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**ON THE COVER:** A young victim of the Nargis cyclone awaits aid at a camp in Myanmar's Irrawaddy delta, May 2008 (UN Photo/Evan Schneider).

*The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.*

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# EDITOR'S COMMENT

## Concrete Ideas

Editors, like priests, have their moments of doubt: Do ideas really matter? Happily, my own doubts rarely survive the morning drive to work, with its concrete reminders that ideas have consequences. After threading my way through filigreed suburban streets, I come to a road that seems as wide as the Nile, even though it is lightly used and passes through a residential neighborhood not very different from my own. Its two lanes occupy almost enough space for four, and it is carved into the suburban landscape with big, swooping curves. To my car-loving soul, it says one thing: *raceway!* But I often wonder what life is like for the people who live on the street. Stepping out their front doors, they look out across an all but empty highway toward neighbors as remote as Luxor. It must be a lonesome feeling.

Williamsburg Boulevard didn't just happen. It is the product of mid-20th-century ideas about how we ought to live. The new world of suburbia was engineered on the principle that an efficient, unrestricted flow of traffic to jobs and shopping was one of humankind's greatest goods. That principle and others were encoded in zoning laws and road construction standards and inscribed on the landscape in asphalt and concrete. Life was good, if you were a car.

The relatively direct way ideas are expressed in the built environment, subtly influencing everyday life, is one of the reasons the *WQ* has returned to the subject many times over the years, as we do in this issue with articles by Tom Vanderbilt on the innovative traffic thinker Hans Monderman and by Witold Rybczynski on why the modern single-family house has become so expensive. They remind us that even the road to the office is paved with big ideas.

—STEVEN LAGERFELD



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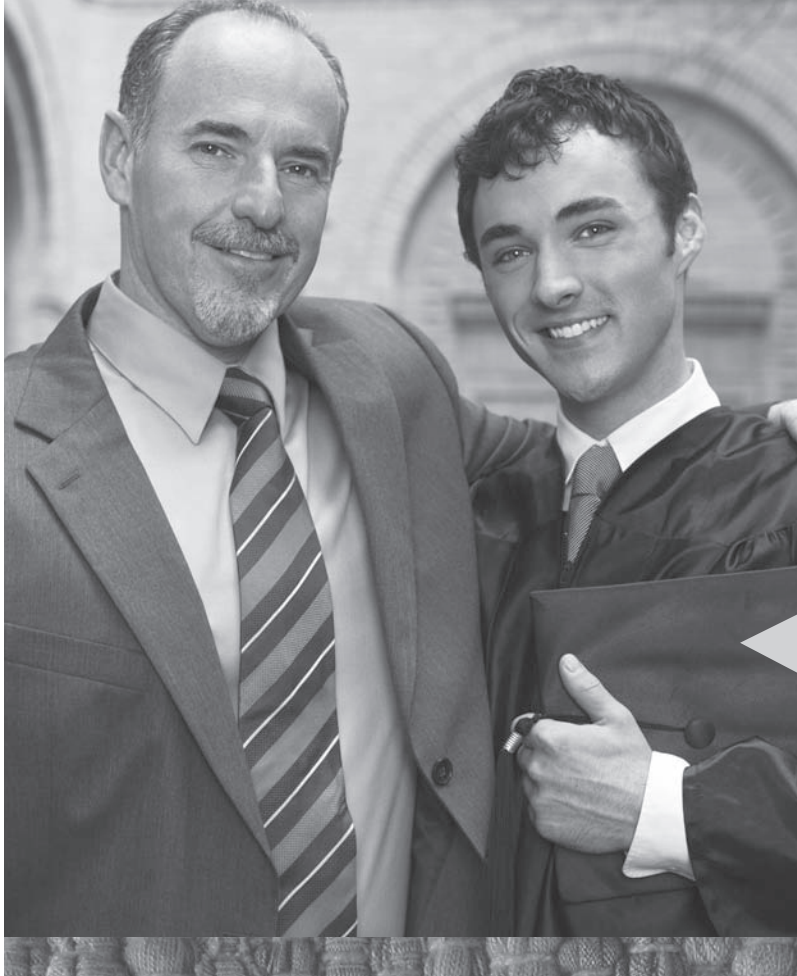
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# LETTERS

## BUILDING UP

BRUCE SEELY DOES A FINE JOB OF framing the transportation infrastructure challenges facing our nation [“The Secret Is the System,” *WQ*, Spring ’08]. Clearly, past federal investments in road, rail, and air made this country what it is today. Now it is time for the government to renew its commitment to America’s infrastructure in a big way.

However, the article fails to address the free-for-all that is our current federal infrastructure policy—particularly in the area of transportation funding. Budgetary decisions reflect political motivations, with little or no regard for the needs of the market. As a result, the system is better suited to build bridges to nowhere than to maintain the ones we have, develop world-class transit, and expedite the movement of freight.

Seely calls for an expert-driven, comprehensive funding overhaul, but this degree of improvement is just not possible under the outdated, minimal, and underperforming policies in place today. Incremental innovations will not be enough to fix the current 1950s-era transportation model and replace it with one that reflects our time: fast moving, hypercompetitive, highly volatile, and metropolitan based.

**Robert Puentes**

*Fellow, Metropolitan Policy Program  
Brookings Institution  
Washington, D.C.*

YOU KNOW YOU’RE GETTING CLOSE to the reauthorization date for federal transportation programs when vehicles for thoughtful commentary publish articles on the infrastructure “crisis” confronting America. *The Wilson Quarterly’s* recent issue is a case in point. National infrastructure worries first emerged in the internal improvements debate of the early 19th century, and by now crisis mongering is predictable: Some degree of economic and social doom is always imminent unless we agree to spend fill-in-the-blank gazillion dollars on roads, rails, trolleys, funiculars, bridges, tunnels, runways, air traffic control towers, wastewater treatment plants, and so on.

Despite the attention, much of this debate is simply wrong, and may very well be more wrong today than at any time during the previous two centuries. As any list of infrastructure “needs” reveals, nearly all problem areas can be explained (politely) by the fact that it is the government who owns and operates the means of production. In effect, what Americans confront is a problem familiar to the citizens of Bulgaria, Burma, and Belarus: the crisis of socialism.

Note all the vital types of infrastructure that never make these lists: pipelines, refineries, power grids, generators, train sets, drilling platforms, storage tanks, filling stations, etc., that

seamlessly, efficiently, and safely deliver energy products 24/7 with few interruptions and no congestion. And then there is the world of information technology—dial-up, DSL, cable, and optical fiber; wireless and hard wire; and broadcast (including satellite)—that provides reliable access to a global communications network. I could provide more examples, but discerning readers get the point: Infrastructure provided by the private sector is robust, high quality, diverse, and competitively priced.

**Ronald D. Utt**

*Herbert and Joyce Morgan Senior Research Fellow  
The Heritage Foundation  
Washington, D.C.*

YOUR OSTENSIBLY FORWARD-looking triptych on America’s decaying infrastructure was surprisingly dated, as if written in the era before Al Gore and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change were household names, much less Nobel laureates. Few elements in the race to prevent catastrophic climate change are more central than infrastructure. Not only are the old transportation, power, and water systems crumbling, but in many ways they are actively promoting inefficiency. Fortunately, many of the old systems are wearing out simultaneously—a priceless opportunity. The key challenge isn’t where to get the money for repair, but where to get the will for redesign.

Joel Garreau captured some of this perspective in his paean to technology

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["Get Smart," *WQ*, Spring '08], but his main point seemed to be to hold off pouring concrete, as we don't know where future technology will take us. Instead, we must build technology and infrastructure designed to take us—quickly—from a fossil-fueled society to a carbon-neutral one. Atmospheric scientists and presidential contenders agree that America's greenhouse-gas emissions must be halved over the next four decades. Our long-lasting infrastructure will guide us to a sustainable future... or not. How to steer toward sustainability is the big infrastructure story you missed.

**Gordon Rodda**

*Fort Collins, Colo.*

AMERICA'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM was planned and developed chiefly to reflect the political and economic patterns of the Cold War. As communism crumbled and the 20th century turned into the 21st, a new global economic geography emerged, shaped by a redistribution of economic activity. With the rise of customizable goods, more parts and pieces now move to more places, more rapidly, on tighter schedules, than ever before, increasing the number of trucks on the highways, trains on the rails, and tons of cargo in our ports. In addition, America shifted to a service economy, and more commuters joined the freight on the already overburdened roads and rails, and at the airports.

Unfortunately, the size of the problem means that there is no quick fix. First, we need a new conceptual framework and methodology to guide us toward a more seamless and efficient multimodal transportation system. Second, we need a mecha-

nism to encourage cooperation among public and private entities. Only the U.S. Department of Transportation has the capacity to lead such an effort. Third, the funding mechanisms are broken; we need to make transportation a budgetary priority and work toward better-structured public-private partnerships.

The crisis in transportation is an increasing threat to the nation's economy and its competitiveness, raising the cost of every good and service produced or consumed in America. If the United States is to remain competitive in the global economy, the time to act is now.

**Michael Gallis**

*Principal*

*Michael Gallis & Associates*

*Charlotte, N.C.*

## RAPPING THE SCHOOLS

IN HIS ESSAY, "BAD RAP ON THE Schools" [*WQ*, Spring '08], Jay Mathews argues that, contrary to popular claims, international test scores have little to do with economic competitiveness, and that, in any case, average scores belie the reality that the vast majority of U.S. schools are quite good.

It's true that a nation's economic performance depends on more than its labor force's high school test scores. America has a highly flexible economic system, and, as Mathews notes, we are a very creative, innovative society. We probably also have the best university system in the world, though we must import about half of our engineering faculty from abroad. He is right to suggest that we can still succeed economically by providing more serious academic training for the upper quartile of

students when they get to college.

His argument that 70 percent of our K-12 schools are just fine is less convincing. One widely accepted conclusion of the 1995 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study was that U.S. schools offer an anemic math curriculum. Mathews claims that American students who have gone beyond precalculus are on a par with their peers in other countries. That misses the point. Most American students never get beyond geometry, and relatively few ever take calculus.

Mathews is right that the bottom third of our schools are inadequate, but he should take a look at the latest Program for International Student Assessment results if he thinks that the best students are doing great. The top 25 percent scored about one-half of a standard deviation lower in math and science than their counterparts in Canada and Australia. In educational terms, that is an enormous difference.

Whether average high school students are learning a lot of math and science may not be crucial for many businesses, but it surely affects the quality of our primary and secondary school teachers, especially those who will work in the schools Mathews thinks are most problematic. When the average American state college student is not a great reader and doesn't achieve at high levels in math and science, where are we going to get the expert teachers to staff inner-city schools or, for that matter, suburban schools? This continues to be the huge hidden cost of American education's mediocre middle.

**Martin Carnoy**

*Vida Jacks Professor of Education*

*Stanford University*

*Stanford, Calif.*



# FROM THE CENTER

## A MATTER OF FOCUS

LATER THIS SUMMER, THE WILSON CENTER expects to announce the creation of a new institute devoted to China, allowing a significant expansion of the Center's China-related activities. When the needed support has been secured, it will join the Center's four existing "country" institutes, which have the unique mandate to focus attention on nations with which the United States has some of its most important bilateral relationships.

The new institute will be a valuable bookend to the Kennan Institute, the oldest and largest of all the Center's units, with its ambitious agenda of seminars, briefings, workshops, and conferences (a total of more than 70 events in 2007) on Russia and the other states of the former Soviet Union. The Kennan Institute also brings more than 60 scholars and policymakers to the Wilson Center annually for months-long stays, creating the opportunity for research, writing, and exchanges with Americans. Its visiting scholars are working on topics as varied as the status of Jews in imperial Russia, the failure of health care reform, and Russia's troubled demographic future.

By bringing together scholars, policymakers, and others from the United States and other countries, Kennan and the Center's three other country institutes—devoted to Brazil, Canada, and Mexico—work to improve our expertise and knowledge, but, equally important, to foster dialogue. And just as they bring outside perspectives to Washington, they also help convey American ideas abroad. In May, for example, the Canada Institute hosted a luncheon in Toronto that brought Wisconsin governor Jim Doyle to speak to a crowd of 175 Canadian businesspeople about bilateral cooperation on conservation and other issues related to the Great Lakes. Efforts of this kind allow the Center to bring American voices to discussions of bilateral relations that would otherwise be absent.

Yet a major reason why the Center has established its country institutes is that the United States, and the Washington community in particular, simply doesn't pay enough attention to some of our most important neighbors, allies, and trading partners. Canada shares a

5,525-mile border with the United States and is by far our largest trading partner; its splendid embassy enjoys a privileged position on Pennsylvania Avenue, just a short distance from the Capitol. Yet in a city preoccupied with global interests and constant crises, Canadian-American issues get relatively short shrift, and Canadian perspectives and concerns are seldom heard.

Much the same can be said of Brazil, a sprawling multiethnic democracy increasingly active on the global scene, with a surging economy (the world's 10th largest) and many shared concerns with the United States. The Brazil Institute's recent conferences and meetings at the Wilson Center and in Brazil have dealt with infrastructure integration and environmental protection in the Amazon, bilateral trade, innovation policies, and biofuels (one of the fields in which Brazil is a leader).

The Mexico Institute, which we launched early last year, focuses on six themes: migrants and migration; security and the rule of law; trade, development, and the economy; perceptions, media, and society; energy and natural resources; and Mexican politics. Recently, a crowd filled the Center's auditorium to hear a dozen Mexican and American specialists analyze the impact of the upcoming U.S. presidential election on Mexico.

The country institutes hardly exhaust the roster of internationally focused efforts at the Wilson Center. We have regional projects and programs devoted to Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and three different regions of Europe, as well as more targeted efforts such as the China Environment Forum, the Environmental Change and Security Program, and the Global Health Initiative. The new institute will thus join distinguished company. As China grows into its role as a major power, great care must be taken to ensure that the U.S.-China relationship continues to develop along mutually beneficial lines. That will require continuing infusions of the very things the Wilson Center has brought to all of its efforts: knowledge, insight, and dialogue.

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JAY MATHEWS'S EFFORT TO REFOCUS the lens through which we see educational data is laudable. Many people readily accept manipulated or inadequately analyzed numbers because they are unwilling to acknowledge the fundamental problem of the public school system: the persistent and unconstitutional disparity of school funding in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Parents and students in the inner city may be apathetic, as Mathews observes, but it's not because the school days aren't long enough, but rather because our "classless society" requires that they draw upon more strength and energy than most of us can muster in order to see beyond their immediate circumstances.

Providing these students with the education they deserve will require a shift in the cultural paradigm. As James Baldwin wrote in his 1979 *New York Times* essay "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?": "The brutal truth is that the bulk of white people in America never had any interest in educating black people, except as this could serve white purposes." Minority and working-class students, both urban and rural, are routinely denied encouragement to engage in scholarly discourse or develop advanced writing skills, based on the premise that they do not require such instruction. Underfunded schools serve poor children in a manner designed to supply society with the working-class citizens it needs.

Mathews persists in arguing that the problem underlying our education system is "our doubts about our ability to help the American children who need it most." It's not that we haven't the ability; it's that we lack the will. As

Mathews acknowledges, "More than 50 years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), we still have separate and unequal education." He does not deliver on the promise of further discourse on that matter, despite the urgent need for that conversation.

**Nancy Hopkins**

*Greenfield, Mass.*

THANK YOU FOR RUNNING JAY Mathews's excellent rebuttal of the exaggerated, if not unfounded, claims that America's educational failings are crippling our economic competitiveness. Most of us view education reform as an issue of either civil rights (closing the achievement gap between white and minority students) or economics (closing the competitiveness gap between the United States and the math and science giants of eastern Asia).

That the achievement gap exists, and that it's shameful and unacceptable, is undeniable. But the claims of the economics crowd are less unsailable. Many a blue-ribbon panel has told us of late that unless we adopt such-and-such 30-point plan to fix our schools, we're certain to cede our economic preeminence to the emerging powers of the East. But in fact, there's little evidence to support such claims, just as there wasn't in the 1980s and '90s when Japan was on its supposedly inexorable march toward world domination.

Mathews's piece injects some badly needed sanity into this discussion. It's one of those articles you want to have handy whenever education or globalization comes up at the water cooler.

**Coby Loup**

*Policy Analyst*

*Thomas B. Fordham Institute*

*Washington, D.C.*

## STEPS TO PEACE

ONE OF THE MOST UNFORTUNATE recent developments in American foreign policy is the notion that history begins on inauguration day. The Bush administration felt a need—unnecessarily—to break with history and take sharp turns on numerous national security policies. These were policies that had enjoyed more than a generation of bipartisan support, such as our pragmatic approach to Arab-Israeli peacemaking. One can only hope that the next administration restores American leadership on the global stage by re-establishing continuity, bipartisanship, and the balance between realism and idealism that defined American foreign policy during its most successful periods.

With this in mind, Aaron David Miller's wise essay offers numerous ways to fix the Middle East peace process ["The Long Dance: Searching for Arab-Israeli Peace," *WQ*, Spring '08]. Miller's argument is timely, particularly given the growing discourse in the United States that has identified our close relationship with Israel as a stumbling block to—rather than a key ingredient for—success. Miller rightly points out that it is America's closeness to Israel—our privileged, "special" relationship with the Jewish state—that enables us to be a successful mediator. Arab parties, despite what many believe, are not eager for Washington to squander its ties to Israel, but rather wish it to leverage that relationship in the service of peacemaking. For their part, American policymakers in recent years have seemed blind to what has become an axiom of Israeli politics: No Israeli leader can afford tension with Washington.

Miller makes another powerful

argument, one about the need for bipartisanship and the long-term nature of Arab-Israeli peacemaking. If the process becomes a staging ground for partisan posturing, as President George W. Bush's speech to the Israeli parliament in May was seen at home, little progress can be expected. In both this essay and his new book, *The Much Too Promised Land*, Miller provides a devastating critique of our diplomacy in recent years, but he also offers useful ideas about how to do a better job when a new administration takes office.

**Scott Lasensky**

*Senior Research Associate*

*Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention*

*United States Institute of Peace*

*Coauthor, Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: American Leadership in the Middle East (2008)*

THERE ARE THREE LESSONS MISSING from Aaron David Miller's list for those who wish to pursue peace in the Middle East.

1. Miller lists the future of Jerusalem, the fate of Palestinian refugees, and the location of borders as the biggest issues, but if peace itself is not at the top of the list, it won't just happen. Diplomats cannot assume that the Arabs want peace with Israel, if only Israel will agree to meet their demands on these issues; that assumption doomed the Oslo Accords. We won't get it unless we are prepared to apply the same pressure on the Palestinians to make real peace as many diplomats and politicians wish to place on Israel regarding these lesser issues.

2. Narratives change, and bringing the narratives of the two parties closer together, in line with documented history, may be the key to finding a solution.

3. Sometimes there isn't a solution.

This is a most un-American fact, and acknowledging it calls for a certain maturity. Each time the West raises its expectations for Israeli concessions, the Arabs have raised their demands, resulting in no net gain. When a reasonable offer has been rejected, the next offer should be for less, not more. The current approach simply results in an ever-escalating series of demands.

**Yale Zussman**

*Weymouth, Mass.*

AARON DAVID MILLER'S PIECE could not have come at a more appropriate time. During the long presidential primary season, the Israeli-Palestinian issue was mentioned no more than a handful of times in either party's debates. On those rare occasions, the candidates invariably resorted to pandering—Israel right, Palestine wrong—hoping to ensure that no donor could take offense at his or her remarks.

Miller's piece demonstrates that one-sided diplomacy is worthless. Successful negotiations require not that one side trusts the Americans but that both sides do. Unfortunately, that has not been the case since 2001. And even under the Clinton administration, we made little effort to hide our biases. The next president should memorize Miller's seven suggestions on how to conduct successful negotiations.

**M. J. Rosenberg**

*Director of Policy Analysis*

*Israel Policy Forum*

*Washington, D.C.*

**TECHNOLOGICAL TUMULT**  
IN "THE DAY THE TV DIED" [*WQ*, Spring '08], Stephen Bates oversimplifies TV program choices in



David Sarnoff's era, characterizing them as "limited: Uncle Miltie or Aunt Bea, Car 54 or Agent 99, Captain Kirk or Colonel Klink."

Actually, the 1950s and early 1960s are known as the "golden age" of TV, which, like the "golden age" of radio that preceded it, was distinguished by diverse programming in a restrained commercial climate almost unimaginable today—including now-classic comedy acts, variety and quiz shows, popular-music series, live drama, classical music, Broadway-show adaptations, foreign news-bureau reports, and even prime-time documentaries.

No nirvana—but compared with today's deregulated, over-commercialized, and fragmented electronic media environment, those years deserve more than revisionist shorthand.

**Alfred Balk**

*Former Editor, Columbia Journalism Review*

*Author, The Rise of Radio, From*

*Marconi Through the Golden Age (2005)*

*Huntley, Ill.*

## HOW THE OTHER HALF INVESTS

TO THOSE OF US WHOSE WORK focuses on a recent explosion of trade and investment among the developing nations of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, it remains a mystery why virtually all media accounts treat this phenomenon as though these countries discovered one another only recently. In contrast, Martin Walker, a distinguished veteran of the international press corps, begins his essay with a discussion of the historical roots of commerce ["Indian Ocean Nexus," *WQ*, Spring '08]. The role of Asia's

two emerging economic giants in Africa's development is being contentiously debated. Without historical context, any analysis, advice, and policy or business decisions—and, ultimately, the resulting economic outcomes—will undoubtedly be distorted.

Walker justifiably focuses on the rapid growth of trade and investment flows between the sub-Saharan African continent and China and India—by almost any measure the epitome of South-South commerce's modern era. But as spectacular as this growth is, with Africa's exports to China now doubling every two years, it is important not to lose sight of the global context. The European Union and the United States still account for 90 percent of the stock of foreign direct investment in sub-Saharan Africa. As Walker makes clear, a lot is at stake for the millions of people in this region, so policymakers would do well to get a more comprehensive perspective. Maybe then they'll be able to focus on the key question: How can African stakeholders best leverage China and India's "newfound" commercial interest in the continent to their maximum advantage?

**Harry G. Broadman**

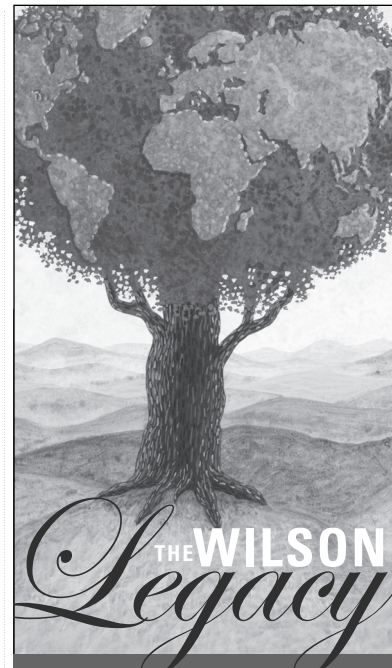
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## CORRECTION

A QUOTATION IN "THE BRIEF History of a Historical Novel" [*WQ*, Autumn '07] attributed to Samuel Johnson was inaccurate. In his *Dictionary of the English Language*, Johnson defines theory as "speculation; not practice."



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# FINDINGS

BRIEF NOTES OF INTEREST ON ALL TOPICS

## Fourth Rite

*Huzzahs, Hessians, and the heart-ache*

The first recurrence of Independence Day, like many an anniversary, caught its celebrants unawares. Distracted by the Revolutionary War, delegates to the second Continental Congress in Philadelphia didn't give the Fourth any thought until July 2, 1777, Peter de Bolla writes in *The Fourth of July and the Founding of America* (Overlook). They decided to mark the occasion as many Americans do today, with a big meal.

Philadelphians proved to have more clangorous plans. Church bells rang all day. Boys shot off fireworks. Ships in the harbor fired cannons. John Adams told his daughter, "The wharves and shores were lined with a vast concourse of people, all shouting and huzzahing."

Adams and his fellow delegates met for dinner at a tavern. They enjoyed "fine music," played by Hessian prisoners of war, and exchanged toasts "in honor of our country and the heroes who have fallen," punctuated by volleys of gunfire from soldiers outside.

When he stepped out for fresh air that evening, Adams found the streets aglow. Except for "a few surly houses," every residence had a candle burning in the window. He

judged it "the most splendid illumination I ever saw." Had King George III or British general William Howe "been here in disguise," he added, "this show would have given them the heart-ache."

## Selling Smoke

*Bernays sauce, laid on thick*

Women accounted for just an eighth of cigarette purchases in 1928, according to *Profiles in Folly* (Sterling), by Alan Axelrod. To persuade women to smoke, the American Tobacco Company hired Edward Bernays, PR pioneer and nephew of Sigmund Freud.

Bernays crafted two pro-smoking campaigns, shrewd if somewhat contradictory by today's standards: one hawked slenderness; the other, feminism.

Cigarette as diet aid came first.

Working, as always, behind the scenes, Bernays got Arthur Murray to lament fatties on his

dance floor, "encroaching on more than a fair share of space." Murray admonished dancers, "When tempted to overindulge at the punch bowl or the buffet . . . reach for a cigarette instead." Six svelte Ziegfeld girls signed a pledge to "renounce the false pleasure of the table—fattening foods, drinks, and cloying sweets. But I make no sacrifices: I shall smoke cigarettes."

By year's end, American Tobacco's profits had soared.

Edward Bernays showed flappers how to smoke away excess pounds.

Women were smoking at home, at work, in restaurants—but not on the street. So Bernays came up with a new campaign. In the battle for “equality of the sexes,” he wrote (over his secretary’s name), cigarettes were “torches of freedom.” He enlisted women to light up as they promenaded in New York City’s Easter parade. To make the demonstration seem spontaneous, he recruited women who were attractive but not “model-y,” and had some of them ask others for lights. The spirit of the suffragettes was now used to tout cigarettes.

Bernays himself didn’t smoke, according to Axelrod, and he pressured his wife, Doris, to quit. Finding her cigarettes, he would “snap them like bones, just snap them in half and throw them in the toilet,” his daughter later said. Edward Bernays was too smart to believe his own PR.

## Ashes to Ashes

### *Antismoke rings*

Like Doris Bernays, thousands of Americans have broken the tobacco habit. Centers for Disease Control surveys find that around 42 percent of American adults smoked in 1965; now, just 19 percent do. According to *The New England Journal of Medicine* (May 22, 2008), social networks help explain the decline. Just as smokers congregate outside workplace entrances, they often quit smoking together.

Researchers Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler studied the smoking patterns of 12,067 people over 32 years. “Smokers remained in tightly knit groups,” they found,

“even as the incidence of smoking sharply declined. . . . Whole clusters stopped smoking.”

The decision to stop smoking wafts from one circle of friends to another, according to the researchers, reaching three degrees of separation. That is, if you stop smoking, your friends are likelier than average to quit, and so are your friends’ friends, and your friends’ friends’ friends. Packs of smokers toss out their cigarettes together.

## Egghead Gumshoes

### *CSI, Ph.D.*

“The official version of the assassination of President Kennedy has been so riddled with contradictions that it [has] been abandoned and rewritten no less than three times. Blatant fabrications have received very widespread coverage by the mass media, but denials of these same lies have gone unpublished. Photographs, evidence, and affidavits have been doctored out of recognition. Some of the most important aspects of the case against Lee Harvey Oswald have been completely blacked out. Meanwhile, the FBI, the police, and the Secret Service have tried to silence key witnesses or instruct them what evidence to give. Others involved have disappeared or died in extraordinary circumstances.”

Oliver Stone, 1991? No, Bertrand Russell, 1964. Russell, 91 at the time of the assassination, helped found a “Who Killed Kennedy?” committee and allied with Mark Lane, proponent of a smorgasbord of conspiracy theories.

Two other doubting philos-

ophers were lower profile but harder working than Russell, Tim Madigan writes in the British magazine *Philosophy Now* (March–April 2008). Richard Popkin, a professor at the University of California, San Diego, read all 26 volumes of the Warren Report. Kierkegaard scholar Josiah Thompson, of Haverford College, traveled to Dallas and pored over Dealey Plaza. Both published books arguing that Lee Harvey Oswald couldn’t have acted alone.

Whereas Russell returned to pacifism and other causes, the assassination left deeper marks on the other two. “Thompson, for reasons partly connected with his Kennedy assassination work, eventually abandoned academic philosophy altogether and became a private detective,” Madigan writes. And “Popkin, not content with merely pointing out flaws in the Warren Report, became obsessed with finding the real killers of JFK. His involvement in conspiracy theories eventually had an adverse effect upon his mental health before he finally returned to his primary focus, his highly acclaimed work on the history of Skepticism.”

## T-Square in Red Square

### *Architects without borders*

“The world’s autocrats have developed a taste for modern architecture,” *Time* architecture critic Richard Lacayo writes in *Foreign Policy* (May–June 2008). Frank Gehry and Rem Koolhaas have designed buildings in the United Arab Emirates; Koolhaas has worked in China, too. Norman Fos-



ter designed Beijing Capital International Airport as well as Moscow's "Crystal Island," which will be the biggest building in the world when it opens in 2014.

Lacayo acknowledges that autocrats keep the cranes running on time: "The new Terminal 5 of London's Heathrow Airport, designed by the firm of architect Richard Rogers, was subjected to a public inquiry in

state-controlled media would eventually evolve 'into something like the BBC,'" Lacayo recounts. "That may take some time. The BBC, whose newscasts are restricted in China, reported recently that when journalists at CCTV log on to their computers every day, one of the first things to appear on their screens 'is a notice about what not to report.'"



Artistic freedom in an unfree world: Rem Koolhaas's palace for Central Chinese Television.

Britain that lasted nearly four years. That's about the same time it took for Foster's new airport terminal in Beijing to go from conception to completion. There was a feng shui consultant who needed to be satisfied, but no messy court challenges."

But, as the autocrats of the 1930s showed, efficiency isn't everything. Lacayo asked Koolhaas if he had any qualms about designing the headquarters of Central Chinese Television (CCTV), a media outlet in a country with a far-from-free press. "He replied that China was evolving, and he hoped that its

Like Koolhaas, many architects maintain that they're encouraging autocracies to open up, respect human rights, and move toward democracy. Lacayo isn't so sure. "If there's one thing an architect should know how to do, it's draw a line. With a little prodding, perhaps more of them will give it a try."

## Frankenstein: The Prequel

### *Governess service*

Mary Wollstonecraft, the 18th-century feminist and mother of

*Frankenstein* author Mary Shelley, spent a melancholy year in her mid-20s as a governess. In 1786, Wollstonecraft joined the staff of Lord Kingsborough, the wealthiest man in Ireland. Wollstonecraft looked after the dozen Kingsborough children, Ruth Brandon writes in *Governess* (Walker), while Lady Kingsborough baby-talked to her dogs.

When she played with the children, Wollstonecraft wrote, "*something like* maternal fondness fills my bosom." She found little else to like, though. The food was "rather of the grosser kind." Though the Kingsboroughs included her in parties and dinners, she could not "be flattered by the respect of people whose judgment I do not care a fig for." Lord Kingsborough, according to village gossip, had had an affair with an earlier nanny; now he seemed unduly fond of Wollstonecraft, which on one occasion made her "out-blush her ladyship's rouge." She left after a year.

Wollstonecraft went on to achieve renown for her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in 1792. In a chapter on child raising, she disparages parents who employ governesses. If you have "hirelings" raise your children, she writes, you'll "miss the reward" of "filial duty."

After two ill-advised romances and two suicide attempts, Wollstonecraft married philosopher William Godwin in 1797. On August 30 of that year, she gave birth to a daughter. Ten days later, she died of septicemia.

In the eyes of literary critic Ellen Moers, these circumstances of Mary Shelley's birth plainly inspired her

masterwork: “No outside influence need be sought to explain Mary Shelley’s fantasy of the newborn as at once monstrous agent of destruction and piteous victim of parent abandonment.”

But *Frankenstein* came later. In 1797, the newly widowed Godwin, distraught and overwhelmed, hired Louisa Jones. For the first three years of her life, Mary Shelley was raised by a nanny.

## Dunderheaded Democracy

*Zbig talk*

Unlike presidential candidates and cable TV pundits, Zbigniew Brzezinski isn’t gushing over the glorious good sense of the electorate. “The public really has no grasp of complexities, no sense of intellectual refinement in judging them,” Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter’s national security advisor, tells *The American Interest* (May–June 2008), “and our political leaders have become increasingly demagogic. The way George W. Bush campaigned for the war in Iraq . . . is a case in point. But he was responding to our increasingly imbecilized societal condition.”

Should the next president appoint Brzezinski to a post that requires Senate confirmation, expect a lively hearing.

## Sloppy Seconds

*Virtual wedding-bell blues*

By 2015, according to one expert, two percent of Americans will “marry” in Second Life and other online pseudoworlds, often to indi-



In the virtual world of Second Life, an avatar hits the singles scene.

viduals they’ll never meet in real life. Millions of people have Second Life accounts, and many of them are living parallel lives in a virtual world. Users are represented by “avatars,” which can be upgraded through the purchase of such features as idealized bodies (hunkier, curvier), chic haircuts, tattoos, and dragon companions. Moving around is easy: Even no-frills avatars can fly. Still, virtual courtship poses challenges, Lauren Bans says in the feminist magazine *Bitch* (Spring 2008).

“On my first day in-world, I flew to one of Second Life’s most popular sites, a nude beach,” she writes. A “good-looking male avatar” persuaded her to undress. But she and her fellow beachgoer were “dismayed” to find that Bans’s avatar had no sex organs. The erstwhile beau uttered a Second Life variant of “Get a life”—“Buy a skin!”—and flew off.

Second Life made a cameo on NBC’s *The Office* last fall. Dwight,

one of the worker drones, says that he got hooked on Second Life when “my life was so great that I literally wanted a second one.”

His coworker, Jim, mocks the “game.”

“Second Life is not a game,” Dwight insists. “It is a multiuser virtual environment. It doesn’t have points or scores. It doesn’t have winners or losers.”

Jim replies, “Oh, it has losers.”

## Self-Exam

*The perfect fool*

Daniel Ames, a professor at Columbia Business School, administers personality tests in class. As Sam Gosling recounts in *Snoop: What Your Stuff Says About You* (Basic), one MBA student got the maximum score on narcissism. Ames worried that the result might prove distressing, until he overheard the student tell a classmate, “I aced the narcissism test—I got every single question right!”

—Stephen Bates

# Why Can't We Build An Affordable House?

*One explanation of America's housing market collapse is that too many people bought too much house. The solution: build more affordable houses. Here's what stands in the way.*

BY WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI

THE HOUSING MARKET IS IN TATTERS, AND HOUSE prices continue to fall precipitously in many parts of the country, so it might seem a strange time to bring up the subject of housing affordability. But one of the reasons we are in this mess is that people bought houses they couldn't really afford. At some point in the future, consumer confidence will be restored and people will start buying houses again. Pent-up demand, and the inevitable delays in restarting an industry that has seen the withdrawal of many home builders, will likely produce a spike in prices, and once again the affordability issue will come to the fore.

The term "affordable housing" has come to be associated with social programs and government subsidies, but it once meant commercially built houses that ordinary working people could afford. A pioneer of affordability was the builder Levitt and Sons, whose famous "Levittowns" were the first postwar examples of large, master-planned communities. The story is well known.

WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI is Martin and Margie Meyerson Professor of Urbanism at the University of Pennsylvania. His latest book, *Last Harvest: From Cornfield to New Town*, appeared in paperback this spring.

After World War II, as GIs came home and the peacetime economy gathered steam, the demand for housing grew dramatically. Levitt, an established Long Island builder, set its sights on this new market. William Levitt, the eldest son, applied his wartime experience building barracks with the Navy Seabees to traditional wood-frame construction. He organized the building site like an assembly line. Teams of workers performed repetitive tasks, one team laying floor slabs, another erecting framing, another applying siding, and so on. No one had ever built housing that way before.

The first Levittown was on Long Island, the second in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and the third in New Jersey. The Long Island project, because it was the first—and the closest to New York City—is the best known, but the Bucks County development, which began in 1951, was larger and more comprehensively planned and designed. At that site, the more than 17,000 homes on nearly 6,000 acres were intended chiefly for workers employed at a nearby steel plant. The largest and most expensive of the six model homes, the Country Clubber, was for supervisors and executives, but the three-bedroom Levittowner was





Levittowners were given touches of luxury within a simple but flexible floor plan, all for the affordable price of \$9,900 (equal to \$82,000 today).

the workhorse of the development. It sold for \$9,900, which would equal \$82,000 today.

The design of the Levittowner, like the planning of the community, was the responsibility of William's younger brother, Alfred. Though William Levitt went on to have a long and well-publicized career as a developer and builder, Alfred, who died in 1966 (at only 54), is less remembered. He was a self-taught architect who had spent an entire summer observing the construction of one of Frank Lloyd Wright's so-called Usonian houses, in Great Neck Estates, Long Island. Many of the Levittowner's cost-saving features were influenced by this experience: the efficient one-story plan that combined an eat-in kitchen with the living room; the concrete floor slab without a basement; the under-floor heating; the low, spreading roof with no attic; and the carport instead of a garage. (The Usonians, Wright's answer to affordability, were beautiful, but since they were built one at a time, they were expensive—the Rebhuhn Residence, the one Alfred studied, cost a whop-

ping \$35,000 to build in 1937, the equivalent of more than half a million dollars today.)

Many of the design innovations of the Levittowner were Alfred's own ideas. A folding basswood screen that slid on a metal track separated a so-called study-bedroom from the living room, allowing the space to be open or closed. Thermopane (insulated glass) covered a large section of the living-room wall overlooking the garden. The kitchen had a large window facing the street—an early example of a "picture window." High window sills in the bedrooms provided privacy—and reduced cost. Locating the bathroom and the kitchen on the street side reduced the length of piping to the street mains. There was no mechanical room; instead, a specially designed furnace fit under the kitchen counter, its warm top doubling as a hot plate. The Levitts were careful to give penny-pinching buyers of the Levittowner touches of luxury: the purchase price included a kitchen exhaust fan, an electric range, a GE refrigerator, and a Bendix washing machine. The Country Clubber added a clothes dryer.

A two-way fireplace was located between the kitchen and the living room. Two-way fireplaces were a standard Usonian feature, but while the Levittowner had a low, spreading roof and clean lines, no one would mistake it for a Frank Lloyd Wright house. Yet, although Alfred Levitt's design looks unremarkable today, in fact this early example of the so-called ranch house represented a revolution in domestic design. One-story living was new to most Americans, as was the open plan combining kitchen, eating space, and living room. The undecorated exterior was unabashedly modern. Picture windows had no precedents in traditional homes; neither did carports. Instead of brick or wood, the exterior walls of the Levittowner were covered with striated sheets of Colorbestos (asbestos cement), which had been developed especially for the Levitts by the Johns Manville Corporation. With integral color that didn't require painting, this was an early example of low-maintenance siding.

We don't use asbestos cement anymore, and some of the other novelties, such as under-floor heating, proved troublesome (as they did in the Usonians), but the Levitt brothers' achievement remains impressive. They introduced the American public to modern production building and proved that standardization, mass production, and technical innovation could be successfully—and profitably—used by commercial builders to produce houses for a large market. Moreover, unlike many architectural experiments that have been dealt with harshly by the passage of time—the high-rise public-housing projects of the 1960s come to mind—Levittowns have remained desirable places to live. Even the names of the house models have survived. “Fabulous expanded Levittowner,” reads a recent Internet real estate ad for a house in the Bucks County community, “3 bedrooms, one bath, custom eat-in kitchen.” It's listed as sold.

The continuing popularity of the Levittowner after more than half a century does not mean that the demands of home buyers haven't changed over time. Builders found out long ago that buyers would pay the small extra cost for the additional space provided by a basement. One-story houses are still popular, especially with older owners, but two-story houses have come back into vogue. So have traditional features such as porches, dormers, shutters, and bay windows. (The spare look of Alfred Levitt's design would be a hard sell today.) Finally, buyers of the Levittowner were not given any choices; although Colorbestos came in seven colors, and the precise location of the carport varied from one

house to another, these alternatives were predetermined by Alfred Levitt to create variety on the street. But modern buyers expect to personalize their homes. In response, while today's builders still sell predesigned models, they also offer scores of options: alternative façades, different materials, a variety of interior finishes, and “extras” such as upgraded kitchens, higher ceilings, and add-on sun rooms.

**W**ould it be possible to build a modern version of the affordable Levittowner? It would probably be a small house, closer to the 1,000 square feet of Alfred Levitt's design than the 2,469 square feet that is today's national average for new houses. Building smaller houses not only reduces construction costs, it is also good for the environment, saving materials and energy—and land. The house would still have three bedrooms, but it would also have at least one and a half bathrooms, since people have come to expect a powder room, even in small houses. Closets would be bigger, and there would be more of them. There would probably not be a living room, but the house would include a family room facing the backyard. The kitchen would be larger; the hot-plate furnace would be replaced by a conventional model, and the fireplace would be optional.

What would such a house sell for? In 1951, the price of the original Levittowner (\$9,900) was three times the national average annual wage (\$3,300). In 2008, with an estimated national average wage of \$40,500, a similarly affordable house should have a sticker price of \$121,500. Yet according to the Census Bureau, even in the current declining market the median price for a new single-family house in the first quarter of 2008 approached twice that: \$234,100. So, the price of a modern Levittowner would have to be nearly 50 percent cheaper than that of today's average new house. Easy, you say, just make the house 50 percent smaller, about 1,200 instead of 2,469 square feet. But it's not that simple. In most metropolitan areas, the selling price of such a house would still be more than \$200,000, considerably more than \$121,500.

So what's keeping housing prices high? It's not the size, and it's not the construction costs, either. The Levittowner cost \$4–\$5 per square foot to build in 1951, equivalent to \$30–\$40 per square foot in 2008. That is approximately what an efficient, large-scale production builder spends today. Home builders have followed the Levitts' lead in streamlining construction, introducing labor-saving tech-

niques, and using industrialized materials. Plans are rationalized to reduce waste. Components arrive on the building site precut and preassembled so that the entire construction process for a typical house takes as little as three months. Perhaps the most important change in home building concerns scale. Since the 1980s, the industry has come to be dominated by a dozen national builders. These publicly owned companies, the largest of which produces as many as 50,000 houses a year, are able to take advantage of economies of scale that the Levitts could only dream about. Large, efficient enterprises buy materials in bulk, optimize mass production of building components such as windows and doors, and operate their own prefabrication factories. This keeps construction costs low.

What's driving the high cost of houses today is not increased construction costs or higher profits (the Levitts made \$1,000 on the sale of each house), but the cost of serviced land, which is much

greater than in 1951. There are two reasons for this increase. The first is Proposition 13, the 1978 California ballot initiative that required local governments to reduce property taxes and limit future increases, and sparked similar taxpayer-driven initiatives in other states. Henceforth, municipalities were unable to finance the up-front costs of infrastructure in new communities, as they had previously done, and instead required developers to pay for roads and sewers, and often for parks and other public amenities as well. These costs were passed on to home buyers, drastically increasing the selling price of a house.

The other reason that serviced lots cost more is that there are fewer of them than the market demands. This is a result of widespread resistance to growth, the infamous not-in-my-backyard phenomenon, which is strongest in the Northeast, California, and the Northwest. Communities in growing metropolitan areas contend with increased urbanization, encroachment on open space, more neighbors, more traffic, and more school-age children. Roads have to be widened, traffic lights added, and schools expanded, all of which lead to higher taxes. Voters commonly respond to these ill effects of growth by demanding restrictions on the number of new houses that can be built. Usually this is achieved by tightening zoning, invoking environmental constraints,

and generally drawing out and complicating the permit process. It is no coincidence that house prices are highest in the Northeast, California, and the Northwest. According to the research of economists Edward Glaeser of Harvard and Joseph Gyourko of the Wharton School, since 1970 the difficulty of getting regulatory approval to build new homes is the chief cause of increases in new house prices. In other words, while demand for new houses has been growing, the number of new houses that can actually be built has been shrinking.

The most common tactic communities use to restrict development is to zone for large lots. In many parts of the

**IT'S NOT CONSTRUCTION costs that  
have driven up house prices, it's the much  
greater cost of serviced land.**

country, the median size of new lots now exceeds one acre; by contrast, the 70-by-100-foot Levittowner lot covered less than one-sixth of an acre. For the neighbors, requiring large lots has two advantages: It limits the numbers of houses that can be built and, since large lots are more expensive, it ensures that new houses will cost more, which drives up surrounding property values. But reducing development has another, less happy effect: It pushes growth even farther out, thus increasing sprawl. While large-lot zoning is often done in the name of preserving open space and fighting sprawl, in fact it has the opposite effect.

It is a vicious circle. Smaller houses on smaller lots are the logical solution to the problem of affordability, yet density—and less affluent neighbors—are precisely what most communities fear most. In the name of fighting sprawl, local zoning boards enact regulations that either require larger lots or restrict development, or both. These strategies decrease the supply—hence, increase the cost—of developable land. Since builders pass the cost of lots on to buyers, they justify the higher land prices by building larger and more expensive houses—McMansions. This produces more community resistance, and calls for yet more restrictive regulations. In the process, housing affordability becomes an even more distant chimera. ■



# Happy Campers

*Why do we send children weaned on video games into the woods with knives and kindling? A perplexed father considers the beloved American tradition that is summer camp.*

BY JIM RASENBERGER

THIS SUMMER, MILLIONS OF AMERICAN CHILDREN will leave their homes in the cities and suburbs and embark for the nation's hinterlands. Following the seasonal migratory patterns of summers past, they will travel along crowded interstates and thruways, down winding rural lanes and over dirt roads that lead through piney woods to the shores of quiet lakes. They will arrive, at last, at that peculiar province of American summerhood known as sleepaway camp.

The custom of sending kids off to camp is not exclusively American. The French and the Russians, among others, embed large numbers of their youth in the woods each summer. Even in the United States, the tradition is not all that widely observed. According to the American Camp Association, enrollment in summer camps is about 10 million, a fraction of the nearly 74 million Americans under the age of 18. But it was in America that camps first took root, and it is here they have flourished for nearly 120 summers. If camp attendance never became universal in this country, as some early promoters hoped it would, the lore of camp, at least, is inescapable.

Camps today come in an extraordinary variety, but their taxonomy can be divided into two basic branches. One

includes the many species that focus on single pursuits, from old standbys such as "fat camp" and sailing camp to newer venues such as rock 'n' roll camp, debate camp, and—pity the child—math camp. Such camps no doubt benefit youngsters and satisfy parents, but what goes on at these places is fairly obvious and requires little in the way of explanation.

My interest is in the other genus of summer camp, referred to in camp literature as "general" or "traditional." Anyone who has ever attended one—and many who have not—knows the drill: the rustic cabins named after dead Algonquians or furry animals, the reveille bell clanging in the misty chill of morning, the vats of oatmeal steaming in the mess hall. Arrows twang at the archery pit and canoe wakes lap the dock. Children play epic rounds of capture the flag, hike mountains, roast marshmallows, drink bug juice, and learn new skills, such as knife handling and fire building.

It was these last two, the knife handling and the fire building, that started me wondering about camp. My sons had returned from a month at camp looking as if they'd spent their summer scouring chimneys in 19th-century London rather than roughing it in 21st-century Vermont, but under the grime and sunburn they glowed with pride in their newly acquired woodsman skills. They were also proud of the Leatherman they had somehow managed to snag in bosky barter with a fellow camper. This pocket-sized tool combines pliers, screwdrivers, knives, and other

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At a short remove from the rigors of city living, campers at White Pine Programs in Maine learn how to craft bows by hand and other “ancient living skills.”

assorted gadgets, all of which tuck neatly into its gleaming handles. A step up from the Swiss Army knife, the standard camp tool of my own youth, the Leatherman is a cunning fusion of multiplicity and lethality. There is more than one way to skin a cat, but the Leatherman’s stainless-steel blade is a good place to start.

I was delighted that my sons had returned from the maw of nature with a little mountain man know-how under their belts. But in two city boys who live in a highly flammable wood-frame apartment building and attend a New York City public school, were fire building and knife handling really skills we wished to *encourage*?

The question occurred to me again last winter, when it was time to send in the first payment for this summer’s four-week, four-figure excursion to the woods of New England.

I paused to consider what we were purchasing. Just what were my wife and I giving our children by sending them to camp?

**T**o some people, summer camp is a fundamental rite of childhood, its virtues manifest in every aspect of camp life. Independent from parental expectations and school-year pressures, liberated from hi-tech paraphernalia and status-defining accessories, children at camp forge true bonds with fellow campers, commune with nature, build self-confidence, and eat s’mores. What’s not to love? Best of all, this children’s paradise makes kids into *better human beings*.

A few years back, former Walt Disney CEO Michael Eis-

ner wrote a slim memoir titled *Camp* (2005). Reflecting on his childhood summers at Keewaydin, a century-old all-boys camp in Vermont, Eisner credited the experience with making him a better man, if not—as we might infer after his acrimonious dismissal from the Magic Kingdom—a better corporate sachem. “Camp taught me a lot of little things, and the experiences accumulated into some big ‘stuff,’ stuff that builds backbone and teaches lessons that will keep popping up in adulthood,” Eisner rhapsodized. “I realized that I had developed my values and knowledge at summer camp.”

Given his reputation at Disney for arrogance and vitriol, Eisner may not be every camp director’s poster boy. But his belief that camp furnishes kids with the right “stuff,” and that this stuff will make them wiser, more decent, more successful, altogether more terrific adults, is one that has been

babes into the woods. On the contrary, the history reveals an intricate skein of assumptions and attitudes Americans have long held about nature, and about the campers who inhabit it.

**T**he origins of camp go back to a moment when Americans were waking up to a fast-changing landscape. In 1890, the U.S. Census Bureau declared the frontier closed. The Wild West was largely settled, the Indians were subdued, and the once boundless eastern forest was deeply cut. America was no longer a country defined by its wild places and frontier spirit, as it had been for generations, but by its exploding cities, its steel mills and coal mines, its stunning industry and wealth.

The more urbanized America became, the more Americans longed for their vanishing wilderness. Some joined the preservationist John Muir in worshipping nature, the more pristine the better, in reverential reflection. Others threw themselves into nature appreciation with something more like the blood lust of Muir’s

**CAMPS APPEARED WHEN AMERICA came to be defined more by its stunning industry and wealth than by its wild places and frontier spirit.**

embraced and disseminated by camp directors, parents, and campers since boys’ camps first began appearing on New England lakeshores in the 1880s. A lot of what boys did at camp then will sound familiar to campers now. They swam, canoed, hiked, ran races, and gathered around fires. All of this was deemed fun, but the kind of “wholesome” fun that promised to deliver campers home “physically and morally invigorated,” as Leslie Paris observes in her informative new book, *Children’s Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp*.

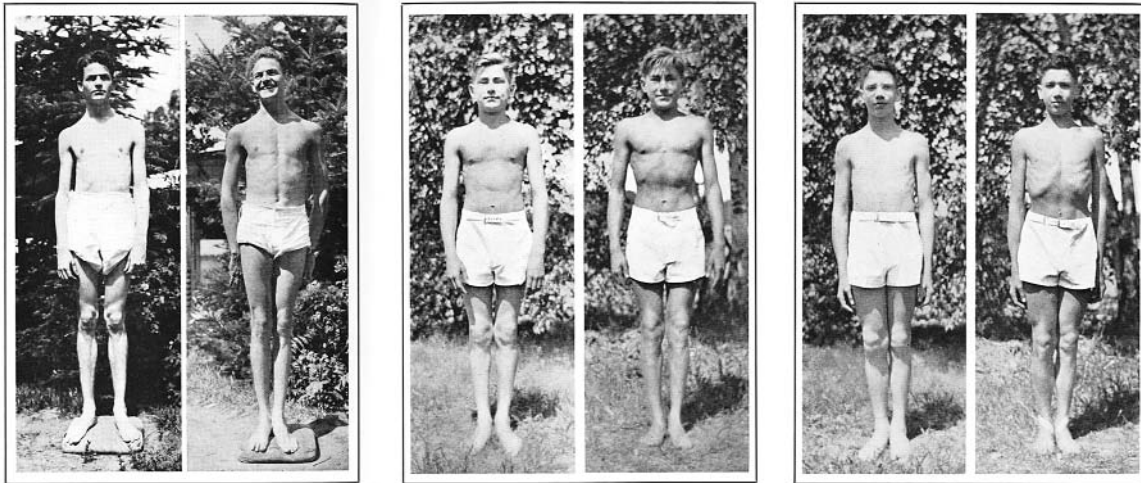
Paris’s book is the second history of summer camps to appear in the last few years, following *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890–1960*, Abigail A. Van Slyck’s 2006 study of the architecture and culture of camps. Together, these two volumes may seem like an awful lot of scholarly sweat and ink spilled over a subject as simple as a craft-hour lanyard. But, as both convincingly demonstrate, there has really never been anything simple about this business of sending our

friend (and occasional nemesis) Theodore Roosevelt, who exhorted his compatriots to enter the woods (preferably while bearing a gun and hunting license) and pursue the “strenuous life.” Both approaches were essentially romantic, and both were extraordinarily compelling to Americans at the turn of the last century.

Children, especially, were thought to benefit from time spent in nature. This belief was supported by the work of G. Stanley Hall, the preeminent American psychologist of the time, who taught that the milestones of child development were reenactments, or “recapitulations,” of earlier stages in human evolution. Where better to let children explore their naturally savage selves than in the primitive realm of the forest? The popular nature writer Ernest Thompson Seton (who later helped found the American Boy Scouts) took Hall’s advice one step further, encouraging boys to dress up like Indians and perform pagan dances by the campfire. “The Medicine Man should have a drum



**These are pictures of boys taken when the Camp opened and again when it closed**



NOTE THE MUSCULAR FIRMNESS, GENERAL POSTURE, AND MENTAL ATTITUDE OF THESE BOYS AFTER EIGHT WEEKS IN CAMP

**Suck it in:** A 1935 flyer for Camp Mishawaka in Minnesota boasts of a body-conscious improvement program that would do Gold's Gym proud.

and be able to sing the *Mujje Mukesin*,” Seton wrote in his detailed instructions for one such dance. “One or two fellows who can howl like wolves should be sent off to one side, and another that can yell like a lynx or a panther on the other side.”

And hovering in Mother Nature’s shadow was the specter of social Darwinism. As conceived by the English philosopher Herbert Spencer and other 19th-century thinkers, social Darwinism was a half-baked attempt to deploy the theory of evolution in defense of economic hierarchy. The mantra of social Darwinists—“survival of the fittest”—assured prosperous Americans that they deserved their prosperity (since they were demonstrably most fit), but it also stoked anxieties that prosperity was softening their male offspring. Too much comfort and etiquette robbed boys of “vigorous manliness,” Roosevelt worried, and would turn them into a race that “has lost the great fighting, masterful virtues.” Summer camp was the cure. Camp directors pledged to counter “the weakening feminine influences” of home life, as one camp director put it, with a character-building dose of the Great Outdoors.

From the first private boys’ camps of the late 19th century, other camps soon followed. Beginning in the early 20th century, private girls’ camps offered a sanitized and domesticated version of the boys’ camps, emphasizing community and simplicity over competition and privation. Organiza-

tional camps, notably those run by the YMCA, were less costly and more inclusive alternatives for middle-class children. Another middle-class camping alternative, the Boy Scouts, was established in England in 1907 by Robert Baden-Powell, but quickly became an all-American institution. The Camp Fire Girls, founded in 1910, provided a female counterpart.

And still more camps—hundreds more, then thousands more—sprang up: Communist camps, socialist camps, Quaker camps, Jewish camps, charity camps for the poor, all found a place in the woods. Each supplied its own mythologies, its own explanation for how nature improved children. For every camp that suggested that nature made youngsters more competitive or more pious, another suggested that it made them more creative or more cooperative or more egalitarian. Elite private boys’ camps recommended a stint in the outdoors to toughen up overly civilized lads; camps for the poor described their environs as a civilizing refuge from the squalor of the urban jungle. Nature was the Leatherman of child development—an all-purpose tool that served as needed.

But if camps’ doctrines varied, their programs were similar. The kids at the camp run by the socialists did more or less what the kids did at the camp run by the social Darwinists. And the conviction that camp *mattered*, that it was an essential rite of childhood, remained a core shared principle. “The organized summer camp,” Harvard’s former



president Charles W. Eliot proclaimed in 1922, “is the most important step in education that America has given the world.”

**M**uch has changed in the last 120 years. Children spend less time than ever in nature and more time in front of computer screens, televisions, and video games, and attached to cell phones. They are less physically active and softer—nearly one in five children between the ages of six and 19 is overweight. Teddy Roosevelt would be horrified.

Looking back, it is clear that camps were never really a refuge from the outside world. They reflected adult orthodoxies and anxieties from the start. Camp was, and still is, a lifestyle choice before it is anything else. Will it be the coed camp where kids grow their own food in the garden and competition is frowned upon? Or will it be the single-sex, uniform-wearing, sports-oriented camp? Will it be the camp with the website featuring smiling white faces, or the one with a more diverse array of skin tones? Will it be the camp with electrified screened-in cabins and flush toilets, or the one with musty tents, kerosene lamps, and outhouses? We may think we are developing our children’s personalities by sending them to camp, but we are revealing much about our own prejudices, too.

One of camp’s draws is nostalgia: Everything else changes, but camp remains the same. Of course, this isn’t really so. Many of today’s camps are wired to the gills. Even the most rustic and traditional have websites on which they post frequent updates, along with photographs and videos, for parents throughout the summer. Camp directors of the past would have scoffed at these high-tech apron strings.

But some things are more or less as they have always been. Camps still offer a deeper immersion in nature than most American children are likely to experience elsewhere. Camps still promise that this immersion will, in the words of the American Camp Association, “help children develop the healthy emotional and social skills necessary to grow into strong, considerate, competent adults.” Earlier this year, Peg Smith, director of the association, picked up the old refrain. “It’s not about camp,” she told an audience of camp directors, “but about making people better.”

That’s a difficult claim to prove. A child returning from music camp is more adept at playing an instrument or not; a child back from fat camp is 15 pounds lighter or not. But what of the child who returns from plain old sleepaway camp? How do you measure the kind of “stuff” Michael Eisner writes about? The American Camp Association cites a 2005 study in which 5,000 camper families filled out a questionnaire about camp’s effect on their children. Not surprisingly, the responses were generally positive. Seventy percent of parents reported that their child gained self-confidence. Pardon me if I take this study with a grain of salt. Parents’ responses may be a real measure of camp’s success in molding children into better, happier human beings. But they may also be a measure of wishful thinking.

Maybe it’s my own wishful thinking, but I don’t need a study to tell me camp is good for kids. For all my skepticism, for all my suspicion that the “stuff” Eisner celebrates carries a whiff of the stuff deposited from a bull’s back end, I’m still inclined to believe it. My own camp baptism—those teeth-chattering, early-morning polar bear dips in New Hampshire’s Little Squam Lake—may partly explain my faith. I can’t say I loved every moment of camp or even, frankly, remember many moments. (My most vivid recollection is lying in my bunk one August night in 1974 and listening to Richard Nixon resign over the camp’s PA system.)

But camp did leave its mark. I know how to split wood with an ax, light a fire with birch bark, and properly stern a canoe. No matter that I am rarely called upon to demonstrate these skills in Manhattan. It satisfies me to know I possess them. More deeply, my affection for nature, the real pleasure it brings me—even in the city—was fed by the pine forests and cold lakes and wood smoke of my childhood summers. I could have done without the archery and the sing-alongs, but I am convinced that simply living in the woods for a month each summer enriched my life as much as, for example, the books I read. Will my own children be happy campers as adults because they spent a few summers learning to burn and whittle sticks in the woods? I can’t prove it, but damned if some part of me doesn’t buy it.

Leaving aside the intangibles of moral and spiritual well-being, the fact is that camp is short-term fun for kids, does no apparent grave harm, and is therefore sufficiently valuable in its own right without the mumbo



As camps such as this one in Newton, New Jersey, sprang up in the early 20th century, bunking in nature for the summer became an American rite of passage.

jumbo. (Let's stipulate, though, that some kids find camp exquisite torture. A perfect antidote to Eisner's warm and fuzzy memoir is Jim Shepard's dry-eyed short story "Courtesy for Beginners," about a lonely boy stuck in the summer camp from hell; moments after his arrival, the boy watches a counselor casually kick another camper in the face.)

Perhaps the best argument for summer camp is one I came upon under the heading "Boys Camp" in *Appletons' Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1888*. The benefit of sending children away, *Appletons'* told readers, is that camp "renders it quite impossible for them, in the exuberance of their youthful spirits to become, even unconsciously, a source of annoyance to their elders."

One night last winter, around the time camp deposits

were due, I came up with my own rationale for summer camp, one not likely to appear on the ACA's website. I'd woken up worrying about the usual three-in-the-morning concerns, until eventually my thoughts ran to the really scary stuff. Terrorism. Global warming. And then it hit me: My two gung-ho campers would not be heading off into the New England woods this summer merely to bask in whimsical primitivism or engage in youthful shenanigans. They'd be developing—God forbid the worst should happen—a useful post-apocalypse skill set. While other city slickers struggled to survive without a microwave, my boys would be cooking up feasts in the forest.

So *that's* why we were sending the kids to that pretty little camp in Vermont? Well, no. But should the end of the world ever come, camp will have been worth every penny. ■

# The Traffic Guru

*An unassuming Dutch traffic engineer showed that streets without signs can be safer than roads cluttered with arrows, painted lines, and lights. Are we ready to believe him?*

BY TOM VANDERBILT

IF YOU WERE ASKED TO NAME A FAMOUS TRAFFIC engineer, in some pub quiz gone horribly wrong, chances are slight you could hazard a good guess. It is true that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, president of Iran, was trained as a traffic engineer, but his notoriety does not derive from tinkering with the streetlights in Tehran. Bill Gates got his start developing software for a device to count car traffic, but he was a computer boffin more interested in the technology than the traffic. Your memory might flicker in recognition at the names of William Phelps Eno, the putative “father” of traffic control, or Henry Barnes, the onetime New York City traffic czar credited with inventing the “Barnes Dance,” wherein an entire intersection, for a moment, is given over to a four-way pedestrian crossing.

Traffic engineers are rather obscure characters, though their work influences our lives every day. A geographic survey of East Lansing, Michigan, for example, once found that more than 50 percent of the retail district was dedicated to “automobile space”—parking, roads, and the like. By and large, the design and management of this space is handed over to traffic engi-

neers, and our behavior in it is heavily influenced by their decisions.

In the last few years, however, one traffic engineer did achieve a measure of global celebrity, known, if not exactly by name, then by his ideas. His name was Hans Monderman. The idea that made Monderman, who died of cancer in January at the age of 62, most famous is that traditional traffic safety infrastructure—warning signs, traffic lights, metal railings, curbs, painted lines, speed bumps, and so on—is not only often unnecessary, but can endanger those it is meant to protect.

As I drove with Monderman through the northern Dutch province of Friesland several years ago, he repeatedly pointed out offending traffic signs. “Do you really think that no one would perceive there is a bridge over there?” he might ask, about a sign warning that a bridge was ahead. “Why explain it?” He would follow with a characteristic maxim: “When you treat people like idiots, they’ll behave like idiots.” Eventually he drove me to Makkinga, a small village at whose entrance stood a single sign. It welcomed visitors, noted a 30 kilometer-per-hour speed limit, then added: “Free of Traffic Signs.” This was Monderman humor at its finest: a traffic sign announcing the absence of traffic signs.

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Dutch traffic engineer Hans Monderman, shown in 2005, sought to make roads feel dangerous so that pedestrians and drivers would navigate them with care.



Monderman wasn't an obvious candidate to become a traffic revolutionary. Born in the small Friesland village of Leeuwarden, son of a headmaster, he worked as a civil engineer, building roads, then as an accident investigator, examining how crashes happen. But he was an unusually fluid thinker. Over lunch during my visit, he excitedly told me that he had been reading about the theory that delta societies tend to foster innovation because of their necessary flexibility in dealing with potentially changing landscapes. He saw a parallel with the low-

felt human and organic.

A year after the change, the results of this "extreme makeover" were striking: Not only had congestion decreased in the intersection—buses spent less time waiting to get through, for example—but there were half as many accidents, even though total car traffic was up by a third. Students from a local engineering college who studied the intersection reported that both drivers and, unusually, cyclists were using signals—of the electronic or hand variety—more often. They also found, in surveys, that residents, despite the measurable increase in safety, perceived the place to be more dangerous. This was music to Monderman's ears. If they had *not* felt less secure, he said, he "would have changed it immediately."

**TRAFFIC ENGINEERS KNOW that we think waits are longer when we don't know how long they will be.**

lying Netherlands. "I think the Dutch are selected for that quality—looking for changes—by the landscape."

And Monderman certainly changed the landscape in the provincial city of Drachten, with the project that, in 2001, made his name. At the town center, in a crowded four-way intersection called the *Laweiplein*, Monderman removed not only the traffic lights but virtually every other traffic control. Instead of a space cluttered with poles, lights, "traffic islands," and restrictive arrows, Monderman installed a radical kind of roundabout (a "squareabout," in his words, because it really seemed more a town square than a traditional roundabout), marked only by a raised circle of grass in the middle, several fountains, and some very discreet indicators of the direction of traffic, which were required by law.

As I watched the intricate social ballet that occurred as cars and bikes slowed to enter the circle (pedestrians were meant to cross at crosswalks placed a bit before the intersection), Monderman performed a favorite trick. He walked, backward and with eyes closed, into the *Laweiplein*. The traffic made its way around him. No one honked, he wasn't struck. Instead of a binary, mechanistic process—stop, go—the movement of traffic and pedestrians in the circle

Not surprisingly, these kinds of counterintuitive findings made news. But often, the reports reduced Monderman's theories to a simple libertarian dislike for regulation of any kind. Granted, he did occasionally hum this tune. "When government takes over the responsibility from citizens, the citizens can't develop their own values anymore," he told me. "So when you want people to develop their own values in how to cope with social interactions between people, you have to give them freedom." But his philosophy consisted of more than a simple dislike of constraints. He was questioning the entire way we think about traffic and its place in the landscape.

In several years of research for a book on traffic, I interviewed any number of engineers, but none, save Monderman, referred to Marcel Proust. In *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913–27), Proust famously waxes lyrical on the ways the automobile changed our conception of time and space. When a driver says it will take only 35 minutes to travel by car from Quetteholme to La Raspelière, the narrator is moved to reflect: "Distances are only the relation of space to time and vary with it. We express the diffi-

culty that we have in getting to a place in a system of miles or kilometers which becomes false as soon as that difficulty decreases. *Art is modified by it also*, since a village which seemed to be in a different world from some other village becomes its neighbor in a landscape whose dimensions are altered.”

Proust, unlike critics such as John Ruskin (who argued that “all traveling becomes dull in exact proportion to its rapidity”), saw much to extol in this new mobility, as did his Belgian contemporary Maurice Maeterlinck. In his 1904 essay “In an Automobile,” Maeterlinck enthused that “in one day,” the car gave us “as many sights, as much landscape and sky, as would formerly have been granted to us in a whole lifetime.” The railway had already radically altered conceptions of time and space, as standardized time united villages in which previously, as Thomas Hardy described it, “one-handed clocks sufficiently subdivided the day.” But the car liberated us still further, from fixed destinations and schedules.

Monderman was interested in this notion that the car changed time and space. He commented on Proust’s observation that a visit to a relative that once took a few days could now be completed in one. Suddenly, more trips could be made, but each trip seemed shorter. “What happened to these people?” said Monderman. “They had gone to their uncle’s, spent three days. Suddenly they’re in a hurry. . . . It’s quite simple—they bought a car. The first thing put in a car is a clock, ticking away in an objective linear time. In the past time went different. They woke with the chickens, and went to bed when it became dark. You had your own time schedule depending on what the seasons told you. Suddenly we can measure the whole day around objective time.”

The implications are clear to any modern driver. Commute times are precisely that—times—with distance obliterated, as if we were driving across the face of a clock. Cities have essentially expanded in size to the extent that new transportation means have arisen to keep commuting *times* more or less stable. Pedestrians, on the other hand, who possess a more intimate knowledge of the geography they are traversing (and must provide the actual power to do so), tend to think in terms of distance. As a New Yorker, my first instinct is to think of some destina-

tion in terms of how many blocks away it is, not how long the walk is.

Progress in traffic is measured in time, and it is striking to hear Proustian phrases such as “lost time” appear in the engineering literature. At traffic lights, for example, “start-up lost time” is the time consumed as cars in a line successively begin to accelerate from a stop. The time that drivers toward the back lose as the queue begins to creep forward is the sum of everyone else’s lost time. Commuters, too, dread “losing time” in traffic.

Time, of course, is highly subjective. Traffic experts have long known that people in traffic tend to feel they are making more progress at a slow, continuous clip than if, over the same distance, they wait at a long traffic light, then drive quickly to the next light. Traffic plays into what is known as “queue psychology”: We think waits are longer when we don’t know how long they will be, or when we are alone, for example. David Levinson, a researcher at the University of Minnesota, has found that drivers view waiting on the highway as less onerous than waiting for a “ramp meter” light to allow them to merge onto the highway.

Monderman believed that the best way to change the conception of time—and thereby to change people’s behavior—was to change the context. This simple insight was one of the foundations of his traffic revolution, which took root a decade before he remade Drachten. In the mid-1980s, Monderman, then a regional safety inspector for Friesland, was dispatched to the small village of Oudehaske to check the speed of car traffic through the town’s center (two children had been fatally struck). Previously, Monderman, like any good Dutch traffic engineer, would have deployed, if not an actual traffic light, the tools of what is known as “traffic calming”: speed bumps, warning signs, bollards, or any number of highly visible interventions.

But those solutions were falling out of favor with his superiors, because they were either ineffective or too expensive. At a loss, Monderman suggested to the villagers, who as it happens had hired a consultant to help improve the town’s aesthetics, that Oudehaske simply be made to seem more “villagelike.” The inter-



How to get from Point A to Point B? In Jeffrey Smart's *Cahill Expressway* (1962), that's a head-scratcher for a man marooned in a motorists' landscape.

ventions were subtle. Signs were removed, curbs torn out, and the asphalt replaced with red paving brick, with two gray “gutters” on either side that were slightly curved but usable by cars. As Monderman noted, the road looked only five meters wide, “but had all the possibilities of six.”

The results were striking. Without bumps or flashing warning signs, drivers slowed, so much so that Monderman's radar gun couldn't even register their speeds. Rather than clarity and segregation, he had created confusion and ambiguity. Unsure of what space belonged to them, drivers became more accommodating. Rather than give drivers a simple behavioral mandate—say, a speed limit sign or a speed bump—he had, through the new road design, subtly suggested the proper course of action. And he did something else. He used context to change behavior. He had made the main road look like a narrow lane

in a village, not simply a traffic-way through some anonymous town.

What Proust, in his early modernist enthusiasm for the mobility afforded by the automobile, did not seem to foresee was that the ability to conquer distance would lead to the denigration of landscapes between the points of origin and destination, and that once the mass of society had acquired cars, those distances would feel more arduous to cross, thus increasing the pressure of time. As Wolfgang Sachs writes in *For Love of the Automobile* (1992), “The masters of space and time awaken to find themselves slaves of distance and haste.”

And so places such as Oudehaske begin to be read less as villages than as something to be blown through on the way to some great elsewhere. Traffic engineers, in Monderman's view, helped to rewrite these places with their signs and other devices. “In the past

in our villages,” Monderman said, “you could read the street in the village as a good book.” Signs advertising a school crossing were unnecessary, because the presence of a school and children was obvious. “When you removed all the things that made people know where they were, what they were a part of, and when you changed it into a uniform world,” he argued, “then you have to explain things.”

Traffic signs speak to our increased mobility, but also our loss of local knowledge. They are standardized fast food instead of local cuisine. For the past few decades, the geographer Denis Wood has intensively mapped his neighborhood, the Boylan Heights section of Raleigh, North Carolina, to show everything from the distribution of Halloween jack-o'-lanterns on people's porches to the light cast by streetlights. He noticed that the streets with the most signage were those that carried the most people *through* the neighborhood. “The signs were, by and large, not for locals,” he said. Another map showed that the most emergency police calls came from those same streets, typically for crashes: The signs were not necessarily improving safety (though of course it could be argued that without signs there would have been even more accidents).

Monderman envisioned a dual universe. There was the “traffic world” of the highway, standardized, homogenous, made legible by simple instructions to be read at high speed. And there was the “social world,” where people lived and interacted using human signals, at human speeds. The reason he didn't want traffic infrastructure in the center of Drachten or any number of other places was simple: “I don't want traffic behavior, I want social behavior.” The social world had its limits; at some intersections in Drachten, Monderman said, he “wouldn't trust this solution.” The removal of signs and other visual markings could only be done after careful study of conditions such as traffic volume, the geometry of the intersection, and the mix of cyclists and cars. It is precisely this delicate attention to context that Monder-

man felt many of his colleagues lacked in installing traffic controls in the first place: “I call them copy machines. They always do things by the book.”

Monderman's work has inspired or been echoed by a growing number of projects that, in essence, try to replace the traffic world with the social world. His ideas, often under the guise of what is known as the “shared space” movement, have found their way in one form or another into a number of other towns across Europe, from Bohmte, Germany,

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where the town's leaders (after visiting Drachten) decided to scrap the lights and signs at its center, an increasingly busy artery for through traffic, to the “gossip square” in the Swedish town of Norrköping, where cars, bicycles, and pedestrians cross streams of traffic in a central plaza largely devoid of markings.

Despite Monderman's successes in places such as Makkinga and Drachten, skeptics have objected that while these arrangements are fine for small villages, they could never work in cities with heavy traffic. A project in London, undertaken a few years ago independently of Monderman, suggests otherwise. On Kensington High Street, a busy thoroughfare for pedestrians, bikes, and cars, local planners decided to spruce up the street and make it more attractive to shoppers by removing the metal railings that had been erected between the street and the sidewalk, as well as “street clutter,” everything from signs to hatched marks on the roadway. None of these measures complied with Department for Transport standards. And yet, since the makeover there have been *fewer* accidents than before. Though more pedestri-



ans now cross outside crosswalks, car speeds (the fundamental cause of traffic danger) have been reduced, precisely because the area now feels like it must be navigated carefully.

While Monderman addressed conferences and municipal governments in the United States on several occasions during his lifetime, his ideas have not been adopted here in any meaningful way. One reason is that the United States has yet to fully embrace even traditional traffic calming methods. Collectively, Americans are still trying to wrap their heads around the fact that roundabouts are safer (and generally move traffic more efficiently) than conventional signalized intersections.

If Monderman's ideas seem heretical to many in the United States, it's worth considering exactly who created the American system in the first place, and why. In *Fighting Traffic*, a fascinating history published earlier this year, Peter D. Norton documents how the automobile industry, in concert with self-proclaimed traffic experts, helped shift the debate on urban traffic safety during the 1920s. As motorization levels soared, measures such as "speed governors" on engines, a once popular idea, fell out of favor, and the urban street was redefined from a place with various uses to a channel for moving the most vehicular traffic as quickly as possible.

And this is what we got: an entire infrastructure of inner-city expressways and elevated pedestrian crossings, whose ethos of separation was adopted under the banner of safety but was meant to move cars through cities faster (and even that strategy backfired, as the available space quickly filled with new drivers). The traffic infrastructure was intended to make cities safer for pedestrians by removing them from the street; but in any vital city this was, of course, never possible. The illusion of safety—roads built so that, as one engineer put it, "accidents will be impossible"—simply brought new dangers, and degraded the very qualities that made cities attractive: spontaneity, locality, interactions at human scales.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given how long we have lived with this built ideology, Monderman's ideas encounter two common criticisms. The first is that measures that appeal to the

better angels of our nature could never work in a country such as the United States, where drivers seem stubbornly reluctant to "share the road" even with other cars, much less pedestrians and cyclists, and the threat of a lawsuit hovers over the smallest traffic intervention. It is true that if a local government is to remove the signs from a busy intersection, and orchestrate the smooth movement of bicycles and cars through it, strong social norms must be in place. But norms can be influenced by context. Picture, for example, the improvised grass parking lots at county fairs: no stop signs, no speed limits, no markings of any kind—maybe just some kids with flags telling you where to go. But people, by and large, drive and walk in a cautious manner. There is no great epidemic of traffic fatalities at county fairs.

The other objection Monderman's ideas often meet is that people do act like idiots, and that, if anything, we need more separation, more safeguards, more rules. Standing with me near the roundabout in Drachten, Monderman noticed a driver speeding past. "There's a little part of society who don't accept rules, who don't accept social structures," he said. "It's not up to a traffic engineer to change it." A few weeks earlier, he said, a local 21-year-old who had just gotten his driver's license had died in a crash. "He used drugs, alcohol. There's not a street that can cope with that problem."

Traffic signs, for Monderman, were an invitation to stop thinking, to stop acting on one's own volition. In streets designed to safely handle the actions of the riskiest participants, everyone slips into riskier behavior. As he put it to me, "There are so many things that can be forbidden. The stranger thing is that we believe everything that isn't forbidden is allowed."

Monderman loved cars. "I like to drive really fast on the Autobahn," he admitted. But he did not love the accommodations that had been made to cars everywhere outside the Autobahn—the garish, oversized warning signs, the pens for pedestrians, the anonymous asphalt roads. For decades, traffic engineers have pursued, with the best of intentions, an impossible goal: the elimination of accidents. Monderman questioned how safe this kind of safety was. More fundamentally, he asked if mature automobile societies could, in essence, act like adults. ■



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# The Burden of the Humanities

*What use are the humanities? Even some scholars no longer seem sure. But at a time when bioengineering throws into question what it means to be human, the answer should be obvious.*

BY WILFRED M. McCLAY





*Landscape (1994), by Mark Tansey*

LAMENTATIONS ABOUT THE SAD STATE OF THE humanities in modern America have a familiar, indeed almost ritualistic, quality about them. The humanities are among those unquestionably nice endeavors, like animal shelters and tree-planting projects, about which nice people invariably say nice things. But there gets to be something vaguely annoying about all this cloying uplift. One longs for the moral clarity of a swift kick in the rear.

Enter the eminent literary scholar Stanley Fish, author of a regular blog for *The New York Times*, who addressed the subject with a kicky piece entitled “Will the Humanities Save Us?” (Jan. 6, 2008). Where there is Fish there will always be bait, for nothing pleases this contrarian professor more than double-crossing his readers’ expectations and enticing them into a heated debate, and he did not disappoint.

He took as his starting point Anthony Kronman’s pas-

sionate and high-minded book *Education’s End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (2007), in which Kronman argues that higher education has lost its soul, and can only recover it by re-emphasizing the building of character through the study of great literary and philosophical texts. Fish was having none of such “pretty ideas.” There is “no evidence,” he sniffed, that such study has the effect of “ennobling” us or spurring us on to noble actions. If it did, then the finest people on earth would be humanities professors, a contention for which the evidence is, alas, mostly on the other side.

Teachers of literature and philosophy possess specialized knowledge, Fish asserted, but they do not have a ministry. The humanities can’t save us, and in fact they don’t really “do” anything, other than give pleasure to “those who enjoy them.” Those of us involved with the humanities should reconcile ourselves to the futility of it all, and embrace our uselessness as a badge of honor. At least that way we can claim that we are engaged in “an activity that refuses to regard itself as instrumental to some larger good.”

This sustained shrug elicited a blast of energetic and mostly negative response from the *Times*’ online readers. To read through the hundreds of comments is to be reminded that Americans do seem to have a strong and abiding respect for the humanities. For many of these readers, Fish’s remarks failed the test of moral seriousness, and failed to come to terms with exactly what it is that makes the humanities special, and places upon them a particular task, a particular burden, in the life of our civilization. That one of the humanities’ most famous, influential, and well-paid elder statesmen would damn his own livelihood with such faint praise seems in itself a perfect indicator of where we now find ourselves.



What does it mean to speak of the “burden” of the humanities? The phrase can be taken several ways. First, it can refer to the weight the humanities themselves have to bear, the things that they are supposed to accomplish on behalf of us, our

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nation, or our civilization. But it can also refer to the near opposite: the ways in which the humanities are a source of responsibility for us, and their recovery and cultivation and preservation our job, even our duty.

Both of these senses of burden—the humanities as preceptor, and the humanities as task—need to be

combine to make all the fearsome transgressions of the past into the iron cages of the future, and leave the human image permanently altered.

The mere fact that there are so many people whose livelihood depends on the humanities, and that the humanities have a certain lingering cultural capital associated with them, and a resultant snob appeal, does not mean that they are necessarily capable of exercising any real cultural authority. This is where the second sense of burden comes in—the humanities as reclamation task. The humanities cannot be saved by massive increases in funding. But they can be

saved by men and women who believe in them.



**IT IS A BAD SIGN that defenders of the humanities become tongue-tied when a layperson asks what they are and why we should value them.**

included in our sense of the problem. The humanities, rightly pursued and rightly ordered, can do things, and teach things, and preserve things, and illuminate things, which can be accomplished in no other way. It is the humanities that instruct us in the range and depth of human possibility, including our immense capacity for both goodness and depravity. It is the humanities that nourish and sustain our shared memories, and connect us with our civilization's past and with those who have come before us. It is the humanities that teach us how to ask what the good life is for us humans, and guide us in the search for civic ideals and institutions that will make the good life possible.

The humanities are imprecise by their very nature. But that does not mean they are a form of intellectual finger-painting. The knowledge they convey is not a rough, preliminary substitute for what psychology, chemistry, molecular biology, and physics will eventually resolve with greater finality. They are an accurate reflection of the subject they treat, the most accurate possible. In the long run, we cannot do without them.

But they are not indestructible, and will not be sustainable without active attention from us. The recovery and repair of the humanities—and the restoration of the kind of insight they provide—is an enormous task. Its urgency is only increasing as we move closer to the technologies of a posthuman future, a strange, half-lit frontier in which bioengineering and pharmacology may

First, we should try to impart some clarity to the term “humanities.” It is astounding to discover how little attention is given to this task. More often than not, we fall back upon essentially bureaucratic definitions that reflect the ways in which the modern research university parcels out office space. The commonest definition in circulation is a long sentence from a congressional statute—the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965, the legislation that established the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. As you might expect, this rendition is wanting in a certain grace. But here it is: “The term ‘humanities’ includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism, and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.”

In some respects, this provides a useful beginning. But doesn't it tacitly assume that we already understand the thing being defined? Rather than answer the larger question, a long list merely evades it. One doesn't capture the animating goals of a manufacturing firm merely by listing all of the firm's discrete activities, from procurement of raw materials to collection of accounts receivable. The task of definition requires that some overarching *purpose* be taken into account.

It is a bad sign that defenders of the humanities become tongue-tied so quickly when a layperson asks what the humanities are, and why we should value them. Sometimes the answers are downright silly. At a meeting of the American Council of Learned Societies two years ago in Philadelphia, the subject was "Reinvigorating the Humanities," but the discussion was anything but vigorous. Consider this witticism from Don Randel, then the president of the University of Chicago and president-elect of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation: "When the lights go out and our friends in science haven't developed a national energy policy, they'll be out of business. We, with a book of poems and a candle, will still be alive." Well, we'll see about that. This is the kind of airy-fairy, self-congratulatory silliness that gives the humanities a bad name. And when Pauline Yu, president of the council, addressed herself to the big, obvious question—Just what will it take to reinvigorate the humanities?—the answer was stupefyingly predictable. What was needed was, in the immortal words of the great American labor leader Samuel Gompers, *more*: more money, more fundraising attention from university leaders, more support from Congress, more jobs for professors.

The fixation on a Gompers agenda suggests that many of those who speak for the humanities, especially within the organized scholarly disciplines (history, English, and the like), have not quite acknowledged the nature of the problem. The humanities reached unprecedented heights of prestige and funding in the post-World War II era. But their advocates can only dream of such status today. Now the humanities have become the Ottoman Empire of the academy, a sprawling, incoherent, and steadily declining congeries of disparate communities, each formed around one or another credal principle of ideology and identity, and each with its own complement of local sultans, khedives, and potentates.

And the empire steadily erodes, as colleges and universities eliminate such core humanities departments as classics (or, at the University of Southern California, German), and enrollment figures for humanities courses continue to fall or stagnate. Even at Anthony Kronman's Yale College, which has an unusually strong commitment to the humanities and many stellar humanities departments, the percentage of undergraduates majoring in humanities fields has fallen sharply since 1986, from half of all majors to just over a third.

The thing most needful is not more money, but a willingness to think back to first principles. What are the humanities, other than disciplines with "humanistic content"? What exactly are the humanities for, other than giving pleasure to people who enjoy playing inconsequential games with words and concepts?



It is perhaps more helpful, if still somewhat abstract, to say that "the humanities" include those branches of human knowledge that concern themselves with human beings and their culture, and that do so in ways that show conversancy with the language of human values and respect for the dignity and expressive capacity of the human spirit.

But this can be stated more directly. The distinctive task of the humanities, unlike the natural sciences and social sciences, is to grasp human things in human terms, without converting or reducing them to something else: not to physical laws, mechanical systems, biological drives, psychological disorders, social structures, and so on. The humanities attempt to understand the human condition from the inside, as it were, treating the human person as subject as well as object, agent as well as acted-upon.

Such means are not entirely dissimilar from the careful and disciplined methods of science. In fact, the humanities can benefit greatly from emulating the sciences in their careful formulation of problems and honest weighing of evidence. But the humanities are distinctive, for they begin (and end) with a willingness to ground themselves in the world as we find it and experience it, the world as it appears to us—the thoughts, emotions, imaginings, and memories that make up our picture of reality. The genius of humanistic knowledge—

and it is a form of knowledge—is its commensurability, even consanguinity, with the objects it helps us to know. Hence, the knowledge the humanities offer us is like no other, and cannot be replaced by scientific breakthroughs or superseded by advances in material knowledge. Science teaches us that the earth rotates on its axis while

without them. Certainly not in the same sense that we can't get along without a steady supply of air, water, and nutrients to sustain organic life, and someone to make candles and books for the world's poets. But we need the humanities in order to understand more fully what it means to be human, and to permit that knowledge to shape and nourish the way we live.

For many Americans, not just Stanley Fish, such a statement goes against the grain. After all, we like to think of ourselves as a practical people. We don't spend our lives chasing fluffy abstractions. We don't dwell on the past. We ask hardheaded questions

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revolving around the sun. But in the domain of the humanities, the sun still also rises and sets, and still establishes in that diurnal rhythm one of the deepest and most universal expressive symbols of all the things that rise and fall, or live and die.

It utterly violates the spirit of literature, and robs it of its value, to *reduce* it to something else. Too often, there seems to be a presumption among scholars that the only interest in Dickens or Proust or Conrad derives from the extent to which they can be read to confirm the abstract propositions of Marx, Freud, Fanon, and the like—or Smith and Hayek and Rand, for that matter—and promote the right preordained political attitudes, or lend support to the identity politics du jour. Strange, that an era so pleased with its superficially freewheeling and antinomian qualities is actually so distrustful of the literary imagination, so intent upon making its productions conform to predetermined criteria. Meanwhile, the genuine, unfeigned love of literature is most faithfully represented not in the universities but among the intelligent general readers and devoted secondary-school teachers scattered across the land.



**T**he chief point to make here is that the humanities do have a use, an important use—an essential use—in our lives. Not that we can't get along

such as Where does that get you? How can you solve this problem? What's the payoff? If you're so smart, we demand, why aren't you rich?

Well, there's nothing wrong with concentrating on the "uses" of something. The difficulty comes when we operate with too narrow a definition of "use." At some point, we have to consider the ultimate goals toward which our life's actions are directed. What makes for a genuinely meaningful human life? Of what "use" are things that fail to promote that end? If you're so rich, we must ask, why aren't you wise—or happy?

And that brings me to a characteristically humanistic way to relate a truth: by telling a story. The tale begins with a tourist on holiday, wandering through the back alleys of San Francisco's Chinatown, where he comes upon a little antique shop, filled with curious pieces of bric-a-brac and art objects. What especially catches his eye is a beautifully wrought, life-size bronze statue of a rat. He asks the elderly shopkeeper the price. "The rat costs \$12," says the shopkeeper, "and it will be \$1,000 more for the story behind it." "Well, you can keep your story, old man," responds the tourist, "But I'll take the statue."

The tourist leaves the store with the statue under his arm. As he crosses the street, he is surprised to see two rats emerge from a storm drain and fall into step behind him. He looks nervously over his shoulder and starts to walk faster. Soon more rats appear and begin



to follow him. In a few minutes vermin are coming out of every sewer, basement, and vacant lot, forming themselves into swarms and packs and massing in step behind him. People on the street point and shout as the rodents force him into a trot, then a dead run. The rats, now squeaking and squealing grotesquely, stay right behind him.

By the time he reaches the water's edge, the line of rats trailing him extends back for 12 city blocks. It's a terrifying spectacle. In desperation, the tourist leaps as high as he can onto a lamppost and grasps it with one arm while, with the other, he flings the statue as far as he can into the waters of San Francisco Bay. To his amazement, the hordes of rats race right by him and follow the statue, surging over the breakwater and leaping into the bay . . . then promptly drowning.

Immediately, the tourist hurries back to the antique shop. When he appears at the door, the shopkeeper smiles knowingly and says, "Ah, yes, sir. So now you've seen what the statue can do, and you've come back to find out the story?" "No, no, no," replies the tourist excitedly. "I don't care about that. But can you sell me a bronze statue of a lawyer?"

The story is good for a laugh, but it also illustrates a point. The tourist in this story is interested only in the immediate uses of things. He couldn't care less about "knowing the story," the context in which the statue came to be, and which would explain the source of its special powers. This lack of curiosity is part of the joke. But doesn't the punch line assume that we agree with him? If the statue can have such amazing effects, who cares how it works? A picture may be worth a thousand words, but no story is worth a thousand bucks.

This, I'm afraid, is the characteristic American attitude toward the past. "You can keep your story, old man; I'll take the statue." But our tourist friend also makes a serious error of judgment, assuming that all bronze statues from this shop will have the same effect. How can he possibly know that, until he has heard "the story?" His lack of interest in "the story" is not only crude, it is foolish. Hasn't he learned that you get what you pay for?

Yet this attitude, or something like it, is all too common in our culture. One is particularly aware of the problem if one is a teacher of American history, at a

time when the state of general knowledge of our past is abysmally low and sinking. It is profoundly important for us to resist this tendency. For you can't really appreciate the statuary of our country—our political and social and economic institutions—or know the value of American liberty and prosperity, or intelligently assess America's virtues and vices against the standard of human history and human possibility, unless you pay the price of learning the stories.



If the humanities are the study of human things in human ways, then it follows that they function in culture as a kind of corrective or regulative mechanism, forcing upon our attention those features of our complex humanity that the given age may be neglecting or missing. It may be that the humanities are so hard to define because they have always defined themselves in opposition. That becomes clearer if we look back at the role played by the humanities (or by cultural activities that we can legitimately call by that name) in earlier times.

Some notion of the humanities first began to arise out of the Greek conception of *paideia*, a course of general education dating from the mid-fifth century BC that was designed to prepare young men for active citizenship. It was further developed in the Roman notion of *humanitas*, set forth in Cicero's *De Oratore* (55 BC). Early Church Fathers, notably St. Augustine, would adapt the Greek and Roman ideas to a program of Christian education, built around the study of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy. For classical and early Christian thinkers alike, these disciplines were thought to have value because they aided human beings in the fulfillment of their highest human nature, a rational nature that was assumed to be elevated above and distinct from that of mere animals.

By the Renaissance, though, the point of reference had changed somewhat. The *studia humanitatis*, as the "humanists" of 15th-century Italy called them, shifted emphasis toward subjects that were human, not as opposed to animal, but as opposed to *divine*. Hence, their object was notably more secular than religious in character, though partaking of both attributes. They were grounded in a recommitment to classical forms of learning that had been de-emphasized (though never entirely

lost) during the Middle Ages. Such logic carried the day, perhaps even carried it too well—for the philosophes of the 18th-century Enlightenment later rejected the *studia humanitatis* precisely because of their heavy emphasis on Latin and Greek studies. Inspired by the success of burgeoning modern science and bored by the pedantic study of ancient classical texts, Denis Diderot and the other French Encyclopedists thought it long past time to move on to new things.

By the 19th century, the proper domain of the humanities had undergone another transformation. They now began to take their identity, not so much from the human distance from the realm of the divine, but instead from the human distance from nature—specifically from nature as understood by the increasingly influential physical sciences. These ripening disciplines, such as mathematical physics, tended to picture the world and its phenomena

general harmonious expansion of those gifts of thought and feeling which make the peculiar dignity, wealth, and happiness of human nature.” Culture was, for him, the “study of perfection,” a force for balance and integration whose function was particularly vital to a civilization that was sadly becoming “mechanical and external,” and tending constantly to become more so. “Faith in machinery,” he insisted, was “our besetting danger.”



**W**e live in a different age, far less enamored of the machine, if far more dependent upon it. Which raises, in a different way, the question of the humanities’ past and future. Do any of these three previous understandings of the humanities—the human as opposed to the animal, the divine, or the rational-

mechanical—have any meaning in our times? All three still do, and will continue to. Each has derived its power from its willingness to assert, and insist upon, some crucial aspect of what it means to be human, some aspect that the conditions of the day

**THE HUMANITIES REMIND US that  
the ancients knew things about man that  
modernity has failed to repeal.**

“objectively” and mechanistically, without reference to human subjectivity and meaning. It was now the distinctive role of the humanities to counter this tendency, to picture the world differently from the sciences, and thereby to preserve the heart and spirit and affective properties of the human being in what seemed increasingly to be a soulless and materialistic age, dominated by large machines and larger social and economic mechanisms.

The humanities’ new picture took account of some of the same responses to industrialism and utilitarianism that gave rise to the Romantic movement in literature and art. But, as the writings of the poet and critic Matthew Arnold show with special force, the body of knowledge we call the humanities—or, to use his preferred term, “culture”—was increasingly looked to as a substitute for religion in the formation, education, and refinement of humanity’s sentiments and moral sensibilities.

The aims of religion and culture coincided, Arnold claimed, since both concerned themselves with “the

may have threatened to submerge. What we *are* as humans is, in some respects, best defined by what we are *not*: not gods, not angels, not devils, not machines, not merely animals (and ordinarily not rats). The humanities, too, have always defined themselves in opposition, and none of the tendencies they have opposed have ceased to exist, even if they are not as dominant as they once were. That is one of the many reasons why great works of the past—from Aristotle to Dante to Shakespeare to Dostoevsky—do not become obsolete, and have shown the power to endure, and to speak to us today, once we develop the ability to hear them. Indeed, one of the repeated themes of Western intellectual history is the revival of the present by the recovery of the past, a principle most brilliantly exemplified by the Italian Renaissance’s self-conscious appropriation of classical ideals, but also illustrated in our own time by the sustained interest in the recovery of classical philosophy as the platform for a penetrating critique of modernity.

But there can be little doubt that the principal challenges to humanity's humanness have always shifted over time. In our own age, the very category of "the human" itself is under attack, as philosophers decry the hierarchical distinction between humans and animals, or humans and nature, and postmodernists of various stripes proclaim the disappearance of the human "subject." We also are far less clear about what we mean by the word "culture," and about the standards by which it is judged, including most notably the clear distinction between "high" and "low," let alone "excellence" and "mediocrity." Matthew Arnold felt reasonably confident that we could agree upon what constituted "the best" examples of humanistic expression. But we are not so certain that such a category even makes sense anymore.

Still, if the past is any guide, what we call "the humanities" will survive and thrive, however we choose to define them. Indeed, it seems likely that they will experience yet another transformation in the years to come—one that will be, as all the transformations of previous eras have been, an assertion, or reassertion, of some essential element in our humanity that is being neglected or debased or misunderstood. Just what form it will take is impossible to say with any certainty. But I think it possible that the transformation may already be taking its bearings from the problems and prospects now opening before us in the realms of biotechnology and medicine. These developments—human cloning, genetic engineering, artificial wombs, species melding, body-parts manufacture, bionic and pharmacological enhancements, and many others—are not necessarily favorable to our human flourishing; nor are they necessarily threats to it. But they call into question precisely the inherent limitations that have always figured into what it means to be human, and throw open the windows of possibility, in ways both terrifying and exciting.

One of the ways that the humanities can indeed save us—if they can recover their nerve—is by reminding us that the ancients knew things about humankind that modernity has failed to repeal, even if it has managed to forget them. One of the most powerful witnesses to that fact was Aldous Huxley, whose *Brave New World* (1932) continues to grow in stature as our world comes increasingly to resemble the one depicted in its pages. In that world, as one character says, "everybody's happy," thanks to endless sex, endless consumer goods, endless youth, mood-altering drugs, and all-consuming entertainment.

But the novel's hero, who is named the Savage, stubbornly proclaims "the right to be unhappy," and dares to believe that there might be more to life than pleasure: "I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin." In the end, the Savage is put on display as if he were a rare zoo animal: the Nietzschean "Last Man."

Huxley understood that there was something nobly incorrigible in the human spirit, a restlessness and conflictedness that is built into the constitution of our humanity, an unease that somehow comes with being what we are, and that could not be stilled by a regime of mere good feeling, or willingly be sacrificed for its sake. But he also teases and taunts us with the possibility that we might be willing to give up on our peculiarly betwixt-and-between status, and give up on the riddle that every serious thinker since the dawn of human history has tried to understand. Huxley was disturbing, but also prescient, in fearing that in the relentless search for happiness, it is entirely thinkable that human beings might endeavor to alter their very nature, tampering with the last bastion of fate: their genetic constitution. Should that happen, supreme irony of ironies, the search for human happiness would culminate in the end of the human race as we know it. We would have become something else. The subject, man, would have been devoured by its object.

This is, of course, not really so different from the self-subverting pattern of the 20th century's totalitarian ideologies, which sought to produce "happy" societies by abolishing the independence of the individual. Yet the lure of a pleasure-swaddled posthumanity may be the particular form of that temptation to which the Western liberal democracies of the 21st century are especially prone. Hence the thrust of Huxley's work, to remind us that if we take such a step in our "quest to live as gods" we will be leaving much of our humanity behind. One of those things left behind may, ironically, be happiness itself, since the very possibility of human happiness is inseparable from the struggles and sufferings and displacements experienced by our restless, complex, and incomplete human natures. Our tradition teaches that very lesson in a hundred texts and a thousand ways, for those who have been shown how to see and hear it. It is not a lesson that is readily on offer in our increasingly distracted world. It is the work of the humanities to remind us of it, and of much else that we are ever-more disposed to forget. ■

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# SAVING THE WORLD\*

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Doing good is hard work, and it is getting harder all the time. Humanitarians confront a long list of challenges around the world, from natural disasters in Asia to soaring food prices. They also face a growing number of discomfiting moral complications. Is it really helping, for example, to provide aid that props up African dictators or allows warring groups to continue fighting? For the rising international humanitarian movement, a critical moment has arrived.

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# Humanitarian Dilemmas

*The rapid expansion of relief efforts since the end of the Cold War has produced a surprising result: a series of difficult moral questions about the humanitarian enterprise.*

BY G. PASCAL ZACHARY

IN JANUARY, AS I SIPPED A COOL NILE SPECIAL IN far northern Uganda, I watched a group of U.S. Army soldiers file into the open-air bar where I sat. They were not in uniform, but their bearing and speech gave them away.

We were in a poor, dusty town named Gulu, eight hours by bus from the capital, Kampala. Night was falling, and as the soldiers ordered local beers, I wondered where they came from. Then I did a simple calculation. By helicopter, these troops could reach Garamba National Park in neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in roughly 30 minutes. There, in the jungle, Joseph Kony, Africa's most notorious war criminal, was hiding.

Over the last 20 years, Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army have abducted tens of thousands of children in Uganda and killed or raped untold numbers of adults, most of them members of his own Acholi ethnic group. At the peak of Kony's power, several years ago, nearly two million Acholi cowered in refugee camps, dependent on interna-

tional aid organizations for sustenance. Uganda's army has been unable—and, some critics insist, unwilling—to kill or capture Kony. Though the International Criminal Court has indicted Kony for crimes against humanity, it has no means of apprehending him.

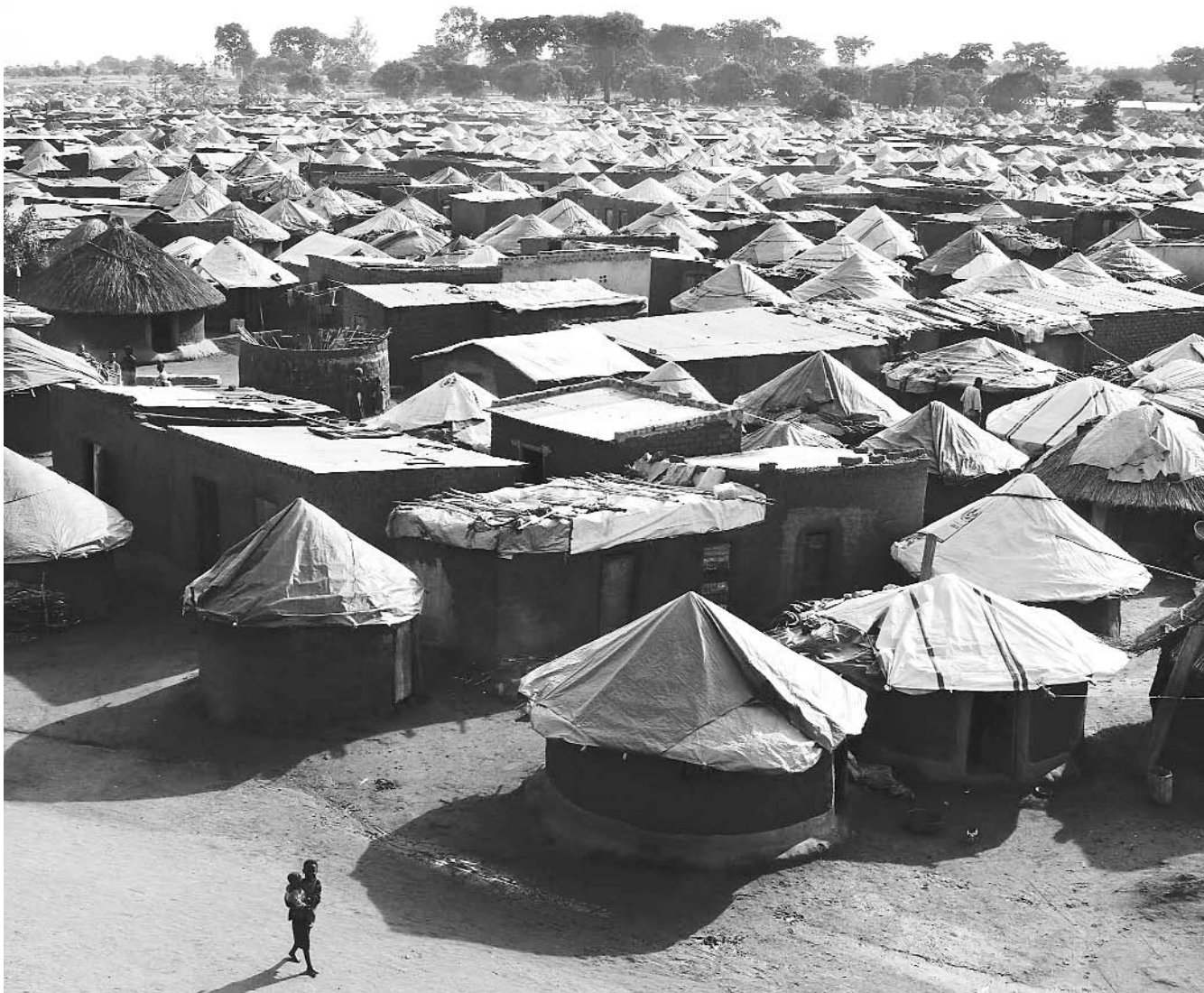
In a single Rambo-like sweep, these American soldiers could end Kony's reign of terror. I wondered if I had stumbled onto the scoop of my life.

As it happened, I was in the bar to meet the highest-ranking U.S. official posted in Gulu. A few minutes later, Christine turned up and ordered passion juice, a local favorite. I asked her if the Americans in the bar were soldiers.

She said they were from the Pentagon's new African command in Djibouti.

G. PASCAL ZACHARY is the author of *Married to Africa*, a memoir to be published by Scribner in January. He is a former foreign correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal* and a consultant on African issues to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The views expressed here are his own.





For more than a decade, the Pabbo camp in northern Uganda has been home to some 50,000 people displaced by the country's civil war.

My mind flashed to a threat reportedly made last year by the U.S. assistant secretary of state for African affairs. On a visit to Kampala, Jendayi E. Frazer is said to have told Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni that his army had three months to finish Kony off once and for all—or the United States might send its own soldiers to do the job.

“Are they here to get Joseph Kony?” I asked.  
Christine started to laugh.

“They are animal doctors, livestock specialists,” she said.  
“They are here to vaccinate cows against diseases.”

“You’re joking.”

“I’m serious. Go ahead. Ask them.”

Yes, they said, they were on a humanitarian mission to inoculate local Ankole cattle.

“So you’re sticking to your cover story,” I said skeptically.  
The soldiers laughed. Then one rolled up a pant leg to



expose a big, black bruise. “I got kicked in the leg today,” he said.

A comrade added, “African cows are dangerous.”

I wished the soldiers were lying, but they weren’t. Armed humanitarian intervention is still rare. American airpower helped put an end to ethnic cleansing in Kosovo in 1999, and the United States has intervened in Haiti and elsewhere. Leaning partly on humanitarian arguments, the United States has overthrown hostile governments in Iraq and Afghanistan. In Africa, however, U.S. soldiers don’t start wars—or end them. Instead, U.S. tax dollars, along with funds from foreign donors and private charities such as World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, and the American Refugee Committee, are devoted to another kind of humanitarian intervention, aimed at relieving the suffering of people trapped in war zones or, as in Zimbabwe, under the calamitous rule of bad governments.

The outsiders come with good intentions and do the best they can. In the DRC, United Nations troops and aid workers have struggled without success to bring stability for 10 years. The people of Somalia, Liberia, and Sierra Leone have endured incredible suffering. And there is the tortured Darfur region of Sudan, where, after five years, more than 2.5 million displaced people still live amid a widening civil war and government-organized predations that have rendered everyday life a kind of nightmare. In response to the horror in Sudan, humanitarians cannot simply organize the overthrow of the government; nor are donors willing to embark on a long-term reconstruction (and occupation) of that vast country. The humanitarians’ only recourse is to try to relieve the suffering of millions of people—often at some peril to themselves. In Somalia, for example, Islamist insurgents have abducted several UN relief workers, including, in late June, the head of UN refugee efforts in Mogadishu.

But as humanitarian organizations have increasingly discovered, even their neutral efforts to help can alter conditions on the ground in unexpected ways. This unpleasant truth became apparent to me in 2000 when a journalistic assignment took me to Burundi, in central Africa. The government was battling an ethnic insurgency in the mountains around the capital, Bujumbura. In order to reduce support for the insurgents, the government forcibly removed thousands of people from the area, emptying whole villages and ordering the inhabitants to move to open ground, where government

soldiers could better prevent them from helping the rebels.

The tactic, a classic of counterinsurgency, created a humanitarian crisis. But not for the government. It summoned private groups and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN’s refugee agency, to deal with the displaced people. Even though they knew that the government itself was responsible for the disaster, the humanitarians came, wallets open.

I remember visiting a makeshift refugee camp with the country director of Catholic Relief Services, a leading humanitarian agency. Thousands of people were spread over the side of a hill, protected from the rains by tarpaulins provided by CRS. As we toured the camp, we were followed by armed Burundian soldiers. The director, a fellow American, was glad to see his tarps being put to good use. But I got angry thinking that CRS was essentially helping the government carry on its war.

“You’re making it cheaper for the government to mistreat its own people,” I barked.

As if he’d heard such reactions before, the CRS man smiled wanly and put his arm around me. “It’s the only choice we have,” he said. “Without us, the people suffer more.”

Our eyes met, and I saw his sincerity. “Where do you draw the line?” I whispered. “When do you walk away?”

Humanitarians themselves are increasingly asking such questions. “Even stalwart defenders of humanitarianism concede that the moral necessity of humanitarian action is no longer self-evident,” write Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss in their introduction to a new collection of essays, *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*. Humanitarianism, they say, “is in the midst of a full-blown identity crisis.”

That identity crisis comes after two decades of rapid growth in the humanitarian enterprise. Modern humanitarianism originated in British abolitionists’ successful campaign against slavery in the first half of the 19th century and the creation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863–64, and it grew in fits and starts through the 20th century. The end of the Cold War brought a vigorous new phase of growth, driven by government and private actors alike, resulting in a large and sophisticated network of humanitarian efforts that Alex de Waal of Harvard’s Global Equity Initiative calls the “humanitarian interna-



tional.” And just as the creation of the U.S. defense establishment after World War II spawned a new breed of defense intellectuals, so the rise of de Waal’s “international” has fostered a new generation of humanitarian intellectuals who concern themselves with the movement’s moral and operational conundrums. Barnett and Weiss, political scientists at the University of Minnesota and the City University of New York Graduate Center, respectively, describe some of the questions that engage the intellectuals, as well as many of their counterparts in the field:

When, if ever, should [humanitarians] request armed protection and work with states? Would armed protection facilitate access or create the impression that aid workers were now one of the warring parties? Should they provide aid unconditionally? What if doing so means feeding the armies, militias, and killers who are responsible for and clearly benefit from terrorizing civilian populations? At what point should aid workers withdraw because the situation is too dangerous? Can aid really make a difference?

Yet for all the pitfalls of humanitarian efforts, it is also clear that staying the course can sometimes pay off. In the summer of 2000, shortly after my trip to Burundi, I traveled to Kosovo, the breakaway Yugoslavian province where a Serb campaign of ethnic cleansing had been halted only by a U.S.-led NATO military intervention in 1999. I went there to visit a refugee family that I had literally followed around Europe during the previous year. I’d first met the Hajdaris in a Macedonian refugee camp. When that temporary haven was hurriedly dismantled amid NATO preparations for a planned assault on Serbia, the family had been moved to Britain, and I caught up with them at their new home in the village of Ulverston, where they bubbled with news that their 13-year-old daughter, Arijeta, got to shake Queen Elizabeth’s hand and thank her in rudimentary English for her country’s generosity. Now, having returned to Kosovo, the Hajdaris had resumed life in their village, Livoç i Poshtëm, where U.S. Army troops guarded the peace. The family, which had been driven out when Serbs burned their home down, returned specifically because of the security provided by the American soldiers. The village still consisted of a mix of Christian Serbs and ethnic Albanian Muslims, and relations were tense.

The American soldiers kept order through the force of

their guns, determination, and discipline. The human benefits were clear. One morning, I walked with Arijeta to her school and quietly observed her in a math class. She sat in her usual chair in the first row, surrounded by four other girls, all of them whispering together and laughing. When the teacher arrived, Arijeta was the first to stand to attention. After school, she took me on a tour of her village and, no longer smiling, told me, “This is the house of the Serbs who burned down our house.”

The Hajdaris wanted to take revenge, but the American soldiers aimed to prevent that, too. In a goodwill gesture, a soldier one day gave Arijeta’s younger brother, Leontiff, a soccer ball. “Americans—good,” the boy said as we kicked the ball around.

The next day, I walked with members of a U.S. Army platoon as they escorted dozens of Serbian children to an elementary school. “We don’t take sides,” a soldier from New Jersey said. A Serb parent commented that without the American troops, “we would not feel safe and we would start fighting again.”

In the nine years since NATO intervened in Kosovo, sub-Saharan Africa has increasingly become the focus of the world’s humanitarian efforts. Two centuries ago, it was because of Africa that humanitarians launched their first major campaign of modern times, resulting in the abolition of the slave trade in the British Atlantic in 1807 and the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833. Today, sub-Saharan Africa is home to more humanitarian crises than any other region in the world. And these crises also seem to last longer, and require more resources, than any other. Seven UN peacekeeping operations are currently under way in sub-Saharan Africa, including one in the DRC that began in 1999. The total for the rest of the world is 10.

Giving help to distant Africans can be a perilous undertaking. Somalia and Rwanda taught us that. In Somalia, the United States failed in 1993 to halt a civil war; the image of dead American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu remains a grim rejoinder to anyone who might advise sending combat troops into an African war. The following year, when Hutus fell upon Tutsis in Rwanda, the world stood by and watched as nearly one million people were killed in a genocidal slaughter. But what shook the confidence of humanitarian groups even more deeply than the failure to halt the Rwandan genocide was the aftermath,



Two U.S. naval crewmen carry an injured Banda Aceh woman to a waiting helicopter in January 2005. Indonesian officials allowed international relief teams to enter areas devastated by a tsunami, but this year Myanmar's government rebuffed a similar outpouring of aid to help victims of Cyclone Nargis.

when a Tutsi guerilla army led by Paul Kagame took over the government and ignited a mass exodus of Hutus. The international community responded with aid for the Hutus who sought refuge at camps in the DRC, but the camps became havens for Hutu killers, who used them to stage fresh attacks on Tutsis in Rwanda. "Many aid workers were shaken, demoralized, and haunted by their experience in Rwanda where their aid prolonged the suffering of those in the camps that were controlled by the [Hutu] *genocidaires*," write Barnett and another coauthor, Columbia political scientist Jack Snyder. "Aid workers want to know how they can do their jobs better and how to make the most of their limited resources."

Out of the Rwandan crackup came demands for a more robust, self-critical, and efficiency-minded humanitarianism that pledged, in the words of Mary Anderson, a leading practitioner, to "do no harm." In a 1999 book with those words as a title, Anderson bluntly concluded, "Aid too often

also feeds into, reinforces, and prolongs conflicts." Another response to Rwanda has been the evolution of humanitarian codes and protocols, some of which are quite elaborate, even daunting, in their complexity. In some quarters, the high-minded do-gooder of the past has come to be seen as a throwback, or even a hazard. "Humanitarian assistance, particularly in the midst of conflicts and disasters, is not a field for amateurs," argues Kevin M. Cahill, director of Fordham University's Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs, in *Basics of International Humanitarian Missions* (2002). "Good intentions are a common but tragically inadequate substitute for well-planned, efficiently implemented operations that, like a good sentence, must have a beginning, a middle, and an end."

Even as they confront the tension between their traditional mission to do good and the need to think about all manner of unintended consequences, humanitarians are also weighing a third element: tackling the root causes of

humanitarian crises, and delivering the sort of aid that might provide durable “insurance” against them.

There is an undeniable logic to this kind of approach, but when they try to address long-term needs, humanitarian organizations cross over into the field of development assistance—and risk not only losing their focus and effectiveness but blundering into new minefields.

**N**orbert Mao understands the promise and perils of modern humanitarianism as well as anybody on the planet. Mao is an Acholi (the group has a taste for bestowing the names of famous people on their children) who lives in Gulu. At 41, he is the highest elected official in Gulu District and the most influential elected official in northern Uganda, as well as a leader of a national opposition party. Among foreign diplomats Mao is universally respected, and with the help of the U.S. government he recently spent an academic year at Yale University. I first met him late one night in the same bar where I encountered the American soldiers. Mao said

he had supported the new wave of assistance that began to arrive in 2004 after the United Nations declared the situation in northern Uganda one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. “Relief was necessary, but these relief efforts now need to be scaled down,” he said. The foreigners had overstayed their welcome and, without any sanction from local authorities, had created a parallel government that is accountable to no one, cripples self-reliance, and fosters Acholi dependence on handouts.

Mao’s complaints were partly self-serving, since failures by all branches of the Ugandan government had given rise to the need for outside aid in the first place. But Mao justifiably complained about the sanctimony often displayed by individual aid workers—“disaster tourists,” he called them—and their insensitivity toward the culture of his conservative, patriarchal society. He bristled over their interference in matters that go well beyond emergency relief. He has tangled frequently with the

American Refugee Committee, which has taken on the mission of providing refuge to abused wives. Mao argued that the humanitarian groups “are embracing a new agenda simply to stay relevant.” He said he held 15 or more meetings a week with international aid agencies just to stay abreast of what they were doing.

The shooting war has ended in northern Uganda, and so has the need for urgent relief, yet the development requirements of the region are huge. The Lord’s Resistance Army hasn’t mounted any attacks in nearly two years; Joseph Kony’s long-time sponsor, the government of Sudan, has cut off its support. By any measure, northern Uganda is now safer than many parts of the United States. But the region’s people live in a peculiar limbo, a condition that

**“HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE,  
particularly in the midst of conflicts and  
disasters, is not a field for amateurs,”  
argues analyst Kevin M. Cahill.**

James Nyeko, leader of a local interfaith council, has described as “no peace, no war.” Efforts to end the lingering threat posed by Kony have repeatedly failed. The Ugandan army, which had little trouble striking deep into the DRC in an orgy of looting in the 1990s, has proved strangely unable to dispatch the ragtag remnant of Kony’s forces. Peace negotiations have dragged on inconclusively since 1993. Not surprisingly, many observers have concluded that the prospect of losing the humanitarians’ largesse has left the government less than eager to end the conflict.

The rebels, too, have incentives to stop short of peace. In Uganda, as in other cases, they can steal humanitarian aid, impose a “tax” on recipients, or, in some instances, receive aid directly. The negotiators for the Lord’s Resistance Army receive direct financial support from European donors, including a per diem allowance for days spent representing Kony (who gets a kickback) in peace talks. (And aid givers aiming at “root causes” of violence and rebellion, such as

poverty, sometimes essentially reward insurgents for taking up arms.)

Other pathologies are less obvious. Because the end of war means an end to food, housing, and other foreign assistance, requests for postconflict aid often become a stumbling block in negotiations in places such as Uganda. Not only do

had long manipulated the “humanitarian international,” steering donated food and other goods to supporters of the regime. In one widely reported example this year, the government seized a truck loaded with 20 tons of American wheat and pinto beans destined for poor schoolchildren and blatantly gave the food to Mugabe supporters. Good intentions, in short, were exploited to strengthen Mugabe’s repressive regime.

“Zimbabwe is a huge patronage system, and ZANU-PF [Mugabe’s political party] drives that system,” Eldred Masunungure, a political scientist at the University of Zimbabwe, told *The New York Times*. “Food distribution is not only

**HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS require just the right mix of force and charity, sympathy and structure, blind will and determined follow-up.**

combatants demand money to lay down their arms and start a new life, but people who live in refugee camps often expect cash “buyouts” to return to their original homes—after all, they are giving up a number of benefits.

At first blush, Zimbabwe would seem to present fewer complexities and traps for well-intentioned outsiders than Uganda. Aid agencies have for years been providing food and medical relief to poor people in the southern African country, where economic and social conditions have steadily deteriorated. The agencies have scrupulously avoided politics and any overt concern for the longer-term future of Zimbabwe in order to avoid running afoul of the country’s president-cum-dictator, Robert Mugabe. The posture of one prominent agency, World Vision, which says it helps meet the basic human needs of one million Zimbabweans per month, or nearly 10 percent of the population, is typical. By “maintaining minimal activities in the field and sticking to activities that have little ‘community mobilization,’” World Vision says it has steered clear of anything remotely threatening to Mugabe’s government.

Yet even this very narrow dedication to the immediate relief of suffering has proved unsustainable. This past June, on the eve of the country’s bitterly contested but eventually derailed presidential runoff election, Mugabe shut down all aid operations, claiming they were strengthening his political opponents. While Westerners bemoaned Mugabe’s step, Zimbabwean dissidents presented a more nuanced interpretation. They insisted that Mugabe’s government

a matter of life and death to recipients, but it’s a strategic political resource that the government deploys to promote its political agenda.”

In order to succeed, humanitarian efforts require a “Goldilocks” solution—just the right mix of force and charity, sympathy and structure, blind will and determined follow-up. Getting that mix right, as in Kosovo, is difficult but not impossible. Some measure of military support can help some of the time. In Francophone West Africa, France’s military forces often intervene to bolster failing states or halt civil wars. Earlier this year, the government of Chad—nobody’s idea of a model regime—was kept in power by a timely threat by French forces, which happen to have a permanent base in the country. A few years before that, in Côte d’Ivoire, French troops intervened in a civil war between the Muslim North and Christian South. While the willingness of the French government to send troops into Africa violates—or obliterates—the sovereignty of these countries, there is a humanitarian benefit. In Francophone Africa, there is a distinctly lower incidence of humanitarian crises. One can argue that the French end up keeping bad governments in power, such as Paul Biya’s in Cameroon and Omar Bongo’s in Gabon, but they prevent the sort of barbaric disorder that has engulfed Somalia, Sudan, and parts of Congo.

The lesson is not that military intervention per se prevents humanitarian disasters but that—notably in



Africa—the intervention of soldiers from a single powerful country equipped with extensive local knowledge, often acting unilaterally, can decisively reduce the incidence and severity of humanitarian crises.

Yet timing military interventions is something of a crapshoot, and there is no science to choosing opportunities. The best results, again, seem to involve former colonial armies in Africa. Elsewhere in the world—notably Iraq and Afghanistan—military intervention designed to bring about regime change, and done partly in the name of reducing human suffering, can have the opposite effect. Of course, many humanitarian crises don't permit even the remote possibility of a military response. When Myanmar's ruling junta made it all but impossible for outsiders to help the victims of a devastating cyclone and tidal wave earlier this year, there were scattered calls in the West for using force to get aid into the country, but there was little prospect of action. Despite efforts to chip away at the concept of national sovereignty—a UN summit in 2005 endorsed the principle that outsiders have a “responsibility to protect” people facing certain kinds of threats, regardless of national borders—sovereignty remains alive and well in the real world. Many developing countries regard the new principle as a thinly veiled effort by the West to find a way to impose its values on them, and, in any event, it is rare that many nations can be rallied to a risky and expensive cause in which they have no direct interest. The continuing ability of nation-states to chart distinct courses guarantees that humanitarianism will often be simply an exercise in providing Band-Aids for grievous and painfully lingering wounds.

Humanitarians will continue to need patience and a willingness to make the best of bad situations. Even in Kosovo, where humanitarians were backed by military force and worked under conditions of relative peace and security, billions of dollars were required to help a relatively small number of people and still for a long time it appeared that the state of political and social limbo might last forever. In northern Uganda, however, the perverse incentives of humanitarian assistance may be merely prolonging a stalemate. Still, the limbo of dependency and interference in local affairs by the “humanitarian international” is much preferable to the resumption of war.

The Goldilocks solution is unsatisfying to scholars and many practitioners, since it acknowledges that we don't know what is working until after it has been done.

Purists who don't want humanitarian aid to help the Mugabes and Konys of the world, either directly or indirectly, can't be happy with the Goldilocks solution either. And those who wish humanitarian aid to tackle long-term problems and root causes—in essence, to serve legitimate development aims—will also be disappointed. As a practical matter, the relief of suffering is an achievement that can be measured day by day, while creating sustainable benefits and structural changes in societies can only be judged over long periods of time.

Whatever its shortcomings, the Goldilocks solution—getting humanitarian intervention *just right*—cannot be judged on measurable outcomes alone. Humanitarianism is ultimately about our humanity: how we choose to live. Good intentions are not enough, but they are still something.

A couple of months ago, I was reminded of how much the purely human aspect of humanitarianism matters when I received an e-mail from Arijeta Hajdari. I'd not heard from her or her family for years. Coincidentally, her message arrived just days before Kosovo gained full sovereignty after nine years of UN rule. Arijeta wrote in halting English that her family was well. Her parents had, finally, a brand-new house to replace the one destroyed by the Serbs. Her brother, Leontiff, was studying architecture and still playing soccer. Arijeta herself was attending Kosovo's leading university, in Priština. She was 21 years old and studying criminology. She wanted to pursue a career in law-enforcement. Attached to her e-mail was a photograph of her with friends, dressed well, perhaps at a party. She was smiling.

She asked me about my son and daughter and whether I remembered how they played with her and Leontiff in the English town where she met the queen of England. And did I recall another time, she asked, when her family came to visit mine in London? And how the Hajdaris had stayed in our house, and we showed them around the city?

I wrote back to Arijeta and told her that, indeed, we all remembered the Hajdaris and were happy to learn they were well.

Minutes later, another e-mail came from Kosovo. “It is lovely to hear from you,” Arijeta wrote. “I thought that you had forgotten us.”

I have not. ■

# Call It Slavery

*The abolition of slavery was the great cause of 19th-century humanitarians. In the 21st century, it needs new champions.*

BY JOHN R. MILLER

“SO YOU’RE GOING TO RUN THE STATE DEPARTMENT’S trafficking office!” a friend exclaimed when he heard the news. “What qualifications do you have to run a motor pool?” That was back in 2002, and despite a history of involvement in human rights issues as a congressman from the state of Washington, I was almost as much in the dark about human trafficking as my friend. Like most Americans, I assumed that slavery had ended in the 19th century. As I was to learn during the next four years, slavery may be illegal, but it still flourishes around the world, even in the United States. Despite the phenomenal increase in worldwide humanitarian concern, it remains one of the most curiously neglected issues of our time.

During my years as director of the U.S. State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, and later as ambassador at large on modern slavery, I met with many survivors of slavery: sex slaves; farm, factory, and domestic servitude slaves; child soldier slaves; even children enslaved as camel jockeys in the Persian Gulf states.

In an Amsterdam hospital I encountered Katya, who recalled how, as a Czech teenager with a disinte-

grating marriage and a two-year-old daughter, she was told by a “friend of the family” that she could make good money waiting on tables in Amsterdam. A Czech trafficker drove Katya and four other girls to the Netherlands, where he linked up with a Dutch counterpart. After they took the girls’ passports for “safe-keeping,” the men drove Katya to a brothel in Amsterdam’s red-light district. When Katya said that she had come to work in a restaurant, she was told that she owed the traffickers thousands of euros for transporting her across Europe. When Katya continued to resist, she was told she must do the men’s bidding if she hoped to see her daughter alive. She was freed only after several years, through the efforts of a friendly taxi driver who enlisted a gang to intimidate her captors.

In Bangkok, I met a teenager named Lord at a Catholic shelter. She told me that her parents in the hills of Laos had sold her at the age of 11 to a woman who promised to educate her. She was then resold to a Bangkok embroidery factory, where she was forced to sew 14 hours a day without pay. When Lord protested the first time, she was beaten; the second time, she was shot in the face with a BB gun. She was locked in a closet; her captors poured industrial chemicals on her face. Bars across windows and doors kept Lord and other girls from leaving. They were finally rescued in a government raid.

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A Filipina mother holds out a photograph of her missing daughter, who hasn't been heard from since she was recruited to work overseas as a maid.

In Uganda I talked with Nancy, who had been abducted at gunpoint along with her sister from their family's garden by the Lord's Resistance Army, then forced to march to a remote camp where she was trained to kill. (I did not have the heart to ask if she had been forced to kill relatives and friends, a common practice.) Nancy tried to escape, was caught and beaten, then was turned over to a rebel commander to serve as his concubine. Nancy escaped only when her jaw was shot off in a clash with government soldiers and she was left behind to die.

In the United States I met with Susan, an African-American woman in her twenties who had been terrorized since her teens by her Minneapolis pimp. He exerted such control over her that she didn't know how to buy groceries, take a bus, or interact with people outside "the business."

It is not a coincidence that the vast majority of the former slaves I met were women and girls. Sex and domestic servitude slaves are the largest discrete categories in human trafficking across international bor-

ders. As many as 80 percent of all slaves are women or girls, making human trafficking, as antislavery activist Michael Horowitz calls it, "the great immediate women's issue of our time." Not surprisingly, feminists, along with faith-based groups, have become the biggest advocates of abolition.

Because slavery is universally illegal—though it was banned in Saudi Arabia only in 1962 and in Mauritania in 1981—its existence is subterranean. There are no reliable estimates of the number of people held in bondage. The U.S. State Department and the International Labor Organization put the figure in the millions. The State Department estimates that as many as 17,500 slaves are brought into the United States every year, from many different countries, and it is likely that trafficking within the United States involves several times as many people. As is the case elsewhere in the world, most American slaves toil in brothels, massage parlors, and other sex businesses, or as domestic servants. A large proportion of those who come from abroad arrive by perfectly legal means, often in the

company of “handlers” who help them obtain tourist or business visas.

As I grappled with the enormity of the crimes I encountered and the near silence that surrounded them, I turned to history for insight, and especially to the example of William Wilberforce (1759–1833), the great British reformer who led the 20-year campaign in Parliament to abolish the slave trade in the British Atlantic. In 1807, Parliament officially outlawed the horrible trade that every year saw thousands of human beings carried off from Africa to sugar plantations in the West Indies and to other

rights organizations and other groups to pay attention to slavery. Freedom House, for example, does not weigh slavery in *Freedom in the World*, its respected country-by-country annual survey of human rights around the world. One reason is that victims of slavery tend to be isolated, relatively poor, and badly educated. They don’t hold press conferences. But people deprived of their political and religious rights are often educated and articulate. If they can’t speak for themselves, they have spokespersons who can.

Clarity about what is going on before our eyes, I discovered, can be a potent weapon. On a visit to Japan in 2004, I held a press conference to highlight the

peculiar fact that Tokyo had issued 85,000 visas to female “entertainers” from the Philippines in 2003. The Japanese government quickly responded, and by 2006 the number of visas was down to 5,700. Not all governments are as sensi-

**TODAY’S SLAVES ARE not dragged off in chains, but they are just as effectively deprived of their freedom by force or threats.**

British outposts in the Americas. Even so, slavery was not abolished in the British Empire until 1833, the year of Wilberforce’s death.

In modern parlance, Wilberforce was a “values” politician. He was an evangelical Christian who confronted centuries of institutional support for slavery, even within organized religion. Evangelicals and their Quaker allies took on the task of making Britain see that the long-accepted and rarely questioned institution of slavery was an abomination. Wilberforce had more than moral force at his command; he was a masterful strategist and orator. Edmund Burke compared him to Demosthenes. Even James Boswell, who maliciously described the stooped, five foot one British parliamentarian as a “dwarf,” expressed amazement after watching him deliver a speech: “I saw what seemed a mere shrimp mount upon the table; but as I listened, he grew, and grew, until the shrimp became a whale.”

For today’s antislavery activists, I realized, much of the task is the same as it was in Wilberforce’s time: to awaken others to an abomination that most people barely recognize. It is a measure of the challenge that remains that activists still need to persuade human

tive to American opinion as Japan’s, but the State Department’s annual *Trafficking in Persons Report*, which rates the efforts of 170 countries to suppress slavery, has been a useful attention getter on many occasions.

In Wilberforce’s day, slavery was shrouded in euphemism by its defenders: “field hand,” “laborer,” and “house-boy.” Today, the news media and academics unthinkingly use words—“forced laborer,” “child soldier,” and “sex worker”—that have their own anesthetic effect, and along with others I have insisted on calling slavery by its right name. I have never understood why we constantly use the bloodless, bureaucratic term “human trafficking.”

Today’s slaves are not dragged off in chains, but they are just as effectively deprived of their freedom by force or threats. They are bought, sold, and leased. For years during the Bosnian civil war a sex slave auction operated in Belgrade, and many auction sites thinly disguised as sex tourism sites have functioned on the Web. Slaves may receive some pay for their work, but their wages amount to no more than the subsistence provided to peo-



ple in bondage in the past. Because it is illegal, the trade is dominated by organized crime. It takes a network of workers to persuade a woman like Katya to leave her home country, to sell and transport her, and to keep her terrorized for years. Some law enforcement officials believe that the trade in humans is the third-largest source of profits for organized crime, after drugs and arms.

Unlike the slaves of yesterday, those of today are not captured in raids or warfare, but usually are either deceived into or in some cases willingly enter into slave status, then find themselves trapped. Yet, as in the past, the slave trade is defined by greed, sexual exploitation, beatings, and rape. Race is still a factor. In Mauritania, lighter-skinned descendants of Arab invaders sometimes ensnare darker-skinned Africans in slavery as shepherds or domestics. In India, the survivors of sex and agricultural slavery I met tended to be darker-skinned members of lower castes.

In most countries, what distinguishes the victims is not their color but their foreignness or otherness. Most of the survivors I talked to were attracted by the promise of a job in a distant land. Once there, they found themselves in unfamiliar surroundings and unable to escape. It is difficult to flee when you know neither the local language nor the geography, and when you have no friends or family outside your small world to turn to for help. I rarely met survivors who had been enslaved in their own community. Moldovan women are enslaved in Dutch brothels, Indonesian men on Malaysian construction sites, and Filipinas in Saudi Arabian homes.

Poverty often propels people into slavery, causing families, for example, to sell their children. But the equation is not always simple. In Indonesia, Save the Children found that some impoverished villages produced many slavery victims while similar villages nearby produced very few. A study in Nigeria showed that the villages that sent the most victims to Italy were not the poorest ones but those where television was available. As that study suggests, visions of opportunity drive many victims into the hands of modern slave traders, and often these slaves are people with some resources of their own. An Indonesian woman named Nour



**An ounce of prevention:** Bulgaria's Diva Foundation warns local women to be wary of recruiters promising to find them glamorous jobs abroad in fashion and other fields.

whom I met in Saudi Arabia paid a recruiting agency thousands of dollars to obtain work as a maid in Saudi Arabia, where she hoped to earn far greater sums to send home. But her masters confined Nour to a house, and beat her until gangrene forced the amputation of several fingers and toes.

As Wilberforce saw, well-intentioned reformers rob the abolitionist cause of some of its power by seeking to improve the conditions of slavery rather than end the institution itself. In the 18th century, the high-minded Dutch boasted of having the cleanest slave ships. Today's reformers call for better ventilation in factories for coerced workers and condoms and health inspections for those who may be enslaved in prostitution. The 21st-century Dutch are leading exponents of the idea that legalizing and regulating prostitution can reduce sex slavery. But as they have discovered, it is hard

to promote a legalized sex trade, with its inevitable links to organized crime, without becoming a magnet for slave traders, and city officials in Amsterdam are now working to shrink the city's famous red-light district. Germany, which has also embraced legalization, has almost 10 times the number of people engaged in prostitution as neighboring France, and, correspondingly, more trafficking victims.

There is no dearth of multinational agreements designed to address trafficking, including the United Nations' Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2003). But in all my travels, I never encountered a government that attributed a specific action to an international covenant. Indeed, some of the governments with the worst reputations for non-enforcement, such as Mexico and Equatorial Guinea, were among the first to ratify the UN protocol. The UN's own moral authority in this area has been compromised by the fact, documented in a 2004 report to the organization by Prince Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein of Jordan, that UN peace-keeping troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries have been guilty of rape and of using food and money to entice children into sex.

There is no substitute for solid national laws and vigorous enforcement, and obtaining both requires moral suasion from abroad and, most of all, constant effort by non-governmental organizations in each country. Prosecutors convicted more than 3,000 slave owners and traders around the world in 2007, up from just hundreds seven years ago. But far too many countries still treat slave trading lightly. In Germany and other European nations, convicted traffickers often get only suspended sentences or probation. Near Chennai, India, I met members of three generations of a lower-caste family—a boy, his father, and his grandfather—who had been freed by the government after many years of servitude as bonded laborers, working to pay off a debt to a local businessman who ensured that the debt grew ever larger. (With their millions of victims, India and Pakistan are the great exceptions to the rule that most modern slaves travel across national borders.) Just when I was feeling pleased with the provincial government's efforts, the father pointed to the rice mill where they had toiled. It was still operating, and the owner had not been punished—he was bringing in more slaves to replace those who had been released.

A situation in which the educational stakes are higher is difficult to imagine. Preventive education is vital, especially

in alerting potential victims to the risks they face in traveling abroad in pursuit of opportunity. Efforts on the demand side can also be effective. In San Francisco, a mandatory "john school" for men caught soliciting prostitutes that showed them the link between the sex industry and slavery and other ills produced a dramatic drop in recidivism rates; the program has been replicated in other cities. A final imperative is to rescue and protect victims. Most countries summarily deport rescued slaves, but the burden of shame often prevents them from returning to their home villages. Toward the end of my tour as ambassador I saw more shelters being opened, but much more assistance is needed to help these traumatized and poorly educated people make new lives.

When Britain turned against slavery, it threw its military power against human traffickers. After Parliament passed the Slave Trade Act in 1807, Wilberforce and others prodded the British Admiralty into using part of the British navy to seize slave ships traveling to the Americas, regardless of which country's flag they flew. Britain sacrificed the lives of 600 sailors, but it liberated hundreds of thousands of slaves on the high seas.

There is no military solution for modern slavery. But the United States can continue to campaign for clarity, for action, and for abolition. Our own record bears blemishes and deep stains—both historic and modern—but we have probably done more than almost any other country to eradicate this scourge at home and abroad. Even before the Slave Trade Act, critics argued that Britain had no right to impose its moral values on the world. Wilberforce rightly replied that freedom is a universal value. And when critics insisted that Britain should not act unilaterally—it tried without success to enlist other European nations—his friend and ally, Prime Minister William Pitt, responded, "This miserable argument, if persevered in, would be an eternal bar to the annihilation of evil. How is it ever to be eradicated if every nation is thus prudentially to wait until the concurrence of all the world should be obtained?"

Thus, more than 200 years ago in facing Britain's own moral quandary, Pitt and Wilberforce posed the abolitionist challenge to all nations in all times. Today we need hundreds of Wilberforces in more than a hundred countries to finish the abolitionist revolution. ■

# The New Face of Global Giving

*A new humanitarianism is emerging as private donors and governments respond to the world's needs.*

BY HOLLY YEAGER

IN A BIT OF CRACKLING NEWSREEL FOOTAGE from May 1946, a headline declares “President Buys Food Packages for Starving!” and Harry Truman is seen handing over a \$1,500 check to a representative of CARE, the international humanitarian group. President Truman explains that the new organization will “act as a means for the whole country to provide a hungry person in Europe with food enough for three or four weeks,” and urges the American people to join the effort.

It is remarkable to see Truman, so closely associated with the grand, national-level response of the Marshall Plan, making a plea for this kind of small-scale action. But the clip also shows how much our humanitarian impulse—and the structures through which we express it—has evolved.

Truman seemed to be introducing the very notion that a check written in one country could help someone on another continent (though Americans had already donated generously to relieve famine in Europe after World War I and for other causes). Today, that idea is embedded in the public consciousness. The humanitarian and relief organizations established during World War II and its aftermath—including Oxfam, CARE, and World Vision—have expanded their reach and been joined by hundreds of others.

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The result is a public that thinks nothing of clicking on NothingButNets.net and, for just \$10, joining the fight against malaria (“your bed nets will be added to our next delivery to Africa”), or using GlobalGiving.com (“a marketplace for goodness”) to help finance an irrigation system for 7,000 Gambians or computer skills for 100 Sri Lankan students. Indeed, the humanitarian sector appears to be at a turning point. Today, with private money overtaking public funding and a host of fledgling organizations defining their roles, a new generation is becoming convinced, rightly or wrongly, of its ability to affect the lives of others. These groups have reached a critical mass, prompting them to look anew at how they do business and interact with government, multilateral organizations, and those they serve.

International philanthropy from 22 wealthy nations in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development reached \$42 billion in 2006, according to *The Index of Global Philanthropy 2008*, published by the Hudson Institute’s Center for Global Prosperity. By adding remittances—the funds migrant workers send back home—and foreign direct investment, the center put total private flows to the developing world at \$332 billion. That far exceeded official assistance—humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and development aid—from those countries,

which totaled \$104 billion. (In the United States, official development assistance totaled \$23.5 billion in 2006; private philanthropy destined for similar uses, including funds from universities and religious groups, was \$34.8 billion.) According to the *Index*, “The numbers underscore the dramatic change in how the developed world is now engaging

which now works to fight poverty in 69 countries, as well as smaller ones. Taken together, he said, “it’s actually a sizable response to some of the world’s biggest problems.”

What Worthington calls the sector’s “collective impact” has given the private humanitarian community new sway among governments, businesses, and multilateral organi-

zations. He pointed to a meeting in late May at the World Bank in Washington about the emerging crisis caused by soaring food prices. Top officials from the Bank, the International Monetary Fund, UNICEF, and the UN Food Crisis Task-force participated, along with leaders of 30 civil society

**THE ATTENTION SHOWERED on malaria may be most valuable not for the number of mosquito nets sent to Africa but for what it does to build public will.**

with the developing world—through a large and diverse private sector that is shaping economic growth and social patterns in dramatic and lasting ways.”

Many of the everyday good works carried out by humanitarian and development groups around the world are low profile, and often they have been under way for decades, but they still epitomize the spirit of the movement. The recent documentary *A Walk to Beautiful*, for example, tells the story of a hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, founded by two Australian doctors who arrived in 1959 and wound up staying for a lifetime once they saw a compelling problem. Surprising numbers of poor, undernourished women from the Ethiopian countryside suffered from a condition called fistula, a tear in the bladder or intestine during childbirth that leads to poor hygiene and very often to the complete ostracism of these women by even their closest family. Their lives were ruined. But now they have a place to go for a cure.

While there are countless such small-scale examples, big money, bigger organizations, and ever-bigger roles are forcing the new humanitarianism to confront an entirely novel set of prospects and challenges.

As president and CEO of InterAction, a coalition of 165 U.S.-based relief and development nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working overseas, Samuel Worthington is in the middle of the changes sweeping the humanitarian movement. His group includes large players such as CARE,

groups that work on food delivery and security. “Fifteen years ago, that wouldn’t have happened,” Worthington said. “Now we’re at the table for that conversation.”

The day I spoke with him, Worthington had joined a group of NGO and business leaders for a morning meeting at the White House on relief efforts following the Chinese earthquake. Worthington led the first session, about short-term responses to the emergency, and President George W. Bush quizzed him: “How do you coordinate yourselves?” Worthington explained that because his group’s members operate all over the world, they are often among the first responders to emergencies. With that capability, and the sector’s growth, the humanitarian community now brings deep expertise in coordinating relief.

The sector has also become increasingly professional. While an American teenage girl and her mother may still spend two weeks in the summer painting the interior of an African orphanage, and the two-year Peace Corps stint remains very much in vogue, humanitarian organizations are now attracting people who work in the field for decades and others who have built their careers elsewhere—in the military, in business, in diplomacy.

Indeed, there is a growing sense that mere enthusiasm is not a sufficient qualification for would-be humanitarians. As Tony D’Souza, a Chicago native whose Peace Corps experience in Côte d’Ivoire was the basis for his first novel, *Whiteman* (2006), explained, even the best-intentioned newcomer may find it difficult to be effective.

“You hear that proverb in the Peace Corps all the





**A Congolese woman holds her malaria-stricken child at a hospital run by Médecins Sans Frontières. Of the estimated one million people who die from the disease each year, 90 percent are African children under the age of five.**

time, ‘Give a man a fish, feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime,’” D’Souza said. But when he arrived in a rural Muslim village, “people knew how to fish. They knew how to feed themselves. I was the one who didn’t know how to do a thing.” It took 18 months for D’Souza to learn the local language and mores he needed just to begin the AIDS education he was sent to do. And when all was said and done, “the person who benefited most from that experience was me.”

Discussions of effectiveness in this sphere take many forms—and reports of weakness are easy to come by. A U.S. Government Accountability Office report earlier this year about international efforts to halve hunger in sub-Saharan Africa by 2015 found that Washington had increased food aid funding for emergencies but failed to address underlying conditions—such as low agricultural productivity—and thus to help break the African cycle of food insecurity.

This emphasis on accountability, to both funders and the people aid efforts are supposed to serve, will likely increase, as the humanitarian community competes for support in an increasingly crowded field. But

debates about effectiveness also extend to areas where funding is relatively strong.

Most people in the public-health community are thrilled to see the new energy behind the fight against malaria, which claims the lives of almost one million people a year, most of them Africans. The battle against the disease has been boosted by donors large and small, from schoolchildren who send \$10 to buy bed nets treated with insecticide to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which has pledged to spend millions. Many other high-profile efforts, at the White House, the World Health Organization, and in other quarters, have improved mosquito control, increased supplies of medicine, and made progress on vaccines. But a recent, ambitious call by the Gates Foundation for the eradication of the malaria parasite has prompted concern among some in the field that such a campaign—which would require massive investments in initiatives such as genetically modifying mosquitoes to resist the disease—may detract from effective current efforts that are instead focused on controlling the spread of the scourge and treating those who have it. Critics note that the World Health Organization launched an eradication campaign in 1955 but formally abandoned it 14 years later after the extreme costs of traveling the “last mile” became clear.

Professionals involved in the fight against malaria generally welcome the public attention showered on their cause in recent years—even *American Idol* did its part, contributing a portion of the proceeds from special charity fundraising broadcasts—but they say it may be most valuable not for the number of mosquito nets sent to Africa but for what it does to build public will. “You’re getting people to care, and you’re getting them to be invested stakeholders in the cause,” said one person who works in the global health community. Over the longer term, solid support will be needed for the unglamorous work that remains, including expensive improvements in basic public-health systems in poor countries—improved supply chains for medicine, staff for clinics, and so on.

The rise of many new groups, often with disparate priorities and views about how to tackle such challenges, may at times lead to fierce debates and set organizations working at cross-purposes. But these are growing pains. As Worthington put it, organizations like those he represents “are no longer just a sideshow on the international scene.” ■

# Controlling Passions

*It seemed an obvious answer to the ills of the developing world. So how did the population control movement go so terribly wrong?*

BY MATTHEW CONNELLY

OF ALL THE 20TH CENTURY'S GREAT HUMANITARIAN ventures, none appears to have accomplished more than the campaign to control world population. Fertility rates have declined in every region of the world, and women now bear, on average, half as many children as they did 50 years ago. At a time when poor people are rioting over rising food prices, one could well imagine how many more hungry people there would be if the world's population had continued to grow at its old rate.

Yet few of those who work in family planning today—almost no one uses the term “population control” anymore—are rushing to claim credit for averting disaster. In part that's because studies show that their efforts account for only a very modest share of the decline in fertility. The movement itself is largely becalmed. Aid levels for family planning have been flat or declining since the mid-1990s, even though birthrates remain high in many countries and tens of millions of women in sub-Saharan Africa and other regions still lack access to birth control and safe abortion. Family planning workers in places such as Nigeria and India often find that the people they seek to help suspect their motives, doubt their assurances about the safety of contraceptives, and wonder whether they have a hidden agenda.

That skepticism, and the hesitation of family plan-

ning advocates to trumpet success, is in part the legacy of the movement's own mixed history. As it gained momentum and a sense of urgency after World War II, the movement to reduce population growth encountered an unexpected array of complex practical and moral problems. What happens when a cause suddenly captures the public imagination and money pours in, along with demands for immediate action that can't easily be satisfied? What should be done when ordinary people are reluctant to do what's supposed to be good for them, or for humanity? What if they have more immediate needs that might impede achievement of the global goal? Especially in the 1960s and '70s, the heyday of population control, the movement gave a lot of wrong answers.

Family planning was meant to help people take charge of their own lives, but in India and other developing countries it often came to mean applying varying degrees of coercion, from pushing risky contraceptives on reluctant clients to paying cash rewards to poor people who agreed to be sterilized. In the pursuit of their great goal, population controllers proved willing to sacrifice other efforts to improve the well-being of poor people around the world. And they were so persuaded of the necessity and rightness of their mission that they shielded much of their work from oversight and, more important, accountability to those they were supposed to serve. At a time when some are calling for a major new

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Population control advocates such as the World Bank's Robert S. McNamara, shown in 1968, called for war-like measures to combat the population "crisis."

crusade against global poverty, their story provides a cautionary tale.

Family planning grew out of two somewhat contradictory movements. The eugenics movement, a creature of the 19th century, attracted those who were concerned not just about the numbers but the kind of people who might inherit the earth. Eugenicists aimed to breed better people by sterilizing the "unfit" and encouraging "fitter" parents to have more children. After World War I, feminists promoted birth control as a means of liberating women and preventing poverty and war. "No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body," declared birth control advocate Margaret Sanger. But Sanger, like many other progressives of the day, was sympathetic to eugenics, with its promise to attack the most basic causes of poverty and conflict, and in the 1930s she and oth-

ers forged a broad alliance between feminists and eugenicists under the banner of "family planning"—a slogan that left unspecified who would do the planning.

At first, family planning involved purely voluntary efforts, but that approach looked increasingly inadequate as the Cold War began and national security arguments came to the fore. "We are not primarily interested in the sociological or humanitarian aspects of birth control," wrote Hugh Moore, the cofounder of the Population Crisis Committee. "We are interested in the use which Communists make of hungry people in their drive to conquer the earth." Even those who didn't share in such calculations were alarmed by the brute demographic facts. High birthrates in the world's poor countries combined with declining death rates due to improved nutrition and health pointed ineluctably to rapid increases in population.

This sense of crisis nudged orthodox family planning in the direction of population control: Now contraception

and sterilization would need to be aggressively promoted in poor countries, and specific goals for fertility reduction would need to be set. Population control would take priority over other uses of foreign aid, from education to public health. Research by Rand Corporation economist Stephen Enke purported to prove that paying poor people to agree to sterilization or insertion of an intrauterine device (IUD) would be 250 times more effective in promoting economic development than other kinds of aid. In 1965 one of Enke's studies landed on the desk of President Lyndon B. Johnson, and it convinced him to withhold food aid to India despite

the threat of famine. "I'm not going to piss away foreign aid in nations where they refuse to deal with their own population problems," LBJ insisted. India was already committed to controlling population growth. Now it agreed to begin paying incentives to those who accepted sterilization or IUDs.

In 1968, Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* made population control a national issue. (Ehrlich wrote the book on commission from the Sierra Club in just four weeks—not enough time to confirm some of his data or to notice that the cover's image of a bomb with a burning fuse was captioned, "The population bomb keeps ticking.") With its warning that hundreds of millions of people would starve to death during the 1970s, the book terrified many Americans. Money began pouring in to support population control. In 1969 Congress boosted the U.S. Agency for International Development's budget for family planning to \$50 million (about \$275 million in today's dollars), a 20-fold increase in three years. The USAID administrator, William Gaud, complained that his agency could not possibly spend this sum, but two years later Congress doubled the budget again.

As other Western governments, foundations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) rushed to create programs, they looked to the new United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) as the natural leader. Because family planning faced popular resistance in many poor countries, along with widespread suspicion that it was designed to limit the size and power of the Third World, it was thought that the UN imprimatur would show that population control was a worthy objective for *all* humanity. UNFPA got most of its money from foreign-aid donors such as USAID, and it was governed by an independent board rather than the UN member states, an arrangement that gave it great freedom of action. Rafael Salas of the Philippines was named the first UNFPA director, in no small part because he had been nominated by the philanthropist and population control advocate John D.



"Prosperity in life is through family planning," promises this poster used in a population campaign in Iran during the 1970s. "Many offspring shall bring poverty and misery."



Rockefeller 3rd and because the top UN development official wanted a front man who was “Catholic and brown.” Salas had only a single deputy, who, like him, had no experience organizing family planning programs.

By 1970, a total of 27 countries had announced that they aimed to cut birthrates. But only South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, India, and Pakistan had substantial programs. Everywhere, proponents claimed that there remained enormous “unmet need” for contraceptives. Sweden quadrupled its aid for family planning between 1971 and 1977. Starting at a lower level, Norway, Japan, and the Netherlands increased their budgets eightfold. “I traveled around with tens of millions of kroner in my pockets,” one Norwegian official recalls, “and I had to find a way of spending them.”

The biggest challenge was to establish and rapidly scale up programs in countries that lacked even rudimentary public-health services. “We are undertaking a virtually unprecedented effort at deliberate social change of a very great magnitude,” said Bernard Berelson, president of the Population Council. He lamented that some of the beneficiaries were slow to get with the program, blaming “illiterate and uninformed villagers” and “peasant resistance to change.”

Consultants tended to promote standardized techniques. In India, Indonesia, Tunisia, and the Dominican Republic, truck-borne mobile clinics were sent into the countryside, dispensing condoms and pills to anyone who would take them. But the consultants failed to reckon with inadequate roads that wreaked havoc on the trucks, not to mention the lack of interest in what the clinics had to offer. In poor rural societies, children provided parents with their only security in old age, and many died young in places where the water was alive with harmful microbes and the mosquitoes carried malaria. In the Punjab, anthropologist Mahmood Mamdani found parents grumbling that aid workers didn’t help childless couples with *their* “family planning” or offer other kinds of health care.

Critics pointed out that better health care for mothers and infants, clean drinking water and improved nutrition, and other public-health services might have changed the

equation for many poor people, but the aid givers were bent on their single-minded vision. Funding for already neglected public-health services was to be redirected toward population control, while other forms of aid were restricted. World Bank president Robert McNamara, recently arrived from the Pentagon, said in 1969 that the bank would not finance health care “unless it was very strictly related to population control, because usually health facilities contributed to the decline of the death rate, and thereby to the popula-

**ROBERT MCNAMARA, World Bank president, said the bank would not finance health care “unless it was very strictly related to population control.”**

tion explosion.” USAID kept spending more on population control even as it cut other kinds of aid. The head of its population program, Reimert Ravenholt, argued that helping women avoid unwanted childbirth in places with high maternal mortality rates would by itself save many lives. Some officials in the field didn’t bother with such niceties. “It becomes increasingly important to show progress in the only terms which ultimately matter,” Ravenholt’s man in Manila declared, “births averted.”

The big question confronting leaders of the population control movement was whether they would need to resort to incentives and disincentives in order to persuade poor people to stop having so many children. Some contemplated going further. A Ford Foundation report speculated in 1967 about the potential of a technological breakthrough: “an annual application of a contraceptive aerial mist (from a single airplane over India), neutralized only by an annual antidotal pill on medical prescription.” Berelson favored research on a “mass involuntary method with individual reversibility.”

But most of the leading people in the field, including Berelson, doubted this would prove feasible. They demanded instead that family planning programs set numerical targets, either in terms of birthrates or the number of “acceptors.” By 1977 Bangladesh, Egypt, India, South

Korea, Pakistan, Taiwan, and Tunisia were all paying family planning personnel according to the numbers of IUDs inserted. (In principle, clients were supposed to be offered a range of choices. But since administrators could not be sure people would use the condoms and pills they were given, they pushed IUDs and sterilization.) USAID was also offering to pay hospitals in Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Philip-

areas, government officials were offered what amounted to bounties for finding volunteers, prompting some of them to mobilize the police and tax collectors. In the state of Kerala, local officials set up a sterilization camp and carried out some 60,000 procedures in a single month in 1971. It was hard to overlook the fact that many of those recruited were desperately poor people tempted by the cash incentives—

the numbers of “acceptors” rose and fell with the level of incentive payments, and shot up in times when famine threatened.

Often, the programs attracted the wrong “acceptors.” In Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous state, one study found that the ages of those undergoing vasectomies had been systemati-

cally falsified—almost half were more than 50 years old. But bribing people to agree to sterilization was not merely ineffective. It made family planning seem like an imposition, rather than something that served clients’ own interests.

In the 1970s, many more national governments adopted numerical targets, and a few went beyond incentives to disincentives. Indonesia denied public servants rations for younger children in large families. Anyone in Singapore who had more than three children was kicked out of public housing.

No government went further than India during the Emergency Period (1975–77). By 1975 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s corrupt Congress Party was becoming increasingly unpopular. Faced with mass demonstrations, Gandhi suspended the constitution and imprisoned more than 100,000 opponents. Her ne’er-do-well son Sanjay took charge of population control and other initiatives, raising incentive payments, ratcheting up disincentives, and encouraging states to consider compulsory sterilization for Indians with more than three children. “Our real enemy is poverty,” explained health minister Karan Singh, but to many the population effort looked like a war on the poor. Sanjay Gandhi launched an aggressive slum clearance program, and displaced Indians were told they would not be allowed to build new homes elsewhere unless they consented to sterilization. In several towns and cities, the police and army had to

## FROM THE AYATOLLAH Khomeini to Nicaragua’s Daniel Ortega, revolutionaries attacked family planning as a form of imperialism.

pinies a fee for each sterilization performed. In many countries, freelance “motivators” were paid to recruit patients.

In their haste to get the job done, many providers cut corners. India’s national program was the most closely studied because it had been the first country to commit to population control and absorbed the lion’s share of international aid. In the state of Maharashtra, a 1971 government study produced the surprising finding that three-quarters of husbands, who many supposed would object to having fewer children, were initially happy with their wives’ decision to adopt the IUD. But more than half changed their minds. Almost 58 percent of the women experienced pain after IUD insertion, and 43 percent had “severe” and “excessive” bleeding. Most fieldworkers, the study reported, had no training in family planning. Peace Corps volunteers in the state of Bihar saw firsthand one reason why so many women suffered side effects: Rather than sterilize the inserter after each procedure, workers would simply wipe it on their saris. When the volunteers alerted Ford Foundation consultants, they were told to stay focused on program targets. Indian women began refusing IUDs; it took nearly 20 years to restore the device’s popularity.

When programs failed to meet targets, consultants working for the UN, the World Bank, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) advised governments to provide “incentives” worth up to a month’s wages directly to “acceptors” who agreed to sterilization. In some

fire on crowds to keep the sterilization camps running.

McNamara flew to Delhi to offer his support. "At long last," he wrote, "India is moving to effectively address its population problem." Donors were well aware of what was happening. "Obviously the stories . . . on how young and unmarried men more or less are dragged to the sterilization

control program, but it was too late. When she ended the Emergency and called elections in 1977, voters routed the Congress Party, ending its 30-year reign. In the states with the largest increase in the number of sterilizations, the party lost 141 out of 142 seats.

India was only the most dramatic instance of a growing international backlash against population control. In Pakistan, opponents of Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto bitterly criticized contraception as "a filthy business and against the spirit of Islam." When Bhutto was overthrown in a military coup in 1977, Pakistan's family planning program was immediately suspended. From the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran to Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, revolutionaries attacked family planning as a form of imperialism. The Vatican seized the opportunity to organize conservative Muslims and Third World revolutionaries in a worldwide campaign against it. (Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo of Colombia, a key adviser to Pope John Paul II, condemned one USAID-funded project as part of a program of "global castration.") A crowning blow came in 1984, after UNFPA and the IPPF blundered into China and helped Communist leaders implement their draconian one-child policy, which in some cases led to forced abortions. President Ronald Reagan now had the excuse he needed to cut off U.S. funding to the two organizations and to put all others on notice that they would lose support if they helped make even voluntary abortion available.

Meanwhile, the movement was being transformed from within, as feminists working in international NGOs found their voice and women began to gain power within some of the leading organizations. At the UNFPA, Salas was succeeded in 1987 by a woman, Nafis Sadik, who insisted on a broader agenda devoted to the well-being of women, including

efforts against female genital mutilation and the emerging plague of HIV/AIDS.

Feminists assailed abusive population control programs along with traditional means of coercing women into bearing unwanted children. It had been well known since the early 20th century that women with schooling and jobs overwhelmingly elected to have fewer children. But it was a lesson that few chose to hear in the post-*Population Bomb* crisis atmosphere, not only because it threatened to



As foreign observers look on, a technician performs a vasectomy on an Indian man at a Kerala family planning "festival." The man, one of nearly 80,000 Indians who were sterilized at such events in 1970 and '71, earned rewards equivalent to three month's pay.

premises are true in far too many cases," a Swedish official acknowledged. He advised against compulsion, but suggested that "civilized and gentle pressure should be used." The World Bank, Sweden, and the IPPF all decided to increase funding. Over 12 months, the government carried out more than eight million sterilizations. According to official statistics, 1,774 people died because of botched operations.

A chastened Indira Gandhi finally reined in the popu-

complicate the simpler prescriptions of population control but because it contradicted the eugenicist strand of the population movement, which saw the lower birthrates of educated people as something to be combated.

**P**opulation control finally met its formal end in 1994 at a UN-sponsored conference in Cairo. In what is now called the “Cairo Consensus,” 162 states rejected the use of population targets as well as the incentives and disincentives used to reach them, embracing instead a new focus on the well-being of individuals, including full reproductive rights, education for women, and health care for mothers and infants.

Family planning remains a gigantic enterprise.

**INDIANS WERE TOLD they would not be allowed to build new homes unless they consented to sterilization.**

Through USAID, the United States gives more than \$400 million to such efforts worldwide, still more than any other country. But the younger people who are passionately committed to the cause today tend to care most about extending reproductive rights—the idea that women everywhere should have the same freedom to control their fertility, regardless of what size family they choose to have. The tainted history of population control has bred a degree of ambivalence, while experience has brought more realistic attitudes about how much social change can be engineered.

At most, studies suggest, family planning programs account for about a quarter of the worldwide decline in fertility rates since the 1950s. Women can now choose from many methods of contraception—pills, IUDs, implants, and injectables—that might not exist had family planning organizations not pushed to develop them. But women had the means to regulate the number of children they bore long before these methods were available. What was lacking was the economic security, education, and basic health needed to persuade

couples to have smaller families. Where those conditions occur, birthrates typically decline. Brazil, Algeria, and Turkey, for example, all made minimal efforts in family planning in the second half of the 20th century, yet fertility rates in all three declined dramatically.

But enthusiasm for the old ideas hasn’t died. Economist Jeffrey Sachs, a leader of the campaign to “make poverty history” and combat global warming by implementing a crash program to achieve the UN’s Millennium Development Goals, has cited “population control” as a model, calling it “one of the great success stories of modern times.” Sachs says he favors purely voluntary methods, but he and his allies are playing with a dangerous formula. Declaring a “global crisis” can attract media attention and donors. It can also create pressure for quick

results while increasing the temptation to resort to extraordinary measures. These sorts of pressures are already manifest in the current worldwide efforts to eradicate malaria and stop HIV/AIDS. The governments and organizations pouring money into these

two great causes are insisting on short-term numerical targets—medications delivered, bed nets distributed—and those involved in combating HIV/AIDS are pondering the idea of compulsory testing.

Humanitarian challenges rightly create a sense of urgency. The problems begin when those who set out to save the human race refuse to be accountable to any humans in particular. Acting in the name of an abstract “humanity,” population controllers found it easier to think of the world as a laboratory populated by potential “acceptors,” and to believe they could manipulate millions in pursuit of a global goal. Rather than accept that the causes of poverty are many and complex, including the bad choices some people insist on making, they preferred to focus on neat technical fixes.

Global crises do not necessarily have global solutions. Would-be humanitarians must listen to what people actually want and develop answers appropriate to each need, without simply assuming they know best. A campaign to make poverty history will lead nowhere or worse if it starts with an impoverished understanding of the past. ■



# In ESSENCE

REVIEWS OF ARTICLES FROM PERIODICALS AND SPECIALIZED JOURNALS HERE AND ABROAD

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## POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

### The Death of Mercy

**THE SOURCE:** "The Ascent of the Administrative State and the Demise of Mercy" by Rachel E. Barkow, in *Harvard Law Review*, March 2008.

THE QUALITY OF MERCY MAY not be strained, as Portia said in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, but its quantity certainly is—at

least if you're an accused or convicted lawbreaker. Parole has been eliminated in many states, and executive clemency is an endangered species.

"These are punitive, unforgiving times," writes Rachel E. Barkow, a law professor at New York University.

The popularity of "three-strikes-and-you're-out"—the advocacy of locking the door on criminals and throwing away the key—has swept a generation of tough-on-crime candidates into elected office. They have written into law a range of severe minimum sentences, particularly for drug-related crimes.

But politics, Barkow argues, does not entirely account for the fact that some two million Americans—more than one in 100 adults—are behind bars and another five million are on



Three's a crowd. An inmate lugs his floor mat into his new cell in the Washington Corrections Center, Washington state's most overcrowded prison.

probation or some other form of supervised release from jail. She looks at the rise of the administrative state, with its accompanying laws and procedures designed to check the powers of government officials, as an important culprit. Government agencies are increasingly operating under strict procedures designed to prevent bureaucrats from rewarding friends and punishing enemies as they implement the likes of housing subsidies and pollution restrictions. The spirit of “administrative law” enjoys public support because of its perceived absolute fairness, and leaches into the judicial branch. If it is effective in limiting the executive branch’s discretion to interpret civil law, why not extend its limits to criminal matters?

In effect, Barkow says, this is exactly what is happening. Even without formal limits, presidents and governors have sharply cut their use of executive clemency. The powers of parole boards—once afforded the discretion to be merci-

ful—are highly circumscribed.

President Richard M. Nixon—himself the recipient of a presidential pardon after he was forced from office—granted 36 percent of the petitions he received for clemency for convicted wrongdoers. That number dropped steadily, to five percent of petitions granted by President George H. W. Bush, before ticking up to six percent for President Bill Clinton. Researchers have found a similar trend at the state level. And the courts themselves have placed limits on jury nullification—“not guilty” verdicts in the face of substantial evidence to the contrary.

Prosecutors still have considerable leeway to show mercy by simply declining to prosecute a case. They don’t have to follow strict guidelines about when to let somebody off the hook by failing to bring charges, and they don’t have to give reasons for their decision. Even if they are elected as crime-busters, they can’t physically or financially

prosecute every infraction and seem to get a pass on their ability to be lenient.

But drafting administrative procedures to guide juries and executives in showing mercy would contradict the most important reason for having discretion to be lenient in individual cases, Barkow concludes. The utter impossibility of anticipating every human factor in advance is the very reason for the existence of mercy.

#### POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

## The Rise of the Donor Class

**THE SOURCE:** “The Check Is in the Mail: Interdistrict Funding Flows in Congressional Elections” by James G. Gimpel, Frances E. Lee, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, in the *American Journal of Political Science*, April 2008.

AMERICANS HAVE NEVER BEEN as interested in social class as Europeans, partly because most

### EXCERPT

## Broadway Neocon?

*I wrote a play about politics. . . . The argument in my play is between a president who is self-interested, corrupt, suborned, and realistic, and his leftish, lesbian, utopian-socialist speechwriter. The play [is] a disputation between reason and faith, or perhaps between the conservative (or tragic) view and the liberal (or perfectionist) view. . . .*

*I took the liberal view for many decades, but I believe I have changed my mind. . . . I found not only*

*that I didn’t trust the current government . . . but that an impartial review revealed that the faults of this president—whom I, a good liberal, considered a monster—were little different from those of a president whom I revered. Bush got us into Iraq, [John F. Kennedy] into Vietnam. Bush stole the election in Florida; Kennedy stole his in Chicago. Bush outed a CIA agent; Kennedy left hundreds of them to die in the surf at the Bay of Pigs. Bush lied about his military service; Kennedy accepted a Pulitzer Prize for a book written by Ted Sorensen. Bush was in bed with the Saudis, Kennedy with the Mafia. Oh.*

—**DAVID MAMET**, on his most recent play, *November*, in *The Village Voice* (March 11, 2008)

people consider themselves middle class, no matter what their income. But political scientists have identified a distinct new demographic group perched geographically and economically apart from the hoi polloi. Made up of individuals with the means and inclination to influence the outcomes of congressional races far afield, this small group of wealthy, highly educated urban and suburban residents constitutes the growing donor class.

Today's typical congressional candidate now receives more than two-thirds of all individual donations from people outside the contested district, write James G. Gimpel, Frances E. Lee, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, professor, associate professor, and graduate student in political science, respectively, at the University of Maryland. In fully 18 percent of all congressional districts, candidates receive almost all of their personal checks from beyond the boundaries of the area they are seeking to represent.

The wealthy segregate themselves even more than the poor, and the donor class is concentrated in a few places, including Los Angeles; New York City; suburban Miami-Dade and Broward counties, Florida; Lake County, Illinois; Montgomery County, Maryland; and Bergen County, New Jersey, the authors say. The flow of funds doesn't go from rich to poor or urban to rural, but from the donor class to competitive races wherever they may be.

While political action commit-

tees have been shown to donate to gain access to members of Congress, the new class gives to "make a difference" in party alignment, Gimpel and his colleagues write. The donor class typically ignores primaries. "Distant nonresidents respond unambiguously only to two-party competition," they say. Republican-leaning and Democratic-leaning enclaves are both well represented in the donor class. As the level of competitiveness increases, so do the checks.

Today's typical congressional candidate now receives more than two-thirds of all individual donations from people outside the contested district.

Reformers have expressed concern that the increasing role of nonresident donors obligates members of Congress to favor the priorities of distant givers over the locals they represent. But because of the crucial role of the party in identifying close races and mobilizing tried-and-true contributors, lawmakers are more indebted to the party than to individual donors. Large individual donations from distant locales are, functionally speaking, not individual at all, say the authors. "They are instead extensions of the modern parties' organizations into the electorate."

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

## New Directions in Pork

**THE SOURCE:** "The Presidential Pork Barrel and the Conditioning Effect of Term" by Andrew J. Taylor, in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, March 2008.

IF YOU'RE A STATE GOVERNOR with a hankering for a bigger slice of the federal procurement pie, a recent study may point the way.

First, make sure your state is big. "Bigger states get discernibly more procurement per capita," says Andrew J. Taylor, a North Carolina State University political scientist who analyzed procurement contracts from 1984 to 2004. Bigger states have more votes in the Electoral College, electoral votes help presidents get elected (or reelected), and, Taylor points out, "the president and his administration can influence the distribution of procurement contracts greatly." Most of these contracts "are undertaken with the Department of Defense," he adds.

Second, get your people onto a congressional committee. You will see a modest return even if it's just in the House of Representatives, but, Taylor says, "adding a senator to a state's delegation on Appropriations is worth about \$42 per capita in procurement spending; to Armed Services it is worth about \$77." That's no small change if your state has as many people as, say, California. Bonus bucks if your legislator is a member of the party in power.

Third, and this may be the

trickiest to pull off, convince your constituents to vote *against* the sitting president's reelection. Though it may seem counterintuitive, Taylor reports that "states that gave the president less of their popular vote in his reelection received significantly more procurement dollars per capita in his second term." Why? Stressing that his theory is "highly speculative," Taylor thinks the answer may have to do with the peculiar nature of lame-duck politics. Second-term presidents may steer federal dollars toward particular states to "buy legislative votes—rather than popular ones—in support of their agenda." Legislators from states that didn't support the president are "predisposed to oppose the administration," which may make them all the more receptive to procurement pressure. They will support the president—in return for those lucrative contracts—and still reap all the credit from the voters they represent. More pork, anyone?

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

## The Daughters Vote

**THE SOURCE:** "Female Socialization: How Daughters Affect Their Legislator Fathers' Voting on Women's Issues" by Ebonya L. Washington, in *American Economic Review*, March 2008.

POLITICAL SCIENTISTS HAVE spent decades weighing the factors that sway individual votes in the U.S. House of Representatives: party affiliation, constituent preferences, and a legislator's personal opinions and characteristics. Ebonya L. Washington, an economist at Yale University, has identified another influence: daughters. Each female child a member of the House has, Washington found, significantly increases the likelihood that the legislator will cast a liberal vote, particularly on reproductive rights issues.

Washington used the voting scorecards compiled by the American Association of University Women, the National Organization for Women (NOW), and the National Right to

Life Coalition to gauge the impact of having a female child on votes related to women's issues. All but a few of the legislators were men. Among House members with two children, those with one daughter earned an average score from NOW nine points higher than that of lawmakers with two sons (out of 100 total points). Members with two daughters and no sons scored 18 points more than those with just one daughter. Washington found a similar effect among both Democrats and Republicans, regardless of which organization's scorecard and which Congress she examined. All of the scores were from the 1997–2004 period.

When looking at a legislator's entire voting record, Washington found that having female children was correlated with a propensity to take the liberal side, and the strongest effect was always on legislation concerning reproductive rights. She speculates that legislators think about how their votes will affect people they know personally, so it's not too surprising that people who call them Daddy have a powerful influence.

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## Unmasking the Surge

**THE SOURCE:** "The Price of the Surge" by Steven Simon, in *Foreign Affairs*, May–June 2008.

EVEN THE MOST PARTISAN Democrats in Washington acknowledge that last summer's "surge" of

troops has reduced the killing in Iraq, and some Republicans say the strategy has finally cleared the way for victory. But the tactics that have made Iraqis safer in the short run may have the opposite effect over time, says Steven

Simon, senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

The surge has lessened the violence only in tandem with homegrown developments, such as the "grim successes" of ethnic cleansing that have driven warring Sunni and Shiite Muslims from mixed neighborhoods and villages, Simon writes. The troop buildup also coincided with a breakdown in the alliance between Sunni tribes and Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia. In the months



leading up to President George W. Bush's announcement of the surge, Al Qaeda had infuriated its Iraqi partners by seizing resources, demanding obedience, and later killing recalcitrant Sunni leaders. Abetted by American offers of \$360 a month, insurgents abandoned the Al Qaeda association in droves, becoming what is known as the "Sons of Iraq," and swearing to support the United States.

The influx of 21,500 surge troops, combined with the cooperation of 90,000 Sons of Iraq, reduced the violence significantly. But the tactics that have been employed have contributed little toward building a stable, unified Iraqi nation, according to Simon. Instead, the surge has inadvertently strengthened the three modern horsemen of Middle Eastern apocalypse: tribalism, warlordism, and sectarianism.

General David Petraeus has employed a "bottom-up" strategy rather than a "top-down" effort that might have built support for a strong Iraqi government among

The troop surge has made Iraqis safer in the short run but may have the opposite effect over time.

tribal leaders, Simon observes. The importance of local sheikhs grew as they struck deals with the Americans, and the 20 percent cut they often skim from the U.S. payments to the former insurgents made them even more powerful. The focus on working with local tribesmen instead of through the Iraqi national government has bolstered warlords who have exploited the current security situation and all but taken over some cities, Simon writes.

The bottom-up strategy has allowed Iraq's three major groups—the Sunnis, Shia, and Kurds—to fantasize that the United States will help each of them achieve their goals. The Sunnis want a return to the power they held under Saddam Hussein.

The Shia want compensation for their suffering under Saddam, and the Kurds want autonomy and territory. None feels much loyalty to a central government that would demand compromise on all fronts.

The failure of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government to make much progress on reconciliation has left the United States with "no good options" in Iraq, Simon concludes. A new U.S. administration is going to need international cooperation to force Baghdad to take meaningful steps. To get this help from neighboring countries, European allies, and the United Nations, the Americans should announce a phased troop withdrawal, and yield a degree of their "dubious control" in return for shared responsibility in establishing stability, he says. The course is "risky and possibly futile," Simon acknowledges, but is more promising than the current fashionable fix, which doesn't address the need for a centralized, functioning government in the heart of the Middle East.

## EXCERPT

### Naval Disconnect

*[Millennium sailors] were born with laptops in their hands. . . . But when we get them into the Fleet, the disconnect between what they were promised and what they find will be profoundly disappointing—a veritable bait-and-switch scheme. They will discover that our "leading-edge-of-the-shelf" and "state-of-the-art" technology is at best ancient. . . .*

*The two-way communication bandwidth of a single BlackBerry is three times greater than the bandwidth of the entire Arleigh Burke destroyer. Looked at another way, the Navy's most modern in-service multimission warship has only five percent of the bandwidth we have in our home Internet connection. . . . Moreover, every system we field takes nearly seven years to reach the Fleet. By the time it gets to the people who need it, it is already out of date.*

—VICE ADMIRAL MARK EDWARDS, deputy chief of naval operations for communications networks (N6), in *Proceedings* (April 2008)

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## Dictator Regret

**THE SOURCE:** "The Costs of Relying on Aging Dictators" by Caroline Sevier, in *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2008.

EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT HOSNI Mubarak turned 80 in May. Saudi king Abdullah will be 84 in August. Tunisian president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali celebrated his 71st birthday last September, and Oman's sultan Qaboos is the youngest of the group at age 67. Official Washington counts these four Western-allied dictators as among the bulwarks of stability in the Middle East. None of them has a clear successor with popular support.

Egypt, home to one in three

Arabs, has stifled both Islamic and secular alternatives to the Mubarak regime, writes Caroline Sevier, manager of foreign policy and defense studies at the American Enterprise Institute. Mubarak appears to be grooming his son, Gamal, as his successor, despite Gamal's lack of military and political support.

There are nearly 150 official candidates for the Saudi kingship, all descendants of the patriarch Ibn Saud, and any new king must be chosen by consensus of the roughly 7,000 members of the increasingly fractious royal family. In Tunisia, Ben Ali has suppressed opposition, along with almost all civil liberties, and prevented potential rivals from acquiring the skills, experience, and support that might allow them to

step into the presidency. And Oman, bordering the vital oil corridor of the Strait of Hormuz, possesses a plan of succession decreed by Sultan Qaboos: Upon his death, his family will decide on a new sultan; if it deadlocks, he's left an envelope with his pick.

Simple biology makes it unlikely that the four leaders will govern for much longer, but there has been little contingency planning in Washington. The Bush administration once made it a priority to promote democracy in the Middle East, Sevier says, but soon retired the rhetoric in favor of promoting stability. Without more focus on the coming successions, that strategy will prove no more successful than the one it replaced.

## ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## The Rule of Slogans

**THE SOURCE:** "Order in the Jungle," in *The Economist*, March 13, 2008.

DANI RODRIK, THE STAR development economist at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, recently made a startling admission: He has been throwing around the latest big idea in economics—the rule of law—without a clear fix on what it means. The rule of law is the reigning motherhood-and-apple-pie issue of developmental economics, write the editors of *The Economist*. But although a na-

tional devotion to the rule of law seems to be an unalloyed blessing, it's a concept that eludes a universal definition, and it doesn't necessarily produce strong economic results.

Back in the 1980s, the "Washington consensus" was in vogue: Get the policies right—budgets, trade, regulation—and prosperity will surely follow. But the Asian economic crisis of 1997–98 eroded economists' confidence that they knew what the right policies actually were. It was also not clear whether macroeconomic tinkering

made a smidgeon of difference if the rules of the game were a mess, *The Economist* says.

A new consensus quickly emerged. Adherence to the rule of law became the latest orthodoxy: National wealth will increase in countries that (a) establish political accountability, (b) improve the quality of the bureaucracy, and (c) follow the rule of law. Corruption should be battled. The judiciary should be reformed. Two economists even calculated a "300 percent dividend" that was supposed to accrue to a nation that significantly raised the quality of its "governance" in the long run. Sure enough, almost every rich country (with the "arguable exceptions" of Italy and Greece) scored well on the rule-of-law measures, and most poor countries did not.

Unfortunately, it wasn't obvious whether the rule of law preceded or followed economic growth. Moreover, *The Economist* points out, the rule of law has different definitions, which the writers call "thick" and "thin." Some thick-minded economists believe that the rule of law is joined at the hip with liberty and democracy. True adherence to a rule of law constrains state power, and guarantees freedom of speech and association, they say. Thin-oriented economists take a narrower view, defining the rule of law as guaranteed property rights, predictable transaction costs, and the efficient administration of justice. But in either case, why have parts of Southeast Asia and Russia grown steadily richer under the sway not of the stately rule of law, but of crony capitalism and Kremlin banditry?

Although reforms in the rule of law, whether codified as a broad right to democratic institutions or simple access to a security of property, are linked to improved economic status, the tie is weak. Improving the rule of law is desirable, *The Economist* says, but not a prerequisite for growth.

ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## Worth Every Penny

**THE SOURCE:** "Why Has CEO Pay Increased So Much?" by Xavier Gabaix and Augustin Landier, in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Feb. 2008.

THE SIXFOLD RISE IN PAY FOR America's top executives over the past quarter-century has brought

an outcry from populists. But economists Xavier Gabaix and Augustin Landier of New York University argue that CEO pay merely rose in lockstep with the market value of large corporations during this period. The average value of the nation's top thousand firms grew by more than 500 percent from 1980 to 2003. Average chief executive pay went up by the same relative amount.

Gabaix and Landier say that the

Executive pay raises may seem astonishing, but they reflect a corresponding rise in the market value of major corporations.

difference in top talent is almost minuscule. The best CEO is statistically likely to increase earnings by .016 percent more than the 250th-best CEO. Even so, when that figure is applied to a \$500 billion company, it amounts to an extra \$80 million, hardly chump change. The astonishing pay raises for chief executives can turn out to be cost-effective.

Executive salaries have not risen at the same astronomical rate in other countries, the authors say, in part because foreign firms have not increased in value at the same rate as those in the United States. But in at least one other country, Japan, where the rate of market capitalization has soared, executive pay has not kept pace. Comparing giant companies in the two countries, Gabaix and

Landier found that the average compensation of Japanese CEOs was only one-third that of their American counterparts. Tokyo corporations, they say, are much more likely to groom their executives internally than to bid for CEO talent on the open market.

ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## The Baby Penalty?

**THE SOURCE:** "Understanding the Returns to Delayed Childbearing for Working Women" by Kasey Buckles, and "Transitions: Career and Family Life Cycles of the Educational Elite" by Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, in *The American Economic Review*, May 2008.

WHY HAVE WOMEN NOT RISEN further and faster in business since pouring into the work force in the 1970s? It remains a great conundrum of the 21st century, and now two studies present new evidence on the familiar tension between family and work.

The wages of highly skilled women flatten out when they have their first child and never regain the same trajectory, according to Kasey Buckles, an economist at Notre Dame University. Although female fertility declines dramatically between the ages of 25 and 35, the typical American woman is increasingly putting off having her first baby. The first-time mother was almost two years older in 1999 than in 1982 (and since Buckles conducted her research, the mean age at first birth has risen further, to 25.2 years in 2005, the latest year for which figures are available). Each additional year of delay

is associated with a three percent increase in wage rates and a 10 percent increase in earnings.

Highly educated women delay childbirth longer than those without as much schooling, Buckles writes, and face greater wage losses if they don't. National surveys show that skilled women who give birth before age 26 experience a "wage penalty" (compared with women who bear children later) of almost 19 percent in the first four years after the birth, 33 percent in years five through nine, and 62 percent 18 years later.

A separate study of male and female Harvard and Radcliffe graduates during three periods, roughly around 1970, 1980, and 1990, shows that women increasingly delayed marriage as the decades progressed, and nearly 40 percent of women in all three groups never had children at all.

Highly educated women delay having children longer than those without as much schooling, and face greater wage losses if they don't.

The first cohort married earlier than the others (average age 27, compared with age 30 for the most recent), but put off having children until they were 31 or 32 years old—the same age as the more recent graduates. The 1970- and 1980-era female graduates took about a year off during the first 15 years after graduation if they had one child. The younger, 1990-era mothers settled for only nine months. The percentage of women who did not work outside the

home stayed roughly the same—9 percent among the 1970-era grads, 10.5 percent among the 1980-era group, and 10.1 percent in the 1990-era cohorts.

Recent speculation that women graduating from elite universities are "wasting resources by dropping out of the labor force" does not appear supported by the data, write Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, both Harvard economists. What is true, they write, is that there is a wage gap. The median income of fully employed Harvard-educated women in 2005 was \$112,500, of men, \$187,500. Even when education (economics majors tend to be the best paid), time out of work, and occupation (business produces the most astronomical salaries) are accounted for, Goldin and Katz conclude that there is still a "gap of substantial magnitude."

## SOCIETY

# E Pluribus Cacophony

**THE SOURCE:** "The Myth of Multitasking" by Christine Rosen, in *The New Atlantis*, Spring 2008.

ANYONE WHO HAS COWERED in the back of a taxi as the driver simultaneously talked on a cell phone, made change, tore off a paper receipt, and tried to pull into a busy street can attest: Multitasking is a bad idea.

Multitasking no longer defines the brilliant leader or the precocious

overachiever, writes Christine Rosen, senior editor of *The New Atlantis*. In reality, multitasking means paying incomplete attention to two or more tasks at once. Extreme multitasking costs the American economy \$650 billion a year in lost productivity, according to one survey. It takes workers distracted by e-mails and phone calls an average of 25 minutes to get back on task after each interruption, another study says.

The proportion of people who almost simultaneously watch television, surf the Web, play video games, text-message, talk on the phone, and e-mail rose from 16 percent in 1999 to 26 percent in 2005, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported two years ago. Media multitasking has spawned a new condition called attention deficit trait, whose symptoms are similar to those of attention deficit disorder, according to a Massachusetts psychiatrist.

Trying to do too many things at once adversely affects learning. Information taken in by multitaskers goes into the striatum, a "new learning" area of the brain,





Exploding the multitasker myth: This cell-phoning, coffee-sipping, text-messaging driver is a menace.

instead of the hippocampus, a region that stores and facilitates the recall of information. Widespread multitasking may produce a generation of very quick but very shallow thinkers, according to Jane Healy, an educational psychologist.

William James, the Harvard psychologist, wrote in the late 19th century that the youthful mind is characterized by an “extreme mobility of the attention,” and that the transition from youthful distraction to mature concentration is a matter of discipline and character. Some people, James said, never move beyond getting their work done only in the “interstices of their mind-wandering.”

Rosen reasons that multitaskers may simply adjust to constant stimulation and block it out like airplane noise overhead. But given the evidence so far, she writes, “intentional self-distraction could well be profoundly detrimental to individual and cultural well-being.” When people conduct business only in the

“interstices of their mind-wandering,” the world may gain information, but at the expense of wisdom.

#### SOCIETY

## In Praise of Renting

**THE SOURCE:** “Cleaning House” by Joshua Rosner, in *The New Republic*, May 7, 2008.

TOO MANY AMERICANS OWN their own home, writes Joshua Rosner, managing director of a research consultancy. Lots of them would be better off if they had never drunk the Kool-Aid of near-universal homeownership. And so would the public. The federal government made the mistake of allowing the housing and financial services industries to suck risky buyers into the housing market with such novel instruments as no-money-down mortgages and repayment schedules that ballooned years later. Buyers were encouraged to purchase

homes they couldn’t afford, had no equity in, and had little incentive to maintain.

Now that they’ve created this mess, politicians shouldn’t be propping up borrowers and lenders with tax credits that encourage more spending, Rosner argues. And they shouldn’t be pouring taxpayers’ money down a rathole by trying to keep families in unaffordable dwellings. Many troubled borrowers should just mail back their keys and sign over title to their overpriced house to avoid foreclosure. Most lenders would be better off too, because they wouldn’t have to pay the costs of foreclosing on somebody who has lost all motivation to keep up the property. The former debtors could rent, and save for something affordable.

Real estate prices have risen faster than wages for most of the last 40 years, so families thought they had to get their foot on the ladder before the first rung rose completely out of reach. Ownership jumped from its usual level of between 62 and 64 percent to almost 70 percent, Rosner says, but the market’s natural equilibrium was disturbed by the government’s attempts at social engineering.

Americans created an “economic mirage” by allowing the appreciation in home values to substitute for the return on labor in estimating their personal wealth, Rosner argues. Instead of artificially stimulating home buying, federal officials should focus on policies that increase real, not illusory, prosperity. They should concentrate on supporting wage growth. They should spend public money on “strengthen-

ing America's economic foundation" (he suggests investing in schools to reeducate displaced workers and in highways to link rural and suburban workers to jobs), rather than helping people buy McMansions.

Homeownership is a good thing as long as it allows families to build a stake not only in their house but in their community as well, Rosner concludes. But "a home without equity is really just a rental with debt."

## SOCIETY

## Ghost Bird

**THE SOURCE:** "Bottomland Ghost: Southern Encounters and Obsessions With the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker" by Michael K. Steinberg, in *Southern Cultures*, Spring 2008.

THE IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER has fascinated the public since Native Americans used the bird's skins to carry medicine bundles and traded its remains as far

north as Canada. John James Audubon compared the beauty of its stunning plumage and prominent bill to the works of Flemish painter Anthony Vandyke, and it inspired writers such as William Faulkner and Walker Percy. But relentless hunting and the disappearance of the ivory-bill's habitat in southern bottomland forests took their toll. The last documented sightings were in the 1940s.

Over the years, bird experts and rural residents reported occasional sightings, but their claims were ridiculed, writes Michael K. Steinberg, a geographer at the University of Alabama. "Few die-hards seem capable of believing that anybody else—whether a knowledgeable outdoors person or even a respected ornithologist—could actually see or hear an ivory-bill." So when a team of scientists declared in 2005 that they had laid eyes on an ivory-bill in eastern Arkansas, and produced a fuzzy 11-second video as evidence,

there was much rejoicing about this "official" sighting. But skeptics have questioned whether the video shows the famous bird or its common, similar-looking relative, the pileated woodpecker.

Such disputes are frequent in the scientific world. But because "the ivory-bill is the Holy Grail among birders," and because millions in federal money for conservation efforts hang in the balance, the debate stirs deep passions among both ornithologists and rural residents such as Steinberg's neighbor who, after a few drinks, often threatens to "go into the swamp and 'find that damn bird.'"

What really ruffles Steinberg's feathers is the marginalization of locals who report glimpsing the elusive woodpecker. "These people are often far more familiar with the sights and sounds of deep swamps than academics or birders who seldom venture into southern bayous," he says. Local hunters and fishers are also the

## EXCERPT

## Plugged In, Left Behind

*In recent years I have administered a dumbed-down quiz on current events and history early in each semester. . . . Results have been, well, horrifying. Nearly half of a recent class could not name a single country that bordered Israel. In an introductory journalism class, 11 of 18 students could not name what country Kabul was in, although we have been at war there for half a decade. . . .*

*It is hard to reconcile [college] students' lack of knowledge with the notion that they are a part of the celebrated information age, creatures of the Internet who*

*arguably have at their disposal more information than all the preceding generations combined. Despite their BlackBerrys, cell phones, and Wi-Fi, they are, in their own way, as isolated as the remote tribes of New Guinea. They disprove the notion that technology fosters engagement, that connectivity and community are synonymous. . . .*

*The noted American scholar Robert M. Hutchins said, decades ago . . . that "the death of a democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment." I fear he was right.*

—TED GUP, professor of journalism at Case Western Reserve University and author, most recently, of *Nation of Secrets: The Threat to Democracy and the American Way of Life*, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, (April 11, 2008)

most likely to brave the mosquitoes, alligators, snakes, and prickly palmettos of the birds' favored environment.

In preparing a book on the search for the ivory-billed woodpecker in Louisiana, Steinberg ran down many of the reported sightings. Photos are few, which is no surprise given the forbidding, dense terrain; the ivory-bill's reportedly fast, straight, ducklike flying pattern; and the likelihood that after generations of intense hunting, any surviving birds are probably selected to be wary of humans. But Steinberg concludes that the sightings are consistent enough to suggest that ivory-bills still exist.

The next evidence of the ivory-bill's existence, he predicts, will be produced by "a rural resident who may have little experience or even interest in bird watching." The birding world should prepare to take heed. To discount rural dwellers' reports "is not only shortsighted, it may be detrimental to ivory-bill preservation."

#### SOCIETY

## School Choice Apostasy?

**THE SOURCE:** "School Choice Isn't Enough" by Sol Stern, in *City Journal*, Winter 2008, and "Is School Choice Enough?" responses, [www.city-journal.org](http://www.city-journal.org), Jan. 24, 2008.

THE INITIAL GAINS FROM THE school choice movement have fizzled, concludes Sol Stern, author of *Breaking Free: Public School Lessons and the Imperative of School Choice* (2003). While efforts to give parents vouchers for private

schools and establish charter schools have liberated thousands of children from stultifying public classrooms, experience has dashed Stern's hope that a powerful dose of the free market would cure morbidity in the nation's public schools.

Choice is not enough, he argues. Evidence is "meager" that voucher-financed competition from private schools has made public schools any better. Voters have resoundingly defeated voucher programs in five straight

School choice is not enough, one long-time advocate of the policy has concluded.

state referendums. Prospects for future voucher programs are undermined by the financial crises of inner-city Catholic schools. What is needed is not merely the invisible hand of competition fostering the best schools and driving out the worst. In a contest between economically oriented free-market visionaries (the incentivists) and curriculum and pedagogical reformers (the instructionists), Stern now tilts toward the instructionist camp. Improving the education of the nation's 50 million public-school children will require a rigorous, content-based curriculum and stricter teacher licensing.

This conclusion is borne out in New York City and the state of Massachusetts, he says. On the Monopoly board of school reform, New York City has placed all of its

hotels on choice and competition. Unfortunately, the city has pushed the free-market philosophy "far beyond where the evidence leads," Stern believes. New York City principals and teachers can get cash bonuses if they produce better student test scores, and parents can get money for showing up at parent-teacher conferences. But fourth- and eighth-grade readers have shown no improvement. By contrast, Massachusetts, where school choice is limited to only a few charter schools, has raised scores in both reading and math. The real Massachusetts miracle, according to Stern, is the state's strong content-based curriculum, certification regulations that require teachers to master that content, and serious testing.

Stern's critics have since responded to his article not only by attacking his ideas and facts, but also by accusing him of "apostasy and moral flaws," he laments. Jay P. Greene, the head of the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas, charges that Stern has broken a "truce" between education reformers who push choice and those who advance curriculum changes. Education reform is like curing cancer, Greene says. It's a slow process, but that's no reason to give up. Without competitive pressure, what would cause education leaders to adopt any changes at all in curriculum or teaching methods?

Andrew J. Coulson, director of the Cato Institute Center for Educational Freedom, says that Stern has mistakenly confused tiny and highly regulated school choice programs with real free-market schooling, which would require hundreds of

thousands of potential customers. And Robert Enlow, executive director of the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, dismisses Stern for citing a tired list of “greatest hits

of teachers’ union talking points,” for making unfounded claims that school choice hasn’t made significant improvements in public schools, and for failing to mention

evidence that contradicts his views. The blistering retorts to Stern’s points suggest that hell hath no fury like the school choice movement scorned.

## PRESS & MEDIA

# Nut Gets Nukes!

**THE SOURCE:** “Paranoid, Potbellied Stalinist Gets Nuclear Weapons” by Hugh Gusterson, in *Nonproliferation Review*, March 2008.

PART OF THE REASON JOURNALISTS are about as highly esteemed as termite inspectors and telemarketers is their failure earlier in this decade to challenge U.S. government estimates of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Press critics charge that reporters downloaded the assertions of government officials and Iraqi exiles into news stories as uncritically as songs from iTunes. Then, even after Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction failed to materialize, writers repeated the same credulous performance in covering North Korea.

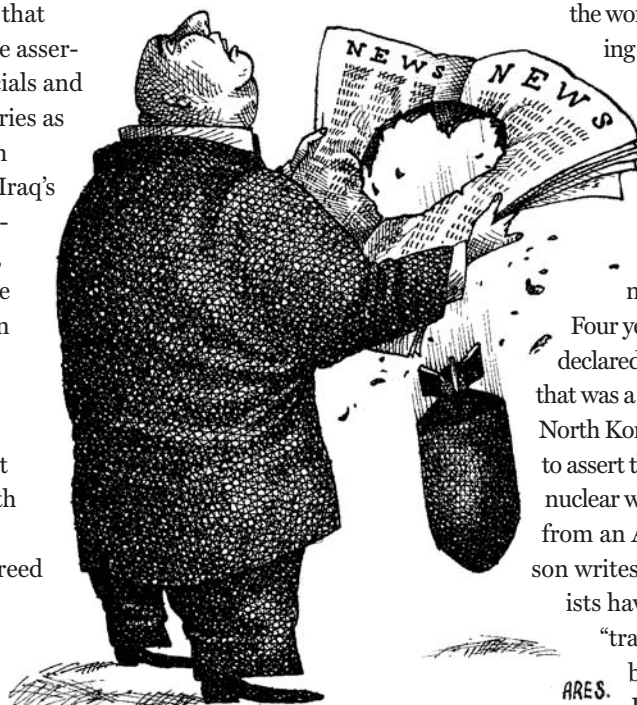
America’s largest newspapers presented a “simplistic narrative” that focused “entirely on North Korean duplicity” in the breakdown of a 1994 “agreed framework” between the United States and North Korea that was designed to persuade Pyongyang to abandon

its quest for nuclear weapons, writes Hugh Gusterson, an anthropologist at George Mason University. In truth, he says, neither side fully lived up to the agreement, but leading publications covered only accusations of North Korean perfidy. They relied almost entirely on anonymous diplomatic sources, retired gov-

ernment officials, and specialists in nuclear nonproliferation, rather than academics or other students of the Korean peninsula. They also failed to make enough international phone calls to experts monitoring the situation from South Korea.

Pundits tend to portray Kim Jong Il as a paranoid pygmy who watches Daffy Duck cartoons and spends nearly \$1 million a year of his impoverished country’s treasury on rare cognac. Entertaining reading, but it hardly advances understanding of what a former secretary of defense called “the most dangerous spot” in the world, Gusterson says. Relying mostly on unnamed American officials for their facts, reporters wrote in 2002 that North Korea admitted it had been cheating for years on its commitment to freeze its nuclear weapons program.

Four years later, *Newsweek* declared that “diplomats now say that was a translation error.” What North Korea had actually done was to assert that it was “entitled to have nuclear weapons” to safeguard itself from an American threat, Gusterson writes. (Some Korea specialists have since dismissed any “translation errors” as quibbling in light of North Korea’s announcement in 2006 that it had



The media dwell on odd or talkative people, sometimes missing the story.



detonated a nuclear weapon.)

But details do matter, and so does a judicious attitude, Gusterson says. Reporters should identify U.S. government officials who make accusations about Pyongyang, diversify their pool of Korea specialists, occasionally dial the 011 international access code instead of turning exclusively to District of Columbia analysts, and separate news about nuclear developments from opinion about Kim Jong Il's personal peculiarities. More objective reporting would yield better national debate and sounder foreign policy regarding one of the world's gravest areas of concern.

## PRESS &amp; MEDIA

## News Virgins

**THE SOURCE:** "Young People Flee From the News, Whatever the Source" by Thomas E. Patterson, in *Television Quarterly*, Winter 2008.

A GENERATION AGO, AS THE Watergate scandal threatened President Richard Nixon, knots of readers stood outside the entrance of *The Washington Post* each night waiting to buy the next day's news-

paper, which would go on sale at 10:15 P.M. Many of these eager consumers were teenagers and twentysomethings who were as interested in public affairs as they were in the new Stones album.

That was a time when more than half of all adults under 30 were regular readers of a daily newspaper, and most of them also watched the evening news. Today, only one in 12 young adults reads printed news. Twice as many watch news on television—one in six. One young person in eight checks out Internet news.

So how does this generation get the news? Much of it doesn't.

Roughly a fourth of all younger Americans pay no attention to news from any source, writes Thomas E. Patterson, of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

A large national survey found that only a fifth of younger respondents could accurately dredge up a factual element about the top story of the day. And though some proponents of new media say that young Americans merely get their news fix through a "different distribution system" such as *The Daily Show*, the

survey uncovered only a tiny number of such individuals.

The decline in exposure to news is part of an overall cultural shift. Two or three decades ago, news had a near monopoly on dinner-hour television, Patterson says. Watching TV while preparing—or eating—dinner meant watching news. But television's ability to force-feed news ended with the rise of cable, which offered alternatives, even at six o'clock. Fewer parents watched news, and even if they did, their children were usually in another room watching something else. The development of "news habits" in children and teenagers slowed dramatically.

The Internet has even less ability to build new audiences for news. Users gravitate to the sites they like, and news is about as popular with many of them as spinach. Even if they call up the news, they spend less time reading it than in the past, and are less likely to do so as a matter of habit. New media, Patterson says, reinforce interests rather than create new ones.

## HISTORY

## Currying Maximum Favor

**THE SOURCE:** "France Under the Nazi Boot" by Filippo Occhino, Kim Oosterlinck, and Eugene N. White, in *The Journal of Economic History*, March 2008.

IT TOOK DECADES FOR HISTORIANS to shatter the political fable that the French fought back fiercely

against their German occupiers during World War II. Now, researchers have debunked the economic myth that the Nazis were solely responsible for the pervasive hunger and deprivation in occupied France during the period. In

fact, the French government voluntarily turned over far more money and manpower to the Hitler regime than the terms of the armistice required.

In 1941, French leaders, expecting Britain to surrender quickly, maneuvered to curry favor with Germany to boost French standing in a new Europe dominated by Adolf Hitler, write economists Filippo Occhino and Eugene N. White of Rutgers and Kim Oosterlinck of

the Université Libre de Bruxelles. “Germany secured a massive and, perhaps, unparalleled transfer of resources from France” to finance its war on other fronts, the authors say.

The French turned over 479 billion francs to the Germans from 1940 to 1944. The occupiers took billions more in loot. While the economists don’t translate the sums into current U.S. dollars, they note that the payments were equivalent to 55.5 percent of French economic output in 1943. The elderly French hero of World War I, Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain, was allowed to remain head of the country because he ensured the “passivity” of the population and the continued exploitation of the economy during the occupation, according to Occhino and his coauthors. The strategy worked so well for Germany that it took fewer than 40,000 unfit and overage German occupation officers to administer all of France until the Allies threatened a cross-channel invasion in 1943.

When the Germans marched around the Maginot Line and launched their blitzkrieg against France on May 10, 1940, France’s economy was slightly larger than Germany’s on a per capita basis. When France agreed to an armistice six weeks later, the two nations’ fortunes reversed. The Germans received 400 million francs a day in “occupation costs,” a figure so large that Nazi authorities were unable to spend it. Reduced to 300 million francs a day in 1941, the toll was raised to 500 million a day by 1943 as the war turned against the Germans. Germany

Germany received 400 million francs a day in “occupation costs,” a figure so large that Nazi authorities were unable to spend it.

also put thousands of French prisoners of war to work in its munitions industries, and conscripted another 649,000 civilian laborers to work in its factories—altogether, about 10 percent of the French labor force. Germany commandeered 92 percent of France’s oil, cut off 40 percent of its coal, and took so much of its food that adults were reduced to 1,500 calories a day, less than the daily rates in Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. (Conquered Slavic states were exploited more ruthlessly, but they were targeted for eradication under Hitler’s plan.)

Twenty-five years earlier, France and its allies had demanded 132 billion gold marks in reparations from Germany after its defeat in World War I. In the years from 1923 to 1931, Berlin paid the Allies 50 billion deutsche marks, or 83 percent of one year’s gross domestic product. The amount of the reparations was considered so crippling that it helped Hitler justify World War II.

France’s collaborationist Vichy government paid Germany much more, and much faster. The payments, the authors conclude, probably represent the “maximum degree of exploitation that is feasible when a state is left intact.”

## HISTORY

## Blood for Liberty

**THE SOURCE:** “The Emancipation of the American Mind: J. S. Mill on the Civil War” by John W. Compton, in *The Review of Politics*, Spring 2008.

UNLIKE MANY OF HIS ENGLISH contemporaries, philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–73) applauded the American Civil War. In only a few decades, he argued, the fledgling United States had slid backward from the highest principles of liberty and equality to “intellectual stagnation” and a fixation on “money-getting.” The war would provide a “salutary shock” to the national conscience. The horrifying butchery required to eradicate slavery was well worth the cost, not only for the emancipated victims but for society as a whole, he believed.

Mill’s now-little-studied views were highly unpopular in Britain, where traditionalists openly supported the Confederacy and many reformers loathed slavery but balked at the expected carnage, writes John W. Compton, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California, Los Angeles. Mill thought the elimination of slavery essential to the preservation of liberal ideals. Because the United States was at the time the only nation founded on “abstract principles” that could fade over time, a struggle to eliminate a “stain” on the national character might force a re-articulation of principles, leading Americans to tackle other wrongs, such as the failure to allow women to vote.

America had been blessed with founders of political and intellectual genius, according to Mill. Mostly supported by the labor of slaves, these

exceptional men had tolerated slavery in the Constitution. Mill, like Thomas Jefferson, had expected it to wither away, and was encouraged by a spate of manumissions following the Revolutionary War and by the American ban on the importation of African slaves in 1808.

Mill blamed the survival of slavery on economics: Cotton production required little but brute animal force for its production, depleted the soil,

and fueled an insatiable desire for new territory. If the North had compromised with the secessionist states, he wrote, the South's peculiar institution would have been pushed by the barrel of a gun into Mexico and Central America as cotton growers acquired the virgin land necessary for further production. Slavery would have been somewhat legitimized and would ultimately have required a crusade by civilized Europe to eliminate.

Mill had become concerned that America forgot its principles in the pursuit of prosperity in the early years of the 19th century. A "courtier spirit" pervaded American life, and people had little stomach for those who questioned established institutions. America lived in "perpetual adoration of itself," Mill wrote, and the greatest danger it faced was that the national mind would be dulled by the self-satisfied notion that all was right.

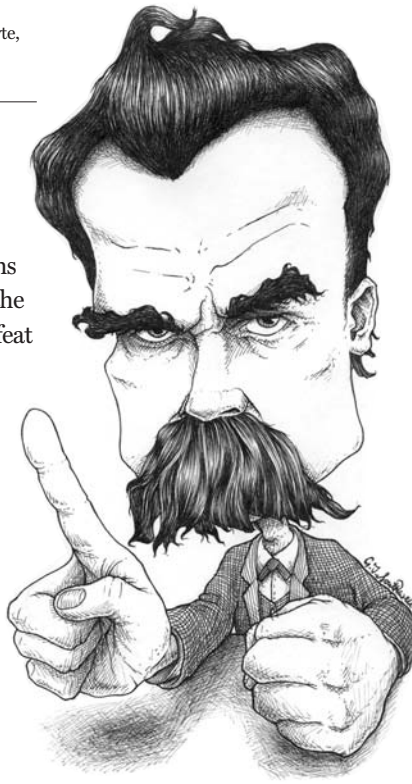
## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

# Nietzsche and the Nazis

**THE SOURCE:** "The Uses and Abuses of Nietzsche in the Third Reich: Alfred Baeumler's 'Heroic Realism'" by Max Whyte, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, April 2008.

DURING WORLD WAR II, Hitler's soldiers marched off to battle with field-gray editions of Friedrich Nietzsche's works in their packs, and ordinary Germans were occasionally urged on with the philosopher's words. After the defeat at Stalingrad in 1943, Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels declared, "We shall once more justify the words of the philosopher: 'That which does not kill me makes me stronger.'" Yet today Nietzsche (1844–1900) is one of the guiding lights of modern and postmodern thought, his exploitation by the Nazis dismissed as a travesty based on ignorance and willful distortion.

Not so fast, says Max Whyte, who



Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, prolific and ambiguous, provided grist for the Nazi mill.

recently received his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge. Nazi thinkers picked selectively from Nietzsche's vast and ambiguous corpus, but we must still reckon with the fact that many of the philosopher's ideas did lend themselves to the Nazi cause. Liberal bourgeois existence—the very ideas of Christian morality, democracy, and rationality—filled Nietzsche with contempt. God is dead, he declared, and mankind must reinvent itself in a new image of greatness. The door was open.

Among the Nazi thinkers who seized on Nietzsche was Alfred Baeumler (1887–1968). A professor at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Berlin, Baeumler embraced the Nazi cause around 1930 and was granted an hour-long audience with Hitler himself in 1931, the same year he published his influential *Nietzsche: The Philosopher and Politician*. Baeumler also edited Nietzsche's works and wrote for the general public; Whyte adds that he was "a close personal and professional ally of Alfred Rosenberg—the self-proclaimed 'chief ideologist of National Socialism.'"

For Nietzsche, the way toward a new human future lay through the ancient Greeks, pioneered by the *Übermensch*, or superman, a heroic figure who through great struggle would transcend the banalities of everyday experience. Baeumler had to make some twists and turns to get around other Nietzschean ideas, such as the philosopher's emphasis on the creative, Dionysian side of Greek culture (notably in music) over its more orderly Apollonian aspect. He based much of his argument on the posthumous *Will to Power* (1901), in which Nietzsche argued that the desire to dominate is the most essential human drive, surpassing even the will to live.

Baeumler called his simplified Nietzschean doctrine "heroic realism." Enmity and war were not

## EXCERPT

## Devotional Jihad

*The dominant thread in Islam does see the extension of the faith . . . as a legitimate reason for deploying force: This is the conclusion of serious Muslim scholars and the literature is vast. So if, in the Christian just war tradition, there are criteria you have to go through—barriers, in effect—to the deployment of armed force, in Islam, you must search for ways to refrain.*

—JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, professor of social and political ethics at the University of Chicago Divinity School, in *American Behavioral Scientist* (May 2008)

unfortunate facts of the human condition, he declared, but its essential and perpetual characteristics. Violent conflict was the only path to ennobled human life. Baeumler then shifted the role of the *Übermensch* to the German *Volk* (people), hungry

for a political and cultural rebirth in the unhappy years after World War I: "The old task of our race reappeared before Nietzsche's eyes: the task to be leaders of Europe."

Baeumler was not alone among Nazi ideologists in drawing on Nietzsche—the philosopher Martin Heidegger shared his view for a time—but some sharply criticized the practice. (Nietzsche had, among other things, spoken out against anti-Semitism.) "Baeumler's depiction of Nietzsche . . . was certainly one-sided and myopic, but

it was neither incoherent nor absurd," Whyte concludes. National Socialism was not a cohesive doctrine, he adds, and understanding it, as well as Nietzsche's place in it, remains unfinished business for scholars.

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## Dad's Biological Clock

**THE SOURCE:** "Dad's Hidden Influence" by Tina Hesman Saey, in *Science News*, March 29, 2008.

DON'T HAVE BABIES WHEN you're too young, or too old. Avoid alcohol, and watch the coffee. No long hot baths and no drugs or even a single cigarette. Don't gain too much weight—or too little. And go

easy on fish—it might be laced with mercury. Women of childbearing age have long been warned that the effects of any unhealthful practices would be visited on their children. Now it appears to be men's turn.

A father's age and his exposure to chemicals can leave a medical legacy that lasts generations, writes Tina Hesman Saey, a geneticist who

writes about molecular biology for *Science News*. Infants with teenage dads face increased risk of being born prematurely, or even stillborn. And while researchers couldn't determine whether such results were related to the dads' socioeconomic status or physical health, they noted that fathers under age 20 often have more fertility problems than men a decade older. At the other end of the age spectrum, children of much older fathers face increased chances of having autism, schizophrenia, and Down syndrome. And babies fathered by



firefighters, painters, woodworkers, janitors, and men exposed to solvents and other chemicals at work are more likely to be miscarried or to develop cancer later in life.

Historically, women were blamed when something went awry in fetal development. But now the censure once reserved for “crack moms” can easily be extended to “crack dads.”

Men manufacture new sperm continuously throughout life, with each one living about 74 days. Scientists once thought that defective sperm were doomed to die with the roughly 40 million unrequited suitors in every ejaculation. But now it seems that some kinds of damage do not hinder sperm in their race to fertilization. The result can be embryos with high vulnerability to problems including autism and cancer.

Men’s reproductive health is most robust in their twenties, and after that it’s downhill. Each year after puberty, a man’s sperm-making cells divide about 23 times. By age 40, these vital human building blocks have gone through about 610 rounds of replication, each with a chance for genetic error.

Demographic studies have shown that babies whose fathers are under 20 or over 40 have slightly more health problems than children whose fathers were in their twenties when they were conceived. The reasons are not clear, but more and more evidence shows that current environmental factors can take a toll on the health of future generations. A gene doesn’t have

to develop an actual mutation in order to pass on unhealthy traits. Slight changes in chemicals can turn genes on or off at the wrong time, or label the genetic material improperly. “Scientists have discovered that chemical modifications to DNA and proteins can change the way genes are packaged and regulated without changing the genes themselves,” Saey writes. It may be that the older the individual, the greater the opportunity for slight anomalies to creep in. And changes caused by aging, or exposure to toxins, form a “molecular scrapbook” handed down—from dad as well as mom—to countless future generations.

#### SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

## Better Living Through Chemistry

**THE SOURCE:** “Better Brains, Better Selves? The Ethics of Neuroenhancements” by Richard H. Dees, in *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 4.

WHILE MOST PEOPLE ARE willing to give cosmetic surgery a free pass, the debate gets stickier when it comes to enhancing human brains through artificial means. As Richard H. Dees points out, “People think that altering our brains tinkers with the core of our personalities and the core of ourselves. It changes who we are, and doing so seems wrong.”

Drugs already improve humans’ ability to think. Amphetamines, Dees notes, can help people to “learn skilled motor tasks, like play-

ing the piano, more rapidly.” Other drugs help Alzheimer’s patients “improve their attention and memory.” Another class of drugs—Prozac is the best known—improve people’s sense of well-being, while beta-blockers, whose “widespread use among concert performers is legendary,” decrease stress and nervousness.

If individuals feel that neuro-enhancing drugs improve their lives and cause no harm either to themselves or anyone else, why object to them?

Critics dispute the “no harm” argument on several grounds. The drugs’ long-term effects, for instance, are unknown. But Dees, an associate professor of philosophy and medical humanities at the University of Rochester, believes that limiting and closely monitoring the use of neuroenhancers can counter this concern. Others question the unfair edge the drugs might provide. What if someone scores higher on an SAT under the influence of a memory-improving drug? Dees dismisses this objection by comparing using the drug to procuring the services of a tutor. The unfairness lies not in the advantage the tutor gives, per se, but in the ability of some to *afford* the tutor. While this affordability argument might be extended to neuroenhancers, he still finds it “an odd place to look for a deep moral objection.”

There remain two philosophical areas that present more troubling considerations: human dignity and authenticity. Do the drugs simply provide users with an easy way to overcome life’s difficulties? Consider a concert pianist, gifted with an

uncanny ability to play Rachmaninoff but paralyzed by stage fright. If a pill allows him to wow audiences at Carnegie Hall, does that diminish his achievement? While Dees believes that “overcoming obstacles builds character and makes us all better people,” he notes that “many technologies, from irrigation and permanent settlements to airplanes and air conditioning,” make life easier. Still, the argument is a slippery one: Morally, we know that we should not degrade others in order to advance our own ends, but do we degrade ourselves when we use available technologies, such as the “stage fright” pill?

This leads to a final objection to neuroenhancers: They “fundamentally alter an individual’s personality and create . . . an inauthentic life with artificial happiness.” Dees believes that a person’s “achievements and his relationships must be real before he can live a truly good and happy life.” From Aldous Huxley to the creators of *The Matrix*,

Drugs that enhance performance are not as morally problematic as those that give a false sense of happiness.

social observers have warned about the dangers of creating a happy “reality” that is simply an illusion, and Dees agrees that “a good life must be connected to the reality of people’s lives and to the reality of their own accomplishments.” On this basis, he excuses drugs that enhance memory: They may make people perform better on tests but don’t create false memories. But Dees argues that we need to develop “a more nuanced view” regarding drugs that give a false sense of happiness. True, they may allow some individuals to overcome paralyzing grief or depression, but simply using “enhancements to separate people from the real world is morally bankrupt.”

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## Earth Exceptionalism

**THE SOURCE:** “Where Are They?” by Nick Bostrom, in *Technology Review*, May–June 2008.

PHILOSOPHER NICK BOSTROM has surprising aspirations for the *Phoenix* spacecraft, which landed in the arctic zone of Mars on May 25. The director of the Future of Humanity Institute at Oxford University wants the probe to turn up nothing—sterility, dead rocks, lifeless sands.

Such an outcome would be a good omen for humanity, Bostrom writes. It would provide new evidence that the emergence of life is extremely improbable. It would suggest that billions upon billions of rolls of the dice have produced a score of only one. Heretofore, the notion that 100 billion galaxies containing possibly 100 billion stars each would have only once gener-

## EXCERPT

### Burn, Baby, Burn

*[The United States] has experienced [a] trend, almost exclusive to our country . . . to reintroduce fire. Nature kindles fires galore, but reforms in American fire policy and practice also account for much of the escalation in burning on public lands, which is where nearly all large fires now reside. Federal agencies have for several decades sought to promote fire in the name of ecosystem management: Fires that would have been*

*suppressed are left to burn. Fires are deliberately set. Fires have escaped. . . . [But] today’s fires do not burn as those of the past did; they have to accommodate more than a century of human-wrought changes. . . . The sudden reliance on large fires in the public domain is comparable to economic shock therapy in Eastern Europe. . . . We are long past the time when every burned acre must be labeled “destroyed”; we are not yet to the point of recognizing that not every acre burned is “enhanced.” Turning fire management over to fire likely belongs in the realm of faith-based ecology.*

—STEPHEN J. PYNE, author of the *Cycle of Fire* series, in *The American Scholar* (Spring 2008)

ated the spark of life seemed almost preposterous. Yet after nearly half a century of searches for extra-terrestrial intelligence with increasingly powerful telescopes and data mining techniques, the night sky has yielded no messages, no aliens, and no spacecraft.

The likely explanation for this, Bostrom writes, is that the path to life forms capable of colonizing space leads through a "Great Filter," a term he borrowed from George Mason University economist Robin Hanson. This filter consists of one or more steps that must be negotiated against odds so great as to

make a particular process essentially impossible—except once. If the filter is in the human past, maybe it was traversed 3.8 billion years ago, when life first shows up in the fossil record. Or maybe it happened after single-celled organisms became more complex eukaryotes 1.8 billion years later. That's Bostrom's optimistic scenario.

But what if the Great Filter is ahead of us? This would mean, according to Bostrom, that some horrific probability lies in our future—nuclear destruction, climate catastrophe, genetically engineered superbugs, or high-energy physics

experiments run amok. If other advanced civilizations were born but failed to pass through the filter, could our earthly civilization be any different?

If traces of some creature are found on Mars, it could mean that the emergence of life is not so rare. If it could happen twice in a single small solar system, it's probably occurred in galaxy after galaxy. It could mean that all the civilizations created by the life forms that evolved over time were somehow destroyed before they could colonize or communicate with others. It could mean the Great Filter is in Earth's future.

## ARTS & LETTERS

# Yoknapatawpha Diplomacy

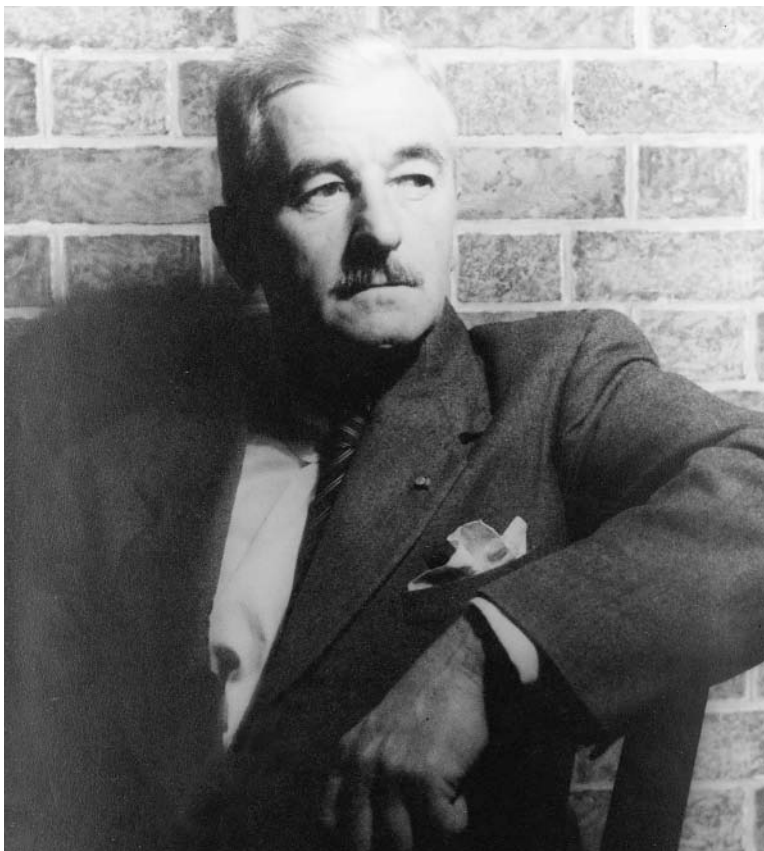
**THE SOURCE:** "Combating Anti-Americanism During the Cold War: Faulkner, the State Department, and Latin America" by Deborah Cohn, in *The Mississippi Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3.

A HALF-CENTURY AGO, DURING a period of particularly fervent anti-Americanism, the U.S. State Department launched a massive campaign, quaint by today's standards, to win hearts and minds around the globe. At the height of the Cold War, America mobilized not seasoned diplomats and practiced public-relations specialists, but intellectuals. Nobel Prize-winning novelist William Faulkner was dispatched to South America.

Faulkner (1897–1962) was a curi-

ous emissary in a propaganda war. One of the world's most reclusive celebrities, he had to be persuaded to attend his own Nobel Prize ceremony in Sweden in 1950. But as the Soviet Union filled the world canvas with portraits of a grossly materialistic America without cultural achievements, Faulkner responded to appeals to his patriotism and agreed to represent the United States internationally. Acclaimed as a writer earlier in Europe and South America than in his home country, Faulkner "fulfilled the wildest dreams and underlying political agenda" of the government that sent him, writes Deborah Cohn, a professor of Spanish literature at Indiana University.

He ran into a rough patch in Brazil on his first Latin America foray, in 1954, when he drank himself into a "pre-coma" state and was unable to participate in as many activities as the State Department had hoped, but redeemed himself with gracious press interviews on the rest of the trip. In 1961, on a tour to Venezuela, where Vice President Richard Nixon's motorcade had been stoned three years earlier, Faulkner lectured, gave press conferences, and conversed with unsympathetic Marxist critics and pro-Soviet journalists as a "nonpolitical, modernist author who addressed 'universal truths,'" Cohn says. A year later, when the National Guard was called in to enforce the desegregation of the University of Mississippi near his home, State Department officials noted in internal communications that he provided a counterbalance to Soviet efforts to define America as a land of bigotry and race riots.



William Faulkner served as a successful cultural emissary for the State Department during the Cold War, despite occasional alcoholic overindulgence, and helped introduce international writers to Americans.

The U.S. government's enlistment of highbrow cultural figures in its "propaganda wars against Communism," Cohn writes, was inspired by a belief that promoting greater understanding and respect between cultures would "ultimately benefit national security." The years of the Cold War were heady times for American artists and intellectuals, when they were considered not only relevant but vital to U.S. foreign policy.

The public diplomacy of these figures took a sometimes unpredictable course. Faulkner's travels in Latin America spurred interest in the works of Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, and

Mario Vargas Llosa in the United States. Thus, the effort to bestow the blessings of American literature on Latin America wound up enriching American letters by introducing more people to writing from south of the border.

#### ARTS & LETTERS

## Imperial Edifice

**THE SOURCE:** "McEmbassy" by Kurt M. Campbell, in *The American Interest*, May–June 2008.

THE ROMAN MOTIFS OF WASHINGTON'S earliest public buildings convey the exalted aspirations of

the fledgling American nation. And the futuristic architecture of Brasília illustrates Brazil's goals of half a century ago. Now the new Chinese Embassy rising on a hill in Northwest Washington reflects the architectural aesthetic of a giant new rival on the world stage, writes Kurt M. Campbell, CEO of the Center for a New American Security. At 250,000 square feet, it will be the largest embassy ever built in the United States.

Since the restoration of relations with the United States three decades ago, the Chinese have been holed up in a fortress-like former hotel on one of the capital's busiest thoroughfares. The old embassy, with its drawn curtains and shuttered windows, seems emblematic of the xenophobia of the Cultural Revolution, and completely out of step with the "mercantilism" of modern China. The vast new steel-and-cement embassy, while discreetly shielded from passing commuter traffic, bids to establish the nation as a more prominent player. As China has opened up to the world, its embassy staff has begun to work the town, talking to reporters, entertaining members of Congress, making friends, influencing people—and keeping trade flowing despite contaminated dog food and lead paint on toys.

The new embassy building, designed by three Chinese Americans, including I. M. Pei, is being built by a consortium of four non-American corporations that cut their construction teeth on Shanghai's dramatic new skyline. Despite its illustrious architects, its sheer



vastness turns it into a bland, “veritable McEmbassy,” Campbell says. Chinese guards patrol the gates of the construction site, and virtually every worker and contractor has come from outside the United States. The Chinese explain the secrecy and security monitoring by saying that when they received an airplane built for senior leaders by Boeing some years ago, they found many “unexpected surprises” in the form of listening devices. “In today’s environment of barely disguised strategic competition,” both sides appear to

## EXCERPT

## Verses Versus Marriage

*It may be too sweeping to say that modern poetry is unhappy poetry, but it is certainly true that modern poems about marriage are almost always about unhappy marriages. . . . Such unanimous poetic testimony against the possibility of happy marriage . . . is more than a sign that poets are unusually difficult to be married to. It is a statement of the modern artist’s belief that truthfulness to experience, especially the worst phases of experience, is more important than the promise of pleasure; that it is better to be authentic than to be happy.*

—ADAM KIRSCH, poet and critic,  
in *The New Criterion* (April 2008)

be constantly probing for inside information on what the other is up to, according to Campbell.

America’s biggest embassy is not its mission in Beijing but the one under construction in Baghdad. When the new Chinese embassy opens, it will be a reminder that while the 20th century belonged to America, China intends to seize the 21st. Its “McEmbassy” is a piece of a larger public-relations strategy, Campbell concludes. Its message is that while the Americans were away “fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, China arrived.”

## OTHER NATIONS

## Spain’s Memory Wars

**THE SOURCE:** “Pinochet’s Revenge: Spain Revisits Its Civil War” by Omar G. Encarnación, in *World Policy Journal*, Winter 2007–08, and “The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain” by Carolyn P. Boyd, in *The Annals*, May 2008.

CALL IT PINOCHET’S REVENGE. When Spain asked Scotland Yard to go to a private London hospital in 1998 and arrest Chile’s former dictator, General Augusto Pinochet, on charges of murdering Spanish émigrés, the shock waves hit Spain even harder than his home country. Spain seemed morally hypocritical for attempting to prosecute a foreign

autocrat while adopting a policy of “collective amnesia” toward its own bloody civil war and nearly 40-year aftermath. When Spain went after Pinochet, who later died of natural causes at age 91 without ever standing trial, it could no longer ignore its own dictator, Generalissimo Francisco Franco, writes Omar G. Encarnación, a political scientist at Bard College. The worldwide reaction to the Pinochet arrest destroyed Spain’s unwritten “Pact of Forgetting” that had made the politically connected deaths of 580,000 Spaniards during Franco’s reign (1936–75)

almost unmentionable.

Other countries, including Germany and Argentina, conducted trials to punish crimes of former despots and their henchmen. But in 1977, Spain legislated amnesty. Within a decade of Pinochet’s arrest, however, a dramatic shift in public attitudes led to the 2007 passage of a “Law of Historical Memory” to commemorate the vanquished and rebuke the myth that the victors—Franco’s fascist forces—were right.

International human rights organizations argue that the 2007 law continues to let the guilty off the hook. It metes out no punishment even for wholesale murder and torture. But the measure’s supporters in Spain note that it is the first declaration that the Franco regime was “illegitimate” and requires visible sym-

bolic change—getting rid of ubiquitous Francoist monuments and renaming streets called “Avenida del Generalísimo,” which can be found in nearly every city.

Although there is consensus among Spaniards that the record needs to be corrected and history recovered, there is less agreement on what should be remembered, according to Encarnación.

By 2000, nearly half of the Spanish population was too young to recall either the civil war or the dictatorship, writes Carolyn P. Boyd, a historian at the University of California, Irvine. And though more than 15,000 books have been written about the period, there is still no agreement on the causes of the war and who was at fault. The Right continues to think Franco saved the country by eliminating Marxist atheists, and the Left believes itself victimized in the “Spanish Holocaust.” Boyd notes that most history textbooks simply describe the civil war as a “fratricidal tragedy.”

#### OTHER NATIONS

## Cultural Learnings of Kazakhstan

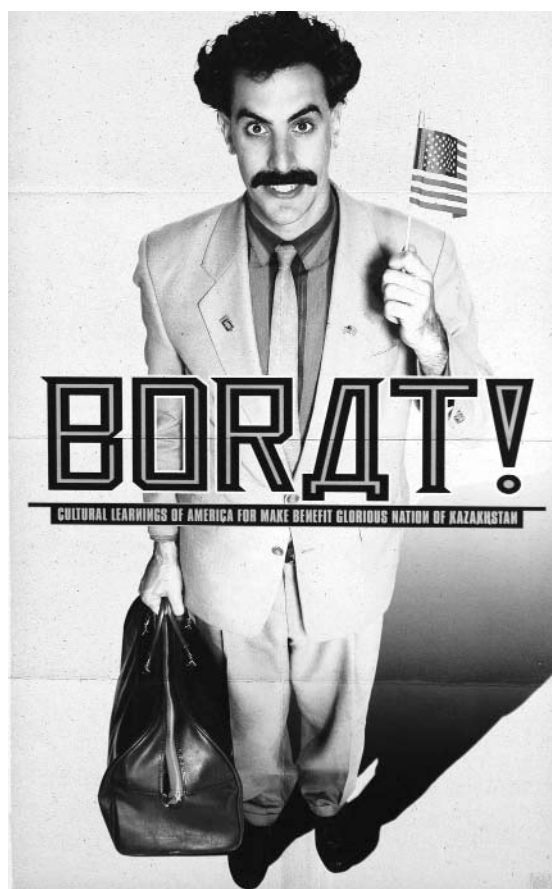
**THE SOURCE:** “Buying into Brand Borat: Kazakhstan’s Cautious Embrace of Its Unwanted ‘Son’” by Robert A. Saunders, in *Slavic Review*, Spring 2008.

IMAGINE THAT YOURS IS A newly independent nation the size of Western Europe. Your country straddles the world’s sixth-largest oilfield. It befriends the United States. It lays out millions to brand itself as one of the most stable, diverse, and rapidly

modernizing states on the planet.

Then enters a fictitious reporter, star of the \$250 million-grossing film *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*. Suddenly, your unknown country is famous. But it’s been rendered as a medieval backwater populated by rapists and anti-Semites. It’s become notorious for an imaginary festival called “The Running of the Jew.” It’s portrayed as a world center of wife beating. It’s depicted as hiring one-eyed drunkards to pilot the planes of its national airline.

And how has the actual nation of Kazakhstan handled this all-too-extensive exposure? It has vacillated, writes Robert A. Saunders, a historian at the State University of New York at Farmingdale. In responding to Sacha Baron Cohen, a Cambridge University-educated comedian who has promoted Borat into a lucrative specialty, Kazakhstan has tried being tough, branding Cohen’s humor as racism. It’s issued threats and demanded that the character be banned. It’s been nonchalant, saying it can take a



The fictitious movie journalist Borat put oil-rich Kazakhstan on the map—as uncouth and anti-Semitic. Tourism has blossomed.

joke. And it’s been cynical, touting Kazakhstan as the “perfect home for this autumn’s hottest comedian—Borat.”

The more Kazakhstan fussed, the more people wanted to see the film. And the more people who flocked to the film, the more tourists wanted to go to Kazakhstan. Visa applications in Cohen’s native Britain spiked as Borat became better known.

So in the end, Kazakhstan adopted the attitude of P. T. Barnum—any publicity is good publicity—and proved that not only circuses but even sovereign nations with oil wealth can make money off slander.

*Also in this issue:*

*D. T. Max* on  
insomniacs

*Lynn Berry* on  
Boris Yeltsin

*Karl E. Scheibe* on  
the Hitler salute

*Matthew Dallek* on  
the Nixon era

*Edith Gelles* on  
Mercy Otis Warren

*Nicholas Carr* on  
American business  
schools

*Jeffrey Burton  
Russell* on  
original sin

*Mary Swander* on  
pantheism

*Eric Hand* on  
Niagara Falls

# CURRENT BOOKS

REVIEWS OF NEW AND NOTEWORTHY NONFICTION

## Self-Styled Moses

*Reviewed by Michael Anderson*

MARCUS GARVEY REMAINS THE MOST confounding figure in the history of black America. Arriving in the United States in 1916, the 28-year-old Jamaican emigrant, of slipshod self-education and without connections, rapidly created what the distinguished black historian John Hope Franklin called the first black mass movement in the history of the United States. Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association claimed a worldwide membership in the millions; his weekly journal, *Negro World*, had a circulation of 50,000. At the height of his influence, Garvey drew thousands of black people every night to rallies in Harlem.

He deliberately set himself in contrast to the fledgling NAACP. Garvey advocated racial separation, making common cause with white-supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan: "I regard the Klan, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs, and White American Societies as better friends of the race than all other groups of hypocritical whites put together." The NAACP was Fabian in its strategy of low-key lobbying and public education to protect black political and civil rights. Garvey roared, "The Ku Klux Klan is going to make this a white man's country. . . . Fighting them

is not going to get you anywhere."

How, then, could Garvey command the almost hysterical devotion of the black masses? Through a commanding oratory that hypnotically invoked racial pride. "The man spoke," James Weldon Johnson wrote in *Black Manhattan* (1930), "and his magnetic personality, torrential eloquence, and intuitive knowledge of crowd psychology were all brought into play." Garvey vowed to "organize the 400,000,000 Negroes of the world into a vast organization to plant the banner of freedom on the great continent of Africa."

Johnson remarked upon Garvey's "Napoleonic personality," and he certainly dressed the part, sporting a "military hat tipped with white feathers, black broadcloth trousers with a gold stripe down the side, a Sam Browne belt across his chest, gold epaulettes, a gold sword, and white gloves." Though the spectacle caused W. E. B. Du Bois to mutter that "a casual observer might have mistaken it for the dress-rehearsal of a new comic opera," to his devoted followers Garvey was what he proclaimed himself to be: the Provisional Presi-

### NEGRO WITH A HAT:

The Rise and Fall of  
Marcus Garvey.

By Colin Grant.  
Oxford Univ. Press.  
530 pp. \$27.95

dent of Africa, the man who would reclaim the continent from its colonialist masters and establish a homeland where an oppressed people would rediscover its lost glory.

And the people were willing to put their money where Garvey's mouth was. At its peak, in 1919 and 1920, Garvey's movement amassed more than \$600,000 (the equivalent today of more than \$7 million), with which Garvey proposed to extend Booker T. Washington's pastoral ideal of black economic self-sufficiency into the entrepreneurial age of the Roaring Twenties. He told his followers he would initiate a business venture every month: a lunchroom, a restaurant, a tearoom, an ice-cream

parlor. These were, however, but overtures to the inauguration of a steamship company, the Black Star Line. As Colin Grant writes in his biography of Garvey, *Negro With a Hat*, not only would the steamship line "operate between American ports and those of

Africa, the West Indies, and Central and South America," but to devoted Garveyites the Black Star would also be the mechanism through which "a latter-day Moses . . . was going to lead them to the Promised Land." Five thousand black people cheered the maiden voyage of the line's first steamer as it left New York's 135th Street pier in November 1919.

"Of course, the bubble burst," Johnson wrote. Garvey and his entourage knew nothing about ships—not even how to shop for them. The vessel that thousands cheered was in such drastic need of repair that one Universal Negro Improvement Association official despaired, "She could not have been worth a penny over \$25,000 when the Black Star Line acquired her for \$165,000." (Two other ships broke down on their initial voyages and never returned to New York.) By January 1922 the Black Star Line was bankrupt, costs outrunning capital by nearly \$89,000 (just over \$1 million today).

Marcus Garvey "was not the worst kind of demagogue," W. E. B. Du Bois conceded. "He believed in his program and he had a childish ignorance of the stern facts of the world into whose face he was flying."

Garvey was convicted of federal fraud charges in 1923. His five-year sentence was commuted by President Calvin Coolidge in 1927, and Garvey, who had never become a U.S. citizen, was immediately deported to Jamaica. Irrepressibly, he announced plans for a *new* steamship company, as well as a campaign to collect \$600 million for a worldwide program of global black uplift.

However, exiled from his base in Harlem, Garvey was a leader in search of followers. A newspaper account of his talk in 1928 in London's Royal Albert Hall, which seated 10,000, was headlined, "9800 Empty Seats." In 1940, five years after settling in London, he died there, at the age of 52, without ever seeing the continent he had promised to deliver.

"Writing on Garvey has lately been a polemical tussle between two camps," Grant concludes, "one that wants to skewer him as a charlatan and the other that seeks to elevate him to the status of a saint." On the one hand, there is Nobel laureate Ralph Bunche's judgment from 1940: "When the curtain dropped on the Garvey theatricals, the black man of America was exactly where Garvey had found him, though a little bit sadder, perhaps a bit poorer—if not wiser." On the other hand is the fact that a future prime minister of Jamaica, Edward Seaga, arranged in 1964 for Garvey's remains to be returned for a funeral honoring him as the country's first national hero.

But the forced choice Grant proposes is far too restricted. Himself of Jamaican heritage, Grant is unable to achieve a balanced perspective; though he is obviously aware of Garvey's lunacies, his reservations are expressed only as snarky asides (as in the title of his book, a reference to that befeathered military hat that dominates the best-known photographs of Garvey). For the most part he writes as Garvey's champion, praising his "genius," snidely denigrating his opponents, even (most unforgivably) comparing him to Gandhi. The principal value of *Negro With a Hat* may be that it inadvertently immerses the modern reader in the spirit of Garveyism: a murk of inchoate exhortation, discus-





**Marcus Garvey, shown above in 1923, sought to unite blacks worldwide to “plant the banner of freedom” in Africa, and often dressed as though he were ready to lead the charge.**

sive and digressive, lacking organization or over-scrupulousness about facts. For example, Grant situates a Chicago beach on the Missouri River. Anyone seeking an intelligent and accurate account of Garvey and his movement must return to E. David Cronon's superb *Black Moses* (1955), still the only scholarly account of Garvey's life and movement.

From the time of his ascent, Garvey evoked conflicting responses, even from opponents such as the black newspaper *The Chicago Defender*, which wrote in an obituary editorial: “Had Garvey succeeded in his undertakings, he would have been incontestably the greatest figure of the 20th century. Having failed, he is considered a fool.” Though he might have been a buffoon, a crook he was not: His endless and strident appeals for black people to purchase shares in the Black Star Line (“Any Negro not a stockholder in the BSL will be worse than a traitor”) were not designed to line his pockets but to support his crackpot fantasies of racial grandeur. (When one of the line's steamships finally managed to take on coconuts as paid cargo,

Garvey's insistence that the vessel make unscheduled stops, that more people might marvel, ensured that the fruit rotted before it could be delivered.)

And had the man himself not appeared, the times might have created him. In the wake of the Great Migration of southern blacks to the North and their subsequent bitter discovery of a subtler segregation, in their disillusionment with the failed promise in Woodrow Wilson's flatulent, if ringing, rhetoric of democracy, in their newfound determination to confront racial violence during the series of white mob actions of the “Red Summer” of 1919, “the mingled emotions of the race were bitterness, despair, and anger,” Johnson wrote. “There developed an attitude of cynicism. . . . There developed also a spirit of defiance born of desperation.” These conditions called for a demagogue, and Garvey answered.

But he was “not the worst kind of demagogue,” Du Bois conceded. “If he had been simply a calculating scoundrel, he would carefully have skirted the narrow line between promise and performance and avoided as long as possible the inevitable catastrophe. But he believed in his program and he had a childish ignorance of the stern facts of the world into whose face he was flying.” Garvey certainly had the right enemies (colonialism, racial oppression, economic exploitation), and though his appeals for racial self-respect could be shrill and silly (he bestowed endless titles on followers: “Baron of the Zambezi,” “Knights of the Nile,” “the Distinguished Service Order of Ethiopia”; even the humblest Garveyite was called “Fellowman of the Negro Race”), they could not be wholly despised at a time when Congress refused to outlaw lynching.

**H**e may have been wrong-headed, but at least he was sincere: Such has been the case made for Garvey. Just as he ignored the ancient dictum when he acted as his own lawyer in his mail fraud trial, far too many commentators cite his good intentions without acknowledging that they cobbled the pathway to perdition. Yet in the cold light of history, what did he accomplish, what good did he do? Garvey's putative importance as precursor to racial self-esteem is as greasy as that

term has come to be; his concrete achievement is as evanescent as his steamship line. "You have been preying upon the gullibility of your own people," a judge told Garvey. "You should have taken this \$600,000 and built a hospital for colored people in this city instead of purchasing a few old boats. There is a form of paranoia which manifests itself in believing oneself to be a great man."

Honky baiting, a favored tactic of black demagogues from Garvey to Jeremiah Wright, is a sorry substitute for reform. Equally barren is the

assertion that Garvey, however demented, deserves praise for detesting the detestable. Such symbolic triumphs have so long been offered to black Americans that too many have substituted shadow for act (these days it is called "representation") in a state of almost conscious denial. As the black scholar Kelly Miller said in the last century, "The Negro pays for what he wants and begs for what he needs."

MICHAEL ANDERSON is writing a biography of the playwright Lorraine Hansberry.

## Waking Nightmare

*Reviewed by D. T. Max*

PITY THE POOR SLEEP RESEARCHER. THERE he (and it is usually a "he") is at a sleep convention, and along comes Gayle Greene, a professor of literature with chronic insomnia who has made a specialty of trying to cure herself. The researcher is pumped up on recent successes in the field: the growth of apnea treatments or the development of a pill that quiets restless legs syndrome. The "sleep switch," a central trigger in the brain that divides sleeping from waking, has been located. Then Greene, who teaches at Scripps College in Claremont, California, starts her rat-a-tat of questions. What do we know about how our diet affects sleep? she might ask the researcher. Er, nothing. Do our parents' sleep habits affect our own? Er, we don't really know. Well, surely you can tell me how the best-known sleeping pills work? No, actually, Professor Greene, we can't. They just sort of seem to help.

*Insomniac* is an odd kind of book: It's not a whodunit but a why-don't-they-do-it. It asks questions, then asks why no one really qualified is exploring them. Greene wants answers, and, unfortunately, there are few in the world of sleep research. Those we have are bought and paid for by Big Pharma, with a predictable distorting effect. For instance, we know a lot about how breathing affects sleep patterns, but next to nothing about how menstruation affects sleep

patterns. That's because there's money to be made in treating breathing problems. Insurance companies will cover the costs of the things sleep clinics can sell you to ease your apnea. Not so if your insomnia is linked—as Greene suspects hers is—to hormonal fluctuations.

*Insomniac* is, along the way, an alarming, uncomfortable portrayal of how researchers in the field fail the sufferers they are supposed to treat. Desperate for funds, bent over by insurance companies, whiplashed by the National Institutes of Health, researchers do not treat insomnia as it is actually experienced. If you cannot cure me, Greene seems to be saying, at least hear me. Don't tell me how insomnia ought to be, but let me tell you how it really is. "What is missing from everything I read about insomnia is—the insomniacs," she writes. And earlier she confides, "No doctor I ever saw showed the slightest curiosity about the cocktail of hormones, estrogen, progesterone, thyroid, that I ingest daily." "This is a somewhat cranky book," she writes. Indeed it is.

And with reason, as Greene makes clear. Certainly insomnia came early to her and has stayed for a long time. Greene was born wide awake. "There is no sleep in that baby," her mother wrote to

### INSOMNIAC.

By Gayle Greene.  
Univ. of California Press.  
503 pp. \$29.95



*Night* (1963), by George Tooker

her father in 1944, in a letter Greene unearthed many years later. With puberty her insomnia really blossomed, and by graduate school it had become a permanent companion. Her only break was during pregnancy (whence her theory that hormones can play a significant role in insomnia).

But if there was never any sleep in Greene, there was always a lot of fight. She came of age in a generation that believed that problems could be cured, an optimistic postwar time. There is no station of the insomniac cross she has not visited in the last 65 years. "I've tried (nearly) everything anyone has ever told me worked for them," she writes, "and it's taken me some strange ways: lathering myself in sesame oil, brewing a Chinese herbal tea so foul that my dog fled the kitchen when it steeped, concocting a magnesium supplement that hissed and spat like something out of Harry Potter." On the pharmaceutical front she's been equally active, sampling "valerian,

kava kava, chamomile, skullcap, passionflower, homeopathic concoctions, L-tryptophan, 5-HTP, GABA, melatonin, Elavil, Zoloft, trazodone, tricyclics." Add to this the benzodiazepines, "Librium, Valium, Xanax, Dalmane, Klonopin, Restoril, Halcion, and more Ativan than I care to remember or probably can remember, since the drug erodes memory." Throw in Ambien and Sonata, and "in the bad old days" sedatives such as Nembutal, Seconal, and Miltown. Plus the over-the-counter remedies: Sominex, Nytol, Sleep-Eze. Not to mention other treatments, including meditation, acupuncture, and biofeedback. And on and on, poor soul. Nothing ever quieted her chattering brain.

**T**he tone of much of this book is high dudgeon. If she were Dante, Greene would put the drug companies in the last circle of hell and arrogant, prescription-scrib-

bling “sleep specialists” one circle away. But she reserves gentler criticism for the sleep therapists who treat patients with cognitive behavioral therapy. CBT is, in theory, exactly where Greene wishes the field would head. “The best drug is no drug, as far as I’m concerned,” she writes. Instead of treating insomniacs with pills, CBT counsels small changes in behavior that will lead to more soporific outcomes, changes that are sometimes grouped under the rubrics “sleep hygiene” and “sleep restriction.” For instance, use blackout drapes, CBT advises. Do nothing in your bed besides sleep (or make love, Greene gamely adds); if you can’t sleep, get out of bed and do something else. When you’re sleepy, come back and try again. And no, we repeat, no caffeine.

The only problem with CBT, Greene learns, is that it doesn’t really work. She cites studies showing that CBT rarely increases sleep time significantly and that the work involved in participating in it often leaves insomniacs more dispirited than before they started. One 1999 review of 50 CBT studies Greene mentions found that sleep was only increased by 30 minutes. Sufferers probably spent that much time filling out their sleep diaries.

So with the virtuous pagan of CBT fallen, what are we left with? What hope does Greene hold out for herself? For the reader? For the researcher who deigns to pick up a book written by a non-specialist? Greene embraces some commonsense proposals for the near-term future: (1) Stop blaming the victim. Failure to sleep is not a character flaw, nor is complaining about tiredness a sign of weakness. (It is not true that “the best don’t rest.”) (2) Insomnia is not a psychological condition but the result of a combination of genetic and physiological problems with a possible psychiatric component. For instance, contrary to long-standing assumptions, there is no proof that insomnia is a byproduct of depression; indeed, depression is likely a byproduct of insomnia. (3) Sleep is a feminist issue, or should be. Researchers should look a lot harder at women, who report sleep

problems in disproportionate numbers. (4) And they have to push back against the pharmaceutical industry, which trumpets one miracle cure after another without testing them widely enough or on a diverse enough group of subjects. “Most medications on the market today,” Greene writes, “are a parody of what we need, dumbing us down and increasing the risk of falls.” (5) Sleep researchers must be wary of their own success—if “success” is the vast increase in sleep clinics in this country. Those clinics are good at treating pulmonary problems but all but useless for true insomnia. (6) A child of the ’60s, Greene’s final call is to organize. Follow the model of AIDS or restless legs syndrome sufferers. Arise, insomniacs, you have nothing to lose but the bags under your eyes.

*Insomniac* is a wild ride, and its wildness is part of its pleasure. You get to know Greene in these pages: bright, jagged, exhausted, funny, wistful. “Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?” she might say with Job. If *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is the textual analogue of bipolar syndrome, *Insomniac* is the textual equivalent of sleeplessness. It’s jazzed. It’s disorganized. It’s in a hurry. It forgets its hat.

But when all is said and done, you emerge with a great sense of frustration on behalf of the author and a lively appreciation for what she has been through. You certainly do wonder about the mystery of sleep, how we can know so little about a physiological state so central to our experience. “If sleep does not serve an absolutely vital function,” the sleep researcher Allan Rechtschaffen famously observed, “then it is the biggest mistake the evolutionary process ever made.” And after reading Greene’s plaint, you’d add that if nature was going to go to all this trouble, this vast mechanism for restoration that leaves us inert and unprotected for a third of our lives, it might at least have done a better job.

D. T. MAX is the author of *The Family That Couldn’t Sleep* (2006), a cultural and scientific study of fatal familial insomnia.



# Russia's Flawed Hero

Reviewed by Lynn Berry

WHEN BORIS YELTSIN DIED, ON THE AFTER-noon of April 23, 2007, CNN and the BBC immediately interrupted their programming to run non-stop coverage of his life and legacy, but the Russian channels, all under Kremlin control, did not seem to know quite what to say. They did not even report his death until more than two hours later.

The master of the Kremlin at the time, Vladimir Putin, had built his popularity in part by perpetuating the myth that he had saved Russia from the horrors of the Yeltsin years. Many Russians look back on the 1990s as a time of economic collapse, social misery, and national humiliation. But some, including much of the Moscow intelligentsia, remember Yeltsin as the man who gave them freedom and hope. They mourned not just Yeltsin but the final realization that the democratic rights he had handed them had been all but snatched away.

By evening, Putin seemed to understand that he could not allow Yeltsin's death to become a rallying point for his opponents. He arranged for his predecessor to lie in state in the grand Cathedral of Christ the Savior and to be buried in Novodevichy Cemetery, the leafy resting place of Russia's heroes. When Putin finally spoke publicly, he announced a day of national mourning for Yeltsin with words of praise, albeit indirect: "A new democratic Russia was born during his time, a free, open, and peaceful country." Thus began the cautious official reassessment, even co-option, of Yeltsin's legacy.

The role of Russia's first president in the country's transformation remains controversial both within Russia and abroad, as Timothy J. Colton acknowledges in his biography. The man will be forever remembered for climbing onto a tank in August 1991 to valiantly defend democracy and also for embarrassing his compatriots three years later when he tipsily conducted a German band outside Berlin's city hall. He was committed to freedom of speech but shelled a defiant parliament into sub-

mission. He freed market forces but allowed a group of loyal bankers and businessmen to grow fabulously rich as ordinary citizens paid the cost of economic reform.

Still, Colton, a professor of government and Russian studies at Harvard, says he has come to see Yeltsin as one of history's great men. For all his foibles and mistakes, Yeltsin put his country on the path toward democratic politics and market-based economics, and he did so while largely avoiding the apocalyptic scenarios of anarchy and civil war. He was a "hero in history—enigmatic and flawed, to be sure, yet worthy of our respect and sympathy."

Colton's biography is the first major assessment to come along since Leon Aron's *Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life*, which went to press shortly before Yeltsin unexpectedly

stepped down from Russia's presidency in the final hours of 1999. It benefits from the passage of time and perspective afforded by Putin's eight subsequent years as president. Colton's research included what he describes as "eye-opening" interviews with

Yeltsin, his family members, and about 150 others. He also had access to declassified files from Soviet archives and new memoirs by former aides and other political players of the time that shed light on Yeltsin's life.

Colton says he set out to write a book about Yeltsin's leadership in the 1990s, but the further he got, the more he wondered what had molded the man who would rise through the communist system to become its "hangman." The result is that the chapters on Yeltsin's family, childhood, and early

## YELTSIN: A Life.

By Timothy J. Colton.  
Basic. 616 pp. \$35

As a young Communist Party boss, Boris Yeltsin encouraged entrepreneurial initiative in the state sector. His hair seemed "suspiciously long" for a party member in good standing.

career as a construction boss in Sverdlovsk provide some of the most engaging reading of the book.

Yeltsin grew up in a self-reliant family in the Ural Mountains. His paternal grandfather, a “self-made man, a backwoods capitalist,” suffered under Joseph Stalin for the crime of owning a farm, a mill, and a smithy. A dispossessed kulak, he died a broken man when Yeltsin was five. Yeltsin’s maternal grandfather, a master carpenter, and his wife also were driven from their home, and when Yeltsin was a boy his father spent nearly three years in a labor camp for “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.”

Because he had relatives who were persecuted during the Stalinist repressions, Yeltsin was neither permitted nor particularly inclined to join the Communist Party as a young man. He did so only in 1961, at age 30, after the Khrushchev thaw made it possible, and with the aim of advancing his career in the construction industry. A natural leader, he soon moved into the regional party nomenklatura.

Colton finds harbingers of Yeltsin’s future rebellion in his behavior as Sverdlovsk party boss in the late 1970s and early ’80s. Yeltsin encouraged entrepreneurial initiative in the state sector and thought it economic nonsense to control prices in the farmers’ markets. Even his hair seemed “suspiciously long” for a party member in good standing. While Yeltsin believed in the ideals of communism and had no “metaphysical thirst for reform, democracy, or the market,” he had a visceral sense that the Soviet system had lost its way. “The bacillus was there, gnawing away at Yeltsin *before* he left for Moscow in 1985,” Colton writes.

**M**ikhail Gorbachev brought Yeltsin to Moscow to help carry out perestroika, but they soon clashed. Yeltsin turned on him at a Central Committee meeting in 1987, spontaneously taking the floor to accuse the party of bungling the promised reforms and kowtowing to Gorbachev. Colton calls this Yeltsin’s secret speech, a bombshell comparable to Khrushchev’s address denouncing Stalin in 1956. Yeltsin later tried to patch up his relationship with Gorbachev, who wavered before stripping him of his position as Moscow party boss. Had they reached a com-

promise, Yeltsin told Colton in 2002, history might have been different.

Shunned by the Soviet establishment, Yeltsin shifted the action to the Russian republic. He won a seat in 1990 in the new Russian Congress of People’s Deputies, which elected him speaker. Gorbachev tried to prop up his own position by introducing a Soviet presidency, but refused to submit to a popular vote, even though, at the time, he would have won, a decision Colton describes as a “blunder of biblical proportions.”

The Russian republic then held a general election for its own president, which Yeltsin won with 59 percent of the vote, thus gaining the legitimacy of a democratically elected leader that Gorbachev had allowed to pass him by. After his defiance of the bungled coup of August 1991, Yeltsin’s victory was complete and the fate of the Soviet Union was sealed.

As president of a newly independent country, Yeltsin set out to free the economy from the control of the state. But the lifting of price controls led to soaring inflation, wiping out the savings of ordinary Russians. Outdated factories languished as state subsidies and contracts dried up. Colton defends Yeltsin’s reforms, claiming that the economic slump was not as bad as usually depicted. And when Yeltsin stepped down, Russia had a market economy that was beginning to see the strong growth that has continued to this day.

Colton also challenges other common perceptions of the Yeltsin presidency. While Yeltsin did overindulge in alcohol, his drinking was not central to his public role, and few realized that, after a series of heart attacks, he virtually stopped in 1996. In his second term, heart disease weakened but did not incapacitate Yeltsin, who “rationed his effort and expended it purposefully.” Colton dismisses as not credible persistent accusations that the Yeltsins accepted bribes from a Swiss construction company hired to renovate the Kremlin. Contrary to what many believed at the time, Yeltsin did not surrender control to what was known as the Family, a group of insiders that included his daughter Tatyana Dyachenko and oligarch Boris Berezovsky. Yeltsin chose Putin not because Berezovsky or anyone else put

him up to it, but because Yeltsin himself thought Russia needed a leader with a “military manner” who could consolidate political authority. But Colton is convinced Yeltsin would have reversed the decision later if he’d had the chance.

The Yeltsin that emerges in Colton’s book is a powerful man of sharp political instincts and the courage to act on them. He generously gives away his wristwatches. He habitually snaps pencils in frustration. He remains loyal to friends from his hometown but promotes young economists to help run Russia. He makes mistakes, then apologizes to his fellow Russians for them.

Frequently, Colton sets Yeltsin off against Gorbachev, his chief rival. Born a month apart, the two men could not have been more different. While Yeltsin, the grandson of kulaks, was 30 when he received his party card, Gorbachev, a third-generation Communist, joined in his early 20s, when Stalin was still in the Kremlin. Yeltsin’s instincts, Colton says, were feline, while Gorbachev’s were more canine—“trained, trainable, tied to the known and to the previously rewarded.”

But it is in the comparisons to Putin, in most cases unstated, that Yeltsin truly shines. Yeltsin was roasted in the media over the brutal war he unleashed in Chechnya in 1994, but he did not try to silence his many critics or stop journalists from investigating alleged corruption, accepting the need for political debate and an independent press. “For the first sustained period in modern times, Yeltsin’s Russia was to be a land without political censors, political exiles, or political prisoners,” Colton says. Under Putin, this all changed. National television stations were deployed as propaganda tools of the Kremlin, and journalists who angered those in power lost their jobs and, in some cases, their lives. Berezovsky leads a long list of Russians who sought asylum abroad to avoid politically motivated criminal charges, and Russia’s prisons and mental hospitals once again began to collect political dissidents.

In stepping down on New Year’s Eve 1999, Yeltsin said he was confident that Russia would never return to the past and would “proceed only forward.” He then famously asked Putin to “take

care of Russia.” Putin let him down. With Putin’s installation this spring of his own handpicked successor, Dmitry Medvedev, a man who promises to fulfill “Putin’s Plan” and has made the former president his prime minister, Putin still rules.

But Colton concludes that there is still hope for a democratic Russia. Yeltsin gave Russians a personal independence that they will not easily relinquish. His economic reforms underlie the growth that has improved the lives of his compatriots, who mistakenly thank only Putin. In his book, Colton is kind to Yeltsin. History will be, too.

LYNN BERRY is news editor of the Moscow bureau of the Associated Press. She has been a journalist in Russia for 13 years, including more than five years as editor of *The Moscow Times*.

## HISTORY

### Meet and Greet

*Reviewed by Karl E. Scheibe*

ON THIS SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC, boys mocked the Hitler salute during World War II. I recall holding a pocket comb under my nose with my left hand while extending my right arm, clicking my heels, and intoning, “Heil Hitler!” I never closed the gap of consciousness between my own German heritage and my pleasure in ridiculing my father’s native land. To this day, one may mock and scorn the Nazis without fear of offending anyone’s sensibilities. Mel Brooks’s uproarious comedy *The Producers* milked this standard Nazi greeting to great effect. How is it that the defining pole of manifest evil in our times is at once chilling and funny?

In *The Hitler Salute*, German sociologist Tilman Allert has given us an analysis of the famous greeting that is both thorough and modest, accessible and profound. In the scope of 100 pages, he provides a history and interpretation of a most remarkable and telling feature of the totalitarian regime that was National Socialism. By decree from the very beginning of the Nazi era in 1933, this salutation, involving voice and gesture, was pre-

#### THE HITLER SALUTE:

On the Meaning of a Gesture.

By Tilman Allert.  
Translated by Jefferson Chase. Metropolitan.  
115 pp. \$20

scribed. It was “a historically unique phenomenon that, for the span of 12 years, politicized all communication within German society.”

It is astonishing to observe that the entire German nation quickly abandoned the greeting rituals and habits established over centuries (*griß Gott, auf Wiedersehen, guten Tag, servus*) in favor of a salute that was a test and a manifestation of loyalty, a pledge of allegiance to a charismatic leader, and a confession of pious faith in the new order. Of course, there were protests and exceptions. Jews were neither expected nor allowed to use the greeting. Allert notes that the military was slow to substitute the new greeting for its traditional salutes. The Catholic Church did not fall into line immediately. And within families, especially those of the aristocratic classes, traditional greetings survived. But by the end of the war, in 1945, the salute had been assimilated into the routines of everyday life. Then, with Germany's defeat and the death of Hitler, the custom was abandoned virtually overnight—except by certain prisoners of war and a few fringe political groups.

This work constitutes a brilliant example of what Erving Goffman referred to as the micro-analysis of the interaction order. The theoretical structure of the book is drawn from classical sociology—in particular the thought of Max Weber. Greetings are the means by which individuals enter into social arrangements and relationships; the ways greetings are given, received, and reciprocated provide a means of reading status, power, group identity, and disposition toward cooperation or hostility. What sets the Hitler salute apart is that it did not grow out of popular custom, but was imposed from the top down. The comparison that most readily comes to mind is from Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel *Brave New World*, in which the citizens of his futuristic society are expected to employ the sign of the T as a gesture of solidarity.

No longer could an individual take public exception to the course of events or seek pleasure in the company of others who might share one's passions. The only permissible pleasures were collective, communal. “Ultimately,” Allert asserts, “what made it possible for Germans to accept the Hitler greet-

ing was neglect, an attitude in turn made possible by a perception of society that so attenuated people's expectations of social exchange they became indifferent to the presence of others.” Ordinary Germans, under the watch of suspicious Nazi authorities, abandoned previous social values and lost their trust in social interactions. The path to the extermination camps was paved by such neglect and indifference.

The elimination of individuality betokened by the universal Hitler salute was a form of madness. The relief from this madness was a return to normality—including the capacity to laugh at what was once so tragic.

KARL E. SCHEIBE, an emeritus professor of psychology and director of the Wasch Center for Retired Faculty at Wesleyan University, is the author of *The Drama of Everyday Life* (2000), among other books.

## Day of the Jackal

Reviewed by Matthew Dallek

IN 2001, HISTORIAN RICK Perlstein published *Before the Storm*, which examined the conservative ascendancy through the lens of Barry Goldwater's 1964 White House run. Now comes the sequel, *Nixonland*, in which he explains how Richard Nixon emerged in the Goldwater aftermath as the unscrupulous tribune of a “silent majority” infuriated by the social instability gripping America.

Though the style is overwrought, *Nixonland* is, at times, an eloquent narrative of a society in chaos. Perlstein argues that Nixon capitalized on that unrest—crime, rioting, pornography, “women's liberation”—to win the presidency. Appropriating the tactics and strategies of conservative leaders such as California governor Ronald Reagan and Alabama's George Wallace, Nixon used racial codes, patriotic symbols, and get-tough language to appeal to suburbanites who sought the restoration of order to their streets and college campuses.

Nixon's appeal to the “silent majority” and his us-versus-them brand of politics is by now a relatively familiar story. Yet, with an anthropologi-

**NIXONLAND:**  
The Rise of a  
President and  
the Fracturing  
of America.

By Rick Perlstein.  
Scribner. 881 pp. \$37.50



cal eye for detail, Perlstein mines news articles, numerous historical monographs and books of the period, and, to a lesser degree, archival documents to capture vividly the rage that animated this era's politics among both conservatives and the New Left.

Hardhats clubbed antiwar demonstrators in New York City, and Nixon's vice president, Spiro Agnew, emerged as a "law-and-order vanguardist" who railed against campus ruffians and attacked the liberal media as "nattering nabobs of negativism." The National Guard, rifles and bayonets at the ready, cracked down on protesters at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago while chants of "kill the pigs!" went up as police waded into the crowds.

But there is a cartoonish and ultimately unconvincing quality to Perlstein's portrayal of political figures. Nixon is purely Machiavellian. Agnew is irredeemably vicious. George McGovern is utterly incompetent. Politicians of all stripes are depicted as lacking substantive ideas about public policy and foreign affairs. The Left and the Right are united only by their incivility and contempt for the other side. Human decency is virtually absent from these pages.

There are other problems as well. The narrative tends toward the grandiose, as if an already dramatic storyline had to be written with big and bold strokes to capture the tenor of the times. Perlstein italicizes ("Agnew *hated* beards"). When Nixon aide John Erlichman warned administration official Leon Panetta to stop saying that Nixon favored civil rights, Perlstein needlessly deadpans, "Silly Leon." Nixon is described as "lustily" pursuing his goals.

Still, Perlstein's history of violence in America—of street crime but also ideologically charged attacks on Americans by other Americans, and their effect on electoral politics—is a stark reminder of the bitter divisions of the Lyndon Johnson–Nixon years. Despite its overreach, *Nixonland* is an important work of synthesis, capturing a moment when ideological, racial, gender, and moral conflicts rent the electorate. While issues including class tensions, the growing influ-

ence of the Sunbelt in presidential politics, and Nixon's foreign policy receive short shrift, Perlstein provides a thorough and provocative analysis that reinforces, with a wealth of detail, the roots of conservatism's successes.

Whether American politics is still defined by the violence of Nixon's age, as Perlstein concludes, is debatable. Nonetheless, public morality did

emerge as a dominant factor in American politics in the late 1960s. The Watergate scandal ultimately derailed Nixon's career. But his Republican successors moved in to pick up the pieces, and *Nixonland* is a bracing reminder of how some

divisions from Nixon's presidency continue to haunt debates about abortion rights, flag pins, and gay marriage—issues likely to play a part in presidential politics for the foreseeable future.

MATTHEW DALLEK, a fellow at the Wilson Center, is the author of *The Right Moment: Ronald Reagan's First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point in American Politics* (2000).

## Meet Mrs. Warren

Reviewed by Edith Gelles

MERCY OTIS WARREN'S REPUTATION is based largely on her magnum opus, the incomparable *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*. Published in 1805, it is one of the earliest histories of that era.

That an 18th-century woman was inspired to believe she could write history—indeed, did write it—is remarkable. Still, today her *History* is hardly known, much less read outside the circle of scholarly specialists on the revolutionary era. Unlike that of her friend Abigail Adams, Warren's place in the pantheon of the American Revolution has been shortchanged, even ignored, in the stream of recent popularizations of the founding "greats."

Whether American politics is still defined by the violence of Nixon's age is debatable, but public morality did emerge as a dominant factor in American politics in the late 1960s.

**THE MUSE OF THE REVOLUTION:**  
The Secret Pen of Mercy Otis Warren and the Founding of a Nation.

By Nancy Rubin Stuart.  
Beacon. 314 pp. \$28.95

Given her extraordinary accomplishments and the paucity of records on women of that era, this neglect is unfortunate.

Born in 1728 into the large, affluent, and politically influential Otis family of Barnstable, Massachusetts, Mercy married James Warren, a politician and gentleman farmer from Plymouth, in 1754. She bore five sons, three of whom suffered tragic ends, lending her life a sad undercurrent. She befriended most of the leaders of the American Revolution, including, early in his career, John Adams, who introduced his young wife to this formidable matron, knowing that theirs would be a rare combination of domestic and intellectual compatibility. Warren's correspondence was far flung among politicians and literati of the period—including the British historian Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay and friends, Hannah Winthrop, and Ellen Lothrop. She published—pseudonymously, of course—poetry and plays in public jour-

nals, often on political themes.

Until Warren's death in 1814, she and Abigail Adams continued to correspond. Her friendship with John Adams was more vexed. During his vice presidency, she asked for political favors for her husband and sons that he declined to grant on the grounds that doing so would be favoritism. Thereafter their friendship cooled, especially as the Warrens, disillusioned by their antipathy to the new constitution and by the postwar depression that devastated their fortune, broke politically with Adams. In her *History*, Warren included few mentions of Adams, and those she did make he found disparaging, a slight that resulted in a prolonged and heated exchange that terminated their friendship for several years.

Aside from the customary male slant in American history, other reasons account for Warren's invisibility. Though related to important men of the period, she was not the wife of a president, as was Abigail Adams. Furthermore, fewer of her letters survive, whereas Abigail Adams's surviving letters number several hundred, at least. Warren did not write for the modern reader. Her style is mannered and pretentious, and her ponderous sentences and obscure classical references contrast sharply with Adams's elegant prose.

In a 1774 letter to Abigail Adams, for example, Warren wrote of her concern that American institutions not be subverted by the First Continental Congress: "I hope they will have no uncommon Difficulties to surmount or Hostile Movements to impede them, but if the Locrians should interrupt them, tell him [John Adams] I hope they will beware that no future annals may say they Chose an ambitious Philip for their Leader, who subverted the Noble order of the American Amphyc-tones; and Built up a Monarchy on the Ruins of the Happy institution."

Nancy Rubin Stuart, the author of several popular biographies of women, presents Warren in a colorfully anecdotal style. Given the difficulty of reconstructing Warren's life, Stuart has artfully set the story in the context of the Revolution and relied upon her subject's friendships, especially with the Adamses. The pace is brisk, if not jaunty. But the



*Mercy Otis Warren (1763), by John Singleton Copley*

history is marred by small errors. The stamp tax was an internal, not an “external,” tax. Abigail Adams’s sisters were Mary Cranch and Elizabeth Shaw, not Elizabeth Cranch and Mary Shaw. And Stuart is too susceptible to conjecture, relying on qualifiers such as “may have” and “probably.”

All in all, Stuart does not satisfactorily support the exaggerated claim of the title, that Warren was the secret muse to the Revolution. But Warren’s intelligence, her erudition, her patriotism, her political commentary, her well-lived life, deserve attention. As a lively introduction to the great Mercy Otis Warren, this book is appealing. But to the student of history, Rosemarie Zagarri’s *A Woman’s Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (1995) still stands as the best biography.

EDITH GELLES, a senior scholar at the Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research at Stanford, is the author of *Abigail and John: Portrait of a Marriage*, forthcoming next year, among other books.

## Making History

Reviewed by Martin Walker

IN THE 19TH CENTURY, AS history was transformed from a vocation to an academic profession, historians began to specialize. Constitutional and diplomatic historians; economic, social, and military specialists; and historians of ideas emerged, then philosophical schools. Some historians preferred the top-down view from the throne, others the bottom-up perspective from the gutter or the plow. But something was lost in the separation of history into these various specialties. Two recent books demonstrate just how fruitful it can be when scholars combine the findings and approaches of different academic disciplines.

In bringing economics into assessments of military history, Jurgen Brauer and Hubert van Tuyll

also bring illumination. Cost efficiency isn’t top of mind when we gaze on the ruins of some imposing medieval castle. But the analysis is clear. Kings and barons built castles because, however expensive, these fortifications were a great deal cheaper than the alternative of maintaining a large standing army. Moreover, castles provided a refuge for a suddenly vulnerable or beleaguered owner; standing armies, by contrast, often presented a threat to their commander. (The authors do not apply their calculus to non-Western armies, but the example of China’s Great Wall or medieval Arab fortifications suggest that similar factors may well have been at work.)

In our own day, the same analysis suggests that France developed nuclear weapons not simply to augment its prestige, but because doing so was cheaper than raising, training, and maintaining large conventional forces. Nuclear arsenals require a relatively high initial investment in science and technology (which can bring useful spinoffs to the wider economy), but thereafter tend to be cheaper to keep up than armored divisions and fleets of warships. In the 1960s, thanks in part to its nuclear weapons, France felt comfortable cutting 470,000 men from its armed forces.

Brauer and van Tuyll, who teach economics and history, respectively, at Augusta State University in Georgia, also turn their interdisciplinary lens on the mercenary arrangements of Renaissance Italy; the wars of Marlborough, Frederick the Great, and Napoleon; Grant’s campaigns in the Civil War; and the strategic bombings of World War II. The results are invariably stimulating. For example, in their analysis, the medieval drama of kings versus barons can be explained by the fact that, at the end of the 12th century in England, a basic stone keep could be built for £350 and a state-of-the-art version with curtain walls and gate houses for £1,000.

While the king’s income never fell below £10,000 a year, only seven barons drew more than £400, and the average was about £200. That is why it took an alliance of barons to force King John to sign the Magna Carta in 1215. Within another 200 years, the relative power of the monarchy increased again, as the castles of even the richest and strongest

### CASTLES, BATTLES, AND BOMBS: How Economics Explains Military History.

By Jurgen Brauer and  
Hubert van Tuyll.  
Univ. of Chicago Press.  
403 pp. \$29

### THE HORSE, THE WHEEL, AND LANGUAGE: How Bronze-Age Riders From the Eurasian Steppes Shaped the Modern World.

By David W. Anthony.  
Princeton Univ. Press.  
553 pp. \$35

barons could not withstand the cannon of the royal artillery train. Fortresses, in short, were central not only to the imposition of Norman power over England and Wales but also to the emergence of the centralized monarchy and nation-state.

David Anthony's book is a masterpiece. A professor of anthropology, Anthony brings together archaeology, linguistics, and rare knowledge of Russian scholarship and the history of climate change to recast our understanding of the formation of early human society. *The Horse, the Wheel, and Language* begins with perhaps the greatest unanswered question of prehistory: How, when, and why did the Indo-European family of languages emerge and spread to dominate Eurasia from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean?

A couple of insights from Anthony's remarkable book may give some of its flavor. DNA studies show that all the world's domestic horses developed from at least 77 ancestral mares, but quite possibly from a single stallion. A relatively docile stallion would have little hope of reproducing in the wild, as he would have to compete with violent and dominant males, but he would appeal to people looking for a manageable breeder for a domestic bloodline. In Anthony's perceptive summation, domestication meant that "from the horse's perspective, humans were the only way he could get a girl. From the human perspective, he was the only male sire they wanted."

The strong likelihood of one sire for the world's entire population of horses suggests a single point of origin for the horse-dependent nomads of the steppes. A person on foot with a dog can herd about 200 sheep, Anthony observes, but on a horse can manage about 500. That is half of the key to the growth and spread of the steppe peoples. The other half is that once they had wheels, they could carry their own supplies and thus stay on the move indefinitely, fighting where they chose or running away if necessary. They could roam from the steppes above the Black Sea east into Siberia and west into Europe, and when warm and cold periods made the climate untenable for the early agrar-

ian and urban settlements of the Mesopotamian region, the people of the steppes moved in. Language followed the carts.

MARTIN WALKER is a senior scholar of the Wilson Center and senior director of A. T. Kearney's Global Business Policy Council.

## ARTS & LETTERS

### Landscape Artist

Reviewed by A. J. Loftin

WE DEPEND UPON OUR FAMOUS writers to drink too much, marry too often, backstab their rivals, and sleep with their students. Wallace Stegner (1909–93), despite a long life at the center of things, never did any of that. He taught conscientiously, published abundantly, and sustained a monogamous marriage for 59 years. The only familiar note is his gradual disillusionment. As the American West that had forged his character and reputation vanished, Stegner found himself literally alone on a hill, surrounded by the garish manses of Silicon Valley. In the end he became attached to Vermont, where, as he observed, nature heals faster.

Stegner once said that Americans were "expected to make the whole pilgrimage of civilization in a single lifetime," which was "a hell of a thing to ask of anybody." His own trip started with an impoverished childhood in Iowa and points west and finished with more literary prizes and accomplishments than anyone could want. He started Stanford's creative writing program in 1946 and ran it for decades; among the students influenced by his exhortation to "write what you know" were Wendell Berry, Edward Abbey, Ken Kesey (whose flippant philosophy—"write what you don't know"—enraged Stegner), and Larry McMurtry. He served on the board of the Sierra Club and helped to shape the Kennedy and Johnson administrations' environmental policies.

Best known for his Pulitzer-winning novel *Angle of Repose* (1971), a multi-generational saga based

**WALLACE STEGNER AND THE AMERICAN WEST.**

By Philip L. Fradkin.  
Knopf. 369 pp. \$27.50



on the life of writer and illustrator Mary Foote, Stegner wrote 12 other works of fiction and nine books of nonfiction. Among his most autobiographical novels were *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* (1943), drawn from his childhood, and *Crossing to Safety* (1987), a close study of the friendship between two married couples. Stegner also wrote a biography of conservationist John Wesley Powell and other works about the West. But Stegner didn't like being labeled a "western writer," and with good reason: While attentive to the landscape, his novels were also psychologically probing, nuanced, and painfully honest.

Two previous academic biographies treated Stegner's literary contributions. Philip Fradkin, an environmental writer based in northern California, aims instead to look at "the whole man—or as close as I can get to him—set against the passing backdrops of his life." In an epilogue, he describes visits to Stegner's childhood homes. Not much had stayed the same—which, of course, is Fradkin's point. To be western is to relinquish everything that was once familiar.

"I was born on wheels," Stegner wrote of his itinerant frontier childhood. His mother and his only sibling died young; his father, a bootlegger and gambler, killed himself after shooting a girlfriend. Reacting to the instability of his early years, Stegner drove himself to succeed. After graduating from the University of Utah in 1930, he got a master's and a doctorate at the University of Iowa. There, he met his wife, Mary, by all accounts an extreme hypochondriac, who nonetheless supported her husband's ambitions "in the manner of a traditional politician's wife . . . as buffer, filter, cook, hostess, and social secretary." The Stegners' only child, son Page, has said it was tough to find his own space in that equation.

Stegner never allowed teaching at Stanford to consume his whole life. He and his wife built a house in Los Altos Hills in 1949, amid pig farms and orchards. There he wrote for several hours each day. Over the next four decades, Stegner witnessed the population explosion that eventually drew him into the national conservation debate. In 1960, in an impassioned and widely circulated let-

ter, he advocated for a national wilderness preservation system. While his phrase "the geography of hope" became the environmental movement's war cry, the West became, Fradkin says, Stegner's geography of despair. Stegner's greatest failing, in Fradkin's view, was his inability to deal with the rapid change that is a constant of western life.

Fradkin's environmentalist background makes him the right person to re-create Stegner's physical landscape, and to understand Stegner's contributions as a conservationist. He's not always able to penetrate Stegner's emotional landscape. Fortunately, for that readers can turn to Stegner's fiction, where the writer laid bare his soul, as wide open as a western sky.

A. J. LOFTIN is a writer and editor living in Connecticut.

## Still Happening

*Reviewed by Andrew Starner*

IT'S THE '60S ALL OVER AGAIN!

Anyone who has frequented modern art museums in the last decade has seen numerous exhibitions of experimental art from a period that intended to make museums obsolete. "Kunst als Leben—Art as Life,"

a traveling exhibit that opened two years ago in Munich and closes this fall in Genoa, is one of the most successful shows to engage with the ambivalence of the avant-garde toward museums. The exhibit is devoted entirely to the work of Allan Kaprow, who is credited with inventing the term "happening" to describe performances that blend painting, sculpture, and theater. Kaprow has been called the most known unknown artist of the 20th century (he referred to himself as an "Un-Artist/Non-Artist"), but a spate of attention is the bittersweet result of his death in 2006.

Kaprow characterized his work as action painting that left the canvas behind. His happenings—in which multiple events take place together in space and time, and can never be repeated in exactly the same way—are poised between the abstract expressionism of the '50s and the pop art of the '60s. Performance art wasn't invented in the '60s, but it

### ALLAN KAPROW— ART AS LIFE.

*Edited by Eva Meyer-Hermann, Andrew Perchuk, and Stephanie Rosenthal.*  
Getty. 358 pp. \$55

started to be recognized in its own right, mainly because of the word Kaprow coined. For many in the art establishment, “happenings” seemed fatuous, a notion that performance artists did nothing to dispel. “Happenings are events that, put simply, happen,” Kaprow wrote. “Their form is open-ended and fluid; nothing obvious is sought and therefore nothing is won, except the certainty of a number of occurrences to which we are more than normally attentive.”

For his 1966 piece *Self-Service*, for example, instructions were posted in four U.S. cities with separate but linked proposals for the participants:

NEW YORK

(Available Activities)

Everyone watches for  
either:

a signal from  
someone

a light to go  
on in a win-  
dow.

a plane to pass  
directly over-  
head.

an insect to  
land nearby.

three motor-  
cycles to  
barrel past.

Immediately afterwards, they write  
a careful description of the occurrence, and  
mail copies to each other.

Although it is difficult to periodize Kaprow's work, by the early '70s his emphasis had shifted from large-scale happenings to more intimate works—which he termed “activities” and then “environments”—that dispensed with large casts, and could be experienced by a couple, or solo. But his works never lost their preoccupation with time, with something that happens.

*Art as Life*, an exquisite catalog of the exhibition, features almost 300 lavish pages of full-color

photographs, manuscript reproductions, exhibition posters, art reviews, and instructions for the performance of Kaprow's pieces; many of the materials are drawn from his papers held at the Getty Research Institute. It is an impressive trove of art resistant to archiving, art that seeks to abolish art objects by leaving no artwork behind after a performance and by incorporating quotidian objects, a strategy that coincided with the use of found objects for which Robert Rauschenberg became known. But a Rauschenberg can hang on a wall and be sold at auction. How can a price be put on a piece composed of a ball of street trash or blocks of ice—the products, respectively, of Kaprow's pieces *Round Trip* (1968) and *Fluids* (1967)? How can a work that requires the concerted effort of numerous participants be put on permanent display?

Kaprow himself struggled with the legacy of his works, which were tied all but inextricably to his active participation. His collaboration in the Munich exhibit as his health was failing is movingly described by Stephanie Rosenthal, curator of contemporary art at Haus der Kunst, Munich, in her contribution to the catalog. For the first time, Kaprow allowed other artists to follow his procedures, to make “new versions” of his works. These reinventions (they are not reenactments—they often take on independent forms) come close to recreating the experience of being in a Kaprow piece, and being “in” is important: Active participation is demanded from spectators.

The real gem of *Art as Life* is the essay “Writing the Happening,” in which University of Michigan art history professor Alex Potts opens a window to Kaprow's engaging, frustrating, and at times tedious texts. Kaprow's instructions glitter with the polish and concentration of concrete poetry. The experience of experience, the gap in experience, is the revelation of the happening, and, inexplicably, to read these defiant activity booklets, these scores of hesitations and diversions, is to bring his art back to life.

ANDREW STARNER is a graduate student in theater and performance studies at Brown University.

CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

## Getting Down to Business

Reviewed by Nicholas Carr

DURING THE PROSPEROUS years after World War II, the executives who headed America's corporations tended to be anonymous bureaucrats. They saw themselves as the stewards of the organizations they ran, having a mix of commercial and social responsibilities. Then came the economic shocks of the 1970s, when the dominance of American corporations appeared to be crumbling. Under pressure from Wall Street financiers and deal makers, executives began to adopt a single-minded focus on boosting profits in order to "maximize shareholder value."

As late as 1990, the Business Roundtable, an influential group of big-company chief executives and directors, still defined the role of executives as balancing the interests not only of shareholders but also of "customers, suppliers, creditors, the communities where the corporation does business, and society as a whole." By 1997, the Roundtable was singing from a different hymnal. Management's duty was to stockholders. Period. "The notion that the board must somehow balance the interests of other stakeholders fundamentally misconstrues the role of directors."

The rise of what's now called "investor capitalism" had many causes, ranging from the expansion of free trade to the decline of labor unions to the public's growing fascination with the stock market. But as Rakesh Khurana explains in *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands*, his panoramic history of business education in the United States, it was academia that provided the intellectual rationale, and the cover, for management's transformation. In the late 1970s, a small group of business school professors promoted, with much fanfare, the

### FROM HIGHER AIMS TO HIRED HANDS:

The Social Transformation of American Business Schools and the Unfulfilled Promise of Management as a Profession.

By Rakesh Khurana.  
Princeton Univ. Press.  
531 pp. \$35

"agency theory" of management. Corporations exist, they argued, to increase the wealth of their shareholders, and the fundamental role of managers is to act as the representatives, or agents, of the shareholders. The best way to align managers' and shareholders' interests is to tie managers' compensation to the company's share price, through, for instance, big grants of stock and stock options.

Agency theory, as it came to be embedded in the operations and compensation policies of businesses, turned outsized greed into a desirable and often glorified personality trait for executives. The extent of an executive's greed was, after all, a manifestation of the extent of his—or, very rarely, her—commitment to boosting share prices. As the pursuit of riches intensified, we saw waves of mergers and layoffs, the arrival of celebrity CEOs such as Jack Welch, and, between 1980 and 2003, a sixfold increase in executive pay. We also saw a surge in corporate scandals, as the monomaniacal pursuit of higher stock prices undermined managerial ethics.

Celebrity sometimes ended in a perp walk.

Though born in business schools, agency theory represented a repudiation of the founding ideals of those schools.

The first university-based business schools—Wharton at the University of Pennsylvania, Tuck at Dartmouth, and Harvard's Graduate School of Business Administration—were established around the beginning of the 20th century. As Khurana documents, in fascinating detail, these schools saw it as their mission to upgrade management from an occupation to a profession. Managers were to join doctors and lawyers as the elite university-trained professionals who would apply their specialized knowledge for the benefit of society. In a 1908 address announcing the opening of Harvard's business school, the university's president, Charles W. Eliot, declared that "business in its upper walks has become a highly intellectual calling, requiring knowledge of languages, economics, industrial organization, and commercial law, and wide reading concerning the

"Business in its upper walks has become a highly intellectual calling," said Harvard president Charles W. Eliot in 1908.

resources and habits of the different nations.”

Khurana, himself a Harvard Business School professor, bemoans the loss of this idealized view. Today, he writes, the MBA degree is often viewed as “a ‘product’ that business schools simply sell to consumers.” Most business school graduates eschew managerial jobs altogether, opting instead for more lucrative posts at consulting firms, investment banks, hedge funds, and private equity houses. “With little or nothing to be gained in the marketplace from reputations for intellectual rigor or educating students in the social responsibilities of management,” he writes, “business school administrators are now challenged primarily to demonstrate that their schools provide access to high-paying jobs.”

It’s hard not to share Khurana’s disappointment. At the same time, his lament echoes the naiveté evinced by the founders of the first business schools. Of the many quotations that pepper Khurana’s book, the most salient may be from a speech the social critic John Jay Chapman gave at a 1924 dinner celebrating the recently launched *Harvard Business Review*. “My friends,” said Chapman, “the truth is that business is not a profession; and no amount of rhetoric and no expenditure in circulars can make it into a profession. . . . A School of Business means a school where you learn to make money.”

NICHOLAS CARR, a former executive editor at *Harvard Business Review*, is the author most recently of *The Big Switch: Rewiring the World, From Edison to Google*, published earlier this year.

## Dead Tree Scrolls

Reviewed by Stephen Bates

“NEWSPAPERS ARE STILL FAR from dead, but the language of the obituary is creeping in,” proclaims the Project for Excellence in Journalism in its 2008 *State of the News Media* report. While the audience has migrated to the Web—the top 10 news sites account for 30 percent of all Web traffic—ad dollars haven’t followed. In particular, newspapers have lost lucrative classified ads to Craigslist, Monster.com, and

other non-news websites. As a result, stock prices for newspaper companies have dropped more than 40 percent since 2005. Network news divisions and newsmagazines are bleeding too.

Not so long ago, reporters were scrappy, indefatigable crusaders, comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable, indifferent to profit-and-loss statements. The *Encyclopedia of American Journalism* chronicles those glory days, and some inglorious ones too. The book’s 405 entries, written mostly by media scholars, range in tone from obsequious to bilious, and in style from newspapers at their sprightliest to academic journals at their ghastliest. The encyclopedia devotes articles to reporters, media outlets, press-related laws, and other aspects of journalism, including the colonial press, music criticism, and, quirkily, patent-medicine queen Lydia Pinkham.

The “language of the obituary,” referenced in this year’s *State of the News Media*, dates back three centuries. “Jane Treat, granddaughter of Connecticut’s deputy governor, opened her Bible one spring Sunday—and became the subject of American journalism’s first obituary,” writes Nigel Starck, of the University of South Australia. “It was 1704. Sitting outside, reading the scriptures, she was struck ‘by a terrible flash of lightning.’ *The Boston News-Letter* recorded this event . . . telling readers her death had been instant, that the lightning strike left her body ‘much wounded, not torn but burnt,’ and that in life she was a model of piety and sobriety. Although death reports had previously appeared in American journalism, the story of Jane Treat qualifies as the earliest obituary because it offers also an appraisal of character.”

Like Starck, many contributors enliven their entries with piquant tidbits. Paul Reuter, founder of the Reuters news service, initially received stock prices by carrier pigeon. As a young man, Joseph Pulitzer was convicted of shooting a lobbyist who had called him “a liar and a puppy.” Turn-of-the-century muckraker Samuel Hopkins Adams went on to write the story on which Frank Capra based his 1934 Oscar winner, *It Happened One Night*. President Herbert Hoover feared coming across as a self-promoter, so he insisted that reporters

### ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AMERICAN JOURNALISM.

Edited by Stephen L. Vaughn.  
Routledge. 636 pp. \$195



append to his quotations “in reply to a question from representatives of the press.” The ABC television network was initially owned by Edward Noble, maker of Life Savers.

Alas, the book misspells the name of candyman Noble and, in places, those of Mathew Brady, Annie Leibovitz, Rupert Murdoch, Britney Spears, and even a couple of contributors, Jeffery Smith and Everette Dennis. Spelling isn’t the only thing that’s spotty. Editor Stephen L. Vaughn, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, includes entries for the left-leaning magazines *The Nation*, *The Progressive*, and *Mother Jones*, but not for the conservative publications *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *The American Spectator*. Granted, the choices at Madison newsstands may be limited.

They just shrank some more. In April, Madison’s *Capital Times* stopped the presses forever. The paper now appears only online. “We are going a little farther, a little faster,” Clayton Frink, the publisher, told *The New York Times*, “but the general trend is happening everywhere.” With its understandable emphasis on print and broadcasting, the *Encyclopedia of American Journalism* may turn out to be a book of the dead.

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## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### Bad to the Bone

Reviewed by Jeffrey Burton Russell

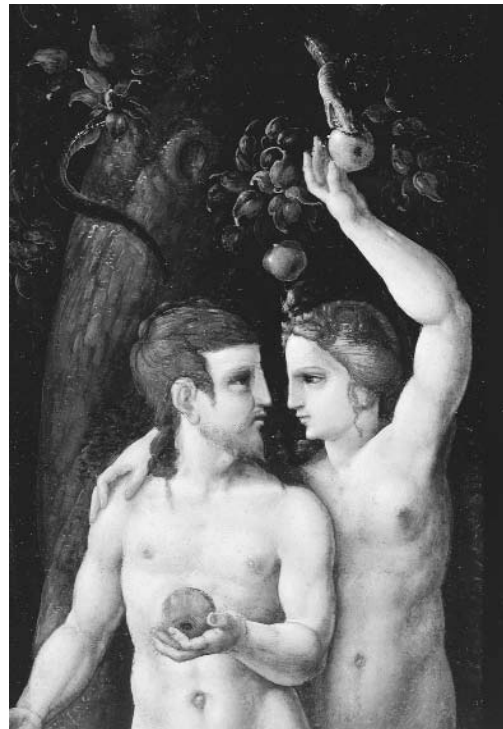
AN ESSENTIAL QUESTION through the ages has been whether human nature is basically good or basically evil. If it is good, general human progress may be assumed; if it is intrinsically flawed, then the American Founders were right in declaring that nature has to be constrained by justice. Though G. K. Chesterton and others have suggested that original sin is the only empirically demonstrable Christian doctrine, views on what original sin is vary. In this reflective,

#### ORIGINAL SIN: A Cultural History.

By Alan Jacobs.  
HarperOne.  
286 pp. \$24.95

original, and witty book, Wheaton College English professor Alan Jacobs displays wide learning worn lightly as he examines the views of writers as diverse as Benjamin Franklin and Harriet Beecher Stowe, Jonathan Edwards and C. S. Lewis, and Sigmund Freud and J. R. R. Tolkien.

The concept of original sin predates Christianity, Jacobs points out, citing not only Genesis 3, in which Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and are expelled from Paradise, but also Psalm 51, which declares that humans are conceived in sin and born in iniquity. “The universality of sin,” Jacobs concludes, “is certainly a Jewish belief.” He explains that the traditions of both Eastern and Western Christianity, though varying in their details, have it that God created human nature intrinsically good, that goodness must entail freedom if it is not to be robotic, and that Adam and Eve freely chose their own will over that of God, thus committing original sin—an alienation from God common to all humanity. All humans participate in original sin, whether it is transmitted from generation to generation through



Detail from *The Original Sin* (16th-century triptych, German school)

time, or whether the entire human race chooses in one eternal moment to disobey God.

Jacobs efficiently defends Augustine (AD 354–430) against the many attacks against him as the author of original sin, demonstrating that doctrines of original sin similar to Augustine's preceded him by at least two centuries in both the East and the West. Jacobs quickly dismisses the still widely held belief that original sin was sexual—Adam and Eve practiced free sex in Eden before their eviction. Original sin is the initial assertion of human *pride* against God. Augustine did maintain that original sin, once it existed, was *transmitted* sexually through generations, in much the same way that today we understand genetic flaws are passed on. Contrary to another common misconception about Augustine, he was adamant that the source of sin does not lie in the body but rather in the corruption of the will. In fact, he spent a great deal of his career denouncing the Manichean belief that the human body is essentially evil.

Jacobs's most original and provocative argument is that original sin has strong democratic implications. Denial of original sin leads to elitism: Take, for instance, the duchess who simply refuses to believe that she shares a common nature with the unkempt commoners of field and street, or the self-righteous people who believe that they can make themselves good by stacking up a higher pile of good deeds than of bad ones. Their underlying assumption is that some people have exempt status, or higher virtues, or brighter minds, that others lack—plainly speaking, that some people (usually *us*) are better than other people (*them*). Original sin, on the other hand, is egalitarian because it means that *everyone* is alienated from God and has an innate tendency to sin. Equally egalitarian is the belief that Christ died in order to give *everyone* the liberty to escape sin. No one person can dare to consider himself or herself better than others, and no nation or race should dare to do so either. Jacobs offers this fascinating angle on the age-old debate in a splendid book.

JEFFREY BURTON RUSSELL is emeritus professor of history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and is the author of 17 books and numerous articles on history, religion, and philosophy. His most recent book is *Paradise Misland: How We Lost Heaven and How We Can Regain It* (2006).

## The Holy Web

Reviewed by Mary Swander

TWELVE YEARS AGO, SHARMAN Apt Russell sat down on her porch in Silver City, New Mexico, and decided to become a Quaker. For Russell, adopting the Quaker religion meant not only joining a group of like-minded people whose traditions include pacifism and a commitment to right the wrongs in the Peaceable Kingdom, but finding her own definition of “standing in the Light.” Her group consists of unprogrammed Quakers and Universalists. They have no minister, no creed, no scripture. Rather, they gather in silence, “waiting—waiting for the Light.”

On her porch steps, Russell had an epiphany. She found her Light in pantheism. In middle age, with her children growing up, instilled with a sense of her own mortality by her father's early death, Russell embarked on a spiritual quest to practice and more clearly define a belief system that falls under the umbrella of paganism—any nontheistic belief that is not Christian, Jewish, or Muslim. But isn't pantheism just a New Age belief in tree spirits? Russell's friends asked. Isn't it mysticism with an experience of the supernatural? Russell answers these questions and others in her investigation of this little-understood belief.

Pantheists include a wide spectrum of thinkers—from the Greek *physici* philosophers, to practitioners of Eastern religions, to dualists, to Romantic poets, to contemporary deep ecologists and cell biologists. But the basic belief is that “the universe is an interrelated whole that deserves human reverence.” In the words of the Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius, “Everything is interwoven, and the web is holy.” As part of that web, Russell says, we are “called upon to celebrate our existence in the universe, no matter what and who we are, blessed or not, whole or broken, deserving or undeserving.”

Throughout her exploration of spiritual thought, she interweaves a narrative of her work as a naturalist. Her observations of herds of jave-

**STANDING IN THE LIGHT:**  
My Life as a Pantheist.

By Sharman Apt Russell.  
Basic. 306 pp. \$25

lina, of stinkbugs and coots, and of birds she bands for the Nature Conservancy deftly illustrate her sensitive yet unsentimental connection to the holy web. Through binoculars Russell watches sandhill cranes, the oldest known living bird species, and waits for the female crane to dance, but “with wings fully extended, she springs upward, flapping strongly, the upstroke more rapid than the down as she gains altitude.” The transitions between Russell’s theological writing and her personal observations of nature can be abrupt. But the material is compelling, and we always feel that we are in good hands with Russell, who has written with authority of the natural world in previous books, most recently *Hunger: An Unnatural History* (2005).

Yet in *Standing in the Light*, the nature writing plays a supporting role to human biography. Russell is at her best when she focuses on portraits of Marcus Aurelius, Baruch Spinoza, and Walt Whitman, all pantheistic writers. Even when faced with a besieged empire and the death of nine of his 14 children, Marcus Aurelius (AD 121–180) acknowledged a beneficent universe and his role in it. Spinoza (1632–77), exiled from his Jewish community for beliefs that, in the words of an Augustinian monk reporting to the Spanish Inquisition, “reached the point of atheism,” lived out his days in a rented room in Holland, grinding glass for lenses. His posthumously published masterpiece *Ethics* offered what Spinoza saw as a logical “geometric proof” that God was identical with nature. Like Spinoza and other pantheists whose ideas contradict the dominant culture, Whitman (1819–92), a Transcendentalist, was disparaged in his time. In *Leaves of Grass* (1855), he sought to write a uniquely American poetry that celebrated humanity and the natural world.

In the large sweep of this book, Russell shows us the variety of Western thought on the holy web through the voices of D. H. Lawrence, Robinson Jeffers, Virginia Woolf, and Annie Dillard. And she investigates the many rich Eastern traditions, including Hinduism and Buddhism, that embrace the call to celebrate the spirituality of the present moment. She widens the lens of her binoculars so that we, too, may see the cranes dance. But she

ends not with the excitement of that sight, but with the act of opening the door to her little yellow house to reveal her serene faith in the wonders of her place on the earth.

MARY SWANDER is a Distinguished Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Iowa State University. She is the author of 11 books of poetry and nonfiction, most recently a memoir, *The Desert Pilgrim: En Route to Mysticism and Miracles* (2003), and a collection of poetry, *The Girls on the Roof*, which is forthcoming next year.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### A Real Gusher

Reviewed by Eric Hand

IT SOUNDS LIKE A NATURAL-ized urban legend, but the rumor holds water: Niagara Falls is turned up for the tourists. At night, and during the off-season, much of its flow is diverted into turbines for peak power generation. When Ginger Strand, an environmental writer from New York City, discovered this fact while taking notes on a foray to the falls, she “stopped scribbling and just grinned like a maniacal toddler.” It is the starting point for *Inventing Niagara*, a picaresque journey that explains how just about everything at Niagara Falls is engineered, Disneyfied, or deluded.

The 176-foot drop in the Niagara River between Lakes Erie and Ontario, on the border between Ontario and New York, is neither the largest nor the tallest cataract in the world. But it does occupy an outsized place in American mythology, sitting at the frontier of a young country just venturing into tourism. As Strand sees it, that virginal experience went horribly awry. Goat Island, a wooded hunk of rock in the middle of the river, became a staging area for parking lots. The Cave of the Winds, a natural cave behind the falls, was blasted away to make room for an eponymous observation deck. The history of the place has been bowdlerized; the waste from falls-powered industries, buried. Taken together, these stories say a lot about America’s relationship with nature, Strand argues, and so she sets herself to

**INVENTING  
NIAGARA:**  
Beauty, Power,  
and Lies.

By Ginger Strand.  
Simon & Schuster.  
337 pp. \$25

rescuing the true Niagara from the memory hole.

The Native Americans who once lived in the region avoided the falls, with its rattlesnakes and dangerous river rapids. When Europeans arrived in the 17th century, they immediately set to dispossessing the local tribes. The patron saint of Niagara Falls, a city on the New York side of the river, was a 19th-century landowner named Peter Porter lauded for his purported proto-environmental views, but Strand discovers that he was more interested in war profiteering and land grabs than in philanthropy. She moves on to the history of the tacky museums, with their Egyptian mummies and two-legged dogs, and the falls' use as a backdrop to acts of daredevilry. No diversion or digression is too small. While she sketches each tale with humor, the kaleidoscopic narrative at times resembles one of the tawdry casinos around the falls that she deplores—lots of bright lights, jingling and jangling, but ultimately a place to satisfy a compulsion.

Yet it is hard to begrudge Strand her indulgences. Her prose is cheeky and sharp. In two sentences, she limns the early life of Frederick Law Olmsted: "He went to sea and almost died of scurvy. He bought a farm and won a prize for pears." Olmsted, the architect of New York's Central Park, pushed in the 1870s to make Niagara a place of wooded paths for all classes of society to enjoy—though Strand faults him for being patriarchal and elitist. With good reason, she is much harder on Robert Moses, another New York master planner, who, nearly a century later, ruthlessly paved the way (literally—the Robert Moses Parkway divides the Niagara River from nearby communities) for a power authority that spawned toxic waste-dumping industries.

The book's most compelling chapter examines Niagara Falls as a symbol for sex. Strand mixes the history of the honeymoon capital—a tradition hastily evolved through heavy marketing—with ruminations on Marilyn Monroe (the falls, like Marilyn, have "been girdled and boosted into the shape the audience wants"). And she weaves in scenes from an in-town convention of the Red Hat Society, a club for women over 50 that revolves largely around merchandising and the

slogan "Red Hatters Matter." The parallels are incisive, even sadly profound.

Strand has produced a multilayered book that occasionally sparkles and shimmers. But after a point, keeping up with her tireless reportage becomes exhausting. *Inventing Niagara* may best be appreciated in dribbles, like Niagara Falls during the off-season.

ERIC HAND is a science reporter for *Nature*.

## In the Genes

Reviewed by Bonnie J. Rough

IN 2004, JOURNALIST MASHA Gessen learned through genetic tests that she was predisposed to develop breast cancer, which had killed her mother in middle age. Faced with choosing whether or not to take preemptive measures, including surgical removal of her still-healthy breasts and ovaries, she embarked on a research bender. The result was a series of personal essays for *Slate*—which eventually became the frame for *Blood Matters*, an intelligent and imaginatively researched tour of modern genetics.

Today, relatively simple tests can reveal patients' predispositions toward hundreds of diseases—and even diagnose disorders in human embryos before implantation during fertility treatments. With each year the list of detectable genetic diseases grows, as does the number of books about this suddenly common medical experience and its attendant dilemmas. (In last year's *Embryo Culture*, for example, Beth Kohl tackled the ethical quandaries of creating "designer" babies through reproductive technology.)

Characterized by Gessen's publisher as a "field guide," *Blood Matters* is more properly described as a collection of dispatches from the field. Her approach seems to draw from her days as a war reporter: She traverses unfamiliar, often risky terrain in search of interesting stories, visiting with scientists, doctors, genetic counselors, religious thinkers, and a host of individuals and families

### BLOOD MATTERS:

From Inherited Illness to Designer Babies, How the World and I Found Ourselves in the Future of the Gene.

By Masha Gessen.  
Harcourt. 321 pp. \$25



stricken by genetic disease. Jewish communities receive special attention, both because of Gessen's own Jewish background and because these semi-closed groups have been well studied by geneticists. A 2005 study, for example, hypothesized that the same genetic mutations that predispose many Jews to diseases such as Tay-Sachs and Gaucher also give them higher IQs.

Gessen jumbles the research related to her own genetic mutation—hearings with genetic counselors, doctors, other cancer “previvors,” even an economist who helped her calculate her personal risks—with a series of junkets into the world of genetics. She explores Nazi eugenics, Huntington's disease, the new use of science in matchmaking among Jewish families to prevent marriages between genetically “incompatible” individuals, various illnesses prevalent among closed communities such as Old Order Mennonites, and the genetic components of behavior studied in a Russian facility that breeds foxes, minks, and rats of various temperaments.

But it is Gessen's writing about her own mutation and deftly chosen family anecdotes that possess much of *Blood Matters*' narrative power. As she grapples with the decision of whether to keep her breasts, her ovaries, both, or

neither (she reveals her choice midway through the book), she continues to nurse her young daughter and to live with the fear that descended when her mother died. “I would think about this in the sleepless early mornings, when my daughter pressed her hot heels into the small of my back, and I knew I was the only thing that protected her from the cold wind of fear and freedom that came into the room through the open balcony door. Then she would tap me on the shoulder and ask me to turn around so she could hold my breasts.”

A book about a medical arena of whip-quick advancement is necessarily of the moment. The numerous up-to-the-minute scientific breakthroughs mentioned in the text indicate that *Blood Matters* may not have a long shelf life, but Gessen is to be commended for creating a valuable snapshot of a domain that gains a greater hold on our lives by the year. “If there is one thing behavioral geneticists can agree on,” she writes, “it is that all of their findings are nothing but a reason to do further studies.” Perhaps *Blood Matters* may be taken in the same spirit: as a foundational early comer to the literary canon of a burgeoning field.

BONNIE J. ROUGH has written about genetics for *The New York Times* and *The Sun*. She lives in Minneapolis, where she teaches at the Loft Literary Center.

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# PORTRAIT



*Marathoner Dorando Pietri crossing the finish line in the 1908 London Olympics.*

## *Finishing Touches*

Before steroid popping and knee bashing became their own events, Olympic scandals seldom reached Olympian proportions. At the 1908 games in London, Italian marathoner Dorando Pietri took the lead heading into the final leg of the race, only to falter as he entered the Olympic stadium. Eighty thousand spectators watched as the diminutive pastry chef collapsed, struggled to his feet, and collapsed again and again. (A practice of gargling with Chianti during

races may have contributed to his distress, some think.) Two British officials rushed to Pietri's aid and helped him across the finish line—enabling him to narrowly defeat Johnny Hayes, who hailed from Britain's Olympic archrival, the United States. The Americans protested Pietri's victory, and the judges disqualified him just hours later. But his heroic effort did not go unrewarded: The next day, Queen Alexandra presented him with an honorary gold cup.