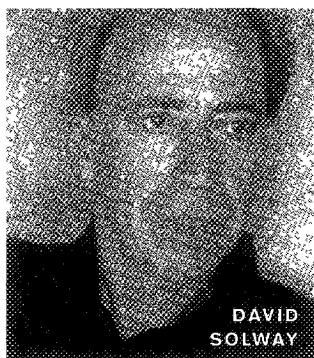


porary Greek poetry." The term "heteronym" ineluctably brings to mind Fernando Pessoa, with whom Solway is pleased to be compared.

What he discourages, however, is close analogy between his fabrications and those of mere pranksters. "Karavis is not a hoax in the usual sense of the term. My intent is not deflationary in the tradition of Harold Stewart and James McCauley's Ern Malley or



DAVID SOLWAY

"I am not interested in perpetuating a deception but in creating a style," Solway says.

Kent Johnson's 'Hiroshima poet,' Araki Yasusada," he said, alluding to an Australian poetry hoax of the mid-1940s and an American one of the 1990s, both of which pointed up the gullibility and aesthetic bankruptcy of the avant-garde. Nor does Solway see himself as the heir of earlier hoaxers such as James Macpherson and Thomas Chatterton. "I am not interested in perpetuating a deception but in creating a style," he explained. As Peter Davison, poetry editor at *The Atlantic Monthly*—in which

Solway, with Davison's informed consent, published a Karavis poem—put it, "Why is it so important that another name was used? What should matter, it seems to me, is whether the poems contain vitality, identity as poems."

Still, Solway clearly relishes the practical-joke side of *L'affaire Karavis*, in no small part because it allows him covertly to tweak his countrymen. "Canadians are not a very exciting people," he says. "Like rubes at a carnival, they need to be poked, challenged, gulled, bedazzled, so that the collective jaw drops in something other than an insufficiently stifled yawn." Solway also derives bittersweet irony from the fact that having published a raft of books in both poetry and prose, he has won Canadian fame only in the guise of a grizzled Greek sea dog.

When all is said and done, how persuasive *is* Karavis? Rachel Hadas, an American poet known for her connections with Greece, finds that "some of the poems are quite good, but many do not seem to me to be extremely plausible as poems translated from Greek." Certainly, some Greeks are not amused. In December 1999, *To Vima*, a major Athenian newspaper, sternly upbraided Solway and Reed for having bamboozled Canadian readers (although, bizarrely, the article included a boyhood photo of Karavis).

What's surprising is the degree to which the Canadian press has coyly abetted the hoax, or at least refrained from rumbling it. To an American audience, all this may look like a big canard in a small pond. Such a national flap is almost inconceivable in the United States—and that, perhaps, is our loss.

BEN DOWNING



TOO FEW IN THE PEW?

"VISIT A CHURCH AT RANDOM next Sunday and you will probably encounter a few dozen people sprinkled thinly over a sanctuary that was built to accommodate hundreds or even thousands." Thus began a review by *New York Times* editorial writer Brent Staples of *God's Name in Vain*, the latest book by the Yale Law School professor Stephen Carter. "The empty pews and white-haired congregants lend credence to those who argue that traditional religious worship is dying out."

Staples meant to set the stage for a discussion of the role of belief in politics. But upon reading those words in the November 26, 2000, *New York Times Book Review*, a smattering of religion scholars across the country spit out their Sunday coffee. The review, snorts Rodney Stark, a sociologist at the University of Washington, was "the most pathetic, misinformed thing I've seen in a long time."

As it turns out, America's rates of churchgoing are the subject of a long-running debate among sociologists of religion. For decades, scholars have agreed that Americans have a distinctly high level of religious commitment compared with citizens of other nations. Over 90 percent of Americans say they believe in God, and since the 1930s at least 40 percent of Americans have told pollsters that they attended services in a given week (By contrast, the rate in Australia, Canada, and Belgium is 20 percent. England is at 10 percent, and Scandinavia at 4.) In recent decades, there has been a demographic shift away from mainline churches toward evangelical denominations, but the conventional wisdom has it that overall church attendance has remained constant.

In the early 1990s, however, three scholars decided to see if that was so. C. Kirk Hadaway, of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, Penny Long Marler, of Samford University, and Mark Chaves, then at the University of Notre Dame, focused on Ashtabula County in Ohio, population 100,000. They tracked down every Protestant house of worship in Ashtabula and obtained attendance figures from every minister they could. Where those figures

LAY D SOLWAY

weren't available, the researchers counted cars in church parking lots.

Summing up their findings in the December 1993 issue of *American Sociological Review*, the three scholars reported that when they surveyed Ashtabula residents, 36 percent claimed to have attended church over the previous seven days. But the authors' head count revealed that only 19.6 percent of residents actually showed up for services. Hadaway, Marler, and Chaves bolstered their Ohio findings by comparing survey data with attendance figures reported by priests in eighteen Catholic dioceses in different counties. Fifty-one percent of Catholics claimed they had gone to Mass; 28 percent actually went. "We have shown that the church attendance rate is probably one-half what everyone thinks it is," the authors crowed.

Predictably, a counter-reformation followed that proclamation of dissent. In a February 1998 *American Sociological Review* symposium, Berkeley's Michael Hout and the University of Chicago's Andrew Greeley (the priest cum popular novelist) challenged Hadaway, Marler, and Chaves's "head counts," charging that the researchers had relied too heavily on ministers' sloppy guesstimates. Moreover, Hout and Greeley argued, the traditional data withstood rigorous internal checks. For example, people in "intellectual" professions like teaching or science, who presumably face little social pressure to conform in religious behavior, still reported church attendance rates of 38 percent. Hout and Greeley therefore conceded a 5 percent "social desirability" bias in the traditional figures, but no more.

Other participants in the same symposium, however, supported Hadaway, Marler, and Chaves, with some even contributing fresh evidence. Stanley Presser, a sociologist at the University of Maryland, and Linda Stinson of

Hadaway and his colleagues counted the cars in church parking lots. They found fewer than they expected.

the Bureau of Labor Statistics pointed to a time-use survey that the Environmental Protection Agency had commissioned in 1992-94 in order to study pollution exposure and compared it with similar surveys conducted in 1965-66 and 1975. Respondents recorded how they spent each minute of selected days. Presser and Stinson assumed the subjects would have felt little incentive to exaggerate church attendance in that context, since it would be just one activity among many (including, say, napping or taking out the garbage).

The time-use surveys showed decline: In 1966, 42 percent reported going to church, whereas in 1992-94, only 26 percent did. In *Bowling Alone* (Simon & Schuster), his high-profile study of American social isolation, the Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam cites the findings of both the Presser group and the Hadaway group as proof that Americans spend less time in church than they used to. He also compiled polls showing a 10 percent decline in religious attendance since the 1950s.

That last figure, however, could be deceptive. Almost everyone agrees there was a tick upward in religious atten-

dance and observance in the 1950s, notes Robert Woodberry, a sociology graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill who took part in the 1998 symposium. Woodberry contends that if you omit the

anomalous 1950s, self-reported attendance figures have remained steady since modern surveys began, in the 1930s. In a paper he presented at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion meeting last October, he suggested that Presser and Stinson's time use data were marred by methodological flaws: Namely, some of the earlier surveys took place around Easter and during

Advent. Though Woodberry concedes that church attendance is lower than 40 percent, he maintains that "it's certainly higher than 20 percent." He believes the main thing skewing the data is reliance on telephone polls,



THE PATHOLOGY OF POOH

THOUGH BELOVED BY CHILDREN, PARENTS, AND EDUCATORS around the world, Winnie-the-Pooh is a psychologically damaged individual with poor brain growth and an eating disorder.

So conclude Dr. Sarah E. Shea and four colleagues in "Pathology in the Hundred Acre Wood: A Neurodevelopmental Perspective on A.A. Milne," a not-quite-serious article in the December 12 issue of the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. Shea and colleagues find that Pooh displays a "comorbid cognitive impairment, further aggravated by an obsessive fixation on honey." In fact, the Hundred Acre Wood is a veritable asylum: Eeyore "would benefit greatly from an antidepressant," Tigger "has a recurrent pattern of risk-taking behaviours," and poor Piglet suffers from generalized anxiety disorder.

Fine, but is there anything wrong with kids reading stories about animals with issues? Shea doesn't think so. "I think it's good if the characters are presented in a way that helps kids learn something," she says. "For instance, there's something wrong with Pooh—he has 'Very Little Brain' and forgets things. But everybody loves him anyway."



—Maura Kelly

Woodberry believes that most people tell the truth about attending church.

since easy-to-reach people—homemakers, married couples, people with nine-to-five jobs—are disproportionately religious.

Woodberry took up the church attendance issue because he thought the Hadaway group's findings raised serious questions about the reliability of self-reported data. But though his research allowed him to breathe a sigh of relief—people generally do tell the truth about church attendance, Woodberry now believes—the experience was otherwise disheartening. "I've

been really shocked at how political this debate is," he laments. Some scholars who adhere to the 40 percent church-attendance figures see those who challenge them as ideologically obsessed. "These guys are married to the secularization thesis," says Rodney Stark. "They say that religion is going to be gone by next Tuesday. If not then, then Friday. They have been saying it for 150 years. Nothing has happened." But on the other side, says Mark Chaves, now at the University of Arizona, "sociologists of religion have kind of taken it as their mission to show that religion is still important in modern life."

"Anything that suggests that religion might be of declining importance or of less importance than we might think," he adds, "is threatening."

CHRISTOPHER SHEA

SAFETY SCHOOL

ON FEBRUARY 25, 2000, Columbia law professor Gerard Lynch addressed the Columbia University Senate about proposed changes to the university's sexual-misconduct policy. Lynch worried that the changes would deprive accused students of the right to due process. But his concerns were not widely shared. "I proposed a variety of amendments," he recalls dryly, "and I had an interesting afternoon having them rejected."

Lynch's failure testifies to the strength of a student group, Students Active for

Ending Rape (SAFER), which had garnered widespread support for the proposed changes over the last three years. But now that Columbia has followed SAFER's lead and revised its policy, opposition is growing.

SAFER ran a well-organized campaign, repeatedly citing a powerful statistical discrepancy: Almost no rapes are reported at Columbia, yet local hospitals treat several sexually assaulted patients from Columbia each month. Furthermore, at the school's annual Take Back the Night

AFTER THE PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL

A Discussion

Sponsored by New York University's Cultural Reporting and Criticism Program and *Lingua Franca*

Thursday, March 1, 2001, 6:30 PM

New York University

Jurow Hall, 1st floor, Main Building, 100 Washington Square East

Free and open to the public

THE PANELISTS:

Michael Ignatieff, visiting professor at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and author of *Isiah Berlin* and *The Warrior's Honor*

Russell Jacoby, visiting professor of history at UCLA and author of *The Last Intellectuals* and *The End of Utopia*

Roger Kimball, managing editor of *The New Criterion* and author of *Tenured Radicals* and *The Long March*

Eileen Willis, director of the Cultural Reporting and Criticism Program at New York University and author of *Don't Think, Smile* and *No More Nice Girls*

Alan Wolfe, director of the Bios Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College and author of *One Nation, After All* and *Marginalized in the Middle*

Additional funding provided by NYU's Graduate School of Arts & Sciences.
For further information, contact Kate Pollock at kbp202@nyu.edu or 212-998-1786

Has the rising interest of many academics in becoming public intellectuals led to a more salubrious exchange of ideas between the university and the public? Or has it simply made the gap between academic discourse and the culture at large more visible? Given the vast changes that have taken place in the university, the publishing industry, and the media, is it still possible to be a public intellectual in any meaningful sense?

On the occasion of the publication of *The Social Hubs: The Shows That Shook the Academy* and a new edition of Russell Jacoby's *The Last Intellectuals*, New York University's Cultural Reporting and Criticism Program and *Lingua Franca* have invited five authors to discuss how the work of intellectuals does, and should, intersect with the public sphere.