paltry, “Whatever.” The indifference is a natural, or at least widespread, response to the great array of meanings on offer in our cul-

tural experience. It's a perfect illustration of the isomorphism that exists between self and world. If the world is a 500-channel universe of offerings to which one is equally indifferent—a crowded catalogue of been-there, done-that Web sites—what more appropriate response than to become a person who has no interest in anything at all? The limit-case of the Socratic interlocutor's art is to engage people who have no interest at all in having meaning matter to them. One can only hope that they will grow out of this attitude and begin to realize that meaning ought to matter, at least sometimes. Until then, it will be difficult to persuade them, for, from their point of view, that effort of persuasion is just another boring message being directed at them from some point on the mediascape, another doomed bid for their already-gone attention.

Which brings me to a fifth response, and the only truly good one. It's what we might call critical immersion in the world of our meaning-engagements. This option may seem obvious after everything that's been said so far, but obvious things are often true, and the obvious, after all, is a philosopher's stock-in-trade. More to the point, its being obvious doesn't make it any less difficult. Indeed, if we understand the question of meaning as really being about shaping a life so that it's a worthwhile life, one can hardly imagine a task more daunting. It must encompass the ridiculous and the sublime, the banal and the stunning, because every moment of waking life is a form of engagement with the world of meaning—another line or two in the story we tell about ourselves.

At that story's center is the enduring inefability of human consciousness, the peculiar capacity in humans (and maybe in other entities; we ought to be open-minded on the issue) for existence to be like something: to have a mood and particularity and texture that's experienced directly only by the subject and that's irreducible to anything else. What it's like for me to be me, or for you to be you, is a condition that repels reduction or translation. It cannot be rendered into anything other than itself. This quality of individual consciousness makes everything

else possible, for, without it, there is nothing we could call meaningful, and therefore no things or thoughts we could call questions, and therefore no subclass of questions we could call philosophical. Questions such as these: Have I taken pleasure in beauty? Have I fashioned humor or wit? Have I forged genuine friendships? Have I established a beachhead of civility and justice in my political interactions? Have I taken up roles and professions with integrity and joy? Have I left the world a better, more interesting place than I found it? Have I done one simple thing—changed a tire, written a letter, cooked dinner, performed a heart bypass—as well as it could be done?

In such moments, we are asked to make many choices and judgments. We can make them well or badly. But whatever we do, our actions will add up to a mortal span, to the story that is my life or yours. Our most basic choice, the one that grounds all the others, is this: Do we attend closely to the business of our choices, or do we flee from them, in arrogance, or fear, or boredom—or some combination of all three? That's the only ultimate purpose or meaning that we can make sense of. But it's enough.

An old saw suggests that any decent thesis can be stated while standing on one leg. That works only if you and I are already talking about the same thing (not in agreement, necessarily), as I hope by now we are. So let me return, one last time, to the question at the head of this essay, and do so on one metaphorical leg.

What does it all mean? That life is full of meaning, too much meaning to make sense of in any simple fashion. That wonder in the face of meaning's richness is appropriate and necessary—is, in truth, indispensable. That only open-mindedness, and the humility that comes with it, will allow us, finally, to sort good meanings from bad, the worthwhile from the mere distraction. That in the fullness of our allotted time and after our fashion, we may perhaps put together enough meanings-that-matter to judge of ourselves that we have told a good story, lived a life that was worth living.

That it all begins with a question mark. □

# WQ

## An Invitation

Please join us in Washington, D.C.,  
October 2001, as the  
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars  
celebrates the 25th Anniversary of  
*The Wilson Quarterly*  
with a dinner and a program on  
"The Shadow of Woodrow Wilson"

*Details to be announced in the Summer issue. Participation will be limited. To be included on our mailing list, please send an e-mail to [WQ@WWIC.SI.EDU](mailto:WQ@WWIC.SI.EDU), or write to the Wilson Quarterly, One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004-3027. Attention: Anniversary.*

## FELLOWSHIPS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



The **Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars** announces the opening of its 2002-2003 Fellowship competition. The Center awards academic year residential fellowships to men and women from any country with outstanding project proposals on national and/or international issues. Projects should have relevance to the world of public policy or provide the historical framework to illumine policy issues of contemporary importance.

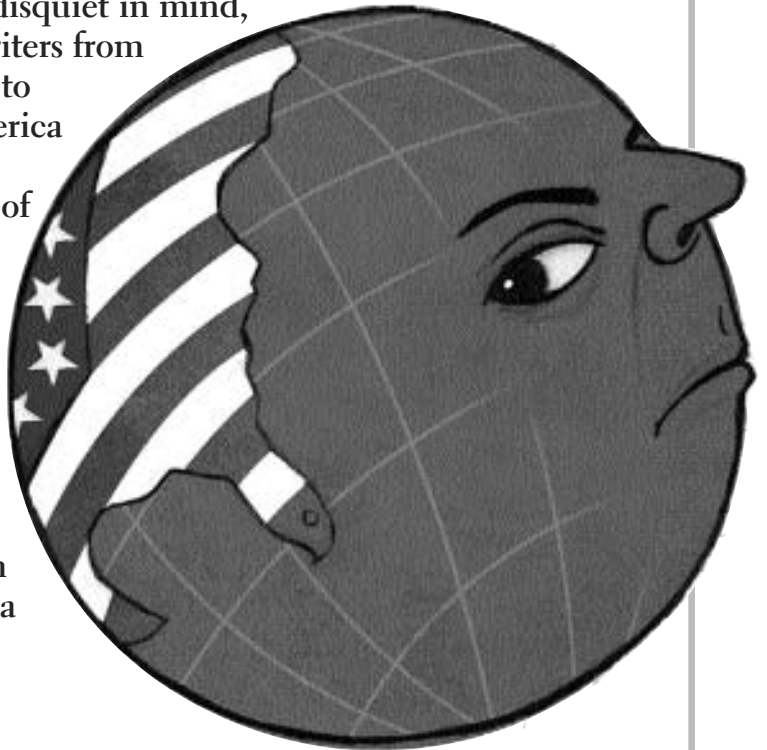
Fellows are provided offices, access to the Library of Congress, Windows-based computers, and research assistants.

**The application deadline is October 1, 2001.** For eligibility requirements and application guidelines, please contact the Center. If you wish to download the application, please visit our Web site at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org>.

Scholar Selection and Services Office  
One Woodrow Wilson Plaza  
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20004-3027  
E-mail: [fellowships@wwic.si.edu](mailto:fellowships@wwic.si.edu)  
Tel: 202-691-4170  
Fax: 202-691-4001

# HOW THE WORLD VIEWS AMERICA

The overwhelming predominance of the United States in the post-Cold War world has left many Americans uneasy—and a bit perplexed. Why, we wonder, doesn't the world see us as we tend to see ourselves, as selfless champions of freedom and democracy? The national unease was reflected in last fall's presidential campaign, when both major-party candidates called for a new humility in the nation's foreign policy. With this disquiet in mind, we asked seven writers from around the world to describe how America looks from where they stand. Many of the criticisms are harsh. Yet from even the most critical, two truths emerge: the United States cannot avoid engagement with the world; nor can it forgo its role as a beacon of liberty.



Allister Sparks on Africa (46) Denis Lacorne on France (51)  
Fouad Ajami on the Middle East (56) Wang Jisi on China (61)  
Peter Schneider on Germany (66) Sergio Aguayo on Mexico (72)  
Yuri Levada on Russia (77)

# A View of Rome from the Provinces

by Allister Sparks

The American scholar spoke in a matter-of-fact tone. “Not since Rome,” he said, “has a single power so dominated the world—militarily, economically, culturally; in science, in the arts, in education.” Around the Washington seminar table, sage heads nodded. It was not a statement uttered with boastful intent. It was spoken, and received by the audience, as an expression of self-evident truth.

Objectively assessed, the statement is probably true. American dominance in the world is indeed extraordinary. Yet, as the only foreigner in the room, I bristled. There is a disturbing whiff of hubris about such an assured assumption of one’s own superiority. I made some crack about how good it was to come from the provinces to Rome to sit at the feet of the patricians, but I fear the irony passed unnoticed. The American self-image of a mighty power that is also a benign hegemon, the global custodian of democratic values and human rights, is deeply rooted. There is genuine bewilderment at the fact that the United States is not universally admired but is, rather, often seen as domineering and manipulative.

Much of the hostility, of course, stems from envy. It has been the lot of the rich through the ages to be resented by the poor, and Africa, being the poorest of the poor, has more than its share of this resentment. But it is more accurate to speak of a love-hate relationship, for in Africa, as elsewhere, America’s pop music and culture, its movies and television, its fashions and its fast-food restaurants are pervasive, even as the resentment of cultural invasiveness smolders. Developing countries want direct U.S. investment to build their economies, but the transnational corporations that make the investments are targeted as symbols of economic imperialism. The United States is criticized for not being more directly involved in humanitarian interventions, especially in Africa, but if it does get involved, it is accused of being hegemonic.

Ironically, my own country, South Africa, which shares in this love-hate relationship with the United States, is also caught in a Catch-22 in its relationship with the rest of the African continent. In regional terms, it is the most advanced democracy and something of a superpower, accounting for 40 percent of sub-Saharan Africa’s total gross domestic product. For decades, African states longed for the day when South Africa would be liberated from its status as the apartheid pariah and become the economic engine that would pull Africa out of its mire of poverty and underdevelopment, much as Japan did for the Pacific Rim. But now that South Africa is free and democratic, there is acute resentment of its busi-





*A crowd surges toward President Bill Clinton in Accra, Ghana, during his 1998 African tour.*

nessmen as they thrust northward, and its political leaders are almost obsessively cautious not to appear to be throwing their weight around.

Like America in the world at large, South Africa has the power, but fearful of being called domineering, it winds up being accused of failing to provide leadership. It, too, is reluctant to join peacekeeping missions in Africa. “It’s an exact analogy,” says Gregory Mills, director of the South African Institute of International Affairs. “We’re both damned if we do and damned if we don’t.”

**S**outh Africa’s love-hate relationship with the United States has moved through cycles over the years. The United States has long been a reference point for black South Africans, who have not only identified with the civil rights struggle of African Americans but at times looked to them for salvation, even as they resented what they perceived to be Washington’s de facto support for white minority rule in South Africa. For their part, white South Africans, who still dominate the economy, admire the dynamism of American capitalism and have historically shared the American abhorrence of communism. Nevertheless, they have a faintly derogatory attitude toward the United States, inherited from their European past.

During the 1920s, Marcus Garvey’s back-to-Africa movement ignited an apocalyptic expectation among black South Africans that their liberation was at hand. Word spread that Garvey, who had formed his Black Star shipping line to transport African Americans to Africa, was sending a fleet to liberate South Africa and establish a black republic. *AmaMelika ayeza* (“The Americans are coming”) was initially a rumor and then a slogan that sparked a political awakening with the for-

mation of a militant black labor movement under a man named Clemens Kadalie.

When I first came to Johannesburg, in the 1950s, the pullulating black townships around the gold-mining city evinced an identification with what these newly urbanized folk imagined was the racier side of American life. Crime gangs arose, with names like “the Americans” and “the Berliners” and larger-than-life leaders who affected what they imagined was an American lifestyle. America, the land of Jesse Owens and Joe Louis, was perceived as the place where the black man was free, or at least where he was a man of the city, of the Big Time—with a big car, racy speech, and flashy suits.

Later, after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, the banning of the African National Congress (ANC), and the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela, this romantic vision faded. It was replaced by a more hard-nosed identification with the Soviet Union when the West generally failed to support the ANC exiles, and only the socialist countries (including those in Scandinavia) gave them sanctuary and material aid. The intellectual influence of this support base; continued racism in the United States; a perception, particularly during the Reagan years, that Washington was a covert supporter of the apartheid status quo; America’s shift away from its traditional liberalism; and the emergence of a tougher, more grasping form of capitalism all combined to make *capitalism* itself a pejorative word and the United States something of an ogre. “Reagan and his ‘constructive engagement’ policy made us very angry,” says Nthato Motlana, Mandela’s lifelong friend and adviser. “He seemed to support all the worst dictators in the world. We just hated Americans at that time.”

That perception softened considerably in the late 1980s with the surge of public support for the anti-apartheid cause in America. Congress overrode President Reagan’s veto of sanctions against South Africa, and U.S. economic pressure proved decisive in forcing the apartheid regime to the negotiating table. Then came the collapse of the Soviet empire, at the very moment the ANC triumphantly assumed power after its long and arduous liberation struggle.

The end of the bipolar world has brought a new ambiguity. The ANC is nothing if not pragmatic, so it recognizes America’s supreme importance—Mandela’s first trip abroad was to the United States, where he was lionized and given the honor of being one of the few foreign heads of state to address Congress. But with the end of bipolar competition, the Third World generally and Africa in particular find themselves increasingly on the margins of world affairs and even forgotten.

There is also a sense that the United States has become more arrogant and isolationist. The legacy of the Reagan years and the winning of the Cold War, most black South Africans believe, have produced a sea change in the American ethos. There has been a dwindling of the idealistic spirit that inspired the Peace Corps, a discrediting of liberalism, a persistent dominance

>ALLISTER SPARKS, a former Wilson Center Public Policy Scholar, is a South African journalist. He was editor of the crusading Rand Daily Mail during the 1970s, reported for the Washington Post and Britain’s Observer during the 1980s, and was most recently editor of TV News and Current Affairs for the South African Broadcasting Corporation. He is the author of two books about South Africa, *The Mind of South Africa* (1990) and *Tomorrow Is Another Country* (1995), and is at work on a third, covering the Mandela years. Copyright © 2001 by Allister Sparks.

in foreign policy of the “national interest” over “humanitarian interests” — likely to be more pronounced under President George W. Bush — and an attitude in domestic policy that in the land of opportunity the poor, who are disproportionately black, are to blame for their own misery. “I visit the U.S. often and I have to say that Martin Luther King’s dream has not been realized,” says Motlana. “Many African Americans still live in wretched conditions, and you wonder why a country as well endowed as the U.S. allows that to happen. The African Americans I meet are very bitter about the American system. Their anger is much greater than that of the black South Africans.”

**B**ill Clinton introduced more ambiguity into the U.S.-African relationship. Admittedly, he paid more attention to Africa than did any previous U.S. president. Soon after his inauguration, he held an unprecedented event, the White House Conference on Africa; he organized the first-ever United States–Africa ministerial meeting, attended by representatives of 50 countries in 1999; he paid two visits to the continent; he addressed the South African Parliament; he developed a close personal relationship with Mandela; and he sent a stream of cabinet delegations to Africa, at the rate of about one every two months. But he did not match his words and gestures with action.

Africa’s crises multiplied during the Clinton years, yet the administration did little to prevent or alleviate them other than provide some token funding for peace-keeping forces. It took no action to stop the Rwanda genocide or the appalling atrocities in Sierra Leone. In Liberia, the nearest thing the United States has to an ex-colony in Africa, it brought no meaningful pressure to bear on the evil Charles Taylor to stop him from sending aid to Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front or to stay his hand in the looting of “blood” diamonds. It also supported a deal that brought Sierra Leone’s psychopathic Foday Sankoh, leader of the Front, into a “government of national unity” and gave him control of the country’s mineral resources, even as Sankoh’s men were drugging child soldiers and chopping off the hands and feet of ordinary citizens.

AFRICA’S CRISES MULTIPLIED  
DURING THE CLINTON YEARS,  
YET THE ADMINISTRATION  
DID LITTLE TO PREVENT  
OR ALLEVIATE THEM.

There have been no U.S. initiatives on the continuing conflicts in Angola, where Washington’s onetime client, Jonas Savimbi, is the key problem figure, or in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which continues to suffer after the horrendous reign of another ex-client, Mobutu Sese Seko. Other crises have smoldered unattended in the Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, and Sudan. Meanwhile, new crises loom in Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Ivory Coast, three key states that, until now, have been regarded as pillars of stability.

It seems clear that after the 1993 military debacle in Somalia, which left 18 American soldiers dead, the United States will not soon use armed intervention again in Africa. Yet it has intervened in Kosovo and Bosnia, and would doubtless be willing to do so again in the Middle East. The rationale is that U.S. national interests are at stake in those regions, but to Africans the

choice looks more like racial discrimination. A recent study by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) shows that U.S. companies have larger investments in Africa (more than \$15 billion) than in either the Middle East or eastern Europe. America's total trade with Africa (about \$20 billion annually) exceeds that with all former communist states, including Russia. Africa, moreover, is one of the world's most active areas of oil and gas development. Fifteen percent of U.S. oil imports now come from Africa (mostly Nigeria and Angola), and the figure will increase to more than 20 percent over the next four years.

What is more difficult to understand is that even while the Clinton administration was making such a show of attention to Africa, the staffing of the State Department's Africa Bureau was run down, many key U.S. embassies in Africa were left understaffed, and more than a dozen U.S. Agency for International Development missions in Africa were closed. As the CSIS study noted: "Large stretches of the continent—particularly areas suffering acute conflict—are no longer covered by on-site diplomatic personnel."

**A**nother matter that raises concern in these distant provinces of the empire is the growing U.S. scorn for the emerging framework of international organizations and the trend toward greater American unilateralism. While maintaining its self-image as the global custodian of human rights, the United States took 40 years to ratify the 1948 Genocide Convention, and it remains one of the few countries that have failed to ratify the Landmines Agreement, the International Covenant on the Rights of Children, or the Rome Treaty establishing an international criminal court for human rights. Washington and Belgrade were the only two capitals that refused to participate in the proceedings of the Independent International Commission on Kosovo, which has investigated the war in that region.

"There is a schizophrenia here," says Richard Goldstone, the South African judge who cochairs the commission. "Americans believe in these institutions, they want to see international criminals prosecuted, but they don't want to open themselves to the process. I think they fear that the institutions will be used against them politically, but it is perceived as arrogance, as though they regard themselves as above scrutiny."

There are allegations of arrogance and hypocrisy in matters of trade too. The United States, which initially developed its own economy behind high tariff walls, insists that developing countries remove protectionist barriers, to the huge advantage of U.S. exporters. Yet opposition to increasing America's imports of African textiles from a paltry 0.8 percent of all textile imports to 1.6 percent stalled the African Growth and Opportunity Act in Congress for more than a year.

Finally, of course, there is the matter of The Election, a source of much hilarity and jesting on the part of us provincials, who must subject our own electoral processes to the scrutiny of outside observer teams, and ultimately to the judgment of the United States, if we are to receive a stamp of democratic acceptability. Romulus in his feasts in honor of Neptune, so runs the legend, introduced the most ancient of all Roman spectacles, the circus. Al Gore and George W. Bush, it would seem, have revived the tradition. □

# The Barbaric Americans

by Denis Lacorne

**T**o the French, the winner of the American presidential election in 2000 was Bill Clinton. Political commentators expressed no particular liking for George W. Bush. The little that was known about him was not encouraging. Had he ever visited Europe? Only once—a short trip to Rome to attend a friend’s wedding. The French consensus is that American democracy was discredited by the failure to complete the recount of Florida’s votes. It is thus left to the American news media, according to an editorial in the weekly *L’Express*, to save the “honor of American democracy” by finishing the job. But Bush’s problem, for Europeans, stems from a flawed personality as much as from the election. In the French press, he has been called a “dumb leader,” the “Forrest Gump of American politics,” and the great master of a new adventure in “political cretinism.”

At the same time, the American election provoked a series of French articles praising Bill Clinton’s legacy and his well-demonstrated powers of seduction. There is a genuine French nostalgia for Clinton—a president who, in the view of Felix Rohatyn, the former U.S. ambassador to France, would have been overwhelmingly reelected had he been the president of France. Projecting their own perceptions onto the American political scene, French journalists were convinced that Clinton remained quite popular in the United States as well. “What if Clinton had been a candidate?” ran a headline in *L’Express*, which suggested that a last-minute appearance by Clinton would have saved Al Gore’s candidacy. The daily *Le Monde* published a sympathetic eight-page supplement that praised the departing president for having been “an economic reformer,” “a protector of blacks, women, and homosexuals,” “an activist struggling for gun control,” “a man who managed to stop the congressional offensive of the fundamentalist Republican Right.”

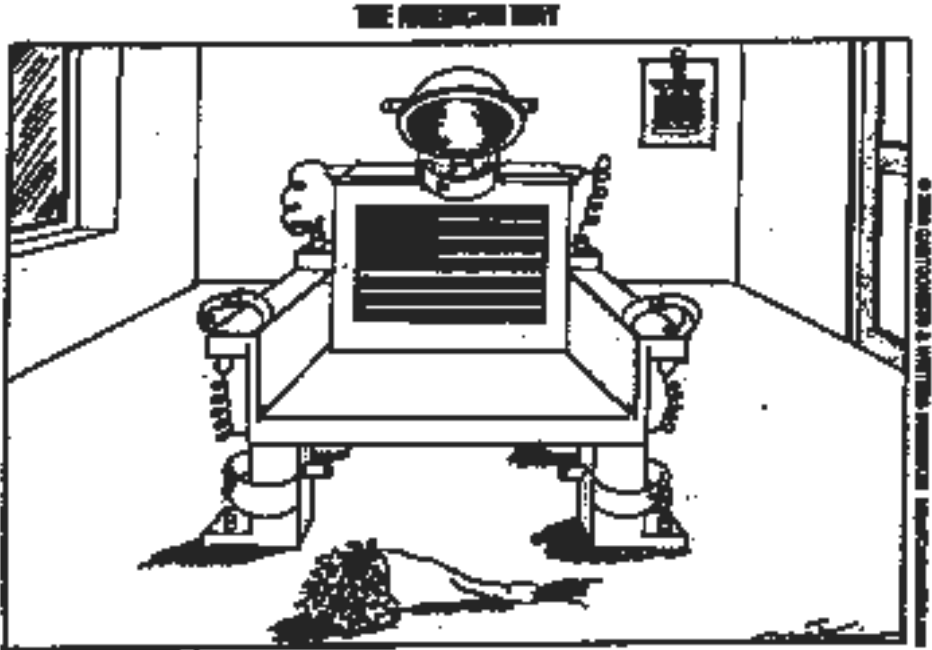
True, there had been minor problems with *l’affaire Lewinsky*, but those were just diverting *polissonneries* (naughty tricks) that did not shift the balance of Clinton’s achievements to the negative side. In the popular *Journal du Dimanche*, the only French Sunday newspaper, the novelist Philippe Sollers wrote of missing Clinton’s “gaiety, his twisted sense of humor, his false apologies, his desperately rational attempts to [help] Israelis and Palestinians reach a peace agreement, his wife’s steely nerves, his humorous little film [a spoof of his lame duck status shown at a White House correspondents’ dinner].” By comparison, according to Sollers, Bush is the “typical provincial hero of the most banal family novel.” As for Clinton’s controversial pardons, they amounted, in *Le Monde*, only to a “failed exit.”

French perceptions of the United States, as measured by a recent SOFRES/French American Foundation public opinion poll, are rather negative. Nearly half the French (48 percent) express “neither sympathy, nor lack of sympathy” for the United States. Very few would like to live in the United States (16 percent), and an overwhelming majority (80 percent) are convinced that the American system of social protection does not work well, and certainly not as well as the system in France. When asked for “images that come to mind when you think of America,” a majority of respondents (56 percent) gave answers linked to violence, criminality, the death penalty, and the liberal availability of weapons. Presented with a short list of words and asked which best evoke the United States, the respondents generally chose the most unflattering terms: “violence” (67 percent), “power” (66 percent), “inequality” (49 percent), and “racism” (42 percent). Only 20 percent mentioned “freedom,” and four percent, “generosity.” Note that those are post-Cold War opinions. Without such a list to choose from, very few French people surveyed today spontaneously denounce “American imperialism” (three percent) or even “capitalism” (two percent)—because a majority of the French are now themselves small capitalist shareholders.

**B**ut the feelings are not entirely negative. Though only 16 percent of the French would ever consider living permanently in the United States, 39 percent would like to attend an American university. That is particularly true of the young, 54 percent of whom want to study in the United States. The percentage is even higher for French college graduates. (Two-thirds of them would like to attend an American university.) The U.S. educational system clearly has great appeal for young French people. And though we French fight to defend our language, we simultaneously borrow numerous English terms from the new economy. In the hybrid vocabulary of a new generation of Frenchmen, we talk about “*le net*,” we pray for “*les business angels*,” we praise a “*petite startup*,” and we are reluctant to replace “*e-mail*” with the preferred term of the Commissariat à la Langue Française, “*le courriel*.” The only “smart” defense of the French language was dreamt up by Claude Hagège, a respected professor of linguistic theory at the Collège de France, and it’s actually rather simpleminded: let us teach at least two foreign languages in French primary schools, but not English, which is not needed at this stage of a student’s life (!). Why two foreign languages and not one, as in the rest of Europe? To set a worthy example for our neighbors and, above all, to get them to choose French as their second language. Hagège’s multilingualism is quite self-serving, a desperate strategy to block the progress of English as the true unifying language of the European Union.

What should be of most concern to Americans is the perception that their country is a violent, uncivilized society, incapable even of assimilating its own immigrants properly. Why is that perception so prevalent in France? In part because the available evidence shows that the United States is indeed far more violent

>DENIS LACORNE is a Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of International Relations (CERI), a professor of political science at the Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences-Po), and a visiting professor at the University of Paris I-Panthéon-Sorbonne. He is the author of *La Crise de l'identité américaine: Du melting pot au multiculturalisme* (1997) and *L'Invention de la république, le modèle américain* (1991), and the coauthor and coeditor of *The Rise and Fall of Anti-Americanism: A Century of French Perception* (1990). Copyright © 2001 by Denis Lacorne.



*The cartoon is Spanish but the sentiment is European: America is a less-than-civilized place.*

than most European societies. Consider, for example, comparative data on the number of men between the ages of 25 and 34, the “dangerous age” bracket, who commit murder. The comparison is stunning. Each year, 38 of 100,000 men in that age bracket commit a murder in the United States, compared with fewer than two of 100,000 in Germany, one of 100,000 in France, and an even lower number in the United Kingdom.

Similar disproportions mark the prison populations of the United States and Europe. Some 650 of 100,000 Americans were incarcerated in 1997, compared with 120 of 100,000 individuals in the United Kingdom, 90 of 100,000 in France and Germany, 86 of 100,000 in Italy, 59 of 100,000 in Sweden, and 750 of 100,000 in Russia. “The United States,” writes French sociologist Loïc Wacquant, “shares with Russia the title of world champion for incarceration.” The visual media reinforce this image of a violent America. Over and over again, they show the horrors of random school shootings and the cruelty of inner-city drug wars.

**T**here’s yet another reason for the negative image of America: the systematic denunciation by European media of the use—and abuse—of the death penalty in the United States. The campaign of accusation is sustained, systematic, organized, and relentless. In European eyes, America is still a barbaric country, a Wild West that does not know how to police its population and control its judges and sheriffs. Executions are not merely reported in the French press. They are made front-page events and are discussed by leading journalists, novelists, and justices of the highest French courts. They are the subject of numerous op-ed pieces, unsigned editorials, and popular petition campaigns. The life stories of American death-row inmates such as Karla Faye Tucker, Betty Lou Beets, Gary Graham, Odell Barnes, and Mumia Abu-Jamal are thoroughly familiar to readers of French

newspapers, and the inmates' stories have mobilized some of the most famous French intellectuals (among them Jacques Derrida, who has participated in the campaign to save Mumia Abu-Jamal).

According to Raymond Forni, the chairman of the French National Assembly, the death penalty, as it is applied in the United States, is pure "savagery": "There used to be slavery, then organized racial segregation. Today there is the death penalty: [by] injection, firing squad, hanging, the electric chair, the use of gas. The country of scientific innovation deploys innovation in the service of death."

In the same vein, Robert Badinter, a former chief justice of the French Conseil Constitutionnel, thinks it deplorable that "the oldest democracy in the world has now joined the head pack of homicidal states, together with China, Iran, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Saudi Arabia." Convinced that the death penalty is "the most serious violation of the first of all human rights, the right to live," Badinter launched a campaign to get a million signatures on a petition, which was sent on January 21, 2001, to the newly elected American president.

Jack Lang, the minister of education in the Socialist government, went to Texas to spend a few minutes with Odell Barnes, in the hope of influencing the state's Board of Pardons. Barnes was executed, but not before thanking his supporters. That led Bernard Pivot, an influential French TV personality, to express a new form of patriotic pride: "I may be an old-fashioned patriot, but this week I'm proud to be French: an American publicly thanked the French. He was on death row."

That statement clearly reminded the French that they belong to the universe of civilization, in contrast to their American cousins, the barbarians. One French anthropologist even volunteered a cosmological explanation for what's going on in America: "Facing the threat of destruction of their social order, modern Americans, like the Aztecs, are terrified by the prospect of an end to the current cosmic cycle. Only the deaths of countless human beings can generate enough energy to counter the danger."

**W**ith their criticism, contemporary Frenchmen are actually renewing an old "scientific" tradition that was begun by the 18th-century French naturalist the Comte de Buffon and one of his early publicists, Corneille de Pauw. In his *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains* (1770), de Pauw wrote that "it is a great and terrible spectacle to see one half of the globe so disfavored by nature that everything there is degenerate or monstrous." The degeneracy was so widespread that it affected the physical and mental abilities of native Americans—as it affected the faculties of newly arrived European settlers, who, in the words of de Pauw, became "similarly degenerate" because of the "secret vice" of the New World's harsh climate. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton worked hard to redress the image of a "degenerate" America. But in the end, their efforts failed. Three centuries after Corneille de Pauw's attacks, the old stereotype survives: Americans have not reached the intellectual and moral level of their European counterparts. Despite all the available evidence, they still believe in the redeeming virtues of the death penalty. They remain as cruel and barbaric as the old Aztecs.



The ethical war between France and the United States is comforting for the French intelligentsia, who are able to reaffirm, at little cost, their moral and intellectual superiority. The war also reveals a surprising ignorance on their part about the workings of the American political system. Badinter's petition to the president of the United States will have little impact because it ignores an essential reality: the federal nature of the American political system. The centralism of the "one and indivisible" French Republic has not prepared us French to understand the functioning of a federal government. Few in France know that criminal law in the United States varies from state to state, and that the abolition of the death penalty would require 50 distinct legislative decisions (or a reversal by the U.S. Supreme Court). In France, as in most European parliamentary systems, it took only a simple majority vote in the National Assembly to abolish the death penalty in 1981, at a time when 62 percent of the French still favored the practice.

THE ETHICAL WAR  
BETWEEN FRANCE AND  
THE UNITED STATES IS  
COMFORTING FOR THE  
FRENCH INTELLIGENTSIA,  
WHO ARE ABLE TO REAFFIRM,  
AT LITTLE COST, THEIR  
MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL  
SUPERIORITY.

The slogan used so often by U.S. politicians and candidates for local police and judicial positions—"Vote for me because I'm tough on crime"—is unfashionable in France today. That's not because we're unconcerned about criminal activities, but rather because Jean-Marie Le Pen's extreme-right party (Le Front National) played excessively on our fear of crime—and discredited itself in the process. The fact remains that France and its European neighbors are not violent societies. Food markets and wine shows are more popular weekend destinations than gun shows. And because our society is less violent than U.S. society, we are less willing to imagine the outside world as dangerous, and we are not disposed to fill the skies with a virtual Maginot Line against the missiles of some hypothetical rogue state.

**A** more fundamental difference between France and the United States lies, paradoxically, in a quality they have in common. Both claim to have invented the modern republican form of government, together with modern freedoms and human rights. The competing universalist pretensions of their two revolutions, the particular arrogance of the French intelligentsia, and the contempt of the American political class for neo-Gaullist posturing will ensure that France and the United States remain rivals. This rivalry can only be asymmetrical: we French would like to civilize the world, but we are instead being globalized by the United States, even as our "civilization" is rejected by our European neighbors as excessively Francocentric. Yet there is one thing on which all Europeans agree: no country that has the death penalty today can pretend to be civilized. □

# Stranger in the Arab-Muslim World

by Fouad Ajami

That wily, flamboyant Egyptian ruler Anwar al-Sadat contracted an affection for things and people American when he dominated his land in the 1970s. In the distant, powerful United States, which had ventured into Egypt, he saw salvation for his country—a way out of the pan-Arab captivity, the wars with Israel, and the drab austerity of a command economy. But Sadat was struck down in October 1981. The following year Sherif Hetata, a distinguished Egyptian man of letters, published a novel called *al-Shabaka* (The net), into which he poured the heartbreak and unease of his political breed (the secular Left) at America's new role in Egypt.

It is not a brilliant novel. The fiction is merely a vehicle for Hetata's radical politics. A net (an American net) is cast over Egypt and drags the old, burdened land into a bewildering new world. The protagonist of the novel, Khalil Mansour Khalil, is an educated Egyptian who works for the public sector in the pharmaceutical industry and has known the setbacks and the accomplishments of the Nasser years. The Six-Day War shattered the peace and promise of his world in 1967, but vindication came six years later, in October 1973, when Egyptian armor crossed the Suez Canal. "We lived through a period of great enthusiasm, but it did not last." American diplomacy changed things, "weaned" Egypt away from its old commitments.

Khalil feels the new world's temptations when Ruth Harrison, a mysterious American woman with some command of Arabic, enters his life. Glamorous and alluring, Harrison offers him a contract with an American multinational, and Khalil's drab world and marriage to Amina Tewfic, a woman with "roots deep in the ground," are set against the dazzle of Harrison's world: "Amina always faced me with the facts, laid bare the contradictions in my life; perhaps that is why I kept running away from her. But Ruth was different. She exercised an attraction I found difficult to resist. Was it just the fascination of the unknown, of visiting another world where everything is there for the asking?"

Khalil throws over his life and is doomed. Harrison is a spy come to this new American sphere of influence to decimate the Egyptian Left. Predictably, the affair ends in disaster. Harrison is murdered, and Khalil, insisting on his innocence, is put to death. American spies and tricksters and the Egyptians who fall under their sway dismantle the old world and erect in its place a world of betrayal. Egypt wades beyond its depth and barter time-honored truths for glitter, grief, and ruin.

The chroniclers of Arab-Islamic history since the mid-1970s must come to terms with two especially puzzling developments: the spread of American pop culture through vast stretches of the Arab world, and the concomitant spread of a furious anti-Americanism. Thus, even as Egypt was incorporated into the American imperium, a relentless anti-Americanism animated Egyptian Islamists and secularists alike. It flowed freely through Egyptian letters and cinema and seemed to be the daily staple of the official and semiofficial organs of the regime. A similar situation now prevails throughout the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, where an addiction to things American coexists with an obligatory hostility to the power whose shadow lies across the landscape.

Historians who take note of these developments will not explain them adequately if they believe that the anti-Americanism at play in the Muslim world merely reflects the anti-Americanism now visible in France or Russia or India, or among a certain segment of the Latin American intelligentsia. America's primacy in the world since the defeat of communism has whipped up a powerful strain of resentment. Envy was the predictable response of many societies to the astonishing American economic performance in the 1990s—the unprecedented bull run, the “New Economy,” the wild valuations in American equities, the triumphant claims that America had discovered a new economic world, free of the market's discipline and of the business cycle itself.

This global resentment inevitably made its way to Arab and Muslim shores. But the Muslim world was a case apart for Pax Americana and *sui generis* in the kind of anti-Americanism it nurtured. José Bové, the provocateur attacking the spread of McDonald's outlets in France, is not to be compared with Osama bin Laden, the Saudi-born financier suspected of bankrolling a deadly campaign of terror against American embassies and military barracks. The essayists of *Le Monde Diplomatique* may rail against *mondialisation* American-style (the business schools, the bad food, the unsenti-



A Teheran scene. During the 1990s, some 100,000 Iranians legally immigrated to the United States.

mental capitalism of a Wall Street–U.S. Treasury alliance). But a wholly different wind blows through Arab lands, where a young boy drove a Mercedes truck loaded with TNT into an American military compound in Beirut in October 1983; where terrorists targeted a housing complex for the American military in Saudi Arabia in June 1996; where two men in a skiff crippled an American destroyer on a re-fueling stop in Aden, Yemen. Grim, defining episodes of that sort, and many others like them, mark the American presence in Arab-Muslim domains.

**I**n the aftermath of the October 1973 war, the Arab and Iranian heartland slipped under American sway, and America acquired a kind of Muslim imperium. The development gained momentum from the needs of both the rulers and the social elites who had taken to American ways. The poorer states (read Egypt) needed sustenance; the wealthier states (read the states of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf), protection against the covetous poorer states. A monarch in Iran, at once imperious and possessed of a neurotic sense of dependency on American judgment, effectively brought down his own regime. The order he had put together became inseparable in the popular psyche from the American presence in Iran. And they were torched together. The tribune of the revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, was particularly skilled at turning the foreign power into the demon he needed. Iran alternated between falling for the foreigner's ways and loathing itself for surrendering to the foreigner's seduction. It swung wildly, from the embrace of the foreigner into a faith in the authority of the ancients and the reign of a clerical redeemer.

In the years to come, there would be no respite for America. Khomeini had shown the way. There would be tributaries of his revolution and emulators aplenty. A world had flung wide its own floodgates. It let the foreigner in and lost broad segments of its young to the hip, freewheeling culture of America. By violent reaction the seduction could be covered up, or undone.

Consider Osama bin Laden's description of America, as reported by a young Sudanese follower of bin Laden who defected and turned witness for American authorities: "The snake is America, and we have to stop them. We have to cut off the head of the snake. We cannot let the American army in our area. We have to do something. We have to fight them."

The American military force that troubles Osama bin Laden, that hovers over his Saudi homeland and reaches the ports of his ancestral land in Yemen, is there because the rulers of those lands acquiesced in its presence, even sought it. Bin Laden and his followers cannot overturn the ruling order in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf—entrenched dynasties that have mastered the art of governing and struck workable social contracts with the governed. But the rebels cannot concede that harsh truth. Better to hack at the foreign power. More flattering to the cause to say that the political orders in the region would fall of their own weight were it not for the armadas of the Americans and the military installations and weapons they have stored in the ports of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. Pax Americana may insist on its innocence, but,

>FOUAD AJAMI is the Majid Khadduri Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, and the author of *The Dream Palace of the Arabs* (1998). Copyright © 2001 by Fouad Ajami.

inevitably, it is caught in the crossfire between the powers that be and the insurgents who have taken up arms against them and who seek nothing less than the extirpation of America's presence from Muslim lands.

In fact, as Muslim societies become involved in a global economy they can neither master nor ignore, both rulers and insurgents have no choice but to confront the American presence. America has become part of the uneven, painful "modernity" of the Islamic world. Even American embassies have acquired an ambivalent symbolic character: they are targeted by terrorists and besieged by visa seekers—professionals who have given up on failed economies and a restricted way of life; the half-educated and the urban poor, who in earlier times would never have sought opportunity and a new life in a distant land.

Denial is at the heart of the relationship between the Arab and Muslim worlds and America. There can be no written praise of America, no acknowledgment of its tolerance or

DENIAL IS AT THE HEART OF  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
THE ARAB AND MUSLIM  
WORLDS AND AMERICA.

hospitality, or of the yearnings America has stirred in Karachi and Teheran, Cairo and Beirut, and in the streets of Ramallah. In November 2000, America extended a special gift to Jordan: a free-trade agreement between the two nations. Jordan was only the fourth country to be so favored, after Canada, Mexico, and Israel. The agreement was an investment in peace, a tribute to the late Jordanian ruler, King Hussein, and an admission of America's stake in the reign of his young heir, Abdullah II. But it did not dampen the anti-Americanism among professionals and intellectuals in Jordan.

There, as elsewhere, no intellectual can speak kindly of America. The attraction has to be hidden, or never fully owned up to. From Afghanistan to the Mediterranean, from Karachi to Cairo, human traffic moves toward America while anti-American demonstrations supply the familiar spectacle of American flags set to the torch. I know of no serious work of commentary in Arab lands in recent years that has spoken of the American political experience or the American cultural landscape with any appreciation. The anti-Americanism is automatic, unexamined, innate. To self-styled "liberals," America is the upholder of reaction; to Islamists, a defiling presence; to pan-Arabists, the backer of a Zionist project to dominate the region.

**I**n the pan-Arab imagination, there would be a measure of Arab unity had America not aborted it. There would be a "balance" of wealth and some harmony between the sparsely populated Arab oil states and the poorer, more populous Arab lands of the Levant had America not driven a wedge between them. There would be wealth for things that matter had those oil states not been tricked into weapons deals and joint military exercises they neither need nor can afford. "I hate America," a young Palestinian boy in the streets of Gaza said late last year to Michael Finkel, an American reporter who had come to cover the "Second Intifada" for the *New York Times Magazine*. But the matter is hardly that simple. Like the larger world to which he belongs, the boy hates America and is

drawn to it. His world wants American things without having to partake of American ways. It has beckoned America, and then bloodied America.

America entered Arab lands on particular terms. The lands were, in the main, authoritarian societies, and such middle classes as existed in them were excluded from meaningful political power. Monarchs and rulers of national states claimed the political world, and it was precisely through their good graces that America came on the scene. Pax Americana took to this transaction. It neither knew nor trusted the civil associations, the professional classes, the opposition. America had good reasons to suspect that the ground was not fertile for democratic undertakings. It was satisfied that Egypt's military rulers kept the peace. Why bother engaging those who opposed the regime, even the fragile bourgeois opposition that emerged in the late 1970s? Similarly, the only traffic to be had with Morocco was through its autocratic ruler, Hassan II. The man was harsh and merciless (his son, and successor, Mohammad VI, has all but admitted that), but he kept order, was "our man" in North Africa, and could be relied on to support America's larger purposes.

America extended the same indulgence to Yasir Arafat, the latest, and most dubious, ruler to be incorporated into its designs. In the Palestinian world, the security arrangements and the political arrangements had been struck with Arafat. His American handlers ignored such opposition as had arisen to him. With no real access to the Palestinian world, and precious little knowledge of Arafat's opponents, America seemed to have to choose between the Islamic movement Hamas and Arafat's Palestinian National Authority. An easy call. The Palestinian strongman, in turn, accepted America's patronage but frustrated America's wishes.

The middle classes in the Arab world were mired in the politics of nationalism, whereas the rulers always seemed supple and ready to wink at reality. There was precious little economic life outside the state-dominated oil sectors, and little business to be done without recourse to the custodians of the command economies. It was the prudent and, really, inevitable solution to negotiate American presence and American interests with those who, as the Arabic expression has it, have eaten the green and the dry and monopolized the life of the land.

The populations shut out of power fell back on their imaginations and their bitterness. They resented the rulers but could not overthrow them. It was easier to lash out at American power and question American purposes. And they have been permitted the political space to do so. They can burn American flags at will, so long as they remember that the rulers and their prerogatives are beyond scrutiny. The rulers have been particularly sly in monitoring the political safety valves in their domains. They know when to indulge the periodic outbursts at American power. Not a pretty spectacle, but such are the politics in this sphere of American influence.

America's primacy will endure in Arab and Muslim lands, but the foreign power will have to tread carefully. "England is of Europe, and I am a friend of the Ingliz, their ally," Ibn Saud, the legendary founder of the Saudi state, once said of his relationship with the British. "But I will walk with them only as far as my religion and honor will permit." In Arab and Muslim domains, it is the stranger's fate to walk alone. □

# Beauty—and Beast

by Wang Jisi

In a recent survey of Chinese attitudes toward America, the respondents—a cross-section of Chinese society—were asked to give the first words that came to mind at the mention of the United States. Thirty-four percent of them answered “modernization,” “affluence,” or “high-tech”; 11.6 percent said “democracy” or “freedom”; and 29 percent responded “overbearing,” “hegemonic,” “arrogant,” or “the world’s policeman.”

The sum of those responses is a fair representation of China’s ambivalent sentiments about America, a nation whose name translates literally into Chinese as “Beautiful Country” (*Meiguo*). When the Chinese focus on America within its own boundaries, they see a nation that is beautifully developed, governed, and maintained. But when they view the United States as a player on the international scene, most Chinese see an unattractive and malign presence. The Chinese are similarly ambivalent about what they assume to be America’s attitude toward China. Sixty percent of the respondents in the survey said they thought that America supports the process of reform and opening that is taking place in China, but an equal number said that the United States wants to prevent China from becoming a great power. They believe that Americans will accept only a China that goes the American way—and will hinder the nation’s development if it does not.

Not all Chinese hold similar views of the United States. Chinese society today is increasingly pluralized, and the China-U.S. relationship is increasingly multifaceted. Yet to most Chinese—the general public and the political elites—American condescension toward China and the contrast between America’s internal achievements and its external mischief are striking and puzzling.

At a closed-door meeting in Beijing, the editor of a leading Chinese newspaper expressed his feelings this way: “So far as its domestic conditions are concerned, the United States is a very good country. It is prosperous, powerful, and rich, and its living conditions are comfortable and humane. Americans have managed their country successfully. So why do we not want them to meddle in international affairs? Why are we so reluctant to learn from their experiences in running the country? Because they are too arrogant and too highhanded to be tolerated.”

To be sure, the editor’s comments were not entirely “politically correct.” Since the founding of the People’s Republic, the textbook definition of the United States has been that it is a capitalist country where the bourgeoisie exploits and oppresses the proletariat and where racial tensions reflect that class struggle. But because countless numbers of Chinese have recently made their way onto American soil as tourists, and many more have gotten ideas about America through publications, films and television, and the Internet, the official ideological line may or may not be relevant.

The Chinese debate among themselves as to whether the confusing outcome of the American presidential election in 2000 reflected a dirty power game

in a pseudo-democracy or a fair competition based on the rule of law and self-government. Many Chinese youngsters are fascinated by Bill Gates, Mariah Carey, Harrison Ford, and Michael Jordan. At the same time, serious observers point to school shootings, drug addiction, police brutality, and the disparity between rich and poor as evidence of what they call the “American disease.”

**B**ut if the Chinese people view U.S. domestic affairs with favorable or mixed feelings, they take a quite negative view of the role and behavior of the United States in global affairs. They do not accept America’s assertion that it acts in the world only on moral principles. They believe that self-interest drives U.S. foreign policy no less than it drives the foreign policy of any other nation. They point out that even American leaders justify U.S. international actions by invoking the national interest, as when President Richard Nixon said during his historic visit in 1972 that he had come to China in the interests of the United States. In 1991, President George Bush launched the Persian Gulf War to safeguard the Middle East oil supply, and not, as he asserted, to create a “new world order.” In Rwanda and other strife-torn countries, Washington has taken few steps to help because it sees little to gain.

It is especially difficult for the Chinese to accept the notion Americans have of their “manifest destiny” — that they are the people chosen by God to save the rest of the world for democracy and freedom. In China’s largely atheist society, the American propensity to interfere on the international stage seems no more than a camouflaged ambition to acquire fortune and power. The 1999 military action in Kosovo by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), for example, was widely perceived in China as an American scheme — under the guise of protecting human rights — to conquer Yugoslavia, isolate Russia, weaken the European Union, warn China, and, ultimately, keep the United States in a dominant position.

Some Chinese with a liberal, cosmopolitan outlook, who may not be so critical of America’s motivation or its alleged greediness for power, are nonetheless disturbed by America’s attitude. The Confucian tradition regards modesty as a virtue and presumption as a sin. The United States, in their eyes, is guilty of assuming too much. They particularly resent members of the U.S. Congress who know little about international issues yet attempt to impose sanctions on other nations.

The vast majority of Chinese observers reject the U.S. notion that America should “play a leadership role” in the world — both because they see that role as self-assumed and because the word *leadership* in the Chinese language connotes a hierarchical order in which many are subordinated to one. In their view, the United States should “mind its own business” — and remedy the various manifestations of social and moral decay at home before it denounces others.

Books and Hollywood movies are windows on America for the Chinese, and, for better or worse, they effectively shape America’s image in China. A lot of American movies reveal the dirty side of U.S. politics and society, even as they extol the virtuous side. But when the plots involve the international scene or imaginary star wars, Americans as a group are heroes and saviors, while the peoples of

>WANG JISI is director of the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. Copyright © 2001 by Wang Jisi.





Great Castigation Series: Coca Cola (1993), by Wang Guangyi

other nations are either followers of Americans (in which case, they must be “good guys”) or anti-American devils (who have to be eliminated). The U.S. news media tend to make judgments along the same lines: the lives and well-being of U.S. citizens are by definition more valuable than those of foreigners—friends and foes alike. Americans have a system of values; others have ideologies. Loyalty to America is “patriotism,” loyalty in other countries is merely “nationalism.”

Chinese commentators on international security issues observe that the United States possesses by far the most formidable armed forces in the world. Yet at a time when the world is basically at peace, America is increasing its military budget. The commentators refuse to buy the argument that a missile defense system, if developed by Americans, would not be threatening to other nations. The ostensibly defensive system, they believe, would embolden policymakers in Washington to take the offensive against potential rivals and deprive them of their defense capabilities. In other words, Americans want the luxury of “absolute security,” and they are prepared to achieve it by making other nations even more vulnerable.

In Chinese eyes, the world would be a safer and fairer place if the United States, China, Russia, the European states, Japan, and many other countries shared responsibility for dealing with global and regional issues through multi-lateral consultations in settings such as the United Nations. Unfortunately,

the world today is becoming increasingly unbalanced because international norms and institutions seem so much to favor the United States.

**E**conomic globalization has clearly benefited China. Millions of Chinese welcome the presence of Coke, McDonald's, Motorola, Microsoft, Disney, Reebok, and companies like them, and they earn good salaries working on the production lines of Western companies. But millions of other Chinese, particularly those working in state-owned enterprises that face fierce competition from American industrial giants, may lose their jobs. Because Americans are in China to make money, and not out of a sense of charity, few Chinese feel grateful to the United States for the improvement in U.S.-China economic relations.

For the Chinese, the United States is, at once, their greatest economic partner and their gravest external threat. It does not much matter to them how the United States is governed, or even how it conducts its global affairs generally. What does matter is America's attitude specifically toward the growth of China's national power.

The official Chinese line is that U.S. strategy is designed to Westernize, divide, and weaken China. Despite the obvious political motivation for such an allegation, the belief is widespread in China that the United States does indeed want to keep the country down for strategic purposes—and is not hostile merely to the communist leadership in Beijing. As one Chinese student of international relations has remarked, "I am puzzled by what the Americans have done to China. They say they do not like the Chinese government but are friendly to the Chinese

FOR THE CHINESE,  
THE UNITED STATES IS,  
AT ONCE, THEIR GREATEST  
ECONOMIC PARTNER  
AND THEIR GRAVEST  
EXTERNAL THREAT.

people. That is understandable from a political perspective. But they have obstructed the Chinese bid for holding the Olympics in Beijing, threatened to revoke normal trade relations between the two countries, and shown little concern about the suffering in China from devastating floods. They try to dissuade China from selling weapons to the countries

they dislike, even as they sell advanced weapons to Taiwan to strengthen its position against China's reunification. So do they really want to hurt the Chinese government only, or do they want to harm the Chinese nation as a whole?"

The Taiwan issue feeds the Chinese suspicion that the United States is pursuing a strategy of "divide and rule." It evokes the collective memory of China's being bullied and dismembered by Japan and the Western powers for more than a century after the Opium War. In 1950, at the outbreak of the Korean War, the Truman administration dispatched the U.S. Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait. In the Chinese interpretation, that act and the subsequent U.S. support of Taiwan have kept the island separated from the mainland for more than 50 years.

Perpetuating the separation may serve several U.S. interests. First, by keeping China's territory divided and its sovereignty violated, the United States may ham-

per China's drive to achieve the dignity of a great power. Second, Taiwan's ongoing acquisition of U.S. weaponry is good business for U.S. military industries. Third, continued tensions across the Taiwan Strait provide an excuse for Americans to maintain a military presence in the Asian Pacific and to develop their missile projects. Finally, by endorsing Taiwan's democratization, Washington may exert more pressure on Beijing for political change. All these Chinese fears and interpretations of events persist in the face of assurances from the United States that its commitment to the security of Taiwan is morally motivated and intended to do nothing more than maintain peace in the area.

In the wake of the NATO bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade on May 8, 1999, Chinese policy analysts and scholars heatedly debated the status of China-U.S. relations and how China should respond to America's neo-interventionism. Although pragmatic considerations in favor of stabilizing relations with Washington have thus far prevailed in Beijing, the bombing had a devastating effect. Government officials joined the general public in expressing their indignation—along with their perplexity as to why the bombing had occurred. In the survey cited at the start of this essay, 85 percent of the respondents said they were convinced that the bombing had been deliberate.

**M**any Chinese are likewise disturbed by the condescending and overbearing tone of American criticism of China's human rights record. They are ready to concede, at least privately, that the human rights situation in China is far from satisfactory. But they suspect that the criticisms are politically motivated. Some Chinese point out that Americans were virtually silent when the human rights situation in China was at its worst, during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), whereas they vigorously reproach China today, when the situation has improved remarkably. One explanation for the odd behavior is that the United States needed China in the past to counter the Soviet Union—and needs a new enemy today to continue the Cold War.

In any case, China's ambivalence about the "Beautiful Country" will linger. Deep in the Chinese mind lurks a strange combination of images of America—a repressive hegemon, a sentimental imperialist, a grave threat, a hypocritical crusader, a contagious disease, a successful polity, a gorgeous land, a ravishing culture, an indispensable partner, a fond dream, and a patronizing teacher.

Chinese political elites may still recall the striking remarks made by Mao Zedong in 1949, when he referred to the West as a dream and as a teacher: "Imperialist aggression shattered the fond dreams of the Chinese about learning from the West. It was very odd—why were the teachers always committing aggression against the pupil? The Chinese learned a great deal from the West, but they could never make it work and were never able to realize their ideals." Hence, the revolution to drive the West out of China.

The process of reform and opening that is now occurring in China can be seen as the renewal of an earlier painful process of learning from the West. Many Chinese wonder whether the teachers will once again bully the pupil. And yet, how immeasurably better it will be—for the United States and for the rest of the world—if, in the 21st century, Chinese ideals are fulfilled. □

# A Hero with a Blind Spot

by Peter Schneider

**F**ifteen years ago, as I was setting off to visit the United States for my first extended stay, a knowledgeable friend gave me the following advice about the difference between the United States and Germany: “When you enter a house for the first time in America, you begin 10 points ahead, but can quickly drop to zero. In Germany, you start 10 points in the hole and have a decent chance of working yourself up to zero.”

His rule of thumb was confirmed. Anyone who has sent a child to school in the United States has observed the effects of the psychological drug called “high expectations”: “You’re good! We believe in you! You can do things others can’t! In fact, you can do anything, be anyone—Michael Jordan or Bill Gates or the president!” It’s easy to challenge this sort of naive American dreaming, which, in any case, Americans don’t take literally. Europeans fail to understand that the unreal career promises represent a frame of mind: “The world lies open before you. Grab hold of it. You’ll see its limits soon enough.”

Germans do not regard the habit of effusive encouragement as a virtue. Whoever finds fault first—with a product, a project, or a colleague—supposedly proves his intelligence; whoever praises someone is suspected of having ended his studies prematurely, or of being in the person’s debt. In the Old World, people underestimate the intangible energy one feels in the United States—the optimism, daring, and self-confidence.

I witnessed a striking illustration of this contrast with the introduction of the impotency pill Viagra. On American television, I saw the failed Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole give an ecstatic thumbs-up. He had tested the blue pill after a prostate operation, and, like hundreds of thousands of American men, he had experienced the miracle of resurrection.

In Germany, too, the news about the wonder drug triggered waiting lines in front of urology clinics. But in the special reports about Viagra on German television, you saw only the deeply concerned faces of experts who outdid one another with warnings: if you want to experience dizziness, headaches, and stomach pains, become blind, and risk a heart attack, take Viagra! As Americans celebrated the hundreds of thousands of men who could enjoy their regained stamina, Germans focused on six men who had died—and warned those who survived that they had better visit their psychiatrists. We’ll have to leave open for now the question as to which reaction will prove wiser over time. But to the question “Where would you prefer to live in the



Courtesy of PaintingsDIRECT.com

*John Wayne (1987), by Michel Dattel*

interim—with the ‘thumbs-up optimists’ or the ‘head-shaking pessimists?’” the answer is easy.

What is not always easy is to distinguish between Americans’ politeness and praise and their outright lies. I once visited an acquaintance’s newly furnished Georgetown apartment with two Washington friends. We strolled through this gem of a home exclaiming repeatedly “How wonderful!” and “Just amazing!” before winding up in the kitchen. It was an expensive

kitchen of outstanding hideousness. Nothing matched—the rose-colored rug covering the marble floor, the fake gold knobs on the teak cabinetry, the heavy chairs set around the oval glass table. But my two friends so outdid each other with compliments that I began to question their taste. We had barely said good-bye to our host and reached the street when they broke out in a fit of laughter: they had never seen so absurd and screwed-up a kitchen!

Since that experience, I tend toward caution when I am the recipient of American compliments. I ask myself what these friendly people might be saying about me once they reach the street. And when an American editor says nothing more than “really interesting” about one of my articles, I know that he might pay me for it, but that he’ll never print it.

But if you ask me which, in the end, I prefer—phony American politeness or an honest German insult—I’ll opt for the American approach. I’ve profited from the American culture of encouragement and positive overstatement. There have been times when a stay in the United States has been like time spent at a health resort: I was able to recover from the generous advance of mistrust and competitive putdowns I’d experienced at home in Germany. Why should I not say loud and clear that I’m grateful to America and Americans for their good mood—and even for their lies?

**T**o be sure, I discovered very early on certain limits to American openness. The limits became clear the moment I answered a rather superfluous question about the origin of my accent. Here I must dispel an illusion. It’s not true that the foreigner in the “land of individualism” is perceived first as an individual. It’s been my experience that I’m seen first as a German and then, after a quick test, as an individual.

That may have more to do with a passion of the American media than of American citizens. Indeed, I am baffled by the omnipresence of Germans on American television. Apart from Spanish, German is the only foreign language, I believe, that can be heard frequently on American television. But this privilege, which any other nation might envy, has a catch. Almost every image and every narrative refers to a period some 60 years ago—specifically, those 12 years when Germans became world famous for a colossal crime whose singularity only a few hopeless crackpots dispute.

It’s not that people distrust me or my kind because we’re German. Among educated people, the idea of collective guilt and its transmission to third or fourth generations is obsolete. The problem is at a lower level than the intellectual discourse. If you are a German in the United States, that *one* subject always comes up quickly, and you are asked politely about it. And, of course, there’s a difference if you are the one posing the question or the one who has to answer it.

Many of the Germans I know in the United States have gone through a transformation: they try to act as un-German—as much against the stereotype—as possible. That’s not as difficult as it sounds. First of all, you avoid

>PETER SCHNEIDER, a writer based in Berlin, is a former Wilson Center Fellow and the author of 18 books, including the recent novel *Edward’s Homecoming* (2000). His articles have appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*, *Harper’s*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Le Monde*, and *Corriere della Sera*. He was Parker Distinguished Writer in Residence at Georgetown University for the fall 2000 semester. Copyright © 2001 by Peter Schneider.

all the vocabulary that we might call “Hollywood German” — commands such as “*Komm her!*,” “*Halt!*,” or “*Achtung!*,” even when your child is about to cross against a red light at a dangerous intersection. You avoid names such as “Fritz” or “Hans” or “Wolfgang.” You also avoid seeming too earnest or profound; you display a sense of humor even if you have none; you work at being nonacademic and relaxed. Above all, you try to become the exception to the rule: you learn to be the “good German,” the German who is struggling appropriately with his past, the German who is always ready to show feelings of guilt, the German who dislikes any kind of German patriotism and expresses doubts about German unification (doubts that Americans find hard to understand).

WHY SHOULD I NOT SAY LOUD  
AND CLEAR THAT I’M GRATEFUL  
TO AMERICANS FOR THEIR GOOD  
MOOD — AND EVEN FOR  
THEIR LIES?

The not-exactly-flattering image of what is “typically German” has even provoked many young people in Germany to behave in the most “un-German” of ways, often with strange results. Sometimes you get the impression that the German trying to be the exception has become the rule. Germans are the only people in the world who think that “typically German” is a naughty expression.

But these efforts are all in vain. Just turn on the television in the United States and you’ll find a German on some channel. He’s blond and, more often than not, good-looking. But he’s got those cold blue eyes, he’s wearing a brown or black uniform, he’s snapping his heels together, and he’s shouting “*Zu Befehl, Herr Obersturmbannfuhrer!*”

I asked a friend who’s a specialist in German-American relations whether Germans from 60 years ago could possibly be shaping the popular image of Germany in the United States today. His answer was refreshing. “Oh Peter,” he said, “you mustn’t take that so seriously. The Nazi story assumed a place long ago in the library of great historical myths. For Hollywood it is, among other things, a great plot line: legendary bad guys, singular crimes, degenerate, pent-up sex, and daring, victorious heroes — who, as a rule, are Americans. No one associates those things with today’s Germans.”

I had no difficulty with the first part of his answer. Today’s Germans don’t have much to offer the media. To be sure, 50 years of democracy, 20 years of Helmut Kohl, the amiable Gerhard Schröder, candlelight vigils, self-mutilators, and identity seekers are infinitely preferable to what Germans offered the world in those infamous 12 years. But are they exciting? They can’t compete with the Nazi plot line — thank goodness.

But I doubt my friend’s opinion that the preference of American media for Germans has no effect on the contemporary image of Germans. As evidence, I need only consider most of the articles I’ve written for American journals and newspapers. They have two themes: Germans facing their Nazi past,



*Four walls of a room in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., are covered by photos from the devastated Lithuanian village of Ejszyski.*

a Jewish child in Nazi Germany right up to extermination, we need to ask some questions. Might it be that the visual lesson in the museum (and elsewhere in American culture) deludes the young into thinking that, because of their birth and mother tongue, they are to be counted among history's good and justified?

Millions of Germans have married and had children with immigrants from Poland, Yugoslavia, Denmark, Hungary, and Russia—countries that were assaulted by the Nazis. Why should one of those children have to justify himself to an American child the same age? With every generation it will become more difficult to distinguish by means of mother tongue and passport between the progeny of the victim and the progeny of the aggressor. And does the temptation to feel superior really apply only to sixth graders?

**T**he somewhat recent American culture of remembering the Holocaust has made a definitive contribution to the historical understanding of that unparalleled crime and to the moral education of those born after the fact, in the United States and around the globe. But does this culture of remembrance have a side effect? As identification with the victims of the Holocaust becomes a part of American identity, does it tempt Americans to suppress the crimes of their own history? It is astonishing that no monument or museum on the National Mall in Washington is dedicated to the history of American slav-

and Germans facing the neo-Nazis.

A journalist friend of mine worked for a long time in Berlin. He, an American Jew, and his wife, a Pole, moved recently to a suburb of New York City. At first, his sixth-grade son spoke better German than English. When it was the boy's turn to hold the American flag during the Pledge of Allegiance, he was excited and proud. But a classmate insisted that the boy had no right to hold the flag because he wasn't an American. And another classmate was more blunt: he called the 12-year-old a Nazi.

If such is the pedagogical outcome of the option the Holocaust Museum gives children to track the fate of



ery. The Vietnam War Memorial honors the approximately 58,000 American soldiers who were killed in the conflict—but there is no mention of the approximately three million Vietnamese dead, most of whom were civilians.

Perhaps my greatest concern about American culture is that its inherent drive toward purity and innocence and its inclination to self-righteousness (and compulsion to save the world) come at the price of denying a good portion of America's history. I realize that I'm now jumping on the character trait I praised—for good reason—at the start. But the wonderful, highly productive optimism of Americans flows from a belief that in the eternal struggle between good and evil, the good empire flies the American flag.

The world needs and wants a good cowboy, whose justice and righteous individualism overcome evil empires. In contrast to all the other superpowers, America has actually lived up to this self-elected identity several times. What to do, then, when the justified have eyes only for the sins of others and not for their own? In the future, only a limited number of conflicts will follow the good-versus-evil pattern. The conflicts will revolve, rather, around the control and distribution of finite energy resources—and the grotesque waste thereof in the United States. Questions about whether meat with hormones is healthy or whether biologically altered food should be marked accordingly are not answered by the conviction that what's good for America is good for the world.

**A**nd yet, my objections do not alter my fondness for a country in which I have spent some of the best years of my life. Perhaps Europeans should be disturbed that, of all things, the American way of life has become the model for the emerging world culture. Of course, it's not a good thing that a society that depends upon competition suddenly has no competitor in the world. Sometimes one hopes for a strong and equal Europe if only to save Americans from overweening pride and ignorance. Still, the anxious and envious inhabitants of the Old World might ask themselves what makes the American model so attractive. Precisely because it is incomparably more open and welcoming to integration than European society, American society is, to date, the only one in the world in which all non-Americans can recognize a part of themselves.

The image of the United States in Europe is similar in many ways to the image West Germany had in the East German media for 40 years: the negative details were correct, but the overall picture was fundamentally wrong. What gets lost in the picture is that, after each episode of intolerance, racism, and moral one-upmanship, a countermovement arises. Americans have not avoided most of the historical evils that befell Europeans before them. But in contrast to the Europeans, Americans have freed themselves from most of those evils on their own.

The Maryland village of Friendship Heights recently attempted to forbid smoking on public property—even outdoors—in accordance with the crazy slogan “A smoke-free America!” Meanwhile, heroes in Hollywood films still smoke. Perhaps this is the unique quality of American culture: of most things good or bad that you can say about it, the opposite is also true. □

# Mexico's New Spirit

by Sergio Aguayo

**M**exico's perceptions of the United States have changed very little during the past five decades. What has undergone a total transformation, however, is the atmosphere in which they are formed. This change reached its culmination with the defeat of the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) at the polls on July 2, 2000, and the presidential victory of Vicente Fox. The end of the PRI's dominion after 72 years of authoritarian and often viscerally anti-American rule would seem to augur well for improvements in Mexican-American relations, and in many ways it does. But along with political change has come a new and more self-confident spirit of Mexican nationalism that will pose challenges for the United States.

In order to peer into the future, however, we must first reenter the past. Our two countries have a long common history, stretching back to the 16th century, that has profoundly influenced Mexican society and its attitudes toward the United States.

Today, from the Mexican perspective, we are entering the fourth phase of a long and complicated relationship. During the first centuries of our common history, the 13 American colonies were the weaker part, and New Spain the regional power. When this balance was reversed during the 19th century, the growing influence of the United States gradually damaged its positive image among Mexico's elite.

As late as 1821, Mexican leaders, having wrested independence from Spain, turned eagerly to the north in search of a national role model. But the American elite reacted with a combination of indifference and disdain. For them, Mexico was little more than a potential source of land and raw materials. John Adams put this early American view in explicitly racist terms when he said that there could never be "democracy among the birds, the beasts, or the fishes, or among the peoples of Latin America." Such beliefs provided the rationale for America's undisguised exploitation of an "inferior" people and its pursuit of its "manifest destiny."

In 1848, a Mexican nation weakened by internal conflict and vanquished on the battlefield in the Mexican-American War surrendered half of its national territory to the United States. That conflict inaugurated the second phase of the Mexican-American relationship, but it also left a more lasting scar on Mexican consciousness. After the war, Mexico closed in on itself, doing everything in its power to forget the arrogant and aggressive neighbor that had delivered its humiliating defeat. Among intellectuals, scholars, and others, research



*“Prospering Together,” proclaim the roadside banners that greeted President George W. Bush during his February visit to Mexico. U.S.-Mexican trade more than tripled between 1994 and 2000.*

and debate about the United States came to an abrupt and total standstill. With very few exceptions, they would not be revived for more than a century.

This self-willed blindness would prove very damaging to Mexican society. Problems ignored are seldom solved, and as our neighbor became a global power, the “American problem” grew worse. Mexico’s blindness encouraged the country’s leaders to manipulate Mexican nationalism even as it deprived them of the knowledge they needed to fully defend Mexican interests.

**T**he third phase in the Mexican-American relationship came with the Mexican Revolution of 1910–17. Washington was at first openly hostile toward the nationalist radicals who overthrew the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz and established the PRI. But this confrontational tone was softened in 1927 with the arrival in Mexico of the new U.S. ambassador, Dwight Morrow. Although he was not a professional diplomat and spoke no Spanish, Morrow reached a broad understanding with President Plutarco Elías Calles that would largely govern the relationship between the two nations for decades to come.

More than anything, the United States wanted a stable regime on its southern flank. Throughout its history, the absence of threatening neighbors has been one of the keystones of America’s international strategy. Mexican authoritarianism was able to deliver stability, and Mexico’s leaders were willing, despite their occasional rhetorical sallies, to settle the differences that inevitably arose in pragmatic fashion. Thus, Mexico stood by Washington during World War II and the Cuban missile crisis. During the Cold War, Mexico’s intelligence services cooperated with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

In return for stability, the United States gave Mexico exceptional treatment. It scrupulously abstained from any involvement in Mexico's internal affairs. It tolerated a regime on its southern border with a variety of seemingly unpalatable features: an independent foreign policy (in which the United States was frequently depicted as a threat), an economy with heavy state involvement, and a one-party political system.

Mexico was largely spared the arrogance and interventionism that marked America's dealings with other Latin American nations—the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Chile, to name only the most outstanding cases. In 1976, when Mexico entered a long period of chronic economic crisis and currency devaluations, Washington quickly stepped in with aid. It is no exaggeration to say that these transfusions extended the life of Mexican authoritarianism.

**F**rom the beginning, the PRI had maintained its power in part by astutely manipulating Mexican nationalism. In the PRI's revolutionary ideology, all foreigners (especially the Americans) were a threat to national sovereignty, and combating this challenge required that the government monopolize Mexico's relations with the outside world. The government made its role of paladin more acceptable to Mexican elites by pursuing a foreign policy that sometimes challenged Washington and by winning the support of the Left in Latin America and elsewhere. Revolutionary Cuba, for example, wholeheartedly supported Mexican authoritarianism.

Until the 1990s, Mexicans who discussed the country's internal affairs with foreigners, or who exposed Mexican human-rights violations and electoral fraud to the outside world, were automatically classified as disloyal or treasonous and subjected to harassment, exclusion, and marginalization. Most Mexicans interested in public life accepted the PRI's vow of silence. The reasons were various—the PRI's continuing legitimacy as the vehicle of Mexican nationalism, the memory of an unjust conflict (the war of 1846–48), and ignorance about the United States and the world at large. (Mexican universities did not even begin to offer courses in international relations until the 1960s.)

The relationship between Mexico and the United States was thus governed by the interests of their respective ruling elites. Popular attitudes counted for little. Those attitudes, however, were surprisingly positive in Mexico, at least according to the U.S. government opinion surveys that provide the only available measure from the 1946–80 period. For example, a 1964 poll in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, and Caracas by the United States Information Agency indicated that the “greater majority” of those polled were “friendly toward the United States, as opposed to the dislike that they expressed towards the Soviet Union, Communist China, or Castro's Cuba.” Of those sampled in Mexico City, 74 percent said they viewed the United States as Mexico's “best friend.” Yet, by a similar margin, the Mexicans con-

>SERGIO AGUAYO is a professor at the Colegio de México's Center for International Relations. A long-time activist in campaigns for democracy and human rights, he also writes a weekly column that appears in *Reforma* and 14 other Mexican newspapers. His latest book is *Myths and (Mis)Perceptions: Changing U.S. Elite Visions of Mexico* (1998). Copyright © 2001 by Sergio Aguayo.

demned America's anticommunist foreign policy. Mexicans, in other words, had positive views of the United States even during the contentious years of the 1960s, but they did not want a formal alliance. They favored a degree of neutrality in the dispute between the world's two great superpowers. They seemed to say, "Friends, yes; allies, no."

During the past four decades, a quiet revolution has taken place in Mexico's politics and in its relationship with the world at large.

As the years passed, the government lost control over contacts with the outside world. During the 1970s, American politics and society gradually became acceptable topics for research in universities and academic centers. The number of students traveling north to pursue their studies increased dramatically. Between 1975 and 1986,

nearly 67,000 Mexican students, or about 5,500 annually, enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities. As many of these young people returned home and joined the ranks of the Mexican elite, the country's perspective began to change.

FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY,  
MEXICANS HAD SEEN THEIR  
COUNTRY'S CLOSE PROXIMITY  
TO THE UNITED STATES AS A  
GREAT MISFORTUNE; NOW THEY  
SAW IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY  
TO BE GRASPED.

**M**isfortune also sped the opening of Mexico. The massive earthquake that struck Mexico City on September 19, 1985, brought an influx of aid and foreign visitors, and the guerilla wars in Central America made Mexico City a crossroads for the combatants and the many outsiders who became involved in the conflicts and their resolution. Mexican migrants, meanwhile, traveled back and forth across the Mexican-American border with increasing frequency.

The turning point came in 1985, when economic crisis forced the governments of President Miguel de la Madrid and his successor, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, to begin liberalizing the Mexican economy and opening it to the world. Within a year, Mexico had joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (predecessor of the World Trade Organization). The inauguration of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on January 1, 1994, completed a shift that would have been impossible to imagine only a dozen years earlier. For more than a century, Mexicans had seen their country's close proximity to the United States as a great misfortune; now they saw it as an opportunity to be grasped.

The turnabout that led to NAFTA was remarkable for its speed, and even more for the scant resistance it encountered. According to a survey in 1990, before the treaty was signed, Mexicans were overwhelmingly in favor of expanded commercial relations—much more so than Americans. While 71 percent of Mexicans said they favored free trade, support was only 37 percent among Americans. Even more surprising (and a testimony to the effects of Mexico's earlier years of economic crisis), 59 percent of the Mexicans polled

stated that they were in favor of more complete integration of the two nations if it would lead to an improved quality of life.

The fruits of NAFTA spilled over into realms beyond commerce. During the 1990s, the opening to the north strongly influenced the battle for electoral democracy within Mexico. Much of official Washington came finally (though often reluctantly) to acknowledge that authoritarianism south of the border was producing perverse results. At the same time, a sense that change was in the air radically transformed perceptions of Mexico in the American news media, universities, and other institutions. The MacArthur Foundation and the National Endowment for Democracy, to cite just two examples, began actively supporting Mexican human rights and prodemocracy efforts. Five hundred foreign observers (two-thirds of them from the United States) came to monitor the 1994 presidential election, and although the PRI won yet again, it became clear that the electoral abuses that had kept it in power could not continue.

**T**he election of July 2, 2000, was a triumph not just for Fox and his National Action Party but for Mexican democracy. With this election, Mexico reaped the harvest of economic and social changes that had been underway for many years. There is a new self-confidence in Mexico today and a new openness to the world, as Mexicans increasingly compete internationally in the academic, artistic, political, and business arenas.

Along with self-confidence has come a new willingness to defend our interests. For example, President Fox has pledged to press Washington for the protection of the labor and human rights of Mexicans in the United States. At the same time, however, the Fox government is boldly pursuing common interests. In a remarkable step in March, for example, Mexico agreed to a joint U.S.-Mexican Task Force to combat the drug trade.

The year 2000 signaled the beginning of a new, fourth phase in the U.S.-Mexican relationship. Mexicans continue to see their relationship with the United States largely in a very positive light. NAFTA, for example, has won widespread acceptance. In a poll earlier this year by the Reforma Group, 56 percent of those surveyed said that Mexico was wise to sign the trade pact, while only 27 percent disagreed. Forty-three percent said that NAFTA has been good or very good for Mexico, while only 21 percent said it has been bad. Yet a MUNDOS MN/Consortio poll reveals that a certain deep-seated mistrust of the United States remains: 70 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that the United States is “trying to dominate the world.”

A more democratic and prosperous Mexico will be a more assertive Mexico. The change will revolutionize U.S.-Mexican relations in ways that are difficult to anticipate with precision. Despite their mistrust of America’s ultimate aims, Mexicans are willing to establish certain kinds of closer ties. But the U.S.-Mexican relationship will not be governed by the understanding that Calles and Morrow reached nearly 75 years ago. Washington has been accustomed to dealing with a neighbor that practiced a kind of papier-mâché nationalism, a showy façade on a hollow foundation. Now there will be less rhetoric and more substance. □

# After the Thaw

by Yuri Levada

When Russia began emerging from decades of international isolation and confrontation with the West in the years after Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* (1985–1991), many Russians hoped for the quick establishment of friendly ties with the Western nations. Ten years of disappointment lay ahead of them.

Russians overestimated how much Western assistance would be available to help bring about their country's rebirth. They did not foresee the obstacles to effective cooperation that would arise within Russia: the lack of comprehensive economic reforms, the absence of full legal protections for foreign investments, and the growth of corruption. And many were disappointed when the spirit of great-power confrontation lingered, despite the end of the Cold War, dashing hopes for normal relations with the West. Today, after several years of political and economic turmoil, there is growing nostalgia in Russia for the Soviet era, when the Soviet Union was perceived as a great power, with a host of dependent states under its domination.

Yet Russian attitudes toward the United States have followed a far more complicated path than this simple narrative would suggest. In public opinion surveys, positive evaluations of the United States peaked between 1991 and 1993, a time of relative optimism about the possibilities of reform within Russia. In 1993, Russians gave positive evaluations of the United States 10 times more often than they offered negative ones. (See the "index" number in table I on page 78.)

Between 1995 and 1998, however, Russian views of the United States became more negative as a result of frustration with worsening conditions in Russia, disappointment with the volume of Western assistance, conflicts related to the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and other irritants. Even so, positive opinions still predominated.

The nadir of Russian attitudes toward the United States came in the first half of 1999. The cause was the dramatic confrontation between Russia and the United States over Kosovo—in particular, over the bombing of Yugoslavia by NATO forces. Russians have long seen Yugoslavia (without much justification) as an area of special interest and the Serbs as their traditional allies, linked to Russia in part by their adherence to Orthodox Christianity. Propaganda further inflamed popular feelings. Russian public opinion turned sharply negative, and for the first time since measurements began, negative views of the United States outweighed positive ones.

Yet even during the worst weeks of the conflict, Russians saw their country's disagreements with the United States as temporary. Thus, in August 1999, only 17 percent of survey respondents considered it possible for relations with the United States to return to the way they were during the Cold War; 52 per-

cent said that relations between the two countries would return to normal after the crisis in Kosovo ended. Indeed, by early 2000, positive evaluations of the United States had returned to their immediate precrisis level.

Earlier this year, there was another drop in positive assessments of the United States, albeit a slight one. The change probably reflected popular reaction to the Borodin affair (in which a Russian official facing charges in Switzerland was detained by U.S. authorities) and to the harsher accents intro-

**I. Russian Attitudes Toward the United States**  
(Percentage of Respondents)

	'91	'92	'93	'95	'97	'98	1999			2000			'01 Feb.
							Mar.	May	Dec.	Mar.	May	Jul.	
Very favorable	18	20	27	17	12	13	3	2	7	10	12	8	10
Mostly favorable	52	50	45	48	59	54	36	30	48	56	56	62	47
Mostly unfavorable	6	5	5	10	12	17	30	30	23	18	15	16	17
Very unfavorable	2	3	2	3	7	6	19	24	8	4	6	7	8
Not sure	21	23	22	21	10	10	13	15	15	12	11	8	17
Index*	8.8	8.8	10.3	5.0	3.7	2.9	0.8	0.6	1.8	3.0	3.2	3.0	2.3

\*Ratio of "very" and "mostly" favorable responses to "very" and "mostly" unfavorable responses.  
Source: VTsIOM surveys.

**II. American Attitudes Toward Russia**  
(Percentage of Respondents)

	'94	'95	'96	'97	1999			2000	
					Feb.	May	Nov.	Mar.	Nov.
Very favorable	8	5	6	7	6	4	4	5	5
Mostly favorable	48	44	46	49	38	42	34	35	35
Mostly unfavorable	28	32	29	29	34	36	44	39	39
Very unfavorable	11	12	10	7	10	13	14	12	14
Not sure	5	7	9	8	12	5	4	9	7
Index*	1.4	1.1	1.3	1.6	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.8

\*Ratio of "very" and "mostly" favorable responses to "very" and "mostly" unfavorable responses.  
Source: Gallup Organization, *Perceptions of Foreign Countries*, Nov. 17, 2000.

duced into Russian-American relations by the Bush administration's position on antimissile defenses and other issues.

It is worth comparing these views with American attitudes toward Russia. A certain similarity can be seen between the dynamics of public opinion in the two countries, although, on the whole, the attitude of Americans toward Russia is markedly more reserved (see table II above). Despite many changes in their attitudes over the years, Russians evince an underlying respect for the United States as a great and rich country. (In an October 2000 poll, the United States was rated a great country by 70 percent of Russians surveyed; Japan, by 44 percent; Russia, by 39 percent.) American opinions of Russia, however, seem to be strongly influenced by fear and by critical views of Russian policies and practices (e.g., the conflict in Chechnya,

>YURI LEVADA is the director of VTsIOM, the Russian Center for Public Opinion Research, in Moscow.  
Copyright © 2001 by Yuri Levada.



corruption). Until 1999, most Americans held positive views about Russia. During the Yugoslavian crisis, the ratio of positive to negative views deteriorated, much as it did in Russia. But while positive sentiment subsequently grew in Russia, there was almost no change for the better in the United States.

It's important to put Russian opinion in a larger perspective. A survey of attitudes toward a variety of countries (see table III below) suggests that Russians give negative assessments of countries they see as a source of conflict. Thus, in Russian eyes, the United States fares about the same as its rival Iran and Russia's friendly but troubled neighbor Ukraine. Yet the attitude in Russia toward Americans as a people almost invariably remains very favorable, with 90 percent offering a positive view in one recent survey. Only the Japanese, who are favorably regarded by 95 percent of Russians, fared better.

The Russian perspective on the United States is also shaped by overall attitudes toward the West. One-third of Russians think that the majority of their countrymen have a "respectful" attitude toward the countries of the West, while another third say that the majority are neutral, with no "special feelings." Fear of the West, or contempt for it, is absolutely not characteristic of the majority of Russians, in the opinion of the respondents. Only nine percent say that attitudes toward the West are colored by "uneasiness."

By contrast, few of these same respondents (only 19 percent) think that people in the West have a neutral attitude toward Russia. Russians believe that a cluster of words such as "uneasiness" and "contempt" best describes how the West relates to Russia. (However, no one-word characterization of Western attitudes was chosen more often than "sympathy," which almost one-quarter of respondents picked.) Only eight percent suppose that people in the West regard Russians with respect.

### III. Russian Attitudes Toward Other Countries (Percentage of Respondents)

	Very Favorable	Quite Favorable	Quite Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	Index*
France	15	69	5	1	13.6
Japan	10	72	6	1	11.7
India	11	72	5	3	11.7
Cuba	9	69	7	2	9.2
Belarus	25	58	9	2	7.5
Germany	11	70	9	2	7.4
North Korea	7	62	9	2	6.3
Poland	9	67	11	2	5.9
Yugoslavia	9	64	17	6	5.6
China	9	66	12	2	5.4
Ukraine	14	59	17	6	3.2
<b>United States</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3.1</b>
Iran	5	57	15	5	3.1
Baltic countries	5	47	26	1	1.4

\*Ratio of "very" and "quite" favorable responses to "very" and "quite" unfavorable responses.  
Source: VTSIOM survey, 2000. Table does not include data from respondents who were "not sure."

In the last few years, the number of Russians who believe that other countries are ill disposed or hostile toward Russia has increased noticeably. In a November 1994 survey, 42 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that "Russia has always aroused hostile feelings in other states." By April 2000, this opinion was shared by 66 percent of respondents. Many Russians believe that foreign investment, the efforts of Western banks, and even humanitarian assistance are designed to denigrate and enslave Russia and to plunder its wealth.

**R**ussians remain suspicious of NATO. In a survey last August, 44 percent of respondents said they thought Russia's fears with regard to the NATO countries were well founded. (Only 32 percent denied that this was so.) At the same time, only 28 percent acknowledged that the NATO states have reason to fear Russia. The prospect of Russia's entry into NATO was viewed with approval by no more than nine percent of Russians. Twenty-two percent endorsed the creation of a defensive union as a counterbalance to NATO (in the spirit of creating a "multipolar world"). Russian cooperation with NATO was favored by 27 percent, while 23 percent did not want Russia to participate in any military blocs.

Much more popular was the idea of joining the European Union at some time in the future. More than half (54 percent) of Russians in the August survey supported this idea to some extent, while 25 percent did not.

Despite the sometimes troubled nature of Russia's relations with the West and the reservations many Russians have about Western intentions, a significant majority of Russians believe that links should be expanded. When asked "How should Russia act in relation to the countries of the West?" in the survey last August, 74 percent agreed with the proposition that it should "strengthen mutually beneficial connections." Only 14 percent said that Russia should "distance itself." (The rest were not sure.) These numbers represent an increase in favorable attitudes: in September 1999, the same questions elicited response rates of 61 and 17 percent, respectively.

Attitudes toward the United States in Russian society have always been complicated. They continue to be influenced by fears and prejudices that remain from the Cold War era, and by current conflicts and misunderstandings between the two countries and between Russia and the West as a whole. Russia's painful domestic problems have exacerbated fears of the West and suspicion of its motives, but because of Russia's national inferiority complex, these sentiments have spawned a defensive rather than offensive approach to the world. Isolationist sentiment has grown.

Given its current weakened industrial and military potential, Russia cannot return to a policy of great-power confrontation. But it is also significant that a positive attitude toward the United States and the West as a whole still prevails in Russian public opinion. In the aftermath of the Yugoslavian crisis of 1999, and with President Vladimir Putin's rise to power, many observers feared a return to confrontation. Yet, although the military and the military-industrial elite have increased their influence, this has not occurred. Despite many complications and contradictions, the prevailing trend is still toward rapprochement with the West and the United States. □

# THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

---

Politics & Government	83	95 Religion & Philosophy
Foreign Policy & Defense	84	97 Science, Technology
Economics, Labor & Business	87	& Environment
Society	90	100 Arts & Letters
Press & Media	93	105 Other Nations

---

## *The Morally Perplexed Academy*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

For all its wealth and prosperity, the American university seems a bit troubled these days, not at all sure just what its true purpose is. “What’s the University for?” ask the editors of the *Hedgehog Review*\* (Fall 2000), in an issue devoted to that subject. “We continue to invoke the old, inspiring ideas concerning the purposes of higher education . . . but against the realities of the 21st century they have lost much of their ring,” the editors say.

The “culture wars” over the state of academe have been raging for years now, of course. While resistance to the conservative critique of “political correctness” seems to remain strong, some professors now question the typical liberal response—that, in effect, all is well in academe. If the once-cherished aims of liberal education—to produce enlightened individuals and good citizens—are now looked upon with skepticism, they ask, then what, if anything, is to replace them? There is worry, too, say the *Hedgehog Review* editors, that “the growing necessity of higher education for socioeconomic success” may be leading the university astray, prompting it to treat students as “consumers,” offering them “information and entertainment,” not “education or wisdom.”

The conservative critics of the university pledge allegiance to the older ideals of liberal education. In their view, vigorously expressed in Roger Kimball’s *Tenured Radicals* (1990), Dinesh D’Souza’s *Illiberal Education* (1991), and other well-known books, the university is suffering from a malady derived from the noxious New Left radicalism of the 1960s. Instead of disinterested research and the traditional liberal arts education, the academy, they charge, too often now provides slanted scholarship and ideological indoctrination.

“Conservative charges of anti-intellectualism have some merit,” concedes Jackson Lears, a historian at Rutgers University. Lazy professors with “some predictable thesis” now trick it out in “conceptual verbiage, the meat-grinder approach to theory,” invoking talismanic names such as Gramsci, Foucault, and Lacan. Meanwhile, academics of “vaguely postmodern leftist sentiment” celebrate “corporate-sponsored entertainment,” dismissing as “elitist” any intellectual or aesthetic judgment against it. That dismissal, says Lears, “is precisely the opposite of what liberal education is all about.”

But Lears defends “the postmodern challenge to positivist orthodoxy and the enactment of multiculturalism.” Both, he avers, “are rooted” in the liberal arts tradition. “Multi-

---

\*The *Hedgehog Review* is published by the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, P.O. Box 400816, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va. 22904-4816.

culturalism at its best,” for instance, “is about expanding the kinds of evidence we typically look at in the classroom. . . . Who could object to that?”

As he sees it, both sides in the culture wars have ignored “the chief threat to intellectual freedom in the academy,” which comes from the university’s own administrators. “The main menace,” Lears says, “is market-driven managerial influence.” The increasing use of part-time and temporary faculty is symptomatic. In “a cultural climate that encourages professors to think like entrepreneurs,” the historian writes, universities must “refuse to tailor their research agendas to the needs of industry, and reassert the core value of the liberal arts tradition: the pursuit of truth for its own sake.”

**T**he more typical liberal response to the conservative critique has been simply dismissive—and toothless, says Russell Jacoby, a leftist critic and author of *The Last Intellectuals* (1987). “In the liberal view, education has proceeded swimmingly; it has become more diverse, multicultural, and exciting, which only crabby conservatives fail to fathom.” Strangely, he notes, “liberals and leftists, once critics of the establishment, have become its defenders.”

Philosopher Richard Rorty, a professor emeritus at the University of Virginia and the author of *Philosophy and Social Hope* (2000) and other works, seems a case in point. “If I were writing a history of the American university,” he declares, “I would tell an upbeat story about the gradual replacement of the churches by the universities as the conscience of the nation.”

Rorty’s history is not very accurate, comments Julie A. Reuben, a professor of education at Harvard University and the author of *The Making of the Modern University* (1996). Historically, the university has not been the nation’s moral conscience, particularly if “promotion of progressive politics” is the criterion.

The men who created the modern research university in the late 19th century, she says, expected that the research “would solve moral problems—it would provide authoritative instruction on how to live and how to shape a more perfect society.” But

within a generation, it became clear that this would not be easy. Instead of developing a moral consensus, the biological and social sciences produced “seemingly endless disagreements about basic theories.” Many professors wanted to wash their hands of moral concerns.

Although hidden by the university’s “success . . . in producing knowledge and training skilled professionals,” this problem of morality “continues to plague American higher education,” Reuben believes. “Universities have been unable either to fully incorporate morality or to comfortably abandon a moral mission.”

In the mid-1960s, New Left activists forced that contradiction into the open, contending that the nature of the university’s intellectual life, with knowledge presented in disconnected bits by supposedly disinterested specialists, “discouraged students from asking important questions.” The university’s scholarship, they said, was not really neutral, but served the interests of the reviled establishment. In recent decades, postmodernist scholars have elaborated the rap against “claims of neutrality,” Reuben says, but nobody has come to grips with the need to transcend relativism and define the moral purpose of the university’s scholarship.

**U**niversities today are lacking not in moral concern but in moral coherence, contends George Marsden, a historian at the University of Notre Dame. Long “essentially liberal Protestant institutions,” American universities became in the latter half of the past century more inclusive and tolerant. But this great accomplishment has come at the price of moral incoherence. The moral foundation has fragmented. The virtue of tolerance, for instance, “will not bear anything like the moral weight that is put on it in our public culture” today.

What is to be done? Marsden suggests that universities should become even *more* inclusive and diverse—that is, “more open to identifiably religious perspectives.” Adding more scholars from the Catholic, Orthodox Jewish, Muslim, Evangelical Protestant, and African-American Christian traditions would not solve the university’s moral problem, he says, but “it would do some good.”

## The Second Coming of Scandal

“What Happened to Sex Scandals? Politics and Peccadilloes, Jefferson to Kennedy” by John H. Summers, in *The Journal of American History* (Dec. 2000), 1215 E. Atwater Ave., Bloomington, Ind. 47401-3703.

At the 1912 Democratic National Convention, which nominated New Jersey governor Woodrow Wilson for president, there were whispers about Wilson’s close friendship with a woman not his wife. He worried about possible public scandal, but none occurred. The country by then, writes Summers, a doctoral candidate in American history at the University of Rochester, had entered a new era of public reticence about the sexual transgressions, real or imagined, of active political leaders. This represented a sea change in American politics.

“In the early republic and throughout the 19th century . . . the sexual character of officeholders [was subjected] to close, steady, and often unflattering scrutiny,” he notes. Alexander Hamilton was forced to acknowledge an adulterous affair; Thomas Jefferson was accused of a liaison with one of his slaves; Andrew Jackson was denounced for having lived in sin with a married woman; William Henry Harrison supposedly had fathered illegitimate children; and Grover Cleveland was accused during his 1884 presidential campaign of having seduced a young woman and fathered her child. (Cleveland candidly acknowledged his possible paternity, and was elected.)

Intense partisanship, openly expressed after the emergence of the party system, played a role in the close scrutiny of politicians’ character, Summers says, but so did genuine conviction. “American republicanism . . . regarded solid moral character as a *sine qua non* of good government.” Evangelical Protestantism also encouraged 19th-century voters to seek men of sound character for public office.

The uproar over Cleveland’s derelictions, however, “proved the last major scandal of its kind for more than 100 years,” Summers says. Though Theodore Roosevelt in 1913 noted “the foul gossip which ripples just under the surface about almost every public man,” what was new, Summers points out, was that the foul gos-

sip stayed below ground. Only after they were dead did the public learn of the apparently adulterous behavior of Warren G. Harding, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy.

Progressive reformers, favoring “a more intellectualized, ‘educative’ brand of politics,” altered public life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, says Summers. American jour-



“Ma, Ma, Where’s My Pa?” Republicans gleefully chanted in 1884, but Cleveland and the Democrats had the last laugh.

nalism underwent a metamorphosis—from fierce partisanship to high-minded “professionalism.” *Harper’s Weekly* editor George Harvey declared in 1908 that the journalist had become “the accepted and most potent guide of the masses,” and must seek “to uplift humanity, not to profit by its degradation.”

“Once, evangelicals and republicans appealed to the populace to discipline and monitor the morality of political elites,” observes Summers. “Now, political elites were charged with the discipline of the populace.” The new reticence proved especially useful to reporters, allowing them “to get closer” to government officials, who could rest assured that their “secrets” were safe. As the century progressed, and the government, faced with the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War, grew larger and more powerful, keeping offi-

cials' peccadilloes secret came to seem vitally important. In recent decades, with Vietnam and Watergate, that changed, of course. And with

the impeachment of President Bill Clinton in 1998, says Summers, the era of reticence definitely came to an end.

## *Federalism's Phony Rebirth*

"Does Federalism Have a Future?" by Pietro S. Nivola, in *The Public Interest* (Winter 2001), 1112 16th St., N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

"WE WIN," exulted the conservative *Weekly Standard* after President Bill Clinton declared in 1996 that the era of big government was over.

Soon thereafter came welfare reform, and talk of further devolution of power to the states grew louder. On education reform and other major issues, states seemed to be taking the lead. And the U.S. Supreme Court, in several decisions, seemed to be trying to shore up state prerogatives.

But the supposed shift of power to the states is largely an illusion, contends Nivola, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution.

Though devolution appeared to prevail in welfare and other areas, Nivola points out, Congress and federal regulators frequently have preempted state authority with new prescriptions and prohibitions. Congress intervened, for example, in enforcement of child support laws, eligibility of legal aliens for public assistance, and state taxation of Internet commerce. Federal grants-in-aid to the states often acquire new strings after the states undertake the programs, Nivola observes. "And typically, federal rules remain firmly in place even if congressional appropriations fall far short of authorizations. The local provision of special education for students with disabilities, for instance, is essentially governed by federal law, even though Congress has never appropriated

anything near its authorized share of this \$43 billion-a-year mandate."

Legislation proposed in 1999 to require Washington to assess the impact of new statutes or regulations on state and local laws came to naught, Nivola notes. The reason, he says, is that corporations "fear aggressive regulators and tax collectors in the state legislatures and bureaucracies even more" than they fear Washington. They *want* Congress "not just to set baselines (floors) below which state policies must not fall but to secure compulsory *ceilings* on the possible excesses of zealous states." Though congressional Republicans "have . . . paid lip service to decentralization," Nivola says, a study of roll calls from 1983 to 1990 found the GOP lawmakers "more prone than the Democrats to overrule state and local regulations."

As for the Supreme Court, its decisions on federal-state cases have been "a mixed bag," Nivola says. Along with some rulings in favor of the states, there have come plenty that went the other way (e.g., decisions overturning state policies on child visitation rights and oil-tanker safety training).

In short, concludes Nivola, the era of big government is definitely not over. "A bigger, or at least more invasive, central government has been the dominant trend for decades. And signs today . . . augur anything but a radical reversal."

### FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

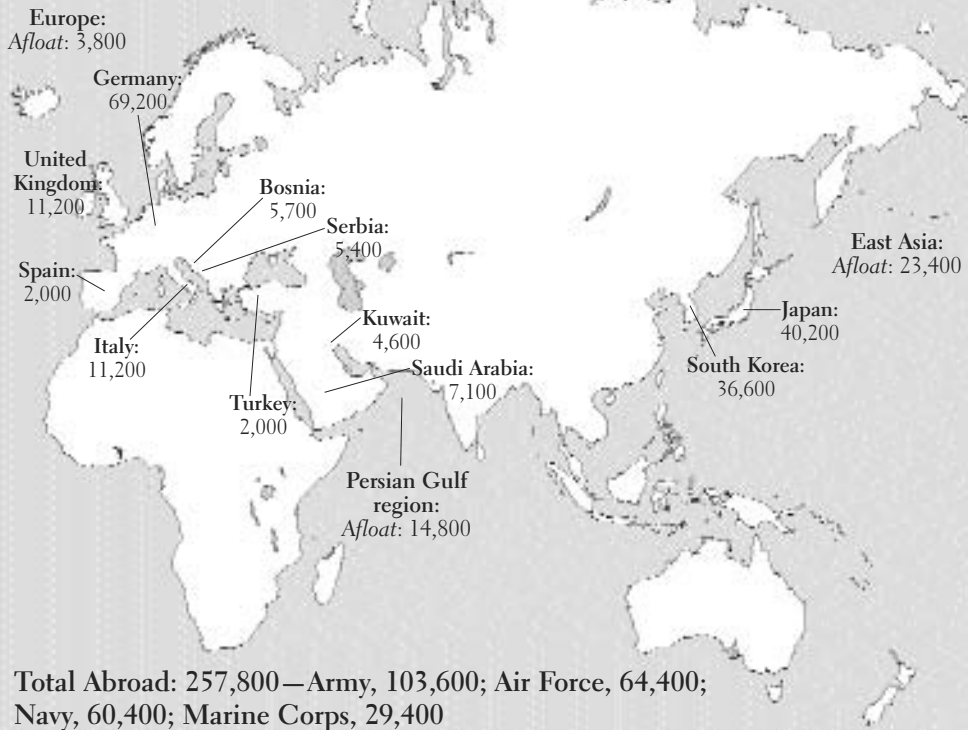
## *Trimming the Force*

"Come Partly Home, America" by Michael O'Hanlon, in *Foreign Affairs* (Mar.-Apr. 2001), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

George W. Bush charged during last year's campaign that the Clinton administration had deployed troops on too many peacekeeping

missions around the globe. The charge was "greatly exaggerated," says O'Hanlon, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. But, he

## Major Deployments of U.S. Forces Abroad



Source: U.S. Department of Defense

argues, some scaling back of U.S. forces overseas is in order.

The United States now has more than 250,000 military personnel abroad. The vast majority, notes O'Hanlon, "are not participating in peacekeeping operations in the Balkans or anywhere else. Rather, they are protecting the United States' core interests and allies." America has some 117,000 troops in Europe, 101,000 in East Asia and the Pacific Ocean, 29,000 in North Africa, the Near East, and South Asia, and 5,400 in the Western Hemisphere.

"Although the number of U.S. troops overseas has been cut in half since 1990," says O'Hanlon, "most of the reductions have come from bases abroad (notably Germany)," where U.S. personnel can enjoy many of the comforts of home and family. By contrast, the number of personnel deployed on morale-draining missions away from home bases—more than 100,000—has declined little. Thanks to changed strategic circumstances and new technology, that number can be reduced, he says. Here's how:

- **The Balkans.** The current U.S. force of about 12,000 troops is half of what it was in 1996 and less than 20 percent of the international force in the region. Bosnia, unlike Kosovo, has regained "a degree of stability," O'Hanlon says, and the 5,700 U.S. troops there could be pared to about half that number.

- **Okinawa.** Nearly 20,000 U.S. marines are on this Japanese island, in "a deployment," O'Hanlon says, "that is not militarily or strategically essential. . . . Okinawa itself is not at risk, and Japanese forces [could] defend it even if it were." Moreover, the U.S. presence is "a major strain on U.S.-Japan relations." The 2,000 marines of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit patrol the region on amphibious ships, but the rest of the Okinawa garrison is not very mobile. Washington should cut the Okinawa force to about 5,000 (including "enough forces to maintain storage and staging facilities for use in a crisis").

- **Mediterranean Sea.** The U.S. Navy not only maintains "a nearly continuous aircraft carrier presence in both the western Pacific

Ocean and the Persian Gulf,” notes O’Hanlon, but also keeps an aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean for six to eight months a year. With the Soviet Union no longer a threat, says O’Hanlon, this regular naval presence in the Mediterranean is unnecessary.

• **Persian Gulf.** Maintaining no-fly zones over Iraq since 1991 has been demanding, and the costs of constant airborne patrols now outweigh the benefits, O’Hanlon says. U.S. fighter aircraft should remain in the region to deter Iraq’s Saddam Hussein from attacks against Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, or against the Kurds or Shi’ites within his own borders. But

de-emphasizing airborne patrols would allow the withdrawal of perhaps half of the U.S. aircraft. This would cut the 25,000 U.S. military personnel in the region to fewer than 20,000.

All in all, O’Hanlon calculates, his cuts would involve some 25,000 service members. Though this would be only 10 percent of the existing overseas force, it would be about 25 percent of the personnel “routinely deployed away from home bases and families.” The result, he says, would be a significant boost in troop morale and military readiness.

## *The Missile Defense Divide*

“Europe’s Aversion to NMD” by Justin Bernier and Daniel Keohane, in *Strategic Review* (Winter 2001), United States Strategic Institute, 67 Bay State Rd., Boston, Mass. 02215.

Why have America’s European allies been so reluctant to go along with the U.S. effort to develop a defense against a potential “rogue state” missile attack? In part, they’ve deemed continued reliance on arms control and nuclear deterrence less risky; they’ve also worried about Russia’s opposition (which has softened recently). And then there’s the multibillion-dollar cost. But, say the authors, there’s another,

oft-ignored reason: “European governments do not believe that North Korea, Iran, and Iraq harbor intentions of using long-range missiles against Europe, even if they will be capable of doing so.”

Europe does not object to ballistic missile defense per se. “The Netherlands and Germany, for example, have decided to buy . . . a newer version of the Patriot theater missile defense system,” note Bernier,

### EXCERPT

## *Star Trek’s Wilsonian Mission*

**T**his paradox of democracy—that it cannot tolerate intolerance—is at the heart of Star Trek. Reflecting from the beginning the political ideology of the United States, Star Trek has always been democratic in spirit. The mission of the Enterprise—“to seek out new life and new civilizations”—appears to capture the spirit of democratic diversity and what is now called multiculturalism. But I would like to reformulate the mission of the Enterprise: More accurately, it is “to seek out new civilizations and destroy them” if they contradict the principles of liberal democracy. Above all, [Captain] Kirk and his crew set out to eliminate any vestiges of aristocracy or theocracy in the universe. In short, their mission was to make the galaxy safe for democracy. . . . If anyone claims a natural or divine right to rule over anyone else in the galaxy, Kirk automatically reaches for his phaser.

—Paul A. Cantor, a professor of English at the University of Virginia, in *Perspectives on Political Science* (Summer 2000)



a staff member of the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University, in Washington, and Keohane, a Visiting Research Fellow at the Western European Union Institute for Security Studies, in Paris. However, theater missile defense systems are able to shield only relatively small areas from short-range missiles.

Nor has Europe failed to grasp the rogue states' growing military capabilities. In a report last year, for instance, Germany's Federal Intelligence Service warned that nuclear, bacteriological, and chemical weapons, in combination with long-range missiles, constitute "a direct threat . . . to Germany and NATO [the North Atlantic Treaty Organization] in the medium and long term." By 2005, the report said, Iraq will possess a medium-range missile capable of threatening parts of Europe. However, Bernier and Keohane

point out, European governments, unlike that of the United States, see no intent or will on the part of rogue states to employ such weapons.

"While Europe has significant economic and political interests in the Middle East and Far East," the authors write, "these interests are not backed by military commitments comparable to those of the United States." The Europeans count on "their growing, and relatively strong, political and economic ties with 'the rogues'" to deter attack.

But if Europe's opposition to the U.S. effort stems to a significant degree from a strategic calculation that Europe, unlike the world's lone superpower, has little to fear from the rogue states, the authors warn, that could have "profound" implications for NATO. Its members, after all, are pledged to regard an attack on one as an attack on all.

## ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

### *Is the New Economy History?*

"Does the 'New Economy' Measure up to the Great Inventions of the Past?" by Robert J. Gordon, in *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (Fall 2000), American Economic Assn., 2014 Broadway, Ste. 305, Nashville, Tenn. 37203-2418.

The celebrated "New Economy" has run into difficulties lately, with dot.com woes now almost a regular feature of business news coverage. Are these just minor bumps in the road leading to an economy fundamentally transformed by the computer and the Internet? Gordon, a Northwestern University economist, doubts it. The computer's greatest benefits may well lie "a decade or more in the past, not in the future."

While the late 1990s were very good years for the U.S. economy, awash in computer investment, the recent productivity revival, he says, "appears to have occurred primarily within the production of computer hardware, peripherals, and telecommunications equipment, with substantial spillover to the 12 percent of the economy involved in manufacturing durable goods." In more than 80 percent of the economy, however, computerization has

had virtually no impact on productivity. "This is surprising," he says, since more than three-fourths of all computer investment has been in wholesale and retail trade, finance, insurance, real estate, and other service industries.

When, from the 1970s through the early 1990s, investment in computers failed to yield productivity gains, many economists predicted that they would arrive eventually. But unlike the electric light and the electric motor, which, once invented, "took time to diffuse [because] initially they were very expensive and didn't work very well," computers "provided powerful benefits early on," Gordon writes. "Many of the industries that are the heaviest users of computer technology—[such as] airlines, banks, and insurance companies—began in the 1960s and 1970s with mainframe technology and still perform the most computation-intensive activities on mainframes,

often using personal computers as smart terminals to access the mainframe database. . . . In this sense, computers have been around for almost 50 years. Instead of waiting for the productivity boost to arrive, it is more plausible that the main productivity gains of computers have already been achieved.”

Another reason computers have yielded diminishing returns, he observes, is the continuing need for human beings to perform many jobs—to pilot aircraft, drive trucks, provide medical care, teach classes, and cut hair. “No matter how powerful the computer hardware and how user-friendly the software, most functions provided by personal computers . . . still require hands-

on human contact to be productive,” writes Gordon, and that limits potential productivity gains.

Nor has the rapid diffusion of the Internet since 1995 given productivity more than “moderate” boosts. Humans’ time is limited, Gordon points out, and much Internet use “represents a substitution [of] one type of entertainment or information-gathering for another. . . . Internet surfing may be fun and even informational,” but its contribution to the American standard of living is no match for the improvements made by many past inventions, including the electric light, the electric motor, and the internal combustion engine.

## *Making Sense of Labor*

“The Development of the Neoclassical Tradition in Labor Economics” by George R. Boyer and Robert S. Smith, in *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (Jan. 2001), Cornell Univ., Ithaca, N.Y. 14853–3901.

During the 1950s and 1960s, theory-minded neoclassical economists came to dominate the field of labor economics, pushing their more fact-oriented colleagues to the margins. But in more recent years, the theorists have become interested in just the sort of quotidian issues whose study they once disdained, report Cornell University economists Boyer and Smith.

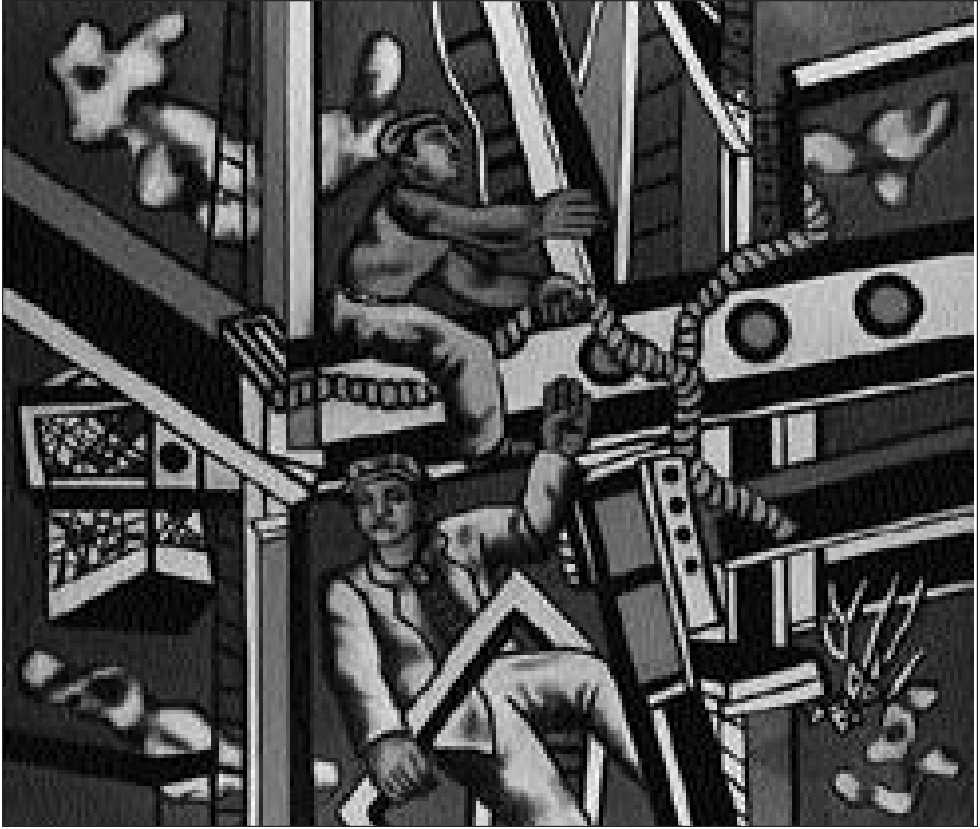
Prior to World War II, the field was dominated by “institutionalists” such as John R. Commons of the University of Wisconsin at Madison. They generally did “intensive, often historical” studies of particular cases or events, producing “detailed *descriptions* of various labor-market institutions or outcomes,” Boyer and Smith note. They might, for instance, detail the history of a labor union in a particular steel factory, and show how it affected workers’ pay and benefits.

The rival neoclassical approach better satisfied “the scholarly yearning for general principles that can organize ‘mere’ facts,” the authors note. These economists used mathematical models to test theoretical propositions about such things as the “price” of labor under various conditions of supply and demand.

After the war, leading “neoinstitutionalist” labor economists, such as John Dunlop, Clark Kerr, Richard Lester, and Lloyd Reynolds, remained “deeply skeptical of [neoclassical theory’s] relevance to the real world,” say Boyer and Smith. But the neoclassical economists prevailed. As the Nobel laureate Paul Samuelson once wrote, “In economics it takes a theory to kill a theory; facts can only dent the theorist’s hide.”

By the early 1970s, the trend toward neoclassical economics was clear. Reynolds revised his classic textbook, putting economics to the front and relegating the discussion of unions to the rear. Albert Rees sniffed in his neoclassical *Economics of Work and Pay* (1973) that economists trained in the “institutional tradition . . . have tended to move into industrial relations . . . and [become] somewhat isolated from the main stream of economics.”

Yet a kind of convergence was also underway. Econometrics—which uses sophisticated statistical techniques to test theoretical propositions in various “realistic” contexts—became popular in economics, especially after the advent of the computer. In the field of labor econom-



*The Constructors (1950), by Fernand Leger*

ics, Boyer and Smith point out, pioneers such as H. Greg Lewis used the new tools to look at traditional topics, including “the effects of unions in raising the wages of their members relative to those of non-union workers.”

As neoclassical economists became intimately involved in debates about government policies, “they were forced to give more attention” to institutionalist concerns, Boyer and Smith point out. “Seem-

ingly small administrative details about how unemployment or workers’ compensation insurance premiums are set, for example, have huge implications for the lay-off or safety behavior of employers; labor economists wanting the ear of policy-makers had to know these details.” Today, say the authors, a permanent fusion of “the neoinstitutionalist *interests* . . . with the neoclassical *approach*” may be in the works.

## *The First Crash*

“The First Bank of the United States and the Securities Market Crash of 1792” by David J. Cowen, in *The Journal of Economic History* (Dec. 2000), Social Science History Institute, Bldg. 200, Rm. 3, Stanford Univ., Stanford, Calif. 94305–2024.

The Panic of 1792 was America’s first market crash, and historians usually have blamed it on a speculator named William Duer and his confederates. Evidence freshly assembled, however, suggests a different culprit: the First Bank of the United States.

The brainchild of Secretary of the

Treasury Alexander Hamilton, the semipublic national bank received a charter for 20 years in February 1791 and, with a colossal \$10 million in capital, opened its doors in Philadelphia the following December. Its mission was to facilitate commerce by lending money, and, not incidentally, to

strengthen the federal government. Duer, working in secret with others, borrowed heavily in an effort to corner the markets in U.S. debt securities as well as the stocks of the national bank and the Bank of New York. “In the ensuing speculation,” writes Cowen, a foreign currency trader and director of Deutsche Bank, “securities prices reached their peaks in late January 1792. Prices trended lower in February, [and] fell off sharply in March”—prompting the “Panic of 1792.”

The speculator Duer, his credit exhausted, could not meet contracts he had made to buy securities and suspended payments on his obligations on March 9. His failure, a contemporary said that month, was “beyond all description—the sums he owes upon notes is unknown—the least supposition is half a Million dollars. Last night he went to [jail].” Historians blamed him for bringing the market down.

An 1833 fire at the Treasury Department destroyed most of the First Bank’s records. But its balance sheets for the 1790s were found by historian James Wettreau in the 1930s in the papers of Hamilton’s successor, and published in 1985. Together with other historical materials, Cowen says, they make it clear

that the national bank, headed by Thomas Willing, was responsible for the March crash.

When it opened in December 1791, the bank “flooded the economy with credit.” Some loans were for legitimate businesses, but others were made to speculators (apparently including Duer) who used them to buy securities. In February—a full month before Duer ran into trouble—the bank, realizing it had loaned so heavily that its bank notes were not being readily accepted everywhere, reversed course by sharply curtailing credit and calling in outstanding loans. Hamilton, worried about speculation and the state of the financial system, gave the reversal his blessing, Cowen says, and may even have initiated it. Suddenly, Duer and other speculators were called upon to repay their loans. Many dumped stocks to do so, and the market sank.

It was a classic “credit crunch.” But no recession or depression followed. Like Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan after the 1987 market crash, Hamilton moved rapidly to have the central monetary authority act as lender of last resort, helping to avert a meltdown.

## SOCIETY

# *The Urban Myth*

“Small Towns, Mass Society, and the 21st Century” by James D. Wright, in *Society* (Nov.–Dec. 2000), Rutgers—The State Univ., 35 Berrue Circle, Piscataway, N.J. 08854.

Over the past half-century it’s become conventional wisdom, reaffirmed at 10-year intervals by the Census Bureau, that the United States is becoming an ever more urban nation. Wright, a sociologist at Tulane University, paints a different picture.

If America is becoming more “urban,” he says, isn’t it strange that “most of the really big American cities have been losing population for decades”? Of the 10 largest cities in 1970, seven—New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Baltimore, Washington, and Cleveland—were noticeably smaller two decades later. Of the 100 largest cities, 54—predominantly in the Northeast and Midwest—had fewer people.

Of course, if “urban” simply means “not rural,” then, yes, more than three-fourths of the American populace is “urban.” (The Census Bureau classifies as rural any place with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants.) But should a tiny burg of 3,000 really be considered “urban”? It’s an archaic definition, Wright says.

“Urban” is also often casually equated with what the Census Bureau calls “metropolitan areas.” These have a “large population nucleus” of at least 50,000 people, located in a county of at least 100,000, and include any adjacent counties that seem economically or socially “integrated” with the nucleus. In 1990, nearly four out of five Americans lived in such areas. Does that really make all of them “urban” folk? Many

metropolitan areas, such as Springfield-Holyoke-Chicopee in Massachusetts, in fact comprise “aggregations of numerous small cities and towns,” Wright points out. And 50,000 people hardly make a metropolitan hub. Kokomo, Indiana, 30 miles from his hometown of Logansport, now falls just below that cutoff, but aside from its two large manufacturing facilities, says Wright, it “strikes me as wholly indistinguishable from the hundreds of other small towns that dot the Indiana landscape.” Fort Wayne, Indiana (pop. 173,717), in contrast, seems like “a real city.” Only about 22 percent of Hoosiers live in the five cities with populations greater than 100,000, but the Census Bureau has 72 percent living in metropolitan areas.

And what about suburbanites? Are they truly part of “urban” America? The term *suburb* implies “inferiority and dependence,” Wright notes, but “the whole point of these communities is to be something other than the cities.” People fled to the suburbs to escape

the ills of the cities and “to reclaim for themselves and their children some of the still-accessible virtues and insularity of small town American life.”

When suburbanites (48 percent of the population in 1990) are added to the 20 percent of the population in non-metropolitan areas, Wright says, it becomes clear that most Americans live in small towns or in places that resemble or seek to emulate small towns.

The small town is much changed, of course. Most of the corner grocery stores have been replaced by supermarkets, and residents now watch cable TV, read national newspapers, and wear clothes made in Taiwan. But over the past half-century, Wright says, “there has been a strong *resurgence* of traditionalism, of religiosity, of small town ‘American’ and ‘family’ values, and an equally substantial *repudiation*” of big-city ills. Are these the characteristics, asks Wright, of an urban society?

## *The Next Welfare Reform*

“Reforming Welfare Reform” by Jared Bernstein and Mark Greenberg, in *The American Prospect* (Jan. 1–15, 2001), 5 Broad St., Boston, Mass. 02109–2901.

When welfare reform turned from buzzword into law in 1996, many liberals feared the worst: that one million children would be pushed into poverty, and 11 million families made worse off than before. So far, those fears haven’t been realized. Yet many of the affected families are not really better off today, contend Bernstein, an economist at the Economic Policy Institute, and Greenberg, a senior staff attorney at the Center for Law and Social Policy.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 transformed welfare from a federal entitlement into a program of fixed block grants, with the states given much more discretion over spending. The law (antedated by some state-level reforms) accelerated a decrease in welfare caseloads that had begun in 1994. In that year, the number of American families getting aid was five million; by the end of 1999, it was 2.4 million. Meanwhile, the employment rate for low-income single mothers rose from 39 percent to 55 percent.

While a majority of former welfare recipients are employed at any given moment, “for many the connection to the labor market is quite tenuous,” Bernstein and Greenberg say. Only about 40 percent work consistently throughout the year, according to recent studies, and the wages they earn are very low, averaging around \$6-8 an hour. Nationwide, about 40 percent of former welfare recipients “are not working and have very high poverty rates.” Working or not, many former recipients report having experienced some hardships since leaving welfare.

Yet “state studies consistently find that roughly half of those surveyed report that life is better . . . and that if they could choose to go back on welfare, they would not want to do so,” write Bernstein and Greenberg. These mothers seem to have “a sense of hope for the future that was absent in the past.” Low-wage workers made significant earnings gains during the 1990s, thanks to the tight labor market, a hike in the minimum wage, and the expansion of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit.

That does not mean welfare reform should be regarded as an unqualified success, say the authors. “There’s more work but not much more disposable income, especially after . . . the expenses associated with work.” Many poor families that leave welfare fail to obtain food stamps or Medicaid because of “administrative mistakes, lack of information, [or their desire] to leave stigmatized systems that treat them badly.” Most mothers who’ve gone from welfare to work do not receive child care subsidies.

“For the families who haven’t been able to break into the labor market,” write Bernstein and Greenberg, “the tattered safety net is providing

less help than ever. Furthermore, the [new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families] program, which has been greatly supported by the strong economy, is not prepared for the next recession.”

Bernstein and Greenberg urge Congress to shift the 1996 law’s focus when it comes up for renewal next year. “In 1996 Congress emphasized the need to cut welfare caseloads and states responded impressively.” The states should next be challenged, and given sufficient resources, to meet “a national goal of reducing, and ultimately eliminating, child and family poverty.”

## ‘Ordinary’ Mass Murderers?

“Were the Perpetrators of Genocide ‘Ordinary Men’ or ‘Real Nazis’? Results from Fifteen Hundred Biographies” by Michael Mann, in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (Winter 2000), Dept. of Academic Publications, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20024-2126.

Was Nazi Germany’s murder of six million Jews and millions of other unarmed persons the work of “real Nazis”—i.e., fervent Nazi ideologues and murderous sadists—or was it carried out by “ordinary” men? Passionate debate has raged over this question in recent years.

In *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* (1996), a bestseller in Germany and America, historian Daniel Jonah Goldhagen argued that “ordinary Germans” full of anti-Semitism did much of the Holocaust’s work. In *Ordinary Men* (1992), historian Christopher Browning contended that the killers in Hamburg’s Reserve Police Battalion 101, for instance, were unexceptional men driven to act by the atmosphere of total war and their fear of breaking ranks.

Clearly, committed Nazis, as well as some sadists, were leaders in the genocide, and the perpetrators were so numerous that “fairly ordinary people” must also have been involved, says Mann, a sociologist at the University of California, Los Angeles. But after examining the backgrounds and characteristics of 1,581 presumed German war criminals—“the largest and most representative sample of mass murderers yet studied”—he finds these individuals “clustered toward the ‘real Nazi’ end of the spectrum.”

Ethnic German “refugees” who had been

living abroad in Alsace-Lorraine and other territories lost after World War I, or living in regions near borders threatened with Allied intervention, were especially “overrepresented” among the war criminals, Mann notes. Their circumstances apparently inflamed nationalist and Nazi sentiments. A conspicuous exception: the Sudeten Germans, whom Czechoslovakia treated quite well during the interwar years. “When Hitler marched in, fewer than two percent of Sudetens were in the Nazi Party.”

Ninety-five percent of the war criminals were men. Few of the women had any record of having joined an adult Nazi organization before 1939, or of having taken part in any previous violence. The women, the Sudeten Germans, and the foreign ethnic Germans not recruited until after their “liberation” by the Wehrmacht—these, says Mann, seem the likeliest candidates among the war criminals for “ordinary” status.

“Most of the remaining 90 percent of the sample had some [prior] Nazi record, rising to a large majority in the upper ranks,” he writes. One-third of the men on whom pre-war records were available, he says, had been involved in serious violence or noted as especially fanatic Nazis.

It appears, says Mann, that at the center of Nazi genocide were “ideological, experi-



*Many ethnic Germans in the Sudetenland cheered Adolf Hitler when Germany annexed it in 1938. But less than two percent of the Sudeten Germans had opted before then to join the Nazi Party.*

enced Nazis,” who were driven not simply by anti-Semitism but by “broader currents of embittered nationalism.”

Even in Police Battalion 101, which Browning and Goldhagen closely studied, Mann finds signs “that things might actually have been a little out of the ordinary.” Thirty-eight percent of the policemen were

Nazi Party members—twice the level of all German men at the time, he points out. Of the 13 battalion members convicted of war crimes, 10 were Nazi Party members. Even in this “ordinary men” battalion, “the hierarchy and the experienced core were mostly Nazis or initiates in violence, ordering and guiding the rawer recruits into genocide.”

#### PRESS & MEDIA

### *The Giveaway Scoop*

“Giving It Away” by John Morton, in *American Journalism Review* (Jan.–Feb. 2001), Univ. of Maryland, 1117 Journalism Bldg., College Park, Md. 20742–7111.

In New York, the *Daily News* has been giving away an afternoon edition, the *Express*, at subway stations, bus stops, and commuter train depots; in Philadelphia, commuters in the transit system have been getting a free daily called the *Metro*. This trend—if it is one—flies in the face of conventional wisdom, observes newspaper analyst Morton.

Only a handful of the 1,483 daily newspapers in the United States are given away to readers, even though many of the 8,138 weekly newspapers in the country are. “There

seems to be a dichotomy in the attitude of advertisers toward paid and free newspapers,” Morton explains. “Paid dailies are attractive, but not free ones, and free weeklies, he says, are attractive, but not paid ones (at least for major advertisers).” The free weeklies do well mainly in the suburbs, where they can offer advertisers blanket “coverage” of generally affluent households.

Why the difference? In a word, *tradition*, says Morton. Dailies “have always charged, and advertisers have always used them on the log-

ical grounds that anybody who pays money for a newspaper is going to read it.” During the past few decades, however, dailies failed to expand their paid circulation to keep pace with growing population, especially in the suburbs. Free weeklies sprang up, offering low advertising rates. Though the weeklies, with no circulation revenue, “tend to be only half as profitable as paid dailies . . . they do make money,” Morton notes.

He suspects that the *Daily News* decided to give away the boiled-down *Express* edition in the hope that once exposed to it, commuters would start putting down 50 cents for “the real thing.” (If the rival *New York Post*’s swift response of cutting its 50-cent price in half

lures readers away from the *Daily News*, observes Morton, the *Express* move “could turn out to be a huge tactical mistake.”)

Meanwhile, the *Metro* in Philadelphia claims a daily distribution of 125,000, but advertising sales—especially to the all-important big local retailers—have been “disappointing,” says Morton.

The most likely places for free dailies to prosper, in his view, are not large metropolitan areas but affluent small towns that do not have a paid daily. The resort town of Aspen, Colorado, full of wealthy residents and visitors, has had two free dailies—the *Aspen Daily News* (distribution 12,100) and the *Aspen Times* (13,865)—for years.

## *Wonk If You Love Policy*

“Think Tanks in the U.S. Media” by Andrew Rich and R. Kent Weaver, in *Press/Politics* (Fall 2000), Kennedy School of Government, Harvard Univ., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Policy wonkery is manifestly a growth industry. In just three decades, the number of “think tanks” devoted to public policy research has soared from fewer than 70 to more than 300. Yet despite their often frantic efforts at self-promotion, most of these organizations remain largely hidden from public view. Rich and Weaver, political scientists at Wake Forest University, looked into what makes some think tanks more visible in the news media than others.

Taking a sample of 51 think tanks of various resources, outlooks, and locations, they examined how the organizations and their “experts” fared in news coverage and op-ed pieces in six national newspapers—the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Washington Times*.

The papers “tend to rely on the same think tanks as sources,” they found. The centrist Brookings Institution was the most commonly cited think tank—except in the conservative *Washington Times*, where it ranked fifth. In each of the other five newspapers, Brookings, the conservative Heritage Foundation, and the conservative American Enterprise Institute (all located in Washington) were the three most-cited

think tanks, accounting for a third or more of the mentions.

Washington-based institutions got the lion’s share of the coverage, from almost 69 percent of the mentions (*New York Times*) to more than 86 percent (*USA Today*). Nationally oriented institutes headquartered elsewhere, such as the conservative Hudson Institute in Indianapolis, got only between 12 percent (*USA Today*) and 24 percent (*New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*).

Though state-oriented think tanks are the fastest-growing type, say Rich and Weaver, they “are almost invisible” in the national newspapers, getting less than two percent of the mentions in five of the papers.

The organizations’ financial resources vary widely. The conservative Heritage Foundation’s 1996 budget was \$24.2 million, 11 times that of the liberal Worldwatch Institute. Washington-based, nonliberal think tanks “have major advantages,” Rich and Weaver say, in attracting money from foundations, corporations, and governments—and this translates into more media visibility. The conservative outfits received from 29 percent (*New York Times*) to 62 percent (*Washington Times*) of the think tank mentions. Liberal ones got only between four percent (*Washington Times*) and 13 percent (*Christian Science Monitor*).



However, in four of the newspapers, the centrist think tanks were the most visible, getting a majority of the mentions. The “biases and

agendas” of the news organizations themselves, note Rich and Weaver, also affect think tank coverage.

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

# *A Medieval Sociobiologist*

“Thomistic Natural Law as Darwinian Natural Right” by Larry Arnhart, in *Social Philosophy & Policy* (Winter 2001), Social Philosophy and Policy Center, Bowling Green State Univ., Bowling Green, Ohio 43403.

In his controversial works *Sociobiology* (1975) and *Consilience* (1998), Edward O. Wilson argued that ethics is rooted in human biology: the deepest intuitions of right and wrong are guided by the brain’s emotional control centers, which evolved through natural selection to help the human animal exploit opportunities and avoid threats in the environment.

Many critics contend that Wilson’s explanation of human ethics promotes a degraded view of human life. Some religious critics deplore it as a denial of God’s moral law as the basis for human ethics. But Arnhart, a political scientist at Northern Illinois University, argues that the Harvard University scientist belongs to the same tradition of ethical naturalism as Thomas Aquinas. Indeed, Wilson’s Darwinian view of human nature, in Arnhart’s view, lends support to Aquinas’s “natural law” reasoning.

Drawing on Aristotle’s biological psychology, Aquinas (1225–74) “explained natural law as rooted in ‘natural inclinations’ or ‘natural instincts’ that human beings share with other intelligent animals,” notes Arnhart. Thus, as with other animals whose offspring require care from both parents, Aquinas said, nature implants in the human male and female an inclination to stay together. Unlike other such animals, humans—using their unique cognitive capacity for conceptual reasoning—devised customary or legal rules of marriage, in conformance to natural law, thus giving formal structure to their natural desires.

Starting in the 17th century with Thomas Hobbes, says Arnhart, there was a modern break with “the Aristotelian and Thomistic account of natural law as rooted in the biology of human nature.” Hobbes insisted “that social and political order is an utterly artificial human construction,” not rooted in biology but requiring that humans transcend their animal nature.

In the 18th century, however, says Arnhart, there was, in effect, “a revival of the Thomistic conception of natural law as founded in the inclinations or instincts of human nature.” Adam Smith showed “how ethics and economics could be rooted in the moral sentiments of human nature and the natural inclination to sympathy.” In the next century, Charles Darwin “explained the moral sentiments as manifesting a moral sense rooted in the biological nature of human beings as social animals.” He argued that natural selection implanted in humans the natural inclinations that lead to the moral sentiments. Adding comparative data on social behavior to Darwin’s and Smith’s ideas, sociologist Edward Westermarck (1862–1939) defended a theory of ethics “rooted in the natural moral sentiments,” says Arnhart. The nearly universal incest taboo, for example, worked via an emotional aversion favored by natural selection.

“While Wilson recognizes that he belongs to a tradition of thought that includes Aristotle, Smith, Darwin, and Westermarck,” Arnhart notes, “he explicitly rejects Aquinas’s views” because they seem to him to root ethics in absolute moral standards outside humanity. But though Aquinas regarded natural law as ultimately an expression of God’s will, says Arnhart, he distinguished “the natural law, as known by the human mind’s grasp of the natural inclinations, from the divine law, as known by God’s revelation of His will through the Bible.” Marriage, for instance, has both sacred and secular meanings, and the secular one is quite compatible “with Wilson’s ‘empiricist’ view of morality.” Similarly today, Arnhart concludes, the religious believer and the Darwinian scientist “can each look to the laws of nature as a ground of common human experience that can be known by natural reason alone.”

## The Blue-Collar Montaigne

“Eric Hoffer Revisited” by Stephen Miller, in *The Republic of Letters* (2000: No. 9), [www.bu.edu/trl](http://www.bu.edu/trl).

A self-educated longshoreman who loved Montaigne, Eric Hoffer (1902–83) was already a well-known author when he appeared on national television in 1967. But his one-hour conversation with CBS commentator Eric Severeid made him a star: “the lowbrow’s highbrow,” as one friendly reviewer put it. Today, though, Hoffer is little remembered and less read—and that’s a shame, says Miller, author of the forthcoming *Three Deaths and Enlightenment Thought: Hume, Johnson, Marat*.

The blue-collar philosopher’s early life made him seem “like a character out of a

de Tocqueville’s reflections on the uniqueness of the new American nation.”

Hoffer’s first, and best-known, book was *The True Believer* (1951), “a study of the mentality of those who subscribe to radical ideologies,” in Miller’s words. It later gained widespread attention when the *New York Times* reported that President Dwight D. Eisenhower kept pressing it on cabinet members and friends.

Hoffer’s life changed dramatically in the mid-1960s. In 1964, he was appointed a senior research political scientist at the University of California, Berkeley. From that perch, he watched the student revolution, feeling “that

I was witnessing the Latin-Americanization of an American university.” He was contemptuous of the student radicals who “haven’t raised a blade of grass . . . haven’t laid a brick . . . don’t know a god-damned thing, and here they sit in judgment!” Three years later came the Severeid program.

This champion of the common man, disdainful of the counterculture and anti-anti-communist intellectuals, made educated elites, not the masses, his main subject. Intellectuals disliked bourgeois, market-oriented societies, he believed, because

such societies were driven by self-interest and offered no major role for intellectuals. “At the core of Hoffer’s thought,” Miller says, “is the notion that one should be wary of idealists” who want to transform man or create a future free of conflict.

Though his books—which include *The Passionate State of Mind* (1955), a collection of aphorisms; *The Ordeal of Change* (1963), a collection of essays; and two diaries—would have been better had he “constructed his arguments more carefully,” they all remain worth reading, says Miller. “Many of his aphorisms about the mentality of true believers hold up well; and he offers a better guide to the landscape of 20th-century politics than many more weighty tomes by academic historians and political theorists.”



Hoffer often quoted Montaigne to his fellow workers.

Steinbeck novel,” Miller notes. Born into a German immigrant family in New York City, Hoffer went blind at age seven, the same year his mother died, and as a result never attended school. He recovered his sight at age 15, however, and became a voracious reader. After his father died in 1920, he went west to California, living a rough-and-tumble existence until finally settling into the relative stability of work as a San Francisco longshoreman in 1942.

Through all this, “Hoffer never stopped reading,” notes Miller. “He discovered Pascal in a library in Monterey, and he picked up Montaigne by chance in a second-hand bookstore in San Francisco. . . . Pascal’s dark sense of the self and Montaigne’s playful exploration of ideas shaped Hoffer’s thinking. So did Alexis

# *The Reluctant Sectarians*

“The Intellectual Appeal of the Reformation” by David C. Steinmetz, in *Theology Today* (Jan. 2001), P.O. Box 29, Princeton, N.J. 08542.

In looking back at the early Protestant Reformation, observes Steinmetz, a professor of the history of Christianity at Duke University Divinity School, it's easy to overlook an essential truth: its *Catholic* character. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other early reformers “were not Protestants” in the way that later ones would be. “In the nature of the case, they could not be.”

The Reformation began in the 16th century as “an intra-Catholic debate,” writes Steinmetz. “All of the first generation of Protestant reformers and most of the second had been baptized and educated as Catholics.”

Their goal was not to replace a dead or dying church with a new Christianity, says Steinmetz, but rather to achieve “a reformed Catholic Church, built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, purged of the medieval innovations that had distorted the gospel, subordinate to the authority of Scripture and the ancient Christian writers, and continuous with what was best in the old Church.”

Most of the questions that the reformers asked and answered—e.g., Does baptism wash away original sin? Is Christ present in the Eucharist?—“were traditional questions that had been asked and answered before,” Steinmetz notes. And even Catholics who rejected the movement, fearing that it would go too far, “felt the force of many Protestant criticisms . . . and attempted to accommodate some of those criticisms within the framework of medieval Catholic orthodoxy.”

Eventually, however, the lines hardened, observes Steinmetz. “Faced with a stark choice

between competing visions of Christianity, a large number (though never a majority) of European Catholics born between 1480 and 1510 voluntarily abandoned the Church in which they had been raised in order to ally themselves with one or another of the new reform movements.” Having begun as “an argument among Catholic insiders,” the Reformation continued as one between Catholics and ex-Catholics “until well past the middle of the [16th] century.”

The elements in the Protestant “angle of vision” that the new converts found intellectually attractive, writes Steinmetz, included: the appeal to Christian antiquity; the intention to restate theology in the fresh language of the Bible rather than the stale one of the medieval Scholastics; the doctrine of justification by faith alone; the dedication not only to studying the Bible but to preaching the word of God; and the theoretical support for institutional reforms (such as lifting the ban on clerical marriage) to correct acknowledged abuses.

By the mid-16th century, Steinmetz says, “a permanent, self-perpetuating Protestant culture had developed. The older ex-Catholic leadership of former priests, nuns, friars, and monks was slowly replaced by a new leadership that had never attended Mass, much less said one, and by a laity that had never confessed its sins to a priest, gone on pilgrimage, invoked patron saints, made a binding vow, or purchased an indulgence.” By century's end, Protestants were confirmed outsiders who had “settled into a mode of permanent opposition.”

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

### *Is Nanotech Getting Real?*

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

**N**anotechnology has been the next new thing for more than a few nanoseconds now, but it's still not clear how much is science and how much is science fiction. Utopian dreamers, doomsday prophets, hardheaded

scientists, and now the federal government—all have been drawn to the hot new field and the promise that it could change the way virtually all products, from vaccines to computers, are designed and made.

Nanotechnology involves the manipulation of materials at the molecular or atomic level to create large structures with fundamentally new molecular organizations. The technology has vast potential in many different fields. It could enable the development of materials that are many times stronger than steel but only a fraction of the weight—and so lead to more fuel-efficient land, sea, air, and space vehicles. Nanoengineered “contrast agents” may someday be able to detect nascent cancerous tumors only a few cells in size.

Such potential benefits seem marvelous enough, but some nanotech seers imagine that the technology will do far, far more. Eric Drexler, chairman of the board at a nanotech think tank called the Foresight Institute, in Palo Alto, California, has been describing for years the incredible wonders to come. Manipulation of matter at the molecular or atomic level, he believes, is the key to boundless human prosperity. It will allow low-cost construction of virtually everything, from supercomputers to jumbo jets, ushering in a world of abundance. It also will allow humanity to conquer illness, as minute submarines roam the bloodstream, fighting disease. And nanotechnology will allow virtually all human physical defects to be corrected.

Drexler envisions tiny machines called “assemblers” doing the molecular construction work. But there’s a danger, which he calls the “gray goo” problem: the possibility that assemblers could be designed to replicate themselves, multiplying like malignant cancer cells and consuming everything in their path.

That is one of the dangers that make Bill Joy, a cofounder of Sun Microsystems and a prominent computer scientist, fearful. In a *Wired* (Apr. 2000) essay that still has nanoscientist tongues wagging, Joy warned of the technology’s military and terrorist uses, arguing that self-replicating nanotech devices “can be built to be selectively destructive, affecting, for example, only a certain geographical area or a group of people who are genetically distinct.” Moreover, he says, the technology carries “a grave risk . . . that we might destroy the biosphere on which all life depends.”

Though himself admittedly “more a computer architect than a scientist,” Joy judges that “the enabling breakthrough to assemblers” is likely to occur within the next 20 years.

Joy proposes a radical solution: “relinquishment,” that is, “to limit development of the technologies that are too dangerous, by limiting our pursuit of certain kinds of knowledge.” He includes robotics and genetics, as well as nanotechnology.

“‘Relinquishment’ has a voluntary air about it,” observe writers George Gilder and Richard Vigilante in the *American Spectator* (Mar. 2001), but, as Joy himself says, “‘a verification regime . . . on an unprecedented scale’” would have to be applied to individuals and businesses. “Wittingly or not,” they contend, “Joy has unveiled what will be the 21st century’s leading rationale for anti-capitalist repression and the revival of statism . . . a program and *raison d’être* for a new Left.”

The danger from future self-replicating nanobots may be wildly overblown. Richard Smalley, a Nobel Prize-winning chemist at Rice University, in Houston, tells Robert F. Service of *Science* (Nov. 24, 2000) that, for various practical reasons, it will never be possible to build nanomachines of the sort Drexler imagines. Other nanoscience researchers, writes Service, also find “that what Joy and others fear is at best implausible and more likely plain wrong,” and they have begun speaking up.

Nanotechnology today is by no means just a matter of speculation about the benign or malign future. In 1989, IBM physicists in California “dazzled the scientific world when they used a microscopic probe to painstakingly move a series of xenon atoms on a nickel surface to form a Lilliputian version of the three letters in Big Blue’s logo,” writes David Rotman, a senior editor at *Technology Review* (Jan.–Feb. 2001). Today, at Northwestern University, chemist Chad Mirkin, using an atomic force microscope, is turning “nano writing” (which resembles ordinary writing but has a very different purpose) into “a practical fabrication tool,” which could be used, for instance, to make different configurations of biological mole-

cules that “could prove invaluable in discovering new drugs or diagnosing disease.”

Inside a chamber of Mirkin’s microscope, Rotman explains, “the tips of tiny probes dip into a well of organic molecules. The microscopic tips, sharpened to a point only a few atoms wide, then ‘write’ the words typed by Mirkin in letters tens to hundreds of nanometers wide.” (A nanometer is one-billionth of a meter.) “By automating the procedure and rigging up a number of tips in parallel,” Rotman continues, “Mirkin has learned how . . . to rapidly and directly create structures at the nanometer

scale.” This could be a way to mass-produce nanostructures, Mirkin believes.

His structures are a far cry from Drexler’s nanobots, but they have the advantage of being real. Other advances in nanotechnology, notes Service, “have already led to improvements in computer data storage, solar cells, and rechargeable batteries.” More are on the way. Adding to private-sector efforts, Congress last year approved the National Nanotechnology Initiative. The federal government is spending on nanoscience this year some \$423 million—hardly a nanosum.

## *Tuskegee Redux?*

“The Shame of Medical Research” by David J. Rothman, in *The New York Review of Books* (Nov. 30, 2000), 1755 Broadway, Fifth Floor, New York, N.Y. 10019-3780.

As American medical researchers have pressed the fight against AIDS, some have been conducting more of their clinical trials in Africa and Asia. So have investigators from American drug firms who want to test new treatments for various ailments without the regulatory and financial burdens of research at home. But the researchers seldom give their overseas test subjects the same high level of medical care that Americans receive. Rothman, a professor of social medicine at the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, says this is wrong.

The question of whether Western standards should be applied in Africa and Asia first arose, Rothman says, after clinical trials in the United States determined in 1994 that the drug azidothymidine (AZT), though highly toxic, significantly reduced the transmission of HIV from infected pregnant mothers to their children. This treatment immediately became standard in American hospitals, but it was too expensive (\$800 for a six-month course of AZT) for developing countries, where the average citizen spends less than \$25 a year on health care. Researchers then sought to determine whether administering a small amount of AZT late in the pregnancy, at a cost of only \$50, would be almost as effective. They conducted clinical trials involving some 17,000 pregnant women, mostly in southern Africa and Thailand. The women generally were given either the small amount

of AZT or a placebo. Had the trials been conducted in the United States, Rothman notes, the women in the control group would have been given not a placebo but the already-proven six-month AZT treatment.

Critics such as Marcia Angell of the *New England Journal of Medicine* charged that in giving the women placebos, the researchers showed “a callous disregard of their welfare,” in violation of the World Medical Association’s code of ethics for human experimentation. But Harold Varmus and David Satcher, the then-heads, respectively, of the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which funded some of the research, defended the use of placebos. The six-month AZT treatment, they said, not only was very expensive but required frequent medical monitoring beyond the capacity of developing countries. Use of the placebos also allowed researchers to find out more quickly that the small-dose treatment was effective, thus sparing more infants. Africans and Asians on local review boards had approved the clinical trials, and the United States, proponents said, should not be dictating research ethics for developing countries.

That was far from the end of the controversy, however. “AIDS investigations in developing countries often withhold effective treatments from research subjects,” says Rothman. This is not only because the treat-

ments are costly and hard to administer, but because they can fatally undermine the research. For example, researchers from the University of Washington and the University of Nairobi who were studying not the efficacy of AZT but how HIV is transmitted from pregnant women to their children, could not have carried out their study if they had given the women AZT.

Some advocates, Rothman notes, contend

“that the tidal wave of AIDS sweeping the world, particularly in southern Africa, is so dreadful that researchers must be given a relatively free hand.” But he disagrees. “When we take account of the misery and stunted hopes of people in Uganda, it is not enough for investigators to say that their research left them no worse off. . . . Do unto others as we do unto ourselves—a principle for researchers everywhere.”

## *Why Do Horses Sleep?*

“Do Horses Gallop in Their Sleep?” by Matt Cartmill, in *The Key Reporter* (Autumn 2000), Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Fourth Floor, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Is consciousness unique to humans, or do other animals also possess it? Scientists—who are generally reluctant to deal with so subjective a thing as consciousness—are divided on the question. But Cartmill, a professor of biological anthropology and anatomy at Duke University Medical Center, thinks that the form of unconsciousness known as sleep offers some clues to the mystery.

Like humans—and unlike most animals—horses and other mammals (as well as birds and possibly some reptiles) engage in “true sleep, involving a shift from fast to slow waves in the forebrain,” Cartmill notes. Because such sleep is “dangerous, complicated, and time-consuming,” there must be “a payoff.” It’s not to conserve energy, he says, since “mammalian sleep uses almost as much energy as wakeful resting.” And it’s not to avoid predators, since “birds and mammals that are too big to hide still have to flop down and fall asleep every day, right out there on the prairie, exposed to every predator in the world. They do it as little as possible—a horse sleeps only about three hours a

day, of which only 20 minutes is spent lying down—but they’d be better off if they didn’t do it at all,” like most invertebrates and cold-blooded vertebrates.

It appears to be “the needs of the brain” that make sleep necessary for humans, Cartmill says. “Consciousness damages or depletes something in the waking brain, and we can’t keep it up indefinitely. If we’re forced to stay conscious around the clock, day after day, with rest but no sleep, we soon start manifesting pathological symptoms.” Sleep seems to restore that damaged or depleted “something” in the brain.

If that is so, Cartmill concludes, then “it seems reasonable to think that animals that have to sleep as we do are conscious when they are awake.”

The evidence for animal consciousness “is necessarily indirect,” Cartmill says. But that evidence, in his view, “seems at least as persuasive as the indirect evidence that we have for other unobservable phenomena—for example, the Big Bang, or neutrinos, or human evolution.”

### ARTS & LETTERS

## *Remaking the Landscape*

“A Word for Landscape Architecture” by John Beardsley, in *Harvard Design Magazine* (Fall 2000), Harvard Univ., Graduate School of Design, 48 Quincy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Unlike architecture and the fine arts, landscape architecture seldom appears in the limelight. But that may be about to change. The low-profile discipline is fast

becoming perhaps “the most consequential art of our time,” claims Beardsley, a senior lecturer in landscape architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. No



*In projects such as the Parque Ecológico Xochimilco, landscape architects are finding a new role.*

longer concerned simply with arranging places for safe, healthful, and pleasant use, landscape architecture has become a means of expressing “individual and societal attitudes toward nature,” and it is transforming “our public environments.”

Embracing ecology as “a moral compass,” landscape architects, says Beardsley, now take up a host of challenges—environmental, social, technological, and artistic. In cleaning up the contaminated site of a former iron and steel plant in Germany, landscape architects Peter Latz and Anneliese Latz made the site’s “problematic history” part of their design, Beardsley notes. They preserved the blast furnaces and surrounded them with trees, “making them appear like craggy mountains glimpsed through a forest”—and offering an environmental lesson to park visitors.

Environmentalism and the ethic of “sustainable design,” says Beardsley, now encourage landscape architects to develop “‘green’ infrastructure for improved energy efficiency, storm water management, waste water treatment, bioremediation, vegetal roofing, and recycling.” For architect Renzo Piano’s DaimlerChrysler complex in Berlin, landscape designer Herbert

Dreiseitl devised an unusual plan featuring rooftop gardens that capture and filter rainwater. The water is used in the building and also feeds a big lagoon.

Perhaps the best example of the new role of landscape architecture is the Parque Ecológico Xochimilco, an early-1990s environmental restoration project in Mexico City. Dating to the 10th century, the prized landscape consisted of some 7,400 acres of rectangular artificial garden islands set amid a network of canals. But the canals were clogged with aquatic plants, and the islands were sinking as the aquifers beneath them became increasingly depleted. Runoff from developed areas nearby caused frequent floods.

Landscape architect Mario Schjetnan’s design “was guided by hydraulic strategies,” says Beardsley. Water was pumped back into the aquifer; polluted surface water was treated, then used to regulate water levels in the canals, which were cleared of harmful vegetation. The eroded islands were built back up, more than one million trees were planted, and agriculture was reintroduced to the islands. Today, the canals of Xochimilco are full of pleasure boats, and the city’s people can

wander a 743-acre park “whose different zones emphasize natural, recreational, and interpretive areas.”

“The ways in which we meet the challenges of urban sprawl, open space preservation, resource consumption and waste,

and environmental protection and restoration are crucial to the quality of our lives—maybe even to the survival of our species,” asseverates Beardsley. “It is landscape architecture that confronts these challenges.”

EXCERPT

## *Living Other Lives*

*It is the curious identity of books in general that history and philosophy, invaluable though they are, cannot, by their very nature, contain novels; yet novels can contain history and philosophy. We need not quarrel about which genre is superior; all are essential to human striving. But somehow it is enchanting to think that the magic sack of make-believe, if one wills it so, can always be fuller and fatter than anything the historians and philosophers can supply. Make-believe, with its uselessness and triviality, with all its falseness, is nevertheless frequently praised for telling the truth via lies. Such an observation seems plainly not to the point. History seeks truth; philosophy seeks truth. They may get at it far better than novels can. Novels are made for another purpose. They are made to allow us to live, for a little time, another life; a life different from the one we were ineluctably born into. Truth, if we can lay our hands on it, may or may not confer freedom. Make-believe always does.*

—Novelist and essayist Cynthia Ozick, in *The Yale Review* (Oct. 2000)

## *A Misunderstood Masterpiece*

“The Real Presence of Christ and the Penitent Mary Magdalen in the *Allegory of Faith* by Johannes Vermeer” by Valerie Lind Hedquist, in *Art History* (Sept. 2000), Assn. of Art Historians, 70 Cowcross St., London EC1M 6EJ, U.K.

*Allegory of Faith* (c. 1671–74), which may have been Johannes Vermeer’s last painting, is quite different from all of the Dutch master’s earlier, straightforwardly naturalistic works. It shows a woman striking a rhetorical pose, surrounded by religious objects in an otherwise typical Dutch domestic interior. Perplexed, most scholars have dismissed the painting as a crude religious allegory done when Vermeer’s artistic sensibilities were growing duller. Other scholars have given incomplete interpretations. But Hedquist, a professor of art criticism at the University of Montana–Missoula, contends that *Allegory of Faith* is “a finely painted masterpiece” that must be understood in the context of the Dutch Roman Catholic community to which Vermeer (1632–75) belonged.

The painting, she says, is a sophisticated allegorical apology for the Catholic doctrine of

transubstantiation (whereby the bread and wine in the Mass are miraculously transformed into the real presence of Christ’s body and blood). Disagreement about the sacrament of the Eucharist was the main issue dividing Roman Catholics and Calvinists in the northern Netherlands. The Calvinists, who did not believe in transubstantiation, insisted that simple faith, without the special sacrament of communion, was sufficient for salvation. In the Catholic community in Delft, clandestine gatherings to celebrate Mass were not at all unusual, says Hedquist. Indeed, parishioners probably gathered in Vermeer’s home for that purpose.

In *Allegory of Faith*, a tapestry curtain (with decorations standing for the outside, secular world) is pulled back to reveal a richly attired woman whose right foot is on a terrestrial globe



and who is gazing heavenward at a hanging glass ball above her head. She leans with her left arm on a table, which is actually an altar (where heaven and earth meet). On it are liturgical objects, including a chalice (for the wine), a crucifix, and a crown of thorns.

The woman not only personifies faith, says Hedquist, but also represents the penitent saint Mary Magdalen, the favorite female saint of the Counter Reformation. In the background of *Allegory of Faith* hangs a large painting of the

Crucifixion, based on a work by Flemish artist Jacob Jordaens. But Vermeer, Hedquist notes, has removed or obscured the figure of Mary Magdalen in Jordaens's original composition, so that Vermeer's female figure of faith seems to take her place in the background painting while coming to life "as the penitent saint within his domestic church interior." The dress, pose, and adornments of the woman echo depictions of Mary Magdalen in other 17th-century paintings. Her pearls and elegant costume



*Allegory of Faith* (c. 1671–74), by Johannes Vermeer

“refer to Mary Magdalen’s life of vanity before turning to Christ.”

In the foreground of *Allegory of Faith* are representations of the original sin: a partially eaten apple and a snake crushed by a fallen corner-

stone (symbolizing Christ). Also in the foreground, just beyond the drawn-back curtain, is an empty chair—a seat for the viewer, Hedquist says, who is being invited to join in celebrating the Mass.

## *Ellison and the Wright Stuff*

“The Birth of the Critic: The Literary Friendship of Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright” by Lawrence P. Jackson, in *American Literature* (June 2000), Box 90020, Duke Univ., Durham, N.C. 27708-0020.

Sixteen years before he published *Invisible Man* (1952), a young Ralph Ellison left his music studies at Alabama’s Tuskegee Institute and plunged into the unfamiliar world of art and radical politics in New York. Within a year, he had found a mentor—Richard Wright (1908-60), who would go on, like Ellison himself, to become one of the century’s leading black writers. “Their friendship blossomed,” writes Jackson, an English professor at Howard University. But over time, the two black writers would come to have very different visions of art and American life.

Wright was working for the Harlem branch of the Communist *Daily Worker*, and Ellison admired his zeal for exposing racial injustice and his “almost religious devotion to the craft of writing,” says Jackson. As a fledgling literary critic, Ellison “fell under the sway of Wright’s commanding Marxist examination of history and culture.” Wright, whose award-winning collection of short stories, *Uncle Tom’s Children*, appeared in 1938, “used his party clout” to get Ellison a job with the Federal Writers’ Project in New York, and also introduced him to the editors of the Communist literary journal *New Masses*.

Wright’s best-selling *Native Son* (1940) made him a celebrated author. In the novel, a black Chicagoan named Bigger Thomas accidentally kills a white girl, takes flight, and is captured, tried, and, defiant to the end, executed. *Native Son* was the first black “protest novel.”

Ellison, meanwhile, was developing his own artistic vision, one that went beyond Wright’s social realism. In a 1941 essay, he lauded *Native Son* but contended that future black writers could do even better if they gained more technical expertise from “advanced white writers” and brought “the

imaginative depiction of Negro life into the broad stream of American literature.” Ellison’s critique soon encompassed more than aesthetics: he came to see black writers’ social realism as dishonest, an extension of the “Communists’ manipulation of the black rights movement,” Jackson says.

While Wright, who grew up in poverty, felt rejected by the black bourgeoisie and alienated from the unlettered black working class, says Jackson, Ellison was comfortable in both worlds. Steered to Henry James and Feodor Dostoyevsky by Wright, Ellison not only came to speak “with growing confidence about high art” but also “reached deep” into black folk culture. Wright, who considered blacks oppressed by their impoverished environment, found little of value in their folk culture. In a review of Wright’s 1945 autobiography, *Black Boy*, Ellison defended Wright’s assertion of the “essential bleakness of black life.” But he also argued that the black folk art of the blues had enabled blacks to face and triumph over adversity. Privately, Jackson says, Ellison deemed *Black Boy* “a deliberate regression in artistic form and near propaganda.”

The gulf between the two writers widened, especially after Wright permanently moved to Paris in 1947. In 1952, Ellison’s *Invisible Man* appeared, a modernistic novel whose unnamed hero, a southern black who moves north, gives a dreamlike account of his journey toward disillusion and of his alienated and “invisible” condition. The novel was immediately acclaimed a classic. Ellison became “something of an American patriot,” Jackson says. By the time he saw his former mentor for the last time, in 1956, Wright “felt betrayed” by him, according to Jackson, while Ellison saw Wright as someone caught in an ideological trap.

## The Ming Voyages

“China, the West, and World History in Joseph Needham’s *Science and Civilisation in China*”

by Robert Finlay, in *Journal of World History* (Fall 2000), Univ. of Hawaii Press,  
2840 Kolowalu St., Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.

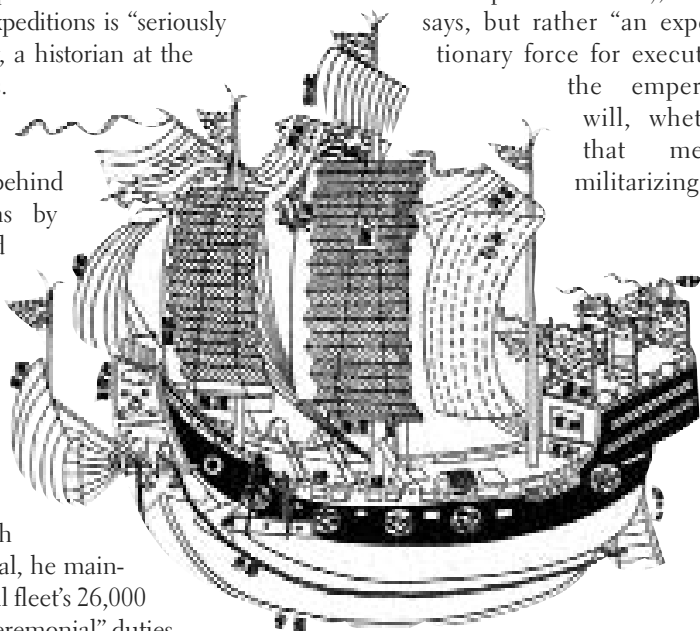
Thanks to British scholar Joseph Needham’s monumental *Science and Civilisation in China* (1954–98), westerners have a whole new appreciation of China’s richly inventive past. Especially compelling was his account of 15th-century Chinese expeditions to Southeast Asia and, through the Indian Ocean, to India, Arabia, and Africa. Renowned now as voyages of discovery, they show up in many notable treatments of world history. Needham drew a sharp contrast between those peaceful Ming dynasty expeditions (1405–33) of Zheng He, whom he portrays as China’s answer to Vasco da Gama, and the early-16th-century Portuguese voyages of conquest. But Needham’s portrait of the Ming expeditions is “seriously skewed,” argues Finlay, a historian at the University of Arkansas.

Though Needham (1900–95) acknowledged that the motives behind the seven expeditions by Zheng He’s 300-odd junks were mixed, he claimed that the chief purpose, growing stronger with each expedition, was “proto-scientific”—the scholarly gathering of rare materials and knowledge. Trade, though extensive, was incidental, he maintained, and the peaceful fleet’s 26,000 troops had “primarily ceremonial” duties since they were part of “a navy paying friendly visits to foreign ports.” Far more important than merchants and military men, according to Needham, were the fleet’s astronomers, geomancers, physicians, and naturalists.

The reality was quite different, Finlay argues. The eunuch admiral Zheng He “did not, as Needham asserts, inspire the Ming voyages, and there is no significant sense in which he can be regarded as an explorer. He commanded the maritime expeditions as a military agent of the

Yongle emperor, a ruler who had no interest in voyages of discovery. . . . Aggressive and ruthless, Yongle was one of the most militaristic rulers in Chinese history.” He had come to power in a bloody civil war, personally commanded campaigns against the Mongols, and, starting in 1406—the year after Zheng He’s fleet first sailed to Southeast Asia—sent an army of more than 200,000 men to invade Vietnam. “Yet the emperor does not figure in Needham’s analysis,” Finlay observes.

The 26,000 troops on the Chinese junks were not “a ceremonial cortege for diplomatic occasions” (being much too numerous and expensive for that), Finlay says, but rather “an expeditionary force for executing the emperor’s will, whether that meant militarizing the



*The ocean-going fuchuan provided a model for the large junks in Zheng He’s fleet.*

tribute system, suppressing piracy in Southeast Asia, bringing overseas Chinese ports under control, or even making Siam and Java vassal states of the empire.” And the many “experienced, heavily armed” troops, not the “calm and pacific” nature of the Chinese, were the reason that the voyages were generally tranquil. Nor was trade mere-

ly incidental, “for Yongle evidently intended to harness the force (and profits) of seaborne commerce to serve the purposes of imperial hegemony in Southeast Asia.”

Needham, a former biochemist who subscribed to an idiosyncratic blend of Marxism and Christianity, was determined, says Finlay, “to present the Ming expeditions as embodying the virtues of China in contrast to the vices of the West.” *Science and Civilisation in China* is an

encyclopedic survey of Chinese accomplishments in science and technology. But, “as with the voyages of Zheng He,” Finlay says, Needham’s account of those accomplishments “ignores social, political, and economic contexts.” Needham’s claims about the impact of Chinese inventions on Europe are also suspect, Finlay thinks. Yet, despite its flaws, he says, the late scholar’s masterwork “remains an extraordinary achievement.”

## *Mexico’s ‘Compassionate Conservatism’*

“Vicente Fox and the Rise of the PAN” by David A. Shirk, in *Journal of Democracy* (Oct. 2000), 1101 15th St., N.W., Ste. 802, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Mexico’s new president, Vicente Fox, ended decades of rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) when he took office last December. The country is entering a new era—and many fear that Fox’s National Action Party (PAN) is, at bottom, a reactionary party. It isn’t, contends political scientist Shirk, a former visiting fellow at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, at the University of California, San Diego.

Though the PAN includes traditionalist conservative and Catholic elements, he says, “the party is better understood as a liberal-democratic alternative to PRI authoritarianism than as a Catholic reaction” to the Mexican Revolution of 1910–17.

Founded in Mexico City in 1939, the PAN initially attracted business groups and religious activists opposed to the PRI regime’s leftist and anticlerical tendencies. But the regime soon made a sharp right turn, drawing most businessmen back into the PRI fold. The remaining PAN supporters were committed to the party’s agenda of liberal-democratic reform and religious freedom, says Shirk. During the 1960s and early ’70s, the party’s religious wing grew stronger, but it was heavily influenced by international Christian Democratic organizations and left-leaning liberation theology.

Then, in the early 1980s, many entrepreneurs in small- and medium-sized businesses, frustrated by the PRI regime’s mismanagement of the economy, entered the PAN, and “the balance of power within the leadership shifted in favor of more secular and pragmat-

ic leaders,” Shirk says. Fox, a former Coca-Cola executive who was then running a small business, was one of the PAN’s new breed.

“The PAN’s path to the presidency was paved by a ‘creeping federalist’ strategy focused on winning control of local and state governments,” Shirk observes. PAN governments had jurisdiction over less than one percent of the populace in 1987, but by the time of last year’s election, PAN-controlled municipal governments alone governed nearly a quarter of the nation’s population.

Along with “the practical, largely secular approach of [its] liberal-democratic vision,” says Shirk, the PAN has a philosophy of “political humanism.” Drawing largely from Jesuit teachings, it advocates programs that meet both spiritual and material needs and that help citizens to help themselves—“a Mexican analogue to ‘compassionate conservatism,’” Shirk writes. This outlook is very different from the “illiberal brand of ‘right-wing’ conservatism historically adopted” in Chile, Argentina, and various other Latin American countries, he notes.

While the PAN and Fox have frequently been made out to be Catholic crusaders, “these characterizations have little basis in reality,” the author says. Fox, a divorced bachelor, is a moderate Catholic who “has taken middle-of-the-road positions on key religious issues,” such as abortion. At least for the time being, says Shirk, the Mexican “religious right” has far less voice in the PAN than its U.S. counterpart has in the Republican Party.

# RESEARCH REPORTS

*Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions*

## ***“Major Management Challenges and Program Risks: A Governmentwide Perspective.”***

U.S. General Accounting Office, P.O. Box 37050, Washington, D.C. 20013. 66 pp. No charge.

GAO-01-241. Available at [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov).

The era of big government may be over, but the General Accounting Office (GAO), Congress’s independent investigative agency, finds that many arms of the federal government still cannot fully detail just what they do with taxpayers’ money. The susceptibility to mismanagement, waste, fraud, and abuse remains widespread.

Despite some progress in recent years, major departments and agencies have “substantial and longstanding financial management problems,” the GAO reports. The Department of Defense, with some three million military and civilian employees and an annual budget of \$310 billion, “is not yet able to comply with generally accepted accounting principles and pass the test of an independent financial audit.” Other major laggards in recent years include the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Forest Service. And those are just the worst offenders. For fiscal 1999, the GAO says, 21 of 24 major agencies “substantially” failed to comply with federal accounting standards or other requirements.

Since 1990, the GAO has been identifying government operations it judges “high-risk because of their greater vulnerability to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanage-

ment.” That year, it designated 14 high-risk areas to worry about; this year, it found 22. Those numbers conceal considerable turnover. In three areas this year, for example, sufficient progress has been made to warrant removal of the high-risk label: the Environmental Protection Agency’s Superfund program for hazardous waste sites, the Department of Agriculture’s farm loan programs, and the National Weather Service’s efforts to modernize its information technology.

Still on the list today, however, are eight high-risk areas from 1990, including the Medicare program, the Pentagon’s weapons acquisition program and inventory management, the Department of Energy’s management of projects with outside contractors, and the IRS’s collection of unpaid taxes.

The GAO has added 19 areas to its high-risk list since 1990, including, this year, a governmentwide concern, “strategic human capital management.” Efforts to trim the federal work force—which fell from about 2.3 million (nonpostal) employees in 1990 to fewer than 1.9 million nine years later—have checked “the influx of new people with new skills, new knowledge, new energy, and new ideas.” The “reservoir of future agency leaders and managers” has been depleted.

## ***“For Goodness’ Sake: Why So Many Want Religion to Play a Greater Role in American Life.”***

Public Agenda, 6 E. 39th St., New York, N.Y. 10016. 58 pp. \$10.

Authors: *Steve Farkas et al.*

Two-thirds of Americans apparently like the idea, championed by President George W. Bush, of providing federal funds to churches and religious groups that aid the needy—but only if they refrain from giving those they help any religious message.

A survey of 1,507 adults last November by Public Agenda, a nonprofit opinion research organization, found that, while 44 percent deemed government funding of “faith-based” charitable organizations a good idea even if the groups did try to pro-

## Research Reports

mote religious messages, 23 percent went along only if they didn't do that. And 31 percent thought the whole idea was a bad one.

Gallup and other polls in recent years have shown that most Americans regard the current moral condition of the country as a major problem, if not a "crisis." Public Agenda found that 69 percent believe that "more religion is the best way to strengthen family values and moral behavior." Even larger majorities agree that if many more Americans were to become "deeply religious," then crime would decrease, parents would do better at raising their children, and people would do more volunteer work. But a slight majority (52 percent) think that there also would be more intolerance toward "people with unconventional lifestyles." And 54 percent of Jewish Americans and 67 percent of "nonreligious" Americans fear that there probably would be more prejudice toward religious minorities, Public Agenda found (with the aid of supplementary surveys). Only 31 percent of the general public agrees.

About 60 percent of Americans think the Supreme Court has gone overboard in

separating church and state, and don't believe that school prayer would violate the Constitution. "At the same time, however," say the Public Agenda authors, "most people are sensitive to the fact that children of all creeds attend the public schools and want a policy that is as inclusive as possible." Remarkably, only six percent favor a Christian prayer referring to Jesus, while 20 percent want a prayer referring to God but no specific religion, and the majority (53 percent) favor a moment of silence. Even 53 percent of self-described "evangelical Christians" subscribe to that as the best solution. "But while large numbers of Americans are looking for the middle ground on the school prayer issue," say the authors, 60 percent of Jewish Americans and 56 percent of nonreligious Americans want to keep both prayer and a moment of silence out of the schools entirely. Only 19 percent of the general public takes that stand.

Despite the broad support for expanding religious influence in American life, 54 percent of the general public (along with 73 percent of Jews and 75 percent of the nonreligious) agrees that it could "easily get out of hand."

### *"Ever-More-Rooted Americans."*

Working paper for "USA: A Century of Difference," a project sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation, and also supported by the Center for Working Families, University of California, Berkeley.  
29 pp. Available at [ucdata.Berkeley.EDU/rsfcensus](http://ucdata.Berkeley.EDU/rsfcensus). Author: *Claude S. Fischer*

**T**hose who lament the "rootlessness" of modern life often cite the propensity of Americans these days to "pull up stakes" and move. They ought to reconsider, asserts Fischer, a sociologist at the University of California, Berkeley. Census data for the last half-century show that Americans have become *less* likely to change their address.

The decline in the rate of residential mobility since the mid-20th century has been slow but steady, he says. In the late 1940s, about 20 percent of all Americans changed their address annually; in the late 1990s, only about 16 percent did. The large majority of moves are local, and it's in this category that virtually all of the decline has

occurred. Americans still make "distant" moves (across county lines) at about the same rate.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Americans seem to have moved more often (though data are fragmentary). In Sangamon County, Illinois, for example, only two of every 10 households present in 1840 were still there a decade later.

Not surprisingly, Americans in their early twenties are the most likely to move, as they leave their parents' home, marry, and become parents. Distant moves are usually for job-related reasons, while local moves are usually to obtain better housing, Fischer says. People in their late twenties or early thirties with a college degree are more

likely than others to make distant moves, while high school dropouts are more likely to make local ones. "Much of American residential mobility," says Fischer, "is composed of repeat moves by the same people."

If residential mobility has decreased, what accounts for the many casual scholar-

ly references to *increased* mobility and "rootlessness"? Perhaps, says Fischer, social scientists find their "grand narrative" about modernity's "socially disorganizing and psychologically alienating" impact simply too good a story to let inconvenient facts get in the way.

## WILSON CENTER DIGEST

### *"The Currency Conundrum."*

A conference held Jan. 11, 2001, at the Wilson Center, sponsored by the Center's West European Studies program.

Ever since President Richard M. Nixon's 1971 decision to take the dollar off the gold standard, the United States and other nations have had to pay close attention to their respective currencies' exchange rates. Their management of those rates hasn't always been done well, as the major financial crises in Asia, Mexico, Russia, and elsewhere in recent years attest. In a one-day conference at the Wilson Center earlier this year, specialists discussed the status of the world's three major currencies: the dollar, the yen, and the euro.

The United States' slowing economy and current account deficit (which reached more than \$331 billion in 1999 and may have reached a record \$450 billion last year) pointed to a decline in the value of the dollar against the euro, said Robert D. Hormats, vice chairman of Goldman Sachs (International). In just the last few months of 2000, the euro's value relative to the dollar rose nearly 20 percent, to \$0.94, at the time of the conference.

Norbert Walter, managing director of Deutsche Bank Research in Germany, said the European Monetary Union's requirements that full members' fiscal deficit be no more than three percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and their national debt no greater than 60 percent of GDP, had led to improved economic policies and competition among member nations to reduce taxes. The changes have made Europe more attractive to investors, he noted, including those in the United States.

Walter said he would not be surprised to

see the euro reach parity with the dollar or even \$1.10 in the near future.

Japan, with a stagnant economy, is another story. On the day of the conference, the yen had slipped to 117 to the dollar. Eisuke Sakakibara, director of the Global Security Research Center at Keio University in Tokyo and formerly Japan's vice minister of finance for international affairs, said he expected the yen to fall soon to 120 to the dollar and perhaps then to plummet to 130 or lower. Although Japan's dynamic export industries have high levels of productivity and continue to do well, they employ only about 10 percent of Japanese workers, he noted. The other 90 percent work in construction, retail trade, health care, and other areas that are heavily dependent on government subsidies and protection. Productivity in this part of the economy is only about two-thirds the U.S. level. Sakakibara, who blamed many of Japan's economic problems on the state of its political system, was pessimistic about the prospects for economic improvement anytime soon. A slowing U.S. economy, he noted, will hurt Japanese exports.

The United States should work with Japan to limit depreciation of the yen, argued C. Fred Bergsten, director of the Institute for International Economics and a former official in the Nixon and Carter administrations. The challenge for the new Bush administration, in his view, is to manage the needed decline in the dollar's value without letting it drop so rapidly that the U.S. economy is seriously hurt.

# CURRENT BOOKS

Reviews of new and noteworthy nonfiction

## *The Confederacy's Marble Man*

---

*DUTY FAITHFULLY PERFORMED:*

*Robert E. Lee and His Critics.*

By John M. Taylor. Brassey's.

268 pp. \$18.95

---

*THE MAKING OF ROBERT E. LEE.*

By Michael Fellman. Random House.

360 pp. \$29.95

---

*Reviewed by Max Byrd*

Robert E. Lee's famous nickname at West Point, given by a classmate who saw him riding by, was "the Marble Man" — a distinctly curious image to apply to an 18- or 19-year-old boy. It suggests a statue, of course, a military hero astride his mount, and it conveys a little of the awe that the young Lee's physical beauty and moral character seemed to inspire in everyone (astonishingly, he went through all four years at the U.S. Military Academy without receiving a single demerit). But it also suggests a cold, distant, inhuman figure of stone.

This is the contradiction that Thomas Connelly took up in his remarkable book *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society* (1977). He concluded that the second interpretation is the right one, that Lee's legendary Victorian virtue, celebrated in a thousand marble statues across the South, was really no more than a terrible hardening of the heart, a chilly mechanical repression of all that was strong and vibrant in his personality. In the quarter-century since Connelly's book appeared, almost everyone who has written about Lee has begun by responding one way or another to this argument.

Rejecting the Connelly thesis, self-described "counter-revisionist" John M. Taylor offers a quick-paced, very well written short biography of Lee, concentrating (as befits the son of General Maxwell Taylor) on criticisms of Lee's strategy and tactics during the war years. He has a nice ear for quotation and anecdote. He gives due attention to Lee's weaknesses, especially at Gettysburg, where he thinks Lee should have listened more closely to James Longstreet, but he will have none of the charge that Lee was neurotic or unfeeling or, as John Keegan claims in *The Mask of Command* (1987), "of limited imagination." If there is a key to Lee's character, Taylor insists, sounding rather earnestly Victorian himself, it is his sense of Duty ("Stern Daughter of the Voice of God," as Wordsworth called it), "a secular manifestation of his religion," which "led inexorably to self-denial." Less readily explained, Taylor concedes, is how the outgoing young Lee turned into someone so private and severe.

As one of its many strengths, *The Making of Robert E. Lee* provides, if not an explanation, at least a wonderful series of slow-motion pic-



tures of that evolution from sociable, even ebullient young man to marble hero. Michael Fellman, a professor of history at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, begins with the familiar facts of Lee's unstable childhood, including its two examples of male self-indulgence and indifference to duty: Lee's father, the celebrated Revolutionary general "Light Horse" Harry Lee, who early disappeared from the boy's world in bankruptcy and disgrace; and Lee's scandalous half-brother "Black Horse" Harry Lee, who quite publicly seduced his wife's younger sister. And there was, of course, the great Roman-Virginian counterexample of self-control and virtue, Light Horse Harry's beloved commander, whom Robert E. Lee, leading his "nation" of Virginia into independence, would consciously emulate. "General Lee," remarked a sardonic colleague in 1862, "you certainly play Washington to perfection."

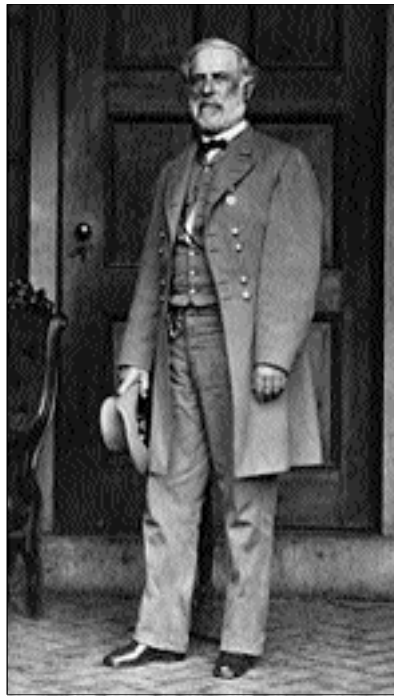
Those who know Lee only as a paragon of military skill and virtuous self-denial, the Protestant Saint of the South, will be amazed by Fellman's account of just what Lee had to control and deny. He did not smoke or drink, rarely used rough language, and despised all forms of personal physical violence. When it came to sexuality, however, "he departed from what were by his lights nearly perfect habits." Lee married the daughter of George Washington's stepson, but Mary Custis seems not to have been a warm or particularly affectionate wife. To the end of his life, Lee kept up a number of flirtatious (and more than flirtatious) relationships and correspondences with attractive young women. To a friend's younger sister, he writes that he had been thinking about her on her wedding night: "And how did you disport yourself My

child? Did you go off well, like a torpedo cracker on Christmas morning?" To another friend, he confesses that while on duty in St. Louis, away from his wife, he loved to be among pretty women, "for I have met them in no place, in no garb, in no situation that I did not feel my heart open to them, like a flower to the sun."

A second element of Lee's character also escaped his otherwise strong self-control. As he emerges in Fellman's penetrating narrative, the elegant, aristocratic Virginian comes to resemble more and more that most demonic prince of eros and aggression on the other side, William Tecumseh Sherman. If the Civil War ultimately made Lee into a tragic figure, it was not before he released in full measure his *rage militaire*, the deep pleasure in destruction that also possessed the Butcher of Atlanta. Nearly to the end of the war, Lee dreamed of the one great apocalyptic battle that would vaporize the enemy in a cloud of smoke and blood. As a general he was audacious, ruthless, furious. Gettysburg was no aberration, but the fullest possible expression of his aggressiveness. At Fredericksburg, as he watched the Union

army stumble into a veritable slaughter, with 12,600 casualties in a single day, Lee turned to an aide and made his famous remark, "It is well that war is so terrible—we should grow too fond of it!"

**T**he final years of Lee's life make gloomy reading. Fellman and Taylor both trace in some detail his performance as president of Washington College (now Washington and Lee) in Lexington, Virginia. Fellman devotes a number of thoughtful pages as well to Lee's rather sad



Robert E. Lee in Richmond (1865), in a photograph taken by Mathew Brady

## Current Books

ideas on race, slavery, and Reconstruction. His last words, Taylor says, following the old Douglas Southall Freeman story, were “strike the tent.” But the more skeptical and penetrating historian Fellman observes simply that Lee had suffered a stroke two weeks earlier and was almost certainly incapable

of speech at all. In the college chapel, he adds, a statue was soon erected, sculpted “from white, white marble.”

>MAX BYRD, a professor of English at the University of California, Davis, is the author most recently of *Grant: A Novel* (2000).

# Requiem for a Dream

## DEEP IN OUR HEARTS:

### *Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement.*

By Constance Curry, Joan C. Browning,  
Dorothy Dawson Burlage, Penny Patch,  
Theresa Del Pozzo, Sue Thrasher,  
Elaine DeLott Baker, Emmie Schrader Adams,  
and Casey Hayden. Univ. of Georgia Press. 400 pp. \$29.95

## FREEDOM'S DAUGHTERS:

### *The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970.*

By Lynne Olson. Scribner. 460 pp. \$30

*Reviewed by David J. Garrow*

For years, historians slighted the contributions of women to the civil rights movement. It was the women of black Montgomery who instigated the famous municipal bus boycott of 1955–56, for instance, but until the late 1980s historians credited the city's black ministers and other male activists. Although black women have been the most overlooked, scholars have also given short shrift to white women—including the idealistic young white women who worked in the early 1960s for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the most important if not the most heralded of the southern civil rights groups. Now nine of those women, led by Sandra Cason “Casey” Hayden, have joined together to publish their individual recollections. *Deep in Our Hearts* is a richly emotional and sometimes quite moving document, a tale of optimism, hope, and, ultimately, disillusionment.

“Our book,” they write, “is about girls growing up in a revolutionary time.” Most of them became active in SNCC in their late teens or early twenties. They found themselves in a

small, close-knit, and warmly supportive organization, albeit one in which most white women were assigned office work rather than field organizing—in dangerous rural counties, the presence of white female activists would have further inflamed violent segregationists.

That loving and supportive world of interracial harmony began to deteriorate in mid-1964. SNCC and other movement groups recruited hundreds of new college students, mostly northern and primarily white, to help staff the massive Mississippi Summer Project. They organized freedom schools, registered voters, and mounted a powerful challenge to the state's all-white delegation to the 1964 Democratic National Convention. The new volunteers were enthusiastically received by most black Mississippians. Emmie Schrader Adams, in one of the book's richest chapters, quotes famed Mississippi activist Fannie Lou Hamer as saying that the “big thing about the summer of '64 was the people learned white folks were human.”

As the locals grew more understanding, though, blacks on the SNCC staff seemed to

grow more distant from their white colleagues. Adams asks, “So if in [Hamer’s] opinion local people had their first opportunity in the summer of 1964 to rub shoulders with nonracist whites, why is it that the same experience caused the staff not only to resent and dislike the new whites, but even to turn on their old white comrades-in-arms? The local people discovered that some whites are different, just as some staff discovered that all whites are fundamentally alike?” In Adams’s view, the “main problem with whites in the movement was that there were suddenly too many of them.”

**S**NCC’s internal problems reached well beyond racial tensions. To Casey Hayden, staff morale eroded because the organization lacked a clear strategy for the future: “We were at the end of all our current programs. We had no plans for after the summer.” The Summer Project ended in disappointment—at the behest of President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City rejected the movement’s integrated delegation in favor of Mississippi’s traditional all-white delegation—and the atmosphere within SNCC turned even sourer.

In November, SNCC activists gathered at Waveland on the Mississippi Gulf Coast to plot a new strategy. The Waveland meeting is best remembered for a single word that future SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael uttered one evening, when a biracial group of men and women were drinking and joking on the Waveland pier. Prompted by a paper anonymously written by Hayden and her friend Mary King, part of the day’s formal discussion had addressed incipiently feminist questions about the position of women in the freedom movement. Carmichael, in a remark that would live in scholarly infamy, joked that the real position of women in the movement was “prone.”

Defending Carmichael, Theresa Del Pozzo argues in her essay that it “is a funny line today, and it was then, and no one took it any other way. Especially not Stokely, Casey, or me.” Casey Hayden concurs: “Stokely sounds like a sexist, pure and simple, to any outsider. But he was quite the opposite.” The laughter that greeted his remark expressed “our release and relief at the exposure of sexuality, sexist attitudes, and the paper’s pomposity.”

Although no one knew it at the time, Waveland marked an ending. “That night on the pier was my final experience after a SNCC meeting of black and white joining together to laugh, to touch, to bond, and to comfort each other,” writes Hayden. The Waveland meeting aimed to restructure SNCC, but, as she notes, “nothing was resolved.” SNCC became a centrally controlled organization that soon fell into decline. At the same time, the organization abandoned its nonviolent, interracial roots in favor of Carmichael’s call for Black Power.

For these white activists, SNCC’s dissolution was as much emotional tragedy as political tragedy. Penny Patch writes of her “anguish” over the growth of black separatist sentiment in the organization. She left in 1965, feeling desolate and betrayed. Hayden writes, “Even now when I give talks about the movement I weep, sometimes breaking down completely. My tears are for that loss and for the innocent girl I was.”

**A** second new book, Lynne Olson’s broadly inclusive *Freedom’s Daughters*, allows one to compare the SNCC women’s firsthand accounts with a sympathetic and experienced journalist’s evaluation of the women’s experiences. Olson, a former reporter for the Associated Press and the *Baltimore Sun*, provides a valuably comprehensive civil rights history. She emphasizes the contributions of black women, but her extensive treatment of SNCC ensures that most of the contributors to the Hayden volume appear in *Freedom’s Daughters* too.

Characterizing SNCC as “unprecedented” among civil rights groups for “the way it welcomed women,” Olson stresses that women in the organization “were leaders in all but title and outside recognition,” while acknowledging that white women lacked the clout of their black counterparts. The white women who worked with SNCC in the early years, she notes, were mostly southerners, often initially naive about the dangers and obstacles facing them. They weren’t naive about everything, though. Penny Patch forthrightly acknowledges that Carmichael’s “prone” joke had a grain of truth: “We were ready, black and white, to break all the taboos.”

## Current Books

Olson's account, like the essays by the women themselves, describes the emotional devastation that followed SNCC's decline and implosion. The feeling of loss, of "searching for the kind of meaning and fulfillment" of the early years of the movement, has haunted many alumni, black as well as white, men as well as women. As Casey Hayden confesses to Olson, "It's hard

to sense that you've peaked in your twenties and that nothing is going to touch this afterwards."

>DAVID J. GARROW, *Presidential Distinguished Professor at Emory University Law School*, is the author of *Bearing the Cross* (1986), a biography of Martin Luther King, Jr., which won a Pulitzer Prize, and the editor of *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson* (1987).

# Name That Tune

READING LYRICS.

Edited by Robert Gottlieb and Robert Kimball. Pantheon. 706 pp. \$39.50

Reviewed by James Morris

What good is a song  
If the words just don't belong?

Jay Livingston and Ray Evans didn't get around to asking that question in a song ("To Each His Own") until 1946, but the sentiment was hardly new then, and it hasn't aged a day since. The common wisdom is that words and music are inseparable, a taken-for-granted couple like love and marriage, horse and carriage. And yet, the music of many a song lives without its lyrics. So how would the words to those same songs fare if sent orphaned into the world? On the evidence of this hefty brief for independence, the lyrics on their own would have an up-and-down time of it, and a lot of them would go hungry. But that's not to say they don't deserve a shot at freedom.

Gottlieb and Kimball gather the words of more than a thousand American and English popular songs written during the first 75 years of the 20th century as if the sum of them made a new species of Norton poetry anthology. And throughout the collection, the lyrics have the look of poetry. They're in slivers down the page:

What'll I do  
When you  
Are far away  
And I am blue  
What'll I do?  
(Irving Berlin)

Or they grow to Whitmanesque width:

And list'nin to some big out-a-town jasper  
hearin' him tell about horse race gamblin'  
(Meredith Willson)

Or they find distinctive cadences in between:

My ship has sails that are made of silk—  
The decks are trimmed with gold—  
And of jam and spice  
There's a paradise  
In the hold.  
(Ira Gershwin)

But though they may look like poetry from a distance, they mostly lack good poetry's denseness and complication. Of course, they don't need to be poetry. They're pliant and colloquial and always meant to be only half of a whole. The stronger the claim of lyrics to poetic independence, the less comfortable they'll be making the accommodation to music.

Poetry—even poetry that may fall comfortably and intelligibly on the ear when recited—makes its first impression on the page and allows a reader to linger over its complicating devices. Lyrics are written to be heard and apprehended more or less immediately, which is why the emotions in them are so direct and simple—simple-minded even ("Tea for Two," for goodness' sake). But wrap what is spare in

a transforming cloak of sound, and the embarrassing simplicity can become bliss. Take the following:

Of thee I sing, baby—  
Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring, baby.

The words are Ira Gershwin's, and maybe there's some vague promise in the formality of the four opening words against the jolt of "baby," but nothing more. Add George Gershwin's notes, and those same words launch an anthem.

For giving lyricists their due, this is a book to treasure, and plainly a labor of love. Gottlieb, a jazz buff, was once editor of the *New Yorker*, and Kimball edited or coedited collections of the lyrics of Cole Porter, Lorenz Hart, Gershwin, and Berlin. All the great lyricists are here (Berlin, Gershwin, Porter, Hart, Oscar Hammerstein II, Stephen Sondheim, E. Y. Harburg, Johnny Burke, Leo Robin, and more), along with others who managed to be proficient often enough, or at least once. The editors invoke an unimpeachable criterion: "Singableness was our final test for every song considered for inclusion." On page after page, they introduce individuals whose names we never knew or have long since forgotten, but whose legacy we take for granted: Herman Hupfeld ("As Time Goes By"), Roy Turk ("Mean to Me"), Mort Dixon ("Bye Bye Blackbird"), William Engvick ("While We're Young"), Edward Heyman ("Blame It on My Youth"), Edgar Leslie ("For Me and My Gal"), Noble Sissle ("I'm Just Wild about Harry"), Haven Gillespie ("Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town").

Gottlieb and Kimball give every prominent lyricist a paragraph of introduction and biography, and append to each set of lyrics the name of the composer who made them into song. In the index, each song title carries its year of composition and its provenance (if the source was a

show or a movie), and the name of the performer who first sang it. So *Reading Lyrics* has all the credentials to be a proper reference volume—and even stronger claims to be a shameless reminiscence volume.

For every reader, this will be a different book from page to page, and sometimes from one part of a page to another. The reason is simple: if you know the music to a set of lyrics, you read the words to its cadences. Unavoidably. The words can't escape the hospitable shackles of their tunes. They dance and strut, or languish and sigh, or glide and whirl to the sounds in your head. But when you bring to the page only silence, the plain words may look awfully wan, unable to manage so much as a twitch.

The real pros overcome the disadvantage. Lorenz Hart, funny and rueful and doomed, never met an internal rhyme he didn't like:

Sir Philip played the harp;  
I cursed the thing.  
I crowned him with his harp  
To bust the thing.  
And now he plays where harps are  
Just the thing.

Or:

I may be sad at times  
And disinclined to play  
But it's not bad at times  
To go your own sweet way.



*Ira Gershwin in 1956*

## Current Books

Cole Porter can glitter on the page, particularly when he's on a tear in one of those giddy catalogue songs ("Let's Do It," "You're the Top," "It's Delovely," "Let's Not Talk about Love," "Brush Up Your Shakespeare"). "Fred Astaire" rhymes with "Camembert" and "Zuider Zee" matches "broccoli," the refrains multiply and the show-off names proliferate—drawn from headlines and from history, from literature, geography, and mythology, from social norm and proper form. Maybe Porter labored over the lyrics for days or weeks, but on the page, and in the hearing, they have a spontaneous rush. The man was so sly and smart that he could pay tribute, at once, to the English music hall, the Broadway showstopper, and the bawdiness of Shakespeare:

If she says your behavior is heinous,  
Kick her right in the "Coriolanus" . . .  
When your baby is pleading for pleasure,  
Let her sample your "Measure for Measure."

You don't need an education to get Berlin, but for Porter (as well as Sondheim, Noel Coward, Alan Jay Lerner, and others), a little schooling helps.

On the other hand, a lifetime of learning won't help you decipher what Alan and Marilyn Bergman intended in "The Windmills of Your Mind," a song that lets the simile police declare an emergency:

Round like a circle in a spiral,  
Like a wheel within a wheel. . . .  
Like a snowball down a mountain  
Or a carnival balloon,  
Like a carousel that's turning,  
Running rings around the moon.

Unrepentant, the Bergmans plant "the meadows of your mind" in a second song, and it appears on the very same page of this anthology—wicked Gottlieb and Kimball! Perhaps those meadows have windmills for grass.

This tribute to one particular type of 20th-century American song—the kind born on Broadway and in Hollywood and up and down Tin Pan Alley—is an elegy as well. The songwriting skills the country once took for granted, because they were so common, had only the common American

75-year run at life. Songs such as these disappeared along with radio and TV hit parades, movie musicals, and Broadway shows that had music instead of notes. The discipline to write them is lost, the audience to hear them dulled. Many an assassin played a part, but those dreary sung-through shows of the past generation—*Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Cats* (in which the helpless T. S. Eliot had a dead hand), *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Aspects of Love*, and such—were among the most efficient. Those burdensome theatrical events seemed designed not to delight but to lumber like failing elephants to the cultural graveyard of PBS pledge week.

How do Gottlieb and Kimball disappoint? By omission, of course; every reader will regret the absence of some favorite ingenuity (I vote for Sondheim's rhyming of "raisins" and "liaisons"). They also make odd mistakes of punctuation and transcription—an exclamation point where the music calls for none ("In other words, please be true!"); the strange-looking "Madem'selle" in a Lerner lyric, when what's plainly sung on the first recording is "Made-moi-selle." Perhaps they're only reproducing what they found on the sheet music, but in "I'm Through with Love," for example, wouldn't the line make more sense as "I have stocked my heart with icy, frigid air," and not "with icy frigidaire," the refrigerator being a bulky encumbrance for the narrow confines of a heart?

In the words of Ira Gershwin, "Who cares?" It may be possible to trace through these hundreds of pages an imagined course for the 20th century, from "By the Light of the Silvery Moon" innocence to Sondheimish resignation ("Quick, send in the clowns. Don't bother, they're here."). But the book needs no ponderous scheme to make it significant. To these words, through these words, generations of Americans fell in and out of love, fretted and pined and recovered, celebrated and grieved, grew up, grew wise, grew old. If you open to one page, you'll be lured to the next, and the next. Measured against the enticements here, the Sirens' song was only scales.

>JAMES MORRIS is deputy editor of the *Wilson Quarterly*.

## ARTS & LETTERS

### CARSON MCCULLERS:

#### *A Life.*

By Josyane Savigneau; transl. by Joan E. Howard. Houghton Mifflin. 370 pp. \$30

I once heard Eudora Welty quote some advice Willa Cather had given her: “Let your fiction grow out of the land beneath your feet.” It is advice southern writers have traditionally taken to heart, creating from their regional postage stamps of America our nation’s literary landscape. On that fictional map is a small, hot, dreary Georgia mill town where during the Great Depression a girl named Lula Carson Smith (known as Sister) grew into a tall, gangly misfit who fled from loneliness by playing Bach and reading Flaubert and making up stories. At 20, she married another would-be writer, the charming Reeves McCullers, a serviceman at Fort Benning, the first boy who ever kissed her.

Carson McCullers (1917–67) was 23 when her first novel, *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), made her famous overnight. Like *This Side of Paradise* before it and *The Catcher in the Rye* for a later generation, McCullers’s novel depicted a character—awkward, androgynous, swaggering adolescent Mick—in whom young rebels, with or without causes, saw themselves. She wrote another novel, *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), and then adapted it for the stage. Starring Ethel Waters and Julie Harris, her first play became a huge hit on Broadway.

Where could so fast a comet go but down? And down she went, into alcoholism, romantic despair, critical failures, debilitating illness. Like her fellow Georgian Flannery O’Connor (who didn’t think much of her), McCullers died fairly young. Unlike O’Connor, she is occasionally dismissed as a

“minor” writer. But since her death in 1967, there have been half a dozen McCullers biographies, including several by French admirers such as Savigneau. (McCullers lived for a while in France, although she never spoke the language.)

No novelist could have a more passionate advocate than Savigneau, the author of a highly praised study of the French novelist Marguerite Yourcenar. *Carson McCullers: A Life* offers a critically persuasive and deeply sympathetic portrait of this troubled, shy, grandiose, and extraordinarily talented woman. While acknowledging a debt to the voluminous biography by Virginia Spencer Carr, *The Lonely Hunter* (1975), Savigneau offers a corrective to what she perceives to be Carr’s subliminally hostile and moralistic attitude and her refusal to grant McCullers the license of her genius and her unique childlike intensity of emotion.

Savigneau subtitled her book in the original French edition *Un coeur de jeune fille*, “a young girl’s heart,” for out of that lonely heart, those “torments of the body and the heart,” were born, she thinks, the novelist’s most memorable fiction. Frankie in *The Member of the Wedding* says, “I feel just exactly like somebody has peeled all the skin off me.” It is in that raw sensibility, that luminous, eerie candor shared by

Frankie’s creator, that Savigneau locates the peculiar genius of Carson McCullers.

A star from an early age, McCullers traveled the celebrity circuit—hopping from London to Paris to Rome—and we are as likely to find her in Ireland with John Huston, or in Key West with Tennessee Williams and Françoise Sagan, as we are to find her sitting at home on the porch with her housekeeper. A lasting place in American letters was vitally important to her, and she



Carson McCullers, by H. V. Poor

fought to hold onto hers. Despite shyness, illness, and at times suicidal depression, she committed herself to her public presence as a writer. International literary festivals and writers' retreats such as Breadloaf and Yaddo were second homes. Wherever she went, she was greatly beloved—and greatly disliked. Gore Vidal once said, "An hour with a dentist without Novacaine was like a minute with Carson McCullers."

Undiagnosed rheumatic fever led to a series of strokes beginning in her twenties that took her in and out of operating rooms dozens of times. She had surgery to reconstruct a hand, so she could use at least one to type, and to replace tendons in a leg, so she could walk with a cane. Her drinking didn't help, nor did smoking three packs of cigarettes a day. But through years of physical and emotional pain, as friends and family fell away (her caretaking mother died, her husband killed himself, allies such as Truman Capote became enemies), McCullers's indomitable will kept her alive and writing. It took her 15 years to finish her final book, *Clock without Hands* (1961), but she did finish it.

Although she left behind only a few plays, stories, poems, and essays, and the four novels, they are legacy enough to ensure her home in the modern canon. To McCullers, moral isolation was the normative human experience, and the desperate longing to connect, to find "the we of me," was the strongest human desire. In her fiction, she found it for herself—and gave it to a world of readers.

—MICHAEL MALONE

---

*THE VIRGIN OF BENNINGTON.*

By Kathleen Norris. Riverhead. 240 pp. \$24.95

"My story . . . begins with an untidy but cheerful job interview on a snowy day in early December 1968," writes Norris. A senior at Bennington College in Vermont, and an aspiring poet, Norris had gone down to New York to apply for an assistant's job at the Academy of American Poets. The director of the Academy, Elizabeth Kray, then in her mid-fifties, was friendly with one of Norris's professors at Bennington (a poet with whom Norris was about to lose her virginity). Norris was nervous

about her lack of sophistication and East Coast credentials—her family was from South Dakota and Hawaii, where her father played in the Honolulu Symphony. Precisely for those deficiencies, the woman gave Norris the job.

Betty Kray, as Norris discovered, was that rare soul, a true appreciator of poetry without ambition to be a poet herself. Kray sent poets out to talk in ghetto high schools. She mixed readings by established poets such as Auden and Eliot with appearances by young talents—the then unknown Anne Sexton, John Berryman, Kenneth Koch, and Donald Hall. In the days before the academization of everything, she created the poetry circuit, on which poets could support themselves by going from college to college. In exchange for a reading, the poet got \$100, a wine and cheese reception, and, often as not, an overnight stay in a student's bed.

At work, Norris learned from Kray; outside of work, Norris learned from New York, that hard-edged teacher. She looked at porno magazines in Times Square with the poet James Tate. She wore "a tight lacy blouse, scarlet velvet hot pants, and turquoise panty hose" to a party given by Erica Jong, with the result that a drunken Gregory Corso chased her around the room, and her ex-lover, the professor—who had come with a younger Bennington girl—snubbed her. Norris frequented Max's Kansas City at the dawn of celebrity culture. She remembers the night one of Andy Warhol's beautiful boys asked her, "Would you have my baby? . . . I have such pretty ones . . . all over the world." "My God," the young woman thought to herself, "I have met Narcissus."

Norris got out early. In 1973 she met her future husband, and the following year the couple took over the farm she had inherited in South Dakota. Many years, several books, and one religious conversion later, Norris describes serving a funeral lunch with ladies from her church: "slapping butter and ham onto sliced buns; setting out a variety of donated salads (heavy on the Jell-o)"—details that stand in stark opposition to life in New York.

So far, so good. The memoir has a gentle rhythm, a pleasing way of looping through time without losing momentum. Then, on page 161, we return to Betty Kray, and never leave. We learn about her family, her marriage, her background, her relationships with other poets, her death in 1978. This is where the



reader is likely to get exasperated. First the irresistible title, promising a comedy of manners at college, turns out to be a ruse, and now the book abandons all pretense even of being a memoir.

Readers new to Kathleen Norris aren't likely to give the book what it deserves: a second chance, in which they abandon all expectations and trail, lamblike, behind the author onto strange terrain.

Those who follow will be rewarded with something more interesting than a memoir. In considering the role Kray played in her life and in the lives of others, Norris comes to see her old friend and mentor as something akin to a spiritual leader. She may even wish us to see

Kray as a latter-day saint, though she has the good taste and sense never to say so.

Norris's two previous "memoirs," *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography* (1993) and *The Cloister Walk* (1996), were much admired for their nonstick spirituality. Here, too, Norris invites religious contemplation without a trace of ickiness. Her meditation on the life of Betty Kray—a "nobody"—illuminates the miraculous influence that one ostensibly ordinary person can have on another, even long past the grave. And such is Norris's unassuming but persuasive style of thought that the reader, too, may feel something akin to an awakening.

—A. J. HEWAT

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

---

**BERTRAND RUSSELL:**  
*The Ghost of Madness, 1921–1970.*  
By Ray Monk. Free Press. 574 pp. \$40

The second thick volume of Monk's biography of influential Welsh logician, philosopher, and social critic Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) traces the latter half of a long, eventful life. Monk, a British writer and broadcaster, argues tenaciously that Russell, despite his many professional and intellectual achievements, was a tragic figure of misdeeds, anxieties, and betrayals, a man whose life "seems to have been drawn inexorably towards disaster."

The story is indeed depressing in some respects. In 1921, Russell was 49 years old, an established presence in London literary circles, with half of his life still ahead—but his best philosophical work, including the groundbreaking arguments of *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903) and the three volumes of *Principia Mathematica* (1910–13), written with Alfred North Whitehead, was behind him. Because of his active pacifism, he had lost his fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1916 and had been jailed for six months in 1918. He had dropped his first wife, Alys, with a coldness bordering on brutality, and his relationship with his second wife, Dora, was difficult, partly because both were given to frequent infidelities.

To pay the family's bills, he wrote newspaper articles and popular works on science and politics and gave numerous public lectures in

England and America. Though often slapdash and rather vain, many of these efforts became Russell's best-known works (his logical theories are matters for specialists, and in any case were soon overtaken by the speculations of others). Though Russell returned to scholarship, publishing in the 1940s works on epistemology and an acclaimed history of Western philosophy, his concerns and writings were increasingly political, moral, and autobiographical. He regretted his inability to contribute to debates in logic, but he knew it was a young man's game. He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1950 "in recognition for his varied and significant writings in which he champions humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought."

His views were not wholly humanitarian. He harbored some unpleasant opinions, especially about blacks and Jews, and some exaggerated ones, especially about the evils of the United States. Politically he was of the Left, but he was high-minded, arrogant, and naive about the business of politics as only an aristocrat and a philosopher can be. (He succeeded his brother as the third Earl Russell in 1931.) He ran unsuccessfully as a Labor candidate for Parliament in 1922, but later abandoned the party and advocated more radical positions, including the justifiability of guerrilla war in Vietnam and Cuba. In his eighties he lent his reputation to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament,

and his activism led to another stay in prison, this time with his fourth wife, Edith, for a week in 1961. Retired to North Wales, he continued writing and arguing while trying without success to patch up the many rends in his life's fabric, including estrangements from his ex-wives, children, and grandchildren.

Monk is severely critical. His condemnation rests substantially on a judgment of Russell's journalism, which, he believes, exemplifies the philosopher's squandered promise. He seems incapable of seeing the value in polemic, or of accepting that humor and a brisk turn of phrase are assets in newspaper writing. Monk's philosophical hero is the logician who was the subject of his 1990 biography, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (the subtitle seems significant). Compared with the clay-footed Russell, Wittgenstein was indeed the genuine article, a solitary and eccentric man of transcendent mind.

The lack of charity Monk brings to Russell's more complicated, more human story weakens the book. He cannot justly portray the texture of this difficult yet brilliant man. He will not let us decide for ourselves. Luckily, we have the three volumes of Russell's own autobiography to even the balance. Sometimes special pleading in the first person is better, and more accurate, than narrow-minded, thin-lipped appraisals delivered in the third.

—MARK KINGWELL

---

**MYTHS IN STONE:**  
*Religious Dimensions of  
Washington, D.C.*

By Jeffrey F. Meyer. Univ. of California Press. 343 pp. \$35

If you follow the tourists around Washington, D.C., it's hard to miss the element of pilgrimage. Visitors come to see vistas that reaffirm the meaning of American history. The stone temples of the city's monumental core hold out visions of the nation's purpose; the Republic's founding documents rest under glass in the sacred space of the National Archives. The experience of viewing these sites, Meyer argues, is fundamentally religious. He quotes historian Daniel Boorstin: "Architecture can and does play the role of ritual."

Meyer, a professor of religion at the University of North Carolina, never quite explains what makes something a religious experience rather than a ritual or symbolic one, and the failure leaves conceptual gaps in this otherwise intriguing book. But his definition of religion is evidently capacious. He traces some of Washington's "religious" aspects back to Babylon and other ancient capitals: radiating avenues, orientation of the city's main axes to the four points of the compass, "central monumental architecture like temples, palaces, pyramids, ziggurats, and raised altars," and "processional boulevards connecting these places of power." Such architecture, Meyer says, symbolizes the larger cosmic order and proclaims a connection between the city and its heavenly sponsors.

That ancient religious impulse, in Meyer's view, emanates from the wordless, enigmatic Washington Monument and echoes the early settlers' belief that they were creating a new Jerusalem firmly under the protection of Providence. It resonates in the Framers' "missionary" certainty that their great experiment would bring a new birth of freedom to mankind, a conviction expressed through what Meyer calls the "axis of Enlightenment" running from the White House to the Jefferson Memorial. Where the Jefferson edifice is light, open, and hopeful, the more somber Lincoln Memorial completes the task of "baptizing the Founders' terms into the religious discourse of American Christians, with Lincoln assuming the aura of a Christlike figure who saved the Union by taking its sufferings on himself."

The argument breaks down somewhat when Meyer turns to the Smithsonian Institution and the tree-lined National Mall. A quick tour of recent controversies, such as the fiasco over an Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian, is meant to show how these venues have become a locus for communal reevaluation of the American experience. But such squabbles hardly seem to fall under the rubric of religion, even American civic religion. Nor does Meyer's closing survey—fascinating though it is—of the allegorical artworks that decorate the Capitol itself, including now-objectionable depictions of the white man's conquest of the Native Americans.

The tussle over changing cultural mean-



*The Lincoln Memorial*

ings, religious or otherwise, is an important part of the capital's life. This book makes clear that ours is not the first generation to fight

pitched battles over the messages conveyed by statues, museums, and memorials.

—AMY SCHWARTZ

## CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

---

### *THE WOMAN I WAS NOT BORN TO BE: A Transsexual Journey.*

By Aleshia Brevard. Temple Univ. Press.  
260 pp. \$24.95

This is the story of a small-town kid, growing up in the narrow-minded but not deliberately unkind Tennessee of the 1940s and '50s, dreaming of Hollywood and fame. She achieves minor stardom (shows at Finocchio's, almost-dates with Jack Jones and Anthony Newley, "pretty girl" parts on the *Red Skelton Show* and in the Don Knotts movie *The Love God*) and marries a few bad but not terrible men (one lazy, one gay, one far too young).

In her forties, she becomes a feminist and realizes that she will never be truly happy, or truly safe, if she keeps seeking validation and a sense of self from men: "I'd squandered valuable years in an attempt to become someone worthy of love." What distinguishes Brevard's book from the slight, feminist coming-of-age stories of the 1970s are passages such as this: "We made love in front of the roaring fire and later . . . fell asleep melded like two cherubs in a sugar-spun dream. The next morning, Hank and I went to the doctor's. I had a rectal tear."

Aleshia Brevard was born Alfred Brevard Crenshaw in 1937. "From my earliest years I'd known that something was wrong with me. . . . I felt that people kept treating me improperly. They did. They insisted on treat-

ing me as though I were a boy." Alfred had a sex-reassignment operation in 1962, when there were no transsexuals on talk shows and damned little expert surgery, and emerged as Aleshia. Her book straightforwardly describes pre-op life as a female impersonator (Marilyn Monroe once came to watch), the perfunctory "psychiatric" treatment before surgery ("He asked me if I thought I was a woman. I did. That was pretty much that."), the brutal and painful procedure of creating and using a new vagina, and her feelings upon becoming a woman. "My life began at Westlake Clinic on that day in 1962," she writes. "Gone was my 'birth defect.'"

*The Woman I Was not Born to Be* is not the kind of book one really expects from an academic press: no statistics, no elaborate theoretical structure. Nor is it the story of people whom history has utterly ignored. Mocked, crucified, tortured, and jailed, yes; ignored, no. But I'm glad Temple University Press chose to publish it: in academia as in real life, a reasonably well-adjusted, kind-hearted woman who was born male is not so common. If you're intimidated by such brilliant and accomplished transsexuals as economist Deirdre McCloskey, scientist Joan Roughgarden, and classical pianist Sarah Buechner, you can relax with Brevard. She is as unassuming, unthreatening, and sweet natured as anyone could ask.

—AMY BLOOM

---

**TRUE TALES FROM  
ANOTHER MEXICO:  
*The Lynch Mob, the Popsicle Kings,  
Chalino, and the Bronx.***

By Sam Quinones. Univ. of New Mexico Press. 336 pp. \$29.95

“Poor Mexico,” lamented the dictator Porfirio Díaz, “so far from God and so close to the United States.” Echoing Porfirio, most Americans writing on Mexico portray it as a pitiable place, impoverished, corrupt, and hopeless. And so this beautifully written collection of essays is a wonder and a delight.

Quinones, a journalist who has covered Mexico since 1994, opens with the tale of Chalino Sánchez, the smoldering-eyed Sinoloan who created a new genre of popular music. In the late 1980s, having done time for petty crimes in a Tijuana prison, Chalino was in Los Angeles washing cars when he began to write his *corridos prohibidos*, or narco ballads—songs recounting the lives of the drug smugglers from Mexico’s tiny northern villages. He sang them with his own bark of a voice and sold the cassettes at car washes, butcher shops, bakeries, and swap meets. Though no radio station would play them, “Chalino’s rough sound ignited immigrant Los Angeles.” Shortsightedly, Chalino sold the rights to his music for some \$115,000 in the early 1990s. Today, the songs are worth millions.

Millions of dollars also changed hands when Televisa, Mexico’s entertainment conglomerate, sold its soap opera *Los Ricos También Lloran* (The rich also cry) to Spain,

Italy, Yugoslavia, Russia, and other countries. When the show’s star, Verónica Castro, visited Moscow, so many people came to greet her that the airport had to be closed. Her presence at the Bolshoi Ballet caused a stampede. Muscovites who spotted her on the street, she told Quinones, would “cry and cry and cry.”

Equally remarkable is the chapter called “The Popsicle Kings of Tocumbo,” about the thousands of ice cream shops that dot the republic from Tijuana down to Tapachula, hard by the border with Guatemala. These little shops have proved so prosperous that the entrepreneurs’ tiny hometown, Tocumbo, Michoacán, is filled with lavish houses, forests of satellite dishes, a beautiful park with a swimming pool, a church designed by a world-renowned architect, and a statue, “big as a three-story house,” of an ice cream cone.

Not all of the stories end happily. “Lynching in Huehuetla” was so gruesome I found it difficult to read. The author also takes an unblinking look at glue-sniffing gang wannabes, the unsolved murders of young women in Juárez, and a cult-run town where, on the day Quinones was finally admitted, he found the adults all wearing halos fashioned from wire and tinfoil.

Quinones has succeeded in finding “another Mexico.” Intimately tied to the United States, it is at times far from God, but, as this splendid book shows, it is also in the midst of a transformation. In the next decade, Quinones predicts, we will see “a country evolve from a dusty political/economic joke to one that is robust and part of the world.”

—C. M. MAYO

---

## HISTORY

---

**TROUBLEMAKER:  
*The Life and History of A.J.P. Taylor.***

By Kathleen Burk. Yale Univ. Press. 491 pp. \$35

In a biography of a celebrated Oxford University historian, one doesn’t expect to find a table charting the scholar’s annual income or a chapter titled “The Business History of the History Business.” In the case of A. J. P. Taylor, however, the accountancy is more than appo-

site, for it measures the distinction of the popular historian who invented a profession. The son of wealthy radicals, Taylor (1906-90) was the first of what Britain dubbed the “telly-dons,” an intellectual whose TV shows and radio talks and articles in the popular press made him a public institution.

His Oxford colleagues, naturally, hated his eminence almost as much as they envied it. Lesser men, but better placed, conspired to

deny him the promotions he deserved. There were excuses enough. In the 1930s, he had briefly dallied with communism. In the late 1940s, he had argued that Britain could neither trust nor rely on the United States, and should seek national security through an alliance with Stalin's Soviet Union. In the 1950s, he helped found the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Burk, an American who was Taylor's last graduate student, has mastered the vicious subtleties of the British class system and managed to produce a biography that is fair and well judged. She comprehends both Taylor's resentments and the attitudes of his enemies, including the unholy glee they took in his wife's infidelities (with, among others, Dylan Thomas). Above all, she conveys Taylor's distinction as a historian, a career to which he came late, after a false start in law.

His *Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (1954) remains the outstanding diplomatic history of the decades leading up to the First World War. It was the first study in English to take account of the diplomatic documents in German (which he learned in Vienna in the late 1920s), French (which he learned at school), and Russian (which he taught himself). British historians had done superb work in the British archives; Taylor was perhaps the first to take these forensic skills to archives abroad.

His most infamous book, *The Origins of the Second World War* (1961), argued that Hitler, though indisputably wicked, acted as a rational statesman in European affairs, pursuing logical and traditional German goals and then pushing his luck when he realized the feebleness of the French and British responses. From, in Taylor's words, "all that was best and most enlightened in British public life" came the disastrous policy of appeasement. As controversy raged over the book, Alec Douglas-Home, a loyal appeaser at Neville Chamberlain's side in Munich, was Britain's foreign secretary; in 1963, he became prime minister. No wonder Taylor sneered that the British establishment always won in the end, however grievous its mistakes.

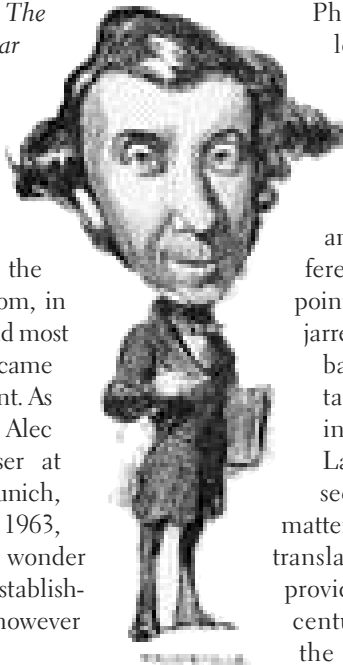
Well sustained by the documentary record, his argument was formidable, and "all that was best and most enlightened" never forgave him. His students saw nothing to forgive and much to admire in the only Oxford lecturer who could fill a hall at 9 a.m. and still have standing room only at the end of term. His TV audience marveled at a man who could deliver, without a note or a pause, 30 polished minutes of witty, anecdotal, and informed scholarship and end, with a perfect epigram, on the dot of time. He was a performer who made history fun, and, as this admirable biography shows, history gave him a great deal of pleasure in return. Moreover, the money was good. From teaching, books, broadcasting, and freelance journalism, he earned the equivalent in today's values of well over \$250,000 a year from the late 1950s into the 1980s. No wonder he always looked forward to the day he would spend making out his income tax returns.

—MARTIN WALKER

---

*DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA.*  
By Alexis de Tocqueville; transl. by  
Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba  
Winthrop. Univ. of Chicago Press.  
722 pp. \$35

I first encountered *Democracy in America* in the 1835–40 Henry Reeve translation (revised by Francis Bowen, edited by Phillips Bradley), and fell in love with its rolling sentences and flowing turns of phrase. The more highly praised 1966 translation by George Lawrence and J. P. Mayer, with its different phrasing and, at certain points, different interpretations, jarred me; I found myself going back to Reeve to make certain my memory wasn't playing tricks. Though the Lawrence-Mayer volume seemed more lucid on some matters, the fluidity of the earlier translation and its older usages provided an appropriately 19th-century feel. A few days with the French original persuad-



## Current Books

ed me that the Lawrence-Mayer version was generally the more reliable, but, like the Reeve, it often seemed rather free spirited.

In this new translation, Harvard University political scientists Mansfield and Winthrop adopt a decidedly literal approach, striving above all to translate the French faithfully. (I regret that they did not use the more literal title for Tocqueville's classic, *On Democracy in America*, to signal their fidelity, but sticking to the traditional English title was probably necessary to avert confusion.) They seek "to convey Tocqueville's thought as he held it rather than to restate it in comparable terms of today," and to provide a readable text in terms of "what can easily be read now, not what we might normally say." In a long introduction—which is a short book in itself—they provide the best entry point into Tocqueville's thought now available in English.

As Tocqueville attempts to analyze with impartiality the new regime of democracy and the old regime of aristocracy, his key terms include *la liberté*, *l'individualisme*, and *l'égalité*. One sentence uses all three words, and the three versions of the sentence suggest the different spirits animating the translators. Tocqueville writes: "*Les Américains ont combattu par la liberté l'individualisme que l'égalité faisait naître, et ils l'ont vaincu.*" Reeve-Bradley: "The Americans have combated by free institutions the tendency of equality to keep men asunder, and they have subdued it." Lawrence-Mayer: "The Americans have used liberty to combat the individualism born of equality, and they have won." Mansfield-Winthrop: "The Americans have combated the individualism to which equality gives birth with freedom, and they have defeated it."

In retrospect, I am glad that I was introduced to this classic in the melodious, freer translation of Reeve and Bradley. But I would now direct new readers to Mansfield-Winthrop, where they are assured of getting much closer to the original thought. A rare spirit such as Tocqueville's, after all, induces respect; one wishes to fit one's mind as exactly as possible into the nuances of his thinking. It is not often

that scholars of high stature show such reverence for greatness in others that they submit their own egos to full and faithful service, but that is the gift Mansfield and Winthrop render Tocqueville, and the noble service they render us.

—MICHAEL NOVAK

---

### COMRADES AT ODDS: *The United States and India, 1947–1964.*

By Andrew J. Rotter. Cornell Univ. Press. 337 pp. \$55 hardcover, \$19.95 paper

Since India gained independence in 1947, its relations with the United States have been stormy. The years 1947 to 1964, during which Jawaharlal Nehru led India, were particularly contentious. The strains stemmed from the wars in Korea and Vietnam, U.S. reliance on nuclear weapons, decolonization, rising nationalism (often with anti-American overtones) in Asia and Africa, and New Delhi's refusal to accept the American view of the Cold War as a Manichaean struggle against evil incarnate. Washington also stirred feelings of anger and betrayal by embracing Pakistan as a Cold War ally and by supplying it with military arms—weapons that New Delhi rightly understood were likely to be used against India, not the Soviet Union. Little wonder that historians addressing Indian-American relations have chosen such titles as *Estranged Democracies*, *The Cold Peace*, and now *Comrades at Odds*.

Rotter, a historian at Colgate University, places these mostly familiar events in a fresh light by concentrating on their cultural contexts. In his thematic approach, each chapter uses case studies to illustrate the differences growing out of a specific cultural construct. Race, religion, gender, class (or caste), and "governance" take their places alongside the more traditional categories of strategy and economics.

For Rotter and other practitioners of the "new" international history, culturally induced perceptions take precedence over political and security issues. Stereotypes, images, and clichés replace power and economics as tools of analysis. Missionaries stand alongside pres-

idents, authors wield more influence than industrialists, travelers rate more attention than generals. In Rotter's treatment, for example, Katherine Mayo, author of the travelogue *Mother India* (1927), earns more index citations than U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

*Comrades at Odds* illustrates both the virtues and the shortcomings of the new history. Rotter offers a subtle reading of heretofore-neglected source materials, and he adds to our understanding of the cultural side of this difficult

relationship. But he sometimes must stretch to argue for the importance of cultural factors. One need not understand the differing roles of family in India and the United States, for instance, to fathom why conservative members of the U.S. Congress abhorred Indian socialism. *Comrades at Odds* provides valuable insights, but it will not supplant the work of more traditional scholars such as Robert McMahon, Dennis Merrill, Dennis Kux, and H. W. Brands.

—ROBERT M. HATHAWAY

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

---

### **COSMIC EVOLUTION: *The Rise of Complexity in Nature.***

By Eric Chaisson. Harvard Univ. Press.  
274 pp. \$27.95

If you want to patent a perpetual motion machine, be sure you have a working model. The U.S. Patent Office, flooded with doodlings by hopeful inventors, has long since decided that it won't examine claims for a *perpetuum mobile* without the article in hand.

Which, of course, rules out a patent, because a perpetual motion machine falls afoul of that ultimate trump card, the Second Law of Thermodynamics. "If your theory is found to be against the Second Law of Thermodynamics," Sir Arthur Eddington once mused, "I can give you no hope; there is nothing for it but to collapse in deepest humiliation."

Roughly speaking, the Second Law states that the disorder in the universe—its entropy—is always increasing. An ordered state, such as a box with hot air on one side and cold air on the other, will quickly deteriorate and become lukewarm throughout. But how can a universe slouching toward disorder have such orderly structures as galaxies, stars, bacteria, and people? To Harvard University astrophysicist Chaisson, this interplay between order and disorder, between energy and entropy, holds the answer to the age-old question, "What is life?"

As Chaisson describes in *Cosmic Evolution*, the Second Law has a little

loophole—not really an exception, but a means for eking out an existence in a universe that's inexorably falling apart. Energy lets us make order out of disorder. An air conditioner, plugged into a wall socket, can turn a zone of lukewarm air into one with hot air on one side and cold air on the other, reversing the disorder, at least locally. Organisms do this too, taking in energy in the form of food, which keeps their bodies from literally disintegrating. So Chaisson defines life as an "open, coherent, space-time structure maintained far from thermodynamic equilibrium by a flow of energy through it." This definition covers not only bacteria and people, but stars, galaxies, and planets as well. To Chaisson, the Earth is a living object that differs only in degree from an ostrich or an aardvark.

The problem with such a broad definition of life is that it becomes meaningless; cosmic evolution parallels biological evolution only in the most general sense. Still, Chaisson does give the theory some numerical muscle. He analyzes the flows of energy through various objects and shows how these flows seem to be related to the complexity of the objects. The greater the energy flow, the greater the complexity. Though following the nuances of the argument requires a basic grounding in physics, Chaisson's approach leaves one wondering, perhaps absurdly: Are hummingbirds "higher" than humans on the evolutionary ladder? Are jet engines

“alive?” In this creative, thought-provoking book, Chaisson shows how difficult even the most basic scientific questions can turn out to be.

—CHARLES SEIFE

**WHEN INFORMATION  
CAME OF AGE:  
*Technologies of Knowledge in the  
Age of Reason and Revolution,  
1700–1850.***

By Daniel J. Headrick. Oxford Univ. Press. 246 pp. \$29.95

When I taught a course 10 years ago on the history of information, the 18th and early 19th centuries had no strong themes of their own. Before them came the ferment of the printing revolution and elite literacy; after them, the rise of mass com-

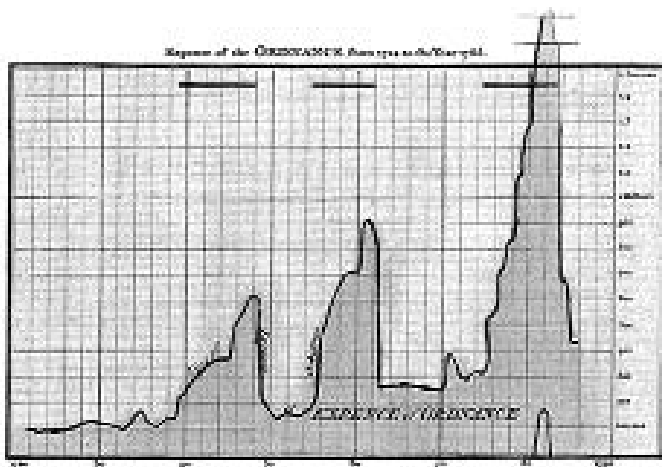
munication, with its Faustian bargain of cheap publications on doomed acidic paper. There were, to be sure, superb studies of 18th-century book publishing, of mapmaking, of early probability theory and statistics. But these trees were far better known than the forest.

and the revolutionary era helped bring cartography to new heights. Some illustrations from the period are still reprinted in graphics texts as classics for emulation with the latest computerized methods. There was also a new wealth of textual information, led by Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* and Samuel Johnson’s dictionary. And the nascent U.S. Post Office and the French optical telegraph laid the foundations for today’s communication networks.

As Headrick recognizes, some readers will quibble about omissions, such as the Foudrinier papermaking machine that

is what Headrick does here: he deems the years 1700–1850 a period of exceptional innovation, featuring a “cultural revolution in information systems” that prepared the way for developments ranging from the punch card to the World Wide Web.

*When Information Came of Age* provides a respectful overview not of hardware breakthroughs but of the conceptual leaps made by scientists, scholars, artisans, businesspeople, government officials, and publishers. It begins with monuments of system that were essential to later science—Linnaeus’s binomial classification scheme, still the international standard for living matter from *E. coli* to *Homo sapiens*; Lavoisier’s chemical nomenclature; and metric weights and measures. It reviews the theory and practice of quantification, the still-vibrant faith in the power of population statistics and other numbers to guide policy decisions. Headrick quotes the first director of Napoleon’s statistical bureau, who acknowledged the limitations of his work: “The most exact determination of the number of vegetables that France produces will not bring forth one additional cabbage in her gardens.”



*William Playfair’s 1786 study of 18th-century British ordnance expenditures. The thick horizontal lines indicate periods of war.*

The chapter on graphic representation suggests that war may be healthy for mapmaking and other arts of information display: colonial conflicts



helped flood the world with print. Still, he has produced an original, lucid synthesis, one that serves to remind us that today's controversies often have long pedigrees. Many of our debates on Internet privacy and encryption, for instance, have their origins

in the postal service and legislative controversies of the French Revolution. The recounting of the history of power and information has only begun, and this book is an outstanding contribution.

—EDWARD TENNER

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Amy Bloom**, the author of the novel *Love Invents Us* (1997) and the short-story collections *Come to Me* (1993) and *A Blind Man Can See How Much I Love You* (2000), is writing a nonfiction book about gender and sex. **Robert M. Hathaway** is director of the Wilson Center's Asia Program. **A. J. Hewat** is associate editor of the *Litchfield County Times* in New Milford, Conn. **Mark Kingwell**, a professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto, is the author most recently of *In Pursuit of Happiness: Better Living from Plato to Prozac* (2000). **Michael Malone's** novels include *Dingley Falls* (1980), *Handling Sin* (1986), *Time's Witness* (1989), *Foolscape* (1991), and the forthcoming *First Lady*. **C. M. Mayo** is the author of the short-story collection *Sky Over El Nido* (1995), which won the Flannery O'Connor Award, and the founding editor of the bilingual literary journal *Tameme*. **Michael Novak**, the author of some two dozen books and the 1994 winner of the Templeton Prize, holds the George Frederick Jewett Chair in Philosophy, Religion, and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute. **Amy Schwartz** writes about cultural issues for the *Washington Post*. **Charles Seife**, the author of *Zero: The Biography of a Dangerous Idea* (1999), writes for *Science* magazine. **Edward Tenner**, a former Wilson Center Fellow and author of *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences* (1996), is a visiting researcher at Princeton University. **Martin Walker**, a former Wilson Center Public Policy Fellow and the author most recently of *America Reborn: A Twentieth-Century Narrative in Twenty-Six Lives* (2000), studied history at Oxford University.

**Credits:** Cover, p. 45, Illustration by Edel Rodriguez; p. 8, © Burstein Collection/CORBIS; pp. 11, 26, 42, 115, 123, © Bettmann/CORBIS; p. 15, AP wirephoto; p. 19, Courtesy Wilde Meyer Gallery, Scottsdale, Ariz.; p. 21, Photo by Bill Wiegand/University of Illinois; p. 25, Illustration by Tamara Clark; p. 29, Courtesy of the Jamestown Foundation, Washington, D.C.; pp. 32–33, Roger-Viollet Collection; p. 37, Courtesy of Galería de Arte Mexicano; p. 38, Courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge; p. 47, AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite; p. 57, © Simon Bruty/Sports Illustrated; p. 63, Courtesy of the artist; p. 70, AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee; p. 73, AP Photo/Victor R. Caivano; p. 83, The Granger Collection; p. 89, © Francis G. Mayer/CORBIS; p. 93, © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS; p. 96, Pix Inc./TimePix; p. 101, Courtesy of Grupo de Diseño Urbano, Mexico City; p. 103, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 1931. (32.100.18); p. 105, Reprinted with permission from *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405–1433*, by Louis Levathes, Simon & Schuster, Copyright © 1994 by Louise E. Levathes; p. 111, The Virginia Historical Society; p. 117, © CORBIS; p. 121, © Joseph Sohm, Visions of America/CORBIS.

## FROM THE CENTER

In his inaugural address, President George W. Bush asked the nation's lawmakers to join him in setting a tone of civility and mutual respect in Washington. For the new administration, the nation's partisan divide poses a difficult challenge, especially in the realm of foreign policy. Controversial issues crowd the agenda—from national missile defense to Middle East policy and the status of America's troop deployments overseas—and Congress is nearly evenly divided along party lines.

In the days of Truman and Eisenhower, politics was said to “stop at the water's edge.” But in recent decades, the spirit of bipartisanship in foreign policy has proved elusive. The war in Vietnam and the breakdown of the Cold War consensus greatly complicated the task of American leadership. More recently, as scholars have observed, the West's triumph in the Cold War has created new and somewhat paradoxical difficulties. In the absence of a serious military rival, the fetters on partisan instincts in Washington have been further loosened. The American public, meanwhile, has grown increasingly uninterested in world affairs, even as globalization gathers momentum.

Though he favors a conservative foreign policy, President Bush has shown that he is determined to build consensus. Reaching across party lines, he attended retreats held by legislators of the opposing party, a move that many called unprecedented in recent memory. He assembled a strong foreign policy team, including Secretary of State Colin Powell, whose integrity and experience command respect in both political parties, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. The appointment of Powell, who strongly supports the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, was particularly reassuring to the many members of both parties who worry about the strength of America's commitment to Europe in the aftermath of the Cold War.

In a speech before the election, candidate Bush stated that his administration would not “dominate others with our power or betray them with our indifference.” He said that U.S. actions abroad should be guided by the nation's deepest strategic interests, including free trade, the control of nuclear proliferation, and stability in the Persian Gulf. In its broadest terms, his administration's

approach would continue a postwar tradition, rejecting isolationism, promising American engagement in the world, and embracing the commitment to confront emerging threats before they became unmanageable. A foreign policy built on these principles, Mr. Bush said, would restore bipartisanship.

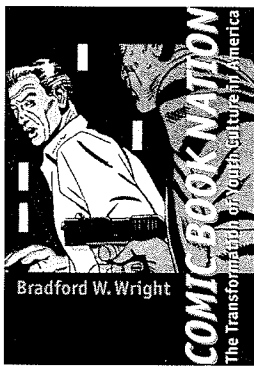
The new administration has quickly begun to translate these principles into actions. The president has pledged to strengthen and transform the military to meet emerging threats. A fresh emphasis on diplomacy can be seen in Secretary Powell's efforts to revitalize the State Department. And at the urging of congressional leaders in both parties, the administration has decided not to heed (at least for the present) those who call for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Bosnia and Kosovo.

The bipartisan tradition in American foreign policy was born more than 50 years ago, in the aftermath of World War II, when the United States was confronted by a new global challenge. It fell to Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg (R-Mich.), a leading prewar isolationist, to decide whether to mount a partisan campaign against the Truman administration's efforts to meet the crisis. When Vandenberg chose a different path, the nation was able to unite behind the policy of containment. Bipartisanship, Senator Vandenberg declared in 1952, “does not involve the remotest surrender of free debate in determining our position. On the contrary, frank cooperation and free debate are indispensable to ultimate unity. In a word, it simply seeks national security ahead of partisan advantage.”

Just this kind of spirit has been a defining quality of the Wilson Center since its creation in 1968. Through Republican and Democratic administrations alike, the Center has served as a neutral forum where policymakers, scholars, and others can meet to debate, exchange ideas, and forge consensus on the leading issues of the day. As the United States addresses the challenges of the post-Cold War world, we look forward to helping renew Washington's commitment to the founding principles of bipartisanship: free debate, frank cooperation, and ultimate unity.

*Joseph A. Cari, Jr.*  
*Chair*





## COMIC BOOK NATION

The Transformation of Youth Culture in America

Bradford W. Wright

"Pow! Bam! Crash! Analysis! This insightful and highly entertaining political and cultural history [offers] an intelligent study not only of comics but of shifting attitudes toward popular culture, children, violence, patriotism, and America itself."—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"Congratulations to Bradford W. Wright for penning one of the most comprehensive and readable accounts of the pervasive effect that comic books have had upon generations of readers throughout America, and indeed—the world."—Stan Lee

\$34.95 hardcover

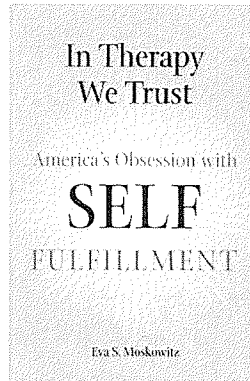
## IN THERAPY WE TRUST

America's Obsession with Self-Fulfillment

Eva S. Moskowitz

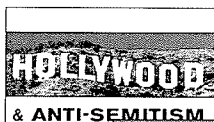
"*In Therapy We Trust* is a brave and groundbreaking book that will help stir interest and further scholarship in this large and daunting subject—America's fascination with the psychological."—James Hoopes, Babson College

\$34.95 hardcover



The Johns Hopkins University Press • 1-800-537-5487 • [www.jhupbooks.com](http://www.jhupbooks.com)

## The Best in Scholarship from Cambridge



### Hollywood and Anti-Semitism

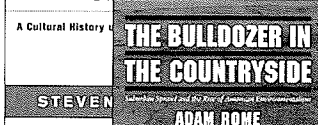
A Cultural History up to World War II

Steven Alan Carr

In this study, Steven Carr reconceptualizes Jewish involvement in Hollywood by examining prevalent attitudes towards Jews among American audiences, revealing a powerful set of assumptions concerning ethnicity and the influence of the media.

Cambridge Studies in the History of Mass Communication

0-521-79854-X Paperback \$24.95



### The Bulldozer in the Countryside

Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism

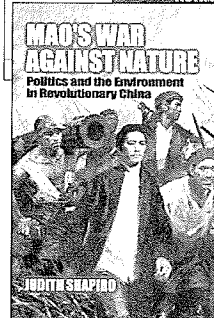
Adam Rome

"In a fascinating new look at suburbia, Adam Rome convincingly demonstrates that postwar suburbanization not only created sprawl, it ironically helped spawn the environmental movement that would struggle to contain it, sometimes with success, other times not."

—*Lizabeth Cohen, Harvard University*

Studies in Environment and History

0-521-80490-6 Paperback \$19.95



### Mao's War Against Nature

Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China

Judith Shapiro

In clear and compelling prose, Judith Shapiro relates the great, untold story of the devastating impact of Chinese politics on China's environment during the Mao years

Studies in Environment and History

0-521-78680-0 Paperback \$18.95

Available in bookstores or from



40 West 20th Street, N.Y., NY 10011-4211

Call toll-free 800-872-7423

Web site: [www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

AmEx/MasterCard/VISA accepted.

Prices subject to change.

# New from Princeton



## **Republic.com** Cass Sunstein

In cyberspace, we already have the ability to filter out everything but what we wish to see, hear, and read. Tomorrow, our power to filter promises to increase exponentially. In all of the applause for this remarkable ascendance of personalized information, Cass Sunstein asks the questions, Is it good for democracy? Is it healthy for the republic? What does this mean for freedom of speech?

"We are in danger of transforming ourselves into a society of egocentric techno-tribalists, Sunstein warns."

—Paul M. Barrett, *The Washington Monthly*

Cloth \$19.95 ISBN 0-691-07025-3

## **When the State Kills**

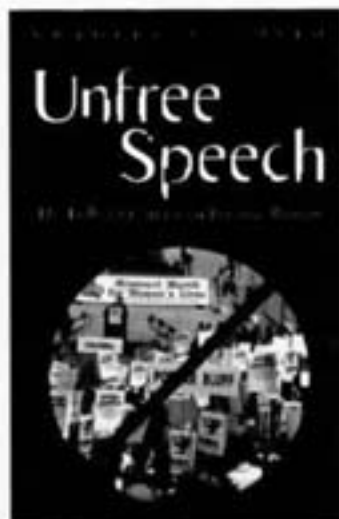
Capital Punishment and the American Condition

**Austin Sarat**

In this bold and impassioned book, Austin Sarat argues that capital punishment must be stopped because it undermines our democratic society.

Sarat uncovers the forces that sustain America's killing culture, including overheated political rhetoric, racial prejudice, and the desire for a world without moral ambiguity. Aided by a series of unsettling color photographs, he explores the place of capital punishment in popular culture, and shows that it ultimately leaves Americans more divided, more hostile, and much further from solving the nation's ills. In short, it leaves us with an impoverished democracy.

Cloth \$29.95 ISBN 0-691-00726-8 Due April



## **Unfree Speech**

The Folly of Campaign Finance Reform

**Bradley A. Smith**

At a time when campaign finance reform is widely viewed as synonymous with cleaning up Washington and promoting political equality, Bradley Smith, a nationally recognized expert on campaign finance reform, argues that all restriction on campaign giving should be eliminated.

In *Unfree Speech*, Smith presents a bold, convincing argument for the repeal of laws that regulate political spending and contributions, contending that they violate the right to free speech and ultimately diminish citizens' power.

Cloth \$26.95 ISBN 0-691-07045-8



**Princeton University Press**

800-777-4726 • WWW.PUP.PRINCETON.EDU