



C. P. Burnett

A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE LONG MARCH

What the civil-rights movement looked like when it was still happening.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

The recent fall of a Senate majority leader for the crime of praising a centenarian colleague who had once been a leader of the segregationist movement made for an excellent demonstration of the marvellous, and misleading, clarity of historical retrospection. Everybody now knows, it seems, that the civil-rights movement was a good thing, and that its opponents were so patently wrong that, unless they are elaborately penitent, they can have no place in our public life. (At the same time, it would have been fine for Trent Lott to send off Strom Thurmond—whom everybody in Washington had long been treating as a lovable huggy-bear—with an encomium to his wonderfulness, as long as it didn't specifically mention the main cause with which he was associated.)

The rules of acceptable political behavior were not at all so clear at the time. In the South, when civil rights was still an open question only a brave few Democrats supported it, and one is hard pressed to think of any Republicans who did. In 1964, the Republican Presidential nominee, Barry Goldwater, ran as an opponent of mandatory school desegregation and of the landmark Civil Rights Act, which Congress had just passed. George H. W. Bush, campaigning for the Senate that year, came out against the Civil Rights Act. Ronald Reagan, then a popular conservative speaker preparing to run for governor of California, strongly opposed it. During the Lott affair, the commentator Charles Krauthammer, in a dump-

Lott column in the *Washington Post*, wrote that neoconservatives like him “oppose affirmative action on grounds of colorblindness and in defense of the original vision of the civil rights movement: judging people by the content of their character and not the color of their skin.” As Krauthammer surely knows from firsthand experience, movements and their visions always look a lot simpler from the outside and after the fact. If the civil-rights movement were suddenly to reappear as it really was, political officeholders would no more be unanimously for it than they were at the time.

The event that Krauthammer was obliquely referring to by bringing up the content of character and the color of skin was the March on Washington in August, 1963, where Martin Luther King, Jr., made his magnificent “I have a dream” speech, from which that line comes. The march was originally planned by the movement's radical wing, which was going to end the day by having the marchers move, en masse and unlawfully, into the hallways of the Capitol. A series of compromises brought the movement's moderate wing (the N.A.A.C.P., the Urban League, and the United Automobile Workers, as well as King himself) on board. Still, the chief organizer was the former Communist and still socialist Bayard Rustin, who titled the event the “March for Jobs and Freedom”—and what he meant by “jobs and freedom” was a degree of state intervention in the economy that nobody would dare pro-

pose today. The long list of those who appeared onstage at the march included Bob Dylan, Walter Reuther, Roy Wilkins, Josephine Baker, Odetta, Marlon Brando, A. Philip Randolph, and Charlton Heston. By the time King spoke, much of the crowd had drifted away. The big behind-the-scenes drama centered on John Lewis, who was then the head of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and is now a veteran congressman from Georgia. Lewis had drafted a speech that said, “We will march through the South, through the heart of Dixie, the way Sherman did. . . . We shall pursue our own scorched-earth policy.” Washington's Catholic archbishop refused to give the invocation unless Lewis toned it down, and finally, under heavy pressure from the organizers, he did. So even the era's most celebrated moment was not nearly as consensual as everybody now remembers.

The Library of America's new, two-volume anthology “Reporting Civil Rights: American Journalism 1941-1973” (\$80) is a useful corrective to the way memory has domesticated the movement. As one reads through a hundred and eighty-eight chronologically ordered articles, the movement's true messiness, radicalism, internal disorganization, high failure rate, and lack of internal agreement become manifest. These are absorbing volumes even if read straight through, and they make for a valuable reference work that will reward occasional dipping in. There are, inevitably, moments of hokey overwriting—“Once more down the old familiar highways into that passionately alive and violent country,” Karl Fleming begins a piece in *Newsweek*, and he's soon on to days of smothering heat and nights of honeysuckle—but fewer than you'd expect. It helps that the Library of America's anonymous compilers have not taken the terms “reporting” and “journalism” literally: they have supplemented the newspaper stuff with lots of essays, memoirs, manifestos, and book excerpts, and without them the anthology wouldn't be nearly as good. King's “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” James Baldwin's “The Fire Next Time,” the reminiscences of Lillian Smith and Anne Moody, John Howard Griffin's “Black Like Me”—

Martin Luther King, Jr., a week before his assassination, at a demonstration in Memphis. Photograph by Ernest C. Withers.



who would have wanted a definition of “reporting civil rights” so strict that it excluded them?

Many famous bylines—Joan Didion, David Halberstam, Tom Wicker, Hunter S. Thompson, John Steinbeck, Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes, John Hersey, Garry Wills, and Alice Walker, to name a few—appear in “Reporting Civil Rights,” but it’s a particular pleasure to read less well-known writers whose

work, at least in these pages, is just as good or better. Journalists I didn’t start reading until they were in the settled columnist-essayist phase of their careers—like Carl T. Rowan and Dan Wakefield—appear here as reporters on the scene. The Negro press, which was then vital and important, is well represented, with first-rate articles from the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and the *New York Amsterdam News*, among oth-

ers, and there is a lot of material that demonstrates what a loss it was when the big-format mass magazines *Life*, *Look*, *Collier’s*, and *The Saturday Evening Post* went out of business. Among the specific attractions of the volumes are contributions by Louis E. Lomax, writing as a secret sharer about life inside the black establishment; Michael Thelwell, who performs a similar function for the radical student movement, and also writes beau-

tifully; August Meier, who contributed a very smart essay on King, which, as a work of analysis, stands out in a collection that is naturally much stronger on dramatic firsthand description; and William Bradford Huie, the hot-blooded investigative reporter who bribed confessions out of the murderers of Emmett Till. The outstanding piece of investigative reporting is an hour-by-hour inside account of the integration of the University of Mississippi, in 1962. The authors, George B. Leonard, T. George Harris, and Christopher S. Wren, convey both the terrifying violence and danger of that event (for a while, it looked as if the segregationist mob would actually defeat the federal forces) and the duplicity of Governor Ross Barnett, who kept making and breaking deals with the Kennedy Administration while the situation in Oxford spun out of control.

What's most valuable about "Reporting Civil Rights" is that it provides a history of the civil-rights movement written by people who weren't allowed to peek ahead to the ending. All the complexity and contingency of the movement comes through; it becomes hard to argue that the movement was centrally about the kind of color-blind, meritocratic ideology implied by King's "content of our character" rhetoric. Even the name is misleading, because it implies that overturning the South's Jim Crow laws was the one great, agreed-upon cause. As "Reporting Civil Rights" makes clear, there were several distinct elements within the movement: Old Lefties, including some Communists; New Lefties; labor unionists; black nationalists; church people; and liberal dogooders. Hence the movement's many contending and sometimes conflicting goals, among them changes in the structure of Negro leadership (in particular,

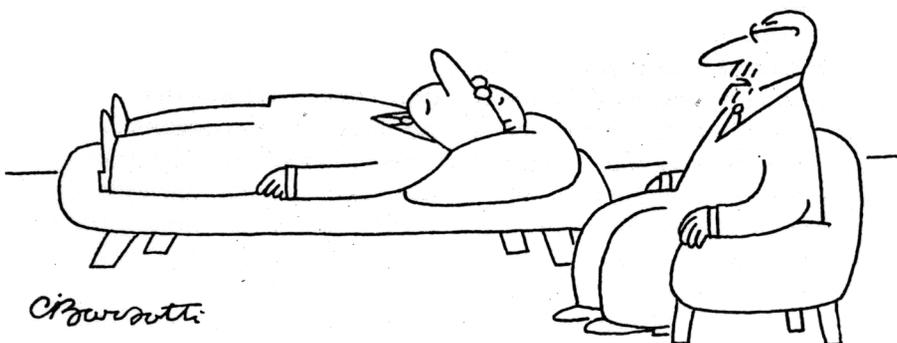
unseating the N.A.A.C.P. from its traditional position of dominance), a remaking of black consciousness, left-wing economic policies, better jobs and better housing for blacks, and black political power. Although the movement was biracial, and wouldn't have succeeded if it hadn't been, its white and black members generally had different views of what its main purpose was—the whites being much more likely to think of color blindness and integration as the goals, the blacks being more likely to think in terms of racial advancement. King made a point of befriending Malcolm X, who regularly said that he wasn't interested in civil rights or integration; and King's well-publicized association with Stokely Carmichael, of SNCC, didn't end when, in 1966, Carmichael unveiled the electrifying, polarizing, and implicitly non-nonviolent phrase "black power," during a march that featured them both. When the movement succeeded, it wasn't completely clear which element was winning, and that ambiguity survives today—it's why both sides in the affirmative-action fight, for example, can claim to be pursuing the true goals of the civil-rights movement.

The racial problem that makes the strongest impression in the pages of "Reporting Civil Rights" is not legal segregation (which many African-Americans didn't mind then and feel nostalgic about now) but something more basic: fear and a lack of dignity. It seems almost too obvious to mention that during Jim Crow black people in the South did not have reliable recourse to the legal system; even if most whites were benign, those who weren't could do anything they wanted to a Negro and get away with it. Violence within the black community usually went officially unpunished, so it, too, was rela-

tively risk-free for the perpetrators. The corrosive terror of living with the constant possibility of unpunishable vigilantism comes across vividly in "Reporting Civil Rights." In 1942, Hugh Gloster, a professor of English at Morehouse College, was taken off a bus in Mississippi and beaten so badly that he had to be taken to the hospital—not a crime. In 1961, Herbert Lee, a Negro cotton farmer in Mississippi who had tried to register to vote, was shot in the head at point-blank range, in a public place in broad daylight, by a white state legislator—not a crime. This sort of low-grade, and sometimes not so low-grade, terrorism continued through the sixties. In Oxford in 1962, segregationist snipers fired freely on members of the National Guard. In Jackson in 1963, Medgar Evers, the field secretary of the Mississippi N.A.A.C.P., was gunned down in front of his house. The 1963 church bombing in Birmingham that killed four girls came at the end of fifty anti-Negro bombings, all unsolved by the local authorities. In Philadelphia, Mississippi, in 1964, three young civil-rights workers were murdered by the Klan, and their bodies buried in a dam, with the active support of the town's top law-enforcement officials. And these were cases involving respectable middle-class people, not the vulnerable black poor, who had it far worse. In "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," written just a few months before the "I have a dream" speech, King conveys this sense of indignity and exposure with remarkable power:

Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your 20 million Negro brothers smothering in an air-tight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society . . . when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, never quite knowing what to expect next, and you are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.

The problem that King is discussing here is, in some ways, a very old one: black people had never been treated the



Chris Ware

"This is not about Schmidt— it's about you."

same as everybody else in America. But the period of waiting really dated back to Reconstruction. President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, and Congress and the states passed the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, in 1865. The Fourteenth Amendment (1868) gave the freed slaves legal rights, and the Fifteenth (1870) gave them the right to vote. The former Confederacy accepted the Thirteenth Amendment, but though it voted for the others, it nullified them in practice. During Reconstruction, it became obvious that, especially in the deep South, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments would be without effect unless federal troops came to the South and enforced them at gunpoint. Support for this died out quickly in the North and never existed in the South, and the last time it happened in post-bellum America was in January, 1875, in New Orleans and Vicksburg, Mississippi. Reconstruction ended formally, in 1877, on the explicit understanding that the federal government would no longer intervene militarily to enforce the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

This bargain that the South made with the nation as a whole—Thirteenth Amendment yes, Fourteenth and Fifteenth no—was durable to the point of seeming unchangeable. For much of the twentieth century, civil rights for Negroes weren't even on the liberal agenda. President Woodrow Wilson honored D. W. Griffith's pro-Klan "Birth of a Nation" with a White House screening. President Franklin Roosevelt, who was probably the most powerful liberal politician in American history, and whose wife was a crusader on the subject, did not attempt to dismantle segregation. The South was an essential element in the Democratic Party's coalition, after all; and the country as a whole was, at best, unused to thinking of segregation as a problem. So the civil-rights movement had to pursue a series of related projects: awakening the long-slumbering racial conscience of non-Southern white Americans; organizing the black South politically by nontraditional means (since most black Southerners were prohibited from voting); changing the consciousness of all of black America to be less accepting of the situation; and, critically important, persuading the fed-

eral government not just to endorse the movement's goals but to use its power to enforce them.

The anthology's first document is A. Philip Randolph's call, in 1941, for a march on Washington "for jobs and equal participation in national defense" (Franklin Roosevelt, through persuasion and concession, forestalled the march), and following it are a number of pieces demonstrating that attempts to erase informal "color lines" in the housing and job markets, Negro voter-registration efforts in the South, and the refusal of blacks to sit in the back of the bus all predated what we now think of as the beginning of the civil-rights movement. The struggle was necessarily waged on many fronts, and one of the most important was the press; in fact, as "Reporting Civil Rights" reminds us, much of the press was effectively part of the movement, and an indispensable part. One reason that the Montgomery bus boycott was a breakthrough was that it made Martin Luther King the movement's first true media star. King was shockingly young and oratorically spectacular, and the national press—in particular, *Time* and *Life*—conferred a celebrity status on him that it had never given A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, Bayard Rustin, Thurgood Marshall, or any of the movement's earlier leaders. King and his advisers had a genius for generating publicity that engaged the sympathies of liberal whites in the North. It wasn't just the strategy of nonviolence and the rhetoric of hope and redemption that made King successful; it was the staging of events in order to play to the national audience. King's local attempts to achieve broad-gauge progress for blacks failed repeatedly in Northern cities like Chicago and Cleveland; in Southern towns like Albany, Georgia, and St. Augustine, Florida; and even, arguably, in the movement's sacred sites, like Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma. But King was great at losing the battle while winning the war—in August Meier's phrase, at producing "local failure and national victory." The ongoing real-life morality play he mounted—in which civil-rights heroes contended

with white-resistance villains like Bull Connor, Jim Clark, and George Wallace—profoundly affected events in Washington. The real fruit of the Birmingham campaign was the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the real fruit of the Selma campaign the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

The movement's success depended upon a ricochet effect among the various power centers of American society, and the press was only one of them. Thurgood Marshall and the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense Fund began filing lawsuits against segregated educational institutions back in the thirties. The Second World War subjected Northern black soldiers to Southern segregation (both in the military, which maintained segregated units throughout the war, and in the civilian world, when they were on leave) and gave Southern black soldiers a taste of life outside the Jim Crow system, and this, thanks in part to publicity in the Negro press, inflamed black public opinion. These wartime sentiments produced federal anti-discrimination executive orders signed by Roosevelt and Harry Truman. They helped spur the very early interstate bus rides by the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The Brown decision helped inspire the Montgomery movement. The Montgomery movement's success and the attendant publicity contributed to President Eisenhower's decision to send federal troops to Little Rock. And so on. This kind of multilayered, cross-jurisdictional activity was necessary because the opposition to the movement was a lot more powerful and sophisticated than the gap-toothed Klansmen and corpulent small-town sheriffs who were its public foils. The Brown cases, for example, pitted Marshall against, among others, a former Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes, and a former Democratic Presidential nominee, John W. Davis; our current Chief Justice, then a Supreme Court law clerk, wrote a memorandum to his boss laying out a justification for a dissent from the unanimous decision.

"Reporting Civil Rights" has a few *R*lacunae (where's Gunnar Myrdal?), but the most important absence is of material hostile to the civil-rights movement. Having made the decision not to



limit themselves to journalism per se, the editors had the opportunity to give us some flavor of the conversation among the movement's adversaries, as they do so well for the conversation among its allies. But the ideological range of the pieces runs from journalistic-neutral to left; by my count, there are only two contributions from conservatives, Norman Podhoretz's "My Negro Problem—And Ours," and Tom Wolfe's "Mau-Mauing the Flak-Catchers," and neither of those writers was so identified at the time that he published his article. Only one piece in "Reporting Civil Rights," a long, overwrought excerpt from a 1956 book by Robert Penn Warren called "Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South," gets across the feeling of the respectable white sentiment that I grew up around in Louisiana—opposed to civil rights, but with a paternalism that was deeply convinced of its own benevolence and painful honesty about the race problem, and deeply embarrassed by the lynchings and snarling mobs that were what the North knew of segregationism. (If only the movement had been more patient, the patrician white South thought, it wouldn't have brought such creatures crawling out of the swamp.) It's true that, as several contributions say in passing, a good deal of the written case against civil rights took the form of crude mimeographs and newsletters, but there were also publications, like the *Dan Smoot Report* and the John Birch Society's *American Opinion*, that were hardly less mainstream than, on the left, the *Southern Patriot* or *Ramparts*, which did make the cut for "Reporting Civil Rights"—and there was the entirely presentable work of James J. Kilpatrick, then the editorial-page editor of the *Richmond News Leader*, and soon to be a familiar Washington columnist and television personality. Here's a passage from his 1962 book "The Southern Case for School Segregation":

Manifestly, the resistance to a coerced racial "equality" is wide and deep. Why is this so? The answer, in blunt speech, is that the Negro race, as a race, has not earned equality. And as I have attempted to argue earlier, it is a feeble and evasive response to accuse the white critic, in making that flat statement, of emulating the child who shot his parents and then pleaded for mercy as an orphan. The failure of the Negro race, as a race, to achieve equality cannot be blamed wholly on white oppression. This is the excuse, the crutch, the piteous and finally pathetic defense of Ne-

grophiles unable or willing to face reality. In other times and other places, sturdy, creative, and self-reliant minorities have carved out their own destiny; they have compelled acceptance on their own merit; they have demonstrated those qualities of leadership and resourcefulness and disciplined ambition that in the end cannot ever be denied. But the Negro race, as a race, has done none of this.

The white South's argument against the civil-rights movement always had at least three elements: in addition to the racial one that Kilpatrick was making, there was the idea that the movement was a Trojan horse filled with Communists and other radicals who wanted to change society wholesale, and there was opposition to the use of federal power to overturn local customs. You almost never see sentiments like Kilpatrick's in print anymore, and the radical left no longer presents a plausible danger, but hostility toward the federal government is a far more important element in American conservatism today than it was during the civil-rights movement. At a time when the movement begins to seem safe, neutral, and inarguable, it's worth recalling that coercive federal power really was crucial to its success. The civil-rights revolution reestablished the principle that the federal government would, after nearly a century's retreat, again assume responsibility for enforcing the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments in the South. In Congress, the bitterest fights about civil-rights legislation were always over the question of federal enforcement power, which, for the South, was the most objectionable aspect. The 1957 Civil Rights Act is relatively little remembered because the enforcement provisions were stripped out before Congress passed it; the 1964 act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act were landmarks, and finally made the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments real in the South, precisely because they provided for federal enforcement. Federal troops were present at one milestone event after another during the movement's heyday—indeed, their arrival *was* the milestone. You have to wonder how, in a country that has become far more suspicious of the federal government, they'd be received today.

The glory days of the civil-rights movement came to an end in the summer of 1965. On August 6, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, which signalled the

progression of black Southerners from an oppressed caste to an interest group; on August 11th, in Los Angeles, the Watts riot—vividly and terrifyingly described in several pieces in "Reporting Civil Rights"—broke out. The riot lasted most of a week and left thirty-four people dead, in addition to destroying much of a large black neighborhood and much of white America's store of racial good will. After Watts, the bulk of the material in "Reporting Civil Rights" is a dispiriting succession of riots, murders (including King's), unsuccessful campaigns, renunciations of nonviolence, factionalism, and black-white fights. (In 1966, John Lewis, the firebrand of the March on Washington, was ousted from SNCC for being too moderate.) But the summer of 1965 wasn't so obvious a turning point within the movement at the time as it now appears to have been, and the anthology makes it clear why not. Nearly everything about the movement was improvised and almost accidental. The two shimmering peaks of King's career were the 1963 March on Washington and the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery march, which ended in a speech arguably even more dramatic and better than "I have a dream"—the one delivered from the steps of the Alabama state capitol, with a refrain of "How long? Not long." But King had originally planned to skip the Selma-to-Montgomery march; only when the situation escalated did he realize that he had made a mistake and rush to the scene. Given that none of the important organizations in the civil-rights movement thought that its purpose was limited to achieving "civil rights," the movement couldn't declare victory after the Voting Rights Act and go home; instead, for all its successes, it had to endure the pain of failure, a sense of what had not yet been achieved.

Even now, it would be a mistake to think that civil rights belongs to the realm of settled opinion, requiring of us only the kind of easy, post-facto approval that Trent Lott managed to bungle. The Supreme Court is about to hear arguments in a monumental case on affirmative action in university admissions. The institutional defendant is the University of Michigan, but the case is the culmination of a string of conservative anti-affirmative-action activities that began in

1995 with something called the California Civil Rights Initiative, which used King as its patron saint until it became clear that King had actually been a supporter of affirmative action. Although I didn't notice a single reference to affirmative action, pro or con, in the nearly nineteen hundred pages of "Reporting Civil Rights," the Michigan case is really an organic continuation of the events described in these books. Beginning in the forties, at least part of the civil-rights movement devoted itself primarily to demanding more and better jobs for Negroes outside the segregated South. When these efforts were successful, the usual result was proto-affirmative-action policies by state fair-employment commissions, under which the ordinary job qualifications would be set aside so that Negroes could be hired. The spectre of such programs haunted the debate over the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the act contained an amendment prohibiting them. But, once it became law, the act quickly led to the establishment of federal affirmative-action programs, and no civil-rights organization, across a wide ideological range, seems to have objected.

The movement began with a struggle for political change without the benefit of either votes or public opinion, and it became expert at using the courts and regulatory agencies to get results that lacked popular support. It's doubtful whether a plebiscite would have approved affirmative action in the first place. But history rolls onward: today one can't run for national office as a Democrat without declaring support for affirmative action, as Senator Joseph Lieberman demonstrated when, on being nominated for Vice-President, he renounced his previous doubt; even President Bush has made a point of avoiding a frontal assault on affirmative action—for example, declining to ask the Supreme Court to use the Michigan cases as the occasion simply to ban the use of race in college admissions. Big social issues of this sort are always in contention. "Reporting Civil Rights" is really a chronicle of one long season in America's ongoing political battles over race. A major legacy of the civil-rights movement is that those battles are far less intense and destructive now than they were during the period covered in the anthology. But they are by no means over. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Inquisitors' Manual, by António Lobo Antunes, translated from the Portuguese by Richard Zenith (Grove; \$25). "We forget everything, we forget everything forever and ever," an old soldier declares about the nearly four decades when Portugal languished under the regime of António de Oliveira Salazar. But no one can, and "The Inquisitors' Manual" is a swirl of narratives and perspectives revolving around the family of a powerful, eccentric oligarch in Salazar's government. These orbits are wide: not only ministers but veterinarians, housekeepers, and social workers all have their say. Lobo Antunes, one of the most skillful psychological portraitists writing anywhere, renders the turpitude of an entire society through an impasto of intensely individual voices. Unable to filter present from past, dialogue from echo, his multiple narrators bring us with them as they eddy through the dark backwaters of a lost half-century.

On a Grand Scale: The Outstanding Life of Sir Christopher Wren, by Lisa Jardine (HarperCollins; \$34.95). This engrossing biography charts Wren's trajectory from mathematical prodigy who invented transparent beehives and a copying machine to England's greatest architect, who rebuilt much of London—most famously St. Paul's Cathedral—after the Great Fire of 1666. Wren later claimed to regard all enterprises involving stone and mortar as "rubbish," and was prouder of his work as an astronomer and anatomist. His extraordinary versatility and industry give Jardine the opportunity to examine the political and scientific constellations of Restoration England. Such is her feel for the subject that, when she sees a long-forgotten basement room directly underneath Wren's Monument to the Great Fire, she immediately realizes that it is a laboratory—that the building was designed not only as a mon-

ument but also as a multipurpose scientific instrument, including "a zenith telescope, with lenses at ground and upper-platform levels."

Wrapped in Rainbows, by Valerie Boyd (Scribner; \$30). The novelist, folklorist, and playwright Zora Neale Hurston lived a life easily equal to the drama of her best novels. Although her ambitions took her far from the all-black town of Eatonville, Florida, where she grew up, her intellectual and emotional roots remained in its watery environs, where telling tall tales was a way of life. She told a few tall tales herself, especially in her autobiography, "Dust Tracks on a Road." But what can lying about one's age or about how many husbands one had matter in the face of having escaped Eatonville to study at Barnard? Hurston's significance as an anthropologist should not be underestimated. She made her readers see the uniqueness of black American speech by printing it the way it was said. Boyd is too laudatory in her approach, but this is a convincing attempt to make sense of a life that continues to defy categorization.

Starving to Death on \$200 Million, by James Ledbetter (PublicAffairs; \$26). In the year 2000, the *Industry Standard*—the would-be bible of the New Economy—appeared to be one of the most successful magazines in history, with more than seven thousand ad pages and projected revenues of two hundred million dollars. The next year, it went out of business. This self-lacerating postmortem by the magazine's former European editor shows that the *Standard* was doomed by early success. Unbridled optimism led to wild spending, dubious side projects, and an unwillingness to make hard decisions. The *Standard*, then, was just like the dot-coms it wrote about, and so the story of the magazine's failure becomes a parable about the era of the bubble. Ledbetter's account of the backroom negotiations that attended the *Standard's* demise drags in places, but he is adept at capturing both the late-nineties atmosphere of irrational exuberance and the bitter, hung-over feeling that followed.

