

female, and the gender gap in enrollment is projected to grow.

“Far from being shy and demoralized, today’s girls outshine boys,” Sommers says. “They get better grades. They have higher educational aspirations. They follow more rigorous academic programs and participate in advanced-placement classes at higher rates. . . . Girls, allegedly timorous and lacking in confidence, now outnumber boys in student government, in honor societies, on school newspapers, and in debating clubs. Only in sports are boys ahead. . . . Girls read more books. They outperform boys on tests for artistic and musical ability. More girls than boys study abroad. More join the Peace Corps.” Meanwhile, boys have the dubious edge in school suspensions, being held back, and dropping out. They are more likely to be diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. “More boys than girls are involved in crime, alcohol, and drugs.”

Boys score better on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and other standardized tests, Sommers acknowledges—but that’s

because of another male disadvantage. Boys from families with lower incomes or limited formal education—characteristics associated with below-average scores—are less likely than comparable girls to take the SAT. They don’t drag down male SAT averages—and they don’t go to college.

“Growing evidence that the scales are tipped not against girls but against boys is beginning to inspire a quiet revisionism,” observes Sommers. Even Gilligan—though “oblivious of all the factual evidence that paternal separation causes aberrant behavior in boys”—lately has given some attention to their problems, calling for basic changes in child rearing to get boys in touch with their inner nurturer. A far better solution, says Sommers, would be “the traditional approach” to civilizing young males: “through character education: Develop the young man’s sense of honor. Help him become a considerate, conscientious human being. Turn him into a gentleman. This approach respects boys’ masculine nature; it is time-tested, and it works.”

## *What’s in a Face?*

“The Mythology of the Face-Lift” by Wendy Doniger, in *Social Research* (Spring 2000), New School Univ., 65 Fifth Ave., Rm. 354, New York, N.Y. 10003.

Though face-lifts and other kinds of cosmetic surgery are a distinctly modern phenomenon, myths both ancient and modern have something to say about it. They tell of the folly of the desire for a new face—and they are quite right, contends Doniger, a professor of history of religions at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

The folly is shown, for instance, in various versions of an Inuit tale: A jealous mother who desires her son-in-law kills her daughter and takes her face, putting it on over her own. The husband is fooled—but not for long. He soon notices the discrepancy between the beautiful young visage and the old woman’s skinny legs or shrunken body. Or, in a version told by Annie Dillard in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1975), the young man, wet from hunting, lies with the woman, and “the skin mask shrinks and slides, uncovering the shriveled face of the old mother, and the boy flees in horror, forever.”

The face-lift myths, like contemporary accounts of cosmetic surgery, “frequently express the desire to have not just any face but one’s own face as it once was in the past—to masquerade as one’s younger self, as it were,” Doniger says. But gaining the countenance of this younger self changes one into someone else, a person “different from who you really are now: a person with a soul and a face that are formed and scarred by experience.”

Myths warn of other dangers, Doniger notes. “Incest dogs the face-lift because of the confusion of generations, mothers looking just like their daughters, as they so proudly boast on returning from their surgeries and spas. Even when this doubling back does not result in actual incest, it arrests our abilities to move forward in time [to] become our parents and eventually accept our own deaths.”

In the film *Dave* (1993), a wife realizes that the man impersonating her husband has

none of the “scars” of their life together. “The scars that a face-lift removes,” says Doniger, “are the body’s memory, in a form visible to others, of what the mind may have forgotten.

Our scars may be the strongest signs of who we really are: Perhaps, at the final reckoning, the whole body will disappear, and only our scar tissue will be there to testify for us.”

## *Let Sprawl Sprawl*

“How Cities Green the Planet” by Peter Huber and Mark P. Mills, in *City Journal* (Winter 2000), Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Follow Portland’s lead and ring America’s cities with “urban growth boundaries” and greenbelts? That’s what some foes of “sprawl” urge. But it’s a bad idea that would result in “less wilderness, not more,” assert Huber and Mills, senior fellows at the Manhattan Institute and the Competitive Enterprise Institute, respectively.

Yes, suburbs consume more land than cities do—but rural life eats up even more. City and suburbs should be regarded “as a single economic entity, growing organically together,” in their view. “The suburbs wouldn’t exist but for the city and its jobs and money.” And the city could not survive without its suburbs as a refuge from its “worst excesses and pathologies.” Stop the growth of suburbs, Huber and Mills argue, and you will send the refugees further out into the countryside, just as digital prophets are predicting. Cyberpundit Nicholas Negroponte, for example, foresees the digital world “redistribut[ing] jobs and wealth,” with the result being a flow of people “out of, not into, cities.”

One of the virtues of sprawl, Huber and Mills argue, is that it *saves* land. “Cities grow

not because they sprawl out from the center, but because they draw people in from the [rural] periphery . . . far beyond the suburbs.”

Over the last three decades, the authors calculate, about 95 million acres of farmland farther from the city “returned to wilderness or began . . . doing so.” Some 25 million acres, meanwhile, have been consumed by development—perhaps half of it “farmland that gave way to suburbs.”

Today, cities, suburbs, and local roads cover about 27 million acres, and highways a like expanse. The total of 54 million acres—though more than twice the area occupied in 1920—is less than three percent of the two billion acres in the lower 48 states. (Antisprawl activists often also count as “developed land” some 90 million acres of farmsteads, field windbreaks, barren land, and marshland, say Huber and Mills.)

Rural life consumes far more land than suburbia, Huber and Mills argue, and if anti-sprawl activists ultimately succeed, a wave of Information Age emigrants on new 10-acre farmettes will show us just how much more.

## PRESS & MEDIA

### *Eyes on the Prize*

“Journalism’s Prize Culture” by Alicia Shepard, in *American Journalism Review* (Apr. 2000), Univ. of Maryland, 1117 Journalism Bldg., College Park, Md. 20742-7111.

“We are the most self-congratulatory industry this side of Hollywood,” says Peter Leo, a (prize-winning) columnist for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. He’s talking about the news biz and its well-known fondness for showering itself in awards. In the frenzy for journalistic Oscars, are readers getting shortchanged? asks Shepard, a (prize-winning) senior writer for the *American Journalism Review*.

Some 230 newspapers and 14 syndicates

and chains submitted 1,516 entries (and \$75,800 in handling fees) for this year’s Pulitzer Prizes. There also were 650 entries for the TV and radio equivalent (the Alfred I. duPont awards), and 1,320 print entries and 60 online ones for the American Society of Magazine Editors’ National Magazine Awards. And those are just the most sought-after laurels. There are at least 200 national contests, and scores of state and local ones.