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C^{the}resset



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Above: Sarah Spencer Sloan, American 1832-1923. *Mrs. Junius R. Sloan, 385 Fulton St., 1874-75*, calling card signature, 2 1/8 x 3 3/8 inches. VU 78.1.29

Cover: Frederic E. Church, American 1826-1900. *Mountain Landscape, c.1849*, oil on canvas, 14 1/4 x 19 3/4 inches. VU 53.1.107

Back cover: John W. Casilear, American 1811-1893. *Landscape in the Catskills, 1887*, oil on canvas, 14 1/4 x 27 1/2 inches. VU 53.1.106

The above art works are included in the Sloan Collection of American paintings in the Valparaiso University Museum of Art. For the artists of these works "unspoiled" nature was the touchstone to high beauty and God's presence. Even the Spencerian script above was inspired by seed ovals and the movement of water in streams flowing around pebbles. Sarah, the daughter of the originator, Platt R. Spencer, and the wife of the landscape painter, Junius R. Sloan, taught Spencerian script in Chicago before the advent of the typewriter.

IN LUCE TUA

Comment by the Editor

A Xenophobe by Any Other Name

On campuses at least, we're doing a lot of talking about global awareness. But suddenly, the other communities of which we are a part have become a lot more globally aware than they ever meant to be. We don't need the pictures in the news magazines to tell us that a good many of our friends and neighbors, or at least their kids, find themselves in places many of us couldn't spell two months ago.

It probably isn't surprising, given the fact that nations in war postures are not at their best, that our public language about Arab nations, leaders, culture and peoples leaves room for improvement. Edward Said, admittedly not known for moderation or tact, but a great truth-teller nonetheless, wrote recently in *The Nation* that most of what appears in the press about these countries is a "repetition of appalling cliches, most of them ignorant, unhistorical, moralistic, self-righteous and hypocritical." Blunt, but accurate. (And I thought Arabs were the masters of subtlety, the darkly intriguing and mysterious veiled intimations of what is suspected, but unspoken, etc., etc.)

Reliance on stereotypic language dominates the popular press, at least in most of its descriptions. Reading *Newsweek* and *Time* on Arabic cultures is like watching flickering old Valentino clips—remember how the eyes would whiten and widen under that thing wrapped around his head? Oooo, shudder. The Other! Turn on the lights! The desert is "barren, hostile," the entertainment is non-existent: "no booze, no babes" commented one AP report, in just those words. You have the feeling you've seen all this before somewhere, and it turns out to be *Beau Geste*.

This would be amusing if it weren't so important. Our ignorance of the world will kill us, or kill some of us that we don't want to lose. Iraqis are not cut-out figures that stand in the lobby of the theatre where *Lawrence of Arabia* is showing. We need to know who they are, not what some producer (in or out of the Pentagon) fools us into thinking they are. Those who have been talking for years about Americans becoming

better acquainted with the world as it is seemed to have been getting somewhere. On our campus, we have noticed a renewed interest in multicultural affairs and world issues. But recent events threaten to move us all backward toward a preference for fantasy and stereotype. Only real knowledge, painstakingly gained with time and study, can protect us from the distorted untruths that get promulgated in times of conflict. Let us try to make these times a reminder to pursue such knowledge with even greater determination. □

The Cresset Colloquium

It is our great pleasure to publish in this issue the first three of five articles on the broadly related topics of nature, creation, metaphors and religion. Last spring, five members of the faculty read together a number of texts, discussing and arguing and attempting to get closer to understanding these major elements of our thinking about the world and the way we inhabit it. The texts were a selection of Luther's writings on the creation, Sallie McFague's *Models of God*, Jon Levenson's *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, and Roderick Nash's *The Rights of Nature*. As you will see, the results of their work are various, as one might expect from a gathering that included theologian, philosopher, mathematician, lawyer and poet. The Frederic E. Church on this month's cover recalls for us an ethic and an aesthetic about nature that seemed to work well enough for the nineteenth century. Today that wide-eyed but confident gaze will not carry us through. Though we have increased the extent of our power over nature, a relationship based on power and control looks increasingly problematic. So, read with pleasure—and with the expectation of work to come.

Peace,

GME



Shipwreck, Household, and the End of Nature

Philip N. Gilbertson

We have often described our summer home on Flathead Lake in Montana as a “wooden tent” so that friends back East would not imagine our living in a Lincoln log cabin in the mountains. My wife and I spent many years dreaming about what sort of dwelling would provide modest, affordable shelter in this paradise. Thoreau no doubt spent less time planning his household in the woods, but then he had in mind a two-year stint, and we were building for at least the next two generations in a place which had been a spiritual power center for me since the early fifties. I am writing this essay from that wooden tent, propped on a ledge I dug out of the steep rock hillside with a pickaxe ten years ago. We had bought the acre of land the year our son—now eighteen—was born, so we had time to plan how we would build a household on the bay inside Angel Point, a few miles north of the Flathead Indian Reservation, an hour south of the border, just northwest of Norm Maclean country.

I confess that this two-decade attempt to build a wilderness household with a modest sense of permanence has shaped my thinking about nature significantly enough to remind me of Wendell Berry, the Kentucky farmer who in his essays sees the world through his fields and forests. It is easy to imagine the natural world as an ally, a friendly neighbor, who permeates the boundaries of our property with ease, because this corner of the wilderness is really quite domesticated. Even though a pair of bald eagles fish in our bay, sighting a black bear is a rare event. We drink the lake water, but also heat it electrically for showers. To take a hard look at the environmental catastrophes of our time, therefore, is for me to approach the scene of an auto wreck with my seatbelt in place and the doors locked—the alarm is at arm’s distance, frightening for its spectacle, but not my agony. Beyond Wendell Berry’s clear analysis of the dilemmas we have created for ourselves and our children, he rarely loses that calm assurance that comes from daily nurturing

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the land. In his poem “The Wages of History,” Berry laments “Men’s negligence and their / fatuous ignorance and abuse” that have “made a hardship of this earth.”

Doomed, bound and doomed
to the repair of history to death,
we must cover over the stones
with soil for tomorrow’s bread
while the present eludes us.

[we] must live drawn out and nearly
broken between past and future
because of our history’s wages,
bad work left behind us,
demanding to be done again.

Yet Berry’s landscape is a lens to see his own relationship with the earth more fruitfully. The daily building and renewal of his farm shapes Berry’s exploration through the dilemmas with more grace and hope. Our house on the lake does that for us. And I continue to be surprised how often it shapes my thinking of the earth as household.

The great dramas of human cultures deal with households—from Gilgamesh and Oedipus to King Lear and *Long Day’s Journey into Night*. The damnation and salvation equation of our quest to find wholeness within the human family is imaged in the microcosmic ecology of individual families and individual households. The metaphor of household binds together freight and fright—past and future—deepening the image of our global plight.

Few acres now exist that are not part of human design, wilderness included. Indeed, the American wilderness was always also the Garden of Paradise; and life, however crude, was always seen to be lived in a house, if only Huck’s and Jim’s raft, rather than in Tom Sawyer’s toy cave. This ambivalence about the wilderness has permitted all of us to accommodate its domestication. Our own acre on Flathead Lake is wild, but a garden nonetheless. As our era began to view the earth whole for the first time, we could begin to see that the limitlessness of the horizon on ocean or American prairie was only a *trompe l’oeil*, soon to be overwhelmed by development, right up to the oil spill of Valdez and the acid rain of black forests soon to become “dieback.”

Bill McKibbin calls this phenomenon *The End of Nature*. McKibbin has produced the nineties version of Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* which crystalized imaginations of nuclear holocaust for the eighties. McKibbin's book attempts to describe the far-reaching consequences of the environmental crisis in terms of the global domestication of nature—we have made all wilderness our nest, and we have soiled it, apparently beyond hope of recovering it adequately even to call it "nature" again. The effluents of CFCs, carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide have virtually killed it off.

The crisis is so fundamental that McKibbin describes it in theological terms. For McKibbin, nature is the incarnation—the concretion—of God's presence on earth. Nature has been a perennial benevolent Other; and now "we have deprived nature of its independence, and that is fatal to its meaning. Nature's independence is its meaning; without it there is nothing but us" (58). McKibbin, a Methodist, reaches to transcendentalist Thoreau for theological reassurance that the Divine Order displayed in nature had meant something critically important to us after all. It is "infinitely sad" (79), therefore, that God has permitted us to achieve the godlike power to turn the wilds into a zoo and thus banish language formerly reserved for the mysterium.

This domestication of nature is for McKibbin a colossal loss of what is most precious about it: its alien wildness. Thoreau had dared to say, "In wildness is the preservation of the earth." McKibbin describes the wholesale of that wilderness which had managed to outlast centuries of explorers:

We have changed the atmosphere, and that will change the weather. The temperature and rainfall are no longer to be entirely the work of some separate, uncivilized force, but instead in part a product of our habits, our economies, our ways of life. Even in the most remote wilderness, where the strictest laws forbid the felling of a single tree, the sound of that [chain] saw will be clear, a walk in the woods will be changed—tainted by its whine. The world outdoors will mean much the same thing as the world indoors, the hill the same thing as the house. (47-48)

On the one hand, McKibbin complains that "We can no longer imagine that we are part of something larger than ourselves—that is what all this boils down to" (83). Yet this "something larger" is lost because we have domesticated it. We replaced the hand of God with our smelly paw to make the entire globe our yard, a bumbling "science-fair project."

McKibbin has little time for talk about the environment that tries to paper over this cosmic loss. Devotees of James Lovelock's "Gaia hypothesis," for example, who see humans as the engineers of an earth

that is a self-regulating single organism, are deluding us by talk of perpetuating the earth through our own rational management. The earth may survive, admits McKibbin, but it will be a sickly hothouse variety. The "deep ecology" movement is much more to McKibbin's liking because its followers assume a fundamental humility in relation to the earth that places all human desires subservient to the commonwealth of nature. Political metaphors enter the debate about ecological ethics, as Roderick Nash's *The Rights of Nature* tells, because questions of virtue in community inevitably get hammered out in our society as rights and interests. If human self-interest were defined as coterminous with the whole biotic community, many environmental ethicists could accommodate the centrality of human ethics in relation to nature. The problem, however, is similar to that faced in antebellum America: "The ethical community ended then at the line between white and black; now it ends, for many, at the human-nature boundary" (212).

For McKibbin, however, the problem is that humans have already passed the boundaries of defilement, and the loss is permanent because the loss is a *concept* of nature: If forest and rain and cloud all bear the stamp of our hand, nature, no longer separate from us, "loses its special power. Instead of being a category like God—something beyond our control—it is now a category like the defense budget or the minimum wage, a problem we must work out" (210). The language of law and politics applied to foxes and redwoods, McKibbin would say, simply confirms the fundamental conceptual shift that has occurred in our time: the prairie has become *polis*, the clouds have been brought to court. Nonetheless, McKibbin's lament ends in a call for "A Path of More Resistance" (his final chapter title) that picks up Roderick Nash's rallying cry for a new abolitionism, an abolitionist movement to liberate nature so enslaved. McKibbin finally resorts to this model of civility, on a model of increased domestication of nature from the outlawry of our abuse, in order to liberate nature again to itself. If this sounds contradictory, it is because McKibbin has little choice but to turn again to metaphors of the human community to articulate his appeal for help.

McKibbin longs for a wilderness unaltered by human choices, but he seems unable to come to terms with this transformation of nature as a fundamental cultural directive of Western societies for centuries. The West's enslavement of alien peoples may have preceded the abuse of their land and their surrounding wildernesses, but not by much. Yet I do not want to mislead: McKibbin's earnest description of a bleak globe is quite factual, and his grim

projections reasonable. It is fruitless to argue whether or not McKibbon is wrong about the "end of nature." His argument helps us reconsider the meddlesomeness of our play with nature, and his assertion should weave into the fabric of our thinking if we are to come to terms with what our culture means for the fate of the earth.

But in his horror over the human contamination of the global ecosystem, McKibbon loses balance in understanding our perennial relationship with nature: "What will it mean to come across a rabbit in the woods once genetically engineered 'rabbits' are widespread? Why would we have any more reverence or affection for such a rabbit than we would for a Coke bottle?" (211) Well, the non-native rainbow trout that my son and I catch and release in Jewel Basin lakes above the Flathead valley are not for us trademarks. Wendell Berry, with his feet planted firmly for decades in that Kentucky soil, takes on this reductive thinking that allows McKibbon to lapse into silliness. (If summer weather is now man-made, complains McKibbon, then "it will not be summer, just as even the best prosthesis is not a leg" [59]). Berry has watched the ants and the beavers and understands nature differently:

What we call nature is, in a sense, the sum of the changes made by all the various creatures and natural forces in their intricate actions and influences upon each other and upon their places. . . . [H]umans must make a choice as to the kind and scale of the difference they make. If they choose to make too small a difference, they diminish their humanity. If they choose to make too great a difference, they diminish nature, and narrow their subsequent choices; ultimately, they diminish or destroy themselves. (1989, 7)

Berry recognizes that nature does not cordon off the human, and any complex understanding of wilderness must come to terms with human interchange. God's Incarnation is an underlying metaphor for this fusion of all realms of reality. This stance toward nature grows out of the Reformation. As Paul Santmire points out, Luther and Calvin turned Thomas' and Dante's metaphors of spiritual ascent from the world into metaphors of God's descent into earth, seeing the fecundity of nature imbued with God's love that bonds humans with all creatures.

The idea of wilderness has a long and prominent history in our culture. In *Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought*, George Williams traces that history from the Hebrews to contemporary America and uncovers its rich ambiguities. Wilderness has been for our culture the realm of death and refuge, testing and consecration, land of demons and provisional paradise—all wondrously recapitulated in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Williams observes that in the ancient world, the West tended to see the

wilderness as the desert battlefield of spiritual warfare, whereas the East was drawn to it as the locus of contemplation. For the House of Israel, the landscape was a vast stage set for the contentious drama of creation and redemption. Essentially wilderness was not treated as something Other, that pristine realm McKibbon yearns for, unviolated by human dreck, but rather as the battlefield of men and cosmic forces. Thus Santmire sees in biblical history and text little encouragement for an ecological theology, though he finds some promise in recent scholarship that stresses the importance of the biblical wilderness as both God's gift and blessing which redefines the human relationship to the land. This long history makes clear, however, that the preservation of nature in a state unaltered by human activity—a land utterly apart to be isolated for its own sake—is simply not an idea nurtured in our cultural conversation.

The most radical of the deep ecologists point to this history as the legacy of error, of course, and call us to contemplate the expendability of humanity in order to preserve the biotic community. But neither McKibbon nor I am prepared to endorse this notion, and again Wendell Berry best explains why. "In wildness is the preservation of the world" as Thoreau said, but Wendell Berry follows that truth with its opposite: "so long at least as humans are in the world, in human culture is the preservation of wildness—which is equally, and more demandingly true." (1989, 11) Berry seeks the continuities between the wild and the domestic as the way of wisdom for wholeness and joy.

In his marvelous essay "Preserving Wildness," Berry leads us through wilderness territory with wisdom and grace, not McKibbon's fustian and frustration. Listen to these final points in his list of assumptions about wilderness:

5. It is not possible (at least, not for very long) for humans to intend their own good specifically or exclusively. We cannot intend our good, in the long run, without intending the good of our place—which means, ultimately, the good of the world.

6. To use or not to use nature is not a choice that is available to us; we can live only at the expense of other lives. Our choice has rather to do with how and how much to use. . . .

7. If there is no escape from the human use of nature, then human good cannot be simply synonymous with natural good. (1989, 139)

Wildness and domesticity are indivisible. Such is the nature of our being in the world. No wonder our metaphors and models of talking about preserving the wilderness are all tied up with human referents. But as Berry goes on to say, this also "is a spiritual predicament, for it requires us to be properly humble and grateful; time and again, it asks us to be still and

wait. But it is also a practical problem, for it requires us to *do things*" (1989, 139).

Our talk about the relationship between God, humanity, and creation often pivots on the models we use, either by choice or by acculturation, to describe that relationship. Models and metaphors, as the stuff of language, are unavoidable in talking about nature or God or the human community. The kinds of verbal and visual models we use are therefore unavoidably important.

For two centuries now, our culture has been searching for a new mythology beyond the biblical texts that can carry human hope and aspiration. If the Enlightenment Project which preceded this era found hope in the Empire of Reason, the Romantic Projection through the last two centuries has been a search for an adequate myth that can incorporate experience mysteriously unaccounted for by the Enlightenment. The contemporary American poet Gary Snyder, in *Turtle Island*, says the hope lies not in the radical transformation of societies, but rather in "seizing the key images, myths, archetypes, eschatologies, and ecstasies so that life won't seem worth living unless one's on the transforming energy's side" (101). Sallie McFague's *Models of God* is such a fruitful study of these fundamental images, our verbal models about reality, because she brings together all the current strands of conversation in theology in order to reexamine the metaphors that build God's community on earth.

McFague constructs a convincing case that the biblical models of God such as king, ruler and patriarch are no longer as helpful as they once were to describe our relationship with God and the earth. The political metaphors I referred to earlier to describe the deep ecologist's call for a new abolitionist movement on behalf of nature are an extension of the traditional biblical metaphors of God's dominion over the earth. In a nuclear and ecological age, where the survival of the planet as well as humanity is at risk, McFague presents models of God that accentuate God's immanence in creation in "forms of fundamental intimacy, mutuality, and relatedness" (85). She chooses to speak of God as mother, lover, and friend to draw our attention to God's activity in the natural world among us. Like Berry, McFague is drawn to more personal, domestic metaphors to capture the defining qualities of God, humanity, and nature as primarily relational.

Ship and house have been elementary artifacts of Western culture first delineated in *The Odyssey*. In the past two centuries, they have become illuminating (if only minor) motifs that can help us to understand the

kind of relationship to the natural world that Wendell Berry describes, and how this relationship is enhanced by revising some of our talk about God, as Sallie McFague suggests. Ship may be our house afloat, but it is our preeminent cultural image for the journey to discovery and individuation; it defines much of the character of our culture. Ship is separation from home, a dwelling place where household shapes our attachments, connections, and community.

The "spaceship earth" of Buckminster Fuller and the "life-boat ethic" of Garrett Hardin in the 1970s drew on a long heritage of nautical images to describe the circumscription of the globe by human achievement, which in turn created a world crafted wholly for human habitation, fragile to human destruction. The potential for shipwreck of this globe looms larger than ever before.

When the Romantics of the nineteenth century discovered the limitlessness of their world (in his *Journals and Papers* of 1836, Kierkegaard shrewdly observed that creative boundary-breaking lay at the heart of Romanticism: ". . . the romantic lies essentially in flowing over all boundaries."), they often, almost obsessively, imaged the threat of personal risk with the public disaster of shipwreck. Admittedly, despite the epidemic of colossal oil spills today, shipwreck no longer carries its terror much beyond the *Titanic*; the *Andrea Doria* is a forgotten encore. But for nineteenth century Romantics, who risked disintegration of self in their creative flights, shipwreck served as a most forceful emblem of daring and disaster, life imperiled as it sought wholeness through a new encounter with the universe. If the sea epitomized the sublime as a wild, incomprehensible power beyond human control, it also symbolized the ultimate quest of the spirit which risked the shipwreck of tremulous disorder and diffusion. Percy Shelley's life literally shipwrecked—a lone non-swimmer, capsized in his own sailboat—could serve as sign for the times, for even though the shipwreck image draws its power primarily because it depicts momentous mass death, from Coleridge's *Mariner* to Baudelaire's "Bateau ivre" to Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* it symbolized the high stakes of modern times. Ibsen wrote to Georg Brandes: "On the whole these are times when the entire history of the world strikes me as being one enormous shipwreck."

For our time the parallel image may still be the Bomb (not yet the contaminated greenhouse), but for that era the power of the shipwreck image lay in its identifying community disaster, wrought in the cosmic context of the infinite and terrifying sea, with the personal peril of individual risk. The life-risk was the inward quest for oceanic wholeness with the unending plenitude of life, a fusion of humanness and nature

and God. Thoreau, a surveyor who laid out and trespassed boundaries by profession, frequently described his own self as open-ended, saw his life as a borderer of the ocean: "My life is like a stroll upon the beach, As near the ocean's edge as I can go." ("The Shipwreck") The notion of shipwreck as an event of the mind caught at full expansion, caught by reminders of incomprehensible disorder, destruction, and death, signals for us the human and personal meaning of the disaster image. Shipwreck describes the end of many personal journeys that seek to circumnavigate the globe and in so doing bring that globe toward destruction. While *The Odyssey* dramatizes shipwrecks, the story, we should recall, is about a man's struggle to return home from war. Upon return, the work of household is not escape and withdrawal: Odysseus exacts his savage judgment against the warrior-leeches' violations of hospitality and their indifference to the homeless stranger. This turn away from world-remaking to the justice of caretaking is explored thoughtfully by Sharon Parks, who sees the image of home as a corrective for a society at the end of its tether:

At this pivotal, dangerous, and promising moment in history, the formation of adequate forms of meaning and faith—and perhaps the future of our small planet home—is dependent, in part, upon the liberation, reappropriation, and renewed companionship of the metaphors of detachment *and* connection, pilgrims *and* homemakers, journeying *and* homesteading. (301)

McFague explores the model of God as mother/parent who births, nourishes and seeks fulfillment for her creation of humanity and nature. What McFague describes is a caretaker of a "cosmic household" who understands the "interdependence and interrelatedness of all species. The mother-God as creator, then, is also involved in 'economics,' the management of the household of the universe, to insure the just distribution of goods" (114). The ethics that follow from such thinking link justice for all peoples with liberation for the natural order in the household of God. Earth as household can thus model for us the relationship—the mutuality—we have with all of nature. Gary Snyder's sixties book, *Earth House Hold*, for all its panegyric romanticism, captures this mingling of human nature and creation that still survives in many remnant tribal cultures: "Thus nature leads into nature—the wilderness—and the reciprocities and balances by which man lives on earth. Ecology: 'eco' (*oikos*) meaning 'house' (cf. 'ecumenical'): Housekeeping on Earth" (127). If the earth is our household, we may care for it like our table and bed and children. For all of the transientness and fragmentation of households in our time, household

remains the seedbed of our future that deserves our nurturing. Keeping of the household, as Sharon Parks says, "is the creation of forms and patterns which cultivate and shelter life itself" (304).

During the years my family and I dreamed and fashioned our Montana mountain household, I have been an itinerant academic. We have lived in sixteen different houses in the past twenty-five years. But here on the deck of our cabin at Flathead Lake, it is easy to see the cosmic household. In the ocean of midnight, the foamy Milky Way almost sprays us with stars, and in the morning the wide bay is always our front yard. A few years ago, when the Parkinsons down the road sold their 25-acre Oleo Ranch to retire in Oklahoma, they left a huge, cast-iron wood stove in the kitchen of their shack; they couldn't haul it out through the door. A few nights after they abandoned it, the little ranch house got a garage-door sized, chain-sawed hole in its side and the stove was gone. We have to think about households when we close up at the end of every summer season, as we work to keep a household secure enough to nurture us again next year. To imagine the earth as the household of God allows us to imagine again our responsibilities back here in Valparaiso and how they are tied to that Montana wilderness. As Wendell Berry says:

The only thing we have to preserve nature with is culture; the only thing we have to preserve wildness with is domesticity. (1989, 143)

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Mapping Nature and Nature's God: Models for Understanding Creation

Robert F. Blomquist

Understanding the meaning of Creation presents humanity with one of its biggest issues as we slide into the new millennium. Since in times of crisis and decision we turn most readily to those we know to be wise guides, let me begin with a quote from farmer-philosopher Wendell Berry:

There appears to be a law that when creatures have reached the level of consciousness, as men have, they become conscious of the creation; they must learn how they fit into it and what its needs are and what it requires of them, or else pay a terrible penalty: the spirit of the creation will go out of them, and they will become destructive; the very earth will depart from them and go where they cannot follow. (11, 17)

Indeed, those who seek to "learn how they fit into" creation often resort to metaphor, but may go beyond metaphors of the created world to make metaphorical reference to the God (or gods) of creation. For instance, Annie Dillard, in "Tickets for a Prayer Wheel":

My sister
dreamed of a sculpture
showing the form of God.

He has no edges,
and the holes in Him spin.
He alone is real,
and all things lie in Him
as fossil shells
curl in solid shale.
My sister dreamed of God
who moves around
the spanding, spattered holes
of solar systems hollowed in His side.

While metaphor is necessary and enlightening when one seeks to understand creation, is it sufficient? As any metaphorical writings about creation suggest, the conception of creation is unwieldy at best. It can logically be linked to multiple cognate ideas, as one

can find it in Mortimer Adler's Great Ideas taxonomy under headings from God, Art, and Change, to Space and Symbol. Given this range and vastness, is our understanding of the meaning and significance of creation sufficiently complete after we have exhausted our favorite creation metaphors or analogies? Or is something else needed to fill out our understanding of this difficult and elusive concept?

My thesis is that metaphor—religious, poetic, or scientific—is not enough for a complete understanding of creation. Rather, metaphors of creation must be supplemented by models of creation. As I shall try to explain, model builders strive to be more rigorous and demanding than metaphor makers. While models pose certain risks, properly formulated and applied models hold great promise for amplifying our understanding and appreciation of the multifaceted complexities of creation.

To support this thesis, I shall proceed by first examining the differences and similarities between metaphors and models; second, discussing certain provocative models of nature recently developed by a landscape architect and an environmental ethicist; and third, noting the work and significance for this discussion of theologian Sallie McFague in her recent book, *Models of God*. In conclusion, I will address some some problems and prospects of modeling God and Nature.

Metaphorical thinking employs figures of speech in which, according to a dictionary definition, "a term is transferred from the object it ordinarily designates to an object it may designate only by implicit comparison or analogy." Metaphorical thought entails a materialization of experience where unity between diverse objects is perceived and communicated. The several poets who comment on metaphor in *The Poet's Work* bear this out. For Delmore Schwartz, metaphorical thinking involves "mak[ing] something new by putting things and words together" involving "a bearing-across, or bringing-together of things by means of words" (Gibbons 82, 83). Metaphorical thinking—what many equate with poetic thinking—is a form of soothsaying. As Wallace Stevens observed, "It is necessary to be a seer, to make oneself a seer. The poet [or metaphoric thinker] makes himself a seer by a long, immense

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and reasoned unruliness of the senses.... He attains the unknown" (Gibbons 48, 57).

While metaphors may reflect reality, more often than not they entail a groping for a small portion of reality, what Paul Valery describes as "a hesitation between several different expressions of one thought, an explosive incapacity that surpasses the necessary and sufficient capacity" (Gibbons 170). In Gary Snyder's words, metaphor "effects change by fiddling with the archetypes and getting at people's dreams about a century before it actually effects historical change" (Gibbons 283).

Models, in contradistinction to metaphors, aspire to systematic, comprehensive, and simulated versions of reality. While several models are inspired and informed by metaphors, modeling entails a search for specific, identifiable, and measurable parameters (or variables). These parameters seek, albeit imperfectly, to reproduce the complexities of reality.

Mathematical modeling is the prototypical notion of what models are all about. Mathematical modeling can involve either of two kinds of mathematical representation: physical models or theoretical models. Some reference to the *Encyclopedia Britannica's* article on the "Mathematical Model" should help us get at an understanding:

Physical mathematical models include reproductions of plane and solid geometric figures made of cardboard, wood, plastic, or other substances; models of conic sections, curves in space, or three-dimensional surfaces of various kinds made of wire, plaster, or thread strung from frames; and models of surfaces of higher order that make it possible to visualize abstract mathematical concepts. (7, 932)

Theoretical models, on the other hand, use simulation of varying realities to create any number of possible situations, factoring in human or natural intervention into a system, whether it is one of cloud formation, traffic patterns, message transmission or beach erosion.

Models, then, are rooted in the use of a metalanguage, firmly placed in the structures of Western thinking about the cosmos and its essentially rational harmony. Certainly the Enlightenment project is premised on the belief that predictable consequences can be arrived at by proper examination of phenomena. In fact, models can be, as the *Britannica* puts it when discussing "Social Structures and Change," a new method of problem solving, "analytical modes directed toward the building of a variety of models of structure and organization." Models, therefore, have a potential of being used as models for future models. In other words, one of the chief benefits of modeling is the cre-

ation of a feedback loop which at least improves simulation, if it rarely perfects our understanding of reality.

Professor Ian McHarg, of the University of Pennsylvania's Landscape Architect department, in his provocative book *Design With Nature*, articulated a model of better understanding nature minimizing adverse environmental impact by human development. Implementation of his model entails what he refers to as "mapping" natural characteristics of the land in juxtaposition with proposed and alternative human development projects. In applying his mapping model—actually a dualistic model consisting of both a physical as well as a theoretical reality component—McHarg provides a familiar illustration of a development project: selection of a route for a highway. According to McHarg:

It is clear that the highway route should be considered a multipurpose rather than a single-purpose facility. It is also clear that, when a highway route is so considered, there may be conflicting objectives. As in other types of multipurpose planning, the objective should be to maximize all potential complementary social benefits at the least social cost.

This means that the shortest distance between two points, meeting predetermined geometric standards, is not the best route. Nor is the shortest distance over the cheapest land. The best route is the one that provides the maximum social benefit at the least social cost. (32-34)

McHarg amplifies the parameters of his model's theoretical component by "identifying both social and natural processes as social values," quantifying these values, and ultimately ranking them. As he explains in some detail:

We will agree that land and building values do reflect a price value system, we can also agree that for institutions that have no market value there is still a hierarchy in values. The Capitol is more valuable than an undifferentiated house in Washington, Independence Hall more precious than a house in Philadelphia's Society Hill or Central Park more valuable than any other in New York. So too with natural processes. It is not difficult to agree that different rocks have a variety of compressive strengths and thus offer both values and penalties for building; that some areas are immune; that certain soils are more susceptible to erosion than others. Additionally, there are comparative measures of water quantity and quality, soil draining characteristics. It is possible to rank forest or marsh quality, in terms of species, numbers, age and health in order of value. Wildlife habitats, scenic quality, the importance of historic buildings, recreational facilities can all be ranked. (34)

The physical component of McHarg's model of nature comes into play when various physiographic factors (the need for structures, poor foundations, etc.) and social values (both human and natural) are

and social values (both human and natural) are "mapped." He suggests that we can "map physiographic factors so that the darker the tone, the greater the cost. Let us similarly map social values so that the darker the tone, the higher the value. Let us make the maps transparent. When these are superimposed, the least-social-cost areas are revealed by the lightest tone" (32-34). Thus, according to McHarg's model of reality, the highway should be constructed on the "light" area of the map overlay.

McHarg acknowledges the shortcomings of his model; yet, he urges its use because it is an improvement over any existing method. He claims that his model "has the merit of incorporating the parameters currently employed and adding new and important social considerations, revealing their locational characteristics, permitting comparison, disclosing aggregates of social values and costs" (34).

In his 1986 study *Earth and other Ethics: The Case for Moral Pluralism*, Christopher Stone, who is Roy P. Crocker Professor of Law at the University of Southern California Law Center, presents another model of nature. The Stone model has at least two rather direct antecedents: first, his own metaphorical thinking published as a law review article in 1972 entitled "Should Trees Have Standing? Towards Legal Reasoning for Natural Objects" and, second, the "mapping" approach to social values originally articulated by Professor McHarg. While Professor Stone's "Trees" was cited and amplified by Justice William O. Douglas in his dissenting opinion in *Sierra Club v. Morton*, it took Stone several years to build on his original conceptions, identify ethical variables, and formulate a model for what he calls "moral pluralism." Reaction by others to his moral pluralism model has added to the rigor and utility of his approach.

At its essence, Stone's model of moral pluralism

...conceives the realm of morals to be partitioned into several planes. The planes are intellectual frameworks that support the analysis and solution of particular moral problems, roughly in the way that algebra and geometry provide frameworks for the problems to which they are respectively suited" (Stone, 1986, 133 ff).

Each plane is composed of two basic elements: "an ontological commitment" or "a foundational judgment as to which things are to be recognized and dealt with," as well as a "governance" aspect—the rules that apply.

Drawing on McHarg's work, Stone explains that mapping the varying "versions of the world's salient qualities" we can get hold of the many different, and often competing, interests in a physical area. He addresses the hypothetical problem of whether and how an oil company should search for oil in the Beaufort Sea, in an area close to whale migration

routes, observing that "the search for oil in the Beaufort Sea gives rise to several quandaries that induce us to sort out relations among different sorts of entities: contemporary persons, future generations, whales, Indian tribes, corporate bodies, species, habitats, and on" (201). One seeking to apply Stone's moral pluralism model to the ethical dilemma would employ "moral maps." As Stone explains, these maps consist of two major sets: "empirical maps" and "moral reference maps." (The following summary is based on *Ethics*, 202-240)

Empirical maps are subdivided, in turn, into two typologies: (1) "natural features maps" and (2) "action-influence maps." The natural features map would seek to display such things as whale migration, geophysical properties of the ocean floor, tidal and wave structures, temperature, and potential products. The second, "action-influence maps" would seek to depict "each area of proposed geophysical dynamiting present[ing] a zone of risk" to whales. Stone's model, applied to the whale/oil drilling problem, then combines "the data on these first two maps...with biological analysis to display risk-to-whale probability configurations for each developmental plan of varying intensity and precaution. The highest risks will be where zones of maximum hazard overlay existing migration routes."

Stone's "moral reference maps" are subdivided into two typologies: (1) "utility plane maps" and (2) "nonutility plane maps." Utility plane maps, in turn, consist of four kinds: (a) person preferences ("the utility to contemporary humans of all things subject to influence under the alternative development plans"); (b) all sentient creature preferences (assuming "animals are morally significant on their own account, and that, in principle, the way to account for them is through their pleasures and pains"); (c) future humans and spatially remote human preferences (future human generations as well as existing, spatially remote, humans in other parts of the world from the proposed development project); and (d) "all temporarily (spatially) remote sentient creatures, human and non-human combined."

Professor Stone's non-utility plane-maps consist of six kinds: (a) maps of "persons"; (b) maps of "persons remote in time and space"; (c) maps depicting preferences of "non-human animals"; (d) maps of "preferenceless and non-sentient entities" (like plants or lichen); (e) maps of "membership entities" (like species, nations, corporations, and cultures); and (f) maps of worthy "qualities" (like life, courage, and beauty). Stone explains these "non-utility planes" as attempts to depict "morally corrected preferences," instead of mere utility preferences. He notes:

The way in which we calculate utility may vary slightly, domain to domain. But that aside, much of moral theory sup-

poses that there are certain things we ought not to do even if the choice entails some sacrifice of (or, in a strong Kantian form, irrespective of) the general welfare. The point here is that as we pass across each of the same domains (of persons, the temporarily and spatially remote, etc.), there is a mirror governance for each, not anchored in utility at all. In each case, the non-utility governance may deviate from the utility-driven conclusion, forcing us to correct or displace entirely the judgments we might arrive at on the utility planes.

In concluding his book, Professor Stone emphasizes that his model of moral pluralism is a technique for renouncing "the commonly held Monist assumption that moral considerateness is a matter of either/or." Rather, Stone contends that his model can show that "it is not true that there is a single moral property, for example, intelligence, sentience, or life, such that entities are either morally relevant (in the same way according to the same rules) or utterly inconsiderate, out in the cold."

Professor Sallie McFague, in her 1987 book *Models of God: Theology for An Ecological, Nuclear Age*, asserts that it is indeed our models of God that may need re-shaping if we are to be better than mere survivors on the planet. Specifically, McFague contends that "the Judeo-Christian tradition's triumphalist imagery for the relationship between God and the world" cannot work within the context of postmodern sensibility. She points out in her preface

Any listing of these assumptions will vary but will probably include some of the following: a greater appreciation of nature, linked with a chastened admiration for technology; the recognition of the importance of language (and hence interpretation and construction) in human existence; the acceptance of the challenge that other religious options present to the Judeo-Christian tradition; a sense of the displacement of the white, Western male and the rise of those dispossessed because of gender, race, or class; an apocalyptic sensibility, fueled in part by the awareness that we exist between two holocausts, the Jewish and the nuclear; and perhaps most significant, a growing appreciation of the thoroughgoing, radical interdependence of life at all levels and in every imaginable way. (ix)

For McFague, these basic shifts in assumptions manifested in post-modern society "form the context for theology if it is to be theology for our time" (ix). In other words, a Judeo-Christian member of the post-modern world must be ready to use a more powerfully imaginative theology to link and reconcile these critical variables. In essence, Professor McFague makes a plea for more sophisticated metaphors and model-building in the realms of theology and Christian faith.

Significantly, she asserts that though "theologians have attempted to interpret the faith in new concepts appropriate to our time, the basic metaphors and mod-

els have remained relatively constant: They are triumphalist, monarchical, patriarchal." Her critique continues by asserting that "much *deconstruction* of the traditional imagery has taken place, but little *construction*" (xi). (original emphases)

Accordingly, Professor McFague identifies what she believes to be a crucial need in post-modern theology, a "re-mythologizing of the relationship between God and the world" by working with other models, encouraging us to think in terms of God as mother, lover, and friend of the world, in addition to God as father, king, ruler, or conqueror. The theology she calls for is, as she says, "mostly fiction: It is the elaboration of key metaphors and models. It insists that we do not know very much and that we should not camouflage our ignorance by either petrifying our metaphors or forgetting that our concepts derive from metaphors" (xi)

On close examination, McFague's way of thinking about creation—on a continuum of model building—is less precise and more impressionistic than the nature models of McHarg and Stone. Her "metaphorical or heuristic theology" is a model-seeking approach somewhere between merely hazy metaphors and more systematic, integrated models. Indeed, her analysis tends to support this interpretation at several points of the text, particularly when she writes:

No longer is it possible to insist without question on the 'fixed canonic and binding' character of metaphors and the concepts built upon them that have come to us 'after long usage.' The constructive character of theology must be acknowledged, and this becomes of critical importance when the world in which we live is profoundly different from the world in which many of the traditional metaphors and concepts gained currency. Theologians must think experimentally, must risk novel constructions in order to be theologians for our time. (6)

Moreover, McFague's discussion of the "organic model" or "evolutionary ecological perspective," versus the "mechanical model" or the "model of the machine," while nuanced and thoughtful, omits several details; these must presumably be worked out later. She argues that the machine model, despite its efficacy in the nineteenth century, fails to work as well today as a more organic one. She would prefer a model which reflects the world of "relationships and relativity, as well as process and openness. . . . [The organic model] is most appropriate to life, and hence qualities of life—openness, relationship, interdependence, change, novelty, and even mystery—become the basic ones for interpreting all reality" (10). And she urges theologians to be willing to take risks. "Since metaphors are imaginative leaps across a distance—the best metaphors always giving both a shock and a shock of recognition—metaphorical theology will dare to take

risks as well, for the recognition does not come without a shock" (35).

To describe God with source material previously outside religious tradition is justified because "our concept of God is precisely that—our concept of God—and not God" (37). Accordingly, it is not sacrilegious, or presumptuous, in McFague's view, to investigate other models of God's relationship with the world and human beings. For her, the models of mother, lover, and friend, precisely because they come from such deep levels of human experience, are "illuminating possibilities for expressing an inclusive, nonhierarchical understanding of the gospel" (87). Thus she expects that her image of the world as God's body should lead us to better, more life-giving, more restorative, more gospel-filled actions toward the world as we seek to know how to behave in it.

Where does all this lead us? What are the benefits as well as the risks of seeking to build better models of creation? Are we up to the project? I see four problem areas, and four significant possibilities for improvement.

The first problem involves the very nature of knowing itself. In a famous piece of argument, Immanuel Kant asserted that human knowledge of the universe suffers from a pretension of realism. Though he recognized the necessity of thinking through analogy, he vigorously denied that knowledge construed in such a fashion could reach reality itself. Indeed, Kant anticipated the scientific crisis of the early twentieth century when scientists were forced to accept the relativity—and imperfection—of the two then-prevailing classical theories of the physical universe: the wave theory and the particle theory of light.

The nature models of Stone and McHarg, as well as the models of God sketched by McFague, can be criticized in Kantian terms. To a certain extent, these models are nothing but subjective constructs in which the model-maker unites his or her experience. However, in partial defense, all three thinkers acknowledge the need and desirability for experimental praxis to test and, if need be, revise the underlying models.

Notwithstanding the call for experimentation, how can the models of McHarg, Stone, and McFague be tested? It is one thing to test the Einsteinian model of relativity by observing atomic particles in a nuclear accelerator or bending light through a giant telescope. But how can models of creation be satisfactorily tested? Are not all human models of creation hopelessly encumbered by rampant anthropocentrism, whether or not the model acknowledges the independent importance of God, on the one hand, or of nature on the other?

A second difficulty involves a lack of precise termi-

nology. The McHarg, Stone and McFague models also suffer from a lack of definitional precision. A model, as an explicit premise of purported reality, "lacks precision if it does not set clear boundaries between what it includes and what it excludes" (Schlag and Skover 13. I borrow extensively from this text in my analysis of these creation models.)

For example, does McFague's model of God as "mother," "friend," and "lover" also contemplate over-protective mothers, two-faced friends, and jealous lovers? Do the Stone and McHarg mapping models of fine gradients of shading envision map readers who are color blind or maladept at making fine distinctions? If these models do not contemplate these relatively negative characteristics, as the implicit meaning of the terms would indicate, do they thereby lose some of their saliency, much as an econometric model of national income is unrealistic to the extent it assumes "perfect" competition?

Thirdly, to the extent that the creation models suffer from imprecise terminology, the conclusions reached by using these models may be overinclusive or underinclusive. For example, if the only acceptable reason for not developing a particular natural resource (such as open terrain or the ocean's Continental Shelf) is the weighing of competing evaluative judgments, the McHarg and Stone models should accurately assess future human values about nature and economic growth. To the extent these models are unable to accurately assess and predict these values, then an outcome that would halt a human development project for the sake of natural values today may be too broad and, therefore, overinclusive in the event that values of the future put a premium on resource exploitation and material affluence.

Similarly, if the underlying justification of the McFague model is that the "evolutionary, ecological perspective" of "modern sensibility" involves a relational play of chance, process, change, transformation and openness, then her conclusion that God should be modeled on Mother, Friend and Lover is underinclusive. Her tripartite model may be attacked as underinclusive because chance, process, change, transformation, and openness may also be characterized by inherent evil as well as inherent good in the universe. Biblical scholar Jon Levinson pointed this out, in a general way, in his book *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence*. Writing from the standpoint of the theology of the Hebrew Bible, Levinson observes:

A false finality or definitiveness is ascribed to God's act of creation, and, consequently, the fragility of the created order and its vulnerability to chaos tend to be played down. Or, to put the point differently, the formidability and

resilience of the forces counteracting creation are usually not given their due, so that the drama of God's exercise of omnipotence is lost, and a static idea of creation then becomes the cornerstone of an overly optimistic understanding of the theology of the...Bible. (xiii)

A fourth problem concerns the unknowable implications of these models for other settings. Thus, while the Stone and McHarg nature mapping models may be acceptable when dealing with traditional development projects in a stable geopolitical context, the models may be undesirable in non-traditional scenarios. For example, how would the model of oil exploration in the Beaufort Sea factor in a state of conventional war between the United States and another power, where access to increased quantities of petroleum is in the national interest? In this new context—a threat to national security—the Stone and McHarg models might be undesirable because they would hamper attempts to fight the war and, therefore, save the political society. Similarly, McFague's models of God may be satisfactory relational and interactive premises of human-divine interfaces. However, the model may be unsatisfactory if it were to be applied to unilateral actions and workings of God. It is reasonable to assume—and there is ample biblical support for the proposition—that there are some things that God does without regard to human beings. This comes down to the mystery, the omnipotence, and the suzerainty of God—a reality of the universe at least as plausible as the McFague assumption of reality.

On the other hand, as Robert Browning wrote, a "man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" Creation models like those of McFague, Stone and McHarg reach out to understand and to deal with matters that are inadequately understood. By attempting to build models descriptive of diverse and unpredictable forces, they are building something akin to the recent models and theories of chaos being developed, with considerable promise, in the biological and physical sciences. As such, they put human beings on the high road: the road of inquiry, the road of deep reflection about vitally important questions. This process—provided it can overcome the aforementioned problems—is good and socially useful.

The creation models discussed in this essay, while not without problems, are bottomed on trenchant, penetrating and persuasive metaphors. There are many convincing similarities between human evaluations of the relative importance, or lack of importance, of sentient and non-sentient creatures, landscape forms, and natural resources and the act of making and reading a map. Similarly, the theological creation model of

Professor McFague is strongly supported by biblical text as well as modern socio-political realities. To the extent that there are shortcomings in the models of creation that these thinkers put forth, the shortcomings appear to be secondary, and inconsequential.

They help us to discover and to learn a more sophisticated, complete, and synoptical version of the ongoing dynamics of creation. While imperfect, and in need of revision and correction in some instances, they go beyond a merely metaphorical sensibility. They describe and simulate key parameters. They bring clusters of metaphors together. They provide a feedback loop for further insights.

The models of creation discussed in this essay—while deeply concerned about transcendent matters of non-human life and natural forces, of God and divine providence—also serve to enhance the very best of humanistic thought and values. Indeed, the models by Stone, McHarg and McFague remind one of the game of *Magister Ludi*, the Glass Bead Game discussed by the German author Herman Hesse in his novel of that name. Something like chess but far more intricate, the Glass Bead Game is thought in its purest form: a grand synthesis through which philosophy, art, music, and scientific laws are appreciated simultaneously. The challenge, and ultimate worth, of the creation models by McHarg, Stone, and McFague is their potential to be used and appreciated by a wider audience of thoughtful people. A subject as vast and interconnected as creation deserves nothing less. □

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The Nature of American Religion

Betty A. DeBerg

In 1988 the American Society of Church History celebrated its centennial. One of the high points of the event was an address by Catherine L. Albanese, professor of religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. In her remarks she asked the kind of question that keeps historians of American religion going, that puts a spring into our steps, and research ideas into our heads: Given the newness of the United States as nation, and the diversity of its native and immigrant subcultures, how long will we wait for a recognizably American *ethnos*? "How many centuries are needed to turn the manyness of American immigrants into the oneness of a single people? And if to the extent that would please a geographer they became one people, what would their national religion look like?"

The search for *an* American religion can be a bit unsettling because it upsets the canons of much "American church history" that has taken as its subject matter the transplanting of various strands of European Christianity and their subsequent development into American denominations. Given Albanese's vision and mission (should we choose to accept it), students of American religion and culture must expand their perimeters beyond traditional denominational compartments, for the object of our hunt is not those precious, carefully hoarded and loudly proclaimed denominational differences and points of uniqueness, but rather just what can be said to be common among all. We must also leave behind an exclusive concern with things European and Christian because there are so many non-European

and non-Christian religions and ethnic groups in the American mix.

We will, on the basis of recent Gallup surveys, also want to broaden our considerations beyond affiliations that are self-consciously or conventionally "religious." While Black denominations, mainline "moderate" ones, and the Roman Catholic Church have lost membership in the last 30 years, and both very liberal and conservative Protestant denominations have gained a bit, the fastest growing group on the American religious scene is the "secular constituency," the "nonaffiliates." We cannot assume that these nonaffiliates are uninterested in religion, or that they do not hold religious beliefs or engage in religious behavior. Many of these people "hold beliefs in the supernatural and the mystical." They were described by the conductors of the survey as "a 'new class' in outlook and ideology." Albanese concluded that many of the nonaffiliates are drawn in powerful ways to a constellation of religious beliefs and practices associated with New Age religion.

So we begin again with the question: What religious sensibilities and behaviors do California Buddhists, Black Muslims, Ecofeminists, Missouri Synod Lutherans, Hispanic Roman Catholics, Reform Jews, Scientologists, Free-will Baptists, Hard-shell Baptists and Southern Baptists—US citizens all— have in common? Are there common traits that can be identified as embodiments of an American religion?

Historians and other social analysts have proposed a number of interesting candidates for *the* American religion. One of the most important and most obvious is civil religion, or the cult of the nation. In the American context, Robert N. Bellah first used the term civil religion to name a set of discrete beliefs and observable institutions and rituals that give symbolic expression to the identity of Americans as Americans, and to the meaning Americans give to the nation as a

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whole and their own particular role in it. For Bellah, one such belief is that the United States is God's New Israel, or in secular terms, America has a mission to bring (either by being the shining-city-on-a-hill example to all or by direct involvement in international affairs) its goodness, justice, peace, and democracy to the entire world. Ask randomly selected members of any immigrant group why they or their forebears came to the United States and one is likely to hear that in this country one is free to pursue one's dreams and fortune. America has been and is still understood by many of its inhabitants as a land of opportunity. Traditional American civil religious rituals include presidential inaugurations, Fourth of July celebrations, Thanksgiving Day feasts, and pledging allegiance to the flag. The American civil religion is preserved in and promulgated by a number of social institutions: the public schools, the military and veteran's organizations, Boy and Girl Scouts, TV programming, as well as many religious organizations and denominations. While Americans squabble over a flag amendment and some seem to hold even the civil religion's high priest (currently George Bush) in derision, in the face of national disaster (war, hurricane, death of a president in office, death of astronauts) and triumph (the 1976 Bicentennial, the landing of astronauts on the moon, the victory of the US ice hockey team over the USSR team in the 1980 Winter Olympics) most of us discover deep ties of national loyalty and often unspoken but just as often surprisingly strong value associated with the country and our place in it which can only be described as religious.

Another phenomenon touted as a common American religion is the religion of domesticity. Historians such as Ann Douglas, Barbara Welter, and Colleen McDannell are responsible for the currency of this phrase and this particular analysis of American religion and culture. The religion of domesticity is the religion practiced within the family home and the domestic conventions of the family home practiced religiously. Like all forms of religion, this one has a particular history and social context. With the rise of industrial capitalism and the solidification of an urban middle class in the mid-nineteenth century, religion (conventional religion such as Christianity) was privatized, relegated to the "domestic sphere" of women along with household management, child-rearing, and philanthropy. Religious morality and values, unwelcomed in the "public sphere" of men and their business, political, and professional activities, became the mainstay of family life and "feminized" mainstream religious organizations. When we enter

the world of American Christian domestic religion, we enter a world of family devotions, home altars and Bible stands, portraits of Jesus and crucifixes on living room walls, family Bible camps and religious theme parks, and mothers like Richard Nixon's who, he claimed in an inaugural address, served as the prime model for him of self-sacrificing devotion to God and family.

A secular version of the religion of domesticity has permeated the entire society from its source in middle-class evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic circles. Jeff Blum, a friend of mine, calls the secular version the Cleaver syndrome (named after Ward, June, Wally, and the Beav rather than Eldridge). While the power of this religious system may be fading, most Americans feel some pressure to conform to this model of family life. Until only recently the mass media promoted it to the exclusion of all others, and social welfare and public assistance policies enforced it. Still today the bridal wear and home construction industries make their fortunes off it, and participation in it is practically a prerequisite for public office. The deep sense of identity and meaning (as spouse, parent, man, woman, child, breadwinner, homemaker) fostered by American domesticity is nothing short of religious. It shapes our lives in profound ways and locates us within a community of import and meaning that transcends the individual.

Another candidate for the religion of America is a corollary of domestic religion. I call it the religion of the corporation. While the religion of domesticity traditionally functioned most powerfully for women, the religion of the corporation gave and gives American men, especially, much of their identity and meaning. This religious system, too, has its origins in the gendered division of labor and influence that resulted from the rise of corporate industrial capitalism a century ago. These vast changes in the social and political landscape were matched in the religious culture. A Swede, Rolf Lunden, has done the best study I know of the origins of the religion of the corporation in the United States. He documented a dominant cultural strand in which the values and methods of the corporation were sacralized and propagated as the best that America and religion had to offer. The public media began to reconstruct the cultural myth of origin: business, because it dealt with the fundamental necessities of life, predates other cultural forms (e.g., religion, science, jurisprudence) and is, hence, the very basis of social life and cultural achievement. Skyscrapers, business suits, and the Model-T became the key symbols of American identity at home and abroad. Business leaders became the towering new American heroes. The new anti-hero—the socialist, the Bolshevik, the Wobbler—personified

all that the capitalists feared. These new corporate religious values, symbols and mythology have their institutionalized form, outside business enterprises themselves of course, in the business and civic clubs such as Rotary and Kiwanis, once exclusively men's clubs, which proliferated after 1910. (Women were given a role of their own as consumers after 1920 or so, and now are allowed in increasing numbers into the sacred space of stock exchange and executive office suites.)

Further, American religious organizations (churches, synagogues, sectarian groups) were at the same time remodeled along corporate lines. Toward the end of the last century, churches began eagerly to endorse business values, evangelize businessmen, and defend personal property and profits made from it as good stewardship. Today, too, churches and other conventional religious organizations hire business managers, expect religious leaders to function as executives, and borrow a full range of advertising and public relations strategies from corporate America. I do not believe that this time-honored American religious tradition is waning. One need only look at business school enrollments, the sales figures for Lee Iacocca's autobiography, the allure of Donald Trump and big illegal drug money, and the corporatization of health care, the PTL Club, higher education, and funerals to catch a glimpse as it goes by of this deep and wide stream in American religious culture. To the extent that Americans are what they do (for a living), the values and *mores* of corporate America are religious in every sense of the word. And unemployment is a spiritual as well as an economic scourge.

The last option for America's religion that I will present, and the one of which I will give the fullest description, is nature religion. This strand of American religious culture seems the least obvious to many, and gets insufficient attention from scholars in my field. The work of two historians are essential for understanding this religious tradition. The first is Catherine L. Albanese, with whose centennial address I began this essay, and the second is another historian at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Roderick Frazier Nash. Each traces the cultural descent of one of two distinguishable forms of contemporary nature religion in the United States. Both recognize, however, the indelible stamp placed on the world view of Americans by the sheer vastness of United States territory and the variety and beauty of its natural wonders.

Albanese is primarily interested in the evolution and contemporary popularity of religious sentiments and groups loosely categorized as New Age. She located the emergence of a mystical reverence for the

natural world and its processes primarily in the Romanticism of the 1830s, particularly the Transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau and their ambivalence about the industrial revolution. In Emerson's *Nature* are two themes that emerge again and again in popular nature religion: a correspondence between nature, humanity, and God; and the presence of the divine, or at least the image of the divine, in nature itself. The sensibilities of the Transcendentalists were institutionalized in nature communes such as Brookfarm and Fruitlands. In the mid-nineteenth century, nature mysticism was taken from town to town by Lyceum speakers, many of them "animal magnetizers" (hypnotists) who claimed to break down within individuals any blockages interfering with the free flow of the universal energy that flowed in and through the entire world. The nineteenth century was a great age of natural medicine. Euro-Americans discovered the natural healing methods of Native American societies. Chiropractic, osteopathy, and homeopathic medicine became widespread alternatives to the intrusive and often brutal treatment by physicians. A major new religious sect, Christian Science, whose Mother Church is located in Boston, the city of the Transcendentalists, rejected standard forms of medical care. Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, and various vegetarian groups promoted reforms in eating habits. (Graham crackers and breakfast cereal are part of that legacy: Sylvester Graham was a well-known health reformer, and the Kelloggs of Battle Creek, Michigan, were Adventists.)

A century ago, interest in the health of the individual was matched by interest in the health of the nation. With the closure of the frontier in the 1880s, and the rapid growth of problems associated with industrialized economy and urban living conditions, many began to yearn for the country's wilderness days and ways as a cure for its social ills. Would America without its wilderness be like Samson without his hair? Such concerns motivated the national parks movement. In 1872, Ulysses S. Grant signed the bill which set aside Yellowstone National Park. In 1892, John Muir founded the Sierra Club to explore and protect western wilderness areas. Scouting, camping, and hunting organizations got their start in the early years of this century, their purpose to strengthen the character of individuals, and hence of the country, by exposing them to the purity and challenge of the wilderness. Edgar Rice Burroughs provided an appropriate new hero of the untamed wilds; he published *Tarzan of the Apes* in 1914.

An important forebear of the holistic environmental movement of today, a mainstay in New Age perception and thought, was the rise of the science of ecology. Pioneers in the field such as Henry

C. Cowles, a University of Chicago scientist who in the 1890s studied the south shore dunelands of Lake Michigan, gave scientific underpinnings to the mystical sense of the unity and interconnection of all creation.

The contemporary New Age movement exhibits all of these characteristics and more. Institutionalized in channeling groups, nature sounds cassettes, book and crystal stores, nontraditional mental and physical health care centers, astrologers and other practitioners of occult arts and nature mysticism, syncretistic East Asian religious communities, vegetarian and nudist communes, human potential and prosperity evangelists, and magazines such as *Mother Earth News*, the New Age camp of American nature religion emphasizes cosmic unity, the spiritual quality of people and nature, the presence of the divine in the world, the ability to access the divine under certain circumstances, and the participation of people in the ongoing creative, healing, and transformational processes of the cosmos. These concerns have left their mark on many regions of American culture, and many individuals who identify primarily with conventional religious organizations have chosen for themselves certain of these beliefs and behaviors, from reading horoscopes to taking wilderness retreats to giving up red meat. Words like ecology, holistic, and Gaia are common parlance in many parts of the American cultural landscape. But the New Age is not such a newcomer to the religious scene; mystical nature religion is a powerful and dynamic tradition in our culture.

The second major form of nature religion is the animal rights movement. Nash is most interested in this particular part of the picture. He argues that contemporary concerns such as forest and wetlands preservation, the welfare of marine mammals, and the agitation against the use of animals in scientific and industrial experimentation have their roots in the very foundation of American social, political, philosophical and religious identity: the natural rights philosophy of the European Enlightenment as refracted through the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Just as movements for abolition of slavery and woman suffrage were hard-fought but successful attempts in the nineteenth century to enlarge the ethical community beyond white males, so is the animal rights movement today an attempt to expand our notions of community even further to include nonhuman animal life and, for a growing number of activists, plant life and inorganic matter as well.

The animal rights agenda, too, has a long history in this country. It was popularized by the humane movement (Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) immediately after the Civil War. There are

telling similarities between the abolition and animal rights movements. Besides the use of natural rights rationale, both were emotionalized in campaigns for public support. Nash called the novel *Black Beauty* the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the horse. And one thinks now of the use by animal rights activists of color photographs of cute baby seals and the lurid descriptions and bloody pictures of their slaughter by fur traders today. In any case, the move from abolition to animal rights work seemed like a consistent and natural one for Harriet Beecher Stowe, who joined the humane movement after the emancipation of the slaves.

Other factors in nineteenth-century culture contributed as well. Darwinian theory proved compatible to some in the animal rights movement with its claims that humanity arose from and is still an integral part of the animal kingdom. The ecological sciences reinforced the sense of the unity and value of all creatures. Henry S. Salt, responsible in large part for the popularizing of Thoreau and *Walden Pond*, published in 1892 a pamphlet entitled "Animals' Rights," and gave the movement its name. Now, nearly a century later, animal rights has emerged as a hotly contested issue, with many zealously devoted to the crusade to protect animals, plants, rivers, and mountains from human interference and destruction. Convinced, and taking their case to the public, that a whale, or a redwood tree, or a wolf is as valuable and has the same inalienable rights as does a human, animal rights activists are turning to more aggressive, sometimes violent means to act morally within the world as they perceive it. These activists do not constitute a mainstream, but their sensibilities are rampant. The mass media devoted considerable air time to the fate of two whales trapped in the ice off Alaska several years ago; the fishing industry was forced to change its techniques and to sell "dolphin safe" canned tuna; sales of fur coats have dropped dramatically; even on commercial television, nature programs are regularly aired; and, at least in urban areas, vegetarian restaurants abound. If Nash is correct in his assessment that the animal rights movement is simply the next wave of natural rights liberalism, and I suspect that he is, then he has identified a religious movement of great power and relatively undiluted American lineage.

In closing, let me make one brief comment on my perceptions of the relevance of Lutheran theology and culture to this discussion. While I think that there are parts of Luther's theological and exegetical corpus that can be mustered in support of various kinds of environmental ethics and reform activities, use of traditional Lutheran materials in this way is really a rear-guard maneuver to give a Lutheran appearance

and pedigree to religious sensibilities and trends welling up from within the larger American culture (which knows and cares little or nothing about Luther and Lutheranism) and already adopted or annexed, consciously or unconsciously, happily or grudgingly, by many Lutheran individuals, congregations, and bureaucratic organizations. I say this to demean neither *The Cresset* Colloquium's assignment, American Lutherans, nor American nature religion. I only want to adjust our perspective a bit away from denominationalism, which disallows a good view of the whole, belies the American character of American Lutheranism, and exaggerates denominational uniqueness, toward a broader historical and cultural perspective when we think about religion in the United States, be it Lutheranism, Pentecostalism, peyote religion, or the Unification Church. While religious interests, beliefs, rituals, and organizational structures in this country vary widely and will always do so, any living, compelling part of the American religion mosaic will of necessity embody in significant ways one or, more likely, all of the forms of cultural religion I have sketched so briefly above. Whether Lutherans like it or not, it is the American way. □

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The Friends of Christ

The stones cried out
When Christ went past —
Their gravel voices
Stiff with fear
And pain that only he could hear.

The sea grew hard
When Christ walked out.
He found the waves' solidity.
He sensed their strength
Beneath his heels.
He felt what others could not feel.

He laid his hands upon the stones
And healed them of rigidity.
He spoke some kind words
And calmed the sea.

The mountains moved
When Christ cried out.
They trembled when
They heard him moan.
They did not let him die alone.

Barbara Bazyn





The Hating of America

Renu Juneja

We Americans have been distressed and puzzled by the recent events in the Middle East. One aspect of this distress has little to do with the fear of recession due to rising oil prices or even the fear of loss of American lives in the event of a war with Iraq. What unnerves many of us, I think, is the vilifying of the United States, the mass hatred directed at us in protest rallies not only on the streets of Iraq, where they are to be expected, but also in the neighboring Arab states like Jordan. We want to believe that these are media events orchestrated by politicians and to some extent they are.

And yet the gnawing fact is that they are not entirely media events. When we look at the faces brought home to us on our television screens, or read about these rallies in news magazines, or talk to people

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with first hand knowledge of the people and the places where such events take place, then we are left with the frightening realization that often the hate is palpable and real, not just the manufactured emotion of political propaganda. And this for most of us well-meaning Americans, liking ourselves and so desirous that others like us too, is like a blow to the stomach.

It's puzzling isn't it? We supported Iraq all through its war with Iran. This may have been motivated by our greed for Iraqi oil. But some of this eagerness to support Iraq had to do with our pleasure at finding someone else hating our enemy—especially that enemy which had directed such a frightening degree of hate at us. I suppose our pleasure at discrediting those who hated us so violently must have led us to ignore Saddam Hussein's inhumanity. How is it then that we have once again become the Great Satan for Iraqis and for others we feel we have never harmed? Why should we be haunted by memories of similar mass gatherings in Central and South America and in South East Asia where people have assembled in the past to vent a collective hatred for the United States? These are often people we have aided

through money, development assistance, and sale or gift of arms.

The United States has never been a bully on the scale of Soviet Russia. We Americans are, on the whole, a warm, easygoing, caring sort of people. Sometimes we are not fully sensitive to different viewpoints but others have been more guilty of arrogance. We have, we feel, tried not to be the ugly Americans. When we ordinary folk travel we seem to be genuinely liked. When we live among others we are usually welcomed and accepted. People seem really to desire our way of life and endorse our ideals. Why then these eruptions of collective hate?

As an erstwhile colonial who has herself had a love-hate relationship with the colonizer, I want to venture an explanation. This inexplicable, seemingly unmotivated resentment of America is a response to a special brand of new colonialism for which America is perhaps an appropriate symbol. America is a colonizer not by virtue of its force, although its superpower status does make its apotheosis into a bully rather convenient. America is a colonizer by virtue of its hidden control of economies of developing nations through American multinationals,

but this is not the special brand of colonialism I have in mind. This new kind of colonialism America has achieved by virtue of its increasing influence on the psyches of ordinary people of other nations. For the non-western world, America is now an abstraction symbolizing the powerful ideology of modernity and all the conquering technology of the west. To us it may seem unfair that America alone draws the resentment the rest of the world feels towards the cultural imperialism of the west—until we remember that to a great extent even the rest of the west has been colonized by America in terms of food, clothing, cinema, television, and music.

America is feared less as a bully outside but more as the bully *inside*, altering the structures of the mind, altering, that is, the cultural priorities of other nations. What passes as development or progress or education does often involve the destruction of the existing identity of a people. In this process, psyches become unmoored. When progress and education also imply the inferiority of the existing culture, the sense of identity of a people is not only dislocated, it is also wounded. The ethicist Dr. William May, in his talk at Valparaiso University's Faculty Seminar, distinguished between guilt and shame. Guilt comes from misuse of power, from doing wrong and causing pain. Shame comes from feeling pain, from a sense of lacking power. Shame involves a diminishing of self and hence it touches deeper issues of identity. I would like to use this distinction to probe the response of the non-western world, particularly the Arab world, to America. The colonizers, if they feel responsible for any unworthy deeds, feel primarily guilt. But the colonized feel shame. The honor of the colonized nation has been wounded, or is perceived as having been wounded. And if, as with the Islamic Middle East, these are mas-

culine cultures with deep rooted concepts of honor, then these people, like men of honor who value honor more than life, are willing to restore their honor at what seem to the 'objective' and 'rational' observer to be absurdly high costs. They may maim themselves, ruin their economy, sacrifice millions of lives in order to 'restore' their honor. So for taking on America, Saddam Hussein does become a hero to these people, even to those who are likely to be very heavily burdened by the consequences of his defiance of the powerful west.

Should America (as a symbol of the west) really be viewed as a colonizer of the mind? In the past forty years, even remote corners of the globe have been transformed by the impact of western technology, a transformation, one could argue, far greater than that experienced by the colonized during the heyday of European imperialism. The impact of the British on the traditional lives of most Indians, for instance, was relatively minor compared to the impact of western technology and western values embodied by this technology now hosted by Indians since independence. The Arab world is no different. Christopher Dickey's recent book, *The Expats: Travels in Arabia, From Tripoli to Tehran*, reminds us of the difference between the old and the new Arabia. Mr. Dickey tells us that he was motivated to travel to Arabia by the writings of Wilfred Thesiger. Thesiger's Arabia of forty years ago was a land of silence "where only the winds played." It was a land where people lived out lives patterned by traditional notions of hospitality, graciousness, and civility, this last most often exercised in leisurely conversations. The people Thesiger describes "did not live out their lives secondhand, dependent on cinemas and wireless." The Arabia Mr. Dickey finds, however, is a land transformed by oil wealth and mod-

ern technology: "a land . . . that blends the convenient and the exotic like a raj rooted in suburbia and silicon valley." He describes the new Dubai with its Tex-Mex restaurants, a new Dubai that a relative of mine gushed about on her return from a recent vacation because it had American style grocery stores full of American goods she has no access to in India.

But even India's attempts to restrict the import of American consumer goods in order to encourage native manufacture (a policy that is earning it threats of trade penalties by the US) has hardly stemmed the tide of American influence. McDonalds may not have yet entered India, but hamburgers and pizzas remain popular fare with the middle class. Wrangler jeans entice young girls away from sarees, and Indian movies (the most powerful vehicle of acculturation of the masses) are full of young people wearing western clothes, dancing and singing to the rhythms of rock music, and imitating the west in manners and ideas. Let me quote from a recent article from *India Today*, a popular news magazine. "Rockets whizz into the air and explode in a thousand colorful fragments. Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck trundle past followed by a host of shrieking fans. Robin Hood greets King Arthur while Friar Tuck stands on the side." Is the magazine describing a theme park in America? No, these are descriptions of birthday parties organized by the rich in Delhi for their children. I am not surprised by the outrageous expense of these events (the costs equal the income of a reasonably well-to-do household for a year) although I am a little sickened. But I imagine the feudal princes behaved no differently. What surprises me is that none of the parties described in the article has an Indian theme.

It is against the backdrop of this

kind of colonization that Islamic mullahs (and their equivalents in other cultures) have flourished in their call to denounce America as a corrupter of values. In Islamic countries where there is such an overlap between religion and nationhood as also between religion and culture, religious fundamentalism is a means of purifying oneself, of throwing off the corrupting alien influence. It is a means of aggressively affirming identity and asserting pride. And one aspect of this reaffirmation of self and identity is hatred of America. In the writing of Arab writers Peter Theroux has noted a curious phenomenon, a phenomenon I find particularly significant since the writers are the articulators and self-conscious shapers of any culture's sense of identity. I quote Theroux: "The absence of Americans from Arab novels is an intriguing example of the presence of absence, explicable, perhaps, in terms of the constant nagging presence of American food, appliances, music, and politics even in the remotest Arab town or oasis; when the Arab novelist sits down to write, he shuts it all out." (*Sandstorms: Days and Nights in Arabia*).

"In the animal kingdom," writes Thomas Szasz (*The Second Sin*), "the rule is eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom define or be defined." Because they fear being defined by others, those subject to new forms of colonization set out to aggressive-

ly define themselves. Cultural anthropologists and sociologists tell us that cultures usually define themselves through encounters with others, often as against that other. Edward Said has argued in *Orientalism* that it was against the other imagined as the oriental that the western world defined itself. Now it is against the west, of which America is a convenient but appropriate symbol, that the 'orientals' are defining themselves. Of course, the America imagined by these other cultures is itself a product of their imagination. Our virtues are often defined in opposition to the 'vices' of the other. If we are God's children then the other must be the devil, the Great Satan. And because this imagined other is an abstraction usually far removed from the complex reality, it is still possible to continue loving the discrete individuals who compose that other.

Since most of those who express hatred for America belong to the economic or technological havens of the world, it is tempting to dismiss the ire as envy. I have tried to suggest a different genesis for these feelings. I do not wish to suggest, however, that such hatred for the other is a necessary component of the process of self-definition, even in the vitiated relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. There could be and indeed there are more productive ways for a people to affirm itself. Under the

influence of Gandhi, for instance, India avoided the trap of hating the colonizer. Not a naive idealist, Gandhi's affirmation of Indianness was always a double-edged sword. To dress Indian asserted the dignity and value of Indian culture and it undermined the economic exploitation caused by imposition of British textiles on India. But he never saw Britain as out of reach of God's grace. Sociologists have argued that societies which have evolved cultures capable of living with ambiguities are less prone to the need of affirming their own identity through rejecting the other. We hope that we Americans have achieved this ability as perhaps has India, despite the sporadic outbreaks of religious and ethnic chauvinism. I sometimes think that the reverse side of the passivity and 'effeminacy' of Hinduism is its enormous tolerance for contradictions and oppositions. Nor is Islamic culture monolithic either in geographic or cultural terms. Islamic Spain was more tolerant of diversity than Christian Europe. Cultures are, after all, the confluence of contingent histories. An anonymous writer of one the ancient *Upanishads* said it thus: "He who sees every being in his own self and sees himself in every other being, he, because of this vision, abhors nothing." □





Free Will and Determinism at the Movies

Norbert Samuelson

Other than their current availability in video stores, what do the films *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, *Do The Right Thing*, and *Crimes and Misdemeanors* have in common? My answer is that each uses comedy to describe how individuals affect what happens to them and their fellow human beings, and the limitations or restrictions on this influence. (Since none of these movies is new, some knowledge of their plots and milieu will be assumed.)

Set during a time that we generally call without blushing the Age of Reason, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* focuses on the siege of an unnamed coastal European city by a Turkish Sultan. To the central question: why did the Sultan attack the city and what can the city do to save itself? two answers are given. The first comes from Sir Horatio Jackson, the second from Heronymous Karl Frederick Baron von Munchausen.

The former is identified as the

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voice of realism; the latter as the advocate of fantasy. The film sides with fantasy. Jackson thinks that the war is caused by conventional greed, (a rational cause for war) and the solution is thus to follow ordinary rules. However, the truth is nearer to the Baron's assertion that war is both caused by and solvable through extraordinary (i.e., fantastic) human behavior.

Jackson is a public servant in the tradition of Robespierre. More than a republican zealot, he is a stereotype of the composite voice of the entire, secular humanist tradition, from Rousseau and Locke through Hegel and Marx. In short, he is the pure and simple believer in reason. Everything that *does* happen has a rational explanation and solution. Furthermore, everything that *should* happen should reflect the universal laws of reason, i.e., be common to all humanity and in accord with prescribed rules. Jackson interprets "to be common to all humanity" to mean, "unexceptional." Hence, Jackson executes a war hero at the beginning of the film, precisely because he was a hero, i.e., exceptional, and, as such, a bad object lesson to the rest of the troops.

The same motive underlies his

attempt to kill the Baron, who is, above all, an exceptional human being. Similarly, Jackson interprets "in accord with prescribed rules" to mean, "independent of any consequences to human beings." Hence, for Jackson, all that matters in the war is that the rules are followed. In short, Jackson is a parody on the ethics of Immanuel Kant's teaching that ethics are determined by pure, *a priori* rules independent of all experience and are intentionally blind to all consequences for human beings. The film's implicit charge is that Jackson is the kind of man inevitably produced by this kind of ethics: a bureaucrat, a man so bound by rules that experience no longer matters. Jackson's solution, when experience defies rational conception, is to outlaw the experience rather than to find new laws.

The Baron is an epic hero in the tradition of Homeric tales. In fact, the film's story is an odyssey, as the Baron undergoes multiple adventures in pursuit of his extraordinary friends. He sails to the moon, romances its queen and escapes the king's jealousy in order to find Bertold. Next, he enters the volcano of Mt. Edna, romances Venus and escapes her husband,

Vulcan's jealousy in order to find Albrecht. Finally, he is swallowed by a South Sea sea-monster in order to find Gustavus and Adolphus. As Odysseus' voyage culminates in a heroic battle, so Baron Munchausen's adventure culminates in a long and complicated battle sequence. In short, the screen play of Terry Gilliam and Charles McKesson asserts that there are heroes whose extraordinary abilities give human beings control of their universe. Hence, it is fantasy that best describes reality. In the end, life is what we make of it. Our control of our fate is limited solely by our lack of talent, the most important ones being courage and imagination. As such, this film, while appearing to critique the ideals of the age of reason, fundamentally advocates its individualistic, humanist ethics.

If *Munchausen* is the thesis, *Do The Right Thing* is our antithesis. Gilliam's movie suggests that human beings can determine their fate; Spike Lee's film argues that they cannot. As *Munchausen* focused on a war in which Turks besiege a classical European city, *Do The Right Thing* focuses on a different kind of war, where Blacks and Puerto Ricans burn down an Italian pizzeria in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of contemporary New York City. Lee's film is set on a day when the temperature is more than 100°F and there is a water shortage, with characters who include middle-aged and young Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Italians, and Koreans. Besides the pizzeria, the only other businesses that we see is a Korean-owned, "Ma-and-Pa" grocery/convenience store, and a Black-owned push cart selling flavored ice shavings. The Black establishment leaders are the so-called Mayor, Mother Sister, and a disc-jockey called Love Daddy who "plays platters that matter" on the neighborhood radio station, We

Love FM 108. Of all the music played, the dominant song "that matters" is Public Enemy's "Fight the Power." On the face of it, burning down the store fought the power. The burning questions though, are who is the "power" ? and does it really "matter"?

Lee carefully lays out the causes of the riot, and all of them can be described as being outside anyone's control. None of them, however, is in itself a sufficient and necessary cause, for chance also makes its contribution. What happens happens for other reasons, if, in fact, there are any reasons for what happens.

The Mayor and Mookie are the heroes; like the Baron, they are leaders who could (if anyone could) affect the outcome of the war. They can do something, but, unlike the Baron, they cannot do much, and it is not clear that what they can do matters. The mayor can save a child from being hit by a car, but he cannot make his mother stop abusing him. Nor could the mayor feed his own children. In other words, he can save lives, but he cannot affect their quality. We are presented with carefully chosen messages from Martin Luther King that violence "as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral..." and from Malcolm: "I think there are plenty of good people in America, but there are plenty of bad people in America, and the bad ones are the ones who seem to have all the power. ...it doesn't mean that I advocate violence, but at the same time I am not against using violence in self-defense ... I call it intelligence."

However, no hero's advice seems to offer any solution. King is right that violence doesn't work, but the riot wasn't really about racial justice, and it was not a rational act on anyone's part, but merely an instinctual release of tension. The good that the Mayor and Mookie perform is equally instinctual, as the Mayor says, "I wasn't a hero; I just

seen what was happening and I reacted; didn't even think." In the situation documented by the movie, Malcolm's advice is equally unhelpful, for self-defense was an irrelevancy. In fact, the best use of self-defense was that of the Korean, not because he was swinging a broom at the angry crowd of blacks, but because his assertion of oneness with them was so absurd that the humor of it dissipated their anger.

From the perspective of Lee's film, what is the answer to the question of adequate ethical framework for action? The one implicit answer is, as it is for Aristotelian ethics, good character. Mookie and the Mayor act the way they do not because they deliberate, but because they are the kinds of people that they are. They cannot win a war, or at least they cannot prevent a riot, but they can minimize its damage when they "do the right thing."

Whereas the first film focused on individuals in states and the second in smaller community, Woody Allen's film focuses on them in families. Judah Rosenthal, an eminent and successful Jewish ophthalmologist, is a religious sceptic, but retains a "spark" of his religious upbringing. He has had an affair for the past two years with Dolores, an airline stewardess, who now threatens to ruin his marriage of twenty five years to Miriam and to destroy his reputation and business by revealing that he illegally borrowed money from one of his charities. After much soul-searching, he allows his brother Jack to have her murdered. To his utter chagrin, Judah not only gets away with the murder, but he discovers that he can overcome the guilt and continue to lead a successful, happy life.

The story also contains a number of parallel subplots involving characters loosely connected to Judah: the saintly Rabbi Ben, who, in spite of his moral excellence and

in spite of his moral excellence and Judah's treatment, goes blind; Ben's sister Wendy and their brother Lester; the assorted partners of these siblings. Wendy is about to divorce Clifford Stern who is competing (unsuccessfully) with Lester for the affection of Holly Reed, an associate TV producer whose interest in Cliff is primarily in Cliff's documentary about a Holocaust survivor, Louis Levy, who subsequently commits suicide. Both Lester and Cliff are film makers, though the implicit assumption (which we receive primarily through Cliff's eyes) is that Lester is shallow and successful while Cliff is deep and a failure.

Eyes play a central role in both the film's story line and its symbolism. Judah, morally blind, is an eye doctor in whose office hangs a painting of two people whose faces have no features. In contrast, Ben, who has moral vision, goes blind. Judah frequently quotes his father, Sol's lesson: "The eyes of God are on us always," though he never really understands it. He thinks it means that "the righteous are rewarded and the wicked punished." He notes that when he looked into the murdered Del's eyes, he saw nothing behind them; all he saw was 'a black void.' In the end, because Judah does not understand, he rejects his father's lesson. Judah's communist Aunt May told her brother Sol to open his eyes, that might makes right. However, even she sees more than Judah. She says, "For those who want morality, there is morality" and notes that her brother's faith in moral order is "a gift." Sol notes that he prefers God to truth, and comments that even if his faith were wrong, he would still have 'a better life' for that faith. Judah thinks that this means more happiness and success, but Sol means 'better' in a moral sense. The implication is that Sol knows what Ben knows, and that ideals cannot be falsified by mere

events in this world. The film ends not with the moral despair of Judah and Cliff, but with the blind Ben dancing with his just-married daughter to the music of "I'll Be Seeing You."

Two views of divine providence seem to dominate the film. One is Judah's: the world is moral in that the good are rewarded and the evil punished. The other is Cliff's: the world is immoral in that the good are punished and the evil prosper. The story line itself suggests that both are wrong. At the descriptive level the world is non-moral, since there is no correlation whatsoever (either direct or indirect) between morality and success. However, that does not mean that morality is futile. On the contrary, morality is something that human beings create, project on the universe, and, in so doing, create reality. The spokespeople for this view are Professor Levy, Rabbi Ben and Judah's father.

A sharp contrast is drawn between the amoral world of experience and the divine/human world of morality. The former is a world without love and forgiveness, because these are both part of the God/human co-creation of the moral order. Those who, because they lack both, have never known either, think that the world of experience is reality, but those who have had the good fortune to be touched in their youth by moral persons have the strength and 'vision' of character to know that the ideal is the real. Cliff thinks that movies are unreal, because they reflect morality, but, throughout the film, events from the experienced world are paralleled by movies, that is, by human creations that project order on the apparently haphazard events of human interaction. The reward for virtue is more virtue, and the punishment for sin is more sin. Hence, the "misdemeanors" of borrowing money illegally and having an affair lead Judah to the "crime" of mur-

der. In Judah's own words, at first he did "a foolish thing, senseless, vain, dumb," and his "one sin leads to a deeper sin." Feeling guilt, Judah tells Ben that "after two years of shameful deceit ... I awakened as if from a dream." Ben tells him, "It's called wisdom. It comes to some suddenly. We realize the difference between what is real and deep and everlasting, versus the superficial pay off of the moment." Ben loses the ability to see "the superficial," but grows in his ability to see "what is real and deep and everlasting." Judah is blind to this moral reality. He sacrifices long term gain for short term advantage. Ben's advice to Judah to tell Miriam the truth about his affair and thus move together to a deeper life is unheard, as instead, Judah has Dolores murdered, and in so doing preserves the static superficiality of his marriage.

If *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* is the thesis, and *Do The Right Thing* is the antithesis, then *Crimes and Misdemeanors* is the synthesis. If the conceptual framework of Gilliam's film is modern, and Lee's is contemporary, the implicit ethics in Allen's film is post-modern. Gilliam tells us that exceptional people can affect the moral quality of the world, and Lee tells us that what matters is innate virtue. *Crimes* accepts both claims, and expresses a richer conceptual framework in which this apparent contradiction becomes coherent. The underlying schema of *Munchausen* is both humanist and romantic, for good and evil are defined in terms of maximizing human pleasure and minimizing human suffering, while emphasizing the richness of human imagination over and against the narrow perspective of conventional human intellect. The underlying schema of *Right Thing* is Aristotelian. Pleasure and pain have more to do with human fortune

than with human deliberation, and ethics have more to do with character than action. In contrast to both, the underlying schema of *Crimes* is the Jewish philosophical tradition of Hermann Cohen, Franz Rosenzweig

and Emmanuel Levinas, which asserts that while the empirical world of nature is morally neutral, human beings can produce a moral order that is inherently more real. In other words, whereas the reason

of science can only describe an apparent universe that is non-moral, the reason of ethics can produce an ideal universe that is moral. □

Promise

The maple keeping the ravine edge

To a symetry of gold

Gave in today.

I saw its richness downed by wind,

As I sat listening to my small daughter,

Hard at the piano across the room from me.

It's only lately that I've noticed

The earnestness she fingers into every note,

The way of her eyes cutting the world aside.

Leaning on the window sill,

I watched the branches stripped

And wondered about the hold we have on promise—

Leaves whose yellow is teased through the air

Or my child caught up

By the bright coquetry of song.

Lucy Shawgo



The Global Pillage

James Combs

Mature readers of *The Cresset* can recall most of the signal events and images associated with what was universally misnamed "The Cold War." It was only "cold" to distinguish it from the next step that many thought inevitable of "hot" war, World War III. From the breathtaking vantage point of Fall, 1990, the history of the Cold War was hot indeed: intense, scary, expensive, and seemingly unending. Moreover, it was global.

Every non-Western regime, alliance, action, event or leader was evaluated in terms of real or imagined relationship with communism. American politics hinged on questions such as who was tougher on the Reds, and in our more paranoid fits, who was 'soft' on, or even sympathetic with the communists. (Remember 'comsymp'?) It was official doctrine that we were willing to fight and annihilate these mortal foes, even at the risk of national, and even worldwide, suicide in so

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doing. And, most infamously, we were willing "to bear any burden" and "pay any price," a pledge that would cost us dearly in treasure, pride, and lives. The Cold War went on for so long that those whose careers, wealth, and commitments depended upon it became unable to imagine the world without it. Defense contractors, thinktanks, and others who profited from it obviously had a vested interest in it. So did the military system, which had a stake in its perpetuation, so interest and ideology complemented nicely. Entire political careers were spun out of its cloth, federal budgets premised on its centrality, and technology developed for its needs. The Cold War was ingrained in the popular mind as a reality and a necessity.

Popular culture from comic strips to TV series such as *I Led Three Lives* made communists into archvillains. Usually, they were depicted as gangsters, except their ambitions were greater: rather than wanting to take over the West Side, they wanted to take over the Western world. As with most villainous projections, they were depicted as both superhuman and subhuman, certainly lacking in the human traits of our society, and the humane conduct of our politics. In our minds, we divided the world into one big barrier ("The Iron Curtain," "The Bamboo Curtain,") or spreading Red stain. We seemed to keep 'losing' countries that weren't ours in the first place, with accusatory debates over whose fault it was that we 'lost' China, Cuba, Vietnam, and

so on. With both elite interests and the popular mind conceiving the world as an implacable and unending place of mortal conflict, some came to dread the virtual inevitability of war and others even came to hope for it. In any case, we could approach the world with an attitude that was both smug and scared, since our definition of the situation insured its permanence.

Ah, but there is nothing constant in this world except change. The geniuses who govern us planned for everything in the mighty struggle with 'world communism' except the absence of the conflict with it. World War III was planned down to its minutest detail. The whole thing might start by accident; but by Mars, it was not going to be a mistake. Those metaphysicians we call 'strategic thinkers' debated the arcane theology of overkill and acceptable losses and mutual assured destruction. But apparently no thought was given to a time and situation in which the whole enterprise ended. When Gorbachev apparently began to say, in effect, 'Oh, the hell with it,' this new thinking set in motion the dizzying array of events that led to the advent of the unthinkable.

In any case, we seem stunned by the sudden disappearance of our familiar nemesis, and we are looking around in a rather bewildered way to see just where the next move ought to be. (Of course, we may have had that decision made for us by Saddam Hussein.) But when we look at our alternatives in the newly independent nations of Eastern and

Central Europe, we are looking at puzzling new game boards. Independence brings new choices and hopes, and those with cash to invest in these suddenly free countries happily rush in. While we build Stealth bombers and poormouth the eastern Europeans, the Germans and Japanese get the lion's share of the investments. If it is the case that World War II ended in 1990, were the Americans and Russians the big losers and the Japanese and the Germans the big winners?

Communism may have been the last great internationalist ideology in the modern world. In the post-modern world, there will be other international forces, given energy and direction through mutual interest rather than utopian vision. I can see two such forces on the horizon: the international corporation, and international popular culture. Communism was not so much defeated as it was transcended, for it could not keep out, or transform, the desire for a better life, the lure of greed, or just simply the desire to have fun. There is even some evidence that the East Germans in particular were little impressed by Radio Free Europe or the Voice of America propaganda broadcasts. They had plenty of daily experience with official propaganda, and knew it for what it was. But they could also pick up West German television, and that may have had significant impact. Ideological argument was a bore; ads for Volkswagen and Lowenbrau reinforced the rationale to unify into one Germany.

Now these national states will be beset by the international corporation, which strikes me as the most potent organizational force in the world today. National states may be the host or benefactor of the international corporation, but in the aftermath of communism, and in some measure of classical capitalism, the global firm is the one

organization that will have the ability to act globally. Nation states think locally, since domestic politics is local; but global corporations (and banks) act in a global economy, and develop the organizational capacity to reach into new markets.

What the eastern Europeans will discover very quickly is that they are being bombarded by corporate propaganda. The most visible of the international corporations will be those which specialize in consumer products, those objects of personal ownership with which we amuse ourselves. Everyone quickly will recognize the logos of the corporate world. In the spring of 1990, as the East Germans entered the brave new world of advertising, Ford Motor Company ran a month long campaign on TV featuring a German soccer star; General Motors ran ads touting its German subsidiary, Adam Opel. Coca Cola began sponsoring sporting events and fairs, altogether spending \$140 million in East German production, distribution, and advertising (they also now have the landmark neon billboard in Moscow's Pushkin Square). Big advertising firms, such as Ogilvy & Mather and J. Walter Thompson, have opened offices in East Berlin, anxious to develop clients and pitches for this new market. And on the first day East German television accepted advertising, Mattel ran ads for—you guessed it—Barbie.

In some ways, the lives of these people will be enhanced by the economic intervention of the international corporations. Yet they too will quickly learn the price of prosperity, both in monetary and moral terms. Communism could not sustain either economic prosperity nor moral rectitude, which discredited the old regimes on two crucial counts. The new regimes at the moment have the legitimacy of being part of the revolutionary lead-

ership, but that will pale if people begin to sense that international corporations are not benefactors as much as exploiters who take more than they give. What General Motors did to Flint, Michigan, or is now doing in Mexico with cheap labor, could be done to eastern Europe. The social and environmental damage that has been done elsewhere could just as well be done in Bulgaria and Romania. If international corporations are unrestrained in their global pillage, then the 'market values' that sustain economic prosperity will become suspect as lacking in moral rectitude, and movements sounding for all the world like marxists might emerge demanding restraint on exploitation.

On the other hand, the globalization of the economy is accompanied by what is often called 'the spreading world culture.' International corporations may operate in the amoral context of business, but global pillage becomes something of which more and more people are aware. Yet the international corporation is also the carrier of this spreading world culture, at least in the sense of selling music, art, movies, books, and so forth. Their penetration into eastern Europe, not to mention the Third World, insures the spread of that culture, both high and popular. Like the spread of the marketplace values of the corporation, the worldwide proliferation of popular culture especially is not an unalloyed blessing. When the East Germans get a whiff of heavy metal rock, they may demand the return of the Reds to shut down the noise. But even though a lot of popular culture is crass and vulgar, it does have the salutary effect of giving people a common cultural currency. The thirst of Czechs and Poles and Germans is not just for money, but also for the common popular cul-

tural cultural experiences they knew the West was enjoying.

Market values by themselves, however, bring nothing more than the bread on which we cannot live alone. The power of popular culture is such that it will bring with it a new horizon of experience, something that has the potential to give humankind increasingly a common language, a kind of pop esperanto. In many ways, globalized popular culture has been a going concern for a long time. Despite the cultural restrictions, eastern European films (just to use one example) of remarkable quality managed to deal with sensitive and serious subjects, and also made their way West. Now that the restrictions are gone, we may fondly hope that they do not lose their sensitivity or their seriousness. The downside, and corrupting, aspect of popular culture always is the impulse toward the lower common denominators, including the insensitive and the frivolous.

This is not to say that forms of popular entertainment (wrestling and soap operas, for instance) cannot be enjoyed just as amusing play. But if the spreading world popular culture is to have any impact in giving us a common language through which we may understand each other's particularity, we are going to have to learn ways to reward popular creativity. If the money powers that will control modes of popular expression insist upon sticking to the safe and formulaic, then the hopes that an international culture might enlighten will dim. If our popular creations remain provincial and superficial, then different peoples will lose their chance to have some insight into other cultures through sharing a common language. Americans, just to pick on us, could remain insular and self-absorbed, insensitive to the experience of foreign cultures and reveling in the frivolity that omits

serious subjects. American popular culture in recent years seems to me to have such tendencies. There has been a strong strain of self-absorption, and much pressure to suppress not only the lewd but also and more importantly, the critical aspects of popular culture.

Older Anglos in the United States see themselves threatened by two popular expressions by minorities in their midst: salsa and lambada music and dance created by Latin Americans, and the rap music of a segment of our Afro-American population. Both forms of expression are viewed as frightening in their sensuality, but rap music in particular is feared also for its politics. If you view the rap hour on MTV, you do learn some crosscultural understanding: there is a lot of rage at the bottom of society, a great deal of pride and pathos, and the political icon is not so much Martin Luther King, Jr. as it is Malcolm X. Some rap is just for fun, but some of it is quite serious, and you can learn a lot about the state of things outside the pale of your own experience if you heed such popular expression.

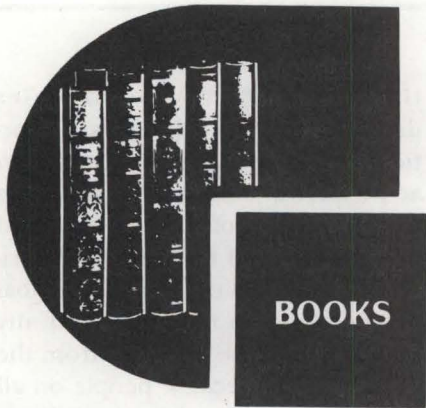
The same principle of course applies to other countries and their cultures. If we can overcome our own ethnocentric fears, we all can learn a lot about other peoples. (I recall President Reagan, on his trip to the Soviet Union, giving a gift to President Gorbachev of the American film *Friendly Persuasion*, saying that it would tell him a lot about America. True, but one thinks Reagan could have benefited if he had sat down and seriously watched Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*, which would have told him much more about the Russians than all the rhetorical demonology conjured at meetings of the Committee for the Free World.)

As any glance at the business page of the newspaper will tell you,

the future of the United States depends upon its willingness to participate in, and indeed become an active part of, the new world rising from the ashes of the old. The old world was one of frontiers and barriers, of mutual suspicions and tribal hatreds. If the new one is in any sense going to be different from the old, it will be because people on all sides of fallen barriers avail themselves of the opportunity to participate in other people's cultural experience. We cannot travel to all countries, nor learn everyone else's languages; but we can take seriously their more important forms of popular expression as an entry into understanding them.

Humankind has a real opportunity at this moment to overcome some of the ignorance that engulfed the dying century in cycles of warfare. Now with the 'wired' world before us, we have a chance to rectify some of that ignorance. Spinoza wrote long ago of human bondage and human freedom, arguing that freedom comes by letting the infinite variety of the world into your mind. Popular culture as a global force could become for those so willing to be free a playful language of understanding. It could celebrate those things which tend to unite us, the Earth's environment for one, than those which divide us.

As a political force, it could help in minimizing the political and economic pillage that bedeviled the old world. If aspects of popular culture such as music do contribute to creating a world beyond pillage, it will be worth the noise. For that reason, it was altogether fitting and proper that the demise of the Berlin Wall was celebrated not by a pompous gathering of politicians but by a huge concert featuring the spandex, leather, and metal marks of the rock culture. □



Of China, and Other Imponderables

R. Keith Schoppa. *Xiang Lake: Nine Centuries of Chinese Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

In the opening lines of *Xiang Lake*, the author asks us the following question:

Xiang Lake: a six thousand-acre reservoir ten miles from scenic West Lake in the city of Hangzhou. Nothing of national importance either in the empire, republic, or people's republic ever occurred there; no disastrous rebellions or other social disturbances ever began there; no conferences of national significance were ever held there; no figure of national scope ever rose from its shores; none of China's preeminent poets wrote of its beauty. In the vast sweep of China's history it seems, on the whole, quite forgettable, a lake of little significance. Why then should we spend time at Xiang Lake? (xi)

Why indeed? To answer that question forces us to consider first some questions about historiography. For to say that nothing of national significance happened at Xiang Lake is not to say that nothing happened. This may seem an obvious point, at least until one recalls that most Chinese history, written by Chinese or foreigners, has been almost exclusively dominated by national events and figures. Local or regional histories are a rel-

atively new thing in Chinese historiography, and for the most part are a reflection of the influence of Western historiography, where such texts have only recently regained legitimacy.

In the West, in fact, local and regional histories are nothing new. As far back as the Greeks we find examples such as Hellanicus' study of Attica, Diyllus' of Athens, Nymphis' of Heracleia Pontica and Hieronymus' of Cardia. Later still, studies of cities such as London, Cologne and Paris were common. From 1200 onward, towns all over Europe, and later in America, had chroniclers who compiled impressive amounts of data, occasionally organized and presented as a history of the region. One of the most highly regarded European examples in this vein was *The Great Annals of Cologne*, with such American counterparts as Thomas Prince's *Chronological History of New England* and Robert Beverly's *History of Virginia*.

In the modern period, under the influence of Leopold von Ranke and the German school of the late 19th century, historiography for the most part turned away from the regional and local to concentrate upon the national, international and even universal. The regional and local were like so many specks when seen from the almost divine altitude from which many of these histories were written. Localities only came to view if they played some role in a major historical event.

But beginning in the 20th century, we see a gradual turning back

to a concern with the regional for its own sake. In part due to the rise of social history, which turned its attention to the common people, history now took a number of different directions. Some historians, under the influence of marxist philosophy, were concerned with the underclasses struggling for liberation, while others, under more democratic influences, believed that the common people embodied the spirit or genius of a nation. Social histories such as those pioneered by Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., focused upon what he liked to call "the Great Many" rather than the "Great Men" of history. While it is true that these early social histories took up the cause of the common many and paid attention to some local and regional concerns, in the end their ultimate concern was still the grand scheme rather than the sense of local meaning. The common, the local, the regional were taken primarily as examples of something larger than themselves.

In Paris a group of historians took the idea of social history to a new level. The work of the *Annales* group, under the influence of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloc, turned away from the macrohistorical approach in order to focus upon what they called "total history." Total history attempts to deal with all aspects of life. As Febvre put it in his book from 1953, *Combats pour l'histoire*:

History must cease to appear as a sleeping necropolis haunted solely by shadowy schemes. They [the historians]. . . must penetrate into the old

silent palace where the princess slumbers, throw the windows wide open, relight the candelabra, bring back the world of sound; then they will with their own vitality, with their own bubbling and young vitality, awaken the suspended life in the sleeping princess. (32)

Total history shows a new concern for the regional in that the key to understanding is in the details themselves, and not in the search for some overriding pattern. If patterns (what the *Annales* call *mentalite*) emerge, they do so from a multifaced and finely-nuanced attention to the details. Universal histories were seen as reductionist in their denial or ignorance of the local, the small, the seemingly insignificant events and people. The thrust of total history is to give even the most trivial its due. History thus becomes the story of a place and time. As such it should draw upon everything at its disposal, from politics and economics to geography, meteorology, documents, art and music. Anything which helps the historian bring the period to life—that awakens the sleeping princess—is legitimate. History is no longer the search for a solution to universal problems, but the creation of a richly textured object which has value in itself. This concentration on detail, and abandonment of the belief in the Big Picture, has lent legitimacy to the local and regional historian who does his or her work by drawing upon masses of multiform materials in order to understand a place and a time. The method implies that if there is any place where the spirit, the lived ideas, the sense of custom, the feeling for the rhythms of a people can be found, it is in the stories of the local peoples. History has no need to try to tie such stories back into some macrohistorical scheme.

Xiang Lake is such a microhistory, but with a difference. It studies a small and seemingly insignificant

subject—a reservoir. However, this small subject is studied for its appearance over an enormous length of time, from 1112 until 1986. In nine intriguing chapters, Professor Schoppa indeed “awakens the sleeping princess” by composing his wonderfully-textured object to depict the lives and culture which surrounded and depended upon the lake over a period of roughly nine centuries.

The key to the success of the book is the author’s careful attention, not just to what we would call ‘fact,’ but to the quality of the writing itself. The reader is slowly drawn into a series of small dramas, each crafted with the skill of the short story writer. Characterization and wit, apt descriptions of the land or a sunset, speculations about the moods of the characters—all these absorb the reader into the world of the lake. They make it live in the reader’s imagination as a whole world, miniature but nonetheless compelling in its sense of dazzling reality.

Professor Schoppa begins each section with a brief prefatory “View.” Here he attempts to establish the tone of the chapter to follow. Each “View” begins with just that, a glimpse of the lake or the mountains, lands, temples, pavilions and gardens which can be seen from the lake. Over the course of nine chapters, one gets a splendid sense not only of the area’s appearance, but also of its emotional effects. These descriptive forays are supplemented by a number of photographs and maps to further aid the reader as he or she enters this alien world. The remainder of each section is composed of a series of vignettes of various lengths which relate important local events, the lives of important local people, and generally build upon the reader’s sense for the period and the place as it floats through the historical landscape which surrounds it. Unlike

the large sweeping stories which are usually written about China, this one invites us to feel at home in this place, to identify with the people and their problems, to hate the interference of outsiders and generally to care about what happens in this obscure corner of Zhejiang province. By the end of the book, the reader not only has a sense of Xiang Lake’s history, but also of what it would be like to have lived here.

I am particularly struck by the relevance of the phrase that the more things change, the more they stay the same. With the exception of the Taiping rebellion and the occasional clash with imperial or republican politics, the people of Xiang Lake live local lives, consumed with local problems that confront them in local ways. It is from this perspective that Schoppa expects us to read the book. Thus, one must first get over an initial disappointment that he does not draw out the connections between Xiang Lake and the broader scope of Chinese history. We gradually accept that the author asks us to take on the local perspective, to see that the truth about the region is to be discovered by allowing oneself to enter fully into the local mindset.

We gradually realize too that Schoppa’s opening declaration that nothing significant happened here involves us directly in the paradoxes of this form of history. Our glimpses of Chinese life, of the lived values, of the daily struggles of people and place both with and against each other gradually do serve to develop our understanding of the whole picture. As any student of Chinese history is aware, to know the people you must know the land. In *Xiang Lake*, this relationship is paramount. The insights we have into politics, social structures, and lineage as all these affect and are affected by the land itself show us more than the sum of the parts. As

we know about the parts, we begin to sense the whole.

This book is hard to find fault with for two reasons. The first, and superficial one, is that Professor Schoppa can have few readers who know his subject as he does. If there are any who can or would challenge him on this front, they will have come from the handful of experts on Zhejiang province, but I suspect that even they are unlikely to know as much about Xiang Lake and the Xiaoshan region. The more profound reason for my enthusiastic endorsement of the book is that it is one of that rare category of books valuable and eyeopening to the specialist and amateur alike. In this, Schoppa's book reminds one of the work of Jonathan Spence, both expert and accessible, informed and elegant.

James Buchanan

Geoffrey R. Lilburne. *A Sense of Place: A Christian Theology of the Land*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989. 140 pp, pbk.

Here is the wisest and perhaps the most stimulating recent addition to the growing field of 'green theology.' By this phrase, I refer to constructive theological works that give renewed attention to the non-human world. For Geoffrey R. Lilburne, Christians need not only to clean up the environment, but to renew their sense of place through a deeper understanding of the incarnation of Jesus Christ on earth.

Dr. Lilburne is a professor of theology at the United Theological School in Dayton, Ohio. He was raised in Australia, and part of the unique flavor of this book derives from the illuminating parallels he draws for us between the land-centered practices of Australian Aborigines and the Hebrews of the Old Testament. What he does, final-

ly, is to update Walter Brueggeman's fine study, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Fortress, 1977), with anthropological sensitivity, poetic insight and careful biblical scholarship.

It is precisely attention to the Bible that is missing in so much "theology of Creation" these days. In the works of the Dominican Matthew Fox, for example, the clear tendency is to focus so intesely on creation that the biblical focus on God's redemptive activity drops out of the picture almost completely. We see a similar tendency in books such as *Beauty of the Lord: Awakening the Senses* (John Knox, 1988) by the environmental theologian Richard Cartwright Austin.

Lilburne notices that particularly in the Old Testament, the word "land" draws us deeply into the movement of biblical history. He therefore states a firm preference for a "theology of the land" over a "theology of creation."

For all its validity as a *direction* in contemporary theological reflection, creation theology often calls us to a simple return to the garden of life. Though all creation was good "in the beginning," contemporary experience should be enough to warn us that no simple return to Eden is available.

The book is aimed at seminary students, college professors and church leaders with seminary training. Lilburne's writing is overly condensed at times—particularly as he examines the Western philosophical tradition—and in Chapter 4 some familiarity with Brueggeman's earlier book will help. But when read with care, Lilburne's book is a fine entry point to a new and growing field of study.

Wayne Bolton

James F. White. *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.

This important study of worship among Christians who are not Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox will deserve its likely popularity as a textbook. White combines a wealth of details with an ingenuity of scheme: "Protestant" worship comprises on the right wing Lutherans and Anglicans, in the center Reformed and Methodists, and on the left wing adherents of the Anabaptist, Quaker, Frontier and Pentecostal traditions. In addition, he chooses to focus not just on the texts of the rites that are used but especially on the people who engage in the action of worship. And he argues that the central defining characteristic of "Protestant" worship is its essentially non- or even anti-sacramental character, being

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based, he argues, more on a celebration of the Word and the exercise of prayer.

While one must welcome the gathered information White presents, one must raise two serious questions. First, is there in fact a single, unitary "Protestant" tradition in worship, one that can be defined essentially by its non-Roman/non-Eastern character? It might well be argued (as it has by Frank Senn) that the Lutheran/Anglican/Methodist (and perhaps Disciples) branches of Christianity are one tradition, and that the Reformed are another, that Free Church and Chrismatic branches of Christianity are a third and possibly also fourth. And second, is Protestantism, however defined, fundamentally anti-sacramental? This Lutheran reviewer finds the former question to disclose a highly debatable problem, and the second question to require a decided 'No' as answer. In fact, White's choice of Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* as his point of departure should be sufficient evidence of the profoundly sacramental concern and orientation of Luther's program of liturgical reform, and similar arguments would show the profoundly sacramental character of Anglican, Methodist, and even Reform worship. Still, White's book has much to commend it. And even the questions it raises are worthy of careful attention.

David G. Truemper

Robert Wuthnow. *The Struggle for America's Soul: Evangelicals, Liberals, and Secularism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow is doing his best to overcome his training as a positivist. Still, in this intriguing book, which attempts both to describe a struggle within American society and to construct an argument urging liberal and evangelical Christians to get beyond their often ignoble disagreements, Wuthnow only occasionally succeeds.

Our author is concerned about America. He believes a "growing polarization of religion's response to the public sphere" threatens to produce a society prone on the one hand to totalitarian politics, and on the other to solipsistic religion of either secularist or fundamentalistic stripes. The evangelical-liberal middle ground, which Wuthnow identifies as the historic core of the "third (non-market, non-state) sector," has eroded.

Is this news? Wuthnow at length (if fuzzily) characterizes the conflict between liberal and connive believers, bringing the struggle into clearest focus by studying one "by no means unique" denomination—the Presbyterians. In fact, the sample is neither random nor representative, but the case study sets up Wuthnow's argument well.

The sociologist is at his best when describing the "Dynamics of

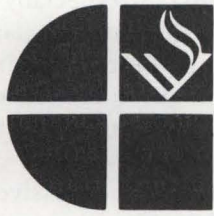
the Secular." A chapter "Paradox and Media" is especially insightful, in which the author details how the electronic church has in fact promoted public awareness of religious issues, while at the same time conditioning viewers of religious television to be passive and routinized public agents, acting in accord with "god's" mediated word. This is effective applied sociology, advancing our understanding beyond the stereotype of the couch-potato consumer of Pray-TV.

Too often, though, Wuthnow leaves us with platitudes. This is a book designed for a general, popular audience, but even the most ill-informed American could hardly be enlightened by reading that "much is changing in American religion," or that issues such as abortion, prayer in schools, and politics in Central America, "will continue to be subjects of intense debate by religious groups." Writing a book for a popular audience need not be an excuse to dummy-down one's discipline.

At worst, this book may actually reinforce the polarizations between Christians and the marginalization of Christianity in American life. It is neither enough of an analysis of the functions of the conflict nor enough of a passionate argument to be a remedy. At best, this effort by Wuthnow outlines some interesting stereotypes, and occasionally illuminates their shortcomings.

Jon Pahl





Over the years, this journal has been consistently interested in the question of Christian higher education, and many articles on the subject have been printed here. We now announce a competition for the best article on this subject by a writer under thirty-five.

Articles should be between 2,500-3,500 words, suitable for a general audience. A prize of \$250 will be awarded to the author of the winning article, which will be published in an issue devoted to work by younger writers and artists.

The deadline for submission is 1 January 1990, and entries will be read by members of the Advisory Board, and the editor, who will make the final decision. Entries should be submitted with name, address and proof of age on a separate sheet. For further information, please write *The Cresset*, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN 46383. (Note the change in age limit.)

NEXT MONTH

- Cresset Creation Colloquium continues with Jim Caristi on changing DNA and Spotted Owls, and Jim Bachman on Creation, Luther and the Bible.
- Tom Kennedy reviews Wendell Berry's *What Are People For?*

Midwest Autumn

The maple flames out
against the October sky,
burning bush for us.

The owl's note quivers,
wavers on the still night air,
chilling every bone.

The grey hawk lifts, banks,
riding November's rough winds,
partner with the sky.

Barbara Jurgensen

