
HOPE

As the century ends, the marginality of poetry grows. Today it is either a ceremony in the catacombs, a ritual in the urban desert, a fiesta in the basement, or a revelation in the supermarket. It's true that poets are still persecuted in totalitarian countries and in old-fashioned military tyrannies; in democratic nations they are allowed to live and are even protected—except that they are locked within four walls not of stone but of silence. In the affluent societies of the West, dedicated to business and entertainment—or to passing the time, as the indicative phrase says—there is no time for poetry. Nevertheless, the poetic tra-

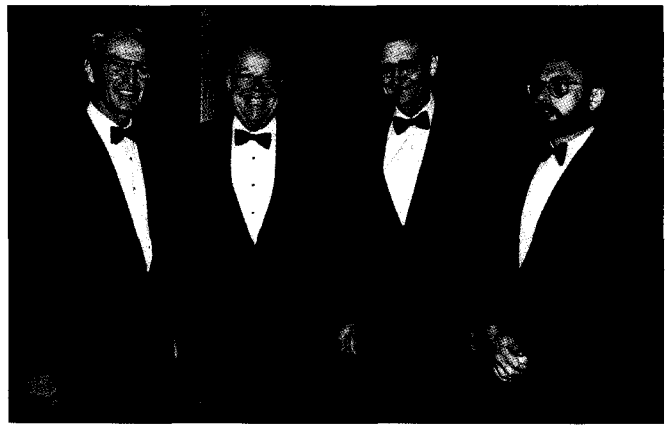
dition has not been broken, nor will it be. If it were interrupted, the words would wither on our lips and our discourses would once again be the howling of monkeys. The continuity of poetry is the continuity of the human word, the continuity of civilization. Which is why the other name for poetry, in times like ours, is *perseverance*. And perseverance is the promise of resurrection.

—from Octavio Paz, *"Ceremonies in the Catacombs,"*
April 1988

HUMAN FREEDOM

Modern biology appears to have banished nihilism. But in so doing it has not led to a narrow form of genetic determinism. . . . I have never met a genetic determinist by this definition. Most or all biologists who study behavior, especially social behavior, are interactionists—they view final thought and response as the product of a complex interplay of genes and environment. Social behavior in human beings is the result of biologically based predispositions filtered and hammered into final shape by the particular cultures in which individuals are reared. On the other hand, I have met many cultural determinists, especially among the reigning social theorists. They deny or at least wholly ignore the influence of biology. The evidence—fortunately or unfortunately, depending on how you view it—has proved them wrong. I would say fortunately, because any species wholly dominated by culture and free of genetic constraint would run a grave risk of moral nihilism.

—from Edward O. Wilson, *"On Genetic Determinism and Morality,"* August 1986



From left: John Howard, T.S. Eliot Award winner George Garrett, Richard M. Weaver Award winner E.O. Wilson, and Thomas Fleming.

LACKEYS OF THE REGIME

If there ever was a time when real debate on fundamental ideological questions was fostered and stimulated by the mass media in our country, it ended with the advent of the Cold War. The exigencies of the nuclear age, the perils of America's confrontation with Soviet communism, made it imperative, we were told, that "politics stop at the water's edge." This put foreign and military policy—literally matters of life and death—beyond the pale. Critical media scrutiny was *verboten*, and public debate, when it existed at all, was inevitably uninformed and invariably unwelcome. And the media, which often engage in lofty flights of rhetoric about their devotion to the First Amendment, eagerly embraced this drastic limitation not only on their freedom but on their essential function. They became devoted and obedient servants of the official line—as obedient as their counterparts in the communist camp, who at least made no pretense of independence.

—from Erwin Knoll, *"Mass Media, Mass Conformity,"*
October 1994

. . . [T]he audiovisual culture is more easily controlled, manipulated, and degraded by power than the written word. Because of the solitude in which it is born, the speed at which it can be reproduced and circulated, the secrecy with which it conveys its message, and the lasting mark on people's conscience of literary images, the written word has revealed a stubborn resistance to enslavement. In all totalitarian and authoritarian societies, if there is dissidence, it is through the written word that it manifests and keeps itself alive. In a good number of places, writing is the last bastion of freedom. With its demise, the submission of minds to political power could be total. In the kingdom of audiovisual, the master of technology and budget is the king of cultural production. And in a closed society, this always means, directly or indirectly, the state. It would decide what men should and should not learn, say, hear, and (in the end) dream. There would be no underground culture, no counterculture, no *samizdat*. This society, once personal choice and initiative in cultural activities are removed, would easily slip into mental slavery. . . .

The nature of culture—either alphabetic or audiovisual, free or enslaved—does not stem from historical determination, from the blind and impersonal evolution of science. The decisive factor will always be man's choice, the decision of powers that can drive society in one direction or another. If books and gadgets are caught in a deadly fight and the latter defeat the former, the responsibility will lie with those who chose to allow it to happen. But I do not think this Orwellian nightmare will really occur, for our fate, as writers and readers, is linked to that illness or vice called freedom, which humanity caught rather late in history and which affects a good part of mankind in apparently an incurable way.

—from Mario Vargas Llosa, "Literature and Freedom,"
April 1992

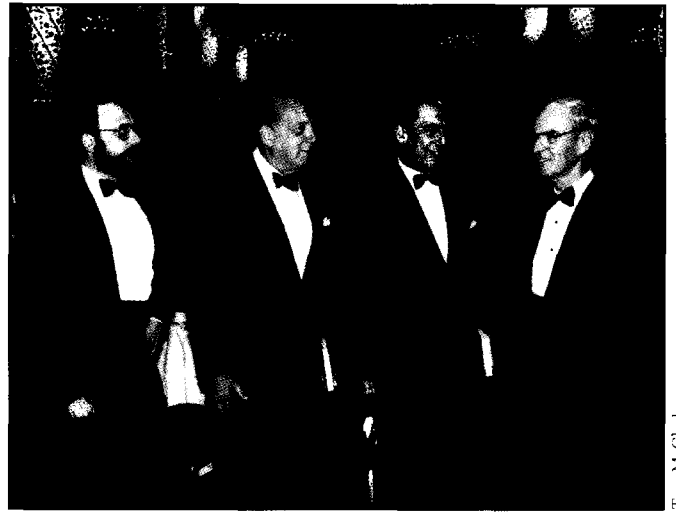
It is time to pose the question of why the American media and intellectuals display so much tender solicitation toward Russia and the Russians, while treating 300 million non-Russians of the former Soviet Empire as unpersons. One answer is that the media and intellectuals, of the left and of the right, are attracted to displays of brutal power. Our value system has evolved in such a way as to put on a pedestal those who are leaders in that regard. Such people and such nations have acquired immunity to criticism and that magic quality which encourages worship. This is why the twin powers of Russian art and Russian army are irresistible as objects of fawning attention, why the holes in Russian children's clothes generate more concern than birth defects and starvation in a Central Asian countryside poisoned by chemicals. Power attracts; its trespasses are blurred by its might. Stalin's famed question, "How many divisions does the Pope have?" underlies many a learned article and book written by think-tank gurus. American culture has been increasingly hospitable to the language of violence and power. Russians have mastered that language to perfection, and American elites seem to be mesmerized by it.

—from Ewa Thompson, "Russophilia," October 1994

How can we reclaim our values? Certainly not through legislatures, administrations, communal assemblies—in short: politics. That brings the fight into the rings and stadiums of the evening news, fashionable poses, social moods and sympathies, and TV sitcoms. Cultural influences and powers can be contested only by opposing cultural forces. It's not easy. Our time sees no honor in fairness. When amorality, vulgarity, and egocentrism of liberal lifestyles begin to emanate an odor of rot, palpably endangering the very health of the society, those who did everything to infect the social body with decay refuse to bear their responsibility. This is where the oldest conflict becomes opaque: The side that controls the media, as the liberals do, has nothing to fear. The media, the cradle of programmatic amorality, operate on a principle of fake innocence that can never be proven to be a fraud. They refuse to be held accountable for their deeds and for the putridity they inject into the nation.

—from Leopold Tyrmand, "Editor's Comment," May/June 1979

It has already become clear that, in spite of all liberal media efforts, there's an unbridgeable rift between the common people and the ugly beautiful people of America. In fact, the latter are the former's openly declared enemy. Two kinds of money earned by two kinds of people have obvious civilizational consequences: Those who provide food, electricity and transportation are pitched against the producers of news, entertainment,



Thomas Fleming (l) and John Howard (r) with Richard M. Weaver Award winner John Lukacs and T.S. Eliot Award winner Mario Vargas Llosa.

pop art and distorted liberal ideas. The ugly beautiful people are the focus of contention: The first loathe them, the second not only tolerate them but permit them to act as their legitimate elite. . . .

In the end, it's all a strange, if not tragic, contradiction of democratic capitalism. Why, at its most advanced stage, does it still remunerate with money, work, thrift, enterprise, innovation, reliability, and courage in economic life, while, at the same time, lavishly granting fame and millionaire wealth to vulgarity, destruction, sham, wickedness, lies, expediency, obsequiousness to fads, stupidity, meanness, bestiality in culture? In short—why does it reward the ugly beautiful people with exorbitant success? It was not always thus; as it stands now, capitalism is, in the long run, the loser, in spite of some instant bonanzas for the record companies and TV corporations. With the help of a perverted First Amendment, which was not conceived as a privilege, but as a principle of mutual obligation, an insidiously mighty group exploits a bogus populist rhetoric in order to accrue immense wealth and use it to corrupt the American culture. The only real title to populism is the sharing of people's historic condition and needs. Nothing is further from that than the multibillion-dollar entertainment industries run by the ugly beautiful people who fraudulently claim solidarity with the American people. Since the liberal culture that backs them is by now a dogmatic orthodoxy, anyone who opposes them must be branded as reactionary, redneck, low-brow, yahoo, etc. Which, in turn, makes a merciless struggle inevitable.

—from Leopold Tyrmand, "Editor's Comment,"
July/August 1979

The quality or relevance of literary work nowadays can be less important than the views expressed in it or the people you know. And just as bad or worse (it's difficult to judge with the dark growing darker) is the academy's refusal to carry on discourse with ideologies or views alien to its entrenched Marxist-humanism (no oxymoron that), and the reluctance of the literary-publishing complex to take note of, much less put into print or support, the work of anyone whose views are not quite correct.

—from Larry Woiwode, "Politics in American Letters:
Remembering Dos Passos," August 1992

LIBERAL ARTS

Fraud and deception among society's heroes draw attention to contradictions and inconsistencies in its value systems. Because American culture applauds entrepreneurship, independence, and ambition, for example, scientists have been encouraged to develop independent imaginations and innovative research, to engage in intense competition, to strive for success. Ironically, Americans also want their whitecoated heroes to be humble and generous in success, to share credit where credit is

due, not to steal credit falsely. The discovery that a scientist has calmly and rationally cheated, lied, and deceived his colleagues and the public contradicts the common image of how scientists should act. It also creates doubt about the reliability of scientific advice—a disturbing uncertainty in a world where that advice is so pervasive.

—Marcel C. LaFollette, *"The Politics of Scientific Fraud,"*
September 1993

NATIONALISM

One of the things that has blurred the bitter, present-day realities of French society and politics has been the stupid habit of calling Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front a "right-wing" party. In strict fact, the National Front, which is now in numerical terms France's leading workers' party, is no more a "right-wing" party than was Adolf Hitler's NSDAP—the *National-Sozialistische-Deutsche-Arbeiter-Partei*—which to the very end of the Third Reich proudly advertised itself as both a "socialist" and a "workers' party" in order to emphasize its popularity with the laboring masses of Germany. The reason why French working men and women have been abandoning the traditional parties of the so-called "left" and flocking to the National Front in droves is because they are fed up with the shopworn rhetoric of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," which has no relevance today to the conditions of everyday life in their once-tranquil suburbs.

—from Curtis Cate, *"The Revolt of the French Masses: The Smoldering Fires of Immigration,"* July 1997

Patriotism grows from a sense of belonging to a particular country; it is confident rather than self-conscious; it is essentially defensive. Nationalism is self-conscious rather than confident; it is aggressive, and suspicious of all other people within the same nation who do not seem to agree with some of the popular nationalist ideology. Patriotism is traditionalist; nationalism is ideological. Patriotism is rooted to the land; nationalism to the mythical image of a people, of a community that so often is not a real community. Patriotism is not a substitute for religion, whereas nationalism often is. It may fill the emotional needs of insufficiently rooted people. It may be combined with hatred—and, as Chesterton said, it is not love (which is always personal and particular) but hatred that may unite otherwise very disparate men and women. Or, as Duff Cooper once put it, "the jingo nationalist is always the first to denounce his fellow countrymen as traitors."

—from John Lukacs, *"The Patriotic Impulse,"*
July 1992

By the end of World War II, the federal government had largely succeeded in replacing the various European-American identities with a "universal" American nationalism, and new immigrants were forced to abandon their national identity and native language and sign on to the "American way of life." Post-war American nationalism—built on democracy, capitalism, the Pledge of Allegiance, hot dogs, baseball, and Rotary—may have been sufficient to drive the Cold War, but it was insufficient to bind the nation or to act as a bulwark against alien cul-

tures. People long for roots, for a sense of belonging. An abstract conception of democracy and capitalism can only displace, not replace, the songs and stories, faith and food, language and kinship that compose a true national culture. By alienating European Americans from their national cultures in the interwar period, the federal government replaced an emerging American national identity with a false nationalism, and undermined our ability to withstand assault from Third World cultures. When Lyndon Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, removing the national preference for European immigrants and opening the floodgates to Third World immigration, he signed the death warrant of postwar nationalism. . . .

What can be done? To say that America stands at a crossroads, with one fork leading to Europe and one to a global Third World culture, would be incorrect. America reached that crossroads in the early years of this century, and . . . our rulers chose the fork leading to the Third World. If we desire to revitalize our educational system and to reaffirm America's status as a European country, we must, like the Prodigal Son, acknowledge our error (and our bankruptcy) and return home. The standard neoconservative "solutions" advanced by Allan Bloom and Bill Bennett—"Great Books," a national core curriculum, an emphasis on assimilating immigrants—won't work; these were, in fact, among the tools used to subvert the older educational system and to place us on our current path. . . .

Multiculturalism is a fable, as is any American nationalism that tries to deny or eradicate the European and regional cultures that once made America strong. If America is to have a future as a nation, and not simply as a geographical region, then we must allow Anglo-American culture to bind Northern and Southern, Western and Central and Eastern European communities in the United States in a revitalized American civilization. It is time for the Prodigal Son to grow up, and to return home.

—from Scott P. Richert, *"The Multicultural Lie: The European Roots of American Life,"* April 1998

[Donald Warren]: You identify yourself with the intellectual roots of German conservative thought that is quite different from National Socialism . . .

[Jörg Haider]: I think it is very important to have a clear understanding of German and European history on the main question of National Socialism. It contained many different streams of thought. There were socialist streams, and many people were executed for following this commitment. If the New