

and the larger message that he delivers illuminates the ambiguities of First Amendment rights in the context of the schoolhouse. Johnson ably argues that by making the classroom part of a larger marketplace of ideas, the majority in *Tinker* performed the important service of drawing more clearly the thin line that divides education from indoctrination. Johnson also does a fine job of underscoring the importance of individual choice and courage in the development of constitutional law. Wearing the arm bands was one example of the protesters' commitment to rights; agreeing to sue the school system was a separate story of young people prizing dissent as a constitutional value more than many of their elders. Johnson also reminds us that while the *Tinker* decision remains good law, it and the rights of students that it protects have eroded since the early 1970s, much the same way that the Rehnquist Court has increasingly limited the so-called right to an abortion and to the use of affirmative action. The Rehnquist Court has extended school officials' powers of regulation over curricular matters and even student expression in school-sponsored settings such as student newspapers and assemblies.

The Struggle for Student Rights is a splendid example of the case study method used to its best advantage. Johnson not only sheds light on the history of American constitutional law and the Supreme Court, but also brings new insight to the question of why a group of clean-cut Iowa teenagers would defy authority and boldly assert their constitutional rights to be heard. The book, therefore, reveals how the depth of hostility to America's policy in Vietnam shaped the history of constitutional rights and education not only in Iowa but also in the nation.

Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History, by David Lowenthal. New York: The Free Press, 1996. xiii, 338 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$25.00 cloth.

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David Lowenthal's *Possessed by the Past* is the work of a man who got what he asked for and isn't so sure it's what he had in mind. The "it," in this case, is widespread popular appreciation for history. In 1985, in his brilliant book, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, Lowenthal argued that the past should be dynamic, personally meaningful, and relevant to contemporary life. Now—with a shock, it seems—he has realized that "the public" is taking history as its own, and, in his view, it is making a mess of it. *Possessed by the Past* is his response, an alternately reasoned, fascinating, obstinate, and frustrating explora-

tion of the interrelationship between popular "heritage" and traditional "history."

"Heritage," as Lowenthal uses the term, is the sense of the past that shapes our personal identity—the historical materials we use to define what it means to us to be American, Iowan, Latino, or Lutheran. In Lowenthal's view, this approach to the past is also intuitive, presentist, and not especially concerned with historical accuracy. By contrast, Lowenthal sees "history" as a discipline that demands allegiance to a set of methods and a body of accumulated knowledge greater than oneself. It rewards research, mustered evidence, and reasoned argument.

Lowenthal argues that in recent decades there has been a stunning explosion in the power and scope of heritage appreciation. For much of the book, he seems determined to analyze this phenomenon dispassionately. Out of ten chapters, seven essentially describe various ways heritage is expressed, from genealogy to national celebrations to race pride. In these sections, Lowenthal masterfully documents the range of eccentricities and, often, abominations that are created in the name of heritage, demonstrating how personal choice, political pressure, and economic incumbency shape popular interpretations of the past. If, though, one has read works in the burgeoning field of public memory (Lowenthal's own *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, for example, or works by Michael Kammen, Edward T. Linenthal, or Michael Wallace), the sorts of manipulations of the past that Lowenthal describes are hardly news. In reading *Possessed by the Past*, I wondered at times, "What drove Lowenthal to write this book?"

A clue emerges in chapter five. Seemingly out of the blue, after having recited a legion of examples of the shallowness and inaccuracy of heritage expression, Lowenthal suggests that, in the end, history and heritage are compatible. He dismisses as "null and void" charges that heritage is "bad history" (105). After all, traditional history, too, is shaped by bias; no one pursuing the past can legitimately claim objectivity. "Heritage, no less than history," Lowenthal writes, "is essential to knowing and acting" (xi). The personalized past that heritage provides, he feels, fills a fundamental psychological need.

This acknowledgment of heritage's role, though, does not mean that Lowenthal respects it. On the contrary, his "defense" of heritage reflects deep-set fears and resentments. He says that heritage is not "bad history," but he means that it cannot be considered history at all: the same standards of truth simply do not apply. "Heritage the world over not only tolerates but thrives on and even requires historical error," he writes (128). He reserves special criticism for public

historians who try to pursue heritage with scholarly diligence: "Heritage-mongers feel compelled to cloak [their] wares in historical authenticity. Material relics are scrutinized, memories retrieved, archives examined, monuments restored, reenactments performed, and historic sites interpreted with painstaking precision. Heritage apes scholarship with factoids and footnotes. . . . It is all in vain. . . . heritage by its very nature *must* depart from verifiable truth. . . . to embrace heritage *as history*, disguising authority as authenticity, cedes it a credence it neither asks nor deserves" (250). Lowenthal's attitude is surprising, considering his previous work. In *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, he lamented that "we are no longer intimate enough with [our] historical legacy to rework it creatively." He urged that the past *not* be treated as "a separate and foreign country" but rather be "assimilated in ourselves, and resurrected into an ever-changing present" (xxiv, 412). He pleaded, in other words, for a personal, flexible, present-oriented conception of the past, much like the heritage boom he now scorns.

Why the change of heart? *Possessed by the Past* hints at some answers. Lowenthal seems uncomfortable with the contribution heritage has made to the fractured identity politics of recent years. He likewise criticizes the cult of "victimization" that animates much so-called "politically correct" cultural discourse. He laments the damage that selfish heritage has done to the possibilities for global "shared legacies" (78–81, 89–90, 245). Most of all, though, Lowenthal sees "the heritage crusade" as a threat to historical scholarship itself. Its determined inclusiveness, he fears, degrades intellectual standards. "Old baseball cards, beer cans, Coke bottles, and barbed wire thrill ten times as many collectors as Queen Anne chairs or mahogany highboys" (14–15). Fearing the loss of the best of high culture, Lowenthal warns, "We [must] learn to control heritage lest it control us" (3).

"Us" here seems to mean professional historians. In the end, *Possessed by the Past* is a rallying cry directed at those whom Lowenthal believes should control history—trained professionals who, he feels, appreciate the past and treat it with appropriate dignity. Lowenthal asserts that heritage does have a place next to traditional history, but his more emotional rhetoric undercuts this invitation. I, for one, hope that in his future work, this master observer of public history will regain the generosity and inclusiveness that animated his previous contributions to the field.

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