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THE COMING REVOLUTION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

by

FRANK COLON

Associate Professor at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

American public administration is experiencing a new revolution. The changes in thought have affected many areas of the social sciences as well as political science, which public administration claims to be a part. This new challenge which has sometimes been referred to as the "new public administration" or the "now public administration" is in part a reaction to behavioralism and scientism and partially to the traditional studies of non action based on structure, description, and history.

The initial impact of this new revolutionary thinking is just being felt. Its creed is relevance and action. The cry of relevance has echoed the country's campuses as students have questioned the time worn and time presented courses that have traditionally made up college curricula. The call for action has come from minority and disadvantaged groups, students, teachers, police and previously unorganized groups. The appeal for relevance and action, however, are not to be taken lightly as a nudging and bothersome child who will possibly fade away or give up any hope of being heard.¹

Before I examine this revolution in detail, let us review the other approaches that have precipitated this chain of events.

I. The Traditional or Classical Approach

When Leonard D. White wrote his textbook in 1926, *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration* and a year later W. F. Willoughby's *Principles of Public Administration*, was issued, it was an attempt to codify the main elements of public administration that had been apparent since the forming of the nation. The main elements of these textbooks were the following:²

¹ At the 1970 annual convention of the American Society for Public Administration, when confronted by the New Administration Group, the old guard offered the standard arguments which have been offered for years in situations such as this: "We are not perfect . . . we have been through the struggle when you . . . the older generation understand the disillusionment of the young . . . there is value in preserving something meaningful . . . young people can make a contribution". *American Society for Public Administration Convention*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, April 6-8, 1970.

² WALLACE S. SAYRE, "Premises of Public Administration: Past and Emerging", *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 18, (1958), p. 102-103.

1. A politics-administration dichotomy which followed Woodrow Wilson's theory that administration and politics were two separate elements within the governmental system.¹

2. Organization theory was stated in the terms of scientific management e. g. necessity of a hierarchy, uses of staff agencies, work subdivision, limited span of control, and the principles of departmentalization. Pfiffner and Presthus consider these and other elements in their well known "integrationist model."²

3. The scientific study of administration leads to the discovery of principles of administration. The scientific management school, traced to Frederick Taylor, stressed the physiological factors in achieving efficiency and a methodology which would discover the "one best way" of performing a function. He gave little emphasis to the sociological and psychological aspects of administration and argued that any act of a workman was reducible to a science.³

4. Economy and efficiency are the sole goals of public administration. This is partly seen in the followers of Frederick Taylor or what has sometimes been called Taylorism or the Scientific Management Movement but it is also reflected in the 1883 Pendleton Act, which established the national civil service system; the 1894 establishment of the National Municipal League; the growth in the early 1900s of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research; President Taft's 1910 Commission on Efficiency and Economy; and the 1921 Budget and Accounting Act. Out of these events came the executive budget, personnel management and a body of administrative law, all emphasizing the concept of rationality. Budgets emphasized coordination, planning and control; personnel management described how employees were to be selected, paid or advanced; a neutral career service was to insure competence and expertise; and an administrative law which prescribed standards of due process in administrative behavior.

In 1937 Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick, *Papers on the Science of Administration* subscribed to the theory that efficiency was the number one axiom of administration. If an organization was to be efficient, they reasoned, division of work in the organization was important because the more a particular job can be divided into its component parts, the more specialized a worker becomes in executing his job which ultimately makes the whole organization efficient.⁴ Thus, the concept of PODSCORB came into existence. Each letter in the contrived word denoted a standard func-

¹ WOODROW WILSON, "The Study of Administration," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 2, (1887), p. 197-222.

² JOHN M. PFIFFNER / ROBERT PRESTHUS, *Public Administration*, 5th ed., New York: The Ronald Press, 1967, p. 177-197.

³ FREDERICK WINSLOW TAYLOR, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1967.

⁴ JOHN C. BUECHNER, *Public Administration*, Belmont, California: Dickenson Publishing Co., 1968, p. 8-9.

tion of administrative management; planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordination, reporting, and budgeting, all of which were activities necessary to an effectively functioning organization.

The Depression, New Deal and the expansion of big government in the 1930s confirmed the concept of rationality in public administration. Gulick and Urwick's *Papers* and the *Report of the President's Committee on Administrative Management* brought about what Wallace Sayre calls the "high noon of orthodoxy" which was really a confirmation of the principles espoused in the White-Willoughby texts.¹

II. The Post War Period : The Behavioral Impact

With the exception of the Reports of the two Hoover Commissions, the traditional theories were not able to hold up under the assault of the behaviorists. This trend was partly due to increased use of modern technology in related fields of study following World War II. For example, political scientists attempted to employ scientific methods such as modern mathematics, statistics, and computer programming in hopes of understanding such phenomena as voting behavior, voting trends and dynamics, and political polls and opinions.

The behavioral emphasis centers on the way people behave in real organizations. Methodologically, the behaviorists criticize the traditionalists for attempting to generalize and to seek principles with universal application. Furthermore, the behaviorists do not stress efficiency as a primary goal of organization because they believe organizations are social systems which contain conflict and interactions which must be understood to discover how organizations actually function.

One of the first premises of pre war orthodox public administration to be attacked was the politics-administration dichotomy. A series of books commencing with Fritz Morstein Marx, *The Elements of Public Administration* in 1946 attempted to illustrate the involvement of administrators in policy formation and their use of discretionary power in the general political process.² Even Wilson would have agreed that in practice the dichotomy between policy and administration was not always easy to perceive.³

Willoughby and White believed administration consisted of certain principles which were universal in application. However, Robert Dahl doubted that public administration could be classified as a science embracing

¹ SAYRE, p. 103.

² See also PAUL H. APPLEBY, *Policy and Administration*, University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1949; HERBERT A. SIMON / DONALD W. SMITHBURG / VICTOR A. THOMPSON, *Public Administration*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950; and HAROLD STEIN, (ed.), *Public Administration and Policy Development*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1952.

³ WILSON, p. 197-222.

universal principles because the subject matter was concerned with such considerations as normative values, the social setting and individual personalities or human behavior.¹ In other words, such variables as environment, society, type of organization, and human behavior had to be studied and made constant before a science could exist. Dwight Waldo echoed Dahl by stating: "The 'scientific outlook' indeed would lead one to conclude that it is not 'scientific' to try to force upon a subject matter a method not suitable to it; that instead the nature of the subject matter must define the method. Many administrative matters simply are not, by their nature, amenable to the methods of physical science."²

Herbert Simon, the outstanding representative of the new science of administration, argued that the so called "principles" were mere "proverbs." He presented a new theory based on logical positivism which makes a sharp distinction between questions of fact and questions of value. The doctrine of the separation of politics and administration in the logical positivist view was to be replaced by the new value-fact dichotomy.

The post war dissent also contributed to the sociological studies of public bureaucracies. Philip Selznik's *TVA and the Grass Roots* in 1948 revealed a career bureaucracy deeply involved in the political process and demonstrated the art of cooptation which showed the effect of compromise allowing a New Deal agency to function in a basically conservative region.³

III. Three Influences on the Behavioral Approach

1. *The New Science of Administration*

If one could subdivide the different influences on the behavioral approach, it would be that of Herbert Simon and his new science of administration; the impact of other social science disciplines such as sociology, social psychology, and anthropology; and the growth of ecological, development and comparative administration studies. There is a great deal of overlapping in these influences but together they lay the basis for a large amount of present research.

The new science of administration which is sometimes referred to as management science is attributed to Herbert Simon who believed the proper object of study in administrative organizations is the decision: "What is a

¹ ROBERT A. DAHL, "The Science of Public Administration: Three Problems," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 7, (1947), p. 1-11.

² DWIGHT WALDO, *The Administrative State, A Study of the Political Theory of American Public Administration*, New York: The Ronald Press, 1948, p. 191. See also DWIGHT WALDO, "Public Administration in a Time of Revolutions," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 28, (1968), p. 362-368.

³ PETER BLAU, *Bureaucracy in Modern Society*, New York: Random House, 1956, p. 96-98.

scientifically relevant description of an organization? It is a description that, so far as possible, designates for each person in the organization what decisions that person makes, and the influences to which he is subject in making each of these decisions.»¹

This emphasis has relied on game theory, operations research and cybernetics. Game theory views decision making as a problem of strategies of choice in which there may or may not be a required solution (zero sum and non zero sum games). Operations research formulates the problem, constructs a model, selects decision criteria, and proposes solutions. Informational theory or cybernetics analyzes messages and communications that may be used in decision making; attempts to determine alternative decisional outcomes; and undertakes an analysis of both positive and negative feedbacks into the decision making system. General systems theory, simulation, information storage and retrieval prompted by computer technology will ultimately make an impact on the study of public administration.²

2. *The Socio-psychological Approach*

The behaviorist wants to develop theoretical frameworks, restrict the approach to analysis, and build up generalizations about organization and administration. He is interested in the nature of authority, the bases of conflict in organizations, the effects of small group behavior in organizational goals, recruitment patterns, leadership styles and decision making. The introduction of methods and insights from sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and economics into public administration has brought about a broader understanding of decision making, communication, leadership and individual and group behavior. Organizations are viewed more as social institutions and individuals who have thoughts and desires and as members of a group. There have also been attempts to limit the scope of studies, such as the use of middle range theory, in order to provide generalizations upon which a broader theory of administration can be built, and to bring about prediction through use of a scientific method in order to discover valid generalizations about human behavior in certain types of administrative situations, during the process of change, and through the influence of culture on the administrative process.³

¹ HERBERT A. SIMON, *Administrative Behavior*, 2nd ed., New York: The Free Press, 1966, p. 37. See also Simon's other works, *The New Science of Management Decision*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960, and *The Shape of Men and Management*, New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

² There is an increasing number of books in this area, some of which are: DAVID W. MILLER / MARTIN K. STARR, *The Structure of Human Decisions*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1967; KENNETH JANDA, *Information Retrieval: Applications to Political Science*, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1968; B. G. SCHUMACHER, *Computer Dynamics in Public Administration*, Washington, D.C.: Spartan Books, 1967; and HARRY H. FITE, *The Computer Challenge to Urban Planners and State Administrators*, New York: Spartan Books, 1965.

³ PFIFFNER / PRESTHUS, p. 198-236.

The introduction of this type of thinking into the study of public administration along with the already existing legal, structural, constitutional, historical, and descriptive works brought consideration for social power, family structure, personality, the educational system, socialization, identification and social role. Sociologists, for example, have long argued that public administration has neglected the impact of small group behavior on organization, the struggle for power among agencies, and the competition of personal and organizational goals. There is greater insistence upon observing actual behavior than upon speculating about how people should behave as done in former studies. This thinking of studying "what is" precipitated a plethora of case studies which have now reached the saturation point.¹

The old structural institutional approach did not concern itself with individuals because the individual was expected to conform. Consequently, there is a humanistic feeling that administrators need not manipulate individuals and the individual need not make all the adjustments to the organization.² The New Administration, of course, would agree with this humanistic or humane feeling. Out of this concern for human behavior has come such studies, for example, as Simon's concept of organizational equilibrium in which the individual must decide to participate requiring a working and constructive balance; Peter Blau's investigation of informal organization; and Robert Prethuis' work on the three individual categories effected by an organizational society.³

3. *Ecology, Development and Comparative Administration Studies*

Ecology is concerned with the relationships of administrative organizations, their external and internal environment, and the forces determining interdependent change, innovation, or adaptation. Writers such as Fred Riggs, Ferrel Heady, and Morroe Berger have concluded that administrative institutions can be better understood if the surrounding forces and conditions in the environment that are affecting them can be identified.⁴ Contributions

¹ Two of the more recently published books containing case studies are FREDERICK MOSHER, *Governmental Reorganizations: Cases and Commentary*, Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Co., 1967; R. JOSEPH NOVOGROD / GLADYS DIMOCK / MARSHALL DIMOCK, *Casebook in Public Administration*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

² CHESTER I. BARNARD, *Functions of the Executive*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Technology Press, 1947.

³ There are numerous works in this area, a few of which are: GARTH N. JONES, *Planned Organizational Change: A Study in Change Dynamics*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969; LOUIS C. GAWTHROP, *Bureaucratic Behavior in the Executive Branch: An Analysis of Organizational Change*, New York: The Free Press, 1969.

⁴ FRED W. RIGGS, *Administration in Developing Countries*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964; FERREL HEADY, *Public Administration: A Comparative Perspective*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966; MORROE BERGER, *Bureaucracy and Society in Modern Egypt, A Study of the Higher Civil Service*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957.

from anthropology, sociology, history and other disciplines have constructed ecological models for the comparative study of administration. Various typologies and cross cultural frameworks have been devised in an effort to compare administrative systems of governments.¹

Comparative administrative studies have also included development studies which is sometimes used interchangeably with the former but usually emphasizes the relationships of bureaucracy in developing countries to economic and political growth. These types of studies are often more particularistic than those in comparative administration and really do not involve comparison at all.² In order to assist the developing nations, which by the way is where the emphasis of this approach lies, in building up their administrative functions and institutions, it is important to understand the conditions of transferability which is the applicability of American-Western European administrative principles to non western cultures. This applicability is an attempt at universality application of the administrative process and experience to all cultures.

IV. Current Studies and Other Research Frontiers in Public Administration

Besides the number of studies being published in the aforementioned areas of management science, the associated social sciences, and comparative administration, there is an increasing number of materials coming out in public policy and areas not considered public in the narrow scope of public administration. There has been no new textbook with a new or different approach on the horizon. Pfiffner and Presthus, *Public Administration* (5th ed., The Ronald Press, 1967) and Felix A. Nigro's, *Modern Public Administration* (2nd ed., Harper & Row, 1970) are still in prominent use.³

Some studies have been prompted by current soundings on the American scene. For example, there has been an excessive amount of material published on University administration and politics in American education which includes the public school system.⁴ Militancy from public and

¹ Again there are numerous studies in this area, some of which are: RALPH BRAIBANTI, (ed.), *Political and Administrative Development*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1969; HIRAM S. PHILLIPS, *Guide for Development : Institution-Building and Reform*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969; and RICHARD P. TAUB, *Bureaucracies Under Stress : Administrators and Administration in an Indian State*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.

² MICHAEL D. REAGAN, *The Administration of Public Policy*, Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1969, p. 31.

³ Others in the field are MARSHALL and GLADYS DIMOCK, *Public Administration*, 4th ed., New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969; IRA SHARKANSKY, *Public Administration, Policy Making in Government Agencies*, Chicago: Markham, 1970; JOHN BUECHNER, *Public Administration*, Belmont, California: Dickenson Publishing Co., 1968.

⁴ JOHN D. MILLETT, *Decision Making and Administration in Higher Education*, Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1968.

government workers has brought about studies on personnel administration with particular emphasis on unions and collective bargaining.¹ Criticism of the selective service system and resistance to the war in Vietnam resulted in many studies in this area.² The cry of minority, unemployed, and welfare groups for jobs and job opportunities have brought about manpower studies.³ Because of the military buildup over the past years, investigations have been made of the defense establishment and its programs.⁴ The interest in Planning-Programming-Budgeting is continuing, while studies on the new federalism, decentralization, community groups, and states are ever present.⁵

There is increasing interest in environmentalism and natural resources administration, police administration, regional development, public health and welfare, science and public policy, antipoverty work, minority group recruitment, and other areas that reflect the demands of society. This type of prognosis leads us hopefully to the satisfaction of these demands with the growth and emergence of the new or now public administration. The New Administration argues that the value question becomes a central consideration in that public administration ought and must change to respond to today's needs. Such studies as deconcentration, decentralization, community participation, and neighborhood control differ from the prevailing doctrines of public administration because even partial control alters the traditional chain of command of the hierarchical organization.

V. The New Public Administration

The behaviorists were viewed as a threat to traditionalism of which there has been notable reaction. The New Administration approach is future oriented and is an attempt to push public administrators into action and into studies of relevant material. It professes no methodological commitments. To borrow Professor Easton's seven tenets of the "post behavioral" credo which he uses in his recent study of the state of political science, in application to public administration, one could argue the following:⁶

1. It is more important to be relevant and meaningful for contemporary urgent social problems than to be sophisticated in the tools of investigation.⁷

¹ DANIEL H. DRUGER / CHARLES T. SCHMIDT, *Collective Bargaining in the Public Service*, New York: Random House, 1969.

² JAMES W. DAVIS, Jr. / KENNETH M. DOLBEARE, *Little Groups of Neighbors: The Selective Service System*, Chicago: Markham, 1968.

³ GARTH L. MANGUM, *MDTA: Foundation of Federal Manpower Policy*, Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1968.

⁴ RALPH E. LAPP, *The Weapons Culture*, New York: Norton, 1968.

⁵ DAVID NOVICK, (ed.), *Program Budgeting, Program Analysis and the Federal Budget*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

⁶ DAVID EASTON, "The New Revolution in Political Science," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63, (1969), p. 1051-1061.

⁷ See HOWARD ZINN, *The Politics of History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1970.

2. Behavioral science conceals an ideology of empirical conservatism which purveys an ideology of social conservatism.

3. The heart of behavioral inquiry is abstraction and analysis which is bound to lose touch with reality.

4. To understand the limits of our knowledge one must be aware of the value premises on which it stands.

5. The intellectual's historical role has been and must be to protect humane values of civilization.

6. The intellectual as scientist bears the special obligation to put his knowledge to work. Action science reflects the contemporary conflict in society over ideals and this must permeate and color the whole research enterprise itself.

7. If the intellectual has the obligation to implement his knowledge, those organizations composed of intellectuals e. g. the professional organizations and universities must involve themselves in the current struggles. Consequently, politicalization of the professions is inescapable as well as desirable.

The New Administration Group made their attempt to fulfill Professor Easton's tenet number 7. by running their own slate of candidates at the 1970 annual Spring convention of the American Society for Public Administration in Philadelphia. They were successful in bringing about a dialogue in a special panel in which James Elden argued that the organization was not truly responsive to its members. Subsequently, he called for affirmative social action as noted in the following letter: "We need to take affirmative action now. It is not enough to say that blacks can find jobs in public administration if only they try. We should . . . recruit, from among the ghetto and student groups, qualified people who can bring fresh perspectives to the public enterprise. Further, we must abolish the subtle but effective discrimination (on the basis of race, sex and age) so common in governmental service. What we need is a basis for judging the system not from the view of the comfortable middle but from the disregarded bottom. If a quarter of the members is in bad circumstances while the majority is well off—and this situation persists—are we in accord with basic American values?"¹

Earlier Peter Savage wrote that we spend a great deal of time on the venerable and fatiguing issues of whether public administration is a science, a profession or a discipline. "Somehow the perpetuation of social injustice and human misery make these issues seem irrelevant."² And Frank Heller in reaction to the *Public Administration Review* January-February 1969 issue featuring the Symposium on Alienation, Decentralization and Parti-

¹ Letter to the Editor, "Need for Action Now," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 30, (1970), p. 466-467.

² Letter to the Editor, "What Am I Bid for Public Administration?" *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 28, (1968), p. 390-391.

cipation, commented that federal employees are taking advocate roles in advising new employees and revitalizing unions and participating in new political parties. "Many new federal employees have joined the unions and are taking an active part in resurrecting them. The old goals have given way to new ones of program performance, program evaluation, interagency coordination, client needs, new organizational forms, employee participation in policy decisions and review and many other areas never thought of by union leaders . . . There has been little attempt, that I know of, to meet the professional needs of emerging black administrators by ASPA. Some of us have attempted to promote an exchange of knowledge with administrators working in antipoverty and other innercity programs. We have not succeeded . . ."¹

Possibly Wesley Bjour summarizes the Movement best when he states that the New Public Administration has a new view of man, who is described as a "knower" committed to a passionate existence and caring about the quality of the human condition. It is a recognition that the thinking administrator needs an internal ethic to guide his choices and policies even though administrative theory claims he is not supposed to assign an ethic to the public. Finally, it is a search for an epistemological framework which must be consistent with the new emphasis upon man as a being who cares about the condition of his fellow man, and who is caught up in a lived world which is undergoing necessary and rapid change.²

VI. Aftermath

My announcement for the 1971 National Conference on Public Administration which was held in April arrived and it might be interesting to note that the title of the Conference was "Public Administration in an Age of Involvement." Although there are still the standard topics concerning organization, administrative theory, and comparative administration, there have been added some current issues such as: "Public Funds and the Problems of Migrant Workers; Effects of Racial Polarization on Administration; Neighborhood Government in Large Cities; Bureaucratic Risk Taking; and The Impact of National and Local Foundations on Public Decision Making."

Regional chapters have already been discussing such relevant and current topics as: "Educational Requisites for Public Administration in the Post Industrial Society; Management of the Environment; Another Look at Citizens Participation; Communications with the Ghetto." There

¹ Letter to the Editor, "A New Generation," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 29, (1969), p. 329-330.

² Letter to the Editor, "The 'New' Public Administration," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 30, No 2, March-April, 1970, p. 201-203.

is no doubt that the behavioral studies which I have discussed will continue as a major research frontier in the future, but I am certain that the influence of the New Public Administration Movement, although sparsely apparent now, is bound to be felt in the literature very soon.

Résumé

La science administrative américaine connaît actuellement une nouvelle révolution. Des changements de conception ont affecté plusieurs sciences sociales, dont la science politique, à laquelle la science administrative prétend appartenir. Ce nouveau mouvement, qualifié parfois de « new public administration » ou de « now public administration », constitue une réaction d'une part au behaviourisme, et d'autre part aux études traditionnelles descriptives, fondées sur la structure et l'histoire.

L'approche traditionnelle ou classique de l'étude de l'administration publique proposée par Leonard White et W. F. Willoughby a principalement une importance historique. La plupart des recherches actuelles portent sur le comportement et tentent plus précisément de déterminer le comportement des individus dans les organisations réelles. Cette approche a été influencée 1. par les travaux de Herbert Simon dans le domaine du management; 2. par les développements théoriques et méthodologiques en sociologie, en psychologie sociale, en anthropologie et en économie, qui ont permis une meilleure compréhension du processus de décision, des communications, du leadership et du comportement des individus et des groupes; et 3. par les études comparatives sur l'administration, axées sur le développement et les aspects écologiques.

On peut constater par ailleurs un intérêt croissant parmi les fonctionnaires pour les problèmes relatifs à l'environnement, à la gestion des ressources naturelles, à l'administration de la police, au développement régional, à la santé publique, à la sécurité sociale, à la science, à la politique gouvernementale, à la lutte contre la pauvreté, aux minorités et à d'autres domaines qui font apparaître les besoins de la société. Ce type d'analyses doit aboutir à la satisfaction de ces besoins grâce au développement de la « new » ou « now public administration ». La « new administration » affirme que les problèmes de valeurs occupent une place centrale, dans la mesure où l'administration publique devrait et doit évoluer pour répondre aux besoins de l'époque. Son approche est axée sur les problèmes d'avenir et constitue une tentative pour amener les fonctionnaires à diriger leur action et leurs études vers les questions les plus importantes. Elle n'implique aucun engagement méthodologique. Il ne fait aucun doute que les études sur le comportement continueront à se développer dans le futur, mais je suis certain que l'influence du mouvement de la « new public administration », bien qu'apparemment diffus aujourd'hui, grandira certainement dans la nouvelle littérature.

