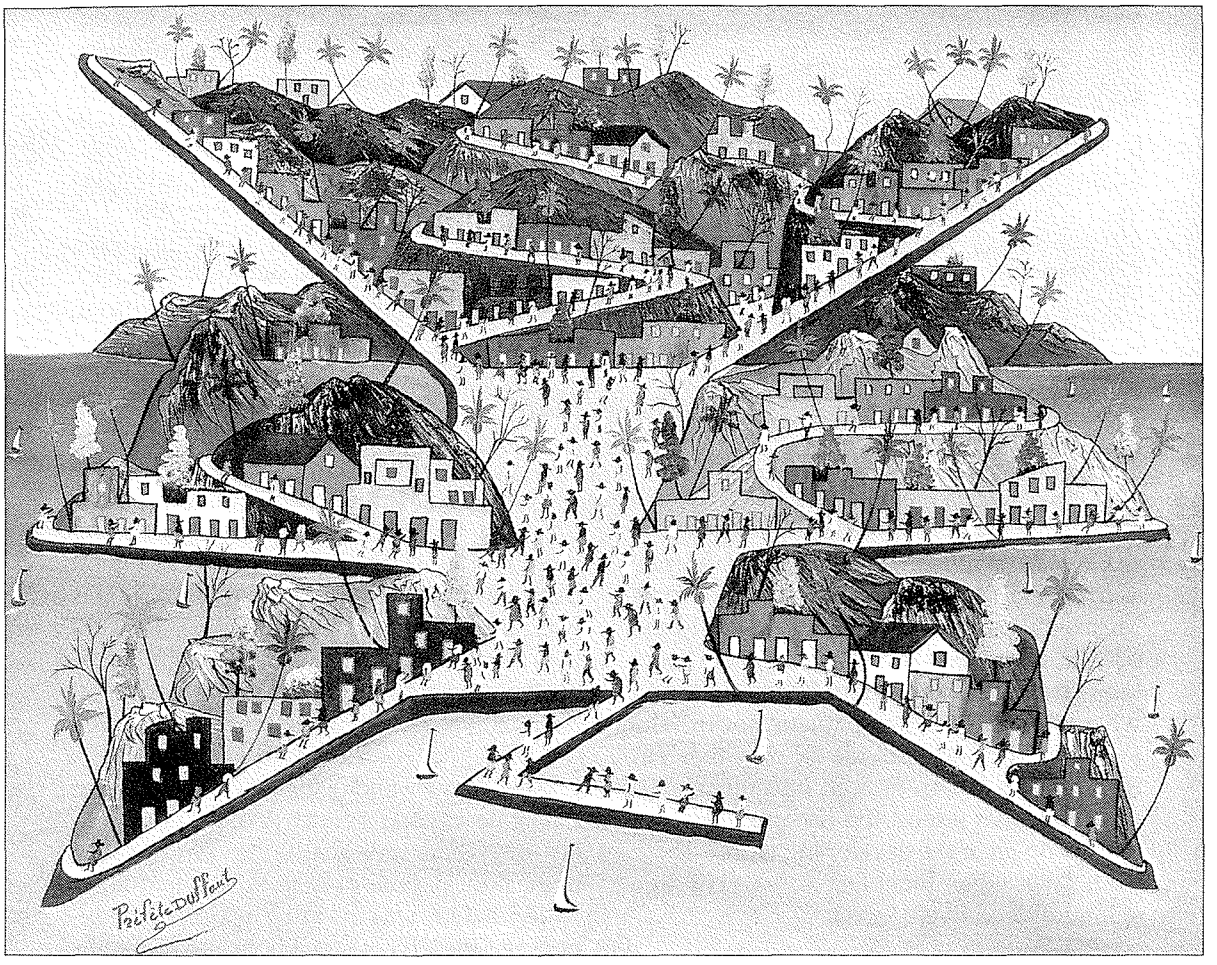
THE POPULATION QUESTION REVISITED

BY GEORGE MOFFETT

Despite surprising reductions in birth rates in many parts of the world, more than 90 million people are being added to the Earth each year. World population is now approaching six billion, up from only three billion in 1960. During the next 20 years, it could increase by as much as 40 percent, to almost eight billion people, or by less than 30 percent, to about 7.2 billion. The difference will depend in part upon decisions that are made by the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo this September. Behind the conference, George Moffett explains, simmers a long debate between those who see the rise in population as a clear and mounting danger and those who argue that such growth ranks low, if at all, among the world's problems.

There are two ways to view the extraordinary growth in human numbers that has occurred during the last half of the 20th century. One is with trepidation. The other is with hope. During a recent three-year tour of duty as a newspaper correspondent in the Middle East, I found abundant cause for both.

Trepidation comes more easily in a region where continuing high rates of population growth have contributed to a visible array of political, economic, and social problems. It is an emotion evoked merely by walking down the street in a city like Algiers. The vacant stares of the jobless men who wile away long hours on street corners and in coffee houses because they have nothing else to do tell a disturbing story. These poor are part of an army of unemployed men and women that includes

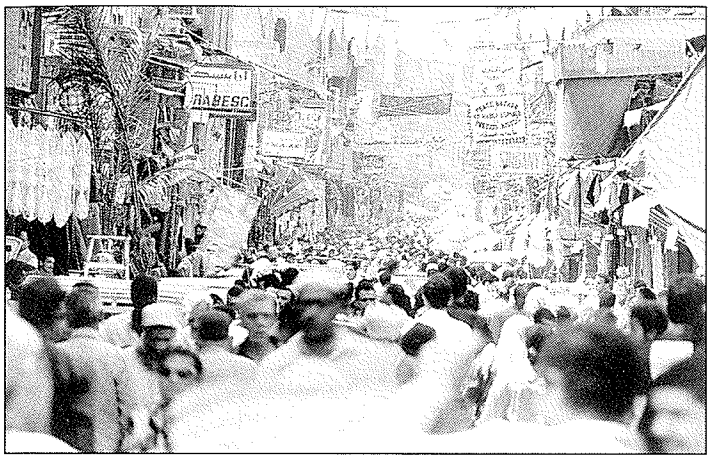


Jacmel, *a painting by the 20th-century Haitian artist Préfète Duffaut*

three-quarters of Algerians between the ages of 16 and 29. Their circumstances are bleak for many reasons. An inefficient socialist economy and 30 years of increasingly corrupt one-party rule have done their damage, but there is something else at work and it bears down more heavily each year on Algeria's future. It is the relentless onrush of humanity that has magnified inefficiency and mismanagement, that has swelled the ranks of the jobless, and that has led even hard-core optimists to wonder whether this once-proud nation can ever regain its footing. The despair reflected on the faces in Algiers tells one side of the population story.

But there is a more hopeful side to the subject as well. I discovered it one day while reporting on the consequences of rapid population growth in Egypt. After interviewing the usual government officials and population experts, I was directed to a small family-planning clinic, located near Cairo's infamous "City of the Dead," a sprawling group of cemeteries that is now home to half a million living Cairenes who have nowhere else to reside. It was there that I met Aziza.

Until three years before, Aziza had been one of the majority of Egyptian women who, according to one Egyptian public-opinion poll, wanted to stop having children but did not know how. Just how to use the birth control devices passed out by a local government



Cairo, site of this year's population conference, is the world's 12th most populous city. It currently has 97,106 residents per square mile.

clinic was a mystery. Family and friends warned her of grave side effects if she tried. Meanwhile, the children, five born into the squalor of her teeming Cairo neighborhood, kept coming. At the clinic she finally found what she needed: a sympathetic doctor who took the time to provide advice that cut through the layers of fear, ignorance, and suspicion that attend the use of contraceptives in much of the developing world. Three years later, when I met her, Aziza's children still numbered five.

The uncertainties occasioned by world population pressure are nothing new. Despairing or hopeful, thousands of books have been written on the subject, and virtually all of them have something to do with a dramatic historical trend that began around the turn of the 17th century and that will probably end sometime during the 22nd. Throughout most of human history the world's population remained below 250 million, capped by birth rates and death rates locked in a seemingly permanent equilibrium. But sometime after 1600 the line demographers use on graphs to plot population growth began to stir, then took an unexpected—and until now permanent—turn upward. The ascent was slow at first. The line probably crossed the half-billion mark sometime during the 17th century. Nudged along by improvements in agriculture and public health and then by the Industrial Revolution, it climbed higher through the 18th century. After the turn of the 19th century it reached a milestone, passing the one billion mark for the first time in human history. This was not long after the English economist Thomas Malthus penned his famous essay warning that such growth would outpace food supplies and keep mankind in the grip of poverty.

The line continued upward into the present century and began its steepest ascent in the years after World War II, when two developments sent death rates plummeting in the poor nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. One was the introduction of antibiotics and the advent of public health programs that led to mass immunizations and improvements in sanitation and water supplies. The other was an agricultural revolution based on chemical fertilizers, irrigation, and improved seed strains that dramatically expanded food supplies. The combined effect was to reduce mortality rates. But with no corresponding drop in birth rates, the population line was propelled into the demographic stratosphere. By the 1960s, the *rate* of population growth reached 2.1 percent globally and 2.5 percent among developing countries—the highest

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ever recorded—and then dropped off. But, driven by the disproportionately large percentage of young people in the nations of the Third World, the line plotting the actual growth in human numbers continued its upward course.

The world's population now stands at about 5.6 billion, on its way to six billion by the turn of the century. At current growth rates it will double by 2035, while in Africa, where growth rates remain the highest in the world, population will double in just over half that time, from 670 million today to 1.4 billion around 2015. Exactly when and at what level global population growth will finally peak is extremely difficult for demographers to predict. Several decades of the fastest population growth in human history still lie ahead, according to the United Nations. If fertility declines fast enough, the line will begin to level off sometime after the middle of the 21st century. If it does not, its ascent will continue into the 22nd. Its long upward journey will then, finally, be at an end.

Although many specialists believe that rapid population growth is a root cause of economic underdevelopment, political instability, and environmental degradation, the population issue has evoked little public concern in the United States since the late 1960s and early 1970s, when books such as Paul Ehrlich's *Population Bomb* and the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* created a stir with projections of famine and economic collapse. Nor has it assumed over the past decade the kind of priority among American policymakers that it was once given by one secretary of state, Dean Rusk, who warned during the 1960s that bringing nuclear weapons and high global population growth rates under control were the two greatest challenges facing mankind.

According to one recent Gallup poll, only 50 percent of Americans believe it is in the best interest of the United States to help other nations slow their population growth. Only four percent more support providing U.S. economic or technical assistance to curb population growth in developing nations. Asked how best to help developing countries protect their environments, only a slightly higher number in other Western democracies, queried on the eve of the Rio "Earth Summit" in 1992, endorsed supplying family-planning information.

Such apathy is bound up with a problem long familiar to pollsters: that long-term trends and complex issues of public policy are beyond the ken of all but the most educated members of the public. But neither ignorance nor apathy will spare Western nations from the implications of the growing body of evidence that population expansion, alone or in conjunction with other factors, is having significant and adverse consequences, and not just in poor nations.

In the United States, which has a population growth rate five times that of western Europe and four times that of Japan, immigration and natural population growth are occurring so fast that the U.S. Census Bureau was recently forced to revamp its long-term projections. In the late 1980s, the bureau projected that the nation's population would peak at slightly over 300 million just before the mid-21st century. New projections issued just four years later put the 2050 total at between 383 and 500 million, with continuing increases projected through the 21st century. The result: Today's American children could end their lives in a United States almost twice as crowded as it is today.

Elsewhere, the effects of rapid population growth are far more severe. Among the wealthy industrial nations of Europe, population increases lie behind significant new social tensions and the growth of pernicious right-wing political movements. The cause: a steady flow of people crossing the Mediterranean in search of jobs that North Africa's inefficient economies are unable to generate fast enough to keep up with population growth. Six million Africans now live in France and Germany alone, adding to the existing burden of absorbing refugees from the former Soviet bloc, Turkey, and Asia. The visible manifestations are shantytowns and street

crime and outbursts of anti-immigrant violence. The region with the world's lowest rate of population growth is bracing itself against worse to come from the region with the world's highest rate. Africa, which today has about the same number of inhabitants as Europe, will have three times Europe's population within a generation.

Elsewhere in the developing world, demographic change is contributing to political and social dislocations that could put the most serious strains on the international system in the post–Cold War world. All around the developing world, governments are struggling to counteract the effects of rapid population growth on domestic economies, particularly on the potential for job creation. Some 500 million people are already un- or underemployed in developing countries, and 30 million more are entering the job market each year, according to the United Nations Population Fund. Many experts doubt that capital and technology can be created fast enough in poor countries to keep up with the demand. Population growth, meanwhile, has magnified the problems created by bad government policies and social inequities, contributing to extensive deforestation, land degradation, overcropping, urban overcrowding, regional tensions, and, in countries such as Algeria, worrisome political trends.

"Population projections out to 2050 are dramatic and have dramatic implications," say John Steinbruner, director of foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution. "Along with the internationalization of the economy and the information revolution, population creates an entirely new set of circumstances, altering the character of what we understand to be security. We have a major story on our hands here, and people will eventually have to notice."

II

Unlikely as it may seem in a world of nearly six billion people, population was a concern in a world one-twentieth that size. The reason is not so surprising: Long before human numbers began to have an impact on the global environment, they had an impact on the local environment. The specter of widespread deforestation and soil erosion in ancient Greece, for instance, occasioned mostly by overgrazing, convinced Plato and Herodotus that the city-states of Attica had to balance population growth with available resources. Moderation in population size as in all other matters, the Greek philosopher and the Greek historian reasoned, was desirable. Aristotle, the intellectual godfather of the pessimistic persuasion of many modern-day demographers, anticipated other problems that would attend rapid population growth. It is necessary that the state "take care that the increase of the people should not exceed a certain number," he cautioned, adding that the failure to do so "is to bring certain poverty on the citizens." It is evident, Aristotle warned, that "if the people increased, many of them must be very poor."

Across the Mediterranean, in the capital of the great empire of antiquity, Cicero believed that there could never be such a thing as too many Romans. But a neighbor of later times was unconvinced. When "every province of the world so teems with inhabitants that they can neither subsist where they are nor remove elsewhere . . . it must come about that the world will purge itself through floods, plagues, or famines," warned the Florentine statesman Niccolò Machiavelli, early in the 16th century.

To a list that included environmental degradation and poverty, Sir Walter Raleigh a century later added another danger of rapid population growth: imperialism. "When any country is overlaid by the multitude which live upon it, there is a natural necessity compelling it to disburden itself and lay the load upon others, by right or wrong," wrote the explorer, who had reason to know.

Plato and Aristotle, Machiavelli and Raleigh provided one answer—a resounding yes—to the central demographic question of the ages: Is there such a thing as too many

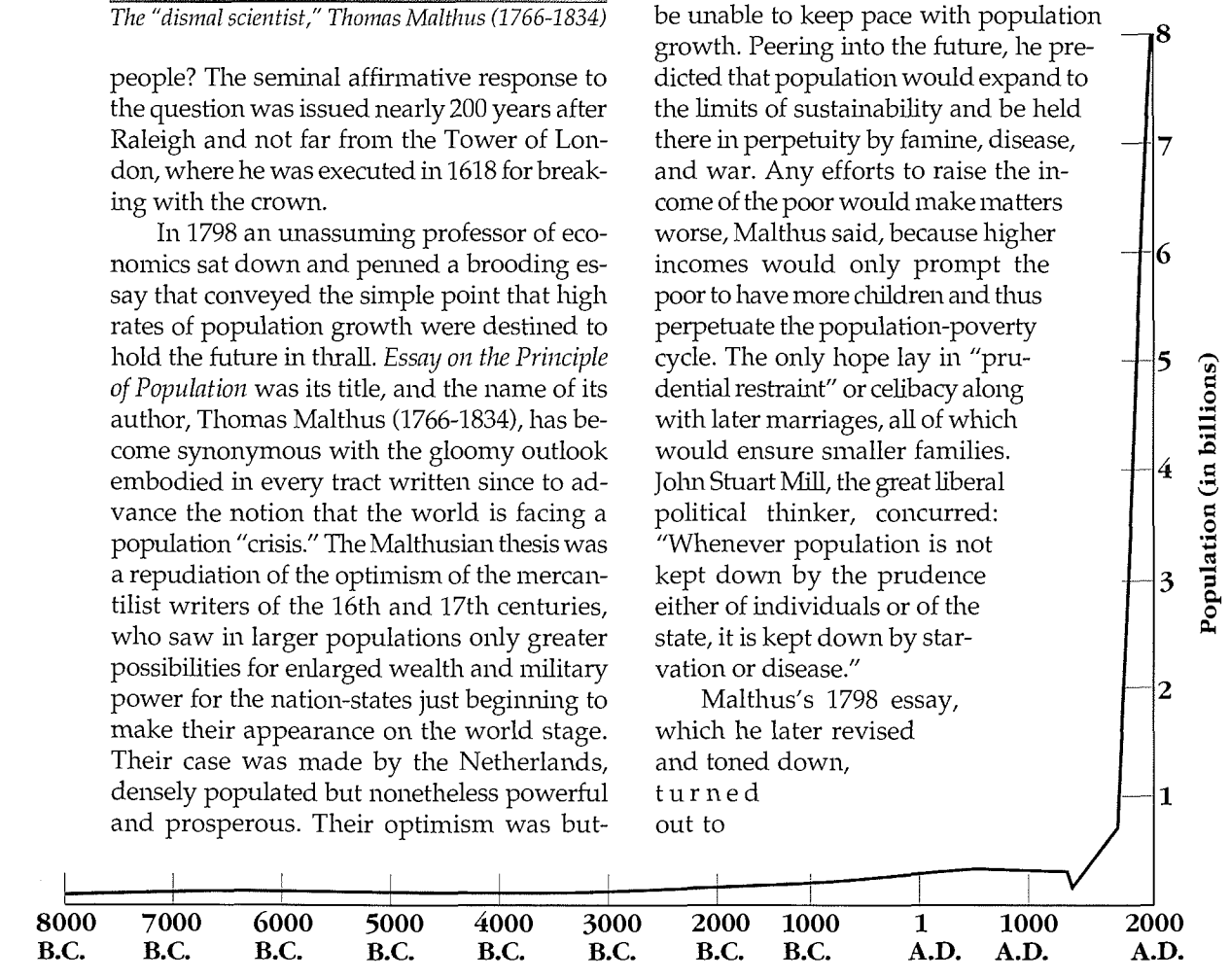
The "dismal scientist," Thomas Malthus (1766-1834)

people? The seminal affirmative response to the question was issued nearly 200 years after Raleigh and not far from the Tower of London, where he was executed in 1618 for breaking with the crown.

In 1798 an unassuming professor of economics sat down and penned a brooding essay that conveyed the simple point that high rates of population growth were destined to hold the future in thrall. *Essay on the Principle of Population* was its title, and the name of its author, Thomas Malthus (1766-1834), has become synonymous with the gloomy outlook embodied in every tract written since to advance the notion that the world is facing a population "crisis." The Malthusian thesis was a repudiation of the optimism of the mercantilist writers of the 16th and 17th centuries, who saw in larger populations only greater possibilities for enlarged wealth and military power for the nation-states just beginning to make their appearance on the world stage. Their case was made by the Netherlands, densely populated but nonetheless powerful and prosperous. Their optimism was buttressed by utopian writers such as France's Marquis de Condorcet, who wrote convincing assurances that man's technology and ingenuity would combine to create the economic opportunities needed to accommodate expanding populations. But by Malthus's time such opportunities seemed remote. Industrialization had created great wealth but also great poverty in Britain, which reeled from a series of economic crises and bad harvests.

The man at the center of the great demographic debate was an immensely popular figure in London, a tall and handsome scholar, "in appearance and conduct a perfect gentleman," according to a contemporary magazine. Malthus looked out from Britain's cauldron of troubles and concluded that progress would be stymied because economic growth and food production would be unable to keep pace with population growth. Peering into the future, he predicted that population would expand to the limits of sustainability and be held there in perpetuity by famine, disease, and war. Any efforts to raise the income of the poor would make matters worse, Malthus said, because higher incomes would only prompt the poor to have more children and thus perpetuate the population-poverty cycle. The only hope lay in "prudential restraint" or celibacy along with later marriages, all of which would ensure smaller families. John Stuart Mill, the great liberal political thinker, concurred: "Whenever population is not kept down by the prudence either of individuals or of the state, it is kept down by starvation or disease."

Malthus's 1798 essay, which he later revised and toned down, turned out to



Religion and Family Planning

Padre Alberto Marquez Aquino's church, Maria Madre, is located in the sprawling western reaches of Mexico City, the second largest city in the world. A Roman Catholic priest for more than 20 years, Marquez is a respected figure in this lower-middle-class community, where the church retains a strong hold on popular affections and loyalties. He speaks as a man who has no doubt about the church's position on contraception but understands the struggles of those who do. He also grasps the surprising fact, borne out by a large body of anecdotal evidence, that despite the church's well-publicized views on the subject, very many Catholics do not understand the large area of permissibility that enables Catholics to space children and to use natural means of contraception to limit family size.

"Many people think that the church says they should have a lot of kids," the soft-spoken cleric explains. "Others think that Catholicism is totally against any type of contraception and family planning. Maybe 10 percent know what the church really feels. And because they don't understand what the church doctrine is, they don't even think about it and they do what they want to do. Some feel guilty, but most are simply ignorant of the church's true position."

As the senior priest of Maria Madre for the past seven years, Marquez has spent dozens of hours talking to parishioners about natural methods of birth control. "If they really understood that natural methods do work," he insists, "they would not use artificial contraceptives." Father Marquez has no way of knowing how many obey because most parishioners no longer confess to using modern contraceptives. But he is worried that the battle is being lost—and not without reason. If the statistics are accurate, Mexico has become a nation of Catholics who believe themselves faithful despite a breach over the essential issue of contraception. Across Mexico and around the Catholic world, a historic transformation of lay attitudes toward contraception is taking place as the relentless pace of modernization is forcing millions of believers to revise their ideas about what is morally correct and religiously acceptable.

In Latin America, where half the world's 800 million Catholics reside, this transformation has already produced significant demographic changes. A continent that used to be the object of gloomy demographic predictions, similar to those now made about Africa, is today a notable, if not uniform, family-planning success story. "In terms of attitudes toward family planning, Latin America is like Berlin after the wall came down," says Paul Burgess, a former priest and Vatican official who is an expert on population issues. "It's a whole new era."

In many individual countries, Catholics use contraceptives at rates equal to or higher than among adherents of other faiths. Of those who do not, religion is usually not the main reason. Meanwhile, despite pressure from the church, governments in most Catholic countries are now committed to family planning and have invested large sums to make contraceptives widely available.

On the matter of specific contraceptive choice, public attitudes in Mexico and elsewhere across Latin America are also largely at variance with Catholic teachings. Despite the church's 1975 ban on sterilization, 20 percent of Latin American couples of reproductive age use sterilization and the proportion is rising fast, according to one UN study. Fully one-fourth of married women of reproductive age in Brazil have been sterilized, one-third in Panama and El Salvador, and 40 percent in Puerto Rico, which has the highest rate in the world. And these trends show no sign of leveling off. Among women in their later thirties and early forties the figures are higher still. As for the pill, banned in the church's definitive 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, only northern and western Europe surpass Catholic Latin America in its use. Together the pill and female sterilization account for two-thirds of all contraceptive use in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The use of modern birth-control devices is just as widespread in Catholic nations outside Latin America, testifying to the prevalence of what Pope John Paul II has described as the "contraceptive mentality." The prime example lies outside the pope's front door. Italy, where condoms can be

purchased within sight of the Vatican, has the highest contraceptive prevalence rate (nearly 80 percent) and the lowest fertility rate (1.3 children per woman) ever recorded. According to the World Health Organization, the country's birthrate has declined by half since the early 1960s. Italy now produces fewer children in relation to its population than any country in the world.

Nor is Catholicism the only religion buffeted by the contraceptive revolution. Millions of Muslims have responded by accenting a more permissive side of their theology. In the process they have removed one barrier to reducing fertility in the Muslim crescent of South Asia and the Arab world, where birthrates are among the highest in the world.

Just what is and what is not allowed under Muslim law is a matter of debate. Throughout the 1,400-year history of Islam, the world's second largest faith, children have been considered one of the greatest blessings of God. The religion's long tradition, based on the Prophet Muhammad's injunction to "marry and have children"—the Islamic equivalent of the enjoinder in Genesis to "go forth and multiply"—is one reason why large families have been the rule in Muslim nations.

But in the Muslim world, as in Catholic nations, old teachings are bumping up against the hard realities of population trends that have fundamentally altered daily life. In Egypt, Mohammed Sayeed Tantawi, a government-appointed mufti, or interpreter of religious law, speaks with authority as a keeper of doctrine for the world's 850 million Sunni Muslims. "Islam provides no opposition to controlling birth. There is no Koranic verse which forbids family planning," says the cleric. "I personally, if I were to have a meeting with the pope at the Vatican, would explain to him that the Shari'a of Islam does not forbid family planning as long as the couple sees that there is a necessity for it."

The implications of high birth rates in the Arab world dawned first upon politicians whose jobs depend on keeping up with spiraling demands for jobs, food, and housing. More than three decades ago, Tunisia's long-time leader Habib Bourghiba warned of "a human tidal wave that is implacably rising—rising more quickly than our capacity to support ourselves."

"What good is it to increase our agricultural production and our mineral wealth if the population continues its anarchic and demential growth?" Bourghiba asked when he established the region's first successful family-planning program.

Thirty years later, the logic of family planning extends even to the bastion of Shiite orthodoxy, Iran. When they seized control from the shah in 1979, the country's new Islamic rulers sneered at birth control as a Western plot. Fifteen years later, faced with twice the population but the same fixed, oil-based annual income, the mullahs have caught the spirit. With the zeal of converts, they have created a family-planning program that includes everything from aggressive public education to free vasectomies to financial disincentives that discourage anything larger than a three-child family.

The ethics of reproduction are also changing in Hindu nations. Like most of the world's major faiths, Hinduism is pronatalist and patriarchal. Sons are extremely important because, among other reasons, males are responsible for the funeral rites that ensure the survival of the souls of the departed. In rural Nepal, the emphasis on sons has been so great that couples traditionally have as many as six children to ensure two surviving sons, according to research conducted by the Ford Foundation's James Ross.

But in Nepal, as elsewhere, new factors have altered the calculus of reproduction. With less and less agricultural land to divide among heirs, the economics of having large families has been altered. As a result, religious considerations favoring large families have taken a back seat to the necessity of having fewer children so that they can be educated for salaried jobs. The trend toward smaller families in Nepal has been abetted by the increasing availability of health-care services that have raised child survival rates, and by the provision of basic family-planning services by the government.

In nearly every region of the world, similar circumstances have prompted millions of believers to separate their reproductive decisions from their religious faith.

—*G.M.*

be one of the more influential economic treatises ever written; it set the terms of a demographic debate that has lasted to the present day. The essayist William Godwin, whose optimism Malthus had set out to repudiate in his own work, was nevertheless impressed by it and called Malthus "the most daring and gigantic of all innovators." Thomas Carlyle was depressed by it and dubbed Malthus's new discipline the "dismal science." Decades later Karl Marx was simply angered by it, and he vilified the essay as "nothing more than a schoolboyish, superficial plagiary [that] does not contain a single sentence thought out by [Malthus] himself." More vociferous than Marx was Friedrich Engels, co-author of *Das Kapital*, who thundered against "this vile and infamous doctrine, this repulsive blasphemy against man and nature. Here, brought before us at last," Engels roared, "is the immorality of the economists in its highest form." Part of Malthus's pessimism stemmed from the conviction that when population increased, the price of labor would drop. In short, too many people would mean lower wages and more poverty. Marx and Engels rejoined that low wages were not a function of population but of class exploitation, which resulted from the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. Factor out the inequities of capitalism, they argued, and population growth would pose no problem.

The other main criticism of Malthus, echoed by Marx but anticipated nearly a century earlier by the French utopians, was that technology would offset the diminishing price of labor, rescuing mankind from a future of population-induced food shortages. "New instruments, machines, and looms can add to man's strength and improve at once the quality and accuracy of his productions, and can diminish the time and labor that has to be expended on them. The obstacles still in the way of this progress will disappear," Condorcet predicted in an essay published in 1795, a year after his death. "A very small amount of ground will be able to produce a great quantity of supplies."

Malthus was burdened by fatalism induced by fears of population growth and resource shortages. His critics were buoyed by optimism induced by faith in market forces and the power of technology. Together they defined the poles of a debate that, under far different circumstances, continues today. Once confined to economists, it is now largely waged between economists, on the one hand, and biologists and environmentalists, on the other. Once focused on conditions in the industrialized nations, the debate now centers on the implications of rapid population growth in less developed countries where the lion's share of growth is now occurring. Once limited to issues such as industrial wages and food supplies, it now extends to the viability of the very ecological support systems on which human life depends. Only the question remains the same, though with numbers that Malthus, who lived in a world of less than one billion inhabitants, would have trouble comprehending: Can the planet, regions of which are already sagging under the weight of its 5.6 billion passengers, sustain five or 10 billion more?

The modern demographic debate has been set in the context of unprecedented population growth rates that took off in Malthus's day and peaked during the late 1960s. Surveying the developing world, modern Malthusians, who for the first three decades after World War II included the vast majority of population experts, were sure that population growth was largely responsible for the famines, economic slumps, and political unrest that were endemic in the postcolonial era. To this scene of disarray they brought a bold policy prescription unknown to Malthus: family planning. The use of modern contraceptives, they argued, would reduce fertility and speed economic and political development.

One school of modern Malthusians believed that population growth retards economic development. Too many people, the

reasoning went, leads inevitably to poverty and unemployment. It was a view that deeply influenced American policymakers during the Cold War, who worried that rapid population growth would prevent or retard development, thus opening the door to communism in the Third World. They responded by adding a family-planning component to U.S. aid programs starting in the 1960s. Another more pessimistic version of modern Malthusianism dealt less with economics and more with the ecological limits to growth. Because supplies of life-supporting resources such as land, water, and minerals are finite, pessimists argued, high rates of population growth could endanger the survival of humanity.

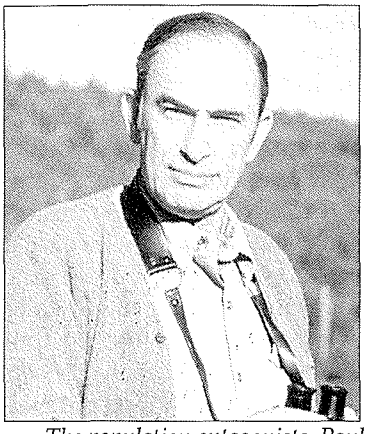
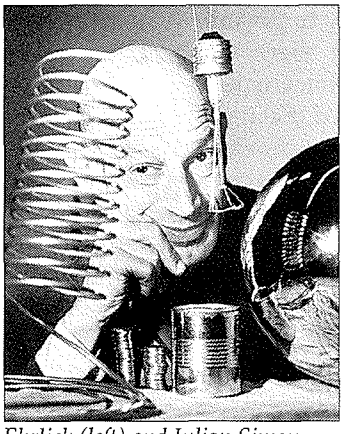
This gloomy perspective was given enormous credibility by a publishing event in 1972 that, as demographer Kingsley Davis notes, seemed at the time to settle the debate in favor of the alarmists. In that year a group of scholars associated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology fed data on land use, food supplies, pollution, and patterns of industrialization and resource use into a computer and watched in awe as it cranked out projections of a bleak future for humankind. They concluded that the world's population would grow so fast, that pollution would reach such high levels, and that resources would be drawn down so far and so fast that the inevitable result would be "overshoot" and "collapse." They called their study *The Limits to Growth*. As Donella Meadows, a Dartmouth College biophysicist and one of the report's principal authors, later put it, "The world is racing ahead like a speeding car heading for an accident." The only way to avoid such an accident, the authors argued, was to slow industrial and population growth.

But even as *The Limits to Growth* succeeded in galvanizing public concern that a population crisis was at hand, the aura of crisis it helped to create unexpectedly dissipated almost as fast as it had gathered. By the mid-1970s fears of famine began to diminish because of the green revolution in Asia and Latin America, the latest manifestation of a two-century advance in agricultural productivity that has continued to the present day. Meanwhile in many developing nations birthrates began to drop from historic highs attained in the late 1960s, presaging eventual population stabilization. Elsewhere in the developing world, economic growth rates started to rise, notably in the densely populated nations of East Asia. Suddenly the correlation between population and underdevelopment was in doubt.

Such doubts energized the smaller community of demographic revisionists, who emerged to do battle with their Malthusian brethren. The most vocal among them were New Right conservatives and libertarians who unexpectedly resurrected the old Marxist critique of Malthus, arguing that faulty economics, not high levels of population growth, was the cause of scarcity. Unlike Marx, they looked to an unfettered market economy, not socialism, to create opportunities for the earth's masses.

Harbingers of this revisionist view had appeared in the 1930s, when a few writers ventured the opinion that, in the industrialized nations at least, population growth could stimulate economic growth. In the mid-1930s, Harvard University economist Alvin Hansen had argued that underemployment and underinvestment during the Great Depression were the result of insufficient population growth, a view elaborated by the influential British economist John Maynard Keynes. After World War II, conservative economists reaffirmed the link between population growth and business expansion. "The importance of family growth for business activity is beginning to be realized by business planners," *U.S. News & World Report* noted in 1950. "They are revising upward their estimates of future markets."

The notion that population growth is a

The population antagonists: Paul Ehrlich (left) and Julian Simon

neutral or even positive phenomenon gained wider acceptance during the 1970s, when many of the earlier apocalyptic forecasts failed to come true. Contrary to such predictions, nearly all the indices of human progress have improved since the dawn of the industrial age. Aggregate statistics indicate that life expectancy, literacy, global economic output, and per capita income are all at unprecedentedly high levels, despite rapid population growth. Infant mortality rates, mineral prices, and food prices, meanwhile, have fallen to record low levels.

"The data shows that Malthus had it backwards," wrote David Osterfeld, a political scientist whose book *Prosperity and Planning* was published just before his death in 1992. "The population explosion didn't limit production. It was made possible by the explosion of production, of resources, food, scientific information, and medical advances. Thus, if anything, the limits to growth are receding rather than growing nearer and the world is therefore growing relatively less populated."

Predictions of catastrophe have been wrong on two counts, according to revisionists. The first is that economic models, including the one used for *The Limits to Growth*, project outcomes far into the future using the technology and know-how in existence today and thus vastly underestimate the potential achievements of future generations. The other, related mistake is the persistent tendency of Malthusians to underestimate human ingenuity. If population growth creates problems, revisionists say, then history has proved time and again that it also calls forth the innovations needed to solve them. One case in point is the green revolution, which catapulted growth in agricultural output above population growth rates in some of the most densely packed nations on earth. "The basic problem," concluded Osterfeld, "is that Malthus underestimated everybody's intelligence but his own."

III

Like David and Goliath, two combatants have stood out from the academic armies engaged in the great demographic debate. Both prefer to think of themselves as David, the virtuous underdog. But both are more like Goliath, armed to the teeth, in this case with graphs, charts, and computer models designed to penetrate the other's intellectual defenses. The *New York Times Magazine* has called these rivals "the Cassandra and the Dr. Pangloss of our era." According to script, one is an environmentalist—Paul Ehrlich of Stanford University—and the other is an economist—Julian Simon of the University of Maryland.

Paul Ehrlich first came to notice when, as a young biologist, he wrote the book that carried the population issue from the precincts of academe to a mass popular audience. *The Population Bomb* (1968) built upon a simple mathematical calculation: finite natural resources divided by a rapidly expanding population. The nearly inevitable result, Ehrlich wrote, was mass starvation and ecological overload. "The birthrate must be brought into balance with the deathrate or mankind will breed itself into oblivion,"

Ehrlich warned. "We can no longer afford merely to treat the symptoms of the cancer of population growth; the cancer itself must be cut out. Population control is the only answer."

The Population Bomb sold three million copies and made Ehrlich the leading Jeremiah of his age. Thirty books, dozens of articles, and innumerable media appearances later, he is still the most sought-after expert on the population issue. Unlike Cassandra, the mythical figure whose dark predictions were always right but usually ignored, Ehrlich has commanded and held a large popular following. His biggest media triumph was an appearance on the Johnny Carson show in 1970, earned by the overwhelming success of *The Population Bomb.* A scheduled 10-minute interview turned into a 45-minute media event that produced the biggest response in the show's history, generating 5,000 letters to Carson in the weeks that followed. Admirers and critics alike attribute Ehrlich's success to a glib speaking style and a gift for analogy, talents he has harnessed to the task of purveying to popular audiences a compelling image of imminent disaster.

But fame has brought criticism as well as praise. Ehrlich is repeatedly reminded that some of the dark prophesies contained in his book have failed to materialize. Hardest to live down has been a projection of massive famine within a decade of the book's publication. "In the 1970s the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions are going to starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now," Ehrlich had warned. He acknowledges the error but insists that developments in the quarter century since the book was published—global warming, for example—have proved that, if anything, his prediction was not pessimistic enough. On balance, Ehrlich maintains, ecologists have been better forecasters than economists. Among the latter, Ehrlich likes to point out the one who in the 1950s predicted that India would be one of the strongest nations on earth by the end of the century precisely because of its large population.

"It's true that we didn't foresee the great success of the green revolution," Ehrlich says. "But it's also true that we missed a lot of other things: depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain, the accelerating destruction of tropical forests, playing Russian roulette with the atmosphere—all of which are at least partly due to population growth. It makes you wonder what else is going on out there that we don't know about yet. We did miss a lot of stuff. But the fact remains that we were too optimistic."

Ehrlich bristles at the charge that he blames environmental degradation entirely on population growth, particularly in poor nations where it is occurring at the fastest rates. "We've published more pounds of paper than anyone else trying to explain that the real problem is overconsumption in the United States," he says, referring to various academic colleagues, including his Stanford biologist wife, Anne, with whom he has collaborated in print. "Seventy percent of global environmental damage is because of the rich countries. The problem is not just the poor."

But rapid population growth, which is mainly among the poor, ranks a close second in Ehrlich's hierarchy of concerns. Some economists say declining population growth rates have defused the population bomb. Ehrlich disagrees. With China factored out, fertility in less developed countries remains high, he says. Even in countries with successful family-planning programs, such as Indonesia and Mexico, fertility declines have stalled well above replacement level. Not to worry about birthrates and not to promote family planning aggressively under such circumstances, Ehrlich says, is folly.

When asked about his adversary, Julian Simon, Ehrlich is equally direct: "It's as if Julian Simon were saying that we have a geocentric universe at the same time NASA is saying the earth rotates around the sun. There's no reconciling these views. When

The Cost of a Solution

Any sound strategy for slowing global population growth will have to include several elements. One is a strong emphasis on economic development, which demonstrably reduces the demand for large families. Another is the promotion of greater equality between the sexes. But no single measure will have a greater short-term payoff than extending family-planning programs so that safe and effective birth control methods are made universally available.

Demographic and health surveys conducted in dozens of developing nations indicate that 125 million women who want to space their children or stop having children altogether are not using contraceptives. Just by tapping into the demand that already exists, the public and private agencies and commercial outlets that dispense contraceptives could, by the most conservative estimates, increase contraceptive use in developing nations to at least 60 percent of couples. There are 180 million more couples who might use contraceptives if they were available.

Compared to the benefits, the costs of tapping in are minimal. Right now a total of about $5 billion is spent annually on family-planning services, three-quarters of which comes from the developing countries themselves. To stabilize population below 10 billion, it will be necessary to reach the replacement-level fertility rate of 2.1 children per family early in the next century. That means between 70 and 75 percent of couples will need to use contraceptives, a level of use that would increase the total annual cost of family planning to about $11 billion (in 1993 dollars) by the end of the decade, rising to around $14 billion in 2015, with outside donors picking up an increased share. The cost would total $17 billion in the year 2000 if a broader array of reproductive health services were included. For the United States, for example, this would mean increasing annual expenditures on population planning from $500 million to about $1.3 billion ($1.9 billion including other reproductive health services) by the end of the decade, still a small share of U.S. foreign aid but arguably the most effective in terms of its contribution to the welfare of developing nations.

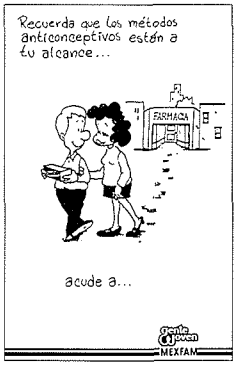
The strongest indication that such an investment would be cost-effective is that an estimated one-quarter of births in the develop-

you launch a space shuttle you don't trot out the flat-earthers to be commentators. They're outside the bounds of what ought to be discourse in the media. In the field of ecology, Simon is the absolute equivalent of the flat-earthers."

The two combatants, now both in their early sixties, have never met in person. But corresponding in 1980, they arranged the 20th-century equivalent of a duel to determine whose view of the future was more accurate. Ehrlich and two colleagues accepted a long-standing Simon bet that the prices of five minerals—tin, copper, tungsten, chrome, and nickel were agreed upon—would be lower in 10 years. They wagered $1,000, but the real stakes were much higher. "We knew if we bet on metals there would be a fair chance we'd lose," Ehrlich says now. "But we knew at the very least that if we took him on we could keep him quiet for a decade. The bet was trivial: We could have bet on the state of the atmosphere or on biodiversity loss, but it would be too hard to determine who won. With metals it's unambiguous." As it happened, the price behavior of metals—and what it says about future scarcity—turned out to be the trump card in Simon's hand.

It was Dr. Pangloss in Voltaire's *Candide* who advanced the sunny notion that "all is for

ing world (excluding China) are unintended and that 25–50 million abortions are performed each year, many or most in countries where planning programs are weak. Corroborating evidence is supplied by national fertility surveys, which indicate that in most countries outside of subSaharan Africa more than two-thirds of all married women want to limit their family size or to space the births of their children. Today less than half of women in developing countries are using modern contraception, just over one-third not counting China. In most countries, all that's missing to increase these figures is the means.



The simple truth is that rapid population growth is one of the few solveable problems in an otherwise complicated world. Four decades of experience with family planning have made abundantly clear which programs and methods work best. Lessons learned in countries from Thailand to Mexico are even now being incorporated into the practice of countries that were late to set up population programs.

"Family planning is one thing we know how to do well so let's get on with it and rejoice," says Malcolm Potts, a professor of public health at the University of California at Berkeley. "Just provide services in a respectful way, listen to what people want, provide good geographically, culturally, and economically accessible services and fertility falls. That's what the data show."

As Potts notes, rapid population growth is no longer a problem looking for a solution but a solution looking for resources. It was the resources of the industrialized nations that helped lower death rates in the developing world half a century ago, contributing to the population explosion that has occurred there since. The idea of investing the modest resources now needed to lower birth rates has appealing symmetry. More to the point, such an investment would be the consummate act of enlightened self-interest on the part of wealthy nations, which, in the absence of such support, will not long remain isolated from the daunting consequences of rapid global population growth.

—G.M.

the best in this best of all possible worlds." For Julian Simon, there has been much to be sunny about lately. Fifteen years ago he was on the sidelines of the great demographic debate, a man of unorthodox views and—as a professor of business administration—atypical qualifications. An intense and prolific advocate like Ehrlich, he has since elbowed his way into the debate and nearly single-handedly shifted the mainstream in his direction. Although he has not won the popular acclaim of his Stanford nemesis, even some of his critics concede that his optimism is not altogether ungrounded.

Simon was not always sanguine about the population issue. When he was younger, he says, he "enlisted in the great war to reduce population growth." He set out to learn the theory and data of demography. In the process he came across the statistical correlations between population growth and economic growth developed by demographer-economists Simon Kuznets and Richard Easterlin that challenged the conventional wisdom. "I realized the data did not square with the theory that population growth causes resource depletion and environmental degradation. So I decided I'd better follow the path of the data, not the theory." It was a path that led to the conclusion that the population growth that is a curse to Malthusians is really a blessing in disguise.

One reason, he says, is that by stimulating larger demand for goods and services, population growth expands markets, and thus leads to economic growth. Another reason is that population is the necessity that is the mother of invention—in particular the invention of the technologies that Simon is convinced will "liberate production from the land, find substitute materials, and overcome damage to the ecological base." It was the massive growth of population in southern Asia, he points out, that set agronomists to work on the package of technologies that created the green revolution. "Again and again," Simon says, "temporary scarcities induced by the growth of population and income have induced the search for solutions which, when found, left us better off than if the scarcities had never arisen." Simon's views burst forth upon an increasingly divided population community in 1980 in an article in the prestigious journal *Science*. There he argued that government should not interfere with high fertility because "more people not only means the use of more resources but more units of creativity and productivity. More people compete creatively for ways to develop or find substitutes. Thus the world's resources are not finite."

If Ehrlich's *Population Bomb* was "a gloomy book for a gloomy age," as Jonathan Mann writes in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Simon's seminal and highly controversial article was a cheerful rebuttal for an era determined not to be pessimistic about much of anything. The article and Simon's later writings found a receptive audience among many conservatives (including the editors of the *Wall Street Journal*), making the Maryland economist an influential figure during the presidential administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

Though rarely the dominant view, the notion that population growth can confer benefits on society has a long history and distinguished expositors going back at least as far as Condorcet. Simon's contribution was to make the populationist argument so aggressively that it commanded attention, even as it made him the archenemy of the environmental movement. "A lot of what Simon said had been said earlier but ignored," says Fairfield University sociologist Dennis Hodgson, who has written widely on the demographic debate. "What Simon did was to marshal the arguments and put them forth in a form that was difficult to ignore, and he did it at a time when people were more receptive to them."

On at least one issue Simon was right, and the cost to Ehrlich and his friends was $1,000, paid without comment and on time in 1990. When it comes to so-called nonrenewable resources, the economist had insisted, the whole concept of "finiteness" was meaningless because reserves of any mineral are merely a function of price and demand. Natural resources "will progressively become less scarce and less costly, and will constitute a smaller portion of our expenses in future years," Simon says.

As it turned out, despite a population increase of nearly one billion during the decade, the price of each of the five metals indeed dropped. And despite massive increases in the demand for metals since the start of the industrial age, supplies of most minerals have not shrunk but expanded. Rising prices have made deeper extraction financially rewarding. Improved methods of locating minerals have been discovered. Businesses and consumers are more conservation-minded. The use of alternatives has increased. The result: Reserves of copper, to choose but one example, grew from 91 million tons in 1950 to 555 million tons in the early 1980s, according to UN statistics.

If price is any indication of scarcity, food and minerals have never been more abundant, confirms the Cato Institute's Stephen Moore. "Measured in terms of how long a person must work to purchase them, natural resources were 20 percent cheaper on average in 1990 than in 1980, half as costly as in 1950, and five times less costly than in 1900." Ehrlich concedes that over the short term prices have fallen. But even if Simon has been

right so far with respect to some nonrenewable resources, he says, the combination of continued population growth and increased global consumption is catapulting the world toward a point of diminishing returns. More to the point, it is not minerals but the depletion of renewable resources such as air, water, and soil that poses the real risk to the future of humankind. Despite the still-prevalent impression that the future is secure, Ehrlich says, appearances can be deceiving.

IV

When *The Population Bomb* was written, the earth had 3.4 billion inhabitants. The addition of more than two billion since then has done little to diminish the intensity of the great demographic debate, nor to break the stalemate that has existed since the battle was joined by the revisionists during the 1970s. It is a debate that, to the consternation of a confused public and frustrated policymakers, has generated more heat than light. It is a debate that has failed to establish with any certainty whether there are limits to growth and, if there are, when they might be reached.

That the debate has been so inconclusive has several explanations. Not the least important is the extent to which the opposing sides have been talking past each other. Economists typically think in terms of labor, capital, and production; ecologists think in terms of finite supplies of land and water and natural habitat. Economists say the ecosystem is basically healthy; ecologists worry that it may be on the verge of being irreparably damaged. Economists celebrate the prosperity of densely packed countries such as Japan; ecologists fret that Japan is merely exporting the environmental costs of such crowding by exploiting the forests and mineral resources of other countries.

Economists accent aggregate trends and exult that, on average, the world's citizens are better fed, housed, educated, and cared for medically than ever before; ecologists accent the maldistribution of such gains and fret that aggregate statistics provide cold comfort to the hundreds of millions in individual countries who have not benefited by them and who live on the hard edge of want and starvation.

It is as if the two sides, which have access to the very same data, are talking about different subjects, and in a sense they are. Nathan Keyfitz, a professor emeritus of sociology and population at Harvard, has spent considerable time analyzing the debate. It is stuck on dead center, he concludes, because the parties to it live in "largely noncommunicating worlds." One problem, says Keyfitz, is that many of the participants in the debate have drawn conclusions that extend far beyond their specific areas of professional expertise. Within their own disciplines, he says, individual scholars are held to a high standard of scholarship: "There's enough internal discipline that if there's a flaw in their logic or a contradictory argument, they won't be able to get away with it." But when economists and ecologists range beyond their disciplines—as when economists talk about biodiversity loss or ecologists about the price behavior of minerals—they venture into a realm that has fewer checks and balances, permitting predictions, generalizations, and conclusions that under normal circumstances might not pass muster. The result has been a gap between levels of analysis that, in turn, has led to irreconcilable conclusions, as the point-counterpoint debate between Ehrlich and Simon on the subject of biodiversity illustrates.

Simon insists that there is no scientific proof that species are becoming extinct at any significant rate and that until there is, scientists should operate on the assumption that losses are minimal. For his part, Ehrlich cites frightening statistics on deforestation—the direct cause of species loss—which give a misleading impression of quantitative certainty. There are, in fact, large data gaps. Rates of deforestation and reforestation in China, for example, are virtually unknown to Western scientists. Many scientists

The Urban Explosion

While world population is expected to be at least three times as large in 2025 as it was in 1950, urban population will have increased six times during the same period. In 1950, fewer than one in three people lived in cities, and only two cities—New York and London—held more than eight million people. There are 20 such megacities today, 14 of them in the developing world. In developing countries, the urban sector will absorb virtually all the increase in population between now and 2025; it has absorbed 49 percent of the increase since 1950. In a few years, cities of the developing world will contain twice as many inhabitants as those in developed countries, and by 2020, they will have three times as many. Demographer Robert Fox puts the case nicely when he writes, "The urban explosion, after all, is now essentially the population explosion."

In earlier centuries, cities grew slowly and could rely, as Jane Jacobs has argued, on an economic relationship with the hinterland. Time and resources allowed infrastructure to be created ahead of or at least in step with immigration. This pattern of growth remains characteristic of cities in developed countries, whose urban population is already three-quarters of the size it is projected to reach in 2025. With developing countries, however, the situation is quite different. Cities in the developing world, already huge, are projected to triple in size by 2025 and to increase by 80 million people a year for some time after that. The suddenness and magnitude of this increase beggars anything that the more developed countries have known. Moreover, the importation of grain from Europe and America has broken the economic links tying urban areas to the productivity of the surrounding countryside. This is especially true in nations dominated by one enormous metropolitan area—San José in Costa Rica, Lima in Peru. The political and economic resources, and the extended periods of time, that allowed developed countries to urbanize gradually are not available in the developing world.

The cities of the developing countries now provide one springboard for international migration. Immigrants, legal and illegal, arriving in developed countries now tend to have an urban background; unable to find jobs in Cairo or Djakarta, they are attracted to Los Angeles or London, especially since enclaves of their countrymen already live in those cities. Thus the urbanization of the developing world may presage increasingly strong pressures to immigrate to urban centers in the North.

—Mark Sagoff, Director,
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nevertheless believe that forests in general and rain forests in particular, where most species are found, are disappearing at an alarming rate. Bruce Wilcox of the Institute for Sustainable Development reconciles the opposing views: "There's no question that a loss of rain forest is occurring at a catastrophic rate, but there's no way we can produce statistics to prove it with more than plus or minus 50 percent confidence."

The problem is that the very frameworks the two sides have built up make them mutually incomprehensible, says Nathan Keyfitz. "Because of the overlap of interests, those preoccupied with months are at the moment engaged in a lively controversy with those preoccupied by millennia. . . . When biologists and economists try to talk to one another the biologists speak concretely about the fragile character of rain forests and the economists

more broadly about the power of substitution impelled by the price system. There is plenty of goodwill but effectively no dialogue."

Keyfitz uses the world's fisheries to illustrate the problem of communication. The economist's goal is to optimize the catch. He judges success based on how the equipment on the boat is operating, by the efficiency of boat and crew, by how many fish are caught. His frame of reference is only one part of the commodity cycle: If the maximum number of fish is caught, providing the greatest array of choices at the lowest possible prices to consumers, the operation is a success. He thinks in the relatively short term and with a focus on human needs.

The biologist is willing to reduce efficiency in the interest of sustaining the catch. He judges success by how effectively human needs are reconciled with the needs of the ecosystem. His frame of reference is the entire commodity cycle, and he worries that the economist's objective is consistent with the destruction of the habitat. He thinks in the longer term and with a focus on balancing the needs of humankind with other species that share our habitat. The differences reduce to a question of values: Is saving fish or meeting consumer needs at the lowest cost the higher good?

The failure of the dialogue to clarify the effects of population growth on ecosystems and mineral supplies has other causes. One study conducted in 1980 examined seven economic-demographic models constructed to project the future of food and resource supplies and pollution levels. Though each was serious and academically rigorous, their results were dramatically different, ranging from the doomsday scenarios projected in *The Limits to Growth* to the far more benign projections of study groups based in Argentina and Japan. The problem, as Keyfitz notes, is that "no one of them proves anything" because all of them reflect the assumptions factored into them.

The problem of bias is not confined to econometric and biometric models. It runs deep in disciplines nominally dedicated to the search for truth and whose analysis is essential to answering the questions that relate most directly to the future of humankind. As noted by Michael Teitelbaum and Jay Winter, co-authors of an informative essay on the demographic debate, the adversaries in it have been curiously united by a tendency to marginalize or exclude information or frames of reference incompatible with their own. The selective use of evidence, in turn, has had the effect of oversimplifying an immensely complex subject, driving wedges between disciplines that need to cooperate. The tendency is reinforced by the way research grants are awarded. To facilitate grant making, science is compartmentalized into various narrow subdisciplines by megafunders such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. The process has retarded the kind of interdisciplinary research required by complex environmental and population issues.

The People's Republic of China advocates one child per family.

Perhaps in the end, as the American Enterprise Institute's Nick Eberstadt suggests, it is no more reasonable to expect that demographers can come up with comprehen-

sive "laws of population" than to expect historians to create a unified theory of history. "For all the mathematical rigor of some of its investigations," writes Eberstadt (*WQ*, Winter '86), "population studies is a field of social inquiry. . . . Researchers may uncover relationships between population change and prosperity, poverty, or war in particular places at particular times, but none of these findings can be generalized to cover the world at large."

Even so, the debate that has raged over these very issues has been bad for all the disciplines involved and worse for the policymakers who have been left on their own to formulate responses to one of the most pressing of world problems. Worse yet, it has sent a signal to policymakers and the public both that, in the absence of a consensus on what its implications are, population growth can safely be ignored.

V

A quarter century after books such as *The Population Bomb* and *The Limits to Growth* reignited and popularized the debate over the consequences of population growth, important tactical gains have been won by those who challenge their apocalyptic view of the future. Economists such as Julian Simon and the American Enterprise Institute's Ben Wattenberg have made it impossible to ignore the huge contributions science has made to human welfare, even in the face of the most rapid population growth in history, or to discount the argument that further advances could diminish the impact of projected future increases. In the presence of decades of declining prices, meanwhile, the case for limiting population growth is now rarely argued on the basis that supplies of non-renewable resources are likely to be jeopardized in the near term by rapid population growth. Many mainstream Malthusians are more guarded about using the word *crisis* to describe the implications of population growth. Their willingness at least to gesture to the arguments made by their opposite numbers, the cornucopian economists, has become an unexpected new form of political correctness. Still, while the global community of population experts is generally less skeptical of the cornucopian thesis, worries persist among many, probably most, that, as Rockefeller University demographer Joel Cohen notes, even if Malthus has been wrong for the past two centuries he may not be wrong for the next two.

The population community's nagging concern about the future is based on a fear that the stunning technological advances that have so far mitigated the worst effects of rapid population growth may have merely postponed, not necessarily precluded, an ultimate day of reckoning. While most specialists acknowledge that technologies such as those of the green revolution have rescued humankind from hunger and want, some point out that such advances occurred when global consumption rates and real annual increases in population growth were smaller than they may be in the near-to medium-term future. Within the next half century, the UN projects, twice as many people will be seeking three times the food and fiber and four times the energy and engaging in five to 10 times the level of economic activity. That means dramatically greater energy use, more resource consumption, more wastes, and more environmental degradation associated with mining and refining nonrenewable natural resources. Moreover, while the point has been proven that rapid economic and population growth can occur simultaneously, such growth has not been taking place in an infinite world but within the confines of a closed biosphere, which is now exhibiting unmistakable signs of overburden.

"You can't ignore the forces that have worked in the past: technological innovation and market adjustments. In the future, these could take different forms and operate even more rapidly than before," acknowledges the World Resources Institute's Robert Repetto. "But when you think about the expansion in

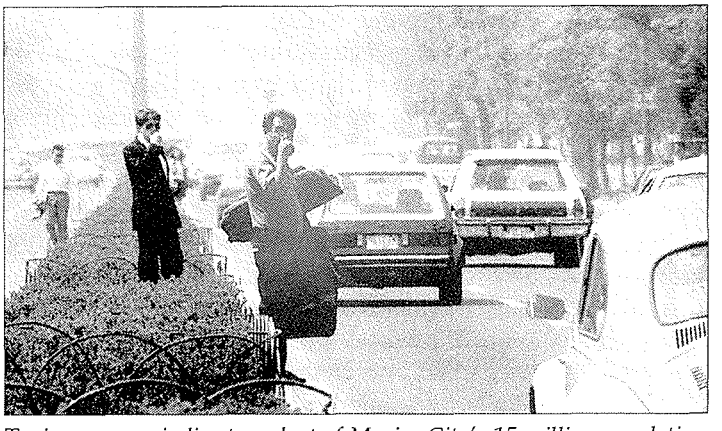
the scale of the population and the scale of economic activity, especially in the Third World, there's every reason to believe that renewable resources are going to be altered drastically, probably irreversibly: forests, coral reefs, wetlands, wildlife habitat, soils."

In general, population experts appear less confident that "skilled, spirited, hopeful people," to quote Julian Simon, can make social and economic contributions significant enough to compensate for their absolute numbers, especially under the conditions of poverty and overcrowding that hold so many in the grip of ignorance, joblessness, and ill health. They are also less sanguine about the long-term implications of what British ecologist Paul Harrison describes as the "enigma" of the simultaneous depletion and expansion of nonrenewable resources. Economists have made much of the paradox that even as demand has increased for many nonrenewable resources, supplies have expanded and prices have dropped. Harrison voices what may be the more prevalent view, that under the impact of rising consumption rates and population growth, a point of diminishing returns may eventually be reached: "The magic porridge pot that has spewed forth riches in the past may work for us for a few decades more. But it would be imprudent to rely on it forever. A world of 10-to-16 billion people cannot continue to consume resources at current Western levels. Something has to give."

Studies to establish undisputed cause-and-effect relationships between population growth and environmental degradation have been too few, too country-specific, or, like one conducted recently by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and reported by the UN Population Fund, too circumstantial to be definitive. After surveying habitat loss in 50 African and Asian nations, the IUCN concluded that the 20 percent of countries that lost the most habitat (averaging 85 percent) had 1,900 people per square kilometer on average, while the 20 percent that had the least loss of habitat (averaging 41 percent) had only 300 people per square kilometer on average.

While highly suggestive, such studies have not always met the test of scientific proof. But for most policymakers, enough such suggestive studies have been conducted to justify measures to limit population growth. As one World Bank official notes, inferences have often had to substitute for conclusive data to justify investments by national governments and international lending institutions in population programs. No airtight case has been made, for example, that population retards economic development, he says. "But we do know that too many births too closely spaced strongly correlates with infant mortality, and that large families diminish the productivity of women and increase national health costs. Those are the arguments we use at the Bank [to secure money for population programs]. We're coming in the side door, but it's honest and it works."

The growing body of solid and circumstantial evidence linking rapid population growth with environmental degradation is so worrisome that even the scientists some economists have been banking on to rescue the



Toxic smog: an indirect product of Mexico City's 15 million population

future have been gripped by a belated failure of confidence. In one widely noted warning issued jointly in 1992, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the Royal Academy of London predicted that if current population and consumption trends continue, "science and technology may not be able to prevent either irreversible degradation of the environment or continued poverty for much of the world. . . . Some of the environmental changes may produce irreversible damage to the Earth's capacity to sustain life."

Another warning, dispatched the same year and signed by 1,700 scientists, including more than 100 Nobel laureates, cautioned that "pressure resulting from unrestrained population growth puts demands on the natural world that can overwhelm any efforts to achieve a sustainable future. Not more than one or two decades remain before the chance to avert the threat we now confront will be lost and the prospect for humanity (and nature) immeasurably diminished." Yet another report, this one issued by 56 national academies of science in October 1993, cautioned that "it is not prudent to rely on science and technology alone to solve problems created by rapid population growth, wasteful resource consumption, and poverty."

Buttressing that view are growing indications that environmental change may be occurring on a scale unprecedented since the advent of the glacial ages one million years ago, and that population growth is one contributing factor. Permanent damage to fragile local ecosystems has already resulted, and many demographers and scientists worry that the added pressures likely to be imposed by simultaneous increases in population and living standards could catapult worrisome global trends across critical environmental thresholds. Meanwhile, as Robert Repetto notes, even though the world's renewable resources—water, soils, and living organisms—have yielded increasing production, it has been at the cost of sacrificing current and future productivity, which could undermine the capacity of many countries to provide for the much-larger populations expected in the near future.

The problem is epitomized in the forests of Guatemala, where settlers have hacked out the only living available to them, halving the country's last remaining forested area in less than two decades. Haiti, which has one of the highest population densities in the world, is a worse case. While it was once heavily wooded, only two percent of the country remains forested, and those trees that still stand are at the mercy of more than six million people starved for fuel wood. Thirty years from now, 12 million Haitians will compete for what's left. Population is not the only reason for Haiti's deforestation. But as one population expert notes, if impoverished Haitians turn the country's last trees into firewood, irreversible damage may be done to Haiti's watershed and eventually to its arable land and fresh water—results paralleled in other countries, including India, where deforestation has caused flooding during the rainy season and water shortages during the dry season.

Deforestation has also led to the loss of one of the most important habitats for animal and plant species, along with wetlands and coral reefs. As already noted, scientists have been unable to estimate reliably either the number of species in nature or the rate of their loss. But their presumptive reasoning has not led to encouraging conclusions. Most species live in tropical rain forests. But the rain forests are now disappearing in Washington state-sized chunks each year, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. In the handful of nations where the world's remaining tropical forestland is concentrated, population doubling times are as short as 22 years. With most of the wood harvested in developing countries used for fuel, a drastic shrinkage of forests and species seems all but certain.

But the problem is not just forests. At stake is the extent to which all the earth's "renewable" resources and its ability to absorb

Clearing the mahogany forests in Bolivia

wastes are being taxed by a combination of bad government policies, inappropriate technology, high levels of consumption, and rapidly growing populations. However much scientists and economists may differ on the scope and implications of such global changes, the fact is that most developing nations now operate on the assumption—correct or incorrect—that rapid population growth is a serious problem that needs to be addressed quickly and decisively. Accordingly, nearly all have adopted ambitious programs to lower birthrates, sometimes adopting coercive measures at which even staunch Malthusians have winced.

Government leaders have been galvanized not only by the conviction that rapid population growth will mortgage economic development but by a lengthening inventory of small and large environmental calamities to which population pressures have contributed. All across the developing world, for example, population growth, livestock, and wasteful agricultural practices are putting pressure on soils, contributing to the process of desertification that has led to a steady exodus from the land. And desertification is only the most extreme result of the relentless pressure that is being placed on land to feed swelling populations. As much as half the world's wetlands have been drained to provide farmland since the turn of the century. Meanwhile, the world fish catch, which provides the main source of protein for the population of 40 countries, has leveled off and may have reached a point of diminishing returns because of overharvesting and the destruction of spawning habitats, according to the Worldwatch Institute.

Fresh water, the resource whose shortage is most likely to impinge on human development, is also under pressure, in substantial part because of population growth. In 1990, one-third of a billion people lived in countries defined as water-stressed or water-scarce, according to Population Action International (PAI). Without a breakthrough in desalination technologies, the number could increase to three billion, or one in every three people, by 2025,

mostly in Africa and Asia. Compounding scarcity is the growing problem of water degradation caused by salt-water intrusions, chemical pollutants, and human sewage.

The effect of population growth on finite water supplies is illustrated by comparing Iran and Great Britain. In 1990, the two countries had the same number of inhabitants—just under 60 million—and access to equivalent amounts of renewable fresh water. Assuming supplies remain stable, by 2025 Iran will have only half the amount of water per capita that it has now because its population, according to the UN's medium projection, will double. In Britain, where population is expected to grow by only five percent during the same period, per capita availability will remain close to what it is today.

As PAI reports, there is no more fresh water on the planet today than there was 2,000 years ago. Yet the earth's population today is more than 20 times greater, which is one reason why chronic freshwater shortages are expected soon in Africa and the Middle East, northern China, parts of India and Mexico, the western United States, northeastern Brazil, and several former Soviet republics. More troubling, some of the highest population growth rates are occurring in some of the most arid regions. "Within a decade," PAI reports, "water could overshadow oil as a scarce and precious commodity at the center of conflict and peacemaking."

Water is a natural renewable resource. But like land and ambient air, it can also be a repository for waste, which is yet another reason many demographers and scientists view the future with misgivings. Human activity has severely taxed the planet's absorptive capacity. Vast flows of toxic chemical and human wastes now pollute the earth's rivers, streams, and oceans, damaging aquatic life and posing health hazards to humans. Air pollution from factory emissions, motor vehicles, and utilities has brought disease to European forests and to crops in Africa, has damaged the ozone layer, and has loaded the atmosphere with greenhouse gasses. The estimated global emissions of carbon from fossil fuels alone have tripled since 1950.

As in the case of global warming, global environmental degradation has mostly to do with profligate energy use in the First World. Japan, western Europe, and the former Soviet republics account for about 35 percent of the carbon emitted into the atmosphere through the combustion of fossil fuels. The United States, with five percent of the world's population, accounts for another 25 percent of carbon emissions. Per capita fossil fuel consumption is actually declining in the United States, but the decline has been more than offset by an annual population growth of 2.6 million. As a result, the U.S. contribution of carbon to the atmosphere continues to increase.

But the balance between developed and developing countries is beginning to shift as living standards, and thus energy and resource use, gradually rise in developing countries. Such improvements hint at what many environmentalists see as a potentially tragic paradox: that human progress may push environmental degradation to a point that produces human suffering. Given the persistently high rates of population growth in many developing nations, the environmental effects of even small increases in per capita consumption could be magnified, shifting more of the blame for global environmental degradation to poor countries. The Third World share of the global consumption of aluminum and copper alone rose from 10 percent in 1977 to 18 percent in 1987, according to one study. If incomes in less developed countries continue to grow at about three percent annually, 40 years from now "these countries will produce more than half the global waste loadings (though still less per capita than the rich nations), and the world economy will be five times as large as it is today," according to Mark Sagoff of the University of Maryland's Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy.

The dark threat posed by the combination of simultaneous population and consumption increases in the developing world is suggested in projections issued by the Futures Group, a strategic-planning firm in Washington, based on a study conducted in the Philippine capital of Manila. That city's population of eight million will soar to 12 million within 20 years under a low-growth scenario, and to 16 million under a high-growth projection. Concurrently the number of motor vehicles in Manila is projected to double, from one for every 10 people to one for every five. The level of air pollution from particulate matter in Manila is already three times the maximum level deemed safe by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. With the projected population and consumption increases, the volume will rise to between 25,000 and 33,000, or nearly six times maximum safe levels. Such dry statistics translate into an enormous human tragedy, which, for monetary and bureaucratic reasons, is unlikely to be mitigated by pollution-control efforts.

"In the absence of legal, regulatory, and incentive programs, there's no chance of tight emission controls," says the Futures Group's John Freymann. "What the figures demonstrate to policymakers is that lowering population growth is a fundamental part of any environmental strategy."

In the end, the concern exhibited by large numbers of population specialists is mostly inferential, an educated hunch about global trends backed up largely by evidence drawn from local trends that the order of population growth projected for the future will pose challenges of unprecedented magnitude. But it is a hunch that has generated a degree of passion even among normally dispassionate natural scientists.

VI

Economists, demographers, and ecologists have managed to agree on at least one thing: that population growth is only one factor contributing to environmental degradation. The consensus holds that poverty and inappropriate government policies are the main problems—so far. In many developing nations, sluggish economic performance has led directly or indirectly to measures that have had a lethal impact on forestlands. Unable to keep up repayment of massive foreign debts incurred in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, many developing nations have been pressured by international lending institutions to accept austerity measures that have led to deep cuts in government services. The result has been the dislocation of the poorest and most dispossessed, some of whom have spilled into virgin forests in countries such as Guatemala. Countries such as Brazil, which have been pressured to generate more foreign exchange, have exploited the forests for minerals and timber for export, often with devastating ecological results.

Governments have frequently made matters worse by granting concessions to cattle ranchers on terms that have created incentives for reckless exploitation, or by granting squatters' rights to settlers who "improve" the land by clearing it. In the notable case of Costa Rica, squatters who clear forestland are entitled to sell it to parties who are allowed to take immediate title. As a study of Costa Rica released by the World Resources Institute concludes, "many enterprising poor and landless could make a business of simply clearing marginal public and private lands, selling them to eager cattle ranchers or other speculators, and moving on to repeat the process."

The classic example of synergy between population and bad government policies, and an underlying cause of much of the deforestation in Latin America, is the inequitable landholding patterns that have long existed in many Latin American nations. Under conditions of low population growth, these patterns have had minimal impact on forestland. But where the growth in real numbers occurs rapidly—which is to say, in nearly every de-

veloping nation—such patterns have pushed poor farmers into the only areas remaining for exploitation. Land redistribution could sharply reduce the impact of population growth on forestland but has occurred in only a handful of nations,

Richard Bilsborrow, a demographer at the Carolina Population Center in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, has studied the process of deforestation in Guatemala for nearly two decades. He holds the view that population growth is an indirect but highly important agent of deforestation. "Population growth leads to fragmentation of the land and forces people to migrate to other parts of the country, where they continue the process of deforestation," he says. "The exact amount of deforestation is directly related to the size of the families that engage in it."

In theory, one means to retard deforestation would be to create jobs in regions like the Petèn in Guatemala to discourage farmers from expanding into cattle ranching, which is far more lucrative but also more destructive to soils and forests. One means to do that would be for the government to invest in low-impact eco-tourism facilities that would create the demand for cooks, drivers, tour guides, and other service workers. The problem is that even prosperity could redound to the detriment of the Petèn's remaining forests.

"The non-governmental organizations all assume that if the farmers make a good living from tourism that they won't go into or expand cattle ranching, but there's always the possibility that they might," says the anthropologist Norman Schwartz, who has been doing fieldwork in Guatemala since the 1960s. "If they make more money from tourism they might expand the size of their ranches because they'll have extra income to invest. In that case, the forests won't be helped but hurt."

The good news is that where economic or tenurial policies encouraging land clearing have been changed—as in Costa Rica and Brazil, for example—deforestation rates have slowed. The bad news is that such changes are rare and unlikely to be enacted and implemented in other countries in time to save more than a fraction of the vast forests that once covered countries such as Guatemala and the Philippines. The reasons are largely political. Unlike logging interests and large landowners, forests as a rule have no constituency, although a green movement is beginning to take shape in the forested nations of Central and South America.

In the last analysis, such cases as Guatemala, Costa Rica, and the Philippines may best explain why the future looks so uncertain to so many population experts. It is not that the future has to be so, but that it is likely to be so given the factors that countervail against humankind's indisputable ingenuity and innovative technology. One such factor is economic: Poor nations are simply unable to afford environmentally sound consumption and production practices. Another factor is political: In the face of widespread poverty, diverting resources to environmental protection is largely out of the question.

"Given the problems that Guatemala faces," Norman Schwartz explains, "who could give conservation first priority? You're facing a hungry population, increasing land shortages in the mountains, ethnic problems, urban unemployment, anti-government guerrillas, a powerful oligarchy that says land distribution is a communist plot. As important as land conservation is, there are other things that, no matter what you believe, are just going to get first priority."

Even if governments were not so constrained, they would have only limited ability, for example, to enforce revised property laws designed to prevent squatters from despoiling forestlands. As for reducing poverty, perhaps the principal cause of deforestation, it is a task that is likely to take more time than the forests have available at current rates of destruction. It is precisely such limitations that cause environmentalists to worry. If poverty remains perva-

sive, if the regulatory arm of government remains weak, or if governments continue to make bad policies, the doubling or tripling of populations that is likely before population stabilization occurs seems certain to become the most important factor in the process of deforestation, placing much of the world's remaining forestland in jeopardy.

Environmental writer Clive Ponting makes the point that human history is one long record of humanity's attempts to circumvent the limitations imposed by nature. The biggest departure from these limitations has been the growth in human numbers that, Ponting says, has far exceeded a level supportable by natural ecosystems. The departure was made possible first by advances in agriculture, then by the use of fossil fuel energy, which opened the door to the quantum increases in the production of goods required to support a growing population.

As viewed by some, the escape from nature's constraints has been a triumph of human ingenuity, a testament to the promise of technology. As viewed by a large number of natural scientists, it has been something else, rather more of a borrowing against time than a permanent escape from ecological limits. If bad policy, social inequities, and simple incompetence were the only factors contributing to environmental degradation, the debate between the optimists and the pessimists would be academic. But increasingly, there are signs that there is something more involved. As Population Action International's Robert Engelman points out, bad policy is nothing new. Social inequities are ancient. Land has always been badly distributed. Why is it, then, that only in the past three decades has deforestation suddenly begun occurring at such a rapid rate all over the tropics? Why is it that peasant-farmers have suddenly become such lethal, if unwitting, agents of forest destruction? Many scientists now believe that the answer may have something to do with the synergy between bad policy and population growth that appears to be tending toward a dangerous critical mass.

When population growth was slow and other frontiers remained to be conquered, the latitude for bad judgment and bad policy was broad. With population high, the latitude is shrinking. In the past, the planet forgave humankind's excesses and mistakes, except in local settings. But with more than five billion inhabitants, the Earth is now considerably less forgiving. It is likely to become even less so as the human race presses on toward its next five billion.

CURRENT BOOKS

How to Make History

TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT HISTORY.
By Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob. Norton. 322 pp. $25

This book is the work of three prominent American academic historians—from, variously, the University of California, Los Angeles (Appleby), the University of Pennsylvania (Hunt), and the New School for Social Research (Jacob). Their areas of expertise include 17th- and 18th-century British and American history, the Enlightenment, modern French history, and the history of science and the scientific revolution. They make a formidable team.

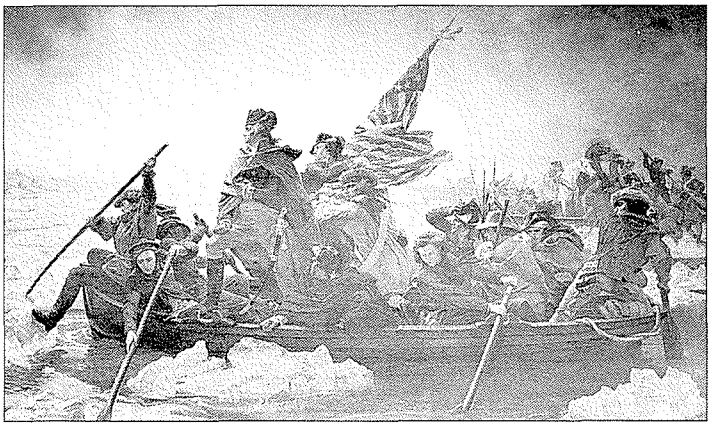
Yet for this book, these authors' most important credential is probably the fact that they're not associated with conservative intellectual or political views. Why? Because the arguments they offer in defense of the discipline of history and of the professional historian's capacity to write a reasonably objective narrative in this age of rampant relativism and saturating irony and a skepticism that might have rattled Pyrrho would receive less credit in important quarters if they were put forward by card-carrying traditionalists.

The authors (and they write as a single voice) are plainly sympathetic to much that has been happening at American colleges and universities these past 20 years—to, for example, the intellectual overhaul of disciplines by new linguistic, anthropological, philosophical, and literary theories, and to calls for a multicultural agenda in American classrooms that reflects a vision of America different from the one that has served up to now. Their own scholarship, in fact, has bolstered such reconsideration and change.

But they worry that the sorcerer's apprentice of relativism that they perceive to be cavorting on American campuses (and throughout the larger society) has lost control of the broom, which now threatens to sweep away more of the intellectual enterprise than they want to see go. The current uncertainty about the nature of objective knowledge—indeed, about the very possibility of such knowledge—promises intellectual chaos. Why bother writing history at all if one version is as true, or false, as any other? Why do we need departments of history? Or professors?

The authors locate the sources of our contemporary predicament in the Enlightenment. They trace the ascendancy of the heroic mode of Enlightenment science, under whose influence historians were persuaded to turn themselves into perfectly neutral investigators capable of precise reconstruction of the past. Ideas of modernity and progress encouraged historians to discover *laws* of human development, valid and absolute as scientific laws. Then, in the 19th century, "building the nation became an absolute value, and history's contribution to that effort was assumed unreflectively." So nationalistic history came to hold sway.

As they move forward from the 16th century to our own, the authors write an intellectual history of the rise and fall of the



absolutisms—science is shown to be socially conditioned and anything but value-free, nationalistic history to be fiercely exclusionary, and so on. It was inevitable, and healthy, that these absolutisms be questioned. But the "fluid skepticism [that] now covers the intellectual landscape, encroaching upon one body of thought after another" is dangerous and debilitating "because it casts doubt on the ability to make judgments or draw conclusions." With history's potential for getting at the truth denied, a new absolutism—rooted, ironically, in subjectivity and relativism—is upon us.

To counter the disarray, the authors propose what they call a "practical realism"—and what no one would call a philosophical breakthrough. They are reluctant to claim too much, but they insist at the least on the existence in the world of things knowable and usable that, though separate from the linguistic expressions used to describe them, are capable of being captured in the mind by these expressions: "Words and conventions, however socially constructed, reach out to the world and give a reasonably true description of its contents." Relying on documents and evidence, historians can pursue their vocation in this cautiously real world (too cautiously real for those of us not racked by Sausurrian-inspired doubt about language, who believe still that the distracted jaywalking Sausurrian about to be flattened by an 18-wheeler would come to terms once and for all with the link between the signifier and the signified if the sole observer, a mischievous Aristotelian, yelled "Mind the pillow!").

Moreover, the "deeply social nature of scientific truth-seeking" and the necessarily subjective manner of individual scientists do not mean science cannot speak truth about the world. Newton was a practicing alchemist, but that did not keep him from being a mathematical genius too, or from formulating universally applicable laws of gravity.

The authors admit that historians cannot capture all the variables bombarding a single past event. But this inability does not render quixotic or meaningless the attempt to say *something* about it—with a qualified objectivity that recognizes the artificiality of language and the subjectivity or culturally shaped character of the individual historian. Different interpretations of the same event do not alter the event, and the sum of interpretations, in the larger continuing historical enterprise, will better convey its reality and achieve a kind of collective truth. In other words, that there may be 13 ways of looking at a blackbird does not make the bird green.

This sane pragmatic position is so hardly won and tenuously held that I do not want to say anything that might erode it. It does seem, however, that the reality the authors advocate is just a slightly paler version of the one the best historians traditionally have embraced. Almost 65 years ago, the great German historian Hajo Holborn wrote in a paper for a Princeton University symposium: "[The critical historian] trusts that the ideal of a science of history can be made evident by a common effort of scholars. . . . To talk about a science of history means nothing but an affirmation of the critical and systematic approach to history, and the validity of the results achieved in this way." Though the words "science of history" will induce horror today, the practice behind the words should not, particularly if Holborn's words are amended to read "a common effort of *diverse* scholars."

To argue that history can still be done, the authors do history. And that is one of the values of their book. It is a coherent narrative that, by its very existence, challenges critics who may think they have revoked the credentials of the form. Regrettably, the authors depict the events of centuries with a brush stroke so broad that one fears a lot of the paint has missed not just the mark but the canvas. For example: "For the Greeks and Romans, history concerned persons, things, or events but did not exhibit overarching meanings or patterns. History showed only the inexorable effects of human passions, weaknesses, and ambitions." This would have come as news to Thucydides, who wrote his book precisely so that it might be "judged useful by those who

want to understand clearly events that occurred in the past and (human nature being what it is) will occur again in the future, at some time or other and in much the same way." And Polybius, Sallust, Tacitus? Were they really blind to overarching meanings and patterns in events?

In their last chapter, the authors write, "For almost a half century, [the Cold War] determined identities, magnified anxieties, and permeated every intellectual enterprise." Not *some* or even *many* intellectual enterprises but *every* intellectual enterprise? Even at the height of the Vietnam War, when I was in graduate school, colleagues working on dissertations about Latin love poetry and Greek moods—intellectual enterprises by my reckoning—did so well beyond the reach of any war, hot or cold. These are minor points perhaps, but neither statement reflects the quality of painstakingly careful judgment and nuance the authors have been urging on historians in previous chapters if they are to make sense of the past.

Incidentally, this last chapter, on "the future of history" in the post–Cold War era, promises a great deal more than it delivers—and some of what it delivers should be returned to sender. The chapter is not about the future of history as such (it does not preach to Brazilians, Germans, or Japanese) but about the future of history in American classrooms and the need for (reflexive) accommodation to multicultural narratives: "The motifs of a multicultural history of the United States will have to incorporate themes and variations on *all* [emphasis added] the identities that Americans carry with them, because only this will satisfy our awakened curiosity about what it truly means to be part of American democracy." This chapter appears to have been included to assure readers that the authors' liberal credentials are intact and that their embrace of objective reality is not too tight.

Yet even if they have told only part of the truth about history, the authors should be commended. They will receive the criticism of colleagues both from the Right and the Left. The book will be dismissed as thin gruel by traditionalists, who want more meat. But perhaps among at least some of the modish, who are making do with smaller and smaller portions at an intellectual table set for perpetual Lent, it will have the forbidden appeal of crème fraîche.

—James Morris is director of the Division of Historical, Cultural, and Literary Studies at the Woodrow Wilson Center.

The Masculine Mystique

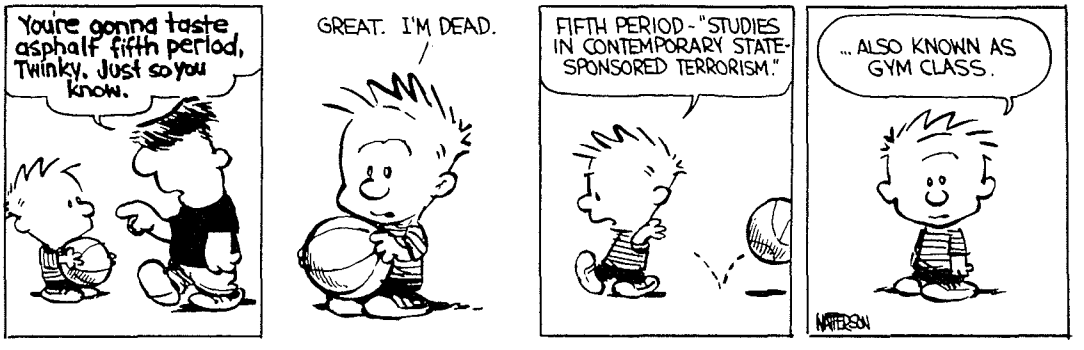
THE TROUBLE WITH BOYS. *By Angela Phillips. Basic Books.272 pp. $23*
WHAT MEN WANT: Mothers, Fathers, and Manhood. *By John Munder Ross. Harvard Univ. Press. 242 pp. $29.95*

For the past 30 years or so, experts, activists, and talk show hosts have been thoroughly absorbed with what women want, what women don't have, and what society has done to women. The "dominant sex," meanwhile, has been relatively ignored in scholarly tomes and readily abused in political and pop-psych rhetoric. We hear a great deal about the "deadbeat dad," the "insensitive male," the "hormone-driven warmaker." The "problem with men," according to current wisdom, is that they are not women.

Two new books seek to bring men back into the picture, and, just as astonishing, they do so with sympathy. Phillips, a British journalist attuned to the impact of class on social

relations, and Munder Ross, an American psychoanalyst and teacher, are well acquainted with men who make trouble and are in trouble. But their critical compass takes such matters into consideration as only one part of a very complex story. From their very different angles of vision, Phillips and Munder Ross reach startlingly similar conclusions. Perhaps most startling is that many of the conclusions are not new at all, but really pieces of old wisdom, long buried under layers of errant nonsense, ideological excess, and not-so-benign neglect.

What both authors say amounts to this: Men may be more inherently aggressive, but social factors—our contradictory definitions of masculinity, a troubled economy, the rise of single-parent families—are far more responsible for many of the problems boys and men have been getting themselves into. "The trouble with boys," writes Phillips, "is that they must become men, and if the only picture of men available is that of a brute then in order to become male they must be brutish." Instead of focusing on cultural and social factors, Phillips contends, we've been too busy blaming men for being men. Feminists took the lead in the blame game, but they are not alone. Many of those in the "helping professions" tend to approach the male as a beastly nuisance. The result has been that men all too easily play the parts the scripts require. No more than women are men puppets on the end of a social-deterministic string. But no more than women can they leap out of a world with a deeply ingrained psychological, social, and civic repertoire that defines them in certain ways.



Every text that takes up contemporary men needs its fair share of dismal data. Phillips and Munder Ross do not disappoint. In the United Kingdom, the United States, and everywhere else in the world, young men are the likeliest perpetrators of violence. Increasingly, they are also at greatest risk of being its victims. In all major industrial societies, girls do better than boys in school. This is especially striking among black Americans: Twice as many black girls as black boys graduate from college, according to Phillips. Eighty-five percent of children categorized as "special ed" are male. Fidgety young boys, disproportionately categorized as suffering from "attention disorders" of one sort or another, are separated out, turned over to therapists, or fed Ritalin.

How much all of this is the result of "wiring" is impossible to say. But the rising rates of boys at risk and boys posing risks to others correlate precisely, as Phillips shows, with the increase in fatherless homes. Relying heavily on interview material, Phillips shows how fatherless young men are more likely to be aggressive and self-destructive and to exhibit antagonism toward women. Without the steadying influence of a male adult, who both draws out and inhibits their aggressive spurts, boys and young men spin out of control.

Children, it turns out, long for their fathers. According to Munder Ross, who has analyzed more than 20 years of study, including his

own, the father introduces a principle of "difference" and "triangulation" into the early mother-child dyad, helping to tease out "the child" as a separate identity from its early engulfment in the maternal figure. Father absence poses "terrible threats to the boy's gender identity." A boy without a father has trouble knowing what appropriate male behavior is. And paradoxically, rather than spurring a strong identification with the mother, father absence more likely produces a spurning of things female. In an effort to achieve a separate identity, a boy without a father will seek to sharpen the distinction between himself and his mother.

Munder Ross lays part of the blame for our not fully understanding "a father's less obvious role in procreation" on a certain sort of "phallic dominance" assumed by male and female psychoanalysts. He discusses the "pervasive and abiding omissions" of fathers in clinical formulations and treatment plans, which only perpetuate the dismissive stereotyping of responsibility for children as "women's work." This is the world of "separate spheres" that feminists railed against, at least until the "pathological male" became the dominant scapegoat in orthodox feminist discussion. Ironically, we are now enjoined to celebrate a world of "women and children only," as if the primary problem is one of inadequate social provision, provision that would permit, even encourage, women with children to "go it alone" without a man.

Mere father presence, of course, is not enough, and Phillips reports that women increasingly would rather raise a child alone than raise one with an abusive husband. Fathers need not only to be involved in child rearing but also to offer a model of constancy and caring. Not coincidentally, this image of "father" has been encouraged by a prominent line of thinkers in the West, at least from the writings of 16th-century reformers (Luther, Calvin) through the Romantics (including Rousseau) up to and including liberals (Mill, Wollstonecraft). But this father also had "authority." It was his job to protect and to discipline, in moderation. Fathers have now been stripped of their authoritative roles, and many are stripped of their useful labor. At the same time, they are required to become "like mothers"—nurturing, caring, and communicative in exactly the same way as women—if we are to honor them at all.

This is Munder Ross's most important contribution to the contemporary debate—though I doubt very much that its gatekeepers will permit his voice to be heard. He doesn't have in mind the well-documented troubles in America's inner cities; rather, he indicts the upper-middle classes, those on the "cutting edge" of social change.

Munder Ross discusses the post-World War II world in which "a man's loyalties shifted to his corporation or institution as the owner of his life, well-being, and energies, indeed, as his family away from home." Vital childrearing functions were ignored. Then in "what was probably a distortion of feminism," Munder Ross concludes with noteworthy understatement, women, too, began to conform to the "extrafamilial power structure governing our lives," a structure that values "economic necessity" and the world of production above the "nurturing of human life itself."

Perhaps we need to begin by redefining masculinity. Although Phillips's rhetoric grows overheated at points ("What is it about men that creates, in one group, the thirst for power and, in another, the thirst for destruction?"), her evidence suggests it isn't anything "about men" in some essential or strictly predetermined sense that invites or causes trouble. Instead, a society that requires certain things from men—responsibility, protection, a stoic determination to get the job done—also increasingly denies many of them respectable work and respect for the work they do when they try to live up to these standards.

Phillips observes that one "of the things that struck me so forcefully as the mother of a son is that growing up male is hard, very hard." What's so hard about it is that, increasingly, no one knows what men are around for except to make babies. At the same time, save for a few upper-middle-class homes in which

it might be possible for fully equal and shared parenting, men are neither encouraged nor rewarded for staying at home. When they try to pitch in and help, they are often chastised by their wives for "not doing it right." Phillips puts the matter in stark but apt terms: "A man without a wage has no value in a family system in which wage earning is a man's only function." Small wonder, then, that when things start to fall apart for men, their rate of suicide, depression, and substance abuse soars.

How should we redefine masculinity? Neither author offers a completely satisfactory answer, but at least many of the right questions are finally being addressed. Munder Ross stresses the "feminine underside" of a man's nature. He finds that, much more than traditional psychoanalysis allowed, men (and boys) want to be like women (and girls). Even as girls may yearn for the ostensible "external" excitement of the male world, boys yearn for the relational warmth and safety of the female world, as they have themselves experienced it as sons.

The point is that males are just as variable and complex as females. But, as Phillips states, "lessons in violence, indifference, and separation are provided every day for every male child." At the same time, crying and distress in boys are less tolerated and less tended to than in girls. Boys are still ordered to "shape up." Much greater latitude is permitted to girl tomboys than to boy sissies. "There is no socially sanctioned way in which boys can show their anxiety and ask for help," writes Phillips. "If they are rough and anxious they are seen as aggressive, but they are given precious little encouragement to show weakness either." Destructive boys need to be taught not to be destructive; calling them monsters only assures that the behavior will continue.

There are a few moments of speculative silliness in Phillips's book, passages where she becomes untethered from her own evidence and suggests that men are somehow united in a determination to "fiercely" defend the status quo. The "world would be a better place without hard men," she concludes. Here I would recommend repeat readings of, say, Max Weber's "Politics as a Vocation" to Phillips to get her off this particular kick. Statecraft is infinitely more complicated than adolescent males fielding teams determined to do one another to death.

But all in all, these volumes show us just how hollow current celebrations of "difference" really are. On the most elemental level, we seem no closer to respecting the reality of male and female difference and the complexity of negotiating the shoals of that difference in the emergence of our own identities and in our engagements with one another than we ever were. That we cannot do so means the project of generous and accepting equality between the sexes will continue to elude us.

—Jean Bethke Elshtain, visiting professor of government at Harvard University, is author most recently of Democracy on Trial, *forthcoming from Basic Books.*

Reading Cultural Studies

THE CULTURAL STUDIES READER. *Edited by Simon During. Routledge. 478 pp. $49.95*

Imagine feeling like an alert, slightly irritable foreign guest in the midst of your own culture. Imagine that the TV shows, pop songs, movies, best sellers, radio programs, and sports events that other people look to for pleasure or edification have a much different status for you. To you, they are artifacts to analyze. And you analyze them not in terms of the pleasure they yield but in terms of their power to perform certain social functions. You want to see whether they induce

conformity, challenge it, or somehow do both of those things at once.

So a popular movie such as *Sleepless in Seattle* is of interest to you for the way it tries to keep the ideal of heterosexual marriage and the nuclear family alive during a time when the movements for women's rights and gay rights and certain economic developments have put that ideal in question. Granted, you may also have liked the movie, but then you'd want to interrogate your own attraction to its conventional ideals.

Someone who approaches popular culture in this way is practicing (albeit in a rather elementary form) what the academy calls cultural studies. Cultural studies is the latest academic wave, the movement that seems to have taken the vanguard position recently occupied by new historicism and, before that, by deconstruction.

Cultural studies practitioners are something like anthropologists in the midst of their own culture. They ask how the meanings that the culture manufactures create social cohesion. They look at cultural works in terms of ritual, with ritual understood as a symbolic action that confirms and reproduces existing social forms. A Jivaro initiation ceremony in Peru may allow the young initiate a period of liminal self-dispersion in which his conventional identity is suspended, but the ultimate objective is for the young man to embrace a self-conception much like his father and grandfather's.

The cultural studies critic is attuned to the possibility that an artist might challenge the status quo. But because he begins with the anthropological assumption that cultural works tend to consolidate, rather than question or defy, established social forms, the critic will be especially alert to how what looks like a rebuke to the existing order may subtly reinforce it. So Oliver Stone's *JFK*, which suggests that a pro-Vietnam War junta killed the president, may strike one as a subversive piece of work. But it's Hollywood work, the cultural-studies critic warns, so look twice. Conspiracy theorists such as Stone are often optimists in disguise: If only it weren't for those wicked cabals, they suggest, we'd be fine. They forget that it's political and economic injustice—deeply rooted, systemic problems—that account for most human misery in America. A movie such as *JFK* takes your eye off the real target. Cult-studies analysts supposedly have their antennae poised for the genuine article—for music, film, and dance that release progressive energies. But mostly what they see around them are ersatz goods.

As Simon During, who teaches English and cultural studies at the University of Melbourne, writes in his thoughtful introduction to *The Cultural Studies Reader*, a cultural studies maven is likely to be on the Left: He's likely to see cultural works in terms of how they refute or reaffirm capitalism's lucrative patterns of oppression. And the popular work that engages his energies will probably be contemporary, though there are cultural studies types devoted to, say, Elizabethan pop culture, often with special attention to what Shakespeare or Marlowe might have skimmed from it. The method will be interdisciplinary, combining terms and theoretical narratives from

sociology, psychoanalysis, literary criticism, and elsewhere. And, too, the practitioner is probably out of patience with what he takes to be the blind commitment to a high-brow standard of taste sustained in the local department of English.

Fair enough. But to his casual description of the contemporary scene, During wants to add a historical genealogy of cultural studies. The genealogy starts out well. During discusses the work of F. R. Leavis and Raymond Williams and points to the Birmingham School studies of popular culture by writers such as Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggart, the latter the author of the brilliant and moving 1957 volume, *The Uses of Literacy*. But During also wants to tell a more or less Hegelian story about how cultural studies picked up influences on the way to its present apotheosis, gaining resources from the Frankfurt School, Foucault, feminism, and gay studies.

Actually, the field is far less systematic. A good cultural studies critic will have read Marx, Foucault, Bourdieu, Adorno, Lyotard, and Williams (all but the first of whom are represented in During's anthology). But she will apply these and other big thinkers with a chef's discretion: a dash of historicism, a dollop of Althusser, and a drizzle of Derrida when needed.

The turn to cultural studies seems to me potentially a splendid development. What better for intellectual life than that a lot of bright people who know something about both art and philosophy go public with their interests? Pauline Kael wrote vivid movie reviews for the *New Yorker*, recording the immediate experience of seeing a film like no one before or since; Stanley Kauffmann's confident aesthetic judgments and catholic taste, still on display in the *New Republic*, remain gifts to be grateful for. But one might hope for more comprehensive responses to film than either of these critics have been in a position to provide. Why not try, for instance, to see major films in terms of their power to console, inflame, define, or shape what one might call the national psyche? I've been looking for a long time to find an expansive cultural critic with something valuable to say about what I take to be the best American movie, *The Godfather Part 2*, and in particular about its deep broodings on revenge—a major subject in the wake of the Vietnam War. Most people will, I suspect, be able to point to popular works that have meant a lot to them, works they would like to see explicated with gusto and skill. So I want to like cultural studies, no doubt about it.

And in fact sometimes I do, though only two of my favorite practitioners turn up in During's anthology. One is Andrew Ross, who has recently moved from Princeton University to New York University. During excerpts Ross's chapter on pornography from his recent book, *No Respect: Intellectuals & Popular Culture* (1989). It is perhaps the least consequential chapter in the book, but it's not hard to see why an editor would want a treatment of pornography to enliven his volume. Ross writes about the attitudes struck by American intellectuals in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s on issues such as media, race, camp, and the Rosenberg case, as well as pornography. He shows how the American intelligentsia tried to acquire cultural authority by condemning popular forms in unthinking, programmatic ways. But Ross can be almost as hard on his contemporary colleagues in arms: He is suspicious of Marxists who denounce all popular forms as simple functions of bourgeois ideology.

So Ross bobs and weaves, showing how mass-produced, commercialized products such as Motown soul music aren't to be written off as trash, as a somber socialist like Irving Howe would have been inclined to do. Nor is such music the product of pure appropriation, of callous businessmen sucking the passion and protest out of indigenous black culture—sanitizing Little Richard and selling him as Michael Jackson. To Ross, there's good stuff in popular Motown music. It's simple, passionate, direct (as John Milton said all poetry ought to be), speaks for sex and tenderness, and also for black pride.

To be sure, Ross's work can degenerate into a guide to hip, left-wing taste. He can be read as telling you—and here's a phrase I hear all too unself-consciously now—what "it's okay to like." Can you be into Frank O'Hara and still count as a bona fide left-winger? Yet I like Ross because he has fresh, complicated things to say about popular culture. The optimal critical method, said T. S. Eliot, is to be very intelligent, and that describes Ross at his best.

It also describes a number of the better critics who are not included in this volume: Carol Clover, who is to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* what Aristotle was to *Oedipus Rex*; Laura Kipnis on *Hustler*; Constance Penley on home-made fan magazines; Mark Crispin Miller, whose pieces in *Boxed In* (1982) on Richard Dawson and *Family Feud*, on *The Cosby Show*, and on Orwell as prophet of TV culture are marvels; and Richard Poirier, whose 20-year-old reflections on the Beatles, published in *The Performing Self* (1992), are a model of receptive close scrutiny and speculative panache.

But the best any critic of popular cultural has recently done in combining critical individuality with (give or take) progressive left-wing politics has been Roland Barthes, represented in the During collection by a piece called "Dominici, or the Triumph of Literature." Barthes, who taught at the Collège de France until his death in 1980, went through a new theoretical phase in virtually every book: He has avatars as a Marxist, a semiotician, a structuralist, a post-structuralist, a reader-response theorist, and an allusive autobiographer. In whatever guise he wrote, Barthes delivered marvelous observations. He's a serious critic with the right light touch: The staged wrestling match "enacts the exact gestures of the most ancient purifications"; Greta Garbo's face "reconciles two iconographic ages, it assures the passage from awe to charm"; the Eiffel Tower "makes the city into a kind of nature"; Baudelaire strove "to protect theatricality from the theater."

Yet the academic verdict on Barthes has been revealing. Virtually no academics write in the mode of Roland Barthes. In fact, despite his extraordinary originality and range, he's rarely even cited by academics. Though he's a great critic, he's too urbane, too much the *flâneur*; he doesn't take himself, or his methods, seriously enough. Susan Sontag, the author of a polemical essay called "Against Interpretation" (1964) that calls at its close for an erotics of art, saw this, and connected herself with Barthes in ways that she couldn't with the more somberly methodological Derrida and Foucault.

When, by contrast, the very intelligent Meaghan Morris, an Australian feminist critic, decides to write about shopping malls, she prefaces her trip to the contemporary agora with a slag heap of anxious reflections on method. The reflections are wearisome, the theory dull. Barthes would have known better; Ross too. Morris's approach is a way of establishing credentials with the other intellectuals, of flashing badge. It's also a way of engaging good old Arnoldian high seriousness. For, in truth, professional anxiety continues to be rife in cultural studies, as it was during the reign of high theory. Intellectuals seem to need to apologize for their immersion in Barbie and Ken, in *The Dukes of Hazzard*, in Madonna, by longer and longer bouts of ritual theorizing.

Ross paid his dues by writing a so-so book about modernism; Barthes wrote a sleepy volume of his own to inaugurate his career. Both of them then used academic security to have some fun. In fact, it's often the respectable youth, *les enfants gris*, who are cluttering what could be a splendid field with their ponderous, adult wisdom. Why doesn't someone write a cultural studies book on professorial rituals?

—*Mark Edmundson, associate professor of English at the University of Virginia, is the author of* Towards Reading Freud: Self-Creation in Milton, Wordsworth, Emerson, and Sigmund Freud.

OTHER TITLES

History

DOUBLE LIVES: Spies and Writers in the Secret Soviet War of Ideas Against the West. *By Stephen Koch. Free Press. 338 pp. $24.95*

The demise of Soviet communism has inspired more than a few indignant exposés of those Westerners who fell under its spell. Add to this growing list of often bilious works Koch's *Double Lives*. Koch, chairman of the Writing Division of the School of Arts at Columbia University, seeks to lay bare the workings and reach of the Soviet Union's early propaganda apparatus in the West. Using the life of Willi Münzenberg, the first master of Stalinist spin control, Koch tells a tangled tale of fellow travelers, unwitting literati, and master spies that enmeshes everyone from Madame Sun Yat-sen to Ernest Hemingway.

Called by Koch "one of the unseen powers of 20th-century Europe," Münzenberg was already a canny underground organizer in Germany when he met Leon Trotsky in 1914. Trotsky led him to Lenin, who entrusted Münzenberg with helping to found the Communist International, or Comintern. Münzenberg's first real foray into international agitprop, however, did not take place until the Soviet famine of 1921, when Lenin ordered him to launch an appeal for aid from the "international proletariat." That effort in turn provided the foundation for what would become known as "the Münzenberg Trust," a media combine that spanned the globe. In Japan, for example, the trust directly or indirectly held sway over 19 magazines and newspapers.

Münzenberg's career as a propagandist provides a jumbled structure for Koch's work, but the real focus—or, rather, target—of *Double Lives* is the "adversary culture" that yielded Münzenberg a "rich secret harvest" from "the Left Bank of André Malraux," the "Bohemia of Greenwich Village," and "the rooms of Trinity College, Cambridge." Koch's recounting of those associated with what Münzenberg liked to call his "Innocents' Clubs"—book and film societies, conferences, and committees designed to push Soviet causes—reads like a who's who of the chattering class in the 1930s and '40s: John Dos Passos, André Gide, Ernest Hemingway, H. G. Wells, Dorothy Parker, and Bertolt Brecht, to name a few.

Münzenberg's organization sought supporters and converts by tapping the disaffection of the intellectual elite over issues such as racism in America, philistinism and middle-class repression in England, fascism in Germany, and capitalism everywhere. Koch provides ample details of the elaborate fronts Münzenberg set up in Paris, London, New York, and Hollywood to capitalize on the anti-establishment sentiment generated by such events as the trial of Niccola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti and the Spanish Civil War. He also notes that such Münzenberg creations as the League Against War and Fascism provided a well-stocked pool of would-be recruits for Soviet intelligence agents, yielding among other catches the notorious British double agent Kim Philby.

Yet in Koch's darkly simplistic view, sympathy with the lofty ideals professed by Soviet propaganda could have been the result only of manipulation or collaboration. He reduces many of the finest contemporary minds in the West to victims or accomplices of an "elaborate secret service network . . . set up to keep this large number of celebrity sympathizers appearing in the right places and reading the right lines."

Koch's paranoia might be more plausible were it backed by more than the flimsiest of evidence. Prominently pegged by Koch as a fellow traveler, for example, is John Dos Passos; but Koch himself notes that Dos Passos reacted to his free five-star tour of the Soviet Union by telling Hemingway that leaving the communist state "was like being let out of jail." All too often, Koch's charges about the secret Communist Party membership of various intellectuals rest on "may have beens" or "might have beens." Positing a conversation between British homosexual spies Anthony Blunt and Guy Burgess on the utility of homosexuality for espionage rings, Koch says, "I have no evidence to prove it, but some such conversation may well have taken place, and if so, it must have been an interesting one." Careful scholarship in the Kremlin and elsewhere may one day yield the truth about which Western intellectuals actually led "double lives." No one doubts there were fellow travelers swayed by Münzenberg and his minions. Indeed, Koch's own penchant for sensationalism, half-truths, and trumped-up irrelevancies suggests that, in another time, he "might well have been" one of them.

TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS: The Origins of an Anglo-American Right. *By Joyce Lee Malcolm. Harvard. 248 pp. $29.95*

What Congress meant by the Second Amendment may be the most controversial question in modern constitutional debate. "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed," the amendment reads. The mystery lies in the relationship between the clauses: Is the right to bear arms limited to militia members, or does the first clause merely offer one compelling reason why every citizen must be allowed to own a gun? Malcolm, a scholar of 17th-century English history, explicitly declines to take sides in the modern gun-control debate. Yet she argues that we cannot answer its fundamental question without understanding the former colonists' philosophical debt to the motherland.

In preindustrial England, most subjects believed that an armed populace was the only safeguard against the ambitions of a power-hungry monarch, and, despite a law limiting private ownership to wealthy landowners, most households contained guns. The majority of Englishmen also believed that any standing army posed an outrageous threat of despotism. Yet in the late 1660s, Charles II, cynical and insecure after his father's execution and his own exile, amassed England's first standing army. Partially in response, Parliament soon passed England's first Bill of Rights, which specifically declared the right of all Protestant subjects to keep arms for their defense.

The American colonies went beyond English law: Colonists were required to carry weapons when traveling outside towns and attending church. (The exceptions, of course, were Indians and slaves; it was a crime to sell them firearms.) The terror of standing armies also persisted, especially when the redcoats did not disband upon the conclusion of the French and Indian War in 1763. Drawing up constitutions during the Revolutionary War, the individual colonies explicitly condemned standing armies and made provisions for a popular militia. But there was disagreement as to individual rights to firearms. While Massachusetts declared, "The people have a right to keep and to bear arms for the common defence," Pennsylvania included personal defense, stating "that the people have a right to bear arms for the defence of themselves and the state."

When it came to drafting the federal Constitution, the Founders debated an amendment that read: "That the people have a right to bear arms for the defence of themselves and their own State, or the United States, or for the purpose of killing game; and no law shall be passed for disarming the people or any of them, unless for crimes committed, or real danger of public injury from individuals." Ultimately, though, they approved the Constitution without a bill of rights.

The Founders, of course, also granted extensive control to the central government over both the standing army and the state militia. These provisions provoked outrage during ratification, but in the end, many argued, if the people remained armed the standing army would never be able to enforce unjust laws. Yet disagreement continued over whether the right was to be for collective or individual protection. The House drafted one version of the Second Amendment based on states' proposals. The Senate, paring out wordiness (and choosing not to include the phrase "for the common defense"), cut the amendment to its current concise abstruseness. As Malcolm writes, "At each stage of its passage through Congress the arms amendment became less explicit . . . and brevity and elegance have been achieved at the cost of clarity."

Still, Malcolm believes that the Framers and Congress meant to protect individuals' right to arms for self-defense and to guard against tyr-

anny: "The argument that today's National Guardsmen, members of a select militia, would constitute the *only* persons entitled to keep and bear arms has no historical foundation." How modern Americans should act on this conclusion she declines to say: "We are not forced into lockstep with our forefathers. But we owe them our considered attention before we disregard a right they felt it imperative to bestow upon us."

BUDAPEST AND NEW YORK: Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870–1930. *Ed. by Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske. Russell Sage Foundation. 416 pp. $39.95*

In 1870, Budapest and New York were rising stars of urban modernization. During the following 30 years both acquired world-famous bridges and subways, substantial new populations, and all the trappings of modernity. Moreover, their economies outpaced those of their closest urban rivals. Yet while the next 30 years made New York wealthy and cosmopolitan, an avatar not just of America's but of the world's future, Budapest settled into economic stasis and a reactionary torpor. What happened?

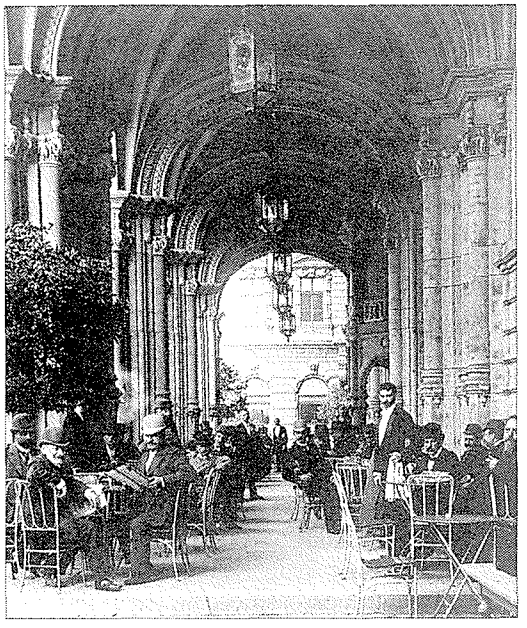
It's tempting to blame Budapest's political system, a nearly ossified centralized government with limited suffrage (under five percent of the population voted). But according to Bender, Schorske, and the 14 other historians who contributed to this volume, politics was not the only reason, or even a major reason, for Budapest's stagnation. In fact, a brief phase of relatively progressive politics, from 1900 to the failed Revolution of 1919, had minimal effect. Rather, the historians argue that New York's success depended on its ability to produce and retain diversity, while Budapest floundered because of its virulent xenophobia, which produced widespread resistance to cultural innovation.

Ethnic difference forced on New York's institutions, from its local government to its construction industry, the sort of resourcefulness and flexibility that remained essential to the city's ever-evolving infrastructure. For example, Central Park evolved out of a contest of various civic interests: Frederick Law Olmsted's patrician vision of a zone of rural tranquility became, under public (i.e. ethnic) pressure, the home of brass bands, working-class crowds, and a zoo. The heterogeneity and chaos of mass-market newspapers and avant-garde art were vital in founding a new urban order precisely on "moral and intellectual disorder." In the new newspapers—read by Bowery workers and uptown aristocrats alike—limerick contests that drew more than a million responses ran side by side with Will Durant-style philosophizing and pious exhortations about poverty.

Meanwhile, Budapest was being "Magyarized." An influx of rural Hungarians at the turn of the century had the effect of driving German-speakers and Jews out of the city and stifling modernization in the commercial and public spheres. City parks and other sites of social mingling never flourished in Budapest. From 1900 on, Budapest's literary and cultural scene (aside from a tiny, virtually ignored avant-garde) was ruled by various antimodernists who denounced the sinful excesses of urbanity or mocked its notions of progress. In one fictional account, the "woeful people of Pest" spend their lives selling each other antifreckle cream and preparations for perspiring feet. There was even a spirited campaign against something as innocent as the telling of jokes, which came to signify to the provinces how un-Hungarian the capital had become.

Why did petty provincialism and xenophobia exercise such a stranglehold on Budapest? In part because, as Hungary's capital, it was expected to remain somehow exemplary of the nation as a whole. Budapest was home to one of eight Hungarians and yet could never seem Magyar enough to satisfy most newly arrived Hungarian peasants. New York, by contrast, was never home to more than one-twentieth of the nation's population, and was capital only of a commercial and financial network that exerted an admittedly strong but still comparatively indirect control over America. Furthermore, being progressive, innovative, or forward-looking—traits that came to characterize New Yorkers—commanded respectful attention, even envy, from the rest of the country.

Curiously, for all of the talk of bigotry's effects, the historians who contribute to this volume bring up New York racism toward African-Americans only in passing. If the retention and toleration of diversity is indeed the essential



prerequisite of successful urbanization, then why did racism persist, even deepen, as New York modernized? In the end, the self-congratulatory optimism of the New York accounts, and the air of melancholy and self-reproach in the chapters on Budapest, may lie less in the past than in the present. The book gives off the faintest whiff of post–Cold War triumphalism. Nevertheless, it usefully explores the deep connections among such aspects of a city's life as a heterogeneous political debate, technological and commercial innovation, a thriving avant-garde, and the toleration of ethnic differences. By 1930, Budapest could boast of none of these virtues, while New York was the nurturing alma mater of them all.

Contemporary Affairs

A RAGE TO PUNISH: The Unintended Consequences of Mandatory Sentencing. *By Lois G. Forer. Norton. 204 pp. $23*

The thesis of *A Rage to Punish* sounds so unobjectionable that one may wonder why the author had to write the book at all: Public safety should be our top priority in sentencing criminals; a judge should be the one to determine a convict's sentence; once sentenced, prisoners should serve out their time.

But Forer's appeal for criminal-justice reform comes at a time when we are passing laws that run directly counter to her desired goals. Our ever-harsher sentencing laws mandate minimum sentences for certain crimes, especially nonviolent drug crimes, leaving judges with little discretion to sentence as they see fit. As a result, prisons are overflowing, dangerous criminals are being let out years early, and preventable violent crimes are further jeopardizing public safety.

Forer, a state trial judge in Philadelphia for 16 years, left the bench in 1987 to protest a prison sentence she considered unfair but would have been forced to impose under state mandatory-sentencing laws. She thinks we need to get over our retributive and moralistic approach to crime. Judges should lock up only those criminals they deem dangerous. The others should be fined, forced to make reparations to their victims, and placed on probation with requirements such as finding a job or learning to read.

America has already seen one attempted reformation of criminal law along the lines Forer proposes. It was spearheaded by the U.S. Supreme Court after Earl Warren's appointment as chief justice in 1953. Victim-compensation laws and alternative sentencing became commonplace, and for the first time the Supreme Court guaranteed the right to free counsel to all defendants, in the landmark *Gideon* v. *Wainwright* decision in 1963. But a period of what Forer dubs counter-reformation set in when the Supreme Court in 1976 restored the death penalty, which had been abolished only four years earlier. Rehabilitation was declared a liberal pipe dream, and mandatory-sentencing laws spread. With the 1980s war on drugs, Forer argues, jails became packed with drug-runners and other two-bit criminals. She wistfully recalls the days before guidelines, when a crotchety old judge could bark at a prosecutor who had brought in a petty thief, "There are wolves out there and you bring me squirrels and chipmunks. Case dismissed."

Part of the current impetus behind mandatory time was the fear that sentencing had grown arbitrary, that judges of different ideological stripes were imposing vastly different sentences

for the same crimes. That fear turned out to be misguided, Forer claims. In a survey of her own court's sentencing during the early '70s, she found that conservative and liberal judges consistently imposed similar sentences in similar circumstances. In fact, under mandatory guidelines, sentencing has become far more discriminatory, though now differences result far more from the color of the accused than from the political leanings of the judge. Prosecutors, who now have the power to sentence, notoriously convict a disproportionate percentage of minority defendants, and black defendants receive the death penalty at a far higher rate than whites.

The estimated re-incarceration rate for released prisoners in the United States is 41 percent, and it costs the government $35,000 a year or more to keep each prisoner behind bars. Does it make sense to keep throwing bad actors back into the prisons at such an expense? A doctoral candidate at the Wharton School of Business found that less than a quarter of the 600 felons Forer had sentenced—most to probation and payment of restitution—were rearrested for other crimes. One such case involved Willie, an illiterate 19-year-old gang member who was convicted of aggravated assault for injuring a member of a rival gang in what police called a routine rumble. Rather than send Willie to jail, as she now would be forced to do, Forer put him on strict probation for five years. She required him to live in a supervised group home, to learn to read, to find work, and to pay a $300 fine by the end of the fifth year. With the help of an unusually conscientious parole officer, Willie finished parole with a high school diploma, a job, his own apartment, and a wife (Forer performed the wedding ceremony). Perhaps most important, Willie had no new arrests.

THE GREEN CRUSADE: Rethinking the Roots of Environmentalism. *By Charles T. Rubin. Free Press. 312 pp. $22.95*

Two centuries after the nation's founding, environmentalism is probably the closest thing Americans have to a civic religion. While it is illegal to pray aloud in school and suspect to salute the flag, it is not thought unusual if schools teach a fantastic environmentalist catechism of devastation and disaster that suggests, among other things, that Planet Earth will soon be reduced to a lifeless cinder if children let the water run while brushing their teeth.

If this really is a new order in the making, Rubin's intellectual survey of its founding mothers and fathers does not offer much encouragement for the next two centuries. In the work of Rachel Carson, Paul Ehrlich, E. F. Schumacher, and the handful of other environmental popularizers he carefully scrutinizes, the Duquesne University political scientist finds internal contradictions and, worse, sloppy and often downright dishonest science employed to advance half-hidden utopian political agendas. Rubin is not a shrill critic, however, and he points out that others have erred in labeling these environmentalists Luddites. Indeed, he argues, it is their technological optimism and faith in a rationally designed world that often leads them into totalitarian temptations: Follow my plan and we will solve all human problems, they suggest.

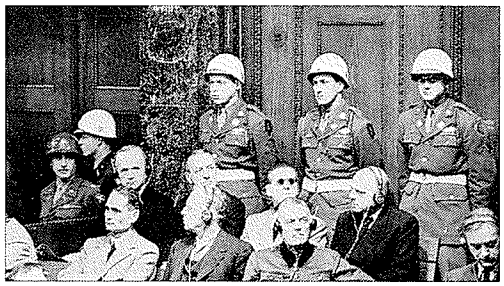
Their faith in certain visions of progress blinds both environmentalists and their critics to the complexities of human needs and desires, Rubin writes. But oddly enough he looks for a remedy in the scientific method, hoping that future environmental prophets will see its virtues. One exemplary figure is British scientist James Lovelock, who, in response to scientists' criticisms over the years, has continually revised his famous Gaia hypothesis, which suggests that the earth is a kind of self-regulating entity working toward the optimum conditions of life. Another is René Dubos, whose famous slogan "Think Globally, Act Locally" Rubin sees as a rejection of the dangerous "everythingism" of environmentalism, in which the connection of one problem to all others allows nothing but all-encompassing solutions.

It is not encouraging to read Rubin's chapter on the likely next generation of environmentalist popularizers. "Deep ecologists" such as Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess and American academics William Devall and George Sessions dismiss their predecessors as mere "reform environmentalists" and criticize them for accepting the corrupt "anthropocentric" view that

human beings enjoy a "privileged" status in nature. Aptly enough, Rubin calls this chapter "The Mind O'erthrown."

THE WAGES OF GUILT: Memories of War in Germany and Japan. *By Ian Buruma. Farrar Straus. 330 pp. $25*

To Ian Buruma as a child, the first enemies were the Germans—this despite his having been born in the Netherlands six years after World War II ended. The old animosity persisted in Holland, where adults kept it fresh for children too young to have experienced the war's reality. Despite the cultural similarities between the two nations, or because of them, the Dutch after the war drew clear borders, geographical and mental, to keep the Germans beyond the pale.



In his early forties, Buruma began to wonder how the Germans remembered the war. Having lived in and written about Asia for many years (he was the arts editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*), he also began to wonder the same about the Japanese. So in his fourth book, which blends history, sociology, political commentary, and cultural appreciation, he set out to explore the complex psychological legacy of World War II for the two defeated nations.

A clear-eyed observer alert to rote pieties and practiced evasions, Buruma is curious why so many Germans today are obsessed with the war and the Nazis, with mourning and remembrance, when 30 years ago they were accused of being unable to mourn. The turning point, Buruma found, was the broadcast of the American miniseries *Holocaust* on German television in January 1979. Although it was entertainment, not art, it struck home with the Germans as nothing had before, unleashing the introspection that continues to this day. Buruma believes German memory is now like "a massive tongue seeking out, over and over, the sore tooth." Although many of those old enough to have lived through the Nazi years would prefer to forget, the young especially want the past rehearsed, to establish a moral superiority over their parents and to "crack their guilty silence."

This German preoccupation with guilt over old horrors puzzles the Japanese, who are far more reluctant to come to grips with their wartime past. Why is the collective German memory so different from that of the Japanese? Buruma suggests various possible reasons: Japan is an Asian shame culture, Germany, a Christian guilt culture; the Japanese were responsible for much unspeakable cruelty—the atrocities the army committed against the Chinese at Nanjing in 1937 were kept hidden for years from the Japanese public—but for no Holocaust; finally, to some Japanese, the atom-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki argue powerfully that they were victims.

For Buruma, the explanation lies less in the history of the war than in the history of the postwar political arrangement imposed on the Japanese, "a generous version of the Versailles Treaty: loss of sovereignty without financial squeeze." The Japanese were encouraged to get rich, while matters of war were taken out of their hands. The same corrupt party stayed in power for more than 40 years. The settlement helped to stifle public debate and has, in his view, kept the Japanese from political maturity: "As far as the history of World War II was concerned, the debate got stuck in the late 1940s."

Buruma believes that Japan will not develop a grown-up attitude toward the past until it is allowed political responsibility over matters of war and peace. That the justice minister in the Japanese government newly come to power in the spring of 1994 could dismiss the massacre at Nanjing as a "fabrication" shows the distance still to be traveled. That he was fired three days later shows there is hope.

Arts & Letters

PADDY & MR. PUNCH: Connections in Irish and English History. *By R. F. Foster. Penguin. 382 pp. $27.50*

Elizabeth Bowen once described the uneasy relationship between the English and the Irish as "a mixture of showing-off and suspicion, nearly as bad as sex." In this new collection of essays, Foster argues that that relationship, however strained, shows that there is no such thing as a purely "Irish" history or a purely "English" history: The two islands' histories are inevitably intertwined.

Foster is a professor of history at Oxford University. More important, he is Irish and thus a product of the connection between England and Ireland. Bowen, too, was such a product, having, as Foster writes, lived ambivalently between two worlds: the Anglo-Irish gentry in an independent Ireland and literary London and Oxford. Just before she died in 1972, Bowen wrote to friends: "I hate Ireland." Foster says Ireland had grown away from her, "or away from the collusive, stylish, never-never land which she had chosen to inhabit." The Ireland of Bowen's imagination made her view England as eccentric, peculiar, exotic. The interaction between the two nations moved her art in a tradition distinctively, if uncomfortably, Irish. This is a predicament that faced other figures Foster treats, including W. B. Yeats, Anthony Trollope, and William Thackeray.

Foster's main argument is that "cultural diversity and cross-channel borrowings are implicit in Irish history." That may seem an obvious notion, but for making similar assertions in the past Foster has been called a "revisionist," a London Irishman, an Oxford Mick, a Southern Prod Historian. These labels are hurled at him by the keepers of the grail of classic Irish nationalism. As Foster explains, "One version of Irish history stood for many years as an important component in political state-building and in religiously dominated education: Any mild attempt to review it arouses a disproportionately vehement reaction from vested interests."

That version of history is based on the notion that the "real" Ireland was Catholic and Irish-speaking. This nationalist view, which began to emerge in the mid-19th century, denies the major role of Protestants in the south of the island in culture, business, and particularly in the independence movement. Equally, it ignores the fact that only a very small percentage of the population still spoke Irish. And finally, the nationalist "ideal" excludes a culturally different community of one million Irish people in the north of the island, the Ulster Protestants, who were of largely Scottish stock and Calvinist in religious bent. Similarly, early Ulster Unionist mythmakers refused, in most cases, to accept any connection with the label "Irish."

Foster's version of history challenges and, using new scholarship, corrects the record. As he says, in a country continually invaded and settled, who qualifies as "Irish" anyway? Indeed, almost half of the revolutionary movement's leaders had lived in Britain or were of returned emigrant stock. Even Erskine Childers, the director of publicity for Sinn Fein (and author of *The Riddle of the Sands*) who eventually was executed by his former comrades in the Irish Civil War (1921–1923), qualifies as "a quintessential English adventure-hero." He had been educated in England and spoke with an English accent.

There seems to be a clear correlation, Foster notes, between mixed identity and stridency and extremism. The poet Yeats, for example, was a Protestant Irishman whose youth was spent alternating between England and Ireland, and his only permanent home for decades was in London's Bloomsbury. Yeats was regarded with suspicion by the more muscular figures of the independence movement for not being sufficiently "Irish." Is this why he overemphasized his Irishness? And was his pursuit of the occult the product of his envy of Catholic "magic" that most of his fellow Irish possessed as their birthright? Foster would have us think so.

Both the nationalism in what is now the Irish Republic and the nationalism of Ulster unionism were exclusive, inward looking, tribal. Foster's book advocates a new Ireland: pluralistic, diverse, all-encompassing, where the two traditions show each other mutual respect. This does not mean Irish "unity" necessarily but an attempt to share power within Northern Ireland and, at the same time, allow links for both com-

munities with the Irish Republic and Britain. Slowly but surely a less antagonistic relationship between the two islands—including membership of both in the European Union and the loosening of church power—is inching Ireland into the 21st century. An honest and inclusive re-examination of shared history such as Foster's can only accelerate the process.

PERSPECTIVES ON MUSICAL AESTHETICS. *Ed. by John Rahn. Norton. 386 pp. $35*

What is the function of music? Should it act, as French intellectual Jacques Attali has suggested, as a mirror to the modern world and a prophecy of its future? Or should it respond to some loftier—if undefinable—aesthetic? Indeed, it may be fruitless to ascribe meaning to a medium so inherently subjective; what strikes one listener as pleasurable may send another shrieking from the room. Nonetheless, most of the essays in this volume, culled from the pages of the journal *Perspectives of New Music* and written by composers as well as theorists, grapple bravely with just such questions.

One difficulty with discussing modern musical composition is pinning down exactly what is being discussed. It was once a relatively simple matter to categorize music as baroque or classical or romantic, but such reliable signposts are much harder to come by in today's all-inclusive repertoire. As philosopher Michel Foucault points out in a dialogue with composer Pierre Boulez, "The evolution of these musics after Stravinsky or Debussy presents remarkable correlations with the evolution of painting." And just as Cézanne and Picasso pointed the way toward abstract expressionism, so too did Arnold Schönberg open the door for composers such as Philip Glass and John Cage (who in his famous *4′ 33″* [1952] added no sounds to the space in which the piece was performed—silence as music). Once the door was ajar, it became impossible to bar entry to any manner of composition, a phenomenon that composer J. K. Randall comments on humorously in his freeform essay, "Are You Serious?" Randall relates his impressions of a weekend festival of "spiritual expression through music and dance," a celebration of New Age music and its purported healing effects on the soul. Ultimately, the music leaves Randall cold: "I'm agog at the coupling of 1. find your true self & unblock your creativity & get in touch with the cosmos with 2. do exactly what I'm doing and saying as I transmit to you by rote what I got by rote from someone who got it from God by rote."

Other essays explore the narcissism of composition and performance, and of the self-conscious pressure of not repeating what has gone before. The hand-wringing exhibited by composers such as Milton Babbitt ("I try to write the music which I would most like to hear, and then am accused of self-indulgence, eliciting the ready admission that there are few whom I would rather indulge") makes one wonder how they ever manage to put notes on paper. Sometimes they do not. Babbitt has been a proponent of taped improvisation, essentially classical "jam sessions" that attempt to fill a space with sound in the hope that something worthwhile will emerge.

What emerges from these essays is the idea that the function of music is multiple and contradictory. Indeed, it's easy to feel a certain sympathy for the composer's task: to create music that brings self-satisfaction, breaks new ground, and remains accessible enough to gain entry into the symphonic repertoire (with enough attendant recording sales and airplay to keep one off the breadlines), while at the same time saying something significant about the human condition. Clearly, the impulses that drive composers are as varied as listeners' responses to their music, but it may be best not to overanalyze them. Comments such as these from David Dunn, noted for his experimentation with animal sounds, may make one long for the days when composers merely wrote the music, and left its interpretation to others: "There may be clues for our continued survival on this planet which only music can provide. . . . I'm much more interested in that than in being a composer."

THE OXFORD BOOK OF EXPLORATION. *Ed. by Robin Hansbury-Tenison. Oxford Univ. 530 pp. $30*

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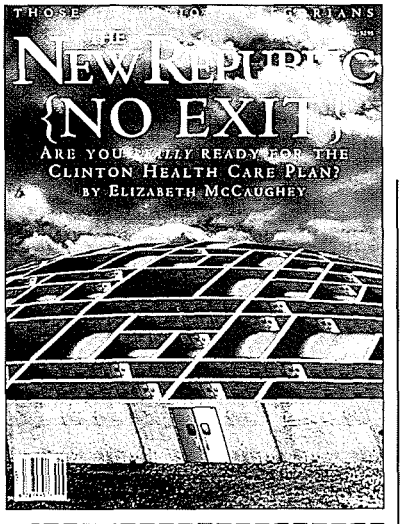

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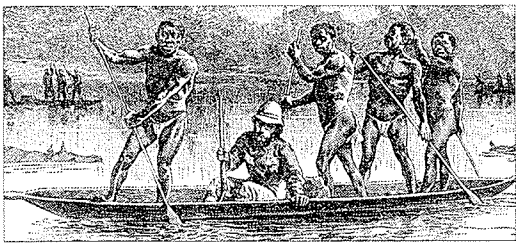
ogy is proof that you cannot destroy the allure of good travel writing, not even by the kind of overexposure the genre has received in recent years. Hansbury-Tenison's collection sticks to the subgenre of travel writing with the best dramatic possibilities: first-person period accounts of explorers, all of whom struggled to visit far-



flung and unreported places or underwent astonishing ordeals, and often both. Hansbury-Tenison, himself a gold-medalist explorer with the Royal Geographic Society, suggests in his introduction that "explorers are quite different from travelers," since their curiosity impels them not toward other cultures per se but toward extremes of novelty, danger, and privation. He also acknowledges that his explorers' sense of accomplishment in reaching exotic places was heightened, far too often, by complete obliviousness to the people who actually inhabited them: "Time and again the European explorer, as he 'discovers' some new land, makes a passing reference to his native guide."

None of this interferes, fortunately, with the selector's editorial gusto; nor with the reader's ability to appreciate these hundreds of accounts for their better qualities. They're mostly of easy browsing length and are arranged by region and chronology, so that you can trudge through Asia repeatedly from Marco Polo's day to Sir Edmund Hillary's (and discover few changes apart from mode of locomotion). There are a fair number of self-caricaturing British imperialist types, from the British Jesuit William Gifford Palgrave in 1862 fulminating against camels—"from first to last an undomesticated and savage animal, rendered serviceable by stupidity alone"—to Lady Florence von Sass Baker, wife of an explorer, writing home to her stepdaughter from Africa in 1871 for more handkerchiefs: "The whole country is in a state of the wildest anarchy. . . . We shall have to support some tribes and subdue others before any hope [of] order can be entertained."

But the moxie and ardor of these explorers comes through, too, along with an old virtue that doesn't always get its due these days, sheer physical bravery. This is especially true of the classic South Pole accounts that Hansbury-Tenison wisely places at the end. Though endlessly anthologized, this sequence remains thrilling: Roald Amundsen reaching the Pole in 1912, Robert Falcon Scott devastated to arrive a month later and learn he's been beaten, the agonies of Scott and his men on the attempted return march ("no idea there could be temperatures like this"), their gruesome deaths, and the horror of the next team when its members find Scott's diary. Scott was especially concerned that posterity know of the grit with which one companion handled his imminent death from frostbite and gangrene: Lifting the flap of the tent in a raging blizzard, he remarked, "I am going outside the tent and may be some time."

Science & Technology

HIGHER SUPERSTITION: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science. *By Paul Gross and Norman Levitt. Johns Hopkins. 328 pp. $25.95*

It's hard to imagine deconstructionists, Afrocentrists, and radical feminists and environmentalists taking any cues from Christian fundamentalists. Yet the latest target in the academic Left's war against a white, male, Western worldview is science. So say Gross, a former director of the Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory, and Levitt, a professor of mathematics at Rutgers University. And while creationists merely tried to replace evolutionary biology with Genesis, a growing element within the academic Left is seeking to disavow science completely, labeling it another tool of cultural oppression.

For most of this century, Gross and Levitt argue, scientists were natural allies of progressive thinkers, and often at the forefront of movements for racial and sexual equality or global ecological responsibility. But since postmodernism began to infect the academy in the 1960s, the search for objective truth has become the worst

form of heresy. Vigilant feminists deconstruct algebra problems to uncover ostensibly sexist stereotypes ("Why is it *Bob* and *Fred* in the powerboat race?") and expose the semiotic tyranny of DNA, while Afrocentrists claim their ancestors were the first to approximate the value of pi.

The complaint Gross and Levitt make about this critique of science is less philosophical than factual: these humanities professors don't know the first thing about science. "Buoyed by a 'stance' on science, they feel justified in bypassing the grubby necessities of actual scientific knowledge," the two authors argue. The philosopher Steven Best, for example, makes the case for "postmodern science" by hailing chaos theory over Newton's linear equations. But oops! Newton's equations are nonlinear.

Feminists are among the main culprits, as they search for an alternative "feminist science" to counter centuries of male-driven research. Gross and Levitt concede that the profession has traditionally excluded women, but they deny that the foundations of science are distorted by patriarchal assumptions. There is only good and bad science, they argue, not male and female science. The feminists' mistake, they say, is to confuse language that describes results with the results themselves. But is the attack on metaphor mongering really the feminists' only complaint? Take the authors' main example: A group of feminists has decried a textbook description that depicts "martial gang rape" of an egg by the sperm. The feminists' complaint certainly goes overboard, but as Gross and Levitt themselves point out, a vast science has emerged in the past 30 years, pioneered by women, proving that the egg is much less passive than was previously thought. Contributions by women have challenged basic assumptions.

Gross and Levitt reserve their harshest criticism for Afrocentric theorists, who are guilty of "flagrant falsification of science in the service of Afrocentric chauvinism." In the collection *Blacks in Science*, Khalil Messiha argues that a small wooden figure of a bird made in Egypt is an example of "African experimental aeronautics." The evidence? If you build a copy with lighter balsa wood and add a vertical stabilizer, you get a so-so version of a toy glider. This kind of analysis is destructive, Gross and Levitt say, because it assumes "black children can be persuaded to take an interest in science only if they are fed an educational diet of fairy tales."

While Gross and Levitt succeed in making light of their opponents, one is left wondering, as their own last chapter asks, "Does It Matter?" As they themselves admit, "scientists generally ignore these critiques," so they are unlikely to affect the field. And with the exception of feminists, the other radicals they describe are at the periphery of the academic Left. If the issue at stake is the ability of the larger culture to interact with science, then scientists are partly to blame. Research contracts have professionalized and isolated many scientists into lab ghettos, where they have little contact with the general culture. In the end, it all seems like a lot of academic bickering that could be mitigated by a steady dose of mandatory English and biology courses.

POETRY

KATHERINE HOSKINS

Selected and Introduced by Anthony Hecht

If I were still teaching graduate students in modern English and American poetry and had assigned to me an especially gifted student, widely conversant with the whole rich canon from, say, Chaucer right up to the last minute, a student who was enthusiastic, willing to work, imaginative, painstaking, and keenly sensitive to poetic nuance, I think I could do him or her no greater favor than to suggest a careful poem-by-poem commentary on the poems of Katherine Hoskins. It would doubtless prove a demanding task, but the rewards would be incalculable if it were to eventuate in a publishable book of solid critical appreciation, for it might restore her to the notice she has deserved from the first, and was hers only in the view of the best of her fellow poets. Think, if you can, of another modern poet who won the enthusiastic praise of the likes of Robert Lowell, Randall Jarrell, William Meredith, James Dickey, and Theodore Roethke, and is, in spite of this, quite simply unknown and out of print. It is a fate feared by Keats himself, to whom Hoskins bears certain touching and quirky resemblances.

To be sure, she did not court public notice. The books of her work that I own, three in number, are at pains to reveal nothing whatever about her except that she lived in Weston, Massachusetts. Nary a word about her family, nor her education, though it might be inferred that if she were an autodidact (as some very good poets have been) she did a first-rate job. I was able, however, to glean some facts from her publisher. Katherine DeMontalont Hoskins was born May 25, 1909, at Indian Head, Maryland, where her father was inspector at the naval proving ground, and was later to retire as rear admiral. Although she did not attend school until the age of 11, she graduated from the Smith College Honors Program in its Class of 1931. Five years later, she married Albert Hoskins, an officer of the Boston Municipal Court. They made their home in Weston, and had one child, a daughter. Hoskins was awarded the Brandeis University Creative Arts Poetry Grant in 1957 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1958. She died a widow, after a stoic battle with esophageal carcinoma, in 1988.

Reading through her poems, one is aware of literary allusions, influences, and sympathies that cover an enormous range and include a great deal of 16th- and 17th-century English poetry, as well as Chekhov, Faulkner, Marianne Moore, Dickinson, the very best and earliest children's literature, folklore, and fairy tales, Renaissance painting and sculpture, geography and cartography, American and European history, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and a keen love of the qualities and properties of the natural world, linked, often enough, to a thoughtful capacity for allegory and moral reflection.

Her poems, moreover, make no glib concessions to lazy readers. Her syn-

tax is gnarled (though far from uncomely); her stanzaic forms as complex, at times, as those of the most intricate metaphysical poems, exhibiting something like the same density and compression. They also display a ventriloquist's capacity to shift within the body of a poem from the adopted diction, or noble accents, of the great Renaissance poets to local and regional dialect. She is a woman of many voices, all of them superbly tuned to achieve her wiliest effects.

Take, for example, the opening of a poem that, by the time its mere three stanzas close, has shown us the horrifying tableau of a woman (clearly a black woman) cradling in her arms a man who has been beaten to death, and whose head now is only " 'a sack of little bones.' " The poem is called "After the Late Lynching." (The asterisks, my own, are explained below.)

No,
It goes not liquidly for any of us.*
Yseult
's as hard as Troilus.
Heloise is far away and
Difficult.
Nor's Death felicitous.*
Not princes' proud defiant trumpets,
Not good men's easyness
With Death is not ours yet*

This elaborate stanza is faithfully repeated (though with approximate rhymes later on) throughout. Its tone is seemingly wry and disenchanted. It speaks of the old juxtaposition of Love and Death, and it does so by deliberate literary allusion. Yseult is given her medieval (not her Wagnerian) name to insist upon the antiquity of the conflict in which she played a part. Troilus and Heloise are both "far away and/ Difficult." It all seems artificial, legendary, highly literary in the most removed sense, and the poet knows exactly what she's doing.

But in addition to those famous names, there are also allusions in the lines I've starred with asterisks. The first is to a poem ("Philomela") by John Crowe Ransom, which I had occasion to comment on recently in these pages [*WQ*, Spring '94]. The allusion is important here. Philomela, too, was a victim of love and rape; she too was an ancient figure. In Ransom's poem we, in our modern era, are hopelessly severed from the grandeurs of music and of tragedy that her story and her song as a nightingale represent. There has been for Ransom, as for Hoskins, a crude and degenerate falling away from an earlier loveliness, though with no diminution of the world's horror.

The second starred line is meant to recall the dying words of Hamlet, who says to Horatio, "If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,/ Absent thee from felicity a while,/ And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,/ To tell my story." There is brilliant irony at work here. For Hamlet, death may seem felicity because life is repellent; for Hoskins, the death she is about to describe is almost too hideous to believe.

Finally, the third starred phrase concerns the death of good men as conceived by John Donne in a poem called "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."

The very title suggests its relevance to Hoskins's purpose. And her spelling of "easyness" is meant, once again, to confer the burnish of antiquity. Donne opens his poem thus:

> As virtuous men pass mildly away,
> And whisper to their souls, to go,
> Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
> The breath goes now, and some say, no. . . .

The serene tranquility Donne allows to those who have a clean and untroubled conscience at the hour of death is, again, opposed by Hoskins to what is found in the world we moderns inhabit. The richness and ramifications of all her allusions serve as substructure and solid foundation for the modern horror she is ruthlessly planning to expose.

Readers properly equipped to get the most of Katherine Hoskins's poems will come upon her splendid "To Apollo Musagetes" (Apollo as leader of the Muses) and will find themselves compelled to think of Yeats's "The Circus Animals' Desertion," Coleridge's "Work Without Hope," Robert Lowell's "Epilogue" to his last book, and, finally, of Keats's self-composed epitaph: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

A Merry Meeting

Allemagna? She offers the store with the candy.
He reaches and, Ah! *Allemagna* has recognized.
And how deeply, magnificently blue the sky
Is over Milano, Via Manzoni.

And they are hand in hand, laughing like lovers.
Cinema handsome, they laugh, peering through louvers
At those sleek seals, the Milanese,
Balancing circus-colored cakes and candies.

Leaves pattern plaster—Via Marco di Marchi.
Then he, with affectionate ado,
Goes back to his Piétà, she to the zoo.
Great Milano—villaged by her stranieri.

He takes a sweet and clapboards close around
Them once again—they somewhat breath-bound
Still from when they wandered Milano together
For thirty seconds, and were lovers.

After the Late Lynching

No,
It goes not liquidly for any of us.
Yseult
's as hard as Troilus.
Heloise is far away and
Difficult.
Nor's Death felicitous.
Not princes' proud defiant trumpets,
Not good men's easyness
With Death is not ours yet

Whose lives construe so little of what is brave.
Grace notes
Should not be asked of slaves.
Slaves' is, lunk-dumb and mutinous,
At whipping posts
To crouch and whine till they've
Spelled out the primitive construction—
So plain, so difficult—
Of a death and a woman.

Nor not from whitest light of foreign poems
Hope help;
But from her native woe
Who took that black head in her hands
And felt,
"A sack of little bones";
Whose arms for the last time round him knew,
"All down one side no ribs
But broken things that moved.".

For Tazio

The royal quality
Of this child's beauty
Gives me who wait on him
Such inordinate pleasure
As, from Rome to Delft,
Those painters must have felt
Who drew so close to nature
The nature of cherubim

At Giuffre's "Harbor View"

Called from sole and scrod,
Chef picks up the phone;
Catches words like God's
From it and hurls it down.

My wife?!
Sprung from wrung bowels, the cry
Is quick disguised
By young and loyal waiters who
Toss pots and clatter pans;
Then, still in the blood-spattered apron
Of his trade, support him to a landing
Off the stairs
And seat him.
Grieve here, they say, but don't disturb
The diners who have reached liqueurs,
That profitable course.
Grieve, grieve at your ease, old man,
But do not howl.
He squats on the chair
And does not howl,
Just stares.
The while, on bloody apron gray as wash,
On face and hair of soggy ash,
On an old beat-up clothes-horse,
The young waiters wait—
Brown-skinned, black-chevelured, sinewed, muscled—
Two to a side.
And now another mounts the stair.
Cup-bearer, brandy in his hand,
His knee is bent
To climb, to make a present.
And the light shifts.
You'd say someone had varnished it.
You'd say an antiquarian Masaccio,
Stumbling upon an ancient garden statue,
Some remnant of the Greeks
Weathered to low relief,
(Silenus or a garden variety of Grief)
Had set it on its pedestal and set
His bronze-eyed cinque-cento boys round it.
Bronze-muscled and bronze-eyed,
Adept with knife and rod,
These young Guineas recognize a god,
Still.

Courage, old stone, they murmur,
(who once cold-chisel sleeked like us
To features will be reived from us,
Too)
Don't howl,
(Who are our own).
But let us go now to fetch liqueurs.
Back at their jobs,
Suave gestures,
Sorrow-spattered eyes
Abstracted to a past they can't recall,
Speak of a statue fallen
In a neglected garden,
Of abandoned sepultures.

For the Inheritors

Compassion bends us to our young
Who, in a slant-eyed glance, betray
Their old old selves.
To them we yearn, we cry—
Pushing the hair back from their solemn eyes—
No, no. Be children still.
In spite of us, your world and you are young.
Go, go. Go play.

Play? They answer
As wanting to please us, only our words
Slip by them like the cries of strange birds
Long long ago and in another world
And even there scarce heard.
Play, dear Elders? they repeat their duty.

At ease in summer chairs,
We watch the westing sun pick out
A stark oak limb
From frolic foliage,
Its massive corrugations rosy-lit.
Moved by that sudden bareness note
The strength, part true part fabulous, of oak.

In Praise

Silk without weight; liquid without wet;
Caressive yet impalpable.
Trees waving stir what sun has warmed.

We cannot use it as the birds do—
Three swifts quartering the evening sky,
The glider hawk that, quiet, quiets all.

At home though. Like silent fish
Ten fathom down on ocean's pasturage,
We move around each other separately;

Encased, enthralled and gentled by
Our kindest element, the summer air.

Guilt

Patient and small as life, our minor betrayals
Await us in the ante-room to Hell;
Mild creditors of fear and snobbery,
And lazy cruelty.

At ten, how eloquent we were to teach
That boy shame for country shoes and speech.
His blue eyes, brilliant with astonished tears,
Illuminate the years.

An old black nurse took ferry, trolley, bus
To call on his beautiful child, now all grown-up;
Grown-up too vain to doff her busyness
Before his tiredness.

And what of those lonely women who found in Death,
Not us, the punctual friend? To right and left,
The benches fill with our gentle victims; not
Insistent, not forgot.

To Apollo Musagetes

Farewell, farewell
Who was the best of me.
My mind's turned Quakerish
And silent sits
Possessed by grey vacuity.
Bunched like silly swallows on a line,
Presaging rain,
Words preen, shove, twist and twit
But will not ever burst up into the wild air again,
Nor jet-dive down that narrow, nested chimney-flue of mine.
Jet-power and precision-sight are gone,
Long gone.
Farewell.
Say I strung gauds to an almost poem;
Rhymes, rhythms, images contrived;
In fact, a còmpleat mechanism nifti-
ly devised
And that pleased the critics;
Remembering thee, I could no less
Than hate that seeming
And mourn again the warm, the fleshed
And quiet breathing
That, with thy help, I'd sometimes come by.
Farewell.
Say I confessed my every grievous lack
Of body, spirit, mind and corrected all—
Shored with six virtues each sagged fault—
No effort brought, nor none will get thee back.
Thou cam'st in deed the sun
To pour me down and gild with courage, brightness, gay
persuasions.
And goest too
Like him, ghost-
ing me to farthermost Antipodes,
Native
To live
There with some pale, timid, forlorn race
Of twilit savages
That's never seen thy face.
Farewell.
Who, having seen, can't keep thee
Lose heart even to weep thee.
Farewell, farewell.
