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The Other's America
Notes on Rogers Smith's *Civic Ideals*

Imagine a political scientist who fell asleep twenty-five years ago. Now, she wakes up to a vibrant, new intellectual scene. The bookshelves in her office groan with work on historical institutions – the state is back in with a vengeance. Meanwhile, pluralist self-interest models have evolved into rational choice; the homely geometry metaphors (remember the "parallelogram of forces"?) have grown up into serious calculus.

However, when Professor Van Winkel turns to political culture, she gets a pleasant surprise. Everything remains reassuringly familiar. The same old stalwarts – from Alexis de Tocqueville to Louis Hartz – still pose the same old questions: What makes America exceptional? What are the roots of America's suffocating liberal consensus?

Beyond political science, contemporary intellectual life buzzes with hot new lines of cultural inquiry. Scholars furiously debate constructions of American national identity – in departments of history, literature, American studies, and women's studies. Why are political scientists not jumping in? Because most Americanists have tossed cultural studies aside. As a result, the traditional political arguments face few new challengers. The Tocquevillean views have petrified into assumptions, lying largely unexamined below the analytic surface of contemporary scholarship.

Enter Rogers Smith. *Civic Ideals* aims to uproot those ancient, unexamined convictions about the United States. Smith gets down to the fundamentals: Who are full rights-bearing Americans? Who is excluded? This double-edged approach dislodges old questions about consensus and poses new ones more appropriate to a diverse, often fractious society. Smith's focus plunges us back into the business of analyzing American ideology and culture. But this cultural inquiry is a far methodological cry from Louis Hartz.

To get at the clashing visions of citizenship, Smith turns to multiple modes of analysis. First, he locates himself in the institutionalist mainstream; his

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focus – his dependent variable – is the body of legislation and court rulings that define citizenship. Second, Smith draws lightly on a kind of rational choice calculation; he traces American prejudice largely to the machinations of self-interested politicians trolling for easy votes. Finally, Smith's framework raises plenty of questions about the culture. This is a top-down view of politics and society; filling out the analytic picture would mean bringing the people back in. The question Smith leaves us asking is how the people themselves – through social movements, popular discourse, panics, dime novels, and riots – help shape American views of "us" and "them."

Smith's project implicitly calls on analytic approaches that political scientists often keep artificially separate. We might call them the three I's – institutions, interests, and ideology. Social scientists are going to need them all to get at the intellectual agenda *Civic Ideals* leaves behind.[1]

The following section describes and defends Smith's most important contribution, the multiple American traditions thesis. Following that, I criticize Smith's use of liberalism. Finally, I turn to his analysis of "us" and "them." My view of the book could be repeated on every page of this essay. Instead, let me just say it once: *Civic Ideals* is terrific. It rightly takes its place in the political canon, alongside the classics – Hartz, Myrdal, even Tocqueville – that Smith challenges. My criticisms ought to be read in a context of frank admiration.[2]

THE *MAYFLOWER* AND THE SLAVE SHIP

The book's most important (and most controversial) contribution lies in its rewriting of American history. Smith describes a great dialectic between the familiar liberal tradition and its illiberal (or "ascriptive") opposite. To get his view across, Smith has to dislodge the longstanding hegemony of the liberal view – a task he pursues with gusto.

Tocqueville wrote the most celebrated exposition of the American liberal tradition. "It seems to me that I can see the entire destiny of America contained in the first Puritan who stepped ashore."[3] That early American, argued Tocqueville, leapt out of feudalism and into a new world where everyone was "born equal." Success or failure lay in one's own hands. More recent scholars – Louis Hartz, Samuel Huntington, Seymour Martin Lipset – draw a straight line between Tocqueville's story and contemporary American politics: a nation of government bashing, competitive individuals whooping "let the devil take the hindmost" all share a deep-seated American creed that can be

1. For a more sustained application of this view, see James A. Morone, "The Bias of American Politics: Rationing Health Care in a Weak State," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* (1992) 140, no. 5: 1923–38.

2. A bit of truth in criticizing: I chaired the committee that awarded the J. David Greenstone prize to *Civic Ideals*. For the award citation itself, see *Clio: Newsletter of Politics and History* 9 (1998).

3. Alexis de Tocqueville, *de la Democratie en Amerique* (Paris: GF-Flamarion, 1981), 130 (my translation). For the standard translation, see Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969), 509.

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summed up in five words: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and *laissez faire*.[4]

The liberal creed propels American political development into a great historical trajectory, toward ever wider rights and broader democracy. Sure, there are bumps in the liberal road (like slavery, nativism, and misogyny), but they are all vanquished in the inexorable march of American democracy. The sustained conflicts in American history come from tensions within the liberal ideology itself – between liberals touting markets and democrats pushing equality.

For Smith, this liberal interpretation is merely the angel of America's better nature. In every era, it confronts an entirely different impulse: the equally American urge to reject groups and repress rights on the basis of ascriptive traits – race, gender, ethnicity, religion. Neither tradition has any special standing. The liberal and the ascriptive are evenly matched – Manichean twins wrestling for control over each historical moment. American political development offers no historical trajectory, no inevitable march of rights, no irresistible liberal triumphs.

This is not a new story. Many writers have discovered an illiberal American tradition. Always "poised against the Mayflower is the slave ship," wrote William Carlos Williams in 1925; both the quest for freedom and the urge to exploit run deep in the American grain. And W. E. B. DuBois confessed to being astonished at how routinely evil was "forgotten, distorted, skimmed over." But *Civic Ideals* tells the story of America's malignant side with a rarely sustained vehemence and in unblinking detail. Rogers Smith pokes under every rock of the American experience to expose the illiberalism swarming beneath the surface.[5]

Out of the relentless details comes a new historical arc. Forget the march toward rights and democracy. There are no inevitable directions. On the contrary, each step toward greater rights unsettles the society and unleashes the illiberal demons – stepping away from Puritan hegemony stirred up witch trials, extending the vote to working men unleashed the Jacksonian era's racism, the effort to redeem slavery ended with Jim Crow. I would have made the causal link between the two traditions more central to the book's narrative. But Smith is clear enough: each moves towards greater liberalism unsettles the society and prompts a distinctly illiberal backlash.

What is oddest about the liberal view is how long it lasted. How could so many fine scholars have so missed (or dismissed) the ascriptive side of American life? These are not rare or minor or hidden violations on the edge of America life – though some critics of *Civic Ideals* continue to insist that they are.[6]

4. The five word summary is from Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword* (New York: Norton, 1996), 31.

5. William Carlos Williams, *In the American Grain* (1925; New York: A New Directions Book, 1956), 208. In a sense, this is a poetic version of *Civic Ideals*. W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Athenium, 1992), 722.

6. See, for example, Jeffrey Rosen, "America in Thick and Thin, *The New Republic* (Jan. 5–12, 1998):29–36; or Jeremy Rabkin, "Elective Citizenship," *The Public Interest* (March 22, 1998).

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Take the last two years of Andrew Jackson's administration to illustrate the force of Smith's argument. A half-century ago, Arthur Schlesinger painted a heroic picture of the period: Jacksonian Democrats rose up and fought for the common man till the antislavery crusade "drained off the energies" and "diverted the enthusiasm" of the "men of good will."[7] In the liberal frame, the Jacksonian era remains (despite growing caveats) a great democratic moment.

But a close look finds illiberal impulses all over Jacksonian liberalism. First, there were the Abolitionists. They stand, for the most part, beyond the scope (but not the logic) of *Civic Ideals*. President Jackson did not speak kindly about abolition: "It is fortunate for the country that the good sense . . . of the people [in the North] . . . have given so strong and impressive a tone . . . against . . . the misguided persons" who advocated abolishing slavery. That "strong and impressive tone" referred to the fifty-three anti-abolitionist race riots that jarred the United States in 1835. Male gangs, egged on by community leaders, pelted women's anti-slavery meetings with rocks and brickbats. Abolitionist Lydia Maria Child did not find the anti-abolition riots "impressive." "We have managed," she wrote, "to get along in safety so far; but I have . . . at times . . . trembled and wept like a very child. . . . Tis like the times of the French Revolution." Abraham Lincoln was not impressed either: "Outrages committed by . . . the worse than savage . . . mobs form the every-day news of the times." A wild and furious disregard for law pervaded the entire country. The ostensibly democratic Jacksonian moment was rocked by violence so intense that Lincoln speculated about America's demise – and all this illiberal violence triggered by the genuinely liberal idea of abolishing slavery.[8]

Or take the Native Americans. Here, too, Smith understates his own case. Even Tocqueville reserved some of his most ardent writing for the terrible campaign to remove Native Americans from the East:

> One cannot imagine the frightful afflictions that accompanied these forced migrations. When the Indians leave their ancestral fields they are already exhausted and worn down. . . . Behind them there is famine, before them war, everywhere misery. . . . With my own eyes I have witnessed miseries [and] afflictions beyond my power to portray. . . . The sight will never leave my memory.[9]

Nor was this a policy on the margins of the administration. In his Farewell Address, "Indian removal" is the first issue that Jackson turns to. And, as Smith

7. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson,* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1946), 505.

8. Andrew Jackson, "Seventh Annual Address" December 7, 1835), in *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* ed. James Richardson (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of National Literature, 1918) 2:1394. Lydia Maria Child, *Selected Letters,* ed. Milton Meltzer and Patricia Holland (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 31; Abraham Lincoln, "Address Before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois (January 27, 1837), in *The Writings of Abraham Lincoln,* ed. Arthur Brooks Lapsley (New York: Putnam, 1905), 148–61.

For discussion, see James, A. Morone, "Race Images and American Politics: The Argument About Slavery and Its Legacy," Paper prepared for delivery at the 1998 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, September 3–6, 1998.

9. Tocqueville, *de la Democratie en Amerique,* 1:435–36; Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1961), 323–24.

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rightly notes, Jackson does not mice words: "The states which had so long been retarded in their improvement by the Indian tribes residing in the midst of them are at length relieved from this evil."[10]

At the same time, the Irish were entering the country in large numbers – they made up 46 percent of all immigrants in 1835. They joined the Democratic party (a bona-fide liberal story) and faced their own race riots (another ascriptive story). Smith briefly notes the most famous anti-Catholic event, the mobbing and burning of an Ursuline convent outside Boston. The riot followed the usual anti-Catholic rumors: the Papists were abducting and raping the neighborhood girls. Two decades later the nativists would briefly capture both the Massachusetts legislature and its Congressional delegation.

That is an awful lot of illiberalism in just two years of a classic "democratic moment." Generations of social scientists simply read past the violent, antebellum political pyrotechnics. Others saw an exception here, a bump on the democratic road there. But Rogers Smith is exactly right: all those exceptions – anti-abolitionist riots, Amerindian genocide, anti-Catholic violence – add up to a systematic American tradition.

The clash between liberal and illiberal strains is the ground on which *Civic Ideals* is at its best. It is where Smith has invested his energy. "If the reader agrees that the evidence overwhelmingly supports these multiple traditions," he writes, the book's main aim will be achieved" (9). Any serious student of American political history will be able to pile illiberal instances on top of those that fill Smith's book. Even readers who are not ready to give the ascriptive urge equal billing will have to concede at least some sobering balance to traditional celebrations of American liberalism.

Smith's moral conclusion is worth emphasizing. Democratic victories are precious and fragile. Rather than a constant movement toward liberal democracy, there is always a struggle. But what are we fighting *for?* On the details of that question, I cross over and join with Smith's critics.

UP TOWARD LIBERALISM?

Smith unmasks the ascriptive impulse at every historical turn. The alternative, he insists, is liberalism; after debunking the liberal interpretation, he celebrates its values. But Smith's liberalism is an almost furtive presence through his historical narrative. He insists on liberalism without mounting a sustained defense – in fact, he barely describes it, stuffing his definitions into the footnotes.[11]

This exacerbates the book's major analytic difficulty. Smith writes as if there is a sharp distinction between the liberal and the ascriptive traditions. In American political history, however, that line constantly blurs and vanishes.

10. Jackson, "Farewell Address" (March 4, 1837), in *Messages and Papers of the Presidents,* 2:1513.

11. For notes on liberalism, see *inter alia,* 506 n.5; 517 n.44; 639 n.16. The first of these is a fine definition of liberalism that actually implies some common ground with the critiques of liberalism such as the one I make here.

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The liberal tradition itself organizes ascriptive troubles. The market economy, for example, is always skewed. It represses as easily as it liberates; it erodes support for the kinds of policies that Smith supports. Markets are hell on social welfare states. And the political side of liberalism wreaks its own ascriptive havoc through American time.

Markets

Once upon a time, free economic markets liberated citizens from oppressive feudal privileges. When colonists first arrived in the new world, they found plenty of land an ocean away from the old world's stifling seigniorial rights. The Puritans added God to the economic calculus. Prosperity offered hints of providential favor – how you fared here was a pretty good indicator of how you would fare in the hereafter.

God eventually fell out of the economic calculus. But Americans famously sacralized hard work and success. They demonized failure. Economic markets remain the great metric of individual merit – as Ted Turner once put it, "money is how we keep score in life." Rogers Smith inadvertently shows us the nasty side: "Liberal morals demand that individuals show themselves to be industrious . . . and self reliant, usually via economic productivity" (37).

What this means is that all those liminal groups marching across *Civic Ideals* were getting blasted for their economic failure. In America, failure meant laziness or lack of talent or both. The underclass narrative was well established by the mid-eighteenth century. As Benjamin Franklin wrote about the Philadelphia Germans in 1752, they "under-sell," "under-live," and "underwork"; consequently, the English neighbors were "incommoded"; and "disgusted." Two hundred fifty years later, market failures still produce underclass stories organized around lazy groups that "under-work" and "incommode" the more prosperous citizens.[12]

Like any set of rules, markets are rigged. They were skewed against free blacks in the North, against nineteenth-century women ("Woman must have a purse of her own" wrote a frustrated Susan B. Anthony in 1853), against African Americans fighting for dignity after the Civil War, and against labor unions until the New Deal (and beyond). Frederick Douglass vividly described the dynamics of the bias: White carpenters were happy to work alongside black slaves; but the appearance of free black workers provoked the white men to throw down their tools and strike. "If free colored carpenters were encouraged," they insisted, "poor white men would be thrown out of employment." Black freemen and women were hounded out of their jobs, then denounced for being lazy and lacking enterprise. How else could one explain such poverty in the land of free labor?[13]

12. Benjamin Franklin, Letter to James Parker, in Archibald Kennedy, *The Importance of Gaining and Preserving the Friendship of the Indians to the British Interest Considered* (London: E Cave, 1752), 43–45.

13. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845; New York: Norton, 1997), 62–3; Susan B Anthony, *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B Anthony* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 230.

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Smith understands that markets are biased. In his view, it is all part of the ascriptive urge. But the bias is wrapped tightly around the liberal-market fancies of hard work, success, and each person standing on her own like a proper, rugged individualist. Put it differently: Is there a single place in the 700 pages of *Civic Ideals* where rolling back the public sector and permitting people to compete has actually resulted in more equity or lifted a liminal group? I cannot think of one.

Rather, the real world of market liberalism has proven an eager accomplice to the ascriptive strain in American life. Progressive social policies are constantly condemned for mucking up the market test of private virtue. They tax the hard working and reward the lazy.

Hartz got it frustratingly right in his picture of American liberalism. A less liberal, more class conscious society might foster citizens who feel more solidarity with one another. But the American dream turns on individual success and failure. A pro-market, anti-statist ideology – precisely what Europeans call American liberalism – makes welfare state programs extremely difficult to win. The liberal impulse, and its celebration of markets, cuts sharply against the social welfare policies that Rogers Smith himself favors.

Of course, Hartz overemphasized the importance of ideology and culture. Take national health insurance to illustrate why. Opponents howl about socialism and intrusive government each time the reform comes onto the agenda. But the repeated demise of national health insurance is an institutional story as much as a cultural one. If the United States had been playing by parliamentary rules, it would have had the reform in 1949 (after Truman campaigned on the issue) – more or less on the same schedule as the Westminster democracies. We would have gotten it again, of course, in 1993. This bit of American exceptionalism derives from the self-interest of opponents and the institutional design of American government as much as political ideology. Even conceding that, however, the ideology matters.[14]

Pro-market, anti-governmental ideology remains an important part of the American political story. Few other industrial nations have developed the broad, anti-governmental tax revolts like the ones that keep bursting across the United States. Few have major parties as rightist (read, anti-governmental) as the United States Republican party. And for all the American checks and balances, few rightist parties in any industrial nation have gone as far in dismantling welfare states as the Americans did in 1996.

Markets are not, of course, inherently unjust. They are not inherently anything. One can imagine markets designed to promote social justice. Judith Sklar's *American Citizenship* proposes counting job rights as part of basic citizenship rights.[15] But market liberalism, as it actually developed in the United

14. See James Morone, *The Democratic Wish* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) chap. 7; and Sven Steinmo and Jon Watts, "It's the Institutions, Stupid: Why Comprehensive National Health Insurance Always Fails in America," *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 20 (1995):329–72.

15. Judith Sklar, *American Citizenship* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), chap. 2. I think I detect Smith's influence on his mentor's work – indeed, he is cited (as "particularly help[ful]"), see 106.

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States, fostered and justified much of the bias that *Civic Ideals* so effectively uncovers and laments. American liberalism includes a cult of markets that perpetuate what Smith calls the ascriptive tradition. Insofar as markets have been concerned, Smiths's optimistic American alternative is no alternative at all.

Politics

Civic Ideals combines liberalism with democratic republicanism to produce a high-minded, Spartan, civic ideal: "Democratic republicanism denies the title of 'virtuous' to those unwilling or unable to undertake extensive political participation and sacrifices for the public good, despite the pressures of the competitive market economy" (36). The austere liberal-republican ideal, writes Smith, places "great strain on citizens" (ibid). This sounds fine; we aspire to be good, republican citizens, yet we sometimes fail and fall for the easy seductions of prejudice.

Politicians pandering for easy votes lure Americans to the dark, ascriptive side. People uneasy about who they are define their tribe against strange-looking others. The moral lesson is clear and simple: stick to the virtuous high road, shun its bad ideological twin.

But take a more careful look at the high-minded talk about virtue. The republican-liberal synthesis pushes America to cull its people. On the one side, the "virtuous"; on the other, those whom get denied that title (37). Precisely because these traditions ask so much of its citizens, their champions have always worried about the quality of the people. The traditions themselves pose a dangerous question: What happens when the United States fills up with men and women who are not up to those "daunting demands?" What are we to do with men and women who must be denied the "title of virtuous?"

These are questions built into Smith's liberalism. Answering them – pursuing the hard liberal path itself – opens the door to ascriptive prejudice. The virtuous are "industrious" and "self reliant." Small wonder that Americans have always been so harsh on their paupers. And on social groups that have failed to prosper – like Amerindians, African Americans, and immigrants. Ascriptive trouble does not lie in a neatly external "tradition." It flows directly from the questions Smith poses in the name of liberalism itself.

To illustrate how liberal virtue produces illiberal mischief, consider the nineteenth century prejudice against Catholics. As Smith himself notes, it was not just nativist paranoia; the old American guard feared for the nation's republican virtue (209). The great Whig evangelical leader, Lyman Beecher, shows up in *Civic Ideals* only as a leader who stoked the dark, tribal passions of Boston mobs that later burned down the Ursuline Convent (211). But Beecher was asking precisely the questions that Rogers Smith finds central to republican-liberalism.

"It was by training men for self government," wrote Beecher, that the founding Fathers "expected to make men free." By cultivating "intellectual culture and moral influence . . . they prepared men to enjoy and perpetuate civil liberty." That republican principle led Beecher's followers to condemn slavery,

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fight for temperance, and fear Catholics. The Catholics, he thought, simply did not meet what Smith calls the "daunting" standard of liberal-republican virtue. The American Revolution and Protestant Reformation had both been rebellions of conscience against tyrannical autocracies, against king and pope. In frightening contrast to the Protestant-republicans, the Roman Catholics clung to their faith in hierarchy and power. Protestant yeomen read the bible, struggled with their conscience and directly experienced God's grace; the Roman Catholics followed orders from a hierarchy still flaunting its medieval garb.[16]

The anti-catholic position grew out of prejudice, of course. However, republican-liberal logic reinforced that prejudice. By reducing the ascriptive urge to the dishonorable self-interest of political leaders, *Civic Ideals* underestimates the American dark side. What we have to face up to is the danger lurking in the liberal-republican vision of virtue itself. Posing the virtue questions in a nation thick with strangers, bursting with different faiths, and crowded with poor people, positively invites (even insures) "ascriptive" judgments about us and them.

Moreover, like any tradition, liberalism faces a boundary question: to whom do citizenship rights apply? Liberal logic presses for broad inclusion. (And no theorist alive trumps Rogers Smith in pushing for universal rights.) Even so, the pesky questions come up. Children do not count as full members, of course. John Stuart Mill notoriously illustrated the slippery slope of liberal practice when he mused that an entire race "may be considered as in its nonage."[17] The mentally ill presumably fall into the same category as children (although the legendary Chicago politician John "Hinky Dink" Kenna, used to haul voters to the polls from the Dunning Hospital for the Insane and, when challenged, asserted that the inmates were "more astute than the most erudite Republicans"). What about prison inmates? There is a loaded question in a nation which will have imprisoned an extraordinary two million people by the millennium. The entire penal system (prison, probation, parole), now has one out of thirty-three Americans – and one out of ten African Americans – in its grip. By definition, that whole army of men and women have had their liberties suspended.[18]

The American civic ideals, as Smith describes them, demand virtue from its citizens. This concept pushes many questions: Who is virtuous? Who is not?

16. Lyman Beecher, "The Memory of Our Fathers" *Beecher's Works* (Boston: John Jewett and Co, 1852) 1:322–23. I am grateful to Gordon Wood for pointing out the ironic outcome. The Catholics did not change the American Protestant emphasis on individual conscience. Instead, the conversion went the other way. The Catholic church in the United States became quite distinctly American; members inherited the tradition of active congregations and individual conscience. Catholicism stopped being a quasi-ascriptive trait (as it often is to those born Catholic in Europe). In the United States, Catholics took to measuring their Catholicism against their conscience – producing the concept of "lapsed Catholics" and promoting the distinctly American penchant for questioning church policy.

17. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859; New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 69.

18. Morone, "Race Images and American Politics: The Argument about Slavery and Its Legacy," 43–45.

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Who threatens our high standards? The impulse towards exclusion lies, not just in some alternative tradition, but in what Smith takes to be the touchstone of our better selves. If we were not so insistent on (contested) visions of virtue, for example, our jails would be a lot less crowded.

By his own account, others have criticized Smith's embrace of liberalism (5). Even so, his defense is undeveloped. His real passion lies in exposing the breadth and depth of the pernicious strain that runs through American politics. For doing that, constructing two entirely separate traditions is an effective heuristic device. Two impulses, a good and an evil, wrestle for the soul American citizenship. A whole generation of books and dissertations can be launched around the neat distinction.

But as a portrait of the American ideological landscape, the division is too neat. The American story is more difficult than even Smith himself acknowledges. The two traditions blend together. Markets are always skewed. Market liberalism aggravates injustice by inviting judgments about productivity, virtue, and self-worth. The search for civic virtue fosters invidious distinctions between us and them. The liberal tradition in America constantly erodes support for progressive social polices. Of course, one can imagine another liberalism. But it is hard to locate it in the American experience so effectively documented in *Civic Ideals*.

STRANGERS AT THE GATE: US AND THEM

Civic Ideals leaves a big question in its wake: precisely how and why do people respond to the ascriptive urge? The book traces prejudice to simple calculations. Politicians hustle for votes; citizens find tribal communion by bashing outsiders, especially during anxious times. But why does it work? Why does deprecating some liminal groups – but not others – rally this particular tribe? Answering that question is going to require bringing the people back into the historical analysis.

For every irresponsible leader there is an irrepressible mob. The clamor of the witch hunt rose up from the people a good deal louder than it came down from the pulpits. Or take the ghastly New York race riot of 1863. Yes, irresponsible leaders had been stirring up hatred for a generation. But the depth of the racial animosity – the torture and the killing – hints at something deeper about American racial demons.

What about the American other, the scapegoats? Who gets thrust into that role? Why? Perhaps these questions about "us" and "them" cannot be answered through a focus on citizenship rules. All great books raise as many questions as they answer – *Civic Ideals* leaves us with a host of questions about the dark side of American political culture.

Smith's own answers work on a very abstract level. Liberalism is austere, people respond to tribal passions, every nation wrestles with its demonic urges. But each country has its own historical experience, its own distinctive version of us, them, and the tensions crackling between them.

Take Germany as an illuminating contrast. Germany is not an immigrant nation, as German politicians frequently point out. Yet, between the end of

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World War II and reunification in 1990, almost fifteen million people immigrated to the Federal Republic and became citizens – they summed to one out of four citizens in West Germany. Include foreign workers and the number of people born abroad leaps to one in three. The United States has never had that many foreigners. Yet, the United States is the country of immigration while Germany is not. How can this be? Germans simply did not see those post-war immigrants as immigrants. They were Germans "returning home" – in many cases, after centuries of living abroad. The cultural concept of a German is particularly robust: "Germans" returning from Romania after several centuries are not foreigners; on the other hand, people born in Hamburg of Turkish parents are not Germans. The Germans have developed their own clear sense of "us" and "them."[19]

And so have the Americans. Which returns us to the great question we are left with at the end of Smith's book: What is it, in the American case, that provokes the tribal responses – the witch hunts, race riots, and three and a half centuries of jeremiads?

One possibility goes right back to Tocqueville's "first Puritan who came ashore." Those colonists were not thinking pre-liberal, Tocquevillean thoughts. They were thinking about Godly social order. The Puritans came to America with a mission – redeeming the Protestant reformation. In the old world, Anglican corruption had subverted pure Calvinist ideals. The Puritans would start fresh, organize a Godly society, and offer the world an exemplar of Christian commonwealth. The rest of the world (or England, which is what really mattered) would have a model to emulate. Before they came ashore, Governor John Winthrop offered his famous sermon about the great task. "For we must consider," preached Winthrop, "that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us." The stakes were high: "If the lord shall be pleased . . . he shall make us a praise and glory."[20]

Future generations would keep returning to the heady image of a special providential task, a great experiment unfolding in America, with the rest of the world – all eyes – waiting on the outcome. Winthrop's sermon still resonates, still gets quoted by politicians across the political spectrum. Three hundred fifty years later, Sacvan Bercovitch would write of his "astonishment, as a Canadian immigrant, at learning about the prophetic history of America." Here was

> a population that, despite its bewildering mixture of race and creed, could believe in something called the American mission, and could invest that patent fiction with all the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual appeal of a religious quest.[21]

19. See Klaus J. Bade, "Immigration and Social Peace in United Germany," *Daedalus* (1994) 123, no. 1:85–106; Thomas Faist, "How to Define a Foreigner? The Symbolic Politics of Immigration in German Partisan Discourse, 1978–1992" ZeS Arbeitspapier Nr 12/1993, Zentrum fur Sozialpolitik, Universitat Bremen (Bremen, Germany).

20. John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," in *Winthrop Papers* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1931), 3:294–95. This discussion comes from James Morone, *Sin: The Moral Construction of America,* in preparation.

21. Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 11.

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Is this, perhaps, the source of all that talk about American virtue? After all, the idea of a special American quest imposes a serious burden on the citizenry. If, indeed, the whole world is watching, then the daunting expectations we impose on our people make good sense.

The downside follows directly. With the high-flying expectations comes the urge to exclude those who do not measure up. Unvirtuous people endanger American ideals. Here are all the ingredients for constructing demons: the dream of a special mission; the veneration of upright, pioneering generations; the fear of national decline; and a steady stream of strangers who seem to lack the virtuous character that our nation and its mission requires if it is to continue as a beacon (of faith, of liberty, of freedom, of market capitalism) for the rest of the world.

The citizens of the City on a Hill have fancied themselves exemplars for more than three and a half centuries. In the process of instructing the world, they developed a political culture that nourishes both liberal dreams and illiberal monsters. *Civic Ideals* brilliantly documents both. And it challenges us to continue exploring the dual sides of the American self.

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