



In this engraving from Theodore de Bry's *Historia Americae sive Novi Orbis* (1596), Indians prepare to test the immortality of a Spaniard by holding him under water.

had no practical worth—only symbolic value—to the native peoples who took them in trade. But Trigger, an anthropologist at McGill University, contends that these “romantic” interpretations do not stand up to scrutiny.

It is true that, according to Indian folk traditions, native North Americans, on first seeing European ships, believed them to be, in Trigger's words, “floating islands inhabited by supernatural spirits.” These strange beings appeared with increasing frequency, giving away trinkets, carrying off natives, and leaving behind diseases.

But when the initial encounters gave way to more direct and frequent ones, Trigger argues, the native Americans before long came to see the newcomers “as human beings with whom . . . they could do business.” By the beginning of the 17th century, he notes, Europeans and Indians were engaging in trade in practical goods

more than in glass beads or liquor. “The first Indians who traded with Europeans may have hung metal axes and hoes on their chests as ornaments and used stockings as tobacco pouches,” he says. But the Indians came to recognize that some European tools and other goods were more useful than their own. By the 1620s, the Montagnais at Tadoussac, near the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, “were using large quantities of clothing, hatchets, iron arrowheads, needles, sword blades, ice picks, knives, kettles, and preserved foods that they purchased from the French.” Similarly, the Mohawks, near what is now Albany, in the 1630s were buying a wide range of clothing and metalware,

and the Hurons, further inland, were purchasing knives, axes, and arrowheads.

The fur-trading Hurons and their neighbors probably continued to believe in the supernatural powers of the French, Trigger says. “Yet in their eyes this did not make Europeans intrinsically different from the Indians, who were also able to practice witchcraft and whose amulets and relations with appropriate spirits enabled them to hunt, fish, and move about on snowshoes and in canoes more effectively than Europeans did.” Even though the Hurons were becoming dependent on the French, the Huron chiefs felt confident they could outwit them.

In the end, of course, the Hurons and other Indians were overwhelmed. But this was not because they failed to realistically understand European behavior, Trigger says. The native Americans grasped all too well what was happening to them.

Underground Disorder

“Reclaiming the Subway” by George L. Kelling, in *NY* (Winter 1991), 42 E. 71st St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

New York City boasts the country's largest subway system—as much a symbol of the city as the bagel and the Empire State

Building—and for nearly two decades now, authorities there have been trying to reclaim it for the populace. After years of

struggle, they did finally defeat the graffiti "artists." But overcoming the disorder caused by the multitudes of vagrants and hustlers who now inhabit the subways is proving far more difficult, reports Kelling, a professor of criminal justice at Northeastern University.

Although crime rates in the subways actually are lower than on the city's streets, people still are more fearful below ground, because disorderly behavior is concentrated there. The conduct of "unpredictable and obstreperous people—youths, drunks, the mentally ill, hustlers, prostitutes, and panhandlers"—frightens people. And with good reason, Kelling says. Disorder breeds serious crime (e.g., muggings and robberies), as well as fear of crime. There were 1,472 felonies reported in April 1990—compared with 1,041 two years earlier.

Authorities' first counter-attack was aimed at graffiti. In the early 1980s, graffiti artists' logos, slogans, and portraits ("tags") covered every subway car in New York City. To most of the riding public, this signified that the subways were out of control. Although all previous efforts to rid the system of graffiti had failed, the New York City Transit Authority, then headed by David Gunn, accomplished the mission in five years. On May 12, 1989, the last graffiti-covered car was taken out of service.

This victory was won simply by frustrating graffiti artists' desire to have their work seen. Once a graffiti-covered subway car was cleaned and put back into

regular service, it remained clean—or else it was no longer used.

But in the battle against disorder, the graffiti fight was just a skirmish. The indignities hanging out in the subways are "the single biggest obstacle to restoring public order and public confidence underground," Kelling says. "Yet in the name of

Academic Valets

Is every statesman only a venal vote-grubber, every artist only a childish egotist? That is the way our contemporary academic culture often seems to portray great men and women, comments historian Gertrude Himmelfarb. From the Jefferson Lecture she delivered in May under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Humanities:

"No man is a hero to his valet." The dictum is generally attributed to the Duke of Condé in the reign of Louis XIV. [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich] Hegel amplified it to read: "No man is a hero to his valet, not because the former is no hero, but because the latter is a valet." . . . Hegel had . . . nothing but contempt for those small-minded men, men with the souls of valets, who reduce historical individuals to their own level of sensibility and consciousness . . . The schoolmaster looks at a historical figure and sees only a private person. He is like the valet, Hegel says, who "takes off the hero's boots, helps him into bed, knows that he prefers champagne, and the like"—and knows nothing more about him . . .

Hegel's schoolmasters are our professors. They are the academic critics who treat the masters of literature with all the reverence of a valet, who put Shakespeare to bed, so to speak, removing his boots, taking off his clothes, tucking him in, secure in the knowledge that he is only a man like themselves, and that they can read, interpret, and "deconstruct" his plays as if they had written them—as if, to use the current jargon, he is no more "privileged" than they, as if his "authorial voice" has no more "authority" than the voice of the critic. We may also find Hegel's schoolmasters among our academic historians, who look for the essence of history not in the great events of public life but in the small events of private life, who reduce public figures to the level of private persons, who recognize no statesmen but only politicians, who see no principles in public affairs but only self-serving interests . . .

The problem with a valet-like conception of history is not only its denigration of greatness and heroism but also its denigration of individuality and freedom . . . Today more than ever we have reason to heed Tocqueville's words: "It is important not to let this idea [of free will] grow dim, for we need to raise men's souls, not to complete their prostration."

civil rights and compassion, advocacy groups . . . defend these people's rights to continue their disruptive behavior."

In October 1989, police and transit authorities launched an effort to get subway vagrants under control. Homeless advocates immediately objected that "'nooks and crannies' should be available for the homeless to do as they pleased, that is, to live in, and that passive panhandling

should be allowed." In January 1990, a federal judge ruled that subway panhandling was a First Amendment right. The decision was later overturned, but the battle over disorder in the subways goes on. If it is lost, Kelling writes, "The ultimate victims will be the working classes and the poor—bereft of [transportation] options, but then even more vulnerable to the predations of hoodlums and thugs."

PRESS & TELEVISION

*A Kind Word
For TV*

"The Impact of Television Viewing on Mental Aptitude and Achievement: A Longitudinal Study" by Steven L. Gortmaker, Charles A. Salter, Deborah K. Walker, and William H. Dietz, Jr., in *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Winter 1990), Inst. for Social Research, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48016.

Many parents are sure that TV is rotting their children's minds. The average American youngster spends more than 15 hours a week in front of the TV set, so that would mean a lot of wasted brainpower. Not to worry, say Gortmaker, acting chairman of the Department of Behavioral Sciences at Harvard's School of Public Health, and his colleagues.

The researchers scrutinized National Health Examination Survey data on 1,745 children who were studied twice: in 1963-65, when they were ages 6-11, and then again in 1966-70, when they were 12-17. In the earlier years, the youngsters watched an average of about two hours of television a day; by the late '60s, they were watching nearly three hours a day.

At first glance, the amount of TV viewed *did* seem to be having a malign effect. Among the children 12 and older, the more TV the youths watched, the lower

were their scores on intelligence, reading, and arithmetic tests. However, the causal connection turned out to be an illusion. When the children's test scores from the earlier years were taken into account, it seemed that the children who were *already* scoring low then simply tended to watch more television later. And when other pertinent factors, such as parents' socioeconomic status, were taken into account, the connection between extensive TV viewing and lowered cognitive abilities all but completely vanished.

This finding agrees with that of an extensive 1986 study of U.S. teenagers. (Other studies, which lent some support to popular fears, suffered from various shortcomings, according to Gortmaker and colleagues.) Of course, while youngsters who watch a great deal of TV may not be *losing* their minds, that doesn't rule out the possibility that they are filling them with junk.

*All the Fluff
That Fits*

"When Readers Design the News" by Carl Sessions Stepp, in *Washington Journalism Review* (Apr. 1991), 4716 Pontiac St., College Park, Md. 20740-2493.

Newspapers are in trouble. Only 24 percent of Americans under 35 read yesterday's paper, according to a 1990 Times Mirror survey, compared with 67 percent

in 1965. "Declining penetration [of the market] and declining profits are giving editors and publishers a jolt," said Seymour Topping, director of editorial devel-

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