

my relationship.’” On *She Australia*: “Cameron Diaz on her \$38 boob job and why Mariah Carey drives her crazy.” No less “intellectually vacuous” than the old magazines, the new ones have added “baseness [and] decadence,” Colebatch writes in the Australian journal *Quadrant* (Sept. 1999).

For the most part, argues Alexandra Starr, an editor of the *Washington Monthly* (Oct. 1999), women’s magazines today “are pushing the same message they were half a century ago: Women’s existence revolves around landing the right guy. Except these days, the seduction isn’t accomplished through baking the perfect cake, sculpting your nails, or making sure your hemline isn’t crooked.” It’s accomplished instead through sex, sex, sex. “In 1961 *Redbook* ran an article cautioning young women that premarital hanky-panky could mean giving up any chance of walking down the aisle; today the magazine advises readers on how to drive men wild.”

That is what readers want, according to Bonnie Fuller, who succeeded long-time editor Helen Gurley Brown at *Cosmopolitan* (circulation 2.3 million) in 1997 and then long-time editor Ruth Whitney at *Glamour* (circulation 2.1 million) the following year. “What Fuller gave them at *Cosmo*,” writes Katherine Rosman, a staff writer for *Brill’s Content* (Nov. 1998),

“was a redoubled emphasis on sex. Even Brown, who in 32 years at the magazine was endlessly castigated by feminists and conservatives alike for her devotion to sex-related articles, says *Cosmo* is now ‘much sexier than I would have gone.’”

“Why,” asks Starr, “do women lap this stuff up?” Her answer: “Well, ladies’ economic fortunes may no longer turn on landing the right guy, but . . . women want to be perceived as attractive.” So do today’s men.

In fact, women’s magazines and men’s magazines such as *Maxim* (circulation 1.3 million) and *Gear* are becoming increasingly indistinguishable in their outlooks, contends *National Journal* (Oct. 2, 1999) correspondent William Powers. “A wave of polymorphously perverse, gender-bending madness has swept across the American newsstand. . . . Women are trading tips on how to improve their abs and get hot men into the sack. Men are studying clothing layouts and fantasizing about life as a top fashion model.” Though most of the magazines “seem to be written for the ‘slow’ reading group of an average fourth-grade class,” he says, they “offer evidence that’s more reliable than any opinion poll or labor-market statistic of the ways that feminism has changed the culture—probably permanently.”

The Second Casualty in Gotham

“Diallo Truth, Diallo Falsehood” by Heather Mac Donald, in *City Journal* (Summer 1999),
Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

A tragic police killing last February had New York City in an uproar for months. But the crisis was a phony one—“manufactured” by the press, particularly the *New York Times*, contends Mac Donald, a contributing editor of *City Journal*.

The slaying was indeed “horrific,” she notes. Four undercover police officers in the elite Street Crime Unit, looking for an armed rapist in the Bronx, mistakenly shot a street peddler named Amadou Diallo 41 times—and he turned out to be unarmed. From this incident, as well as the protests and government investigations that followed, the *Times*, Mac Donald asserts, “created a wholly misleading portrait of a city under siege—not by criminals, but by the police. In so doing, it

exacerbated the police-minority tensions it purported merely to describe.” And it cast doubt on the methods the city has used in recent years under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to bring about a drastic reduction in crime.

The *Times* coverage—which averaged 3.5 articles a day over the first two months—rested on “the unquestioned assumption . . . that the Diallo shooting was a glaring example of pervasive police misconduct,” Mac Donald writes. Yet nothing that has come to light “suggests that the shooting was anything but a tragic mistake.” The use of deadly force by the New York police was far less common in 1998 (403,659 arrests, 19 killed) than it was in 1993 (266,313 arrests, 23 killed).

Since shooting peaceful, unarmed citizens

was obviously not typical police behavior, Mac Donald says, “the *Times* zeroed in on a different angle. The Street Crime Unit, and the NYPD generally, it claimed, were using the stop-and-frisk technique to harass minorities. The logic seemed to be that the same racist mentality that leads to unwarranted stop-and-frisks led the four officers to shoot Diallo.”

The newspaper seemed to regard *any* mistaken police frisks of people thought to be carrying concealed handguns as too many, she says. The Street Crime Unit reported making 45,000 frisks during 1997–98 and 9,500 arrests, of which 2,500 were for illegal guns. That ratio of one gun for every 18 frisks is “well within tolerance,” Columbia University law professor Richard Uviller told Mac Donald. “I don’t know of any other way to fight the war on handguns—the number-one crime problem in the U.S. today.”

The *Times* coverage gave little sense of the danger posed by illegal guns, Mac Donald contends, or of the dramatic reduction in homicides in New York in recent years (from a peak of 2,200 in 1990 to 633 in 1998). Nor did the newspaper pay much attention to community leaders such as one who told her: “If the Street Crime Unit pats me down because I match a description, and the next guy they pat down has a gun, God bless them.” According to a recent U.S. Justice Department study, 77 percent of black New Yorkers approve of the police. But thanks in part to the “anti-police” press coverage, the other 23 percent have grown angrier, Mac Donald says, and so Street Crime Unit officers “have pulled back,” making fewer arrests. No surprise then, perhaps, that in the months after the Diallo killing, murders in the city were up 10 percent.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

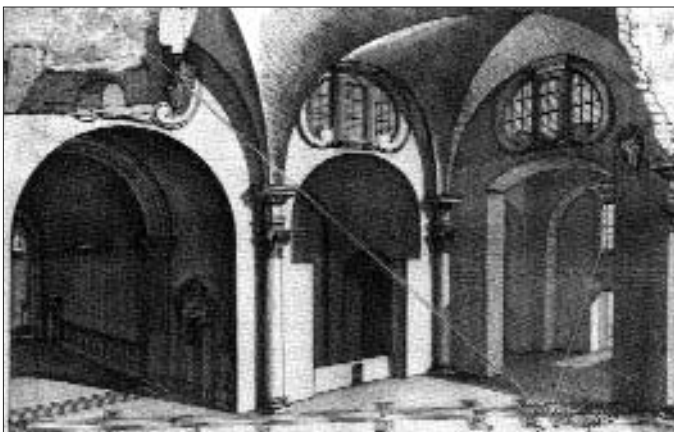
Light in the Cathedrals

“The Sun in the Church” by J. L. Heilbron, in *The Sciences* (Sept.–Oct. 1999), New York Academy of Sciences, Two E. 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

After condemning Galileo in 1633 for adhering to the heretical notion that the Earth moved about the sun, the Roman Catholic Church, many historians believe, made Copernican astronomy a forbidden topic among faithful Catholics for the next two centuries. “But nothing could be further from the truth,” asserts Heilbron, a historian at the University of California, Berkeley, and a senior research fellow at the University of Oxford.

“Beginning with the recovery of ancient learning in the 12th century and continuing through the Copernican upheavals and on even into the Enlightenment,” he writes, “the Roman Catholic Church gave more financial and social support to the study of astronomy—Copernican and otherwise—than did

any other institution.” The reason for these centuries of lavish backing was the church’s pressing need to establish well in advance when Easter (which was to be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox) would fall in a particular year—no easy task, given the state of astronomical knowledge of the time.



A sun ray (right) enters the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Rome in this 1703 drawing, meeting a ray from a star near Polaris.