# Bridgewater Review

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*Rhythms at Dusk,* a hand dyed, handwoven wall hanging in wool (58" x 60") by Joan Hausrath, Professor of Art.
Bridging The Generation Gap - Again

Michael J. Kryzanek

After twenty-one years spent in the midwest, I came of age in Massachusetts during those dark but exhilarating days of Vietnam, Watergate and domestic unrest. Although I was a graduate of that now famous high school class of 1965, I never really thought of myself back then as being part of America's revolutionary generation. But after one year in graduate school I found myself carrying a sign which read "Free Huey Newton" and going to protest rallies to end the war. Mind you, I was no flaming radical or card carrying member of the peace movement, but the times and the public environment changed me, as it did many others who lived through that era.

Looking back now to a time over twenty years ago when words like "relevance," "commitment," and "involvement" were heard on college campuses with great frequency and forcefulness, I am drawn to a comparison with the young men and women who sit in class before me and listen to my lectures on politics. How does this generation of college students match up to my generation? Have the same values and concerns that prompted my generation to get involved been passed down? Was the generation of the 60's unique in the way it responded to crisis in this country or do those of us who are now in our 40's make too much of our social activism and political heroics?

Despite the seemingly endless array of problems and controversies that arose in that period, the 60's were also a time of endless opportunities--opportunities for young people to challenge preconceived notions about the world they live in; opportunities to participate in a dynamic process of social change; opportunities to face danger or at least one's conscience. Not every generation is given such opportunities to test themselves or to find their place in the world. Those young men and women who became part of the post-World War II college generation, for example, will be most remembered not for their political voices or values, but rather for souped up cars, phone booth stuffing, rock and roll and panty raids.

In many respects today's college students face a similar lack of opportunities to reach out of themselves. Granted that world hunger, apartheid, and the war in Central America have stimulated Live-Aid, calls for divestment of stock portfolios by colleges and an occasional demonstration against the contras, but by and large the problems of the 80's are far from home and have little direct bearing on the daily lives and futures of America's youth. With no serious national threat or crisis to force them out of their lethargy, the generation of the 80's has appeared to concentrate its energies on sex, money, sports, and MTV.

Although the students of the 60's will be remembered for their activism and social conscience, it is important to recall that many of them paid little attention to political wrongdoing or economic injustice. Campus strikes were often used as an excuse to cut classes and avoid term papers, and demonstrations against the Vietnam war were supported not only because of moral outrage, but for more selfish reasons such as the prospect of being shot. Yes, idealism, conscience and a concern for others existed in 60's students, but along with these virtues my generation also revealed a nasty sense of intolerance, a failure to understand the personal ramifications of public actions, a blind acceptance of protest leaders and a sad unwillingness to see the good that this country has to offer. Along with its high ideals and morals, my generation also acquired healthy doses of cynicism, permissiveness and an eventual overarching concern for self.

The 80's generation is criticized as more interested in personal and career growth than those of us who still identify with the Tet offensive, the March on Washington and the protest songs of Joan Baez. To a member of the 60's generation the twenty year olds of today seem ignorant of recent history, hopelessly immersed in popular culture and too busy making money to turn their attention to the problems of their community, their country and their world. And yet I think that those of us who came out of the 60's should not be too harsh on the current student population. Their materialistic savvy gives them a much better understanding of how to survive in this difficult world; they are harder workers (although unfortunately much of their energy is directed toward non-academic pursuits); and they know how to enjoy life and are willing to laugh at themselves. Perhaps most importantly, though, they are surprisingly confident about the future of mankind and the planet. Compared to the "gloom and doomers" of the 60's, the generation of the 80's glows with renewed confidence.

If the social commitment and political awareness that were the hallmarks of the 60's seem to be absent today, the cause may be that fewer challenging opportunities exist. This generation has not had the chance to realize that what happens outside of their world does affect them and that they have an obligation to try and do something about it. Yet it is critically important that they, like their 60's predecessors, become aware of the evils of unchecked power, the necessity of insuring that democracy remains a system of popular rule and the responsibility of good citizens to see to it that the American dream becomes a reality for everyone.
Letters to the Editor

The article by Professor Steven Sanders “Two Cheers for Pornography” elicited a number of letters from our readers. Some letters, such as that of Mr. Ted Darcy, questioned the appropriateness of publishing the Sanders article, while others, from faculty members, criticize the positions taken in the article. In order to further clarify this highly controversial issue of pornography and to offer a forum for diverse opinions on this subject, we have published the letters of Mr. Darcy, along with a response from Dr. Gerard Indelicato, the President of Bridgewater State College, and the views of two faculty members, Professors Betty Mandell and Edward James. At the conclusion of this section, Professor Sanders has been given an opportunity to respond.

The Editors

Dear President Indelicato:

As a parent of a student I was appalled by the enclosed article appearing in the April 1986, (Volume 4, No. 1) issue of the Bridgewater Review written by Professor Steven Sanders. Copies are being sent to appropriate personnel throughout the country and the media.

Professor Steven Sanders occupies a position as Professor of Philosophy with special focus on “critical thinking” at Bridgewater State College. His recent article, “Two Cheers for Pornography” does nothing to confirm him as a philosopher competent in the presentation of reasoned certitudes. Nor does it verify his competence as a critical thinker.

Pornography is an issue that calls for clarity and common sense. It does not need the meanderings of academic confusion manifested in his article. Considering here only the conclusions of his confusion in the last paragraph:

(a) He repeats the tired cliche of censorship as the demon lurking behind all attempts to promote minimal public decency in our society. A philosopher of accurate expression should know that in this context censorship is merely an epithet of the unthinking to condemn the efforts of citizens rightly outraged by obscenity. What is really at stake is a public decency carefully defined and limited in the laws of American society.

(b) He finds “benefits” in the inundation of our society by commercial sleaze, simply because some people are entertained by it and find in it personal erotic stimulation. This is to elevate the gutter to the dignity of an honorable highway to personal freedom.

(c) He concludes that the fight against such degradation is “cavalier and indefensible.” His position mocks common sense and spurns the advancing evidence of pornographic effects in promiscuity, perversion, rape, incest, child abuse, and more.

What is really indefensible is Professor Sanders’ defense of the vile pornographic industry.

Sincerely,
Gerard T. Indelicato

Dear Mr. Darcy,

Your letter regarding the article by Professor Steven Sanders in the April, 1986, issue of the Bridgewater Review has just reached me. I want to thank you for taking the time to write to me to share your concern. You obviously read the article carefully and reflected thoughtfully upon its contents.

The Bridgewater Review is, as you know, a magazine edited by the faculty of the College. The articles which appear in the magazine cover a wide range of topics, and I am extremely proud of the quality of the writing and the continuing commitment of the editors to provide diverse ideas for readers to consider. With regard to the publication of this particular article, I believe the president can take only one position, and that is to support and encourage any forum where timely issues are examined and debated. Whether I agree or disagree with Professor Sanders’ conclusions is irrelevant. What is critical is that I uphold the principles which permit the free exchange of ideas. The Bridgewater Review has proven to be a remarkably effective vehicle for this purpose.

I am very appreciative that you, as the parent of a Bridgewater student, contacted me to express your opinion. I hope we will have an opportunity to meet in the coming academic year.

Sincerely,
Gerard T. Indelicato

Boos and Hisses for Pornography: Three Cheers for Erotica

To the Editor:

Steven Sanders and I are miles apart on how we view pornography, but we do agree on one thing — censorship is dangerous to a free society. Censorship puts unrestrained power in the hands of civil servants. It is based on the delusion that the public is incapable of forming its own judgments about even the simplest things, while officials can do the impossible. Whether or not we like pornography, censoring it would reduce the power of people to form their own judgments about it and would enhance the unrestrained power of the repressive state. It would also not reduce people’s need for pornography. One should try to cure sickness, not ban its symptoms.

Sanders gives the impression that the major proponents of censoring pornography are feminists, and that all feminists favor censorship. In fact, the religious right is the most powerful force fighting for censorship and its members have brought about some serious setbacks to our constitutional right to freedom of speech in the past few years. A significant portion of conservatives oppose censoring pornography, while they deplore the commodification of sex, the violence, the stereotyping of sex roles, and — frequently — the racism that pornography contains, and the fact that so many people need pornography in order to stimulate sexual desire.

Now let us turn our attention to the message of pornography. Sanders does not deal with this very much, except to recognize that some pornography includes bestiality, the use and abuse of children, and violence against both men and women, but especially women. Sanders does not defend those kinds of pornography, but he implies that this is only a small part of pornography, and that most pornography is just good clean fun, or at least that it’s not hurting anyone and that feminists oppose censoring pornography. One should try to cure sickness, not ban its symptoms.

Having given us a benign definition of pornography as nudity and/or sexual activity designed to arouse and entertain its audience, Sanders does not analyze the pornography itself. It seems a serious omission to avoid looking closely at what is actually being peddled to the public when one discusses pornography. Sanders considers pornography a “profoundly normative experience, causing us to consider what it means to be human.” He goes on to talk enthusiastically about the buoyancy in the practices depicted in pornography which stimulate the imagination and provoke moral and aesthetic consciousness, open up new erotic
possibilities, and challenge us "to reflect upon our ideas of beauty, normality, and sexuality." Wow! Sounds like Renoir painting, doesn't it? Yet a look at soft porn magazines such as Playboy, Penthouse, and Hustler yields monotonous regularity in naked women in various poses (mostly reclining with legs spread wide) and clothed men--women generally passive; men generally dominant. Women are shown as a collection of orifices waiting to be penetrated. As Kaja Silverman says in her critical essay on the pornographic novel Histoire d'O:

O is above all an exterior with various recesses or depressions ... a body with organs (mouth, vagina, anus). These organs or orifices are not so much portals into the world as entry-points through which multiple penetrations occur. They have no linguistic or generative function, and movement in relation to them is always from without.

The stories in soft porn magazines present a sexuality which follows a monotonously regular format between cardboard characters with stereotyped relationships and little inventiveness or spontaneity. They are profoundly boring. It's laughable to think that these male adolescent masturbatory fantasies would challenge anyone to reflect upon beauty, normality, or sexuality, except in the crudest manner, or cause anyone to consider what it means to be human. People are more easily controlled when they lose their spontaneity and independence and act like pre­
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controlled robots. The mechanization and depersonalization of pornography contributes to the lack of spontaneity which is so pervasive among people today. Andre Gorz criticizes pornography because it keeps people from satisfying their needs in a spontaneous and independent way. In a society such as ours which suffers so greatly from a lack of love and genuine caring about each other, pornography contributes further to treating people as objects. D. H. Lawrence says that pornography "is the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it." Pornographic post cards, he said, are "of an ugliness to make you cry. The insult to the human body, the insult to a vital human relationship! Ugly and cheap they make the human nudity, ugly and degraded they make the sexual act, trivial and cheap and nasty."

The soft porn magazines have removed most of the violence from their pages in response to the anti-porn campaign of the Attorney General, but their sales are going down (Playboy dropped from 7.2 million readers in 1972 to 3.4 million now), and sales and rentals of hard-core video are increasing (from $220 million worth of sales in 1983 to $450 million by August 1986). Hard-core porn has more violence than soft-core.

Rape, bondage, mutilation, and murder appear in pornographic films, literature, peep shows, and even X-rated video games. Of twenty-six porn films viewed over a three-month period by Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media in San Francisco, twenty-one depicted rape scenes, sixteen portrayed bondage and torture, two contained child molestation, and two featured the killing of women for sexual stimulation.

Sanders mistakenly claims that there is no proof of a connection between viewing violence and acting it out, evidently relying for his facts on the 1970 Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. In fact, in May 1982 the National Institute of Mental Health issued a review of over 2,500 studies conducted in the last 10 years that dealt with the relationship between TV violence and aggressive-violent behavior. The review committee unanimously concluded that there is "overwhelming" scientific evidence for a causal relationship between television violence and later aggressive behavior. In relation to violent pornography, several studies have shown that men act more violently toward women after viewing violent pornography.

One of the most serious flaws in Sanders' argument, it seems to me, is his refusal to recognize a distinction between pornography and erotica. While it is not possible to draw a completely sharp and unambiguous line between the two, there is, nevertheless, a difference. Erotica is about relationships of equals; pornography is about power, a power imbalance with sexual overtones.

Interestingly, the word 'pornography' has a common derivation with 'prostitute,' meaning 'female captive' and is closely associated with monetary transactions. 'Erotica,' on the other hand, is about arousal of sexual desire, pleasure, or love, by sensuous or voluptuous depiction. The word is derived from eros, meaning sexual love.

Pornography defines what women are supposed to enjoy (according to whom?) and what men want. What men want is not necessarily what women want. There is a current popular song that expresses sentiment which runs counter to the hard-driving dominating practices that are the stock in trade of pornography.

I want a man with slow hands.
I want a man with an easy touch.
I want a man who will take his time; Not come and go in a big rush.

(M. Clark & J. Bettis, composers. Pointer Sisters, Planet Records)

As long as people need pornography, it will be around. It will disappear only when the need for it disappears. Therefore, the most important question is, "Why do people need it?" One could dismiss the question lightly by pointing to the billions of dollars that producers are making from the commodification of sex, but that is only part of the answer. True, commercialization of sex creates needs which would not otherwise exist. It makes people who are sexually insecure look in one direction rather than another for satisfaction, and those who are particularly vulnerable to this are young men and teenagers who get their first introduction to sex through pornography. In that sense, pornography could be described as normative, in that it is used as a norm by men to instruct them in sexual practices. Studies of sex offenders have shown that sexual practices and beliefs which are imprinted in the unconscious at an early, impressionable, age are harder to change in later life than are most other kinds of beliefs.

Yet, whether or not the need is artificially created, the question still remains -- why are people buying it? I think the answer to the question was suggested by Wilhelm Reich, who pointed out the vastness of people's sexual misery. The majority of people are incapable of achieving full orgasmic pleasure through gentle, sensuous, prolonged, mutually responsive love making. This leads to "orgasm anxiety," which propels people into anxious, mechanistic, depersonalized sex in which the man tries to prove his potency by conquering and piercing
the woman, and the woman is unable to establish her own rhythm or discover what gives her pleasure because she has been so conditioned to passivity and pleasing the man. The world is in deep sexual trouble, and pornography is one symptom of the sickness.

Betty Reid Mandell
Professor of Social Work

To the Editor:
Steven Sanders' article, "Two Cheers for Pornography," Bridgewater Review (vol. 4 [1986], pp. 13-16) deserves a good deal of credit for academic courage as well as philosophic insight. But the insight, alas, has been bought by the heavy price of philosophic myopia. Specifically, he has failed to see the significance of social meaning in our culture. Let me explain.

What I want to argue is that even the so-called "soft porn" of Playboy and its ilk are inherently violations of women. But how can pictures be inherently violations of women? Aren't pictures "neutral," depending upon the observer? By itself, a picture simply is. It does not come with a tag saying what it is. But nothing, including a picture, ever stands alone. This is what Steven has failed to see: a picture comes with a context of discourse, a way of linguistically responding to it. Thus, the conceptual message of a picture is the standard response of interpretation one might expect of it.

Take, for instance, the standard interpretation an observer could be expected to give of Renoir's study known as "Nude in the sunlight." We might say of this something like the following:

The composition itself is daring; the figure is slightly off-centre, and the background, which suggests violently lit plants, is in places barely covered and completely abstract. The light dissolves the blurred lines of the face and brings out the dehumanization of the model, who is in a sense treated simply as an object. The painting is, however, full of Renoir's characteristically joyous and spontaneous sensuality. [Renoir (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1985), p. 208]

This is not a work that would appear to aid the case against Playboy, not when it speaks of the "dehumanization of the model." But what I want to do is compare this sort of "dehumanization" with the kind of dehumanization of the model we find in Playboy.

In Renoir's Study we clearly see the dominance of the male, for it is the male who is the artist, the one who looks, and the model the female, the one who is looked at. And this study in particular gets at that relation insofar as it, brilliantly, by means of various impressionist techniques which serve to departicularize the model, makes the model into any woman. "We," males, are reminded of how we often look at a female, as a piece of flesh, where her personality does not count -- only her sensuality, only her figure, only her "looks." All this can be found, strikingly, in Renoir's Study. And yet it is still a work of art, not a work of pornography. But why?

The answer is, that after the given of the dominance of the male as artist over the female as model is observed, then one carries language elsewhere. This dominance, while present, is not the last work, not the primary work. Rather, in the first place, there is a great deal of emphasis placed on how the work was achieved. The artist's milieu, technique, and creativity all are of fundamental concern. Being aware of them constitutes in large part how we relate to the work. And so we make such remarks as, "The composition itself is daring; the figure is slightly off-centre, ..." In the second place, we are concerned with the figure as a moment in the Female Form, a moment in the sense of another manifestation of an inexhaustible source of beauty and profundity. Hence, we do not stop with comments on technique and the like but go on to what gives the analysis of technique its justification, namely, a further discussion of how this portrayal succeeds or does not succeed as a portrayal of the Female Form. Thus, we make such remarks as, "The painting is, however, full of Renoir's characteristically joyous and spontaneous sensuality." In sum, in looking at such a work, we expect, out of ourselves and out of others, a whole range of sensitive and concrete responses. What makes Renoir's study a work of art, then, is not that it lacks male domination, or is impossible to view strictly from a sexist perspective -- as we regard the model as a "piece" -- but that it calls for us to transcend such perspectives, and even more, shows us how.

Now none of this is the case for a Playboy nude. In fact, it is precisely the opposite. The entire point of a Playboy nude is to allow us, and to encourage us, to stay within the framework of male domination. The language that we use to interpret a Playboy nude is strictly language of male domination and female passivity. Thus we speak of the model as a "bunny," a "plaything," and we know that she will be replaced next month by a new "piece." Even the seeming attempt of Playboy to humanize the model by interviewing her and showing her as having ambitions and ideals and the like only conspires to contribute to the overriding idea that this sort of person too, the girl next door or the successful woman, is one who is primarily there to be undressed, or, if you will, laid bare.

Hence, when Steven Sanders tells us that a pornographic work "involves explicit representations of nudity and/or sexual activity, and contains elements of fantasy and exaggeration" (p. 15), he is telling the truth while missing the point. For the point is how our fantasy and exaggeration are directed. And in the case of the Playboy nude our fantasy and exaggeration are directed along exclusively one-dimensional lines -- those of male domination and power. To remark on the occasional letter that Playboy may receive, commenting on the intelligence of the model or the art of the photographer, is thus to miss the point. For the point is how meaning cannot be divorced from the social milieu, and that the social milieu in which such trash as Playboy exists primarily serves to direct us to respond to it in a way that cannot help but be demeaning to women. Such excremental representations of women ask us to treat them as mere things -- kikes, wops, honkies, spics -- in short, pieces. Thus it is that violence, in the sense of the systematic, i.e., conceptual, degradation of women, is part and parcel of the message.

Edward James
Professor of Philosophy
Professor Sanders replies:

Since its appearance in Bridgewater Review, my essay has sparked an unusual amount of comment and controversy. Because people so often associate pornography with exploitation and filth, even a qualified defense of it must have appeared preposterous, if not pernicious. I thank the editors for giving me this opportunity to reply to criticisms. I am also grateful to President Indelicato for his firm commitment to the principles of free inquiry and expression.

I wish Mr. Ted Darcy had not felt the need to denounce me so vehemently. Nevertheless, I'm grateful for the wider distribution of my essay he speaks of having undertaken. I cannot respond to his arguments, as he gives none. However, his letter reflects concerns which others have expressed in less emotional terms, and I hope to deal with these concerns in what follows.

I welcome the criticisms of Edward James and Betty Mandell, although I remain unconvinced. In philosophy, the charge that someone has "failed to see" something or has "missed the point" is almost always a disguised way of saying "He doesn't agree with me." In the present case, Professors James and Mandell are clear about the nature, intent, and effects of pornography and criticize me for my failure to see what they see so clearly. I can find little justification in their letters for such clarity. Both express antipathy for pornography, even the "soft-core" variety of the Playboy nude. But when it comes to actually describing the materials they find so offensive, one begins to suspect a rather remote acquaintance. (This suspicion is reinforced when we ask on what grounds James speaks so confidently of "The language we use to interpret a Playboy nude," as if there were consensus on this matter.) Although they exaggerate, they both correctly identify a tendency in pornography to portray women along one-dimensional lines. So what? If this is a bad thing, it needs to be explained why the one-dimensional treatment of women in Playboy is bad, while the one-dimensional treatment of women in Sports Illustrated -- where a woman's tennis ability, for example, is emphasized to the neglect of her other talents -- is not bad. Of course, if one thinks that sex and nudity per se are bad, this might explain why one would think the portrayal of women in Playboy is bad while their portrayal in Sports Illustrated is not. But it is far from obvious that sex and nudity are bad. This is something about which reasonable people have strikingly different attitudes, a fact curiously ignored in James' and Mandell's accounts. A similar point applies to the "conceptual message" of the Playboy nude which James professes to decode. Reasonable people can disagree about the content of a Playboy pictorial, some maintaining that it conveys a message of violence or depersonalization, others that it expresses and caters to conventional (and harmless) male fantasies of beauty and romance.

Empirical evidence for my claims that pornography has benefits, that it provokes the imagination and stimulates us to reflect on our ideas of beauty, normality, and sexuality, is available to anyone for the price of a magazine or video cassette. But James and Mandell have blocked this route -- James, by declaring that anyone who cannot see that the entire point of a Playboy nude is to direct our fantasy along the lines of male domination and power is suffering from "philosophic myopia," Mandell, by similarly poisoning the well in diagnosing the need for pornography in terms of sickness and sexual misery. Both appeal to linguistic intuitions or other self-evidence to support these claims: both implicitly deny that reasonable people can come to other conclusions about the content of pornography. Those who disagree have simply "failed to see" what others, perhaps on a more exalted moral plane, have described (James), or their views are "laughable," impossible to take seriously (Mandell). In short, it is disappointing to read James' and Mandell's foregone conclusion that pornography cannot provide benefits and that the reasons people give for seeking it conceal their "true" motives or the "real" social context in which pornography is consumed.

What disturbs many people about pornography is the belief that it causes violence. Professor Mandell cites a study which found that there is "overwhelming scientific evidence" for a causal relation between TV violence and "aggressive-violent" behavior. She also states that "in relation to violent pornography, several studies have shown that men (many, most, almost all) act more violently toward women after viewing violent pornography." I assume that this is the best evidence Professor Mandell has, that if she had stronger evidence against pornography, she would have presented it. This is important because her case against pornography goes wrong in just about every way an argument can go wrong. So it is unlikely that a case based on weaker evidence would fare any better. I shall point out five crucial flaws in her argument. First, the terms "violence" and "aggressive-violent" behavior are vague. They suggest a range of behavior from insults to physical assault. But what we want to know is whether TV violence leads people to commit assaults, or whether, on the other hand, the offending behavior is something less alarming -- garden-variety rudeness, for example. In the study as she cites it, this matter is not made clear. Second, the fact that some violence against women was found to have occurred after men viewed violent pornography is not evidence that the violence was caused by the pornography. To argue that since violent behavior came after viewing pornography, it was caused by pornography is to commit the fallacy of post hoc ergo propter hoc. Third, violence against women is attributed to "violent" pornography in the study Mandell cites. Now, since the only pornography I wish to defend is the non-violent kind, my position is not affected by the results of this study. (I know what you're thinking: all pornography is violent, right? But this isn't a fact about pornography; it's a moral proposal to use the term in a narrow way, a proposal I criticized at length in my essay.) Fourth, Mandell writes that "several" studies found that men act more violently after viewing violent pornography. But the majority of studies of pornography make no such finding. It would therefore be more accurate to say that empirical research has failed so far to substantiate claims of a causal connection between pornography and violence. Fifth, the evidence that pornography causes violence is no stronger than the evidence that soap operas, advertising, and rock lyrics cause violence. Pornography, then, is no more to be condemned on this basis than these other things are. And if they cause violence, why single out pornography for condemnation?

Good taste and decorum (as well as the hot breath of the censor) prevent
me from giving a detailed description of good pornography. But judging from my own experience, such materials need not confirm one in the belief that "all women look alike," that to quote Professor Mandell -- "women are shown as a collection of orifices waiting to be penetrated." On the contrary, only someone who already believed that "all (nude) women look alike" would find nothing but "monotonous regularity" in pornography. Ironically, those who insist upon art or "erotica" may be unwittingly revealing their own ambivalence about the aesthetic resources of the human body. In any event, Mandell endorses the idea that the need for pornography springs from sexual dissatisfaction and misery. Here she ignores the capacity of people to enjoy pornography and fulfilling sex without giving up either. Many people can assimilate a variety of experiences into their sexual repertoire, and couples have been known to rave about the sex they've had after viewing pornography together. People who want to enjoy pornography and consensual sex are likely to be amused by the (sincere but misplaced) concern Mandell has for their sexual fulfillment.

Finally, two matters of more general interest. Some readers were puzzled by the title of my essay. It is of course an allusion to E.M. Forster's essay, "Two Cheers for Democracy." I agree with one of my colleagues who said that a more accurate title would have been "Two Cheers for Some Pornography." However, that title might have created the impression that I meant to limit my defense to "soft-core" pornography. I did not.

I regret some of my criticisms of Ann Garry, whose essay "Pornography and Respect for Women" is worth reading for the contributions it makes to our understanding of pornography. Garry has a delicious sense of humor, something sadly lacking in many writers on this topic. Shortly after completing my essay, I met Garry in Los Angeles and I asked her if she had had further thoughts on the subject. She grimaced in feigned discomfort and said, "I've O.D.'d on pornography." I feel much the same way.

This frail form, regal even in death, Has been betrayed by those she lived to save: the words, the words, the slipping, sliding words, have done her in. Yet no surprise nor shock troubles her sleep, for she has always known, but would not tell, how unreliable the words could be; evasive, self-deluding, double-edged, ready to rip you open, cut you up, not with satiric thrust, sarcastic bite, but rather with the razor slice of Time that strips us all.

She would have been the very last to say "Never believe a word of what you hear!" except to quell some gossip she deplored. Her faith was wide-eyed, innocent, rooted beyond belief in the simple flower, the cast of light, the glow of candle, soft and gentle sound of music. Awed by all wonders: the Taj Mahal, the tabby cat, the mountain's grandeur, and one autumn leaf held reverently in her hand. The rose blush deepened at her fond caress. Each sound she uttered stood like a quiet benediction. She knew the weight of words as goldsmiths know their precious hoard. But words were, after all, only the sounds we give to things, and things were her domain; naming them but a pastime.

She listened more and more, spoke less and less, but what she said stood steady as the sun, and as reliable. She used the words to soothe, to seek, yet scorned hypocrisy wherever it appeared. Her words were both benevolence and bane, and no one ever failed to understand her. She stripped away the posture of disdain, of demagoguery and guile and subterfuge; spoke out for those warmed by the sidewalk grates of Harvard Square; wept for the weak, the ill, the underfed, but never for herself. Her love for people was too great for words. O, from your dearly loved but far too lofty Andean peaks, look down and pity us, betrayed by words that will not speak our hearts. And teach the angels how the earth says, "Love."

Harold Ridlon

A highly respected and deeply loved English Professor Emerita of Bridgewater State College, Virginia Joki died in October 1986. An avid traveler, she had visited every place she wished to see except for the Andes. Harold Ridlon is a Professor and former Chairperson of the Department of English at Bridgewater.
Roughing It was based rather roughly on a period of Twain's life that began in 1861, when Twain went west with his brother Orion. Orion had been appointed Secretary of the Nevada territory with the help of a friend who had a friend in Lincoln's new cabinet. Twain had just faded quietly out of the Confederate army after suffering from boils and a sprained ankle and never firing a shot. For a while out west, Twain prospected for silver around Virginia City; then for about two years he was a reporter for the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise. In 1864 he drifted on to San Francisco, where he was a reporter and a free-lance writer. In 1866 he was sent to the Hawaiian Islands by the Sacramento Union. The period covered by the book ends with his return to San Francisco, his first success as a lecturer, and his boarding ship for the voyage that was to take him to New York and his career as one of America's most famous writers.

The stretch between the inception and the publishing of Roughing It -- from the beginning of 1870 to February 1872 -- was for Twain one of protracted crisis.

There was, first of all, a national crisis. The country was fully embarked on that profit-crazed and corruption-marked era that Twain was soon to stigmatize in his first novel as "The Gilded Age." Twain thought, like even the optimistic Whitman, that democracy was a failure. Second, there was a personal crisis. Just about the time Twain began to think of making a book of his adventures in Nevada and California, he married Olivia Langdon, the daughter of a wealthy coal-dealer in Buffalo. This is not to say that marriage is a crisis in a negative sense, but that it must have been for Twain is clear when we learn that Jarvis Langdon, his father-in-law, offered the former steamboat-pilot, prospector, and journalist ten thousand dollars if he would stop drinking ale and smoking. Then followed a series of disasters. Just when Twain planned to get down to the writing of his book, Jarvis Langdon was found to have stomach cancer, and Twain and his frail wife personally nursed him around-the-clock. In August, 1870, shortly after Twain signed the contract for Roughing It, Jarvis Langdon died, and Olivia, worn down by the nursing, collapsed and herself needed constant care. On top of this, in September, Olivia's friend Emma Nye came for a visit, contracted typhoid, and died in the couple's bed. More than thirty years later, Twain was to describe the days before Emma's death as "among the blackest, the gloomiest, the most wretched of my long life."

Nor was this the end. Shortly after Emma's death, Olivia had a near miscarriage and on November 7 she gave birth to a premature, sickly child who was not expected to survive but who held on, to die several months after the publication of Twain's book. Twain wrote Orion: "I am sitting still with idle hands -- Livy is very sick and I do not believe the baby will live five days." Even when Twain started making good progress on his book the following spring, there were times when he thought he was hearing "a popular author's death rattle" [his own] -- a feeling certainly added to by the sudden immense popularity of Bret Harte,
a competitor in writing about the West, who threatened to eclipse Twain by his sentimental depiction of prospectors and prostitutes. These personal misfortunes provide an essential background for *Roughing It*, for although the novel is generally read as the work of a comic writer, it has a darkly pessimistic side.

It seems to me that Twain's conscious, clear intention in *Roughing It* was to debunk the values, including the religious ones, of respectable -- read eastern -- society and to explore the values that arise in the chaos of frontier conditions. To realize his intention Twain creates a narrator who is looking back at his initiation into the life of the West. Much of the wonderful humor of the book comes from the successive discomfitures of the initiate until he wises up and learns to deal with his new world. Or at least that is the direction the book should have gone in -- towards a happy positive resolution. But while the narrator has become a successful lecturer in the last two chapters, his contact with the West and with characters who live apart from the conventional culture of the East has provided him with no code as an effective alternative to that of eastern culture. There is much -- and it came as a surprise to me as I read the book -- connected with the narrator's failure to find a code -- to find, as it were, solid ground: haunting episodes and images, some on the surface comic, which suggest that during Twain's stay in the West deeply troubling symbols of the dark nature of life were sown in his mind -- symbols that were to reappear as expressions, perhaps, of the ordeal he was going through while writing the book. W.D. Howells, who was to become Twain's best literary friend but had known him only for a short time when *Roughing It* appeared, had this insight into the book's symbolism: "All existence there [in the West] must have looked like an extravagant joke, the humor of which was deepened by its nether-side of tragedy." Interestingly, many of Twain's gag-lines appear within or just after some of the darker symbolic passages, as if he were trying to reject some deeply troubling knowledge.

It is time for examples. I would like to suggest that in spite of the narrator's exhilaration at the start of the book, pessimistic implications appear as early as Twain's account of the career of a desperado named Slade, who has killed twenty-six people and is talked about everywhere. At one stage-station the narrator finds himself seated at the same table with Slade, who "gentlemannly-appearing, quiet, and affable," politely presses the remaining coffee on him. Hearing three years later that Slade begged for mercy at his execution, the narrator indulges in perhaps the most complex and serious speculation in the book. Although Slade, a true desperado, was "a man of peerless bravery," he would take "infamous advantage of his enemy" and at the end cried "under the gallows." Thus one could not say that "moral" courage was the source of his bravery.

Then, if moral courage is not the requisite quality, what could it have been that this stout-hearted Slade lacked? -- this bloody, desperate, kindly-mannered, urbane gentleman, who never hesitated to warn his most ruffianly enemies that he would kill them whenever or wherever he came across them next! I think it is a conundrum worth investigation.

Twain never does investigate -- perhaps because he cannot face the thought that if Slade is not moved by moral courage, which implies free selection of right from wrong, he is a mechanism operating according to some mechanical law.

Now the narrator reaches the Mormon country in Utah, and Twain is as puzzled by the Mormons as he was by Slade and possibly for the same reason. The Mormons irritate and intrigue him. In five chapters and two appendices he discusses their history, their control of Utah, their supposedly polygamous leader Brigham Young, and the Book of Mormon. The appendices -- strangely split -- recount both the persecution of the Mormons which finally drove them to the untenanted West, and a massacre supposedly committed by the Mormons against a wagon-train of "gentiles." Clearly Twain sees the Mormons as having been out-group victims of the established religious society of the East. But the Mormons, now installed in Utah, have in their turn, Twain finds, shown the same pruneness to intolerance and crude exertion of force in the name of true religion demonstrated originally by the establishment they fled. Once again the problem of the springs of human behavior presents itself to Twain and he backs off. His sympathy for the out-group warring with his aversion, he resorts to pot shots against the Book of Mormon and Brigham Young, making merry with the idea that Young is being bankrupted by having to give equal favors to all of his wives.

Twain's prose is cliched and portentous when he describes the mountains he has come through on the way to Utah: they are "a convention of Nature's kings" or "Sultans ... turbaned with tumbled volumes of cloud." But an alkali desert 100 miles west of Salt Lake evokes some of his finest descriptive writing, oddly capped off by verbal foolery:

Imagine a vast, waveless ocean
Stricken dead and turned to ashes;
imagine this solemn waste
Tufted with sagebrushes ... imagine team, driver, coach, and passengers so deeply coated with ashes that they are all one colorless color. ... The sun heats down with dead, blistering, relentless malignity; ... there is not the faintest breath of air stirring; ... there is not a living creature visible in any direction whither one searches the blank level that stretches its monotonous miles on every hand; there is not a sound -- not a sigh -- not a whisper.

Arrived at the next station, the narrator is hard put to describe his relief and the weariness of the mules:

To try to give the reader an idea of how thirsty they were, would be to "gild refined gold or paint the lily."
have tried time and time again to work it in where it would fit, but could not succeed ... it seems to me best to leave it in ... since this will afford at least a temporary respite from the wear and tear of trying to "lead up" to this really apt and beautiful quotation.

Twain is having his fun with the learned prose of the establishment, no doubt, but certainly the joking represents a retreat -- a "respite" -- from the picture of the universe suggested by the alkali desert -- a picture like Melville's of "the heartless voids and immensities of the universe" that stab us "from behind with the thought of annihilation."

After the narrator reaches Carson City, some fifteen chapters deal with the "silver fever" that infects him and others. Everyone is in the "grip" -- rushing about staking claims, deceiving himself or others about the richness of his "vein." Monomania or automatism seems to abound: a Swede is forever singing the same song, a character named "Arkansaw" is always drunk and looking for a fight. Things connected with or around the characters are in equally crazy motion: the narrator is duped into buying a Mexican hotel whose outbuildings melt down like sugar in the rushing waters.

At the end of the sequence the narrator, pursuing an elusive character named Whiteman, who is in turn hunting for a fabulous lost gold mine, takes time out on the shores of Mono Lake, the "Dead Sea of California":

Mono Lake lies on a lifeless, treeless, hideous desert, eight thousand feet above the level of the sea ... This solemn, silent, sailless sea ... is little graced with the picturesque. It is an unpretending expanse of grayish water ... with two islands in its center, mere upheavals of rent and scorched and blistered lava, snowed over with gray banks and drifts of pumice-stone and ashes. This lake, which Twain tells us has no outlet, is so nearly pure lye that no life exists in the waters except "a white feathery sort of worm, one-half an inch long, which looks like a bit of white thread frayed out at the sides ... They give to the water a sort of grayish-white appearance." Thousands of flies come to feed on the worms washed up on shore. Twain continues in parody of nineteenth-century pulpit language:

Providence leaves nothing to go by chance. All things have their uses and their part and proper place in Nature's economy: the ducks eat the flies -- the flies eat the worms -- the Indians eat all three -- the wildcats eat the Indians -- the white folks eat the wildcats -- and thus all things are lovely.

With his companion Higbie, Twain, as we can perhaps call him now, goes out to one of the islands in the lake.

When their canteen water turns brackish, they search the island for a spring but find only "picturesque" mocking jets of stream, near one of which stands the island's only tree; all else is "solitude, ashes, and a heartbreaking silence." Then noticing that the wind has risen, they go to secure their boat -- which is fifty yards from the shore. Two jets of stream, near one of which stands the island's only tree; all else is "solitude, ashes, and a heartbreaking silence." Then noticing that the wind has risen, they go to secure their boat -- which is fifty yards from the shore. The "agony that alkali water inflicts on their way to the mainland through the billows of the alkaline lake, the boat going over at the last minute. The "agony that alkali water inflicts on bruises, chafes, and blistered hands, is unspeakable," Twain writes; but that is all they suffer.

Mono Lake is the landscape of the
alkali desert again, but in more menacing form. The pessimistic implications for the nature of the world seem for once to be on the conscious level in the parody passage. It would hardly seem likely for such knowledge to resubmerge, but that may be just what it does.

The instability of mankind rather than of nature is the concern of the second half of the book. Hucksterism, even if for a good cause, sweeps the crowd along in one chapter; in another we are told that the first twenty-six graves of Virginia City are occupied by murdered men, that juries are made up of the reckless, that desperadoes receive more acclaim than community leaders. One chapter is given over to showing how a murder breeds only further murders -- in short, irrational consequences for the nature of the world seem to be on the conscious level in the parody passage. The pessimistic implications for the nature of the world seem for once to be on the conscious level in the parody passage. It would hardly seem likely for such knowledge to resubmerge, but that may be just what it does.

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*Most of the secondary material in this article is from Justin Kaplan’s Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain.*

Joseph Yohelson is Professor of English at Bridgewater State College. He received his Ph.D. from Brown University and wrote his dissertation on Hemingway. He teaches a seminar on Mark Twain, and finds both writers interesting due to the complexity of their outlooks.
It's February in 'Sconset, the small village at the eastern end of Nantucket. Most of the "summer natives," who six months before packed this community, are long gone. Now, the sounds of summer are replaced by those of the other season: the distant rumble of surf, the whistling no'theast wind beating the shingled cottages. If you want solitude, this is the time and the place. But listen. In the near distance another sound splits the quiet --the steady rhythm of hammer hitting nail.

The pristine qualities that make this island a distinct place, and somewhere "far away," both geographically and philosophically, also make it a refuge, an attractive haven and resort with less traffic (there isn't a single traffic light on the island), pollution and people than the mainland thirty miles away. Nantucket's popularity is beginning to catch up with her. The same things people come here to escape are quickly being introduced as more and more "off-islanders" discover the island. No longer just a summer place, Nantucket is now an active year-round community, with a tourist season that stretches from late April until well past Columbus Day. The most visible manifestation of Nantucket's increased popularity is a building boom that is fast chewing up the island's open spaces.
and threatening its rural character.

A decade ago, only 100 houses a year were being built. Today, the annual figure approaches 300 and, despite zoning controls, appears to be gaining momentum. "The pace has certainly become more rampant in the '80s," agrees William Klein, executive director of Nantucket's Planning and Economic Development Commission. "We're subdividing 500 lots a year consistently. Commercial development has also increased. There are 200,000 square feet of shopping centers on the drawing boards right now."

Klein came to the island in 1974, shortly after town meeting voters established the Planning Commission, a response to the island's first condominium development in the west-end village of Madaket. "People felt they wanted something with more control than a Planning Board," Klein says. "Nantucket was always known to have avoided suburban sprawl, but the island's eighteenth and nineteenth century settlement pattern was becoming compromised by a haphazard development pattern. It was causing us to become like everywhere else, and if there's one thing Nantucketers hate more than anything else, it's to be like everywhere else."

Since its inception, the Planning Commission's work has included the drawing up of more stringent zoning regulations (most of which pass at town meetings) and a growth plan for the entire island. (One aspect of the growth plan is a push for subdivisions to be arranged in clusters, with lots of green space.) These measures are ways in which the town has worked within established systems to have a say in what can be built and where it can be built; but Nantucket has also been in the vanguard in growth control.

The most notable invention is the Land Bank, an agency established by island voters in 1984. As its name implies, the Land Bank, the first such measure of its kind in the country, was set up to buy desirable properties for conservation and recreational uses. Its funding, generated by Nantucket's healthy real estate market, comes from a two percent tax on most property transactions. This money is deposited into a Land Bank account and is handled by five elected commissioners. To date, the Land Bank has purchased 511 acres, land that will be protected for future generations.

"The Land Bank concept is spreading," notes Klein, the Land Bank's prime architect. "Land Banks have been established on Martha's Vineyard, in Little Compton, Rhode Island and on Block Island."

By entering its own real estate market, Nantucket can afford to buy unspoiled acreage, rather than rely on either a conservation organization or a benefactor to keep lands forever wild. "As Klein points out, however, the Land Bank is not enough to save the island from development."

"The Land Bank is averaging $80,000 a week," he noted, "and when you mention that to people they can't believe the figure. But when you consider that house lots on the water are selling for a few million dollars, that figure becomes less impressive."

The single greatest land conservator on Nantucket is the Conservation Foundation, a private organization established in 1963 that is dedicated to preserving the island's most beautiful and unique landscapes. The Conservation Foundation now oversees 6,000 acres, or 20 percent of the island. These lands include a great chunk of Nantucket's moors, former sheep pastures and undeveloped valleys on the picturesque south shore. Because the Foundation owns these properties, it also imposes controls over them, limiting vehicle use in an effort to protect the fragile environment.

Nantucket's aggressive conservation movement, coupled with an even more aggressive housing market, has put land at a premium, however. A half acre plot can run anywhere from $80,000 to nearly $400,000, depending upon the view. This economic reality is squeezing out many natives, particularly the elderly, who have no family on the island. (One aspect of the growth plan is to limit development of second homes of their own. Although this outline may seem far-fetched, it in fact describes the reality of the island's real estate market.

The transportation factor must also be considered. The Steamship Authority's three boats a day in the summer are no longer the only way to travel across Nantucket Sound; many prefer the quick, 15 minute trip by plane. The island's airport is the third busiest in New England, year-round. "In the '60s, it was kind of a pain in the neck to get here," Klein notes. "Now, we're 40 minutes from New York. It's sometimes easier to get here from Manhattan than to the Hamptons."

All this begs the question: Will Nantucket be developed until no house lots remain? The answer from Klein is a resounding "Yes."

We're right in the sights of being a major vacation development," he predicts. "There are approximately 7,000 houses on the island now, and there's room for 7,000 more. The dwelling units are going to double. It's hard for somebody born and brought up in a rural community like Nantucket to imagine that it's going to happen."

Island historian Edouard Stackpole has lived on Nantucket a good part of his 81 years. He has seen the fields he once played in disappear, and has watched development grow far beyond the fringes of the downtown's cobbled streets. Like the depression spawned
The same things people come here to escape are quickly being introduced as more and more "off-islanders" discover the island.

No longer just a summer place, Nantucket is now an active year-round community, with a tourist season that stretches from late April until well past Columbus Day.

"Because it's like what America used to be, at least it is in January," says Klein. "Because there's enough consciousness to protect the harbor and the land so you can still go scalloping and clamming and fishing and have a reasonable belief that the food won't be polluted," notes Benchley. "Because of conservation, you can still find an uninhabited beach in the off-season."

The delicate balance between nature and man is, happily, working for the time being on Nantucket. The busy summer season is offset by the solitude of winter. There is a time to recharge, to dream up ways of protecting this place.

"This is a good planning lab," Klein says. "The eco-systems are pretty well designed, and because we're a town and a county the political set-up is conducive to planning growth. From the outside, people say we're doing a great job. But when you're here seeing some things disappear before your eyes, it can get pretty depressing."

Benchley takes a slightly more optimistic view: "It's just that there has to be some common ground between the people who are rushing down here and why I insist on staying."

"I'm also lucky because I have some of the skills that are needed to build a house."

When he first decided to build his home, Benchley had no intention of leaving his full-time job, and looked into the construction costs of having a builder do the job. He quickly discovered why Nantucket is called "a rich man's paradise."

"I saw the deals builders were giving island people and it was no deal at all," he said, pointing out "the realities of $100 per square foot, minimum -- and that doesn't include appliances."

To justify taking a sabbatical, Benchley figures he's "paying himself to do the job. But the hard economics of it are I'm taking the pay cut of leaving the job."

The hard economics of island life are also what moved Benchley to build a permanent residence. Unlike most of southeastern Massachusetts, where a landlord will scratch his head if a prospective tenant asks if the apartment is "year-round," there are few such luxuries as 12-month leases on Nantucket. Many residents, especially those who comprise the young working force, have to move twice a year: once in the spring, when their winter rental soars from $300 a month to $300 a week, and again in the fall, when the unheated cottage they rented with 12 other people is closed for the winter. "The moving thing, that's what really cast it in iron," Benchley said, "the annoyance of moving twice a year. Sometimes I had to move four times a year."

So why do people live here, and call this outpost home where electricity rates are among the highest in the country, where a cheeseburger approaches $5, where a simple delight like Chinese food has to be flown in from Hyannis?

by the demise of Nantucket's whaling industry over 100 years ago, Stackpole sees increased development as the new threat to the character of the island. Stackpole, who feels the lessons of the past should guide present decisions, is distraught by what he terms "the nibbling process" that he sees.

In an editorial written last year for the Nantucket Historical Association, Stackpole decried the changing face of the island.

"During the summer season of 1985," he wrote, "Nantucket has become an overcrowded, bustling, uncomfortable town ... Too many people; too many automobiles and mopeds; too many motor vehicles invading the beaches and destroying many sanctuaries ... Does this represent a true prosperity?"

Stackpole believes the island is now at a crossroads, and that efforts must be made to keep Nantucket's historical integrity intact. "If we do become just a tourist town," he says, "even the tourists won't come here." At the root of the problem, he says, are the developers who are "only looking for the quick buck."

"When you get people who own the land, and who care so damn little about the land, and rip it up with their bulldozers, tearing away vegetation that took centuries to grow, it shows they haven't got much interest in Nantucket," he said. "The greed is so evident it's terrible, because they're turning their backs on something that exists only once."

Still, even with the rapid building rate, Nantucket remains a desirable place to live. For 7,600 year-round residents, adapting is a way of life: to both the harsh winters and to the even harsher demands of surviving in a spiraling economic market. The best way to overcome a limited island budget, some have found, is to do it yourself.

Rob Benchley, a summer resident all his life and a year-round resident for the past four years, figures he's saving $70,000 by building his own home. Benchley is luckier than most: he inherited a piece of land. "The thing that saved my life was that I had a piece of land my grandfather bought in the 1940s," he said. "I'm also lucky because I have some of the skills that are needed to build a house."

When he first decided to build his home, Benchley had no intention of leaving his full-time job, and looked into the construction costs of having a builder do the job. He quickly discovered why Nantucket is called "a rich man's paradise."

"I saw the deals builders were giving island people and it was no deal at all," he said, pointing out "the realities of $100 per square foot, minimum -- and that doesn't include appliances."

To justify taking a sabbatical, Benchley figures he's "paying himself to do the job. But the hard economics of it are I'm taking the pay cut of leaving the job."

The hard economics of island life are also what moved Benchley to build a permanent residence. Unlike most of southeastern Massachusetts, where a landlord will scratch his head if a prospective tenant asks if the apartment is "year-round," there are few such luxuries as 12-month leases on Nantucket. Many residents, especially those who comprise the young working force, have to move twice a year: once in the spring, when their winter rental soars from $300 a month to $300 a week, and again in the fall, when the unheated cottage they rented with 12 other people is closed for the winter. "The moving thing, that's what really cast it in iron," Benchley said, "the annoyance of moving twice a year. Sometimes I had to move four times a year."

So why do people live here, and call this outpost home where electricity rates are among the highest in the country, where a cheeseburger approaches $5, where a simple delight like Chinese food has to be flown in from Hyannis?
People of Germany

Photographs
by Robert Ward

Goslar, Lower Saxony

Kreuth, Bavaria
Fanaticism, Fear and Faith

Milton L. Boyle, Jr.

Friday, September 5, 1986: BEIRUT BOMB KILLS 3 FRENCH SOLDIERS IN UN PEACE FORCE (Boston Globe)
Saturday, September 6, 1986: AT LEAST 18 DIE, 127 WOUNDED AFTER JET HIJACKED IN PAKISTAN; Four gunmen opened fire on passengers (Boston Globe)
Sunday, September 7, 1986: 22 KILLED IN TERROR ATTACK IN [ISTANBUL] SYNAGOGUE; Two 'suicide gunmen' die (Boston Herald)
Monday, September 8, 1986: TURKISH LEADER LINKS LEBANON WITH SLAYINGS (Boston Globe)
Tuesday, September 9, 1986: UN FORCES FACING INCREASING ATTACKS IN SOUTH LEBANON (Boston Globe)
Wednesday, September 10, 1986: TEACHER FROM MALDEN SEIZED IN WEST BEIRUT; Caller says Islamic group responsible (Boston Globe)
Thursday, September 11, 1986: ISRAELI JETS RAID LEB 'ARMS DEPOT' ...AS GUNMEN KIDNAP ANOTHER (Boston Herald)
Religion appears not only to congeal but to divide; it draws people with a common faith together, but also sharply, and often militantly, sets them against others who hold a different faith or point of view.

The above headlines taken from two Boston newspapers in one recent week demonstrate that nearly every day the newspapers chronicle new acts of terrorism, and the world quakes. People change, postpone, or cancel their travel plans, embassies double their security forces, officials hire bodyguards and curtail their public appearances, workers in foreign countries come home, and affected governments impotently threaten vengeance. And the terrorist, alive or dead, grimates in victory.

Scholars seek their books and minds to discover the roots of terrorism, but have as yet failed even to agree on a definition of the word. Terrorist actions are too varied in scope and common denominators are elusive. Responsibility may lie with nations, ethnic, military or religious groups, or individuals, and the variety of such activities is limited only by the outer parameters of the human capacity for cruelty. Victims range from the soldiers at war, soldiers trying to keep the peace, businessmen, tourists, children and mere passers-by. Research reveals only that there is always a burning cause: a real or imagined injustice, lust for power or greed. There is also a desire to act so outrageously that the "enemy" will be terrorized into acceding to the perpetrator's demands and the whole world will be forced to take notice.

Some of the difficulty in defining terrorism is that your definition depends upon the side to which you belong. Our President has noted, "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Only your enemies are terrorists! Yet, not all agree with this assessment. In a recent book, Terrorism: How the West Can Win, Benjamin Netanyahu says such an attitude is playing into the hands of the terrorist. He advocates universal adoption of the definition formulated by the first conference on terrorism sponsored by the Jonathan Netanyahu research foundation in Jerusalem in 1979: "Terrorism is the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends." Note especially the word "political" which eliminates other motivation, including religious motivation. Many will disagree with the use of the word "innocent" and would include the military among the victims, as I will here.

There is another rather common denominator. Terrorist groups and activities are almost always connected in some way or other with a religious faith. In Northern Ireland, we find Catholics and Protestants pitted against each other. In the Middle East, it is the Jew and the Muslim, or the Christian and the Muslim, or the Sunni Muslim and the Shi'ite Muslim. In the East, it is Buddhism and Christianity, Hindus and Sikhs, and frequently, late-arriving Islam against the more established religions of the area. Religion appears not only to congeal but to divide; it draws people with a common faith together, but also sharply, and often militantly, sets them against others who hold a different faith or point of view. Religion almost univer- sally proclaims the brotherhood of man, yet seems to justify crimes of a most heinous nature, and from that background, to contribute significantly to the enormity and ugliness of those crimes.

The religious factor in terrorism, however, seems strangely ignored. While there is a plethora of articles on the hows and whys of terrorism, surprisingly little is written about its religious roots. In Cornwall, Robert L. Phillips, director of the Program for War and Ethics at the University of Connecticut at Hartford, has published only a handful of articles which deal even peripherally with terrorism: "Tithing for Terrorism?" (May 8, 1985); "Terrorism and Television" (July 3-10, 1985); "Hitjack Aftermath and Prospects for Peace" (October 30, 1985); "1985 Religious Newsmaker: The Shi'ite Fundamentalist" (January 1-8, 1986); "Qaddafi as Villain Fulfills Media Needs" (January 29, 1986); "Libya Raid Undermines Morality and Security" (April 30, 1986), and one other, about which I will comment shortly. Careful reading of these articles reveals virtually nothing about the religious roots of terrorism. One reads the more conservative journals in vain; it is for them as though the terrorist has no religious roots. In fact one learns virtually nothing at all about the causes of terrorism from these publications.

There is one searching and thoughtfull article in the April 9, 1986 issue of the Christian Century, written by Robert L. Phillips, director of the Program for War and Ethics at the University of Connecticut at Hartford. Entitled, "The Roots of Terrorism," the article discusses the intellectual or philosophical roots of terrorism "which, ironically, are peculiarly Western: popular sovereignty, self-determination and ethical consequentialism." Dr. Phillips explains that popular sovereignty is belief that all people in a
nation comprise the state, are thus equally responsible for the acts of that state, and are, therefore, legitimate targets of its enemies, including, of course, terrorists. The philosophy of self-determination dictates that every religious and ethnic group has a right to its own state; ethical consequentialism avers that “just war” may be fought to insure that right. The author notes that there is religious support for this last tenet:

Friendship with God is closely linked to walking the path of justice; it is understood that to damage any basic human value is to attack the very source of value and being. What Plato understood to be the consequence of injustice -- self-destruction -- the Judeo-Christian tradition understands as the cutting off of oneself from the very source of being. It follows that one may do evil to accomplish ultimate good; the end justifies the means.

Dr. Phillips’ article barely touches on the religious facets of terrorism, and while it is not always easy to tell where philosophy ends and religion begins (or vice-versa), his emphasis is on the intellectual rather than the spiritual. But the terrorist is not generally an intellectual. He is a feeling, reacting to accomplish his goals and is willing to use any means at his disposal, from a plastic toy gun to the most sophisticated plastic bomb. He is willing, sometimes eager, to die in the attempt. Such is more characteristic of religious man than intellectual man. The terrorist is a fanatic, using fear as his major weapon, often justifying his actions by his faith.

In the following, the word terrorism will include acts of extreme violence against both the military and the “innocent” non-military. A major aim of such activity is seen as the terrorizing of the enemy to force submission and to awaken the world at-large to the terrorists’ cause. Examples are taken from Judeo-Christian and Islamic sources and would surely apply to cases where terrorists are closely allied to one of these traditions. Further research would be necessary to determine whether there are some common principles here which could be extended to other religious traditions to which terrorist activity may be linked.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon, and we make a serious mistake if we treat it as such. It is probably as old as man himself. These same principles can be extended to the modern world, to the terrorist acts of the Arab and Israeli conflict.

The law of herem, a biblical law of proscription, is invoked on captured enemies as, blinded, he pulls down the pillars of the temple and the building collapses upon them (Judges 16:25-30).

More outrageous acts of terrorism are to be found in Exodus 1:22 where Pharaoh decrees the death by drowning of all male Hebrew babies, in Matthew 2:16 where Herod orders the slaughter of innocent boys, two years old and younger, in and around Bethlehem, and in Exodus 12:29-30, the Passover event:

At midnight the Lord struck down all the first born in Egypt, from the first born of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

In terror, Pharaoh releases the Israelites, and they begin their journey through the Wilderness to the Promised Land.

To the modern Israeli, who rails against Arab terrorism, the Arab points out the terrorist activities of Jewish “gangs” in the difficult years before the partition of Palestine in 1947. Still, it is the Arab who predominates in the media as the perpetrator of current terrorism. To the major religion of the Arab, Islam, I would now turn in search for understanding.

The foundation of the religion of Islam is the Qur’an. Dictated by Allah through the angel Gabriel to the Prophet, Muhammad, Muslims believe it to be co-eternal with Allah, a precise copy of the heavenly original. The Qur’an plus the life and lore of the Prophet are determinative of Muslim activities, and thus provide justification for Islamic terrorism. Islamic law is, by Judeo-
Christian standards, harsh and unrelenting toward the unbeliever. The medieval cry of "death to the infidel" is fully expressive of the belief that those who refuse to accept the teachings of Muhammad are better off dead than continuing in their unbelief. The Qur'an teaches that gentle persuasion, economic and social sanctions are all to be tried on the unbeliever, but Muhammad's actions indicate that when all else fails, the killing of the unbeliever is fully warranted.

Thus, Muhammad's policy, and that followed by succeeding caliphs, was one of death and annihilation of the infidel enemy, but when the enemy converted to the Faith, they were no longer fair prey. Quickly, as the Islamic horde rolled onward through the Middle East, foes and potential foes adopted Islam and saved their lives. Part of the reason for the great and rapid spread of the Muslim empire was that they had to reach ever further into the frontier to find legal prey -- the unbeliever.

In 627, an incident occurred which struck terror in the hearts of Muhammad's enemies -- the massacre of the Jewish tribe of Qurayzah. Before this incident, Muhammad had been willing to exile Jews from the land he had taken from them, and even willing to allow them some income from its produce, but at Qurayzah the policy changed. Since they would not convert to the Islamic faith, the male Jews (reportedly 600 of them) were beheaded in a single day; all the women and children were sold into slavery. Arab-Jewish enmity has a long history. Perhaps the fear engendered among the unbelievers by this event made future Islamic victories come more easily.

The Qur'an, Sura ix, vv 20-22, promises:

Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive (Arabic "jihad") with might and main, in God's cause, With their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of God: They are the people who will achieve (salvation). The Lord doth give them tidings of a mercy from Himself, of his good pleasure, And of gardens for them, wherein are delights that endure: They will dwell therein forever. Verily in God's presence is a reward, the greatest (of all).

The key to winning the favor of God and of gaining eternal bliss near God in paradise is "jihad," striving. The faithful strive both for God (see quote above) and against God's enemies:

Therefore listen not to the unbelievers, but strive against them with the utmost Strenuousness...

Sura, xxi, v. 52

It is in this latter sense that Jihad has come to mean "holy war" although this is not its root meaning, and the orthodox Muslim scholar generally rejects that meaning. Still, it is the cry and motivation of those who fight (strive) against overwhelming odds, with little concern for death, against those whom they perceive to be the enemies of God. We have read of the hundreds of largely unarmed Iranian boys who have charged superior Iraqi forces and who have died believing that the glories of Muslim Paradise would at once be theirs. This is the same religious spirit of the terrorist who drives his truck laden with explosives into an ambassadorial compound to die with his victims, or who willingly dies on a commandeered airplane held hostage with its passengers.

The taking of hostages, a common terrorist practice, has horrified the West. It seems unconscionable that innocent people should be kidnapped and held for ransom and that whole nations should thus be held at bay. The effectiveness of these tactics cannot be denied, but their immorality seems beyond human comprehension. Kidnapping in the West is usually punishable by death since it is regarded as the equivalent of the very taking of human life. In fact, the suffering caused loved ones may be even more agonizing than killing. In the Middle East hostages were taken forcibly, or sometimes given voluntarily to secure a pledge, to be redeemed when the pledge was paid. Muhammad often used this method of coercion against his enemies; hostages were given and taken to assure that word would be kept, or they were traded off for favors or concessions.

A similar example from our own traditions is found in Genesis 42 and 43 in the story of Joseph. Joseph's brothers are forced by famine to go to Egypt to buy grain. There they are met by the brother whom they have sold into slavery, though they do not know him, and he accuses them of spying. When they deny the charges Joseph tells them that the only way they can prove their innocence is for them to return home and bring their youngest brother, Benjamin, their father's favorite, back with them. In the meantime, they must leave brother Simeon with him, and he accuses them of spying. The hostage-taking and redemption was well understood by the people of biblical times, though its meaning has been lost on the West: so Job out of his misery cries, "I know that my Redeemer lives," (19:25) and the Psalmist prays, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer,” (19:14). In fact, the whole theme of Christ’s sacrifice revolves around the same idea. Man was held hostage by his own sinfulness, unable to free himself from this bondage. God himself must pay the price of redemption, nothing less than his first-born son. So the Christian sings,

Up Calvary’s mountain one dreadful morn,
Walked Christ my Saviour weary and worn;
Facing for sinners death on the cross,
That he might save them from endless loss.
Blessed Redeemer! Precious Redeemer!
Seems now I see Him on Calvary’s tree;
Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading,
Blind and unheeding, dying for me!

A group of terrorists calling themselves “Islamic Jihad” have captured and are holding, at this writing, several American citizens. In their name they declare themselves religiously oriented, and justify their actions as appropriate to holy war, just as their founder justified his actions. In the cause of God, there are no rules, for God, as the author of law, is beyond the law and those who act in his name are exonerated from criminal charges. They would simply point to Muhammad’s attack on Meccan caravans during sacred months when caravans travelled without military guards. It was unthinkable that anyone should attack them on holy days, but Muhammad in God’s service was not bound by the law. So the Ayatollah Khomeini was unbound by the law when he held American hostages for 444 days. And the righteousness of his actions was proven by their success. How could a tiny and weak nation hold the strongest nation on earth at bay for more than a year unless their actions be blessed by their God? The Ayatollah gained enormous strength and prestige throughout the Islamic world because he proved once again, as the Arabs had in the 7th and 8th centuries, that those on the side of Allah cannot be defeated. The most massive military might of man is impotent against the power of God.

I expect enough of a foundation may have been laid now so that we may draw some conclusions regarding the relationship of terrorism to religious faith. Accordingly, I should like to make these observations:

1. The terrorist does not usually take his root cause in his faith. He is not primarily seeking to convert the unbeliever, but to coerce the enemy to meet his demands, be they for territory or for the release of prisoners or hostages, or for money, or in a few cases for love. The terrorist is a fanatic about at least this one issue. For him any action that makes the world notice him and his need is justified, and if it takes a crime of inhuman proportions to gain his end, so be it.

2. There can be no doubt that religion can be and is used to justify terrorist activity. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for us to know the mind of the terrorist to determine whether he really believes his faith’s teachings and truly acts in the name of his god, or whether he uses the names and trappings of his faith to gain favor with and support from his peers, or perhaps for both reasons. Did Islamic Jihad choose that name because its members are true believers in Allah and faithful followers of the Prophet? Or did they take that name because they seek the support of the Muslims amongst whom they live? Their motives, if solely political, would appear to derive more from the latter than the former!

3. Religion and social practices are mutually dependent, and we cannot always tell whether religion hallows traditional social activity or gives rise to that activity. Hostage-taking, for instance, was practiced long before the advent of Muhammad, but Muhammad sanctified it when he took his first hostage -- a holy man can only perform a holy deed. Thus, we cannot say that religion causes a particular type of activity, but in later times it makes little difference to the faithful one which came first.

He is not only justified in this action, his religion demands it, and he rightly seeks the glorious heavenly rewards promised him.

Those who study terrorism must more thoroughly consider the role religion plays in terrorist activity. To concentrate on political motives, as Benjamin Natanyahu’s definition cited above would require, is quite inadequate. The same can be said of economic, scientific or psychological studies. All of them must be included, but so must religion. This may be the most difficult study of all, for religion encompasses all the others and is inextricably interwoven among them. Yet, if the world is ever to sigh its relief at the demise of terrorism, it must first understand its religious roots.

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**The Peace Corps at Twenty-Five**

Charles and Sandra Robinson

"You must have artists to have art, you must have philosophers to have philosophy, you must have peacemakers to have peace. Peace Corps is the first secular peace force in the world since Christ."

Ubadoro Arriaga
Minister of the Presidency, Honduras

"Remember that the money spent to train and support you as a Peace Corps volunteer could purchase a tractor for your host country."

The Peace Corps was born on March 1, 1961, when President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order 10924. Only five months before, in an impromptu campaign speech to ten thousand University of Michigan students, presidential candidate Kennedy had shared his vision for a force of Americans to go into nations to work and live as "ambassadors of peace." The response to his call for service was overwhelming. In less than two weeks eight hundred students had signed petitions committing themselves to the service of peace throughout the world. The Peace Corps idea continued to spread quickly throughout the country. In March, 1961, students from more than four hundred universities attended a national conference to demonstrate their commitment to the Peace Corps. In the months that followed President Kennedy was deluged with offers from tens of thousands of young people who wanted to serve.

Even before Congress had authorized funds for the Peace Corps, more than four hundred volunteers were at work in Ghana. In the twenty-five years since then, more than 120,000 Americans have served. They have been motivated by desires as diverse as service, adventure, travel, a chance to grow up, simple curiosity about other cultures, avoiding military service, and an opportunity to work for world peace.

**Personal Reflections**

We entered the Peace Corps separately in 1967, strangers from Texas and Connecticut, ready to serve and see the world. Sandy was strongly motivated by a sense of Christian service; while Charles (Robi) was more politically aware and an ardent supporter of John Kennedy. We both had a desire to prove what we "could do for our country." Our adventure began with Peace Corps training in Philadelphia. Sandy's parents were uneasy about her spending the summer there since there had been turbulent race riots the previous year. Undaunted, however, she accepted the challenge. There were, after all, policemen armed with sub-machine guns on every other corner, and a carefully organized escape plan for all Peace Corps trainees.

More than one hundred trainees prepared for service in the Eastern Caribbean by living, teaching, and becoming involved in community service in Philadelphia that summer. When we left to continue training in Barbados in August, there were less than seventy. The others had dropped out or were "de-selected," the Peace Corps euphemism for "we're not sure you can make it in the field." Training was physically, emotionally, and intellectually stimulating and a strong camaraderie developed among the trainees. The intensity of the training and the shared experience of the ensuing two years caused relationships to form which continue today, nineteen years later. We, like many other volunteers, feel that our most meaningful reunions have been with fellow Peace Corps volunteers rather than with high school or college acquaintances.

We were part of a group assigned to teach in St. Lucia, a small, impoverished island in the Eastern Caribbean. One of the island's most serious problems was that students who finished secondary school had to leave the island to attend university or find appropriate jobs. Many of them never returned, choosing to remain in the United Kingdom, Canada, or the United States. As a result of this "brain drain," most of the island's teachers were not qualified. Teachers were often those who completed eighth grade but could not qualify for secondary school. The Peace Corps' main role was to aid the government by providing American teachers who could also assist in the training of St. Lucian teachers. Sandy became a model teacher in the early childhood program while Robi was assigned to a team that taught demonstration lessons in the mornings and then taught the teachers after school so that they could pass high school equivalency exams. Ironically, once the exams were passed, many left teaching for higher paying jobs in the tourist industry. Twice a week Robi's team would visit Sandy's village and soon our friendship turned into romance. Toward the end of our first year when we entered the Minister of Education's office together, he jokingly asked if we were there to ask his permission to get married. We told him that we were.

That hurdle cleared, we approached our Peace Corps area director for permission to marry. We were warned that Peace Corps marriages did not have a very good chance for success, with nearly half ending in divorce. However, if we wished to proceed, we could each do so with the knowledge that the government had already thoroughly investigated each of us politically, intellectually, psychologically, and physically -- and that we had "passed." Few fiances had such assurances.

Our marriage was celebrated in the presence of both our families, many fellow volunteers, and nearly all of the population of our two villages. During our second year we organized and began an adult education program in our village which we considered to be our most important local contribution. The local priest, however, felt that our wedding was even more important be-

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cause it served as an example in a culture where most people do not consider marriage until after a few children are born.

Looking back at our Peace Corps experience, we realize that it has had a significant impact on our lives. We realized that our ideas and assistance were valued, that people throughout the world shared common hopes, and that we as individuals could make a difference by our personal commitment to service. The knowledge and experience that we gained in school and work, and the love and guidance that we received from our families certainly contributed to the values we hold today. It was the Peace Corps, however, that provided us with the opportunity to put our values and ideals into practice; it was, perhaps, our rite of passage.

Socio-Economic Impact of the Peace Corps

Peace Corps volunteers have learned first hand of the material poverty and spiritual wealth of poor, rural people throughout the world. Today, in a single month, more than one million people's lives are directly affected by nearly six thousand volunteers at work in over sixty countries. Peace Corps volunteers are treating malnourished children in Honduras, bringing water to deserts in Niger, assisting with public health projects in Tonga, helping Filipino fishermen improve their catches, helping to prepare teachers in St. Lucia, and working on scores of other self-help projects in the developing nations of the world.

Volunteers work on projects that are determined by local communities, using affordable technology that protects the ecology and the values and traditions of the area. By living among the people with whom they work and helping them do things for themselves, Peace Corps supplements local efforts which can then be continued after the volunteers leave.

In an attempt to provide skilled manpower to Third World countries, today's Peace Corps has actively recruited a more diverse population. Volunteers now include small businessmen, farmers, urban planners and computer experts. The average age has climbed from twenty-three to twenty-nine with more than ten percent over fifty, and minorities making up more than eight percent. The Peace Corps is also trying to focus on more coordinated long term projects such as helping with food production in Africa.

The impact of the Peace Corps experience has been felt not only overseas, but also at home. During the Peace Corps Twenty-Fifth Anniversary National Conference in September, 1986, returned volunteers learned of their former colleagues' involvement in service efforts in their choice of jobs, and in their work in community, religious, and political organizations. Two have been elected to the Senate, five to the House, three are university presidents, and twenty-one former volunteers are vice presidents of banks working in international finance and development.

Today over five hundred former Peace Corps volunteers are working for A.I.D. (15% of all A.I.D. personnel) where they help use American expertise and funds in development projects throughout the world. More than one thousand have worked for the Foreign Service. Hundreds of other former volunteers are involved with such diverse groups as CARE, Inc., Catholic Relief, Ploughshares (an international peace project), Ending Hunger, and Lasting Links (a clearinghouse matching volunteers with service projects). Eye Care, Inc., for example, was founded by a former Peace Corps volunteer, and has built and staffed seven eye clinics in Haiti that have served over 60,000 needy patients a year. The organization is committed to turning its entire administration over to Eye Care Haiti within a decade, thus fulfilling the Peace Corps ideal of helping people to help themselves.

Political Impact of the Peace Corps

Even though Americans responded instantly and enthusiastically to the idea of the Peace Corps, the first Director, Sargent Shriver, had to "sell" the Peace Corps to Third World countries. India, Ghana, Nigeria, and Burma were the first to agree to accept volunteers. Other countries quickly followed; in the past twenty-five years more than ninety nations have welcomed the Peace Corps.

Not all developing nations, however, have welcomed the Peace Corps. Some have viewed it as an extension of American imperialism and volunteers as spies and/or C.I.A. agents. In 1965, after only one year of service, all forty-five Peace Corps volunteers were expelled from Indonesia. Violence had led to fears for the volunteers' safety. Alex Shakow who was Peace Corps Director at the time in Indonesia felt that while President Sukarno had privately expressed his admiration for the work of the volunteers, his public opposition to many American policies put the Peace Corps in the middle of an ugly political situation.

In the early 1960s, Peace Corps teachers were helping many newly independent African nations provide educational opportunities for their people. Many Africans were suspicious; they wondered why these mostly white foreigners tried to speak their languages and live with them in the bush. They seemed too sincere, too naive to be spies. Gradually volunteers were accepted for the service they were willing to offer. President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania held Peace Corps teachers in high esteem. He told the local press, "They come to Tanzania and if you tell them to go anywhere, they go ... The volunteers have a spirit that I would like to see more of in Tanzania's teachers."

Aid from the United States, however, did not fit into Nyerere's goal of self-reliance for Tanzania. This goal coupled with rising anti-American sentiment due to opposition to the Vietnam War led to the phasing out of the Peace Corps in Tanzania in 1969. When volunteers were invited back to Tanzania in 1979, at Nyerere's request, they maintained a much lower profile and shifted from programs with an overwhelming emphasis on education
to those which involved more community development projects such as health care and food production.

Despite recurring political problems connected to the service role, the Peace Corps continues to meet its second goal -- to enable Third World countries to learn more about Americans. Americans have too often been thought of as rich, overbearing, un-caring. As volunteers in St. Lucia we were continually embarrassed by the American tourists who disembarked from the cruise ships for several hours each week and headed directly to the duty-free shops. Their arrogance and insensitivity were appalling. Is it any wonder that they were referred to as "ugly Americans"?

Peace Corps volunteers have presented an entirely different image of Americans. From the beginning they have lived simply with the local people, eaten their food, spoken their language. Their willingness to live modestly with the people has earned for volunteers the respect, trust, and friendship of those with whom they share their lives. As Ambassador of the Organization of African Unity to the United Nations Oumarou Garba Youssoufou has stated, the Peace Corps is "one of the greatest contributions of American foreign policy." He considers Peace Corps volunteers the best ambassadors that America has and the reason that America today has more friends than enemies in Africa.

The third goal of the Peace Corps, to increase America's understanding of Third World peoples, may ultimately prove to have the greatest impact. Returned volunteers speak repeatedly of their Peace Corps experience as having "changed their lives." Volunteers have learned first hand of cultures and ways of life vastly different from their own. A volunteer living in India observed, "People die here for want of so little." How many Americans have had the painful privilege of learning that lesson? Volunteers have realized that individuals can make a difference, that we need not sit by impotently while others suffer. Volunteers have also come to appreciate the complexities of world problems and realize that there are no easy answers.

The Peace Corps and the Future

Reflecting on the Peace Corps at twenty-five, it is difficult to objectively determine how effective the Peace Corps has been in meeting its goals. How does one evaluate the long-term impact of the re-training of thousands of teachers, or the immunization of thousands of children? How can we measure the effect that the Peace Corps has had on the lives of more than 100,000 returned volunteers?

The fact that the Peace Corps has survived two and a half decades of war and politics is, perhaps, evidence of its effectiveness. The number of volunteers in the field has varied from a high of nearly sixteen thousand in 1966 to only four thousand in the early 1970s. During the Nixon years the Peace Corps was submerged within ACTION, an umbrella agency for all American volunteers. At that time, according to Sargent Shriver, "The Peace Corps no longer had an identity. It had no stationery, no director, no publicity. It wasn't even in the phone book. The Peace Corps continued to do, however, the work it had set out to do."

Today the Peace Corps has rebounded. Loret Ruppe, appointed Director by President Reagan in 1981, has proved to be one of the organization's strongest supporters since Shriver. Under her leadership the Peace Corps has moved out of ACTION and is once again independent. Last year, 100,000 Americans requested information from the Peace Corps and 3,400 were recruited. In early 1986 Congress passed a bill allowing the agency to grow from its present 6,000 to 10,000 by 1990. The 1980s has proved so far to be a decade of renewed promise for the Peace Corps.

While Congress is now spending hundreds of millions of dollars to fortify and arm embassies throughout the world, Peace Corps volunteers live without fear in sixty developing nations. "Why is it," as Sargent Shriver suggests, "that volunteers need not be afraid of terrorists? Why is it that volunteers have become the wanted not the ugly Americans? The answer is selfless service."

Both overseas and at home, the Peace Corps often transcends political differences. President Reagan, on the occasion of the Peace Corps' twenty-fifth anniversary stated, "In a troubled world, the Peace Corps is waging peace. Every day in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, they answer the cries of hunger, disease, poverty, and illiteracy by showing America at its best ... This is the American way."

What should be the role of the Peace Corps in the future? At a time when there is more poverty and disease in the world than at any other time in history, and while the specter of nuclear annihilation constantly haunts us, the Peace Corps must fight for its existence every year to get appropriations from Congress. What kind of priorities as a nation do we have when the budget for the Army Band is nearly as high as that of the Peace Corps? We believe that America can show the world a commitment to the cause of world peace by maintaining a viable Peace Corps. The Peace Corps has demonstrated over a period of twenty-five years that individuals can make a difference. The Peace Corps is proof that a foreign policy dedicated to serving, not colonizing or conquering, can be effective in promoting world peace and understanding. It is our hope that the Peace Corps can continue to be a beacon of hope leading Americans to the realization that we are not only citizens of America, but citizens of the world.

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Vietnam and Revisionism

David Culver

American Colonel Summers: "You know you never defeated us on the battlefield."
North Vietnamese Colonel Tu: "That may be so but it is also irrelevant."
Conversation in Hanoi, April 1975

Last year General William Westmoreland told a Boston College audience that politicians caused America's defeat in Vietnam. "The Vietnam War was not lost on the battlefield," the Commander of United States forces in Vietnam said, "but lost in the halls of Congress."

Westmoreland's charge reflects recent Vietnam War revisionism, the effort to rationalize America's defeat by claiming that United States forces were prevented from winning. Besides the politicians, who reduced military spending, the revisionists' cast of villains includes the media and antiwar dissenters, who turned the nation against the war, and various Presidents, who restricted military operations.

If polls are to be believed, these interpretations are widely held by Americans, especially Vietnam veterans. President Ronald Reagan subscribes to this view. Shortly after his election in 1980, he declared that American troops "were denied permission to win." Revisionism is reflected in our popular culture, reaching its most extreme form in the film Rambo, which has its macho superhero ask his superior, "Do we get to win this time?"

That such interpretations strike a responsive chord is understandable. "The war that went wrong" has been a painful and traumatic episode for Americans accustomed to military victory. The cheering for Rambo reflects the need of many to resurrect a measure of national honor lost in the war. Revisionism salves the national psyche and restores a self-image of power. However comforting, though, revisionism is simplistic and is narrowly focused. It ignores both the strength of Vietnamese nationalism and the weakness of our client state, South Vietnam, historical factors which go far to explain the outcome of the war. But to understand better this lack of historical perspective, a brief review of American involvement in Vietnam is in order.

As nearly everyone knows, America's longest and most unpopular war had its origins in the Cold War and the containment of communism that developed in the wake of World War II. As the Soviet Union tightened its grip on Eastern Europe, an alarmed President Harry Truman in 1947 committed the American government to combating Soviet expansion in Europe. The Cold War was official, and containment -- the effort to limit communism to the frontiers already under Soviet control -- became America's principal Cold War strategy.

But by the end of the decade, the United States seemed less secure, communism more threatening. In 1949 the communists triumphed in China and the Russians acquired the bomb. At home a Red Scare was under way, distorting public debate and foreign policy. Soon led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, conservatives vilified the Truman Administration for being soft on communism and for "losing" China. Washington was in near-panic when it decided to extend containment to Vietnam by openly supporting France in its war in Indochina.

The First (or French) Indochina War (1946-54) erupted when France tried to reestablish its empire in Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia) after World War II. Meanwhile, however, in 1945 Ho Chi Minh, a communist and nationalist, had declared the independence of Vietnam and soon war broke out between the French and the Vietminh, a coalition of nationalist groups led by the communists. By late 1949, however, with the war going badly, France appealed for American aid. In the wake of China's fall, Washington, feeling bound to bolster an important ally whose support the United States needed in Europe, acceded to French demands, and in early 1950 took the first step toward a 25-year-war.

This decision to extend containment to Vietnam was part of a new American strategy to counter communist aggression anywhere in the world. "The assault on free institutions is worldwide," a 1950 National Security Coun-
era over, then, the United States chose military intervention was seriously considered by President Dwight Eisenhower, who resisted subservience to both the Soviet Union and China. Ho's drive for power was indigenous and was not initiated by Moscow. Indeed, it was part of a nationalist movement that was sweeping Asia, a powerful historical phenomenon not fully appreciated by American policy makers, nor more recently by revisionists. As George Herring, the author of a major study of the Vietnam War concludes, "Regardless of his ideology, Ho by 1950 had captured the standard of Vietnamese nationalism, and by supporting France, ... the United States was attaching itself to a losing cause." With the colonial era over, then, the United States chose the wrong side of history.

The Vietnam policies developed by the Truman Administration were continued by President Dwight Eisenhower (1953-61). American aid to France grew steadily (by 1954 America was paying 78% of the cost of the war), but it could not prevent a French defeat. The climax came in early 1954 when the Vietminh surrounded a large French force at Dienbienphu. American military intervention was seriously considered, but rejected by the Eisenhower Administration, and the French force surrendered.

At a conference in Geneva, meanwhile, the future of Indochina was being hammered out at the expense of France. The resulting Geneva Accords of 1954 (which the United States never signed) provided for a military cease-fire, French withdrawal from North Vietnam, and a temporary partition of Vietnam pending elections scheduled for 1956.

While highly critical of the French for any compromise with communism, the United States moved to establish South Vietnam as a barrier to further communist advances in Southeast Asia. Containment would consist of restricting communism to North Vietnam and treating South Vietnam as an independent country and part of the "free" world.

Despite the French failure and strong warnings of the difficulties of nation-building, the United States pushed the French aside and moved quickly to prop up the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem. A nationalist and strong anti-communist, Diem clearly illustrated the enormous task in establishing South Vietnam as the "cornerstone of the Free world in Southeast Asia." He was a Catholic elitist in a Buddhist land, who had many enemies and little popular support. He lacked Ho's reputation, charisma, and vision for the future of Vietnam. The weakness of Diem (and of all South Vietnamese governments) was an intractable problem that would plague American policy to the end and, the revisionists notwithstanding, would have much to do with the war's conclusions.

With American support, Diem consolidated his rule and cancelled the national elections called for by the Geneva Accords. Soon, however, he faced a revolt. The Vietcong, Diem's pejorative term for Vietnamese communists, began a struggle to achieve what they believed had been denied them when Diem cancelled the elections. By the time Eisenhower left office in early 1961, the insurgency, fed by Diem's unpopularity and increasing support from the North, had grown into a formidable movement.

Eisenhower's successor, John F. Kennedy (1961-63), became the third president to try to contain communism in Southeast Asia. Convinced that the struggle there was a test of American resolve, Kennedy was determined not to "lose" Vietnam to communism (no one could ever forget the pounding the Truman Administration took for "losing" China), and so increased the number of American military advisors to 16,500. But Washington could not provide political stability in Saigon or transform Diem into "the Winston Churchill of Southeast Asia," as Vice President Lyndon Johnson publicly hailed him. (Privately, the crude Texan was more candid: "Shit, man, he's the only boy we got there.") By 1963, when it was clear that Diem was losing the war, the Kennedy Administration approved of a coup against Diem, who was subsequently murdered.

In three weeks Kennedy himself was dead. The new President, Lyndon Johnson, inherited a deteriorating situation, despite Diem's elimination. Convinced that American honor, security, and prestige were at stake, Johnson moved to prevent a communist victory.

Following his election in 1964, Johnson began the fateful military involvement. Selective air strikes in February 1965 were followed three weeks later by the massive bombing of North Vietnam and, soon after, by the decision to use American soldiers in battle. By the summer of 1965, the United States was fighting a major undeclared war in Vietnam.

The Johnson Administration believed that a few Marines would be a quick fix, but the war now acquired a life of its own. American escalation was matched by Hanoi with support from China and the Soviet Union. What a frustrated President Johnson exclaimed in 1965 applied to any year of the war: "I can't get out. I can't finish it with what I got. So what the hell can I do?" The answer was more of the same, hoping that a few more troops (550,000 by 1968) or a little more bombing would break the communists' will to fight.

But despite government claims that victory was "around the corner," the United States was losing the war. As if to underscore this, the communists in January 1968 launched the Tet Offensive, a massive attack throughout the south. The communists suffered heavy losses, but not before Americans watching in living color as the Vietcong attacked the American Embassy in Saigon. Tet's psychological effect was devastating and public opinion turned sharply against the war.
Tet also claimed a political victim. Two months after Tet, President Johnson told a national TV audience he would not run for reelection. He had tried to fight a limited war, quickly, cheaply, and seemed baffled by an enemy that was willing to take such losses and continue to fight. "Just look at the figures and you'll see that they have failed," Johnson said. "Ho's people are just not telling him about his losses." In 1946 Ho had declared, "kill ten of our men and we will kill one of yours. In the end, you will lose and I will win." He was speaking to the French, but the equation applied no less to the Americans. North Vietnam, willing and able to fight longer, would outlast the United States.

If the war forced Johnson from the White House, it helped elect Richard Nixon (1969-74), who was determined to end the war but not lose it. His goal was to preserve South Vietnam as a non-communist state, and his strategy was "Vietnamization" -- turn the fighting over to the South Vietnamese, while withdrawing American troops. To compel Hanoi to make concessions, Nixon intensified the war. The war soon resumed, and in April 1975 the communists marched triumphantly into Saigon, drawing the painful war to a close. 58,000 Americans had died. Twenty-five years of effort had ended in failure.

Americans barely noticed South Vietnam's collapse, preferring to put the disaster out of their minds. The nation was spared a bitter witch hunt in search of those who "lost Vietnam." No one seemed to want to know. But the war still haunts the American memory and colors United States foreign policy. The so-called "Vietnam syndrome" has inhibited the United States abroad. "Will Nicaragua be another Vietnam?" is the subject of debate and cover stories. Thus the question returns to why we lost and the "lessons" of the war. The question is not just academic; it bears on the issue of American power in the world and under what circumstances the United States should again send troops to fight abroad.

Though questions persist and a consensus on the war is still emerging, the revisionists' claim that the defeat was largely self-inflicted is a dubious proposition. Congress, to return to Westmoreland's charge, continued to vote funds well after the public had turned irrevocably against the war. The media, too, reflected, rather than shaped, public opinion. As George Herring has recently written, "Careful research has shown that ... the media and the anti-war movement played no more than peripheral roles in turning the nation against the war."

As for the charge that the military was handcuffed by civilian leaders, the United States could have bombed North Vietnam back to the Stone Age and invaded the North. But would the public have supported a costly invasion against a dedicated foe that would have risked war with China and the Soviet Union (China had threatened to respond if the United States had moved north). In any case, what would have been left after "victory?" As Senator Stuart Symington asked of Secretary of State Dean Rusk: "What do we win if we win?" At the least, it would have meant an indefinite American occupation of Vietnam with all its costs and strains.

Revisionism also underestimates the power of Vietnamese nationalism, whose banner had been captured by Ho and whose goal was to rid Vietnam of foreigners. Secretary Rusk said after the war that he had made two mistakes: underestimating the enemy and overestimating the patience of the American people. Rusk's assessment of the determination, even fanaticism, of the enemy, was correct, but he was wrong about the American public. Sentiment turned against the war because the American government could not persuade its citizens that South Vietnam was vital to our survival and that the war had any chance of success. In the end the public recognized that the American goal of propping up South Vietnam was unachievable. Our client state, flabby and corrupt, could not provide the cohesion or stability to become a viable anti-communist state. And no amount of American aid could change that.

Colonel Summers was correct. American soldiers fought bravely and won the battles. But as Colonel Tu said, it was irrelevant. Vietnam required a political solution; America tried to impose a military solution. Despite all its might, the United States could not impose its will. While Americans discuss the lessons of the war, they seem to recognize one chastening lesson: there are limits to American power in a highly complex world.

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La France et les français vus par les voyageurs américains 1814-1948.
(2 vol.)
by
G. de Bertier de Sauvigny

In a day when even elementary school pupils venture abroad, visitors' opinions of countries not their own are surely commonplace. Students of American history are only too familiar with Europe's views of us as expressed in a day when even elementary school pupils venture abroad, visitors' opinions of countries not their own are surely commonplace. Students of American history are only too familiar with Europe's views of us as expressed in Alexis de Toqueville's De la Démocratie en Amérique, Frances Trollope's Domestic Manners of Americans, or Dickens' comical description of stagecoach travel in the States. What others have thought of us is no secret.

But what have we, in our travels, thought of them? A delightful and splendidly researched answer, at least as to Paris and France, may be found in Bertier de Sauvigny's recent volumes covering the first half of the nineteenth century. Renowned as the authority on French history and culture, most recently the biographer of Metternich, Bertier is as comfortably at home in the States as in his native France, having taught in many of the great universities throughout the nation, and numbering among his friends distinguished American historians. His approach to both his homeland and American visitors to it is a provocative olio of admiration, irony, good-humored raillery, and fond indulgence.

Bertier's roster of voyageurs includes names as well-known as novelist James Fenimore Cooper, historian George Bancroft, orator Edward Everett, suffragette Julia Ward Howe, artist Rembrandt Peale, and educator Emma Willard. Altogether he has selected, from an estimated 30,000 Americans who crossed the Atlantic between 1814 and 1848, some 170 travellers who were not only literate but literary, as these fastidiously selected excerpts from their published works attest. They represent a wide range of views: those of doctors and medical students (25), clergymen (18), women (15), men of letters (13), journalists (10), artists (7), along with others in government service (army, navy, diplomacy, and consular service), bankers, merchants, lawyers, and other men of affairs. As Cooper observed, "There were no two travellers who saw precisely the same thing or who saw them with the same eyes." Yet, as Jean-Max Guieu of Georgetown University comments, reviewing the first volume of Bertier's exhilarating survey in the French Review (57, October 1983, 125), "The contribution of this work, which in spite of the multiplicity of voices ... shows such consonance of opinion, rests notably in this multiple American vision of France under the constitutional monarchy, at the precise époque of Toqueville."

Since these Americans taken together commented on almost every aspect of French society and culture, the twenty-six chapters of Volume I (published in 1982) furnish a veritable Guide Bleu to the City of Lights and la belle France surrounding it in the days of Washington Irving, Samuel Topliff, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Margaret Fuller, Samuel F. B. Morse, Lewis Cass, George Catlin, and the lesser lights who visited there. The reader travels by proxy the voyage across the Atlantic, visits the cafés and restaurants, strolls the streets and public gardens, visits prisons and cemeteries, and views with awe the museums and monuments. Beyond Paris he leisurely explores the départements where the French were predominantly a rural, agricultural people. In short, through the eyes of Bertier's delegates, one generally explores the visible forms of France et les français.

The second volume of this engaging retrospect, published three years later, is even more to this reviewer's liking. As the third major division of the whole work, it centers on the people themselves, their character, personali-ty, their daily life -- economic, political, intellectual, religious -- giving one the sense of actually living in the France into which Emile Zola was born.

The position of women startled some Americans. "Women of all classes knew business and managed these affairs as well and perhaps better than men." Though until 1838 they were forbidden on the floor of the Bourse, they speculated in the stock market from the small Café du Report. In France women of sixty-five were more charming, better company, than twenty-five-year-olds were thought to be in other countries. Married women enjoyed greater independence than in the States, and in Paris seemed free to go anywhere unescorted. Many dressed as men, and one tailor specialized in adjusting masculine clothes to the womanly figure. Bertier comments dryly, "The conduct of George Sand would appear less extravagant than one was sometimes tempted to believe."

Bertier is equally tongue-in-cheek introducing the section on dogs: "Finally one must not forget a not inconsiderable portion of the parisienne population constituted by its inhabitants with four paws. The stranger is always surprised at their number and the importance humans attribute to them." The Americans most astonished by the rank canines enjoyed in France were the Iowa Indians whom George Catlin had brought with him to Paris. After taking a census of ladies with dogs, and the numerous pets -- leashed or un-leashed, riding en voiture or on their mistresses’ arm -- the Indians presented it gravely to their guide, inquiring why dogs were kissed on the mouth, but children on the forehead. Particularly, after visiting an orphanage, they demanded why these women did not adopt a baby, instead of a dog.

La France et les français must be read in its entirety (with a French dictionary close at hand) for the density of its detail, the elegance of its style, the panoramic picture it furnishes, and the sheer pleasure of its lore. Although Americans continued to believe their own country superior to any other, many left France with the sentiments of young Augusta Colles, who confided to her journal, "When I left home I thought it could never happen that I could cry on leaving any other country ... but then, I had not seen Paris."

Annabelle M. Melville
Professor of History Emerita
Wickedness: A Philosophical Essay
Mary Midgley
Routledge & Kegan Paul 1984

Why do people act as badly as they sometimes do? Why are human beings callous, cruel, vindictive, selfish, exploitive, manipulative? What are the sources of human wickedness, evil, wrong doing, vice, immorality? Philosophers have long worked to expand our comprehension of such positive notions as goodness, morality, duty, virtue and happiness. By comparison, their consideration of the nature of evil and its sources has been slight, most often peripheral to other inquiries. Mary Midgley’s Wickedness offers at least a partial corrective to this neglect. Her work is not merely the product of an intellectual’s curiosity about an underexplored topic. Midgley knows that evil undermines us and we have no hope of controlling it unless we understand evil and its origins.

Where should we look to uncover the spring of evil in our lives? To the mysterious workings of God? To a cosmic diabolic force which opposes the separate force of goodness? To a destructive element within nature? To the dynamics of flawed social structures? With varying degrees of thoroughness, Midgley considers and rejects each of these approaches to understanding human evil in terms of something external to individuals. The locus of the insertion of evil into human reality is human beings themselves. And inquiry into such evil must focus on human nature. To her examination of evil and human nature, Midgley brings the conviction that we are, above all, persons, requiring an integrated personality, integrity and responsibility, in pursuit of a good life. Accordingly, her book has at least three primary goals: to dissuade us from misguided approaches to understanding evil, to expand our comprehension of persons as purposive agents, and to identify the sources of evil within human nature. Throughout, Wickedness builds upon a profound project to deepen our self-knowledge carried out in two of her earlier works, Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature and Heart and Mind: The Varieties of Moral Experience.

The prophet Jeremiah knew where to look for the root of evil – to the human heart. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9) Midgley agrees that the source of human evil is the heart. But contrary to the implication of Jeremiah’s question, she believes that we must attempt to know the heart and that we can know it. Our biggest obstacle to doing so is a variety of misconceptions about the motives, drives and feelings harbored in the heart. There is a common tendency to believe that human nature is polluted by one or several inherently evil motives or drives. For example, aggression is sometimes viewed as an innate, positive, solitary, irresistible drive which alone causes human wickedness. Midgley argues that such a view is completely mistaken and tends to reflect an untenable conception of human motivation. Not all wickedness is aggressive, much of it results from other motivations, e.g., fear, sloth, greed, habit. Nor is all aggression wicked. ‘Aggression’ refers to an inclination to attack others, most often out of anger. It functions mainly to drive others away, thereby providing individuals with the space needed to carry out the business of living. As a motive, it produces evil only when it is out of control.

Midgley finds fear as a motivating force to provide an interesting parallel to aggression. Certainly, fear is an innate element in human beings and it can lead to despicable acts and worthless lives. This is especially true when our response to fear is cowardice. However, fear is an essential aspect of human existence and our response to it need not, and often does not, result in any wrongdoing. Fear is an emotive recognition of danger to something of value, whether it be oneself, others or things. The pursuit of well-being requires such recognition. Fear becomes destructive when we fear the wrong things or when our fear is out of proportion to the danger encountered. Fear and aggression are natural motives and essential elements of a good life “because they are responses to evil, and there are always some evils which ought to be feared, and some which ought to be attacked.” Our task is not to eradicate these motives or to become fatalistic about them, but to direct them properly.

Midgley’s approach is distinctly Aristotelian. Human beings have a variety of natural capacities and needs. All of us tend to become angry, fearful, competitive, desirous of pleasure and so forth. Wickedness does not arise in human life simply because we have such motives. Each of these natural motives is linked with a wide range of possible behavior and only some acts within each range are wicked. Our propensity for good or evil depends largely on the character traits we develop in connection with each of these motivational capacities. Virtuous traits are life enhancing and bring us to feel anger, fear, desire for pleasure, etc. at the right times, with reference to the right objects, toward the right people and with the right motive. However, as Midgley notes, “to be capable of these virtues is also to be capable of corresponding vices, just as the possibility of physical strength carries with it that of physical weakness.” Here she develops the idea, deriving from the ancient Greeks, that evil is essentially negative, a type of dysfunction, a general sort of failure to live as we are capable of living. The problem of dysfunction is complicated by the fact that our various natural motives tend to conflict. It is a matter for the heart or character to strike compromises among the strong, constant feelings and motives which clash within us. The kind of character we have determines what sort of compromises we are likely to strike and, thereby, whether and to what extent we bring evil into the world. Compromises for the good arise when we view our motives and feelings not as occasional and isolated, but as part of an ordered set within the context of a way of life. Motives and feelings are linked with universal human needs. Needs come as a set and have some structure. “When increasing intelligence brings consciousness conflicts which in other animals seem to pass unnoticed, human beings are forced, on pain of disintegration, to form some kind of policies for reconciling their contrary impulses. This makes some kind of morality necessary, and the nature of the contending motives lays limits on what kind it can be.”

Working with this model of human agency, she explores the development and manifestations of the dysfunctional root of human wickedness. Inner conflict between competing motives is a typical and constant feature of our personal identity. A good and viable way of life requires self-knowledge, self-criticism and the maintenance of an inward balance of competing motives. However, we have
a tendency to divide ourselves into the self we esteem and affirm and its darker shadow which we deny. Thus, we refuse to acknowledge motives which are in fact our own and regard them as alien to us, often projecting them onto other persons. Through this self-deception vice easily grips us and becomes especially pernicious. When the balance of motives is insecure and incomplete, obsession becomes a possibility, with all motives giving way to a ruling passion. Certain desires become detached from the rest of character, which atrophies so that the person disintegrates. The badness of bad motives most often derives from the breakdown of an internal system of counterbalancing motives, especially concern for others.

Though Midgley focuses on the source of evil, she also inquires about a large variety of topics, including the nature of science, moral scepticism, determinism, free will, chance, communal persecution, temptation, cultural relativism, Freudian theory and evolution. While this rich diversity of topics makes her work fascinating, the nucleus of ideas connecting these inquiries is sometimes lost and generally underdeveloped. Also, some of her key notions -- e.g., "wickedness," "motive," "agency," "drive" -- are desperately in need of more careful analysis given the heavy work they do in her book. Overall, Midgley's work is a worthy complement to two other recent philosophical treatises on human evil -- Judith Shklar's Ordinary Vices and Ronald Milos's Immorality.

David Cheney
Professor of Philosophy

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**Actual Minds, Possible Worlds**

Jerome Bruner

Harvard University Press

Cambridge and London, 1986

Let's assume you have read some of the articles in this issue of the Bridgewater Review before getting to this one. It is unlikely that you stopped to consider how the reading of them resulted in your knowing something new, not just in terms of how your eyes work, or even how the brain records information, but how the whole phenomenally complex process operates. Such abstract and involved issues rarely intrude on our everyday lives. We read or watch or do something and learn from the experience and that, as the saying goes, it that.

It is such hard work to consider issues like the relationship between language and knowing. Most of us lack the knowledge, time or skill to even begin. However, such barriers should not reduce our interest in difficult questions, especially when there are thinkers like Jerome Bruner who can bring the results of their comprehensive studies to us in clear, energetic language. Bruner shows in his newest book, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, that the effort needed to study such large, abstract questions is worthwhile.

Bruner has long sought the key to the relationship between language and knowing. Although he is recognized as an important developmental psychologist, he also has the rare ability of the philosopher to elevate discussions to the level of what it means to be human. Of course, nothing is more uniquely human than our capacity for utilizing language to determine and understand our circumstances.

Bruner's most recent work with Harvard University's Project Zero research into the relationship between artistry, language, and culture generated enormous expectation and promise.

In *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Bruner delivers on the promise, accomplishing three significant goals. First, he presents the results of his research into important aspects of developmental psychology. Second, Bruner has gathered and synthesized a much larger body of relevant thought, from a great many of the world's outstanding theorists in very diverse fields, to shed new light on the entire language process and its specific application in literature. Third, Bruner's work in this book provides a secure new base from which further exploration can be carried out. All the bricks of this intellectual foundation, no matter how widely scattered their points of origin, have been solidly mortared together, and the whole has greater strength by virtue of having been put together by a thinker of Bruner's prominence.

At its highest level, AM, PW represents a new approach, a new view of how the mind works. The author guides the reader carefully along the way, writing about the most complex research into the language process in his own clear and energetic language. The reader never feels pulled or pushed along awkwardly, but rather simply follows step by step. The view is fascinating.

There are three major areas. Each is composed of two or more essays originally written between 1980 and 1984, now rewritten and realigned as parts of a comprehensive whole.

Part I, Two Natural Kinds begins with ages-old questions concerning the problems of multiple interpretations or meanings in literature. These essays do not provide answers, but suggest new approaches to asking questions. Bruner contends that in literature, the plot, (composed of a line of incidents) and the themes (composed of a pattern of meaning) continually interact so that the reader must respond by adjusting understanding while continuing to read. The reader changes through the process. Bruner distinguishes between what he calls "actual" and "virtual" text. The actual, or printed text causes the reader to perform by creating a virtual, or interpreted text.

Reading a good story and performing the meanings of the virtual text represent a way of thinking, a system of description and explanation very different from another mode, that of the well-formed argument, the logico-scientific or the formal mathematical system of description and explanation. Bruner calls the second mode of thought paradigmatic and the literary mode of thought narrative. The paradigmatic mode achieves truth through proof: if x, then y. The narrative mode achieves lifelikeness through the appearance of truth: Romeo died, then Juliet. "Great fiction, like great mathematics, requires the transformation of intuitions into expressions in a symbolic system -- natural language or a more artificialized form of it." (The paradigmatic mode can prove truths once they have been formulated, but not until then: if x must first be intuited. It may shock us that Newton and Einstein created their respective theories of gravity and relativity suddenly, as whole pictures, not mathematical symbols, yet we expect that kind of sudden whole creation of our authors.)

In the narrative mode, the action includes a consciousness, which knows, feels, thinks about presupposed circumstances. These presuppositions imply multiple meanings when they are triggered through complex
language transformations (verb forms which include the psychological process in their actions): Tom Sawyer seems to enjoy whitewashing the fence. Bruner describes this process as "subjunctivizing reality [through language] by triggering presuppositions."

Readers also have a strategy and a repertoire that they bring to bear on a text. The reader's strategy determines how the presuppositions of the virtual text are reconciled with the reader's repertoire of possible human realities.

These subjunctive realities, created for and by the reader, exist among many possible realities, many possible worlds. "It is far more important, for appreciating the human condition, to understand the ways human beings construct their worlds" than it is to compare them to a concept of a fundamental, objective reality. Artists create possible worlds through metaphor, which functions as a comparison that transforms the given, the conventional presuppositions, as the actual text is transformed into the virtual text. Scientists also engage in a wide ranging variety of world making, (sometimes even transforming the given for description and explanation, as in current theoretical physics). The proof of a scientific theory achieves "a universality through context independence...invariant across human intentions and human plights." The appearance of truth of a work of art achieves a universality through "context sensitivity...understanding the world as it reflects the requirements of living in it." Considering Tom Sawyer and $E = mc^2$, each is a comparison between the variable and the given, and experiencing each creates a transformed world. There are many possible worlds from which to choose.

Part II, Language and Reality, begins with an examination of the ways in which the social, interactive nature of human beings requires a complex set of shared assumptions and beliefs about mechanisms, results, intentions, definitions, and so on. The process of these transactions is negotiated by "the capacity of language to create and stipulate realities of its own...by warning, by encouraging, by naming, and by the manner in which words invite us to create 'realities' in the world to correspond to our product, our laws, our nation, product, antimat...the Renaissance." (The law, for example, creates corresponding realities, such as legislatures, courts, police, jails, and rehabilitation centers.) Individual behavior in a human culture depends upon extensive negotiation of agreement for the transactions to take place, comparable to interpreting an ambiguous text in literature. In this sense, interpreting the literature of our culture seems to provide "a map of possible roles and of possible worlds in which action, thought, and self-definition are permissible (or desirable)...the major link between our own sense of self and our sense of others in the social world around us."

As individuals, and as a whole culture, human beings interpret given circumstances in different ways at different times, for example in ways dependent upon the age of the interpreter. "Contrary to common sense, there is no unique 'real world' that pre-exists and is independent of human mental activity and human symbolic language; (but) what we call the world is a product of some mind whose symbolic procedures construct the world." The primary difference between arts and sciences is not the conflict between objectivity and subjectivity. It is rather a difference in the use of symbol systems, but both attempt to understand the world by creating a version of it with a symbolic language. (A mathematical version and a biological version can seem to differ as greatly as a sculptural and a musical version.) In every version, the reality is what we stipulate, rather than find, and what we make of it in thought, action, and emotion. "We know the world in different ways, from different stances, and each of the ways in which we know it produces different structures, or representations, or, indeed, 'realities'...We give different 'reality' status to experiences as we create from our differently formed imaginations with the world....We place a canonical value on certain stances that yield certain forms of knowledge, certain possible worlds." The rational, logical, scientific, paradigmatic worlds now seem to dominate Western cultures, yet multiple versions of reality, or forms that reality can take, or possible worlds, can be accepted as independently truthful, despite the apparent contradictions at the heart of such tasks as determining school curriculum. (We accept and try to understand the truthful coexistence of biology and friendship, psychology and justice, physics and music.)

In Part III, Acting in Constructed Worlds, Bruner explores the tangible effects of language on the multiple social worlds we construct. "A culture itself comprises an ambiguous text that is constantly in need of interpretation by those who participate in it." The constant recreation of our culture through reinterpretation and renegotiation of its multiple meanings establishes the concept of culture as a forum for that process whereby "language creates social reality." There are three forms in which we structure experiences, from which we construct our many realities: the experience of the senses; the symbolically encoded experience we gain through interacting with our social world; and the vicarious experience we achieve in the act of reading. The narrative mode of thought in our culture's literature is essential in teaching us how in interpreting, negotiate, and understand our evolving culture. When developmental psychology becomes an ever more active influence in the interpretation of our culture, the theory of the evolution of human beings as a species seems to enlarge. Not only genes, but culture as well is responsible for the development of brain function. "The literary artist...becomes an agent in the evolution of mind -- but not without the co-optation of the reader as his fellow author."

In AM, PW Jerome Bruner has set himself a seemingly impossible task, as all explorers do. He rarely delivers less than he promised, and often more than we have expected. His focus, however, is limited by its bias toward a paradigmatic, logical-scientific approach, even when evaluating the narrative mode of thought. Bruner counts the number of verb transformations in literature. It seems an odd and limiting analytical tool for someone who has argued that literature is by nature metaphorical. A more holistic process for the analysis of literature would seem appropriate, given Bruner's theories.

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The Politics of Literature: What Makes a Masterwork?

Charles Fanning

One Indian summer afternoon in October I attended a meeting of the college committee whose job it is to approve or reject the courses that our students may take for "General Education" credits. One course that I designed and have taught twice, "The Literature of Immigration and Ethnicity," came under fire from some committee members. Their main objection was the absence from the reading list of books that the committee considered to be "literary masterworks of Western civilization." Not much happened in the way of defining such "masterworks." It was assumed that we all knew one when we saw one. The only title mentioned was Moby Dick.

Herman Melville is, in fact, an instructive case, though not in a way that the committee would necessarily welcome. When Moby Dick first appeared in 1851, the reviews were few, unenthusiastic, and uncomprehending. So disillusioned was Melville by this, and the even more negative response to his next novel, Pierre, that he virtually stopped writing fiction, although he was in his early thirties and had 40 more years to live. By the time of his death in 1891, he was a forgotten man. Here Melville's reputation languished until the publication in 1921 of a study of his life and career which began a reassessment that culminated in his canonization as perhaps THE great American novelist. The most important document in Melville's apocrypha was a book published in 1941 by Harvard professor F. O. Matthiessen: American Renaissance.

This book had itself become canonical by the time I entered Harvard College as a freshman more callow than most in 1960. Matthiessen had died five years earlier, but his book was already discussed in reverent tones as the Bible of American literary study. The book discusses five writers who Matthiessen contended were responsible singlehandedly for a renaissance in American letters that had taken place between 1850 and 1855, when their masterworks appeared. These writers were Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville, whom Matthiessen called "the American with the richest natural gifts as a writer."

Now, I would no more have questioned Matthiessen's litany of the great American writers (accepted as gospel by my professors, some of whom had been his students) than I would at the time have questioned the gospel itself. In fact, it took me 20 years to ask what now seem two obvious questions: what do these writers have in common, and who is missing from the list? First, all five were men. All came from white Anglo-Saxon Protestant families that had been in America for at least a hundred years. All were from either Boston or New York. Second, who is missing? Women and ethnic and racial minorities. You wouldn't know from reading this book that there were any nineteenth-century American writers worth reading who were not East Coast, male WASPs. Moreover, there are significant gaps in subject matter. You wouldn't know from reading Matthiessen that any writers had dealt with working-class life, factory work, families and child-rearing, attitudes toward women and minorities, or issues of immigration, ethnicity, and assimilation. Had they been asked, Matthiessen and his successors would have said that there were few writers worth reading other than the Big Five, and that the missing subjects were peripheral to an understanding of the essence of America. They would have said that Moby Dick, The Scarlet Letter, Leaves of Grass, Emerson's essays, and Walden were the masterworks of nineteenth-century American literature. This gets us to the issue of how and by whom the canon of masterworks is determined. Probably the most familiar and widely accepted notion is that a classic is a work that has withstood the "test of time." A classic formulation thereof is that of Samuel Johnson, who declared in his Preface to Shakespeare that masterpieces are those works that "unassisted by interest or passion, have passed through variations of taste and changes of manners, and, as they devolved from one generation to another, have received new honors at every transmission." Most interesting to me in Johnson's definition is the notion that a book makes its own way, "unassisted by interest or passion"; that is, that no special interests are at work in a book's ultimate emergence as a masterwork. In those halcyon days of the Kennedy administration I swallowed this sort of thing whole, but such an idea now appears to me to be strikingly naive. It takes a leap of faith to absolve literature of the tangle of motives, the subtext of psychological, social, and economic self-interest, that surely informs every other area of human endeavor. It now seems to me obvious that a literary reputation is no
more arrived at by objective standards than any other kind of reputation. Instead, it is most definitely what I would call a POLITICAL matter. The people who write, read, judge, and teach literature are no more or less capable of objective evaluation than anyone else. They form interest groups as inevitably as any other aggregate of human beings whose interests are served or harmed by the decisions they make.

There have always been established elites in literature -- groups of people in power who have a significant measure of control over what gets published (and thus read), praised (and thus taught), and eventually canonized as a masterwork. It seems to me that there have been three such elites controlling the American literary canon since publishing became big business in the 1830s. Through the late nineteenth century, the publishers were in control. By the turn of the century, the great age of magazines, journalists and reviewers had taken over. And in our time, the literary establishment has become the academy -- college and university professors.

The "test of time" thesis argues that a book remains popular over a long period of time, during which short-sighted cavils and contemporary prejudices drop away to leave -- lo and behold -- a masterwork. Now this certainly doesn't describe the emergence of Moby Dick. On the contrary, after 70 years of total neglect, Melville suddenly began to be read again -- thanks to two influential critics from the literary establishment: his biographer Raymond Weaver and F. O. Matthiessen. Actually, this kind of shot-in-the-dark rediscovery is at least as common in literary study as the steady progression of the test of time. What happens is that a particular cultural generation, because of its preoccupations and predilections, becomes receptive to new and different works. Certain cracks appear in the armor of accepted dogma preached by whatever elite is currently established as keepers of the kingdom of culture. Thus, Weaver and Matthiessen broke through the hegemony of late-nineteenth-century "Gilded Age" critics, who believed that literature ought to provide ideal examples and moral uplift, in order to praise Melville's fierce grappling with deeper, more disturbing issues.

For a variety of reasons, ranging from accepted ideas of role distribution to sheer prejudice, the nineteenth century was not a good time for women or minorities to get properly published, read, and reviewed in America. But there were dozens of women who wrote novels then that are worth considering in our time. Most such books were dismissed previously as "women's fiction." In a now famous phrase, Nathaniel Hawthorne, one of Matthiessen's heroes, called their authors "a damned mob of scribbling women." A similar intolerance governed the literary scene for ethnic and racial minorities. Thoreau declared in Walden, for example, that "the culture of an Irishman is an enterprise to be undertaken with a sort of moral bog hoe." A slander of such generality is of particular interest to me, because I am currently writing a book that traces the literature produced by Irish Americans from the eighteenth century to the present. And, in fact, my research has turned up an impressive number of fascinating, forgotten writers who also deserve to be considered freshly.

Reclamation projects for women and black writers have been under way for some years now, and these have already yielded important discoveries. Some that come to mind are Kate Chopin's The Awakening, Rebecca Harding Davis's Life in the Iron Mills, and the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. The work in other immigrant and ethnic groups is less far along, but there are indications. My point is this. What governs the formulation and revision of the canon of accepted masterworks is not the test of time, but different times. We need to keep our minds -- and our course syllabi -- open so that this work can continue.

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Pride

You wait for him by the side of the road, the old, red Peugeot swinging down on you like a chariot.
You strain to see if he is anxious getting out; if his thighs too are jelly. But the strength in his footsteps obscures your vision.
He does not struggle.
His eyes are silent, blood unscreaming.

Security

You lean with him against the car door, the three hundred mile good-bye breathing down your crotch and his hand light on your hip.
In his fingertips you recognize your own reluctance; his fear freezes on your tongue.

Blossoming

I wake with expectation of you, rising in my blood a bubble streaming toward the surface.
I am bursting with you.
In the telephone your voice is an anxious stutter thick with Jamaica.
I did not think that I would call so soon you say, but it's been centuries and I am bursting.
Outside magnolia buds swelled with early morning drizzle break into blossom.
This I believe will be the last beginning.

Ann duCille

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