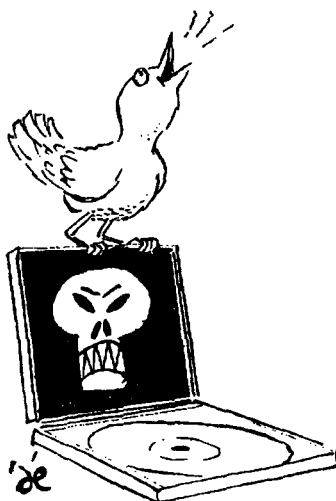


warmly appreciative and coldly exploitive. Here, our worst problems stem from the tendency, in both the foes and friends of Afro-American music, to reduce it to a crude caricature of dehumanized sex.

Focusing on the simple, pounding beat of heavy metal, Bloom wrote that all rock music "has the beat of sexual intercourse." Taking exactly the same view, Steven Tyler of the band Aerosmith boasts, "It's rhythm and blues, it's twos and fours, it's fucking." Neither acknowledges that the monotonous beat of heavy metal (and indeed of much rap) is a travesty of the rich, tireless, complicated rhythms of Afro-American music at its best.

This caricature overlooks the fact that Afro-American music originally functioned in many different spheres, including work, story-telling, celebration and (most importantly) religion. To accept the caricature is to forget a complex history and, worse, to insult the people who created the music in the first place.

So is the culture beyond hope?



We know that censorship of popular culture is both practically and constitutionally impossible. As the experience of the former Eastern bloc attests, even censorship at its most ruthless cannot control the flow of the electronic media. In this country, the great bulk of offensive music — even hard-core "gangsta" rapping — does not fall under the narrow purview of obscenity law as derived from the 1973 Supreme Court decision, *Miller v. California*. There will always be experts willing to defend the "serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value" of material like 2 Live Crew's "The Fuck Shop." And, as both fundamentalists and fem-

inists have learned the hard way, the First Amendment stands solidly in the way of any attempt to expand the scope of the law.

I would argue that our only hope of reversing the current malignant mood of the culture is...the market. But I am no libertarian, expecting the market to do tricks by itself. It can only respond to a shift in public taste, brought about by the usual combination of things we cannot control and things we can. Optimistically, I count among the latter the old-fashioned tools of persuasion, debate and education. We need to trace the roots of our present predicament to their true sources in the larger culture.

Instead of saying, "I don't know much about art but I know what I don't like," we need to follow the cultural historian Jacques Barzun, who boldly asserts: "It is because I understand this work of art that I dislike it." ♦

*Martha Bayles is the author of* *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music* (The Free Press: 1994).

## Dispatch

# Getting Mary Poppins Off the Dole

*Anne Applebaum* suggests a new type of 'workfare'

**R**EMAINS OF THE DAY is a film which irked many British reviewers, and it is not hard to guess why: the scenes shot around a large English country house were too rose-colored, the country land-

scapes were too nostalgic for British taste. As for the vast kitchens filled with cooks and pantry maids, the under-butlers polishing the brass, and the maids sweeping the stairwells, they seemed almost calculated to annoy. For there is

nothing so fraught with connotations, nothing so touchy in British life as the subject of servants.

It is a pity, because a discussion of servants is something which might help provide the solution to another British

problem, one which is equally unmentionable: that of the permanent disappearance of jobs for unskilled workers. Not long ago, the British government released a set of economic figures showing recovery underway — inflation rose less than expected, retail sales were up more than expected — but unemployment rising. That was partly seasonal, but it also reflected something else: the side effect of growth, these days, is not necessarily higher employment figures. On the contrary, growth can just as easily bring a new crop of redundant workers along with it.

In Britain, as in America and Western Europe, the nature of unemployment is beginning to change, along with the nature of work. This leads to semantic difficulties. Once, the "leisure class" was a small group of people who lived in leisure; the "working class," on the other hand, did the work. Now, although the stereotypes and prejudices remain, a combination of free trade, high West European minimum wages and advancing technology (industrial robots, computers which replace clerical workers) has made the developed world much wealthier, but at the cost of turning those categories upside down.

Put crudely, that means that the *de facto* working class are more and more often either highly-skilled, relatively high-paid workers in industrial countries, or else factory laborers in the developing world. Those who work, work harder than those of comparable wealth ever did in the past. Leisure, on the other hand, is something enjoyed only by those who live off benefits in the world's otherwise rich, post-industrial societies. The new leisure class — the west's unskilled workers — were

once the domestic servants and later factory workers; now there are no jobs for them at all.

Yet although we are all aware of the problem of unemployment, the main point hasn't sunk in: West Europeans and Americans still haven't come to terms with the fact that there are now hundreds of thousands of people who cannot reasonably expect to have jobs, ever again — not because of laziness or a cyclical downturn, but because the



nature of the economy has changed. The only people even talking about the problem are either protectionists, who would urge an end to free trade and moveable jobs, thereby putting an end to growth as well, or advocates of job-training programs which are famous for their failure rate or, in France and other countries, advocates of shorter work weeks and greater impoverishment for all. Defenders of free trade and opponents of the welfare state seem happy to pretend that the problem of permanent unemployment doesn't exist.

But if factory jobs are disappearing, why not put unskilled workers to tasks which they once did very well? Making it easier for the new working class — that is, the middle class — to hire domestic servants is a much better and more intelligent solution to the prob-

lem of long-term unemployment than anything else proposed. And it has worked in the past. Take, for example, not "Remains of the Day," which depicted a large country house, but "Mary Poppins," a film which depicted a bank manager and his nanny in 1910. Before income tax, before unemployment tax, that bank manager could afford not only a nanny but two other staff as well.

If bank managers could afford three domestic employees now, unemployment would disappear. This is not an idea derived from a longing to return to the past, but a practical solution, particularly for the female half of the new working class, which by some measures now works harder than the male half. Not long ago, a British journalist calculated that 30,000 pounds per year was required just to pay the expenses of a nanny, putting that luxury well out of

the average person's range. Obviously, the many women who cannot find a place for their children in state day-care systems (or are reluctant to put them there), and cannot afford this kind of money are making do, but not always happily: in Britain, nearly a million children, one survey told us earlier this year, are regularly left home alone by their working parents.

To help solve the unemployment and to help working mothers at the same time, governments must get used to the idea of reducing or waiving the heavy national insurance taxes which are now imposed on those who employ nannies, childminders, cooks and cleaners. In one or two countries, the subject is beginning to be discussed. In Denmark, where people are less emotional about these things, the govern-

ment has begun subsidizing businesses which provide domestic services, in order to help middle-class families — and to reduce unemployment, which hovers above 12 per cent.

Yet the embarrassment about servants remains. In America, the secret problem of working mothers and the absence of servants appeared in the form of “nannygate,” the discovery that prominent judges and lawyers, along with thousands of other working women, were quietly employing illegal aliens to take care of their children. Yet far from sparking the wide-spread debate on working women and childcare which it should have, the women who had chosen to

employ illegal aliens were forbidden to hold public office.

Most of the technical arguments against the tax-deductibility of the wages of domestic servants could be overcome. It ought to be possible, for example, to calculate the loss to the budget from such tax breaks, and adjust it so that it does not exceed the amount spent supporting the unemployed. Most people prefer to do things legally; part of the loss in taxes would also be made up for by people who would register the existence of their illegal employees for the first time.

But it is, of course, the thought of taxpayers subsidizing vast country houses filled with cooks and cooks’

assistants in the manner of “Upstairs, Downstairs” or “Remains of the Day” (as if so many of them still existed) which makes the idea undiscussable. Few remember “Mary Poppins” and the pre-war world in which it was possible for the middle-class to employ help.

Everyone knows that the state is not wealthy enough to support the attentive childcare that most women want, or omnipotent enough to create a set of job training programs that would actually get people back to work. Everyone knows it — but the resistance remains. ♦

*Anne Applebaum is deputy editor of The Spectator magazine in London.*



## Free To Be “That Girl”

*Elena Neuman* revisits the utopian hits of Marlo Thomas and friends

ONE RECENT SUNDAY afternoon I spent a few hours with my one-year-old daughter, Talia, hanging around Tree Top Toys — the ‘Brentanos’ of Washington toy stores. That was when I saw it: tucked away between “Raffi” and “Peter, Paul and Mommy” was the musical icon of my ’70s childhood, “Marlo Thomas and

Friends, Free to be You and Me.”

I knew all the songs by heart. “Sisters and Brothers,” “Glad to Have a Friend Like You,” “When We Grow Up.” I remembered how scarred that precious piece of vinyl was by the time I entered puberty. I slapped down twelve bucks to purchase the cassette version of this treasure for my little girl,

ripped off the cellophane and eagerly slipped it into the car’s tape deck to enjoy on the drive home.

But my trip down memory lane was quickly cut short. For while I could still recite every tune and every verse, I’d never actually paid much attention to the lyrics. “It’s all right to cry,” the burly quarterback Rosey Grier assures