Poems Written on Hotel Stationery

by David R. Slavitt

1. Las Brisas

A cliff . . . they often put these hotels on cliffs.
Birds dart across the sky making squeaky-toy
cries of delight. (Or are they hungry?) Below,
we see the sea and can descend for lunch
in the shelter of thatch. Outside, in the sun on the sand,
natives trudge, hawk silver bracelets, dresses,
hats, kites . . . One girl sold toy rats.
We repair up the hill where the greatest demand upon us
is the daily death of hibiscus blossoms they put
in the pool each morning to drift and waterlog,
and lack of stress is the only stress. Each day,
we inspect the sunset. Later, we'll have a nightcap
under the stars and over the constellations
of lights below, the town we look down on that clings
to the hem of the mountain's skirts across the bay,
and wonder perhaps what they can dream of down there.
It is up to us to see what those dead eyes
cannot imagine. They take for granted the hot
sand that has burnt their soles to the toughness of shoes.

2. The Inn at Spanish Bay

From across the dunes at sunset, a piper skirls:
the simple meeting and merging of fire and water
as the sun drips from the raspberry millefeuille
confection the sky has become into the silver
foil of the ocean's wrapper is not enough,
so management tries to retain the patrons' attention
by such bizarre grace notes. And the motif is
Scottish, after all. From the golf links: Troon;
St. Andrews; why not a piper? Nevertheless,
the kitchen is northern Italian, some higher-up
having drawn the line, thank God, at haggis. It works,
one must confess, and that nature, naked, requires
tinkering. No place, no event is ever
sufficient unto itself. At Pebble Beach,
tee shirts allude to Maui, as there, to here.
To sit still, to be wholly where we are
and be content even with luxury, sunsets'
spectacular shows of the sky and the sea, demands
too much, is too expensive, exclusive. Heaven!
It's almost all one could want. But it costs the earth.

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A Gildered Cage

by Charlotte Low Allen

"All mental revolutions are attended by catastrophe."
—W. Winwood Reade

Microcosm: The Quantum Revolution in Economics and Technology
by George Gilder
New York: Simon and Schuster; 383 pp., $19.95

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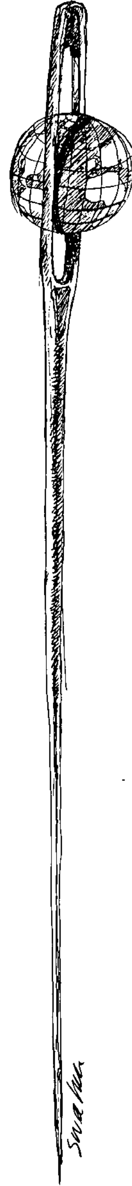
George Gilder's strength as a writer is his ability to create vivid mythic archetypes saturated with his own romantic feelings. He is not comfortable with ideas unless they are strong, simple ideas that lend themselves to vivid evocation of feeling rather than complex rumination: the lure and mystery of women, the bonds of family, the love of God. His best books are the three he wrote during the 1970's: *Sexual Suicide* (reissued in 1986 as *Men and Marriage*), *Naked Nomads*, and *Visible Man*. All three books were essentially about the same subject: the laser-fast speed with which men disintegrate, bringing down the social order with them, when they do not marry or stay married. Gilder's specific target was the surge in the divorce rate that accompanied the simultaneous sexual and feminist revolutions. During the 1970's, the divorce-to-marriage ratio rose to one-to-two, where it remains to this day, bringing with it such phenomena as the feminization of poverty and the CEO's Second Wife, that glitzy creature who replaces in the life of a powerful man the woman who bore his children.

Visible Man focused on one particular aspect of this familial decay, the breakdown of the black family and the surge in antisocial behavior by black males that has accompanied it. All three books theorized that the best way to channel male aggression—ever ready to display itself in the form of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, and pointless tableaux of virility instead of regular work—is to give men a positive role, that of patriarch of a traditional family. If he can be The Boss, a man will gladly cherish his wife and support his children. As the only parent with the physical strength and presence to discipline growing boys, he will ensure that they, too, grow up to be productive members of society and good fathers. Naturally, feminists loathed these ideas, partly because Gilder forecast that, when women achieve critical numbers in men's professions, or, worse, become men's bosses, the men, deprived of patriarchal rewards, will simply drop out. The profession will lose status—a prophecy that has already come true in such fields as teaching, social work, and in some branches of law and medicine.



In 1981, Gilder published *Wealth and Poverty*, an encomium to the free enterprise system. Like his earlier books, it bucked conventional liberal wisdom, this time the accumulated wisdom of the Carter years. Gilder touted Adam Smith, with his theory that wealth springs from creative enterprise; Say's Law, that supply creates demand; and Joseph Schumpeter's definition of capitalism as creative destruction.

Wealth and Poverty invested free enterprise with all the romantic feeling that Gilder had earlier conferred on the patriarchal family. It tended to idealize the money-making impulse, which Smith had more realistically viewed as a form of self-love that happened to yield social benefits. Gilder, as ever, preferred the simple archetype to Smith's more subtle, more interesting assessment of businessmen and what makes them tick. Entrepreneurs display "heroic creativity," Gilder wrote, characterizing their efforts as "forms of devotion." *Wealth and Poverty*, an encapsulation of the supply-side policies that fueled the first Reagan administration, was a huge best-seller.

Gilder's next book, *The Spirit of Enterprise*, published in 1984, was a rewrite of *Wealth and Poverty*, with more about Adam Smith and Joseph Schumpeter. By this time, Gilder's

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