

did; and he skimps on the social moorings of political alliances. But this is an almost unique attempt in English to lay out the modern evolution of Japanese ideas about politics and the individual. Najita has a wide reach: His scrutiny of *samurai* activists in the 17th through early 19th centuries, of popular rights agitators in the late 19th century, and of fanatical superpatriots in the 1930s and '40s lays bare a continuity of intellectual turmoil little understood in the West. Najita's specialized study will be most profitably read along with such general works as Edwin O. Reischauer's *Japan, the Story of a Nation* (1970).

—Lawrence Olson ('80)

THE CHESAPEAKE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: Essays on Anglo-American Society
 edited by Thad W. Tate &
 David L. Ammerman
 Univ. of N.C., 1979
 310 pp. \$26



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During the 1600s, between 130,000 and 150,000 English immigrants fled economic hardships in the mother country for Virginia and Maryland. These nine demographic essays make clear just how harsh life was in the fragile society of the 17th-century Chesapeake Bay region. Virginia's mortality rate is estimated to have been between 27 and 45 percent, partly due to the Virginia Company's fixation on the settlement of swampy Jamestown, where "burning fever" (typhoid) and "bloudie Flixie" (dysentery) raged. Traditional English family life—late marriages, large numbers of offspring, firm parental control of children—degenerated into chaos. The fact that most immigrants were male made the establishment of a native population difficult. Yet, many of the newcomers were indentured servants who "achieved considerable property" and "were fully integrated into the community as small [tobacco] planters . . . and participants in local government," report historians Lois Green Carr and Russell R. Menard. After 1660, the death rate fell as the coastal settlers moved inland to high ground. Male immigration decreased with the decline of the tobacco industry in the 1680s, and a balanced sex ratio resulted. A local elite began to form. The more prosperous early settlers looked down on the new

immigrants, fewer of whom were from the English middle class. Local officeholding became tied to the ownership of land. Chesapeake society was now striving for self-sufficiency and stability, although its members were still tied, psychologically as well as economically, to Great Britain.

—*Rosemary O'Day ('79)*

NIM
by Herbert S. Terrace
Knopf, 1979
303 pp. \$15

A number of research psychologists have endeavored to teach American Sign Language (for the deaf) to chimpanzees. The chimps have come to recognize several hundred signs and to use more than 100 different signs themselves. Many have learned to make sentence-like combinations, e.g., "Come give me sweet." But do these chimps really communicate as people do? What are the limits of their linguistic abilities? To answer these questions, Terrace, a Columbia psychologist, arranged for Nim, a two-week-old male chimpanzee, to be taught and tested under more rigorous scientific controls than any yet applied. Despite disruptive turnover among the chimp's teachers, Nim, by age 5, had learned to express 125 signs and was picking up two new signs a week when the experiment ended in 1978. His vocabulary included verbs and nouns, but not adverbs, adjectives, and prepositions. He had used more than 5,000 different combinations of two or more signs ("Tickle me Nim"). Terrace cautions against exaggerating Nim's accomplishments. The young chimp's utterances were less spontaneous and original than a child's, more dependent on the signals of a teacher than a child's are on the words of its parents. It is too soon to say that a chimpanzee is capable of elevated conversation—of using language "for purposes other than the immediate gratification of basic needs." But then Nim's achievements, Terrace concludes, will not be the last word in chimpanzee language-learning.

—*Peter Singer ('79)*