



HORIZON

SUMMER, 1975 • VOLUME XVII, NUMBER 3

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HORIZON

SUMMER, 1975 • VOLUME XVII, NUMBER 3

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Pseudo-Issues



Speaking of the social and industrial revolutions that began in the eighteenth century, Jacob Bronowski, in *The Ascent of Man*, makes the interesting point that they were made not by "solitary men of genius" but by "many lesser men banded together." What drove them, he continues, "was the conviction that every man is master of his own salvation." The idea that men, rather than vague historical forces, make revolutions ought to be pleasing to modern-day humanists. Bronowski assumes that we are, or can be, masters of our fate, rather than flotsam on the grand tide of it. And if revolutions are made by many lesser men banded together, that might also explain why the Industrial Revolution, to which we are the immediate heirs, has had such wildly diverse results. Nearly every invention that now blesses or plagues us—from the steam engine to the assembly line to plastic dinnerware—came out of it. And, as Bronowski also points out, the great drive for human rights and human equality came out of it, too.

Each man master of his own salvation. And each woman, too, Bronowski doubtless meant to say—or at least he should have meant to. For the feminist revolution is an almost perfect illustration of Bronowski's point, and of the wildly diverse results engendered by revolutions powered by individuals of strong convictions. The ascent of woman, like the ascent of man, has had to contend with some downturns, but no one can deny it its glories. Think of Mary Wollstonecraft dashing off *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*; of Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters pursuing their goals with a combination of eloquence, good sense, and daring that amounts almost to saintliness; of Emily Davidson throwing herself to a terrible death to arouse public sympathy for the feminist cause.

Of heroines there is no lack, nor, alas, of silliness either. Last winter, for example, the *New York Times* carried a story about the storming of yet another contemporary Bastille—the Frick Art Reference Li-

rary. An artist named May Stevens, refused admission to the library because she was wearing trousers, promptly took her case to the New York City Commission on Human Rights. "I would think the Frick would be acting illegally when it discriminates against my wearing clothes I find warm, practical, and convenient," she said.

Any scholar in these parts who has delved much into art history knows the vast resources of the Frick Library. It was founded in 1920 (says the plaque in the vestibule) as a memorial to Henry Clay Frick by his daughter. Frick was, of course, the redoubtable nineteenth-century industrialist, strikebreaker, and art collector. His Fifth Avenue mansion, which now houses his collection, is one of the most perfect small museums in the world. In the library, next door, rules of behavior are, to put it mildly, antiquarian. "Ladies" may not enter in spike heels or even "very short skirts," nor, of course, in slacks. "Gentlemen" must wear jackets. One may not write with anything but a pencil. The accommodations, however, are sumptuous, and the librarians are overwhelmingly courteous and efficient. Nothing has been spared to make the library a model of its kind. A female acquaintance of mine who sought admittance a couple of years ago (wearing slacks) was presented with two skirts in different sizes and told to change clothes. Both garments bore labels from expensive shops and were silk-lined.

There is no need for me to defend or attack the code of etiquette at the Frick. With or without my help, it will continue its sedate archival existence, its decorum untroubled by any trousered female legs or jacketless male arms. But has society grown so perfect that an agency for human rights can find nothing better to do than defend our liberty to wear comfy pants? Would Mrs. Pankhurst believe it?

Discouragingly enough, the liberation movements of the 1970's have wrought their greatest changes for the educated and prosperous, rather than the ignorant and defenseless. Like hyper-vitaminized children, we dose ourselves on pseudo-issues (Is *Sesame Street* sexist? Should we have a vegetarian Thanksgiving this year? Should husbands take a turn at loading the dishwasher?) until we wouldn't know a real issue if we saw one. Oh well, the ascent of woman, and of man, must go on. As we tread that upward path, let us try to achieve something beyond the right to go into a library in britches. —S.T.

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COVER: When Erté, the fashion and theatre designer of the 1920's and 1930's, dreamed up this fanciful ballet costume, it was not intended for dancing but for dazzling. And so it was with the hundreds of other incomparably imaginative costumes that he designed: glitter was what counted. Today his work is enjoying a considerable comeback. An article on the designs—and the imaginative man behind them—begins on page 20.

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The farflung world of Islam stirs today with a fresh sense of purpose and power. Six centuries ago, that same world saw itself as the unquestioned pinnacle of civilization. What was it really like? The answer is in the diaries of one Ibn Batuta . . .

"THE BEST-TRAVELED MAN ON EARTH"



The wayfarer above is not Ibn Batuta—his portrait was probably never made—but one Abu Zayd, hero of the Maqāmāt, a collection of tales written in the twelfth century. This miniature, however, and the others on these pages—done in the thirteenth century by a Baghdad artist—mirror a world of Islam virtually identical to the one Ibn Batuta was later to describe.

OVERLEAF: With the mountains of the Hindu Kush at his back, a lone rider makes his way across a plain in Afghanistan that Ibn Batuta may have traversed more than six hundred years ago.

One day in the Moslem year 756 (1355 in our chronology) a well-known Moroccan theologian began to dictate his memoirs. He was Abu Abdullah Mohammed, better known by his patronymic Ibn Batuta, and he was fifty-one years old. Since he was committing his memories to paper under instructions from the Commander of the Faithful, the Sultan Abu Inan Faris of Morocco, he began them ritually:

In the Name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate: Praise be to God, Who hath subdued the earth to His servants that they may tread thereon spacious ways, Who hath made therefrom and thereunto the three moments of growth, return and recall, and hath perfected His Bounty towards His creatures in subjecting to them the beasts of the field and vessels towering like mountains, that they may bestride the ridge of the wilderness and the deeps of the ocean.

The imagery of this dedication was more than figurative. Though Ibn Batuta was a scholar and a distinguished *qadi*, or judge, he was known chiefly as a traveler. He was not well traveled merely by Moroccan standards, he was the best-traveled man on earth. By sea and land, by camel, on foot, and on horseback, he traveled at least 75,000 miles, a total probably never equaled until modern times. He was unique. He, and probably he alone among all the men of his age, had visited every civilized country there was.

Civilization, of course, lies in the eye of the beholder. To the Sultan Abu Inan Faris, to Ibn Batuta himself, and to any educated citizen of fourteenth-century Morocco, civilization was conterminous with Islam. It had been six hundred years since the Arabs, bursting from their desert heartlands, had carried their austere and warlike faith across the continents; by the fourteenth century the great Islamic empire of the caliphs was no more, having split into a multitude of sultanates, emirates, and squabbling principalities. It remained, nevertheless, if not a political, at least a cultural entity. From Morocco in the west to Java in the east, as far north as Samarkand and Granada, as far south

as Timbuktu, Islamic sovereigns ruled and Islamic traditions were paramount. Even beyond, in East Africa, in the Himalayan frontierlands, in China itself, communities of Moslem traders formed thriving enclaves, like stepping-stones across an infidel marsh. Compared with Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism were impotent. Islam had survived the weakening of its political authority and remained one of the great power factors of the world. The seven great monarchs of the fourteenth-century world, in Ibn Batuta's reckoning, were the sultan of Morocco (naturally), the sultan of Egypt, the sultan of the two Iraqs, the sultan of Turkistan, the sultan of India, the khan of the Golden Horde, and the emperor of China. All but one were Moslems.

For Islam was more than empire, more even than a faith or ideology. All aspects of human conduct were governed by its precepts. It was a religion, a style, a code of conduct, a loyalty, a system of law, a literature, a language (for wherever Islam was honored, Arabic was understood). It was as though the Roman law, the Catholic faith, and the social nuances of the British Empire were all combined in one all-embracing system. The wandering Roman could cry *civis Romanus sum* wherever he went in the world of the Caesars. The wandering Catholic could confess in Latin anywhere. The wandering Briton, if he knew the right people, could be sure of a proper reception from Halifax to Ootacamund. The wandering Moslem could expect still more, especially if he was a learned man of religion: everywhere, whatever the political condition of the country, co-religionists would help him, guide him, put him up, hear his case, introduce him, offer him letters of credit, and see him safely on his way. It was like an immense freemasonry, expressed not only in human relationships and legal practice but in the grand mosques of the Islamic architecture, in the caravansaries of the pilgrim routes, in the common treasury of Arab legend and tradition, in the music of the

Arabic tongue, and in the shared conviction that there was one God and Mohammed was his prophet.

No wonder a Moslem was proud of his faith. Being Moslem was like winning, as Cecil Rhodes said of another condition, first prize in the lottery of life. The empire of Islam might be disintegrating but the idea of Islam was as powerful as ever, and every Moslem felt himself inherently privileged. Islamic potentates bore themselves with immense splendor and confidence. Islamic soldiers, though relatively few of them now believed that death in a righteous battle would mean translation to Paradise, certainly assumed Allah to be on their side: had they not, after all, triumphantly expelled the Christian Crusaders from the holy places of Palestine? The crescent of Islam was not only a holy talisman, but a sign of brotherhood, too, and a reminder of common triumphs and aspirations.

So the world of the Moslems, hard though it was to define politically, did constitute a civilization. Pre-eminent in philosophy, in astronomy, in mathematics, in poetry, in navigation, Islam held in trust for posterity the learning of the classical past. As a fructifying force the faith spread learning and speculation all over the medieval world, so that the peripatetic Moslem scholars of the age—Ibn Jubair, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Batuta himself—were like agents of fertility, passing ideas from one continent to another. Moslems dominated the great trade routes of the earth: from the Mediterranean into Europe, into the Black Sea, into central Africa, through Persia to India and Malaya, through the East Indies to China. Arabic words had entered the Icelandic language, Arabic numerals were used in England, Islamic law governed the affairs of Malacca as of Málaga. Throughout the East every large city had its Moslem quarter, its minaret, its local *qadi*. At sunset, in towns from Tangier to Amoy, hearts turned toward Mecca and hopes toward Paradise. Islam was inescapable.

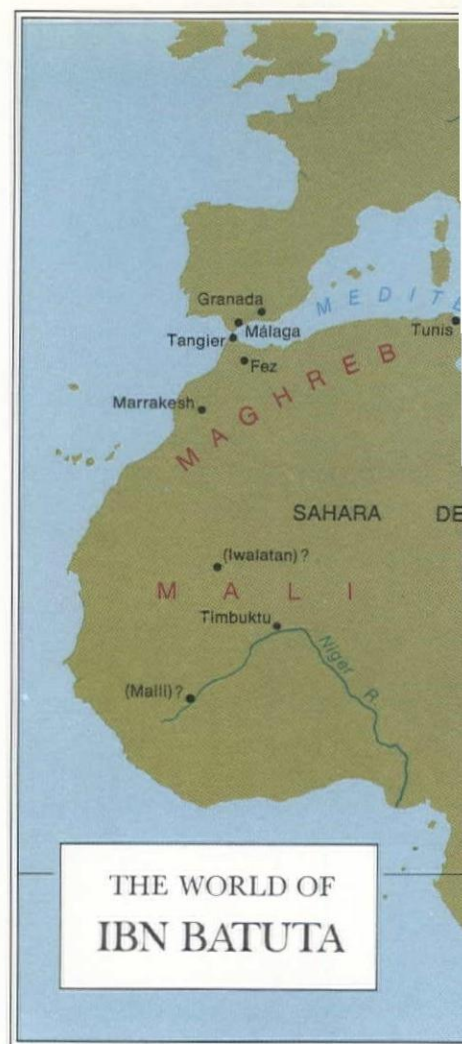
It was into this diverse and politically decadent society that the young Ibn Ba-

“For two days we sailed with a favoring wind, then it changed and drove us out of our course. The waves came overboard into our midst and the passengers fell grievously sick. These terrors continued until we emerged at a roadstead called Ra’s Dawa’ir.”

Ibn Batuta, en route from Jidda to Yemen on the Red Sea



It was on board a jalba, a vessel much like the one above, that Ibn Batuta's fellow passengers got seasick. While Ibn Batuta made several sea voyages, he mostly traveled overland—by camel, on horseback, and on foot—covering, in three decades, at least 75,000 miles. The map at right shows the main places he visited, though some doubt exists that he ever got to northern China.



tuta set off upon his travels in 1325. His first destination was the classic objective of Islam, Mecca itself, but before he laid down his staff at last in Abu Inan's capital of Fez, he saw sights no Moslem had ever seen before—or, for that matter, would ever see again.

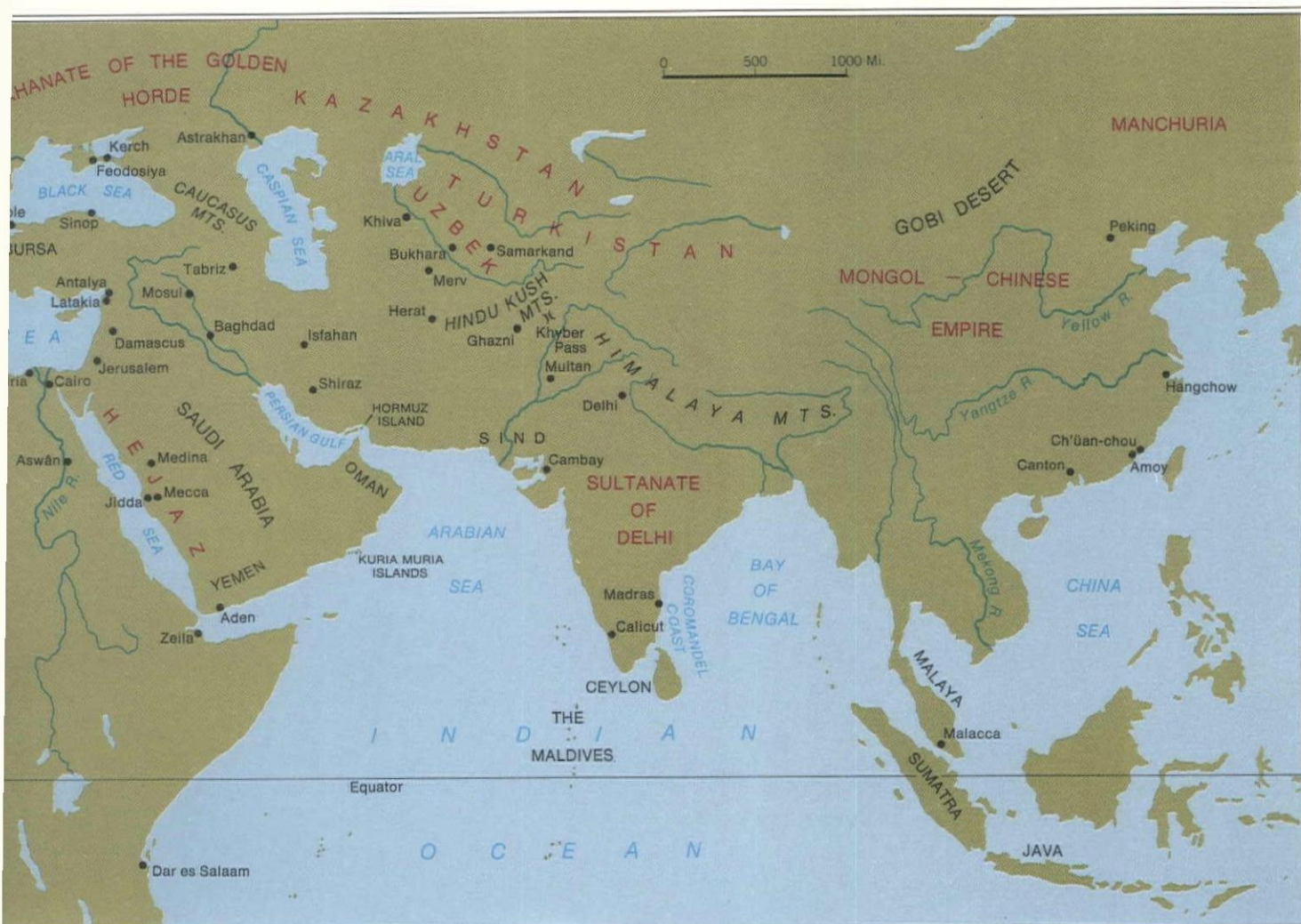
He traveled for three decades, sometimes staying put for years at a time, sometimes beginning a new journey almost the moment he finished the last. His itinerary was wayward. He made the pilgrimage to the Hejaz six times, and he went to India specifically to seek employment in the service of the powerful and ferocious Sultan Mohammed Tughlak. Otherwise he simply wandered, and wandered impulsively: when the spirit moved him, when somebody offered him safe conduct, when a junk sailed unexpectedly, when he took a fancy to see a strange country or interview some celebrated ascetic. Early in his traveling life he resolved that he would never follow the same route

twice, and a map of his journeys looks like the route of some aimless vagrant, all loops and backtracks, sudden forays and purposeless detours.

For thirty years his relatives and friends in Morocco could never be sure where he was, and along the way he picked up and discarded wives and slaves with an easy abandon. Fitfully, news of him passed along the Islamic grapevine: he was heard of now in Turkistan, now in Ceylon, commanding a military campaign in India, investigating the flow of the Niger. In the lands to the east they called him Shams-ed-Din, God's Sun, for he did seem to move in some inscrutable diurnal motion, now shining with success, now dimmed by disfavor (at which moments it was his custom, one observes, to spend more than his usual time in the mosque).

During those thirty years Ibn Batuta saw all the Maghreb, the North African coast, and all of what we would now call the Middle East, from Yemen and Aden

in the south to Constantinople in the north. He visited the Arab settlements of East Africa and passed through the northern borderlands of Turkey, where the emergent Ottomans were establishing themselves as brutal rivals to Byzantium; he journeyed into the Crimea, the Caucasus, and far into Kazakhstan. Passing through Afghanistan into India, he spent seven years in the service of the sultan before setting out on an official mission to China, in the course of which he lost all his possessions, acquired four wives, and became *qadi* of the Maldiv Islands—"I know," the sultan had said, commissioning him for this embassy, "your love of travel." From China he returned via Arabia to Morocco, and after a visit to Moorish Spain spent the last two years of his traveling career in the almost unknown kingdoms of West Africa. He retired to Fez at last in 1354, spent the rest of his life remembering it all, and died in 1378 when he was seventy-three.



Such a bald narrative can give no idea of the scope, excitement, and variety of Ibn Batuta's travels. He was the traveler par excellence, the born wanderer, to whom new scenes, new faces, new experiences were the breath of life. Restless, volatile, emotional, rather greedy, not very profound, distinctly pleased with himself, he nevertheless possessed all the attributes of the good traveler. He was endlessly curious. He was not easily offended. He never pretended to be anything but what he was, a gentleman and scholar of the Maghreb. He relished the pleasures of travel and forgot the miseries unless they were interesting. He was adept at generalization, essential to the art of traveling. Trained to egalitarianism by Islam, he still had a keen eye for the main chance and the princely munificence. He was generous. He was tough. Above all he possessed the gift of serendipity and stumbled through life from one astonishment to another—from the mythical elephant-eating bird

called the roc, for example, to the tree in Ceylon whose leaves never withered, but around whose trunk a community of holy men had settled, waiting year in and year out, autumn after autumn, for the day those leaves would fall.

Sometimes he was rich and influential, sometimes he was destitute, sometimes a political grandee attended by many followers and possessing so many horses, he once remarked, that he dare not mention the number "in case some sceptic should call me a liar." Here we see him as chief justice of the Maldives, ruthlessly reforming the morals of the islanders but plotting to overthrow the regime with the help of the king of Coromandel. Here, on the beach at Calicut, he abjectly watches a renegade junk sail away with all his possessions, leaving him with only one enfranchised slave boy—"and when he saw what had happened he deserted me, and I had nothing left at all except ten dinars and the carpet I had slept on."

Here he is welcomed with honor to the tents of the khan of the Golden Horde, a vast mobile city with its own mosques and bazaars, its ceremonial Golden Pavilion, its thousands of horses and wagons, and the smoke perpetually rising from its hundreds of kitchens. Here, on the other hand, stripped of sandals, turban, and sash, he sits on the ground somewhere south of Delhi waiting to be hanged by the brigands who have captured him and placed at his feet the hempen rope of execution. When he arrived at Delhi with his entourage of forty persons, the sultan gave him a welcoming gift of a furnished house, two thousand silver dinars, large quantities of meat, sugar, ghee, nuts, and betel leaves, and the annual revenue of several villages. When he arrived at Malli, in West Africa, with an entourage of five, the sultan gave him a welcoming gift of three cakes, a piece of fried beef, and a calabash of sour curds.

This at least is how he tells it all. No-

"We set out at night from this blessed valley, with hearts full of joy at reaching the goal of our hopes, and in the morning arrived at the City of Surety, Mecca, . . . where we immediately entered the holy sanctuary and began the rites of pilgrimage."

—Ibn Batuta, on reaching Mecca for the first time



In addition to making six pilgrimages to Mecca, Ibn Batuta regularly took part in celebrations of the Moslem feasts. The horsemen above are about to parade in observance of one such occasion.

body ever described Ibn Batuta himself, and only two contemporary works have references to him, neither very flattering—his stories were often, like Marco Polo's, greeted with reserve. Perhaps some people distrusted his memory, which must have indeed been remarkable. Others took him for a plain liar, flatly disbelieving his tales about the monkey chiefs of Ceylon, who lean on staves of office and are attended by monkey courtiers, or his eyewitness accounts of the Indian rope trick, of roosters as big as ostriches, rats bigger than cats, or his houses made of fish bones in the Kuria Muria Islands. Modern scholars have confirmed that most of what he said is accurate; and though there are certainly chronological blurs in his narrative, and some hazy topographic moments, especially when he approaches the Rampart of Gog and Magog in northern China, still, for myself, I prefer to believe every word of it, if not as history, at least as art.

I believe him implicitly, for example, when he tells us that locusts cannot fly

when they are cold, or that African cannibals believe white people to be unripe. I accept his claim that the males of Barahnakar, though otherwise shaped like humans, have snouts like dogs. And in particular I find his dialogue wonderfully authentic. In Kaylukari in the "country of Tawalisi," a place unknown to geography, he met a princess of warlike tastes who commanded a corps of Amazons and often engaged in single combat herself. This pugnacious lady governor was much taken by Ibn Batuta's descriptions of India and decided she would like to conquer that country. "I must," she drawled, "positively make an expedition to it, and take possession of it myself, for the quantity of its riches and its troops attracts me."

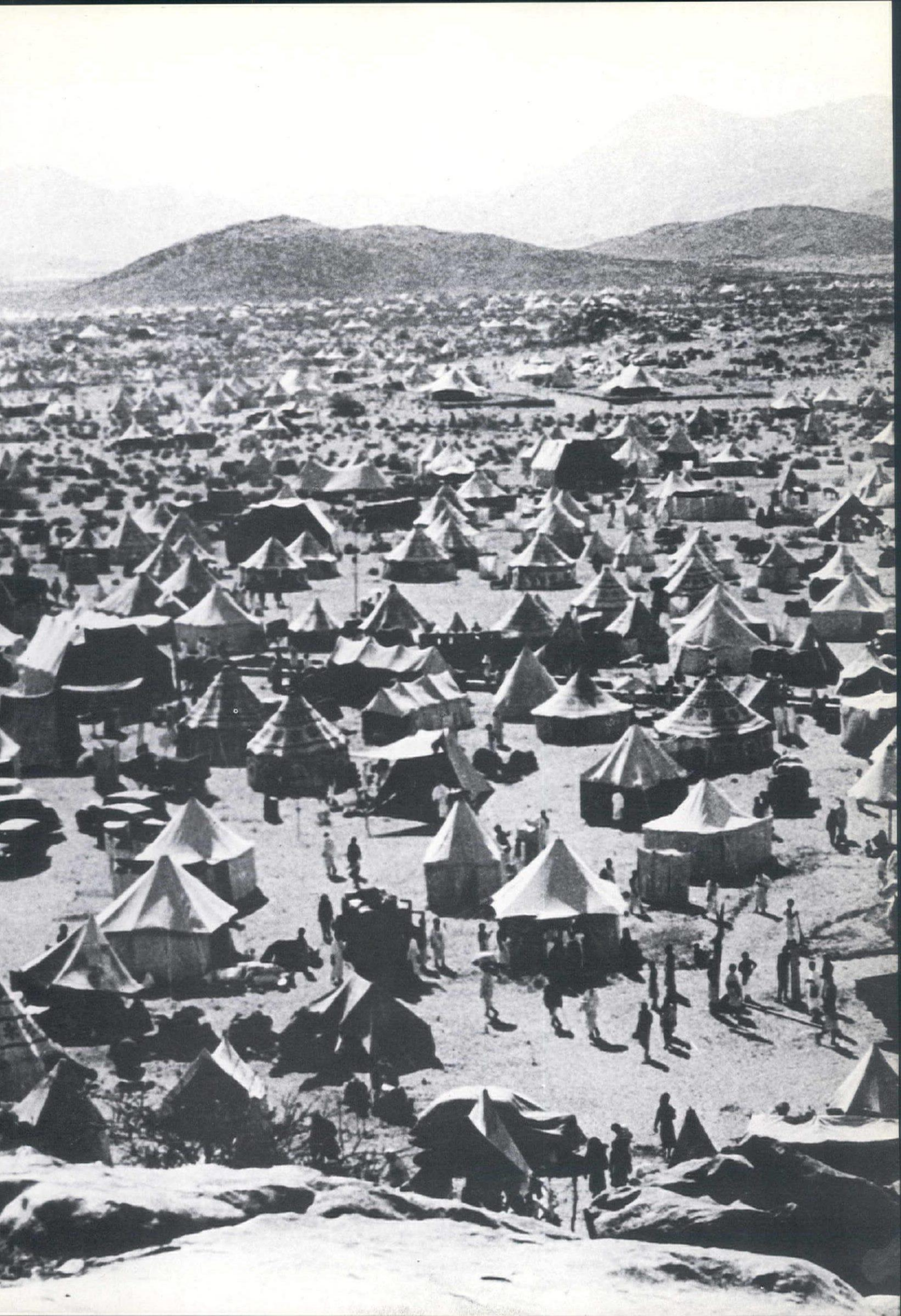
Ibn Batuta had been on the road for twenty years and knew all about women. "Do so," he replied.

If it is not always true in the detail, it is certainly true in the sweep, and Ibn Batuta's memoirs form an incomparable panorama of Eastern life in the fourteenth century. The story is built around

the great trade and pilgrim routes of the Islamic world, with their long established habits of loyalty, comradeship, and peculation. Around its highways flourished a society of the road, ranging from the thieves who beset the pilgrim routes to the Young Brotherhood who courteously ushered the traveler from town to town in Syria. Ibn Batuta's passage through that fraternity, often with introductions, always with the credentials of his faith and learning, gives a theme to his narrative and a tenuous cohesion to the shambles of the Moslem world. He sometimes suggests some modern Christian evangelical welcomed with coffee and crackers in manse or parsonage along his holiday route; but if this routine of travel had elements of the humdrum, even of the touristic, it was relieved by magnificent interludes of danger and pageantry.

There was the moment, for example, when his patroness, a daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus III, having fled from her marriage to the Tartar chieftain Mohammed Uzbek, was met outside Constantinople by her brother Prince Qaras. What a sight that was! From the east rode the prince, attended by five thousand horsemen. Five royal knights rode at his right hand, five at his left, all dressed in white with gold-embroidered parasols above their heads. They were preceded by lancers in chain mail and surrounded by fluttering standards, and they were heralded by drums, bugles, trumpets, and fifes. From the west rode the princess, home from the steppes, and she was surrounded by maidens, slaves, eunuchs, and Mongol guards, all dressed in silk. She wore gold brocade, on her head she wore a crown, and her horse was embellished everywhere with gold. On a flat green space the gorgeous corteges met. Prince Qaras, dismounting, kissed his sister's foot; Princess Bayalun, leaning from the saddle, kissed her brother's head, and so the two companies joined; turning toward the Bosphorus in a glitter of jewels, a discord of trumpets, and a shimmer of golden silks, they proceeded to Constantinople.

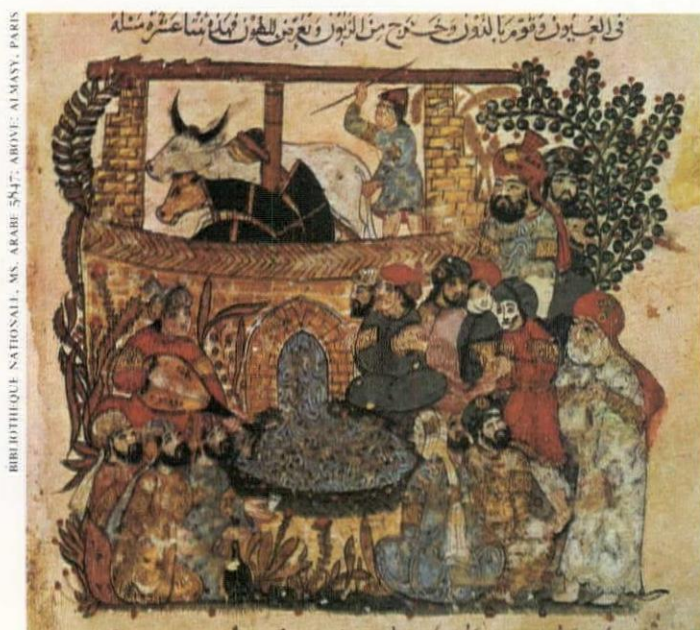
OPPOSITE: Present-day pilgrims arrive at Mecca in such numbers that, unlike Ibn Batuta, they must wait outside the holy city until they are summoned to enter it.





"We traveled on across a well-watered plain. . . . The next day our way lay through orchards . . . and fine villages with very many pigeon towers, and in the afternoon we reached Isfahan."

— Ibn Batuta, on his travels through Persia



BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE, MS. ARABE 5847; ABOVE: ALMAMY, PARIS

Or take the spectacle at the top of Adam's Peak in Ceylon, which Ibn Emtaza reported to be one of the tallest mountains in the world (it is in fact over 7,400 feet high). This was a place of pilgrimage for Moslems, Buddhists, and Hindus alike because of the holy footprint upon its summit—Adam's to the Moslems, Buddha's to the Buddhists, Shiva's to the Hindus. Holy men and pilgrims of every kind made the journey there, pulling themselves desperately up the cliffs by iron chains until on a black rock near the summit, they knelt in ecstasy beside the blessed footprint. For Ibn Batuta this was one of the great moments of his travels. He had seen the mountain from the sea nine days before, and by the time he a

Above, a camel train plods toward Isfahan, "one of the largest and fairest of cities," Ibn Batuta wrote. He stayed briefly, and then hurried to Baghdad, "Abode of Peace and Capital of Islam." At left, in a walled Baghdad garden, scholars assemble for mus



proached the summit the land below was magically veiled in cloud and the holy destination isolated in the sky. His most vivid description of the experience, though, concerns a less than spiritual impulse.

In the hollow of the footprint, pilgrims used to place votive offerings of gold or jewelry. Through the lines of Ibn Batuta's narrative, we watch the wilder supplicants race each other up the summit, ragged dervishes from Sind, Sumatra, and Afghanistan, their tattered clothes streaming, their faces fixed in a grimace as they scrambled up the face of the rock, pushing and jostling each other, to fall gasping upon the sacred imprint and grab its gold.

Ibn Batuta had a fine eye for the

quirk, the incongruity. In the Land of Darkness (by which he means, as Marco Polo did, Siberia), he tells us that traders from the outside world left their wares in an empty clearing in the forest, returning to their tents for the night; when they went back in the morning they would find that the inhabitants had substituted their own furs and hides, thus completing the transaction without ever showing themselves to strangers. Perhaps they were not humans at all, Ibn Batuta mildly surmises, but jinn. In Qaqula (which may have been in Java, or perhaps Malaya), every house had its own elephant picketed at the door, and shopkeepers kept elephants to deliver groceries and bear them home in the evening. In India he saw a widow raise

her hands sacramentally to the fire and then throw herself onto her husband's funeral pyre. In the Maldives he stayed with a weaver who lived on a small island with his family, a boat, and a few coconut palms—"And I swear I envied that man, and wished that the island had been mine, and that I might have made it my retreat until the inevitable hour should befall me."

Like all the best travelers, Ibn Batuta had strong views about the places he visited and the people he met. Nowhere in the world, for instance, were there more excellent people than the Khwarizmians of the Uzbek country, who were generous and hospitable, and who whipped all those absent from morning prayers. Nobody could be much worse



"One day as I was riding in the bazaar I became stuck in the crowd, unable to go either forward or backward. I did not know what to do and only with great difficulty made my way back. The city is in the dominions of Sultan Uzbek. . . ."

—Ibn Batuta, on a visit to Khwarizm, Persia, now Khiva, U.S.S.R.

ian the Russians, who were red-haired and blue-eyed, had ugly, treacherous faces, and were Christian. The Malivians were upright, pious, sound in belief, and sincere in thought. The people of Iwalatan, in the Sahara, were ill-mannered, racially arrogant, and promiscuous. The most gifted people in the world were the Chinese; the most submissive, but the most resolute against injustice, were the Negroes.

Though he excelled in these sweeping judgments, it is the details of daily life that give his work its conviction and its style. One remembers best not the panorama, but the glimpse. The Uzbek prince Qutludumur, reclining on a silk carpet with his feet covered because of the gout, serves a repast of roasted fowl, cranes, and pomegranates, some offered in gold vessels with golden spoons, others (for eating out of gold was anathema to the strictest Moslems) in glass vessels with wooden spoons. The benevolent Sharif Jalal ad-Din al-Kiji of Uja, about to leave on a protracted journey, casually offers Ibn Batuta a farewell gift: "Take my village," he says. We meet a governor of India who eats a whole sheep at a meal; we observe our traveler, huffed against the cold of Astrakhan in three fur coats, two pairs of trousers, and three pairs of boots, shaking the ice from his beard when he washes. Here he is in the middle of the Uzbek desert, halfway between Khiva and Bukhara, in a country seldom visited by foreigners before. And what does he remember best, and recall most tellingly? Not the eerie desolation of it all, not the remoteness, the danger, but the small boys sliding on a frozen lake near Kát.

It was an exhausting life, and sometimes Ibn Batuta momentarily lost heart, withdrawing to the mosque to lick his wounds, or even, in India, "disentangling himself from the world" as the disciple of a troglodytic fakir. Now and then, when his patience is wearing thin, he offers a tart response; sometimes, finding he has rubbed a sultan the wrong way, he finds it politic to move on. He seldom grumbles, though, for there is nothing like travel to broaden one's phi-



Soon after arriving in Khwarizm, which he declared was inhabited by the most hospitable of peoples, Ibn Batuta called on its emir. Above, the governor of nearby Merv welcomes another Arab guest.

losophy. In Turkey he employed an Arabic-speaking fellow-pilgrim to do the shopping for him, only to discover the rascal habitually fiddled the expenses, pocketing the surplus for himself. A lesser traveler would have lost his temper, but Ibn Batuta knew better and confined himself to a wry quip at the end of each day's journey: "Well, Hajji, how much have you stolen today?"

When Ibn Batuta at last retired to Morocco, the world he had wandered had begun to crumble. The Byzantine Empire was in its last century, and the Ottomans were nearly ready to fall upon Constantinople. The sultanate of Egypt was so wracked by rivalry that between 1341 and 1351 eight successive Mamelukes briefly occupied the throne. In Spain the Moslem provinces were being whittled away one by one; in Europe the first portentous enterprises of the Renaissance were stirring. Anarchy threatened half of Islam. Yet the Islamic civilization survived, and even today one can still recognize its flavor and its spirit, and experience many of the sensations Ibn Batuta recorded six centuries ago.

The art and architecture of Islam, for

example, set the tone of great cities throughout the East—some ruled by Moslem governments, some by infidels. The magnificent mosques that Ibn Batuta visited—the Kaaba at Mecca, the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem, the Great Mosque at Damascus—all remain to this day places of sanctity and retreat: one may still meet the learned holy men who were Ibn Batuta's hosts and confreres; the carpets still lie in the shade of the prayer hall; the students sit crosslegged at their books; the muezzin still chants his call to prayer at sunrise, even if his voice is electrically amplified by the loudspeakers that dangle so insouciantly from those glorious minarets. The Moslem travel routes of Ibn Batuta's day are still recognizable. The broad track of the Hejaz pilgrimage, worn by the feet of a million camels through thirteen hundred years of dedication, still stretches away into the deserts of Arabia. The caravans still lurch through the Khyber, Islam's traditional entryway into India. The road from Morocco to Malli passes, as Ibn Batuta did, through Timbuktu. The immemorial chains still hang to help



"We then came to the island of Mulúk. . . . The Wazír had sent instructions that I was to receive in the island thirty dinars' worth of cowries, . . . honey, betel, araca-nuts, and fish every day. I stayed seventy days at Mulúk and married two wives there."

Ibn Batuta, on visiting the Maldive Islands

the pilgrims up the dizzy precipices of the Great Pyramid's Peak.

Many of Ibn Batuta's impressions still apply, too. His ritual panegyric wonderfully captures the perennial multiplicity of Cairo, familiar to infatuated visitors of that incomparable city:

Other of cities and seat of Pharaoh the Great, mistress of broad regions and fruitful lands, boundless in multitude of buildings, peerless in beauty and splendour, the meeting-place of comers and goers, the halting-place of feeble and mighty, whose throngs surge as the waves of the sea. . . .

The golden fragrance of Shiraz and Isfahan, the dour splendor of Constantinople, the green relief of the Damascene orchards—across the gulf of so many years Ibn Batuta offers us their essence, and becomes our contemporary.

Sometimes, all too clearly, we recognize in his narrative the ironies and nuisances of travel, and the characters who haunt the traveler's path as unavoidably now as they did then. What traveler has not met Ibn Batuta's fulsome Turkish judge, who asks so flatteringly about all one's experiences, who says one simply *must* come home for dinner one day, and who is never heard from again? Who has not met the pious Sheikh Abdullah of Bursa, who seems to have been *everywhere* you chance to mention? (Ah, but he never got to China, Ibn Batuta cannot resist interjecting.) Who does not remember the well-known local linguist who, confronted at last by an importunate arrival, resorts to the dim excuse that he speaks a different *kind* of Arabic/Welsh/Hindi/Chinese? All travelers still suffer from the indispensable guide who loses the way, the sailors who claim the tide is too high, the provincial know-it-alls, the officious functionaries, and the inescapable busybodies who infested Ibn Batuta's passage so long ago.

The bureaucracy of travel was hardly less ubiquitous then, for endemic to the Islamic system was a love of regulation. At Constantinople Ibn Batuta was frisked before entering the emperor's throne room as routinely as he would be



Mulúk (modern Mulaku) was real enough—one of the Maldive Islands—but in Ibn Batuta's day places so remote and inaccessible were thought to harbor the wondrous creatures of popular legend. Among the fauna of the enchanted island above, for example, are a human-faced Harpy, right of center, and, at far right, a sphinx.

at the airport now. At the Indian frontier he discovered that intelligence reports about him had already been forwarded to Delhi, and a local judge and attendant notaries had to witness his application for a visa. It was odd how often reports about him reached foreign countries before he got there himself, and noticeable how often emissaries from local despots greeted and questioned him the moment he arrived in town. Ibn Batuta would be quite at home in today's suspicious world. And just as the modern innocent, reaching his first dictatorship, is appalled by the evidence of autocracy all around, so Ibn Batuta, visiting his first Christian city, Feodosiya, on the Black Sea, is appalled by the clamor of the church bells, a sound forbidden to Moslems, and as weird as it was wicked to a holy man from the Maghreb.

And yet, if much of the traveler's

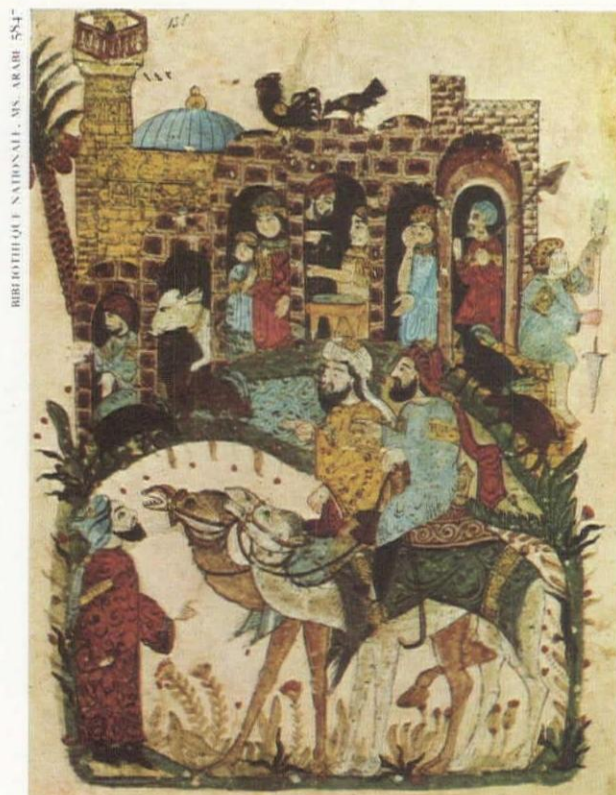
world is familiar, more is gone. Whole cities of Ibn Batuta's civilization are gone from the map, ports once crammed with junks and dhows are no more than silted creeks, great capitals have lost their consequence, nations and tribes are forgotten or even exterminated. The Byzantines provide an eponym of decadence; the Golden Horde evaporated into no more than a romanticized legend; even the rampaging Ottomans became the Sick Men of Europe, and then vanished.

Ibn Batuta could hardly escape the early signs of this decline. He was not, however, a didactic traveler, not one to draw conclusions. He wandered as a way of life, and he drew no particular lessons from his journeying, except perhaps gratitude to God, "Who hath subdued the earth to His servants that they may tread thereon."

Still, if he learned nothing from his

"I arrived at the royal city of Fez, the capital of our master the commander of the Faithful . . . I kissed his beneficent hand and . . . settled down under the wing of his bounty. . . ."

—Ibn Batuta, on returning to Morocco at last



Having seen all of Islam—its magnificent cities and its small towns, like the busy village above—Ibn Batuta came home to Fez, and there, at the command of the sultan, dictated an account of his travels to a secretary.

journeys, we can learn from his example: not only technical tips, like how many towels you are entitled to in the Baghdad baths (three), or what to expect at a Tartar royal funeral (burial of live slaves), but other lessons as well.

The deepest fascination of Ibn Batuta's memoirs lies in their context. The setting was that of a once paramount civilization fast relapsing into fissionary units held together only by a cultural heritage. Within that setting, however, our traveler moves along familiar paths, insulated by manners of thought and conviction against the political convulsions that are occurring all around him.

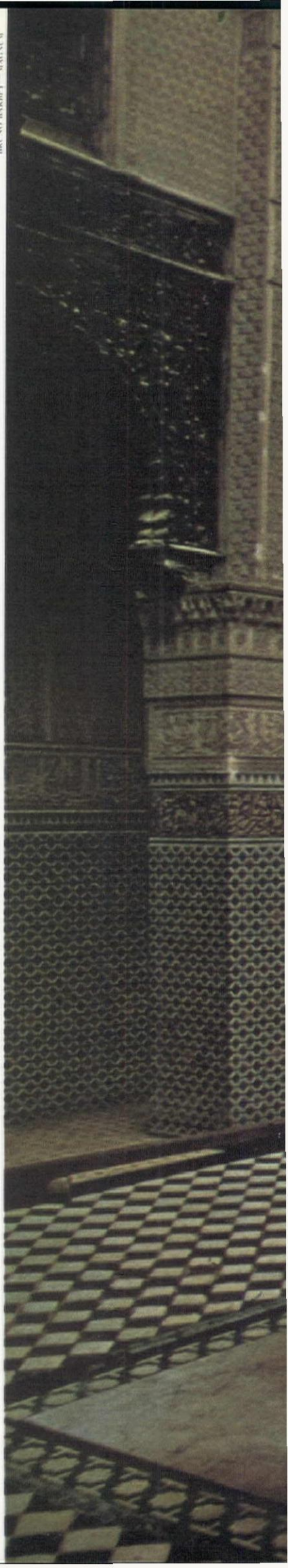
We, too, live in a world where political certainties are shaky, where one can no longer depend upon the Stars and Stripes or the Union Jack to give us security, where infidels of every per-

suation are able to succeed to power.

Yet the good traveler, even now, need not find himself alienated. Everywhere he can discover, as Ibn Batuta did, friendly oases and communes still surviving the fall of dynasties and the eclipse of ideologies, and still ready to welcome him, if not with an elephant or a pomegranate in a golden bowl, at least with a novel to read or an invitation to share the Thanksgiving turkey. Civilization lies not only in the beholder's eye; it lies in the eye of time, too: nothing is permanent in the world, nothing is indispensable. Only the Traveler, impervious to change, journeys always on.

Like Ibn Batuta an indefatigable traveler with the gift of serendipity, Jan Morris has written for HORIZON about several of the places the medieval Moroccan visited, including Delhi, Persia, and West Africa.

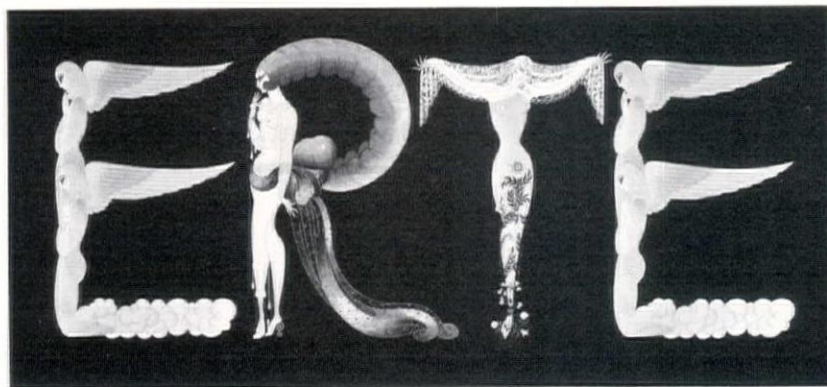
The El-Attarin madrasa in Fez, a center of learning built in Ibn Batuta's day







The Follies, Scandals, and Delights of



Whether fashioning an alphabet or a stageful of lavish costumes, Erté was a great purveyor of elegance in the twenties and thirties. Now a new audience is discovering him

rté, the famous fashion and theatre designer of the twenties and thirties, has achieved what few other artists ever have: he has lived long enough to enjoy his own revival. At the age of eighty-two, as he pursues his career in Paris where it began more than sixty years ago, museum curators and gallery owners mount exhibitions of his work, scholars of Art Deco document it, and critics flock to praise it. As John Russell, then the art critic for the *Sunday Times* of London, wrote in 1969, "If Michelangelo were to come back from the dead he could hardly have greater or more eulogious publicity than has been accorded to Erté."

One need not claim too much for Erté in order to appreciate his exquisitely executed designs. They are not only wonderfully imaginative but great fun to look at. His theatre costumes recall exotic Oriental forms. As the artist Georges Barbier noted in 1929, "One has to examine the bas-reliefs of Angkor, the paintings of Benares, to find these four-tiered diadems, these birdles entwined like stalks in flower, these sleeves that are so heavy that the slaves must make an effort to support them, and these trains, studded with eyes like the tail of a peacock, which, when unfurled, fill the range of vision like a rainbow stretching to the sky." In his fashion collections, there are no discreet little black dresses. That is



Erté—creator of the exotic letter designs above and the costume he called "The Whip," opposite—posed for this portrait in 1924.

hardly Erté's style. Instead, there are opulent silk pajama suits, coats of fur-trimmed velvet, and slinky gowns dripping with beads, fringes, and tassels. In Erté's world, fantasy reigns.

Born Romain de Tiroff, Erté was the only son of an admiral of the Russian Imperial Navy. His family was a part of the social elite of St. Petersburg, a glittering capital of prerevolutionary culture and the most French of all Russian cities. The Tiroffs turned out regularly for the opera, the ballet, museum exhibitions, and the fashion

shows of the latest French designers. Young Erté was fascinated. His mother, who loved elegant clothes, encouraged his early artistic efforts, and once, when he was five, ordered from her dressmaker a gown he had designed. When, however, at the age of nineteen he declared his intention of going to Paris to become a designer, his family blanched; architecture was urged as a more suitable career. In 1912 he did finally set off for Paris, but only after having made a solemn promise to enroll at the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

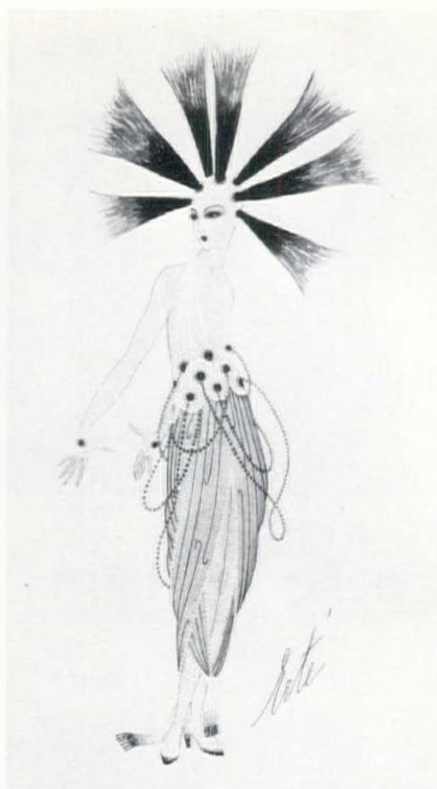
Romain de Tiroff was neither the first nor the last young visitor to Paris to ignore his parents' wishes. He got an education, not at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, but in the museums, at the galleries that showed the fauves and the cubists, at performances of Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, and in racy music halls. A careful observer of the fashion parade on the Paris streets, he began to send drawings home to a Russian fashion magazine. To keep his career from embarrassing his parents, he used various pseudonyms, finally settling on Erté, the French pronunciation of his initials.

The high priest of Paris fashion at that time was the designer Paul Poiret,* whose Oriental styles were all the rage. Harem pants, in the form of Poiret's *jupe culotte*, his gauzy tunics with voluminous sleeves, and his sultry perfumes wafted through elegant salons. Erté had

*See "The Man who Banned the Corset," Summer, 1972



When Erté began his career as a theatre designer, Mistinguett, left, was the star of the French music hall. In 1917 she wore his costume at right in *Marvels of the Orient*.



revues that offered nearly nude women elegant costumes, and lavish sets. Or pioneer of the genre was Madame Rasimi, director of the Ba-ta-Clan Theatre. In 1917, she staged a famous revue, *Marvels of the Orient*, for which Erté designed and costumed an entire act, "The Thousand and Second Night at Baghdad." It featured, among other things, a "caliph's favorite" who wore ropes of pearls around her breasts and harem pants slit seductively at the waist. The revue starred two of the biggest drawing cards of the music hall: Maurice Chevalier and Mistinguett. For the latter Erté created a series of gowns and huge feathered headdresses.

The 1920's saw the spread of the revue form all over the world, and with it the introduction of new stars (among them the electrifying Josephine Baker) and new dances, like the Charleston and the Black Bottom. As one enthusiast put it: "The music hall has become, along with the cinema, the favorite spectacle of the citizen of the world of 1928." Erté was in his heyday. For the citizens of the world at the Folies-Bergère in Paris, or at George White's *Scandals* in New York. Erté designed revue after revue—"The Triumphant Courtesan," "The Queen of Sheba," "Perfumes," and "The Treasures of Indochina." Like other designers of the Art Deco period, Erté was swept along by the fashion for all things Oriental, by the mania for Egyptian

long idolized Poiret. At the end of 1912, without much hope of success, he sent some drawings to the Poiret establishment—and was hired as one of two full-time designers. That same year, the *Gazette du Bon Ton*, the city's leading fashion magazine, published two Erté hat designs, and his first costumes for the theatre appeared onstage, one of them—an Oriental concoction of harem pants and sashes—worn by none other than Mata Hari. For a young man not twenty-one, it was an extraordinary beginning.

Poiret's shop closed at the outbreak of World War I, but by then it hardly mattered to Erté, for he was well on his way. By the mid-twenties his clothes were not only in exclusive shops in Paris but at Altman's and Bendel's in New York, and his drawings and cover designs were being published regularly by *Harper's Bazaar*. So were his comments on fashions and the social scene. He confessed to his readers that he loved decking himself out in costumes, and once he reported that he went to a ball at the Monte Carlo Sporting Club dressed as a mummy: "I was led through the room by an Egyptian slave," he exulted. "The wrappings were then taken off by the

slave and, freed from the golden cape wrapped round my body, I appeared in the costume of an Egyptian Pharaoh." For ordinary daytime wear, Erté preferred mauve suits, and in the privacy of his villa at Monte Carlo he wore ermine lounging pajamas.

With his penchant for fantasy and display, Erté found his greatest pleasure in designing for the music-hall stage. Toward the end of World War I, the Paris music halls began producing



Erté's "Improvised Cage," left, was on the cover of *Harper's Bazaar* in July, 1922. Later that year, the design turned up as a costume, right, for the Greenwich Village Follies.





Ann Pennington, left, rehearses a dance step, the Black Bottom, for George White's Scandals of 1925. For White's Manhattan Mary, 1927, Erté created a Black Bottom costume at right.



seated on three ostrich eggs. After a frenzy of applause from the audience there emerge, from the center egg, four down-colored baby-bird girls who are specialty dancers, and I can't say how many other brilliant-hued and presumably mature bird-girls, which seems to me rather like overproduction for any one egg, no matter what its size.

It hardly matters if the idea behind a revue was banal or even ridiculous. Whatever the dramatic validity, the effect must have been ravishing. Georges Barbier described the exhilarating effect of Erté's magic:

The velvet curtain rises slowly, one might say reluctantly, on the large golden staircase down which descend beautiful snowy women. Their bodies, almost immaterial, are so perfect that all carnal desire is absent before these virginal forms, covered with the pollen of cosmetics, so fragile beneath their towering crowns and headdresses and accompanied by a cortege of winding sheeny robes resembling dragons held in leash.

In awe of Erté's power to enchant, Barbier concluded, "What an artistic and poetical joy to orchestrate these forms, to tune up these rhythms, and to harmonize those colors!" Today, long after the curtains have gone down, those of us who never saw Erté's magic on-stage can still enjoy his splendid visions on paper.

motifs that erupted after Tutankhamen's tomb was opened in 1922, and by the discovery of African and American Indian art forms. Yet no matter what style or period he exploited, his work has its own fresh integrity. The "Queen of Sheba" might sound like cheap exoticism; in Erté's hands it never looked it.

For one thing, Erté was set apart from other theatre designers of the period by the quality of his finished designs. They are masterpieces of precision, their obsessive attention to detail reminiscent of Persian miniatures or Russian icons. The pearls that he paints, for example, are minuscule raised pinpoints of pigment, meticulously applied in layer after layer with a fine brush.

From the beginning, Erté impressed the critics. When his costumes and sets first appeared in George White's *Scandals* of 1922, his "strange and sophisticated art" was cited by one reviewer as the best part of the show. Of the *Scandals* of 1924 another wrote: "We do not expect to find a more ravishing spectacle this side of Paradise." Still, Erté's work was not for everyone. The curmudgeonly critic for *The New Yorker*,

Charles Brackett, described as follows an Erté-designed number from the *Scandals* of 1926 called "I Want a Tweet, Tweet, Tweetie Too," a song sung by the two McCarthy sisters:

When they've finished, great curtains part, revealing . . . a gigantic mother bird which, without ornithological authority, I should diagnose as a bird of paradise, obligingly



Among the designs that Erté produced for the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios in 1929 was the velvet and ermine gown at left. It is worn by Aileen Pringle, right, in *The Mystic*.

The Fine Art of Dazzlement

A PORTFOLIO OF
ERTE'S DESIGNS FOR THE THEATRE



The Guadalquivir, *The Rivers*, Folies-Bergère,
Paris, 1923

GROSVENOR GALLERY, LONDON



When Erté appeared at a 1923 ball dressed as a pharaoh, as at left, he reported that "among the demons and pyjamas my costume was much appreciated." In the sartorial sobriety of 1975 it is pleasant to recall a time when display was what counted. The Erté costume designs reproduced in this portfolio were concocted with one simple purpose: dazzlement. In "Guadalquivir," above, Erté started with nothing more than an ordinary Spanish dancer's costume. Then, by adding an exaggerated train, he deftly evoked the whole undulating length of a river. In "Charleston," opposite, for *George White's Scandals*, both the shape of the costume and its shadow make the most of the angular motions of the dance. Soon afterward, *Scandals* audiences were treated to the witty overflow of vegetation that characterizes the "Carrot," opposite. Included among Erté's most innovative designs were the "living curtains" (pages 26, 27, and 28), in which dancers' bodies were spectacularly combined with brilliantly colored fabrics. For such dancers, life was seldom easy. They had to cope with headdresses that fell to their ankles (page 28), earrings that reached clear to their elbows (page 29), and floor-length pearl "sleeves" (page 31). No doubt they bore it all with the same icy aplomb displayed by Erté's cool mannequins.

TOP: VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON; OPPOSITE RIGHT, COLLECTION H. GOLDET, PARIS

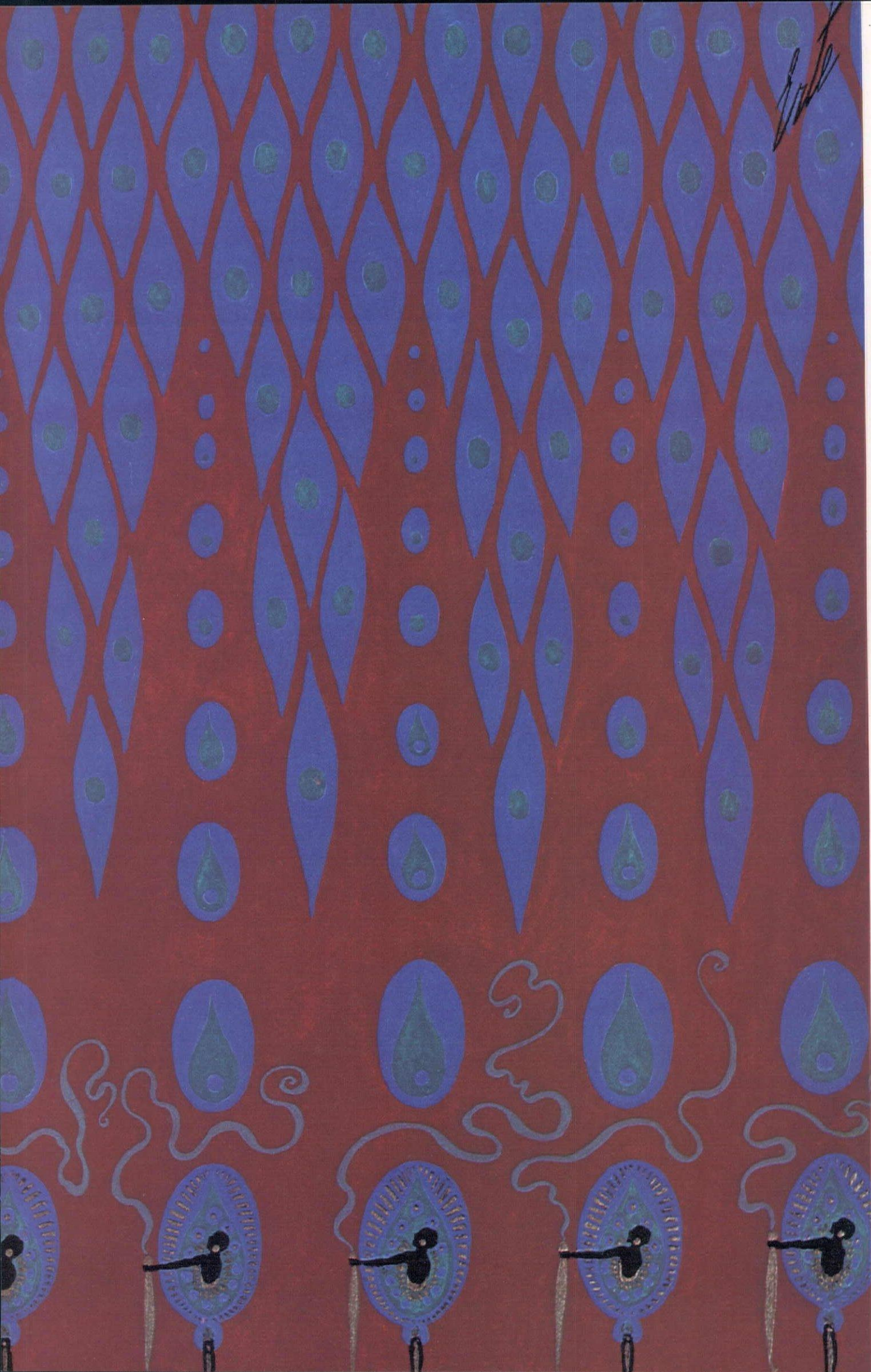


Charleston,
George White's Scandals,
New York, 1925



Carrot, "Vegetable Ballet," George White's Scandals, 1926



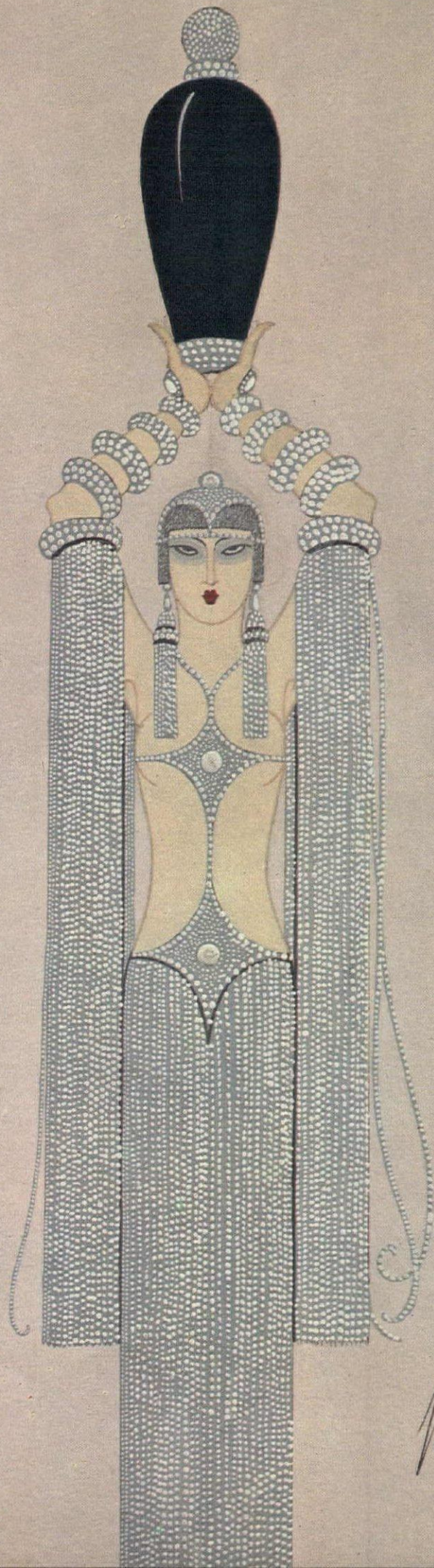




Harem costume, Folies-Bergère, circa 1920

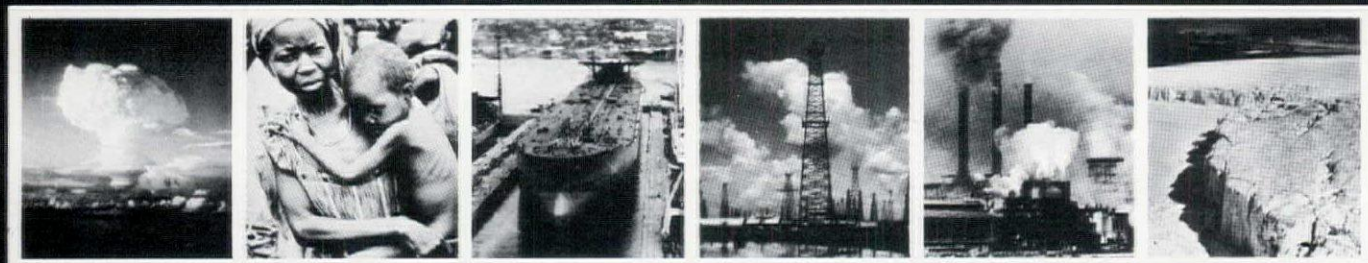


Genie of the Lamp, *Aladdin*,
Folies-Bergère, 1929)



Handwritten signature or mark.

Getting Along Without Doomsday



Holocaust

Starvation

Polluted Seas

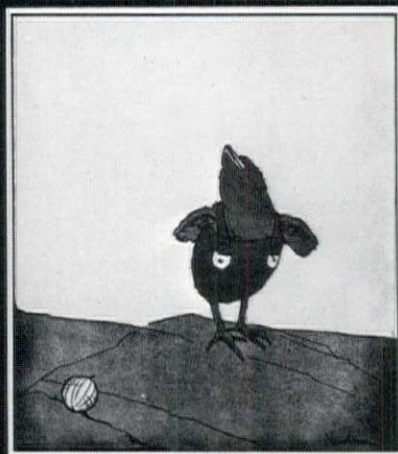
Exhausted Resources

Poisoned Air

The New Ice Age

Many of our leading pundits these days are determined to persuade us that we must give up our liberties and submit to some central authority if we hope to save civilization from the catastrophes they say are at hand. Here is a reply to those doomsday fanciers

By BRYAN MAGEE



"Goodness me," cried Chicken Little, "the sky is falling, and I must run to tell the king." —FROM AN OLD NURSERY TALE

When we look back over the history of mankind, we see certain beliefs cropping up again and again in different societies and different centuries, each time being proved wrong by events yet, in spite of that, retaining perennial appeal. One is the belief that society is about to be made perfect. Another is the belief that mankind is about to be destroyed. In spite of their falsification in the experience of each generation, these beliefs go on being held widely in each new generation. How is this to be explained? The answer, I suppose, is obvious in general terms—though in the case of each individual believer there may be endless complications and qualifications. The beliefs in question (and the ones I have given are only examples) must meet a common psychological need that goes so deep as to insist on satisfaction regardless of the evidence.

The matter is not one of historical interest only, for beliefs of this kind, including both my examples, play a conspicuous role in our own society. In this article I want to look at just one of them: the belief that mankind is about to be destroyed.

The idea is by no means only a Christian one, or only a religious one. In the first few pages of the Old Testament we read that "the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them" (Genesis 6:7). In the twentieth century the belief is more lively and popular than ever before, though among us—ours being an irreligious age—it assumes some entirely secular forms. And because of the rapidity of change in our society, and the voracity of the media, these forms are liable to supersede one another in rapid succession.

Consider what a parade of them there has been in the short period since the Second World War. First there was the conviction, held quite widely, that mankind was about to plunge into a nuclear holocaust that would destroy all life on this planet. That expectation eventually lost support to the different

and longer-term conviction that mankind was going to destroy itself by overpopulation. That had a good run, but had to yield to the belief that man was poisoning the world with chemical waste products and was going to destroy himself that way. This in its turn was replaced by the doctrine that, since the physical resources of our planet are finite, the wherewithal to sustain life was bound to run out, so that mankind would either die of deprivation or destroy itself in a struggle for survival. And only the other day I came upon the following in a London *Times* review of a book published by the BBC: "Mr. Calder concludes that a new ice age cometh. What is more, it could come quickly; that is within the lifetime of most of us."

Having lived in the period when these views were popular, I am struck by several peculiarities about them. First, although most of them are logically unconnected, and some are mutually contradictory, they were all accepted and promoted by roughly the same people. And—this may be merely a comment on the circles I happen to move in, but I do not think so—their appeal seemed to be preponderantly to people of a certain left-wing persuasion. Many of my acquaintances moved from one to the next as each in its turn became fashionable. Some embraced two or more simultaneously. A few heroically muddled individuals tried to believe all of them at once.

This element of modishness was another striking characteristic of these beliefs. In some circles, both in Europe and the United States, it was intellectually stylish to embrace these attitudes: it showed you were up on the latest ideas and concerned about what was going on in the world. It put you ahead of the people who didn't believe them, and in an elusive but important way marked you as superior. As each of these attitudes in its turn approached the height of intellectual fashion, it became the subject of

national and international conferences, articles in "aware" journals, best-selling books by marketplace academics (some of whom showed great skill in extracting funds from big foundations to set up special study projects), and, during the overripe phase, television documentaries. Each gave rise to a jargon and a rhetoric that left deposits in the language. And the fact that they displaced each other so quickly as intellectual fashions no more weakened the intensity of people's addiction to them than changing of fashions does in the case of clothes.

If these attitudes had a common characteristic even more dislikable than the assumption of moral and intellectual superiority, it was fanaticism. A lot of devotees became strident bigots incapable of rational discussion. Anyone who disagreed with them was denounced as a criminal fool endangering the survival of the human race. Many never seriously listened to opponents, and in consequence misrepresented them drastically yet sincerely. As individuals they responded to even the mildest dissent in aggressive, disturbed ways, and when taken to task for their hysteria, defended it on the grounds that it was a natural human response to the impending holocaust and the obtuseness of their fellow men.

As an activist in left-wing politics I have been touched by each of the modern doomsday movements I listed earlier, except for the ice-age movement, which, as of this writing, hasn't had time to catch on yet. In each case the basic pattern of my experience has been the same. First, by their campaigning and persistence the movement's advocates caused me to look with new urgency at a familiar danger and evaluate it afresh. In the course of doing this I listened to the movement's main speakers and read its main books. Naturally, I also developed a new interest in the arguments of its opponents. And in each case (so far) I found myself pushed eventually to the same conclusion: although the danger to which the movement was drawing attention was real and serious, the doom that

“In spite of the obviously
'religious' character of the people they appeal to
and the cults they nourish,
doomsday arguments present themselves as rational and scientific.”

so many of its members proclaimed as inevitable was not inevitable at all, and because of this the panic measures they advocated were usually irrelevant and often socially destructive.

Of course, one must distinguish between the intellectual content of these various beliefs, which is what their merits have to be judged by, and the emotional needs that believing them satisfies. If what a man believes is true, then it is true whatever his motives may be, and criticism of his motives can do nothing to invalidate that truth. So before we come to grips with the needs doomsday beliefs satisfy, we must take their arguments seriously.

A prominent feature of doomsday arguments is that—in spite of the obviously “religious” character of the people they appeal to and the cults they nourish—they present themselves as rational and scientific. Lavish reference is made to nuclear physics, biochemistry, the ecosphere, population statistics, meteorology, or whatever. Figures, measurements, and calculations are bandied about. Chains of logical and practical reasoning are called upon to demonstrate that certain future effects must inevitably follow from certain present causes. It is in order, then, for us to examine the conception of science on which the arguments rest.

A scientific theory about the world is distinguished from unscientific ones by the fact that it is falsifiable. We can specify what experimental observations or results would disprove it and then subject it to these tests. If a theory cannot be tested in this way it is not scientific. That is not to say that it is untrue, or nonsen-

sical, but only that we cannot provide anyone with compelling grounds for believing it. I suspect most of my readers already assume something of the sort, even if they are not able to explain why. For instance, most would agree, without needing to reflect, that the statement “God exists” is a meaningful statement, and that it could conceivably be true, but that it is not a scientific statement.

By this criterion statements about the future can be scientific only if some time limit is put to them. “Sooner or later it will rain in Death Valley” can never be falsified; but “it will rain in Death Valley before the end of this year” can be, and at the end of the year we shall know whether or not it has been. The important thing to note about statements of the first kind is that they *can* be settled, but only one way: they can be proved true, but they can never be proved false. (They are thus the logical opposites of scientific laws, which can be proved false but can never be proved true.) If I choose to utter a statement of this form, and you dispute it, the issue between us will either be settled in my favor or it will never be settled at all; the one thing that is logically certain is that it can never be settled in *your* favor. Little wonder, then, that fanatical beliefs—whether religious, political, or of any other kind—have a tendency to be couched in this form. As Karl Popper has shown in the cases of Marxism and psychoanalysis, it is the impossibility of those thought-systems ever being proved wrong that constitutes their most powerful appeal to their adherents and at the same time rules them out of court as scientific theories.

By this criterion everyone no longer living who held that the world of mankind was going to come to an end in his lifetime believed a historical theory that was scientific, falsifiable, and that has now been falsified. Living believers can say, “Ah, but the fact that they have always been wrong in the past does not prove that we are wrong now.” Of course it does not. But it would make any reasonable man highly skeptical about holding yet another version of this perennially falsified belief.

And—bitter paradox, this—although believers defend themselves by denying the relevance of past to future in this one respect, the false assumption of precisely such a connection is the most important fallacy contained in their positive views. All the examples I have given rest on the projection into the future of existing trends. To take an example at random from *The Limits to Growth*, a report made for the Club of Rome in 1972:

The world's known reserves of chromium are about 775 million metric tons, of which about 1.85 million metric tons are mined annually at present. Thus, at the current rate of use, the known reserves would last about 420 years. . . . The actual world consumption of chromium is increasing, however, at the rate of 2.6 percent annually. . . . That growth rate, if it continues, will deplete the reserve stock, not in 420 years . . . but in just 95 years. If we suppose that reserves yet undiscovered could increase present known reserves by a factor of five . . . this fivefold increase would extend the lifetime of the reserves only from 95 to 154 years.

It all seems very plausible and “scientific.” Figures like these have been worked out for all the world's main na-

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ural resources, and the same basic argument has been applied in other spheres: “The current rate of pollution is such and such. Therefore, in so many years we shall have poisoned our environment to such a point that we shall no longer be able to live in it.” Or: “At present rates of increase the world’s population will be so much by such and such a year and this is insupportable, so there will have to be either famine or war.” Or: “Throughout history great powers have made war against each other with every means of destruction at their disposal. Therefore, nothing can stop them from doing so again.”

These arguments embody a fundamental misunderstanding of the way change occurs. For, in fact, it almost never takes the form of present trends continuing indefinitely. It takes a wide variety of different forms, and most of them are unlike the linear model. Many, for example, are organic. There is an old Italian proverb: “The trees do not reach the sky,” that is, the acorn grows into an oak and stops—indeed, it begins to shrink after a time, then withers and rots. A large number of human activities and institutions have a life cycle like this. An even larger number have a structure that is neither linear nor organic but, roughly speaking, dialectical. We confront a problem situation; the steps we take to solve the problem create a new situation; but the changes have repercussions, some of which were unforeseen, and the new situation itself makes unforeseen demands on us—so we now have a new set of problems. It is an elementary fact about the past that the future has almost never been accu-

rately foreseen. We move from one unexpected situation to another. Why the doomsday men do not see this and reflect on it is baffling at first. Man would simply not have survived if he was a trend follower rather than a problem solver, precisely because—as the doomsday men themselves keep saying—following trends would lead him to destruction.

The most important of the many things the doomsday men get wrong is their failure to see that the primary constituent in the process of change is the process of problem solving. This process is one of endless feedback: we keep altering our actions and expectations in the light of changing circumstances, with the result that we are never where we once expected to be, and never think or want what we once thought we were going to think or want.

So while it is impossible to prove that the doomsayers are wrong, it is also impossible for their opponents to say what is going to happen in place of what the doomsayers prophesy—a double disadvantage when it comes to popular debate. To take a topical example, I have no idea how mankind is going to solve its energy problems. But I am as certain as I am of anything that those who talk about exhausting available supplies are talking nonsense. Every day tens of thousands of times as much energy as the whole world consumes reaches us from the sun. The tides of the world’s oceans ceaselessly exert an incalculable amount

of untapped energy. So does the rotation of the earth on its axis. The entire universe consists of matter in motion. The sources of power are unlimited. The only problem, a very real one, is how to tap them. But the obvious thing to expect is that mankind will continue trying to solve its problems by tapping ever new sources. In fact, it is inconceivable that man will not make the attempt. And his attempts will transform our environment.

The childlike linear model, with its dramatic but hopelessly unrealistic projection from the past, has been lampooned by some of the most famous satirical writers. Mark Twain once wrote:

In the space of one hundred and seventy-six years the Lower Mississippi has shortened itself two hundred and forty-two miles. That is an average of a trifle over one mile and a third per year. Therefore, any calm person, who is not blind or idiotic, can see that in the Old Oölitic Silurian Period, just a million years ago next November, the Lower Mississippi River was upwards of one million three hundred thousand miles long, and stuck out over the Gulf of Mexico like a fishing rod. And by the same token any person can see that seven hundred and forty-two years from now the Lower Mississippi will be only a mile and three quarters long, and Cairo and New Orleans will have joined their streets together, and be plodding comfortably along under a single mayor and a mutual board of aldermen.

This is so close to the reality of much doomsday writing that it is scarcely a parody.

If one selects any period in the past and reads what people wrote about the future as they saw it, one is astonished at

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how wildly off base they were. The mistake nearly everyone makes is failing to take account of the phenomenon of emergence, genuine newness, not only in the world but in ideas and attitudes. We can conceive of the future only in terms of the present, because we have only existing concepts to conceive in and think with. So it is literally impossible for us to know in any detail how things are going to be. In our own case we forget this all the time, yet it is self-evident to us when we think about the past—self-evident, for instance, that it would not have been possible even for, say, Tolstoy, an imaginative genius, to envisage the social reality of the Soviet Union, despite the fact that he died less than seven years before the Russian Revolution. We in our turn can be fairly sure, I think, that whatever lies ahead of us is as unenvisageable to us as the Gulag Archipelago was to Tolstoy.

This phenomenon has also been much satirized. G. K. Chesterton's novel *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, published in 1904, opens with a whole chapter of amusing examples, from which I fillet the following central argument:

The human race, to which so many of my readers belong, has been playing at children's games from the beginning. . . . And one of the games to which it is most attached is called . . . “Cheat the Prophet.” The players listen very carefully and respectfully to all that the clever men have to say about what is to happen in the next generation. The players then wait until all the clever men are dead, and bury them nicely. Then they go and do something else. That is all. . . . All these clever men were at work giving accounts of what would happen in the next age, all quite clear, all quite keen-sighted and

ruthless, and all quite different. . . . The way the prophets of the twentieth century went to work was this. They took something or other that was certainly going on in their time, and then said it would go on more and more until something extraordinary happened.

The simple truth that we are all trying to evade is that we do not know what is going to happen. I apologize for stating such an obvious piece of the obvious, but there are few of us who will accept it and face its consequences. All the well-known doomsday books exhibit the same confusion: not knowing, yet talking as if they do know.

The most influential tract in our own day, *The Limits of Growth*, says on page 93 that “if we wanted to predict the size of the earth's population in 1993 within a few percent, we would need a very much more complicated model than the one described here. We would also need information about the world system more precise and comprehensive than is currently available.” On pages 169–70 it says that the most probable result of letting things take their course and waiting to see what will happen “will be an uncontrollable decrease in population and capital. The real meaning of such a collapse is difficult to imagine because it might take so many different forms. It might occur at different times in different parts of the world, or it might be worldwide. It could be sudden or gradual.”

The Limits of Growth goes on to argue that we should avert this collapse by es-

tablishing what it calls an “equilibrium state.” It acknowledges that this would involve the sacrifice of basic freedoms, yet it has no clear conception of what it is urging us to make these sacrifices for. “What would life be like in such an equilibrium state? Would innovation be stifled? Would society be locked into the patterns of inequality and injustice we see in the world today? Discussion of these questions must proceed on the basis of mental models, for there is no formal model of social conditions in the equilibrium state. No one can predict what sort of institutions mankind might develop under these new conditions.”

Not surprisingly, then, since it has no idea of what sort of society it is advocating, the report is completely at sea on the question of how to get there.

We can say very little at this point about the practical, day-by-day steps that might be taken to reach a desirable, sustainable state of global equilibrium. Neither the world model nor our own thoughts have been developed in sufficient detail to understand all the implications of the transition from growth to equilibrium.

Yet only three pages after the last of these confessions of vagueness and ignorance comes the sentence: “The way to proceed is clear, and the necessary steps, although they are new ones for human society, are well within human capabilities.”

The Limits to Growth is typical of the genre not only in its intellectual weakness but in two other respects. First, the bulk of it is an analysis of our current problems, but it offers only a few sketchy, ambiguous, and brief proposals for action, and no concrete conception

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of the state of affairs it really advocates. Incidentally, this description fits the most famous and influential doomsday book in modern history, Marx's *Das Kapital*, and that, no doubt, has some relationship to the fact that subsequent Communist societies are almost nothing like the ones Marx envisaged and would almost certainly have been rejected by him. The second typical characteristic, again outstandingly exemplified by *Das Kapital*, is that having seduced the susceptible with a distinctive rhetoric, and having omitted almost any consideration of what can be done by human choice and action, *The Limits of Growth* immediately proclaims the regrettable need for an interim period of authoritarian government to meet the crisis.

With this we have arrived at the first of the two deep-lying, sinister, and unacknowledged emotional cravings that doomsday beliefs satisfy in many people: the craving for authoritarian government. There invariably comes a point in the analysis at which we are told that the imminent cataclysm is so apocalyptic that the pluralistic freedoms of open societies are going to have to be sacrificed (alas) so that all resources can be devoted to the aim of survival. Although this is always presented as a lamentable necessity, it is seldom backed up by serious argument. If its proponents really did regard it as an appalling evil, they would accept it in despair, and only after the most stringent examination of the case for it, accompanied by the most searching investigation of alternatives.

But we are never given the alternatives. After a lot of colorful and emotionally appealing rhetoric about the

imminence of disaster, the doom-watchers simply assert the need to abandon basic freedoms and denounce anyone who questions its necessity. ("Wouldn't you rather be Red than dead, you mad fool?" Or: "You mean you want freedom for polluters to go on poisoning the world?" Or . . .) The point I am making is that although the doom-watchers say they are upset at the prospect of having to sacrifice freedom, their disregard of all serious argument against the need to do so, the indecent haste with which they embrace the authoritarian option, and the self-righteous passion with which they try to ram it down everyone's throat belie their words. Anyone watching them over a period of years is forced to the conclusion that although they will not admit it to themselves, they really like the prospect of authoritarian government. They want freedom destroyed. When I said earlier that doomsday ideas seemed to appeal preponderantly to people of a certain left-wing persuasion, what I had in mind was the authoritarian left as opposed to the liberal left. A striking number of the most famous of the doomsday prophets are disillusioned Marxists.

This brings me to the second and deepest of their emotional satisfactions. Anyone who has much to do with apocalyptic politics, whether of the left or right, is struck by the frequency with which hatred of the existing society is revealed as the hidden root of idealism. If one interrogates young people who think things are just wonderful in China, or Cuba, or North Vietnam, or Eastern Europe, their answers almost invariably

lead one to their rejection of their own society (there just *has* to be a good society *somewhere*, and it obviously isn't here; and the grass is bound to be greener on the other side). Indeed, one of the elements in their revolutionary exaltation is joy in the prospect of its destruction. Even the Revelation of Saint John devotes a good deal of space to a gloating description of the physical destruction of Imperial Rome on the day of judgment.

Similarly, the lip-smacking relish with which our twentieth-century prophets proclaim the imminent destruction of our society is unmistakable. They are thrilled by it. They want it. Perhaps they want to revenge themselves on it because it is not perfect. Perhaps, more particularly, they want to revenge themselves on it because it has not fulfilled the dreams of perfection they had when they were young—it has betrayed them, betrayed their hopes and ideals, and to the extent that they have devoted themselves to political action, it has made a mockery of their lives.

It was Marx who said that the real point of a political or social theory was revealed in what it was used to justify, be it in terms of social reality or political action. By this token, the real point of doomsday theories is revealed in their masochistic insistence that we must either submit to authority or be destroyed, and the justification they seek for the sacrifice, which they advocate, of freedom.

Bryan Magee, a Labourite, was returned to the House of Commons in October, 1974, by the voters of Waltham Forest, Leyton.

What Westerns Are All About

As the gunsmoke clears from the main streets
of those frontier towns,
we notice a persistent political theme

Where is the best place to hide a leaf? asked G. K. Chesterton's fictional detective, and he answered: in a forest, of course. Where is the best place to hide the popular understanding? In popular things, of course. That thought struck me recently while watching an Italian version of an American Western movie. The film's Western details were accurate and vivid, yet an essential ingredient was missing. It was the Western town itself, that rude, dusty, self-governing community with its familiar cast of citizens: the barroom ruffians, the gambling-casino owner, the hapless good folk, the dance-hall madam, each of them related in complex ways to all the others.

Without that vigorous political community, the Italian Western fell apart. The actors' motives seemed contrived, their actions mere antics, their characterizations oddly weightless or merely grotesque. Yet the omission is understandable enough. We Americans have never been aware, either, that the familiar life of our Westerns, the indispensable ground of their action, and the force that animates their characters, derive from the political life of the Western town, a small, autonomous republic situated somewhere "in the territories."

Popular things do make good hiding places, for what is hidden in the American Western is nothing less than the shared American understanding of politics, an understanding so deeply embedded in the Western that we are scarcely aware of its presence. More surprising still, that political understanding is complex, clear-eyed, and in many ways

profound. Viewed as political drama, the simple-minded Western is not so simple after all.

One of the great engines of the Western plot, for example, is the quest for "law and order," but it is a republican law and order, totally different from the dubious doctrine expounded by a recent, unlamented administration. According to the latter, the source of lawlessness is the licentiousness of the

regime. Sometimes it is a cabal headed by the mustachioed owner of the gambling casino. More often, the town boss is the local cattle baron who long ago seized control of the town just as the great landed magnates of medieval Italy seized control of Italy's free communes. To the cattle baron of the Western, as to a medieval Visconti, a free community bordering one's demesne is intolerable and must be brought to heel.

The swaggering ruffians are the cattle baron's hired hands; that is why they swagger. The sheriff is the cattle baron's appointee; that is why he is conveniently a sot. The mayor is in his pocket; that is why he is corrupt. In the Western the true source of lawlessness and disorder is not the people's licentiousness. It is the direct result of lawless rule, and it stems from usurpation. This is a profound political insight, deeper by far, for example, than modern-day sociological cant about crime and bad housing. However, like everything else

that is profound in the Western, it appears merely as a device of the plot, as a truth so widely shared by the audience it is taken simply as the way things are. It says much for the American republic and its capacity to generate a truly republican culture that one of its most popular art forms employs a complex political doctrine to set an adventure story in motion.

The doctrine might be called American populism, but there is nothing sentimental about it. Western movies never assume that rulers are inherently evil or the people inherently good. The good

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART FILM STILLS ARCHIVE



Deputy Marshall Wyatt Earp (Henry Fonda) rides into Tombstone to set things right in *My Darling Clementine*, a John Ford film of 1946.

people, who must be curbed by the government through lawless means if necessary. Not so in the Western view, although Western lawlessness itself is conventional enough.

The signs of it are always the same. Rude, bullying ruffians stalk the streets as though they owned them, shoot up the town for the fun of it, and make unseemly advances to gentlewomen. The sheriff does nothing; he is a drunkard or a coward or politically paralyzed. The mayor of the town turns a blind eye. We soon find out the cause of all this. The town is in the clutches of a lawless

Folk, the church-going folk of the Western's polis, are emphatically not repositories of virtue. They attend citizens' meetings at the church and wring their hands in dismay, but they cannot rid themselves of the incubus of the usurper. They cannot bring themselves to act in concert against the local tyrant. Yet they cannot accept servility either, for they are free men. So they are merely unhappy. It is *public* unhappiness they suffer; unhappiness born of the unhappy state of public affairs. The point is an important one. In the Western, man is, in truth, a "political animal" in the Aristotelian sense. His life is a public life, whether he likes it or not.

There is nothing arbitrary about the impotence of the good folk of the town. Their haplessness embodies a profound and rather bleak political truth. Machiavelli, in his *Discourse on Livy*, insisted that a truly corrupted republic cannot save itself by its own exertions. There is simply not enough civic virtue left in such a republic to restore the reign of civic virtue. As usual in the Western, this truth is embedded in the plot. It prepares a hero's role for the hero of the action.

The corollary that Machiavelli drew from his bleak rule is that corrupted republics must be saved by outsiders. The Western reaches the same conclusion. An outsider comes to town. He is so much the ruffian himself, so obviously intimate with the dance-hall madam, that he repels the good people of the town—moral righteousness is their weakness as well as their strength. Gradually, however, it dawns on someone that this brave, resourceful stranger might be the town's salvation. Sometimes it is the drunken sheriff, his dishonor grown insupportable, who deputizes the stranger and bids him uphold the law. Sometimes it is a few of the good folk who swallow their pride and beg the stranger for help.

The outsider agrees to clean up the town, but he does so reluctantly, for he is not a man of civic virtue. He has courage in abundance but no public spirit whatever. The reason he consents to

help them is an exclusively private one. The town's rulers long ago killed his father, or stole his ranch, or framed his brother. He will topple them from power, shoot them down like dogs, to avenge that private wrong. If it helps the townsfolk, well and good. His personal motives and their public motives simply happen to coincide.

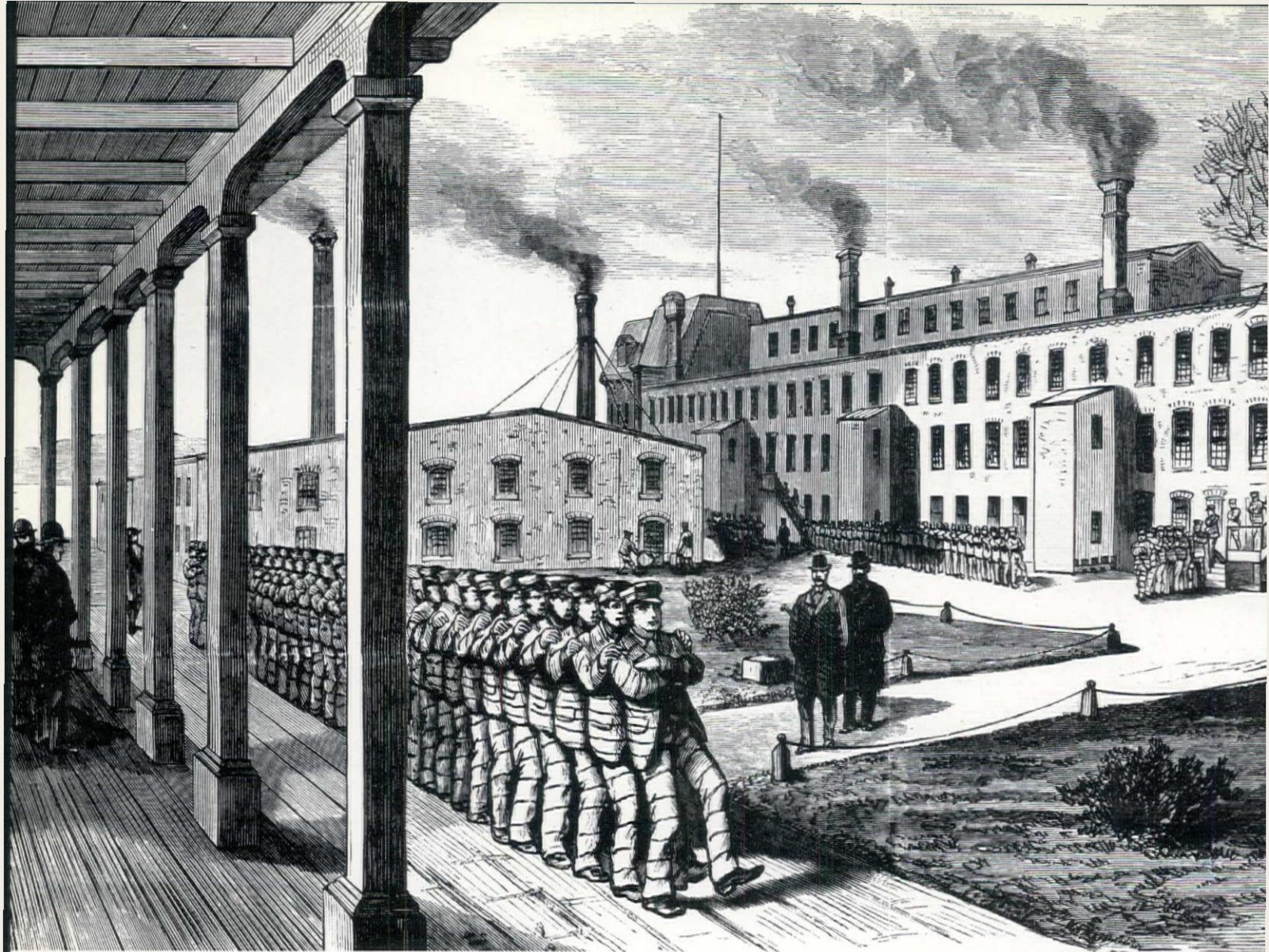
The Western hero is rarely a Sir Galahad in chaps; he is instead what might be termed a Madisonian hero. According to James Madison, the only free government likely to endure is one so contrived that the private interests of the man will coincide with the interests of his office. Congressmen and the president will check each other's usurpations not necessarily out of devotion to the common weal but because each, if only out of pride and vanity, will defend the prerogatives of his branch of government. In this way private motives will serve the common good. The Madisonian skepticism, the refusal to rely on, or even believe in, men of high public virtue, is perhaps the strongest of all America's shared political beliefs. We demand—at least in the movies—that the doer of great public deeds have a private motive. The Western hero meets our political requirement, reaffirming our deep-seated political skepticism. He wreaks ruthless private vengeance, and the town, as a result, is set free.

Since Westerns have happy endings achieved by a quick spasm of violence, they are often said to be shallow and overoptimistic. Such criticism is remarkably self-contradictory. It objects to the happy ending, presumably on the grounds that corrupt regimes cannot be so easily overthrown. Then it turns around and objects to the violence, presumably on the grounds that regimes so hard to overthrow can only be overthrown peacefully. The Western is at once more profound and more consistent. The happy ending is no flight of fancy. Historically, usurpers do get overthrown; it is not as easy as it looks to hold illicit power. In the Western the town is liberated because the townspeo-

ple find an implacable enemy of the usurper, but they are not lucky in the fairy-tale sense. Inevitably, evil rulers make implacable enemies; tyranny does produce tyrannicides. On the other hand, the Western is far from being optimistic. It emphatically denies what its critics so blandly assume—that a corrupt regime can be overthrown peacefully. If the Western movie's political understanding errs, it errs in its extreme pessimism, in its tacit assumption that only through violence and insurrection can free men rid themselves of entrenched corruption.

The Western genre, it is worth noting, was born after World War I in the aftermath of bitter defeat, the final defeat of what were once known as "Western ideas": the People's Party and its program, the Western progressive movement, the entire radical republican tradition. Threaded through hundreds of modern Westerns are bitter traces of the old populist attitudes: hatred of banks and railroads, of greedy cattle barons and foreclosing landlords, and of all the smaller fry who served their interests.

In the Western the old republican spirit lives on in a kind of suspended animation. Its political understanding is passive, embalmed as mere plot. It is republicanism turned into ritual, for the classical Western is as rigid and ceremonial as a Japanese Noh play. Nonetheless the Western does more than endure. What keeps it alive is what lies embedded within it, what Americans still want to see affirmed: namely, their own political understanding, an understanding born of the experience of republican liberty and of the republic corrupted. They want to see a community under the reign of corrupt rulers, to trace the consequences of their corruption, to watch them in the end toppled from power. That is a free man's pleasure. They want to see the bright stage of an American polis where each life touches all lives, where each person's actions affect the common fate, where everyone is a citizen and everybody matters. That is a free man's ideal.



Is Prison Obsolete?

Vengeance, deterrence, reform—
such are the historic purposes of prisons.

Perhaps it is time to ask what,
if anything, prisons have accomplished,
and whether they are
currently accomplishing anything at all

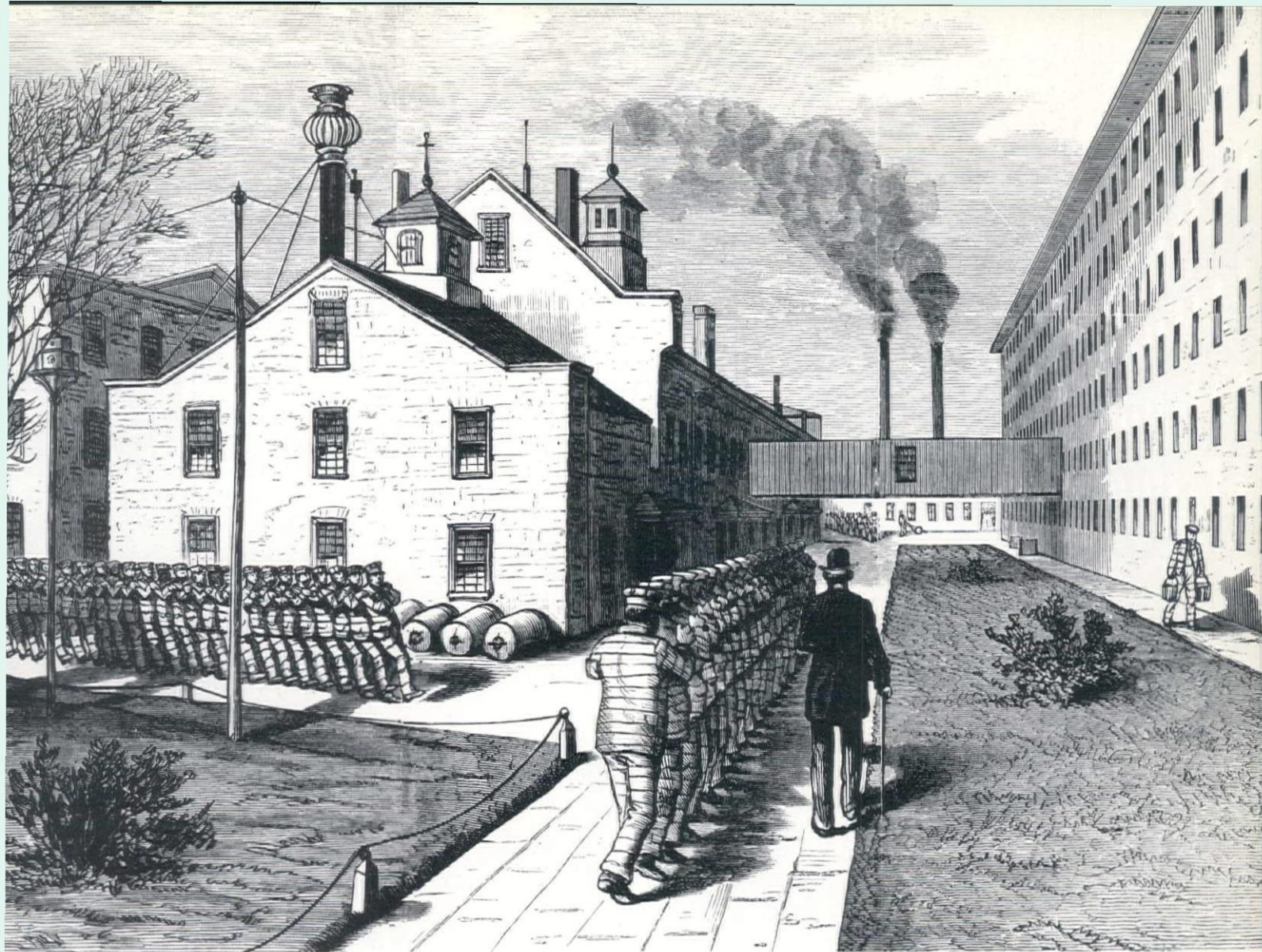
By KENNETH LAMOTT

While society in the United States gives the example of the most extended liberty, the prisons of the same country offer a spectacle of the most complete despotism. —DE TOCQUEVILLE

...

I do not know of any modern society where, as was the case among the Andaman Islanders until recent times, there is no provision at all for the imprisonment or other punishment of criminals. A tribalized Negrito people living on an archipelago in the Bay of Bengal the Andamanese counted upon social disfavor as the regulator of conduct.

This is not to say they were gentle and unaggressive people—quite the contrary, they treated shipwrecked sailors and other unfortunate outsiders with ruthless ferocity. Yet they visited virtually no punishment at all on their own murderers, rapists, or thieves—exile on the rarest of occasions, but neither execution, mutilation, fines, nor imprisonment. For the most part they merely



Incarceration American-style: In the 1878 engraving above, columns of prisoners at Sing Sing march from work to dinner in silent lockstep. Below, a century later, boy charms girl at the Federal Youth Center at Stockton, California, one of five co-ed prisons in the United States for low-risk offenders.



SPRINGMAN—BLACK STAR; ABOVE: CULVER PICTURES

disapproved. Such is the case among other primitive people.

The prison in its modern form, as society's principal instrument for the punishment and reformation of serious criminals, is a relatively recent invention of the most highly developed Western countries. Its origins, however, go back a long way. After his narrow escape from Potiphar's wife, for instance, Joseph was arrested by his master, who "took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in prison."

In medieval England the prison, which was founded in Anglo-Saxon times, was commonly used as a device to squeeze ransoms and fines out of the prisoner or his relatives, while the provident French made practical use of their prisoners by binding them to service in the galleys. As the centuries passed, the English prison became notorious both for its heartlessness and its debauchery,

a mad Beggar's Opera of debtors, vagabonds, prostitutes, demented children, simple rogues, and other miserable wretches who for the most part were innocent of any great crime, as well as prisoners who hadn't even been tried yet. The colonial American experience was not much different, though a strain of idealism made itself known early on. The modern rationale of imprisonment—punishment, deterrence, and, above all, rehabilitation—was still missing.

It has generally been forgotten that in 1831, when the young De Tocqueville, accompanied by his friend Gustave de Beaumont, escaped from his humdrum job at the Versailles law courts, he used as his excuse the urgent necessity of carrying out a personal inspection of the prisons of the New World. De Tocqueville's greatest work, *Democracy in America*, was a serendipitous outcome of his trip. Among the prisons that De Tocqueville and De Beaumont visited

were those at Sing Sing, New York; Charlestown, Massachusetts; and Wethersfield, Connecticut; and two seminal prisons that had opened during the preceding decade at Philadelphia and at Auburn, New York, where the shape of the next century's prisons was being fought out. De Tocqueville knew he was standing at a watershed in the history of prisons in the United States and consequently of the world.

The current that began to run in the 1820's and 1830's has continued to flow until our own times. For a century and a half we have managed our prisons on the foundation of a consensus that they exist not merely to punish and deter but also to bring about such a change in the character of the criminal that he or she will return to society a better and better-behaved person. Today we appear to be standing at a watershed as decisive as the one that De Tocqueville himself investigated.

Our dismay over the dramatic violence that has broken out at such institutions as Attica and Soledad is not the only sign that we are approaching a critical time. There is a general sense of baffled concern, a sense that we must reconsider the role prisons play in our communal life, a sense that we are trying to come to grips with a monster over which we have lost control—if, indeed, we ever had control.

The current crisis in our prisons began to make itself plain more than twenty years ago. A leading 1974 criminology text, by Sutherland and Cressy, identifies the beginning of the modern cycle of prison upheavals as a revolt in the spring of 1952, when sixty-nine prisoners at the Trenton, New Jersey, state prison took four guards hostage to force an investigation by a citizens' committee. At that time I had been teaching at San Quentin for several months. The people I knew in prison work were not aware that a great revolution was being mounted. We were, it is true, acutely aware that the prison system we served was full of imperfections—some of them of bone-chilling proportions—but there was rough agreement that it was

essentially a reasonable system that could be made to work better if only enough money and dedication could be brought to bear. The skyrocketing crime rate, the substantial numbers of our fellow citizens who live behind bars (currently approaching half a million), the high cost of maintaining prisons (now about five thousand dollars a year per prisoner in a relatively decent institution and much more in some), and the monstrous expense of building new prisons (about thirty thousand dollars a cell), all underscored the great urgency of the task.

Reformers and enlightened prison administrators knew what had to be done: the huge old prisons of the past—San Quentin foremost among them—had to be divided into more manageable units; food and living conditions had to be improved; and the work of rehabilitation had to be got on with through the intervention of social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists, guidance counselors, teachers both academic and vocational, and guards with at least junior college degrees in criminology.

If the prisoners did not always subscribe wholeheartedly to this understanding, they were, in my experience, generally agreeable to playing their part. As one of my students said of a literature class I taught, "Well, it's a lot better than standing around the yard in a cold rain." (There were others who were more complimentary, but I'm inclined to the view that the cynic was a more honest witness.)

All of this general agreement appears about to go by the board. The system, which has never worked very well, is showing increasing symptoms of breaking down entirely. The prisoners have been in rebellion as never before—more than seventy-five riots and revolts broke out in the 1960's alone. Although better living conditions remain a staple and usually justified demand of restless prisoners, the main focus of their anger has become the system itself. Their most articulate spokesmen keep repeating the message that prisoners in America are the victims of a hostile and corrupt soci-

ety that alternately brutalizes and brainwashes them. Generally we do not listen: when Angela Davis declared that all blacks in our prisons and jails are political prisoners who should be freed forthwith, my first response was irritation and dismay at her untrammelled and irresponsible rhetoric. Only after considerable reflection did I recognize that, although I didn't agree with her, her demands were hardly more preposterous than the white liberal's demand that these same black prisoners be re-educated and rehabilitated.

The prisoner of the 1970's has become to a remarkable degree a political animal whose first concern is relief of his condition on legal and constitutional rather than humanitarian grounds: he doesn't want to be rehabilitated, he wants out. In the meantime, he wants his rights as a citizen. Among the cries we have heard recently are demands for an end to the indeterminate sentence; for freer access to law books; for legal representation in disciplinary hearings and parole board appearances; and for an end to the civil death suffered by ex-prisoners. (Some progress is being made on this front: the voters of California have recently restored the ballot to ex-prisoners released from parole.)

For reasons that are not entirely trivial, hard-line prison people feel threatened by demands such as these. When my old acquaintance Warden Louis Nelson of San Quentin recently retired after thirty-three years in prison work, he told a reporter that he was the object of one hundred and eighty million dollars in lawsuits brought by prisoners who had been in his charge. The reporter asked Nelson, who is a decent man though something of a traditionalist, if he would consider doing it all over again.

"No way," the retiring warden declared firmly.

• • •

While the saints are engaged in introspection, burly sinners run the world. —JOHN DEWEY

Central to the dilemma of the modern American prison is the theme of the evil that good men can do. There have

indeed been sadistic wardens and brutal guards, but the real progenitors of the modern prison have been men and women of admirable intelligence and delicate sensibilities—Quakers and Catholics, philosophers and sociologists, teachers and doctors, old-line socialists and high-minded young people. The motive force behind the creation of our prison system was part and parcel of the idealism that for a hundred years collected pennies from Sunday School children all over America to save the souls of four hundred million Chinese by turning them into Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Seventh-Day Adventists.

To take, then, the most generous view of the whole matter, prison reform was an expression of the American concern for the worth and welfare of the individual. To take a less generous view, the modern American prison grew partly out of that particular American middle-class idealism that passionately tries to convince other people that their salvation depends on their becoming more like us.

The historical essential is that the new American prisons of the 1820's were something new on the face of the earth. In England and on the Continent, prison reformers such as Cesare Beccaria, Rousseau, Voltaire, John Howard, and Jeremy Bentham had laudably combatted the meaningless horrors of life in the jails and on the prison hulks anchored offshore, but never before had a government committed itself to creating an institution in which armed robbers, rapists, second-story men, and even murderers would be re-educated and sent back into the great world better men than before. Exile, flogging, branding, maiming, the stocks and pillory, hanging, drawing and quartering—these were some of the abominations the humane American mind would relieve.

The great innovation took the shape



The vagaries of nineteenth-century British justice: At the Fleet, above, London's notorious debtors' prison, wardens sold rooms, fine wines, and all manner of privileges and luxuries to anyone who could pay the price. Paupers, on the other hand, reportedly starved to death there, and at the Old Bailey court, below, citizens were routinely flogged for stealing a single shilling, or a fish from a pond.



of the Eastern State Penitentiary, a prison that arose on Cherry Hill in Philadelphia in the later 1820's under the aegis of the Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons. It was an architectural marvel, its great crenellated towers giving it the air of a medieval fortress. Inside, a central rotunda opened onto seven cell blocks that were arranged around it like the spokes of a wheel. The cells were quite large—seven and a half by eleven—and, for reasons lost to history, sixteen feet high. Each cell had its own exercise yard. The physical arrangements responded faithfully to Cherry Hill's philosophy that each prisoner should repent in solitude.

Even the use of the word "penitentiary" to describe a prison of this sort is an Americanism. In early nineteenth-century England, a penitentiary was a house of refuge for reformed prostitutes. (The word comes from Latin—*paenitens*, a regretting.) So it was that under the influence of a moral philosophy that took an optimistic view of human nature, men who had made their livings by violent and illegal undertakings were encouraged to meditate on their sins, to read the Bible, to converse with clergymen and members of the Society, and to sin no more.

To prevent insanity under this tyrannically virtuous regime, prisoners were encouraged to busy themselves in such cottage industries as shoemaking, weaving, and tailoring. In spite of this occupational therapy, a distressing number of inmates did go out of their minds. Noting all this, De Tocqueville asked to speak to prisoners in private, a request which, to his surprise, was granted. The inmates' horror of their solitude made a great impression upon him.

A systems analyst would recognize the prison at Cherry Hill as having little survival value, being a woefully inefficient operation with a deplorably low cost-benefit ration. Even before it admitted the first inmate, New York State authorities had addressed themselves to the cost-benefit problem and opened the doors of a prison at Auburn. It was this system that became the model for state prisons during the next century.

Housed in tiny cells (three and a half by seven feet) stacked like the cells in a beehive, the prisoners marched silently to factories, where they worked in silence, marched silently to a great mess hall where they ate in silence, marched silently back to their factories, marched all the time in lockstep, the columns of prisoners moving like monstrous centipedes, each man clutching the shoulder of the man in front of him.

The Boston Prison Discipline Society

endorsed the Auburn system, noting with some enthusiasm that "The unremitted industry, the entire subordination and subdued feeling of the convicts, has probably no parallel among any equal number of criminals."

The report continued, "In their solitary cells, they spend the night, with no other book but the Bible; and at sunrise they proceed in military order, under the eye of turnkeys, in solid columns, with the lock march, to their workshops; thence in the same order, at the hour of breakfast, to the common hall. . . ."

De Tocqueville, impressed with the efficiency of the Auburn system as it worked at the new prison he saw at Sing Sing, wondered if French convicts would be amenable to the severe discipline that kept Sing Sing from blowing up.

Although guerrilla skirmishes went on for forty years between proponents of the two types of prisons, it was foreordained that in the United States the industrial prison would prevail over the solitary, that Auburn would prevail over Cherry Hill. The industrial prison appealed to our faith in the redeeming qualities of hard work and plain living while at the same time reducing the prison's dependence on the state treasury. In England, during the same period, prisoners' labor was largely non-productive: they carried a cannonball up and down a long corridor or marched on a treadmill. The American prison became a profit-making institution, though seldom for the prisoner. (At San Quentin, however, more than one favored prisoner-clerk in the late 1800's left prison substantially richer than when he had entered.)

The industrial history of San Quentin is typical and instructive. After the prison was founded in the early 1850's, both the prison itself and the labor of its inmates were leased out to a pair of en-

BROWN BROTHERS



Labor and learning: Above, heavily guarded prisoners build a road outside Atlanta in about 1905. In the prison shop below, Indiana convicts learn a trade. The clothes they are making are probably destined for use in state institutions—American labor leaders have traditionally opposed the use of convicts to manufacture goods or perform services that might compete with those of union workers.

CULVER PICTURES



terprising scoundrels who worked the men in a quarry and a brickyard, delivering the products to San Francisco across the bay by means of convict-manned sailing craft. San Quentin brick may still be seen in the walls of Fort Point, which is located beneath the southernmost abutment of the Golden Gate Bridge.

In succeeding decades, after public graft had replaced private profit as the mainspring of the prison's operation, the state contracted out its prisoners' labor to a furniture manufacturer, a harness maker, a shoe manufacturer, a wagon maker, a knitting mill, and a blacksmith shop. Under pressure from the increasingly powerful labor unions, the last of these contracts was terminated in 1880. During the next twenty years, San Quentin was turned into a

jute mill that produced grain sacks for the interior valleys. Until it was totally destroyed by fire in 1951—the prisoner had been making sandbags for the Korean War—the jute mill Loom Row and Sack Alley were the focus of the prisoner's daily life. They were also the focus for rebellions and riots, graft and corruption. But the mill never failed to show a profit.

In later years, substantial numbers of prisoners were put to work in a factory that made furniture for state offices; another factory processed tobacco for the prisoners themselves. But the most modern—and the most awesomely irrelevant—industrial enterprise to go up at San Quentin was the cotton mill that opened in 1955. Although the industrial exploitation of prisoners has from the beginning been piously defended as leading to vocational training and moral regeneration, it was hard to find an excuse for the cotton mill. It was the only one in California, and the skills learned there were utterly without value outside the

walls. Still the mill went up, turned out cotton for a few years, and then finally shut down. Other prisons of other states offer histories that differ only in their degree of dreariness.

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... Granite walls and iron bars, although they deprive the criminal of his liberty and inflict a just physical punishment, do not work that reformation in the soul of man that will restore him to society regenerated and reformed. Until this is in some measure accomplished, our system of prison discipline is imperfect and ineffectual.

—MAJOR A. T. GOSHORN
FOUNDING MEETING, AMERICAN PRISON ASSOCIATION

The New Penology dawned on October 12, 1870, when the American Prison Association was founded at Cincinnati. Its rhetoric has a thoroughly modern sound, for we are still repeating the clichés that ushered the movement in. No longer was the prisoner expected

to do lonely penance under the silent system. Instead, he was to be resocialized, reformed, regenerated, recycled, and returned to the world a better and a stronger man. Any evil done in the process was done in the name of humanity.

Prominent in this new prison world was Zebulon Brockway, the energetic superintendent of the Elmira Reformatory, an institution for the reclamation of youthful criminals which became a popular stopping-place for visiting reformers. Brockway expressed his philosophy succinctly: "In order to train criminals for social life they must have a strict regime and learn quick and accurate self-adjustment to a uniform requirement. . . ."

At Cherry Hill, and even at Auburn, the prisoner had been expected to reflect upon his sins and undergo a change of heart that can only be compared to a religious conversion. It was a process that, it was hoped, would be encouraged by the silent system and the absence of such distractions as palatable food and social intercourse. It was a regime whose taproots were deep in the soil of our ancestral puritanism. By contrast, the reformatory prison smacked of secularism and the twentieth century. Its roots were in the burgeoning social sciences. Its tools were classification and segregation, individualized treatment, vocational training, parole.

Out in California, Warden James A. Johnson explained in 1877 the principles under which San Quentin was then flourishing: "The cruel and inhuman iron-will rule usual at prisons is not in vogue here. Instead, we treat all who will bear it—and most prisoners do—with kindness, and even courtesy. The plan of individualizing each one, and recognizing each from all others, and requiring something of each as an individual, is the secret method of obtaining good government at an institution like this." The fact that, in the same year, Johnson appointed a guard to act as prison flogger need not make us cynical. Johnson was not an evil man and probably believed what he said about the virtues of individualization. Indeed, is not flog-

ging a most extreme example of individualized treatment?

I have not discovered when the word "rehabilitation" was first used to describe the process of turning a criminal into a law-abiding citizen. In this use, it appears, like "penitentiary," to be an Americanism. For all its impressive sound and its general acceptance as legal tender, the word does not have much cash value. I recall being approached one day by a student of mine at San Quentin, who looked remarkably pleased with himself. He had, he told me, just been to the dictionary to look up "rehabilitate" and had found that it meant to restore to a previous condition. He went on, "Now, Mr. Lamott, my previous condition was being a hustler, a pimp, and a junky. Is that what you're trying to rehabilitate me to?"

Whatever the case, rehabilitation has been the banner under which the great mass of American prisoners has marched during the past century. The American Prison Association has become the American Correctional Association, but rehabilitation retains its central position in the rhetoric of prisons. The criminal, according to the modern view of the matter, is not a sinner but a victim, not a bad man but a flawed man, not vicious but sick. He is the rejected goods of our social system, and it is the moral obligation of the system to make him as whole as possible. If his education is faulty, prison teachers will lead him from first grade through college. If his face embarrasses him, plastic surgeons will flatten his ears or iron out a scar or improve the shape of his nose. If his psyche is twisted, psychiatrists and counselors will urge him to take part in group therapy. If the use of alcohol has troubled him, he can join the prison chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous. If his social skills are deficient, he can join the chapter of the Toastmasters Gavel Club. If his religious faith needs buttressing, he can join the Yokefellows. If he has no skills that are both marketable and legal, he can take a course in landscape gardening or automotive mechanics.

Promising as all this may sound, we cannot evade the conclusion that the pragmatic outcome of the New Penology has been Attica and Dannemora, Stateville and Raiford, San Quentin and Soledad. As Min S. Yee has recounted in *The Melancholy History of Soledad Prison*, the tragedy of Soledad was that only twenty years ago it was the brightest star in the prison firmament, the flagship of the fleet, a showplace of what liberal prison reform could do. Now its name calls up images of blood, violence, repression, and madness. Once more, good people had created a great evil.

• • •

It is just such reformers who have in the past made the neglect, oppression, corruption and physical torture of the old common gaol the pretext for transforming it into the diabolical den of torment, mischief and damnation, the modern model prison. . . .

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Something has clearly gone wrong.

Neither the humane motives nor the quality of thought that have gone into forming the modern prison is contemptible—yet not even the best of these institutions can claim to have found methods of treatment that will turn criminals into good citizens. It is a dreary commonplace of penological literature that no matter what one does to men in prison, whether one flogs them or enrolls them in college courses, whether one works them in a jute mill or in an auto-body shop, whether one locks them in solitary cells or assigns them to group therapy, somewhere between half and two-thirds of the released prisoners are in prison again within five years. Most prisoners, by far, are repeaters. In the early 1970's, more than 80 per cent of the prisoners in federal institutions, generally recognized as the best system in the country, had been in prison before.

When Willie Holder, a leader of the Prisoners Union and a graduate of nineteen years in the Oklahoma State Penitentiary, Soledad, and Folsom, was recently asked to describe the ways in which he has seen prison change people for the better or worse, he replied, "I have seen them change for the worse about ninety-five per cent of the time. As

for the five per cent who were changed for the better, the prison had nothing to do with it."

The question to which we are being driven by the current upheavals in the prison world is the central one: can rehabilitation be made to work, or should we abandon the effort and strike out in a new direction? There are persuasive advocates for both sides of the question.

There is a general recognition that, statistically at least, the attempts at rehabilitation made during the past one hundred and fifty years have not produced any significant results. The notion of the ideal prison as a place of treatment, however, continues to burn brightly. If it has not worked in the past, we tell ourselves, it is because it has failed in execution, not in concept; the system has yet to be perfected. Budgets are too low to support effective programs. Statistics are concocted from insufficient data and fail to reveal real progress when it is made. The guards habitually sabotage the effort. The pay scale repels competent people. The prisoners are master games-players. The consensus is that, like Christianity, rehabilitation has never been tried. If only next time we secure larger appropriations, and hire more highly trained people, and more of them, and design a better building and a better program . . .

And, in fact, this is precisely what is being done at the newest and most modern prison of all, a new federal institution at Butner, North Carolina, that is now under construction.

Butner is the ultimate prison, a place designed as an instrument to change men's behavior. It is largely the creation of Martin G. Groder, a thirty-five year-old psychiatrist who works for the federal Bureau of Prisons. Officially called the Federal Center for Correctional Research, Butner will enroll two hundred prisoners in four different programs. Part of the population will participate in a program called Asklepion, a technique invented by Groder that combines elements of transactional analysis, Synanon, and primal therapy. For comparative purposes other prisoners will

experience regenerative techniques from a variety of sources: the psychology of Carl Rogers, psychodrama, "rational self-counseling," and yoga.

Butner will have ball fields, a miniature golf course, a theatre, a playground for visiting children, and, rather than cells, "behavior modification units." The operating cost will be about twice that of a more conventional prison—approximately ten thousand dollars annually for each inmate. The grand objective will be to "turn losers into winners." Whether Butner works or whether it fails, it will be a critical experiment.

The opposition to prisons such as Butner tends to congregate around the idea expressed shortly after World War I by George Bernard Shaw, who observed that you cannot improve a man by doing him an injury. The idea of prison rehabilitation itself, and not merely the methods, is the principal target of these critics. As Thomas S. Szasz, the distinguished professor of psychiatry at the Upstate Medical Center of the State University of New York, has said, "The thesis that the criminal is a sick individual in need of treatment—which is promoted today as if it were a recent psychiatric discovery—is false. Indeed it is hardly more than a refurbishing, with new terms, of the main ideas and techniques of the inquisitorial process."

The Columbia University sociologist Amitai Etzioni has used the failure of rehabilitation as evidence for a broad proposition that it is almost impossible to change the behavior patterns of any group of people, whether they are in prison or not. (Other evidence comes from the failure of massive educational campaigns against cigarettes, heroin, and alcohol.) Etzioni concludes, "What is becoming increasingly apparent is that to solve social problems by changing people is more expensive and usually less productive than approaches that accept people as they are and seek to mend not them but the circumstances around them."

In the case of the convicted criminal, the most radical amendment of the cir-

cumstances around him would be not to put him in prison at all. Paradoxically, it is usually the liberal reformer who argues that people should be kept in prison so that they can be treated and made whole, and the hard-liner who often argues that only a small proportion of prisoners really belong in prison. Carl Hocker, whom I knew as a guard captain at San Quentin and who later became a no-frills warden at the Nevada State Prison, once estimated that 90 per cent of prisoners belong outside.

During the past few years, to test just such a thesis, California has mounted a twenty-million-dollar-a-year program designed to keep as many prisoners as possible out of its penal institutions. During the last years I was at San Quentin, the daily census was, more often than not, 4,999, the statutory maximum. When I returned for a visit in 1971, the population was well on its way down to an all-time modern low of 1,500, even though both the general population of California and the crime rate had been growing steadily in the meantime. When I asked an associate warden to account for this phenomenon, he explained that under this new program, which subsidizes the probation services in the cities and counties, local communities receive up to four thousand dollars a year from the state for each convicted felon they refrain from sending to state prison. The money helps support expanded probation services, allowing the convicted person to remain with his family and at his job, though under supervision.

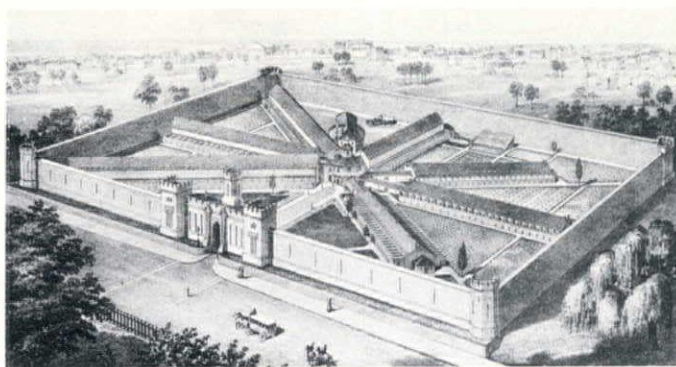
Opponents of the probation-subsidy program were quick to warn that "turning criminals loose" would contribute to the rising tide of crime. Since the program began, however, nobody has produced any evidence that this has been the case. Although it is still too early to know with statistical accuracy whether probation rehabilitates a criminal any better than prison does, at least one thing is certain: it could hardly do any worse.

The San Quentin warden went on to remind me that when I'd been at the

prison, alcoholics who were forgers and writers of bad checks made up 20 per cent of the population. The percentage of these unfortunates had now dropped to five. The corollary, however, was that the men who did end up in San Quentin and the other state prisons were those who had been the most dangerous to other citizens—who were, as the warden put it, “in the violence bag.” Today, the ratio of California prisoners who have been convicted of homicide, rape, assault, and robbery has risen from one-third to one-half. As more and more prisoners come from the “violence bag,” there is less and less chance that the prison can be anything but a place in which to lock people up and keep them away from the rest of us.

The success of programs such as California’s depends heavily on a factor that neither the convicted people themselves nor the most enlightened penal authorities can control. That factor is the force of public opinion. Noting that the prison population of California was rising again this year, I phoned an official in Sacramento to ask for an explanation. Was this evidence that the probation-subsidy program had failed? Oh no, he answered, the subsidy program was working pretty well. Since the 1960’s the proportion of convicted felons

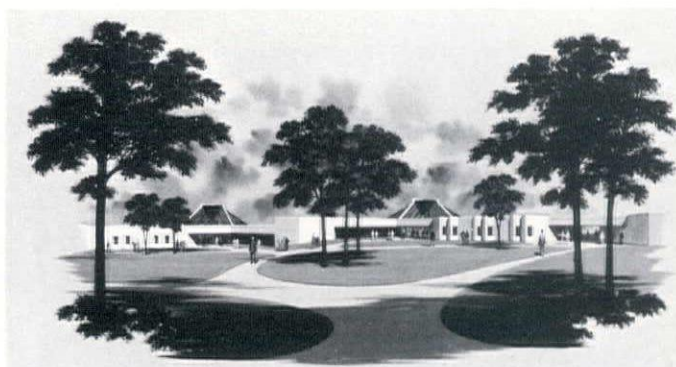
who actually ended up in prison had dropped to almost a third of the previous figure (from 28 per cent to a low of 9.5). This figure was, however, rising again and the prisons filling up because both the sentencing judges and the parole board were responding to public demands that felons be sent to prison and kept there. I was reminded again of Shaw, who wrote that “Of the three official objects of our prisons—vengeance, deterrence, and reformation



Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia



State prison at Dannemora, New York



Behavior Modification Unit, Butner, North Carolina

From solitary to psychodrama: Pennsylvania Quakers built Eastern State Penitentiary in the early eighteen hundreds as a place where prisoners could repent (and occasionally go mad) in solitude. Dannemora, which opened in 1845, combined maximum security with an emphasis on the rehabilitative value of hard work. Next year prisoner rehabilitation will enter still another phase when the Federal Center for Correctional Research opens in North Carolina. There inmates will partake of yoga, group therapy, and psychodrama—all to the somewhat sinister-sounding end of “behavior modification.”

of the criminal—only one is achieved; and that is. . . nakedly abominable.”

• • •

. . . If the functions of deterrence and rehabilitation cannot be performed in a prison without the imposition of a restrictive regime not reasonably related to those functions, it may well be that those functions can no longer be performed constitutionally in a prison setting.

—JUDGE JAMES E. DOYLE

As an idealist, I am much drawn by the example of the Andaman Islanders,

and wish that we could get along without prisons at all. As a realist, I am convinced that some sort of prison will always be with us. As a one-time prison worker I find prisons least offensive when they admit they are lockups, not schools or psychiatric clinics. As a prophet, I find my crystal ball is thoroughly clouded.

The prison picture today is bleak enough to justify the gloomiest pessimism. There is, however, one source of hope. Not since De Tocqueville’s time has there been such a high level of public discussion about the problems of our prisons. We are much in the debt of a small legion of writers such as John Bartlow Martin (whose *Break Down the Walls* appeared twenty years ago), Jessica Mitford, and Min S. Yee. Whatever happens, we cannot plead that we did not know what the problems were.

The future shape of the American penal system will surely draw on three elements that have emerged in the present situation. The first element is the dream of rehabilitation as exemplified by the new prison at Butner. But will Butner work? The second element is the move toward keeping nonviolent offenders out of prison entirely—and whether the public can give up its yearning for vengeance. The third element is the

process that turns prisons such as San Quentin into institutions populated almost entirely by violent men. But can we stomach such prisons at all?

Our only certainty is that we are again at a watershed. Whatever lies on the other side will be, for better or worse, different from what we have now.

Kenneth Lamott frequently contributes to HORIZON. His most recent piece, “The Berkeley Clock,” appeared in Winter, 1973.



A light moment in a predominantly gloomy childhood: Virginia (left), aged twelve, plays cricket with her sister in 1894.

Virginia Woolf and Her World

In the early years of this century Bloomsbury was bright
promise and gaiety and wit. But all the while its most celebrated novelist
was battling private demons that would one day overwhelm her

Most people who have been in London
even briefly know the area around the
British Museum called Bloomsbury. It
is a district of open squares, tree-lined
streets, and weathered Georgian houses.
Recently the "improvers" have been at
work in Bloomsbury. Gordon Square is
threatened, and the houses in Woburn
Square, like so many of the brown-
stones in New York, are crashing to the
ground.

But as one Bloomsbury is vanishing,
another is being resurrected. This is the
Bloomsbury of "the Bloomsbury
group," that collection of writers, art-
ists, and intellectuals who gathered in
this part of London in the early years of
the twentieth century and who are now
enjoying a noticeable revival of interest.
Probably the most famous today are
John Maynard Keynes, upon whose
theories our modern economy is based;
Virginia Woolf, the novelist, and her
husband, Leonard Woolf, an active rad-
ical best remembered perhaps for his
delightful five-volume autobiography;
Lytton Strachey, who revolutionized
the art of biography; E. M. Forster, the
patron of twentieth-century British nov-
elists; Roger Fry, the art critic; his
brilliant lieutenant Clive Bell, who
married Virginia Woolf's sister, the
painter Vanessa Bell; and, on the periph-
ery, various poets and philosophers from
Rupert Brooke to Bertrand Russell.



The public Virginia

The role of the Bloomsbury group in
British cultural life has not been easy to
define. Their lives and achievements
stand at just the wrong distance for us to
easily appreciate them today, nor has
their work assumed a solid place in artis-
tic and literary history. At least two of
them, the painter Duncan Grant and the
novelist David Garnett, are still alive,
but they do not seem part of our con-
temporary world. Theirs was a transi-
tion period. They spent their formative
years under Queen Victoria's reign, and
their influence extended well into the
1920's and 1930's. "We are the last of
the Victorians," Roger Fry once joked,
and there was perhaps more truth in this
than he realized. The Victorians them-

selves have been in vogue recently, and it
is perhaps natural that their gifted sons
and daughters, who first led the revolt
against Victorian standards, should be
cast under a shadow. But time moves
on and shadows pass, and already we
begin to see that Bloomsbury forms our
authentic bridge back to the cultural
traditions of the nineteenth century.

To understand the core of Blooms-
bury, one must begin with Cambridge,
where many of its members were edu-
cated, and with the philosophy of G. E.
Moore: personal relationship + aes-
thetic appreciation = the good life. This,
if anything, was the Bloomsbury creed
—to develop one's own feelings and tal-
ents first, and to influence society and
the world only indirectly, by example,
not precept. The Bloomsburies lived
with one another, painted and wrote
about one another, decorated one an-
other's houses, cultivated their own gar-
dens. Theirs was an anti-establishment
movement, but not a political move-
ment. Above all, they insisted on their
identity as individuals.

They were reformers of arts and let-
ters, but they were not extremists and
certainly not revolutionaries. In paint-
ing, Roger Fry was opposed by the
avant-garde Wyndham Lewis as well as
by the academic Henry Tonks. In litera-
ture, Virginia Woolf turned up her nose
not only at James Joyce's *Ulysses* but



A family outing, circa 1893; Virginia (center front) sits at her mother's feet



George Duckworth

also at the solid, traditional novels of Arnold Bennett. They all supported D. H. Lawrence, but tepidly. Though they might intellectually approve of what he did, they were socially and temperamentally averse to him. They kept their distance, as if he smelled a little.

To their enemies the Bloomsburies were an élitist closed circle, pacifist in wartime, attacking their rivals between the wars, and, it seemed, a powerful influence upon the literary journals of the period—*The Times Literary Supplement*, the *New Statesman*, and Desmond MacCarthy's *Life and Letters*. They were seen as a precious cul-de-sac of a movement, tidily kept but leading nowhere. In their own eyes, however, they stood for tolerance and intelligence, and philistinism was their enemy, in art and in life.

No one, perhaps, better exemplifies Bloomsbury than Virginia Woolf. She was born in London on January 25, 1882, one of the younger children of Sir Leslie Stephen, a distinguished man of letters and most eminent Victorian. His influence upon her was considerable. In many respects his career was an epitome of Victorian intellectualism. Brought up in the faith of the established church, he had gone to Cambridge, won a fellowship, and entered holy orders. But after eight years as a don he had been converted to agnosticism, leaving Cam-

bridge for London and a career in literature. Editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*, author of critical, biographical, and philosophical works, Stephen was celebrated as a skilled expositor of the agnosticism that permeated Victorian thought after Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Less tough than Thomas Huxley, less bleak than Herbert Spencer, he shared with many of the brilliant scholars who were his friends a core of poetry encased in a hard shell of pedantry.

Stephen's first wife had been a daughter of Thackeray. By his second wife, Julia Jackson, widow of Herbert Duckworth and mother of three, he had four children: Vanessa, Thoby, Virginia, and Adrian. When Virginia was born, her father was almost fifty years old and the days of his athletic feats were over. Relics of these exploits—the dusty trophy on the study mantelpiece, the rusted alpenstocks that leaned against the bookcase—encumbered their house at Hyde Park Gate and contributed to its prevailing gloom. For despite its air of comfort, this was not a happy home. To Virginia, the atmosphere seemed permanently overcast, threatening a storm, and she looked forward to the sunlit holidays by the sea. In summer the family often went to Talland House, at Saint Ives on the coast of Cornwall, where

her father, pottering about the Cornish moors, seemed happier than in London and spread his happiness to the other. These summers of her childhood left sea memories that haunt her novels—especially *The Waves* and *To the Lighthouse*—with images, rhythms, and colors, the blues and greens that shir through her work and give it a transcendent glow.

If the sea symbolized the freedom and creativity of life, Hyde Park Gate came to represent the threat of death. Her existence there, though outwardly secure, was interspersed by a series of traumatic shocks. "I still shiver with shame," she wrote many years afterward, "at the memory of my half-brother [George Duckworth], standing me on a ledge, aged about 6 or so, exploring my private parts." Then, before she was ten years old, her first cousin, the handsome and talented J. K. Stephen, began to show alarming symptoms of mental instability. His eccentricities were so extreme that he was expelled from his club, and later, after making violent advances to Virginia's half sister, Stella Duckworth, he was committed to an asylum where in 1892 he died. His father—Virginia's uncle—was inconsolable. He retired, his health deteriorated rapidly; and in 1894 he died.

The following year brought the greatest disaster of all—the death of Virgi-

At Home with the Stephens

In Virginia Stephen's early years, tragedy refused to yield center stage. A cousin went mad; her mother, Julia, died in 1895, followed by her half sister, Stella Duckworth, in 1897 and her father two years later. To console her, or so he claimed, her half brother George made incestuous advances. The leading role in this drama was reserved for Virginia's father, an unyielding, paradoxical Victorian. Thirteen years after his death, she described him (thinly disguised as Mr. Ramsay in her fifth novel *To the Lighthouse*) in these words: "He is petty, selfish, vain, egotistical; he is spoilt; he is a tyrant; he wears Mrs. Ramsay to death; but he has . . . a fiery unworldliness [and] he loves dogs and his children."



"Eminent Victorian" Sir Leslie Stephen, K.C.B., with his daughter Virginia, about 1902

ia's mother. The shock led to a breakdown, and according to some accounts Virginia tried to commit suicide by throwing herself out a window. It was from this time, too, that her father's health began to worsen, and after 1897, when Stella Duckworth died, he came to rely entirely on his two daughters, Vanessa and Virginia.

Virginia's genius was shaped by the special qualities of her parents: her mother's delicate sensitivity and taste, her father's intellectual power and neurotic inconsistencies. But her affections lay on the maternal side. As a militant feminist, she came to disapprove of the patriarchal society in which she had been brought up, where women were worshiped as ministering angels and treated as household servants. Although Stephen believed in the worth of human relationships, he insisted upon a suffocating ceremony that prevented his children from getting to know him. In her obituary notice of him in *The Times*, Virginia paid tribute to his vigor of mind, his honesty, and his endearing peculiarities, but as Mr. Ramsay in her novel *To the Lighthouse*, he is unimaginative, joyless, and tyrannical. He seemed full of contradictions: lovable to his friends, ruthless to his family; rich yet perpetually fearful of bankruptcy; intellectually enlightened but sexually repressed. A believer in freedom, he al-

lowed his sons to go to Cambridge and choose their own careers; Vanessa was allowed to paint, Virginia to write. Yet he inflicted upon them all, and most especially his daughters, what Quentin Bell has called a "savagely, self-pitying emotional blackmail."

By the age of sixteen Vanessa had taken over the running of the house, with the help of Virginia, who was some three years younger. The atmosphere during the nine years between their mother's death and their father's was petrified with boredom and horror. In his last two years, Leslie Stephen suffered grievously from the cancer that was eventually to kill him, but even in this terrible illness his presence was suffocating. While he lay dying three or four floors below, her half brother George Duckworth would fling himself upon her bed, kissing and embracing her in order, so he later explained to her doctor, to administer comfort. The result, Quentin Bell has written, was that "in sexual matters, she was from this time terrified back into a posture of frozen and defensive panic."

As she helped to nurse her father, she must already have known that her release lay in her father's death. Any consciousness of this would have filled her with guilt, and in fact, in 1904, a few months after her father's death, she suffered another mental breakdown. She

recovered, but her continuing obsession with death suggests an awareness that a part of her father lived on in her.

At the turn of the century Virginia's elder brother, Thoby, entered Trinity College, Cambridge. A handsome, charming young man, equally popular with athletes and intellectuals, Thoby made friends who were to form the nucleus of the Bloomsbury group. When he introduced his university friends to his sisters—dressed in their long white Victorian dresses with lace collars and cuffs, shyly balancing parasols and looking as if they had stepped out of a romantic painting by Watts or Burne-Jones—the double apparition was breathtaking. Leonard Woolf recalls that "it was almost impossible for a man not to fall in love with them, and I think that I did at once. It must, however, be admitted that at that time they seemed to be so formidably aloof and reserved that it was rather like falling in love with Rembrandt's picture of his wife, Velasquez' picture of an Infanta, or the lovely temple of Segesta."

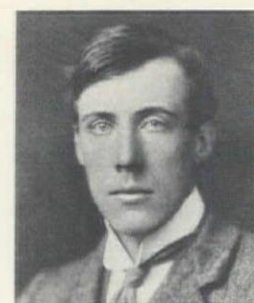
Most people found Vanessa the more beautiful of the two. Her figure was tall and imposing, her face perfectly oval with gray-blue eyes, hooded lids, and a full, sensitive mouth. She radiated a sense of mature physical splendor and moved with an undulating walk that earned for her the nickname "the



Gordon Square, Bloomsbury: No. 46 is the second house from the left.



Vanessa Bell, circa 1907



Clive Bell

Dolphin." There was something magisterial about her presence that befitted a child of Leslie Stephen. Yet part of this remote quality came from extreme vagueness. Her dreamy attitudes and wild inconsequences charmed some and exasperated others.

Virginia was a less comely figure. From out of an anxious, ethereal face her enormous green eyes gazed fearfully at the cold slow terrors of the world. She appeared to glide through life as through a dream that might suddenly turn, without warning, into nightmare. Tall and slender, with a noble forehead and narrow, aquiline features, she had an ascetic, sexless charm that contrasted strangely with her vivid, cerebral enthusiasms. Leaning forward in her chair, a cigarette held limply in her long fingers, her head cocked to one side, she would talk in a throaty voice with a keen sensibility, wit, and an inquiring passion that was altogether different from Vanessa's judicial tone. Her mental animation mounted rapidly as she spoke, and if someone stupidly dared to interrupt her in full flight, she would grow fierce, fling back some scathing remark, and revert to sullen, unapproachable aloofness.

Their father's death had given his children freedom. They moved from their depressing Victorian home to 46 Gordon Square in Bloomsbury. It was not then a fashionable area, and the

move was considered by some to be deeply eccentric. It was here that Thoby began to invite his Cambridge friends, most of whom had by now left the university; and it was here that, as an alternative to Victorianism, the Bloomsbury group first came into existence. They discussed questions of every sort, social, moral, and aesthetic; and they spoke with a freedom that was highly unusual, employing four-letter words in mixed company when the subject seemed to require them. The deed was very much the word. "Talking, talking, talking," sighed Virginia in recollection of those days, "as if everything could be talked—the soul itself slipped through the lips in thin silver discs which dissolve in young men's minds like silver, like moonlight."

Then, in 1906, a tragedy occurred, one that affected both the structure of Bloomsbury and Virginia's career. Thoby died suddenly of typhoid fever after a holiday in Greece. This sudden extinction of promise became the story of Rachel in Virginia's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, of Jacob in *Jacob's Room*, and of Percival in *The Waves*. One of the first results of his death was that Vanessa now consented to marry Clive Bell, and Virginia and her younger brother, Adrian, moved around the corner from them, into 29 Fitzroy Square.

The atmosphere in these two Bloomsbury salons reflected the differing per-

sonalities of the two sisters. The Bell Lytton Strachey wrote to Dunca Grant, "are a wild sprightly couple. The drawing-room has no carpet or wall paper, curtains some blue and some white, a Louis XV bed (in which they lie side by side), two basket chairs, pianola, and an Early Victorian mahogany table!" Clive Bell's hospitality was warm and jovial, reminding his guests of the hunting and shooting set in which he had been brought up, and contrasting oddly with the pictures by Picasso and Vlaminck that hung on the walls. "When the door was opened," wrote David Garnett, "a warm stream of Clive's hospitality and love of the good things of life poured out, as ravishing as the smell of roasting coffee on a cold morning."

In Fitzroy Square, guests encountered a different welcome. Adrian, who was then studying law, was a confirmed practical joker and might at any moment spit in the whiskey or put salt in the cocoa. Virginia's shyness could be formidable. "Upon an unforeseen introduction, for instance," wrote Dunca Grant, "there was an expression of blazing defiance, a few carefully chosen banalities and a feeling of awkwardness." Those whose wish to proceed further had not been quenched might then find themselves in Virginia's study. There, books littered the floor and furni-



Adrian Stephen at 29 Fitzroy Square

Beginning Again

After the death of their father in 1904, the Stephens—Vanessa, Thoby, Virginia, and Adrian—moved to 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, a most unfashionable address but one destined to be immortalized by the talented and witty company that gathered there. Then, in 1906, Thoby died, and the next year, when Vanessa married Clive Bell, Virginia and Adrian were forced to go house-hunting once more. Nonetheless, they remained within their beloved Bloomsbury, settling first at 29 Fitzroy Square, then at 38 Brunswick Square, where their experiment in “modern” communal living included Thoby’s Cambridge classmate, Leonard Woolf. In 1912 Virginia finally accepted his proposal of marriage.



Leonard and Virginia Woolf, 1912

ture, and her tall desk—at which she stood writing for two hours each day—was positioned near the window.

But it was in Adrian’s study, well-ordered, neat, and handsomely lined with books, that the Bloomsbury group met on Thursday evenings. “About ten o’clock in the evening,” Duncan Grant later wrote, “people used to appear and continue to come at intervals till twelve o’clock at night, and it was seldom that the last guest left before two or three in the morning. Whisky, buns and cocoa were the diet, and people talked to each other. . . . Conversation; that was all. Yet many people made a habit of coming, and few who did so will forget those evenings.”

One of those who regularly appeared was Lytton Strachey, and on February 17, 1909, Virginia accepted his proposal of marriage. “As I did it,” Strachey wrote to Leonard Woolf, who was in Ceylon as a civil servant, “I saw it would be death if she accepted me, and I managed to get out of it before the end of the conversation. The worst of it was that as the conversation went on, it became more and more obvious to me that the whole thing was impossible. The lack of understanding was so terrific! And how can a virgin be expected to understand? You see she *is* her name. . . . I was in terror lest she should kiss me.”

Strachey, who was a homosexual, had

made his proposal on the spur of the moment in reaction to a number of unhappy love affairs. It arose, it seems, from a wish to escape from his family, with whom poverty obliged him to live, from his homosexual ties, and from homosexuality itself. But at least as astonishing as his proposal was her acceptance of it. Although she liked him and indeed may have loved him, she found him physically repugnant. He was the model for St. John Hirst in *The Voyage Out* and again for Neville in *The Waves*, a lonely, uncommunicative misogynist, “doomed always to cause repulsion in those [he] loves.”

Why, then, did she say yes? Perhaps someone whose personality was strong enough to dispel the shadow of her dead father yet who would not be sexually demanding looked like a reasonable solution to her problems. It seems that she reconsidered, however, for the next day Strachey was writing to Leonard Woolf that “I’ve had an *éclaircissement* with Virginia. She declared she was not in love with me, and I observed that I would not marry her. So things have simply reverted.”

Perhaps the most extraordinary part of the whole affair was that at the time Strachey was proposing to Virginia, Woolf was writing to Strachey from Ceylon, stating that *he* intended to

propose to Virginia. “You are perfectly wonderful and I want to throw my arms round your neck,” Strachey replied. “. . . Isn’t it odd that I’ve never been really in love with you? . . . If you came and proposed she’d accept. . . . As it is, she’s almost certainly in love with me, though she thinks she’s not.”

Strachey advised Woolf, who up to the age of twenty-five was as much a virgin as his future bride, that “there’s no doubt whatever that you ought to marry her.” With Woolf’s agreement, he sounded out Vanessa, who decided that, especially if her sister was secretly in love with Lytton, Woolf had better wait until he returned to England. So it was three years before Virginia heard of Woolf’s intention to marry her. When she did hear it, he failed to hear her assent, for he had chosen to ask her in a train and, because of its rattling, had to shout out, “What?”—at which she had a sudden revulsion and murmured, “Oh, nothing.”

But finally, on the afternoon of May 29, 1912, at 38 Brunswick Square, into which she and Adrian had moved the previous year, she told Woolf that she loved him and would marry him. “It was a wonderful summer afternoon and we felt that we must get away from London for a time,” he later recalled. “We took the train to Maidenhead and I hired a boat and rowed up the river to Marlow.



Roger Fry with his sketchbox



Lytton Strachey, by Vanessa, circa 1912



Vanessa at her easel, 1905

... We had seemed to drift through a beautiful, vivid dream. ... the intense emotion of Virginia's saying that she would marry me, the gentle rhythm of the row up the river."

They were married on August 10 at Saint Pancras Registry Office and went off on a long, meandering honeymoon in France and Spain, returning in October to live at 13 Clifford's Inn, just off Fleet Street. Five months later Virginia completed the typescript of *The Voyage Out* and sent it to the publisher.

Four months after that she was preparing to enter a nursing home. Ever since their engagement, Leonard had been watching her health with increasing unease. The emotional strain caused by the prospect of marriage and the completion of her novel, together with their long honeymoon, had exhausted her. Her illness, then confidently diagnosed as "neurasthenia" (a vague term covering anything of a mental or nervous nature), was a form of manic-depression. She was afflicted with terrible headaches, lassitude, and a feeling of guilt. She refused to eat and, at the same time, refused to admit that she was ill. By the summer of 1913 Leonard had grown seriously concerned. She was suffering from bouts of intense worry, delusions, and insomnia. Moreover, she blamed herself for this condition as if it were a fault of character.

She left the nursing home in August, 1913, apparently improved, but her despair soon grew deeper again and despite Leonard's constant care her condition worsened. The crisis came one day in Brunswick Square, when she swallowed a large dose of veronal tablets and almost died. Her depression lasted, in an acute but intermittent form, from the autumn of 1913 to the autumn of 1915: two lost years. During much of this time she withdrew from the real world into a land of delusions where the birds spoke Greek and she carried on long, agonizing conversations with her dead mother. She was given to fits of extreme melancholia, and to extreme violence against the nurses.

Even after the madness had left her, the threat of its return greatly affected the pattern of her life with Leonard. They gave up all hope of having children. As far as possible, it was desirable for Virginia to lead a quiet, vegetative life, fortified by plenty of good food, plenty of rest. She must avoid anything that might tire her physically or mentally. Yet she was a born writer. For her, living meant writing, with all its inevitable stresses. So she wrote, while Leonard trained himself to spot the smallest symptom of an oncoming attack and take action to avoid it.

They divided their life between Lon-

don and the country. From 1913 to 1919 they lived at Asham, a nineteenth-century farmhouse set in one of the folds of the Sussex Downs and overlooking the Ouse Valley. It was this solitary house, with its "ghostly foot-steps and whisperings," that gave Virginia the idea for her story *A Haunted House*. In 1919, after their lease was up, they bought Monks House, believed, inaccurately, to have belonged to the fifteenth-century monks of Lewes Priory. It was a white weatherboard house with an acre of garden adjoining the churchyard in the Sussex village of Rodmell.

During the same period they also had two houses in London. They moved into the first of these, the beautiful Hogarth House in Paradise Road, in March, 1915, and then, in 1924, to 52 Tavistock Square in Bloomsbury, which was eventually destroyed by bombs during the Second World War.

The years between the wars were full of achievement. Most of Virginia's novels and critical essays were composed during this period, as were much of her husband's critical and political writings, and together they founded the Hogarth Press in the basement of Hogarth House. In their spare time, they printed and bound books by hand. Not only was it a useful therapeutic occupation for Virginia, but it expanded into a highly efficient publishing firm with a distin-

Art and Life in Bloomsbury

Bloomsbury was unconventional—in literature, in art, in life. Although we mainly remember its writers, to Bloomsbury itself, art was as important as literature. Vanessa painted, Strachey bought the work of modern artists, and Roger Fry organized a postimpressionist exhibition in 1912 that flouted every Victorian notion about art. Personal relationships in Bloomsbury seemed no less shocking. Virginia loved Leonard deeply, but her greatest passion was bestowed on women—for example, Vita Sackville-West. Both Leonard and Vita's husband, Harold Nicolson, accepted the relationship, but didn't altogether approve, for both worried about its effect on Virginia's precarious sanity.

TOP: N. NICOLSON, *Portrait of a Marriage*, 1973; BELOW: ATHENEUM

Vita Sackville-West, 1919



PRIVATE COLLECTION

Virginia and Leonard at Asham, 1914

guished list of authors. One of the most notable was Sigmund Freud, whose complete works the Woolfs published in a monumental translation by Lytton Strachey's brother James—a work so fine that a German publishing firm suggested retranslating it back into German to serve as their own standard edition.

Several of the younger members of Bloomsbury, too, were beginning to show promise—Raymond Mortimer, who later succeeded Desmond MacCarthy as chief critic of the London *Sunday Times*; Gerald Brenan, who had begun his authoritative work on the people and literature of Spain; and David Garnett, who burst upon the literary scene with his prize-winning first novel, *Lady into Fox*. These, and others, kept alive the Bloomsbury tradition, whose echoes we still hear today in the urbane art criticism of Kenneth Clark; in the distinguished writings of Noël Annan, biographer of Leslie Stephen and now provost of University College, London; and in the work of Quentin Bell, son of Clive and Vanessa Bell, who in 1972 published the authoritative life of Virginia.

The old guard of the Bloomsbury group often came to the Woolf house in Tavistock Square. Five or six of them regularly assembled there after dinner, reinforced by one or two of the younger

generation—Gerald Brenan, for example, and Angelica Bell, Vanessa's daughter. The atmosphere, though informal, combined a certain austerity with an air of epicurean ease. Good conversation was what mattered. "I very soon got the impression that these conversations were really in the nature of orchestral concerts," wrote Gerald Brenan. He goes on:

One might almost say that the score was provided, for the same themes always came up—the difference between the younger and the older generation, the difference between the painter and the writer, and so forth. The performers too were thoroughly practised, for they had been meeting every week or even more often over a space of many years. . . . The solo instruments, one might say (both strings), were Virginia Woolf and Duncan Grant: they could be relied on to produce at the appropriate moment some piece of elaborate fantasy, contradicting the serious and persistent assertions of other instruments. . . . Clive Bell, fulfilling the role of the bassoon, would keep up a general roar of animation. His special function in the performance was to egg on and provoke Virginia to one of her famous sallies.

But in spite of the achievements and pleasures of these years, Leonard felt they were going downhill. Their lives had become penetrated by politics. Importantly they beheld a series of disasters leading step by step to barbarism and war: the Versailles Treaty, the creation

of Stalin's Russia, the failure of the League of Nations, the rise of Fascism and Nazism. But their private life, too, was overwhelmed with misfortune. Many of their closest friends, including Roger Fry, Lytton Strachey, and Virginia's nephew, the poet Julian Bell, died. And then there were the ever-deepening crises of Virginia's health.

Her health was closely connected with her novels and the process of writing them. From politics, from what others, especially in the 1930's, tended to think of as the "real world," she seemed oddly isolated. "It's not catastrophes, murders, deaths, diseases, that age and kill us," she wrote in *Jacob's Room*, "it's the way people look and laugh, and run up the steps of omnibuses." Her poetic genius needed stimulus from the outside world, yet she also needed protection against its cruelty. "Life is a luminous halo," she explained in *Modern Fiction*, "a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." It seemed, sometimes, as if she were only half-born into the world, as if her wraithlike spirit never completely possessed her body. The probing, innocent curiosity she felt about life, though often passionate, was sometimes curiously bloodless. In place of the direct involvement that was denied her, she posed a string of improbable questions. What did it feel like to be



Leonard at Monk's House

Downhill All the Way

During the 1920's Virginia produced her finest work: *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*. Yet increasing illness—influenza and fevers that lasted for months—sapped her strength and her spirit. The thirties were no better: old friends died—Strachey's death in 1932 especially affected her—and she agonized over her work, endlessly revising and re-writing. Leonard devoted himself to her care, praising her work, cheering her when she was depressed. Early in 1941 she began to hear voices again; she feared she was going mad. On Friday, March 28, she drowned herself, having become so disoriented that her last letter to Leonard, written that morning, bears the dateline Tuesday.

a king? A man? A bus conductor? She speculated endlessly upon the unknown; and for her the unknown was frequently the commonplace.

Her novels were intricately charted extensions of this process of self-examination. Between periods of importance flies the moment of significance, and it is this transient moment she catches and holds up for us to see. Like a bat, relying on sound waves alone to read the geography of its surroundings, she put together a vision of life full of wisps and fragments: a shadow, a silhouette, a twig in the wind, the mark on a wall. What we overlook in the hurly-burly of modern living, what impresses itself only on our subconscious minds—this was her raw material as a novelist. She was like some special correspondent in a theatre who, unconcerned by the plot of the play, lies concealed in the dark recesses behind the stage and spies upon the actors as they retouch their make-up between the acts.

As a novelist, Virginia Woolf specialized in anguished and often precariously balanced self-observation. Her best books hold in equilibrium sanity and insanity, reality and delusion, the concrete and the dream, granite and rainbow. But it is the dream that gives her books their special quality. As an ordinary land animal she was inexplicable, even ridiculous; as some deep-sea creature, whose

habits and moods could not be properly understood on the hard, matter-of-fact surface of things, she was sublime.

But reality kept breaking through, and for her it was a land of nightmare. Behind her brilliance there was always a hint of stress. The despair that engulfed her when she finished a book became deeper and more dangerous. Fearful of what the real world would say of the world she had created, she nursed a pathological hypersensitivity to criticism. Yet, despite the risks she knew were involved, she continued to work. She had no alternative: writing, after all, *was* her life.

In 1936, while she was revising *The Years*, she came closer to a complete mental breakdown than at any other time since 1913. She thought the book bad. "I wonder," she wrote in her diary, "if anyone has ever suffered so much from a book as I have from *The Years*." She revised it ruthlessly, slowly recovered, and the novel became a best seller.

Her next book, a biography of Roger Fry in which every page was rewritten ten or fifteen times, was finished and the corrected proofs were returned to the printers on May 13, 1940. And with this, some sort of peace came to her spirit. Yet the war had now started, and Rodmell seemed like an oasis, calm but waiting for the storm. Then the bombs began to fall. The significance to Virginia was

that death now showed itself under a different guise—not an invited guest but an interloper.

The symptoms of serious mental illness appeared again at the end of January, 1941. She was revising the proofs of her last novel, *Between the Acts*. A desperate depression struck her. Her thoughts began to race beyond her control. She became terrified of madness. Leonard consulted specialists, did all he could to calm her. At lunchtime on Friday, March 28, he came in from the garden and found a letter from her on the sitting-room mantelpiece:

Tuesday
Dearest,

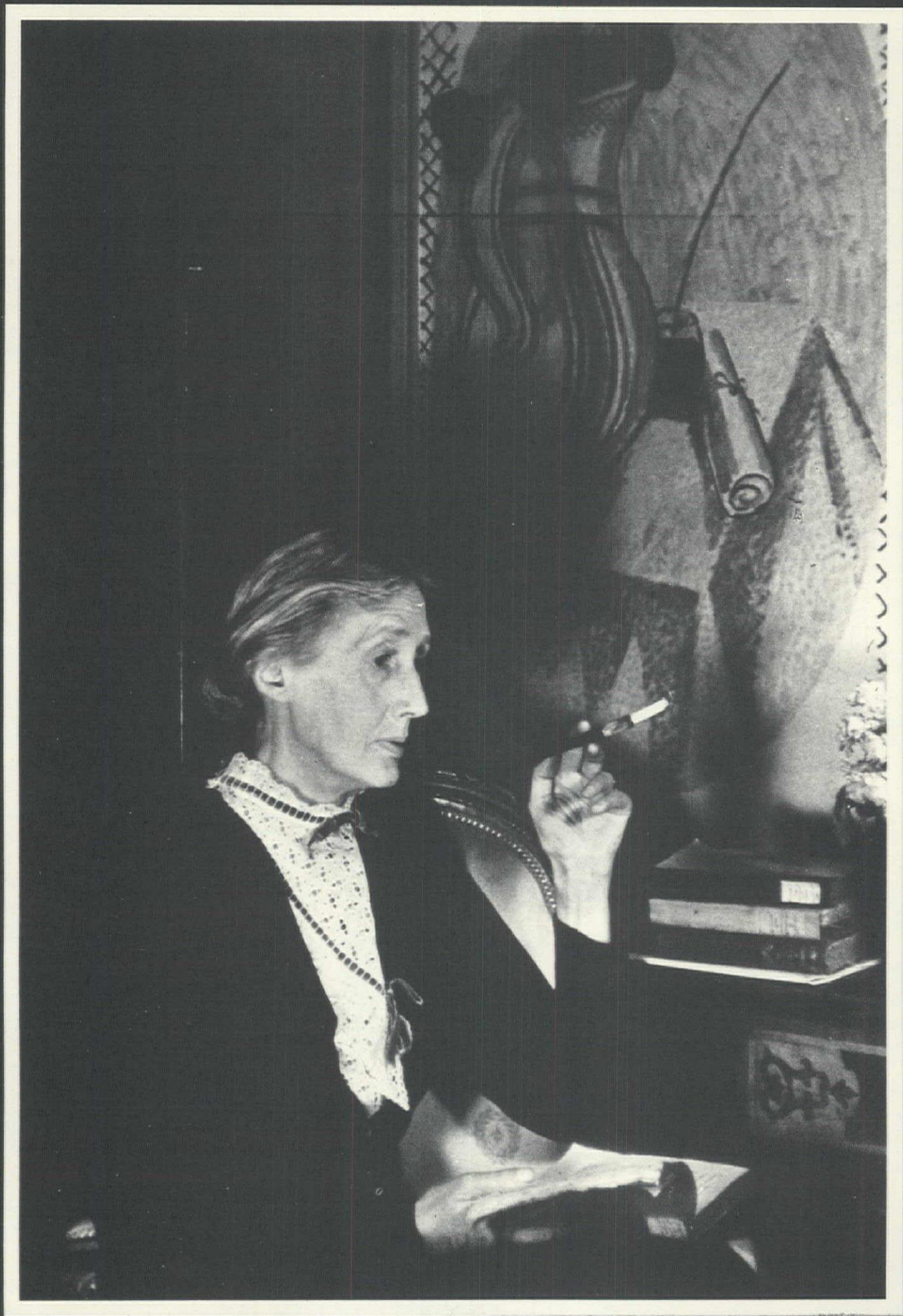
I feel certain that I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, & I can't concentrate. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do. . . .

I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been.

V.

He could not find her anywhere in the house. He ran across the fields to the river. There, on the bank, lay her walking stick. It was three weeks before her body was found, floating in the river.

Michael Holroyd's life of Lytton Strachey appeared in 1968. His biography of the painter Augustus John will soon be published by Holt, Rinehart & Winston.



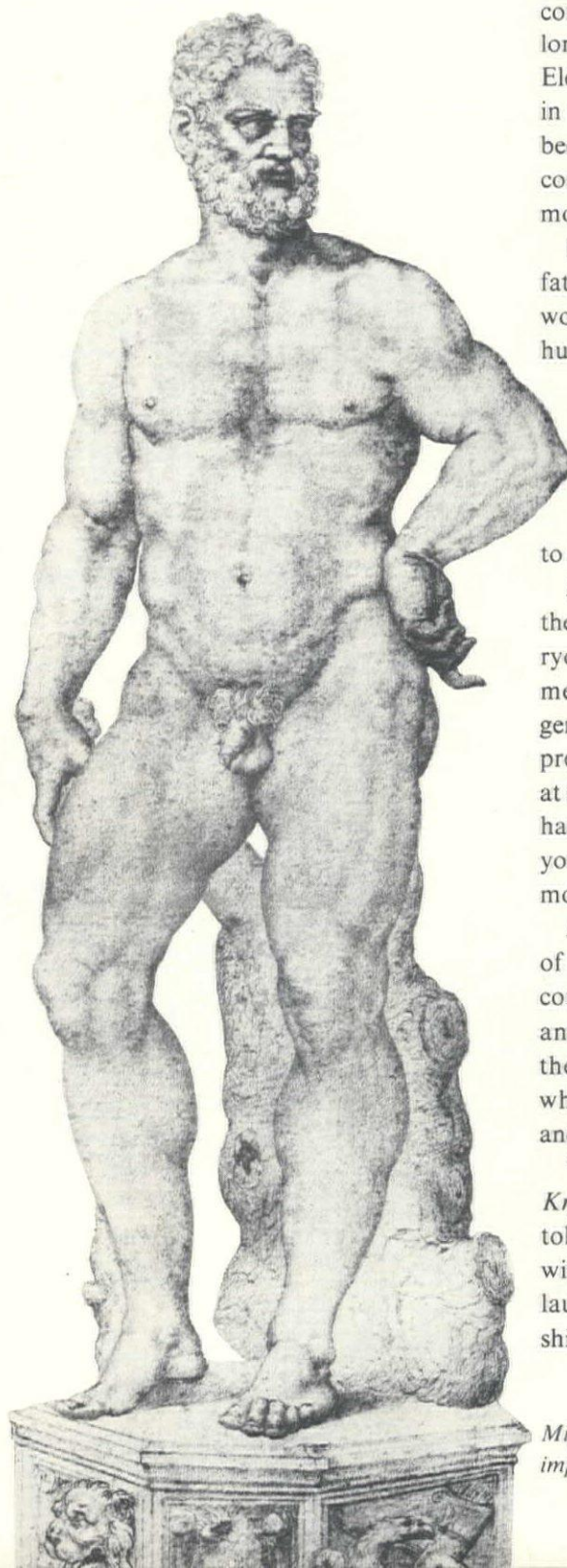
Imagine a hero at the western rim of the world, peering into the void. He has gone as far as anyone of flesh and blood can go, and now he faces a monstrous triform figure that he must destroy. The name of this creature is Geryon. Three bodies branch out from its one waist, a gigantic dog guards its property. When the hero has fulfilled his mission and Geryon is destroyed, he will return home, leaving two huge rocks as memorials to his journey. And now, think of him at the other end of the world, in the east, dressed like a woman and doing women's tasks, in a room where only women and eunuchs are admitted. Contradictory images, a single hero: Hercules.

We are so used to the presence of Hercules in our imagination that we scarcely notice these uncharacteristic twists in his story. He is like the uncle who set the style for our youthful dreams and is now consigned to a rocking chair in a corner of the room, superannuated. But like old, dried-up water courses, the ancient heroes lie in wait for us. They channel our experience along age-old lines. They don't pretend to anything so commonplace as consistency. Aristocratically nonconformist, grandly illogical, they are fickle socialites showing up at the most unexpected places. Now one of their aspects will reincarnate, now another; sometimes a whole cluster of traits will abruptly flower. Not only does the hero have a thousand faces, he has a thousand facets, and it is interesting to see which of these are being reconstituted in our times.

Hercules, the Romans called him. To the Greeks he was Heracles, "Glory of Hera," and the most popular of all their heroes. Every state, every community, was anxious to claim a connection with him, like the small towns of the eastern U.S.A. that proudly claim a house where Washington slept. Hercules earned this affection. Confronted by a dangerous beast or monster, a criminal or oppressor, he went out and vanquished the evildoer. As time went on he lost some of his dignity: the coldly rational Greeks of the fifth century B.C. mocked him as a

HERCULES LIVES!

His guises, weapons,
and methods may be new, but
he's unmistakably
the familiar old strong man
pitted against
the same sinister forces



clumsy hulk of muscle and appetite. A comic playwright, Epicharmus, catches the essence of this version of Heracles: "If you saw him eating, you'd die. His whole throat gurgles, his jaws gnash, his molars clatter, his eyetooth squeaks, he hisses through his nostrils, and his ears waggle."

But it had not always been so. Heracles, the old stories show, had been admitted to the most sacred mysteries in Greece, the Mysteries of Eleusis. Once initiated and purified, he was ready for his greatest test—an encounter with the king of Hades, the lord of death himself. The Mysteries of Eleusis assured eternal life, and now, in the twentieth century, Heracles has been reborn in a variety of shapes, combining in his story the triform monster of power, madness, and sex.

Heracles' birth was auspicious. His father was Zeus and his mother a mortal woman, Alcmene. One night, when her husband was away, Zeus paid a visit to Alcmene's bed. She did not know that the man at her side was a god in disguise, and after Zeus had left, her real husband, Amphitryon, returned, and he was also anxious to make love.

Zeus, that obliging fellow, extended the nocturnal hours to allow Amphitryon to sleep with his wife, and Alcmene, accepting the true husband as generously as she had the false, became pregnant with twins. The older, known at first as Alcides and later as Heracles, had the blood of Zeus in him; but the younger child, Iphicles, was entirely mortal.

All this happened in a timeless world of myth. But in June, 1938, another couple, not so well-born as Alcmene and Amphitryon but good people all the same, became parents of a child who was also from another world, another plane of being.

"Just before the doomed planet, *Krypton*, exploded to fragments," we are told, "a scientist placed his infant son within an experimental rocket-ship, launching it toward earth." The rocket ship exploded from the doomed planet

Mighty Hercules relaxes between labors, unimpressed by his flashy successor opposite.

in an orgasmic burst of flame, and when it landed on earth the compassionate Mr. and Mrs. Kent took charge of the child and placed him in an orphanage. There the infant astounded the doctors and nurses. In the pictures that relate his early life, he appears as a diapered super-baby, breaking his toys or brandishing a massive chest of drawers over his head while a doctor watches in amazement, sweating shocked beads of perspiration. In the same way Heracles, while still in his cradle, betrayed his extraterrestrial origins by strangling the snakes Hera sent to kill him.

Mr. and Mrs. Kent adopted the super-baby as their only child; Alcmene and Amphitryon had two children. But the difference is less than it seems. Early in life, the foundling child from Krypton is told to hide his strength (*krypton* is Greek for "that which is hidden") and assume an alter ego. Thus the one becomes two—Superman and Clark Kent. Clark Kent is all too mortal, bespectacled and bumbling in romance, the Iphicles to Superman's Heracles, who, like his original, must use his strength "to assist humanity." Heracles' title, by the way, was *alexikacos*—"he who defends against evil."

Humanity is almost always in need of assistance, and Heracles' labors were twelve, a zodiacal totality, a life's work. He was sent out to perform them by Eurystheus, a king of Tiryns, just as Kent/Superman is sent out by his editor at the *Daily Planet*. But Eurystheus is only a front for the relentlessly jealous Hera, who never forgives her husband for his adultery. Hera, mother goddess, wife of Zeus, having failed to murder Heracles in his cradle, sends a spirit to drive him mad. In a psychotic fit he murders his wife, Megara, and tosses his own children into the fire. To do penance for this crime he has to go and serve Eurystheus, and so his life's work, his labors and suffering, begin—ostensibly at the behest of Eurystheus but in fact stage-managed by Hera herself. No jealous goddess seems to stand in the shadows of Superman's existence, unless we count the city where he lives and where

the *Daily Planet* is published—Metropolis. Metropolis, the Mother City, may be the vestigial impersonal trace of the imperious mother of the gods, always turning up a gangster to be annihilated, a natural catastrophe to be averted, supplying an Augean Stables of filth for Superman to sluice out.

But that is stretching it. For a more complete reincarnation of the Hera-Eurystheus-Heracles triangle, we have to look at another of Heracles' twentieth-century manifestations. In Ian Fleming's *The Man with the Golden Gun* a horrifyingly persuasive scene in M.'s office finally explodes into the following climax:

The hand, snub-nosed with black metal, flashed out of the pocket, but, even as the poison hissed down the barrel of the bulb-butted pistol, the great sheet of armor-plate glass hurtled down from the baffled slit in the ceiling and, with a last sigh of hydraulics, braked to the floor. The jet of viscous brown fluid splashed harmlessly into its centre and trickled slowly down, distorting the reflection of M.'s face and the arm he had automatically thrown up for additional protection.

The hand holding that bulb-butted pistol, which so sacrilegiously emits its stream of poison against M. as he sits in the inner sanctum of the secret-service building, is the hand of James Bond. Why did 007, the most trusted of operatives, turn on his revered M?

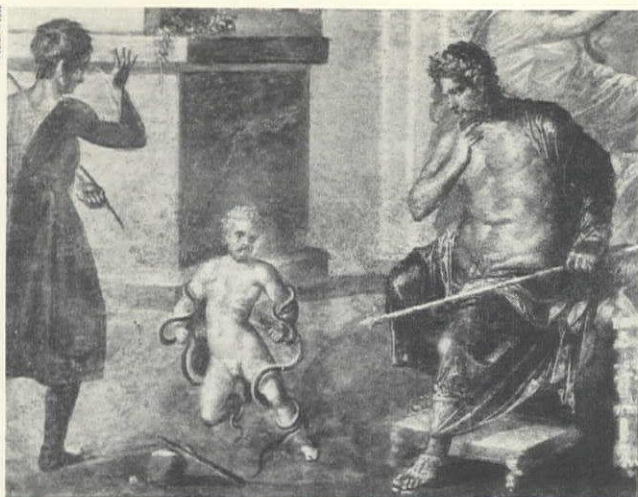
It began on his previous assignment, when he was captured by the Russians. The KGB brainwashed him and now, programmed to kill, he has been foiled only at the last minute by a machine from the gods, the glass that miraculously descends from the ceiling to shield M. Bond is put in the hands of a neurologist, Sir James Moloney, for a fierce battery of E.C.T. treatments at The Park, "a discreet 'so-called' convalescent home in a vast mansion in Kent." "Twenty-four bashes at his brain from the black box in thirty days. . . ." And then, when the treatment is over, Bond, like Heracles, is sent out into the world again on yet another labor to expiate the crime and prove the cure effective.

Heracles would probably have liked to destroy Hera, too. She, however, was invulnerable, while Bond had a flesh-and-blood target. But a closer look at M. will reveal Hera looming in the background.

The clue lies in Fleming's own life. According to his biographer, John Pearson, Fleming's mother was a beautiful but remote woman, adored and inaccessible to her sons. As a boy, we are told, Fleming often referred to her as "M." And so it turns out that it was for the sake of the mother goddess that Fleming invented the mask of Bond, who was to play Superman to his own literary/journalistic Clark Kent. For her sake Bond went out and performed all those incredible deeds of heroism, held in perpetual bondage, as it were, to her will.

In the secret-service (*krypton*) world of Bond, heroism and crime often touch and merge. That Heracleian lapse into homicidal aggression is interesting. The myth contains a shrewd psychological truth when it makes Heracles subject to attacks of murderous rage. Great power may be subject to psychic weaknesses. The split is built into Heracles/Iphicles, and one commentator has noticed it in Clark Kent as well. Heinz Politzer, writing about Superman in 1949, said, "The dual identity motif is the schema of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—a pattern bordering on that of the pathological swin-





Enfants terribles: Baby Hercules, at left, strangles the snakes Hera has sent to kill him, while little Superman, an orphan, warms up for things to come. Note the nurse's prediction.



dler and criminal. . . . The double face and the split personality are symptoms of a disease that has attacked our civilization." We should keep a wary eye on our supermen. He who can split rocks with his fist may have a split in his mind more dangerous than any fist.

Nevertheless, Heracles was not all blood-lust and unrestrained force. Even when his adversary was a deadly freak of nature, like the hind of Cerynea with her bronze hooves and golden antlers, Heracles was likely to bring his catch home alive. He did so with the Cretan bull, which sired the Minotaur, with the horses of the Homeric hero Diomedes (human flesh was their feed), and with the Erymanthian boar, which Heracles tired out by running into a snowdrift. All the monsters were brought back to Tiryns for Eurystheus to inspect, and ancient artists had a field day depicting the king's terrified reactions to this parade of zoological exotica. He is often shown peeping out cautiously from the giant pot into which he is supposed to have crept every time he heard Heracles was returning with yet another catch.

It was enough, apparently, for the man-hero to assert his superiority over these wild creatures. They were sacred, sacred because they were monstrous. The two most famous beasts he killed—the Nemean lion and the Hydra—were specifically sent by Hera to threaten him. The lion was supposed to be invulnerable, but Heracles first stunned and then choked it, finally using its own claws to skin its hide, which he was to wear ever after as a cloak, with the

scooped-out scalp for a cap. The Hydra was a different proposition. Hera sent along a huge crab to assist the many-headed monster (its heads grew in the telling as well as in the course of being chopped off, but nine is the accepted number), so Heracles had to call in a friend to help him. The friend cauterized each of the stumps as Heracles chopped off the head—producing a cry of foul from Eurystheus, who added another labor as penalty.

So Heracles tamed brute nature. His own nature was tamed more subtly—by women. From beginning to end his life is circumscribed and defined by the feminine. The name of a goddess is built into his—Hera-cles—and when he takes another wife after murdering his first, he picks a princess, Deianira, whose love for him turns melodramatically and literally poisonous. On the way home after the wedding, Heracles and Deianira come to a river and a centaur offers to ferry Deianira across. And then, in mid-stream, the centaur, who is called Nessus, tries to kidnap Deianira. Heracles kills Nessus with an arrow, but as the centaur dies he manages, unbeknownst to Heracles, to give Deianira his blood-soaked shirt. "Keep this shirt," says Nessus. "It will be a love charm if ever you think Heracles is falling out of love with you."

Years later, it is this same shirt from Nessus that turns into liquid fire and hugs Heracles to death when he accepts it as a gift from Deianira. His labors, his long absences, the rumors of his other love affairs, all have led her to

this last resort—the grisly love-charm. She sends Heracles the shirt and succeeds where all the monsters, giants, and even Hera herself had failed. So Heracles goes to Olympus, having constructed his own funeral pyre.

In the years between his first encounter with the snakes of the mother goddess and his final immolation, Heracles was embroiled with women over and over again. It was more than a gargantuan appetite for sex—such as his feat of impregnating the fifty daughters of King Thespius in one night. It was a constant running battle with something more subtle and tormenting and modern. James Bond, for all his macho exploits, doesn't begin to explore the recesses of sexuality in the Heracles myth. Much less Superman, with his prepubescent indifference to Lois Lane, which Jules Feiffer has called "A typical American romance. . . . A sissy wanted girls who scorned him; a man scorned girls who wanted him."

For a fuller living out of Heracleian sexuality we have to go to someone who has poured himself into the heroic mold in his life and work, someone like Norman Mailer, who, in recent books and articles, has taken to referring to himself in the third person, as "the writer," as "he." To have no "I," only a "he," is to become more than a man; it is to be a he-man, a hero, and for Mailer, the author of *The Prisoner of Sex*, one of the



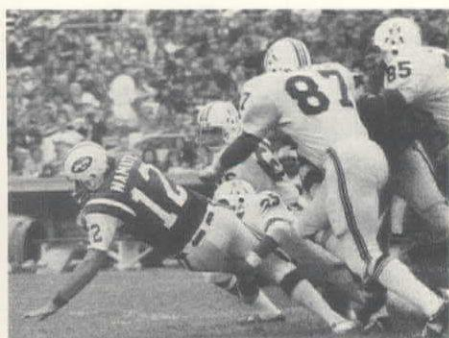
Lion tamers: Hercules slays the Nemean lion; below, Hemingway guardant, Leo couchant.





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Triform foes: Hercules zaps Geryon; below, it takes three to bring down a Namath (12).



WIDE WORLD

principal labors has been a Heracleian contest with the Amazons of feminism. There has always been more than a hint of physical struggle with women in Mailer's writings, at least as far back as the wrestling match in *An American Dream* in which the hero, Rojack, breaks his wife's neck. And Mailer himself has taken on the new feminists in verbal and literary tussles—comparing them to Stalinists, saying Kate Millett has a masculine mind, “like a flatiron.” Heracles fought the queen of the Amazons for her girdle, but Mailer, true to his special candid genius, has gone deeper into the myth than that classical panty-raid. “If we wish to be more masculine we must first satisfy something feminine in ourselves,” he has written in *Cannibals and Christians*. Here he gets close to the nerve of the Heracles myth. For there *is* something feminine in Heracles over and above the name of his persecutor. Ovid, in his *Heroides*, pictures Heracles dressed in a filmy gown of Oriental weave, holding wool for a serving girl and accidentally crushing the spindle of the loom in his great ham fist. How did this very odd scene come about?

It started with another of Heracles' fits of mad violence. He fell in love with a woman called Iole. When her family

refused to let her have anything to do with him, Heracles went berserk and tossed one of Iole's brothers over the ramparts of the castle at Tiryns. For the second time in his life he had to go to Delphi and ask what he must do in order to expiate a crime. This time he was told to allow himself to be sold into slavery to Queen Omphale of Lydia. And so the prime representative of Greek masculinity was made subservient to a woman, an Oriental, a member of the barbarian culture of Greece's ancient enemy.

Heracles is kept alive by his contradictions. This is the key to his vitality in the twentieth century. His myth works on the imagination like those stories of sea monsters: once you have been told they exist, every hummock and knob that breaks the surface of the ocean suggests some larger organic shape submerged just out of sight. In the view of some psychologists, Heracles is an archetype, defined by Jung (who introduced the concept into psychology) as “a preconscious psychic disposition that enables a [man] to react in a human manner.” Archetypes first take on a specific form when they emerge into consciousness in the shape of images, and the Heracles myth, by this interpretation, is an archetypal constellation of images, scenes, and fragments that answer some corresponding psychic need in the collective life of our times. We choose those parts of it that serve us, and reject those that do not.

One last scene—and another twist to the story. Heracles joins Jason and his Argonauts on their trip to fetch the golden fleece from the country of Chalcis, somewhere in the region of the Black Sea. On the way the heroes have to stop for fresh water, and Heracles goes ashore with a companion, a handsome young man called Hylas. Hylas wanders into the forest and finds a pool of clear water. He is alone. The water is perfect and still. He bends over, and from the depths of the pool the nymphs, dazzled by his beauty, stretch up their arms and pull him in.

Hours later, when Hylas has not returned to the Argo, Heracles goes in

search of him. He looks all over the island, calling his name. The Argonauts have to leave, but Heracles cannot bear to set sail without Hylas. So the Argo continues on her way and Heracles stays behind, calling out to the echoing rocks, “Hylas! Hylas!” Only the rocks answer him.

This portion of the Heracles story is like a puzzle piece cut wrong. Where does it fit? Granted, many Greek heroes had their male friends and lovers, but nothing in the rest of the Heracles myth prepares us for this anecdote about Hylas. Heracles seems to anticipate, dreamlike, our own era of trendy bisexuality. If not archetype, prototype. For of all his labors, deeds, enterprises, and struggles, he abandoned only one—this one, the search for the Golden Fleece. Not for the sake of a woman, as we might expect, but for the sake of a man, a man who is ideal, peaceful, unaggressive—and lost. A lost being for whom Heracles searches, as for a part of himself, and never finds.

Playwright, essayist, and former classics teacher Kenneth Cavander writes often for HORIZON. Though no bruiser, he never lets beach bullies kick sand in his eyes.



METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

Eternal enemies: Hercules vs. the Amazons; below, Norman Mailer vs. Germaine Greer.



FRED W. MCDARRAH

Of Panda Cars and Pantehnicons, Biro and Blimps

Reader, beware! English doesn't always mean what it says

Permit me to discuss a personal predicament. I work in a world of American-English and write for a world of English-English. Simple? Not at all. And if your travel plans involve a trip across the Atlantic in the near future, pay heed, because it might very well be your predicament, too.

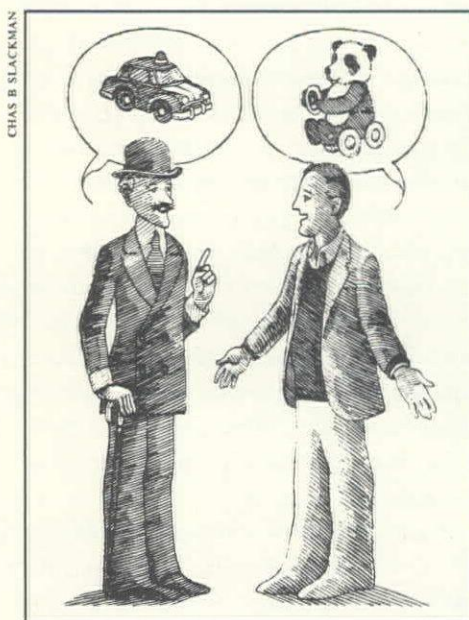
The linguistic schism in the English tongue can be traced to that period in the nineteenth century when America was beginning to flex its muscles both culturally and industrially. Certainly there were transatlantic misunderstandings by the time Oscar Wilde arrived with nothing to declare except his genius and sailed home convinced that "the English have really everything in common with the Americans, except of course language." A bit later, Shaw was moved to make his celebrated remark about two countries divided by a common tongue. These two lofty minds contented themselves with simply discerning the problem. It remained for a scholarly Oxonian, H. W. Horwill, to decide in 1939 that the field was quirky enough to warrant its own compendium. He called it *An Anglo-American Interpreter*.

Horwill took the extreme view that if an American was taken suddenly ill while on a visit to London, he "might die in the street through being unable to make himself understood." The situation has improved somewhat over the past thirty-six years, but I recently witnessed the consternation on the face of an American when an English doctor treating him for an open wound said he was about to put some lint on it. To the patient, *lint* meant only one thing—those nonsterile flecks you brush off a

dark suit. Its English-English meaning—a surgical dressing—has never entered American-English.

Assuming you do not require the application of National Health Service lint, where are the other ambushes?

To begin with, you might pick up the *Times Educational Supplement* and read the following: "A fifteen-year-old Croydon boy has been suspended by his head since last September because of his long



hair." No, this is not the British belief in corporal punishment carried to sadistic lengths. *Head* is an accepted abbreviation for headmaster.

To fortify the nerves after this shock you might repair to a pub. The pub-keeper will probably guess you're an American and ask whether you'd like a block of ice in your drink. If this conjures up a mental picture of a piece of ice the size of a suitcase, don't challenge the man's sanity. To the English *block of ice* simply means ice cube.

Occasionally American friends setting out unescorted down the byways of Anglican usage have asked me to give them advice for the journey, a list of ambush words for the foray into our *lingua incognita*. There are, of course, certain notorious "don'ts," such as *fanny*. I shall long recall the parting words spoken to an American journalist bound for London: "For chrissake, remember that *fanny* to them describes the vulva!" Its broader American-English meaning—the bottom—has never displaced the English-English meaning.

Americans and Englishmen also have to be briefed fully on the conflicts arising over the use of the term *knock up*. Legion are the numbers of English maidens who have retired red-faced for the evening after asking their American hosts to "make sure you knock me up early in the morning."

Perhaps by now you are beginning to understand why *New York Times* columnist Russell Baker began one column under a London dateline with these desperate words: "One of the hardest languages for an American to learn is English."

If you are not fully convinced, take pen in hand and tackle this modest test I prepared recently for a well-educated American woman, aged about forty, who has visited England more than a dozen times but has never lived there. Limiting myself to the *Oxford English Dictionary* and common usage, I wrote out the following bit of nonsense and asked her what it meant.

I was wearing a bespoke suit, with gongs, and was sitting in a bath-chair in a lay-by on the arterial road, when I first saw a panda

car, then a milk float, followed by a pan-technicon and an articulated lorry. The driver of the lorry, oddly enough a real blimp, stopped, got out, and asked if I was carrying a biro. It transpired that he was hauling a load of geysers, immersion heaters, and loofahs for the ironmonger on the front. He said he had heard there was trouble locally in the mains in town and he was searching for a blower. I told him there was a kiosk ahead, just past the pillar-box.

My friend tried gamely to guess the meaning of nineteen baffling words, but finally conceded she might have understood the passage better if it had been written in Esperanto. To end her misery, I provided her with an American-English translation:

Bespoke, custom-tailored; *gongs* ("Is it a fancy word for epaulettes over there?"), medals; *bath-chair*, wheelchair; *lay-by*, rest area; *arterial road*, main road; *panda car* ("Making a delivery to the zoo?"), small police-patrol car; *milk float* ("A soda-fountain concoction obviously, but what's it doing on a road?"), milk truck; *pan-technicon*, moving van; *articulated lorry*, trailer truck; *blimp*, a pompous, elderly man; *biro* ("Is it a kind of pistol?"), ball-point pen; *geysers*, over-the-sink hot-water heaters; *loofahs*, sponges; *ironmonger*, hardware store; *front*, seaside promenade; *mains* ("Trouble locally in the mains sounds like a minor revolt in the municipal council"), electric power supply; *blower*, telephone; *kiosk*, pay phone; *pillar-box*, mailbox.

If you did well on that test, you are no doubt aware that a sentence such as "I was mad about the flat" can mean totally different things on different sides of the Atlantic. To an American, it conveys anger over having to change a tire. To an Englishman, it means delight with an apartment.

Wherever possible, practitioners of American-English have streamlined the language. Long ago, for example, some nameless American decided that the *-ing* was unnecessary in *sparkling plug* (still used in Britain). An American will use a *rowboat* while the British go out in *rowing boats*. The English *washing day* was

long ago shortened to *washday* in America. There is still a *turning* in a British road, and an English schoolboy still speaks of the *parting* in his hair. Americans tend to lop off a final "s"—*upward, inward, northward*. They also eliminate the *-ed* that is retained in many English-English words—*ice*, instead of *iced*, water; *three-room*, not *three-roomed*, house; *stocking*, not *stockinged*, feet.

Sometimes, of course, Americans opt for a long word over a perfectly adequate short one—*apartment* instead of *flat*, *elevator* instead of *lift*, *sanitation-man* instead of *dustman*. Occasionally, the variations are minor, but thoroughly puzzling—at least no philologist has come along to explain the differences.

How, for example, did *lady-bird* become *ladybug* by crossing the Atlantic? Why does an Englishman say *blue-eyed boy* when an American uses *fair-haired boy*? Why in American usage is it *far-sighted* and *nearsighted* when in English-English it is *long-sighted* and *short-sighted*? Why does an American driver use a *gearshift* and not a *gear-lever*, look through a *windshield* and not a *wind-screen*, stow things in a *trunk* and not a *boot*, and dent his *fender* rather than the *wing*? Why did Americans bother to change *occupier* to *occupant*? Why didn't the English accept the perfectly adequate American term *frozen food* instead of persevering with an odd invention of their own, *frosted food*?

Perhaps it is the pace of political life in the United States that makes an American *run* for office. In England one *stands* (and, if successful, optimistically starts *tabling* resolutions—a setback for the American, to whom a bill *tabled* is a bill postponed). But why is it *action replay* on the BBC and *instant replay* on an American network? Why do Americans refuse to touch things with a *ten-foot pole* while the English use—or, rather, do not use—a *barge-pole* for this purpose? Is it because the number of Roman Catholics is proportionately higher in the United States that Americans gathered around the Christmas

turkey ask "*Who'll have the pope's nose?*" The English term, *parson's nose*, is virtually unknown.

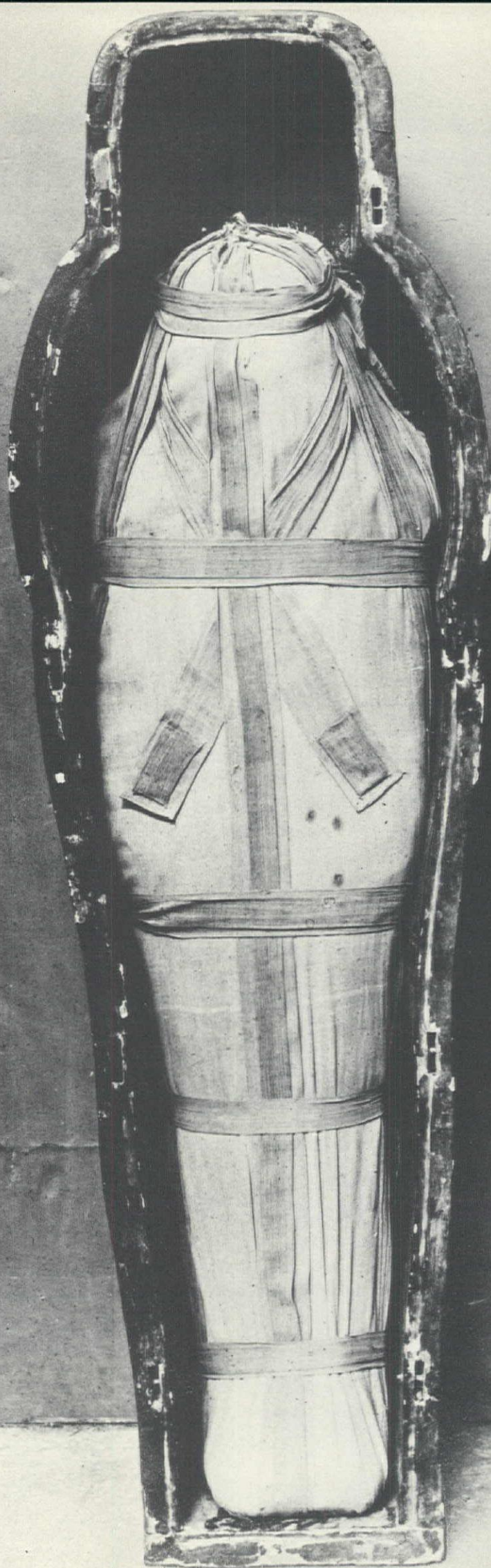
For a correspondent, this division of the language into two briskly flowing streams calls for nimble footwork on the banks. It is no exaggeration to say that virtually every working day poses its linguistic dilemmas.

Is a Fleet Street audience aware that *bomb* in American theatrical jargon means precisely the opposite of what it does in England—a total flop on Broadway, a hit in the West End? Does *peanut gallery*, used in talking about the highest and cheapest seats in a theatre, explain itself to an English audience, who would call it the *gods*? Have English readers seen enough Westerns by now to spare the correspondent's having to put *guard's van* in brackets when an American refers to the *caboose*? Need he explain that *sneakers* are *plimsolls*, a *potty* is a *jerry*, and an *ambulance chaser* is an *accident tout*?

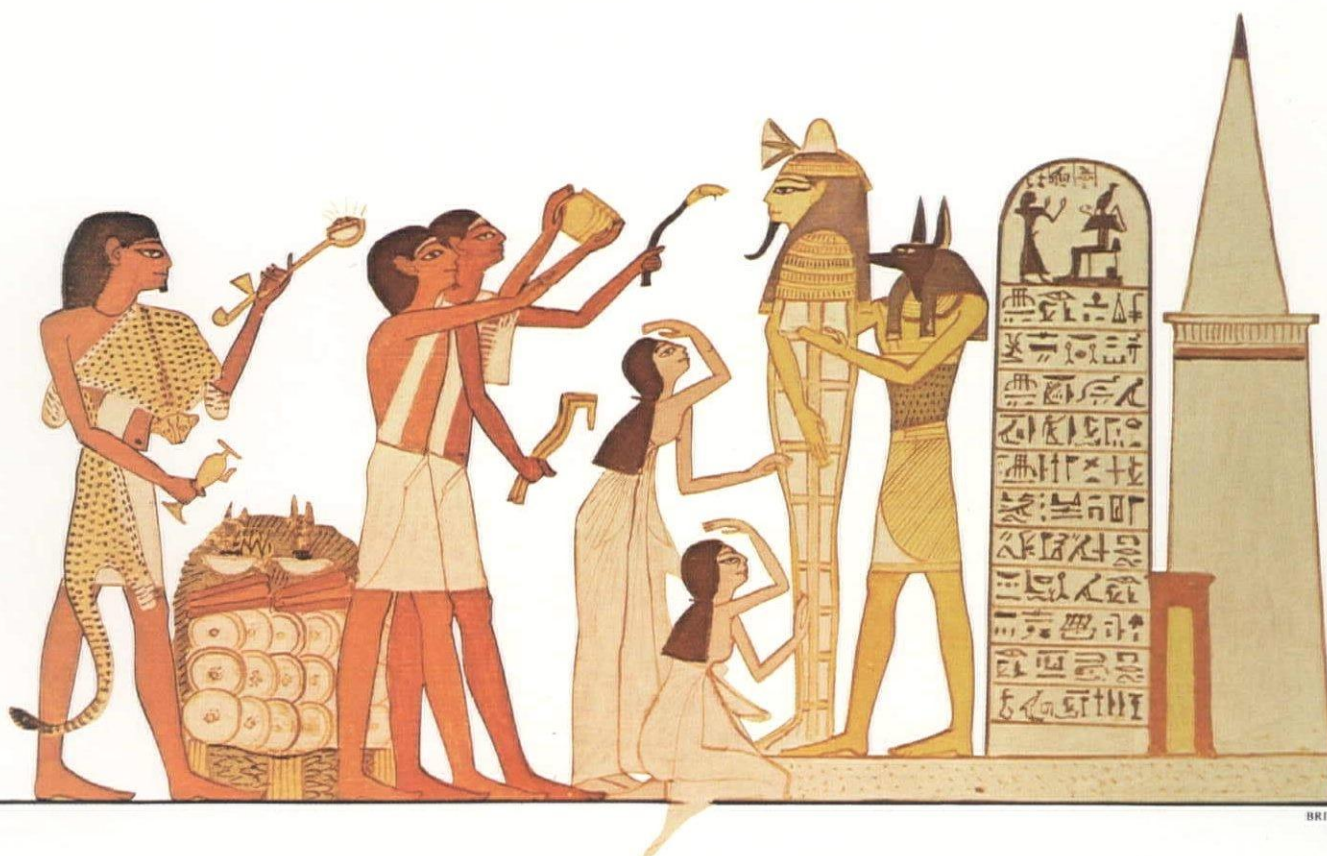
A classic example of the pitfalls here—and of how rapidly the two branches of the language can come together in a pinch—occurred when British correspondents based in New York had the task of explaining to their readers the developing furor over "disc jockey payola." A colleague of mine consulted his paper's style book under the heading "Barred Americanisms" and decided that "disc jockey payola scandal" should correctly be rendered as "wireless gramophone-records programme commentators' bribery scandal." He persevered with this construction for two or three days until an exasperated foreign editor cabled back: "WILL ACCEPT FUTURELY 'DISC JOCKEY' AND 'PAYOLA' IN QUOTES AS UNAVOIDABLE AMERICANISMS."

Clearly, in a world accelerating to an American tempo, there was no room for wireless gramophone-records programme commentators, whether they were on the take or not.

Australian-born and New York-based, Ian M. Ball covers the American scene for the readers of the London Daily Telegraph.



Mummies, or the Restless Dead

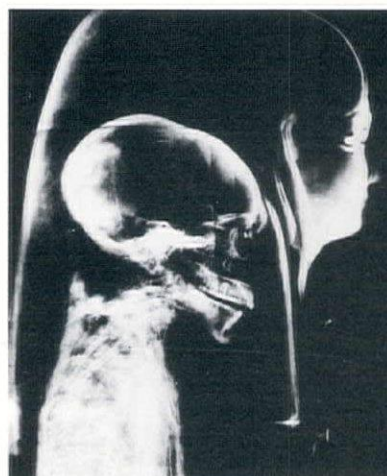


BRITISH MUSEUM

Though they were embalmed, bandaged, and boxed away, presumably forever,
Egypt's finest have for millenniums been the prey of tomb
robbers—as a source of treasure, as curiosities, and even (ugh!) as medicine

By BRIAN FAGAN

While women weep, above, in a painting from a Book of the Dead papyrus, funerary priests in white kilts prepare a mummy for burial. They are symbolically opening the mummy's mouth, a ceremonial act intended to restore its vital functions. The jackal-headed god Anubis, to the left of the inscribed tablet, presides over the ancient rite. It was one of many steps in preparing mummies such as Queen Esemkhebe, opposite, her original wrappings still intact after three millennia. X-ray photographs have recently proved useful tools for studying mummies without despoiling them. The x-rayed mummy at right is Pharaoh Amenhotep I, secure inside his case.





Then we found the august mummy of the king. There were numerous amulets and golden ornaments at his throat, his head had a mask of gold upon it, and the mummy itself was overlaid with gold throughout. . . . We stripped off the gold which we found on the august mummy of the king and the amulets and ornaments, and the coverings in which it rested. . . . We then set fire to the wrappings, and carried away the funeral furniture. . . .”

So ran the testimony of a witness at a judicial inquiry into a break-in at a royal tomb near Thebes, an inquiry which ultimately led to the conviction and punishment of a group that had preyed on the wealth of the Egyptian pharaohs. As it happens, that inquiry was held in the twelfth century B.C., but similar testimony might have been heard in an Egyptian court early in our own century, or even more recently. For ever since the ancient Egyptians began to lay out the mummified remains of their pharaohs and other rich and powerful citizens in sumptuous style, robbers have looted the tombs for the treasures they contained. Moreover, there was for centuries an almost insatiable demand for the ghoulish substance known as “mummy”—a sure cure, it was said, for the ills of those who partook of it. In our own time, Western eagerness to possess the artifacts of ancient Egypt has kept illegal trade going at a brisk rate. However meticulously the ancient Egyptian dead were laid to rest, they were scarcely to enjoy eternal peace, or, indeed, any peace. The mummies simply had too strong a fascination: the living would not let them be.

As everyone knows, the ancient Egyptians went to extraordinary lengths to ensure the well-being of their dead. A deceased person was embalmed with great care, wrapped in bandages, and then, if the family could afford it, laid out in a brightly painted wooden case, thereafter to enjoy eternal afterlife in the underworld. During the Middle and New Kingdoms, the underworld was conceived of as a large and well-appointed Elysian Fields under the Nile. Before being admitted to it, the dead person underwent the Judgment of the Dead: his heart was weighed on sacred scales against the feather *ma'at* (“rightness”). If it failed the test, the heart was devoured by a monster waiting nearby, but a soul that passed muster was brought into the presence of the god Osiris and allowed to enter the underworld, there to live a life of unending pleasure while workmen—represented in his tomb by funerary statuettes—did all the farming and the chores.

Meanwhile, the dead person’s *ka*, his genius or guardian spirit, lived on in the tomb with the mummy, feeding on offerings left outside the sepulcher. Every effort was made to preserve the dead person’s name and *ka*, for if either of these connections with the land of Egypt was disturbed, his soul would be obliterated from the underworld as well.

The process of mummification was closely linked to the cult of Osiris, best loved of the Egyptian gods. Osiris, according to legend, was a wise old king who civilized Egypt and founded its empire. Treacherously murdered, he was mummified, resurrected, and became the father of the god Horus. Osiris’s resurrection, which came to be associated with the Nile Valley’s annual cycle of flood, planting, and harvest, gave the Egyptians hope of a similar resurrection for themselves. Since it was

Hor, an obscure sovereign of the Twelfth Dynasty, was buried with the wooden statue at left, which portrays his ka—the vital force that protected him in life and death. The raised arms of the headdress form the hieroglyph symbol for ka.



The god Anubis seeking a dead man's heart

THE LOVED ONES: According to the ancient Egyptians, immortality could be achieved only if one's corpse were correctly preserved and made into a proper home for the spirit. The process took seventy days. The heart, regarded as the seat of the conscience and the center of physical and emotional life, was left in place and its position marked with a scarab. In the painting above, Anubis seeks out such a scarab before leading the mummy on the first steps of its journey to the afterlife. Other organs—liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines—were removed and stored in canopic jars like the ones below. These were placed in the tomb along with mummy-shaped figurines of servants like the one at right, usually inscribed with a guarantee of eternal leisure for the departed. Even some cats attained the pleasures of immortality, among them the mummified beast at right, dedicated to the cat goddess, Bastet.



Canopic jars, for the storage of innards



A shawabti, or servant



The mummy of a sacred cat



from a mummified state that the god had sprung to life again, all Egyptians sought to preserve their bodies for immortality.

Herodotus, who traveled through the Nile Valley in about 460–455 B.C., was the first writer to record how the Egyptians embalmed and mummified the dead, describing the most expensive method as follows:

They first draw out part of the brain through the nostrils with an iron hook and use drugs to dissolve the rest. Next, they make an incision in the side, using a sharp-edged piece of Ethiopian stone, and take out all the intestines. They clean the inside of the corpse by washing it with palm wine and again with pounded spices. Then they stuff the belly with pure myrrh, pounded fine, and cassia and other such spices, excepting frankincense, and sew up the vent. After this, they keep the body buried in saltpeter seventy days to embalm it; for it is forbidden to embalm it longer. At the end of the seventy days they wash the whole body and bind it with bandages of fine linen and coat it with gum, which the Egyptians commonly use instead of glue. . . . The relatives, when they receive the mummified body, make for it a wooden case, shaped like a man; and having put the body inside and sealed it up, they stand it in a sepulcher, upright against a wall.

Herodotus’s words became part of the vast jumble of fact, superstition, legend, and folklore about ancient Egypt that was available to the medieval and Renaissance traveler. While the ancient Egyptians themselves receded into oblivion, the packed mummy pits and tombs of Sakkara and Thebes came to be thought of as repositories of precious stones and gold—and of a bizarre medicine known as mummy.

Europeans had long prized a substance from the Near East called asphalt, using it as a drug in the treatment of cuts, bruises, and fractures, as well as nausea and a host of other ills. It closely resembled the material the ancient Egyptians had used for their mummies, the word deriving from the Persian *mumia* (Arabic: *mūmiyā*), meaning pitch or bitumen. Thus, when asphalt was in short supply, it became customary to substitute the materials found in the body cavities of the Egyptian dead. From there, it was just a step to substituting the dried flesh of the mummy itself, for as the Arab historian and physician Abd al-Latif wrote, “The mummy found in the hollows of corpses in Egypt, differs but immaterially from the nature of mineral mummy; and where any difficulty arises in procuring the latter, may be substituted in its stead.”

So arose a flourishing trade in mummified human flesh. Villagers at Sakkara dug up ancient Egyptians and transported the mummy to Cairo, where, as Abd al-Latif recorded in 1203, “it is sold for a trifle. For half a dirhem I purchased three heads filled with the substance. . . . This mummy is as black as pitch. I observed, when exposed to the strong heat of the sun, that it melts.” Another Arab writer told in 1424 of how “people who had made a large pile of human corpses were discovered in Cairo. They were brought before the provost, who had them tortured until they confessed that they were removing the corpses from tombs and were boiling the dead bodies in water over a very hot fire until the flesh fell off; that they then collected the oil which rose to the surface of the liquid to sell it to the Franks, who paid twenty-five pieces of gold a hundredweight for it.”

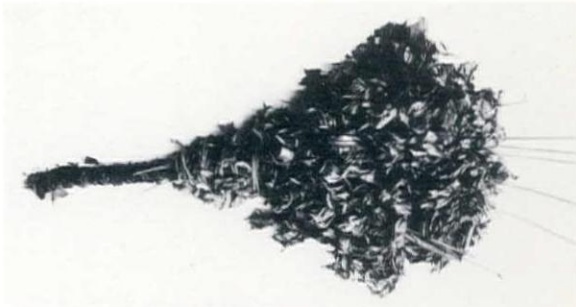
Numerous foreign merchants traded in mummy, but few were as en-

In the section opposite from a Book of the Dead papyrus, Anubis tends a mummy, center register, far left. He appears again in the register directly below, where he guards a tomb. In other vignettes, prayers for the welfare of the departed are offered by various deities and by a birdlike ba, or soul, top right.



Silver and gold mirror for a tomb

TAKING IT WITH THEM: *Wealthy Egyptians’ tombs were crowded with a multitude of life’s necessities and luxuries—toilet articles, furniture, food and drink, even flowers. Usually present, too, was a Book of the Dead papyrus, a collection of prayers and spells that served as both passport and guidebook on the journey through the underworld. If the deceased successfully passed his final judgment—the weighing of his heart against the feather of truth, or ma’at—then he was allowed to proceed, by stages fraught with peril, to the land of Osiris, there to resume the activities he had enjoyed back home in Egypt.*



Tutankhamen’s burial bouquet, somewhat withered



Furniture and a board game for the hereafter



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terprising as John Sanderson, an agent for the Turkey Company who visited Egypt in 1585–1587. Sanderson lived in Alexandria and studied commercial opportunities in Cairo, but he spent a great deal of time at the mummy pits near Memphis, rock-cut tombs filled with embalmed bodies wrapped in cloth. He bought more than six hundred pounds of mummified Egyptian flesh and a complete corpse for export to England. Such a large shipment of mummy was unusual, but Sanderson managed to bribe his way out of the country with his consignment of “divers heads, hands, arms and feet. . . .” The market value of mummy in Scotland in 1612 was eight shillings a pound, so Sanderson must have realized a handsome profit.

Many of the Arab merchants who exported mummy marveled that Christians, otherwise so particular about their diet, could bring themselves to eat the bodies of the dead. Not all of the stuff, moreover, was properly aged; in 1564 a French physician, Guy de la Fontaine of Navarre, investigated the mummy trade of Alexandria and found that fresh corpses were being used to satisfy the apparently insatiable demand. In Europe, mummy was now practically a patent medicine: even King Francis I of France carried a small supply in case of emergency. Still, not everyone credited the stuff with the healing properties ascribed to it: in 1634 an English medical tract warned that “This wicked kinde of Drugge, doth nothing helpe the diseased. . . . It also inferres many troublesome symptomes, as paine of the heart or stomacke, vomitting, and stinke of the mouth.”

Intermittently, Egyptian authorities tried to restrict the commerce in mummy by levying stiff taxes on traders and imposing laws that forbade the shipping of corpses out of the country. Their efforts were abetted, apparently, by nature itself, for ships carrying mummies seem to have encountered violent storms so frequently that sailors regarded mummy as an unacceptably dangerous cargo. But neither government restrictions nor the threat of shipwreck stopped the export trade. Nor did they prevent fraud: the bodies of executed criminals continued to be dried, pounded into powder, and sold for the real thing. Indeed, the philosopher Sir Thomas Browne spoke the truth when he observed that “Mummy is become merchandise, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsam.”

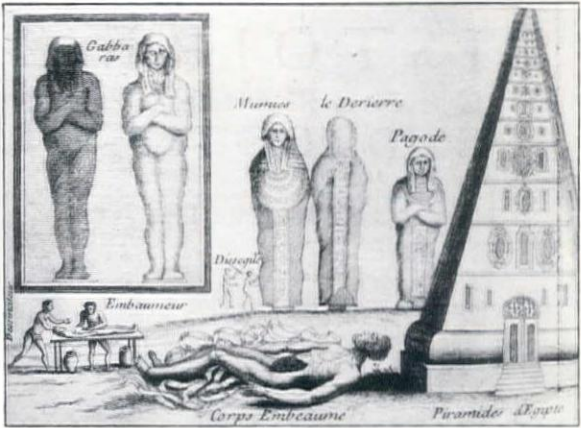
Before long, however, the search for mummies was only one aspect of the quest for antiquities of all kinds. By the eighteenth century both mummies and other relics of ancient Egypt were prized items in the collections of curiosities assembled by wealthy antiquarians. Some collections ultimately grew into museums; that of Dr. Hans Sloane, notably, formed the nucleus of the British Museum, which opened its doors in 1782. In Alexandria and Cairo, a new breed of traveler-collector now joined the merchants of earlier days. He was shepherded around the tourist circuit to the pyramids, to the mummy pits of Sakkara, and on to the bazaars of Cairo, where he could inspect bandaged corpses and marvel at the blackened limbs and shriveled faces of age-old Egyptians. The local hucksters were happy to supply him—for a consideration—with amulets, scarabs, papyri, and even complete mummies. Prices were high, but one could sell the mummy in Europe

Artemidorus, a young Greek who died in Egypt during the second century A.D., survives in this realistic portrait from his sarcophagus. Mummification would soon cease as ancient ways eroded and ultimately gave way to the Arab conquest.



From a 1574 text promoting exotic drugs

MEDICINAL USE ONLY: After the decline of ancient Egyptian culture in the second century A.D., the misconception sprang up that asphalt, then a scarce Middle Eastern folk remedy, had been used in mummification. Thus did mummy become a fast-moving item on the pharmaceutical market—first the packing from the body cavities, later the flesh itself. In northern Europe, where the drug was eventually in great demand, it had a mixed press, but until well into the nineteenth century doctors were prescribing it for ills as diverse as epilepsy, tuberculosis, and bruises. It is said to be in use even today among devotees of the occult.



From a 1694 tract vilifying mummy



Belzoni in the garb of a Turkish pasha . . .

KING OF THE PLUNDERERS: Giovanni Belzoni, a native of Padua, was an adventurer and promoter par excellence who began his career in 1803 as a music-hall strongman in London. (Below he hoists two armfuls of men.) Tiring of show business, he went to Egypt and there discovered his true vocation rummaging through ancient temples, tombs, and mummy pits. He unearthed countless treasures, made a fortune, and virtually founded the tradition of archaeological rapacity that prevailed in Egypt until our day.



. . . and on the English country-fair circuit

at an enormous profit, or even mount an exhibit, unbandaging and dissecting the mummy in some European capital before an audience.

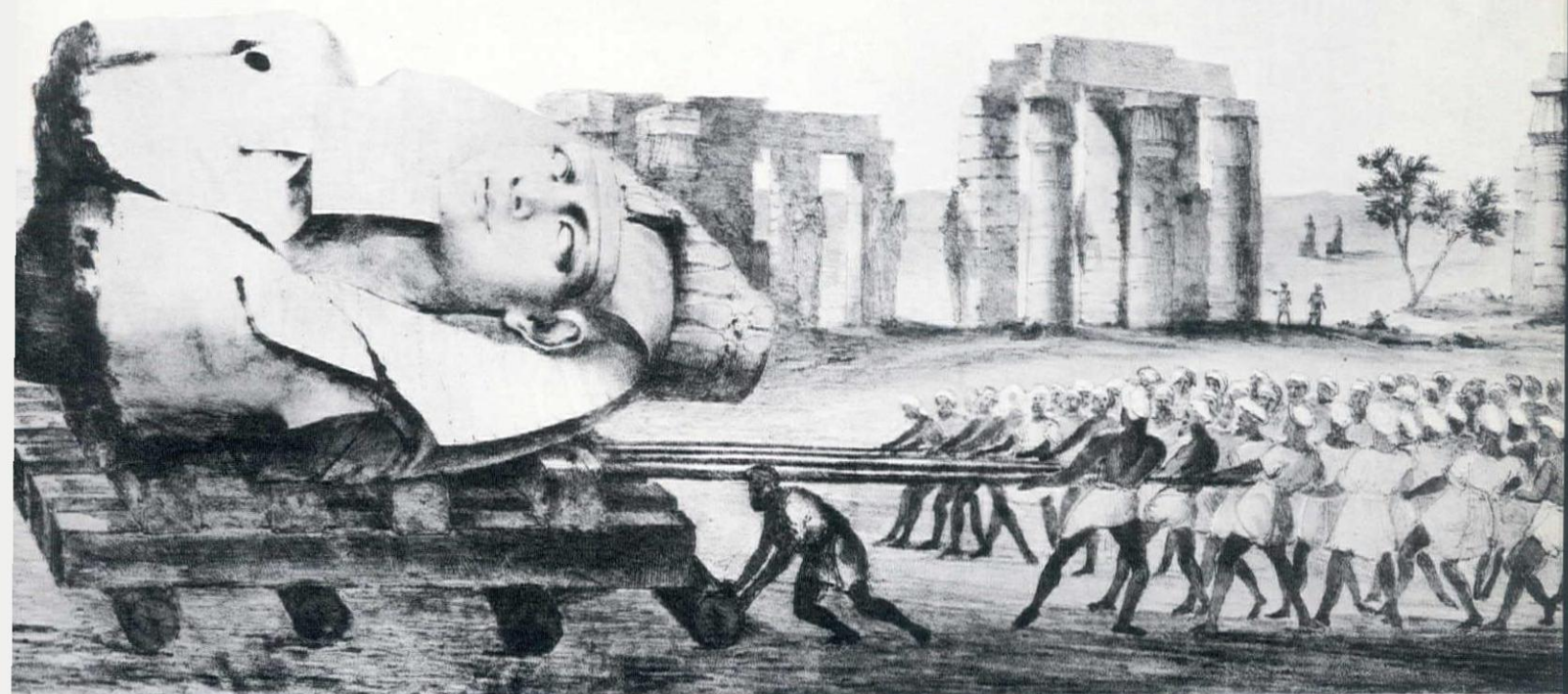
Egyptology, however, did not come into its own until 1798, the year Napoleon ventured into the valley of the Nile on his ill-fated military campaign. He brought with him a team of scientists and artists charged with looking into all aspects of ancient Egyptian civilization. The results were spectacular: the Rosetta stone, the key to deciphering hieroglyphics, was discovered; antiquities were amassed and catalogued; and preparations were made for the publication of the *Description de l'Égypte*. This monumental work of twenty-four volumes described the riches of Egyptian antiquity with an accuracy never before attempted, depicting them on a large scale with delicate drawings and reproductions of exquisitely colored paintings. Today, our easy familiarity with the pyramids and other Egyptian antiquities makes it hard for us to imagine the *Description's* impact on Europe and America. But if the work inspired awe in some, it inspired cupidity in others: Napoleon's savants sparked a scramble for Egyptian antiquities that resulted in the wholesale destruction of mummies, the despoiling of temples and royal tombs, and the scattering of the remains of ancient Egyptian civilization to museums and collections all over the world.

After Napoleon's inglorious departure from Egypt, the British and French consuls on the scene engaged in a frenzy of competitive excavation. The French consul, Bernardino Drovetti, had for years collected antiquities and sold them at great profit to museums and collectors. Henry Salt, Drovetti's English counterpart in Cairo, was urged by his Foreign Office to find another Rosetta stone for Great Britain, and now, in pursuit of their respective ends, the two diplomats staked out the whole of Thebes as their joint territory. Woe to the visitor who tried to dig without a permit from the pasha, and the approval of both Henry Salt and Bernardino Drovetti!

While unscrupulous men like Drovetti plundered the past for profit, others—Auguste Mariette, Gaston Maspero, and that remarkable archaeologist Sir Flinders Petrie—pioneered in conserving and preserving ancient Egypt. Still, profit was the motive force of the day, and the most conspicuous of the great diggers was undoubtedly Giovanni Battista Belzoni, who in three and a half crowded years, from 1815 to 1819, dramatically demonstrated his right to be called the greatest plunderer of them all.

Belzoni was born in Padua in 1778. He acquired a rudimentary education in Rome and then traveled through Europe on small trading ventures, establishing a pattern of restlessness that was to characterize his entire career. In 1803 the handsome Italian—now six and a half feet tall, with a physique to match—came to London and sought work at the Sadler's Wells Theatre. Promptly engaged to execute feats of strength as "The Patagonian Samson," Belzoni traveled the country performing in theatres and at fairs—in one act carrying eleven actors on a 127-pound frame. After nine years in England, Belzoni left for the Continent. He performed in Madrid, then made his way to Malta, and there a chance encounter turned his career in a new direction.

Egypt's Pasha Mohammed Ali, eager to bring his country into the nineteenth century, had sent his agents to scour Europe for men whose special skills and knowledge could be utilized toward that end. One such agent met Belzoni on Malta and, intrigued by the strong man's boasts about his knowledge of hydraulics, commissioned him to construct a



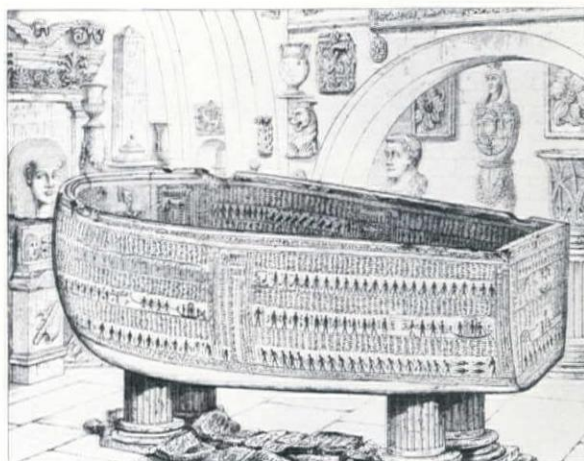
Belzoni's opening act in Egypt: the hauling away of the statue of Ramses II

mechanical water wheel for the pasha. So Belzoni sailed for Cairo, and into a mass of bureaucratic opposition mounted by officials unsympathetic to the pasha's reformist ideas.

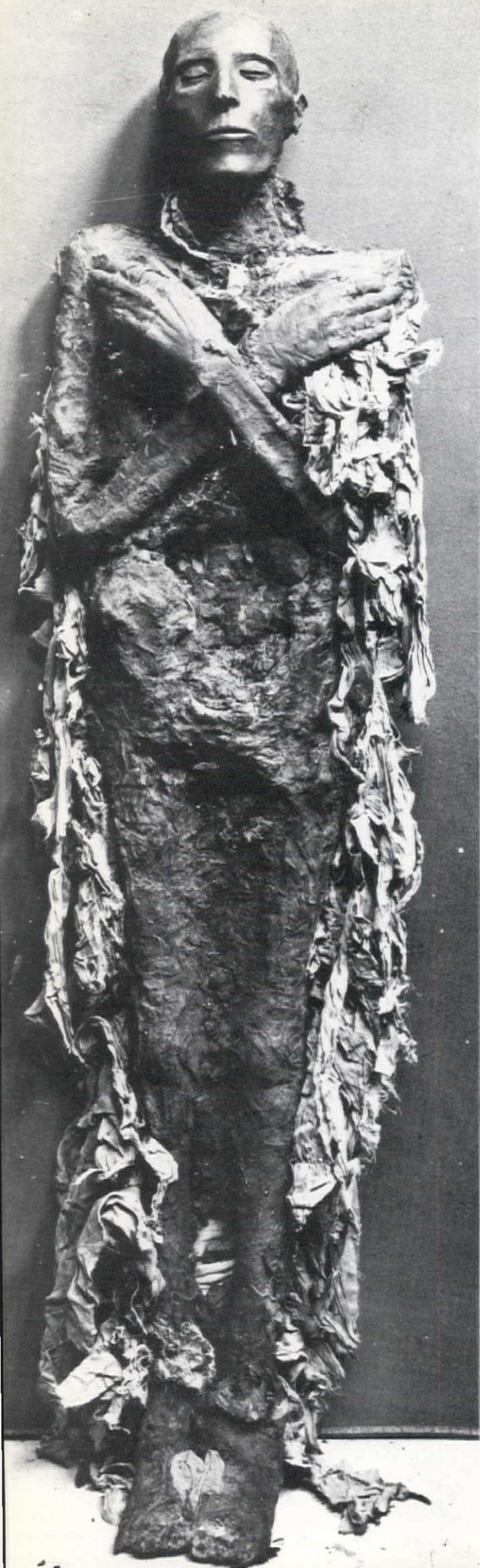
Belzoni was jobless and penniless when he met Henry Salt in 1816 and agreed to transport from Thebes to Alexandria a huge figure of Ramses II destined for the British Museum. In short order, Belzoni accomplished a task that had baffled both the French army and Salt's French rival. Then, instead of returning to Cairo, he decided to hunt for antiquities near Thebes. Using bribery, strong-arm tactics, and artful negotiations, he gathered a band of helpers in Luxor and Karnak who diverted the finest antiquities into his hands. Months later he returned to Cairo with a huge collection of mummies, papyri, and other finds.

In February, 1817, Belzoni set off for Thebes again and the village of Qurna, whose people, he declared, "were superior to any other Arabs in cunning and deceit, and the most independent of any in Egypt." The nearby rocks were honeycombed with hiding places packed with mummies and papyri that the townspeople sold to the highest bidder. With these inveterate tomb robbers, Belzoni embarked on a busy search for papyri. He penetrated deep into the tiny burial chambers and caves where "a vast quantity of dust rises, so fine that it enters into the throat and nostrils, and chokes the nose and mouth to such a degree, that it requires great power of lungs to resist it and the strong effluvia of the mummies. . . . In some places there is not more than a vacancy of a foot left, which you must contrive to pass through in a posture like a snail, on pointed and keen stones, that cut like glass." One can imagine the huge Belzoni's difficulty in squeezing through such defiles.

BELZONI AT WORK: In 1816 the British consul in Cairo hired Belzoni to move an eight-ton head of Ramses II from Thebes to the British Museum. "I found it near the remains of its body and chair," reported the strongman, "with its face upwards, and apparently smiling on me, at the thought of being taken to England." Having sent Ramses safely on his way, Belzoni went on to discover the tomb of Seti I. The pharaoh's mummy had long since been removed, but Seti's splendid sarcophagus was shipped off to London.



The sarcophagus of Seti I in London, courtesy of Belzoni



After getting through the passages, some of them up to two or three hundred yards long, he would sometimes find a place where he could sit and rest. "But what a place of rest!" he wrote.

Surrounded by bodies, by heaps of mummies in all directions . . . The blackness of the wall, the faint light given by the candles or torches for want of air, the different objects that surrounded me, seeming to converse with each other, and the Arabs with the candles or torches in their hands, naked and covered with dust themselves resembling living mummies, absolutely formed a scene that cannot be described.

Eventually a person became inured to the dust and mummies. I helped if, like Belzoni, one had no sense of smell, but even then "the mummies were rather unpleasant to swallow." Belzoni once "sought a resting-place, found one, and contrived to sit; but when my weight bore on the body of an Egyptian, it crushed it like a band-box. I naturally had recourse to my hands to sustain my weight, but they found no better support; so that I sunk altogether among the broken mummies, with a crash of bones, rags, and wooden cases, which raised such a dust as kept me motionless for a quarter of an hour, waiting till it subsided again." On another occasion he could not pass without "putting my face in contact with that of some decayed Egyptian." Bones, legs, and heads rolled down on top of him as he followed the Arabs in their search.

At first, Belzoni was astonished by the casual way the people of Qurna lived among the hands, feet, or skulls that littered the floors of their caves. They thought no more of it than if the human remains had been cattle bones. But in time Belzoni himself became indifferent to the presence of fragmentary ancient Egyptians: "I would have slept in a mummy pit as readily as out of it," he wrote.

Belzoni's objective was simply to obtain as much loot as he could in the shortest possible time. The discovery of tombs or burial pits was a matter of luck, for there were few surface indications to go by. Mummies of less wealthy people were stacked in rows in large burial pits, most of them wrapped in coarse linen without much ornamentation.

In a more richly appointed tomb, on the other hand, the bandaged and embalmed body was often deposited in an elaborately painted sycamore case. Belzoni describes some of the cased mummies he found, flowers still garlanding the breasts of the dead and carefully wrapped entrails packed inside the painted and varnished casing. Such finds, popular with tourists and museums, had commanded good prices for at least a century. These mummies were also the more abundant source of papyri, tucked into the bandages and under the arms. The tombs of very important people were elegantly laid out, consisting of several chambers with painted friezes depicting everyday life. Belzoni himself was particularly interested in the smaller objects buried with the wealthy—vases containing embalmed viscera, alabaster vessels, clay ornaments, carvings, gold leaf, and scarabs. Within weeks he had acquired an enormous stock of mummies and papyri by methods that, however ruthless, were no worse than those practiced at the time by other antiquity hunters.

So successful was Belzoni at Qurna that he virtually cornered the local supply of mummies—only to have his rivals contrive to bar him from the mummy caves by bribing officials. He turned his attention next

At left, the mummy of Seti I, his wrappings in shreds: unearthed and sundered in antiquity, reburied, unearthed again in the 1800's, transported, and now at rest.

to Nubia and there managed to clear away the mass of sand blocking the entrance to the great temple of Ramses II at Abu Simbel, a feat that had daunted every treasure seeker before him. Belzoni's account and sketches of the temple, the first to appear, made him famous.

Fresh from his triumphs at Abu Simbel, Belzoni returned to Thebes and set up camp in the desolate Valley of Kings. Although generations of visitors and Napoleon's savants had failed to find any tombs other than those known in antiquity, he was certain that other royal tombs awaited discovery. Belzoni scoured the valley for traces of concealed entrances and eventually set workmen to digging at its western end. There they promptly discovered the entrance of a tomb containing eight mummies. A few weeks later he discovered the magnificently painted but empty tomb of Mentuherkhepshef and the almost deserted sepulcher of Ramses I. Then, on October 16, 1817, came his greatest discovery.

His men found a choked entrance that when unblocked led to a series of interconnected chambers decorated with paintings in which a procession of divinities embraced the dead pharaoh while dreadful figures guarded the road to the underworld. The paintings were the finest Egyptian tomb art that had ever been found. The chambers of the tomb and the burial area itself had been stripped by ancient tomb robbers, but the pharaoh's alabaster sarcophagus remained in place, a delicately finished, translucent coffin that glowed when a lighted candle was placed inside it. On the bottom of the sarcophagus the bare-breasted goddess Neith was depicted waiting to receive the king. Of the mummy itself there was no trace, for it had long since been removed—as we now know—to a safe hiding place in a rocky cleft behind Qurna.

What Belzoni had found was the tomb of Seti I, father of Ramses II, who had died about 1300 B.C. It is to Belzoni's eternal credit that he recognized the importance of the paintings and took steps to preserve them by sealing the tomb with a solid wooden door.

Belzoni's rivals were infuriated by his success—the tall Italian always seemed to be one step ahead of them—and matters came to a head in late 1818 when Drovetti and a group of his agents accosted Belzoni in front of the Temple of Amon at Karnak. Shots were fired and blows exchanged before Belzoni managed to escape. Realizing that he might have been killed, he left Thebes and, in 1820, returned to London. There he organized an exhibition that included objects from Seti's tomb as well as an assortment of mummies and other finds, arranging with characteristic showmanship to unwrap a mummy on the eve of the opening before a "large and distinguished audience." Belzoni never returned to the Nile: instead, he wrote a book on his travels and perished in West Africa in an attempt to discover the source of the River Niger. His memorial is the Egyptian Hall of the British Museum, crammed with the results of his labors.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the tourist traffic up the Nile to Thebes, Aswan, and on into Nubia steadily increased. The antiquities dealers of Luxor had a ready market for their wares, both genuine and fake. "They waylaid and followed us wherever we went," wrote the novelist Amelia Edwards in 1874, "while some of the better sort—grave men in long black robes and ample turbans—installed themselves on our lower deck. . . . There we always found them, patient, imperturbable, ready to rise up, and salaam, and produce from some hidden pocket a purseful of scarabs or a bundle of funerary statuettes."

The most energetic exploiters of Egypt's glorious past during this



An x-ray of Seti's mummy

DEAD BUT NOT FORGOTTEN: *By interring their rulers with lavish and elegant funerary equipment, the Egyptians unwittingly condemned them to uneasy graves and subverted their hopes for immortality. Seti I, for instance, who died about 1300 B.C., was unearthed (and decapitated) in antiquity by tomb robbers and then reburied with twelve other mummies. They rested in peace until 1881, when tomb robbers laid hold of them again. The mummies were eventually reclaimed by the government and placed in the Cairo Museum. Recently they have been examined by a team of American and Egyptian specialists—dentists, doctors, archaeologists, and radiologists—who are studying pharaonic life expectancy and diseases in ancient Egypt.*



Seti's profile, left, authenticates his ancient portrait.

Carved on her enormous cedar coffin, the portrait opposite of Queen Meryet Amon, wife of the pharaoh Amenhotep II, belies her fifty-odd years and recalls the Egyptians' prayer for the dead: "Behold, you are young again forever."



The skeleton of a queen

UNDER WRAPS: As well as being medical curiosities, royal mummies have proved, with the aid of x-rays, to be rich sources of information about the daily lives of ancient rulers. The female skeleton revealed in the x-rays above, for instance, was arthritic and had a severely curved spine. The mummy below, long identified as the infant daughter of a princess, has proved instead to contain the remains of a baboon. There is strong evidence that the princess died young and in childbirth, but why she was buried with a baboon is a question no one has been able to answer.



An infant—



revealed as baboon

period were Ahmed Abd el-Rasul and his brother Mohammed. In 1881 news of their discoveries reached the ears of officials in Cairo, who were trying to prevent further looting of royal tombs. An investigation was conducted and a party of officials was lowered into a cleft in a hillside at Deir el-Bahri. They were greeted by an astonishing sight: a cache of royal mummies hidden by priests to preserve them from ancient tomb robbers. "And what Pharaohs!" wrote archaeologist Gaston Maspero. "Perhaps the most illustrious in the history of Egypt, Thutmose III and Seti I, Ahmose the Liberator and Ramses II the Conqueror."

The precious finds were loaded aboard a steamer. As the ship left Thebes, Maspero tells us, the local men fired off their rifles and the local women set up a wailing—presumably over the loss of their heritage but perhaps, as cynics have suggested, out of grief over the loss of a lucrative source of income. Later, some of the royal mummies were unwrapped and archaeologists could gaze on the features of the most famous monarchs of ancient Egypt. Seti I was the best preserved, with "a fine kingly head." "A calm and gentle smile still played over his mouth, and the half-open eye lids allowed a glimpse to be seen from under the lashes of an apparently moist and glistening line, the reflection from the white porcelain eyes let into the orbit at the time of burial."

Strange as it may seem, little is known, even today, of the embalming practices of the ancient Egyptians and the history of the mummy. Not even the spectacular discovery of the undisturbed tomb of Tutankhamon in 1922 and recent x-ray research on mummies have added much to Herodotus's account. But Egyptology has advanced enormously in recent decades. Cairo now boasts a world-famous museum containing some of the most important royal mummies and numerous fine antiquities. Well-organized excavations by archaeologists of many nationalities have enriched both Egyptian and foreign collections.

Yet the fancy prices being offered for antiquities these days hardly encourage a real change from the old ways. Today, as always, collectors are imbued with the passion to possess, a passion, as one French writer describes it, "inferior to love or ambition only in the pettiness of its aims." So the tombs of ancient Egypt are likely to go on being violated. As for the violators, their attitude toward the goods they deal in remains every bit as casual as the attitude Mark Twain observed in Egypt a hundred years ago. On an Egyptian railway, he jokingly recalled in *Innocents Abroad*, "the fuel they use for the locomotive is composed of mummies three thousand years old, purchased by the ton or the graveyard for that purpose, and . . . sometimes one hears the profane engineer call out pettishly, 'D—n these plebians; they don't burn worth a cent—pass out a king.'"

But even if the traffic in mummies for collectors could be stopped, there would still be a demand, small but persistent, from dealers in the occult; even now, it is rumored, genuine powdered Egyptian mummy can be bought at certain hole-in-the-wall New York establishments for forty dollars an ounce.

Brian Fagan, a professor of anthropology at the University of California, wrote the forthcoming The Rape of the Nile, to be published by Scribner's.





Ding-Dong, Dug-Dag, Pek-Plak

In the gamelans of Bali—libertarians please note—there is neither conductor nor score: everyone plays his own music at his own rhythm. The wondrous sound that results is like a swarm of bees wearing bells



Cymbalist

Today, nobody knows how many centuries after it began, the gamelan—the indigenous orchestra of Java and Bali—is going stronger than ever in its home islands. The Balinese musicians above, making up about one-third of a gamelan that performs often for tourists, are playing instruments that have hardly changed in a thousand years: in the front row, a drum, cymbals, and a bamboo flute; behind these, two xylophone-like gangsa; and in the rear, two gongs of bronze. Like all of Southeast Asia, Java and Bali have been heavily influenced by the cultures of China and India; yet the gamelan and its music remain, as ever, unique to these islands.



Drummer

There are sounds in the musical world that verge on the miraculous, though we may take them very much for granted—sounds that can be produced only by an extraordinary interaction of acoustics and psychology, of muscular coordination, mental effort, and cultural preparation. The Philadelphia Orchestra, for instance, sailing through the march movement of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique*, or Vladimir Horowitz hammering out Liszt's Sixth *Hungarian Rhapsody*, or (on a quieter level) Julian Bream plucking and fretting his way through Dowland's galliards for the lute. As one of Dowland's contemporaries, the lute-loving Bishop Joseph Hall, wrote in the seventeenth century, "Had we lived in some rude and remote part of the world, and should have been told, that it is possible, only by a hollow piece of wood, and the guts of beasts stirred by the fingers of men, to make so sweet and melodious a noise, we should have thought it utterly incredible: yet now, that we see and hear it ordinarily done, we make it no wonder."

But the most incredible of all man-made noises, it seems to me, is the exhilarating and metallic music produced by the gamelan orchestras of Bali—a great nexus of sounds made by twenty or thirty percussion players manipulating an assortment of gongs, drums, chimes, cymbals, and metallophones. The result is a rigorous jangling and tintinnabulation as though a thousand bells and anvils were being struck and hammered by a band of harmonious but extraterrestrial blacksmiths. Nothing in Western music can even remotely compare with it. Nor can recordings give anything but the palest notion of the gamelan's true self. The equipment has yet to be made that can reproduce the kinetic surge of a real gamelan heard at close range—a sonority that lifts you up by the very soles of your feet as the tones go shuddering through the ground.

Sometimes the music is very loud, sometimes very soft; always it moves on three or four levels of tone and timbre. The players are ordinary men—farmers and artisans—from the villages of Bali.

Each has one note to play, perhaps three or four notes; each taps and hammers away in his own rhythm, though conscious that he is engaged in a great community enterprise. It's as though they were jointly constructing vast towers and temples of metallic sound. And there is a kind of fierceness about this percussion which has its roots in an ancient warrior culture and the clash of arms and armor, though by now it has been softened by centuries of a gentler civilization. Until recently gamelans were all-male institutions. But even in Bali, women are insisting on liberation, and the Denpasar Conservatory of Music has begun training girls to take part. It seems only a matter of time before the male-chauvinist gamelan goes the way of McSorley's Old Ale House.

The instruments of the gamelan are traditional and of ancient design (as is so often the case with "primitive" instruments, the craftsmanship is so sophisticated that they cannot be duplicated by modern factory methods). The most imposing are the huge gongs that preside over the ensemble like emblems of the Mother Goddess: the largest and lowest pitched is the "female" *gong wadon*; her slightly smaller, higher-pitched partner is the "male" *gong lanang*. Made in neighboring Java, they are cast and forged of a heavy bronze that, when struck with the padded mallet known as *tabuh*, sends its dark reverberation booming out for miles across the tropical landscape of coconut palms and rice paddies. Next to them are the lesser suspended gongs, *kempli*, *klentong*, or *kempur*, and still smaller gongs that look like pots and are cradled in individual wooden stands; village sculptors have decorated the stands with bas-relief demons (presumably benign) that stick out their tongues and pop their eyes at you. A set of ten similarly pot-shaped chimes arranged in ascending order on a long table traditionally served as the chief melody instrument, the *trompong*. It boasts a range of two octaves of a Balinese pentatonic scale whose notes, appropriately enough, are known as *ding*, *dong*, *deng*,

dung, *dang* rather than our own *do-re-mi*.

In former days, the *trompong* player at his long set of pots lined out the "nuclear melody" while the rest of the gamelan added an endless counterpoint of accents and ornaments. Nowadays, however, the longest instrument in the gamelan is usually a *reyong*, a rack holding twelve similar gong-chimes and seating four players. The busiest and most numerous members of the orchestra are those who play the *gangsa*, which resembles a marimba but has keys of bronze rather than wood. In the same category is the *gender*, with bronze keys strung over bamboo resonators. A large orchestra may include as many as ten or fifteen pairs of *gangsa*, which are always built, tuned, and played in pairs. They give off a ringing sound, clear and resonant, like a celesta: struck with light wooden mallets in a steady up-down, up-down rhythm, the higher-pitched *gangsa* run tinkling arabesques around the nuclear melody, yet in this torrent of cross-rhythms no pair of instruments duplicates the rhythmic pattern of any other instrument. Meanwhile a steady background tremolo is sustained by the large cymbals, *chengcheng*, or by the smaller cymbals known as *rinchik*. There may also be some xylophones, called *chungklik* (with a sound to match), and at times you may hear the elegant bamboo rattles known as *angklung*. Finally there are the drums—*kendang*—leading the gamelan with their syncopated rhythms, the throbbing *pek* and *plak* of their finger drumming sometimes alternating with the *dug* and *dag* of the stick strokes.

Gamelan players often wear the most impassive expressions while pounding out their share of this exuberant entertainment. Everyone, in fact, is very nonchalant about the performance, even the four- and five-year-olds who sit by their older brothers and are occasionally allowed to belt out a note or two. Words, even the most onomatopoeic, are inadequate to describe not only the music but also the sudden startling gaps of silence that open up in the sound: one of the favorite bravura tricks of the

gamelan is for everyone to move along at full tilt and then to pause, unanimously, for split-second flashpoints of silence. In that context, even the shortest pause is a slap in the face: keener than any sound, and more awesome than the silence of the grave.

Gamelan orchestras have no conductor in the Western sense, and no written music from which to play. They achieve their precision and unanimity by dint of lifelong practice in following the pattern of the drums. A visitor to Bali can hear them playing all day long during the festival seasons, and often far into the night. Since every village has at least two or three gamelans, maintained by local music and dance clubs, there are hundreds of them throughout the 2,000-square-mile island. Many of them are perpetually in rehearsal, whetting the fine edge of their communal virtuosity. It is during these nighttime practice sessions that the ancient melodies are passed from father to son and new pieces added to the repertoire. The "composer" of a new work goes over the music with his fellow musicians, patiently teaching them phrase after phrase until everyone has learned his part by heart. But the composer is not a "dictator of the baton," merely the first among his peers, and in the course of teaching them his nuclear melody he will receive suggestions from each player for melodic and rhythmic embellishments. Many of the traditional pieces are, in effect, group compositions: hence the extraordinary sense that the music is utterly spontaneous yet totally rehearsed.

In any case, no two performances are ever precisely identical, for the whole spirit of the gamelan is elastic and collaborative. Nor could anything but this tradition of freedom and flexibility produce such a breathtaking multiplicity of syncopations, cross-rhythms, and counterpoints—a free-style pointillism of sounds that dazzles even the most sedulous and experienced of Western ears. Claude Debussy, who heard a gamelan at the 1889 Paris World's Fair, wrote that this music was "based on a counterpoint in comparison with which

that of Palestrina is child's play. And if one would listen without European prejudice to the charm of their percussion, one would have to admit that ours is nothing but the barbarous noise of a traveling circus."

Traditionally, gamelan orchestras never gave concerts as such: they performed for temple rituals, *legong* dances, and masked plays, each with its own characteristic form of gamelan. Today there is still no religious occasion without its accompaniment of gamelan music and ceremonial dance. The village gamelan club will play continuously at the temple during the great harvest festival, when hundreds of women arrive, bringing food to be blessed by the gods. On their heads they carry fruits, rice cakes, and cooked meats piled three feet high in an ornate pyramid of delicacies, surmounted by a roasted pigeon spread-eagled like the royal bird of the Hapsburgs. But the Balinese are a practical people: they leave only flowers and quintessential portions of food for the gods and take the rest home again—after it has been duly admired and bathed in a sea of music and prayer.

Gamelans also play for the theatre dances of Bali, which are sacred to the gods and may either be blood-curdling melodrama or slapstick comedy, depending on where you happen to come in. I accompanied one superb marching gamelan on a funeral procession through the hill country during the cremation ceremonies of an important old noblewoman. Her body had been decomposing for twenty-nine days, waiting for an astrologically auspicious moment for cremation. In the ritual battle over the coffin—a traditional tussle in which the young bloods of the village push, shout, run, and pelt each other with fruit—the body was dumped into a stream and the whole neighborhood began to stink with the indescribable odor of the wet, rotting corpse; even after it had finally been consigned to the flames, one couldn't get one's breath on the leeward side of the pyre.

An even more festive occasion was a

consecration ceremony by the seaside when thirty families brought brightly bejeweled towers of bamboo and palm leaf—the towers containing the ashes of their dead—down to the shore to be carried away by the waves. It was a beautiful day and everyone was in high spirits as they walked, sang, and played their way some twelve miles to the sea. Each tower was a monstrosity heavy affair, carried on the shoulders of about twenty young men. Whenever they came to a crossroads they would spin around madly three times, knocking down whatever got in their way of their juggernaut. It is a tradition that the soul of the departed must be prevented from finding its way back home: whirl it around and it will lose its bearings. Meanwhile the villagers are enjoying themselves immensely while ushering their dead relatives into an even better world. And always there is the jubilant jangle of metallophones to mark their passage. As the musicologist Colin McPhee wrote when he first heard a processional gamelan, "Each man sounded a single note, striking a gong, cymbal or drum. Each man beat out an independent rhythm; the rhythms interlocked and created an exhilarating pattern of sound whose tireless energy was ideal from the functional standpoint. . . ."

That strikes me as a functionally ideal model for many possible spheres of human activity: everyone plays his own note to his own rhythm without interfering with anyone else's efforts. There is no conductor, and no one is left out. The problem before us, as we edge toward 1984, is to find a social solution that would do for the world politically what the gamelan does musically. Does that sound impossible to achieve? But the gamelan itself is an equally improbable achievement. Indeed, had we lived in some rude and remote part of the world and been told that it is possible, with only some hollow pieces of wood and some bars and bowls of bronze stirred by the hands of men, to make so sweet and melodious a noise, we should have thought it utterly incredible.





BACCHUS, circa 1596. *The young god, bunches of grapes crowning his head, raises his glass over a basket of fruit in one of Caravaggio's early works.*

CARAVAGGIO

Portrait of the Artist as a Bad Lot

He never scrupled to break the laws of man or God.
Yet—and the paradox would have pleased him—his works are
among the great masterpieces of religious art

The village of Porto Ercole lies on the south coast of Monte Argentario, a high and rocky peninsula, clad in pine forests and dense scrub, that rises from the Tyrrhenian Sea a hundred miles north of Rome. On the map the peninsula looks like an obese bat, clinging by its legs—a causeway and a long curve of pines and beach called the Feniglia—to the flank of Italy. Until the last decade, when tourism made the Argentario fashionable and covered its slopes with a creeping psoriasis of villas and speculators' apartment blocks, Porto Ercole was merely one of a hundred poor, unremarked fishing villages on the Tuscan coast. Most of the inland ground was malarial, the sardines ran but once a year, the farmers grubbed a meager living from the olives and vines terraced along the slopes; and that was all. In the sixteenth century the Argentario came briefly to life when the Spaniards acquired it and built a string of forts along its coastline, thus gaining a useful strategic hold on the sea traffic north to Genoa and south to Rome. But when the Spanish garrisons went away, Porto Ercole lapsed back into a torpor it had never really left. Unlike most other towns in Tuscany, it never even had anything to do with art—not a painting, not a sculpture; merely an engraved funeral slab or two in the little pink-stuccoed church. In fact, Porto Ercole entered the history of art only once, and only briefly. On July 18, 1610, one of the greatest of all Italian painters, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, died there.

He did not go out with much dignity. A fugitive on the run



Sketch of Caravaggio by a contemporary artist, Ottavio Leoni

BIBLIOTECA MARCELLIANA, FIRENCE

from hired thugs who were trying to kill him, weakened from knife wounds, and trying to sneak back into Rome—from which a papal edict had banished him three years earlier—he had been deposited on the beach of Porto Ercole by a passing boat. The Spaniards, officious and inquisitive, mistook him for a criminal and clapped him in a small jail that once stood on the Feniglia. It took them two days to conclude that this stinking, blaspheming gamecock was not their legal concern. But when the prisoner emerged from his cell, shaking with malaria, the felucca he had come in was hull down on the horizon. In it, he thought, were all his possessions, his clothes, his pictures, and his much-

used sword. Cursing and stumbling in the fine white sand, he ran down the beach after the boat. And so he died, a black knot of fever under the crushing July sun. He was buried a pauper, not quite thirty-nine years old.

Caravaggio's death, no less than his life (they were of a piece, lonely and violent), germinated a legend. Today, as his biographer Roger Hinks points out, "we are invited to choose between Caravaggio the inventor of modern painting, and Caravaggio the pioneer of social realism, and Caravaggio the hero of the resistance against the totalitarian imagery of the counter-reformation, and half a dozen other Caravaggios, all of them plausible, none of them quite convincing." He fit the myth on which our own century nourished its popular fiction of the creative life—at least until the 1960's, when the modern



LOVE VICTORIOUS, circa 1598

Above, the winged god of love grins mischievously as he rises from bed. Under his feet are a book, a violin, and other symbols of cultivated life. He is painted with considerably more skill than the hysterical youth "bitten by a lizard," below, but both paintings—young boys in a genre setting—are typical of Caravaggio's early work in Rome.



BOY BITTEN BY A LIZARD, circa 1593–1594

artist with credit card and Volvo became a paradigm of success rather than failure. According to the myth, the painter is a misunderstood rebel, predicting the future from a point outside society while thrashing about in society's entanglements like boar in a net. So Caravaggio, along with Rimbaud and Baudelaire, Modigliani and Van Gogh, was drafted into the Outsiders' Brigade—that legion of nobly gifted and self-destructive men whose haughty critique of the world was their refusal to accept it on its own terms. And a distinguished addition he was: a figure of extraordinary and international influence not only on his seventeenth-century Italian followers like Mattia Preti, Carlo Saraceni, and the Gentileschi, but on the Spaniard Jusepe de Ribera and the great Frenchman George de La Tour; and, more remotely, on Velázquez and even Rembrandt, whose glittering nodes of light, held in an immensity of gloom, find their distant precedent in Caravaggio's dark *tenebroso*.

Yet the picture of Caravaggio as a genius rejected by his time because he was too advanced for it does not survive inspection. Certainly he had his critics, and made enemies easily and often he was arrogant, spiteful, and cocksure, and his virtuosity was such as to terrify an older generation of Roman artists whose Mannerism was already under attack when Caravaggio arrived in Rome in the early 1590's. The flutterings and grumblings in their dovecote are nicely suggested by the aloof and peevish remarks of a conservative Florentine named Vicencio Carducho, who was three years Caravaggio's junior:

In our times . . . Michelangelo Caravaggio rose in Rome. His new style is cooked with such condiments, with so much flavor, appetite and relish that he has surpassed everyone with such choice tidbits and a license so great that I am afraid the others will suffer apoplexy in their true principles, because most painters follow him as if they were famished. They do not stop to reflect on the fire of his talent which is so forceful, nor whether they are able to digest such an impetuous unheard-of and incomparable technique, nor whether they possess Caravaggio's nimbleness of painting without preparation. Did anyone ever paint, and with as much success, as this monster of genius and talent, almost without rules, without theory, without learning or meditation, solely by the power of his genius and the model in front of him which he copied so admirably? I heard a zealot of our profession say that the appearance of this man meant . . . an end to painting . . .

None of this—not the method of working directly from a model without a preliminary drawing, not the extreme and "indecorous" realism, not even the rejection of Mannerist norms and conceits—would have troubled Carducho, or anyone else except for one threat: Caravaggio's work was both popular and influential. He never lacked patrons in Rome. And the men who supported him were among the richest and most discerning "modernist" collectors of the day. Sometimes, though not very often, Caravaggio had trouble with his ecclesiastical commissions: thus the reverent *Death of the Virgin* (see portfolio) the last work he finished before he fled from Rome, was rejected by the Carmelites of Santa Maria della Scala in Trastevere.

because it lacked "decorum": the model for the Virgin, it was rumored, was a drowned and bloated whore who had been fished out of the Tiber. But then it went on exhibition in Rome amid great public notoriety, and painters flocked to see it; one of them was Rubens, who persuaded the duke of Mantua that he should buy it for three hundred and fifty gold ducats—a handsome price for the time.

Caravaggio's problem was not failure; it was a stubborn incapacity to behave like the success that he was. The accounts and rumors of his life—written, it is true, by such enemies as Giovanni Baglione, who imitated his work but sued him in court for libel—converge on a randy desperado, whose hand, when not on the brush, was on the sword-hilt or groping in plackets and codpieces; who, in the end, had managed to offend nearly everyone who "mattered" and to bugger or knife not a few of those who did not. Yet the paintings Caravaggio made from 1600 onward reveal one of the grandest visionary painters of the seventeenth or any other century, a man obsessed by the dense reality of objects in the world, and by the piercing epiphanies of a faith that could transfigure their coarse, sublunary existence.

He was born on September 28, 1571, in the small town of Caravaggio in Lombardy, south of Bergamo between Milan and Brescia. His father, Fermo Merisi, was a builder and "clerk of works"—neither as high as an *architetto* nor as humble as a stonemason. Caravaggio's career as a painter began in 1584 when he was a boy not quite thirteen years old and was packed off to Milan as an apprentice to a painter named Simone Peterzano. This unimportant artist claimed, lying probably, that he had studied under Titian himself; in any case, he painted in the Venetian manner, an influence on Caravaggio's early work. Caravaggio would later insist that his own style was totally original, being based on Nature and no other prototype. But unless he walked around Milan with his eyes closed, which is improbable, there can be no doubt that Lombard painters like Antonio Campi, and Venetian ones like Jacopo Bassano and Lorenzo Lotto, impressed him; the suavely dramatic modeling and deep tones of the Venetian *cinquecento* were the basis of Caravaggio's own contests between light and gloom.

We do not know how long Caravaggio's apprenticeship lasted, though it was meant to go on for four years. Whatever the case, he appeared in Rome in late 1592 or early 1593. At first he turned out hack work for a Sicilian artist known as "Lorenzo," then got taken under the wing of a minor papal bureaucrat, Pandolfo Pucci, whom the young painter is said to



THE MUSICIANS, circa 1596. For models, Caravaggio often recruited friends or picked up young Romans on the streets. In this painting, however, the third figure from the left is probably a self-portrait.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, ROGERS FUND, 1952

have promptly nicknamed "Monsignor Insalata" because he served nothing for breakfast, lunch, and tea but salad. Caravaggio worked for a while in the studio of another hack painter, one Antiveduto Gramatica, and finally entered the studio of a timid creature named Giuseppe Cesari, who would later style himself as Cavaliere d'Arpino. The "Cavaliere" had Caravaggio paint details of fruit and flowers, and perhaps because of it the still-life artist matured within him earlier than the figure painter. Later Caravaggio made a celebrated remark to the effect that there was no

hierarchical difference that he could see between painting figures and painting fruit: both were equally demanding, he said: each meant "*tanta manifattura*."

In the early seventeenth century, in a Rome still dominated by the long and absolute supremacy of figure composition, this position must have seemed eccentric. It was a strikingly modern opinion, one that could almost have dropped from Cézanne's gruff table talk. Certainly his earliest surviving pictures, such as the *Boy with a Basket of Fruit*, painted about 1593, present the inanimate better than the animate. Reproduction is kind to this painting. In the original—it belonged to the Cavaliere d'Arpino, who lost it along with the rest of his collection to the rapacious and unpleasant Cardinal Scipione Borghese, so it now hangs in the Borghese Gallery in Rome—the boy's flesh has a fuzzy and inert quality; the collarbone and throat are clumsily modeled and the rendering of the plaited wickerwork in the *cestina* is finicky and garish. But the fruit is another matter: the weight, texture, and shape of each grape and peach are intimately described with a firm, springy sense of design. They look good enough to eat—a characteristic that Caravaggio would also give, though somewhat later, to his paintings of young boys.

The erotic content of Caravaggio's early work has long been an embarrassment to critics, particularly those who thought homosexuality a crime or a disease. Thus Bernard Berenson: "he was quick-tempered and bad-tempered, intolerant, envious, jealous, spiteful, quarrelsome, a street brawler, a homicide and perhaps a homosexual." The "perhaps" is nicely placed, before the crescendo. Certainly, Caravaggio would never have been invited to Berenson's villa. But his liking for boys cannot be glossed over without distorting his career and depriving several of his paintings of their meaning. It was not idealized or spiritual, like Michelangelo's platonic reflections on love between men. On the contrary: Caravaggio's pouting street Ganymedes with their liquid brown eyes are obviously



SAINT FRANCIS IN ECSTASY, circa 1594

In Caravaggio's first religious painting, above, Saint Francis lies peacefully in the arms of an angel, moonlight revealing them in stark relief against the somber landscape. Such contrast of light and shadow—*chiaroscuro*—became a hallmark of Caravaggio's mature work, and an important source of dramatic power. Below, as witnesses look on in horror at the prostrate saint and his executioner, a flickering light plays unevenly on the figures, adding to the turbulence of the scene.



THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT MATTHEW, circa 1599–1600

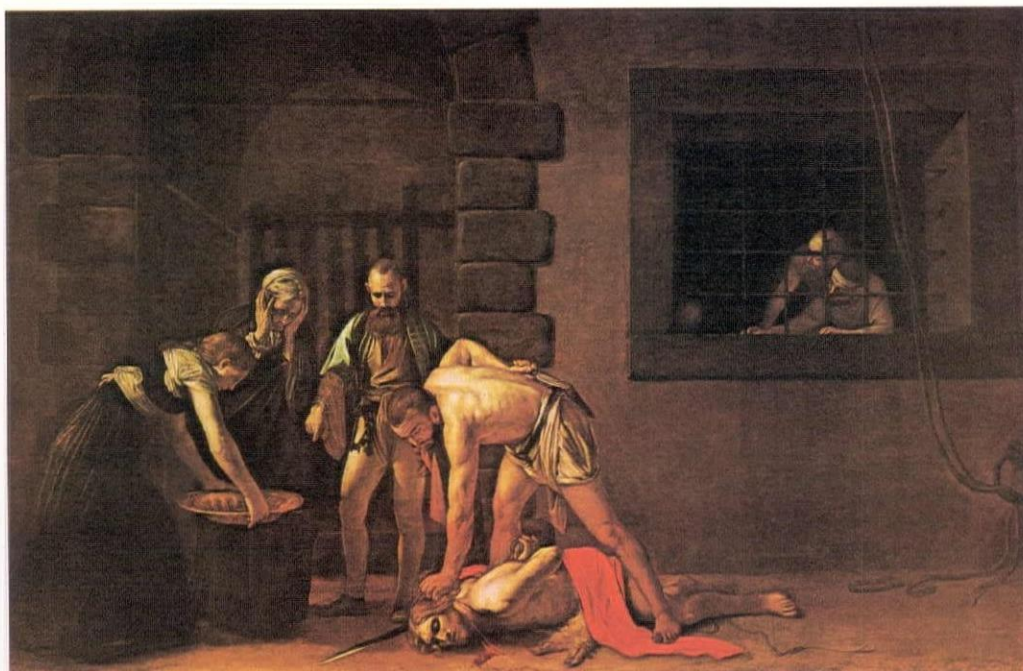
meant to enshrine his sexual responses, and provoke the viewer's. They were quite acceptable, these epicene figures, at least in the circles of Roman patronage in which Caravaggio began to travel by his twenty-fifth birthday.

"Italy the Paradise of the earth, and the Epicures haven, how doth it form our young master?" asked Thomas Nashe, who would have known, having been there. His splendid picaresque novel *The Unfortunate Traveller*, finished in 1597 and so describing the very Rome that Caravaggio knew, left no doubt in its answer. "It makes him to kiss the hand like an ape, cringe his necke like a starveling, and play at hey passe repasse come aloft when he salutes a man. From thence he brings the art of atheisme, the art of epicurising, the art of whoring, the art of Sodomitrie." Granted, Nashe was not immune to the Elizabethan writers' habit of exaggerating the bogey of Machiavellian guile and Catholic vice; still, there is no doubt that the austerities of the Counter Reformation failed to have much of an inhibiting effect on the private lives of the more corrupt and sophisticated princes of the Church.

One of these was Caravaggio's first major patron, the Cardinal Francisco Maria del Monte. They met in about 1595, when the painter was twenty-four and the cardinal a robust and lubricious cleric in his mid-forties. Cardinal del Monte had great influence at the court of Pope Clement VIII; he was very rich and lived in Trimalchian ease in a palace on the Piazza Navona. His special pleasure was to give lavish banquets "where, as there were no ladies present, the dancing was done by boys dressed up as girls." The youths Caravaggio painted were, it seems, much to the cardinal's taste: a round, fleshy face framed with a whipped-cream pompadour of heavy, curly, dark hair; the mouth, usually a little open, expressing a narrow gamut of emotion that runs from slightly vacuous yearning to lustful passivity. Bacchus (page 82) is typical: he is conceived not as a person with a mind and a history, but as a svelte concretion of desire. Caravaggio's famous *Musicians* (page 85) went straight into the cardinal's collection: a homosexual anticipation of Ingres' *Turkish Bath*, it is similar in its rounded exposure of relaxed flesh, its pudgy closeness, its opaque harem eyes, but above all in its single-minded presentation of the human body as sexual object.

At times, Caravaggio's work is rescued from the edge of absurdity only by the sheer skill of painting: so with his *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* (page 84), the boy squealing theatrically from the nip of a diminutive saurian that has just emerged from the flowers he is arranging in a glass vase. It is a joke, or just possibly an allegory of the sense of touch; but the handling of the still life, from the pearly transparencies of the filled vase and the condensation beads on its surface to the glossy leaves and the dense, humid softness of the flowers, is ravishing.

Perhaps the most extreme of all Caravaggio's androgynous images is the *Lute Player*, painted about 1596 and now in the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad. For the last three hundred years, from a 1672 description to the entry in the Hermitage's



CATHEDRAL OF SAINT JOHN, VALETTA, MALTA. SCALA

THE BEHEADING OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST, 1608. In the dank gloom of a prison, the saint has just been murdered and Salome reaches down for his head. Caravaggio daringly threw the composition off balance, concentrating the figures—and the light that illuminates them—on one side of the canvas.

present catalogue, critics have persistently mistaken its sex. Berenson considered it “the most charming of all the Caravaggios that have come down to us . . . a young Roman girl playing the lute.” The girl, as Caravaggio’s contemporary Baglione knew, is “a Boy playing the lute, so lifelike and true in appearance, with a flower-vase full of water, and in it the reflections of a window excellently brought out, with other repercussions of that room in the water, and on the flowers the actual dewdrops exquisitely counterfeited. And this (said he) was the finest piece he had ever done.”

Cardinal del Monte agreed. By now, Caravaggio was installed in the cardinal’s household and living off his patronage. One wonders about their relationship, since there is reason to suppose that the prototype for the sensuous young horn player, second from the right in *The Musicians*, was Caravaggio himself: Ottavio Leoni’s drawing of Caravaggio at about thirty years of age has the same heavy-lidded eyes, thick brows, flattened upper lip, and broad, flared nostrils.

In any case, the cardinal was not the only Roman who enjoyed the pederastic side of Caravaggio’s early work. The Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani, one of the greatest of all seventeenth-century collectors, bought his *Love Victorious* (page 84), and hung it, discreetly veiled by a curtain, in his villa. (A prudish German collector, Joachim von Sandrart, had advised its concealment.) Superficially, the painting looks like a straightforward version of Cupid in one of his numerous manifestations; but it is not. The love god is not hovering round the bed, as in a Titian or a Veronese, but climbing from its rumpled sheets with a raunchy grin; as he climbs, he tramples on a disorderly litter of objects symbolizing the heights of culture that Giustiniani so conspicuously valued—music (score,

violin, and lute), architecture (square and compasses), learning (the book), and even military glory (the armor). Eros conquers all. The painting is an allegory, and—like most of Caravaggio’s work in these early years—it raises the question of to what extent, and in what way, he was a “realist” painter.

Realism is a term that enjoys a considerable degree of cultural relativity, as any word must when it has, at different times and by different writers, been attached to such very different painters as Velázquez, Bruegel, Courbet, and the currently popular photo-realist Richard Estes. It does not mean an unedited transcription of reality. But it does entail the consistent registration of what is extracted as meaningful from that ceaseless tattoo that the world drums on the eyeball. Realism is choice, and the limits of choice vary from painter to painter and from culture to culture. To a modern photo-realist, Courbet’s decision to base his masterpiece of realist painting, *Le Rencontre — Bonjour, M. Courbet*, on a popular woodcut would seem an abdication of the realist’s duty. Probably Courbet would have looked askance at some of the dramatic devices that Caravaggio loved: the magnificent artifice of pose and lighting in his mature religious works, no less than the theatrical nostalgia of his early works.

For nostalgia they are. Art feeds on art, and this is clearly evident in such Caravaggios as *The Musicians*, *The Fortune Teller*, and *The Card Sharps*, all from the mid-1590’s. Their mode is Venetian—Giorgionesque, in fact: small groups in intimate yet shadowy colloquy; the air of expectation and the nuances of melancholy; the fancy dress. Caravaggio’s early figures (when clothed) are not dressed like Romans in the last decade of the sixteenth century. “Hee is counted no gentleman

amongst them that goes not in blacke," Thomas Nashe and *The Unfortunate Traveller* again; "they dress theyr jesters and fooles only in fresh colours, and saie variable garments doe argue unstaiednesse and inconstancy of affections. . . ." The fashion was austere and Spanish. "Did Caravaggio really dress up his young friends," Roger Hinks wondered, "in properties found in some old garret, or picked up in the Campo dei Fiori? And did they really preen themselves on the Piazza Navona in this fantastic raiment, to distinguish themselves . . . from respectable citizens in sober black?" In 1953, when that was written, the obvious answer would have been no. Today one cannot be so sure; anyone who visited Rome in the summers of the sixties and saw the invading hippies and hustlers cruising the Spanish Steps in their tattered finery, all caftans, beads, embroidery, and cast-off furs, might well imagine that the costume side of Caravaggio's *giorgionismo* was on the streets in 1595.

What Caravaggio's critics objected to as his realism was, as the documents of the time abundantly show, his lack of decorum. In answer to the stylistic demands of late Mannerism, with its serpentine figures, stylish elongations, prissy conceptualism, and general recoil from the juices and fats of life, Caravaggio proposed a direct and violent pictorial system that subordinated detail to the immediate, tangible, sculptural reality of the figures—figures drawn not from pattern books but from models picked up on the streets. Gradually the shallow, neutral space, gray or beige, against which Caravaggio posed those ephebi turns into a Black Hole, a continuum of darkness from which light, like a divine illumination, rescues the Marys and martyrs, the crones and executioners, freezing their gestures with the shock of a flashbulb. Light renders the forms concrete, raking across each knot of muscle and wrinkle of cheek. But it also transfigures: it is both a judgment and a reprieve from the eroding dark. That blackness is the constant in the later work: beneath the glaring varnish and blisters, time's graffiti on its skin, are infinite subtleties of void laid into void. Caravaggio, the master of Eros, now becomes the servant of Thanatos.

The way station between these modes of vision is his *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* (page 86). It is dark, and the saint falls back into the arms of an angel in a peaceful swoon of delight. The angel's shoulder and leg are naked. His right index finger is hooked—a very Caravaggesque touch—under the saint's rope girdle. Moonlight caresses their skin and draperies and sends thin streaks of light across the lake behind them. Iconographically, it is a most unusual painting. The customary appurtenances of Saint Francis' vision—the rolling eyeballs, the open mouth, the kneeling posture—are gone. What remains, however, is a fascinating excursus on the interwoven themes of spiritual and erotic ecstasy that had long been present in Catholic visionary literature, and were to reach their most explicit plastic form in Bernini's *Saint Theresa*. Nor is it impertinent to link Caravaggio's image to the nexus of death and love that Michelangelo signified in his Vatican *Pietà*. Saint Francis' ec-

stasy is also a kind of death: the ego dies when Christ enters. It is hardly surprising, then, that one of the numerous copies of Caravaggio's painting once went to Spain with the title *Death of Saint Francis*.

When Caravaggio obtained, through the influence of Cardinal del Monte, his first big religious commission—*The Vocation of Saint Matthew* and *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew*—two paintings for the Contarelli Chapel of San Luigi dei Francesi—he was not quite thirty. He wanted to rivet the attention of Rome with one commanding gesture, and he very nearly succeeded. *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* (page 86) is a titanic hodgepodge, confused, uneven, difficult to "read," but manifestly beyond the ambitions—let alone the capacity—of most of Caravaggio's Roman contemporaries. Matthew lies prostrate on a step (the setting is vaguely architectural), an unconvincing angel writhing down on a cloud to hold his palm while an almost naked executioner prepares to skewer him. This splendid figure of the martyr is the hub of the picture, and around him limbs and bodies churn through the void like the spokes of a wheel: the four witnesses in their "modern" dress, the incomprehensible trio of giants looming from the bottom of the composition, the panicking boy and, in the background, a frowning self-portrait of Caravaggio himself. This last is one of a number of "unobserved watchers" who recur in Caravaggio's mature paintings, suggesting that he had had some acquaintance, however indirect, with Leonardo da Vinci's work. Another suggestion of apparent contact is an image Caravaggio developed almost to obsession in contrasting vitality and death: the paired heads of an old woman and a young woman, which sometimes appear, as in many of Leonardo's images of the Virgin and Saint Anne, to be growing out of one common trunk.

The commissions went on: *The Conversion of Saint Paul* and *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter* (see portfolio) for the Cerasi Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo in 1600; *The Death of the Virgin* in 1605; a dozen more between them. *The Conversion of Saint Paul*, one of Caravaggio's most (and most justly) celebrated works, disciplines the flailing drama of *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew*. Paul, stricken from his horse on the way to Damascus, lies on his back, arms outflung, pinned like a bug on a shaft of revelation whose physical form is a blast of light from the sky. Yet the event is relentlessly matter-of-fact, the light that changes Paul's life also illuminating, in an ordinary, direct way, the barrel and fetlocks of his skewbald horse, while his companion, bending over the bridle, is quite indifferent to it. The furrowed skin and casually lifted hoof are uncompromisingly naturalistic, like the executioner's horny soles in *The Crucifixion of Saint Peter*. Yet the painting is a piercing metaphor of the singularity—if not quite the subjectivity—of religious experience. It is a violent thing.

Which is only to be expected: Caravaggio was a connoisseur of violence. Throughout his Roman prosperity he never extracted himself from trouble with the authorities. His landlady sued him for rent, and Baglione sued him for libel; losing

TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 95

THE LIGHT AND THE DARK

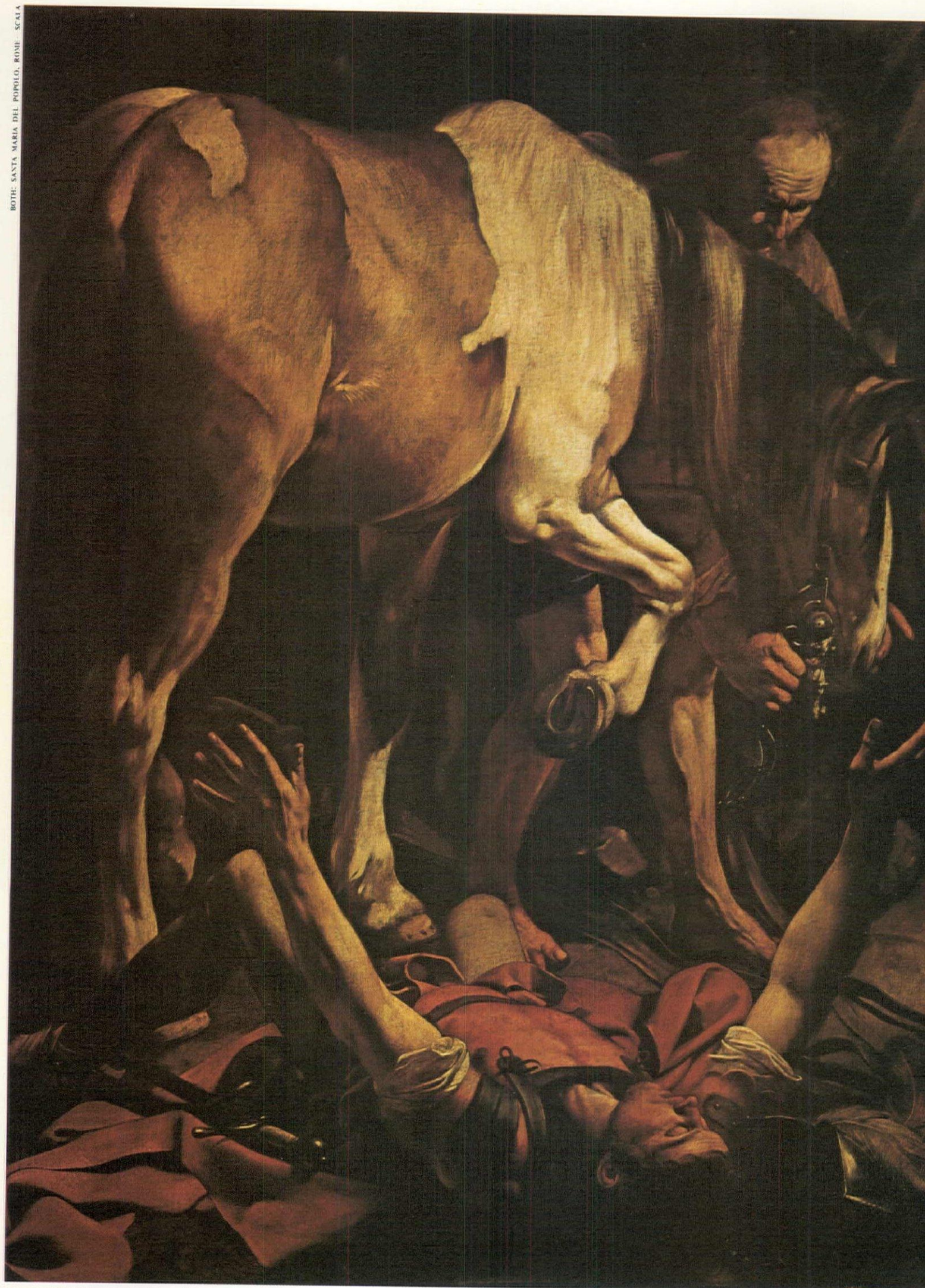
A Portfolio of Paintings by an Unorthodox Christian



THE CONVERSION OF THE MAGDALENE, circa 1598–1599

Caravaggio is best remembered, and rightly so, for works testifying to the power of faith—and to its terrible consequences. The viewer can hardly doubt that Caravaggio himself experienced something of the sudden wisdom that transforms his Magdalene at the moment of her conversion, above—as well as the astonishment of Paul struck down by the light of faith on the road to Damascus, Peter's struggle to hold on to life as he lies pinned to the cross, and the grief of Joseph of Arimathea as he carries the body of Christ. How else could he have painted with such passionate intensity? But he also gave equal attention to the secondary actors in his religious dramas—Martha in the painting above, for example, and the poor people of the Trastevere section of Rome who became the mourners in *The Death of the Virgin*. He portrayed them all with unprecedented dignity, often offending some of his contemporaries with his egalitarian outlook. The monks who commissioned *The Death of the Virgin* rejected it, and *Saint Matthew and the Angel* was Caravaggio's second attempt to paint an altarpiece for the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi, the first having been removed by the priests on the grounds that it was improper. During the Counter Reformation, art commissioned by the Church was meant to invite the contemplation of heaven and ignore the commonplace. Instead, with stubborn brilliance, Caravaggio interpreted spiritual events as if they were everyday experiences. In so doing, he brought a disturbing realism to religious art.

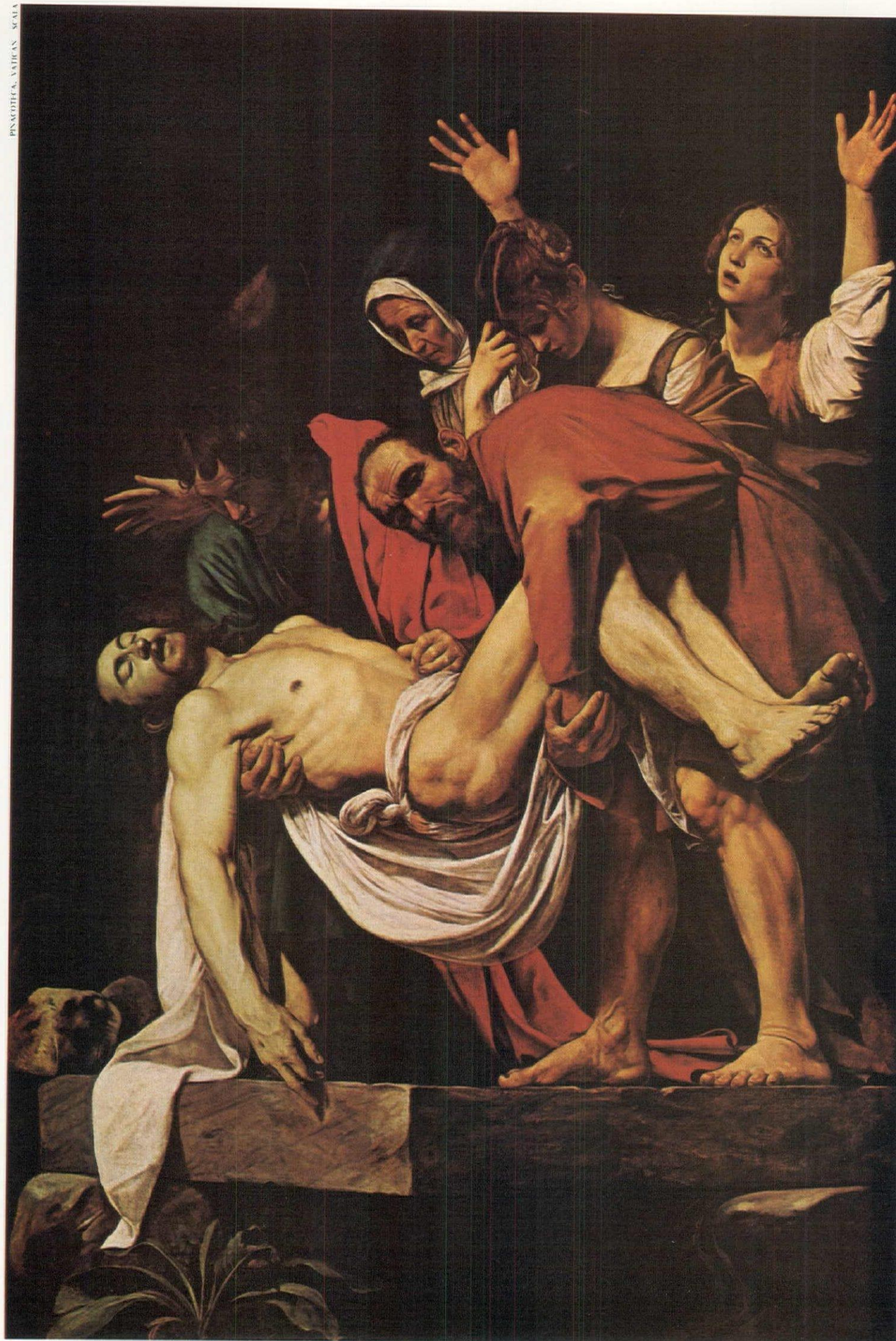
—P.F.



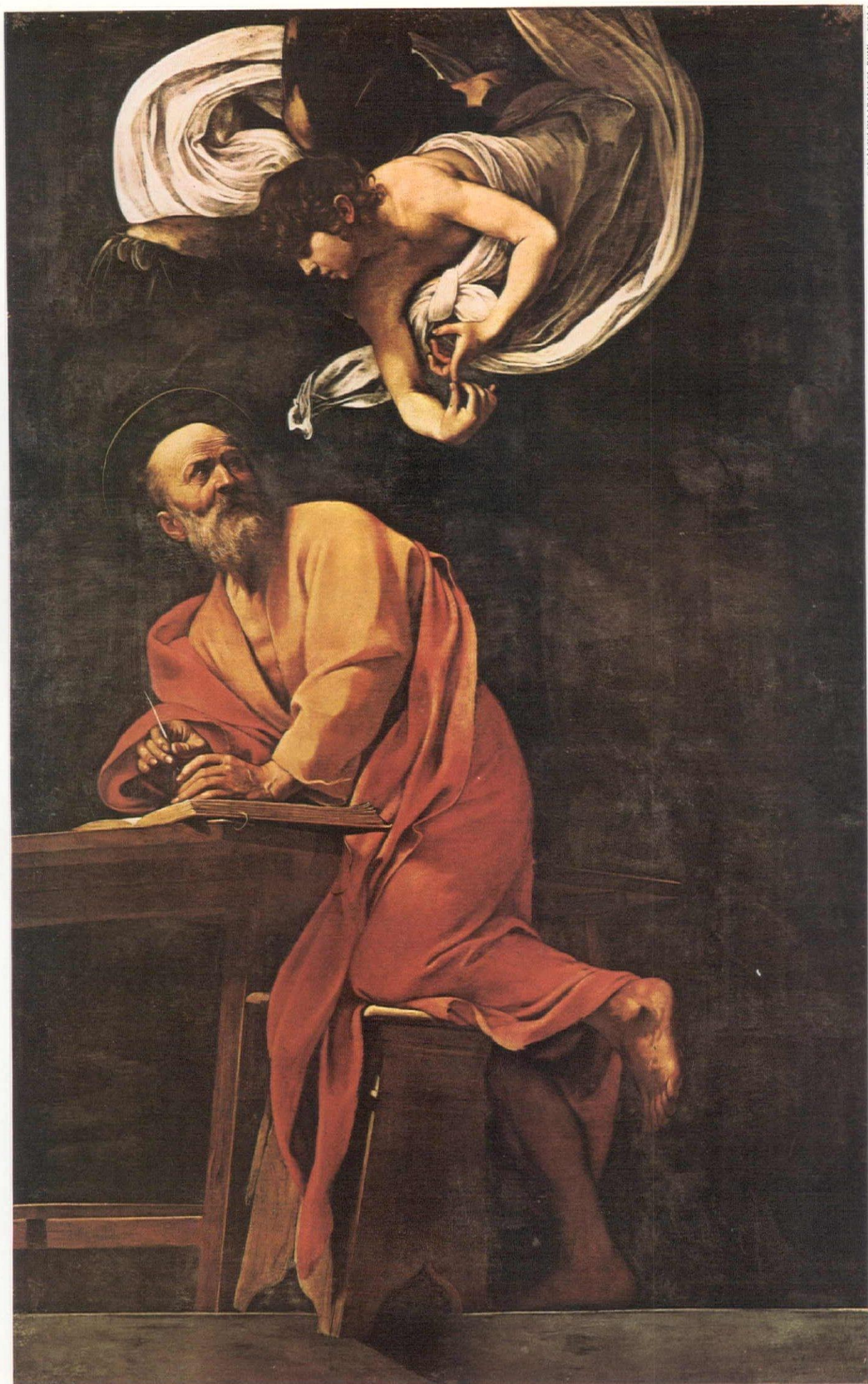
THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL, 1601



CRUCIFIXION OF SAINT PETER, 1601



THE DEPOSITION, 1602-1604



SAINT MATTHEW AND THE ANGEL, circa 1602



THE DEATH OF THE VIRGIN, 1605-1606

that case, he was clapped under house arrest for a time. He fought duels over women (for Caravaggio was certainly bisexual), wounded a guard at Castel Sant' Angelo, was arrested for possessing an unlicensed sword, and nearly killed a waiter at the Osteria del Moro one night in 1604. The minion brought Caravaggio a dozen artichokes, six cooked in oil, six in butter. Which, the painter demanded, were which? "Taste them and you will see," said the surly waiter; whereupon Caravaggio flung the metal dish at the man's head, leapt up, and was about to skewer him with his rapier. One responds to this last episode with a certain sympathy—the New York restaurant trade deserves such clients—but, whether the incidents themselves were comic or dangerous, he was clearly embarked on a switch-back ride of violence.

In this, Caravaggio was probably no worse than thousands of other Roman rowdies; his talent, however, made him substantially more conspicuous, and in the spring of 1606 he finally made a mistake that would cost him his career.

Late in May, he was playing handball on the Campo Marzio, four to a side. There was a squabble over the score. Out came the daggers, and Caravaggio—himself stabbed in the brawl—killed one of his opponents, Ranuccio Tomassoni, with a blow in the groin that presumably severed the femoral artery. He sought refuge south of Rome with a member of the Colonna family, knocked off a couple of paintings to raise some money, and then fled to Naples. In the summer of 1607 he was on the move again, this time to Malta. There, for a little more than a year, he lived in security, enjoying the patronage of the Grand Master of the Knights of Saint John, Alof de Wignacourt. Caravaggio painted a portrait of him, resplendent and smug in gold-inlaid ceremonial armor, and the gratified De Wignacourt dubbed Caravaggio a Knight of Grace in 1608. That year in Malta the supreme painting of Caravaggio's "late" period (he was thirty-seven now), and in some ways the capstone of his career, was completed: a canvas, twelve by seventeen feet, of *The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist* (page 87).

By now, the jarring drama of Caravaggio's earlier paintings had been purified: the screaming faces, the spurts of blood, the writhing muscles, and the flickering, irrational movements are sublimated in a meditation on death and guilt as grave and measured as any of the funerary masterpieces of neoclassicism: David's *Death of Marat*, say, or Canova's *Tomb of the Countess Maria Christina*.

The Baptist is already dead, the action is over. The headsman is drawing the knife with which he will complete the decapitation. Salome bends forward with the plate; a prison warder, in Turkish dress, points to it; an old nurse, the wrinkled crone, again completing Caravaggio's duality of beauty and its ruin, looks

on in horror. Two prisoners stare from the window. The groups form immense and sombre structures, set—a thing uncommon in Caravaggio's work—within a legible architectural space: the rusticated arch of the prison repeats the semicircular curve of the group below it, and is in turn balanced by the yawning rectangle of the barred window. "I have been studying how I may compare/ This prison where I live unto the world"—Shakespeare's lines in *Richard II* are also, at this point, Caravaggio's: Caravaggio's signature is, in fact, traced in the dead saint's blood. The Baptist is almost any victim, killed professionally with no fanfare or cloud-borne angels, lying on the bare flagstones of a prison yard under the indifferent gaze of other prisoners who have seen it all before.

De Wignacourt rewarded Caravaggio for it with, among other things, a "rich collar of gold" and two slaves. But shortly afterward, by another of the grotesque ironies that beset his life, the painter was himself imprisoned; he had assaulted a Cavaliere di Giustizia. In October, 1608, he managed to escape from his dungeon, climbed the fortress wall, and somehow escaped on a boat that was leaving Valetta. What followed was nightmarish: furiously pursued by De Wignacourt's hired thugs, Caravaggio reached Sicily and moved from city to city, getting commissions, painting them fast, and leaving on the run again. By November he had painted a large *Burial of Saint Lucy* in Syracuse; by December 6 he was in Messina, turning out a *Raising of Lazarus*; in the summer of 1609, he was in Palermo and hard at work on a *Nativity*.

It must have been a year of unspeakable fear for Caravaggio, and it almost ended in Naples in October, 1609, when De Wignacourt's assassins caught up with him outside a thieves' tavern. Somehow Caravaggio fought them off and, badly wounded, he started north.

The slow processes of bureaucratic favor had been turning in Rome. Word reached him that he could expect a papal reprieve for the killing of Ranuccio Tomassoni. It is not clear why Caravaggio did not go directly to Rome—possibly he decided to stay in territory not under Roman jurisdiction until he had firm news of the pardon; in any case he must have wanted to get as far as possible from De Wignacourt's agents. The measure of his fear was that before quitting Naples, he packed a *Salome with the Head of Saint John* and sent it to Malta as a gift to the Grand Master. Then he boarded the felucca and set sail for Porto Ercole: for the shivering ague, the white beach, and the last interminable darkness. Three days after he died there, his pardon arrived.



ALOF DE WIGNACOURT, 1608.

Once a patron of Caravaggio, this Grand Master of the Knights of Malta eventually set his hired assassins upon the unlucky painter.

Robert Hughes, the art critic for *Time* and a frequent contributor to *HORIZON*, began to delve into Caravaggio's career some ten years ago when he lived in the village of Porto Ercole.

The Humane Imperialist

The exemplary career of Sir Stamford Raffles only proves, alas, that there is no such thing



PAINTING BY G. J. JOSEPH, NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

Amid souvenirs of his colonial travels, Raffles sat for this portrait in 1817, when he was thirty-six.

By EDMOND TAYLOR

Up to a few years ago, even critics of Western imperialism could look on Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore, as a singularly enlightened nineteenth-century empire builder, if not as an actual precursor of the anticolonialist revolution. Raffles, nearly all his twentieth-century biographers agree, was warm-hearted, idealistic, untainted by racial arrogance or cultural narcissism, and an almost mystical believer in the natural goodness of man.

Though his reputation as a humane, exceptionally far-sighted colonial administrator, who more than a century and a half ago dreamed of East and West someday meeting as equals, is probably secure, certain aspects of his character and career call for sharper scrutiny. As a high-minded lobbyist for British imperial expansion, as a philanthropic cloak-and-dagger operator whose enthusiasms at times ran away with his scruples, Raffles recalls the American Cold War idealists who landed us in such messes as the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Vietnam War.

Raffles was born at sea, on board a West Indian slave vessel commanded by his father. The elder Raffles somehow managed to ruin himself in a traffic that normally enriched its practitioners, and the son was forced to quit school at fourteen. Through his father's connections, he obtained a job as a clerk in the London offices of the East India Company in Leadenhall Street, and there his career was a parable of honest merit duly rewarded. Young Raffles was diligent and conscientious; he used his rare leisure moments to improve his mind; he gained the good graces of his superiors by his modesty, courtesy, and sunny disposition. Promotion was rapid: in 1805, at the age of twenty-four, he was assigned to the company's trading post on Penang, off the coast of Malaya.

During the long sea voyage to his new post, Raffles studied Malay and was soon fluent in it. On Penang and later in Malacca, he applied himself systematically to learning everything he could about the region and became a keen collector of Asian art objects, costumes,

furniture, and botanical and zoological specimens. Within a short time, old Asia hands were astonished by the extent of his knowledge as well as his understanding of the native mind. Reminiscences of those who knew Raffles during those years suggest an ambitious young merchant who displayed an unusually wide range of outside interests. For an organization man on the make, he was atypically spontaneous, frank, and warm-hearted. His sensitive, intelligent face expressed unusual force of character, and his look of authority was complemented by an air of romantic chic.

There was a similar blend of the businesslike and the romantic in Raffles's first marriage, which took place shortly before his departure for Penang. His bride, Olivia Fancourt, the widow of a company surgeon in Madras, had called at East India House to see about her pension. Claim settlement led to courtship, and marriage soon followed.



Olivia, ten years older than her husband, was spirited and good-looking. If one judges by the uniformly complimentary references to her in contemporary memoirs and letters, she possessed a special allure. Until her death in 1814, her charm and tact played a considerable role in Raffles's success, and they were a happy and devoted, if somewhat unconventional, couple. But there was another powerful influence in Raffles's life: John Leyden.

Leyden was one of the most gifted and versatile men of his time. The son of a Highland shepherd, he studied theology and medicine at the University of Edinburgh, where he dazzled his professors with his brilliance. He was ordained a minister and later obtained his M.D., but meanwhile turned to literature, building a considerable reputation as a poet, essayist, and historian. He thought for a time of following in Mungo Park's footsteps as an explorer in Africa, but finally took a job with the East India Company as the head of a hospital in

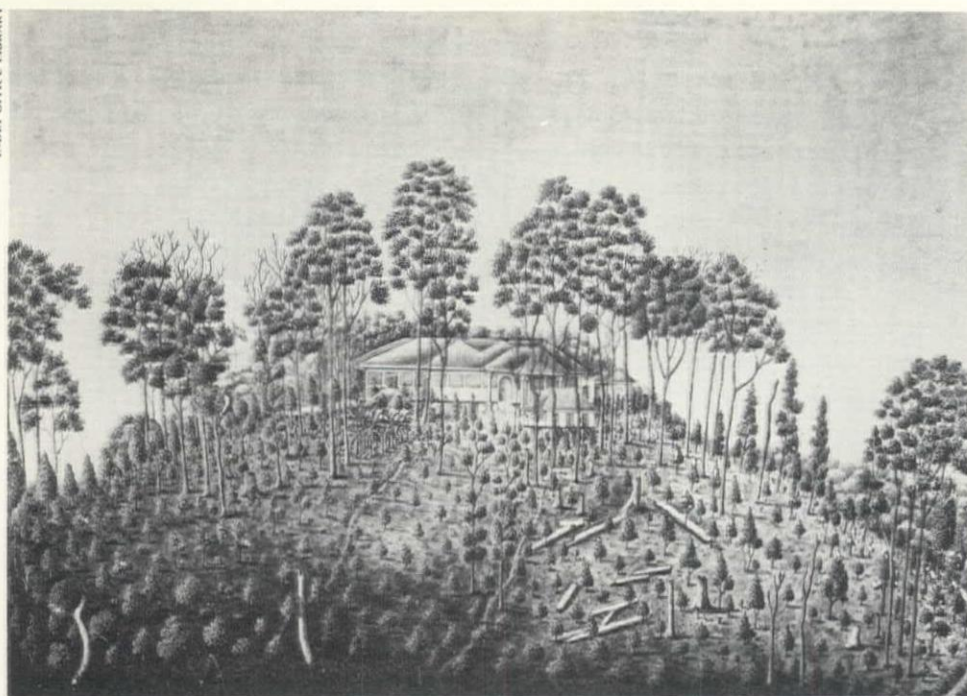
Madras, where he became a passionate Orientalist.

In 1805, when Leyden first encountered Raffles, he was thirty and had been in the East less than three years. In the course of his field work for a government report on the peoples of southern India, he had contracted a tropical disease and been sent to Penang to recuperate. To while away the time, he studied Malay with Raffles, and thus met Olivia. It is possible that she helped nurse him during a brief relapse. In any case, she supplied the morale stimulus during his convalescence.

When Leyden returned to India early in 1806, the relationship was kept alive by a frequent exchange of playfully sentimental letters and verses, but it was probably never anything but platonic. C. E. Wurtzburg, Raffles's most authoritative biographer, is convinced there was nothing "unseemly" in the flirtation between Leyden and Olivia, and cites a letter from the former, beginning "My Dear Sister Olivia," that seems to sustain his contention. A passage in the letter—"you must not be frightened as I am not the same person as I was"—may, however, allude to some brief lapse from seemliness on the part of its author, no doubt long since forgiven, if not forgotten, by the recipient.

What Raffles made of all this is not clear. He loved Olivia, and Leyden was his closest friend. Perhaps the exact nature of their relationship scarcely mattered to him. At any rate, more important in terms of Raffles's subsequent career, and almost as curious, was the relationship between the two men. Leyden was brash, arrogant, and egotistical; Raffles was unassuming and urbane. In many other respects, however, the two were much alike. Both were ambitious and adroit at worldly maneuvering, both were at the same time romantic enthusiasts and sincere idealists, and both combined a diffuse Platonic outlook with a pragmatic rationalism.

Leyden was the master scholar of the two, and he represented a relatively new type of colonialist. For him the study of Oriental languages and civilizations was



In 1818 Raffles was posted to the remote station of Bencoolen on Sumatra. One of his first acts was to order the removal of the jungle growth surrounding his official residence, above.

akin to sexual passion, an almost carnal knowing in the biblical sense, involving both appreciation and possession. The passion was by no means disinterested. For Leyden, knowledge of Asia implied power over Asia, a notion that would exert great influence on Raffles's career.

Liberal young spirits that they were, Raffles and Leyden had nothing but contempt for the sordid mercantile colonialism of the eighteenth century, typified, in their eyes, by the Dutch East Indian empire. Contact with decaying, backward Asian societies, and with the native despotisms they spawned, tended, however, to make both men feel that a new kind of colonialism—reformed and reforming, enlightened, humane, technologically progressive, and, of course, English—was needed throughout Asia in order, as Raffles later said, to “re-establish man in his native rights and prerogatives.”

Leyden met and intellectually conquered the British governor-general, Lord Minto, soon after the latter arrived in Calcutta in 1807 to take up his duties. He enjoyed a succession of rapid promotions, exploiting his favored position to vaunt the talents of his friend Raffles. As a result, Raffles came to be considered for the post of governor of the Moluccas.

The appointment did eventually fall

through, but indirectly it led to the greatest adventure of Raffles's life. Learning in 1810 that his name had been mentioned for the Moluccas post, Raffles hoped to clinch the assignment by a personal appearance. Since no regular passenger ship was due to leave Penang in the immediate future, he sailed for Calcutta in a frail native craft, gambling his life on the chance of arriving before a final decision was made. His eye was on an even greater prize, however. As he wrote some years later, he had heard that Minto was considering an expedition against the French and Dutch in Java, where a strong military force menaced the British eastern flank. Raffles hoped the information he had collected on conditions in Java would be useful, might even “turn the attention of our Government in that direction.”

On reaching Calcutta, Raffles, though cordially received by Minto, was informed that the position had been promised to someone else. “I in consequence,” Raffles related, “relinquished all idea of it, and at once drew his Lordship's attention to Java. . . . His Lordship cast a look of such scrutiny, anticipation and kindness upon me, as I shall never forget. . . . From this moment all my views, all my plans, and all my mind were devoted to create such an interest regarding Java as should lead

to its annexation to our Eastern empire. . . . The fall of Bourbon [Réunion], and the anticipation of success at the Isle de France [Mauritius], encouraged a plan for the conquest of Java. As it in a great measure originated with me, and as I was almost entirely on my information that the decision was taken, I naturally took a conspicuous part [in planning the expedition].”

Lord Minto was already convinced that some action against enemy forces based on Java was essential and was inclined toward annexation. But the British government had specifically forbidden him to attempt military operations against the island, and the East India Company's directors had ruled out any permanent occupation on economic grounds. Minto, however, evidently hoped that he could eventually overcome both cabinet and company opposition, and he therefore continued looking for convincing arguments to use at home.

Raffles supplied some of those arguments. He also drew Minto's attention to the importance of winning Javanese co-operation in conquering and administering the island, and then persuaded Minto to send him to Malacca as the special political agent for all Malaya with a mandate to collect intelligence and begin preparations for an eventual British invasion of Java.

In February, 1811, Minto wrote to Raffles that the government had at last approved the expedition. The governor-general left open, however, the question of whether all of Java or only a portion of it should be occupied. Fortunately Leyden was on the job in Calcutta to straighten out His Lordship's thinking and stiffen his resolve. Minto, Leyden wrote to Raffles, was still fluctuating about the expedition and was even swayed at moments by the arguments of a faction in Calcutta that favored giving the natives independence by rapid stages after the British conquest of Java. Leyden, however, was confident he could neutralize such pernicious influences and impose on Minto a sound political strategy for the expedition.

He then elaborated that strategy for Raffles's guidance:

The Malays must neither be independent, nor yet very dependent, but we must have a general Malay league, in which all the Rajahs must be united . . . under the protection of the [British] Governor of Java. We ought to retain . . . all the Dutch possessions at first, while we make ourselves known. . . . Publish broad and wide the coming of the good *Maha Rajah* [Minto] like another Secunder Zulkaram [Alexander], to reign in Malacca, and conquer Java, and drive out all the cruel Dutch, and the treacherous French, and take away all embargos and restrictions on trade, abolish piracy, and bring peace and happiness to all. . . . In short, make a great and mighty noise, for we will compel his Lordship to be a greater man than he would wish to be, if left alone.

In his final report to Minto, dated from Malacca on June 10, 1811, Raffles dutifully incorporated the essence of his friend's ambitious program for a British protectorate over the entire Indonesian archipelago, based on the occupation of Java, and added to the report some characteristic touches of his own. The governor-general in India, he said, should adopt the ancient Malay title of Lord Protector and claim "a general right of superintendence over, and interference with, all the Malay states." He excoriated Dutch colonial policy, particularly its economic exploitation of the native: it was "not only contrary to all principles of natural justice, and unworthy of any enlightened and civilized nation, but," Raffles declared, "characterized by a high degree of absurdity, for which it was scarcely worth taking the trouble of being so preposterously wicked."

British policy with regard to Malaya, he boldly added, had likewise been "by no means of a conciliating or prepossessing nature." He trusted, however, that in the future it would be more enlightened, aiming to "heal the dissensions of the native princes, to establish firmly ancient authorities . . . and prevent civil wars, . . . at the same time seizing every opportunity of prevailing [on the Malays] to discourage and abandon the destructive traffic of slaves." In

his conclusion Raffles echoed Leyden again, along with his own most deeply felt convictions:

I have now only to congratulate your Lordship on the most splendid prospect which any administration has beheld since our first acquisition of India: the pacification of India completed, the tranquility and prosperity of our Eastern possessions secured, the total expulsion of the European enemy from the Eastern seas, and the justice, humanity, and moderation of the British Government, as much exemplified in fostering and leading on new races of subjects and allies in the career of improvement as the undaunted courage and resolution of the British soldiers in rescuing them from oppression.

It was Raffles's first intensive experience with idealistic intrigue, organized psychological manipulation, and conspiratorial contacts with the native subjects, or vassals, of a rival colonial power. Undoubtedly his success played a considerable role in shaping his philosophy of colonialism. Certainly the skill and energy with which he pursued the project raised him in Minto's esteem, despite the fact that some of his clandestine operations were fiascoes.

Raffles's Malay secretary, Abdullah, gives an amusing account in his memoirs of one such incident. Raffles had paid two high-level native agents to

carry a secret message to one of the most influential Javanese rulers under Dutch hegemony, the sultan of Mataram, on the southern coast of Java. The agents returned bearing a letter, purportedly from the sultan, that promised the British his full co-operation. Unfortunately, as Raffles soon discovered, the two wily rascals had never landed in Mataram: they had, it was discovered, simply forged the letter.

That humiliating cloak-and-dagger debacle was offset by Raffles's other successes, the most important of which was his amassing of information demonstrating that the direct sea route to Batavia, along the southwest coast of Borneo, thought to be too dangerous under prevailing weather conditions, was in fact negotiable by the British fleet. Over the navy's objections, Minto accepted Raffles's conclusions and, to show his confidence in their soundness, led the way in his own flagship, with both Leyden and Raffles aboard. As Raffles wrote to a friend, he experienced some "life-inspiring moments" when the fleet arrived intact within sight of the Java coast.

Caught by surprise, the French and Dutch gave the British little trouble. Batavia was taken without a fight early in August, 1811, and before the end of September the whole island was in British hands. Raffles's propaganda operations had undoubtedly played a significant part, both in discouraging the Dutch from prolonged resistance and in assuring the co-operation, or at least the neutrality, of the Javanese. Certainly Minto gave him generous credit, appointing him lieutenant-governor of Java and its dependencies.

Raffles governed Java from September, 1811, to March, 1816—four and a half years of intense fulfillment, harassment, and tragedy. Soon after the British had landed on the island, Leyden caught a chill and died. And in 1814 Olivia died, after a long illness. Raffles buried her in the Batavia cemetery, next to the grave of their dead friend, and erected a cenotaph to her memory near his official mansion at Buitenzorg. On it



As governor-general of India, Lord Minto, above, wholeheartedly supported Raffles's proposal for British expansion into Java.

he inscribed the first stanza of a poem Olivia had written to Leyden in 1808:

Oh thou whom ne'er my constant heart
One moment hath forgot
Tho' Fate severe hath bid us part
Yet still forget me not—

Meanwhile Lord Minto had returned to England in 1812. His successor, Lord Moira, later the marquess of Hastings, did not share his confidence in Raffles and refused to give him complete support. Company directors complained that Raffles's administration was not increasing dividends. The criticism finally reached such a pitch that Raffles was recalled. In 1816, shortly before Java was handed back to the Dutch, he gloomily sailed for England.

Oddly enough, the year Raffles spent at home marked the apogee of his contemporary recognition. He was knighted, elected a fellow of the Royal Society, and lionized by fashionable society. He also remarried. Popular as he was, he could certainly have wed some wealthy, well-connected heiress, but the ambitions of the heart came first. He met, fell in love with, and married Sophia Hull, the daughter of an obscure Irish country gentleman. Though less glamorous than Olivia, she shared even more fully Raffles's interests.

Regency England, dominated at that period by Castlereagh's stifling, if lucid, conservatism, scarcely seemed an ideal field of action for Raffles's heterodox dynamism. Expansion had not yet come into vogue, and idealism was, for the time being, passé. Nonetheless, Raffles managed to promote both his own career and his somewhat romantic concept of the British imperial mission in Southeast Asia. To William Wilberforce and the abolitionists, he stressed the horrors of slavery as practiced by the Dutch; to his colleagues in the Royal Society, he spoke glowingly of the exciting new fields of study that might be opened there; to George Canning, the future prime minister, he emphasized the value of Indonesian bases for expanding trade with China and Japan; and for the general public, he dashed off in his spare

moments a two-volume history of Java, primarily intended, as he wrote, to "make the country sensible of the loss sustained by the relinquishment of so flourishing a colony. . . ."

It was largely for the opportunity to continue his expansionist crusade that he finally accepted the uncomfortable and relatively subordinate post that the East India Company had held in reserve for him: the lieutenant-governorship of Bencoolen, a company trading post with a vaguely defined British zone of influence on the western coast of Sumatra.

Raffles took up his new duties early in 1818 and spent five busy and, almost until the end, happy years in Bencoolen. He made a number of trips, occasionally accompanied by Sophia, into the wild, almost unknown interior of Sumatra, collecting exotic plant and animal specimens and charming the primitive, sometimes cannibal native tribes into becoming willing vassals of the British crown. He ruled his territory as a benevolent despot and carried out a number of reforms. Perhaps the most drastic of these was the freeing of some three hundred African slaves belonging to the company. It was almost his first official act, and the directors never forgave him.

They were no less upset when Raffles involved himself—and England—in a series of disputes with the Dutch over the boundaries of the two countries' respective areas of influence in Sumatra. Behind these embroilments lay much more than the desire to enlarge the dimensions of the colony he administered. Once again he was "up to his old tricks of empire building," as Emily Hahn puts it, but in the literal rather than the bureaucratic sense. What he had in mind was nothing less than his lifelong dream: the exploitation of a British beachhead as the cornerstone of a British imperium stretching to the shores of China and Japan.

No responsible authority in the company or the government had given Raf-

fles the slightest official encouragement. His plans for the Bencoolen colony in fact, ran directly contrary to Castlereagh's policy of maintaining good relations with the Netherlands as a check on French expansion in Europe. Raffles, however, clung stubbornly to the Raffles policy in Sumatra, heedless of its repercussions elsewhere. When the Dutch deposed the pro-British sultan of Palembang, at the strategic eastern tip of Sumatra, he dispatched three hundred company soldiers to restore him to his throne—only to have the entire force captured by the Dutch. The result was a major international incident.

Raffles was luckier, but hardly less reckless, in accomplishing the crowning achievement of his second tour of duty in the East: the founding of Singapore. His immediate aim was to foil what he believed—no doubt correctly—to be the Dutch design to block British commercial and political expansion in the Malay Archipelago. Since Malacca had been returned to Holland along with Java, the British had no bases in the area apart from Penang, which was too far north to have much strategic value, and Fort Marlborough, Raffles's headquarters for administering the Bencoolen colony, which was not on the main trade routes between India and the Far East. A new British base, near the southern tip of Malaya and commanding the most direct sea routes between Calcutta and Hong Kong, was needed. Raffles decided, as a permanent wedge to hold open the door that Holland was trying to close.

Lord Hastings, whom India had by now converted into a vigorous empire builder, shared Raffles's critical view of Dutch policy in Asia. Thus, when Raffles visited Calcutta toward the end of 1818 and urged that a British advance base be established somewhere along the Straits of Malacca, Hastings exceeded—or simply disregarded—his instructions and authorized him to lead a small naval expedition to the area.

After a brief reconnaissance of the possible sites, Raffles decided on Singapore, an island off the southern tip of the

Malay Peninsula and the seat of an ancient Malay capital. His miniature armada anchored there in January, 1819, and with a characteristic mixture of colonialist skullduggery, far-sighted statesmanship, and sheer gall, Raffles proceeded to establish British sovereignty over the island.

The throne of the sultanate of Johore, to which Singapura belonged, was in dispute between two claimants, one of whom had the backing of the Dutch. Raffles ordered the rival claimant brought to the island, willingly or by force, and charmed, bullied, and dazzled him into signing a treaty under which the British recognized him as the legitimate sovereign of Singapura, and he granted the East India Company the right to found a settlement there in return for a subsidy and British protection against his rival. The Dutch roared, the directors bleated, and the British government wrung its hands—but still the Union Jack continued to fly over Singapore. Protests and negotiations dragged on for four years before the Dutch accepted the *fait accompli* in return for British withdrawal from Sumatra.

Raffles had meanwhile drawn up plans for the creation of a great port city that in his imagination he saw rising out of the swamps. He then sailed away, although he continued to supervise the progress of the new trading post from his headquarters in Bencoolen. Later he visited Singapore again and, for a brief period, took personal charge of the city he envisioned as a catalyst of native Asian economic development, a bastion of British strategic and commercial power, and a beacon projecting British moral influence throughout a vast arc of Southeastern and Eastern Asia. "The station which has been established at Singapore," he boasted, "has given us the command of the Archipelago [in] peace as in war: our commerce will extend to every part, and British principles will be known and felt throughout."

His performance in Singapore was as humane and progressive as ever, though it has been criticized by some historians. From a bureaucratic point of view, his



En route to England in 1824, Raffles escaped the holocaust, above, aboard H.M.S. Fame, but his notes and a vast collection of specimens were lost. "All, all has perished," he mourned.

administration is perhaps open to criticism. Certainly the company directors were not entirely pleased. Refused the proconsulship he sought over the company's three Malayan stations, Raffles returned to England in 1824.

Homecoming was no satisfaction. The ship on which he sailed for home caught fire, and Raffles's splendid collection of Eastern art objects and botanical and zoological specimens was utterly destroyed. In London at last, he was refused the bonus he thought he had earned by giving the company directors Singapore, and when he asked to be reimbursed for his losses in the shipwreck, they countered with a twenty-two-thousand-pound claim for unauthorized expenditures. The last year of Raffles's life was spent in comfortable but discontented retirement in the country house he bought near London. He died of a brain tumor in 1826. He was forty-five.

Raffles never saw the new East Indies that rose on the foundations he had laid. Had he lived to see so, no doubt his reactions would have been mixed. Raffles was not so much an enlightened imperialist as an unconscious or schizophrenic one: though perfectly conscious of his role as empire builder, he never seemed to realize that what he was building was literally an empire. He thought com-

pany agents in Singapore and elsewhere should exercise, as he said, "a due influence among the native states, and such an interference in each, as may tend to secure the British interests." But, he stipulated, they should interfere as little as possible and only to "remove obstructions in the way of a free commercial intercourse." He failed to see that such interference would inevitably lead to British political control over the whole Malay Peninsula and Archipelago and to the gradual extinction of Malay independence.

Raffles's blindness to the contradictions in his philosophy of nonimperialist imperialism emerges as the most significant theme in his life. Like nearly everyone of his time, Raffles was unable to see that free trade and free enterprise inevitably lead to exploitation when imposed by the strong on the weak. And like a number of twentieth-century American politicians and public servants, he failed to perceive the bitter paradox involved in forcing leaders on other nations, leaders willing to serve as pawns in containing enemies assumed to be those of freedom because they are one's own.

Cloak-and-dagger operations are no mystery to Edmond Taylor: for an account of his career in the OSS, see "The Cult of the Secret Agent," in Spring, 1975.

Darwin and the Benchuca



Darwin with his son William in about 1843

Being a parasitological, followed by a
psychohistorical, examination of the aches and pains
and achievements of a great naturalist

By **BRUCE MAZLISH**



The Benchuca
(*Triatoma infestans*)
ACTUAL SIZE

"Darwin and the Benchuca" may sound like an anthropological saga. The Benchuca, however, is an insect, not a tribe. And thereby hangs a tale, for Charles Darwin was bitten by a Benchuca, which he referred to as "the great black bug of the Pampas." The attack occurred in South America, on March 25, 1835, as Darwin tells us in his account of the voyage of the *Beagle*. "It is most disgusting," he notes, "to feel soft wingless insects, about an inch long crawling over one's body. Before sucking they are quite thin, but afterward they become round and bloated with blood."

On the eve of sailing aboard the *Beagle*, Darwin saw, in a flash of intuition, that the voyage was, for him, a new birth, the beginning of a "second life." A few years after his return, however, Darwin, then in his late twenties, began to exhibit distressing symptoms that remained with him in varying degrees of intensity for the rest of his life: palpitations of the heart, gastric and intestinal pains, fatigue and lethargy, shivering spells, and insomnia. Thus almost all his creative work was done in a state of illness, Darwin remaining quietly at his country home in Down, cared for by his devoted wife, Emma, and able to work in sustained fashion for only a few hours a day. His "second life," therefore, was characterized by chronic invalidism.

The doctors Darwin consulted could offer no useful diagnosis. In fact, he soon acquired a reputation for being a hypochondriac. The treatment prescribed was rest and the water cure, a regimen of daily baths in which the patient was swaddled in wet cloths for an hour or more at a time. For homeopathy and mesmerism Darwin had mainly scorn, claiming that neither was subject to scientific inquiry. The water cure was different: "No quackery," he wrote.

What do modern doctors have to say about Darwin's illness? A fierce battle has raged in medical and professional journals. Parasitologists and internists, fixing on the 1835 episode, claim the Benchuca as the cause. Since Darwin's time, they explain, the "great black

bug," now known as *Triatoma infestans*, has been identified as the most important carrier of *Trypanosoma cruzi*, the causative agent of Chagas' disease, whose characteristics closely match Darwin's symptoms. At this point, complex statistics come into play. For example, 70 per cent of *Triatoma infestans* are infected with *T. cruzi*; parts of Chile through which Darwin passed, we are told by Professor Saul Adler, O.B.E., F.R.S., "show a 10 per cent positive complement-fixation test in the population together with a considerable infestation with infected *Triatoma infestans*." In short (the argument, of course, gets much more technical), it is definitely possible—nay, for Adler, probable—that Darwin's illness was caused by the bite of the Benchuca.

Nonsense, respond a number of psychiatrists and psychoanalysts. The physiological etiology does not cover all of Darwin's symptoms and does not account for the fact that some of them—heart palpitations, for example—manifested themselves before the voyage of the *Beagle*. The true explanation, they contend, is that Darwin was a neurotic. His psychoneurosis was the result of his guilt about falling away from orthodox Christian belief; his unconscious resentment toward his "tyrannical father"; his Oedipal rivalry for his mother; his constant preoccupation with sex (*vide* his work on sexual selection).

What is the truth about Darwin's illness? His father, Robert, had tried to dissuade him from undertaking the *Beagle* voyage, pointing out its grave dangers. Did the son see the Benchuca bite as the fateful realization of his father's warnings? Darwin, as his son Francis remarks, had boundless reverence for his father, and "anything his father had said was received with almost implicit faith." As late as 1831, Darwin wrote his friend Professor John Stevens Henslow that "even if I was to go, my father disliking would take away all energy." Was his subsequent fatigue and lethargy a delayed retribution visited on Darwin for ignoring his fa-

ther's advice? The evidence simply does not allow us to rule out flatly either the Benchuca bite or psychoneurosis as an explanation. What we can do, instead, is treat the question (if not the illness) as a misdirected effort. Not Darwin's pathology, but his genius, is what should interest us. That genius, in fact, was not crippled by his invalidism; it did, however, grow out of his own "life history," and that is something that psychoanalysis, or rather, psychohistory, can help us to understand.

Darwin's autobiography and letters are prime sources in this effort. He tells us his feelings toward his mother and father and reveals crucial themes in his own development. Of his mother he says little; his only comment, in the third paragraph of his *Recollections of the Development of my Mind and Character*, is as follows: "My mother died in July 1817, when I was a little over eight years old, and it is odd that I can remember hardly anything about her except her death-bed, her black velvet gown, and her curiously constructed work-table." Indeed it is odd: an eight-year-old can be expected to remember much, much more, if he is not intensely repressing his feelings.

The major theme associated with his mother is death. His concern with it emerges seven paragraphs after the comment on his mother; he writes, "I remember clearly only one other incident during this year whilst at Mr. Case's daily school, —namely, the burial of a dragoon soldier; and it is surprising how clearly I can still see [it]. . . . This scene deeply stirred whatever poetic fancy there was in me." What Darwin does not tell us in this paragraph is that he was at the Reverend Mr. Case's school at the age of eight, in 1817–1818, the same year as his mother's death. Although the soldier's burial would be a dramatic event for any little boy, it seems to have taken on heightened importance for Darwin.

We have other evidence demonstrating Darwin's preoccupation with death. There is the dream recorded in his note-

book in 1838, for example, where he recalls, "Thought that a person was hung & came to life, and then made many jokes about not having run away and having faced death like a hero. . . ." More to the point, however, are Darwin's pronounced feelings of guilt as a child. Two sentences after speaking of his mother's death, he confesses, "I believe that I was in many ways a naughty boy." A bit further on, he admits to a troubled conscience because of his habit of deliberately inventing falsehoods. Whatever the actuality—exaggerated, it seems—Darwin certainly viewed himself as a bad boy. The suspicion grows, based on comparable clinical data as well as on Darwin's admissions, that in an obscure fashion he felt partly guilty for his mother's death.

Concerned with the enigma and meaning of death since childhood, Darwin expanded his personal experience into a professional concern with destruction in general. Though he called his great work the *Origin of Species*, it is as much about their extinction as their origin. Of course, many intervening experiences link Darwin's memory (or lack of it) of his mother's death and his work on evolution; what I am suggesting here is that the theme of destruction—and, with it, origin—takes root in Darwin's childhood.

To an eight-year-old boy the death of one's mother is, undeniably, a riddle. Darwin's answer to this riddle may lie in the letter he wrote to Asa Gray in 1860, in which he expounds a theory of evolution in which no one is guilty.

An innocent and good man stands under a tree and is killed by a flash of lightning. Do you believe . . . that God *designedly* killed this man? . . . If you believe so, do you believe that when a swallow snaps up a gnat that God designed that that particular swallow should snap up that particular gnat at that particular instant? I believe that the man and the gnat are in the same predicament. If the death of neither man nor gnat are designed, I see no good reason to believe that their *first* birth or production should be necessarily designed.

Though haunted by her death, Dar-

win consciously remembered little about his mother. His father, however, loomed more than life-size. Darwin was constantly evoking his name, calling Robert Darwin "the wisest man I ever knew," "the kindest man I ever knew," and "the largest man whom I ever saw." Well might he say the last, for his father stood 6'2" and weighed almost 340 pounds. This wisest, best, and most powerful of fathers, according to Darwin, was characterized chiefly by his powers of observation and sympathy, "neither of which have I ever seen exceeded or even equalled."

Dr. Robert Darwin's most remarkable power, in his son's estimation, was that "of reading the characters, and even the thoughts of those whom he saw even for a short time." Exercising this ability in his medical practice, Dr. Darwin sounds like an early Freud. As Darwin explains, his father's patients, especially women, consulted him "as a sort of Father-Confessor."

He told me that they always began by complaining in a vague manner about their health, and by practice he soon guessed what was really the matter. He then suggested that they had been suffering in their minds, and now they would pour out their troubles. . . . Owing to my father's skill in winning confidence he received many strange confessions of misery and guilt. He often remarked how many miserable wives he had known.

In the face of such an all-knowing and all-powerful parent, how did young Darwin feel? Though his father, exhibiting a family trait, often exploded in anger, Darwin never consciously had anything but the warmest and most loving feelings toward him. Instead, he turned against himself, feeling that his father's fears that he would be stupid, naughty, and an idle sporting youth—"You will be a disgrace to yourself and all your family," he was told—were, alas, entirely justified.

The extraordinary thing is how well Darwin learned to solve his problems, drawing from them, eventually, creativity (obviously there were other factors, too). Unconsciously, I believe, he learned to get back at his father while



Darwin called his father, Robert, "the largest man I ever saw," but barely remembered his mother, the former Susannah Wedgwood.

maintaining his feelings of love and respect for him. To his father's grave disappointment, for example, he did not do well at school and was unable to settle down to either a medical career at Edinburgh or a religious calling at Cambridge. Subtly, he also criticized his father. Though he himself received anything his father said with implicit faith, his daughter recalls his saying that "he hoped none of his sons would ever believe anything because he said it, unless they were themselves convinced of its truth." Though he says his father "wisely" sent him to Edinburgh, Darwin thought his studies there were a waste of time. Lastly, by beginning a "second life" as a result of the *Beagle* voyage—which was undertaken against his father's advice—he finally achieved autonomy.

Darwin was able to accompany the *Beagle* expedition because he had become an ardent collector and amateur naturalist. His collecting was, as we shall see, a sublimated form of aggression, discharged now in a constructive way. Darwin was aware that he shared the family penchant for anger. Francis Darwin tells us that when his famous father felt strongly about a subject, "he could hardly trust himself to speak [Darwin, incidentally, stammered], as he then easily became angry, a thing which he disliked excessively." In his *Recollections*, Darwin recalls how, as a little boy, "I acted cruelly, for I beat a puppy, I believe, simply from enjoying the sense of power." It was an episode that lay heavily on his conscience. A little later, he became "passionately fond of shooting." When he killed his first

snipe, his "excitement was so great that had much difficulty in reloading my gun from the trembling of my hands." Then at Cambridge, he picked up a bird no quite dead, and, disturbed, could no longer "reconcile it to [my] conscience to continue to derive pleasure from a sport which inflicted such cruel suffering."

The ardent sportsman now became the collector. "Gradually," Darwin tells us, "I gave up my gun more and more and finally altogether, to my servant, as shooting interfered with my work, more especially with making out the geological structure of a country. I discovered though unconsciously and insensibly that the pleasure of observing and reasoning was a much higher one than that of skill and sport." Darwin's aggression had turned into an identification with his father, whose "powers of observation" had been unequalled.

However "neurotic" aspects of Darwin's personal life might have been, he was able to keep his scientific work free from crippling conflict. In fact, he drew strength from his inner life. Though the sources of creativity can never be finally fixed, three elements in Darwin's genius can be singled out. The first is his "scientific method." As Darwin modestly confessed, "I think that I am superior to the common run of men in noticing things which easily escape attention, and in observing them carefully."

To his observational powers, Darwin added a constant play of thought. As his son Francis remarked, "no fact, however small, could avoid releasing a stream of theory"; and as Darwin himself wrote, "From my early youth I have had the strongest desire to understand or explain whatever I observed—that is, to group all facts under some general laws." One need only read Darwin's work to see how the play, and interplay, of observation and theory is constantly at hand. Robert Darwin, too, had extraordinary powers of observation, but he did not, as his son remarked, "try to generalize his knowledge under general laws." By both observing and theorizing, Darwin not only incorporated his father's talent but went beyond him.



Despite ill health, Darwin lived to be seventy-three. He was near that age when this portrait was made, probably at his home in Kent.

The second great element in Darwin's work is his poetic vision. The poetic may seem, at first glance, a strange component of the scientific attitude. Yet the poetic ability to evoke imagination and see unusual connections is akin to the scientific endeavor. Certainly in Darwin it worked that way. Though he complains in later life of the loss of his aesthetic tastes—"my mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of fact"—he was deeply interested in poetry in his formative years. He took great delight in Wordsworth and Coleridge. His favorite poet, though, was Milton, and it was *Paradise Lost*—a story of creation and destruction—that Darwin took with him for constant reading on the *Beagle*.

Darwin's account of his voyage is infused both with Wordsworth's poetic sense about nature and with Milton's concept of Creation. One long descriptive passage will illustrate this combination. Darwin is crossing the Cordillera, in Chile, and he comes upon a raging river. He says:

Amidst the din of rushing waters, the noise from the stones, as they rattled one over another, was most distinctly audible even from a distance. This rattling noise, night and day, may be heard along the whole course of the torrent. The sound spoke eloquently to the geologist; the thousands and thousands of stones, which, striking against each other, made the one dull uniform sound, were all hurrying in one direction. It was like thinking on time, where the minute that now glides past is irrecoverable. So was it with these stones; the ocean is their eternity, and each note of that wild music told of one more step towards their destiny.

Here the poetic and the scientific are fused, and in the next paragraph we can see Darwin's imagination leading him to his scientific theory: "When listening to the rattling noise of these torrents, and calling to mind that whole races of animals have passed away from the face of the earth, and that during this whole period, night and day, these stones have gone rattling onwards in their course, I have thought to myself, can any moun-

tains, any continent, withstand such waste?" We have seen how the burial of the dragoon in Darwin's ninth year had stirred his "poetic fancy"; now the rushing waters, reminding him that "whole races of animals have passed away," give him a key to the possible causal agent: time.

When the poetic vision is reinforced by Darwin's "ecological eye," we are well on the way to his great scientific theory. Darwin was not unique in his time when he talked about the "economy of nature." But what marked him off from his contemporaries was his sense of how one part of nature was connected to all other parts, of how rivers, stones, and races of men were interdependent, and his ability to articulate that ecological connection in detail. For one example, there is his rhapsodic description of the flora and fauna of Tierra del Fuego:

"I can only compare these great aquatic forests of the southern hemisphere," he says, "with the terrestrial ones in the inter-tropical regions. Yet if in any country a forest was destroyed, I do not believe nearly so many species of animals would perish as would here, from the destruction of the kelp. Amidst

the leaves of this plant numerous species of fish live, which nowhere else could find food or shelter; with their destruction the many cormorants and other fishing birds, the otters, seals, and porpoises, would soon perish also; and lastly, the Fuegian savage, the miserable lord of this miserable land, would redouble his cannibal feast, decrease in numbers, and perhaps cease to exist."

To this picture of destruction, Darwin needed only to add a similar picture of creation. It is a measure of his genius that he was able to do so, and to avoid sinking into the fatigue of his chronic invalidism. Perhaps the Benchuca was responsible for Darwin's palpitations of the heart. It played no role, however, in the impulses of his brain. These came from his life history, the "Development," as he tells us, "of my Mind and Character." It was out of this "Mind and Character" that Darwin, consciously and unconsciously motivated, forged the *Origin of Species*.

Bruce Mazlish is the author of psychohistorical biographies of Richard Nixon and of James and John Stuart Mill. His article dissecting futurologists appeared in the Summer, 1974, issue of HORIZON.



Rain, rain,
Go away,
Come again
April day;
Little Johnny
Wants to play

Mother Goose's extra-large economy size, 1890's

Homage to the Umbrella

After long service as both a weather shield and status symbol, it may be opening up these days to greater utility and glory

By DOUGLAS TUNSTELL

GRISH SHABANIAN



Royal model, 500 B.C. Xerxes, king of kings, at Persepolis

In today's super-mechanized world, the umbrella is hardly an object of wonder: even the most splendid models rarely command respect, awe, or attention of any other kind. But it has not always been so. Indeed, umbrellas have often played exalted roles in human history.

As early as 1200 B.C., umbrellas of elegant and sophisticated design delighted the aristocracy of Egypt. As a hallmark of distinction the umbrella came to be used in Assyria and Persia (above) and eventually in India (opposite), where it became an even mightier symbol of high estate—both temporal and spiritual. (Westerners, failing to grasp the umbrella's spiritual potential, had to invent the halo instead.)

Oriental respect for the umbrella was based upon its association with the heavens—its bowl shape emulated the shape of the sky. At the same time, it protected the bearer against extremes of sun and rain. Before long there were two distinct types of umbrellas: the ceremonial variety that honored the supernatural, and the practical variety that warded off the elements.

Nowhere was this duality more apparent than in China. At the same time that honorific parasols were appearing on the chariots

of the gods of wind and thunder, the practical Chinese were pioneering in a multitude of earthly uses for the device. Not only did they invent, so it is claimed, the first folding umbrella; they may also have turned it into the first parachute. A favorite story has the emperor Shun parachuting to safety from a burning tower, his perilous descent eased by his umbrellas. That story may be apocryphal, but the idea of using umbrellas as parachutes is curiously persistent: Japanese printmakers of the eighteenth century show women jumping from the top of the Kiyomizu temple, umbrellas clutched in their hands. (For an even later occidental version, see over.) A successful descent indicated favorable answers to their prayers. Not much is written about the failures.

So the umbrella made its way through the East. It is even included among those most holy of symbols, Buddha's Eight Treasures. In Indian sculpture parasols over an empty space frequently signify that the Buddha is present in invisible form. As late as 1855



Gay stripes add color to the papal procession at the Council of Constance, 1414.



The tightly rolled 1938 "peace with honor" model held up fine—till 1939.

the king of Burma, addressing the governor general of India, termed himself "the monarch who reigns over the great umbrella-wearing chiefs of the Eastern countries." (Even in Thailand today the only furnishings in the king's audience hall are three umbrellas: a central one of nine tiers and a seven-tiered one on each side.) As far away as the New World, Pizarro had little difficulty spotting Atahualpa amid the splendors of the Incan court, for the king arrived with a large parasol attached to the back of his litter.

In Western Europe, too, the umbrella started out with strong religious and royal backing. Somehow, though, the prestige didn't last. Adopted by the early popes (see the papal horseman at left), the umbrella

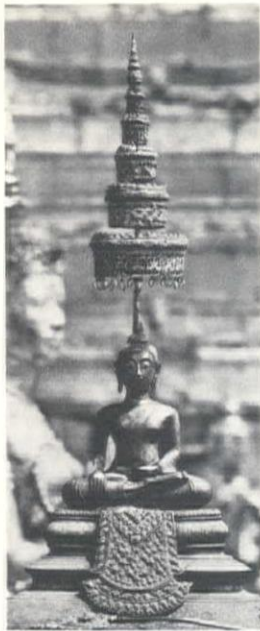
was replaced by four- and six-poled canopies in the thirteenth century. The doges of Venice continued to display their magnificent ceremonial umbrellas until the end of the eighteenth century, but by then umbrellas in general had become, throughout the West, either utilitarian objects or mere playthings in the hands of dandies, fops, and ladies of fashion. By 1871 Robert Louis Stevenson had this to say about the two kinds of people seen with umbrellas:

"The first, without doubt, would be the hypochondriacal, out of solicitude for their health, or the frugal, out of care for their raiment; the second, it is equally plain, would include the fop. . . . Any one acquainted with the growth of Society . . . sees from this simple thought how the carriage of an umbrella came to indicate frugality, judicious regard for bodily welfare, and . . . in one word, all those homely and solid virtues implied in the term RESPECTABILITY."

The decline gathered speed in the twentieth century, and the umbrella finally reached its nadir in 1938 when Neville Chamberlain (opposite) marched off to Munich and made the umbrella infamous. Thus had the great Eastern symbol of power and authority become the Western trademark of cowardice, humiliation, and defeat.

Less than fifty years earlier, ironically enough, Queen Victoria had received an umbrella as symbol of Britain's long and costly conquest of the Ashanti territories. It was, she knew, the visible proof of her sovereignty over the Ashanti people, for in Africa, perhaps more than in Asia, the umbrella was held in high esteem. There had been a time when Ashanti chiefs could not go outside, or even from one room to the next, unless covered by an umbrella; Bavili girls approaching puberty were hidden in huts and then, at the appropriate moment, they were led to their husbands under wide, protective umbrellas.

Nor was the symbolic value of the umbrella lost on the American colonials: Quakers cautioned against its use—too frivolous, they declared. Later they reversed themselves, emphasizing its suitability as a symbol of meekness. It is this last associa-



The Buddha rates seven tiers.

tion that still lingers on in the imagination.

Supermen stride under broiling sun, driving snow, blinding sleet, and drenching rain, disdainful of protection. In the movies, umbrellas, like insurance policies, are strictly for the infirm, the indolent, and the impotent. Tough guys thumb their noses at the security they offer, looking upon the forces of nature as enemies to ignore or conquer. In *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, for example, Gary Cooper locks his bodyguards in a closet and strolls out into the pouring rain. Not only does he not take an umbrella; he even takes his hat off. Then there's *Keeper of the Flame*, in which a huge mob stands around in a downpour. Everyone clutches umbrellas. Suddenly, a man appears. He has to be the hero. For one thing he's Spencer Tracy; for another he has no umbrella.

But while Cooper and Tracy, grim-faced, get soaked, it's Gene Kelly who blithely dances his way through one of the heaviest storms of all. In *Singin' in the Rain* his bravura enjoyment of the wet reaches its climax when he hands his umbrella to a bum, sending the umbrella as far from the Eight Treasures of Buddha as it is ever likely to travel.

There are signs, of course, that the West may yet come to terms with the umbrella. The new sizes, shapes, and colors indicate, if nothing else, a renewed interest. Many of them have a certain flair, suggesting that one day the umbrella may become a universal modern symbol. The potential is there, and it is enormous.

Consider our occasional urge to live in peace with our fellows, and then consider the value of the word "umbrella" in its sense as a common shelter for dispa-

rate peoples or ideas. Consider our new interest in nature: can we not all respect the umbrella as a device that yields to nature rather than tries to subdue it.

Prompted by these fond hopes, we offer on these and the following pages a glorious assemblage of umbrellas. Each and every one has, or had, some special significance. To take one example, the woman with the bubble umbrella (below left) is clearly enjoying her new-found freedom and privacy, but though she strides away from her eighteenth-century Japanese counterpart, nonetheless she obviously owes her a debt of gratitude. For total security, however, for identity with the things he owns and serenity in the face of the elements, none can hold a candle to the Yoruba chief below. We all should sit in such umbrellaed magnificence.

Douglas Tunstall, an author of several film scripts, says he never carries an umbrella.



A parasol with pizzazz for a Yoruba with clout



Plus ça change: a seventeenth-century Nagasakian, left, keeps cool but sees all, while a 1960's New Yorker, right, peers dryly into the rain.



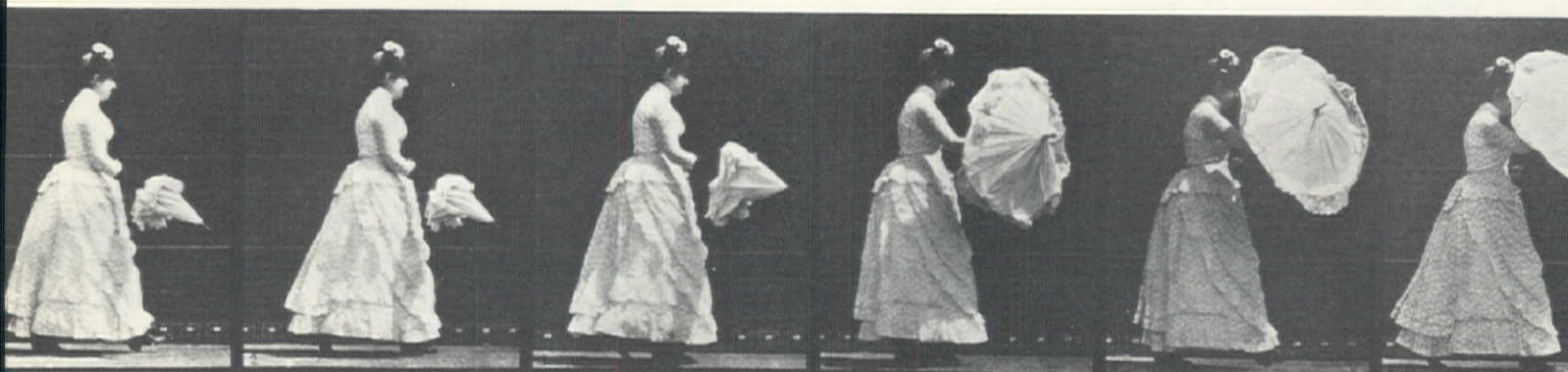
Our refuge and our strength: Elizabeth, New Jersey, 1900



First prize, matching outfits: turn-of-the-century parade, Llano, Texas



Keeping honor bright: from a dime novel, circa 1900



Unfurling the standard: an Eadweard Muybridge zoopraxiscope study, about 1887



Pinup: Miss Swim, circa 1900



Uninhibited self-defense: from a 1906 guide

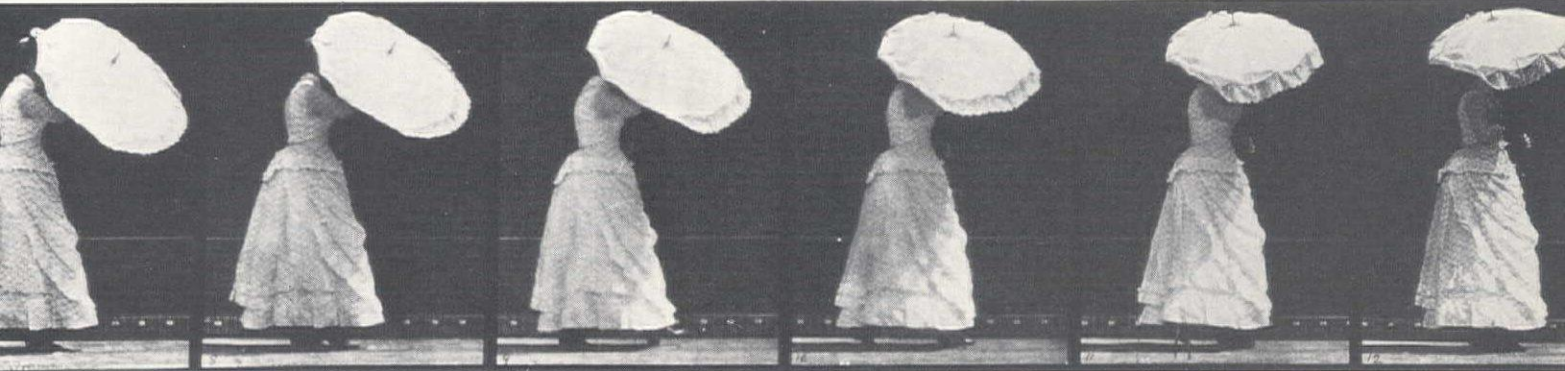


Insufficient unto the day: William Howard Taft on the campaign trail, 1908



J. M. LARTIGUE—RAPHO GUILLOMETTE

Odd man out: Normandy, 1908





Undercover man: a New Yorker-style heist

ST. LOUIS *Post Dispatch*—BLACK STAR; RIGHT: SAME



Waiting for the light: St. Louis street corner



News break: St. Louis sidewalk

HARRY BENSON



Pup tent: Manhattan's East Side

VICTOR DE PALMA—BLACK STAR



Requiescat in pace: midtown New York



Into each life . . . Gene Kelly singin' in the rain, 1952

A Clutch of Clerihews

By MAURICE SAGOFF

cler-i-hew (klēr'ə-hyōō') *n.* A humorous quatrain about a person who is generally named in the first line. [Invented by Edmund *Clerihew* Bentley (1875–1956), English writer.]

—THE AMERICAN HERITAGE DICTIONARY

"Pete's sake!" declared Mrs. Roget,
"What *is* it you're scribbling all day?
I wish you'd define what you do,
But I can't get a word out of you!"

Goya
Suffered from paranoia,
Believing himself pursued
By two *majas*, one nude.

Edward Lear
Was a twentieth child. This does not appear
Among the facts
In Planned Parenthood tracts.

"Pithecanthropus," said Mrs. Erectus,
"Your friends, the big apes, may reject us,
But I think that it's time you began
To stand up and act like a man!"

Jean Cocteau
Packed into a mot
His scorn of life's sureties:
"Young men must not invest in safe securities."

Max Planck
Is the man to thank
For the quantum theory:

$$\rho_\nu = \frac{8\pi h\nu^3}{c^3} \cdot \frac{1}{e^{h\nu/kT} - 1}$$

Thanks, Max, dearie.

Lewis Carroll
Photographed little girls sans apparel.
Just a hobby. Harmless. No discredit.
No need to psych it. Go away, Nabokov, forget it!

Immanuel Kant
Had an empirical aunt
Who, when told of his *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*,
Merely hunph'd.

Lady Gregory
Saved many a writer from beggary.
She also encouraged Yeats,
But not on dates.

"I don't mind," said Mahler,
"All the neighborhood kids in my parlor.
They serve, in a way, as a feeder
For my *Kindertotenlieder*."

"B. F.," remarked Mrs. Skinner,
"How come you're not eating your dinner?
You're out of condition, my hunch is,
From too many Skinner box lunches."

Oscar Wilde
Married and fathered a child,
Which proves, you might say,
He was not *toujours gai*.

Monet
Liked an occasional roll in the hay.
After resting his back,
He would then paint the stack.

Emile Zola
Loved to play the pianola.
His favorite airs
Were "Jack Hughes" and "Affaires."

Fastidious Ronald Knox
Was told he had a fatal pox.
"I trust," he sighed, his voice unhurried,
"Abraham's bosom has been lately curried?"

Sigmund Freud
Felt horribly annoyed:
Thieves broke in and took
His *Gypsy Dream Book*.

George Santayana
Offered this thought for *mañana*
(Hard to beat it):
"Those who cannot remember the past are
condemned to repeat it."

Freelance writer Maurice Sagoff
(Rhymes with "vague off" and with "plague off")
Rhymes unvaguely, and with class,
In pleasant, plague-free Acton, Mass.