

constant supply of best sellers” to satisfy Borders and Barnes & Noble, the dominant bookstore chains, “whose high operating costs demand high rates of turnover” of titles. Most worthwhile books “are not meant to be best sellers,” Epstein points out, and though more such worthy books may be published today than ever before, they stay in print only briefly. Publishers once “cultivated their backlists as their major asset, choosing titles for their permanent value as much as for their immediate appeal.” Bestsellers were “lucky accidents.”

The million-copy sales of a handful of “name-brand” authors, such as John Grisham, have fostered the illusion that book publishing is “a predictable, mass market business,” Epstein says. Between 1986 and 1996, the share of all books sold represented by the 30 top bestsellers nearly doubled. But of the 100 bestsellers in roughly the same period, 63 were turned out by only six authors. This concentration was “a mixed blessing to publishers,” he observes, since profits are often gobbled up in the effort to keep “name-brand” writers.

To reach their mass readers, such authors real-

ly need only routine publishing services—printing, advertising, and distribution—which, in the likely event that publishers sooner or later cease to exist, Epstein speculates, could easily be provided by independent contractors.

With the emerging digital technologies, he says, writers and readers “will no longer need publishers or traditional booksellers to bring them together.” Recently, a Stephen King short story sold exclusively online resulted in 400,000 requests to download it in just the first day. But readers will still need help separating the literary wheat from the chaff, Epstein believes, so “distinguished websites, like good bookstores,” are likely to emerge. “On the infinitely expandable shelves of the World Wide Web, there will be room for an infinite variety of books.” None will ever have to go out of print.

Though distribution of books will radically change, “the essential work of editing and publicity” will remain, says Epstein. And book publishing may become again what it once was: “a cottage industry of diverse, creative, autonomous units.”

The Sins of Hawthorne’s Fathers

“Hawthorne’s Puritans: From Fact to Fiction” by Deborah L. Madsen, in *Journal of American Studies* (Dec. 1999), Cambridge Univ. Press, 40 W. 20th St., N.Y. 10011-4211.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–64) was merciless in his fictional portrayals of merciless Puritans, those upholders of dour orthodoxy, hot in pursuit of witches and heretics. But Madsen, an English professor at South Bank University, London, argues that Hawthorne did the Puritans, and one colonial family in particular, an injustice.

Hawthorne’s own 17th-century ancestors, as he frankly admitted, had been among the real-life Puritan zealots. One was a long-time magistrate of Salem, William Hathorne. (Nathaniel added the *w* to his surname when he began to write.) William Hathorne, says Madsen, was “a notorious persecutor of Quakers,” operating “a system of spies or informers who reported to him individuals who neglected their church and civil duties.” Hathorne’s son John was the “‘hanging judge’” of the Salem witchcraft trials in 1692.

After *The House of the Seven Gables* appeared in 1851, telling of the cursed Pyncheon family, Hawthorne acknowl-

edged—in response to complaints from members of a Pyncheon family (who spelled their name without the *e*)—that the Pyncheon name had been inspired by the name of their ancestor, Judge William Pyncheon (1590–1661), one of the 26 patentees of the Massachusetts Bay Company and the founder of Springfield, Massachusetts.

How odd then, suggests Madsen, that novelist Hawthorne paid no heed to the fact that Judge Pyncheon was cut from very different cloth than his own ancestors—“something of a thorn in the side of colonial authorities.” When he presided over an early witchcraft case in Springfield, the judge seems to have “simply performed his duty,” she says. In 1650, he was found guilty of heresy in connection with a book he had written about Christ and redemption, and arranged to return with his wife to England.

If Hawthorne knew about the real colonial Pynchons and their like, why did he ignore the varieties of Puritanism and portray it instead as a monolith (with heretics being only

exceptional individuals)? Because, Madsen says, he was able in that way “to excuse the sins

of his fathers by showing that they were incapable of acting otherwise.”

OTHER NATIONS

Europe’s Real ‘Haider’ Problem

A Survey of Recent Articles

Has Adolf Hitler returned in the guise of a smooth-talking Austrian politician with the telegenic looks of an aging rock star? So it might seem from the European Union’s swift imposition of diplomatic sanctions against Austria for allowing Jörg Haider’s Freedom Party into its coalition government. Yet a closer look suggests that the real problem facing Europe today is not a revival of Nazism. Rather, says British historian Mark Mazower, of the University of Sussex, writing in *Civilization* (Apr.–May 2000), it is “the realities of democracy triumphant.”

By winning 27 percent of the vote in last October’s parliamentary elections, Haider’s right-wing populist party edged the conservative People’s Party to finish in second place behind the Social Democrats. The People’s Party conservatives then shattered their long-ruling “Grand Coalition” with the Social Democrats and formed a new government with Haider’s party, which has a long history of xenophobia and sympathy for Nazism. Wolfgang Schüssel, the chairman of the People’s Party, became chancellor. The diplomatic sanctions by the 14 other European Union (EU) members soon followed.

But foreign journalists and other close observers do not see in Haider’s rise a resurgence of “the dark side of the Austrian soul,” notes Rainer Bauböck, a political scientist at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, writing in *Dissent* (Spring 2000). The lesson of Kurt Waldheim’s presidency (1986–92), when his unsavory wartime past resulted in some diplomatic isolation for Austria, was not lost, Bauböck points out, on the conservatives and Social Democrats, who had “publicly accepted Austria’s responsibility for its large share in Nazi atrocities.” Nearly three-fourths of Austrian voters did *not* vote for Haider’s party last October. His electoral support, Bauböck says, represented “a diffuse protest vote rather than [an] endorsement for right-wing extremism.”

Other analysts agree. Robert S. Wistrich, who teaches modern Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, writes in *Commentary* (Apr. 2000) that Haider has succeeded by presenting himself as a reformist working for the “little man” and against the status quo created by the conservatives and Social Democrats.

In most respects, that status quo does not seem bad at all. Unemployment is low, inflation is minuscule, exports are high, labor is at peace, tourism is booming, and crime rates are down and falling. But immigrants and refugees—many from central and southeastern Europe—constitute more than 10 percent of the population and have made many Austrians uneasy. Haider’s xenophobic rhetoric, observes Bauböck, often trailed behind the actual immigration policies of the ruling coalition parties, which “kept insisting, contrary to all evidence, that Austria was not a country of immigration [and] radically cut back family reunification.”

Exit polls showed that many Freedom Party votes last October were cast “more in protest against the Grand Coalition’s abuse of its monopoly position . . . than out of agreement with Haider’s views,” notes Richard Rose, director of the University of Strathclyde’s Center for the Study of Public Policy, in Glasgow.

“Party patronage was said to reach down as far as the public lavatories, where the attendant on one side was *rot* [red] (Socialist) and the other *schwarz* [black] (a supporter of the People’s Party),” Rose writes in the *Journal of Democracy* (Apr. 2000). Dissatisfied voters had little choice but to turn to protest parties. Haider’s party attracted not only blue-collar workers but also entrepreneurs and yuppies.

Though Austria has a higher proportion of immigrants in its population than almost any other EU country, public opinion surveys, Rose says, “show that Austrians tend to be *more*