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**Chronicles**  
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## POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

### On 'America First'

Concerning Thomas Fleming's December Perspective about the America First Committee, anti-interventionists might have taken heart from the statement attributed to Winston Churchill in August 1936 by William Griffen, editor of the New York *Enquirer*: "America should have minded her own business and stayed out of the World War. If you hadn't entered the war the Allies would have made peace with Germany in the Spring of 1917. Had we made peace then there would have been no collapse in Russia followed by Fascism, and Germany would not have signed the Versailles Treaty, which has enthroned Nazism in Germany. If America had stayed out of the war, all these 'isms' wouldn't today be sweeping the continent in Europe and breaking down parliamentary government, and if England had made peace early in 1917, it would have saved over one million British, French, American, and other lives."

—Kenneth McDonald  
Willowdale, Ontario, Canada

### On 'Environmentalism'

I enjoyed Jigs Gardner's "Letter From Cape Breton Island" (January 1992) on the subject of "The New Utopians." He correctly states that environmentalists are openly utopian, and as such are full of "cocksure ignorance" in support of utopian views. A true utopian has boundless faith in his dream world, and any challenge to that dream is regarded as an example of the unworthiness of mankind to even exist. "We must put civilization in reverse, before it is too late! All we have to do is take our orders and control our every action to be in 'harmony' with the latest fad—population reduction, primitive hardship, and a short, ugly, starving, disease-ridden, preyed-upon 'existence.'" Of course, the Greens would have said it better.

As to Mr. Gardner's liberal arts education, he should not apologize. His letter shows he is way ahead of the mob and has the basics of an inquiring mind, which is the foundation of all liberal arts curricula.

—John A. Fletcher  
St. Paul, MN

## CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

**WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR.** didn't have a spy novel or a yachting saga in him one recent week, and the skiing season in Gstaad hadn't started yet. So he sat himself down and tinkled out a 40,000-word tome titled "In Search of Anti-Semitism." The article—or book, or monster—consumes the entire issue of the December 30, 1991, *National Review*. The major work of the conservative luminary's declining years goes on—and on and on—for no less than 42 double-column pages of Buckleysque bloviation.

Mr. Buckley's ostensible purpose is to ponder whether certain ostensible friends on the right and one ostensible foe on the left are or are not guilty of anti-Semitism. The unusual suspects include his "close friend," protégé and

colleague at *National Review*, Joe Sobran; former columnist and present presidential candidate Patrick J. Buchanan; the *Nation* and its contributor, novelist Gore Vidal; and the *Dartmouth Review*, an undergraduate conservative publication chiefly notable for sophomoric pranks and the ideological equivalent of swallowing goldfish.

No one much cares what Mr. Buckley says about the *Nation* or the Dartmouth fratty-baggers, but his reflections about Mr. Sobran and Mr. Buchanan have stimulated dismay and outright anger among his and their friends on the right. After wending a tortuous path strewn with misapplied logic and overstuffed sentences, Mr. Buckley puffs to a dubious and equivocal conclusion. While he refrains from saying that either suspect is an anti-

Semite, he finds the sentiments expressed by Mr. Sobran "indefensible," and also "finds it impossible to defend Pat Buchanan against the charge that what he did and said during the period under examination amounted to anti-Semitism, whatever it was that drove him to say and do it."

It would be unproductive to retread the road by which Mr. Buckley and a number of others less talented than he have arrived at these non-overwhelming thoughts. Essentially, the case against both Mr. Sobran and Mr. Buchanan consists in applying the most sinister interpretations to the highly figurative language in which both of them (and many other journalists) habitually write. At no time in the several years of controversy over the two individuals in question has anyone who personally knows them well—including their Jewish friends and associates—accused either of them of harboring anti-Semitism or seeking to promote it. Moreover, a number of their friends, Jewish as well as gentile, have defended them against the charge. In the absence of such accusations and of clear evidence of their anti-Semitic intentions, only the malevolent or the manipulated would bring in a verdict of guilty.

Nor does Mr. Buckley reveal anything new about either his "close friend" Mr. Sobran or Mr. Buchanan. Indeed, never in the entire length and breadth of his gargantuan odyssey does Mr. Buckley emit any new information or any enlightening thoughts that would yield a conclusion more portentous than his own personal inability or unwillingness to defend either man. Given the triviality of Mr. Buckley's conclusions, the absence of any compelling evidence to support them, and the staleness of the charges themselves, readers are led ineluctably to an overwhelming question: why did Mr. Buckley choose this particular time to secrete so much mental fluid about this immaterial matter?

Some light on this may be shed by a "backgrounder" published by the American Jewish Committee more than a year ago, in November 1990, at the height of the controversy about Mr. Buchanan. The backgrounder's author, Kenneth Stern, wonders what "we" should do about Mr. Buchanan, and his decision was suggestive. "Un-

less he says something Mein Kampf-ish," wrote Mr. Stern, "we should refrain from calling him an anti-Semite. That will only draw attention to him, and bring him defenders. Rather, I suggest we approach other people whom Buchanan's adherents see as equally qualified for the title of 'defender of the faith' to write a rebuttal. When it comes to Catholic-Jewish tensions, why not a leader in the church? And when it is an anti-communism based issue . . . why not a non-Jewish conservative?" If Rasputin and Machiavelli had conspired over cocktails, they could not have concocted a more furtive stratagem.

The shoe that fits, of course, is Mr.

Buckley, a Catholic conservative. Is it too cynical to ask if the American Jewish Committee (or someone associated with it) manipulated him into launching his insubstantial Scud against Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Sobran? If so, the plotters didn't get their money's worth.

Bill Buckley used to be the king of the conservatives, and when he whispered, the trumpets sounded. Today that's not the case. Most of what he has written in the last few years is simply fashionable chatter; it may make the best-seller list, but there'll never be a Classics Illustrated version.

—Samuel Francis



**ITALIAN POLITICS** get more “interesting” every day. Francesco Cossiga, the head of state, is continuing efforts to convert his largely ceremonial position into something like the benign dictatorship of Charles de Gaulle. His most risky stunt so far was to order the junior officers at a *carabinieri* station to go on alert last November. Actually, he only advised them, but the message was clear: Cossiga was attempting to harden his symbolic role as commander-in-chief into practical control over the national police and the armed forces. This naked grab for power has added persuasive force to the campaign to drive Cossiga from office. The principal instigator of this plot has been Achille Occhetto, head of what used to be the Italian Communist Party.

The most general response to the president’s attempt to consolidate power is not so much alarm as disgust, because it is hard to take Cossiga seriously. The editors of *Espresso* must have been speaking for many Italians in declaring last December: “the real trouble with Cossiga, perhaps, is that he will not succeed in constructing anything, either good or bad. . . . Seeing that he is commander of the armed forces and that he loves images of war, one might rebaptize him Commander Zero.”

If the Italian political class is no more than annoyed by Cossiga, Senator Umberto Bossi has them quaking in their boots. A few months ago a split in the ranks of the Lega Lombarda had the leaders of the *partitocrazia* celebrating the demise of their only serious opposition. The Lega was predicted to do well in the late November election in Brescia (a significant industrial city in Lombardia), but still somewhere about five percentage points below the Christian Democrats. When the results were in, the Lega Lombarda was, by a hair, at the top of the list with 24.4 percent. The Christian Democrats came in with only 24.3 percent.

One-tenth of a point does not sound like much, but only a year ago, the Lega received only 20 percent in Brescia, as opposed to the Christian Democrats’ 32 percent. Despite the attempt to downplay the victory (the outgoing mayor told the *Corriere della Sera* that voting for the “Carroccio” was a refusal to choose), the effect of this dramat-

ic upset has been demoralizing, especially when it is realized that a significant part of Bossi’s new support is coming from the ranks of good Catholics. A significant part of the credit for this goes to Irene Pivetti, who helped him organize the *Consulta cattolica della Lega*.

Instead of confronting Bossi head on, principle against principle, Italian journalists and politicians continue the slander campaign: “fascists,” “racists,” and “self-centered egoists” are among the kinder epithets being hurled at his followers. The great exception is the skeptical columnist, Giorgio Bocca, who describes this hysterical reaction as “a constant of political history . . . when the arrogance of a power too long without opposition is transfixed by this thought: could this really be the end? It is the moment of panic, when a power that believed it was based on the grace of God—either the extraterrestrial God or the ideological God—feels the weakening of the sacred certainties. It’s like someone who begins to hear the creaking and see the cracks in the ice, like one who calls out in the night and no one answers.”

The Italian crisis is more serious than the American crisis, and Bocca is more eloquent and intelligent than most American journalists, but his powerful images might easily be applied to our own situation. The man who calls out in the night and hears no answer may be George Bush afraid to take Pat Buchanan’s wake-up call to the White House.

—Thomas Fleming

**WHERE FRINGE FEMINISM** and environmentalism meet there is found a shrine to the “Goddess.” Last May *Time* magazine reported that “Goddess worship” is a “growing spiritual movement in the U.S.,” claiming as many as one hundred thousand adherents, most of them female. On May 12, 1991, the *New York Times* placed its imprimatur on the movement, declaring in an editorial that “Goddess worship . . . is rooted in reverence for the Ultimate Mother, for woman as the giver of life.” According to the *Times*, in ancient Goddess-adoring matriarchies, “Life was peaceful, cooperative and egalitarian, while in societies focused on the male gods it

was violent, authoritarian and stratified. In addition, the Goddess-based cultures cherished Earth as nurturer of humankind.” Accordingly, “Goddess worship resonates with modern environmentalism, and in particular with the Gaia hypothesis—the theory . . . that the Earth and its biosphere behave like a single living organism.”

How do we know so much about the ancient Goddess cult, which supposedly was abolished by the advent of monotheism some three thousand years ago? Through the miracle of feminist scholarship, of course. During the past several years numerous “scholarly” works dealing with the Goddess have been produced: *The Great Cosmic Mother* by Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor; *The Women’s History of the World* by Rosalind Miles; *The Chalice and the Blade* by Riane Eisler, to name but three examples. Such works trade in the assumptions found in the *Times* editorial—that somewhere in the arcadian mists of antiquity there existed an egalitarian Goddess-based society that was destroyed by patriarchal usurpers. All of the evil that plagues humanity therefore has its roots in the destruction of the Goddess-inspired order, and “healing” will occur when that order is restored.

If feminist pseudo-scholarship is not enough to persuade the unconverted, perhaps a new mystery play would help. *Mother Wove the Morning*, a one-woman play written and performed by Carol Lynn Pearson, offers 16 vignettes designed to make the concept of the Goddess a palpable reality. Pearson is a Mormon, after a fashion: Orthodox Mormons believe that there is, in addition to a Heavenly Father, a Heavenly Mother—but that the subject is beyond the concern of mortals, and that worshipping the Mother is a species of idolatry. According to Pearson, true worship should be directed at a “partnership”—“The human animal [should] get to an adult where he or she can work for balance, can acknowledge the absolute equal valuing of male and female, and have room on our mantelpieces for mother as well as father. . . . I don’t know of anything that’s more great and important—and I mean really important to us right now—than to further validate the human female by bringing into our concept and to our worship the divine



female."

In the play various women from different stages of history speak aching-ly of the need for the Goddess. Rachel, wife of Jacob ("As in Abraham, Isaac and . . ." Pearson explains) is made to mouth the contemporary feminist party line: she remembers the benevolent era of the Goddess and the brutal, monotheist patriarchs who deposed the "Mother." This memory, we are told, explains Rachel's decision to steal the figurines of several "gods" from Laban (an event described in Genesis, chapter 31); among those "gods," we are assured, was an image of the Goddess.

The "Rachel" segment exemplifies the play's approach. It takes a familiar event from scriptural history and invests it with a feminist subtext, effectively inverting the event's scriptural significance. Idol worshipers suddenly become the Good Guys—the innocent victims trying to preserve the healing image of the "Mother." This perspective utterly invalidates the Judeo-Christian canon as a source of spiritual truth, thus producing a vacuum to be filled by acolytes of the Goddess.

Pearson's play is a runaway smash in Utah. In January 1990 a scheduled 14-date engagement had to be extended to 30 performances in order to meet the demand. An unadvertised performance offered for students at Brigham Young University quickly sold out. The message took root with some BYU students: BYU English teacher Elouise Bell reports that during a Q-and-A period following the performance "All participants seemed to accept her premises; their questions had to do with solutions and particulars: 'How can we . . . ?'" One student offered a public validation of Pearson's Mother hypothesis: the opening prayer at the April 1991 BYU commencement began, "Our Father and Mother in Heaven . . ."

If Pearson can find a receptive audience in Utah—the very bosom of the dreaded patriarchy—she can make it anywhere. Since the play's debut in Utah in 1990, the production has played in Phoenix and Chicago, where it enjoyed extended runs; the play was also warmly received in Ireland. In September 1991 the production returned to Utah, where it was greeted again with sold-out auditoriums.

Pearson professes to be "thrilled" by the response generated by her play: "I have had such a wonderful response from people of all backgrounds, people of all religions or no religion [and] as I'd listen in the lobby after the play, they'd say, 'Oh, let me tell you what my church is doing to bring back the concept of the Mother.'" The desire to bring back the "Mother" can be seen in the use of "gender-inclusive" language in hymnals, prayers, and revisions of the Bible.

The vice-president of the Jungian Psychiatry Institute was so taken with Pearson's drama that he asked her to perform the play at the organization's international conference later this year. According to Pearson, "Jungian psychologists know that the most important psychological work we have to do in this last decade of the 20th century is the reintegration of the feminine divine into our religious experience."

Does anybody still doubt the reality of the Goddess? After all, can the *New York Times*, the Jungian Psychiatry Institute, and Pearson's rhapsodic audiences all be wrong?

—William Grigg

**WHEN MAGIC JOHNSON** announced that he was retiring from basketball because he had tested positive for the HIV virus, the nation fell into the kind of cultural coma that is all too common in recent history. The national television networks interrupted regularly scheduled programs for live coverage of Magic's news conference and ran nightly retrospectives on his life and career. Reporters took to the streets to capture the shock and tears of his fans and admirers. Athletes testified to the many gifts Magic had "given the nation." Los Angeles Lakers' broadcaster Chick Hearn wondered whether "there will ever be a sadder story than this," and if "basketball will ever recover." Senators and congressmen pondered the meaning of it all, and President Bush interrupted a NATO conference in Rome to declare Magic a "national hero."

Of course, there was one segment of the nation that was both clear-eyed and clearheaded: the AIDS lobby. Magic Johnson was the high-profile figure it had long sought—the person whose affliction it could market to show that

"anyone" could get AIDS—and Magic played right into its hands. At a national news conference, Magic pointed to his genitals and said, "Put your thinking caps on, and put your cap on down there." This was the mature and courageous message that convinced President Bush that Magic was a "gentleman who has handled his problem in a wonderful manner." Magic then joined AIDS activist Tom Stoddard to announce their concerted push for "explicit AIDS and sex education" on prime-time television and in elementary schools. Even the international community responded to Magic's call. Just in case athletes are in need of some diversion from the competition they have trained and prepared a lifetime for, the international Olympics committee announced that all athletes, ostensibly male and female alike, will receive free condoms while in Barcelona.

The Magic Johnson story offers many lessons, but they are not the slogans being chanted by the national media and AIDS lobby. It is certainly true that anyone can get AIDS—anyone, that is, who behaves like Magic Johnson. Basketball player Mark Jackson said Magic "touched the whole world," and we now know that Magic did indeed do a lot of touching. One of his close friends, Pamela McGee, admitted that it "didn't surprise me that Magic had the disease. Knowing his flamboyant lifestyle, it was bound to happen sooner or later. Magic's closest friends always knew him as a major player and womanizer. He has had one-night stands with what he calls 'freaks' across America." Magic admitted this himself, saying "I did my best to accommodate as many women as I could."

This story has also reinforced an old stereotype and a famous double standard. In a recent national talk show dealing with the lack of positive role models for minority youth, a number of black women correctly noted that Magic's actions have done little to counter the image of black males as ignorant, irresponsible, and sexually insatiable, whatever their aptitude for bouncing a ball. This story also offended women athletes, because Magic will remain a million-dollar draw for commercial purposes. For all her whining, Martina Navratilova made a valid

point: "If it had happened to a heterosexual woman who had been with 100 or 200 men, they'd call her a whore and a slut, and the corporations would drop her like a lead balloon. And she'd never get a job in her life." Miss Navratilova, a lesbian, added: "I don't have one damn endorsement outside of rackets and shoes." Conclusion from Madison Avenue: better an immoral and sexually immature male than a lesbian who believes in monogamous relationships.

Most importantly, this incident should be used for opening debate on the role that sports and athletes play in American culture. Last year Bobby Bonilla was a good, slightly above-average baseball player for the Pittsburgh Pirates. Last December he became the highest-paid athlete in the history of team sports, signing a \$29 million contract to play five years for the New York Mets. And by all standards, Bonilla has nowhere near the potential or ability of a dozen other players currently in baseball. A Little League baseball manager in La Center, Washington, was last year charged

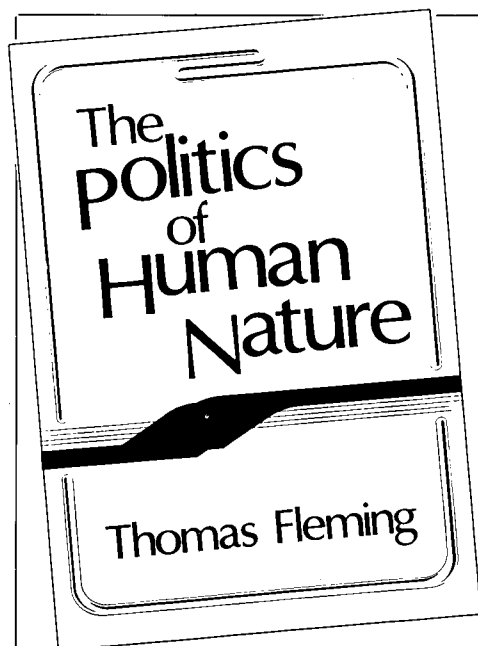
with second-degree assault with a deadly weapon when he beat an umpire with a baseball bat during a post-game argument. The umpire had called the game because of darkness, meaning the score of the game reverted to the previous inning when the other team was winning. The manager was also a local school board member. One of the arguments used by Edwin Edwards in the recent gubernatorial election in Louisiana was that, if David Duke were elected, athletes would be scared away from attending Louisiana schools, costing the state millions in lost revenue. Sports tainting politics by tainting higher education—not a pretty scenario.

At Dixie College in St. George, Utah, crimes committed by school athletes have led to a heated debate in the local press. In the last seven years, there have been 27 charges of rape on campus—24 against athletes, 22 of them being against football players. Last year four Dixie football players were charged with varying crimes involving three teenaged girls, and a group of recruits committed a robbery

while staying at Dixie. One football player had an extensive juvenile record, including the beating of a man who later died. The chief of campus security, Don Reid, told Sandi Graff of the local *Daily Spectrum* that he knew of players who had been recruited right out of prison. Football coach Greg Croshaw was fending off charges late last year that he had met with a probation officer and a judge in Arizona to get a prisoner an early release to play football at Dixie.

With sports permeating every pore of American culture, the public response to the Magic Johnson story should not be surprising. A German news agency compared Magic Johnson to the Persian Gulf War in the degree of national attention garnered in the American press—what a comfort to parents who lost a son or daughter in the Saudi desert.

Alexander the Great slept with a copy of the *Iliad* under his pillow to get closer to the noble and heroic figures of antiquity, but our kids have a different class of heroes. The classics are out, along with virtue and exemplary



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deeds. For today's would-be heroes, it's grab your "cap" and *carpe diem*. Or, as stated in Magic's old Nike commercials, "Just do it!"

—Theodore Pappas

**PUBLISHERS WEEKLY** (*Publishers Weekly* in my book), though it is one of the most depressing magazines in America, obviously considers itself a sprightly, thoughtful, and somewhat "irreverent" publication, gifted with the insight to see that the emperor has no clothes on and blessed with the courage to stand forward and say so. In the bold tradition of Jeremiah and St. Paul, Voltaire and Swift, Samuel Butler and H.L. Mencken, Mailer and Vonnegut and Donahue, PW (as it is known affectionately in the trade) performed the daring and unprecedented act of placing on the cover of its number for September 27, 1991, "An Open Letter to President Bush," which said in part, "Dear Mr. President: Because you have made education policy an important part of your administration . . . [w]e urge you to read a startling and disturbing new book, *Savage Inequalities* by Jonathan Kozol, due shortly from Crown Publishing. . . . It is the story of how, in our public schools, we are creating a country profoundly different from the one our founders envisaged. It is the story of two nations that are separate and unequal in their educational facilities, and tells how this unfair imbalance has been largely created and maintained by the inequitable distribution of public funds. Clearly, something must be done about American education, but too often those who work to reform it do so through notions of 'choice' and 'competition,' market terms that have no place in a debate on the needs of our poor children. In the end, there is no doubt that we will have to spend money, and a lot of it, to bring genuine equality to our schools." This letter was succeeded on the following two pages by excerpts from Kozol's book, and on the third by a special editorial by the editor in chief, John F. Baker, who endorsed both the letter and Kozol and called for "a coordinated, industry-wide program" in which publishers can work to help solve the crisis of educational inequality in America.

That's called sticking your neck out.

(Who says literary folk are natural cowards?) It would help, though, if there were a brainpan at the end of it. Judging from the excerpts selected by PW, I would have to say that Kozol's book rests on politically directed emotionalism, not on sustained, analytical argument. Both Kozol and Baker dismiss the premise of the Bush administration's *America 2000: An Education Strategy* that, "Excellent schools don't have to cost more." If that is so, Baker demands, "then why is so much money consistently being spent on the better ones?" as Kozol implies that it is. The answer to that question, of course, is, "How much better are the 'better' schools?" The SAT scores, along with the rest of the national statistics, say, "not much." High school students who cannot locate their home state on a map are not restricted to the inner-city schools. In 19th-century America, one-room schoolhouses such as those in which Laura Ingalls Wilder taught (and was taught) routinely produced students whose knowledge of mathematics, history, geography, and literature was greatly superior to that of most public high school teachers today, though they were expected to provide their own pencils and slates and often read their lessons out of the same book their seatmates used. The question is not whether black and white pupils learn in the company of one another, but whether anyone learns anything at all. Ah, well (we old book-review hands may say), PW's forte isn't educational policy, but at least its heart is in the right place. And where do you suppose *that* would be? "In the end, there is no doubt that we will have to spend money, and a lot of it."

You have to understand that the American book publishing industry is on the ropes at the start of the recessive 90's, having blown huge sums of money in the prosperous 80's in the attempt to make like Trump Enterprises. (It wasn't just the purveyors of video equipment, home computers, and junk bonds who succumbed to corporate hubris in what Jonathan Kozol calls "the Reagan era.") Huge advances paid to "authors" like Stephen King to prevent them from signing with the competition ultimately could not be earned out, since the finite expansion of chain stores like B. Dalton and Waldenbooks was necessarily unable to

keep pace with the infinite greed of writers and their agents.

Many publishing houses merged with one another; many more, like Simon & Schuster and Random House, were purchased by vast conglomerates whose directors knew (and still know) nothing of publishing, let alone of books that they regard as so many marketable units like cars or tubes of toothpaste. As a result of these changes, a different type of person was drawn into the publishing "industry." Publishers have always tended to be second-rate businessmen and third-rate intellects, but at least they used to love good books and respect the people who wrote them. Today, editors are increasingly people whose formation is not literary but commercial and whose experience is in marketing and sales rather than in literature. To them, Third Avenue is an easier, more glamorous, and romantic version of Wall Street or Sunset Boulevard, allowing you to drink all night with Norman Mailer or visit the discos with Jay McInerney, get to the office at eleven, and take Alice Walker or Jonathan Kozol to lunch at the Four Seasons at noon. In present-day publishing, very few manuscripts are actually read, most "editing" is done by freelancers, very little talent or even competence is applied to very little work, and hardly any money is made. Indeed, a great deal of it is lost. Having long ago forgotten what ought to be their main goal—namely, the acquisition and publishing of good books—publishers today have literally no idea what they are doing, or even what they want to do. As for the schoolbook departments, they are confronted with declining school enrollments and increasing illiteracy and ignorance on the part of faculties as well as of their student bodies. In response to the situation, school publishers invest large sums in audios and videos and other "learning aids," while their trade-book counterparts search diligently for Stephen King imitators and celebrities willing to cooperate with ghostwriters to produce "intimate autobiographies," and hope everything turns out for the best.

Meaning, of course, that they may make a lot of money. *Publishers Weekly* and John F. Baker are coy about this, trying to vitiate accusations of self-interest by anticipating them. "We



supply," Baker writes, "the textbooks and reading materials most of [the schools] use; it is very much in our interest, as business people as well as citizens, to want to see an educated populace that can read and enjoy books." What can't. A glance at the rest of the issue suggests PW's idea of "reading," of "books," and of the nature of literary enjoyment. After television and the American public educational establishment, the American publishing industry has done more to subvert and destroy standards of taste, literacy, and intelligence than any other institution in the national life. For two decades at least, they have been busily "down-leveling" the textbooks they market to a captive school system, just as they have worked deliberately to degrade the so-called adult trade market to a standard largely of their own creation.

Now they are upset about the mess that is public education in this country, to which their answer is "an industry-wide program" to involve themselves in matters for which they have no professional competence or experience whatever. If only they could just get back to the business of intelligent book publishing, they would be doing all that civic duty could possibly require of them.

—Chilton Williamson, Jr.

**HOWARD NEMEROV**, one of our country's titans of literature, died last July. He published his first book shortly after World War II, and during the next 44 years a stream of 26 books garnered for him the country's most prestigious awards. He won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer in 1978 for his *Collected Poems*, the Bollingen Prize for Poetry in 1981, and the National Medal for the Arts in 1987. Our third Poet Laureate for the years 1988-90, Nemerov was a consummate man of letters who excelled in several literary genre.

His essays range in subject matter from Dante and Shakespeare to Thomas Mann and Proust, from computers to painting, and his exquisite insights have been happily free of the self-isolating jargon that has lately typified this field. The body of Nemerov's criticism alone would be the envy of those who solely pursue this activity.

His achievement in poetry looms largest in the public mind, and it was his poetry that has been responsible for most of his awards. Of another poet Nemerov has written: "I prefer poems which want to be read hard and which respond to the closest attention . . . it is a matter rather of how you approach one thought through another with an effect of surprise; a matter of the steepness of the gradient between the immediate and the inferred." The gradient of Nemerov's own work is sometimes steep indeed, but the surprise at the end of the slope is partly what draws readers to him. He is a poet who has read widely and deeply and who is aware of literary history and traditions. Unlike some, he does not think that he has invented himself. There are real poets in our time who have been much less aware of certain modern dilemmas and crises, but it is this added dimension of his work that greatly expands Nemerov's vision and, perhaps, excludes some of his audience: how can they respond if they are only vaguely aware of such problems as the challenges of scientism or of positivism?

Detractors have claimed that the poetry is "academic" and "over-intellectualized." If the reader is looking for a response to the world in extravagantly sensuous terms, he will be disappointed—yet so many of Nemerov's best poems respond to "deep sayings" found in wild nature. That there might have been a mixed response in the romantic 60's and 70's could have been expected. Nemerov is not promising apocalypse, or millennium; and he was no darling of the talk shows.

He has noted in a poem entitled "To the Bleeding Hearts Association of American Novelists" that there are writers who "slop their ketchup in the statue's wounds / And advertise *that* blood as from the heart." He concludes, "I like those masters better who expound / More inwardly the nature of our loss, / And only offhand let us know they've found / No better composition than a cross." It is the latter that we have come to expect in his own verse.

Nemerov's fiction is no small accomplishment, either, especially the three novels, *Federigo*, or *the Power of Love*, *The Melodramatists*, and *The Homecoming Game*, which has been turned into a movie. Thomas Mann

praised Nemerov's fiction as work of "keen imagination." All the novels had been out of print for some time, but are now being reissued by the University of Missouri Press.

Often a reader feels that Nemerov is working in a fashion analogous to subatomic physicists, tracking the illusive, phantom-like trails of a world beyond ordinary sight, revealing the deep-down things while at the same time sharing these discoveries with wonder and humility. Above all, his work is *about* something. The poems and fiction are not merely exercises in technical virtuosity.

About Vermeer, another master, Nemerov has written: "Taking what is, and seeing it as it is, / Pretending to no heroic stances or gestures, / Keeping it simple; being in love with light." So he has done and been himself, which is no mean epitaph.

—William Mills

**WE ARE PLEASED** to report that the February 1992 issue of *Chronicles*—"Bread and Circuses: The Politics of Welfare"—was funded, in part, through a special grant from the Alex C. Walker Educational and Charitable Trust of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Production scheduling prevented adequate acknowledgment within the pages of that issue.

**OUR JANUARY ISSUE** engendered numerous queries as to the availability of books on and by Pitirim Sorokin and James Burnham. Transaction Publishers of New Brunswick, New Jersey, last year republished the popular one-volume edition of Sorokin's *Social and Cultural Dynamics*. Transaction has also just published an edition of Adolf A. Berle and Gardiner C. Means' 1933 classic, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, which greatly influenced James Burnham. We wish also to recommend the August-November 1991 issue of the *Chesterton Review*. Edited by the Reverend Ian Boyd, this issue deals exclusively with the life, works, and theories of C.S. Lewis. The issue can be obtained by writing the *Chesterton Review*, St. Thomas More College, 1437 College Drive, Saskatoon, SK, Canada, S7N 0W6.

# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

**Secessions**—January 1991—Tomislav Sunic on globalism and the right of self-determination, Bill Kauffman on why Upstate should secede from New York City, and Thomas Fleming on Italy's example of unity through division. Plus Theodore Pappas on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s doctoral dissertation, Allan Brownfeld on Pat Buchanan and his critics, and J.O. Tate on the correspondence of Andrew Lytle, Allen Tate, and Robert Lowell.

**Discovering the Past**—February 1991—Forrest McDonald on the study of history, M.E. Bradford on the Constitutional Convention, and Charles Causley on the role the past plays in his poetry. Plus George Garrett on John Updike's *Rabbit at Rest*, Fred Chappell on the best and worst of Donald Hall, David Slavitt on the life and work of O.B. Hardison, and Thomas Fleming on modern American verse.

**Southern Literature**—March 1991—George Garrett on the state of Southern letters, Madison Smartt Bell on the short story, Dabney Stuart on Fred Chappell, Fred Chappell's story "Ancestors," and poems by James Seay and R.H.W. Dillard. Plus Henry Taylor and Kelly Cherry on Southern poetry, George Core on the literary quarterlies, and Steven Goldberg on the teaching of sociology.

**Caught in the Cash Nexus**—April 1991—Irving Horowitz and Mary Curtis on "bottom-line" thinking and national productivity, Josh Ozersky on the seduction of cable's Nick at Nite, and Thomas Molnar on why European unification will never occur. Plus Samuel Francis on the European New Right, George Carey on the present health of the Constitution, and Frank Bryan on the case for Vermont's secession.

**Conservative Movement: R.I.P.?**—May 1991—Six views on conservatism by Wick Allison, Charley Reese, Clyde Wilson, Murray N. Rothbard, Howard Phillips, and Donald Devine. Plus Samuel Francis on the failure of American conservatism, Florence King on misanthropy, Chilton Williamson, Jr. on the history of isolationism, and Peter Stanlis's vindication of Edmund Burke.

**U.S.S.R.: Crack-up or Crackdown?**—June 1991—Andrei Navrozov on Soviet deception and the liberation of Eastern Europe, Yuri Maltsev on the unveiling of Soviet myths, Arnold Beichman on Gorbachev and reform, Jay Kinney on the state of Soviet propaganda, and Thomas Fleming on what America can learn from the Soviet Union. Plus Jeffrey Tucker on enterprise zones, and Matthew Scully's review of Carl Rowan's autobiography.

**The Promise of American Life**—July 1991—Chilton Williamson, Jr. on the cultural and environmental arguments against increased immigration, Richard Estrada on the impact of immigration on Hispanic-Americans, Thomas Fleming on how Ellis Island has superceded Jamestown and Plymouth Rock, and novelist Edward Redlinski's account of emigrating to America. Plus Milton Rosenberg on Paul de Man and J.O. Tate on the music of Ignaz Friedman.

**Penny Dreadfuls**—August 1991—Robert Sampson on adventure fiction, Richard S. Wheeler on the clichés of the traditional Western, and Thomas Fleming on the utopian and dystopian visions of science fiction. Plus Llewellyn H. Rockwell on Christopher Lasch's *The True and Only Heaven*, Ellen Wilson Fielding on Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's *Feminism Without Illusions*, and Bill Kauffman on the life and work of Henry W. Clune.

**Cultural Amnesia**—September 1991—Jacob Neussner on the loss of knowledge and its consequences, George Watson on the role of the literal man, Anthony Harrigan on the importance of dreams and reveries, and Theodore Pappas on the meaning of the New World Order. Plus Frank Brownlow on Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education*, Jack D. Douglas on the sex studies of Alfred Kinsey, and Lorrin Anderson on the politics of docudrama.

**Life on a Small Planet**—October 1991—Garrett Hardin on why good fences make good neighbors, Jacqueline Kasun on population control and the environment, and Richard D. Lamm on the role of culture in determining national success. Plus Chilton Williamson, Jr. on the politics of writing histories of Columbus, Thomas Molnar on capitalism and Eastern Europe, and Florence King on Jonathan Agronsky's *Marion Barry*.

**Western Writing**—November 1991—Chilton Williamson, Jr. on the work of Laura Ingalls Wilder, A. Carl Bredahl on why Western narrative is so American, Stephen Bodio on the life and literature of ranchwomen, and a short story by Kent Nelson. Plus M.E. Bradford on the *Western Writers Series*, Thomas Fleming on traveling in Italy, and John Shelton Reed on the environment and the federal government.

**America First: 1941/1991**—December 1991—Four views of the America First Committee by Justus D. Doenecke, Wayne S. Cole, Ruth Sarles Benedict, and Leonard P. Liggio. Plus E. Christian Kopff on the Veterans of Future Wars, Thomas Fleming on the lessons of 1941, Samuel Francis on the need for a new America First policy, Theodore Pappas on the Tyler Kent affair, and John B. Thompson on the art of indoctrination.

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# Principalities & Powers

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by Samuel Francis

## The Middle-Class Moment

With a whoop and a holler, politicians have suddenly discovered that there's a wild animal called the American middle class prowling around the voting booths, and officeholders are pounding down the stairs to make sure the rough beast does no damage once it gets inside the house. Almost every issue that has emerged in national politics in the last year—term limits and taxes, housing and health care, racial quotas and rascals in government—centers around the cultural identity and material interests of the middle class, and the nation's incumbent oligarchs well understand that all the growling about such matters is rather like the roaring of lions in the jungle night. It's when the roaring stops and the hunt begins that they better start worrying.

The hunt began last fall with the Pyrrhic victory of the oligarchs over David Duke in Louisiana and the announcement soon afterwards of both Mr. Duke and Patrick J. Buchanan of their Middle American-oriented campaigns for President as Republicans. Before that, however, Democrats like Pennsylvania's Harris Wofford and Iowa's Tom Harkin were raising populist banners that the white middle class was likely to find attractive. At the same time, even the oracles of conventional wisdom were beginning to perceive that the middle class was in economic trouble. Columnist George Will, ever a reliable source for what is respectable to think and say, announced his persuasion that middle-class economic distress was a significant political force, and *Newsweek*, which is even more conventional if not always as wise as Mr. Will, rehearsed the facts and figures of middle-class withering in a cover story the following week. Other journalistic accounts around the same time—in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*, among others—also burrowed into the statistical underbrush to document the same story and sagely pondered its political implications.

The arithmetic of annihilation is by

now reasonably familiar. As Mr. Will reported, "The wages of average workers are below 1979 levels, but family incomes have been maintained by wives going to work. In 1960, 30 percent of wives with children under 18 worked. By 1987, 65 percent did. . . . In 1950, the average middle-age middle-class homeowner spent 14 percent of his gross income on mortgage payments. By 1973, that had crept up to 21 percent. In the next 10 years it rocketed to 44 percent. Home ownership rates, which rose for six decades, declined."

The reality of middle-class decline is masked by the continuity between the figures for income levels in earlier periods and those for more recent years. The reason for the apparent continuity is that wives are working and thereby bringing in extra income to compensate for what would otherwise be a clear fall in earnings and living standards. The middle class runs faster, expends more energy, to stay in the same place.

Of course, there are the perennial optimists, mostly self-described "conservatives," who make a living out of claiming that the middle class is more prosperous than ever. They like to point to the availability of VCRs, personal computers, and shopping malls to make their case that we've never had it so good. Such cheerleaders seem not to have met Mrs. Margaret Collier of Peoria, Illinois, and thousands of wives like her. Mrs. Collier in fact doesn't hold a job, but that's because, as she told the *New York Times*, "It takes me working full-time at home to keep the bills down to the point that we can live on his [Mr. Collier's] income. I split the wood [for the Franklin stove], plant and work a vegetable garden, can vegetables, buy meat when it is on sale, help my husband fix our cars." Not only does Mrs. Collier not have a personal computer. She seems to live at pretty much the same economic and technological level as an Apache squaw before modern civilization liberated her.

As for home ownership, the Census Bureau reports that today only 9 percent of the nation's renters can afford

to buy a home and that 36 percent of actual homeowners would be unable to buy a median-priced home if they had to do so on the market at the time of the survey. To own a home and support a wife who doesn't work are, of course, deeply held aspirations of the American middle class, and the decline of the ability to do so represents a serious economic demotion. It also represents an important social and cultural change. Home ownership—even the abstract and rather fictitious sort of mortgaged ownership to which Americans in recent generations have become habituated—is one of the traditional symbols of the economic and social independence that distinguishes free men from medieval serfs bound to the land or slaves fed from their master's hand. It is difficult to see how the transiency that residential renting involves can be consistent with the kind of rooted commitment to community (or family, for that matter) on which republican government must rely. It is also difficult to understand how family institutions can flourish when wives and mothers must work for a living outside the home. That married women must increasingly do so means fewer children and alternate provisions for existing children—and for preparing meals, shopping, cleaning, etc. Today it means a massive redistribution of social functions and the psychic and moral dislocations that redistribution involves: husbands keeping house, children cooking for themselves, and women escaping the natural bonds of home and husband.

The economic independence of the middle class disappeared long ago, however, when modern corporate and governmental organizations began to swallow the independent businesses and farms that made the bourgeois class of the 19th century the core of American society, politics, and culture. At the turn of the century, as historian James Lincoln Collier writes, the middle class constituted "no more than a quarter of the population of the United States," but nevertheless

it was the dominant section of