

no time to dwell on the news of Spitzbergen's death: "It was too bad ... but after all, business was business."

SUMMER IN WILLIAMSBURG was published in the same year as Roth's *Call It Sleep*, another psychological—if more obviously imaginative and phantasmagoric—novel of life in the tenements. Both books, equally out of place in the early Depression years of politically compelled literature, were ignored. And both were re-issued in the 1960s, though this time only Fuchs would fail to gain wide notice. By then, he was contributor to a dozen noirish screenplays and an Oscar winner, for the James Cagney–Doris Day musical *Love Me or Leave Me*. In 1937, disheartened by the poor sales of his novels, he had "decided to become rich," breaking up a fourth novel into stories and making successful sales to *The New Yorker*, *Collier's*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. Soon he was invited to Hollywood to turn one of them into a screenplay. And he more or less never looked back, committing the double sin of managing to leave the place that could never be left and finding contentment in the place where no self-respecting East Coast littérateur was supposed to remain. Surely Fuchs's reputation faltered because some of those littérateurs—who valued their talents much more seriously than Fuchs seems to have cherished his own—never forgave him his flight, and because he mostly stopped writing fiction. But more than anything, it was his own willingness to subordinate the appeal of his art to the idea of his stories.

Fuchs was a master. He had Pasternak's wonder at youth's encounter with the wider world, and Chekhov's nose for thwarted desire, and Turgenev's generosity to the barbarians of the new world order. (Though his truest literary *yichus* is Dovid Bergelson, Yiddish literature's first modernist and its premier chronicler of the decline of the Russian shtetls. A little older than Fuchs, he too saw only ruins, his characters ensconced in a perpetual fog of uncertainty.) But Fuchs was so truthful a portraitist of Williamsburg's lassitude that his novels come to nothing. There are no revelations in these revelation stories. Almost no one is emotionally transformed. Nobody learns anything.

Fuchs's fiction is, essentially, anti-dramatic. Such viciously comprehensive fatalism is hard to take, even when leavened by lovely writing; flawless character draftsmanship, *mise-en-scène*, and dialogue; and a precocious wisdom more befitting an old and lonely heart. It vir-

tually turns the writer into an accomplice, his despair into sanguinity, his non-judgmental innocence an abdication not unlike the unanswering God whom Fuchs implicitly indicts. The reader wishes that Fuchs had at least showed his characters a brighter way, even if all of them failed to find it. But Fuchs, who wrote disapprovingly that "all authors knew everything because they were like God," refuses the crown. Like Philip Hayman, he cannot imagine life beyond the neighborhood walls. He, too, will make do with a cigarette and a window.

But his own life proved that one could "pass on," indeed. And as Sam Tanenhaus perceptively noted in a review of the Hollywood writings, he *had* to leave: "Fuchs was just enough older [than the next generation of Jewish-American writers] to feel hemmed in by Depression exigencies and to fear lifelong entrapment in the immigrant ghetto." So it was the ghetto's compulsions, not a sense of liberation, that sent him out West. Is a man compelled by freedom really free? Perhaps Fuchs sacrificed more than his art to make his literary point. ♦

Gary J. Bass EVERYBODY EVERYWHERE

INVENTING HUMAN RIGHTS: A HISTORY

By Lynn Hunt

(W.W. Norton, 272 pp., \$25.95)

WHEN HITLER came to devour Czechoslovakia, Neville Chamberlain shrugged it off as just a "quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing." It was a notorious phrase, but not a careless one. After all, Chamberlain, while himself genuinely knowing little about Czechoslovakia, was a shrewd politician who had become prime minister not least for his skill in aiming his words at British public opinion. Chamberlain must have thought that these words would sell Britons on appeasement: that the remoteness and the obscurity of the Czechs would make it morally and politically acceptable to sacrifice them to Germany. This was the language of moral unconcern, Chamberlain's deliberate attempt to make the fate of the Czechs a matter of indifference to his own people.

Whose lives matter to us? In principle, for the most austere liberals, there is no justification for preferring one human life over another one. "Because a ... community widely prevails among the Earth's peoples," Kant remarked, "a transgres-

sion of rights in *one* place in the world is felt *everywhere*." John Rawls argued that we should choose society's main rules as if we did not even know which family or ethnic group we belong to. To a pure liberal, if people are dying in a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing, all that matters is that people are dying.

But the politics of this moral duty do not work that way. In real life, our ethical universe radiates outward from ourselves. Our own miseries are our first and foremost concern, even when they are relatively trivial. "If he were to lose his little finger to-morrow, he would not sleep to-night," Adam Smith wrote in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. "But, provided he never saw them, he will snore with the most profound security over the ruin of a hundred millions of his brethren, and the destruction of that immense multitude seems plainly an object less interesting to him, than this paltry misfortune of his own." Virginia Woolf echoed this nasty thought with verve in *Mrs. Dalloway*, in which her sweetly dithering title character thinks this: "And people would say, 'Clarissa Dalloway is spoilt.' She cared much more for her roses than for the Armenians. Hunted out of existence, maimed, frozen, the victims of cruelty and injustice (she had heard Richard say so over and over again)—no, she could feel nothing for the Albanians, or was it the Armenians? but she loved her roses." We all love our roses. And most of us love them a little guiltily, insofar as we recognize the narrowness of this emotional horizon. This guilt, or discomfort, is a mark of moral progress. At least Clarissa Dalloway feels bad that she doesn't feel bad.

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Most of us are devoted to our families and our friends more than to anybody else or to humanity at large. There is ethical dignity in this specificity, of course. But it can turn ugly. During the busing crisis in Boston, mothers in Southie rallied against desegregation for the sake of their children: the concern for immediate family was not attended by any larger sense of community with fellow Bostonians and Americans whose skin happened to be a different color. And beyond our immediate circle, we carry loyalties to our town, our region, our co-religionists, our class, our nation, our country—to the larger classes and sets to which we belong. Some solidarities go very big and very far: pan-Slavism, pan-Arabism, irredentist national movements. For Tolstoy, the privileged human unit was the entirety of the Christian world: “there ... cannot be any reason for dissension between Christian nations.” (Historically speaking, this was a spectacular error.) And Herzen went one better: “after Christianity [came] the belief in civilization, in humanity.”

When one’s loyalties extend to all of humanity, one has reached the climax, and perhaps the limits, of moral sympathy. Humanity, after all, is as much an abstraction as a reality. How concrete must ethical obligations be? Is a species too vast to be a meaningful moral object? Or is it the other way around: are our commitments in the particular premised on the possibility of universalism? These are also political questions, of course. The greatest dividing lines in today’s world are certainly the ones on the map: I mean state borders. Orwell, trying to understand why Germans were bombing him in World War II, argued, “One cannot see the modern world as it is unless one recognizes the overwhelming strength of patriotism, national loyalty.” Patriotism—loyalty to the state—is the doctrine that on this side of the line, you should care intensely, and on that side, you should not at all.

Put that way, it sounds awfully unattractive. But patriotism can be one of the moral sentiments; patriotism is what fueled Churchill’s righteous defense against the Nazis. Yet patriotism is also what underpinned Chamberlain’s argument against England’s interest in Czechoslovakia. The advocates of patriotism tend to lean hard on the unfamiliarity of foreigners. “The ordinary Englishman carries in his mind a generalized picture of the behaviour, daily life, thoughts and interests of other Englishmen, whereas he has no such picture at all of the Greek or the Lithuanian,” wrote

E.H. Carr, the British historian, in *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*, which stands as a realist brief for appeasement. “Moreover, the vividness of his picture of ‘foreigners’ will commonly vary in relation to geographical, racial and linguistic proximity, so that the ordinary Englishman will be likely to feel that he has something, however slight, in common with the German or the Australian and nothing at all in common with the Chinese or the Turk.”


Governments, at least, have long seen the world that way. In 1850, Palmerston sent a British squadron to Greece after anti-Semitic rioters burned the house of Don Pacifico, a British Jew living in Athens. During the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, America and many European countries dispatched troops to safeguard their citizens (and their imperialistic claims) in China. In 1965, Lyndon Johnson publicly justified sending the Marines to the Dominican Republic in order to evacuate American citizens, and in 1975 the White House argued that it was entitled to use force to free the *Mayaguez*, an American merchant ship seized by Cambodia. In 1976, Israel reached as far as Entebbe in Uganda to free Israelis and Jews from Palestinian hijackers. And in 1980, much less effectively, the Carter administration launched a botched raid to try to free American embassy personnel being held hostage in Iran.

This emphasis on a narrow construction of national morality, the sort of patriotism that is deployed against larger and distant obligations, is likely to increase as things in Iraq go from horrific to worse. In the current Scowcroftian moment, as the Bush administration’s disastrous adventure in Iraq threatens to discredit any future projects of nation-building and democratization, Americans are likely to place more emphasis on looking out for fellow Americans, the rest of the world be damned. But the contemporary revival of the patriotic-realist tradition will run up against an obstacle—one of the primary moral accomplishments of our time. I refer to the idea, and the statecraft, of human rights.

II.

WHAT EXACTLY are human rights? Are they a criminal “egoism” that saps the strength of society overall, as Marx wrote? Are they “nonsense upon stilts,” as Bentham wittingly called natural rights? (In his dealings with slavery and the suffering Greeks in the 1820s, Bentham actually showed that he took the idea of human rights much more seriously than that.)

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Is believing in rights, as Alasdair MacIntyre has claimed, like believing in witches and unicorns?

No doubt the definition of rights, and certainly the language of it, is slippery and easily exploited. The precise content of a right is always up for debate, as are the people who get to hold them. (Under the English Bill of Rights, Protestants were allowed to carry arms sufficient to defend themselves.) Rights are supposed to exist in all times and all places: the enslavement of the Spartan helots and apartheid are what we would call human rights violations. But, as Lynn Hunt's splendid new book demonstrates, rights as a political program came along relatively late in the day.

Hunt has written a provocative and engaging history of the political impact of human rights, mostly in the eighteenth century. The language of rights grew up in the early and high Middle Ages, and came of age with political theorists from Grotius to Locke. This is roughly the point where Hunt begins. In the late eighteenth century, for the first time, doctrines of human rights gained wide acceptance. In America, they took on political form in the Declaration of Independence in 1776; in France, in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789. These went a step beyond the English Bill of Rights in 1689, which was rooted in the particulars of English law and history, rather than universal principles that applied to all men—every single member of the human race.

Above all, rights themselves are supposed to be beyond debate. Nothing beats a right. After the middle of the eighteenth century, Americans and (somewhat more grudgingly) Britons increasingly talked about rights as universal, not particular to a given country. When the Americans and French solemnly declared, in 1776 and 1789, that their undeniable rights had been violated, they were trying to render uncontroversial a view of government that was in fact fiercely contested: that the point of government was to secure these rights of man.

Hunt grasps the novelty, and the preciousness, of this intellectual transformation. Although she clearly believes in moral progress even unto her own day, she does not allow herself the smug luxury of assuming the superiority of the current age. She properly condemns Jefferson for owning slaves, but she insists that the really important point is that the flawed Jefferson and his flawed contemporaries nonetheless rose far above the mores of their day: "How did these men, living in societies built on slavery, subor-

dination, and seemingly natural subservience, ever come to imagine men not at all like them and, in some cases, women too, as equals?"

Hunt dwells on the shock of the violation of rights. One does not have a philosophical reaction to the photographs from Abu Ghraib, even if one's principles are offended; one first reacts viscerally. Hunt argues that "we are most certain that a human right is at issue when we feel horrified by its violation." As she notes, in the most famous articulation of the human rights ideal, Thomas Jefferson wrote only that the truth of rights is self-evident. But for rights really to be self-evident implies a widespread emotional recoil from their violation. Hunt is not troubled that Jefferson ducked the issue of rationally deriving rights from first principles. She thinks that the idea of human rights comes not from reason but from experience. What really counts, Hunt argues, is not so much the abstractions of equality and universality, but "the newfound power of empathy": the sense that the suffering of others is like our own.

In our own time, this sense of empathy is nurtured by the mass media. For Hunt, that mostly means pictures in public exhibitions and wildly popular novels. When you hear about torture, you imagine yourself in the position of the person being tortured. (We sometimes do this even in circumstances when it might not make moral sense, such as feeling pity for Saddam Hussein while watching footage of him at the gallows.) Many people will not react with empathy to depictions of suffering; some people will get desensitized or will actually thrill to the cruelty. But if the spectacle of suffering does not make empathy inevitable, it certainly makes it possible. As Hunt writes, "New kinds of reading (and viewing and listening) created new individual experiences (empathy), which in turn made possible new social and political concepts (human rights)."

Hunt describes readers howling with emotion as they read Rousseau's epistolary novel *Julie, or the New Héloïse*. The historical significance of this literary hysteria, she argues, was that it showed readers identifying with characters very different from themselves. In an era of increasingly widespread literacy, novels were a kind of lesson in emotional and moral expansiveness. The point that literature has been a cause of empathy is not a new one, but it is still a good one. In *Julie*, or in Samuel Richardson's titanic *Clarissa*, the story unfolded through letters written by the characters, which allowed readers to discover the characters' inner-

most thoughts without any interference from a narrator. (Writers in our time now make epistolary fiction out of e-mails.) Men identified directly with Rousseau's and Richardson's emphatically female heroines—although, a bit problematically for Hunt's argument, it took well over a century before anyone named Julie or Clarissa experienced anything like political emancipation. Class differences were imaginatively transcended as effectively as gender differences. And this closing of the distance between people represented, in Hunt's view, a huge leap of the moral imagination—the sort of leap without which the idea of human rights would not have been possible.

TORTURE IS Hunt's most powerful example. With a White House that manifestly believes in torture as an instrument of national security policy, it is not just antiquarian to read that back in the eighteenth century people believed that torture could make the body speak truths even when the mind was unwilling. Judicially supervised torture was commonplace in France well into the eighteenth century, and much of Europe's sixteenth- and seventeenth-century criminal jurisprudence was dedicated to the codification of particular forms of torture. Prussia, of all places, led the way in abolishing judicial torture in 1754. From the 1760s, activists fought back against torture and the crueler forms of criminal punishment. French courts began to back away from torture as a way of extracting confessions.

Their champion was a young Italian aristocrat named Cesare Beccaria, who was moved to write his *Essay on Crimes and Punishments* by an empathetic horror at the public spectacle of torture. To the traditionalists in the legal establishment, of course, that was the whole point: punishment had to be horrible for it to produce a deterrent effect among the watching mobs. Clearly not everyone had the same reaction to watching torture as Beccaria; otherwise nobody would have shown up. (The slasher movies of our time profit mightily from Beccaria's error.) Benjamin Rush denounced public punishment for its attempt to block the public from empathizing with the sufferer. For Rush, it was crucial to realize that even convicts "possess souls and bodies composed of the same materials as those of our friends and relations."

Hunt argues that people gradually came to believe that their bodies belonged to themselves and not to the community, and thus could not be sacrificed in the name of public order (or religion).

As Beccaria's treatise was translated into English, German, Polish, and Spanish, torture and public execution withered. In 1780, the French essayist Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville wrote that the "sacred rights that man holds from nature, which society violates so often with its judicial apparatus, still require the suppression of a portion of our mutilating punishments and the softening of those which we must preserve." Brissot would go on to found France's first anti-slavery society. Hunt also quotes Montesquieu, in *The Spirit of the Laws*, suggesting that whereas torture might work for despotic governments, and ancient Greece and Rome certainly had slaves, "I hear the voice of nature crying out against me." By the 1780s, the absolute end of torture was a key tenet of human rights.

The end of torture was one of the signature (and, if you consider the body count of the new republic, one of the most hypocritical) achievements of the French Revolution. Just six weeks after the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789, France's deputies completely abolished judicial torture. King Louis XVI had discontinued the use of torture to get guilty confessions, but had only provisionally abolished it for the purpose of finding out the names of accomplices—what French law, with chilling euphemism, called the "preliminary question." Alberto Gonzales would have gone far at the court of Louis XVI.

III.

FOR THE SUPPORTERS of the old European order, the new language of rights had to be discredited. Edmund Burke, who preferred to base government on deep-seated traditions, was the most withering critic. As he wrote in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*: "Troops again—Massacre, torture, hanging! These are your rights of men! These are the fruits of metaphysic declarations wantonly made, and shamefully retracted!" But even if Burke recoiled at the political abuse of rights language, he strongly believed in universal moral norms. Burke's criticisms of the French Revolution should not be written off as dark reaction. He was right about what the Revolution quickly degenerated into; and so he provided an early warning that the pursuit of a perfect society can quickly descend into the persecution and the destruction of the imperfect human beings who stand in the way of the plan, like the Soviet

kulaks. And Burke was also an early hero of anti-imperialism, in this way giving aid and comfort to those who believed in the rights of man. In 1788, attacking the corrupt colonial administrator Warren Hastings, Burke demanded equal decency in India as in any other place: "the laws of morality are the same every where, and ... there is no action which would pass for an action of extortion, of peculation, of bribery and of oppression in England, that is not an act of extortion, of peculation, of bribery and of oppression in Europe, Asia, Africa, and all the world over." There is not a word in that magnificent declaration that would trouble a liberal rights advocate.

Still, as Hunt shows, those French metaphysic declarations were not so easily retracted. The granting of rights really was a slippery slope. Once one group was included, others followed, in what Hunt calls the "bulldozer force of the revolutionary logic of rights." In France after the Revolution, once the deputies debated granting rights to Protestants, it was hard not to grant them also to Jews. So even in a Catholic country, Protestants got their political rights in 1789, and Jews got them in 1791. Next, as Hunt mordantly notes, "some, but not all, free black men won political rights on May 15, 1791, only to lose them on September 24 and then have them reinstated and applied more generally on April 4, 1792." Even executioners and actors, who had previously been excluded from holding public office, were allowed full participation in the French political system. And in 1794 France abolished slavery in its colonies (only to reinstate it under Napoleon).

The pattern of expansion was much the same in other countries. As Hunt puts it, "the virtue of beginning with the general became apparent once the specific came into question." That logic helped to engender a gradual spread of freedom, despite heated controversy at every step. In Britain, Catholics were allowed into Parliament after 1829, and Jews after 1848. In 1807, fully two hundred years ago, Britain got rid of the slave trade, and in 1833 it decided to abolish slavery in British colonies. In the new United States, where at first in many states only Protestants could hold political office, the process went state by state, but usually in pretty much the same sequence. In Massachusetts, all Christians were allowed to hold public office in 1780, and then, in 1833, the right was expanded to include people

of any religion. The great and disgraceful lag was in the abolition of the most monstrous American violation of human rights, slavery itself. The Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 came almost seven decades after France first tried to abolish slavery. Even Russia beat America to this high ground when Alexander II freed the serfs in 1861.

Women's rights lagged in both Europe and America, trapped in what Hunt nicely calls "the obscuring fog of habit." But Hunt argues that women, while downtrodden by today's standards, "were not a persecuted minority." Unlike blacks or Jews, women could not be expelled outright from society. Women in the eighteenth century did have some civil rights, although not as many as men. In 1791, a French woman playwright named Olympe de Gouges issued a Declaration of the Rights of Woman, extending the language of the famous Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. "Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights," she wrote. She was guillotined. In Britain, in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft rather more safely issued her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

HUNT'S EXEMPLARY book treats mostly the domestic roots of human rights. She does not particularly address herself to the now-pressing problems of a foreign policy based on human rights. Should the liberal republics be merely exemplars of human rights, passively inspiring other societies to follow, or should they more actively seek to spread liberty and defend human rights? If rights are universal, there will presumably be a strong temptation to protect them even in other countries. Thus John Stuart Mill cheered at British foreign policy conducted "rather in the service of others than of itself,—to mediate in the quarrels which break out between foreign States, to arrest obstinate civil wars, to reconcile belligerents, to intercede for mild treatment of the vanquished, or, finally, to procure the abandonment of some national crime and scandal to humanity, such as the slave-trade." This was the interventionist language of "crimes against humanity," almost a century before Nuremberg.

Hunt is wonderful at showing how the American and French declarations reinforced each other, and at demonstrating the slow spread of human rights ideas across borders. Between 1776 and 1783, there were nine different French translations of the Declaration of Independence. French reformers were thrilled by the American example. In revolution-



ary France as in revolutionary America before it, Hunt argues, human rights arguments allowed for a decisive break with past government and a radically new vision of legitimate governance. And after those two great declarations and their concomitant upheavals, the language of human rights swept into Western consciousness. Today, it spans the globe.

Hunt also tracks the effects of imitation from one country to another, as when French abolitionists in 1788 created an activist group modeled on the British Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. French rhetoric about rights was used by Haitian abolitionists. After a slave revolt in Saint Domingue (present-day Haiti), France abolished slavery in all its colonies in 1794. Toussaint-Louverture, an ex-slave who led the revolt, thundered, "I want Liberty and Equality to reign in Saint Domingue." French commissioners on the island started an emancipation decree with Article 1 of France's own Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen: "Men are born and live free and equal in rights."

ALTHOUGH HUNT'S book is not really about the deliberate export of human rights, her examples are telling. The prime case is France in its wars after the Revolution. This meant the temporary abolition of torture in Switzerland and Spain, which fell apart after Napoleon was toppled, and the equally transient emancipation of Jews in small German and Italian states. The rights of man followed the French flag, in advance and in retreat. The few lasting successes—such as Jewish rights in Holland—were tainted by the entanglement of human rights with military aggression.

This old link between rights and troops reverberates to this day. The intentional spread of human rights has long been tarred as imperialism. Many times it *is* imperialism. But more often than is remembered, it is not. Once liberals have secured rights at home, there is a logic for not stopping there. Are not human rights by definition universal? Why not act universally and encourage the spread of human rights to all of humanity? In a pamphlet titled "Emancipate Your Colonies!" addressed to France in 1793, Bentham asked: "You choose your own government, why are not other people to choose theirs? Do you seriously mean to govern the world, and do you call that *liberty*? What is become of the rights of men? Are you the only men who have rights?"

One critical example is the slave trade. As Hunt relates, Napoleon Bonaparte brought slavery back to the French em-

pire in 1802 and sent warships to brutally subdue rebellious blacks in the Caribbean colonies, failing only in Saint Domingue. But immediately after Waterloo, Britain demanded an end to France's slave trade. In July 1815, Lord Castlereagh, the conservative British foreign secretary, proudly informed his prime minister that the restored Bourbon monarchy had declared "the Slave Trade for ever abolished throughout the Dominions of France." (It would actually take until 1848 to put an end to the slave trade.) Bentham furiously told the president of Haiti that he would like to see Haitian ships "capturing the slave-trading ships" and then consigning the slavers "to the like slavery in your Island." The master of the slave ships, Bentham suggested, should be permanently branded as "a man so highly distinguished in barbarity" with "an indelible mark upon him"—such as cutting off "one of his lips."

In 1817, Britain turned its attentions to the Spanish empire, demanding an end to the slave trade, and also rattled its sabers against the slave trade in Cuba, Zanzibar, Iran, and Texas. This was anything but cheap talk. All told, as the political scientists Chaim Kaufmann and Robert Pape have reckoned, Britain lost something like five thousand troops in anti-slavery missions, soured its relations with America and France, and badly damaged its economy by undermining its own sugar industry. And as David Brion Davis has observed, in words that have an oddly familiar sound to debates today about the cost of spreading human rights, "Britain's fixation on the slave trade often worked against British interests, damaging or straining relations with Muslim leaders in an era of Islamic insurgency and nationalistic discontent." Here Britain hurt its own empire for the sake of humanity.

HUNT FAST-FORWARDS in two dozen pages from the end of the Napoleonic Wars to the aftermath of World War II. This is already an ambitious book about the eighteenth century, so it is no criticism to note that she might have been a little more reassured by some of the more hopeful moments of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century is painted here in shades from dark to pitch. Hunt argues that nationalism became the framework for establishing rights after 1815, when the Napoleonic Wars came to an end with France's final defeat at Waterloo. In the post-Napoleonic world, nationalist movements spread across Europe and

Latin America, to the horror of the established empires. Hunt rightly shows how hard it was to reconcile collectivist nationalism and individualist liberalism. The actual populations of Europe were so mixed that it was impossible, as Woodrow Wilson imagined, to draw lines that would hermetically partition ethnic groups from one another. As the century wore on, nationalists turned xenophobic and often simply racist.

But there were more hopeful moments, too. When the Greeks rose up against Ottoman rule, they were helped by the activists of the London Greek Committee, including Bentham and Byron, who died fighting for a free Greece; this pressure pushed the British government to what was arguably the world's first humanitarian intervention, sinking much of the Ottoman navy in 1827 to secure present-day independent Greece. British and French liberals rallied for the cause of Poles crushed by Russia in 1831 and again in 1863, and Hungarians crushed by Austria in 1848. Outraged at a crack-down on political prisoners in Naples in the 1850s, Britain broke off diplomatic relations and then tried a daring covert rescue plan to send a fast steamship to rescue the prisoners. (The ship sank.) In 1860, French troops and British ships intervened in Syria after major massacres there, and, just as impressive, the diplomats managed to get France to withdraw in 1861. In 1876, after a massacre in the remote town of Batak in Bulgaria, Britons from Queen Victoria on down were collectively horrified, and William Ewart Gladstone came roaring out of retirement to campaign against the "Bulgarian horrors." The Tory prime minister Benjamin Disraeli, who drew up plans for a military intervention in Bulgaria, never recovered, and was hounded from office by Gladstone in the next elections. As Gladstone thundered on the campaign trail, "mutual love is not limited by the shores of this island, is not limited by the boundaries of Christian civilization; that it passes over the whole surface of the earth, and embraces the meanest along with the greatest in its unmeasured scope."

In fact, something similar to Hunt's own argument could be applied nicely to the nineteenth century. As Hunt notes, new forms of media created what Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community." What links these distant and unconnected persons, Anderson argues, is, at least at first, print capitalism. In 1791, Burke worried that French revolutionary nationalism was spreading "chiefly by newspaper circulations, infinitely more efficacious and exten-

sive than ever they were.” He warned, “Let us only suffer any person to tell us his story, morning and evening, but for one twelvemonth, and he will become our master.”

The same forces of modernity that first forged a sense of common British political identity between impoverished Welsh villagers and London aristocrats, or between French citizens in metropolitan Paris and the slowly integrating Lorraine and Savoy, could also create a weaker but still politically significant sense of solidarity with foreigners facing massacre. Just as the growth of national consciousness relies on knowledge about the lives of other members of the national community near or far, the growth of humanitarian concern for foreigners relies on knowledge about the lives of foreigners. Although Hunt rightly recalls the imperialist bigotry of the period, the parallel marches of political liberalization and mass-media technology sometimes resulted in a greater concern for more and more people unlike one’s own. In the nineteenth century, this was the product of telegraphs and newspapers and books, and today includes radio, television, satellites, and computer networks—all the distance-shrinking devices.

Press freedom helped sweep away the absolutism of the sixteenth century. By the 1850s, various taxation schemes on the press, left over from the Napoleonic Wars, were abolished: the Advertisement Duty in 1853, the Stamp Duty in 1855, and the Paper Duty in 1861. From the 1850s to the 1880s, the British mass press basked in an unprecedented age of freedom and influence. The limits to the expanding moral universe were the reach of the reporter and the run of the telegraph wire.

The rise of a free and enterprising press meant that the British government could not always pick and choose its foreign crises. In an earlier era, if there was an inconvenient massacre somewhere, only British diplomats would know about it, and they could sweep it under the rug if that was what realpolitik dictated. But no longer after the 1850s. Suddenly there was the danger that an industrious foreign correspondent would report news directly to the British public, no matter what the British government wanted its subjects to know. Newspaper reports of a massacre in Chios, Greece, in 1822 convulsed the British public; and in 1876 a *Daily News* scoop about the massacre in Bulgaria did it again. This was a quarrel in a faraway country of which British newspaper readers knew quite a bit.

That is why dictatorships work so hard to make sure that foreign correspondents cannot do their jobs. In Justice Robert H. Jackson’s opening address at Nuremberg, he spoke of Buchenwald and Dachau but not of Auschwitz, because the eastern camps were in Soviet hands and thus not as accessible to British and American officials and reporters. In Algeria and Chechnya more recently, visiting reporters were potential targets, which helped to ensure that the outside world knew little of the staggering bloodshed there. North Korea imposes strict limits on foreign correspondents, preventing detailed reporting on the country’s vast famine. And Robert Mugabe allows only a few foreign correspondents to operate in Zimbabwe.

You could read Hunt’s superb history with a certain sense of satisfaction: liberalization and the mass media are flourishing beyond her eighteenth-century characters’ wildest dreams. Human rights is not triumphant, to be sure; but the idea is holding its own. It is more

and more a central element in foreign policy and international affairs and even military strategy. We may be living in a very cruel world, but there is a growing conscience, at least officially and culturally, about its cruelty. Yet there is one element of this era of human rights that is in retreat: print capitalism, and thus foreign press coverage. Print and capitalism are not getting along. Although American newspapers now field overseas reporters with a skill and a professionalism unknown to nineteenth-century hacks, Wall Street has decided that it hates newspaper stock. Under heavy pressure from investors, some of the country’s best newspapers have decided to go local. Foreign bureaus are being closed by many important papers in many important places. When the suits decide to shut those bureaus, they fritter away a hard-won achievement of centuries. They are reversing the moral gains of modern empathy. Do they know this? I doubt it. But I doubt also that they would care. ♦

Chloë Schama

DUST AND LITERATURE

THE SAVAGE DETECTIVES

By Roberto Bolaño
Translated by Natasha Wimmer
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 577 pp., \$27)

AMULET

By Roberto Bolaño
Translated by Chris Andrews
(New Directions, 184 pp., \$21.95)

ACCORDING TO the formula commonly used to introduce foreign writers, it would be accurate to call the late Roberto Bolaño a Chilean writer. But since he lived most of his life outside Chile, in Mexico and in Spain, the description is not quite accurate. Bolaño objected to attempts to attach him to a homeland: Chilean writers thought of him as a Mexican writer, Mexican writers thought of him as a Chilean writer, his Spanish colleagues thought of him as something else entirely. “My only homeland,” he said in the last interview before his death in 2003 at age fifty, “is my children.”

For some time, Latin American writers have bristled at the literary characteristics fixed not only to their homelands but also to the entire region of Latin America.

For these writers, the legacy of the “Boom” generation—the Latin American writers who introduced Spanish-language literature to a mass market in the 1960s and 1970s—was both a blessing and a curse. Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, and others paved the way to an English-speaking audience, but the path was narrow, and largely dependent on the writer’s facility with the formulas of magical realism.

In 1996, a group of writers led by the Chilean writer Alberto Fuguet published a collection of short stories titled *McOndo*, an irreverent jab at the imaginary region of Macondo, where much of García Márquez’s fiction takes place. “McOndo,” Fuguet wrote in an introductory essay titled “I Am Not a Magical Realist!,” is a world composed of “McDonald’s, Macintoshes and condos,” a more accurate portrait of his contemporary Chile than one populated by flying grandmothers. Another school with a similar purpose (although slightly different constituents), the self-named “crack” generation of Mexican writers, proclaimed defiantly that they would not write about revolution, houses of ghosts, or the border. Their name referred not to crack cocaine, but to the impending

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