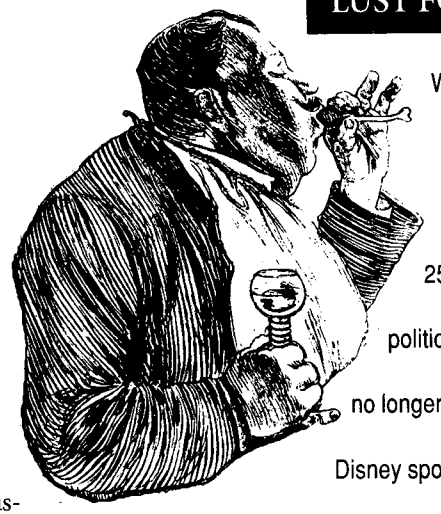
SCAN

LUST FOR GLUTTONY



When Disneyland re-opened its Pirates of the Caribbean attraction not long ago, the 25-year-old exhibit was made politically correct: The privateers will no longer chase maidens. Instead, says Disney spokesman Susan Roth, "the object of their chase will be food." Back to that old view that the surest way to a man's heart is through his stomach, we guess.

PUBLIC HOUSING IS A PRIVILEGE, NOT A RIGHT

In Charleston, South Carolina, where I am chief of police, about 9,000 people—not quite 10 percent of the city—live in public housing. But in Charleston, unlike many other cities, public housing is one of the safest places to live.

Indeed, when our city police officers become fatigued on the job, they are often transferred to the public housing section because that's where they're least likely to have to do high-stress police work. We go year after year without anyone killed in our public housing. We might have two or three sexual assaults in a year—four in a bad year. The number of armed robberies is similar.

People ask: "How do you get this with a population of 99 percent African-American, 100 percent poor people?" People don't think that safe public housing, poverty, and African Americans go together. But they can.

What happened is that Charleston decided to become a responsible landlord. And we in the police department decided we would be there to help. The public housing authority decided they would screen tenants just like any other landlord who expects to provide clean, safe, and secure housing for his tenants.

The housing authority concluded that a conviction on any of 11 crimes indicated a person was not likely to be a successful public housing tenant. The crimes include robbery, sexual assault, pedophilia, burglary, and prostitution. Their thinking was simple: You can't expect to have decent public housing if large numbers of people convicted of serious crimes are permitted to live there.

Essentially, the public housing authority decided to go back to what President Roosevelt had in mind in the 1930s, when public housing was developed in our country. Public housing was designed to rescue people who were living in shanty towns from being exploited by criminals and from having to live in squalid conditions. And that is exactly what public housing did until the 1960s, when public housing became, not a place of refuge, but a place that was crime-producing. It became a place where people were given the right to live simply because they were poor. There were no constraints upon their behavior whatsoever, as long as they could demonstrate that they met the economic guidelines.

Due to reforms in the Reagan and Bush administrations, the code of federal regulations that governs public housing now makes it easier to go back to the pre-1960s standards for public housing. This made it possible for the Charleston Public Housing Authority to screen out those 11 categories of people.

The housing authority also determined that if residents were arrested for these crimes and probable cause was found, it would file civil actions to have them evicted. There is nothing unconstitutional about this. But it is a new approach to public housing.

Public housing authorities often evict people because they don't pay their rent. But the fact that someone is a five- or six-time convicted sexual predator makes no difference whatever to most authorities. In Charleston, though, it did for the first time. And as a result we found fewer and fewer active criminals in public housing every year.

Today public housing in Charleston is a place where you are less likely to be killed or assaulted than in many high-income areas. A little common-sense toughness was successful.

—This is adapted from remarks ***Reuben Greenberg*** *delivered to the Center of the American Experiment in Minneapolis.*

EAST VILLAGE DECLARES WAR ON TURNIPS

As of this writing, the New York state government has yet to agree on the size and shape of its budget for the fiscal year that officially began 121 days ago. Worse, this is the thirteenth straight year the state has failed to pass a timely budget. On each occasion, Albany has had to rely on emergency extensions and financial gimmicks to paper over the delay, with negative effects on the state's credit ratings.

The deepest cause of the annual budget breakdown is New York's sharp regional-ideological division. There is rough parity in the state between very liberal legislators representing New York City and mostly moderate or conservative legislators elected by the rest of the state. Because upstate and downstate roughly balance, the governor is usually

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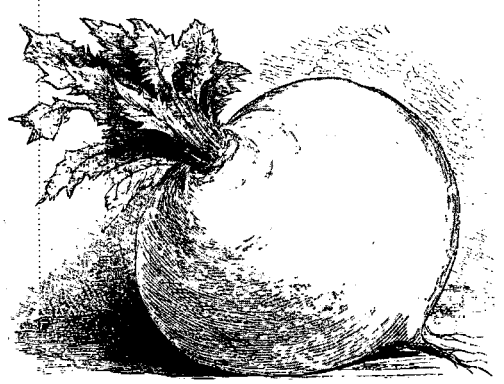
afraid to tip in either direction.

This gridlock goes far beyond budgeting. A war took place this spring, virtually closing down all government decision-making for weeks, over the June expiration of rent controls—which are beloved by liberals even though they've completely ruined New York's housing market. The defenders of rent control were all Manhattanites. The reformers were led by upstate representatives. The battle that took place (ending in an extension of the dingbat status quo) served as a perfect advertisement for the logic of splitting New York into two separate, smaller states.

Where two obviously incompatible populations are yoked together, with neither able to have the kind of principality they would like, why not just set them free? A Greater Manhattan and an Upper York state would each be more cohesive and efficient in choosing their respective destinies. If New York State above Westchester County were broken off as a separate jurisdiction, it would be a locale of six million people with a nice, sensible, quasi-midwestern character, a balanced economy, and a government that could actually pass necessary laws and get rid of stupid ones like rent control and the country's highest tax levies. New York City and its suburbs would be—well, still New York.

After generations of hearing strange voices inside their own heads, many upstaters in particular nurse warm feelings toward the idea of a geopolitical divorce, and Finger Lakes state senator Randy Kuhl has introduced a bill that would allow the formation of two separate states. It's Manhattanites who resist, stating a queer concern that the rest of the state couldn't possibly survive without the metropolis. The idea of splitting the state is ludicrous, says State Assembly Speaker and Manhattanite Sheldon Silver. The rest of the poor state would sink absent the revenues generated by Wall Street and the United Nations, he says. "All of that nonsense about New York City being a drain on the state is ridiculous," he insists. "The rest of the state lives off it." (If so, one wonders why the Speaker isn't leading a hasty march toward city autonomy.)

We say it's time for upstaters to dump some over-ripe cheddar cheeses into New York City's Catskill Mountain water supply. And then declare independence.



BOYCOTT TV NEWS

Florence King isn't going to take it anymore. Our favorite poison-pen essayist told *TAE* she'd "like to start a boycott of TV news. I've drifted naturally into one of my own: Since the election, I've lost my habit of watching the evening news and the Sunday shows. I tell myself I ought to watch them for the sake of my work, but when I turn them on I find myself starting to curdle with revulsion and have to turn them off. I know every smirk on every commentator's face (Frank Sesno has captured the Smirk Crown from Peter Jennings) and every flip of Margaret Carlson's hair."

MARKET NICHE

FNC, Fox's fledgling news channel, faces long odds in its struggle against CNN and MSNBC in the 24-hour news business (see the feature on p. 41 and our interview with Rupert Murdoch, p. 20). But fate may have smiled on the upstart FNC, which claims to offer "fair and balanced coverage" instead of the usual liberal bias: "Don't tell me, you want Fox, right?" a Maryland cable representative was answering callers in July. Seems the cable company was being "swamped" with requests for FNC from viewers seeking the network's live airing of the Senate hearings on the Clinton fundraising scandals.

ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, and MSNBC had denied the Thompson hearings live coverage, and even the networks' news shows were scanting the hearings. CBS's "This Morning," for instance, went weeks without a peep, and ABC's "World News Tonight," after running nothing for two nights straight, aired a story the next night on "why average Americans seem to be paying so little attention."

Washington Post media critic Howard Kurtz defensively claimed that major newspapers were doing a better job, but even he confessed that TV "is in danger of tuning out." Meanwhile, FNC newspaper ads were bragging about its superior coverage, and Dororthy Rabinowitz of the *Wall Street Journal* was cheering: "The all-news cable channels CNN and CNBC appear to have decided (unlike Fox News, which is providing thorough coverage) to find more worthy fare: another important breaking story, perhaps, disclosing that absolutely nothing new has happened in the JonBenet Ramsey case."

WHEN MTV LOST TO *PARADISE LOST*

Can a taste for serious literature be cultivated among the MTV generation? Professors who substitute detective fiction for Great Books have given up trying. When the only allusions kids know come from television, it's not an easy chore. But it's not Mission Impossible.

Here's a true story. Eighteen students signed up for my course on John Milton. (Already this sounds like fiction.) Eventually, tremblingly, I asked them, Would you like to hold an all-day public reading of *Paradise Lost?* All 10,565 lines? It would take ten hours. Pause. Then a hand, and a question. Soon, yes, they said yes! We made plans and put up posters emblazoned "SIN, LUST, SATAN." Each student signed up to be on duty for an hour and to read if no one else would.

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At 8:00 A.M. on the fateful Saturday, three students put a sign saying "Hell" over the fireplace, set an "on-deck" chair for "next reader" alongside the lectern, spread around copies of books, plot summaries, and reading instructions on nearby chairs, and began to read.

> Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
> Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
> With loss of *Eden*, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
> Sing Heav'nly Muse....

Oh, they stumbled at times, but they persevered. Smiles started appearing. This was going to work!

Other students drifted by out of curiosity, had some coffee and cookies, caught the spirit, and stayed for two or three hours. Professors from several departments joined in, to the students' delight. This was academic community in operation. After a while, young and old were making a beeline to the "on-deck" chair as soon as its occupant stood up to read the next 100 or so lines. All told, 150-200 people participated. Visiting philosophers at a conference in a nearby hall asked what these students were doing there all day. "Reading *Paradise Lost*," we explained. "You gotta be kidding," they replied.

Poetry is not black marks on white pages with odd margins. It is sound. On the reading instructions I had written, "The longer you read aloud, the likelier it is that the rhythm of the lines will take over and guide you along." And it did.

As part of our afterglow, I reported to Miltonists on an e-mail list. Of those who took up my offer to receive our promotional and instructional materials, the most moving request came from an inner-city high-school teacher in California, who has had her advanced-placement students do what we did.

So don't tell me today's kids won't respond to challenging academic work. I've had my fill of retro-'60s faculty members with political agendas dumping on today's young. Enough of insulting their intelligence with junk culture. There is a hunger for something demanding and wholesome out there. Serious learning is not dead.

—Edward E. Ericson, Jr., is a professor of English at Calvin College.

NEW BLOOD FOR CITIES

Immigration, warns a recent *New York Times Magazine* story, is leading to the "balkanization" of America's once-mighty industrial cities. "In the last half of the 1980s, for every ten immigrants who arrived in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Houston, nine residents left for elsewhere," the article informs us. Meanwhile, city officials and anti-immigration groups charge that immigrants impose large economic burdens on America's inner cities.

Not so fast, argues a new study from the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution (ADTI) in Alexandria, Va. Certainly immigrants have a profound demographic, economic, and fiscal impact on America's largest central cities. More than half of all immigrants reside in just seven cities: Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Miami, San Diego, Houston, and San Francisco. And true, immigrants impose special strains on these cities—heavier demands for social services, schools, and housing; language problems; and tighter labor markets. But the benefits of an infusion of fresh blood may offset these costs, the ADTI study suggests.

It assesses the local impact of immigration by contrasting the economic condition of cities with the highest immigration and those with the lowest immigration from 1980-90 (and through 1994 where more recent data is available). The 85 most populous U.S. cities, population 200,000 or more, are examined using Census Bureau data on nine different economic and fiscal measures.

The study's findings challenge much conventional wisdom:

- In the 1980s cities with the highest immigration had a job-creation rate twice as high as cities with the lowest immigration.
- Residents of high-immigrant cities are, on average, 15 percent richer than residents of low-immigrant cities. And incomes grew faster in high-immigrant areas as well. Residents of the cities with the most immigrants in 1980 experienced a 95 percent growth in per capita income that decade, versus an 88 percent growth in income for residents in the cities with the fewest immigrants in 1980.

IMMIGRANTS AND CRIME DON'T REALLY MIX

High-immigrant cities	% Foreign-born, 1990	Crime rate, 1991
Hialeah	69%	8 per 1,000
Miami	59	18
Santa Ana	51	8
Glendale	45	5
Los Angeles	38	10
San Francisco	34	9
Anaheim	28	7
New York	28	9
San Jose	27	5
Jersey City	26	9
Average, high immigrant cities	9	

Low-immigrant cities	% Foreign-born, 1990	Crime rate, 1991
Jackson	1%	14 per 1,000
Shreveport	1	10
Birmingham	1	13
Memphis	1	10
Louisville	2	6
Richmond	2	12
Indianapolis	2	7
Mobile	2	13
Nashville	2	9
St. Louis	2	16
Average, low immigrant cities	11	

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• Poverty rates were 20 percent higher in 1990 in the cities with the fewest immigrants than in the cities with the most immigrants. The poverty rate from 1980-90 grew almost twice as fast in the cities with fewest immigrants in 1990 than in the cities with the most immigrants.

What about social conditions? No single factor has contributed to the declining livability of America's inner cities more than crime. Since at least the turn of the century, when the great wave of Germans, Italians, and Irishmen arrived through Ellis Island, Americans have often seen immigrants as a source of criminality.

True or not in the past, crime and immigration do *not* go together today. The nearby table shows that high-immigrant cities in 1990 had a crime rate of 9 per 1,000 residents. Low-immigrant cities had a crime rate of 11—or about 22 percent higher. Only Miami, which has a very heavy concentration of immigrants and also the second highest crime rate of all major cities, is a major exception to the rule.

The ADTI study does not answer the critical question of whether the immigrants cause urban conditions to improve, or whether improved urban conditions cause the immigrants to come. But it does provide compelling evidence to refute the belief that the economic decline of cities is *caused* by immigration. The assertion cannot be true, because, with few exceptions, the U.S. cities in greatest despair—Detroit, St. Louis, Buffalo, Rochester, and Shreveport, for example—have virtually no immigrants.

Some 200 years ago James Madison wrote: "That part of America that has encouraged [foreign immigration] has advanced most rapidly in population, agriculture, and in the arts." That observation may be as true today as it was at the birth of the nation.

*—**Stephen Moore** is an economist at the Cato Institute.*

TALE OF TWO CITIES

Very damaging and very healthy social trends occur side by side in America today. A perfect illustration: Gangster rap and gospel rock are each among today's fastest growing forms of music.

On the one hand, vile new rock and rap groups like Marilyn Manson (named "Best New Artist" earlier this year by *Rolling Stone*) have enjoyed an explosion of media attention and popular following. The members of Marilyn Manson (all male) have taken female first names and the surnames of notorious murderers. Their concerts have included child nudity, gross obscenity, mutilation, and live sex acts. Their songs incite murder and hatred, refer to the bandleader's experiences with abortion, suicide, drugs, and torture, and encourage "anti-Christ" behavior. One of their album covers shows Manson's genitals hooked up to a hose which drains into the mouths of two men. Finding his grandfather's collection of child pornography and seeing his grandfather masturbate are described by the bandleader as formative experiences in his life. (Seagram Company, headed by CEO Edgar Bronfman, markets Manson's music.)

At the same time, there are many encouraging signs on the up side of America's cultural divide:

• The album *Butterfly Kisses* by Christian singer Bob Carlisle has sold more than two million copies this summer, reaching the top of *Billboard's* pop chart for several weeks. Carlisle tells TAE's Dave Geisler that he wrote the title song as a sixteenth birthday present for his daughter. It and the album's other numbers celebrate family love and traditional virtues.

• Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds, nominated for 12 Grammy Awards in 1997, is an artist who sings often of God, the value of fatherhood, and other positive topics. This year's Grammy-winning song produced by Edmonds, "Change the World," was written by three songwriters who made their reputations in contemporary gospel music.

• The latest album by another Christian rock group, The Newsboys, went gold this summer. The band has put on live concerts recently for more than 600,000 people.

• A gospel singer/songwriter and a 50-voice Dallas youth choir called God's Property have put another album, titled "Stomp," at the top of the Billboard charts this summer. The gospel-rap title cut talks about getting high on faith instead of drugs. They recently appeared on "The Tonight Show."

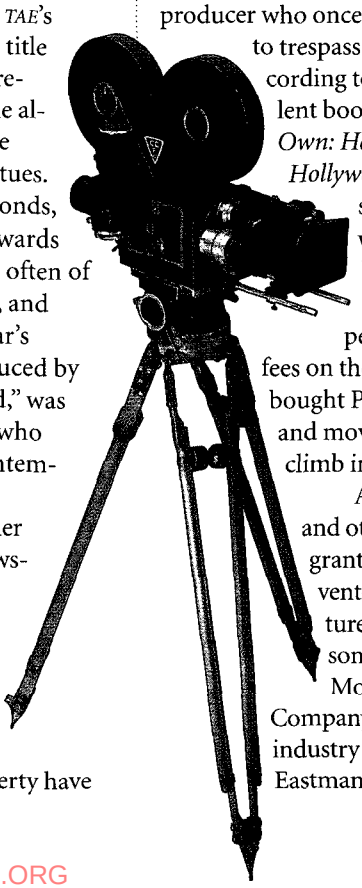
Makes you wonder which tape the teenager next door is listening to, doesn't it?

BAD ECONOMICS MAKES BAD MOVIES

Almost everyone complains about movies today. They're too violent, sleazy, boring, not family-friendly—they just don't make 'em like they used to. But the untold story of Hollywood's decline is the surprising role anti-trust law has played in shaping films. Washington, in short, helps make Hollywood bad.

The movie industry was born in New York and built by theater-owners like Adolph Zukor, who needed "product." At the turn of the century, the theater business was mostly small mom-and-pop operators. Soon savvy businessmen like Zukor bought up small competitors in order to make better pictures that would attract larger audiences.

Zukor also wanted to make movies respectable. He wooed stage stars and teamed up with Jesse Lasky, a powerful producer who once said that he "yearned to trespass on quality street," according to Neal Gabler's excellent book, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood.* The two men shared a vision of what movies could become and a hatred of Paramount's 65 percent distribution fees on their films. So they bought Paramount in 1916, and movies began a 40-year climb in quality.



Along the way, they and other Jewish immigrants ran afoul of the inventor of the motion picture camera, Thomas Edison. Edison formed the Motion Picture Patents Company to control the movie industry and even convinced Eastman Kodak to only sell

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film to people licensed by his company.

Edison's moves were legal—federal anti-trust laws were six years away. The independents went to war with "the Edison Trust" over who would control movies: equipment patent-holders like Edison or theater-owners like Zukor and Carl Laemmle, who later founded Universal Pictures. Laemmle skirted the trust by importing films from Europe and quickly became one of the most successful movie distributors. By 1912, Laemmle and other independents had broken the Edison's monopoly and controlled almost half of America's film business. The market—not the government—had busted the trust.

As the business grew, theater-owners retained control, which irritated trust-busters but ensured quality movies. The studios were what economists call "vertically integrated," meaning they controlled production, distribution, and exhibition. If you wanted to see a Paramount film, you went to a Paramount theater. "Each studio had its own signature," as director Billy Wilder put it. They were brand names, like Coke and Ford, and were publicly accountable for their movies. Why anger long-term customers to make a few bucks on a shocking picture?

Throughout the 1930s and '40s, theater-owners could fire movie moguls, and did—usually for making dull movies, but tasteless movies would have meant even faster firing. Each major studio produced and distributed more than 100 films a year (compared to about 12 today). Movie prices were kept low (between a nickel and dime per person from 1930-55), and the movies were carefully written to entertain at several levels so that adults and children could enjoy the same feature. Families were the core audience.

The large number of films being made gave the vertically integrated studios an incentive to encourage teams to stay together. Today the few production teams that stay together—Merchant-Ivory, for instance—produce better films.

But slowly government intervention in the form of anti-trust decrees undermined the studio system and set producers and distributors at odds with theaters and the public, creating the mess we have today.

The biggest blow was the 1948 anti-trust actions by the Truman Justice Department, which forced the studios to sell their theaters. Now studios had to compete for theater-owners, who wanted sure bets that were highly profitable. That meant stars, special effects, and increasingly graphic sex and violence.

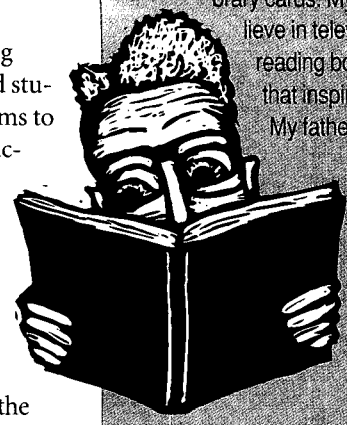
As the movies changed, the industry's family audience drifted away. TV made it easier to stay home, but the changing content and higher ticket prices were major factors. Theater-owners discovered that teenagers viewed movie houses as dark rooms without parents and urged the studios to make films for that audience. Theaters also switched to a high-price, low-volume strategy because the young audience was willing to pay and because special effects, and the other things that the adolescent audience craved continued to climb in price. By the end of the decade, teenagers and young adults formed the core audience for movies, and the slow but inevitable transition to today's movies had begun.

Of course economics is not the sole reason for today's movies, but government intervention did accelerate the move from *The Philadelphia Story* to *Showgirls*.

Can we go back to the good old days? Maybe, but we would have to move a mountain of anti-trust law.

*—**Richard Miniter** has produced more than 400 hours of national television programs.*

CHURCH + LIBRARY - TV + FAMILY LIFE = NOVELIST



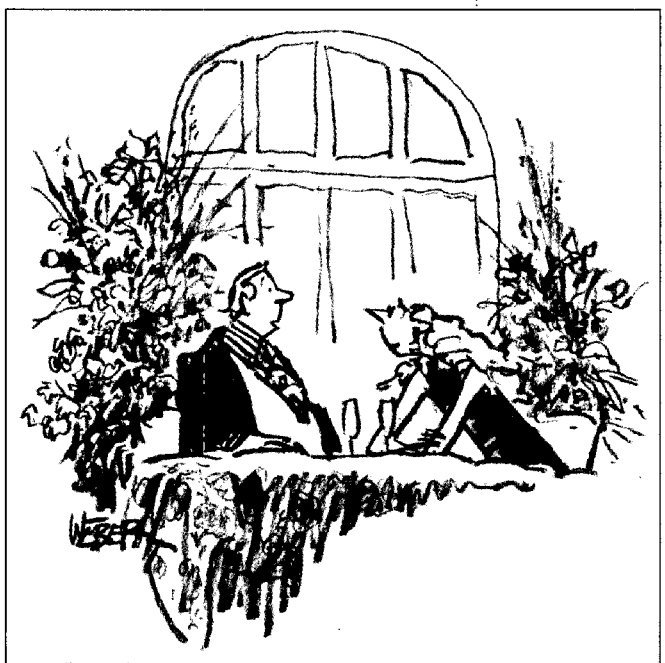
I'm thankful for the influence my mother and father had on my life. My father worked for a construction company, and he was transferred every year or two, depending on where the work was located. The first thing my family did when we moved was join the local church. The second was to go to the library and get library cards. My mother did not believe in television. I grew up reading books, and I'm sure that inspired me to be a writer. My father's family is a family of storytellers, and there were long dinners and lots of stories. As children, we absorbed them.

—Author
John Grisham
in Home for the Holidays

SOILED SOAPS

Don't assume that TV reserves its most depraved offerings for the evening. Indeed, sex- and violence-ridden prime-time shows seem downright quaint compared with what the country's 30 million regular soap opera viewers see during daylight hours.

In fact, the days of our lives have grown increasingly sleazy, as a new study reported in *Glamour* but few other places makes clear. An analysis of ten hours each of "General Hospital," "All My Children," "One Life to Live," "The Young and the Restless," and "Days of Our Lives" found 6.6 sex acts portrayed



Drawing by Weber; © 1995 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

"Gee, I'd love to, but that's the weekend my father gets me."

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or discussed during each hour-long episode—a rate over 35 percent higher than ten years ago.

Although studies repeatedly show that married couples have far more satisfying sex lives than singles, carnal relations on these shows were overwhelmingly non-marital (2.4 per hour, compared to the 0.72 hourly rate that hubby and wife bedded down). And sex commonly took place in the context of date rape. In such instances, the victims were always pure as the driven snow. So much for men who are often falsely accused (as happened to a New York City resident in a well-publicized case earlier this year).

Outside the bedroom, soap operas are quite P.C. Businessmen are inevitably malevolent, minorities noble. Consider this rather typical "As the World Turns" episode summarized by soap critic Karen Lindsey: The thrice-divorced Lyla's "friendship with her young Indian border gave her and the viewers a lesson in white insensitivity." Not so her fiancé, Cal, whose "capitalist acquisitiveness [blinds] him to the rights of native people." Lyla then dumps the clod because he's so darn insensitive.

*—**Evan Gahr** is a regular contributor to* The American Enterprise.

HOME IS WHERE THE LAW FIRM IS

Recall Bob Dole's poignant words on leaving the Senate: "I will seek the presidency with...nowhere to go but the White House or home." Listeners thought he meant Russell, Kansas, but Dole turns out to have meant the D.C. law firm of Verner, Liipfert, Bernhard, McPherson & Hand, which recently told the *Wall Street Journal* it plans to hire more lawyer-lobbyists to handle all the new business he's reeling in.

CLEAN TV IS BETTER THAN RATED TV

At a White House meeting in February 1996, the television industry pledged to develop a "voluntary" ratings system to better inform parents about the content of programs. These new guidelines were eventually to work in conjunction with the V-chip, a device to be installed in TV sets that would allow parents to block out objectionable programs. Ten months later, before a horde of journalists, Motion Picture Association of America president Jack Valenti, head of the group charged with developing rating guidelines, unveiled his grand plan to rate TV using an age-based system.

First appearing on TV screens in January, these ratings were criticized as too vague to provide parents with sufficient information to make the best viewing choices for their children. This surprised no one, since surveys show that over 80 percent of parents favor content-based ratings. Yet despite constant criticism and the February release, by the Parents Television Council, of the first quantitative analysis of the new system (*A TV Ratings Report Card: F for Failure*), the industry stuck by its guidelines.

In addition to parents and advocacy groups, strong criticism also came from Capitol Hill, specifically from the Senate Commerce Committee chaired by John McCain (R-Ariz.). By June, he was threatening that broadcasting licenses might be held hostage unless the networks adopted content-based ratings.

Fearing legislation, the industry agreed to sit down with advocacy groups and negotiate changes. After weeks of haggling, the industry announced on July 9 it would, beginning in October, "voluntarily" add *S* for sex, *V* for violence, *L* for crude language, and *D* for suggestive dialogue. The industry also agreed to add a category called *FV* for fantasy violence in shows like "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers." In exchange, Sen. McCain, Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-La.), head of the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications, and others on the Hill promised a moratorium lasting "several years" on any legislation relating to TV ratings and content.

The changes agreed to could prove useful. But the rating system, as well as the V-chip, is only a Band-Aid solution to the real problem of declining standards, particularly during the first hour of prime time, traditionally known as the family hour. It used to be a safe haven for families to sit together and watch wholesome programming. Nowadays, to the consternation of parents everywhere, vulgar language, sex, suggestive dialogue, and violence pervade this hour. Moreover, the bully pulpit which many in Congress have used to raise this issue has now been pulled out from underneath them for "several years."

As Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), a leading proponent of a return to the family hour, has said, "Garbage labeled is still garbage." The real solution is for Hollywood to clean up its act.

*—**Mark Honig** is executive director of the Parents' Television Council in Los Angeles.*

A VIRTUAL PUBLIC REALM IS NOT ENOUGH

In the automobile slum that our public realm has become, there is little operational grace for children. The young can't function in a world that has been designed solely for the convenience of motorists. The public realm for American children is therefore

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no longer the city block, town park, or sidewalk. It is instead, by default, the psychotic principality of TV.

American suburbia has a magnificent private realm. Nobody builds more luxurious houses than we do, with more bathrooms per inhabitant than any other place on earth. But the public realm of suburbia is composed of parking lots, berms, planting strips, highway medians, and little in the way of consciously embellished civic property. Why is that a problem? Because the public realm is the setting for our civic life, and where it exists in an impoverished form, civic life suffers accordingly.

Perhaps psychologist James Hillman is right when he asserts that, despite all our lip service to "family values," Americans actually hate their children. Much of the content of television is manifestly hateful—from the stock sadism of HBO movies to the sociopathic doggerel of "Yo, MTV Raps"—and children cannot fail to be affected by it. It is absurd to believe that children do not model their behavior on the antics of these characters, who are, after all, the denizens of their public realm.

But even if the content of TV were benign, it would still be problematic as a substitute for real civic life. One of the more insidious delusions of the Electronic Age is the notion that the virtual is an adequate substitute for the authentic: A virtual friend on the Internet is as good as a real friend, and so forth.

All sane people recognize that the artificial public realm of TV is not an adequate substitute for authentic community life. Emotional involvement with soap opera characters is not the same as having relationships with real people (though plenty of adults seem to be confused about this these days). And Barney the dinosaur is neither a true companion to a child nor an imaginary companion equal to the typical youngster's innate imaginative ability (which is precisely why Barney is so sickening to many parents).

We are fortunate that the power of the virtual is somewhat self-limiting in the face of the authentic. Right now TV is in the process of downgrading itself even as a fabulous time-wasting medium. The more channels we add, the more frantically uninteresting everything becomes. As things stand today, the obvious destiny of TV is 500 channels of infomercials.

Among the great political issues in the twenty-first century will be the mess that we have made of our everyday world, and especially the deleterious effects on children. Amidst the tides of cultural sewage now overflowing our national life, there is growing recognition that we desperately need something better, more worthy of the human spirit. What we have achieved in our time is the creation of too many public realms and institutions that are simply not worth caring about. Unless this is changed, the consequence will eventually be a country and way of life not worth defending.

—James Howard Kunstler is author of Home from Nowhere, *which was reviewed in our March/April issue.*

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION LIES

The press has recently bubbled with hysterical reports on declining minority enrollment at law schools in Texas and California. New laws requiring color-blind admissions have been called catastrophic and unfair. Nonsense. First, just because a few schools have seen minority enrollment fall doesn't mean anyone is missing out on an education.

For instance, the *New York Times* and the Associated Press both ran stories on poor Malcolm LaVergne, who supposedly wanted to attend the University of Texas law school, but because of the new policy decided to turn U.T. down. Well, poor LaVergne in fact wanted to go to Cornell—as the *Ithaca Journal* learned by asking him—was accepted there, and will attend. Some tragedy.

Second, most law schools around the country are functioning the same as always, as Cornell's assistant dean for admissions, Richard Geiger, admits: "There's a lot of places for people to go if they're not accepted to the Texases of the world." Yes, 176 other accredited law schools to be precise. And no one's ever died from switching to U.C., San Diego, from U.C., Berkeley.

In fact, as applicants and schools become better matched, minority *performance* will actually improve. Schools like Berkeley won't be allowed to continue admitting students whose presence lets the school preen itself on its diversity while they end up flunking out, even though they would have flourished at a school one notch down.

Still, long-term boosts to academic achievement by minorities will require attacking the root cause of the problem—inner-city public schools. Vouchers anyone?

—Thomas Chandler, a TAE *intern, is an undergraduate at the University of Richmond.*

THE PRICE TAG ON JAPANESE REGULATION

Investment bankers Takuma Amano and Robert Blohm recently totaled up the losses that accrued in Japan when its system of state-managed capitalism collapsed earlier this decade. Japan's refusal to liberate critical sectors of its economy from interference by government ministries caused pressure to build up that finally led to a business collapse which wiped out a staggering total of nearly $10 trillion in asset values in the first half of the 1990s. That, the authors note in the *Wall Street Journal*, is "equivalent to Japan's estimated economic loss from World War II."

SCHOOL CHOICE TRIUMPH

School choice advocates in Minnesota have struck a mighty blow to the educational status quo. Led by Governor Arne Carlson, the Minnesota state legislature has enacted reforms, including an increase from $650 to $1,625 in the existing tax deduction per child in grades K-6, and from $1,000 to $2,500 per child in grades 7-12. This deduction covers private school tuition, fees, transportation, textbooks and instructional materials, summer school, tutoring, and educational computer materials. In addition, a new refundable educational tax credit of $1,000

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per child for families with annual incomes under $33,500 was enacted, as well as provisions expanding charter schools and public-school choice programs.

Steve Forbes, whose Americans for Hope, Growth, and Opportunity ran local radio ads supporting the legislation, hailed "the biggest victory for parents' rights and the biggest defeat of the bureaucracy and teachers unions to date" and urged other states to "follow their inspiring example."

MORE STEAM FROM THE SOCIAL SECURITY KETTLE

Most people know the problems with Social Security. It is approaching bankruptcy, it provides paltry benefits for the contributions offered, and it discourages private savings. What is surprising is that a number of sitting legislators have come to the same realization and have decided to do something about it.

In early May the Oregon legislature adopted a resolution asking Congress to enact a waiver system that would allow residents of any petitioning state to opt out of Social Security in favor of an alternative retirement plan of their own design. The resolution, which passed the Oregon Senate 20-8 and the state House 31-22, was introduced by Senator Gene Derfler after he heard the idea discussed by José Piñera, the man responsible for the privatization of Chile's pension system, and Steve Buckstein, president of Oregon's Cascade Policy Institute. Derfler says Oregon would like state residents to be able to keep their dollars and invest them the way they want in a retirement plan.

The Oregon resolution explicitly acknowledges Social Security's failures and the potential benefits of a decentralized, privatized system. It states that "investment return on Social Security contributions made by many workers today is significantly below that available from other sources," whereas "more retirement investment alternatives might dramatically increase Oregonians' savings rate and retain more young adults who otherwise would leave the state for jobs elsewhere."

This bill signals growing discontent with the Social Security system as well as the popular will to implement serious reform. Since Chile fully privatized its Social Security system under Piñera's guidance in the early '80s, the country has had an average annual growth rate of 7.5 percent and retirees have collected returns that dwarf what the government plan offered.

The Oregon legislature asks: If Chileans can benefit from privatization, why can't Americans? It is time for Congress to pose the same question.

—Aaron Steelman is staff writer at the Cato Institute.

INSTEAD OF THE NEA . . .

Many arts activists argue that the future of art in the United States rests on the reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) this year. As an artist who has studied the agency, I believe it's time to phase out the NEA and have the federal government support artists by more democratic, less manipulative methods. What artists and arts organizations need most from Washington is not a $10,000 NEA grant, but changes in the tax code that can dramatically improve conditions for all artists.

The IRS harms artists on several fronts, the self-employment tax foremost among them. This tax swallows precious funds, complicates accounting, and squanders creative time in bookkeeping. It is a notoriously tricky process for artists to itemize and carry over business expenses: a painter may sell a canvas for $125,000 one year and sell nothing the next. The IRS offers meager, difficult deductions for self-paid health insurance, rather than providing incentives to purchase coverage or form insurance groups. And the home-office deduction, which makes sense for many artists, is complex, subjective, and hard to document. It is likely to trigger an IRS audit; hence many artists shy away from it.

The IRS has also created disincentives to charitable giving to the arts: Individuals cannot take a deduction for donations unless they itemize on their tax returns. Wealthy givers are hamstrung by arcane rules governing deductions for donated art that has appreciated over a lifetime. And the law encourages art to be brought to auction rather than donated.

As for literary artists, they suffer from ill-conceived changes to tax law in the 1970s that effectively killed backlists of older books, once the pride of great publishing houses like Knopf and Norton. Forced to pay tax on inventory, publishers have no choice but to "remainder" thousands of titles, many of literary merit by younger writers whose careers never get a chance to develop. The decline of books of poetry in print has been nothing less than catastrophic.

Reforming IRS practices to help artists will mean reduced tax revenue. But these changes would be a much better investment in the arts than continued spending on the NEA.

—William Craig Rice, a poet and essayist, teaches expository writing at Harvard University.

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By John J. Miller

Indicators

Special Edition on Immigration

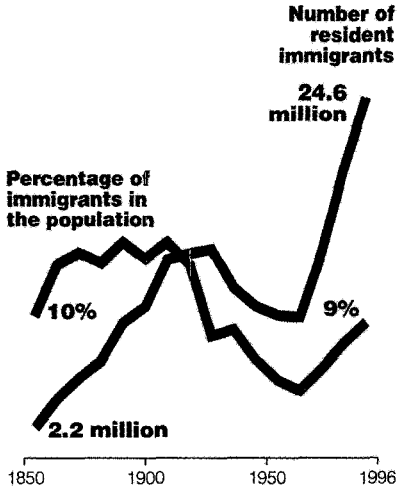
MILLIONS OF IMMIGRANTS

More immigrants live in the United States today than ever before. Almost 25 million residents—nearly one out of every ten Americans—was born abroad. That is up from less than one out of 20 in 1970.

And this rate is bound to rise further, because about 1.1 million new arrivals now come to the U.S. each year (perhaps 70 percent of them legally, the rest as illegal aliens).

Just the same, **immigrants are a smaller share of the total U.S. population today than they were at any time between the Civil War and the 1920s.** That hasn't stopped immigration from emerging as one of the great political issues of the 1990s, however.

Immigrants Within the U.S.



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

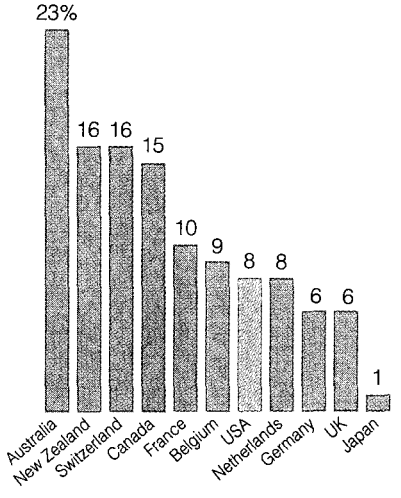
INTERNATIONAL MAGNET

The United States is one of only a few countries that accepts large numbers of immigrants.

Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Canada are all currently experiencing rates of immigration much higher than ours, though. Numerous industrialized nations of Europe also have sizable foreign-born populations.

In absolute terms, however, **the United States takes in vastly more people than any other country.** About 16 percent of all of the immigrants in the world come to America, including 36 percent of those who relocate to a developed country.

Immigrants in Other Countries
(as a percentage of the total population, 1990)



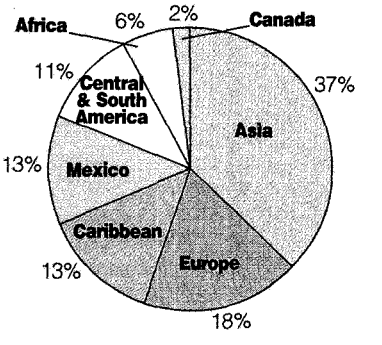
Source: Philip Martin & Jonas Widgren, *Population Bulletin*, April 1996.

A CHANGING MIX OF PEOPLES

When Ellis Island served as the chief entry point for immigrants to the United States, European newcomers made up at least 80 percent of all arrivals. **Today, less than 20 percent of new arrivals hail from Europe.**

Immigrants are more likely to come from Mexico than any other single country. About 30 percent of all U.S. immigrants are Latin Americans (including Mexicans), and well over one-third are Asians.

Origins of U.S. Immigrants, 1995



Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

This demographic overhaul, combined with the growing *number* of immigrants, has sparked much talk about the United States becoming a country where non-whites could compose a majority by the middle of the next century. But population predictions are notoriously inaccurate, and the accuracy of this one depends upon what immigration laws and intermarriage patterns look like in the future.

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