

Gurstein argues that the modern feminist conviction that “the personal is political” leads these writers astray. They fail “to realize that the impassioned words that one utters to a lover in private to make a particular impression are an entirely different thing from a considered statement of one’s political commitment.” In fact, Goldman never did sacrifice her principles for Reitman: “She went to prison, was deported . . . spoke the truth about the brutality of Soviet Russia, and was a pariah among her former comrades for the rest of her life.”

The tormented love letters, Gurstein says, shouldn’t have led biographers to ask what’s wrong with Emma Goldman, but what’s wrong with the ideal of free love.

For all of her outspokenness, Goldman never spoke publicly about her innermost agonies and yearnings. She retained, in other words, a sense of privacy and intimacy. That her private feelings now seem merely clichéd and incomprehensible to contemporary critics, Gurstein says, is a measure of how much our appreciation of the private and the intimate has shrunk.

What Drives Wives to Murder?

“Until Death Do You Part: The Effects of Unilateral Divorce on Spousal Homicides”
by Thomas S. Dee, in *Economic Inquiry* (Jan. 2003), Texas A&M Univ.,
Dept. of Economics, College Station, Texas 77843-4228.

Between the late 1960s and the mid 1970s, a majority of states changed their divorce laws so that one spouse could end a marriage despite the other’s objections. The intent, in part, was to let women with violently abusive husbands escape their domestic prisons. But the reforms, argues Dee, an economist at Swarthmore College, had a perverse result: Some wives whose husbands wanted to leave them—and now could—became so desperate to avoid divorce and the consequent economic hardship that they resorted to homicide.

Between 1968 and 1978, an average of 17 men (and 19 women) died at the hands of their spouses in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Nearly 42 percent of the murders took place when “unilateral” divorces were allowed. When other possible influences, such as the unemployment rate, are taken into account, Dee finds that the

introduction of unilateral divorce had “no detectable effect” on the level of lethal violence by husbands. But it boosted by 21 percent the incidence of wifely homicides, and the slayings were concentrated in states where laws on the distribution of marital property do not favor wives.

Do the findings mean that making divorce more restrictive would save some men’s lives? Not necessarily. Women today may have adjusted to “the new realities of the weakened marriage contract,” Dee speculates, and taken steps to ensure that divorce would not leave them economically bereft. So they have less reason to resort to murder. Even so, he suggests, “a stronger marriage contract” could enhance women’s bargaining power within marriage and help them obtain, when necessary, adequately generous divorce settlements. And that, he notes, would benefit their children as well.

The IQ Obstacle

“IQ and Income Inequality in a Sample of Sibling Pairs from Advantaged Family Backgrounds”
by Charles Murray, in *The American Economic Review* (May 2002),
2014 Broadway, Ste. 303, Nashville, Tenn. 37203.

How much more egalitarian would America be if every child grew up in an intact two-parent family, free of the modern-

day plagues of illegitimacy, poverty, and divorce? Not that much, claims Murray, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and

coauthor of the controversial *Bell Curve* (1994).

From the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, which began in 1978, Murray carved out a “utopian sample” of 733 sibling pairs. Their parents were married and stayed together for at least the first seven years of their children’s lives. They were also relatively affluent (median income \$64,586, in year-2000 dollars). In other words, these children enjoyed major advantages. Only one significant difference divided them. In each pair, one sibling had “normal” intelligence (an intelligence quotient between 90 and 109), while the other had an IQ outside that range, either higher or lower.

By the time the siblings reached their thirties, Murray found, there were big differences in income. Those with “normal” intel-

ligence had a median family income of \$52,700, while their “bright” brothers and sisters had a household income of \$60,500 and the “very bright” ones (120 IQ or higher) \$70,700. The “dull” siblings (80–89 IQ), meanwhile, had a household median of only \$39,400, and the “very dull” ones (below 80 IQ) just \$23,600. These differences are only likely to widen over time, Murray adds.

These findings could point in several directions, toward policies that seek to equalize incomes or toward an acceptance of intractable inequality as the price one pays for freedom. But it won’t do for scholars to “live in a Lake Wobegone world where everyone can be above average,” says Murray. Inequality in abilities is “a driving force behind inequality in the distribution of social and economic goods.”

PRESS & MEDIA

A Plague of Lawyers

“The Heroic Media Attorney: An Endangered Species” by Willy Stern, in *AAN News* (Feb. 11, 2003), Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, www.aan.org.

Lawyers, lawyers, lawyers. Everywhere investigative reporters turn these days, there seems to be an attorney. As a result, the media watchdog has lost some of its bite, says Stern, an investigative reporter for the *Nashville Scene* who teaches at Vanderbilt University.

Investigative reporters, who may spend months on a single story, are a tiny fraction of working journalists. As corporate ownership has supplanted family ownership in recent decades, many newspapers have become “far more reluctant to undertake lengthy, expensive, and high-profile investigative reporting projects,” Stern notes. Such efforts may win journalism awards, but they also generate angry letters and lawsuits—which are anathema to publishers intent on maximizing profits and pleasing shareholders.

The libel lawyers employed by family-run newspapers to vet investigative stories typically had “a bias to publish” and would work with journalists to get the hard-hitting exposés out. Corporate media attor-

neys today typically prefer to play it safe. Increasingly, “the lawyers, and not the editors, are calling the shots,” says Joel Kaplan, a former investigative reporter at *The Chicago Tribune* who teaches at Syracuse University.

At many newspapers and television stations, Stern says, investigative teams have been replaced by “project teams,” which turn out exhaustive but safe features, with no “bad guys” exposed. Some investigative efforts avoid risk by eschewing anonymous sources and relying upon computer-assisted reporting to reveal disturbing trends or problems. This can be valuable, but it is not investigative reporting, at least in the eyes of traditionalists.

When newspapers or TV stations do undertake traditional investigative reporting, news media attorneys increasingly get involved early on, advising reporters, for example, whether they can go undercover or secretly record conversations. This can be helpful, but it reduces the reporters’ prized independence.