

erated intellectual who despises traditional piety and who questions even the power of the gods themselves. His rashness and moral arrogance bring destruction to his family and a plague to his city. Infatuated by science (the dialectic and materialism of fifth-century Sophists), he does not even know, as the prophet points out to him, who he is. Science has liberated him even from the traditional Greek concern for ancestry and lineage. He is a child of fortune, the man who can make his own destiny, a man (until he is taught better) without shame.

In *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, Dorothy Sayers Fleming's Lord Peter Wimsey meets a physician who plans "to make everybody good by glands." A Chestertonian priest is ironically enthusiastic: "My dear man, if you can cure sin with an injection, I shall be only too pleased," but he warns the medico to "be sure you don't pump in something worse in the process." Wimsey should not have been surprised to discover that the physician had murdered an elderly patient in order to get money for his clinic.


"The study of nature makes a man at last as remorseless as nature." The apothegm belongs to H.G. Wells's Doctor Moreau, but it probably expresses Wells' own opinion. The good doctor, you will remember, had found a means of accelerating evolution and was turning monkeys, cats, and pigs into humanoid creatures. The process involved a good deal of pain being inflicted upon the helpless creatures. In the film version, a transparently homosexual Moreau, played by Charles Laughton, enjoys the suffering he inflicts, but sadism, while it lies just over the horizon of scientific materialism, is not the point, but moral obtuseness. In fulfilling his dream of progress, which is to make all the world's creatures exactly like himself, the scientist must deaden himself against his own conscience.

"Don't worry, I'm a scientist," exclaims Peter Sellers as a psychiatrist assaulting one of his female patients, "I understand these things." The film—a 1965 sex farce—was scripted by Woody Allen, an entertainer known for his kindness to children. Even when Mr. Allen's seduction of his wife's adopted daughter became a scandal, his career went on without interruption. A sex scandal destroyed the career of Fatty Arbuckle—a comic genius compared to Allen—and even in the 1950's poor "Rock Hudson" was forced to marry a woman in order to divert attention from the obsessive homosexual activities that would kill him several decades later, but by the mid-90's virtually every actress in Hollywood is either winning an award for playing a tart or, more often, acting out the fantasy in real life. In Hollywood, nobody is anyone unless she's had at least one bastard: to fail in this duty might be construed as judgmental.

At one level, there is no reason to care what these women do. Every society has to tolerate a certain number of courtesans, trollopes, and sluts, and it was a mistake—a very grave mistake—to attempt to burn out the Old Adam from our flesh with fire and sword. That was the dream of oversexed Puritans, who preached the most severe chastity while tolerating the gross peasant familiarities of bundling which, even when they did not lead to intercourse, were hardly incentives to chastity. Our current moral numbness is as much a product of the Puritan legacy as the social idealism, bad cooking, and concupiscentence that have characterized American life since the post-Puritan ascendancy of the 1860's.

For the Puritan, a thing must be either bad, and therefore prohibited, or good, and therefore encouraged by church and state. So long as Puritans were in some sense Christian believers, they were merely irritating killjoys who banned archery and

bowling on the Sabbath and bullied the imperfect into submission to their clerical masters. Once they turned Unitarian, that is anti-Christian, they began to have doubts, not about their duty to regulate private life, but only about the virtues to be encouraged, the vices to be repressed. When they were hot, they condemned fornication, Sabbath-breaking, and heresy. They even condemned the toleration of heresy. Now that their faith has cooled and frozen solid, they condemn anyone who is morally judgmental or intolerant of diversity. Dante located lust in the pleasantest outlying neighborhood of Hell; when it came to sexual sins, however, the Puritans lived up to their name. But if fornication was once a sin of devastating consequence, to be repressed by scarlet letters and public obloquy, it is now (since it cannot be as bad as all that) a positive virtue, a sign of liberation and personal expression. Sex is good for you and ought to be promoted in schools through special courses, and the consequences ought to be subsidized by AFDC payments, the rewards and incentives for the practice of the new morality.

America is neither Eden nor a New Jerusalem. At best, we were Old Europe springing to life on new soil. In turning our backs both on the practical morality of Dante and on the moral cynicism of European degenerates, we have turned the United States into an erotic Disneyland, a glossy pornography shop where nothing is real, nothing is sacred. We do not have nude billboards—yet, but when we do, they will be justified eventually on moral and scientific grounds. Social scientists will receive grants to show how public nudity decreases rape and encourages a healthy respect for women, marriage, and family, and conservatives will write articles proving them wrong, without ever challenging the underlying assumption. Meanwhile, the rates of sexual violence, divorce, and abortion will rise from their currently very high plateau, but these regrettable statistics will be explained away as residues of patriarchal superstitions, because being shameless, we are also liars. 

Aliens

by William Baer

In, then out, of deep hypnotic regression, she told her sympathetic Harvard research prof about the ship's white, sterile room in which they'd probed her naked body as she lay out flat and perfectly immobile in order to assist the world—her Ivy League psychiatrist explained—to reach a higher level of consciousness.

But never did she reveal—she recollected later, driving past that selfish bastard Bob's new condo, with a condescending sneer—that one of her abductors had attempted to impregnate her, and just how good it felt, both then and now, to be more special than anyone else on earth—who'd had the world's (the galaxy's) most extraordinary lover.

Habla Therapy?

by Janet Scott Barlow



Anna Mytek-Wodecki

Instruction #1: "Gather the following materials: a pair of scissors, paste or glue to use on paper, and a piece of construction paper, lightweight cardboard, or a plain piece of paper (in that order or preference) at least 8" x 10" and no larger than 16" x 20." You will also need to gather two to five magazines (preferably magazines with lots of different pictures). Flip through the pages and cut out any pictures, phrases, colors, images, symbols, or anything else that reminds you of your childhood. When you feel you have enough material, paste the clippings to your sheet of paper, so that they form a collage. [Now] write down how you think any of these pictures, phrases or colors might have relevance to your current [marital] relationship."

Instruction #2: Make a list of the top five attributes you want in a spouse, "read your list aloud three times a day for three days, then burn it. . . . Burning the list is significant, it releases and transforms the energy [to] the Universe."

The first instruction above, the psychological art project, was written by Jay Gale, Ph.D. a "licensed psychologist," in his and Sheila Church's book *30 Days to a Happier Marriage*. (My guess is that it would take 15 days alone just to complete Dr. Gale's "collage.") The second, the burning-list-as-smoking-prayer, comes from Kalyn Wolf Gibbens, formerly a "make-up artist, body worker, and owner of a flotation tank center in Tucson, Arizona," currently a "lecturer, publisher, community member and world citizen."

Question: Your marriage is in trouble. You are worried, unhappy, possibly desperate. Which of the above counselors do

you call—Dr. Cut-and-Paste, or Ms. Burning Love? Whose advice do you take?

Now tell the truth: the very question makes you want to put your head in the oven, doesn't it? I hereby offer my own instructions, designed like those above to help you toward your heart's desire, a happy marriage. Instruction #1: Turning counter-clockwise in a circle, pat your head while rubbing your stomach. Instruction #2: Grow up.

Along with the steady rise in divorce rates (55 percent of first marriages and 63 percent of second marriages end in divorce), we have witnessed in this country a parallel rise in the availability of all manner of therapy and marriage counseling, along with all manner of self-help marriage books. Supply, it would seem, is meeting demand. But no one ever asks if the supply is tainted, if it is mismatched to the demand, if, in some perverse way, it actually feeds the problems that create the demand.

Instead, we see a kind of societal panic, a willingness to try just about anything to bring America's divorce epidemic—and the misery that accompanies it—under control. Many churches now require betrothed couples to submit to extensive premarital counseling, often demanding a specific engagement period, the taking of compatibility tests, and a nonnegotiable number of sessions. The main focus of these sessions is, in the words of one minister, the examination of a couple's "perceptions and expectations of each other." In other words, the principal topic of this pastoral counseling is not spirituality.

And how well do these preemptive strikes against divorce—whether inside or outside a religious context—actually work? The bottom line: no one knows. "But," says Michele Weiner-Davis, author of *Divorce Busting*, "it couldn't hurt."

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