palette knife" in the Impressionist manner. In 1882 his *El Jaleo*—a boldly asymmetrical scene of Spanish dancers with contorted faces painted in clear tribute to Goya—was seen by critics as a *tour de force*.

Sargent's 1884 portrait of Madame Pierre Gautreau proved more controversial. In the portrait, one fallen shoulder strap provocatively emphasizes the whiteness of the lady's powdered shoulders above her black, low-cut bodice. The show's critics, who had acclaimed Le Brun's *Bacchante* (a nude woman lolling on the grass in a mythical setting), dubbed this fallen shoulder strap of a known society matron "indecent." Against the advice of his friends, Sargent retouched the painting.

After moving to London, Sargent concentrated on painting studio portraits of British high society. By the 1910s, critics on both sides of the Atlantic had labeled him "merely a commercial portrait painter" whose great "manual dexterity [and] dazzling brushwork" served only to record "mundane elegance." Sargent himself may have agreed, for in his later years he increasingly devoted himself to experimenting with charcoal drawings and watercolor sketches.

Yet Sargent's 1917 uncommercial *Nude Study of Thomas E. McKeller* (McKeller was a young Negro model) shows all his old, "passionate manipulation of pigment" of earlier portraits in oils. And, far from banal, his paintings of society women—as Henry James noted—often manage to convey "the beauty that resides in exceeding fineness."

Heroes' Return

"Of Mermaids and Magnificence" by John R. Silber, in *Reason* (May 1987), 2716 Ocean Park Blvd., Ste. 1062, Santa Monica, Calif. 90405.

Marxists such as playwright Bertolt Brecht argue that heroism is an antique aristocratic emotion obsolete in the modern world. "Unhappy the land that needs heroes," Brecht wrote in his play *The Life of Galileo*.

Silber, president of Boston University, believes the study of heroes is as vital to modern education as it was to U.S. schools in the 19th century. Heroes are important because their all-consuming passions—the rage of Achilles, the nobility of Ivanhoe, the steadfastness of Horatio—can be used as models from which students can derive codes of conduct. By reading King David's lament on the death of his brother Jonathan ("Very pleasant hast thou been unto me/Thy love to me was wonderful"), students can learn how to grieve at the loss of a close friend or relative.

Heroic models need come not only from antiquity. Thomas Jefferson is heroic not just for his writing of the Declaration of Independence, but also for his delight in new ideas. Sam Houston inspires Americans not only for his courage at the Alamo, but also for his refusal to swear an oath of allegiance to the Confederacy—a decision that resulted in his impeachment in 1861 as governor of Texas.

Villains such as Iago, Tamerlane the Great, and Satan in *Paradise Lost* are incomplete heroes because of their self-centeredness and arrogance. Their grand passions, however perverse, differentiate villains from "antiheroes" such as T. S. Eliot's character J. Alfred Prufrock, who vows that while others can play Hamlet, he will merely be "an attendant lord,

one that will do/To swell a progress, start a scene or two."

The true hero is someone who bases his ideal on the firm ground of democratic tradition. We should live at the golden mean between acting as if we were gods and acting as if we were preordained failures. "The genius of democracy," Silber concludes, "is found in this paradox: we are all a dime a dozen and we are all magnificent."

OTHER NATIONS

Hope After Amin

"Uganda: Starting Over" by Robert D. Kaplan, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Apr. 1987), 8 Arlington St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

During his eight-year reign (1971–79) as president of Uganda, Idi Amin Dada earned a reputation as Africa's most brutal dictator.

But Uganda, says Kaplan, a specialist on Africa, rests in better hands today. The nation's young, well-educated president, Yoweri Museveni, has managed to restore "a modicum of stability" in Uganda's capital. "One foreign resident," writes Kaplan, "told me it is now so quiet in Kampala that he has trouble sleeping at night."

To Ugandans, the silence must be golden. Their country suffered from intertribal warfare long before Amin came along. Indeed, several Bantu kingdoms—each of which boasted its own army, law courts, and administrative system—ruled the territory now called Uganda when the colonizing British arrived in 1894. The British, Kaplan says, exacerbated tribal rivalries. They placed members of the advanced Baganda tribes in civil service posts, and enlisted members of rival northern tribes (the Tesos, Langis, and Acholis) in the colonial army.

Thus Uganda was a divided nation when it gained independence in 1962. The country's first prime minister, Apollo Milton Obote, favored his fellow Langi tribesmen and the closely related Tesos and Acholis in filling government posts, until his own commander in chief, Idi Amin Dada, staged a successful coup in 1971. A Muslim from the Kakwa tribe, Amin stirred up tribal hate. Langi, Teso, and Acholi soldiers were slain in their own barracks. The Ugandan dictator, says Kaplan, "soaked this lush, sylvan country with the blood of several hundred thousand people."

Amin, however, proved to be his own worst enemy. Tanzanian troops deposed him in April 1979 after he tried to annex part of their country. Then a fresh succession of dictators ruled Uganda until Yoweri Museveni and his popular National Resistance Army marched into Kampala, and peacefully took power in January 1986.

Unlike his predecessors, Museveni, whom Kaplan calls "Uganda's first nationalist," has managed to unite the country's roughly 40 tribes. "Our political line is a broad, patriotic line," he has said. "It is antitribalism, antidictatorship, and nationalistic."

Uganda, Kaplan concludes, has now achieved independence—not just from the British, but from "the Ugandan heirs to their . . . legacy."