



# THE KEY REPORTER

## Phi Beta Kappa Conducts Two Institutes for Teachers

This summer, Phi Beta Kappa conducted two week-long institutes for middle and high school teachers in Washington, D.C., and St. Paul, Minnesota. Designed to foster teaching excellence in the public schools, the institutes encouraged the participants to examine broad themes in the liberal arts.

In Washington, 15 teachers selected by the city's public school system studied "Darwin: The Man and His Era." In St. Paul, 25 teachers studied "Human Migration: Community and Identity." In both places, faculty members from local ΦBK chapters served as instructors.

The institute on Darwin was conducted on five different ΦBK campuses in the Washington area. It began on June 26 at Trinity College, where participants were introduced to the intellectual setting for *Origin*



*AAAS president Rita Colwell discusses her research in microbiology and its connection with the theories of Charles Darwin in this summer's institute for Washington, D.C., teachers.*

*of the Species.* The next day the teachers went to the University of Maryland, College Park, where they learned about the implications of

Darwin's theories in contemporary microbiology from Rita Colwell, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

On June 28 they went to American University, where, among other things, the chapter restaged the great debate on Darwin's theories at Oxford University. The following day the Howard University chapter hosted a day-long discussion of

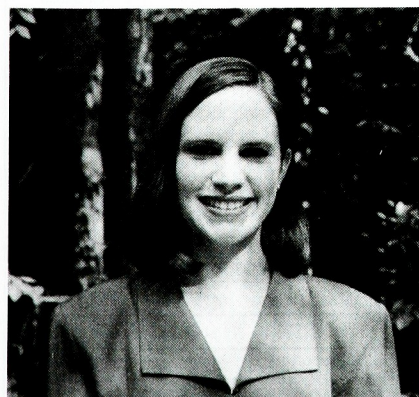
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Emory Ph.D. Candidate Wins Sibley Award

Nancy Darlene du Bois, a 1990 Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of the South, Sewanee, and now a Ph.D. candidate in philosophy at Emory University, has received the \$10,000 Sibley Fellowship for studies in Greek during the 1995-96 academic year. She will devote herself

during the year to completing her dissertation, titled "The Kinship of Vico and Plato: *Paideia*, Poetry, and Providence." She is the 47th recipient of this fellowship, which was established with funds bequeathed to Phi Beta Kappa in the will of Isabelle Stone.

In 1996 the Sibley Fellowship will be offered for studies in French. Candidates must be unmarried women who are between 25 and 35 years of age and hold the doctorate or have fulfilled all the requirements for the doctorate except the dissertation. They must be planning to devote full-time work to their project during the fellowship year beginning in September 1996. Further information and application forms may be obtained by writing to the Sibley Fellowship Committee, 1811 Q Street NW, Washington, DC 20009.



*Nancy du Bois*

### KEY NOTES

ΦBK in the News  
PAGE 2

Life Outside Academe  
by Donald S. Lamm  
PAGE 3

Letters to the Editor  
PAGE 7

Recommended Reading  
PAGE 11

About Our Reviewers  
PAGE 15

Bedau Gives Romanell Lectures,  
Fogelin Wins '95-96 Award  
PAGE 16



## TEACHER INSTITUTES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Modern Genetics and Darwinian Evolution" and "The Implications of Brain Evolution and Human Behavior."

In the concluding session at George Washington University, the teachers studied Victorian science with Linda Salamon, the dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and Carl Linden, professor of political science.

The institute on human migration for St. Paul teachers took place on the campus of Macalaster College on August 7-11. It brought together the resources of the National Faculty, an Atlanta-based professional development organization; the Minnesota Humanities Commission, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities; and  $\Phi$ BK chapters in the Twin Cities.

A grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation of Miami, Florida, enabled the National Faculty to arrange for Paul Skenazy from the literature and writing department at the University of California, Santa Cruz, to take a leading part in the migration discussions, and for Peter Nabokov, an anthropologist at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, to participate. They were joined by Daniel Detzner, a social scientist on the faculty at the University of Minnesota; David Lanegran, a geographer at Macalaster; and Sister John Christine Wolkerstorfer, a historian at the College of St. Catherine with a special interest in German studies and oral history.

The institute used a variety of instructional forums, including writing workshops and dramatic readings, and the teachers visited the city's ethnic neighborhoods and the Minnesota History Center. Follow-up sessions throughout the coming academic year will be led by Andrea Fowler, of the National Faculty staff, and Jenny Keyser, director of the Minnesota Humanities Commission's teacher institutes. The sessions will take place in the St. Paul schools or at the commission's new teacher institute facility in St. Paul.

## Phi Beta Kappa In the News

### William & Mary Chapter Honors Lifelong Scholars

Jessie Dodge, 85, and Beulah Walker, 74, of Lively, Va., each received a special award for "academic achievement and promise" from the Phi Beta Kappa chapter at the College of William and Mary in June. For more than eight years the two women commuted 160 miles roundtrip to the college to take two or three classes a week purely for pleasure.

Initially, Walker went back to school to get her B.A., which she earned in 1985. Dodge already had her B.A. This semester they both returned to a nearby community college to take a computer class.

The story of the two women's dedication to education was first publicized in the Newport News *Daily Press*.

### Ex-Miss Virginia's Résumé Doesn't Stand Inspection

Three weeks after Virginia Tech graduate Andrea Ballengee, who claimed membership in Phi Beta Kappa, among other academic honors, was named Miss Virginia, beauty pageant officials dethroned her, citing "new facts" (Roxanne Roberts, in the *Washington Post*, July 21, 1995). When a spokesman for the Virginia Tech chapter was quoted as saying that Ballengee's grade-point average "wasn't anywhere close" to the 3.6 required, she claimed that it was all a misunderstanding—she had been "invited" to join Phi Beta Kappa. "I believe 100 percent what I wrote down." She also apparently confused her B average in high school with "highest honors" and a "Most Outstanding Cheerleader" award with "Most Outstanding Female Athlete" award.

According to the *Post*, when she refused to resign quietly, the pageant board voted unanimously to strip her of the title. Her goal reportedly is to attend law school, and eventually to run for Congress.

## the American Scholar

**"The American Scholar, the quarterly journal of Phi Beta Kappa, is quiet — the cover is always just a plain list of article titles — and of course brainy. But give it a chance, and it can become an addiction, especially if you have a taste for humanistic essays."**

— William F. Powers, *The Washington Post*

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"It is the perfect publication, is it not? From time to time something simply breathtaking is published."**

— Respondents to the 1994 *American Scholar* survey

As one of the last refuges for the nonacademic essay, *The American Scholar* offers prose on subjects of enduring intellectual interest, written by outstanding contemporary writers who are widely recognized for their intelligence, scholarship, and wit. Among the articles scheduled to appear in the Autumn 1995 issue are "Proclaiming the End of the Book," by Elizabeth Eisenstein; "An Academic in Government," by Diane Ravitch; "On the Death of Plato," by James V. Schall; and "A Note on Feminine Endings: Another Whiff of Censorship," by Jacques Barzun. Also appearing will be "A Nice Little Knack for Name-Dropping," by the *Scholar's* editor and well-known essayist, Joseph Epstein.

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**Editor's note:** This article is adapted from a lecture titled "Goodbye, Gutenberg?" presented by Donald S. Lamm (Yale, ΦBK, 1953) in a series on the new electronic media at the New York Public Library in April. Lamm is chairman of W. W. Norton & Co. and a Phi Beta Kappa senator.

I AM A PUBLISHER WHO IS FOOLHARDY enough to believe that the end of the book is not yet in sight. In some respects the book has enjoyed a charmed existence. Few other tools of daily life have proved as resistant to the onward march of technology. The printing techniques developed in Mainz in the mid-15th century lasted with only minor modification for four centuries. Not until the 19th century could a line of type be set by a machine rather than by hand or printing presses be fed rolls of paper rather than a single sheet at a time.

Another century would pass before computer typesetting and printing plates made from film could telescope into a single day the entire process of translating an author's manuscript into a bound book. One-day publishing would now be the norm if publishers did not stand in technology's path. Instead, with their insistence on editing, copyediting, design, and other niceties that usually pass without the notice of readers, publishers manage to impede the rapid passage of the author's original work into the marketplace.

Here, then, is the easiest way to save the book from the encroachment of the electronic media: Get rid of publishers. More than a few authors would relish the prospect of a publisher-free culture. Examples abound of authors decrying the delays imposed by publishers who have adamantly refused to speed their manuscripts along to publication. Whether by phone, letter, fax, or now, e-mail, authors let publishers know what damage has been done to their careers, their psyches, their marriages, and, most important, their incomes during the 9 or 10 months that elapse between the submission

of a completed work and its appearance in the bookstores.

In 1890, some 10 years past the delivery date in his contract, William James finally wrote his publisher that he could bring in 350 pages of the manuscript of what would become the seminal text in American psychology. The publisher, Henry Holt, had previously treated his delinquent author to encouragement in this vein: "... These things call up a vague, though possibly mistaken, impression that you once had some idea of sending me the manuscript of a Psychology to publish. If you remember anything of the kind, please let me know how the matter stands."

**Given all the inane, witless, imitative, even socially derelict writing that can be found among the 50,000 or so new books that appear in this country each year, one might understandably wonder exactly what gates publishers are keeping.**

Now, with his work on the way to completion, the neurasthenic James implored Holt to give him some peace of mind by sending the partial manuscript to the typesetter. The reply to James's request came in thunder: "I am not going to set any of that book until I have it all." And Holt stuck to his word.

Skirmishes between author and publisher arise over much else besides schedules. Obviously nothing has greater consequence to either party than the decision whether to publish in the first place. Books do occasionally get self-published and a handful of those succeed, thereby



mocking the judgment of the professionals. But, with rare exceptions, the fate of a manuscript depends on a publisher from the moment it leaves the author's grasp.

On that simple fact rests my primary defense of the book and of book publishing in an electronic age: The publisher serves as a gatekeeper to the print culture. No player remotely comparable to the publisher selects what goes out over the computer-based networks. The only constraints on posting material on the Internet are a modest entry fee and usage charges.

### **Gatekeeping**

Given all the inane, witless, imitative, even socially derelict writing that can be found among the 50,000 or so new books that appear in this country each year, one might understandably wonder exactly what gates publishers are keeping. How did *that* book ever get published? is a familiar question lending itself to an easy answer: Some publisher thought that it might sell.

More often than not, the publisher guesses wrong. Some books stumble at the starting line, with sales before publication so meager that salvation can come only in the form of a dazzling review or an author's winning interview on National Public Radio or a daytime television show. Even more rarely a book receives a surprise boost from timing. When Ross Perot announced his candidacy

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4





## LIFE OUTSIDE ACADEME

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

for president in 1992, *Books in Print* listed only one full-dress (and unauthorized) biography of the feisty Texan, published a year and a half earlier by R. D. Irwin, a house specializing in business and economics textbooks. It had sold unimpressively, some 2,000 to 3,000 copies. Perot's announcement sent the publisher back to press, and the action did not stop until the book had netted sales in the vicinity of 150,000 copies.

Infrequently, a book makes its own surprise move, dropping with little or no advance fanfare on a public unprepared for its revelations. That is happening now with Robert MacNamara's *In Retrospect*, a recantation of the Vietnam War policy that he helped orchestrate. I believe that Times Books embargoed the book—that is, clamped a lid of secrecy on it until publication day. (Some authors less lucky than MacNamara admonish their publishers for taking the stealth approach both before and after publication.)

Neither a single success nor a single failure determines the viability of a publishing house. There are, of course, exceptions, unexpected outcomes, as when a bestseller proves the undoing of a small publisher who expands operations to a size that can be sustained only by the steady production of more bestsellers. A half-dozen years ago, the runaway sales of *Son of the Morning Star*, Evan Connell's life of General Custer, prompted North Point Publishers to enlarge its staff and quarters. Soon, operating expenses wiped out income. A company that had almost reached the break-even point collapsed under the weight of its expectations.

My argument boils down to this: The gatekeeping function of publishers has an economic base. A book publisher faces a market test not once, as does, say, the manufacturer of a new super-absorbent disposable diaper, but every time a book is launched. By misreading the public's taste consistently enough, the publisher earns a place for his company in the long line of publishing enterprises, many distin-

guished, that either have disappeared entirely or exist merely as fading imprints within the embrace of multimedia conglomerates.

Yet gatekeeping amounts to more than war stories about money made and money lost. Sparing the public a glut of books has a corollary in the dashed hopes of authors. For every book that sees print, I would estimate that at least 60 manuscripts fall short of publication.

To insist that a rejected manuscript is also an unworthy one is to fly in the face of publishing history. One has only to count the number of publishers that turned down *The Diary of Anne Frank*—10, I believe, Norton among them—to gauge the enormity of the errors that publishers are



PHOTO BY DANIEL DEITCH

Donald S. Lamm

prone to. If the Anne Frank case is not persuasive, consider these graceless responses to authors who had the last laughs on dismissive publishers: "It is impossible to sell animal stories in the USA." So much for George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Or, from a letter to Tony Hillerman on *The Blessing Way*, "If you insist on rewriting this, get rid of all that Indian stuff. . . ." William Golding was let off a bit more gently: "It does not seem to us that you have been wholly successful in working out an admittedly promising idea." With that editorial verdict, *Lord of the Flies* went on to another publishing house and eventual sales in the several million.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Rotten Rejections*, Andre Bernard, ed. (New York: Pushcart Press, 1990).

These examples tear to shreds any doctrine proclaiming publisher infallibility. And since, to the best of my knowledge, no econometric model has been invented that can be applied to editorial decision making, the defense of the publisher's role as gatekeeper must be mounted without either theological or statistical reasoning. Judgment in publishing ought, in my view, to reflect three factors: personal taste, intuition, and experience. That is, some mix of these factors should guide decisions that in the aggregate define the character of the publishing company.

To speak of a company's character may seem anachronistic in an industry where most of the largest companies march to the beat of stock exchanges in New York, London, and Frankfurt. But seven decades ago, during a remarkable flowering of new American publishing firms, taste and intuition, if not experience, bred character into the houses founded by Alfred Knopf, Warder Norton, Richard Simon, Max Schuster, Horace Liveright, Bennett Cerf, Donald Klopfer, Alfred Harcourt, Donald Brace, Pascal Covici, Harold Guinzburg, and more. Many of the founders took the ultimate step in asserting personal control over their imprints: They put their own names on the companies. It is hard to find their match today.

### ***Publishing Today: A Distorted Image***

The structure of publishing in the 1990s creates a danger for the book within the very industry that produces and disseminates it, in part because the heads of most publishing houses no longer are the driving editorial force in their companies. Management skills take precedence over the generation of book ideas; aside from currying the most highly valued authors, publishing CEOs are left to crunch numbers and deal with their superiors at the corporate level.

Even more threatening to the literary endeavor is the bifurcated world of authors in which superstar novelists command advances in six and seven figures while most writers are left to settle for sums they cannot afford to live on.

The star system in fiction has its



counterpart in nonfiction. Celebrity memoirs and accounts of out-of-body experiences, often written by people out of their minds, force serious biographies and books in history and current affairs off the bestseller charts.

Fiction and nonfiction combined, a few hundred titles a year do the heavy lifting for the trade, or retail, end of the book business. Those titles greatly distort the image of publishing in the mirror presented to outsiders, a mirror that magnifies triumphs and diminishes disasters.

In the 1920s publishing houses were started on the proverbial shoestring. Capital requirements were nominal. Today, what economists call barriers to entry make it hazardous, if not impossible, for new publishing ventures to survive for long. Very high hurdles must be cleared in an industry where the 20 largest companies account for over 80 percent of the total sales volume.

### To speak of a company's character may seem anachronistic in an industry where most of the largest companies march to the beat of stock exchanges in New York, London, and Frankfurt.

Still, I will go out on a long limb and forecast a change ahead. Before this decade ends, some book publishing companies that exist within giant conglomerates will be spun off, either to begin a new existence as independents or to serve as prongs of major European publishing cartels into the American market. For although book publishing units generate substantial income for their conglomerate owners, the annual return on investment in book publishing generally falls well below the 15 percent level that races pulses on Wall Street.

Something must be out of joint. In the American business scene, God is usually on the side of the biggest battalions. Why is size no guarantor of publishing profits? It turns out that in book publishing, size confers a warrant to overpay, time and again,

for name-brand authors. Booksellers may expect the largest companies to produce the greatest number of bestsellers, and they do. But those same firms also produce the greatest numbers of substantial money losers, which is the reason no bookseller who expects to remain in business orders only from the largest two or three publishers.

In the face of uncertainty, publishers tend toward reactive decision making, responding to the siren song of a literary agent or waiting for rumor of other publishers' interest before determining whether to make an offer of publication. The so-called auction in which a group of publishers enter a bidding contest for a given author's work (or works) may have been fostered by the invention of the copying machine, which made possible the submission of a manuscript or proposal simultaneously to many publishers. The auction has evolved into a substitute for independent judgment and discovery in a time when companies no longer are driven by a particular sense of identity.

Does this mean that the gatekeeping function of publishing denies acceptance to writers who fail to detect the way the wind blows? Not necessarily. Although the auction—or the threat of an auction—may drive the hot deals, as *Publishers Weekly* terms them, normal publishing still relies on the interest of an editor endorsed by the sales department and ratified by orders from the bookstores. For all their excessive spending, for all their oversights,

publishers do bring some order to what otherwise would be the book equivalent of bedlam.

Of the 50,000 new books published a year, roughly 20,000 are trade books, that is, books intended for the general reader. The chances that any one of those 20,000 will be reviewed in the mecca for all authors, the *New York Times Book Review*, are less than one in eight and declining. Like its counterparts in Washington, Chicago, and Los Angeles, the *New York Times Book Review* is shrinking as publishers divert promotional dollars from space advertising to author appearances on television and radio. (Life seems unfair to authors who are neither telegenic nor radioactive.)

### The Doomsayers

For simplicity's sake, I choose to place those who foresee the imminent death of the book in two principal camps: One group sees the computer sweeping away everything in its path, the book facing elimination along with other durable attributes of civilization. The other group argues that the book is a wasteful assemblage of atoms, an obsolete delivery system that in a short time will be transformed (or, should I say, blown) to bits.

Here, for starters, is Neil Postman, who locates the battleground in the schools. He finds casualties littering the classroom, "children who can't learn to read or won't, children who cannot organize their thoughts into

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## Metal ΦBK Membership Plaques Are Available

Three kinds of mounted metal replicas of your Phi Beta Kappa membership certificate are available:

- 1. 8" × 10" stainless steel plaque, solid walnut base, \$75.
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logical structure even in a simple paragraph, children who cannot attend to lectures or oral explanations for more than a few minutes at a time.”<sup>2</sup> As a publisher whose company’s fortunes ride heavily on the success of our college textbooks, I can bear witness to Postman’s complaint. Increasingly, we find ourselves forced to shorten and simplify texts in all disciplines. At Norton, dumbing down, as the phrase has it, does not come easily, and resistance to the process has cost some of our leading textbooks dearly.

I have serious trouble with Postman, however, when he frets about what he sees as the breaking of “a four-hundred-year-old truce between the gregariousness and openness” fostered by discussion and “the introspection and isolation fostered by the printed word.” The interloper in this situation turns out to be the computer, the selfish genie in Postman’s construct, which operates only on behalf of “private learning and individual problem solving.” He failed to anticipate in 1992 the “net surfers,” the latter-day ham radio operators, who spend hours posting messages to unknown and unseen fellow surfers. What he did detect was the communication overburden that computer mania is creating.

Not all the doomsayers for the book set off alarms. Some toll a quieter bell, similar perhaps to the bell on a cart carrying away victims of the Black Death. Among them is the critic Sven Birkerts. In *The Gutenberg Elegies* he eloquently, despairingly subsumes the printed word under “that part of a vestigial order that we are moving away from—by choice and by societal compulsion.” In a strange way Birkerts is cast under the spell of the very change he laments. “Next to the new technologies,” he writes, “the scheme of things represented by print and the snail-paced linearity of the reading act look stodgy and

dull.”<sup>3</sup> But he rallies later when he speaks of deep reading as “the slow and meditative possession of a book.” There, I think, is the crux of the matter. The computer tends to force the reader’s pace, much in the manner of the old reading machines that were treadmills for the eyes, designed to help sluggish readers by presenting lines of copy at rates that could be speeded up or slowed down by the operator.

A recent motto of the American Library Association, “Take Time to Read,” inadvertently exposes the vulnerability of the book in an age when time is literally of the essence, when

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### Judgment in publishing ought to reflect three factors: personal taste, intuition, and experience.

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a millisecond separates the Olympic silver medalist from the gold. But there is more at stake than speed. At a deeper level the computer ushers in a change of mentality, or as Birkerts argues, we “are adapting ourselves to the ersatz security of a vast lateral connectedness . . . giving up on wisdom . . . and pledging instead to a faith in the web.”

A pole apart from Birkerts is Nicholas Negroponte, founding director of the Media Lab at MIT. In his book *Being Digital*, Negroponte forthrightly identifies himself as “someone who does not like to read.”<sup>4</sup> His quarrel with the book might be hardwired into his sensibility, but he makes a stab at a cognitive argument. Unlike the printed book, in which “sentences, paragraphs, pages, and chapters follow in an order determined not only by the author but by the physical and sequential construct of the book itself,” in hypermedia “chunks of information can be re-ordered, sentences expanded, and words given definitions on the spot.” Every hypermediaist thus has editorial license. The text is merely the

starting point, something to be augmented by the user, mixed with pictures and sound, if desired. Literary theorists who conduct textual searches in order to unlock an author’s intention might as well close shop, for in the digital future, change obliterates the past.

Negroponte, of course, puts this much more optimistically:

The access, the mobility, and the ability to effect change are what will make the future so different from the present. The information superhighway may be mostly hype today, but it is an understatement about tomorrow. It will exist beyond people’s wildest predictions. As children appropriate a global information resource, and as they discover that only adults need learner’s permits, we are bound to find new hope and dignity in places where very little existed before.

Somehow I find this argument less than compelling. Is the revolution in technology going to be so stimulating to young minds that it will overcome what the Librarian of Congress refers to as *aliteracy*, that is, the ability to read without the desire to do so? And will the willful ignorance of history that courses like a polluting stream through American education somehow be more tolerable because only the present and future have meaning? The shade of Santayana cannot, I submit, be dispatched so conveniently. Those who do not remember the past may be able to manipulate everything but control nothing.

### *The Two Cultures*

The debate over the future of the book echoes a controversy that was launched in 1959 when C. P. Snow delivered his Rede lectures on “The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution.” The stakes were equally high, nothing less than the “intellectual life of the whole of Western society.” Snow’s definition of intellectual life included a large part of practical life because, he wrote, “I should be the last person to suggest that the two can at the deepest level be distinguished.”

<sup>2</sup>Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Knopf, 1992).

<sup>3</sup>Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age* (Winchester, Mass.: Faber & Faber, 1994).

<sup>4</sup>Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (New York: Knopf, 1995).



What were Snow's two cultures?

Literary intellectuals at one pole—at the other scientists. . . . Between the two [exists] a gulf of mutual miscomprehension—sometimes (particularly among the young) hostility and dislike, but most of all a lack of understanding. They have a distorted image of each other. Their attitudes are so different that, even on the level of emotion, they can't find much common ground. The nonscientists have a rooted impression that the scientists are shallowly optimistic, unaware of man's condition. On the other hand, scientists believe that literary intellectuals are totally lacking in foresight . . . anxious to control both art and thought for the existential moment.

The cultural divide that C. P. Snow identified three and a half decades ago was neither so deep nor so wide as he surmised. I'd like to believe that the two cultures that are the focal points of my remarks—the print culture and the electronic culture—can be reconciled despite the positions staked out by their most diehard adherents.

**The book will coexist with the computer, as it has had to coexist since far earlier in this century with movies and then television.**

Yet casual empiricism suggests that the hour for the book is late. Ask a builder in Santa Fe, not exactly this nation's low-rent district, why he has designed a custom house without a single built-in bookshelf and he'll take you to the entertainment room, a mini-amphitheater, complete with a 10-foot-wide screen that descends with the touch of a button. What will people do in this inner sanctum? Select among 150 prospective channels of cable TV, play computer games, project their income tax calculations for the neighbors to view—the prospects, while almost endless, most assuredly do not include reading.

## Letters to the Editor

### Declining to Join ΦBK

I was initially surprised to read the news story that was reprinted from the *Arizona Daily Star* (see *Key Reporter*, Spring 1995) which described how more than one-third of the students invited to join ΦBK at the University of Arizona had declined. Upon reflection, however, I can understand why this may have been the case.

I received notice of my invitation to join ΦBK in the early spring semester of my senior year at Wesleyan University in 1991. At that time I was extremely busy working to secure a postgraduation job while trying to keep up with my course work. Had I received a request for \$30 in order to join ΦBK, I would most likely have hurriedly tossed the request in the trash.

Luckily, at Wesleyan, someone [Emma Feeney, in memory of her son] has set up a small endowment to pay for the initiation fees of all Phi Beta Kappa initiates. Since graduating, I have been actively keeping up with ΦBK news through the *Key Reporter* as well as maintaining friendships with some of my fellow inductees. Given the timing of the ΦBK induction process in the context of the undergraduate calendar, it is quite clear why people may consider a ΦBK invitation to have low priority in the short term.

I believe the national organization can address this problem in a number of ways. For example, some money donated to the national organization may be better spent setting up mini-endowments for each chapter to finance the initiation charges. Alternatively, the national orga-

nization can begin a campaign to persuade the alumni of specific chapters to set up such funds. In either case, Phi Beta Kappa will not risk jeopardizing its institutional longevity because of a relatively minor and manageable problem.

*Pradeep Khurana, Boston, Mass.*

I am disturbed that some people are bothered because a number of electees to Phi Beta Kappa at the University of Arizona did not respond to the notification of their election. . . . If students have been in a college or university for three and a half years and cannot distinguish Phi Beta Kappa from a host of other Greek letter organizations, they are not Phi Beta Kappa material. Moreover, the style of the three quoted rejecters of Phi Beta Kappa clearly indicates that they are not Phi Beta Kappa material:

"In considering should I do one of them, should I do all of them"—you don't even have to graduate from high school to speak like that (although this writer at least had the grace later to discover regret).

"It seemed like I could do something else for \$30"—the words of someone who would be taken to have had no education at all.

"I have never seen any of their activities . . . so I wasn't grabbed"—what expression and thinking from a university senior.

Phi Beta Kappa should not be taken for a "do good" club; its only *raison d'être* is to honor people who have exhibited

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

The scene from New Mexico is but one cameo of a larger society that increasingly seeks its entertainment from moving rather than fixed images, a society that listens to voices in Washington and elsewhere hell-bent on persuading us that information, uncontaminated by knowledge, will set us free. Amid these disturbing signs, I somehow do not fear that the book is in a duel to the death with the new electronic media, a duel that the book as the older, less versatile artifact inevitably must lose. Nor do I fear that the book will end up merely as a collection of data to be translated into

digital form and then stored, a filling station, if you will, on the information superhighway.

The book will coexist with the computer, as it has had to coexist since far earlier in this century with movies and then television. Like symphony orchestras, however, books seem destined to move gradually—not today and not tomorrow—to the fringes of our culture. Their utility will not come to an end, even if books serve future generations mainly as beacons to the headlands of civilization.

*Donald S. Lamm,  
New York, N.Y.*



## LETTERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

a certain discipline of mind. That is enough. Let us not strive to enter a world of activities, however much some observers may think that this will indicate significance. "Visibility" is not to be sought; it is there for those who can see.

*Robert B. Heilman, Seattle, Wash.*

When I was initiated into Phi Beta Kappa in 1992 at the University of Denver, most of us milled around, unimpressed, more [because of] our bleak postgrad situation than [because of] any particular lack of interest in the Society. Frankly, the \$30 fee is the lowest of honor society fees, and therefore should not be seen as the reason students decline. Most students try to choose which honors they want to put on their résumé . . . but have small enthusiasm this will really assist them in their job hunt.

One of my primary criticisms of the Society is the apparent aim to please older people. In the Spring '95 issue of the *Key Reporter* there are pictures of nine older white men. . . . I read little of the article [on the family] by Dr. Eisenberg. . . . I can't find a job, and my husband and I are without basic health insurance because most jobs available to young professionals like ourselves are temporary positions, adjuncting slots, or consulting cooperative arrangements—all without benefits. We couldn't afford a family if we wanted one.

Therefore I suggest changing some of the ΦBK attitude and resources from emphasis on older members who have completed their books, to the struggling younger generation who need some solid leads. . . .

*Cathryn Quantic Thurston, Syracuse, N.Y.*

### The Obsolete Family

Dr. Eisenberg's article "Is the Family Obsolete?" (*Key Reporter*, Spring 1995) is rich in statistics and insights into changing family structures worldwide, and he has deep compassion for children from single-parent families who tend to begin life disadvantaged. His formulation of the problem is superb. His solutions, while heartfelt, are simplistic.

Basically, Dr. Eisenberg's solution is to copy Sweden, where the out-of-wedlock rate is nearly twice that of the United States, yet adverse effects are less. Sweden is tiny, with a very homogeneous, well-educated, and motivated popula-

tion. Its social benefits are legendary. They also lead to extremely high taxes and costs of living, high unemployment rates, and budget deficits that, proportionately, dwarf those of the United States. The currency of Sweden is plummeting, and its leaders are eagerly trying to reduce those same generous benefits that Dr. Eisenberg touts.

His specific solutions, each followed by a comment, are as follows:

1. *Reduce family privacy and give the state more "active intervention" (i.e., power) over family matters.* In a homogeneous population with a state religion and common values, the state's interference in family is likely to be in a direction the parent(s) would lean anyway, were they able. But in a society as diverse as ours, one well-meaning bureaucrat's intervention may be another's idea of nightmarish trampling on cherished values. . . .

2. *Implement a "full-employment policy," higher wages for the working poor, and more benefits for the nonworking poor.* . . . Of course everyone wants full employment at decent wages. This is a tremendously complex issue. . . .

Technology has made most low-paying jobs obsolete. Should government create "make work" jobs which, if meaningful, conflict with the private sector, and, if meaningless, become bureaucratic boondoggles? Or should government simply increase benefits, pay people more for not working, and ignore the resulting disincentives to those who work?

Job training sounds great . . . but studies show it does little. Why should housing be subsidized and not clothing? . . . There are literally hundreds of issues here, each deserving a lifetime of study, and even then there will be honest, well-intentioned differences of opinion on each issue.

Moreover, actions in one area always affect other areas in unforeseen ways. . . .

3. *Subsidize and regulate day care.* This is a good idea, but nothing new. Perhaps day care should be subsidized, staffed partially by those appropriate welfare recipients for whom other work cannot be found.

4. *Enforce child support payments better.* . . . Every politician endorses this, but hard-working state officials who have been trying to do this for years will tell you it is not so easy.

5. *Teach family life and sex education in schools.* Even this commonsense solution is not so simple. By most measures, American education has been declining since 1973, and municipalities that spend the most sometimes have the worst results. Do we want these schools to be

surrogate parents? Even if so, there is a vociferous minority that does not want government to impose "official" values and sex education on its children.

Dr. Eisenberg eloquently elucidates a phenomenon. He admits he has not discovered its root causes. Without finding root causes, how can he formulate an adequate solution? And unless he exhaustively examines every aspect of the solution he does propose, and its effect on every other element of society, why should the reader buy it?

*Rudra Tamm, Greenwich, Conn.*

Leon Eisenberg's essay was as disappointing as it was timely. Concentrating on the economic rather than the psychiatric aspects of the family, he prescribes controversial or discredited policies while not exploring subjects on which he is more qualified to speak.

Increasing the minimum wage, for example, has been rejected by most economists for years and in any event fails to address the root problem of lack of employable skills. Six months of *paid* parental leave begs the question of who pays—employers through mandates that increase the cost of hiring, or taxpayers?—for a policy which, if anything, will increase the number of children being born.

More edifying, in light of recent disturbing reports, would have been elaboration of what the enforced standards for licensed day care ought to be. Also needed is a sound basis for providing the desired "context of responsible sexuality." Dr. Eisenberg dismisses "jeremiads from the pulpit"—why scorn the clergy when we need all the moral leadership we can get?—yet offers no meaningful alternative.

*David Peyton, Falls Church, Va.*

As a full-time mother, I feel compelled to remind Dr. Eisenberg that we are not so much a relic of the shadowy past as his article implies. According to the Census Bureau's 1993 report, there are still over 6.2 million full-time mothers in the United States.

In his article, Dr. Eisenberg acknowledges that divorce rates in this country have risen in tandem with women working outside the home. He attributes this solely to the greater financial independence of employed wives. I would suggest the possibility that the stress of maintaining two careers while parenting may be more than modern marriages can



sustain. Certainly the pressure of trying to work 40 hours a week or more, spend quality time with the children, and accomplish necessary domestic tasks leaves little time or energy for relationship building between the parents. Perhaps marriages are imploding in response to the unreasonable demands of the modern, two-income lifestyle.

Dr. Eisenberg asserts that mothers of young children most often work out of economic necessity, yet the 1993 Census Bureau statistics show that the median annual earnings for two-income families were \$50,621, more than 3.4 times the poverty-level income of \$14,763. For most two-income families, the mother's salary allows them to live not *at* but well *above* subsistence level, buying perceived necessities like second cars, newer and larger homes, vacations, restaurant meals, entertainment, and the all-essential child care services. As a culture we have embraced a materialism that defines success in terms of possessions and knows nothing of simplicity, self-discipline, or self-denial. Such materialism will always prove detrimental to children because it assesses them solely as an expense and an inconvenience.

Career status also plays a role in keeping mothers in the work force, especially among the well educated, who are encouraged to believe that they would be wasting their talents in the home. The idea that caring for her own children is not a valuable pursuit for an intelligent woman is as ludicrous as it is myopic and bigoted. As a mother at home, I approach my work knowing that every day I have an impact that will resonate for generations. I know unequivocally that I am the best woman for the job, and that if my life ended tomorrow I could have no regrets. How many mothers working outside the home can say the same?

Instead of creating the pseudo-Sweden Dr. Eisenberg envisions, the federal government should provide substantial tax breaks to single-income, two-parent families, and we as a culture should stop devaluing homemaking as an antiquated, unprofitable career option. There never has been, nor will there ever be, a substitute for a mother's personal care and attention in producing emotionally healthy children. The sooner the parents and the policymakers of this country recognize that fact, instead of focusing all their energies on improving institutional child care, the better off the next generation will be.

Rebecca D. Bruner, Phoenix, Ariz.

### Leon Eisenberg replies:

Each of the three correspondents merits more of a reply than there is space on offer. But let me try.

Rudra Tamm misreads my plea that we learn from Sweden to be a proposal to copy it. Indeed, that would be absurd, if only because of the many differences between the two countries. Nor do I favor giving the state unlimited "power" over family matters. Instead, I urge my fellow citizens to review the effects that our social decisions have on family life (whether they were intended or not) and try to design policy that is pro-rather than anti-family.

France has dramatically reduced premature births, infant mortality, and maternal complications and has increased inoculation rates, prenatal care, and preventive health exams by a program of family benefits keyed to compliance with public health initiatives (see report from the French-American Foundation, 41 East 72nd St., New York, NY 10021). No, I do not advise making all Americans French, although there is much about France worth emulating. With teenage pregnancy rates in the United States the highest in the world, *somebody* is telling our kids about sex. I daresay it is not their parents. Let's make sure that schools present the facts about contraception and that clinics make contraceptives available. Will that suffice? Absolutely not! The problem is more complex. But let's begin by peeling off the layer of ignorance.

I join Tamm in rejecting "simplistic solutions." Tamm settles for hand-wringing in the face of the complexities associated with employment policy, job training, tax policy, and the like. If these issues weren't complex, there would be nothing to discuss. Their complexity, however, is no warrant for walking away from them; I reject "solutions" that further impoverish the disadvantaged.

David Peyton dismisses increasing the minimum wage on the grounds that it has been "rejected by most economists." I haven't surveyed economists, but the ones I read and believe, like Card and Krueger, provide empirical evidence that minimum wages do not reduce employment (*American Economic Review* 84 [1994]:772-93).

Unfortunately, the 21 percent decline between 1979 and 1990 in the real income for men with only four years of high school (U.S. Council of Economic Advisors, *Economic Report of the President*, 1994) is part of a pervasive increase in inequality in the United States (E. N. Wolfe, *Top Heavy: A Study of the In-*

*creasing Inequality of Wealth in America*, 1995).

Peyton asks, Who should pay for parental leave? The answer is that *all* of us should share the cost to ensure U.S. children a healthy start. Standards for day care, well beyond the scope of my talk, have been spelled out in a recent report, *Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers* (available from University of Colorado, Economics Department, Campus Box 159, P.O. Box 173364, Denver, CO 80217-3364). I agree that we need all the moral leadership we can get; I don't see it coming from the religious right.

I join Rebecca Bruner in celebrating the virtues of motherhood (I would add, fatherhood). Full-time parenting is not only a splendid option that should be available for those who prefer it but one that contributes in important ways to society. Many women work because they prefer to, many more because they have to. Either way, having both members of a couple working does strain marital relationships and cut down on time for parenting; nonetheless, women who work outside the home report better health than housewives. I am all in favor of tax breaks for single-income, two-parent as well as one-parent families. It will be all to the good if these enable women who prefer to stay home to do so.

Given the realities of the current economy and the fact that the majority of women with children are already in the labor force, I see little likelihood of a return to the domestic patterns of the first half of the century. In the face of change, I urge that we design employment policy so as to make it easier for parents to care for their children (liberal leave policies, reduced work schedules, day care facilities attached to work places, and so on).

### America's "Decline"

Donald McCloskey (*Key Reporter*, Winter 1994-95) emphasizes "a rising tide of income" in the United States, but neither he nor his critics address a central, disturbing element of that rise. The *New York Times* (April 17 and 18, 1995) reported that of income gains in the United States in the 1980s, three-quarters went to the top 20 percent of families. Everyone else saw their incomes decline or stagnate. The situation regarding wealth is even more skewed: all of the increase in wealth in the 1980s went to the top 20 percent. Both trends continue in the 1990s.

The result, the *Times* reported, is a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



## LETTERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

differential between high-wage and low-wage families that far exceeds those of other industrialized countries and is growing more pronounced. The main cause of this growing division of the U.S. population into a small wealthy class, a declining middle class, and an increasingly large and straitened impoverished class is to be found in market forces. These apply worldwide, but other industrialized countries have used tax and spending policies to offset these forces. . . . By contrast, since the early 1980s, we have reduced taxes on the wealthy and reduced assistance to the poor. One expert (Sheldon Danziger of the University of Michigan) calculates that these policy shifts may have caused 15 percent of our redistribution of wealth from bottom to top.

An increasingly radical division of society into haves and have-nots is a legitimate cause for concern. It is one that our government policies should address but that the current congressional agenda is exacerbating. I wonder how Professor McCloskey would address this issue.

*Bernard D. Sherman, Berkeley, Calif.*

### **Donald McCloskey replies:**

Mr. Sherman and I both want the poor here and abroad to do better than they have in the decade past. The point on which we disagree is that he would take now from the rich and give to the poor. I would rather wait for the boats to rise with the tide. The reasons for waiting are many, having nothing to do with a lack of humanity among "conservatives." The point is prudence in pursuing goals on which Mr. Sherman and I agree.

No one knows much about how the economy works, and therefore trying to fix it is hazardous, especially before being sure it is broken. As Mr. Sherman observes, the recent shift against the unskilled and young is worldwide, having more to do with demography than with any long-term fault in the economy. Waiting for all boats to rise has been prudent in the past. The biggest and most successful policy for helping the poor has been modern economic growth—at the least, income per head has risen by a factor of 12 since the 18th century. Hastily imposed taxes and subsidies can stop this growth cold. And the distribution of income, as modern research has shown, is remarkably stable over the long

run, when corrected for the age composition of the world's population.

One further and distinct point. A tilt in the distribution of income is indeed "a legitimate cause for concern," even if short-lived. It does not follow, however, that "it is one that our government policies should address." I can think of few organizations less likely than the federal government to succeed in shifting income from the rich to the poor. Churches, charities, and above all families do the job. The government more often than not merely shifts the income from general taxpayers to sugar growers and road contractors, and, let it be admitted, college professors.

### **Federal Funding for the Arts**

I am disappointed that the debate regarding federal funding of the arts between Messrs. Ludlow and Katz in the Spring 1995 issue turned solely on free market versus government intervention. This discussion fails to address the really difficult questions of what constitutes art and what role we expect art to serve in our society.

. . . Although the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has never made a convincing case supported by hard facts and figures that its funding is necessary, I am willing to assume for the sake of argument that at least in some instances there are talented and worthy artists who would not have been heard of were it not for government grants.

The problem with the NEA and its supporters is that they fail to realize the extent of the visceral disgust and anger that most Americans feel as a result of a very few notorious examples of NEA funding. I am well familiar with the argument that art among other things is supposed to challenge convention and stimulate thinking and reactions in new directions, but . . . there is a difference between being asked to think and experience in new ways and having your face rubbed in dirt. Most Americans can see the difference even if the NEA cannot. . . .

It is ironic and perhaps a measure of how far we have degenerated that government support of the arts in past centuries produced such monumental and enduring classics as Michelangelo's work in the Sistine Chapel whereas now we get Andreas Serrano's "piss Christ." And I daresay that Serrano will have been totally forgotten in 50 years, whereas the genius of the Italian Renaissance painters has remained a source of joy and delight to countless millions of people for over 500 years.

But while Madonna and Robert Maplethorpe and Serrano even collectively probably don't represent a serious threat to our society, I truly wonder whether ultimately we can survive the unremitting, relentless assault on our moral values and our national heritage, whether that attack is financed by the government or the entertainment media.

I do not profess to have easy answers, but I would have welcomed some recognition in the *Key Reporter* of the reality of what we are facing.

*Peter A. Bookman, Arlington, Va.*

Lawrence M. Ludlow (*Key Reporter*, Spring 1995) writes in opposition to federal funding of the arts that "federal resources represent private pain." . . . Currently, almost everybody on the political right has come out in opposition to taxation as an infringement of individual rights and property. . . . This group argues that any and all money a person earns is due entirely to his or her efforts.

On the contrary, the U.S. government deserves credit for establishing and maintaining an environment in which it is possible for individuals to make enormous amounts of money; and the more money individuals make, the more the government should demand in return for maintaining that stable society. The anti-tax group seems to argue that the poor should be cut off from that necessary support, and that long-term stability should be sacrificed to short-term gain (in the form of decreased taxes for a selected few).

I believe that funding for the arts is not the "luxury" many seem to think that it is. It is more than a statement about one's belief in one's own country and its culture (an argument that was made in favor of establishing the NEA in the 1960s). Rather, it is a necessary part of the *education of the nation's populace*. Recent articles (e.g., *New York Times*, May 16, 1995) point out convincingly that "musically trained children score 80 percent higher on tests of spatial and temporal reasoning, an ability that underlies many kinds of mathematics and engineering."

. . . Mr. Ludlow suggests that the solution to the politicization of arts funding is to cut it off entirely. A much preferable solution is to truly *endow* the NEA—a one-time \$10 billion set-aside could ensure the stability and viability of arts funding and the concomitant societal values.

*David S. Lefkowitz, West Hollywood, Calif.*



# RECOMMENDED READING

## BOOK COMMITTEE

**Humanities:** Svetlana Alpers, Frederick J. Crosson, Simon McVeigh,

Robert P. Sonkowsky, Jean Sudrann, Lawrence Willson

**Social Sciences:** Earl W. Count, Louis F. Harlan,

Thomas McNaugher, Catherine E. Rudder, Anna J. Schwartz

**Natural Sciences:** Ronald Geballe, Russell B. Stevens

### Anna J. Schwartz

**The Flat Tax.** Robert E. Hall and Alvin Rabushka. Hoover Institution Press, 1995. 2d ed. \$14.95.

This is the authoritative source of information on how the flat-tax plan would work. The authors provide answers to questions they are regularly asked about the plan, and rewrite the Internal Revenue code to implement the tax.

**The Future of Central Banking: The Tercentenary Symposium of the Bank of England.** Forrest Capie, Charles Goodhart, Stanley Fischer, and Norbert Schnadt. Cambridge Univ., 1994. \$40.

**The Central Banks.** Marjorie Deane and Robert Pringle. Viking, 1995. \$29.95.

Both books, well worth reading, trace the evolution of central banks from their origins as private banks serving governments to their present position as public institutions operating with more or less independence from their countries' finance ministers in determining monetary policy. The Bank of England volume is the work of monetary scholars, who presented major papers at a conference marking the bank's tercentenary, while the other volume is the work of knowledgeable journalists. The former is suitably academic, the latter delightfully breezy. Both are highly informative about the recent emphasis of central banks on curbing inflation and deemphasis on using monetary policy to affect the level of output. The journalists' volume also discusses the European Union plan to establish a federal central bank for the member countries and the restructuring of central banks in the republics of the former Soviet Union.

**The Road to Serfdom.** F.A. Hayek. Univ. of Chicago, 1994. 50th Anniversary ed., with a new introduction by Milton Friedman. \$19.95; paper, \$10.95.

As instructive and timely now as when it was first published, this classic highlights the dangers to freedom of collectivist economic planning.

**Population Economics.** Assaf Razin and Efraim Sadka. MIT Press, 1995. \$30.

This is a readable introduction to the modern economic approach to the study of population as a facet of household behavior; the mathematics the authors introduce does not overwhelm the text. The central proposition of the approach is that the household allocates its budget not only for purchases of consumer goods and services but also for spending on children, which varies with the parents' choice of the number of children and of their quality. Quality is influenced by spending on a child's current consumption, investing in a child's health and education (investment in human capital), and providing for a child's future consumption (bequests). This approach unifies the study of a household's allocation of time (among work, leisure, education, childrearing), fertility, consumption, savings, investment in human capital, and bequests. The authors study the implications of the fertility and child quality choices for population trends, and the interactions between economic and population growth. They also examine migration as a source of population growth.

**Property Taxes and Tax Revolts: The Legacy of Proposition 13.** Arthur O'Sullivan, Terri A. Sexton, and Steven M. Sheffrin. Cambridge Univ., 1995. \$39.95.

This book discusses four property tax revolts (in the Great Depression, in California and Massachusetts during the late 1970s, and in 1980 in Britain) which transformed the nature of the tax, most dramatically in California. The result there has been a 1 percent maximum property tax rate, with assessed value of all property rolled back to its value in 1975-76, and increases for inflation since that date limited to 2 percent a year. With a change in ownership, property is assessed at its purchase price, which reflects years of rapid price inflation. Proposition 13 thus imposes a penalty on movers.

Large disparities in taxation among virtually identical properties arise as a result of inflation in housing prices and

different turnover rates of property. Proposition 13 has also required a new system to allocate property tax revenue to local governments. Initially, the state supported local governments, using its own surplus and property tax revenue that had previously gone to the schools; later, facing financial difficulties, the state restored property tax revenue to the schools and reduced its support for local governments.

The authors conclude that turnover and new construction as well as low projected inflation will reduce existing inequities among homeowners. To increase revenue and further reduce inequities, they recommend raising the maximum allowable increase in assessed value from 2 percent to 4 percent and, for symbolic reasons, repealing the provision allowing property to be passed through generations within the same family without reassessment. They would also assess nonhomeowner property at market value, thus increasing revenue.

**But Is It True? A Citizen's Guide to Environmental Health and Safety Issues.** Aaron Wildavsky. Harvard, 1995. \$35.

The late author collaborated with his students in case studies of the environmental and safety scares of recent decades (cranberries, saccharin, Agent Orange, Love Canal, asbestos, etc.). In contrast to the environmental paradigm—if there is a possibility of harm, regulate; with inadequate science, proof of no harm is required; predict many more harms even if invalid; for industry, consider health harms but not benefits; for regulation, consider health benefits but not harms—his proposed prescription is as follows: regulate if there is probable harm; with adequate science, show probable or improbable harm; predict far fewer harms because there is no need to extrapolate from rodents to people; for industry and regulation, consider health harms and benefits.

**Restructuring for Innovation: The Remaking of the U.S. Semiconductor Industry.** David P. Angel. Guilford, 1994. \$27.95.

Using the results from a survey of U.S. semiconductor companies in 1991, the author has ascertained the ways in which the companies responded to intensified international competition in the late 1980s. By restructuring manufacturing practice and production to enable the U.S. industry to develop markets, products, and production capacity ahead of foreign competitors, the U.S. industry has

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



## RECOMMENDED READING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

since won back worldwide semiconductor market share that it had earlier lost to Japanese firms. Angel indicates that to maintain market share in this decade will require new rounds of investment in manufacturing technology. Now, however, because he believes that underinvestment is a problem, he advocates continuation of the government's provision of either funding for Sematech—a consortium of firms engaged in development of advanced semiconductor technology to which the government has contributed \$100 million annually since 1987, and the consortium members nearly \$1 billion—or R&D investment tax credits. He also favors government intervention in trade relations with Japan in support of the semiconductor industry.

**Taxation and Democracy: Swedish, British, and American Approaches to Financing the Modern State.** *Sven Steinmo.* Yale, 1994. \$32.50.

This study seeks to explain variations in the tax systems of three countries. The author argues that tax policy choices depend on differences in structure and design of each nation's political decision-making institutions, which define the roles of bureaucrats, politicians, and interests in every polity. In each polity the public resists tax increases but favors public spending.

The American institutional context, in which congressional committees are powerful, yields a tax system progressive on its face but riddled with loopholes; as a result, there is less available to spend on welfare programs. The author finds proposed institutional reforms troubling because they would reduce the autonomy of politicians. He foresees little hope for a balanced budget, and, as the public debt increases, he believes that politicians will promise the electorate what it wants—more spending and, at the same time, tax cuts, to America's undoing.

The massive growth of the Swedish state is the result of government by key interest groups, enabling bureaucratic elites to override short-term resistance to tax increases. Enormous revenue has been collected to finance more welfare programs. According to the author, the new Conservative government—now out of office—had to accept the reality that most Swedish voters approve the welfare state that the long-ruling Social Democrats constructed.

British party government has led to a seesawing of tax policy, as each new

government takes office uncommitted to the existing tax structure. In the author's view the Conservative government elected in 1992 has the power to continue the redistribution that Thatcher began, but, referring to the backlash against the poll tax that she introduced, he suggests there are limits to how far this redistribution can be taken.

### Catherine E. Rudder

**The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush.** *Stephen Skowronek.* Belknap/Harvard, 1993. \$29.95.

One of the most intriguing questions of modern American political life is why the Clinton presidency does not seem to have gotten off the ground, given this president's intelligence, ambition, and experience. Combining historical methods with social science thinking, Skowronek's masterly study of the presidency helps answer this conundrum implicitly, and many others directly, by creating a framework to explain presidential performance and to predict the future.

Skowronek argues that great presidents may be created as much by the circumstances they inherit as by their native talents. For a president to lead in the manner of Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, FDR, and perhaps Reagan, the times must be ripe to reformulate the nation's political agenda, to challenge what has been done in the past, and to articulate a case for the exercise of political power. Presidents in such eras can fairly be compared with one another with regard to their ability to legitimate change.

Presidents like John Adams, Franklin Pierce, James Buchanan, Herbert Hoover, Jimmy Carter, and perhaps Clinton, however, have found themselves in quite different situations, in which each is associated with an established order that is called into question either as having failed or as not having addressed the problems of greatest concern to citizens. For a president in such a situation not to be rendered powerless, he must run the risk of alienating his own political allies. To the degree that such a president instead remains faithful to established commitments, he becomes seen as part of the nation's problems. This dilemma suggests why President Clinton cannot seem to decide whether he is a new Democrat or an old one.

The ability to create and sustain authority is the key to a president's success in putting the nation on a different trajectory or, in Skowronek's words, to being a "reconstitutive" president. Presidents like Clinton will not be reconsti-

tutive, but they can fulfill the promise of office by arguing for changes based on their merits and by working to build popular support despite political constraints.

**Democracy on Trial.** *Jean Bethke Elstain.* Basic Books, 1995. \$20.

If legitimacy underlies successful presidencies, it equally underpins a thriving democracy. Elstain has written an eloquent treatise, based on lectures she delivered at Massey College in 1993, on the state of democracy in the United States, though her discourse applies to democracy in general. She finds American democracy to be in a perilous state because of a growing cynicism about politics, the absence of community and civic-mindedness, the triumph of the market in virtually every aspect of life, a new and destructive attitude toward rights, the growing ideology of victimization, a culture of mistrust, and, finally, an inability of our citizens to talk with one another with respect, empathy, and understanding.

How can a democratic society operate in the absence of citizens' sense that they have a stake in one another's welfare, that they have things in common as well as differences, and that they can effect compromises in the public sphere? Elstain derides the notion that because people are of different races or sexual orientations, they have nothing in common. "My democratic dream," she writes, "was nurtured by a presumption that none of us is stuck inside our own skins; our identities and our ideas are not reducible to our membership in a race, an ethnic group, or a sex" (p. 85). Her vision of a properly functioning democracy provides ample room for a thriving public space but honors privacy of citizens and politicians. This provocative call to a recommitment to the moral basis of American democracy is intended to generate wide debate. It should.

**Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy.** *Robert D. Putnam.* Princeton, 1993. \$33; paper (1995), \$14.95.

For a careful empirical study of the foundational role that civic community plays in successfully functioning democracies, one should turn to this elegant exploration into democratic life. Using the natural experiment of the creation in 1970 of 15 regional governments in Italy, Putnam explores the question of why some democratic governments succeed and others fail. While he finds institutional design and economic well-being to be important determinants of successful democracies, Putnam reports in this



award-winning book that the key to success lies in the existence of a civic community "marked by an active, public-spirited citizenry, by egalitarian political relations, by a social fabric of trust and cooperation" (p. 15).

Mining several rich veins of data that he and his colleagues, Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, began collecting over two decades ago, Putnam discovers that the differences in the success of regional Italian governments in responsibly and responsively governing cannot be explained simply by economic factors. Even when he controlled for relative wealth of the regional governments, he found that significant differences remained. Putnam isolates the rich fabric of social clubs, the engagement in community affairs and in public issues, and the predisposition to compromise with political opponents as the ingredients creating effective democratic government. In his words, "The community values solidarity, civic engagement, cooperation, and honesty. Government works. Small wonder that people in these regions are content!" (p. 115).

Why, he asks, is civic community so much more prevalent in some regions than others? To answer this question, he delves back to the Middle Ages, when northern Italy developed republics marked by self-help and mutual assistance societies and the expansion of political power beyond the traditional elite, whereas southern Italy was governed by a feudal autocracy characterized by vertical, patron-client relationships. The patterns underlying these structures were to reemerge in modern Italy and help explain the differences in political culture in the north and south.

Putnam also sheds light on the "collective-action problem," elucidating the importance of civic community as a buttress to democracy. Absent coercion, rational citizens have little reason to cooperate with one another or to contribute to the common good, both necessary for democratic government to thrive. The broader social context, if it is distinguished by social networks fostering trust and cooperation, can help overcome narrow selfishness.

Putnam's work deserves a wide reading; it ranks among the best that political science has to offer.

**Jean Sudrann**

**Hiding in Plain Sight: Essays in Criticism and Autobiography.** Ed. and intro. by Wendy Lesser. Mercury House, 1993. \$21.95.

In her introduction to this rich collection from *The Threepenny Review*, Lesser describes its best essays as those that "exist on the borderline between criticism and autobiography." Her grouping of the 30 chosen essays under a series of such participial titles as "Musing" or "Looking and Listening" alerts readers to writers' activities, while the widely varying subjects of individual essays explore possible relationships between the writer's life and materials. The book's title, along with its jacket reproduction of Raphael Soyer's double view of model and artist painting the model, defines Lesser's ideal essay—one reflecting the relationship between the artist's inner and outer worlds.

Just as Mindy Aloff's discernment in *Rilke Dancing* forces out of hiding a brilliant illumination of human courage, so too Gore Vidal's knowledge of the American rise to power provides his opening to the borderline between criticism and autobiography. In addition, these essays by Aloff and Vidal, along with others such as Griel Marcus's review of *The Manchurian Candidate*, suggest interlocking themes that emerge from the volume as a whole: the vision of a country that has lost its sense of obligation to its own nationhood as well as the boundaries between, and rare moments of identification with, the material and spiritual worlds always "hiding in plain sight."

**The Afterlife of Property: Domestic Security and the Victorian Novel.** Jeff Nunokawa. Princeton, 1994. \$24.95.

Although the book's title suggests yet another discussion of love versus money in the literature of Victorian England, its content allies economic event with domestic affection, opening hitherto unexplored relationships between cold cash and warm hearts. The scope of Nunokawa's argument and the strength of his analysis are further illuminated by the quotations he uses to demonstrate the various ways the novels create clashes between marketplace and domestic hearth, as characters deny the appropriation of property while the narrative reminds the reader of its acquisition. Arthur Clennam's claim on Little Dorrit (*Little Dorrit*) may be free of monetary taint, but the novel matches the sanctity of the couple's domesticity with their descent into the marketplace, the "roaring streets of London" filled with "the arrogant and the froward [*sic*] and the vain." Walter Gay's courtship of Florence Dombey (*Dombey and Son*) mingles so effectively with his boyhood fancy of rescuing the lovely Florence into his "old day dreams" that instead of bartering a life he makes a marriage.

When Nunokawa turns to Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, his argument is debatable. Because he fails to heed Eliot's complaint about "readers who cut the book into scraps and talk of nothing but Gwendolen," he locates the center of the narrative in the conflict for mastery between Gwendolen and Grandcourt, ignoring Eliot's insistence on the unity of her whole novel, whose full subject is nothing less than the various alienations suffered by human bodies and human spirits. Nevertheless, in linking the "Afterlife of Property" and Gwendolen's terror of "the white dead face from which she was ever trying to flee and forever held back," Nunokawa demonstrates his fine perception of the melodramatic image Eliot creates to mirror the extent of Gwendolen's isolation in a world that goes beyond the ownership of property to the ownership of women.

**English Comedy.** Ed. by Michael Corder, Peter Holland, and John Kerrigan. Cambridge Univ., 1994. \$59.95.

This collection of essays on English comedy finds in the vitality of Shakespeare's comedies a fundamental grounding for British comedy from the Renaissance to the 20th century, from Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* to Noel Coward's "comic geometry." By including grim and ribald, ironic and bathetic, grotesque and orderly, the editors validate their assertion that the varieties of comedy "address the possibilities of life itself."

The approaches made by 3 of the 15 essayists offer a fair sample of the collection's rich variety. Stephen Orgel's essay, "The Comedian as the Character C" (playing with Wallace Stevens's title), celebrates the "transitional moment," the spirit of Elizabethan comedy in Renaissance revivals of Roman drama as well as Victorian textual editions reassigning speeches from Miranda to Prospero out of longing for a Miranda who will exemplify the correct behavior for young women of the 19th century. Gillian Beer's exuberant exploration of the effects of "Rhyming as Comedy" not only demonstrates the ways rhyme celebrates the energy of Shakespearean comedy but also identifies its function in controlling the form of its texts. Undercutting reason, rhyme creates the delights of nonsense as well as the comic confrontation between the mannerly and the grotesque. Rhyme forms texts by arguing, creating dialogue, breeding drama, and expressing George Herbert's reliance on God as tenderly as it voices Lord Byron's skepticism.

Barbara Everett's essay, "Much Ado about Nothing: The Unsocial Comedy,"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



## RECOMMENDED READING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

approaches the play through its formal elements, contrasting the courtly world of Messina, with its continuous rush of activity, to the maturing love of Beatrice and Benedick. That love, Everett suggests, "the great subject of the play," points toward the mingling of sorrow with joy and play with love, an amalgam essential to Shakespearean comedy.

**Risking Who One Is: Encounters with Contemporary Art and Literature.** Susan Rubin Suleiman. Harvard, 1994. \$27.50.

Suleiman's odyssey of self-discovery develops an argument that moves her from parochial to global concerns in a language whose energy and vivid colloquialism mark the intellectual shape of her book: a quest for the self and its place in the world of the "other." Her method evolves as a personal dialogue with literature and art, as she moves among works as varied as the novels of both Kafka and Angela Carter or the paintings of Leonora Carrington and Robert Rauschenberg.

Her initial attempt to understand her complex role as mother-artist pushes her toward a concept of the "plural self" at the same time that it awakens long-buried memories of her early childhood in Budapest when the Nazis began to round up Hungarian Jews. Her newly recovered memory of having been left by her family in the care of kindly Christian farmers defines for her the necessary inclusion of "the other" into the "plural self." To make that inclusion, she learns to join her religious, political, and ethnic identifications to those feminist concerns with which her odyssey began. Serbs and Croats, she says, measuring for us what she has learned, "are also sons and daughters . . . parents, teachers, apartment dwellers. . . ." So don't, she argues, put "all your identity eggs in one basket." If this argument seems both obvious and unreal, Suleiman's formulation—through the terms of her own life, the books she has read, and the galleries she has visited—has helped create a powerful underpinning for her self-exploration.

**Robert P. Sonkowsky**

**The Roman Theatre and Its Audience.** Richard C. Beacham. Harvard, 1992. \$29.95.

This book is more than a mere survey of Roman theater history such as one finds in Classics or theater department courses. It does begin with the origins

(e.g., Fescennine verses and Atellane farces), and it ends with a discussion of Roman influences on medieval and Renaissance theater, but the discussion throughout focuses on the textual and archaeological evidence from which conclusions are drawn, with citations of primary sources, illustrations, and bibliographical references. Furthermore, Beacham is a scholar who has had direct experience with translating Latin texts and designing authentic sets for university productions of Roman plays. He ably covers a vast span of time, dealing, to be sure, with only one play in its entirety, the *Casina* of Plautus, and giving necessarily short shrift to Seneca.

But the book as a whole, especially the chapter on mime and pantomime and the author's research on early and later stages and stagings, as well as the account of his own reconstruction of a Roman stage for University of Warwick productions, is highly recommended for students, scholars, and theater people.

**A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome.** L. Richardson Jr. Johns Hopkins, 1992. \$65.

**Roman Sculpture.** Dianna E. E. Kleiner. Yale, 1992. \$55.

**Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity.** Fikret Yegül. MIT, 1992. \$65.

**Gods and Heroes in Late Archaic Greek Art.** Karl Shefold with Luca Giuliani. Tr. by Alan Griffiths. Cambridge Univ., 1992. \$125.

The first three of these hefty quarto volumes (500 pages each) are learned and useful repositories of information about material remains and the ancient cultures that produced them. Richardson's opus replaces Platner and Ashby's *Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (1929), taking into account the latest excavations and research in a tradition of study going back to the Renaissance and antiquity itself. All important sites, buildings, and monuments within the city of Rome from its earliest occupation to mid-sixth century are here, except Christian monuments that have no bearing on pagan ones. The author's summaries of the literary and physical evidence are clear, incisive, and fresh. He has included plans and line drawings where useful, referring us to Ernest Nash's *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (1968) for photographs. This book will be an indispensable reference tool for students of Roman culture for a long time to come.

The Kleiner volume is the first survey of Roman sculpture since 1907. It provides historical settings, descriptions, and photographs of public and private sculptural remains from about the fifth century

B.C. to the age of Constantine, from the city of Rome to the provinces. The book is a clear and learned presentation of this vast extent of material in various cultural contexts—a good visual introduction to Roman life in its regional, aesthetic, mythological diversity and its changing political and social organization. While giving due weight to Greek models, Kleiner helps put Roman sculpture on the map as a subject of study in its own right.

Like the other two, Yegül's book has vast temporal boundaries (from bathing in Homer and the Greek gymnasium to late Roman and Byzantine times), and like Kleiner's, wide geographical boundaries (roughly the Mediterranean and southern Europe as well as North Africa and Asia Minor). Many photographs, drawings, and plans illustrate the architecture and engineering. The commentary is lucid and provides delightful and surprising insights into the social and political significance of bathing and bath structures, especially for Roman civilization.

The fourth volume differs from the others in price, number of pages (375), the time span studied, and, in a sense, recentness (the original German version was published in 1978). The translation, however, has been revised and updated, and 33 cents a page seems by today's standards perhaps fair for such stimulating and priceless insights. Seriously, the authors bring to bear upon the material, chiefly vase paintings from the last two-thirds of the sixth century, brilliant powers of description and analysis, making this "late archaic" art stand radiant in all of its strange and static qualities. Additional vitality is drawn from that venerable wellspring of Classical studies, the Homeric Question, as developments in archaic art are seen in parallel with certain "additions" that, according to the Analysts, were made to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the sixth century. The synchronic focus on two-thirds of a single century, as opposed to the millennial diachronicity of the other three books, is refreshing, but all four make revealing connections between art and the political-social aspects of ancient civilization.

**The Nature of Roman Comedy: A Study in Popular Entertainment.** George E. Duckworth. 2nd ed., with foreword and bibliographical appendix by Richard Hunter. Univ. of Oklahoma, 1994. \$21.95.

**Barbarian Play: Plautus' Roman Comedy.** William S. Anderson. Univ. of Toronto, 1993. \$50.

The reissue of Duckworth's 1952 book is updated only with a bibliography, but since its original publication, significant



additional amounts of the plays of Menander, the Greek comic predecessor of the Roman playwrights, have been discovered. By comparing these new texts with parallel passages in plays of Plautus, Anderson shows how the Roman comic master developed a form brilliantly suited to Roman culture, deeply risible in that context and in its conscious transformations of Greek comic techniques.

### Russell B. Stevens

**The Scars of Evolution: What Our Bodies Tell Us about Human Origins.** Elaine Morgan. Oxford, 1994. \$12.95.

In this relatively brief, highly readable work, the author discusses a variety of human characteristics not to be found in other primates, even those closely related to us. She has highlighted, among other attributes, bipedalism, hairlessness, sweating, and the subcutaneous fat layer for detailed comment, and deals with each in an authoritative and convincing fashion. The central theme of the book is to argue the case for an aquatic life-style for our prehuman ancestors, as opposed to the more commonly held view that they were dwellers in the African savannah. Regrettably, in my view, the overall effect of her work is needlessly diminished by a recurrent practice of ridiculing the opinions of those who do not share her view—an approach more appropriate to high school debating than to scholarly argument.

**Naturalist.** Edward O. Wilson. Island Press/Shearwater Books, 1994. \$24.95.

Wilson, author of highly regarded scientific publications and recipient of numerous awards for distinguished accomplishments in biological research, has provided here an intensely personal

memoir. Yet in the second section of the book, subtitled *Storyteller*, he treats in substantial detail some of the key insights with which his name is widely linked: island biogeography, the interplay of species as a given area is repopulated following catastrophic destruction of the existing biota; the impact of molecular biology; and, perhaps most widely debated, the implications of sociobiology as applied to the human species. With some apology for using the term, I find Wilson's latest work a "page turner."

**Minds for the Making: The Role of Science in American Education, 1750–1990.** Scott L. Montgomery. Guilford, 1994. \$39.95; paper, \$18.95.

In this volume the author examines rather more than the title suggests, addressing the shifting fashions and emphases in American education, per se, as background against which to trace the

role of science therein. Those especially interested in these matters would do well to seek out two earlier works also: (1) *To Advance Knowledge: The Growth of American Research Universities, 1900–1940*, by Roger L. Geiger (Oxford, 1986); and (2) *The Circuit Riders: Rockefeller Money and the Rise of Modern Science*, by Gerald Jones (W. W. Norton, 1989). Geiger's book offers a detailed treatment of 12 representative institutions; Jones's examines the crucial role of large philanthropic programs in the period before the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health were available to assume the burden.

**Medicine, Money, and Morals: Physicians' Conflicts of Interest.** Marc A. Rodwin. Oxford, 1993. \$25.

Rodwin's book has been much reviewed, and deservedly so, in that it

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

### About Our Reviewers

In the Spring 1995 issue we printed biographic sketches of the book reviewers whose work appeared in that issue. Here are sketches of the remaining members of the Book Committee.

The dean of the Book Committee, **Earl W. Count**, born in 1899, had his early education at a German school in Bulgaria, where his father was a Methodist missionary. After serving in the U.S. Army in World War I, he received his B.A. at Williams College (ΦBK) and his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley. He also earned a B.D. and is an ordained Episcopal priest. He taught anthropology at Hamilton College and at several universities. He still corresponds with Bulgarian colleagues in their language and is researching and writing for publication in Germany.

**Louis R. Harlan**, Distinguished University Professor Emeritus at the University of Maryland, College Park, received his B.A. from Emory University (ΦBK), M.A. from Vanderbilt University, and Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *Booker T. Washington* (2 vols., 1972, 1983, Bancroft and Pulitzer prizes), and editor of *The Booker T. Washington Papers* (14 vols., 1972–89). A memoir of his "unheroic Navy experience in World War II" will be published next year.

**Catherine E. Rudder**, executive director of the American Political Science Association, earned her B.A. in political science at Emory University (ΦBK) and her Ph.D. at Ohio State University, where she won the William Jennings Bryan Prize for her dissertation on voting. Before coming to APSA, she taught at the Uni-

versity of Georgia. Her publications have focused primarily on Congress and the tax policymaking process.

**Anna J. Schwartz** is a member of the research staff of the National Bureau of Economic Research and a Distinguished Fellow of the American Economic Association. She holds a B.A. (ΦBK) from Barnard College and a Ph.D. from Columbia University. Her latest book is a collection of her articles, *Money in Historical Perspective* (1987). She is also coauthor with Milton Friedman of three studies of monetary economics.

**Russell Stevens**, a botanist, received his B.S. from the University of Virginia and his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin. He served in the U.S. Army in the South Pacific in World War II, taught at four colleges and universities, and spent 20 years on the staff of the National Academy of Sciences. He is author of *Disease in Plants* (1952), *Plant Disease* (1974), and *Mycology Guidebook* (1974).

**Jean Sudrann**, Mary E. Woolley Professor Emeritus of English at Mount Holyoke, received her B.A. from Mount Holyoke (ΦBK) and her M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia. She reviews fiction for journals such as the *Yale Review* and the *Dickens Quarterly*. Her latest publication is an essay on the work of Penelope Fitzgerald in *Modern British Women Novelists*, ed. Robert E. Hosmer (1993).

## THE KEY REPORTER

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## RECOMMENDED READING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

documents a long list of situations in the medical profession that give rise to conflicts of interest involving physician and patient. It soon becomes clear to the reader, however, that the word "may" or its equivalent appears repeatedly in the text. In short, the author underscores in commendable detail a number of interactions that *could* work to the disadvantage of the patient, but I find few solid data showing how frequently and seriously these conflicts actually *do* result in harm. Rodwin closes with recommendations for regulatory and administrative actions.

**Higher Superstition: The Academic Left and Its Quarrels with Science.** Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt. *Johns Hopkins, 1994. \$25.95.*

These authors seek to show that the tendency of some humanists to take issue with the practices, policies, and findings of the science community is fatally flawed by their ignorance of the very disciplines they attack. Almost certainly some readers will be delighted, others will be incensed, and hardly any will be bored.

**The Monkey Wars.** Deborah Blum. *Oxford, 1994. \$25.*

Regrettably, the term *wars* in the title is entirely appropriate, for there are few issues more characterized by vehement controversy than the use of animals—especially primates—in biomedical research. In detailing some of the more

dramatic interactions, the author has interspersed her presentations with pleas for calm and reason—indeed, one might wish that her final chapter to this effect had been chapter 1. The book is well written and may calm the tempest to some extent. It is unlikely to be the final word.

**The Ecological City—Preserving and Restoring Urban Biodiversity.** Ed. by Rutherford H. Platt, Rowan A. Rowntree, and Pamela C. Muick. *Univ. of Massachusetts, 1994. \$45; paper, \$17.95.*

This collection of papers by 16 specialists shows convincingly that the term *ecological city* is not an oxymoron. In short, there *are* urban ecosystems—wetlands, forested areas, meadows, wildlife, and genuine landscapes in the urban environment—albeit all too few and all too often threatened with deterioration or loss. The encouraging aspect of the situation is that existing resources can be protected, enlarged, and improved if only their worth be recognized and the necessary measures taken in time.

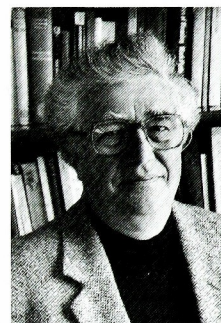
**Bringing Back the Bay: The Chesapeake in the Photographs of Marion E. Warren and the Voices of Its People.** Marion E. Warren with Mame Warren. *Johns Hopkins, 1994. \$45.*

A "coffee table" volume in one sense, this work provides not only fine photographs but an interwoven text that reveals the problems and promises of the Chesapeake as a natural and cultural region of great importance. At least two

## Bedau Gives Romanell Lectures, Fogelin Wins '95-96 Award

"Tragic Choices" was the title of the series of three lectures given in March by the 1994-95 Romanell-Phi Beta Kappa Professor of Philosophy, Hugo Bedau. Each lecture constituted an exercise in casuistry, the identification and evaluation of prin-

ciples as they arise from and apply to particular cases of moral decision making. Bedau, Fletcher Professor of Philosophy at Tufts University, gave the lectures at



Robert J. Fogelin

his home institution.

For 1995-96, Robert J. Fogelin, Sherman Fairchild Professor in the Humanities at Dartmouth College, has received the award, which carries a stipend of \$6,000.

wisely chosen features enhance the effect of the work: The photography is entirely black-and-white, and most of the text comes from people who actually live and work in the region.

### THE KEY REPORTER

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