

Churchill. But back to “Hyacinth”—what would happen if it were written in Hungarian as “Hájszint”? Written, more than spoken, with the consequence that among its readers the idea would occur that the English language, that English names, that English women are ugly.

If words were only symbols of things (this is what the computer suggests they are) their meaning would have the equivalence of facts. “Her name is Hyacinth. That is a fact.” But I, as an historian, have often shocked—without really wishing to do so—some of my students (and, alas, some of my colleagues) when I said that history does not consist of facts but of words about facts, because no “fact” has any meaning by itself. The meaning of any and every “fact” depends on our immediate association of it with other facts; moreover, its meaning also, and inevitably, depends on our statement (or call it “phrasing”) of it—whence there are statements in which the “fact” may be precise but its meaning may be untrue. And so the finding of the *mot juste* is the inevitable task not only of the poet or the novelist but of the historian, too, since his selection of every word is not only a scientific or aesthetic but also a moral choice.

Unlike his great adversary Churchill, who wrote better than he spoke, Hitler was not a master of the written word. He knew that; he said once that his *Mein Kampf* must not be read but spoken. He was right in that: There are long portions of *Mein Kampf* that are unreadable, rather than unspeakable. (But then “unspeakable” has a double meaning, too: Something that ought not be said.) On the other hand, 20th-century literature has plenty of examples of prose that are readable rather than speakable—an intellectual tendency that has, lamentably, seeped into the practices of modern or post-modern poetry, too: for poetry that is not speakable cannot be poetry at all.

Does this mean that the world is getting more and more prosaic, perhaps due to its evolving mechanization? No. If our images and our imagination are becoming more visual and less verbal, this does not mean that they are becoming less intellectual: to the contrary, since, as I wrote before, sight is the most intellectual of our senses. Of course, the increase of intellectuality is not necessarily a good thing. The sins of the spirit are worse than the sins of the flesh; a voyeur is no less of a sinner or a pervert than the men and women whose acts he watches

(or wishes to watch). There is, undoubtedly, an increasing intrusion of mind into matter—but this does not mean that words are becoming less meaningful in our lives. One of the earliest symptoms, beginning more than 100 years ago, of the popular transition from verbal to pictorial imagination was the printing of comics in the newspapers, something ready-made for *slow* readers; but most comic strips are meaningless without words in their balloons. Then came the cartoons of the *New Yorker* type, where the artwork is (or, rather, was) superior to the comics but is also dependent on the words of its captions, much more terse and condensed than those of the comics, and therefore more intellectual and suggestive. And now we have the Internet through which, on occasion, men and women fall in love by reading each others’ disembodied messages in words. In sum: The Age of the Book may be coming to its end, but the Word was not only there in the beginning; it will be there until the end.

What this means is that we may become more sensitive to the quality of words, including their visual forms, their shapes. This has nothing to do with the future of typography (though it does have something to do with the future of spelling). It goes deeper. It occurs within the conscious, not the subconscious, functioning of our minds—at a time when we must begin thinking about thinking itself. And thinking is inseparable from the words we know, including their various qualities. *Quantities* are definable and mathematically fixable. *Qualities* are not. Their sources lie deep in our minds. They are existential realities. Computers can do fabulous calculations of quantities—but not of qualities, in the sense in which Plato had recognized their existence.

The word *quality* is used by most educated people every day of their lives, yet in order that we should have this simple word Plato had to make the tremendous effort (it is one of the most exhausting which man is called on to exert) of turning a vague feeling into a clear thought. He invented the new word “*poiôtēs*,” “what-ness,” as we might say, or “of-what-kind-ness,” and Cicero translated it by the Latin “*qualitas*,” from “*qualis*.”

Thus wrote Owen Barfield in his *History*

in *English Words*, which I consider one of the most important works of this century. And in this inadequate attempt of an essay, I have tried to take a step further, to suggest the association of words not only with their histories and with their sounds but with their shapes, with their meaning perceived not only with our ears but also with our eyes. But perhaps Shakespeare had already known this when he wrote about imagination:

And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the
poet’s pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to
airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Reflections on a Texan’s Visit to Bosnia

by David Hartman

Since returning from a visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina arranged by The Rockefeller Institute to consult with the Republic of Srpska (one of Bosnia’s component states) on privatization of its socialist industries, I have given considerable thought as to what Americans (especially Texans) might learn from the recent decomposition of Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia was created after World War I by President Woodrow Wilson and his allies at Versailles as an ill-conceived conglomeration of Balkan nations freed by the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. Serbia, which had been liberated from the Turks, had an uneasy coexistence until World War II, when it was conquered first by Nazi Germany and subsequently by Soviet-backed communists. The latter liquidated the non-communist, anti-Nazi resistance and superimposed communism. Following the

fall of the Iron Curtain and the death of long-time premier Marshal Tito, the decomposition commenced.

Today, Yugoslavia is a fraction of its former domain, comprising the republics of Serbia (which includes the Kosovo region) and Montenegro. Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia have seceded. Under the current truce, Bosnia-Herzegovina is a federation of the Republic of Srpska and the Muslim-Croat enclaves demanded by the United States. Yugoslavia, as constructed by the communists, was to be the consummate multicultural nation, cemented by the fraternal bonds of socialism. But Yugoslavia failed to forge these bonds, ending instead in a savage war between ethnic rivals, primarily because communism could never progress beyond socialist seizure of industry and commerce. Private ownership of homes and property continued, social regimentation never supplanted families, and citizens maintained their religious faith. The people of Yugoslavia refused allegiance to a nation formed with the objective of supplanting their values.

Today in Bosnia-Herzegovina, we find an uneasy truce being policed by the United Nations under U.S. hegemony. This truce was prescribed by the Dayton Accords after the United States armed the Croats and the Muslims and bombed the Serbs' key installations. One effect of the war was the displacement of refugees from ethnically mixed communities. While tragic, this does present the opportunity to resettle these refugees along the ethnic lines they prefer, removing the continuing irritant of intermingled peoples who are not likely to live peacefully together. Unfortunately, the United States is backing the return of refugees and the goal—once again—of a multicultural state.

The United States has demonized the Serbs for "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia, which is what all three parties—Serbs, Croats, and Muslims—were effectively practicing. With roughly equal casualties, all were equally victims. Yet the Serbs have accepted the most refugees, mainly because they are the only ones who do not persecute those of mixed ethnic marriage or descent. The crowning irony is that the United States is proping up Slobodan Milosevic, a former communist who has undertaken neither privatization nor free elections, and who was one of the original belligerents. In the American view, Milosevic now is

"cooperative."

Perhaps the best lesson that Americans can learn from Yugoslavia is that there is no such thing as a multicultural nation. Certainly what has made the United States a great nation is its cultural heritage. The talents which immigrants brought to America from various cultures blossomed in the context of our culture.

We are a product of Western civilization and Christianity, both of which evolved in Europe. Our own derivation of this civilization emphasizes individual rights and responsibility, strong family bonds, limited representative government, religion separated from state, a strong sense of community, free enterprise, private property, the rule of law and reason, and a common language with which we communicate this cultural heritage. To be an American citizen (or, as an immigrant, to aspire to be one) is to join these cultural bonds, not import alternatives. The only real alternative is the eventual dissolution of America—which, if history is any guide, will likely occur under conditions of savage hostility.

Specifically instructive are the circumstances in Kosovo and Muslim Bosnia. Kosovo is the heartland of Orthodox Serbia. Today the region is predominantly peopled by Albanian Muslims, the result of immigration from Albania and victory in a war of reproduction. The Albanians have retained the language, customs, and religion of their mother country, and most observers agree that Kosovo will eventually be annexed by Albania. At the rate that the Muslims are reproducing, Bosnia will soon find that Muslims have replaced the Orthodox Serbs as the majority. Not surprisingly, the Muslims want a strong central government for the confederation they soon will dominate.

There is a lesson here that those of us who live close to our national border should heed. Texas was effectively annexed by Americans whose language and culture were alien to Mexicans. Today, Texas has a reverse demographic shift due to immigration and reproduction, and our politicians are pandering to the Hispanic constituency by *encouraging* the preservation of a foreign language and culture.

Although most Hispanics, both native-born and immigrants, want to be integrated into American society, "Anglo" politicians play on their gut feelings of

nationalism and downplay the importance of proficiency in the English language, both of which will limit their social and economic progress. Over the long term, this could lead to an increased desire for separatism and a reversal of allegiance to our country.

The government which governs culture least, governs best. But to the extent that government gets involved in culture through the schooling and assimilation of immigrants, the vast majority of American citizens want our government to defend not some multicultural alternative, but rather our cultural heritage and the borders which guarantee the peace and prosperity this heritage has created. That same vast majority, including the vast majority of Hispanics, strongly oppose the imposition of a multicultural America by a self-appointed cultural elite.

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FILM

The Face of Battle

by Wayne Allensworth

Saving Private Ryan

Produced by Steven Spielberg

Directed by Steven Spielberg

Screenplay by Robert Rodat

*Released by Paramount
and DreamWorks SKG*

If you visit the American cemeteries near the beaches at Normandy—there are two of them—you may pick up a booklet describing the landings of June 6, 1944, as I did over 15 years ago. Under the listing for "Omaha," the anonymous historian wrote that

the 1st U.S. Infantry Division landed here from 6.30 . . . however, there was a rough sea at the foot of the cliffs. The first assault suffered heavy losses . . . the beach had not been cleared of anti-invasion devices, and the tide was rising. . . . A few assault groups reached the top of the beach. . . . The Pointe du