

# WQ

THE WILSON QUARTERLY  
SURVEYING THE WORLD OF IDEAS

# WHERE HAVE ALL THE JOBS GONE?

STILL, GOD HELPS YOU  
A MODERN SLAVE'S STORY

TAJIKISTAN'S DREAM



SUMMER 2013



**COVER STORY**

**WHERE HAVE ALL THE JOBS GONE?**

Is the American dream over? Chronically high unemployment and a widening divide between rich and poor don't point to a happy answer. But there are good reasons to think such problems can be conquered.



**1. AUTOMATION ANXIETY**

by DANIEL AKST

**2. GETTING REAL ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL**

by SARAH CARR

**3. THE TRUTH ABOUT JOBS**

by SCOTT WINSHIP

**FEATURES**

**“STILL, GOD HELPS YOU”**

by MELISSA PRITCHARD

William Mawwin was six years old when Sudanese raiders snatched him from a marketplace and sold him into slavery. A novelist who befriended him many years later in Arizona tells his extraordinary story.

**TAJIKISTAN'S DREAM**

by JOSHUA KUCERA

The Central Asian nation has high hopes for what it can accomplish by exploiting the only resource it possesses in abundance.

**EDITOR'S COMMENT**

**FINDINGS**

**IN ESSENCE**

Our survey of notable articles from other journals and magazines

**CURRENT BOOKS**

Reviews of new and noteworthy nonfiction

**ABOUT US**

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

ABOVE LEFT: Job seekers line up at a New York City employment fair in 2009 • Photograph: Don Emmert / AFP / Getty

ON THE COVER: Pleading for work  
Photograph: Odilon Dimier / PhotoAlto / Corbis

# EDITOR'S COMMENT

## WHAT'S PAST IS NOT ALWAYS PAST

The word “slavery” has an antique sound, like “musket” or “forsooth,” but, as headlines periodically remind us, the condition remains all-too contemporary in many parts of the world. In this issue we present an extraordinary essay on slavery that deals not with the headlines but with the life of one man, William Mawwin, and the years he spent as a slave after white-robed raiders swept him away from a Sudanese marketplace at the age of six.

If Mawwin can be called lucky, it is because he found his way to freedom and went on to create a new life in the United States and because he befriended the teacher and novelist Melissa Pritchard, who tells his story with uncommon eloquence.

Misfortune of a very different kind is the subject of this issue's cover “cluster” of articles on Americans' anxiety over the economy's meager production of solid, well-paid jobs. (See the video at right for more on this cluster.) In keeping with the *WQ*'s emphasis on historical perspective, we asked Daniel Akst to revisit the automation



### STEVE LAGERFELD

is the editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*. Before joining the magazine's staff in the 1980s, he worked at *The Public Interest* and the Institute for Educational Affairs. His articles and reviews have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *The New Republic*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and other publications.

crisis of the 1960s, the last period in which new technologies seemed to pose a great threat to American workers. His essay reveals how differently we viewed such economic challenges just a few decades ago, and shows that there is much to be learned from that earlier experience.

Learning is Sarah Carr's subject, specifically the shortcomings of the schooling we provide to the millions of young people who do not complete a bachelor's degree. And economist Scott Winship takes a wide angle view of our current travails, offering some surprising grounds for optimism.

As regular *WQ* readers know, every issue is packed with more serious writing than I can describe in this space. Let me quickly point you to Joshua Kucera's article on Tajikistan's quest for a silver bullet

solution to its problems and to Martin Walker's essay-length review of a new book on the Battle of Gettysburg, fought 150 years ago this summer. And we have given the pieces in our In Essence section, where we report on significant

articles from other thought-leader publications, a more relaxed, essayistic character. We would love to know what you think about this new approach—and about anything else you read in the *WQ*.

— STEVEN LAGERFELD

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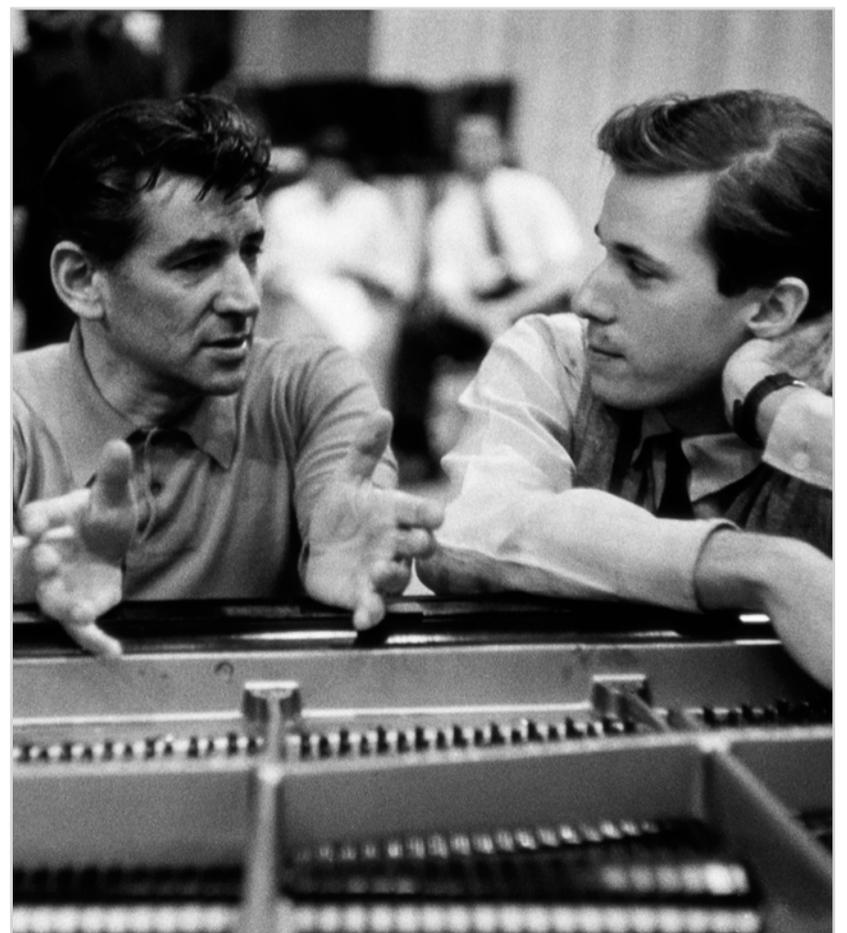
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## THE WORLD NEXT DOOR

*Groundhog, yes; Greenwich, no*  
**American cities routinely vie to** host the Olympics, political conventions, and world's fairs. In the mid-1940s, they contended for a bigger prize: the United Nations. Charlene Mires tells the story in *Capital of the World: The Race to Host the United Nations* (New York Univ. Press).

The lobbying began in 1944, while diplomats met in Washington to discuss the possibility of a global organization, and continued for more than two years. Philadelphians nominated Independence Hall as “the shrine around which the United Nations buildings should be grouped.” Bostonians argued that European delegates would feel at home in their city, with railroads operating on “the European model” and squares “reminiscent of . . . London,” not to mention the Longwood Cricket Club. At a hearing of the UN Preparatory Commission, Chicagoans held up a newspaper to demonstrate the city’s lively doings;



CHARLES E. ROTKIN / CORBIS

**Greenwich’s loss: the United Nations building rises in New York City in 1949.**

a *New York Times* reporter uncharitably noted one of the headlines, “Gangland Murder on North Side.”

Smaller cities and towns tried to snag the international organization, too. Morristown, New Jersey, touted the site where George Washington’s troops had camped during the Revolution.

Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, proffered its claim to fame as the home of the star of Groundhog Day, Punxsutawney Phil. Supporters of Tuskahoma, the former capital of the Choctaw Nation, sought to reassure diplomats about the town's residents: "The Indians . . . are fully civilized and mingle with other people so well now that they are scarcely noticeable."

Champions of Rapid City, South Dakota, were especially persistent. What could be a more appropriate site, they said, than the area around Mount Rushmore, from which George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln were "extending their beneficent influences throughout the world"? Plus, they added helpfully, the Black Hills, one of the area's leading attractions, weren't just "beautiful and interesting," they were also "safely distant from any city that might be a target for the new threat of the atomic bomb." In response to Rapid City boosters, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent perfunctory thanks for the "interesting suggestion" and a promise that it would "receive full consideration." FDR's letter prompted a giddy headline in *The Rapid City Daily Journal*: "FDR Interested in Hills as Peace Capital."

Some towns proved immune to United Nations mania. When word got out that the selection committee was considering Greenwich, Connecticut, the town meeting urged that it look elsewhere. Upon learning that Concord, Massachusetts, might be in the running, some residents protested that siting UN headquarters there would destroy their tranquility and desecrate the memory of Henry David Thoreau. Let other cities angle to become the capital of the world, local author Allen French declared; Concord ought to remain "pleasantly apart from the world."

Although UN officials initially rejected New York City—they wanted to be near a major city, but not in it—the suburbs seemed less appealing after the Greenwich and Concord rebuffs. In late 1946, John D. Rockefeller Jr. offered the UN \$8.5 million for the purchase of 17 acres on the East River. Deeming it a satisfactory location at an ideal price, the General Assembly voted to accept Rockefeller's gift.

During the quarrels over sites in 1945, E. B. White remarked that the ideal home for the UN would be adjacent to Dinosaur Park, an attraction in the Black Hills featuring life-size beasts cast from concrete. "Here let the new halls be built," White wrote in *The New Yorker*,

“so that earnest statesmen, glancing up from their secret instructions from the home office, may gaze out upon the prehistoric sovereigns who kept on fighting one another until they perished from the earth.”

## LIGHTS OUT

*The right marketing*

**Pollsters consistently find a partisan divide over global climate change.** In a Pew survey conducted in March, Democrats were twice as likely as Republicans to agree that “solid evidence” shows that the earth is getting warmer. A survey conducted by Public Policy Polling, also in March, found that 58 percent of Republicans deemed global warming a hoax, compared to 11 percent of Democrats. In fact, among Democrats, those who discerned a global warming hoax were outnumbered by Bigfoot believers (14 percent).

A recent experiment suggests that the gap between Republicans and Democrats may hold implications not just for policymakers, but also for marketers. Each participant in the study was given \$2 and asked to choose between an incandescent light bulb, which cost 50 cents, and a compact fluorescent bulb, which cost \$1.50. The researchers explained



HENRIK SORENSEN / GETTY IMAGES

**Don't call me green.**

that compared to the incandescent bulb, the fluorescent bulb would last 9,000 hours longer and cut energy costs by 75 percent.

In *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (June 4), Dena M. Gromet, a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, and two coauthors report on the results. Presented with the alternatives, liberals and conservatives alike tended to choose the fluorescent bulb. But the researchers

found that placing a small sticker alongside the fluorescent bulb made a difference. The sticker had no effect on liberals, but it made conservatives markedly less likely to choose the green option. The sticker's message: "Protect the Environment."

With time, conservatives and liberals may come to agree on global climate change. For now, though, a manufacturer ought to think twice before promoting products as environmentally friendly. It isn't easy being green.



E.O. HOPPE / CORBIS

"Flummydiddle" in American copyright law vexed poet Ezra Pound (shown in 1918).

## LAWS OF THE POET

*A balance of rights from an unbalanced mind.*

**"Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world,"** Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote in 1821. A century later, one eminent poet tried his hand at lawmaking, as Robert Spoo recounts in *Without Copyrights: Piracy, Publishing, and the Public Domain* (Oxford Univ. Press).

In 1918, while living in London and writing for literary reviews, the poet and critic Ezra Pound declared that the United States desperately needed "a decent copyright law, without so much flummydiddle." He set forth his proposal in a British literary magazine, *The New Age*.

American law at the time provided for a 28-year copyright term, renewable for an additional 28 years. Pound believed that copyright protection ought to be perpetual. Stocks and bonds don't expire, he reasoned; why should copyrights? In addition, America's limited-term copyright meant that older works could be sold cheaply, because publishers didn't have to pay royalties. As Pound saw it, the existing system enabled "dead authors to compete on unjust terms with living authors."

Along with properly compensating writers, Pound wanted to encourage publishers to make books—both old and new—available to the public. Under his proposed system, if an author or the author’s heirs failed to keep a work in print, then any publisher would have the right to print a new edition of it and pay the copyright owner fixed royalties. An author ashamed of an early novel would lose the option of keeping it out of the marketplace.

Pound’s model had one major flaw, though. The U.S. Constitution authorizes Congress to set copyrights for “limited Times”; a perpetual copyright would be unconstitutional. Nonetheless, Spoo thinks Pound struck a “daring” balance between the interests of writers and those of readers.

Pound’s copyright proposal came to naught. Another of the poet’s ventures into unfamiliar territory, international politics, had graver consequences. Between 1941 and 1943, he wrote and broadcast more than a hundred radio speeches from fascist Italy. Aiming at audiences in England and the United States, he ranted and rambled against Jews, President Roosevelt, and the Allied military effort.

After the war, Pound was charged with treason in the United States, declared

insane, and committed to St. Elizabeths Hospital, in Washington, D.C. The poet Archibald MacLeish, who considered Pound “a very silly man who had some remarkable gifts,” succeeded in getting him released in 1958. Pound moved to Italy, where he died in 1972.

In the years since, Pound’s literary estate has authorized reprints of his poetry, criticism, and letters. The trustees could have kept his fascist speeches out of print. Instead, they allowed Greenwood Press to collect and publish them in 1978. In light of his notions about copyright, Pound would have been pleased.

## LEVELING LEVIATHANS

*The dimensions of fairness*

**In 2011, Ralph Nader praised the Occupy Wall Street movement for demanding “the deconcentration of corporate power.”** But according to Gerald F. Davis, a professor at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business, Nader and plenty of others got it wrong. In Davis’s view, a major issue that animates the Occupy movement, the growth of income inequality, actually has resulted from the demise of the American corporation.

Starting in the 1960s, Davis explains in *Politics and Society* (June), some U.S. corporations ballooned and diversified. ITT Corporation, for example, acquired hotels, copper mines, and bakeries. Then, in the 1980s, financial analysts concluded that many huge companies would be more valuable if they were dismantled—the whole was worth less than the parts. Often through hostile takeovers, investors took control of mammoth corporations, broke them apart, sold the pieces, and pocketed the profits.

Next came outsourcing. In the 1990s, many companies began jobbing out manufacturing or distribution to other companies, often overseas. As a result, some of today's biggest brand names don't have many employees. Nike's annual revenue is nearly \$21 billion, according to Davis, yet the sportswear giant employs only 38,000 people. With annual revenue of \$156 billion, Apple employs fewer than 73,000 people worldwide. Meanwhile, the Chinese company that makes most Apple products, Foxconn, has more than a million employees.

Even without outsourcing, technology now lets entrepreneurs create booming companies with a small work force. Facebook has a billion users and fewer than 5,000 employees. Instagram had only a dozen employees in 2012, when

Facebook bought it for \$1 billion.

Davis notes that income inequality in the United States hit a low point in 1968, when employment concentration—the percentage of the work force employed by the nation's 10 largest employers—was near its highest. Since the 1980s, employment concentration has fallen and income inequality has risen.

This relationship between employment concentration and income inequality seems to exist elsewhere, too, according to an earlier study by Davis. Colombia, which has the world's highest level of income inequality, also has low employment concentration; in a nation of 47 million people, no company employs more than 10,000 people. By contrast, Denmark has one of the lowest levels of inequality and one of the highest levels of employment concentration. Davis suggests that the human resources bureaucracy of huge companies may reduce inequality. Typically, a fixed pay scale provides for incremental increases as an employee rises through the ranks. The top executives may receive salaries far larger than anyone else's, but they represent only a small proportion of the company's work force.

According to Davis, corporate behemoths won't be returning to the United States anytime soon. He thinks

Americans may end up working for smaller, locally based entities, some organized as corporations and others as employee-owned cooperatives. The shrinking of the publicly traded corporation, in his view, opens the way for “a more local and democratic path,” even though, as he noted in a recent e-mail, this path isn’t likely to lead to diminished income inequality.

For those who hope to level the economic playing field, it seems that small isn’t beautiful after all.

## A COMPOSER REWRITES

*Sour notes*

**As a composer and conductor, Leonard Bernstein** was accustomed to uncongenial reviews. But in 1962, critics slammed him for his words: a brief statement he made before the eccentric pianist Glenn Gould performed with the New York Philharmonic.

In what he termed a “small disclaimer,” Bernstein told the Carnegie Hall audience, “You are about to hear a rather, shall we say, unorthodox performance of the Brahms D Minor Concerto, a performance distinctly different from any I’ve ever heard—or even dreamt of, for that matter—in its remarkably broad tempi and its frequent departures from

Brahms’s dynamic indications.” Bernstein was not, he said, “in total agreement with Mr. Gould’s conception.” Nonetheless, he felt that Gould was “so valid and serious an artist that I must take seriously anything he conceives in good faith.” Hardly an intemperate rant, but it was enough to scandalize classical music aficionados.

“Such goings-on at the New York Philharmonic concert yesterday afternoon!” Harold C. Schonberg wrote in a chatty *New York Times* review. “First the conductor comes out to read a speech. He says that he doesn’t like the way the pianist will play the concerto. . . . He washes his hands of it.” Schonberg devoted as much space to Bernstein’s remarks as to Gould’s performance. (He didn’t care for either.)

Schonberg wasn’t alone in chiding the conductor. Another critic faulted Bernstein’s “betrayal” of his soloist. Three days after the concert, the *Associated Press* reported that “music lovers . . . are still talking” about his disclaimer. When Gould stopped performing publicly in 1964, some fans blamed Bernstein. In the years since, Bernstein and Gould biographers have endlessly rehashed the episode.

During a daylong interview with journalist Jonathan Cott in 1989, Bernstein told his side of the story. Excerpts of the



MARVIN KONER / CORBIS

**Leonard Bernstein (left) and Glenn Gould marched to different drummers. The photo is from the mid-1950s.**

conversation appeared in *Rolling Stone* in 1990. Cott has now published the whole thing in *Dinner With Lenny* (Oxford Univ. Press).

In Bernstein's account, Gould insisted that "the answer to the Brahms D Minor" was to play it a glacially slow tempo. The conductor tried to dissuade him, but Gould was adamant. Bernstein warned the orchestra—"I don't want anybody to laugh or protest"—and he thought he needed to warn the audience as well; "otherwise we would have an empty hall at the end of that first movement." Diplomatically, he told Gould that he wanted to make a few

introductory remarks about "your new revelatory interpretation of the piece." Gould agreed, and they collaborated on what Bernstein would say, first at a public rehearsal and then at the concert the next afternoon.

At the rehearsal, "I came out on stage and told the audience that they were about to hear an extraordinary performance, that I'd personally never heard anything quite so slow in my life, but I was going along with it because this guy was a very special talent," Bernstein recalled. Gould came out and played the piece at an "*extravagantly* slow" pace. According to Bernstein, it lasted nearly 90 minutes.

Before the next afternoon's concert, this time with Schonberg and other critics in the audience, Bernstein made similar remarks. Gould then came out and, according to Bernstein, surprised him by playing the concerto at a much brisker tempo than he had in rehearsal. "We got through it in something like 50 or so minutes," said Bernstein. As a result, his disclaimer seemed ill tempered and gratuitous. But it didn't bother Gould, Bernstein maintained, and the two men remained close. "Glenn was my angel," he told Cott.

Tim Page, a Pulitzer-winning music critic and the editor of *The Glenn Gould Reader* (1984), agrees that the 1962 concert didn't produce any bad blood. "I knew Glenn quite well, and we talked about it," Page said in a recent interview. Far from being miffed, Gould was grateful. Disagreements between conductors and soloists are common, Gould told Page, and conductors don't always give in as graciously as Bernstein had.

As for the contention that Gould blindsided Bernstein by changing the tempo, though, some skepticism may be in order. Page points out that Bernstein recounted the flap at length in a 1983 essay; he didn't mention any difference between Gould's two performances—both, he implied, were achingly

slow. Then, in 1985, critic Alan Rich unearthed a tape of the concert. "News for you, Mr. Bernstein," Rich wrote in *Keynote* magazine. "The total time is 53 minutes and 51 seconds, which happens to be 23 seconds *faster* than a performance you recorded not long ago." When Cott interviewed Bernstein four years later, the conductor apparently rejiggered his defense. Now he claimed that at the unrecorded rehearsal, Gould had played much more sluggishly than at the recorded concert.

In classical music circles, the flap over Bernstein's "small disclaimer" of 1962 has lasted half a century. *Dinner With Lenny* may not lay it to rest.

## BORN ENEMIES

*Geopolitics, Freudian style*

**In *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu admonishes** military strategists to know the enemy. Twice in the 1940s, the British anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer tried to help the United States apply Sun Tzu's lesson, analyzing the Japanese during World War II and the Soviets at the dawn of the Cold War. Though Gorer took the same approach to both Japan and the Soviet Union, University of Cambridge historian Peter Mandler explains in *Return From the Natives* (Yale Univ. Press),

the two studies met with sharply different receptions.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Gorer set out to master Japan. He had never visited the country. Indeed, he told a colleague, “All that I know could go on the back of a postage stamp and still leave room for a couple of love letters.” Undaunted, he consulted experts, interviewed Japanese Americans, and read Japanese novels in translation.

After four months, he announced his bold conclusions. “Early and severe toilet training is the most important single influence in the formation of the adult Japanese character,” he wrote in a memo. “Any lapse from cleanliness is punished by severe scolding, the mother’s voice expressing horror and disgust, and often also by shaking or other physical punishment.” The trauma of toilet training, Gorer reasoned, gave rise to a lifelong aggression that found few socially acceptable outlets in Japan—hence the “overwhelming brutality and sadism of the Japanese at war.” QED.

American officials found the theory



DREW MYERS / CORBIS

### Totalitarian in the making?

cogent and useful. The Office of War Information distributed the Gorer memo to analysts studying Japanese propaganda. The U.S. Army assigned it in training programs. Under the headline “Why Are Japs Japs?,” *Time* respectfully summarized Gorer’s theory and cited his belief that only “virile discipline from outside” could bring Japan into line.

After the defeat of the Axis, Gorer accepted an invitation from Margaret Mead, the prominent anthropologist and founder of the Institute for Intercultural Studies, to assess the Soviet Union. After a few months of research, Gorer once again zeroed in on the treatment of infants. Soviet mothers tightly swaddled their babies, he said in 1948. That's why the Soviet people tolerated a government that was unresponsive and often harsh: "The earliest constraining 'authority'—the swaddling—is not part of the self, and is not personified."

Six years after his Japan study, Gorer's "diaperology," as one critic termed it, no longer seemed so compelling. As Mandler notes, racism may have contributed to the ready acceptance of the Japan analysis, while the swaddling theory conflicted with the West's faith that all peoples yearned for freedom and democracy. In addition, such reductionism hardly fostered international understanding. Gorer started to appear in the Soviet press as—in the words of one article—a member of "the sinister ensemble of the instigators of a new war."

*The New Leader*, a weekly magazine published by liberal anticommunists in New York, went after Gorer

relentlessly. One writer likened his theory to Nazism. Another scoffed at the pretensions of anthropologists, who believed that they could establish foreign policy "in less time than you can unswaddle a baby."

*The New Leader* also published a parody, purportedly a Soviet professor's analysis of the American character: "The infant born in a proletarian log cabin was swaddled in the coarse muslin which the fearless, hard-working, straight-shooting American frontier woman ripped from her own primitive underskirt." But, the "professor" observed, commercial diaper services were disrupting the mother-child bond. As a result, the modern-day American baby was growing up "psychologically ripe to blow up the entire world in a vain effort to regain his own identity."

Led by Margaret Mead, anthropologists had been struggling to prove the social relevance of their work. The swaddling controversy represented a setback. In a letter to Mead, another anthropologist, John Golden, provided a cheerless assessment. "I fear," Golden wrote, "that only pure kindness and the obviousness of our discipline's successes amongst 'primitives' save us from being branded the fools we are." —*Stephen Bates*



William Mawwin in 2010

JILLIAN ROBINSON

# “STILL, GOD HELPS YOU”

Memories of a Sudanese child slave

ARTICLE BY **MELISSA PRITCHARD**

By MELISSA PRITCHARD

IT IS MONDAY MORNING IN PHOENIX, Arizona, and 33-year-old William Mawwin is getting dressed for school. His right arm is an old prosthetic the color of Hershey’s syrup. The prosthetic



**Mawwin attends a kickball tournament with his daughter, Achol, in Arizona in May 2013.**

has begun to hurt him, but he cannot afford a new one. On his left hand, four fingers are missing down to the second knuckle. His naked back and chest are welted with raised, pinkish scars, some from beatings, others from burns. More scars, from knife wounds and skin grafts, map his body. In the slow, careful way he has taught himself, he puts on socks, jeans, a neatly ironed shirt, dress shoes with pointed tips. Across from his bedroom, a guest room stands empty except for a twin bed and a chest of drawers. His daughter’s teddy bear sits propped on the pillow. William, who is six feet tall and slender, sometimes just sits on her bed and holds the stuffed bear.

He does not look forward to school holidays, to spring or winter breaks. Each day away from the classroom lengthens his exile, leaves openings for bad memories. He takes the public bus to school or, if he is short of money, walks. His car, an old silver Nissan van, has sat unused since it failed last year’s emission test. He hasn’t got money to fix it. Surviving on a Pell grant and disability payments, William lives sparingly but is still sometimes short on the rent. His apartment complex has changed management, and the new policies include strict penalties

for late payments. This morning, he overslept and is late for school, so he needs to borrow his friend’s bright green Discount Cab. He drives to geology class, ignoring calls from the dispatcher, the heel and palm of his fingerless hand guiding the black steering wheel.

**O**N A SEPTEMBER EVENING IN 2005, I was hosting a small fundraiser for the Lost Boys Center in Phoenix, too busy to notice the young Sudanese man sitting quietly beneath a tree in my backyard, his stillness like camouflage. Years later, he will tell me how isolated he felt that night. His English was poor, and experience kept him cautious, emotionally distant. He did not trust people’s motives and had told no one his real story. Less than a year later, introduced to William at another Lost Boys event, I extended my hand and was startled by the plastic palm and fingers I touched, brown, shiny, lifeless. Eventually, when this young man began calling me “Mom,” I felt wary of what I might be obligated to do or to give beyond what I was comfortable with, which, frankly, was not much. If the word “mother” is a mythic invocation of selflessness, I owned plenty of selfishness at that point in my life, along with a slew of rich excuses. What I would come to realize, with some shame

over this tense instinct for self-preservation, was how much this young man had to offer my two daughters and me. Not materially—for he had and has next to nothing—but by his loyalty and integrity, and by his exceptional story of survival.

When a stranger walks into one’s guarded life, a gift disguised as a potential burden, a gentle rebuke to the narrowest notion of family, then the strengthening of one’s capacity to risk generosity, the incremental increase in one’s courage, feels like uncreeded theology, like some new faith, love’s loftiest ideal made human by a series of small, ordinary acts.

The evening I formally met William and shook his hand, he was with his friend Edward Ashhurst, a filmmaker hoping to make a documentary about William’s life. Ed asked for my professional help, and, intrigued by what I might learn about his process, I agreed. He and William began visiting me, and over a period of several weeks we fell into a routine. William would tell his story, Ed and I would listen, and then all three of us would talk over possible strategies for the documentary. At one point, we even flew to Los Angeles to meet a producer who had shown interest. But before long, the project stalled. I became busy teaching and traveling, and

only saw William from time to time. I had also become aware of some slight, unsettling opposition within myself. As much as William’s story of being a child slave haunted me, I was resisting its pull. He had confided terrible things to Ed and me, things he said he had never told anyone; perhaps, I reasoned, the connection I resisted was simply one of bearing witness. Even less comfortable to admit was my fascination with the details and depth of his suffering, again offset by an obdurate reluctance to get too close. Closeness, after all, implies a responsibility that voyeurism doesn’t. So for a very long time my relationship with William stalled too, in uneasy territory. For a long time, I held him at arm’s length.

**T**ODAY, MORE HUMAN BEINGS SUFFER enslavement than during the three and a half centuries of the transatlantic slave trade. The International Labor Organization, a United Nations agency focused on labor rights, recently—and some would say conservatively—raised its worldwide estimate of the number of individuals unable to escape various forms of forced labor and trafficking from 12 million to nearly 21 million. Africa and the Asia-Pacific region together

account for the largest number, close to 15 million people, but slavery is epidemic around the world and increasing.

## Today, more human beings suffer enslavement than during the three and a half centuries of the transatlantic slave trade.

In Sudan, slavery is not a new phenomenon. Intertribal slave raids, Sudanese Arabs enslaving southern tribal peoples for personal use and export, and the lucrative 19th-century European slave trade all played tragic parts in Sudanese history. But in the 20th century, during Sudan’s two scarcely interrupted civil wars, slave raids by northern Arab militia became an especially brutal strategy of the north. Murahaleen, white-robed Arabs armed with Kalashnikovs, swept down from the north on horseback, raiding and burning Dinka and Nuer villages, seizing thousands of women and children, decimating southern Sudanese tribes defenseless against modern weaponry and government-supported rape, slavery, and genocide. With the north’s population predominantly Muslim, and the tribal

peoples of the south mostly either animist or Christian, religious divisions and cultural rifts, along with complex historical, agricultural, and environmental factors, including Chevron’s discovery of vast oil reserves in the south in the 1970s and the Sudanese government’s introduction of sharia law in 1983, created unfortunate, if not inevitable, conditions for civil war.

After 50 years of war and six years after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2005, the South Sudanese voted in a historic referendum in January 2011 to secede from Sudan. On July 9, 2011, the Republic of South Sudan, led by President Salva Kiir Mayardit, became the world’s newest sovereign nation. Today, the Islamist president of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, continues to deny the existence of as many as 35,000 South Sudanese slaves who remain in his country, and refuses to cooperate with South Sudanese government representatives who want to restore these people to their tribal homes.

Of the thousands of Dinka and Nuer men, women, and children captured in Sudan’s murahaleen raids, few have escaped to tell their story.

William Mawwin did break free, and his story begins with his ancestors, generations before his birth, among the Dinka of southern Sudan.

*Manyuol Mawein is the tallest of men, an eight-foot giant. He is also the wealthiest, a tribal chief who owns a vast herd of cattle, thousands, like stars, past counting. He has 50 wives, cattle for 50 more. He has dozens of sons and daughters. During the dry season cattle camp, his family lives in conical mud-walled homes with thatched roofs in his village while Manyuol, with the other men and boys, herds cattle in rich savanna grassland. He sleeps close to his cattle at night. They are his spirit connection to Nhialac, to God, who breathes and moves in all living things. Like all Dinka men, Manyuol is naked but for an elaborately beaded corset signifying status, his readiness for another marriage. His skin and face are coated with a ghostly white ash made from cattle dung fires. His hair, dyed with cow urine and powdered with ash, is a red-gold color considered to be very beautiful. Manyuol is his father’s name, his grandfather’s name, the name of nine male generations before him and unnumbered generations after him. His bull-name is Mawein, after the rare brown-and-white color of his chosen bull, his song-ox. He composes songs in praise of Mawein, strongest and noblest of all his bulls, caresses the beast’s twin curving horns and his*

*belly, and brushes him clean each day with ash. Mawein's high, white crescent horns, black tassels swaying from their tips, pierce new stars in the sky as he walks. Raising his arms high, Manyuol imitates the curving horns of Mawein, his song-ox, as he sings the beauty and number of his cattle, the longevity of his people, the beneficent spirit of Nhialac, of God.*

Manyuol Mawein was born on February 19, 1979, in an army hospital in southern Sudan, the third of six children. His birth name connected him to nine or more generations of Dinka grandfathers. As the largest ethnic group in southern Sudan, the Dinka live from the Bahr el Ghazal region of the Nile basin to the Upper Nile and are a pastoral people, cattle herders during the dry season, which begins in December, and cultivators of peanuts, beans, corn, millet, and other grains during the wet season, which begins in the spring. The tallest people on the continent of Africa, the Dinka often reach seven or more feet in height. While early European explorers called them “ghostly giants,” or “gentle giants,” in the Upper Nile they call themselves *jieng* and in the Bahr el Ghazal region, *mony-jang*, “the men of men.” The Dinka are polygamous,

though many men have only one wife. A woman can marry the ghost of a male who died in infancy, one of his live relatives standing in for the dead man, and many “ghost fathers” exist among Dinka people. Because of the early influence of British missionaries, many Dinka have converted to Christianity from animist belief. Dressing in cheap, imported Western clothes or the loose-fitting Arab *jallabah* has largely replaced such traditional practices as wearing beaded corsets or whitening the naked body with ash from cow dung fires, a form of decoration that also protects against malarial mosquitoes and tsetse flies.

In 1982, on the cusp of what would become the second Sudanese civil war, two-year-old Manyuol was critically burned in a home cooking-fire accident, an incident that his family, even today, is uncomfortable talking about. William guesses they feel guilty, particularly his mother, and he knows that among Dinka people, whatever is bad about the past is carefully kept in the past. To discuss or dwell on unhappy memories is impolite, even inappropriate. Because of this, though he still bears scars from this accident on his side and back, William understands that he may never learn the details of what happened to him that day. What he does know is that following

several months' stay in a hospital, he was returned to his parents in the city of Wau. Soon after, his grandmother, wanting to protect him from the coming violence, walked seven days from her village of Ajok to bring Manyol to live with her. Because of his injuries and young age, he was the most vulnerable of her grandchildren. He would be safer in Ajok, with her, than in the city.

*My first memory is walking with Joc, my grandmother, down to the river to get water. A fisherman gave me my first fish to bring home. I used to love to walk, talk, and lie down next to my grandmother. She would always make sure I ate first. I never felt she was a grandmother; she was just like a mother to me. With her, I had a joyful life. I love my grandmother a lot. I think of her every day, and know I can never have that life with her again.*

Unable to pay his bills, William dropped out of community college classes to take a job as a night security guard at a bank in Phoenix. Hearing this from his friend Ed, I worried that William would plummet between the economic cracks, his hope of an education sacrificed in the monotonous struggle for survival. One morning, before dawn, I

was wakened from a sound sleep by a “voice”—one of the strangest things I have ever experienced, and nearly impossible to describe—but this voice was a command, coming from me, yet not “me,” its directive simple: I MUST pay for William’s schooling, for his tuition and books. Whatever its source, this voice would not be ignored. Calling William that day, I got to the point. Find out how much your tuition and books will cost next semester, and let me know. You need to go back to school, you need to get your degree. Scarcely believing this wild turn of fortune, William quit his job as a night security guard, registered for classes, and, with his tuition and books paid for, would never miss another semester of college. Up to that point, with each low-wage job, he had tried to set aside money for one or two classes at community college, starting with the ESL (English as a Second Language) series. At his airport job, when he had asked for a work schedule to accommodate his class times, he was fired. Each month had become an uphill struggle to pay bills. Somehow, William’s life in America had turned into a futile exercise, his dreams trumped by poverty.

As for me, obeying that voice was one of the most irrational, least practical, and finest things I have ever done in my life.

Soon afterward, William began calling me “Mom.” I found it impossible to reciprocate, to call him “Son.” It felt false, ill-fitting. And when he casually mentioned that I might write his story one day, I was politely evasive. Skittish. But this past spring, in a kind of parallel experience to “the voice,” I instinctively, though less mystically, came to feel that the time had come to tell his story. So for three straight weeks, William came to my home to be interviewed. Every afternoon we sat in my back guest room, blinds drawn, the dimness offering a kind of sedative twilight I hoped would help him feel safe. I sat across from him on a small white couch, trying not to feel like some impostoring journalist/psychologist as I asked questions and rapidly wrote down each word of every answer. Hours passed with William stretched out in a deep white chair, talking. His chair, my couch, white and solid in the semidarkness, hardly anchored us. Remembering details of his capture and enslavement, he would sometimes break down and cry, something he tries never to do. Still, each time he left my house he was lighter of step, cheerful, as if, in the neutral sanctuary of that back room, he had literally left more baggage behind.

To get to my house each day, William

borrowed his friend’s taxicab; occasionally during our sessions, he had to answer a phone call, his speech switching rapidly from English to Arabic to Dinka, depending on the caller. He kept these exchanges short or, increasingly often, turned off his phone. Together, we let go of the present and moved backward in time; we began with that winter morning when a boy’s childhood, William’s, changed irrevocably.

**I began to find it natural, a matter of pride as much as affection, to call him my “son.”**

Simple intimacy sprang up between us during these afternoons. At some indeterminate moment, sitting across from him in that shadowy room as he talked, entrusting me with terrible and sometimes pleasant memories, I began to find it natural, a matter of pride as much as affection, to call him my “son.”

*They teach you to suffer. Put a huge fear in your heart. The day you got captured is the day you start your job.*

**O**N A BRIGHT WINTER MORNING IN FEBRUARY 1985, six-year-old Manyuol accompanies one of his uncles to the marketplace. Hearing gunshots, Manyuol imagines that men must be hunting close by. Two days later, again in the company of his uncle, the boy stares as men wearing long white robes and white headpieces gallop recklessly into the marketplace on horseback. Murahaleen. They seize cattle, children, women, blankets, clothes, mosquito netting, winter supplies. Dust is everywhere, confusion, gunshots, terrified

screams. His uncle is shouting, trying to reach Manyuol, but the boy stands very still, hypnotized by all the noise, the excitement, the horses. He has never seen a horse, wants to touch one. When a man is shot in front of him, he thinks the figure lying in the reddening dirt is going to wake up. Suddenly, one of the white-robed men grabs Manyuol and throws him hard across a horse's back, behind the saddle, tying his arms and legs with rope. Manyuol is one of 70 Dinka boys, girls, and women captured that winter morning by Arab militia.



Mawwin (squatting, lower left) poses in 1994 with friends he describes as fellow Khartoum street persons.

Half will perish before reaching the end of a 15-day forced walk; those who survive will be sold, of less worth than cattle, into slavery.

As William recalled that forced walk, his voice was flat, expressionless. Then it broke, and he stopped to cry.

Sometimes what William relates is remembered in the second person, the “you” providing safe distance, a buffer from overwhelming emotions. When he speaks, his tenses frequently blur. Past and present overlap. Time as a straightforward concept dissolves. William’s accent is heavy; his diction and syntax are unique, cobbled from hybrid, self-taught languages. At times, he uses clinical phrases culled from sociology or psychology classes; often, his grammar is incorrect, his sentences confusing. (In this essay, I have lightly edited some of William’s phrasing for clarity while preserving his meaning as well as his style of speech and transitions from past to present.)

Jotting everything down, I slowly came to realize that there is no proper tense for trauma, no perfect grammar for pain. And when he used the word “skip” for escape, I thought how strange a contradiction that was, using a word most of us associate with play to describe running from captivity. I was jarred each

“First they shot all the boys and girls who couldn’t walk anymore, the four- and five-year-olds.”

time I heard William, with not a trace of irony, refer to the Arab man who had held him captive as “Master.”

*First they shot all the boys and girls who couldn’t walk anymore, the four- and five-year-olds. One soldier ties a little boy to a tree, telling us, “If you can’t walk anymore, this will happen to you.” He shoots the boy, takes a metal rod from the fire, shoves it up the boy’s anus. There was a party that night, the boy still hanging dead from the tree.*

*Another guy stood in front of all of the kids with an AK-47, ordered them to shut their eyes. “If you open your eyes, a bullet will hit you or you will have to shoot another kid.” So you close your eyes. He fires off the gun in front of you; it might or might not hit you. You jump like a bullet. One little boy is crying, “Mom, mom, help me,” but the mother is tied, bound hands to ankles with a rope.*

*A young Arab guy with a mustache—he wore a white headscarf,*

*carried a white rope—he grabbed this little girl, started laughing when she tried to push him away. He dragged her behind a tree, tore off her clothes; we were all watching. Her brother, naked, my age, tied up like us, jumped to his feet, started yelling to leave his sister alone. No one said anything. The Arab guy turned, shot the boy three times in the chest. Put holes in his chest. The mother was crying, crying. They taped her mouth shut, and the next day, shot her in the mouth. Her baby kept trying to get milk from the dead mother.*

*That little boy lay right next to me. He was my age. His foot was jerking, blood was coming out of his mouth and nose, he turned his head and smiled straight into my eyes, died. That little boy is the one person I would never, never, never forget in my life. He is a hero to me.*

What did they give you to eat?

*Rice with insects in it. They forced you to eat it. It gave you diarrhea.*

Can you describe the walk?

*We walked at night because it was cooler for the cattle, and because we couldn't tell where we were going. You walk and walk, you get so tired, don't know where you are.*

Did you know any of the women or other children?

*Yes. One of the kids was a cousin of mine; he's still in captivity today.*

How did they make all of you walk?

*In a straight line, holding a rope, two people tied together. Everyone is naked, you have to sleep on cold ground. If you need to pee, you ask, then everyone has to get up with you. At night you can't see anything—you might step on a snake, a scorpion, get bitten and die. It happened.*

*One morning, this three- or four-year-old boy, too little to be tied up with the older kids, wakes up cold, tries to go nearer to the fire everyone is sleeping around, gets shot.*

*If you are weak, you die. If you smile, you die.*

*Another boy is shot dead because he is sick, then his mother and sister are killed with a machete, because they are weeping.*

*If you show emotion, you die. I kept thinking about my grandmother, thinking my grandmother will come and save me. Somehow she will save me.*

*You have to save yourself.*

*By the time we reach Babanusa [a town in western Sudan], maybe 30 kids are alive. Half died or were left, sick, by the road, with no food or water.*

Do you ever dream about it?

*Every night until I was 17. I still dream sometimes about it.*

*There was one little girl, only four or five years old, wearing a long blue skirt. They ripped off her skirt, hung it on a tree. She got raped by a lot of men. Afterward she said, “When I die, will you tell my father?” She walked for three days after that, naked, bleeding, until she died, until she was free.*

*I keep seeing that blue skirt.*

*At the slave market everyone is naked, sitting on the ground. They test you, look you over. They divide you—women, children, young ladies. If you are related, they separate you. They count you, one by one. Now your name, your identity, is an Arabic number: six women, 30 kids, some girls. The Arab women do the selecting. They are looking for slaves to cook, to clean, do laundry, iron. The older kids are taken first, the eight-to-11-year olds. Then seven-to-five. Nobody takes children under five unless that child is with a woman or one of the women takes the*

*child to raise as a slave. Girls are valuable for sex. By the age of 15 or 16, a girl will have two or three children by her slave owners, and she will raise them, like her, to be slaves.*

*This Arab family bought seven of us, five boys and two girls. I ended up with the old man, my master. His name was Ahmed Sulaman Jubar. He picked me because I spoke a little Arabic. To speak Arabic made you more valuable. He named me “Ali,” and I had to recite from the Quran, pray five times a day with him. I had to call him “Dad,” his wife “Mom.” Their children, I was told, were my “brothers and sisters.”*

*We walked one and a half days more. Then with the old man, two of his sons, and a Dinka woman with her daughter, I walked four days more with all the cattle. Everyone spoke Arabic.*

**“At the slave market everyone is naked, sitting on the ground.”**

*I didn’t understand anything. When we got to a temporary house, I ate real food, drank milk. I still don’t know what’s going on. I sit under a tree, fall asleep there. Next day, I’m still there.*

*Two days later, I got my first order—go with one of the master’s sons, take the sheep and goats to get water.*

*I never sit down to rest until I skip five years later.*

*You’re beaten, slapped, you don’t understand the language, you have to memorize what they say. For two months they tie your hands and feet every night, you sleep on the ground with the cattle. There is nowhere to go. After that, I got picked to take care of the old man. My duties: be his nurse, companion, walk him to the mosque for prayers. His wife stayed in Babanusa with the children and grandchildren. My master liked staying in the country with his cattle and sheep. When his wife would visit, she was terrible, mean like hell, really, really mean. When she comes, it is the worst time for everybody. She sits there cooking her coffee all day, complaining, yelling, crying.*

*In the morning I cook, bring his tea, black tea with milk, his bread. I cook the bread, too. I fold his bed. I cook his lunch, usually chicken. I do his laundry, using a bucket with water and soap. Lay his clothes in the sun to dry. Master would pray five times a day, he was really into the Quran. Then I start going to cattle camp, rotating with his*

*youngest son, three months younger than me, the son he loved more than anything. When this son was around, I had to leave, go to cattle camp, get yelled at, beaten. One time, when I lost one of the cows, Ahmad, the fourth son, stabbed me, told me find the cow or he will kill me. After I find it, he still slaps me, beats me, gets really rough.*

*For four years, I didn’t go anywhere. Master told me: Your parents did not want you, now I’m taking care of you. All this is going to be yours one day. I will find you a wife. These are your brothers. You are part of our family. This will be your special cow. So you feel motivated, work very hard. But it is psychological manipulation. Sweet talk. Mind control.*

*When I was 10, Master took me with him to Babanusa for the first time. It was Ramadan, so we went to buy stuff and to sell cows, goats, sheep. The city was so beautiful! Master had this beautiful house, a city house. We live in it four days, the four most beautiful days ever. I start asking him, “Why do we live in the jungle with cows, why can’t we live here, in the city?” Why, I ask myself, am I living tied up, with rules? In Babanusa, Master buys me cookies. I had never tasted sweets before. I see cars everywhere, and everywhere I see*

*people looking like me, Dinka people, working for themselves. Before, I thought I was my master's son or maybe his grandson, but when I see all of these people in the city, especially Dinka people, I get my first idea to skip. Back at camp, my dream becomes Babanusa. I start thinking how I will skip. I behave well so Master will take me with him, back to the city. I dedicate myself to him, be loyal to him. Become his best slave so he will trust me.*

Ahmed Jubar takes the boy, Ali, to the market in Babanusa for a second time, to sell cattle and buy supplies. On a third trip, Ali is made to go with Ahmed's fourth son, Ahmad, the one who had once stabbed and beaten him for losing a cow. Ali works all day, washing and ironing mountains of clothes, taking care of Ahmad's four children, staying awake all night to watch the cattle, always terrified Ahmad will kill him. Still, he has an extra day in Babanusa with Ahmad and his family, and, at a tea stall, meets an older boy who tells him about an even bigger city, El Obeid. "Babanusa is nothing!" the boy says.

Six months later, Ali, now 11, returns to the tea stall to look for that same boy, but instead meets Chol, a 29-year-old Dinka truck driver. This time, Ali is in

Babanusa with three other slave kids he met in cattle camp. These other boys are 15, 13, and 12, all older than Ali. After meeting Chol, the four of them talk about how they might escape captivity on their next trip into the city.

On Ali's fifth trip, he walks into Babanusa with the other three boys. They find Chol. He buys them food, lets them keep the money they've just made from selling cow's milk. When Ali says he wants to go to El Obeid, Chol answers, "I can get a job for you there, but you have to pay me. I have four trucks leaving tonight with cattle and peanuts. I can take you and your three friends." Ali gives Chol his milk money, makes sure the other boys have a way out, too. They are all runaway slaves now; anybody who gets caught will be beaten, get a foot chopped off, or be killed. If Ali skips on his own, he knows the other boys will be blamed, punished, possibly killed. He decides he can only leave if he helps them escape too, so he invents a story, telling the boys he will wait in Babanusa overnight, watching the cows, while they go in trucks to other cities to buy more cows and bring them back the next day. Believing him, two of the boys go off in one of Chol's trucks, and the third goes by himself in a different truck to another city. Like Ali, they have

given Chol their money. After they are safely gone, Ali waits until dark to leave with Chol. The boy is shaky, scared. He can't relax until they reach El Obeid the next afternoon.

*I am alive today because of that truck driver. He saved my life trafficking me, taking my money, selling me to another master. There is no help given for free. I was a transaction.*

Chol drives to El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan state, and at four the next afternoon delivers Ali to a Muslim family. Ali is astonished to see Chol sitting down and eating with the man of the house, laughing, cussing, using the same plates, drinking from the same cups. The wife brings Ali food, examines him, touches him, seems happy he is there.

**“There is no help given for free. I was a transaction.”**

He will work seven months for this family and never be paid. Sharing a room with another Dinka slave, a 17-year-old boy called Deng, Ali will find life in El Obeid worse than cattle camp, where at least he could be outdoors, could hunt,

fish, and drink cow's milk. Here, inside this house, there is no escape. He works all the time. The first two months, he has to watch the family's children, walk them to and from school, do all the washing and ironing. After that, he is made to do everything, all the cleaning, and gets beaten if something is not done right. But a happy respite, even a new name, comes when he meets Father Tarticchio.

*Sometimes I walk past this church. I see kids running in a field nearby, falling, shouting, laughing, playing with a ball. I watch them. One day, a priest with gray hair and a white mustache comes up to me. His name, he says, is Father Tarticchio. He speaks Arabic and wears a white robe, a red hat, Sudanese slippers, and uses a stick to walk. I find out that he helps all the street kids, gives them clothing, feeds them, helps them to go to school. When he drives his little white car, some kind of Italian jeep, everybody waves at him. He's well loved in El Obeid. The day he gives me a green T-shirt with a picture of Bishop Daniel Comboni on it, I start wearing it all the time. [Saint Daniel Comboni was a missionary credited with numerous conversions in Africa in the 19th century.] I start going to Bible study at the church*

*because it is so peaceful. One Sunday, Father Tarticchio baptizes me, gives me a new, Christian name, William. After William Wallace, he says. Who's that? A Scottish warrior, also called Braveheart.*

*I start going on Sundays to Father Tarticchio's church. I think the Communion wafer is food, bread, so every Sunday I go up there and eat it. The explanation of what it is doesn't make sense to me, but I go up there to be fed. In church, it is peaceful. Nobody slaps you, nobody hurts you, and there's free food. As a kid, you don't know anything, you go for the food, the clothes, a bathroom.*

*I want to play with the kids on the field, but don't know how. Father Tarticchio makes me a goalkeeper, teaches me how. After that, I sneak out of the house whenever I can to play soccer with the other kids. That was the most beautiful thing ever, playing soccer, being a kid.*

**C**HOL STOPS BY THE HOUSE AFTER four months. When Ali, now baptized William, tells him he has not been paid for any of his work, Chol answers, that's because you have to pay me back for the next two years, my price for getting you out. Either that or I will return you to your master, and he can

punish you, kill you, for running away. After Chol leaves, William gets beaten more; now he has to ask permission to leave the house. Deng tells him Chol has been stealing William's "earned" money all along, and starts to talk about Khartoum, a bigger city than El Obeid. With Deng helping him, William plans how he will skip. He agrees to work for Deng's cousin in Khartoum for one month, and then he will be free.

**“That was the most beautiful thing ever, playing soccer, being a kid.”**

As he did with Ahmed Jubar, William puts on a show of loyalty to the family, works even harder. Before walking the kids to school, he puts on extra clothing, drops it off at the cousin's house. One month later, he tells the wife, "Please, I need to buy some clothes." Trusting him, she gives him money to go shopping.

*You're poor. Desperate. You're a slave. You're naive, too, and want to believe what people tell you.*

*Each person influences you the way he wants, then turns mean. You get used to it. You don't care anymore.*

*You decide you're not worth anything. You wonder, who will treat me with honesty and kindness? Who will love me just for who I am?*

*When you are a street kid, you cry and cry and cry, and reach a point where you feel nothing anymore. That protects you. You force yourself to have relations with that person who is bad to you.*

*Emotionless. Forgetting.*

*When you have no family to care for you, you become a person who has already given up on his life, with nothing to lose. When you have nobody, people know it, and they beat you. If you have a family, you are protected.*

*And in Khartoum, everybody can tell if you are Nubian, Dinka, Nuer. They take advantage of you, are cruel because you are poor.*

*Still, God helps you.*

William drops his charges off at school and keeps going. When the family realizes he has run off with the money they gave him, they go looking for him. He hides at Deng's cousin's place a few days, until he and the cousin take the bus together to Khartoum, a 12-hour ride. In Khartoum, the national capital, William sees a lot of other Dinka people standing around. He thinks the

marketplace is huge, beautiful. The next day, he starts working for Deng's cousin, selling cups of cold drinking water at the market. After two months, he is still selling cups of water, and Deng's cousin is taking half of his money. Since this is not fair, not the agreement, William leaves. The cousin finds William trying to sell water on his own, beats him up, takes his money, threatens to kill him. William is learning a pattern with people—they act nice at first, then control you with fear and beatings. He starts over, tries hustling for money at the marketplace. Three days later, the cousin finds him, beats and robs him again. So he discovers a different marketplace in the city, and at night he sleeps on church rooftops. He spends his days hanging around warehouses, waiting for work loading trucks. Sometimes he goes door-to-door offering to wash clothes, clean houses. Work is all he has, a refuge. He takes pride in how well he works, does extra work for free. Now 13, William will live like this for the next five years.

*Life on the street has different values. There is no emotion. Work becomes a silent language, and the kid who beats me up today might be my friend tomorrow.*

**A**KEC, ANOTHER STREET KID, BECOMES William's first real friend. Hot tempered but loyal, Akec is quick to defend William in fights. One morning, they are riding a public bus together when government soldiers climb aboard and seize all the boys. They find seven boys, including William and Akec, and later release two who are too young. The soldiers in Khartoum are looking for street kids 16 or 17 and up, to put into military training and then send south to fight their own people. William and Akec are made to get on a bus with the other three boys and are driven toward a training camp hours away. When the bus stops somewhere en route, all the boys jump out and start running. Akec and William hide in a nearby soccer stadium until the soldiers give up looking for them. Catching a public bus back to Khartoum, they are too frightened to go outside for three days, and stop going to the city's center. They find work with Manyon, an older Dinka man. Sleeping outside his house, they sell things, do construction work, whatever he finds for them to do. They work for Manyon two years before they discover he is cheating them, giving them less than half of the money they have earned. When he figures out they know, Manyon calls the police and accuses Akec and William of

stealing from him. The police arrest the boys. Every day in prison, freezing water is thrown on them, and they are beaten with switches. There is no court date, no trial. Seven days later, they are driven to a prison farm several hours outside Khartoum.

*At the prison farm, you work 16 hours a day, sleep in this little hut. Ninety percent of prison-farm workers are southern Sudanese, Dinka, some Nubians. Men, women, children, working on this huge, huge farm the size of a city, growing food for Khartoum.*

*You wake at 3 a.m., have to put this light bulb on your head so you can see. By 4 a.m., you're packing in the dark, loading trucks with vegetables, tomatoes, okra, corn. Every other week, somebody dies from a snake bite. If you die there, people in prison bury you. By 5 or 6 a.m., the trucks leave for the market. Seven days a week, you are in bed by 8 p.m., up working at 3 a.m.*

*After two months we get free, but have no money. We stay working at the farm an extra week to pay for a bus ride to Khartoum. Instead, we decide to keep the money we've earned and ride in the farm truck to the city. At the marketplace, we have to unload the truck, wait around all day, then load*

*the truck back up again before we are really free.*

But misfortune dogs the boys. On their first day of freedom, they wander into an area of Khartoum where a southern Sudanese man has just run off after killing someone. Akec and William are apprehended and accused of the murder. Sitting in shackles in yet another jail, interrogated, beaten, lashed every night, William and his friend won't be released until seven months later, when the real murderer is found and arrested. It is May 1997 when they get out, and soon the boys find work with a Dinka man named Wael. They sell used clothes in the market, and Wael pays them and gives them food. He is like a father to them. William remembers Wael as the first person since he was captured to sit down with him and eat off the same plate.

*The one nice thing that happens to you when you are in prison is you get to talk all day long about what you will do when you get out. Who you will be. When I get married, you say, or when I get a job, or what I will eat when I get out, when I become a person. When you have a dream life, a second life, you can forget you're in prison. Then, when*

## William remembers Wael as the first person since he was captured to sit down with him and eat off the same plate.

*you get free of being accused of killing someone, it becomes like the toughest thing ever. You're so happy when you get out, have the freedom to start your dream life. The same work you did in prison, you get paid to do. But when Wael gets killed in a car accident, Akec says let's get out of this city, it's bad luck here for us. He leaves for Port Sudan. I decide to stay. At least I know where I am, it's familiar.*

*But after Akec leaves me, I live in a world of darkness.*

*Toward the end of 1997, it seems like everybody is going to Egypt. I meet Majok. He asks me to help him load things onto a truck, I start helping him, we talk. I am his only Dinka worker, but my Dinka is terrible, since I mostly learned it from Akec.*

*I don't trust Majok. I am afraid, don't want to tell him my story. After three weeks, he finds me in the market and says, "OK, OK, just work with*

*me, stay here, you'll get paid.”*

*“I've worked for many, many people, and all I got was jail,” I tell him. I don't want his help. Then Majok's wife tells me her husband's story, convinces me he's a good guy. I go back to working for him.*

*One day I tell Majok I want to go to Egypt.*

*“Egypt? I can get you fake papers to go to Egypt. What do you want to do in Egypt?”*

*“Open my own store, sit in front of it, sell things. I'm tired of the streets. I want a peaceful life.”*

*“I have a store, let me show it to you. I have a house, a family, a store.”*

*“You're rich,” I say.*

*Majok brings me to his home to live, but I am not comfortable in his nice house. Why? I have no trust in anybody anymore. I cut the leather inside my shoe, make a pocket, keep my money there. A street kid trick, your money lives in your shoe. At night I hide my money in a condensed-milk can, bury it in a hole I've dug in the ground, a place people walk by every day, so they won't suspect. I make money selling water, washing clothes, ironing clothes, cleaning, working at the airport baggage claim, anything.*

*Finally, I can give Majok 1,000*

*Sudanese pounds, that's maybe around \$200, for a fake passport. I am crying when I give him that money. Later, I will find out he overcharged me. Cheated me.*

*“Don't tell anybody you have a passport, don't tell anybody you are leaving for Egypt,” he says.*

*I am starting to feel closer to Majok when he tells me, “OK, you leave tomorrow, this guy is ready to take you. You'll ride in his car between Khartoum and Shendi [a Nile River town northeast of Khartoum]. Tell everybody you work for me.”*

*In Shendi, with no ticket, I jump on a train to Wadi Halfa [a town on a large lake that straddles the Egypt-Sudan border]. I have no money for food, no place to sleep—I'm just waiting to get on the boat to Egypt. Then I get arrested for not having a train ticket. I don't get released until the boat has already left.*

*I end up staying in Wadi Halfa, hustling to make money for a boat ticket. Every Friday night, the boat leaves for Aswan [in Egypt], so after six days, I go to the place I was supposed to meet this guy at. When I find him, he tells me, “The boat leaves at 5 p.m. Meet me tomorrow at 4 p.m., not 4:01, not 4:05.”*

*I am there at 3:40.*

*“Where’s the money?” he asks. He takes my money, smuggles me inside this huge plastic container on the dock. I’m in that container for two hours. It’s so hot, I can’t breathe, I’m sweating. Finally, somebody pushes the container onto the boat; I have to wait one more hour until I hear the boat whistle and can open the container and climb out.*

*After the boat arrives in Aswan, I give the police guy at immigration my passport and what’s left of my money. He takes the money, nods, stamps the passport. “OK, go ahead.”*

*I ride the train to Cairo, with maybe five or six hundred other Sudanese guys. It takes 12 hours.*

*February 22, 1998. I am 19, finally in Cairo. It’s the most beautiful city, crowded. Now I can start my own business, my big dream fulfilled. But where to stay? I know nobody, have no money. What food do I eat?*

*I find a Catholic church where all the Sudanese go. I am given food and an empty room in exchange for working in the church. It’s hard to find work, so the church helps people. I stay there two months until I get a job working in the back of a shoe store. Three months later, I get fired because I don’t have a visa.*

**A**FTER WILLIAM IS FIRED FROM THE shoe store for not having a visa—a visa costs money—he goes to the UN office in Cairo and has someone help him fill out an application for a UN identification badge. If he is stopped by police, at least he will have this. Over the next several months, he hustles for money just as he did in Khartoum, until the local Catholic church finds him a second job, this one at a factory that makes car batteries, rubber tires, plastics. He works there one month before he decides he wants to work in the salt mines, digging salt with some of his friends. He goes into the factory to quit, but his boss says he can’t leave until he gets paid for that day’s work. He takes William to a machine he has never operated before, a machine that wraps hot plastic onto giant rolls. When William objects, saying he doesn’t know how to operate the machine, the boss replies, “Figure it out,” and walks off. It is August 31, 1999. Hanging on the wall in front of him, used to measure worker output every 30 minutes and to monitor 10-minute breaks every two hours for the workers, is a large black-and-white factory clock. Because of that clock, William will never forget the time: 12:04 p.m.

*Part of my body is still there, in Egypt.*

Much of what William told me during those three weeks, sitting in the shadowy back room of my house, was painful for him to remember. But aside from the account of his capture by the Murahaleen, this was the worst of our sessions. His voice dropped as the details of the factory accident emerged in a short, scarcely audible rush.

As William attempts to “figure out” how the machine works, its giant roller snags his right arm and yanks it in. Instinctively, he uses his left hand to try to pull it back out.

**At the second hospital, he is given a get-well card, a Bible in Arabic, and a crucifix he will wear every day for years.**

Two Sudanese workers run over, stop the machine, and free his mangled right arm and left hand from the machine. They take him to a hospital, but William is not an Egyptian citizen. He is illegal, illegally employed, so no one wants to treat him. His right arm is crushed to

bloody pulp. The fingers on his left hand are gone. (Today, William still won't eat meat, not for moral reasons, but because meat, cooked or uncooked, reminds him of how the flesh of his arm and hand looked that day.) The Sudanese coworkers spend four hours at the hospital, trying to locate a private doctor willing to perform at-home surgery. Then William becomes frightened. He has heard stories, since verified, of Egyptians killing illegals and selling their organs for profit, so he decides against any surgery outside a hospital. One of the Sudanese takes William's ID badge to the UN office, tells them what happened. Around 5 p.m., someone from the UN shows up and takes William to a hospital. In surgery that night, the anesthetic doesn't work. He can see and feel everything. Five days later, the pain is still so terrible, he is taken to another hospital, run by Coptic Christians, for additional surgery, then to a house somewhere in Cairo to recover. At the second hospital, he is given a get-well card, a Bible in Arabic, and a crucifix he will wear every day for years.

The factory owner is hunting for William, wanting to get rid of him as a potential witness. Because of his accident, UN officials have learned that other illegal Sudanese workers are



**Mawwin hides in a home in Cairo after a 1999 factory accident.**

employed at the factory as well, and they plan to investigate. To avert this, the owner fires all of his Sudanese workers two days after William’s accident. The UN never follows up, never investigates employment conditions or the factory owner, so today, apparently no record exists of William’s accident or of the illegal

workers. Meanwhile, with his life still in danger, William is moved to a UN “safe” apartment with a security guard posted outside the door.

Now the UN officials in Cairo begin looking for ways to get William quickly out of Egypt. They try relocating him to Norway, then Denmark, then Belgium, but in all three countries, the requisite paperwork takes a minimum of 30 days. At the U.S. Embassy, things move far faster, and within two days William is on a TWA flight out of Cairo with a few clothes, his refugee bag, and some doctor’s papers. During the flight, his arm begins hemorrhaging; he begins to go into shock. The plane makes an emergency landing in Amsterdam, where he will spend the next 28 days in a hospital.

Finally, on January 16, 2000, he is flown to New York City. William is 20 years old.

*I am in this big hotel, in a room that looks down on a cemetery. My hands are wrapped up, bandaged. I don’t speak English. I watch the TV, stand at*

*the window, look down at gravestones, snow. My dream was to have my own shop, sit in front of it, sell things.*

## PHOENIX, ARIZONA

William arrives at Sky Harbor International Airport at 4 p.m. on Friday, February 16, 2000. A caseworker from the Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program is there to meet him. She drives him to an apartment in Phoenix, shows him a refrigerator filled with food, then leaves. William is left alone in the apartment Friday night, Saturday, Saturday night, Sunday, Sunday night. He can't use his bandaged hands to eat or to drink, and the skin graft on his leg has become infected. *I was in so much pain, it was like being a slave, tied up again.* He understands no English, only remembers that during an orientation class in Cairo he had been sternly warned about dangers in America, told never to open the door for any reason, never to speak to strangers, never to stare at anyone. Exhausted, terrified, sick, he is depending for his survival on a woman whose language he doesn't speak, a woman who has disappeared. He doesn't know how to eat most of the food in the refrigerator; it looks too strange to him. When he finds some juice, he drinks that. The caseworker returns on Monday, un-

locks the front door, comes in and finds William lying in bed. Thinking he is sick, she drives him to a doctor. But because William speaks only Arabic and Dinka, no one understands what he is trying to tell them. *I'm so hungry. I'm in pain.* The doctor changes the bandages on his leg, and then the woman takes him to the Refugee Resettlement office. By then, he is shaking all over but can't tell anyone what is wrong. When he sees a Muslim woman coming down the stairs, he speaks to her in Arabic. *Please, tell these people I haven't eaten in four days. My leg is hurting. Please, I need help.*

The woman, a refugee from Iraq, understands, and soon William is fed his first food in days. As they sit in a McDonalds, the caseworker indicates to the Muslim woman, who has volunteered to come with them—he had plenty of food in his apartment! No, the woman answers, his hands don't work. He can't eat. She then feeds him French fries with her fingers, and it is not lost on William that the first person to understand him in his new home, the first person to give him what he needs—nourishment—is a Muslim.

*Most of the other Sudanese guys came here as "Lost Boys," but there is a huge difference between the Lost Boys*

*and me. I was captured when I was six, was a slave, then a street kid. The Lost Boys walked from the jungle to a refugee camp in Kenya, then came to American cities. Our experiences are not the same. It's really sad—many of them have had trouble, have died in car accidents, are in prison or living on the street, homeless.*

**As William told me of this time, he shifted into the past tense, a signal that he would be speaking of yet another loss.**

William is moved into another apartment, in a plain but neatly kept area of Phoenix. Arcadia Palms is a glaringly white two-story apartment complex, its muddy aqua trim softened by the city's ubiquitous palm trees and an occasional splash of fuchsia bougainvillea. The complex is filled with refugees, mostly Sudanese. William has two roommates, Malak, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Gurang from Sudan. Malak picks a fight with Gurang, moves out, and soon after is relocated to Nebraska. William will live in that apart-

ment for three years, eventually with five Sudanese roommates, all six young men sharing a one-bedroom apartment that rents for \$515 a month. There is a lot of drinking and weed, and three of his roommates get into trouble with the law.

Six months after his arrival in Phoenix, William meets Jim, another person who will change his life. As William told me of this time, he shifted into the past tense, a signal that he would be speaking of yet another loss.

*In October 2000, I meet a guy named Achile, the education coordinator for ESL at Catholic Social Services. Achile introduces me to this older gentleman in his fifties or sixties named Jim. Jim had two big trucks, mostly he drove this big Ford diesel pickup. The first time he picked me up at my apartment, he is talking, talking, talking to me. I don't know what he is saying. He took me to Coco's on 46th and Thomas for lunch. He orders steak and spinach for himself, fish for me, with blueberries and cake for dessert. He sat and ate, then drove me to the library down the road. He got me a library card and checked out some children's books. He sat with me in the library until 2 p.m., teaching me to read from those children's books. The next day, Jim brought some ESL*

*papers to my apartment, then we went to another restaurant on Indian School and 32nd Street. We sat in a far corner and, again, he ordered me fish. We became friends after that second time in the restaurant. For three months, Jim came to my apartment three times a week and drove me to the library to teach me English.*

*The last time Jim took me out to eat, we went to a really nice fish place on 40th and Campbell. I remember he was drinking water, then started choking, coughing a lot. I worried maybe he was sick.*

*That was the last time I ever saw Jim. After he dropped me back at my apartment, he said something I didn't understand, and when he didn't show up the next time, I tried to find him by calling Achile. Achile told me Jim had moved to New York. "When I come back from my hiking trip next week, I'll give you his phone number." Four days later, I learned Achile was dead from a fall.*

*The world became a dark place.*

*Jim did so much for me. I couldn't tell him. Can you imagine? Three times a week for three months to teach you, to feed you for free, and you don't speak English, so you can't tell him how you feel?*

*If Jim is alive, I'd take him to the*

*same restaurants, sit in the same places. "What did you tell me that day? I didn't understand you then, but now I can tell you what I am feeling." It's a silent talk I have over and over in my heart, but I can't ever tell him. I can't look in his eyes, at his face. I can't ever tell him.*

*Jim is the reason I learned English. I want one day to meet him, to show him: This is my associate's degree, my bachelor's degree. Thank you.*

*I can't go to that library anymore, where we used to sit with the children's books.*

**D**URING ONE INTERVIEW SESSION, I asked William what jobs he'd had since coming to Arizona. Stoically, he ticked them off: delivering pizza for Papa John's and Domino's, making gum in a candy factory, working in a parking booth at the airport, working as a night security guard in a bank downtown. Every time he applied for a new job, he would be questioned about his disability, asked how could he do the work. "Don't let my arms intimidate you," he would answer. "Give me two days, and if it doesn't work out, tell me. I will respect your opinion." Since his escape from slavery, since his factory accident, William has only wanted one thing: independence.

*In the long run, no matter what, I have to do things for myself. I changed my own tire when my car broke down. Nothing is hard when you put your mind into it. Just focus, relax your mind, and you will do it. It is fear that gets you hurt.*

William has a car and a job, and things are almost peaceful for him, when he meets an 18-year-old American girl who likes hanging around the Sudanese refugee guys; when William meets her, he offers to help with some family problems she is having. Soon, she is calling a lot, asking for rides here and there. As he told me about her, I hesitated to press for details. “After a while, we got together,” he simply said. He had been naive, he added, to have gotten involved, though he still carried a photo of her in his wallet.

*I wore black every day to show I was dead but still walking around. I started dressing like this in Africa, after I got out of captivity. Wearing white meant a peaceful day, a better day for me. If I wore black and white, mixed, that meant anything could happen, good or bad. I dressed almost always in black, until the day I became a father.*

On the last day of September 2003, William is in school, taking an ESL class. A security guard comes in to get him, and he drives to Arrowhead Hospital. He stays all that night and two days more. On October 2, at 1:45 a.m., William’s daughter is born by C-section, and William is there to cut the umbilical cord. Afterward, he goes outside the building, sits down, and cries. He told me that by the time he went back inside the hospital, his whole perspective on life had changed.

**“When somebody calls you ‘Dad,’ you feel so proud.”**

William and his girlfriend give the baby a Dinka name, Achol.

*Up to then, I told people what they wanted to hear. Kept to myself. I was like a ghost, empty, living day by day. I didn’t care about my life. Today, I have someone to live for, to say I love you, words you never hear before. When somebody calls you “Dad,” you feel so proud.*

He stays three days at the hospital, leaving only once to buy some baby clothes and a car seat. On the fifth day,

William drives the baby and his girlfriend to her mother’s apartment. When his daughter gets sick and has to go back into the hospital, William quits his job to take care of his new family. He drops out of school. Soon, there are problems with his girlfriend.

He is living in an apartment with five other Sudanese men, saving money for a place of his own, when the court awards him sole custody of his daughter once he is financially stable. In the meantime, his girlfriend’s aunt and uncle are to

take care of the baby. Although William is allowed to see his daughter whenever he wants, it is still hard for him to let her go.

*In my apartment, I have a T-shirt that says “Daddy’s Girl” with Achol’s picture on it. I still have the teddy bear I brought to the hospital the day she was born. It stays on her bed in my apartment. Sometimes I sit and hold that teddy bear and try not to think I’m a failure. I tell myself I am a father, and*



Through acquaintances in the Dinka refugee community, Mawwin learned his brother Abey was living in Calgary, Canada. Shown in this 2005 photo taken at Phoenix’s Sky Harbor International Airport, Mawwin prepares to reunite with Abey.

*my daughter is the first happiness of my life.*

*In Dinka, Achol means “reward after long troubles.”*

*A joy. A happiness.*

In North America, the Sudanese refugee network is extensive and strong, deeply reflective of tribal culture. Through it, lost friends and relatives are located and reunited. In 2005, William attends a large Sudanese gathering in Nashville and meets a young man who knew one of William’s brothers, Abey. He says Abey is living in Calgary, Canada. Returning to Phoenix, William calls Abey, and on May 17, 2005, he flies to Calgary with Ed Ashhurst, the filmmaker. Soon after the brothers’ reunion, their relatives in Ajok learn that William is still alive, living in America. When he speaks to his father on the phone for the first time, William does not mention the factory accident in Cairo or his disability. He decides to wait until the day his family sees him, and in December 2009 he is given a miraculous gift—the opportunity to return home. He has been tutoring a student in his math class at Scottsdale Community College, and when the student’s father hears William’s story, he volunteers to pay William’s airfare for a trip to Sudan for Christmas. William has not seen his family for more than 20 years.

*On December 28, 2009, I flew to Wau, then drove to Ajok. I arrived home at 3 a.m. I didn’t tell anyone I was coming—I didn’t believe I was there myself. All the trees, the jungle, everything—look different than you remember. The village is not the village I used to know. People look different, grown up, married, with two or three wives and kids. The people I loved, like my grandmother, were mostly all dead. Still, people came out from everywhere and start crying. My mom had moved from Wau back to Ajok, and when she came outside and saw me, she fell to the ground, went unconscious. All these years she believed I was dead.*

*The first place I went to visit was my grandmother Joc’s grave. She died in 2004. Her house still had my uncle living in it. I went inside to see her old room and slept there my first night. I thought if I could feel her presence, let her know I’m back, it will complete my happiness. It was a huge moment for me at first, then empty. She’s not here, not in her room, my grandmother is dead. Maybe, I think, she’ll see me in the spiritual way.*

In June 2010, when charity activist and former NBA basketball star Manute Bol dies in the United States, his family

asks if William will escort Manute’s body home for burial. Manute is from Turalei, a Dinka village not far from William’s village of Ajok, and Manute’s father is powerful, well known, “like an emperor or a king among Dinka people,” William explained. Both families know one another and are distantly related by marriage. In Phoenix, after attending a cousin’s graduation at Arizona State University, Manute met with William; they talked and played dominoes. William has a photo of himself with Manute and another of one of Manute’s sisters at her wedding. He agrees to escort Manute’s body home to Turalei, and attends his funeral. Afterward he travels to Cairo, then to Khartoum, where he searches for and, incredibly, locates the family that had owned him as a slave.

The old man, Ahmed Jubar, is dead, but investigating further, William locates Jubar’s fourth son, Ahmad, the one who had stabbed him. William calls Ahmad, says he is in Khartoum and wishes to see the Jubar family again. The two men meet, sit down together, and immediately Ahmad denies that William, as Ali, had ever been his family’s slave. He had been a part of their family, well treated. Why had he run away? If he hadn’t run off, then

that—here Ahmad indicates William’s arm and hand—would never have happened. William invents a story to gain Ahmad’s trust, saying that one day in Babanusa, a man had offered him a ride in a car, then taken him away. He hadn’t run away, he had been kidnapped! William says he is now a college student in America, and Ahmad, initially incredulous, soon asks for William’s help in getting his own son into an American college. Uneasily reunited, William and Ahmad travel to Babanusa to see the rest of the family. Every member of the Jubar family, including the old man’s widow, denies William had ever been beaten or mistreated, had ever been a slave. They insist he had been part of their own family, well cared for, until he made the poor choice to run away, or, as William explains to them, had been kidnapped. After he returns to Phoenix, it takes William a long time to process the Jubars’ blatant denial, their collective insistence that he had never been a slave, that he had never been harmed by any one of them.

**Every member of the Jubar family denies William had ever been a slave.**

*I wanted to find the old man and forgive him. Without him capturing me, I would not be in America. So a bad thing, being captured, taken from my village, turned to a good thing. I wanted to show that family who I had become, how I had changed my name from Ali to William, how I live in the West now. I wanted them to see the difference between who I was with them—a slave—and who I am today.*

**I**N JANUARY 2011, WILLIAM AND ED FLY for a third time from Phoenix to Ajok so that William can vote in the referendum on an independent southern Sudan. And in early July, William returns with Ed, to celebrate the birth of the Republic of South Sudan. The new Government of South Sudan (GOSS) has extended an invitation to a number of Sudanese college students living in America, William among them, to help host the ceremonies in Juba, the new state’s capital. On his first day in Juba, wearing an official GOSS press badge, he drives to the airport to greet and escort UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon, the vice president of Cuba, Esteban Lazo, and the president of Zimbabwe, the infamous Robert Mugabe. The next day, William returns to the airport to greet Susan Rice, U.S. ambassador to the United

Nations. William refuses to greet or to escort Omar al-Bashir, the president of Sudan. At a news conference later that day in the presidential palace, William shakes hands with Salva Kiir Mayardit, the first president of South Sudan. And on July 9, 2011, wearing the red jacket he bought in America just for this occasion, William watches as the black, red, green, and blue South Sudanese flag is raised for the first time. He listens as President Mayardit, Ambassador Rice, the British foreign secretary, William Hague, and many others speak, even al-Bashir. Later, William will say it was the best, happiest day of his life, the day of independence for his new country, the Republic of South Sudan.

In Juba, William is offered a number of promising jobs. Because of his fluency in English and his education—hard won but hardly elite, at least in the United States—he is a valuable asset to a new nation with a 27 percent literacy rate, a 51 percent poverty rate, and a population that is 83 percent rural. The national government offers him a job overseeing the building of roads and infrastructure; the UN wants to hire him to assist people with disabilities in South Sudan, and the governor of Wau is interested in having him help disabled schoolchildren. The Sudan People’s Liberation

Movement (the current ruling political party in South Sudan, headquartered in Juba) along with other political parties in Juba, are also interested in his potential contribution to the fledgling republic. And William is clear about his aspirations to set a new example for a culture that sees no value in disability. He wants to set an example by his education, and his refusal to let disability limit him. The job offers are flattering, even tempting, but he turns each one down, explaining that he needs to return to America and earn his college degree before he can help his country in the ways he dreams of. Beyond agricultural studies, William wants to work in education and hopes one day to be a role model for Sudanese children disabled by war—an inspiration, perhaps, for all children.

*A good thing about Dinka people, they teach a child when he is very young what his name is, what his father's name is, his grandfather's, all the way back to the 10 generations. So if he ever gets lost, he can say who he is, people will know, and they will return him. And just by the name, people will know what tribe, what area you are from.*

Sometimes, whether he is in Sudan or America, people ask him why he

didn't return to his family's village after he escaped captivity. Patiently, William answers that he was a runaway slave. Someone's property. People would hunt for him; it was too dangerous to try to go home. Also, as a captive, he had been forced to walk at night, so he would have had no idea what direction to go in, where home even was.

And sometimes, though he rarely speaks of it or asks for help, people ask him about his disability.

*People treat you differently when you have a disability. I don't blame them. When they ask how it happened or what happened, I have two different answers. The first answer I just say, "An accident." Then they don't ask any more about it. The second answer I say, "It's a long story." And they drop it.*

*With my family, my disability makes me nervous. I left when I was six years old, lose my arm and my fingers, then I go back. It's not hurting me because I've been dealing with it for so many years—what is it, 12, 13 years now? Since I was 19 years old. But when I go home, I'm handicapped. My mom's seeing me, my dad's seeing me, my other grandmother's seeing me, a lot of the rest of the people are seeing me, and there are a lot of tears, crying, sadness.*

*It's hard for them. I'm nervous, seeing my family so sad. And it's Dinka culture, so they try to please me. I wake up, do everything I know how to do for myself, but they're right there, trying to do everything for me because I'm handicapped. I start to feel, oh, I didn't see I was handicapped before, but now with them all trying to be there, doing this and this and this for me, I feel I am handicapped even more.*

*When my daughter first asked about my arm and my hand, what happened to me, I told her about my factory accident in Cairo. "I'm sorry, Daddy. I love you," she said, then hugged me for a long time. It hit me really hard then, that my daughter loves me so much.*

*A lot of people in Sudan are disabled because of the war. Since I'm disabled too, I understand their needs.*

**W**ILLIAM MAWWIN CAME INTO MY life in 2005, sitting, unobserved, beneath a tree in my backyard during a party. When he calls me “Mom” now, I am strong enough, changed enough, trusting enough, to answer with “Son.” The early doubts I had about this stranger’s motives—was his loyalty feigned or genuine?—have gone. William long ago proved his credibility, his integrity, to me. My two daughters,

initially baffled, annoyed by the idea of a grown “brother,” a stranger they did not know and did not choose, are quick and proud to call William their brother. He is a member of our family, and when we celebrate birthdays, weddings, holidays—none of these occasions feel complete without him. He attends events I am involved in and has spoken to students in my classes. A charismatic speaker, he tells his story without embellishment or self-pity. I have watched professors and students alike pay rapt attention, then ask William questions with tears in their eyes. Self-reliant, William rarely complains or asks for anything, but if he does, if he needs money for some unexpected or extra expense, I know the request comes with difficulty, that he hates asking and has exhausted every other possibility. At times, he expresses anger and disillusionment over a local nonprofit organization that invited him to speak more than 20 times on its behalf between 2003 and 2011. He raised money for the organization at these speaking engagements, yet was paid almost nothing, and the \$500 scholarship he had been assured he would receive as compensation was never awarded to him. It is an old pattern, being cheated of what he is owed, bitterly reminiscent of his life as a slave. Yet if anyone in

my family needs William, he will find his way to that person, without a car, without money—invariably, loyally, he shows up.

Our family celebrated Thanksgiving as I was in the midst of writing William’s story. After dinner, I asked him if I might try taking a few photographs of him specifically for this article. I imagined one photo of his scarred upper back, another of him facing the camera, wearing his dress shirt and russet corduroy jacket. I was a bit unsure, a little embarrassed to ask, but when I did, William good-naturedly agreed. In front of my older daughter, my son-in-law, and me, he took his jacket and shirt off. Half naked, he turned boyish, joking around, mugging for the camera. When I asked about the long, faded scar in the center of his chest, he answered that it was from a knife blade that had been heated in a fire, then held against his chest. “People ask if I’ve had heart surgery when they see that scar,” he laughed.

The lighting was wrong in the room, the photos turned out badly, and the whole idea, I realized, after William had gone home, had been a bit melodramatic anyway. As my daughter and I worked quietly in the kitchen, cleaning up, washing and putting away dishes, she stopped suddenly.

“Now I know how he gets dressed. I’ve always wondered.”

“What do you mean?”

“Mom, didn’t you see? To do the buttons on his shirt, to get dressed, William uses his teeth.”

Surrounded by the remnants of a holiday feast, its store-bought bounty, we stood a moment, saying nothing.

*My life, it teaches me to watch, to not get upset or excited too much. When I’m upset, I’m only making it worse. I have to breathe every day, I have to think of the next day. If I get too excited, there is no one to rescue me, I am on my own. I have to think what is good and bad. I have to watch. Take my time. Imitate people when they aren’t watching. I learned that good people can turn to bad people. When someone wants something from you, they treat you nice until they get what they want. That is the reality, but I don’t want to treat people like that. I appreciate all the people who did good things to me. I even appreciate the ones who did bad things to me. I really wish I could sit down with every one of those people, show them my appreciation, show forgiveness. I wish I could do that.*

William Mawwin is now 34 years old. Named Manyuol at birth, renamed Ali by his Arab master, baptized William after a 14th-century Scottish warrior by an Italian priest, William speaks Dinka, Arabic, and English. He became an American citizen on July 17, 2009, began to attend Scottsdale Community College full-time, and in 2010 began receiving assistance in the form of federal disability payments and federal Pell grants. On May 10, 2013, William received his associate’s degree in business from Scottsdale Community College, and this fall he will begin his junior year at Arizona State University, working toward a B.S. degree in global agribusiness. He intends to use his American education to return and help the government and the people of South Sudan.

After his graduation, William Mawwin told me he was going to reclaim his birth name, inherited from nine generations of grandfathers and tribal chiefs.

One of these grandfathers, Manyuol Mawein, eight feet tall and blessed with thousands of cattle, many wives, dozens of children, remains a legendary figure among the Dinka.

Having survived slavery, imprisonment, amputation, and nearly 30 years of exile, William, no longer a male child believed dead, no longer a “ghost father,” now knows who he is: a direct descendent of Dinka chiefs, generations of men named Manyuol, whose tribal leadership was marked by gentleness, dignity, and a just, visionary wisdom.

William—Manyuol Mawein—has come home. ■

**MELISSA PRITCHARD** is the author of eight award-winning books of fiction and a biography. A ninth book, *Palmerino*, will be published by Bellevue Literary Press in 2014. A professor of English at Arizona State University, she is the founder of the Ashton Goodman Fund, which benefits the Afghan Women’s Writing Project.



JOSHUA KUCERA

“Rogun Is A Source Of Endless Light” cheers a roadside sign flanking an image of President Emomali Rahmon. “Rogun Is the Source of National Pride for All Children of Tajikistan,” says the other.

# TAJIKISTAN'S DREAM

Poor, landlocked, and bedeviled by its neighbors, Tajikistan is staking its future on the one resource it has in abundance.

BY JOSHUA KUCERA

By JOSHUA KUCERA

THE SMALL TOWN OF ROGUN RESEMBLES many other remote settlements in the former Soviet Union. Giant factories gone to rust and empty concrete apartment blocks, once brightly painted, now crumbling, achieve a sort of grandeur set against spectacular natural surroundings—the snowcapped peaks of the Alay Mountains and, about 1,500 feet down a steep bluff next to town, the rushing Vakhsh River. Yet, as a reminder of the past, and perhaps a portent of things to come, the occasional cement truck still chugs down the steep road

into town and roadside signs still exhort the citizenry, though they no longer quote Lenin or Marx: “Rogun Is the Source of National Pride for All Children of Tajikistan.” “The Establishment of the Rogun Hydroelectric Plant Is the Bright Future for Tajikistan.” “Water Is the Source of Life.”

There is a special sense in which that last slogan is truer for Tajikistan than for most other countries. Geography—and the Stalin-era officials who drew the borders of this erstwhile Soviet republic—dealt Tajikistan an unlucky hand.



JOSHUA KUCERA

The main street in Rogun, a modest town that hopes to be home to the world’s tallest dam, a relatively narrow clay and stone “embankment” dam more than 1,000 feet high.

Ninety-three percent of its surface is mountainous, which means there is very little arable land. As part of the demarcation process in the 1920s, Moscow denied Tajikistan the once glorious Silk Road cities of Bukhara and Samarqand that Tajiks consider the jewels of their culture, instead putting them in Uzbekistan. The country is profoundly isolated, with borders either remote and inaccessible or shared with difficult neighbors. One indication of the vexed state of Tajikistan's surroundings is the fact that, during the civil war of the 1990s, Tajikistani refugees fled *to* Afghanistan.

## The conflict between the two nations is linked to a global increase in tensions over fresh water.

What Tajikistan does have in abundance is water. Its mountains hold some of the world's largest glaciers, and the hydropower potential of the country, about the size of Iowa, ranks among the largest in the world. So President Emomali Rahmon has staked the future of his country on building the world's tallest dam, here in Rogun. Electricity from the hydropower plant would end

the country's chronic power shortages, while the surplus would create a lucrative export to power-hungry Pakistan, India, and China. President Rahmon has repeatedly said that the dam is of "life or death importance" to Tajikistan.

But Tajikistan is not the only country with an interest in that precious liquid. Downstream, water from Tajikistan's mountains flows into Uzbekistan's vast cotton fields, and the Vakhsh is a significant tributary of the important Amu Darya River. Uzbekistan's president, Islam Karimov, fears that the dam could interfere with that lucrative cash crop, Uzbekistan's top export, and has threatened war to prevent it from being built.

The conflict between the two nations is linked to a global increase in tensions over fresh water. In the Middle East, for example, Turkey's ambitious hydroelectric and irrigation plans have stirred fears among downstream countries in the Tigris-Euphrates basin, and in Egypt there is talk of war over an Ethiopian dam that is rising on a major tributary of the Nile. A retired Egyptian general told *The Washington Post* that his counterparts on active duty may decide that "it is better to die in battle than to die in thirst." A 2012 U.S. intelligence report minimized the possibility of "a water-related state-on-state conflict" anywhere in the world



CORBIS

for the following decade, but warned that “as water shortages become more acute beyond the next 10 years, water in shared basins will increasingly be used as leverage; the use of water as a weapon or to further terrorist objectives also will become more likely beyond 10 years.”

**T**HAT FUTURE COULD COME SOONER in Central Asia. Two decades after the demise of the Soviet Union, the region’s five now-independent states have become increasingly isolated from, if not hostile to, one another. Borders have hardened as corrupt governments,

focused primarily on extracting as much wealth as they can from their own land and citizens, see no need to cooperate with their neighbors. As the outside world has become more involved in the region, each country has come to see its neighbors as competition for aid, investment, and geopolitical clout. And no two countries are more sharply at odds than Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

“It all started in the 1920s,” said one prominent Tajikistani intellectual when I asked about Rogun. Like many conflicts in the lands of the former Soviet Union, the one between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was both created by the Soviets and kept in check by them. Until the 20th century, notions of “Tajik” and “Uzbek” identity didn’t have much meaning. For at least a millennium of Central Asian history, people speaking Tajik and other Persian languages co-existed peacefully with those speaking Turkic languages such as Uzbek. When Russian Orientalist scholars arrived in the region in the late 19th century after Central Asia’s conquest by the tsarist empire, they were confounded by the fact that identity in Central Asia did not conform to their expectations of nationality or ethnicity. “The settled population of Central Asia think of themselves primarily as Muslims, and

## The Uzbeks “do not really know what they are,” lamented a Russian scholar of the early 20th century.

think of themselves as only secondarily living in a particular town or district; to them the idea of belonging to a particular people is of no significance,” wrote Vasiliy Bartold, an early Russian scholar of Central Asia.

The Uzbeks “do not really know what they are,” lamented another Russian scholar, Ivan Zarubin, writing in the early 1900s. “They call themselves Turks. But their Turkmen and Kyrgyz neighbors call them ‘Sart,’ which word they also use for Tajiks.” (“Sart” was a plastic term, used in many different ways by people in this part of Central Asia.) Bilingualism was widespread. In the region’s austere, monophonic traditional music, *shashmaqam*, “singers switch almost unconsciously from one language to the other, and it is not uncommon to find Uzbek and Tajik couplets mixed together in the same song,” wrote scholar Theodore Levin in his study of Central Asian music, *Hundred Thousand Fools of God* (1999).

**Tajikistan is the most remittance-dependent country in the world, deriving nearly half of its gross domestic product from its citizens abroad.**

When the Soviet Union was formed, fitting the square peg of Central Asians' identities into the round hole of "peoples" living in separate soviet socialist republics became state policy. The new boundaries placed large groups of Uzbeks in northern Tajikistan, and Tajik-speaking people in Uzbekistan. The Soviets proceeded to codify the differences between Uzbeks and Tajiks and standardize the two languages, with Uzbek partly cleansed of its Persian elements and Tajik purged of its Turkic features. Shashmaqam was officially separated into two distinct genres. Interethnic tensions grew—Tajiks bitterly complained about the loss and "Turkification" of Bukhara and Samarqand—but the Soviets kept the lid on. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 removed the last constraints.

**T**HE TWO NEW NATIONS BEGAN THEIR lives amicably enough. During Tajikistan's civil war, Uzbekistan took the side of the eventual winners—members of the ex-Communist nomenklatura and the regional clans that supported them. President Karimov was instrumental in installing Rahmon as Tajikistan's president in 1994. Indeed, at one time Rahmon referred to Karimov as "our father." But by 1997, when the civil war ended, leaving more than 50,000 dead, the two had already begun to fall out. Before long, each was accusing the other of backing rebel groups bent on overthrowing his regime.

Today, both countries stagnate under the oppressive rule of dictatorships. Uzbekistan has become a global pariah because it uses forced labor, including the toil of children, to work its cotton fields, whose output benefits a small group of politically connected businessmen. Both countries rely heavily on remittances from citizens living in Russia, where Central Asian construction workers, cleaners, and other menial laborers play a role comparable to that often taken by Mexican and Central American migrant workers in the United States. With more than a million migrants in Russia, Tajikistan has seen entire villages emptied of their working-age men. It is the most remittance-dependent country in the world,



THOMAS GRABKA / IAIF

**Uzbekistan is one of the world's top cotton exporters, but its farms depend on huge quantities of water from Tajikistan and, despite international condemnation, forced labor in the fields by Uzbek adults and children.**

deriving nearly half of its gross domestic product from its citizens abroad.

One huge relative advantage Uzbekistan holds over its neighbor is location. It is at the center of what was once Soviet Central Asia, with the largest population (about 30 million, almost as much as the other four “stans” combined) and the greatest concentration of industry and transportation links. Tajikistan, with just seven million people, is stuck in an especially isolated corner of this isolated region. It has boundaries with China and Kyrgyzstan, but they are far from the country's population centers and difficult to reach. The border with

Afghanistan only opens the door to more trouble. Tajikistan's only real access to the outside has been via Uzbekistan—nearly all of the railways, pipelines, and roads that reach the outside world pass through Karimov's country.

As relations have worsened, Uzbekistan has carried out what Tajikistan calls a “blockade.” It now requires Tajikistan's citizens traveling to Uzbekistan to obtain a visa, and it has mined the border since 2000. Seventy-six people have been killed as a result. The Uzbekistanis have blocked shipments of natural gas to Tajikistan, repeatedly stopped rail shipments—in one case appearing to

fabricate a terrorist attack on a key rail line—and increased cargo tariffs. On several occasions, border guards have exchanged shots across the frontier.

The divide between the countries has been widened by history—or, more precisely, by newly invented histories designed to make it seem that these are ancient states with great traditions rather than artificial creations of 20th-century Russians. For Uzbekistan, that has meant emphasizing the Turkic character of Central Asia and glorifying Tamerlane (or Amir Timur, as he is known in Uzbekistan), the 14th-century conqueror who established Turkic rule that reached into the Middle East from his capital in Samarqand. In Tajikistan, meanwhile, the need to fashion a usable past has led to the creation of a historical narrative centered on Ismail Somoni, the founder of the Persian Samanid dynasty, which ruled during the eighth and ninth centuries from Bukhara. Somoni's name now graces Tajikistan's tallest mountain, the former Mount Communism; the Tajikistanis' currency bears his name as well. In each of these national tales, the myth-spinning country avers that its rival's territory was once included in its own.

Myths aside, the two countries' disputes have become personal. In 2009,

Rahmon bragged to Tajikistani journalists (in an event that was supposed to be off the record) that he had been in two fistfights with Karimov. (Once, the two were separated by Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan Nazarbayev, the other time by Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma.) Rahmon said that he had had the last word, telling Karimov, "Anyway, Samarqand and Bukhara will be ours again one day!" and vowing, "We will bring Uzbekistan to its knees." The way he would do that, he said, was with the Rogun dam.

## **In 2009, Rahmon bragged to Tajikistani journalists that he had been in two fistfights with Karimov.**

Tajikistan already has several hydro-power plants, including one at the world's highest dam, Nurek, at 300 meters, or just under 1,000 feet. Rogun, which could rise 35 meters higher, was designed by the Soviets, who began construction in 1976 but had not gotten very far by 1991. It was meant to be part of an integrated Central Asian power system in which water would be released from the dams in summer, when Uzbekistan needed it

for its cotton crop, while in winter Uzbekistan would supply its neighbor with electricity generated in plants burning its plentiful natural gas. (The Soviet system also included Kyrgyzstan, another upstream country, as well as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan downstream, and today there are similar though much less heated disputes among these countries.)

After 1991, this integrated system started falling apart. Uzbekistan reduced winter power supplies, and Tajikistan took more electricity than it was allotted during the summer, exercising an “unfortunate . . . lack of grid discipline,” the World Bank dryly noted in a 2012 report. Last winter, amid bitter cold, rural Tajikistanis had electricity for an average of only five to seven hours a day. In some past years, the outages have been far worse.

**A**S A WAY OUT OF TAJIKISTAN'S ENERGY woes and general economic dependence, Rahmon dusted off the old Soviet plans for Rogun. The dam would generate 3,600 megawatts of electricity, about as much as three nuclear power plants, almost doubling Tajikistan's capacity. That would easily meet the country's needs and provide a surplus for export.

But Tajikistan has been vexed by one singularly difficult question: Where will the money come from? Because it will cost at least \$2 billion (and up to \$6 billion) to complete the dam, foreign investment will be essential. A deal with a Russian company collapsed in 2007 after the firm reportedly proposed constructing a dam only 285 meters high, rather than the full 335 meters—not tall enough to beat the world record.

In 2009, Rahmon tried another tack. In what became known as the People's IPO, the government “offered” citizens the opportunity to buy shares in the dam, setting a goal of about \$680 per family, even though per capita income is about \$25 a month. Most in Tajikistan saw the effort as a throwback Soviet-style campaign to rally public support. But Rahmon did not rely only on PR. “Government officials at all levels and in all regions extorted money from citizens and businesses,” the U.S. State Department said in its 2010 Human Rights Report on the country. “Teachers, doctors, and government employees were instructed to buy shares or their employers would fire them. University students were forced to show their professors share certificates before being allowed to sit for exams. Businesses were told they would be assessed fines for

failing to purchase shares.” In the end, the government collected less than \$200 million. But work on the dam got started, though at a very slow pace, according to local residents.

## **It was folly of the Soviets to establish such a thirsty crop as cotton in this part of the world.**

In 2011, the World Bank agreed to underwrite two technical assessments of the Rogun proposal. Although the bank has made it clear that it does not intend to fund the dam, a favorable assessment could encourage potential investors, including the Asian Development Bank, Russia, China, and Iran. With foreign funding, of course, would come geopolitical complications: Any backer trying to gain clout in Central Asia would have to weigh the consequences of alienating regional power Uzbekistan. The United States, which relies on the Central Asian countries for various forms of logistics cooperation for the war in Afghanistan, has tiptoed around the Rogun issue, though Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expressed doubts about the value of hydropower

projects when she visited Tajikistan’s capital, Dushanbe, in 2011.

The same U.S. intelligence report that warned last year of coming conflicts over water around the world also noted that “historically, water tensions have led to more water-sharing agreements than violent conflicts.” In theory, there is great potential for such agreements in Central Asia. The region has the highest per capita rate of water consumption in the world, and inefficient agriculture is the chief culprit. While about 75 percent of the fresh water consumed in the world is devoted to agriculture, in Central Asia that figure is over 90 percent.

It was folly of the Soviets to establish such a thirsty crop as cotton in this part of the world. By diverting Central Asian rivers to irrigate the fields, they caused the greatest ecological disaster of the Soviet era: the drying up of the Aral Sea. Poor management and dilapidated infrastructure have compounded the water problem many times over. The World Bank has pushed for various reforms, including water conservation measures in Uzbekistan and utility price increases in Tajikistan to reduce consumption of electricity, but neither country seems interested in changing its ways, preferring to use Rogun for high-stakes brinksmanship.

Rahmon's promotion of Rogun has been accompanied by a growing predilection for the grandiose and megalomaniacal. He seems to have begun emulating the cults of personality and Dubai-style architectural excesses of leaders in nearby countries, especially Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. But those countries all enjoy substantial oil and natural gas income. Nevertheless, Rahmon has in recent years gone on a building spree, erecting several ornate new structures in Dushanbe's formerly modest center, including the massive, Doric-columned Palace of Nations (which reportedly cost about \$300 million to build and now sits largely empty) and the world's tallest flagpole, which, topping out at 541 feet, is visible from almost the entire city.

For Rahmon, Rogun seems to have taken on a symbolic significance greater than its practical value. In Dushanbe, diplomats and officials of international nongovernmental organizations—who have a nearly unanimously poor view of the president and his capabilities—say he has seized on Rogun as a single solution to all of the country's problems. "Rogun has become a symbol of how he can break free of everything," said one longtime Dushanbe-based diplomat. "He thinks that he has found the pana-

cea for his reputation, his legacy." Others suggest that Rahmon, who began his career as a collective farm leader, still sees development in Soviet terms—the Rogun dam certainly has all the appearances of a classic Soviet-style, top-down megaproject.

There is also a simpler explanation: money. Rahmon's government is deeply corrupt, and anyone with money in Tajikistan can be traced through very few degrees of separation to the president. "Tajikistan's elite appears driven by one overwhelming motive: self-enrichment," the International Crisis Group concluded in a 2009 report. The Rogun dam would create the potential for massive amounts of graft. In fact, one obstacle to obtaining foreign financing is that the accounting of the state power company and other Tajik entities that would be involved is opaque, and the government has resisted efforts to get them to open their books.

**T**HE WORLD BANK ASSESSMENT IS scheduled to be released at the end of this year. It will not give the project blanket approval or disapproval but will evaluate three different variants of the proposed dam, two of which would fall short of Rahmon's 335-meter goal. It will be up to the Tajikistan government,

and whoever funds the project, to weigh those options. But early indications have been positive for Tajikistan. In February, the World Bank's regional director, Saroj Kumar Jha, said that the findings on dam safety, water management, and flood risk—all concerns that Uzbekistan has raised—were, so far, positive.

Karimov's invocation of water wars was likely hyperbole, but given the rising tensions and increasing frequency of border skirmishes, there is a risk of "low-level armed conflict" between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, according to a report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The United Nations is trying to conduct shuttle diplomacy between the two countries and has enlisted Kazakhstan to act as mediator.

It is impossible to predict how Uzbekistan will respond if the World Bank assessment is positive and a funder steps forward. It is a common belief in Dushanbe that Uzbekistan has plans, once the dam is almost complete, to launch air strikes against it or to carry out sabotage disguised as a terrorist act. And Uzbekistan retains the ability to cripple construction efforts with a blockade.

In theory, the dam could be beneficial to Uzbekistan. Tied in with the existing Nurek dam, it could allow the restoration of the kind of resource-sharing scheme

that prevailed in the Soviet era. Karimov has even voiced interest in the past in participating in a more modest version of the Rogun project. But given the mutual acrimony, and his belief—probably correct—that part of why Rahmon wants the dam is to exert control over Uzbekistan, Karimov is unlikely to see anything but harm in the facility's construction. "If there were a pro-Uzbekistan government in Tajikistan, no doubt Uzbekistan's attitude to Rogun would be different," said an activist in Dushanbe.

Tajikistan will hold presidential elections in November, and though the constitution would seem to prevent Rahmon from running for a fourth term, no one expects such a technicality to keep him from trying to hold on to power. A leader of the most popular opposition party, the Islamic Renaissance Party, was badly beaten outside his home in April. Police raided the home of another politician shortly after he announced the formation of a new party and charged him with embezzlement and polygamy. Opposition to Rahmon appears to be growing, and it is nearly universal among the educated elite.

Rahmon's government seems to be tightening its controls over society. On my most recent visit, I was unable to get official accreditation to work as a journalist

in Tajikistan, though I have done so easily on two previous occasions. Government officials declined to talk to me, and local journalists and experts spoke only on condition of anonymity, expressing fear that speaking to a foreign journalist could expose them to unwanted attention from the authorities, even when their comments about Rogun were positive.

Still, there is little dissent within Tajikistan on the subject of Rogun. People who generally oppose the government believe that building the dam is the best way for Tajikistan to free itself from Uzbekistan's stranglehold. Even those in communities that would be displaced by the project—where resistance was strong during the Soviet era—have come to see it as a national necessity. During the People's IPO, Muhiddin Kabiri, the leader of the Islamic Renaissance Party and Tajikistan's most principled opposition figure, said the party would buy shares.

“For Uzbekistan it's a political issue,

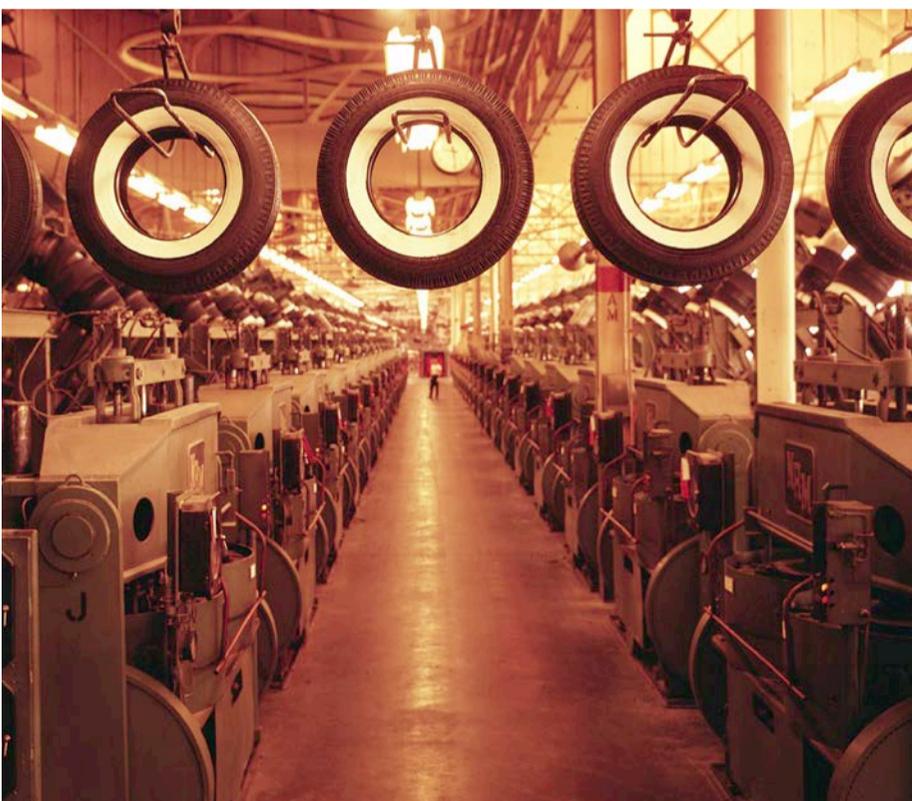
## Even people who generally oppose the government believe that building the dam is the best way for Tajikistan to free itself from Uzbekistan's stranglehold.

but for Tajikistan it's an issue of survival,” said the Dushanbe activist. In a similar vein, a prominent local analyst told me, “It's a question of resisting control. The Uzbekistan elite and intelligentsia still consider Tajikistan part of ‘greater Uzbekistan.’ This is a part of their official ideology.” He added, “Now, Tajikistan doesn't have any levers to withstand this pressure. This would be a lever.” ■

**JOSHUA KUCERA** is a freelance journalist in Washington, D.C., who frequently writes about Central Asia. This essay was made possible by a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

# WHERE HAVE ALL THE JOBS GONE?

**A** chronically bleak job market is breeding unease in a country where prolonged economic gloom is rare. Our authors find glimmers of light in history and the fresh possibilities exposed by today's trials.



**DANIEL AKST**

on the lessons of the 1960s  
automation crisis

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**SARAH CARR**

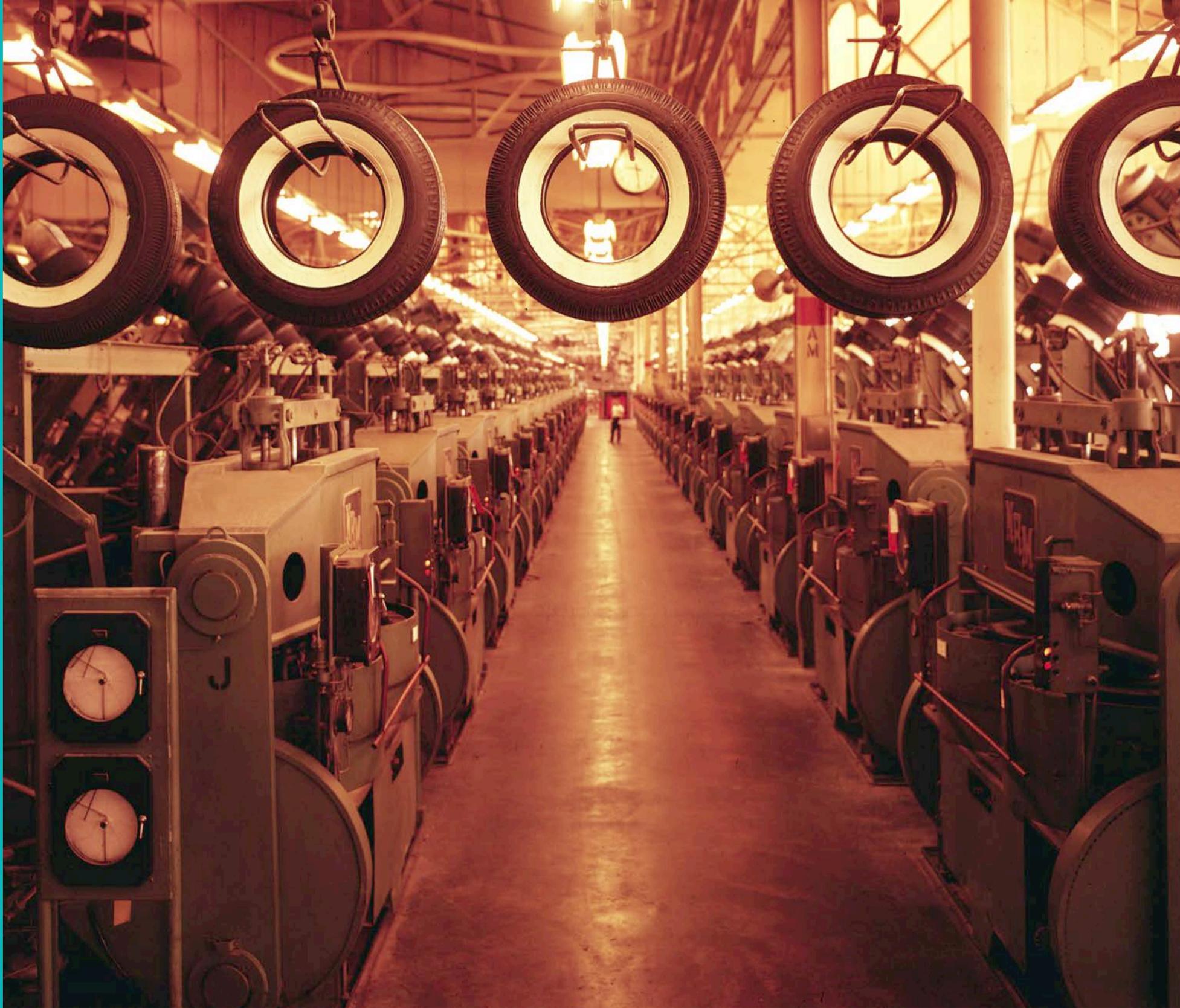
on school reform and work

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**SCOTT WINSHIP**

on what's really happening  
to jobs and wages

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CHARLES ROTKIN / CORBIS

**New tires travel like so many hangman's nooses past a bank of recently installed automated curing presses at a tire factory in 1960.**

# **AUTOMATION ANXIETY**

**The automation crisis of the 1960s created a surge of alarm over technology's job-killing effects. There is a lot we can learn from it.**

BY **DANIEL AKST**

By DANIEL AKST

IN *ULYSSES* (1922), IT'S BEEN SAID, James Joyce packed all of life into a single Dublin day. So it shouldn't be surprising that he found room in the novel for Leopold Bloom to tackle the problem of technological disruption:

A pointsman's back straightened itself upright suddenly against a tramway standard by Mr Bloom's window. Couldn't they invent something automatic so that the wheel itself much handier? Well but that fellow would lose his job then? Well but then another fellow would get a job making the new invention?

Notice Bloom's insights: first, that technology could obviate arduous manual labor; second, that this would cost somebody a job; and third, that it would also create a job, *but for a different person altogether*.

Surprisingly few people have grasped this process as well as Joyce did. Aristotle pointed out that if the looms wove and the lyres played themselves, we'd need fewer people to do these things. The Luddites, active in 19th-century England, didn't take the mechanization of textile making lying down. And in

1930, no less an economic sage than John Maynard Keynes fretted about temporary "technological unemployment," which he feared would grow faster than the number of jobs created by new technologies.

More than a century has passed since that now-celebrated day in 1904 when Joyce's creation crisscrossed Dublin, and for most of that time technology and jobs have galloped ahead together. Just as Bloom observed, technological advances have not reduced overall employment, though they have certainly cost many people their jobs. But now, with the advent of machines that are infinitely more intelligent and powerful than most people could have imagined a century ago, has the day finally come when technology will leave millions of us permanently displaced?

Judging by the popular press, the answer is yes, and there is plenty of alarming data leading some people to support that view. Between January 1990 and January 2010, the United States shed 6.3 million manufacturing jobs, a staggering decrease of 36 percent. Since then, it has regained only about 500,000. Four years after the official end of the Great Recession, unemployment is still running

at a recession-like rate of around 7.5 percent, and millions of Americans have given up even looking for work.

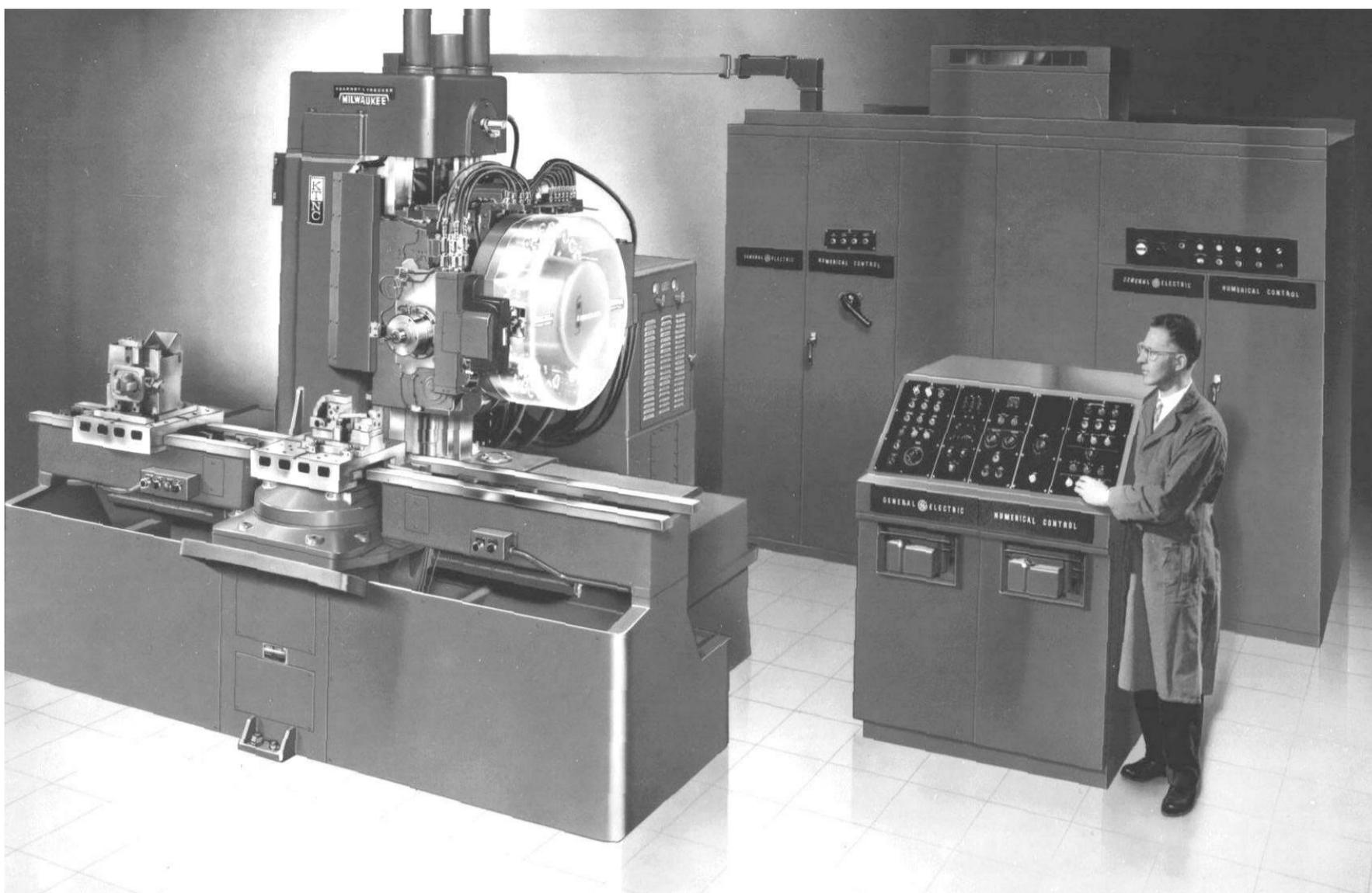
Economists, struggling to disentangle the effects of technology, trade, and other forces, don't have a certain answer to the question of whether this time is different. David Autor, an MIT economist who is one of the leading researchers in the field, argues that trade (imports from China and elsewhere) has increased unemployment, while technology has reshaped the job market into something like an hourglass form, with more jobs in fields such as finance and food service and fewer in between.

**H**ISTORY CAN SHED SOME LIGHT ON our concerns. It was in the middle of the last century that the United States last seemed to encounter job-destroying technologies on today's scale. (The economic woes of the 1970s and '80s were mostly blamed—at least in the popular mind—on Japanese imports.) Automation was a hot topic in the media and among social scientists, pundits, and policymakers. It was a time of unsettlingly rapid technological change, much like our own. Productivity was increasing rapidly, and technical discoveries—think of television and transistors—were being commercialized

at an ever more rapid rate. Before World War I, it had taken an average of 30 years for a technological innovation to yield a commercial product. During the early 1960s, it was taking only nine. Yet unemployment in the Kennedy and early Johnson years remained stubbornly high, reaching seven percent at one point. Automation, seen loitering in the vicinity of the industrial crime, appeared a likely culprit.

*Life* magazine held up an example in 1963, showing a picture of a device called the Milwaukee-Matic, an innovative industrial machining tool, surrounded by the 18 workers it could replace. “There are 180 Milwaukee-Matics in operation in the U.S., and a union official in a plant in which it was installed reported: ‘There is now no need for 40 percent of our toolmakers, 50 percent of our machine operators. Without a shorter work week, 60 percent of our members will be out of a job.’”

**Automation, seen loitering in the vicinity of the industrial crime, appeared a likely culprit for unemployment.**



COURTESY MAG CINCINNATI

**The Milwaukee-Matic industrial machining tool was not computerized, but the ability to have an operator feed it instructions on long strips of punched paper tape was one of its great innovations.**

A year after the Milwaukee-Matic's star turn, Lyndon B. Johnson took time from his many troubles—Vietnam, urban unrest—to create the blue-ribbon National Commission on Technology, Automation, and Economic Progress. *The New York Times* took the enterprise seriously enough to name all the commission members in its pages. *The Public Interest*, which would become one of the most influential intellectual journals of the postwar era, took up the automation crisis in its debut issue the next year. In one of the essays, the prominent economist Robert Heilbroner

argued that rapid technological change had supercharged productivity in agriculture and manufacturing, and now threatened “a whole new group of skills—the sorting, filing, checking, calculating, remembering, comparing, okaying skills—that are the special preserve of the office worker.”

Ultimately, Heilbroner warned, “as machines continue to invade society, duplicating greater and greater numbers of social tasks, it is human labor itself—at least, as we now think of ‘labor’—that is gradually rendered redundant.” Heilbroner was not the biggest

pessimist of the day. Economist Ben B. Seligman's dark view of the whole business is captured by the title of his book *Most Notorious Victory: Man in an Age of Automation* (1966) and the volume's ominous chapter headings, including "A Babel of Calculators," "Work Without Men," and "The Trauma We Await."

Reading through the literature of the period, one is struck—and humbled—by how wrong so many smart people could be. Yet some got the story largely right. Automation did not upend the fundamental logic of the economy. But it did disproportionate harm to less-skilled workers. And some of its most important effects were felt not in the economic realm but in the arena of social change.

**It's striking—and humbling—how wrong so many smart people could be.**

Many of those who wrote about the automation crisis did so in a very different light than the one in which we see technological change today. With the tailwind of the enormous achievements involved in winning World War II and two subsequent decades of relatively constant prosperity behind them, they

were full of confidence in their ability to manage the future. They tended to view the challenge of automation as a problem of *abundance*—machines were finally yielding the long-promised benefits that would allow human beings to slough off lives of endless and usually unrewarding labor without sacrificing the good things in life. As *Life* noted, even as manufacturers were reducing payrolls, factory output was growing at a brisk pace. Yes, factory workers and others were hurt in the process, but the midcentury seers mostly looked upon that as a problem to be managed as the nation traveled toward the bright light ahead.

There is a good deal to be said for recalling that point of view at a time when we see so many things through a glass darkly. But doing so also has its hazards. For instance, it led the savants of automation to err in some of their thinking about the future of jobs. To begin with, they misunderstood the nature of abundance itself. Although the principle that human wants are insatiable is enshrined in every introductory economics course, it was somehow forgotten by intellectuals who themselves probably weren't very materialistic, and who might only have been dimly aware of the great slouching beasts of retailing—the new

shopping malls—going up on the edge of town. Heilbroner, writing in *The New York Review of Books*, worried that even if “we *can* employ most of the population as psychiatrists, artists, or whatever . . . there is still an upper limit on employment due, very simply, to the prospect of a ceiling on the *total* demand that can be generated for marketable goods and services.”

Sociologist David Riesman, one of the big thinkers who roamed the cultural landscape in those days (he was the lead author of the surprise 1950 bestseller *The Lonely Crowd*), innocently suggested

that the bourgeoisie had already lost “the zest for possessions,” surely one of the worst predictions ever made.

Related to this misunderstanding about consumerism was the idea that the time was nigh when people would

**Sociologist David Riesman innocently suggested that the bourgeoisie had already lost “the zest for possessions.”**



BERNARD GOTFRYD / GETTY IMAGES

Automation helped provoke strikes in a number of industries during the 1960s. A 114-day printers’ strike against New York City’s newspapers in 1962–63, motivated partly by resistance to new computerized typesetting systems, hastened the death of four of the city’s seven newspapers. One of them was the *Daily Mirror*, whose last edition sits on a chair in the paper’s offices in October 1963, shortly after it ceased publication.

hardly have to work at all. Harried families in today's suburbs will be astonished to learn that some critics even worried about what we would do with all that leisure time.

**Leisure, warned a government report, “may well become the most perplexing problem of the future.”**

These ideas weren't as far fetched as they sound. In the first half of the 20th century, the number of hours worked per week had shrunk by a quarter for the average worker, and in 1967 the futurist Herman Kahn declared that this trend would continue, predicting a four-day work week—and 13 weeks of vacation.

There was a serious debate among many of the era's leading thinkers about whether all this leisure would be a good thing. Herbert Marcuse, the philosopher who served as an intellectual godfather to the New Left, was optimistic. He saw automation and the attendant increase in leisure as “the first prerequisite for freedom” from the deadening cycle of getting and spending which cost the

individual “his time, his consciousness, his dreams.” But Riesman and the influential psychologist Erich Fromm were among those who worried that people would be unfulfilled without work, or that work itself would be unfulfilling in an automated society, with equally unfulfilling leisure the result. As late as 1974, when the U.S. Interior Department drafted the Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan, people still thought they could see the leisure society just around the bend. And it was a good thing they could see it coming, too. As the Interior Department intoned, “Leisure, thought by many to be the epitome of paradise, may well become the most perplexing problem of the future.”

Advocates on both sides of the automation debate thus fell into the classic extrapolation trap, assuming that the trends they saw in front of them would continue indefinitely. But as the old saying goes, even a train stops. You don't hear too many of those lucky enough to hold a job today complaining about having too much leisure on their hands.

The same unwarranted extrapolation was at work in thinking about household incomes. Many thoughtful people of the day, with no inkling of what we'd someday lay out for health care, higher education, and pets,

just couldn't imagine that Americans would find a way to spend all the money the technology revolution would enable them to make.

In his review of a prescient work called *The Shape of Automation* (1966), by Herbert Simon, a manifold genius who would go on to win the Nobel Prize in Economics, Heilbroner scoffed at Simon's notion that the average family income would reach \$28,000 (in 1966 dollars) after the turn of the century: "He has no doubt that these families will have plenty of use for their entire income. . . . But why stop there? On his assumptions of a three percent annual growth rate, average family incomes will be \$56,000 by the year 2025; \$112,000 by 2045; and \$224,000 a century from today. Is it beyond human nature to think that at this point (or a great deal sooner), a ceiling will have been imposed on demand—if not by edict, then tacitly? To my mind, it is hard not to picture such a ceiling unless the economy is to become a collective vomitorium."

Simon responded dryly that he had "great respect for the ability of human beings—given a little advance warning—to think up reasonable ways" of spending that kind of money, and to do so "without vomiting." He was right about that, of course, even though he

was wrong about the particular numbers. Nobody at the time foresaw the coming stagnation of middle-class incomes. His estimate of the average family income in 2006 translates into more than \$200,000 in current dollars.

SOME MIDCENTURY COMMENTATORS on automation did hit close to the mark on major questions. For example, in another blunt response to Heilbroner's criticism, Simon wrote, "The world's problems in this generation and the next are problems of scarcity, not of intolerable abundance. The bogeyman of automation consumes worrying capacity that should be saved for real problems—like population, poverty, the Bomb, and our own neuroses."

In 1966, the Commission on Technology, Automation, and Economic Progress issued a sensible report rejecting the argument that technology was to blame for a great deal of unemployment, although, with the wisdom of Leopold Bloom, it recognized technological change as "a major factor in the displacement and temporary unemployment of particular workers."

And who were those workers? The answer will be all too familiar: "Unemployment has been concentrated among those with little education or skill, while

employment has been rising most rapidly in those occupations generally considered to be the most skilled and to require the most education. This conjunction raises the question whether technological progress may induce a demand for very skilled and highly educated people in numbers our society cannot yet provide, while at the same time leaving stranded many of the unskilled and poorly educated with no future opportunities for employment.”

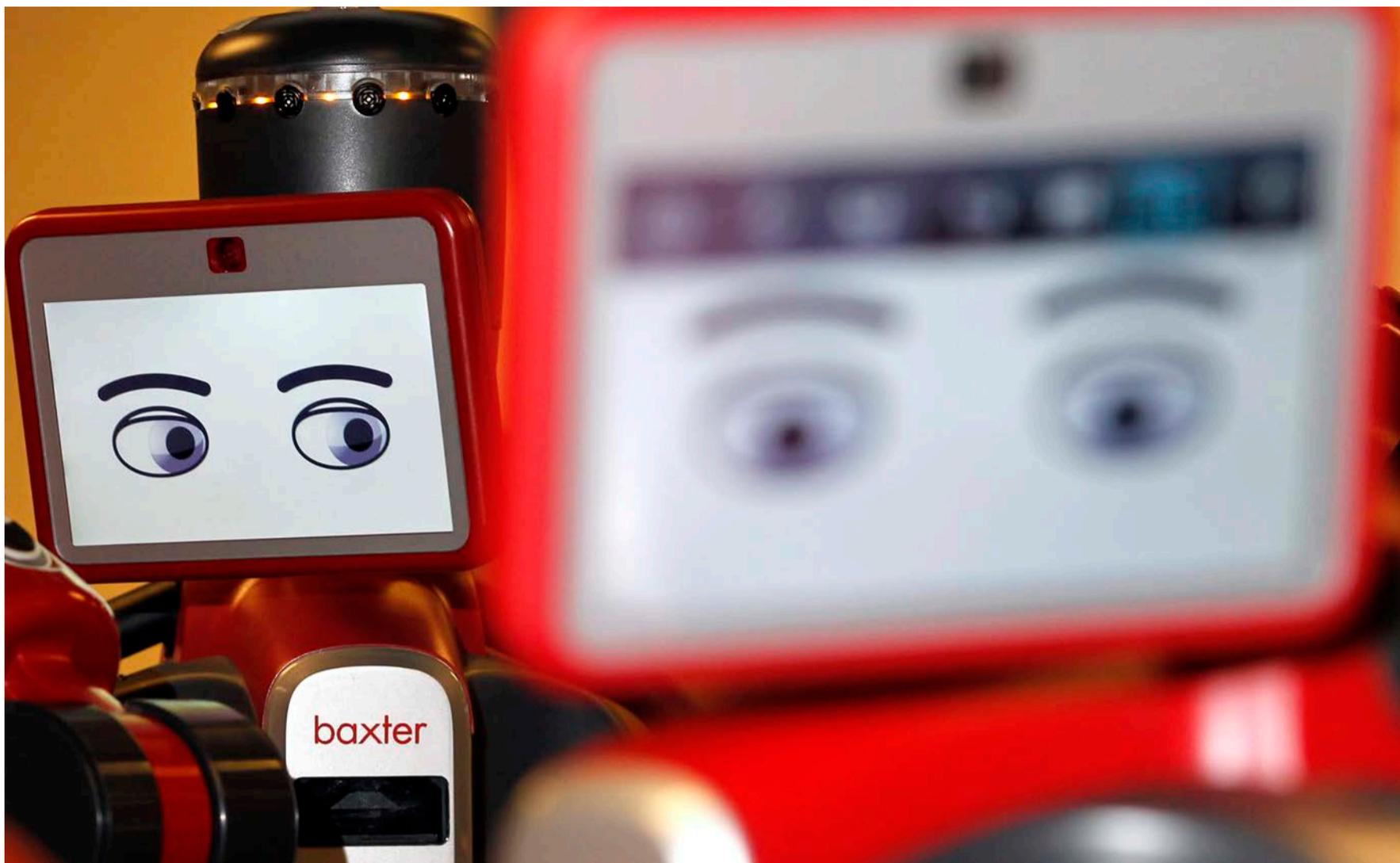
Nobel Prize–winning physicist George P. Thomson took up the issue with an odd mix of callousness and concern in *The Foreseeable Future* (1955): “What is to happen to the really definitely stupid man,” he wondered, “or even the man of barely average intelligence?” Although Thomson didn’t count on rising IQs (a worldwide phenomenon known as the Flynn effect), he did seem to foresee the growing need for home care. “There are plenty of jobs—tending the aged is one—where kindness and patience are worth more than brains. A rich state could well subsidize such work.”

Such worries on behalf of blue-collar workers were far from misplaced. Since midcentury, working-class men in particular have been hammered by a changing economy. The economists Michael Greenstone and Adam Looney found

that from 1969 to 2009, the median earnings of men ages 25 to 64 dropped by 28 percent after inflation. For those without a high school diploma, the drop was 66 percent. This is to say nothing of lost pensions and health insurance.

## The proportion of men who were not in the formal labor force tripled from 1960 to 2009.

Why such big declines? The Great Recession was particularly unkind to men in general, costing twice as many of them their jobs, compared with women. But the job losses date back further, and are attributable to some combination of trade and technology. The flood of women and immigrants entering the work force and competing for jobs also played a role. The big income losses reflect the fact that, when manufacturing jobs vanished, the men who had held them often fell out of the work force for good. In fact, the proportion of men who were not in the formal labor force tripled from 1960 to 2009, to a remarkable 18 percent. (Some of that change, admittedly, was the result of a rise in the number of early retirements and other benign factors.)



JESSICA RINALDI / THE WASHINGTON POST / GETTY IMAGES

Meet the Baxter, an industrial robot that boasts “behavior-based ‘common sense,’ capable of sensing and adapting to its task and its environment,” according to its manufacturer, Boston-based Rethink Robotics.

LBJ’s commission on automation owed at least some of its insight to the presence among its members of the remarkable sociologist Daniel Bell, another of the era’s big thinkers (who would give us a particularly far-sighted work, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, in 1973). Bell wrote about the automation debate with characteristic perception, recognizing how much more subtle—yet perhaps equally far reaching—the impact would be.

“Americans, with their tendency to exaggerate new innovations, have conjured up wild fears about changes that automation may bring,” he wrote in *Work*

*and Its Discontents: The Cult of Efficiency in America* (1956). Citing predictions of “a dismal world of unattended factories turning out mountains of goods which a jobless population will be unable to buy,” he declared flatly, “Such projections are silly.”

Bell acknowledged that there would be disruptions. And he was accurate about their nature, writing that “many workers, particularly older ones, may find it difficult ever again to find suitable jobs. It is also likely that small geographical pockets of the United States may find themselves becoming ‘depressed areas’ as old industries fade or are moved away.”

Okay, maybe not “small,” but he was on the right track, and this before the term “Rust Belt” was in common use.

Bell also saw something that all too often eludes futurists, which is that technology would “have enormous social effects.” It would, he said, change the composition of the labor force, “creating a new salariat instead of a proletariat, as automated processes reduce[d] the number of industrial workers required.” He accurately foresaw a world in which “muscular fatigue [would be] replaced by mental tension, the interminable watching, the endless concentration” of modern work, even though the watching now involves a smartphone or computer screen more often than a set of dials on some piece of industrial equipment. Bell also foresaw a different way of judging a worker’s worth, suggesting that “there may arise a new work morality” in which the value of employees would derive from their success at “planning and organizing and the continuously smooth

**Instead of automating repetitive tasks, technology today is climbing the cognitive ladder.**

functioning of the operations. Here the team, not the individual worker, will assume a new importance.”

It took a woman, however, to recognize that the diminishing role of brawn had put us on the path toward a world in which gender roles would converge. In a collection of essays Bell edited called *Toward the Year 2000: Work in Progress* (1967), anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote that traditional gender roles would break down in developed nations, that a cultural and religious backlash might develop, and that men might feel threatened when the traditional ways in which they defined masculinity became degenerated. (Mead wasn’t right about everything; she also warned of an increase in “overt hostile homosexuality” as one sign of “weakening in the sense of sure sex identity in men.”)

**I**NSTEAD OF AUTOMATING REPETITIVE tasks, technology today is climbing the cognitive ladder, using artificial intelligence and brute processing power to automate (however imperfectly) the functions of travel agents, secretaries, tax preparers, even teachers—while threatening the jobs of some lawyers, university professors, and other professionals who once thought their sheepskins were a bulwark against this sort of thing.

Maybe this time, things really are different. In *The McKinsey Quarterly* in 2011, for example, the economist and latter-day big thinker W. Brian Arthur, a former Stanford professor, talked about a “second economy” of digitized business processes running “vast, silent, connected, unseen, and autonomous” alongside the physical economy: “The second economy will certainly be the engine of growth and the provider of prosperity for the rest of this century and beyond, but it may not provide jobs, so there may be prosperity without full access for many. This suggests to me that the main challenge of the economy is shifting from *producing* prosperity to *distributing* prosperity.”

Arthur’s argument echoes a collection of midcentury seers, the grandly named Ad Hoc Committee on the Triple Revolution, whose members included Heilbroner, scientist Linus Pauling, and social scientist Gunnar Myrdal. “The traditional link between jobs and incomes is being broken,” the committee wrote in its manifesto. “The economy of abundance can sustain all citizens in comfort and economic security whether or not they engage in what is commonly reckoned as work,” the committee continued, arguing for “an unqualified commitment to provide every individual and

every family with an adequate income as a matter of right.”

Echoing the Triple Revolution manifesto, Arthur argued that “the second economy will produce wealth no matter what we do,” and that the challenge had become “distributing that wealth.” For centuries, he noted, “wealth has traditionally been apportioned in the West through jobs, and jobs have always been forthcoming. When farm jobs disappeared, we still had manufacturing jobs, and when these disappeared we migrated to service jobs. With this digital transformation, this last repository of jobs is shrinking—fewer of us in the future may have white-collar business process jobs—and we face a problem.”

Perhaps the biggest lesson we can learn from the midcentury thinkers who worried about automation is that while there is cause for concern, there is no other way but forward. Like trade, automation makes us better off collectively by making some of us worse off. So the focus of our concern should be on those injured by the robots, even if the wounds are “only” economic.

The issue, in other words, isn’t technological but distributional—which is to say political. Automation presents some of us with a kind of windfall.

It would be not just churlish but shortsighted if we didn't share this windfall with those who haven't been so lucky. This doesn't mean we must embrace the utopianism of the Triple Revolution manifesto or return to the despised system of open-ended welfare abolished during the Clinton years. But inevitably, if only to maintain social peace, it will mean a movement toward some of the universal programs—medical coverage, long-term care insurance, low-cost access to higher education—that have helped other advanced countries shelter their work forces from economic

shocks better than the United States has, and control costs while they're at it.

The robots will surely keep coming, and keep doing more and more of the work we long have done. But one thing they won't be able to do—at least not anytime soon—is tell us what we owe each other. Surely we can figure that out for ourselves. ■

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LEE CELANO / REUTERS / CORBIS

A seventh grader at Samuel J. Green Charter School in New Orleans looks on in class. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the city's school system was drastically restructured, with a new emphasis on charter schools geared toward college preparation.

# GETTING REAL ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL

Millions of young people will never attend four-year colleges. America must do more to equip them to secure good jobs and live fulfilling lives.

BY SARAH CARR

THE WILSON QUARTERLY SUMMER 2013

By SARAH CARR

**A**T NEW ORLEANS CHARTER SCHOOLS, even students in the primary grades sometimes start the day with rousing chants professing their commitment to college. “This is the way, hey!/ We start the day, hey!/ We get the knowledge, hey!/To go to college!” kids shout. During several years writing about the remaking of the school system since Hurricane Katrina, I have heard high school teachers remind students to wash their hands before leaving the restroom because otherwise they might get sick, which might cause them to miss class, which would leave them less prepared for college. College flags and banners coat the walls and ceilings of schools across the city. College talk infuses the lessons of even the youngest learners. College trips expose older kids to campuses around the country.

While particularly strong in New Orleans, the “college-for-all” movement has swept the nation over the past decade, with education reformers in different cities embracing the notion that sending more low-income students to and through college should be America’s primary antipoverty strategy. In his first address to a joint session of Congress, President Barack Obama echoed that

theme when he asked every American to pledge to attend at least one year of college. “We will provide the support necessary for you to complete college and meet a new goal: By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.”

At schools that have embraced the college-for-all aspiration, career and technical education is seen as being as outdated as chalkboards and cursive handwriting. Instead, the (mostly poor and mostly minority) students are endlessly drilled and prepped in the core humanities and sciences—lessons their (mostly middle- or upper-income and mostly white) teachers hope will enable the teenagers to rack up high scores on the ACT, SAT, and Advanced Placement exams and go on to attend the four-year college of their dreams (although it’s not always clear whose dreams we’re talking about). On the surface, the tension between college-for-all and career and technical education pits egalitarianism against pragmatism. What could be more egalitarian, after all, than sending the nation’s most disadvantaged secondary students off to the vaunted halls of institutions once reserved for the most privileged? Only eight percent of low-income children



RICHARD DREW / AP / CORBIS

There are more decently paid jobs for people without bachelor's degrees than headlines often suggest. These 2011 graduates of New York City's Police Academy, which requires an associate's degree or its equivalent for admission, earned base salaries of \$41,975.

in America earn a bachelor's degree by their mid-twenties, compared to more than 80 percent of students from the top income quartile.

Yet what could be more pragmatic than acknowledging that in cities where more than half of students fail tests of

**The goal of sending vastly more low-income children to and through college might be egalitarian in theory, but the means to that end are often quite paternalistic.**

basic academic skills, imposing purely academic aspirations might be a fool's errand? Some studies have shown that only about one-third of low-income students who start college earn bachelor's degrees by their mid-twenties; the large majority who drop out are left, in many cases, with thousands of dollars in debt. At some institutions, including the historically black Southern University at New Orleans, the graduation rate is less than 10 percent.

**T**HE NEAT DICHOTOMY BETWEEN EGALITARIANISM and pragmatism breaks down when we consider the players and grassroots realities, however. The desire to send impoverished students to the best four-year colleges undoubtedly

stems from worthy motives. In New Orleans, only about five percent of African-American public school children graduated from college in the years before Hurricane Katrina—a statistic that everyone with common sense and a conscience would agree needs to change. But while the reformers’ big-picture goal of sending the other 95 percent to and through college might be egalitarian in theory, the means to that end are often quite paternalistic.

In their efforts to set poor children of color on the path to college, the idealistic young educators attempt to

inculcate middle-class aspirations in their students through a form of body and mind control: instructing them in everything from how to take notes to how to sit, talk, walk, and move; embracing the goals of “re-acculturating” and “re-calibrating” them; and calling them “scholars,” in honor of the new pursuit. One veteran principal refers to it as “lockstepping.” In a not atypical scene inside a New Orleans charter school, a kindergarten teacher told her young charges, “We have a lot to do this year—a lot if we want to go to the first grade. The first graders already have read this book and moved on to other books.



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**At the Center for Advanced Research and Technology, a charter high school in Clovis, California, students test common herbs and spices for antibacterial properties. The school, which is part of the Linked Learning Alliance, organizes academic and technical education around career-specific pathways that range in their focus from hospitality and event management to robotics and electronics.**

I know all of you want to go to first grade because all of you want to go to college. But you need to show discipline over your bodies to do that.”

Many parents (and even some “scholars”) welcome this structure and the intense focus on college. But some would like to see the new charters incorporate more trade and technical training in addition to their heavy college-prep emphasis. And others see a disconnect between the reformers’ goals and their methods. New Orleans grandfather Ronald McCoy shook his head during a 2010 interview with NPR when he thought about some college-prep charter schools that force their students to walk a straight line—marked out with tape—in the hallway between classes. “This walking the line?” he said. “I have been incarcerated, and that’s where I learned about walking behind those lines and staying on the right-hand side of the wall.”

Applying the college-for-all ethos in a top-down fashion in low-income communities of color creates the risk of being more imperialistic than egalitarian. But emphasizing career and technical education can do another kind of harm, simply because of the dismal state of many programs. “The idea that career and technical education is high quality

and somehow rooted in the real world is just bunk,” says Kati Haycock, president of the Education Trust, a Washington, D.C., nonprofit organization that works to improve student academic achievement.

**In New Orleans, before Katrina, high schools produced an endless supply of graduates to serve as minimum-wage housekeepers and dishwashers.**

Even advocates of career and technical education acknowledge that the programs are often divorced from economic and industry needs. Many of them were designed not out of a desire to prepare students for high-wage jobs in growing technical fields, but on the basis of classist, racist assumptions that low-income students and children of color cannot learn at high levels. To the extent that these programs fill an economic need, it’s to create a permanent underclass of workers destined for minimum-wage jobs. In New Orleans, before Katrina, that meant the schools produced an endless supply of graduates to serve as housekeepers and dishwashers working

for less than \$20,000 a year in the city's tourist-based economy, but very few who could repair air conditioning units, a job that pays more than twice as much.

**A** CONFLUENCE OF FORCES HAS FUELED the college-for-all push of the last couple of decades. Apart from the well-publicized hollowing out of the economy, a raft of reports have shown the differential benefits of college and graduate school education in terms of earnings, job stability, and health. In 2010, for instance, the median wage for a male high school graduate between the ages of 25 and 34 was \$32,800, compared to \$49,800 for one with a bachelor's degree.

**“This very good idea that all kids need a strong academic underpinning morphed into the idea that all kids need to be prepared to attend a four-year college.”**

At the same time, the standards movement—with its emphasis on disaggregated data, high-stakes testing, and

school accountability—exposed huge failures in the schooling of low-income and minority children. “This very good idea that all kids need a strong academic underpinning morphed into the idea that all kids need to be prepared to attend a four-year college,” says Robert Schwartz, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He doesn't think the two ideas are necessarily the same.

The 1990s and 2000s also saw the rapid growth of programs such as Teach For America, which sends recent graduates of elite colleges into poor communities in New Orleans and other places for missionary-style stints. TFA members and recent alums founded several of the charter schools and charter networks, such as KIPP (the Knowledge Is Power Program), that dominate in post-Katrina New Orleans and are the most strident, best-known backers of the college-for-all—or at least college for far *more*—movement.

Some prominent educators have pushed back against the movement in the last two years, citing its lack of pragmatism. In 2011, for instance, Schwartz coauthored an influential paper, *Pathways to Prosperity*, which reported burgeoning demand for “middle-skill” workers, including electricians, construction managers, and dental hygienists.

The report focused on fields where the average wage is above \$50,000 (\$53,030 for electricians, \$70,700 for dental hygienists, and \$90,960 for construction managers, according to 2012 figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics); workers in other traditional vocational fields, including health aides and short-order cooks, make far less.

The “middle-skill” fields described in the report typically require an associate’s degree or occupational certificate, but not a four-year bachelor’s degree. “The ‘college-for-all’ rhetoric . . . needs to be significantly broadened to become a ‘post high-school credential for all,’” Schwartz and his colleagues argued.

The Harvard report stressed that schools and officials should not downplay efforts to improve traditional academic instruction. But it concluded that secondary school career training should be significantly upgraded and expanded by introducing more opportunities for work experience, extensive employer involvement in shaping programs, and enhanced hands-on (as opposed to classroom-based) learning.

Earlier this year, the Brookings Institution published a report that dissected the college payoff by school selectivity, major, and occupation. “While the average return to obtaining a college

**“We have a class snob-  
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white-collar jobs in offices.”**

degree is clearly positive, we emphasize that it is not universally so,” the authors wrote. They cited the low, or negative, “return on investment” for less selective, yet pricey, private universities and for majors such as art and psychology. “By telling all young people that they should go to college no matter what, we are actually doing some of them a disservice.”

Many of the most thoughtful backers of college-for-all and expanded career education agree on more than they disagree on: They all hope to boost the percentage of Americans with some form of postsecondary degree or training and thereby increase social mobility. And they all believe that the high school curriculum could be improved. But they part ways on the best means to their shared ends.

“If we’re talking about earning enough to support a family, the smartest choice is a four-year degree,” Haycock says. “It is the only sure route out of poverty.”

Schwartz maintains that there needs to be more emphasis on alternate pathways to well-paying jobs. “We have a class snobbism that the only jobs that matter are the jobs we do: white-collar jobs in offices.”

The best way to address this divergence is not to give up on college-for-all, or on expanded career and technical education. We need to look at the debate in a different way, incorporating individual experience as well as data, and humanistic as well as economic perspectives. Using this lens, we can come to a more nuanced understanding of how to make our education system both more pragmatic and more egalitarian.

**A**S WITH MOST SOCIAL ISSUES IN America, the debate over college-for-all and career education has taken place mostly at an elite level, with little understanding of the desires and needs of low-income students and their parents. During several years of close observation of New Orleans charter schools, I saw how hard it is to prescribe a set of educational aspirations to a group of people, no matter how convincing the data and experts might be.

Two teenage students I interviewed provided a case in point. Both were poor, smart, creative, and intense, but that’s

where the similarities ended. Brice was talkative, clever, mischievous, and, despite his kindness and generosity, constantly in trouble. One of his teachers described him this way: “Brice’s mouth is his weapon. But if you don’t understand Brice, you would think his weapon is more than his mouth.”

By contrast, Anthony (whose name has been changed) was soft spoken and reserved, and avoided conflict at all costs. Yet he occasionally burst forth with statements that revealed how much he saw and knew, such as his description of the topics covered in an elective philosophy class: “How come people come in different races and what’s the difference? Why is everything this way? How do we know what’s ethically right or wrong? Who are we? Why do we speak to each other and why do we have five fingers and five toes? How can we make the things we make? How do we know what matter is, and why can we feel things?”

Anthony, whose mother scraped by as a hotel housekeeper, desperately wanted to go to college, while Brice preferred the military. (He only somewhat facetiously declared that guns and violence were what he knew.) But in a twist of fate, Brice enrolled in a KIPP high school whose principal endlessly recited the school’s mantra:

“One thousand first-generation college graduates by 2022.” Meanwhile, Anthony attended a long-struggling and less ambitious non-charter New Orleans high school where, in 2010, the year before he enrolled, only 14 of 44 graduating seniors continued on to college. Among those 14 graduates, 10 needed to take remedial courses and the average ACT score was 13.9. (The ACT is scored on a scale of 1 to 36, with a national average of about 21.) Anthony earned a 12 when he took the test in the spring of his junior year.

The education system failed Anthony and Brice in different ways. Anthony suffered from a failure of training: He had more than enough desire and ambition, but his schools did not provide him with the skills and tools to make college graduation an easy (or even likely) prospect. Brice, on the other hand, suffered from a failure of imagination: He attended a school hell-bent on giving him the skills and tools he needed to thrive in college. Yet he retained a limited view of his own potential in spite of all the college banners, slogans, chants, and ambitions that surrounded him.

Anthony graduated from high school in the spring of 2012 and entered Southeastern Louisiana University at the start of 2013, where he struggled

academically during his first semester but remained determined to persist. Brice was arrested for second-degree attempted murder during the spring of his freshman year at KIPP. He spent more than a year in jail before his lawyer negotiated a plea deal during the summer of 2012. Brice has not returned to a traditional high school, although he hopes to earn a GED.

**It is sadly ironic that a restructured school system so focused on getting students through college utterly failed to give both Brice and Anthony what they most needed to get there.**

Most of the new college-for-all charter schools in New Orleans are just graduating their first cohorts of students, so only time will tell if they succeed in their mission. (A national study of KIPP’s earliest graduates found that 33 percent had received a degree from a four-year college within 10 years—four times the national rate for students with similar backgrounds, yet a far cry from the organization’s stated goal of 75 percent.)

But it struck me as sadly ironic that a restructured school system so focused on getting students through college could fail so utterly to give both Brice and Anthony what they most needed to get there.

**T**HERE ARE CHANGES WE COULD MAKE to our schools and way of thinking that would help students like Anthony and Brice—changes that would, however, complicate our understanding of what’s pragmatic and what’s egalitarian.

To more pragmatic ends, we should stop treating academic and vocational education as curricular silos and develop more strategies for boosting college completion rates among low-income students. There’s little point in expanding technical education or four-year college matriculation rates if both pathways are, by design or default, bridges to nowhere. And replicable small-scale efforts aimed at shoring up career education and improving college graduation rates already exist.

For instance, nine school districts participating in a California-based initiative called the Linked Learning Alliance agreed to expand their career and technical education courses while also integrating them with academic classes. Students might study both algebra and

computer-aided design (a modernized vocational subject) in the same class and no longer choose (or get nudged toward) an early college-prep track or a career track. It was assumed that all students would have access to both a rigorous academic curriculum and work experience, such as an internship or employment at a school-based business. “We are trying to overcome the mindset that career and technical education is ‘just shop,’” said Olivine Roberts, the chief academic officer at the Sacramento City Unified School District, one of the participating districts, in an interview with *School Administrator* magazine.

Operating in large cities such as New York and Chicago (as well as New Orleans), the Posse Foundation sends cohorts of 10 low-income children from the same urban community off to elite colleges as a group. The theory is that the students will feel more comfortable, and will be more likely to stay in college, if surrounded with peers who have similar backgrounds and culture. Neither Linked Learning nor Posse is, on its own, a solution to educational or economic inequity in America. But they are both much-needed practical approaches in an area that’s been dominated by abstract, and at times ideological, arguments and approaches.

To a more egalitarian end, we should stop viewing low-income children of color as a form of “other” in the debate over secondary and college education, a bias both sides can be guilty of at times. Children growing up in poverty are not incapable of higher-level thinking and learning, as many backers of vocational tracks have explicitly or implicitly maintained for generations. But neither are they empty vessels who need to be filled with mainstream middle-class ambitions and values at super speed. One extreme discredits and undervalues poor children of color through the end it envisions for them (uniformly working-class jobs), the other through the means it employs (a

form of cultural indoctrination). Both fail to fully conceive of these children as talented and aspirational in their own right.

Before we redesign our education system to better meet the needs of the most disempowered, we must acknowledge how this idea of otherness has fostered the most simplistic (and least constructive) positions in this debate. In the long run, social policies and programs that deny the overwhelming power of individual agency are destined to fail. ■

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BEBETO MATTHEWS / AP / CORBIS

Unemployment has declined significantly since the Great Recession ended four years ago, but the United States still has more than two million fewer jobs than it did when the recession hit.

# THE TRUTH ABOUT JOBS

The great American jobs machine is sputtering, but it has not lost any of its underlying power.

BY **SCOTT WINSHIP**

By SCOTT WINSHIP

**H**ARDLY A WEEK GOES BY WITHOUT at least one commentator somewhere in America heralding the demise of the middle-class worker. Because of the historic severity of the Great Recession and its aftermath, it is not hard to stoke anxiety. The unease coheres in a conventional wisdom that connects a number of short- and long-term economic trends with today's tepid conditions, creating a fearful narrative about the future of jobs in America. It is a narrative that mischaracterizes the past and only feeds the anxieties it claims to explain.

In the conventional story, the economy has been unable for decades to produce jobs for all the people who want them. It is also said that the middle class is becoming "hollowed out" as job growth is increasingly confined to occupations that require either very low-level skills or highly sophisticated ones—and that pay accordingly. "Job polarization," as this pattern is called, has been driven by technological changes that have automated many "middle-skill" jobs and encouraged their offshoring to lower-paid workers in other countries. Increasingly, we are warned that robots and other products of the information technology

revolution will usher in mass unemployment in the not-too-distant future. Wages will continue to stagnate or decline despite rising productivity, as they have done for decades.

How worried should we be that such a dark future awaits? In answering that question, it makes sense to focus on the experience of men during their prime working years. Women have seen such strong gains in education and employment over the past few decades as a result of increasing gender equality that it is very difficult to draw many broad conclusions about the underlying condition of the economy from their experience.

**A**T FIRST GLANCE, MEN HAVE HAD A hard time of it. Ninety-five percent of men between the ages of 25 and 54 were working in an average week in 1969. By 1983, the employment rate among this segment of the work force had fallen to 86 percent, and it fell again, dramatically, with the onset of the Great Recession. Employment had begun to recover by 2012, but it still stood at just 83 percent.

One reason employment fell is that it became harder for those looking for work to find a job. But while the

unemployment rate is abnormally high at the moment, over the longer term it rises and falls with the business cycle. The main reason employment has declined is that more and more men are not looking for work. Between 1969 and 2012, the share of men ages 25 to 54 who were out of the labor force rose from four percent to 11 percent.

Remarkably, if one had forecast the 2012 labor force participation rate (the fraction of men working or looking for work) by simply extending the curve of the 1948-to-2000 decline on a graph, the prediction would have exactly matched the actual 2012 rate. That suggests that whatever is causing the rise in the share of working-age men who are out of the labor force is much more deeply rooted than the past few years of economic ups and downs.

What could be behind this change? People can be out of the labor force for reasons other than despair of finding a job. Many have illnesses or disabilities. Others, even in the 25-to-54 age group, are full-time students. Some are able to retire early. A small number of men have primary responsibility for maintaining their home while a partner works. Others are sustained by unreported sources of income, including off-the-books jobs.

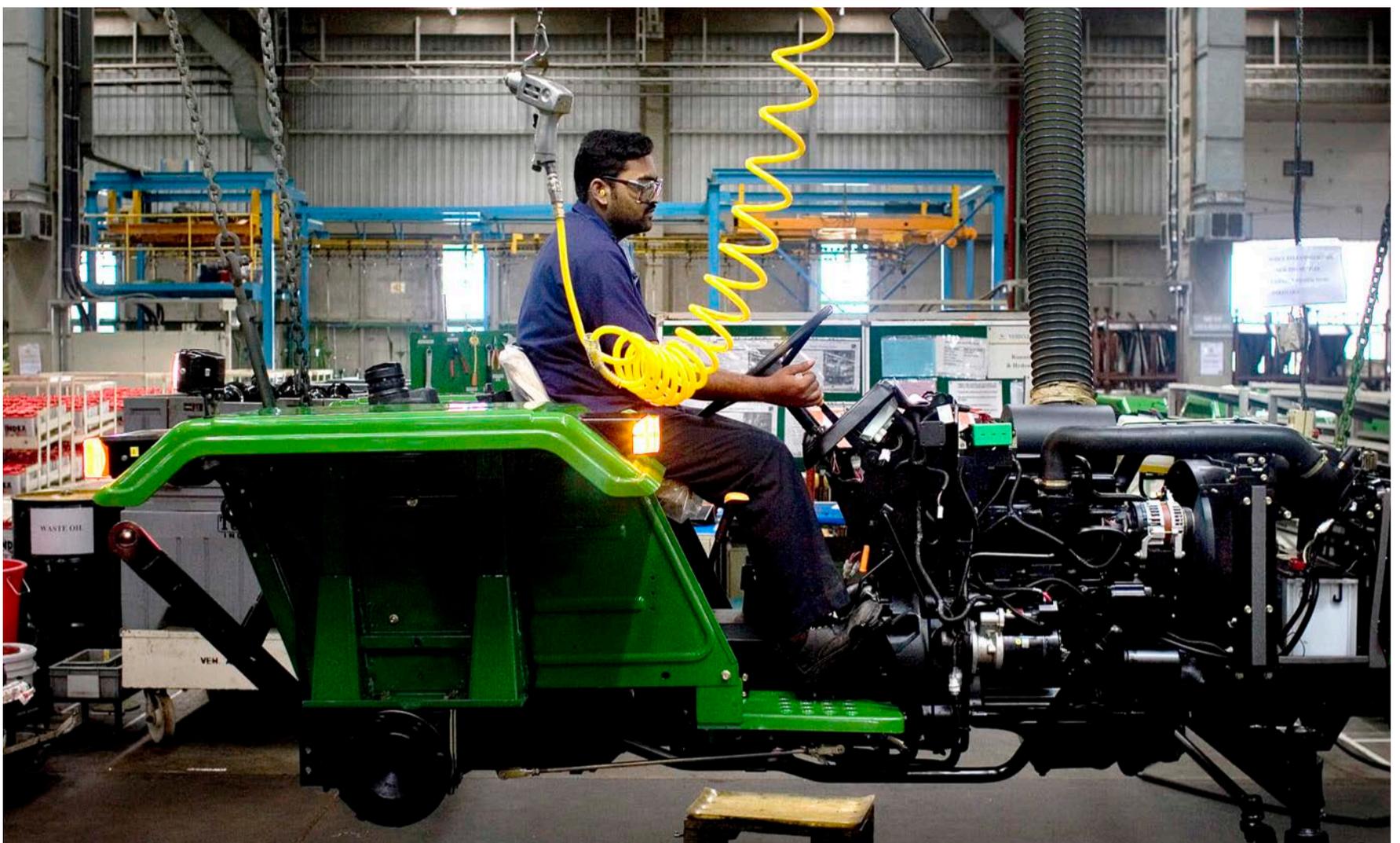
In fact, the vast majority of working-age men who are out of the labor force today tell survey researchers that they do not want to work. When you factor in that preference, the story of employment decline begins to look quite different. By the conventional measure, employment among working-age men declined by seven percentage points between 1969 and 2007, just before the Great Recession, reaching 88 percent. But in my analysis based on “work-interested” men in those years, the drop amounts to just three percentage points—hardly a dire trend. (Counting only work-interested men, 94 percent were employed in 2007.)

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**The main reason employment has declined is that more and more men are not looking for work.**

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To be sure, many of the men who are uninterested in working are only out of the labor force because federal disability benefits have been steadily extended to people who in the past would have had to look for work. Beyond its historic role as a safety net for those with severe



SCOTT EELLS / REDUX

**A John Deere factory in Pune, India, is a visible sign of the offshoring of jobs. But many middle-paying U.S. jobs have been replaced by better-paid managerial, professional, and technical positions.**

conditions, disability has become a welfare program for able-bodied men with low skill levels, since the kinds of jobs they can get don't command high wages. The number of working-age men drawing benefits has climbed over time, and there has been no overall increase in the incidence of health problems to explain it. Still, the rise in the number of disabled men who say they do not want to work is too small—adding another point to the three-percentage-point decline—to alter the conclusion that the drop in male employment has been modest.

When one looks beyond the core

working-age group of men, the long-term employment picture is no more worrisome. Men under 25 have seen a large decline in labor force participation since 1979, but U.S. Department of Education statistics show that this decline is mostly explained by rising high school and postsecondary enrollments. Among 18-to-19-year-old men, school enrollment rose 20 percentage points from 1980 to 2010, while labor force participation declined by 22 points. Among their slightly older peers in the 20-to-24-year-old group, school enrollment gains fully offset the participation decline.

Among men older than 54, the labor force participation rate has actually been rising for the past couple of decades, reversing an old trend. That alarms some observers, who argue that it is another sign of distress—that men are being forced out of retirement or have been unable to retire in the first place. But research by Brookings Institution economist Barry Bosworth suggests that this increase has been concentrated among the best-educated and highest-earning workers, often men who are staying on the job less for a paycheck than for mental stimulation, camaraderie, and other intangible benefits.

IF THE TOTAL SUPPLY OF JOBS HAS NOT shrunk that much over the long run, what about the supply of *good* jobs? In recent years, the work of MIT economist David Autor showing an increase in what he calls “job polarization” has stirred fears that the middle class is being “hollowed out.” Job growth, Autor suggests, has been occurring primarily in occupations

**Among men older than 54, the labor force participation rate has been rising, reversing an old trend.**

that pay either quite well or quite poorly. Solid middle-class occupations—such as clerical, administrative, and production jobs—have seen slower growth or outright declines. A future in which the occupational structure was shaped like an hourglass—fat at the top and bottom and thin in the middle—would condemn us to rising inequality and perhaps diminished economic mobility.

A growing number of routine tasks, Autor argues, can be done by new information technologies or by lower-wage workers in other countries. Increasingly, jobs in the United States will require either abstract skills associated with high levels of education and intelligence or—because nobody has figured out a way to offshore the jobs of short-order cooks and house painters—more basic skills requiring no formal schooling. Jobs in the first group pay well because the demand for abstract thinking outstrips the number of workers who can supply it, while those in the second group pay poorly because so many people can do the work.

Autor’s research, however, has been blown out of proportion by its popularizers even as it has been effectively challenged by other economists. Harry Holzer, of Georgetown University, and Robert Lerman, of the Washington-based Urban Institute, for example,

conclude that there has been only a modest decline in “middle-skill” jobs, from 55 percent of the total in 1986 to 48 percent in 2006. “Stories of dramatic polarization . . . seem inconsistent with these facts,” Holzer has written. He and Lerman predict that middle-skill jobs will account for 40 to 45 percent of new hiring in this decade, with particularly strong demand for certain types of workers, such as “technicians, licensed practical nurses, and therapists in health care.” Holzer writes that there will be “substantial opportunities for earnings improvements to many youth and adults for whom a bachelor’s degree might be out of reach.”

The Washington think-tank trio of Lawrence Mishel and Heidi Shierholz of the Economic Policy Institute and John Schmitt of the Center for Economic and Policy Research confirm that the share of “middle-wage” jobs declined only modestly from the late 1980s through 2007. But they see a much steeper decline if the beginning date is stretched back to 1959, from 66 percent to 48 percent. That might be alarming, except that it mostly reflects a net upgrading of jobs. “High-wage” jobs grew from 21 percent of all employment to 34 percent from 1959 to 2007. Employment has shifted much more from middle-paying jobs to

higher-paying managerial, professional, and technical positions than from middle- to low-paying jobs.

Indeed, this dynamic held in each decade from the 1960s to the ’90s. From 2000 to 2007, growth was strongest in low-paying jobs, but that was a period dominated by two trends—slow growth in the supply of native-born workers (due to an aging population) and a large increase in the number of immigrants with lower levels of schooling. It is always true that the supply of jobs depends significantly on the supply of labor—an important fact to remember when we evaluate the future of job growth.

While Autor emphasizes the threat of automation, Princeton economists Alan Blinder and Alan Krueger stress the negative effects of offshoring. They estimate that, in principle, a quarter of American jobs are “offshorable,” in that they do not require working in physical proximity to colleagues or customers. However, just because a job is offshorable does not mean it will be eliminated. If the benefits of face-to-face interaction among workers were small, employers would not go to the trouble and expense of bringing workers together in central offices and dense metropolitan areas. Perhaps more important, our history of job upgrading shows that the ill effects

of offshoring can be offset. Blinder and Krueger surmise that a quarter of jobs were also offshorable in 1960, and the United States did indeed send many manufacturing positions and other work overseas in the ensuing decades. But the larger story is that the economy adapted to change, and, thanks to continuing domestic job growth, the period brought steady increases in higher-paying occupations.

**W**E HAVE A TENDENCY, WHEN THINKING about technology and trade, to zero in on their harmful effects. But they also have a strong upside: lower prices for American consumers for everything from toothbrushes to refrigerators. Evidence from economists Christian Broda and John Romalis, for example, suggests that thanks in part to imports from developing countries, the cost of living over the last 20 years has risen *less* among lower-income Americans than among richer households.

Consider the impact of Walmart, the often-maligned retail colossus. Jason Furman, the incoming chair of President Barack Obama's Council of Economic Advisers, noted back in 2005 that Walmart's "everyday low prices"—the result of relentless efforts to minimize

costs, including reliance on imports and foreign labor—had effectively boosted American family incomes by 1.5 to 4.5 percent. In total dollars, that benefit was more than \$100 billion, at least 20 times the reduction in wages that Walmart's critics claimed the company caused.

The poor, Furman found, benefited more from lower prices than others because a bigger share of the things they bought—clothing, groceries, paper products—were goods sold by Walmart. Even if one assumes that the bottom fifth of households bears the entire cost of wage reductions caused by Walmart (a figure that is likely exaggerated), the price-lowering benefits of Walmart for this group are still two and a half times the costs.

In short, if trade and technology reduce demand for labor, the lowered labor costs paid by businesses will translate into lower prices. That can be expected to benefit Americans—including lower-income families—in the aggregate, despite the highly visible costs to those who bear the brunt of the resulting economic dislocations. The dystopic fantasy of an economy based on robots and overseas suppliers with mass involuntary joblessness at home will simply not come to pass.

**T**HE WIDESPREAD FEELING THAT THE American economy is failing the middle class owes a great deal to the belief that wages have stagnated or declined. That belief is only half correct. For women, wages have risen smartly. For example, *The State of Working America*, an annual report by the Economic Policy Institute, indicates that median hourly wages among female workers increased by 24 percent from 1979 to 2007. That number grows to 35 percent (an increase of \$4.60 per hour) with adjustments for the value of benefits such as health insurance and to better account for changes in the cost of living. Among men, however, the adjusted increase was only four percent.

During those same years, pay for both women and men badly trailed productivity, or the value of what workers produce per hour, which rose by 60 percent. We would be very right to worry if that disparity between productivity and wages were to continue. Here again, however, a longer-term perspective provides important context.

The hourly compensation of workers has failed to keep pace with productivity since the mid-20th century, but in the 1930s and '40s pay raced ahead of productivity gains. By 1950, productivity was 65 percent higher than it had been

in 1929, but hourly compensation was 115 percent higher. In contrast, pay and productivity rose by the same amount between 1900 and 1929. Workers in 1950 were making about 30 percent more than their productivity should have dictated. Correcting that overpayment required that compensation growth fall behind productivity growth. As of 2010, workers still made 14 percent more than productivity levels suggested they should have, despite the fact that productivity had grown faster than compensation since 1950.

**The belief that wages have stagnated or declined is only half correct.**

The current Great Correction in the relationship between pay and productivity has surely been frustrating for men, who have borne the brunt of the pay slowdown. Women, who started from a lower base, have fared much better as a group, moving into better-paying jobs thanks to the erosion of discrimination and occupational segregation. But for women and men alike, there is a silver lining to this story. In time, the Great Correction will run its course, bringing productivity growth and compensation

back into long-term alignment. At that point, pay and productivity should begin to move in tandem once more, putting Americans' wages back on an upward trajectory. When will that happen? It would be foolish to attempt a prediction, but the closing of the compensation-productivity gap has proceeded slowly, suggesting that we may have to wait a while for the Great Correction to end.

The U.S. economy has shown an amazing ability over the course of two centuries to create good jobs for Americans and to supply their wants and needs. A clear-eyed reading of long-term trends does not point to a fundamental breakdown in that ability. Even with the decline of manufacturing and the peaks and valleys of recent decades, the economy has been strong and dynamic enough to create jobs for millions of additional female and immigrant workers. There is no reason to think it cannot adapt to today's challenges and whatever disruptions may lie in store.

Indeed, Americans, by and large, appear to have a healthy attitude toward the vicissitudes of the job market. According to a Kaiser Family Foundation survey conducted earlier this year, only 20 percent of employed workers are "very worried" about the possibility of

losing their job. Thirty-six percent say they are "not at all" worried. And while job anxiety has to be taken seriously, it is not always well founded. After all, 20 percent of adults also say they are very worried about being a victim of gun violence, though their real risks are miniscule, and 15 percent fret about being caught up in a terrorist attack.

For most Americans, anxiety about work is a low-grade background concern, not a dark cloud over their everyday existence. The relentless focus in so much public debate on the most negative evidence, and on economic challenges much more than economic strengths, may needlessly raise anxiety levels. It also distracts us from the real problems we face. These include too many workers with limited skills, the plateauing of college graduation rates, distressingly stable economic inequality between white and black Americans, and persistent inequality of opportunity between children born into advantageous and disadvantageous circumstances. Not everyone faces pressing job insecurity, but we can do better by those at risk if we maintain the proper perspective. ■

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# IN ESSENCE

OUR SURVEY OF NOTABLE ARTICLES FROM OTHER JOURNALS AND MAGAZINES



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From *Perspectives on Politics*

### HECK OF A JOB, APPOINTEE!

From *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*

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### **CHINA'S MEDICAL MAYHEM**

From *Columbia Law Review*

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

# HOW THE ONE PERCENTERS THINK

**THE SOURCE:** “Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans” by Benjamin I. Page, Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright, in *Perspectives on Politics*, March 2013.

THE RICH REALLY ARE DIFFERENT, AS F. Scott Fitzgerald said—especially in their politics. A rare survey of one percenters shows that they are much more concerned than the general public about federal budget deficits, and much more eager to cut spending. They have a

“distinctive antipathy” to government regulation of the economy.

The 83 wealthy individuals in the Chicago area surveyed in 2011 by political scientists Benjamin I. Page, Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright were unusually politically active. Virtually all of them had voted in the 2008 presidential election, and two-thirds contributed to political campaigns (an average of \$4,633 during the previous 12 months). They sprinkled their conversations with casual references to “Rahm” (Emanuel, who was then President Barack Obama’s chief of staff) and “David” (Axelrod,



LUDGER / GETTY IMAGES

Lunch, cocktails, fret about federal debt, dinner. . .

## One percenters sprinkled their conversations with casual references to top Obama advisers “Rahm” and “David.”

Obama’s top political adviser until he left the administration for an academic job earlier this year). That had something to do with the fact that Chicago is Obama’s hometown, but it’s also further evidence that the wealthy generally exercise disproportionate influence over government policy, the authors write in *Perspectives on Politics*. And these folks sure are wealthy, with an average income of more than \$1 million and median wealth of \$7.5 million.

When the group was asked to name the most important problems facing the country, 87 percent cited budget deficits. By contrast, in a survey of the general public done around the same time, only seven percent of respondents pointed to deficits or the national debt.

Jobs and the economy topped the public’s list of worries, and the rich rated unemployment second, but the authors say the well-to-do weren’t willing to put their money where their mouth was.

They favored private-sector solutions over government action. More than half of the general public said the federal government should provide jobs for those who can’t find work. Among the rich, a scant eight percent embraced the idea.

Presented with a list of nine areas of government activity, the public favored more spending in all but one (economic aid to other nations). Fifty-nine percent of those surveyed wanted more money for Social Security and federal health-care programs. Given a list of 12 areas, the rich folk favored cutting back in nine, including job programs, Social Security, health care, and even defense. They, too, wanted to cut foreign aid.

The rich favored spending more in three areas: infrastructure such as roads and bridges, scientific research, and aid to education. But even in these cases, there were crucial differences between the one percenters and the rest. Despite broad agreement on a number of particular issues—93 percent of the wealthy favored merit pay for teachers, as compared with 77 percent of the general public—there were limits to the generosity of the rich. Only about a third of them agreed that the federal government should “spend whatever is necessary” to create good schools for all. Nearly 90 percent of the public endorsed the open wallet approach.

It may be that wealthy Americans are better informed than others about America's problems and more realistic about public policy, Page, Bartels, and Seawright allow. Their survey undermines a number of stereotypical assumptions about the rich.

Two-thirds of the one percenters said they were willing to pay more taxes in order to reduce the deficit, while only a third of the general public did. Nearly three-quarters of the rich agreed that it might be good for the federal government to run a deficit during a recession. Less than a third of the general public embraced this mainstream economic view—even though large majorities favored big increases in spending on federal programs.

Yet the one percenters' knowledge is "one-sided," the authors contend. The wealthy likely don't know many people who need Medicaid or have been laid off from a job. The people they *do* know, however, is one of the factors that give them outsized influence over government policies. ■

## HECK OF A JOB, APPOINTEE!

**THE SOURCE:** "The Consequences of Presidential Patronage for Federal Agency Performance" by Nick Gallo and David E. Lewis, in *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, April 2012.

FOR 10 YEARS, MICHAEL BROWN WORKED for the International Arabian Horse

Association, monitoring horse show judges. In 2001, he was appointed general counsel of the Federal Emergency Management Agency by FEMA administrator Joe Allbaugh, a close friend. Two years later, Brown became head of the agency, reaching the apex of a career trajectory as sudden as it was improbable. Then, in 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. FEMA performed abysmally.

E-mails Brown sent during the hurricane revealed a man who wasn't interested in disaster management and relief. "I'm trapped . . . please rescue me," he wrote to a friend. He e-mailed his deputy director of public affairs, asking, "Can I quit now?"

For all the attention Brown's case received, the systemic costs of the spoils system aren't commonly considered. According to David Lewis, a professor of law and political science at Vanderbilt University, and Nick Gallo, his research assistant, agencies run by presidential supporters and party apparatchiks perform quantifiably worse than agencies run by career professionals.

In their study published in the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Gallo and Lewis use the George W. Bush administration's Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)—which

scores agencies' effectiveness on a scale of one to 100—to “compare the performance of federal programs administered by appointees from the campaign or party against programs run by . . . career executives” or other appointees from the Senior Executive Service, the elite corps of federal administrators.

After evaluating almost 1,000 federal programs and more than 350 managers—some of whom oversaw multiple programs—Gallo and Lewis found that programs run by political appointees suffered across the board. If you had worked for the presidential campaign or national party, your program probably earned PART scores nine to 13 points lower than those of programs run by nonpolitical appointees. (The average score for all programs was 67.) The results also indicated that running a federal program generally requires specific knowledge of government work. Managers with previous agency experience tended to earn better scores even when measured against political appointees with experience in business or the nonprofit sector.

Political patronage and favoritism crop up in every government across the world, and political appointees, of course, have their defenders. “An important com-

ponent of agency leadership is *political work*,” Gallo and Lewis acknowledge. Appointees' political experience, ties to the president, and familiarity with the news media and key stakeholders can be considerable assets. Appointees also tend to have more education and a longer history in private or nonprofit management than their counterparts in the civil service.

But Gallo and Lewis point out that “the United States has significantly more political appointments than other developed democracies . . . . The White House is involved in the selection of 3,000–4,000 persons to policy or confidential positions.”

**“The United States has significantly more political appointments than other developed democracies.”**

Furthermore, the reign of often underqualified outside hires has a demoralizing effect on ambitious career professionals, depriving them of incentives to excel. Sometimes the effects are worse. When Allbaugh, a former campaign manager for Bush, ran FEMA from 2001 to 2003, “a large number of experienced

career professionals left,” taking institutional memory and critical skills with them.

Gallo and Lewis don’t think political appointments should be abolished (not that there’s any chance of that). Instead,

they favor a better balance between the two worlds. “Working in teams, appointees and careerists can take advantage of the different skills they bring to management and work productively together.” ■

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

# THE PROBLEM WITH THE PIVOT

**THE SOURCE:** “U.S. Grand Strategy, the Rise of China, and U.S. National Security Strategy for East Asia” by Robert S. Ross, in *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Summer 2013

WITH BEIJING’S POWER GROWING BY THE day, the chess match between China and the United States is on. If the past inclinations of other great powers are any guide, China will move its pieces across the board with a fresh assertiveness.

That could spell trouble for the United States. A nation that holds sway over all of Asia invariably threatens North American security, writes Robert S. Ross in *Strategic Studies Quarterly*. But Ross, a political scientist at Boston College, has a bone to pick with the Obama administration over the “pivot,” its strategy for countering China’s rise by engaging with countries on the Chinese periphery.

Washington has the right idea in cultivating regional allies. This strategy enables it to secure bases and access rights that allow U.S. ships to dock



BULLIT MARQUEZ / AP / CORBIS

**High-fives all around:** U.S. Marines and their Filipino counterparts breathe easy after storming a beachhead during a joint military exercise in 2010. Officials in Beijing weren’t smiling; the mock assault unfolded near a shoal in the South China Sea the Philippines and China both claim.

and American troops and aircraft to keep an eye on China's doings. But many of these potential friends, such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and South Korea, are mainland Asian countries right on China's doorstep. That makes Beijing nervous and has the potential to entangle the United States in fights it can't win.

Take Vietnam. In 2010, the United States raised eyebrows in Beijing when Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Hanoi to promote the idea of strategic cooperation. The government of Vietnamese prime minister Nguyen Tan Dung was thrilled—Hanoi had long sought improved military relations. Vietnam has conducted annual joint exercises with the U.S. Navy for three years running and has facilitated port visits by U.S. ships. In a 2012 visit to Cam Ranh Bay, the site of a major U.S. base during the Vietnam War, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta pointed to “tremendous potential here for the future.”

But the new American presence is a little too close for Beijing's comfort. China fought a nasty border war with Vietnam in 1979, and a maritime dispute simmers.

The United States hasn't stopped with Vietnam. In 2010, the Obama administration sent American officials

to visit Cambodia—a neighbor to China that previous U.S. administrations had “all but ignored.” Military maneuvers involving the Cambodian military and U.S. Marines followed.

On the Korean peninsula, meanwhile, the Obama team halted implementation of the Bush administration's plan to gradually withdraw U.S. forces from South Korea. The Pentagon boosted the number of American GIs there and ramped up joint live-fire exercises with the South Korean navy, in part as a response to North Korean belligerence.

In Korea and Indochina, the United States is courting trouble, Ross warns: “Because both regions are on China's immediate periphery, U.S. naval power cannot effectively challenge Chinese coercive power.” In a clash on land between China and one of America's friends in the area, China's People's Liberation Army would maul its opponent. “Even as a primitive fighting force in 1950, the PLA held the U.S. military to a draw in Korea.”

Small mainland Asian nations are bound to fall into China's orbit eventually. “Unless South Korea and the Indochina countries are willing to once again host significant U.S. ground-force deployments and extensive basing facilities—therefore once again incurring

Chinese hostility—they will ultimately succumb to the rise of China by distancing themselves from the United States,” Ross writes.

## Small mainland Asian nations are bound to fall into China’s orbit eventually.

That’s no matter, says Ross. As it learned after it pulled out of Vietnam, the United States can maintain a balance of power in the region by solidifying ties to offshore nations and distancing itself from hot-button local disputes. Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore are ideal non-mainland allies equipped with modern ports and ample space for bases.

Previous presidents saw the wisdom of the maritime approach. George H. W. Bush expanded military cooperation with the Philippines, winning wider maritime access for U.S. ships. George W. Bush deepened the alliance; the former U.S. colony is now the top recipient of U.S. military assistance in East Asia. In 1999, the Clinton administration capped its gradual shift of military assets from Europe to Asia by winning

Singapore’s assent to port access for U.S. aircraft carriers. The United States similarly won greater access to a Malaysian port in the Strait of Malacca. Stalwart American allies such as Japan continue to cooperate with and host U.S. forces.

As part of the pivot, President Obama duly attended to these maritime alliances. He warmed up to New Zealand and Indonesia and struck a deal with Australia to station U.S. Marines in Darwin, a city on that country’s northern coast.

But America’s mainland overtures broke with precedent. Ross says it’s no coincidence that China now makes trouble for the United States. In contrast to the early 2000s, it shows little interest in pushing the communist regime in North Korea to participate in six-party talks over its nuclear program. It has grown much more assertive in maritime spats with the Philippines and Vietnam, displaying its “eroding tolerance for small-power cooperation with the United States.”

Farther afield, China abandoned a record of cooperation with the West in UN action on Iraq, Libya, and Iran. “Whereas from 2006 to 2010 China voted for five UN Security Council resolutions imposing

sanctions on Iran, in 2012 it opposed U.S. efforts to tighten those sanctions.”

China has also been bolstering its presence in its own neighborhood. Since the 1990s, the PLA’s growing fleet of diesel submarines has worried Pentagon planners. The Chinese military is also developing antiship missiles that could make it dangerous for U.S. Navy vessels to venture too close to Chinese waters.

The United States nonetheless retains a military edge, especially on the open seas. In the long run, though, America will struggle to keep pace with Chinese spending in Asia. The Pentagon may need to jettison expensive weapons such as aircraft carriers in favor of “more capable and cost-effective platforms” such as remotely piloted aircraft and unmanned underwater vehicles.

A maritime-based American presence employing such military tools could counter China at an affordable price, Ross argues. On the other hand, he says, the Obama pivot will aggravate Sino-American relations and could lead to a fall. “Whereas post-Cold War U.S. administrations refrained from asserting U.S. power on mainland East Asia, the Obama administration has reversed course,” Ross writes. “The United States lacks the capabilities to sustain this effort.” ■

## NATIONAL SECURITY 101

**THE SOURCE:** “Educating for National Security” by Jakub Grygiel, in *Orbis*, Spring 2013.

TODAY’S NATIONAL SECURITY RESEARCHERS leave little to chance. When danger is at hand, consult the formula for the probability of war. If events don’t proceed as predicted, rewrite the formula.

Many graduates of degree programs in national security and international relations take their lab coats with them into government, where they discover that advanced statistics and theories cannot account for the vagaries of international affairs. “The world is not a clock,” writes Jakub Grygiel, a professor at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, “and a scientific approach may not be the best way to study it nor to educate the next national security wardens.”

Grygiel offers an old-school alternative: a broad-based liberal arts education in “the tragic beauty of worldly affairs,” in which contingencies, imponderables, and surprises reign supreme. “To defend a country is an art,” Grygiel writes in *Orbis*. “The challenge is that we can train scientists but we cannot teach students to be artists. We can only educate them to appreciate art.”

That means reading the masters—Augustine, Machiavelli, Herodotus, Thucydides. All highlighted the puzzles of war and peace long before any political scientist tried to capture them in equations and esoteric theories.

But political scientists specializing in international relations and national security studies go on filling students' brains with abstruse mumbo jumbo. Academics prefer waging battles over methodological form to debating questions of substance. The threat posed by Al Qaeda, as well as the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, snapped some scholars out of their stupor. For the most part, though, there are few real disagreements in academia—the hot issues are all about methodology.

## “The goal is to defend the United States.”

Overt patriotism is increasingly frowned upon in the ivory tower. Cadres of students and scholars fancy themselves “global citizens.” They set their sights on abstract nouns: global warming, poverty, and drugs. Those are valid concerns, but they shouldn't displace consideration of U.S. interests and ideals. “We are telling a generation of students that the world

is threatened by potentially rising seas (a ‘global’ threat) while Chinese strategists think about how to expel the United States out of the South China Sea.”

Universities trot out feel-good global institutes to groom cosmopolitan sensibilities. New York University's Center for Global Affairs vows to train “global citizens capable of identifying and implementing solutions to pressing global challenges.” Meanwhile, many U.S. colleges blanch at the thought of training military officers on campus in ROTC programs.

The global approach seeks to replace rooted allegiances with meaningless ties. “We are expected to feel an equal connection to our neighbors and to anonymous individuals with whom we share only the fact of living on the same planet,” Grygiel writes. “As the particular ends up being replaced by an abstraction, we lose our connection to the ‘here and now,’ to our families, neighbors, and friends.”

Grygiel wants to bring international relations and national security studies back down to earth. “The goal is to defend the United States, a concrete reality defined by history, tradition, and ideals.” Professors should populate their syllabuses with American classics—from the writings of the Founding Fathers

to the works of Reinhold Niebuhr and Thomas Schelling. Those and other works spur students to ponder “the key grand strategic questions of who we are and where we ought to go.”

There is plenty of room for students and scholars to disagree on these questions. Is the United States still an exceptional superpower or on the wane? But debates “are possible only in the presence of a common language—exactly the opposite situation of the one that characterizes modern academia.” ■

## THE POWER OF K

**THE SOURCE:** “The Cognitive Revolution and the Political Psychology of Elite Decision Making” by Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, D. Alex Hughes, and David G. Victor, in *Perspectives on Politics*, June 2013.

FOR DECADES, PSYCHOLOGISTS AND ECONOMISTS have been piling up evidence that people are alarmingly irrational in their decision making. Many of us make bad choices about crucial matters such as investing our retirement savings. One documented reason: The pain of losses is greater than the pleasure of gains. When faced with an unusual situation, we tend to fall back on simple precedents, often choosing those that don’t apply or fumbling to identify any relevant experience at all. And few of us are able to see very far ahead when considering the

consequences of our decisions. It gets pretty scary when you ask how all of this applies to the people who manage America’s national security and other high-level tasks.

Calm down, say political scientists Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, D. Alex Hughes, and David G. Victor, writing in *Perspectives on Politics*. Most of the studies behind the “cognitive revolution” in our understanding of human rationality relied on willing undergraduates as their subjects. A smaller number of experiments involving CEOs, politicians, doctors, and other people in positions of great responsibility present a more complicated picture. Experienced elites, including leaders who decide the fate of nations, may be better able to avoid the cognitive errors that plague everyone else. However, they also have characteristic flaws of their own.

Humans rely on mental models to navigate complex events and make snap decisions. In new and fast-changing situations, most of us grope for one of these models, known to psychologists as heuristics. It’s different for elites with “domain-specific” experience. These Jedi Masters settle on appropriate heuristics much faster than most people. Veteran physicians, one study found, swiftly

align on diagnoses “by applying a small set of rules to the data and sorting for the right decision pattern.” Greener doctors labor through routine cases by working through every possible diagnosis.

Elites’ “metacognition” also appears to be superior. They “revise (or even jettison) their heuristics” with much greater ease when things aren’t working out.

Elites are also better than novices at anticipating the reactions of competitors. They consider future rounds of strategic interactions and tailor their choices accordingly. Economists have even developed a measure called the “k-level” to gauge the number of steps ahead that a person can think in a game-playing exercise. In one study, three-quarters of the subjects betrayed “a strategically simple view of the world.”

In the realm of risk and reward, the average person typically errs by risking more to avoid losses than to attain gains—a phenomenon first identified in 1979 by psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. But as explained by Hafner-Burton and Victor, who are professors of international relations at the University of California, San Diego, and Hughes, a UCSD doctoral student, seasoned decision makers “are less prone to loss aversion, which makes them better gamblers.”

Elites do exhibit one potentially dangerous tendency: They’re flush with confidence. Compared to novice players, for example, chess grandmasters are more likely to place undue value on one of their most precious assets, their ability to recall past moves. And NFL executives “routinely overestimate the abilities of their draft picks and pay above a talent-adjusted market wage.” The national security implication: “What looks like bombastic nationalistic pride—for example, the refusal of a leader to back down in the face of overwhelming odds of failure—might simply be the result of improper self-assessment.”

**Seasoned decision makers  
“are less prone to loss  
aversion, which makes them  
better gamblers.”**

But there are upsides even to this weakness. Confidence goes hand in hand with willpower, an indispensable element in international affairs. And, paradoxically, because of their lower fear of losses, elites appear to be more cooperative than others in game-playing experiments.

Elites aren't superhuman. Everyone has "the hardware needed for politically sophisticated tasks," Hafner-Burton and her colleagues note. Top decision makers just have the opportunity to cultivate them.

Indeed, the authors argue, the George W. Bush administration's dealings with North Korea between 2002 and 2006 show how such learning can occur. At first, the fledgling administration angrily and clumsily confronted North Korea about its nuclear program. Heedless of how Pyongyang might react, it abruptly cut off aid shipments of fuel. Kim Jong Il's regime responded by kicking international weapons inspectors out of the country, withdrawing from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and redoubling its efforts to build the Bomb.

No surprise, Hafner-Burton and her colleagues say. At the time, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had scant experience negotiating with Pyongyang. Showing signs of

loss aversion, "the Bush administration made its most aggressive move first and seemed to have no strategy for the next iterations."

Four years later, North Korea tested its first nuclear weapon. This time the White House used nimble diplomacy, enlisting China and other regional players to help, and North Korea agreed to gradually dismantle its nuclear facilities (though it later reneged). "In 2002 the heuristics were drawn from how parents deal with children throwing tantrums," the authors write, citing evidence from the memoirs of Bush administration officials. In 2006, the Bush team showed that it had quickly learned from experience.

There's plenty more to be learned about how experienced elites make decisions. "Unfortunately, experienced elites are difficult to obtain as subjects because they are generally busy, wary of clinical poking, and skittish about revealing information about their decision-making processes." ■

## ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## REAL-ESTATE SURVIVORS

**THE SOURCES:** “Do Real-Estate Brokers Add Value When Listing Services Are Unbundled?” by B. Douglas Bernheim and Jonathan Meer, in *Economic Inquiry*, April 2013, and “Why Redfin, Zillow, and Trulia Haven’t Killed Off Real-Estate Brokers” by Brad Stone, in *Bloomberg Businessweek*, March 7, 2013.

LIKE BEACHFRONT HOUSES LEFT UNTOUCHED by a hurricane that washes away their

neighbors, real-estate brokers have somehow survived the Web onslaught that has devastated travel agents and other middlemen. It’s one of the minor mysteries of the Internet age, deepened by the latest research of B. Douglas Bernheim and Jonathan Meer in *Economic Inquiry*. People who sell their houses through a broker, the two economists find, get 5.9 to 7.7 percent less than those who don’t.

Other researchers looking at the real-estate market have found similar evidence,



HBSS / CORBIS

Against all odds, real-estate agents are thriving.

Bernheim and Meer report. A 2008 study showed that when agents sold their *own* houses, the properties stayed on the market for nine days more than comparable homes and sold for four percent more. It's a classic manifestation of what economists call the "principal-agent" problem: Agents (not just in real estate) have incentives that don't always align with those of the principals they represent. Real-estate brokers, who bear the cost of marketing homes and showing customers around, have a strong incentive to close a deal quickly rather than wait for better offers.

## Real-estate brokers have somehow survived the Web onslaught.

Why do the vast majority of sellers still use real-estate agents? Bernheim and Meer suggest that people with a house to sell value the convenience or speed the brokers offer, or simply may be ignorant of what a broker's services will really cost them. Brad Stone, reporting in *Bloomberg Businessweek*, where he is a senior writer, gained some insight by looking at four Web-based companies that have entered the real-estate

business. Zillow, Trulia, and Realtor.com have thrived by offering users the ability to shop for homes online, but the companies play no part in transactions. Sellers still need to manage those themselves or sign up with an agent. A fourth Web-based firm, Redfin, has gone head to head with agents by offering cut-rate services. (Traditional broker commissions average more than five percent of the selling price.) It has struggled.

Zillow CEO Spencer Rascoff told Stone that "consumers don't really care about commissions. They say they care, and they talk a big game in the off-season. But when push comes to shove and it comes time to sell their home, the transaction is so infrequent and so highly emotional and expensive—and consumers are so prone to error—that they turn to a professional."

Bernheim and Meer don't think that's the only explanation. Ignorance is another. They point to an area where properties are not entered in the Multiple Listing Service, the broker-owned system that many realtors consider an indispensable marketing tool. The houses are in a California neighborhood in which homeownership is open only to faculty and staff of Stanford University, where Bernheim teaches. (Meer is on the faculty of Texas A & M.)

The properties are listed only through the Faculty Staff Housing Service, a Stanford entity. Even so, many sellers still engage real-estate agents. But after the two researchers circulated an early version of their findings in the neighborhood, “the fraction of sellers using brokers plummeted from 59.5 percent in 2006 to only 28.6 percent in 2007.” ■

## FAMILY MATTERS

**THE SOURCE:** “Career, Family, and the Well-Being of College-Educated Women” by Marianne Bertrand, in *American Economic Review*, May 2013.

DO AMERICAN WOMEN WITH BOTH A CAREER and a family really have it all?

Maybe. But they’re not necessarily smiling about it. Of 3,595 college-educated women polled as part of the General Social Survey, a biennial battery of questions posed to thousands of Americans, only 43 percent of those juggling family and careers reported “being very happy,” Marianne Bertrand, an economist at the University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business, writes in *American Economic Review*.

Forty-seven percent of the women who had families but were not pursuing careers said they were very happy,

according to the data, which were gathered in surveys administered between 1972 and 2010.

Things were worst for single women who had no career. Only 29 percent of them said they were very happy. A slightly larger proportion of single women with careers, 34 percent, characterized themselves in this way. (Bertrand classified a woman as having a career if her income ranked above the earnings of at least a quarter of college-educated men who were of a similar age and worked full-time.) But the greater happiness that resulted from having a career dwindled to insignificance after unmarried women turned 40, according to Bertrand’s calculations.

Family, which Bertrand defines as marriage with or without children, provides a lasting happiness boost. “The biggest premium to life satisfaction is associated with having a family,” she writes. “While there is also a life satisfaction premium associated with having a career, women do not seem to be able to ‘double up’ on these premiums.”

Wives with careers can find life trying. Drawing on self-reported mood levels of 1,482 women who took part in the 2010 American Time Use Survey, Bertrand found that women with both families and careers reported

being stressed, sad, and tired more frequently than married women without careers. Study participants with careers and families were also happy less often, according to data from diaries kept by the women.

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## **Forty-seven percent of the women who had families but were not pursuing careers said they were very happy.**

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But married women with jobs were more likely than their counterparts without jobs to report that their daily activities had meaning.

The data don't necessarily prove that family alone is the key to women's happiness, Bertrand writes. There may be

“systematic differences in personality traits” between married and unmarried women, “such as agreeableness or extraversion,” that influence well-being. And the disparity between married women who are employed and those who aren't may be related to “differences in their husband's work situation and income level.”

If married women who have jobs say they're not as “happy” as those who don't, Bertrand believes this may mean there is something wrong with the way we measure well-being. “Women may strive to ‘have it all’ because they predict it will improve on aspects of their life such as sense of purpose, sense of control, prestige, or social status, aspects of life which may not map well into current measures of happiness and emotions.” ■

## SOCIETY

## REJECTING RUIN PORN

**THE SOURCE:** “Decay and Resurrection” by Paul Dannels, in *Image*, Winter 2013.

IN A CORNER OF DETROIT’S EATON TOWER, A forsaken downtown high-rise, dentistry had never looked so derelict. The debris-covered patient chair, X-ray machine, and instrument table lay abandoned in a 20th-century time warp.

Photographers stumbled upon the

dentist office in the early 2000s. Web surfers lapped up the eerie images, along with scores of others from desolate parts of Detroit. Nothing catches the eye like ruins.

Writing in *Image*, Paul Dannels, an architect in Ann Arbor, Michigan, admits that the pictures can be arresting: “Grand ballrooms where dancers once twirled and courted are now shown reduced to lonely, haunted caverns. Vast, once productive industrial halls are depicted as empty cathedrals of rust.”



TIMOTHY FADEK / CORBIS

The derelict lobby of Detroit’s Lee Plaza Hotel made an eloquent statement about the city’s plight in 2009. But some buildings in the blighted city have found new life.

But the rubbernecking makes Dannels uneasy. “The aesthetic longing to gaze is too close to the less wholesome impulse to gawk,” he writes. “I find myself wanting to defend our cities from the indignity.”

In truth, abandoned buildings are seldom forgotten. “The provocateur engaging a ‘ruin’ with a camera may feel alone, but he isn’t,” Dannels says. “Practitioners of more settled disciplines are watching nearby as well: engineers, development specialists, code officials—and architects, too.”

Dannels is one of those behind-the-scenes guardians. He spends his days prospecting Detroit’s “abandoned historic buildings, poking into the darkness with a flashlight and sifting through debris-strewn floors in boots caked with damp plaster dust.” His job: to trace the source of a building’s deterioration and determine whether the structure can be saved. Investors and restorers ask Dannels for specifics: What would a rescue entail? What materials would it require?

There’s no shortage of huge sites for Dannels to assess. In Detroit’s manufacturing heyday, the Motor City’s belief in perpetual progress fueled an architectural arms race. “Manufacturers determined to outdo one another with their cars naturally sought to do the same with their facilities.”

**“The aesthetic longing to gaze is too close to the less wholesome impulse to gawk.”**

But now comes the reckoning. “The many Detroit buildings that lost tenants a generation ago find themselves facing a make-or-break second generation today.”

If they’re left unattended, nature commences the conquest of well-designed buildings in the blink of an eye. Trees sprout on rooftops in just a few years, their seeds carried there by wind and birds.

Dannels reckons it takes two generations for structures to succumb completely. “The buildings your parents remember from when they were your age, if neglected since then, are now at risk of being labeled ruins. And the buildings your grandparents remember, if similarly neglected, may be damaged beyond hope of being saved.”

Holes in the roof or windows seal a building’s fate. In come the elements, corroding steel and decaying wood. “When we allow water into our buildings, nature proceeds deftly about the business of reducing them to dust of a variety of sorts.”

That doesn't deter Dannels—or a wide range of others. “Skilled observers of all sorts recognize elements of value buried behind the rubble,” he writes. “The value may be economic, social, or cultural, but the watchful eyes of both commercial and civic interests are rarely unaware of opportunities in the shifting cityscape of potential.”

Eaton Tower, site of the deserted dentist office, is now a completely renovated apartment complex known as Broderick Tower. “To have once labeled Broderick Tower a ruin seems off the mark, though the building was certainly at risk,” Dannels concludes. “To an unfamiliar adventurer with a camera, it may have seemed lonely, abandoned, and forgotten, but it never lacked attention. Eventually, attention became care, and care kept at least this one piece of our history off of the path to dust.” ■

## OBESITY UP IN SMOKE

**THE SOURCE:** “The Making of the Obesity Epidemic” by Helen Lee, in *Breakthrough*, Spring 2013.

GREEDY PEDDLERS AND PRODUCERS OF FATTY food, beware: American public health advocates have declared war on obesity. Their battle plan: Ban Big Gulp sodas. Tax Oreos, Fritos, and other foods with empty calories. Most important,

shower low-income neighborhoods, where obesity is prevalent, with farmers' markets and supermarkets full of fresh fruits and vegetables.

It's a progressive foodie's dream. But Helen Lee, a researcher at the New York City-based social policy think tank MDRC, argues in *Breakthrough*, an online journal, that the antiobesity crusaders have adopted a flawed strategy. Public health experts are trying to fight fat the way they fought smoking—by blaming big business and unfavorable environments for a problem that, in reality, starts and ends with individual behavior.

The fat fighters warn that obesity is an epidemic, as if it were an infectious disease. Fudging definitions, they imply that some 60 percent of Americans are obese. The real rate is 34 percent.

Of that group, morbidly obese people run real health risks. But they constitute only four to six percent of the population. “For everyone else, obesity is not a disease but rather a risk factor.”

To rally public opposition to bloated waistlines, advocates consciously mimic the antitobacco model of the 1990s, under which activists attacked cigarette companies for preying on young consumers and blamed the industry for encouraging nicotine addiction.

The offensive of the 1990s barely moved the needle on the number of smokers in the United States, however. The rate dropped only six percentage points between 1990 and 2010.

Compare that with the impact of earlier antismoking campaigns. In the 1960s and '70s, the U.S. government put a huge dent in the percentage of Americans who smoked by limiting cigarette advertisements and waging a robust public education campaign on the dangers of smoking.

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**Taste buds, not an environment of hidden persuaders, are what draw poor people to food packed with fat, salt, and sugar.**

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But antiobesity campaigners decided to cast American eaters, specifically two demographics, as victims. “One was the innocent child, unable to resist the food industry’s predatory marketing tactics,” Lee writes. “The other was the low-income city dweller living in neighborhoods devoid of grocery stores and farmers’ markets in which the only dietary options were unhealthy ones.”

The victimhood narrative deprives people of agency. In reality, people shop where they want and eat what they please. “Most Americans, including the poor, typically travel beyond their neighborhoods to shop at the grocery stores associated with their class status,” Lee notes. Nor is it true that the poor can’t afford healthy foods; they choose not to buy them. “Lentils are as cheap as potatoes. Skim milk costs the same as whole milk.”

The poor don’t lack for supermarkets, either. Three recent studies, including one authored by Lee, “all found that low-income neighborhoods have at least as many and often more grocery stores and supermarkets than do wealthier communities.” More to the point, the studies “found no statistical relationship between the availability of healthy food . . . and lower risk of obesity development.”

Taste buds, not an environment of hidden persuaders, are what draw poor people to food packed with fat, salt, and sugar. “The poor choose their foods not mainly for their cheap prices and nutritional values, but for how good they taste,” write MIT economists Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo in *Poor Economics* (2011), their study of global poverty. They note that George Orwell made a similar point long ago in

*The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937): “When you are unemployed you don’t want to eat dull wholesome food. You want to eat something a little tasty. There is always some cheap pleasant thing to tempt you.”

Public health advocates dream of food bans—along the lines of smoking restrictions—that would eliminate such temptations. But it’s impossible to legislate sugary sodas and snacks full of empty calories out of existence.

What’s needed instead, Lee argues, is nothing less than the transformation of “larger life settings and socioeconomic circumstances that situate agency and habit setting.” People reshuffle their priorities and live healthier lives when they have access to education and good jobs. One way to jumpstart the process: Incorporate lessons on self-control and delayed gratification into school curricula, which can “show young people how to manage desires for unhealthy foods.”

Antiobesity advocates who ape anti-tobacco tactics overlook other basic differences between the two issues. While cigarettes are known to shave years off your life by causing lung cancer and other illnesses, the link between carrying a few extra pounds and bad health

is fuzzy at best. “So far there is scant evidence that being moderately overweight has serious health consequences,” Lee notes.

In contrast to lung cancer, the ailments caused by obesity—such as diabetes and hypertension—are highly treatable. The problem for the poor is affordability and access to care. Little wonder that wealthy and educated people who are obese have lower mortality rates than their poor counterparts.

Ailments aside, exercise may prove to be more important than body weight in determining your health. “Men who are lean and unfit appear to have higher mortality than men who are obese and fit,” Lee writes of recent research.

Some public health experts see exercise as a distraction from their battle to control the American diet. When Michelle Obama launched her Let’s Move program to encourage physical fitness, nutritionist Marion Nestle frostily accused the first lady of having “given up on encouraging food companies to make healthier products and stop marketing junk foods to kids.”

But Lee doubts that Americans will beat obesity if they don’t learn to get moving and get smarter about the food they eat. ■

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## COMING TO A PEW NEAR YOU

**THE SOURCE:** “Singing From One Book” by Mary Louise Bringle, in *The Christian Century*, May 15, 2013.

IF YOU’RE A CHURCHGOER WHO BELIEVES that Sunday worship would not be the same without your most cherished hymns, you may not sing hallelujah at the thought of new hymnals. After

all, the old music is still going strong. Hymns pass from generation to generation. On Christmas Eve, young and old belt out “O Come, All Ye Faithful” with scarcely an eye in the sanctuary turned toward a hymnbook.

But worshipers may soon find that they no longer know all the hymns by heart. That’s because it’s a “banner year” for new hymnbooks, writes Mary Louise Bringle, professor of religion at Brevard College in North Carolina and chair of the Presbyterian Committee on



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**Sing the good news: New hymnals are on the way.**

Congregational Song, in *Christian Century*. In 2013, two branches of the Reformed Church, as well as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), are rolling out new editions. (Bringle's Committee on Congregational Song compiled *Glory to God*, the new Presbyterian volume.) Several other Protestant churches overhauled hymnals recently: the two biggest Lutheran denominations in 2006 and the Southern Baptist Convention in 2008. GIA Publications, a publisher of hymnals for Catholic churches, issued new volumes in 2011.

What's behind the boom? For starters, many American churches now sing to the heavens with "praise choruses," which shatter the conventions of old-fashioned hymnody. Where traditional hymns feature different lyrical verses across musically identical stanzas, praise choruses circle back to simple lyrical refrains, many of them drawn directly from biblical passages, while varying the music by stanza. The first praise choruses were composed by Christians living in "Jesus communes" in the 1970s. The Christian hippies scandalized purists by jettisoning organists in favor of guitarists strumming basic chords. "While factionalism ensued—the infamous 'worship wars' in which some decried praise choruses as simplistic while

others denounced traditional hymns as stodgy—the resultant revolution in congregational song has been undeniable," Bringle writes.

But hymnals printed in the 20th century—each edition usually lasts decades—pay praise choruses little heed. Bringle says the new batch of hymnals rightly acknowledges the genre, even if the worship wars still simmer. "Congregations that prefer some blend of old and new stand to benefit from collections that contain the best of both worlds."

For the most part, the old hymnals also preceded the arrival of worship songs from outside the United States. In the past few decades, church music directors have been drawn to the sounds and driving rhythms of African, Latin American, and Asian Christian communities. It's about time American hymnals incorporate songs from the world church, Bringle says.

The latest hymnals reflect a boom in new hymns written in English, as well. Not since the middle of the 19th century have songwriters in the English-speaking world—especially the United States, Canada, England, Scotland, and New Zealand—written so many new compositions. The songs highlight less known biblical characters—does the Ethiopian eunuch ring a bell?—or allude to issues

such as aging that songwriters in earlier eras eschewed.

Even old classics need a makeover before they're printed in new hymnals. Teams of church theologians and musicians police lyrics for too many unnecessary references to God as male ("Father," "King," and "Lord" all qualify) or undue use of archaic terms such as "thee" and "ye." ("O Come, All Ye Faithful" evidently transcends this scrutiny.) Bringle says compromises are common. "This approach to diversity means that the next generation of hymnbooks will be eclectic and wide open to a criticism of inconsistency." Better that than undemocratic uniformity.

## Expect ample grumbling from people attached to old versions.

In an age when many congregations follow the words and music on overhead projections when singing hymns, should publishers still bother with printed hymnals? "Projection is ephemeral," Bringle counters; "a book is a more lasting artifact." Books don't malfunction or require technical assistance. They go places where screens

often can't: outdoors, on retreats, in Sunday school. The books themselves bring people together. "Couples or parents and children enjoy the intimacy of sharing the same physical object. An older person's fingers can point out words or notes to a younger person." And singing from a hymnal offers precious context. "Congregation members are not simply privy to the passages a worship leader has selected, whether in scripture or in song, but are exposed to the church's fuller repertoire," she writes. "They can encounter songs they know and love alongside ones they do not (or do not know yet)."

Happily, hymn publishers haven't abandoned print. They offer digital companions in addition to print volumes for congregations that use screens.

But will the revamped editions—replete with praise anthems, international tunes, and hymns partially scrubbed of anachronisms—be accepted? Expect ample grumbling from people attached to old versions, Bringle warns. Some congregants bristle at the idea of singing "foreign" songs, for example. Bringle calls on the faithful to put aside their reservations "in order to sing the heart songs of our neighbors, freshly available to us in new hymnals—even when the old ones have worn so well." ■

# PLANET OF THE NEO-DARWINISTS

**THE SOURCE:** “The Heretic” by Andrew Ferguson, in *The Weekly Standard*, March 25, 2013.

EVERYTHING YOU SEE AND HEAR IS FAKE. The blue of the sea and the angelic notes of a church choir do not exist. Those sensations are figments of our “manifest image”—the flawed version of reality handed to us by our senses. We perceive patterns of light as colors, and vibrations as sounds, because those adaptations have maximized our chances of survival over hundreds of thousands of years.

So goes the open-and-shut logic of neo-Darwinian materialism, the metatheory held by top philosophers and scientists such as the biologist Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion* and *The Selfish Gene*, Tufts University philosopher Daniel Dennett, and Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker.

Materialists acknowledge the existence of measurable phenomena that are subject to the laws of physics. To Dawkins and likeminded thinkers, everything else—color, sound, free will, consciousness, your distinct sense of self when you see your reflection in the mirror—is bunk, and human beings are nothing more than “molecules

in motion,” explains Andrew Ferguson, a critic of neo-Darwinism, in *The Weekly Standard*.

In 2012, Thomas Nagel dared to question his sure-minded colleagues. The venerated American philosopher argued that neo-Darwinists can’t account for basic elements of existence such as human reasoning and morality. “There is little or no possibility,” Nagel wrote in his bombshell tome *Mind and Cosmos*, “that these facts depend on nothing but the laws of physics.”

Howls of protest erupted in philosophy departments and laboratories across the land. “What has gotten into Thomas Nagel?” Steven Pinker wailed on Twitter, decrying “the shoddy reasoning of a once-great thinker.” The economist Brad DeLong scoffed that “Thomas Nagel is not smarter than we are.” The *Philosophers’ Magazine* called Nagel’s publisher, Oxford University Press, “irresponsible” for even bringing the book out.

Once a darling of progressive intellectuals, Nagel had all but committed treason. “It is simply taken for granted,” Ferguson explains, “that by attacking naturalism”—which falls under the broader umbrella of neo-Darwinism—“Thomas Nagel has rendered himself an embarrassment to his colleagues and a traitor to his class.”

Nagel insists that neo-Darwinism just doesn't add up. Take human brainpower. The ability to write a symphony or solve complex equations offered no distinct advantages when humans first walked the African savannah. What evolutionary purpose, for that matter, could the ability to ruminate on the meaning of life—whether around a caveman's fire or in today's ivory tower—possibly serve? As Ferguson, a senior editor at the *Standard*, puts it, "The conscious brain that is able to come up with neo-Darwinism as a universal explanation simultaneously makes neo-Darwinism, as a universal explanation, exceedingly unlikely."

**"Thomas Nagel has rendered himself an embarrassment to his colleagues and a traitor to his class."**

The same goes for humans' nuanced sense of morality. It often contradicts basic survival instincts, so how could it have resulted from natural selection?

The neo-Darwinian camp maintains that morality does not exist anyway. Moral judgments are, in Ferguson's words, "useful tricks human beings have learned to play on ourselves."

Neo-Darwinian materialism serves science well in some respects. "Materialism has allowed us to predict and control what happens in nature with astonishing success," Ferguson notes. "But the success has gone to the materialists' heads. From a fruitful method, materialism becomes an axiom: If science can't quantify something, it doesn't exist." The philosopher Edward Feser, one of Nagel's rare defenders, says it's as if somebody concluded that because metal detectors are terrific at finding coins, they tell us everything we need to know about metallic objects. That leaves out a lot, including their size, shape, weight, and color.

Why have scientists and philosophers taken materialism to such extremes? "The priority given to evolutionary naturalism in the face of its implausible conclusions," Nagel states, "is due, I think, to the secular consensus that this is the only form of external understanding of ourselves that provides an alternative to theism."

Nagel, himself an avowed atheist, believes that there is a way to understand existence while avoiding both God and the absurd strictures of neo-Darwinian materialism. Maybe matter was somehow predisposed to producing beings with consciousness.

Ferguson thinks Nagel fails in his attempt to stake out such a position. But he hails the heretic's pluck in the face of his appalled colleagues' reaction.

“There's no doubting the honesty and intellectual courage—the free thinking and ennobling good faith—that shine through his attempt.” ■

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

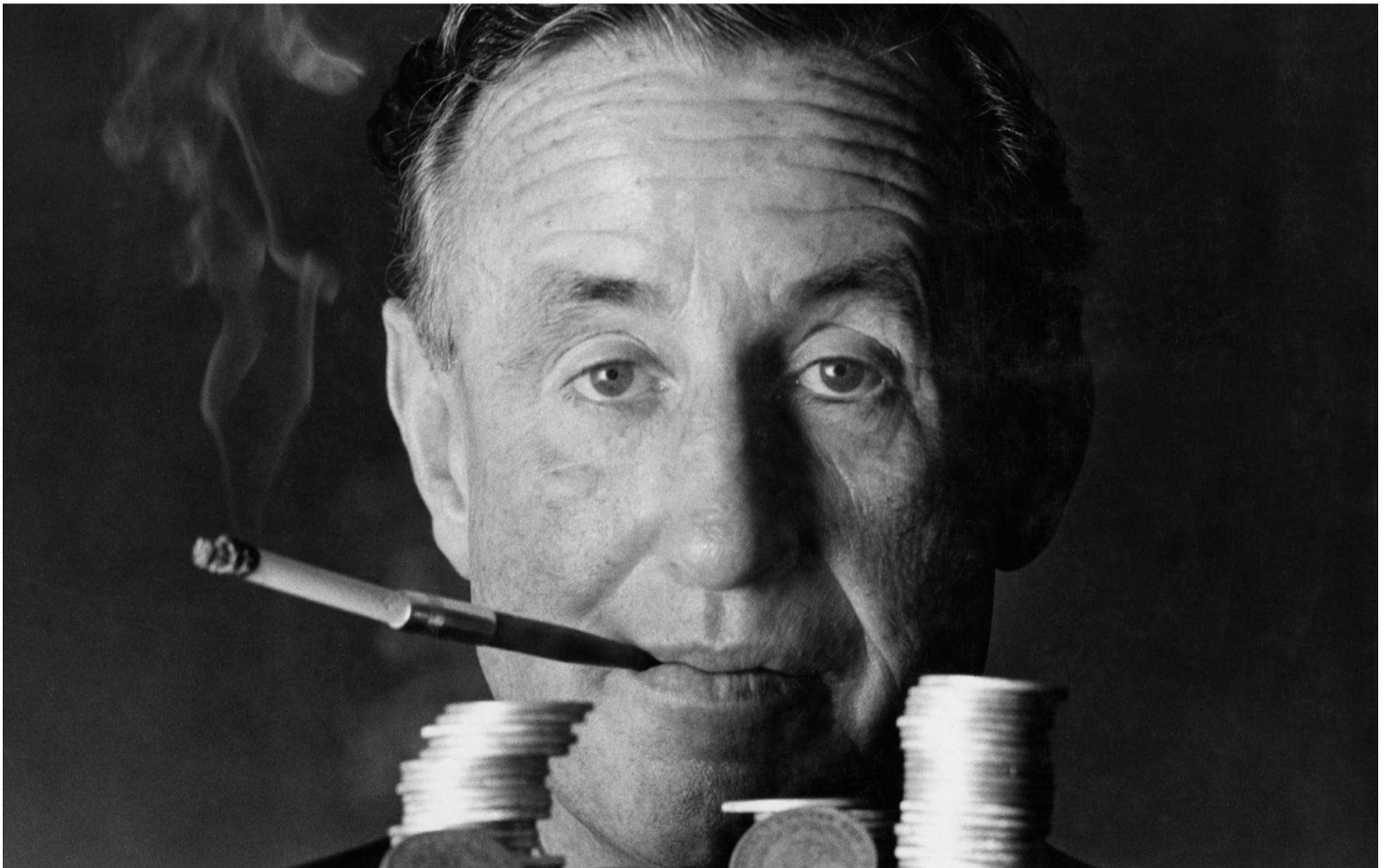
## THE CIA'S FAVORITE NOVELIST

**THE SOURCE:** "Ian Fleming and the Public Profile of the CIA" by Christopher Moran, in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Winter 2013.

BRITISH SUPERSPY JAMES BOND IS IN A BAD way. He's out of chips in a crucial game of baccarat against le Chiffre, the Soviet agent in France. Will a bad guy best the free world?

Not if the CIA can help it. Agency man Felix Leiter swoops in with a wad of cash and a note to 007: "Marshall Aid. Thirty-two millions francs. With compliments of the U.S.A."

For many American readers of *Casino Royale* (1953), Ian Fleming's debut Bond novel, this was the first time they'd heard much of anything about the Central Intelligence Agency. Journalists did not dare pull back the veil of secrecy surrounding the organization, established in 1947 as part of the National Security



HOWELL CONANT / BOB ADELMAN BOOKS, INC. / CORBIS

Ian Fleming pierced the veil of secrecy surrounding the CIA. Legendary Agency director Allen Dulles nonetheless admired the eccentric British novelist. At a gathering in London in 1959, a year after this photo was taken, Dulles had "quite a night of it" exchanging espionage tips with Fleming, who served in British intelligence during World War II.

Act. Even to utter its name on television required permission—and the CIA never granted it.

That didn't stop Fleming (1908–1964), the British novelist and former intelligence officer who wrote his 14 smash-hit Bond books outside the United States. Fleming “could say what he liked about the agency,” writes Christopher Moran in the *Journal of Cold War Studies*. “The Official Secrets Act in Britain prevented him from mentioning explicitly that James Bond, his hero, worked for the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), but nothing prevented him from linking Leiter, the American sidekick, to the CIA.”

So it was that for the first 25 years of the CIA's existence Fleming almost singlehandedly shaped the popular perception of America's spy agency. “In the main, his depiction was positive,” Moran judges. Fleming won powerful American friends and fans in the process, including President John F. Kennedy and his family.

The Bond series, which was published between 1953 and 1964 and has sold more than 100 million copies to date, paints American spies as courageous cold warriors, if a bit clumsy. (The first Bond film, *Dr. No*, appeared in 1963 and was based on the 1958 novel.)

Felix Leiter is a consummate professional: cool under pressure, hard as nails, and fiercely patriotic. Leiter's CIA, while always playing second fiddle to Bond and the British, receives treatment a spin doctor would envy. “In Fleming's hands, the CIA is shown to be a force for good in a dangerous world,” explains Moran, a professor of U.S. national security at the University of Warwick in England. That picture stands in contrast to portrayals by later spy novelists, such as John le Carré, the Briton who has depicted Agency men as paranoid and amoral.

**“In Fleming's hands, the CIA is shown to be a force for good in a dangerous world.”**

Why all the warm feelings from Bond's creator? As personal assistant to the director of British Naval Intelligence during World War II, Fleming developed a “genuine fondness” for American spooks. On trips to the United States during the war, he witnessed British and American spies working side by side at British Security Coordination, a New York-based outfit set up by UK intelligence “to combat Nazi propaganda and

to gain the sympathies and cooperation of the U.S. public.”

In Washington, Fleming left a deep impression on General William J. Donovan, the redoubtable head of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the CIA’s predecessor. The legendary “Wild Bill” was “captivated by Fleming’s high spirits, lively tongue, and unorthodox methods, seeing him as an exemplar of the swashbuckling and slightly eccentric British secret service tradition.” Fleming played the part. He traveled to the States wearing a commando fighting knife and packing “a fountain pen loaded with a cyanide cartridge.” Donovan reportedly asked the future novelist to help draw up plans for a postwar spy agency (what would become the CIA), and later presented Fleming with a .38 Colt revolver. The inscription: “For Special Services.”

Fleming returned the favor by using Donovan’s hard-charging personality as his model for the fictional Leiter, a “tough and cruel fighter” who entered Agency service out of the U.S. Marine Corps.

It was an apt portrait. During the 1950s and ’60s—the “golden age” of CIA covert action, when neither Congress nor the press pried into the spy

service’s doings—Agency operatives hopscotched the globe on daring—and sometimes dubious—missions.

## CIA director Allen Dulles couldn’t get enough of Bond.

But Fleming stuck to a feel-good script. “No mention is made of intelligence failures, nor does Fleming discuss any ‘dirty tricks’—assassination plots, experiments with mind control, and coups against democratically elected leaders.

Little wonder that Allen Dulles, director of the CIA from 1953 to 1961, couldn’t get enough of Bond. In 1957, he received a copy of *From Russia With Love*, published that year, from Jacqueline Kennedy—John and Robert Kennedy were huge Bond fans. Dulles, an OSS veteran, sang Bond’s praises in the press and in retirement attended debuts of the film adaptations. In 1959, British spies arranged for Dulles to meet Fleming in London. Fleming dazzled Dulles with his wit and imagination, especially on the subject of spy gadgetry. Back at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, Dulles leaned on his underlings “to replicate as many of Bond’s devices as they could.”

The two men struck up a profitable friendship. Fleming sent Dulles signed Bond books. Dulles, who resigned from the Agency in 1961 in the wake of the Bay of Pigs disaster, sent Fleming an early draft of his memoir, *The Craft of Intelligence* (1963). In turn, Fleming included an increasing number of flattering allusions to the CIA in his novels. In *The Man With the Golden Gun* (1965), Bond convalesces from a fight thusly: “sitting in his chair, a towel round his waist, reading Allen Dulles’s *The Craft of Intelligence*.” And Fleming benefited handsomely when Dulles talked up 007, as he did at a 1963 meeting of the American Booksellers Association.

Despite his affinity for Americans, Fleming stayed true to his British roots. The Bond novels leave no doubt that Her Majesty’s Secret Intelligence Service plays the game better than anyone. The CIA provides funds and logistics while 007 outsmarts and out-fights the Soviets. In *Casino Royale*, it’s Bond who is tasked with cleaning out le Chiffre, even though this “should have been a problem for the French or for the Americans to deal with,” according to Moran. Though Leiter saves Bond from baccarat bankruptcy, he spends most of the novel attending to less

glamorous chores, “such as completing the necessary paperwork for back home,” Moran writes.

In *Live and Let Die* (1954), Felix snoops around without Bond’s guiding hand and makes a fool of himself. Instead of seducing women and cultivating local agents, as 007 does, Felix relies on paid informants for intelligence and winds up getting captured. Fed to a shark, he barely escapes with his life. Fleming drives the message home in *Diamonds Are Forever* (1956). “Whereas Bond—the Briton—appears impeccably attired and athletic, radiating sex appeal, Leiter uses crutches, walks with a limp, and wears a prosthetic hook,” Moran writes.

In reality, the British were the ones limping. Smarting from colonial losses and financial problems at home, SIS could hardly keep up with the Americans. “In real life the CIA was *primus inter pares*,” Moran observes. “SIS was impecunious, operationally more cautious, and incapable of matching the resources of its closest collaborator.”

Fleming’s depiction of Anglo-American bonhomie also misses the mark. CIA men, including Dulles, saw SIS as overly class conscious and susceptible to Soviet infiltration. One American spy of the era said the CIA viewed its British counterparts as a “bunch of supercilious

snobs” who wouldn’t protect the goods. “Don’t tell the bastards anything,” the refrain went.

Yet the Yanks couldn’t shake their affinity for Fleming. In a 1961 story for *Life*, John Kennedy put *From Russia With Love* on a list of his 10 favorite books. At a Georgetown dinner party, Kennedy, then a presidential candidate, enthusiastically sought Fleming’s input on how to depose Cuba’s Fidel Castro. The novelist shot from the hip, mentioning harebrained schemes to humiliate Castro and convince Cubans of divine opposition to his regime. Kennedy laughed at the suggestions. But Dulles, who caught wind of Fleming’s musings, seized on them. The CIA’s campaign to topple Castro, Operation Mongoose, included stunts that bore a resemblance to some of Fleming’s ideas. The British novelist with a wild imagination “may have played a part in

encouraging the CIA down the path of fantasy,” Moran ventures.

Whatever else Fleming did, he warmed a reticent CIA up to the idea of good PR. “There are tantalizing hints, albeit nothing conclusive, that by the early 1960s the CIA was directly trying to influence Fleming’s coverage of the agency.” In 1961, Fleming told a *New York Times* journalist that Dulles’s “organization and staff have always cooperated so willingly with James Bond.”

Langley left everyone else in the dark. The CIA didn’t open up to mass media until the 1970s and ’80s, when “ugly revelations—amplified and distorted at the hands of novelists and filmmakers—convinced a new generation of intelligence officials that the CIA had an image problem and that popular culture could help.” But once upon a time, Bond had been all the Agency needed. ■

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

# WHERE HAVE ALL THE UFOS GONE?

**THE SOURCE:** “Seeing and Believing” by Stuart Walton, in *Aeon Magazine*, April 5, 2013.

ONE SUMMER NIGHT IN 1981, STUART Walton watched a flying saucer hover in the sky outside his bedroom window. He saw “a strikingly large craft of some kind, flattish but with rounded edges.” Pulsing with white lights, the ship moved back and forth before disappearing into a cloud.

Such sightings were common enough that for years a British military unit investigated reports of unidentified flying objects (UFOs). But the investigations came to nothing. People were usually seeing car headlights, weather balloons, and Frisbees—not flying saucers. In 2009, the British government shuttered the UFO outfit. And over the years, reports of the extraterrestrial and the supernatural—spacecraft, ghosts, and spirits—have dwindled.

Have the aliens gone home? Are we less gullible than we used to be?



MIKE AGLIOLO / CORBIS

Seen a UFO lately? Report it to the 3,000-member Mutual UFO Network, a Cincinnati, Ohio-based nonprofit dedicated to “resolving the scientific enigma known collectively as unidentified flying objects,” according to its Web site. But the heyday of spooky sightings has passed.

If UFOs still lurk, people are too jaded to notice them, argues Walton, a British author writing in *Aeon Magazine*. Commercial spectacles have made cynics of all of us, dulling our senses of wonder and awe. “In previous centuries, what was visually remarkable stood for the otherworldly, the spiritual.” But now we see dazzling sights every day. Instead of evoking the divine or the unseen, spectacles entice us to buy toothpaste, thrill us in the theater, or beckon us to click the “Like” button.

**Instead of evoking the divine or the unseen, spectacles now entice us to buy toothpaste.**

Much of what we’re bombarded with is pure fantasy. Advertisers paint spectacular worlds of consumer bliss. People cope by embracing blanket disbelief. In 1896, some audiences at the first movie projections fled theaters when a train seemed to bear down on them from the screen. Now we know better than to trust our senses. We treat everything—from Hollywood special effects to incredible YouTube videos to strange phenomena observed late at night—with an “incurious skepticism.”

Even as technology improves our ability to document our surroundings, people keep their eyes peeled for fakery. The moon landings were staged, they say. A camera crew and a movie set are all it would take. “We now extend the same degree of undifferentiating refusal even to those phenomena that, while hard to credit, deserve to be heeded,” Walton writes. “Climate change might be the most obvious current instance, but, at its most noxious, skepticism results in an unwillingness to believe in others’ suffering. The attitude of wholesale rejection, by which one might stand a chance of becoming impervious to fraud, is thus bought at the ever greater risk of nihilism.”

Walton yearns for the time when people were more attuned to wonder. “The baroque façades and soaring spires of cathedrals, the carmines and cobalts of stained-glass windows with the sun streaming through them, devotional processions and carnival parades, gargoyles, misericords, miraculous relics—all attested that there was an intangible reality beyond the physical one, a reality that could at most be suggestively delineated in extraordinary sights.”

Today, in a society “entirely mortgaged to the secular spectacular,” the other reality is lost. “The visible and the

invisible, the material and the spiritual, the phenomenal and the noumenal are no longer the distinct realms they once were. They have become mutually permeable to their mutual diminishment.”

Walton remains a believer in that other realm. Several years ago, he watched a documentary on the decline in UFO sightings in Britain. “One man had seen a mysterious object in the sky,” Walton writes of a witness in the documentary. “He had drawn a sketch of [the UFO] soon after. Hearteningly enough, it was identical to mine.” ■

## PRACTICE ISN'T EVERYTHING

**THE SOURCE:** “Deliberate Practice: Is That All It Takes to Become an Expert?” by David Z. Hambrick, Frederick L. Oswald, Erik M. Altmann, Elizabeth J. Meinz, Fernand Gobet, and Guillermo Campitelli, in *Intelligence*, May 15, 2013.

WANT TO GIVE MASTER CELLIST YO-YO MA a run for his money? Practice the cello for 10,000 hours.

Such is the straightforward but grueling path to becoming an expert performer, according to a landmark 1993 study by Swedish psychologist K. Anders Ericsson and two colleagues, Ralf Krampe and Clemens Tesch-Romer. They found that the best violinists and pianists at a German music academy had

tallied an average of more than 10,000 hours of practice before they turned 20. Lesser players weren't as dedicated. Practice time, not innate talent, sets extraordinary performers apart, Ericsson and company concluded.

The world seized on the study as evidence that expert achievement is open to all: Work hard enough on the piano, and you'll have a shot at Carnegie Hall. Superstar writer Malcolm Gladwell gushed in his bestseller *Outliers* (2008) that “ten thousand hours is the magic number of greatness.” He claimed that the formula helped explain the success of people as diverse in their talents as the Beatles and Bill Gates.

Critics have lambasted the theory. What about the hard-working strivers who fall short, and the prodigiously talented people who practice less but shine anyway? Now the doubters have data to back them up.

Michigan State University psychology professor David Z. Hambrick and five other psychologists sifted through data from 14 studies of performers—six of chess players and eight of musicians. Writing in *Intelligence*, the authors report that a full quarter of the master chess players they examined achieved elite status after only 7,500 hours of practice. And more than 20 percent

of the best players made even quicker work of the process, becoming masters in 5,000 hours or fewer. Meanwhile, a sizable contingent of lower-ranked players trudged through more than 10,000 hours in the company of pawns and kings without making the grade. “Some people require much less deliberate practice than other people to reach an elite level of performance in chess,” Hambrick and his colleagues explain. Overall, differences in lifetime practice totals accounted for only 34 percent of the variation between players of different skill levels.

The 10,000-hour theory—a period of time roughly equivalent to 10 years of formal training, according to Ericsson—also fell flat in musical performance. Data published in 1993 by Ericsson and his colleagues actually underscore the point, Hambrick and his coauthors say. While the best pianists at the German music academy had indeed all logged at least 10,000 hours of practice, some practiced as many as 30,000 hours before they attained keyboard perfection.

What explains such disparities? Previous studies have shown that chess players who begin training at a younger age have a leg up on competitors, regardless of practice time. Likewise, many legendary classical composers started writing

music at a young age and made their first contributions to the field more quickly than peers who started later. “There may be a critical period for acquiring complex skills just as there may be for acquiring language,” the authors note.

## The 10,000-hour theory fell flat.

Smarts count, too. Multiple studies have shown that musicians with exceptional working-memory capacities and high IQs outshine their peers. According to a 1992 study, outstanding young chess players also have high IQs.

Grit and passion can still pay off, of course. One chess player in the 2007 study persisted for 26 years before reaching master status, even as another player in the same study became a master in a mere two years.

Hambrick and company don’t mean to crush anyone’s dreams. They want people to be realistic about what’s possible given their talents. Ten thousand hours of toil may not put you on par with the masters. But if people assess their prospects and abilities with open eyes, “they may gravitate toward domains in which they have a realistic chance of becoming an expert.” ■

# BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU “LIKE”

**THE SOURCE:** “Private Traits and Attributes Are Predictable From Digital Records of Human Behavior” by Michal Kosinski, David Stillwell, and Thore Graepel, in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, March 11, 2013.

YOUR SPARSE FACEBOOK PROFILE ISN'T protecting your privacy as much as you think. Those innocuous “Likes”—your favorite TV show, athlete, or potato chip—may open a bigger window on your personal life than you probably intended. Liking Harley-Davidson motorcycles pegs you as a white American of below-average intelligence. Your obsession with Hello Kitty may give away your political leanings: Fans of the cat are more likely to vote Democratic.

In a study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, psychologists Michal Kosinski and David Stillwell of Cambridge University and Microsoft computer scientist Thore Graepel recruited more than 58,000 volunteers from Facebook and compiled background information on each. Then they set out to find connections among various Likes—a median of 68 per user—and particular traits.

Distinguishing between white and black and male and female users was

easy work for the researchers' model. It correctly determined users' race in 95 percent of cases and their gender in 93 percent. More than eight out of every 10 users' political party and religious affiliation could be forecast. About three-quarters of the time, the model correctly predicted if the user smoked cigarettes or drank alcohol.

People seldom realize what their Likes reveal. The researchers found that less than five percent of gay users liked a group or statement with an obvious connection to homosexuality, such as “Gay Marriage.” But liking pages such as *Desperate Housewives* or the musical *Wicked* correctly tipped off the researchers to male users' homosexuality 88 percent of the time. Only gender and ethnicity were better predicted. The model also found a strong correlation between high intelligence and liking a handful of seemingly random things such as “Curly Fries,” but it would probably take one of those *frites*-loving geniuses to unravel the connection.

Kosinski, Stillwell, and Graepel were least successful in forecasting whether users' parents had split up during their childhood, failing 40 percent of the time. The Likes that were strong predictors—statements such as “When Ur Single, All U See Is Happy Couples

N Wen Ur in A Relationship All U See Is Happy Singles”—showed that these users exhibited an unusually strong interest in relationships.

**Researchers found a strong correlation between high intelligence and liking a handful of seemingly random things such as “Curly Fries.”**

Kosinski and his colleagues used voluntarily submitted data, but (depending on a user’s privacy settings) Likes are freely available to others on Facebook, including people whose intentions

may not always be as benign as those of these researchers. And much more data can be mined from Facebook and other sources, from browsing history to purchase records. There’s a potential for good here, the authors say, in improving such things as customer service and users’ online experience. But the new prediction techniques could also be used in ways that threatened individuals’ “well-being, freedom, or even life.”

If people feel exposed and endangered, caution the authors, they may back away from technology. Balancing “the promises and perils of the Digital Age” requires transparency and giving individuals control of their own information. ■

## OTHER NATIONS

## PROTEAN MOSCOW

**THE SOURCE:** “Irrepressible Moscow” by Paul Starobin, in *City Journal*, Winter 2013.

**MOSCOW DOES NOT INSPIRE INDIFFERENCE:** You either love it or hate it. In the 18th century, Catherine the Great called it the “seat of sloth” and complained that the city was “full of symbols of fanaticism, churches . . . and convents, side by side with thieves and brigands.” Konstantin Batyushkov, a 19th-century poet, praised Moscow as “marvelous, outrageous,

gigantic.” Leo Tolstoy fell into both camps, describing it as “a collection of robbers,” yet writing in *War and Peace* that “every Russian looking at Moscow feels her to be a mother.”

In *City Journal*, Paul Starobin, a former foreign correspondent who has lived and worked in Moscow, notes that even now, when “Moscow is subject to more Kremlin control than any other place in Russia . . . [it] is the cradle of the country’s street protests.” Muscovites launched the revolts that dissolved the Soviet Union, after all, and recently, “political theater has at times approached



TRETYAKOV GALLERY, MOSCOW, RUSSIA / THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

Depicted here in *Red Square, Moscow, 1801* by Fedor Yakovlevich Alekseev, the *Krasnaya Ploshchad*, as Russians call it, did not get its name from the Communist Party or the color of its bricks. Though *krasnaya* now translates to “red,” it originally meant “beautiful.”

an art form.” This is where the punk rock band Pussy Riot staged its protest against Vladimir Putin last year—in the rebuilt Cathedral of Christ the Savior.

Starobin says such contradictions, and all of Moscow’s “flamboyant, jarring disharmonies,” not only define the city, but also give Moscow its “near-indestructibility . . . as an organic life-form.”

## Moscow has survived invasions by Mongols, France, and Germany, as well as draconian campaigns of urban renewal waged by its own overlords.

The city has survived invasions by Mongols (in the 14th century), France (in the 19th), and Germany (in the 20th), as well as draconian campaigns of urban renewal waged by its own overlords. In the early 18th century, Peter the Great managed to get rid of the markets of Red Square, which “reeked of sour beer, grease, and undrained cesspools . . . [but] couldn’t realize his larger ambition to remake Moscow.” Instead, he built a new city, Saint Petersburg, from scratch. With orderly, European-style urban

planning and a westward outlook, the new capital grew into Russia’s second-largest city and its cultural capital. But Moscow retained its unique dynamism and, in 1918, reclaimed its role as the national capital.

After Joseph Stalin’s rise to power, the Soviets also attempted to reshape Moscow—a city founded by Russian Orthodox princes—in their image. “Rote destruction was their method, and religious Moscow suffered most,” Starobin writes. “Still, like Peter before him, Stalin couldn’t forge [the city] into a uniform type.” In a Stalin-era subway station, Revolutionary Square, passengers rub the sculpture of a guard dog on the nose for good luck. A monument to modern, scientific socialism has become an object of superstition.

Today, Moscow boasts an official population of 12 million, though if you include the steady stream of migrants from the Russian periphery, the number is closer to 17 million. Some Muscovites fear for the city’s ability to handle its migrant workers, but, Starobin says, it has a long history of assimilating newcomers. Indeed, in 2011 police revealed that some Central Asian immigrants had given a new twist to the city’s oldest tradition: mixing past and present. More than 100 factory workers had constructed a town

of sorts in a Soviet-era bomb shelter, complete with “bathrooms, bedrooms, and even prayer rooms.”

Perhaps Moscow’s stubborn juxtaposition of past and present, good and bad, presents a “cheerful lesson,” Starobin argues. “If today’s Moscow were razed (as early Moscow was by fire, on several occasions), it would likely come back along similar lines, so resilient is its urban DNA.” ■

## JUMPED UP IN PYONGYANG

**THE SOURCE:** “A New Face of North Korean Drug Use” by Andrei Lankov and Seok-hyang Kim, in *North Korean Review*, Spring 2013

IF YOU LIVE IN NORTH KOREA, YOU SHOULDN’T be reading this. You get your news from a pre-set state radio installed in your home. Party propaganda serves to remind you: The state is always watching.

Or is it? North Koreans evince less concern about the police state than they used to. They flout the rules in all sorts of ways, such as tuning in to foreign news shows on shortwave radios and enjoying South Korean soap operas on pirated DVDs. They even have the temerity to try illicit drugs—and get hooked on them.

That’s right, defectors from the Hermit

Kingdom say the country is caught up in a methamphetamine epidemic, report Andrei Lankov, a historian at Kookmin University in Seoul, and Seok-hyang Kim, a sociologist at Ewha Womans University, also in Seoul, in *North Korean Review*.

North Korea is no stranger to dope. For years, the state specialized in the export of illegal drugs. The communist regime in Pyongyang cultivated opium on plantations and churned out potent methamphetamines at government-run pharmaceutical plants. It was a quick, if unsavory, way to fill the Dear Leader’s coffers.

But in the early 2000s, for reasons unknown, Pyongyang sharply curtailed drug production. Scientists and technicians who had fueled the operation lost their jobs. “Private entrepreneurs began to look for such people and give them money” to manufacture drugs, a North Korean defector recounts.

From being virtually unheard of before 2004 or 2005, methamphetamine use among North Koreans suddenly caught on in the regions around the shuttered pharmaceutical plants. According to interviews with 21 North Korean defectors, the drug hasn’t stopped spreading since. “It seems that the epidemic has reached remarkable proportions and

keeps growing, engulfing new social groups and new regions,” Lankov and Kim write.

The authors say the meth craze followed the pattern set by drug epidemics elsewhere. First, a conspicuous elite glamorizes use of the drug. Then the masses scramble to get in on the action.

In North Korea, Communist Party officials were the first to dabble in the highly addictive synthetic stimulant. “Police officers, state security officers, party cadres, administrative officials, they all had their [supply] lines, and they spread it among their friends,” a defector remembers.

State bigwigs excused their habits by claiming that they needed an extra pick-me-up to cope with stress and long hours at work. Officials seduced women by flaunting their ability to get their hands on the drug. Some high-end restaurants even offered methamphetamine as post-prandial fare, “as if it were a dessert or a cup of coffee,” Lankov and Kim marvel. North Koreans reported that the drug offered all sorts of health benefits, such as curing back pain and resuscitating stroke victims. Following Western drug slang, they called the miracle powder “orum” (“ice” in Korean) or “pingdu,” a Korean rendering of the Chinese word for ice.

Thanks to the rave reviews, meth use soon percolated from apparatchiks to others. One defector who had been a construction worker in North Korea recalls that “some 70 percent” of his male coworkers in their twenties used the drug. Other interviewees, most of whom hail from the province of North Hamgyong, which borders China, speak of “extremely wide use of methamphetamine, often claiming that—at least in the borderland areas—the majority of younger North Koreans have sampled the drug,” Lankov and Kim report, though they think that these estimates, while indicative, are exaggerated.

## The all-seeing surveillance state isn't what it used to be.

North Koreans produce ice by processing ephedrine—just as their counterparts in the United States do. Manufacturers set up labs in idle factories, of which there are many, and other out-of-the-way places. The ephedrine is smuggled from China, courtesy of Chinese gangs. Formerly, the drug was often smuggled back into China and sometimes made its way to South Korea, but now most of it is consumed domestically.

The epidemic coincides with the withering of a North Korean government beset by corruption and criminality. The all-seeing surveillance state isn't what it used to be; its drug policies are "inept and inactive." Enterprising North Koreans run "booming if unofficial private manufacturing and commerce" operations. While foreign trade companies are ostensibly owned by the state, Lankov and Kim say that their fat-cat executives are the "de facto owners." The same is true of restaurants.

As for the drug itself, the honeymoon is over. North Koreans use the word "munlan" to describe the ravaged state that comes of long-term methamphetamine abuse. Those who fled before 2008 have never even heard the term.

Pyongyang has apparently tried to crack down on meth dealers by slapping them with two-year prison sentences. In a land where dissidents end up in the gulag, that's hardly a stiff penalty.

Lankov and Kim paint a dark picture of the North Korean future. In addition to widespread malnutrition and "the disintegration of the public health system," the country now faces a drug epidemic that "will further aggravate the already horrendous situation" in the next few years. ■

## CHINA'S MEDICAL MAYHEM

**THE SOURCE:** "Malpractice Mobs: Medical Dispute Resolution in China" by Benjamin L. Liebman, in *Columbia Law Review*, Jan. 2013.

IN SHANGHAI, ANGRY RELATIVES OF A patient who died at a local hospital in 2011 (after doctors allegedly denied treatment) vented their fury by stabbing 10 doctors. In another incident, in Nanchang, a patient death touched off a pitched battle that involved scores of people and left 15 injured.

According to official data from the Chinese Ministry of Health, nearly 10,000 "grave incidents" surrounding medical disputes occurred in 2006, injuring more than 5,000 hospital employees and causing some \$25 million in property damage. Scattered data and anecdotal evidence suggest that those numbers have been rising rapidly in recent years. Police have fled protestors out of fear for their own safety, hospitals have issued bulletproof vests to their employees, and one military hospital installed televisions with "photos of sexy nurses" to "ease the nervous atmosphere."

Changes in China's health care policies are one cause of the new conflicts, writes Benjamin L. Liebman, a law professor at Columbia Law School, in *Columbia*

## Some hospitals have issued bulletproof vests to their employees.

*Law Review.* Under Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, Beijing expanded the number of people with health care coverage but reduced the benefits. Chinese citizens now pay more than 60 percent of their medical expenses out of pocket. Meanwhile, suffering a dearth of government funding, hospitals have become desperate to turn a profit and increasingly unable to provide adequate medical care. Doctors routinely overcharge for basic exams, prescribe unnecessary and expensive medications, and accept bribes from drug companies.

Since patients and their families are paying from their own funds, and frequently receive unduly optimistic information about illnesses and injuries, they expect nothing less than a full recovery. In addition, media coverage of hospital corruption breeds distrust of the system.

Liebman compared medical malpractice disputes from within and without the court system, studying how Chinese lawyers and judges operate under a Communist Party regime that often distrusts them. "Disputes are resolved

not in the shadow of the law, but through micromanagement by the state in the shadow of protest," he observes. "Party-state officials appear unwilling to let go of this role, particularly in a time of rapid change."

"Hospitals settle the overwhelming majority of cases, generally more than 90 percent," he says, and the payouts tend toward the generous. "Settlements are often made with little regard to legal provisions and often exceed the amounts that would be payable in court." In 2009 the average damages awarded in one municipality was about \$7,500, not an insignificant amount in a country where the income per capita is less than \$5,000.

On a local level, government officials—whose superiors sometimes evaluate them based on how well they resolve disputes—have pushed back. Various municipal regulations prohibit raising banners outside hospitals, building shrines around the deceased, and threatening medical staff.

But back in Beijing, party and government higher-ups may find the protests useful. China lacks independent, official oversight in most areas of public life, so the protests provide a sort of spot check for the health care system. "Permitting protest may prevent escalation, play a

useful oversight function, and provide the regime with information,” Liebman says. In addition, medical protestors typically seek money or specific punishments, not political change, so the party doesn’t view them as a threat.

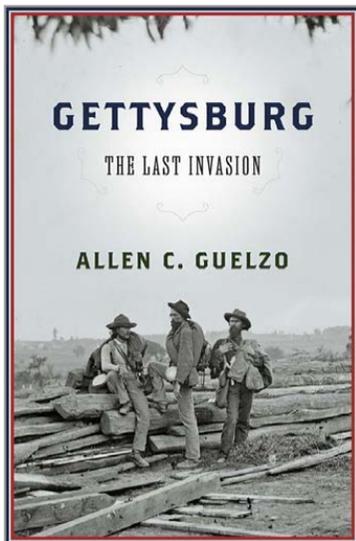
This delicate balancing act, between allowing public outrage and maintaining control, reveals confusion over the future of the Chinese state. Government and party officials regularly speak of strengthening the courts and respecting the rule of law, but their comfort with handling medical malpractice through an informal system that begins with violent protests and ends with generous settlements reveals an “official distrust of the formal legal sphere.”

Some reform is possible. The Supreme People’s Court is trying to “streamline” medical malpractice litigation and make medical review boards fairer and more transparent. Suggested reforms to the nation’s health care system could reduce the inequality of access between rich and poor, urban and rural. But Liebman believes that the grievances and violent conflicts will continue as long as the courts and regulations take a back seat to concerns about “social stability.”

“Violence and protest are now part of the cycle of dispute resolution,” Liebman concludes, adding that “the trend toward resolution of claims through protest and violence appears likely to become more widespread absent significant reforms.” ■

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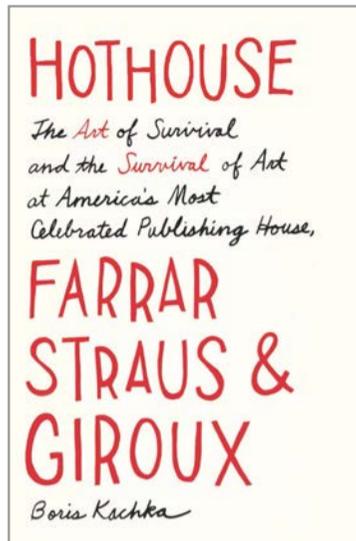


## GETTYSBURG

By Allen C. Guelzo

**Reviewed by  
Martin Walker**

The Greek historian  
Thucydides suggested...

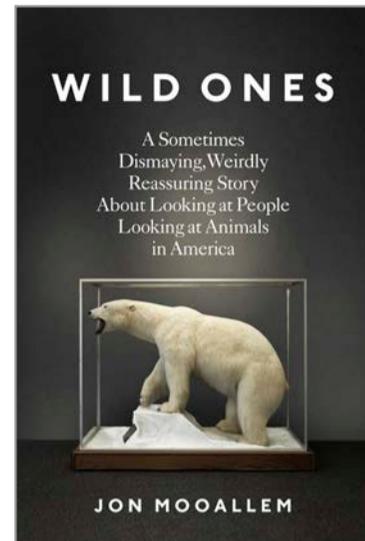


## HOTHOUSE

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**Reviewed by  
Michael Anderson**

High culture don't pay—  
that's not its function...

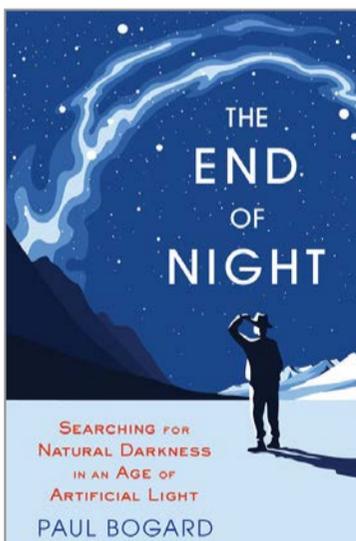


## WILD ONES

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When Christopher  
Columbus first moored...

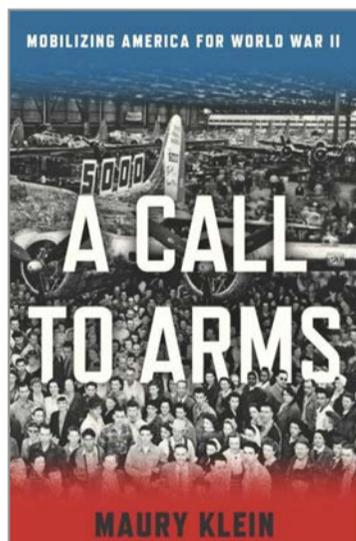


## THE END OF NIGHT

By Paul Bogard

**Reviewed by  
Nathalie Lagerfeld**

At age 18, Paul Bogard  
had a life-changing...



## A CALL TO ARMS

By Maury Klein

**Reviewed by  
Mark Reutter**

Today, when the military  
consumes nearly 60...



## BLESSED

By Kate Bowler

**Reviewed by  
Randall Stephens**

They are as ubiquitous  
on the American...

*The Battle That Changed the War*

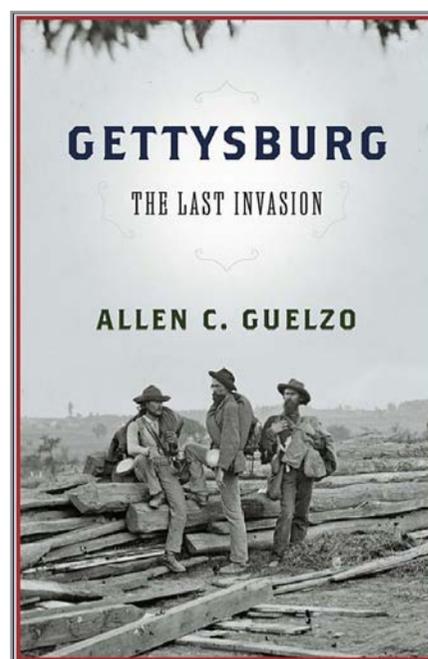
# GETTYSBURG:

## THE LAST INVASION

REVIEWED BY **MARTIN WALKER**

THE GREEK HISTORIAN THUCYDIDES SUGGESTED that when a state falls as a result of a decisive battle, we should inquire not into the battle itself but into the underlying weakness of a state vulnerable to such a hazard of war. France in 1940 comes to mind, or Alexander's victory over the Persians at Gaugamela, or the triumph of Wellington and Blucher at Waterloo. But such battles are rare. Rome recovered from successive defeats at the hands of Hannibal, and Hitler's Reich, imperial Japan, Napoleon's empire, and France during the reign of Louis XIV were able to fight on after repeated military disasters.

The Battle of Gettysburg, which was fought in the first three days of July 1863, was not the decisive clash of the Civil War. When Robert E. Lee lost the battle, in the same week that Vicksburg fell to Ulysses S. Grant (who thus cut the Confederacy in two by winning control of the Mississippi River), the South



By Allen C. Guelzo  
Knopf  
632 pp. \$35.00

did not collapse. It fought on, battered and invaded, for almost two years, until Lee surrendered in April 1865 at Appomattox Courthouse.

And yet it is to the bloody encounters at Seminary Ridge, Little Round Top, and Devil's Den, the Wheatfield and Cemetery Ridge, that historians return in extraordinary numbers. A comprehensive bibliography in 2004 counted 6,193 books, articles, essays, and pamphlets on the Gettysburg campaign, and many more on specific days, events, or individuals. So why, other than the marketing power of this year's 150th anniversary, the need for yet another volume?

The short answer is that Allen C. Guelzo, who directs the Civil War Era

**When we count the North's advantages in money, industrial potential, manpower, naval strength, and railroads, it becomes clear that the outcome of the war was never really in doubt.**

Studies program at Gettysburg College, is supremely qualified to write it. He is an eminent historian of slavery and of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and author of a fine biography of Lincoln. He knows the ground—all 6,000 acres of today's battlefield park and its 1,324 monuments, statues, and plaques. Above all, he has read widely and thought deeply about the battle, not simply as a military encounter but as a political episode; hence his subtitle, "The Last Invasion." This is the finest single-volume account available, and one that illustrates the essential paradox of the event.

"War is not so much a matter of arms as of money," Thucydides noted. And when we count the North's advantages in money, industrial potential, manpower, naval strength, and railroads, it becomes clear that the outcome of the war

was never really in doubt. In the face of such Northern advantages, the South had to rely on the bravery and determination of its troops and the talent of its generals. But on all other fronts save the central battlegrounds along the Richmond-Washington corridor, the Southern generals proved no more skillful than their Northern opponents. Only Lee and his lieutenants were outstanding, at least until Stonewall Jackson died at Chancellorsville, taking with him some vital spark of energy and military magic.

Lee, the preeminent battlefield commander despite his defeat at Gettysburg, finally met an opponent to match his skill when Grant arrived from Vicksburg to lead the drive across the Potomac to the Confederate capital of Richmond. But in that critical theater of war, where, until Gettysburg, the South held a military advantage, the North's political vulnerability was most acute. A successful invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania by Lee's Army of Northern Virginia would threaten Washington and Baltimore and possibly even Philadelphia. Lee understood this. After he was stopped in western Maryland at the Battle of Antietam, in 1862, Lee mourned, "We would have been in a few days' march of Philadelphia, and the occupation of that city would have given us peace." In the



MEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION / CORBIS

**Pickett's Charge:** Confederate troops braved hundreds of yards of open terrain in an ill-fated attempt to turn the tide on the last day of battle at Gettysburg. French artist Paul Philippoteaux recreated the chaos in a cyclorama called *The Battle of Gettysburg*, first displayed in Chicago in 1883, a portion of which is shown here.

spring of 1863, Lee sought a purchase in the North again, writing to the Confederate secretary of war, James Seddon, of his objective: that “next fall there will be a great change in public opinion in the North . . . [and] . . . the friends of peace will become so strong” that the Confederacy would have its independence.

When Lee crossed the Potomac in mid-June 1863, panic began to spread. New military departments were established to defend Pittsburgh (trenches were dug on Mount Washington) and, 160 miles to the east, Chambersburg, which fell to Lee's troops before any defenses could be begun. The governor

of New Jersey wrote to Lincoln that he feared an invasion, and New York sought help to guard its harbor. When General Napoleon J. T. Dana arrived to take charge in Philadelphia, he found only 400 troops; the stores were closed so employees could drill, and the churches open so that citizens might ponder “their duty in this, their darkest hour.” Pennsylvania's roads were filled with refugees, and the guns of General Richard Ewell were bombarding Harrisburg.

The North's army, morale battered after successive defeats, was in disarray. On June 28, just three days before the battle, General “Fighting Joe” Hooker

was sacked and replaced by General George Meade, even though Lincoln feared Meade was another peace-seeking Democrat like the recently cashiered General George McClellan. The abolitionist press distrusted Meade, as did General Daniel Sickles, one of his corps commanders. (The Meade-Sickles row, which erupted over the way Sickles deployed his troops at Gettysburg, inspired an Army court of inquiry and has become a subsection of Gettysburg studies with a bibliography of its own. A combination of personal animosity, Sickles's lack of military experience, and the fog of war seems to explain most of the fuss.)

The battle at Gettysburg did not go according to the plan of either commander. Lee had hoped, by taking the strategic offensive, to force the Northern troops to attack him, thus giving him the advantage of the tactical defensive. Attacking had been Hooker's intention, but Meade was more cautious. He hoped to occupy the strong defensive position of Pipe Creek near Taneytown, Maryland, where he could cover Washington and force Lee to attack him. In the event, both armies blundered into an unplanned encounter about a dozen miles away at Gettysburg, the site of an important crossroads. At first Lee had

the numerical advantage, but day by day more Northern reinforcements arrived.

The opposing generals had different priorities. It was enough for Meade simply to hold on; his very presence would abort Lee's plan to win the strategic political victory by invading the North. But Lee had to defeat the Union army and drive it from the field so that his invasion could proceed. So, even though by the final day he was outnumbered—there were 93,000 Union troops to his 71,000—Lee had to attack. On the first day, he drove the Union troops out of Gettysburg, but they retained a strong defensive position on the ridges south of the town. On the second day, he very nearly turned and broke the Union left flank at Little Round Top, but nearly was not good enough. On the third day, in what now seems a gamble close to an act of desperation, he launched his magnificent infantry uphill over open ground against dug-in defenders with strong artillery support. It is remarkable that this attack, known to history as Pickett's Charge, came so close to success. But it failed, and the South's hopes of forcing a political settlement through victory failed with it.

It is one of the great merits of Guelzo's book that he explains the importance of the tactical defensive. In doing so,

he challenges the orthodox view of the distinguished Civil War historian Bruce Catton, who reckoned that the new Minié rifles (available to both sides) had the power and range to dominate the battlefield out to 400 yards and impose crushing losses on the attacker. It would follow from this viewpoint that infantry alone would suffice to hold a position. But if soldiers armed with Minié rifles aimed poorly or were blinded by smoke, infantry could be vulnerable to an attacker who combined artillery bombardment with a bayonet charge—a combination the Southern troops had learned to deploy to great effect. Guelzo points out that the power of the Minié rifle has been greatly overestimated, not least because the clouds of smoke released by a volley of black powder made subsequent attempts to aim difficult. At the height of Pickett's Charge, Union troops were reduced to aiming at the shoes of their attackers, since nothing else could be seen. Despite claims of two or three aimed shots per minute by

**Only four members of an Illinois regiment of 180 men could hit a barrel 100 yards away.**

men armed with the new Miniés, Guelzo cites reports that soldiers fired much more slowly in battle conditions, as infrequently as once every four minutes.

Moreover, few troops were good shots. Even under perfect conditions, only four members of an Illinois regiment of 180 men could hit a barrel 100 yards away. Only four out of 40 men of the Fifth Connecticut could hit a barn from 100 yards, and only one of those shots was below the height of a man. As the British and French had found in their campaigns in Italy, the Crimea, and India in the 1850s, the decisive power of the infantry rested with the bayonet charge and the volley fire of ranks of infantry at close range. Such was the storm of lead aimed at Pickett's Charge on the final day that one plank of a fence the Southern attackers had to surmount, measuring 16 feet by 14 inches, was perforated by 836 musket balls, one bullet for every three square inches. Some of those balls probably came from canister, a close-range antipersonnel round fired by cannon, and the thick fire ensured that as General George Pickett's troops approached the crest of Cemetery Ridge they were rushing into an especially fearsome killing zone.

The real queen of the battlefield was the artillery, and Meade had 372 guns at Gettysburg, while Lee was so

short of draft horses that he had crossed the Potomac with only 283 guns. Bursting overhead, shells fired at long range could strike infantry even in cover, while a battery of 18 guns was reckoned sufficient to break up attacking infantry formations. And at short range, the case shot that delivered scores of musket balls was devastating. The impact of artillery has seldom been better explained, nor a battle better described, than in Guelzo's account of the duel between the guns as Pickett deployed his troops for their fatal charge. To launch a massed infantry assault uphill and across 800 yards of open ground against an enemy superior in artillery was asking more from troops than Lee had any right to expect.

The North had the further advantage of interior lines. Forced out of the town of Gettysburg on the first day, Union troops had been pushed into lines resembling the shape of a fishhook. By the third day, General Henry Slocum's troops south of Culp's Hill were but a mile from General Winfield Scott Hancock's men on Cemetery Ridge. Reinforcements could therefore move quickly from one side of the Northern defensive lines to another. But any reinforcements from Ewell's Southerners, who had to attack Slocum in order to reach Pickett's men as they lined up for their famous charge,

had five roundabout miles to travel. And so did any dispatch riders trying to coordinate the attacks of the two wings of Lee's forces, stretched out as they were on exterior lines.

And yet Lee almost won, on at least two occasions. In each case, the fault was his; he failed to concentrate his forces, and he failed to coordinate his attacks. Had Ewell pressed his attack on the evening of the first day, or had General James Longstreet not taken so long (those exterior lines again) to develop his attacks on the North's left flank on the second day, victory might have gone to the Confederacy. The key feature of this part of the battlefield, Little Round Top, had been left unguarded by Sickles, who had deployed his troops further forward. But the brave Colonel Strong Vincent, who was to die from wounds sustained in the battle, got a brigade of Union troops and some crucial artillery onto Little Round Top

**Lee avoided a crushing defeat only because of the exhaustion of the Union troops, who had suffered 22,000 casualties over the three days of battle.**

with but minutes to spare. Even then, it took heroic bravery by the First Minnesota and the 20th Maine to save the day with desperate bayonet charges against superior numbers. Four out of every five men in the First Minnesota fell in the battle.

Lee avoided a crushing defeat only because of the exhaustion of the Union troops, who had suffered 22,000 casualties over the three days of battle. Lee had lost almost as many, including a third of his 52 generals. Indeed, Guelzo notes that in proportional terms, Lee's army lost two and a half times as many men as the Allied armies of World War II (British, Canadian, and American) between D-Day and the fall of Paris 11 weeks later.

**“We had them in our grasp,” Lincoln told his son on July 14, when it became clear that Lee had made good his escape.**

Lincoln never forgave Meade for failing to turn Lee's defeat into a rout. “We had them in our grasp,” the president told his son on July 14, when it became

clear that Lee had made good his escape. “There is bad faith somewhere,” he told Gideon Welles, his Navy secretary. The war had 21 months more to run, with the slaughters of Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and the Crater, the march through Georgia, and the burning of Atlanta still to come. The Union was eventually saved and slavery ended, but at a terrible price whose echoes and political resentments have endured for generations.

History books usually tell us as much about the times in which they were written as about the period they cover, but there is a timeless quality to *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* that makes it special. First, it treats the battle as a political as well as a military event, as important to saving Lincoln's presidency (and dooming Lee's invasion strategy) as it was to preserving Philadelphia and Pittsburgh from occupation.

Second, the book blends the two sharply contrasting perspectives of battle, from the general trying to arrange ammunition supplies and reinforcements while hearing conflicting reports from his subordinates, to the hapless, hungry, frightened infantryman seeing his fellows fall around him. Perhaps the only thing the two perspectives had in common was that each was mostly blinded by the smoke of battle.

Third, it explains far better than most military histories the importance of ground, of the cover provided by woodlands or the reverse slope of a hill, the difficulty of keeping formation with dead and wounded underfoot and advancing or aiming uphill.

Fourth, Guelzo focuses intently on the importance of time: how much time was required for a report of some new emergency to be drafted and to reach a general, and then, for that general's orders to reach a unit, and how long it took to assemble and march men and guns to ensure that those orders were fulfilled.

Above all, in an age when most military histories are read by people with no personal experience of the mind-numbing sounds and chaos of battle, Guelzo stresses that raw and terrifying truth Clausewitz tried to convey when he wrote that “the light of reason no longer moves here in the same medium.” All war is hell, but Gettysburg lay in the seventh circle. ■

**MARTIN WALKER** is a Wilson Center senior scholar and with this issue becomes a regular reviewer for *The Wilson Quarterly*. His latest novel, *The Devil's Cave*, was published this summer.

*They Don't Print 'Em  
Like They Used To*

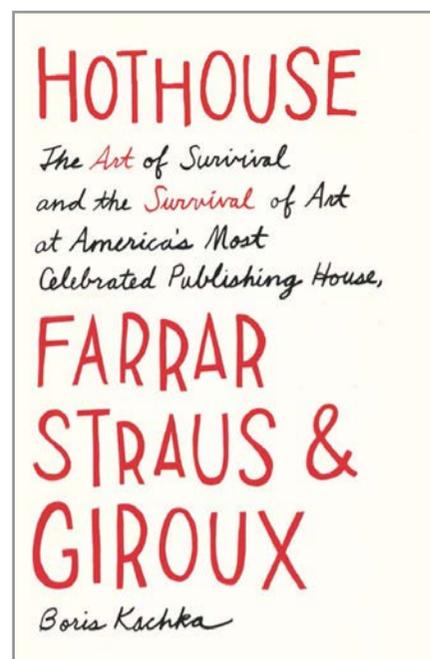
## HOTHOUSE:

### THE ART OF SURVIVAL AND THE SURVIVAL OF ART AT AMERICA'S MOST CELEBRATED PUBLISHING HOUSE, FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX

REVIEWED BY **MICHAEL ANDERSON**

HIGH CULTURE DON'T PAY—THAT'S NOT its function. This makes for a rocky marriage between art, which hopes to make a living, and commerce, which looks to make a fortune. Inevitably, the moneychangers take over the temple. Such was the fate of one of America's most distinguished publishing houses, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, a story that struggles to emerge from Boris Kachka's book *Hothouse*.

Since it issued its first titles in 1946, FSG has been dedicated to finding and publishing books of enduring value. Its roster of authors includes 25 Nobel laureates in literature; between 1978 and 1995, the house published 10 of the 18 winners. Its non-Nobel list is equally glittering, including Edmund Wilson, Philip Roth, Flannery O'Connor,



By Boris Kachka  
Simon & Schuster  
448 pp. \$28.00

Elizabeth Bishop, Philip Larkin, and Thom Gunn. Its children's list boasts authors such as Roald Dahl, Maurice Sendak, and William Steig. (As MGM once did, FSG can claim it has more stars than there are in heaven.) The house was as famous for its miniscule advances and unpretentious offices—"filthy, inadequately heated and cooled, never painted, teeming with bugs and ugly fluorescent tube lights"—as for its solicitude toward its writers and its literary cachet.

FSG was very much the product of the post-World War II era, when education was prized (think of the GI Bill) and artistic accomplishment conferred a status that was esteemed more than money. The house also represented



STEVE PYKE / GETTY IMAGES

**Roger W. Straus Jr. (1917–2004) lusted after mistresses and book deals with Nobel laureates.**

a vehicle for the social advancement of its principals, however different the motivations of Roger W. Straus Jr. and Robert Giroux. (John Farrar, who began the firm with Straus following his ouster from Farrar & Rinehart, contributed little except an illustrious name.)

The black-sheep scion of the Straus department store dynasty and the Guggenheims, Straus rejected business for the romance of publishing. Giroux, the

son of a factory foreman from Quebec and an Irish-Catholic seamstress in Jersey City, was the first in his family to graduate from college. (His classmates at Columbia University included Thomas Merton and John Berryman.) “The most remarkable thing about the partnership of Straus and Giroux,” Kachka writes, “is that their paths crossed at all.” For each man, a career in high art was a social steppingstone.

This is most apparent in Straus, a larger-than-life vulgarian who comes across like one of the unpleasant caricatures in an Edith Wharton novel. Given to speaking in “the Royal ‘I,’” as Kachka puts it, a restless philanderer and devotee of the high life, Straus, with his equally high-born wife, Dorothea, enjoyed playing the salonista. His Upper East Side townhouse became the locus of what Kachka calls “the culture of FSG . . . a full-blown literary apparatus—a one-stop shop of literary greatness. Come for the parties; stay for the book contract; give back by reviewing our other authors or talking them up at the next party.” (Appropriately, Straus’s pet author—he advanced her funds, handled her mail, paid her bills—was Susan Sontag, the embodiment of intellectual social climbing.) It was Straus who set his sights on Nobel laureates. (Publishing rival Jason Epstein sniped that Straus “wanted nothing but Nobel Prize winners.”) His own literary taste was, not to put too fine a point on it, unsophisticated: His two big editing triumphs were Gayelord Hauser’s *Look Younger, Live Longer* (1950) and Sammy Davis Jr.’s autobiography *Yes I Can* (1965); he rejected *Lolita* (1958)—like it or not, the finest postwar American novel.

Straus provided the reckless buccaneering spirit that gave FSG its aura of

intellectual deshabelle, but it was Giroux who gave it literary distinction, “one its restless gut, the other its quiet brain,” Kachka writes. Giroux very likely was the greatest book editor of the 20th century, the man we all think Maxwell Perkins was. As a 26-year-old editor at Harcourt, Brace, he was assigned Edmund Wilson’s *To the Finland Station* (1940) and Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts* (1941) among his first projects; eight years later he was editor in chief.

**Giroux very likely was the greatest book editor of the 20th century, the man we all think Maxwell Perkins was.**

Besides shepherding eminences such as T. S. Eliot, Thomas Mann, E. M. Forster, and George Orwell, Giroux discovered Jean Stafford, Bernard Malamud, and Jack Kerouac. (It is testament to his taste that after publishing Kerouac’s first book, he rejected *On the Road*.) When in 1950 the new owners at Harcourt prevented him from acquiring *The Catcher in the Rye* (thereby denying the house a perennial bestseller), Giroux resolved

to move elsewhere. In 1955, he left for Straus's firm; 17 of his authors—including Eliot, Malamud, O'Connor, and Robert Lowell—followed him. “In one fell swoop,” Kachka writes, “Straus . . . had himself a damned good house.”

“The most sobering of all publishing lessons,” Giroux once said, is that “a great book is often ahead of its time, and the trick is how to keep it afloat until the times catch up with it.” His attitude was perfectly congruent with Straus's decision, as Kachka writes, to focus “less on his company's growth than on its identity—less on market share than on a market niche.” Such a conservative strategy demanded excellent scouting (Straus became a tireless European traveler, seeking writers and luxury hotel accommodations with equal enthusiasm), a passion perhaps closest to Giroux's heart, inspired by Columbia professor Raymond M. Weaver, the Melville scholar who discovered the unpublished manuscript of *Billy Budd*. “I thought how great it would be to discover a literary masterpiece,” Giroux declared.

Giroux and Straus were obvious temperamental opposites. “Why must you be so crude?” Giroux would snap; “You don't know the difference between an editor and a publisher,” Straus would retort. Giroux once commented,

“There's nothing so great about the word *publisher*, per se, except that one publisher—I think it was the second Nelson Doubleday—said, ‘I publish books. I don't read them.’ An editor would never say that.” But the publisher holds the purse strings.

As publishing attempted to emulate Hollywood in the go-go '80s, with multimillion-dollar advances (and subsequent losses), Straus tried to keep pace; for three weeks in 1988, FSG held the top two spots on the fiction bestseller list with Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities* and Scott Turow's *Presumed Innocent*. He abandoned a hard lesson learned after his early success with Gayelord Hauser about “a publishing trap that seems obvious but turns out to be very hard to resist,” Kachka writes. “One very successful year leads to excess cash, which is then plowed into ever larger advances buoyed by excessive confidence. . . . Linear growth is very hard to achieve in books—never mind the exponential kind—and the headiest times call for the greatest excess of caution.”

In 1994, Straus arranged the sale of his publishing house to Verlagsgruppe Georg von Holtzbrinck. (Giroux had retired and, in any case, wasn't an owner.) The deal was part of the trend that would put half of American publishing in the hands of only

five corporations. Straus took in some \$30 million. After 40 years of making a living, he decided to make a fortune. Today FSG is but a subsidiary, giving a tarnished imprimatur of class to a media conglomerate, its current leader, Jonathan Galassi, but a corporate courtier. Although it still proclaims its devotion to literary art, FSG today is more a “brand” than a cultural force.

Although Kachka ostensibly is interested in FSG because of its cultural distinction, his book concentrates on gossip rather than literature. (“By the turn of 1960,” he writes, Straus “was probably sleeping with three of his female employees. . . . The rumor went that the man who delivered fresh towels in the office on Fridays . . . also provided Roger with fresh sheets.”) It is a measure of the book’s unrelenting superficiality that, rather than any of FSG’s outstanding authors, the writer who gets the most attention is the comparatively undistinguished Jonathan Franzen. Giroux may have given the house its

soul, but Straus, as in life, dominates the pages of *Hothouse*. All too often the book reads like a biography of Straus, lightly leavened by a corporate history. Giroux gets little more than the chapter detailing his biography.

Kachka is a contributing editor at *New York* magazine and writes like it. His chapters are more a series of articles than a developed narrative; the history of FSG is anchored in neither social nor literary contexts. And it is a bitter irony that an account of a publishing house renowned for quality is written in careless journalese. Indeed, *Hothouse* is all too typical of what American publishing has become, now that houses no longer talk about publishing books but “moving units.” The value of *Hothouse*, for those pondering the decline of American publishing, is that it serves as an example of what it ostensibly details. ■

**MICHAEL ANDERSON** is a former editor at *The New York Times Book Review*.

*Animal Control*

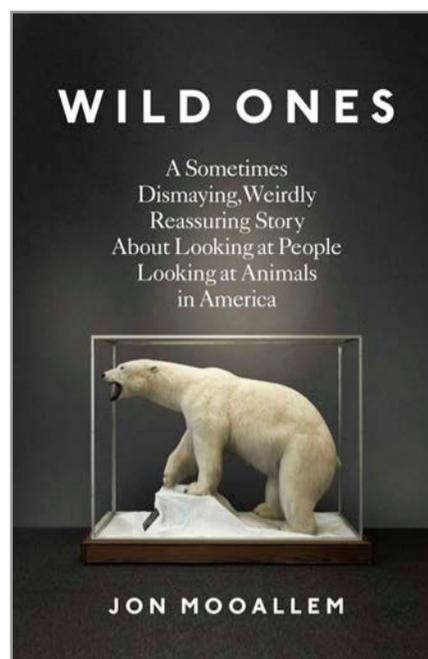
## WILD ONES:

**A SOMETIMES DISMAYING,  
WEIRDLY REASSURING STORY  
ABOUT LOOKING AT PEOPLE  
LOOKING AT ANIMALS IN AMERICA**

REVIEWED BY **DARCY COURTEAU**

WHEN CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS FIRST moored in the Caribbean, sea turtles were so plentiful that the sound of their carapaces thumping against the ships' hulls kept his crew awake at night. As late as the 19th century, passenger pigeons flew in flocks so large they blocked the sun and snapped the branches of trees on which they roosted, and herds of stampeding bison coming across the prairie slammed into trains with enough force to knock boxcars off their tracks.

Jon Mooallem digs up these stories in order to illustrate “shifting baselines syndrome,” a term coined by a fisheries scientist in 1995 to name the sense each generation has that the North America it is born into is the natural one—no matter how the landscape has been altered since those insomniacs sailed into its waters. At the time of Columbus's arrival, other sources have noted, the



By Jon Mooallem

Penguin Press

339 pp. \$27.95

native people were fashioning the wild to accommodate their farming and hunting—some animal populations may well have bubbled after the Indians' numbers declined—but the incursions were nowhere near being on par with those of the past few hundred years. The last passenger pigeon died in a Cincinnati zoo in 1914. Today, bison live in managed bands, while rats thrive. But without a search through the archives, who would know this isn't the way it's always been?

**Half of the planet's plant  
and animal species may  
disappear by 2100.**



JEFFREY PHELPS / AURORA PHOTOS / CORBIS

**In a wildlife refuge in Necedah, Wisconsin, whooping cranes raised in captivity practice flying behind an ultralight aircraft. Come October, Operation Migration pilots will guide the birds on a 1,285-mile fall migration from Wisconsin to Florida.**

Half of the planet's plant and animal species may disappear by 2100, Moollem notes in the introduction to *Wild Ones*, victims of overhunting and overfishing, their habitats lost to mining, agriculture, and other industrial assaults. As a new father, he worried about his daughter's own developing "baseline" sensibilities, and determined to document (at times with the toddler in tow) the efforts now under way to preserve three endangered species. What he finds is that wildlife management "has evolved, or maybe devolved, into a surreal kind of performance art."

Churchill, Manitoba, on the edge of Hudson Bay, is the southernmost range of polar bears, and as such makes for a global warming canary in the coal

mine. Receding Arctic ice keeps the bears stranded on land, away from their fatty food source, seals, for ever-longer periods. Some are beginning to starve, and others are eating their young, while waiting for the winter ice. Polar bears are expected to go extinct, at least in most of their natural habitats, in a few decades.

No matter that the polar bear could gut you like a fish; from a distance, it looks like something you'd like to tuck under your arm at night, an impression that makes it the perfect poster child for endangered animals in general. The conservation group Polar Bears International (PBI) flies in a steady stream of concerned citizens and television crews who track around the tundra in enormous buggies to watch the bears,

while a PBI spokesperson, a former marketing executive, guilts them about climate change. Already, the Churchill community—as well as a larger world of conservationists—is considering the question of if and when it should start feeding the bears. Once that begins, the animals will be conservation reliant.

A handful of species living on the Antioch Dunes outside of San Francisco already are. The 120-foot-high masses of sand piled up over thousands of years were, within a few decades, leveled to make bricks and roads. Native plants that had evolved in the shifting, windblown dunes are now overrun by invasive species, and the Lange's metalmark, a butterfly that exists only on buckwheat growing on what's left of the dunes, is near extinction. The place came under federal protection in 1980, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ordered that the butterflies be counted regularly. In the 1990s, the highest number of Lange's metalmarks spotted in an afternoon was in the thousands; now a typical afternoon yields a couple dozen. Twice a week, a motley crew of volunteers—Mooallem worked alongside a miscreant putting in community service hours for traffic violations—shows up to gaze at a laminated photo of the insect and trudge through the

dunes, hoping to see real-life matches. There's a breeding program in place, and much conservation work involves simply weeding the dunes.

The whooping crane is nearly as conservation reliant as the Lange's. The crane, a bird with an eight-foot wingspan and nasty temper, had soared the skies since the Pleistocene Epoch, until its population took a nosedive several decades ago, nearly exterminated by sport hunting and the draining of swampland habitats for agriculture. By the 1940s, only 30 survived. Now Operation Migration (OM) raises cranes in captivity and endeavors to release them in the wild. (About 275 whooping cranes exist today.) To keep the cranes from imprinting on them, conservationists wear white tent-like uniforms and stay silent as monks. A team of pilots in ultralight aircraft tries to lead cranes born in captivity along old migration routes from Florida to Wisconsin.

Citizens captivated by the effort, who call themselves "Craniacs," aren't allowed close to the birds, so for them, OM has "created an intimacy that's entirely vicarious." The Craniacs track the migratory route on the Internet, showing up at ports of call to buy T-shirts from and hand off pies to the crew.

For their part, the OM folks have sacrificed a lot to help the cranes; the pilots spend much of the year away from their families and wade through bureaucracy and politicking, and yet, they soldier on.

“Humanity caused the problem to begin with, and so it’s very hard for humanity to solve the problem,” one pilot says. “Because it’s humanity! You know what I mean? We bring to the table all the same crap that was brought to the table to create the nightmare in the first place!” This is, Mooallem remarks, the most reassuring thing he’s heard from a conservationist, the admission that though the people involved are imperfect, it’s the striving that matters most. It isn’t even about the birds, the pilot concludes: “It’s a people project. The birds are an excuse for doing something good.”

**A**DMIT TO HAVING INDULGED IN A BIT OF wishful thinking: *The experts will figure this out.* After reading Mooallem’s book, I’ll indulge no more. In fact, some of the best of the activists and experts have left the building. Joan McIntyre, who led the save-the-whales movement in the early 1970s, had her come-to-Jesus moment at a 1977 International Whaling Commission convention, where

**No one seemed to get that ecosystems, not individual species, are what need saving; habitats are too complex to reconstruct.**

nations were bartering whaling rights while whale protection organizations clustered around the scene, competing for resources and recognition. Early one morning, she bought an armload of daffodils, placed bouquets on all the empty conference tables before the delegates arrived, and peaced out. She moved to Hawaii and watched whales from a tent pitched on a cliff.

Rudi Mattoni, one of the world’s foremost lepidopterists, who once worked with the Lange’s metalmark, called it quits, too. “People would say, ‘How do we save the blue butterflies?’” he told Mooallem from his Buenos Aires hideout. “And I’d say, ‘I don’t give a shit about the blue butterflies.’” No one seemed to get that ecosystems, not individual species, are what need saving; habitats are too complex to reconstruct. He spends his days cataloging all the species that are sure to become extinct within the next few years.

These truants come in for a mild scolding. As bizarre and ultimately doomed as Mooallem admits conservation efforts have become, it is in fighting the good fight that he finds meaning. His voice throughout is humane, civilized, tolerant, and kind. He will easily duck the charge customarily used to discredit environmentalists, of practicing not so well as they preach. But despite the uplifting subtitle, “A Sometimes Dismaying, Weirdly Reassuring Story About Looking at People Looking at Animals in America,” this book was not at all reassuring. In fact, it was terrifying.

The jets carrying ecotourists into Churchill to watch bears (an Internet-aided calculation indicates that a single passenger flying round-trip from Washington, D.C., would produce 1,700 pounds of carbon dioxide), the whole Lange’s apparatus, the parking lots full of Craniacs—are a manifestation of what got us here: consumerism, delusions of power and control, and an apostolic faith in human intervention and industry. And that’s not even taking into account the many times preservation efforts directly backfire, as when a year’s crane crop of 18 juveniles died in a coastal storm surge, trapped in their cages.

A publicist’s blurb on the back of my review copy promises that I won’t have to suffer the “easy moralizing and nature worship of environmental journalism’s older guard.” I, for one, still turn to those very fogies who occupy pride of place on my bookshelf. Here’s a favorite: *The Abstract Wild* (1996), by Jack Turner, a philosophy professor turned mountain climber turned, yes, nature worshiper. Turner’s collection of essays criticizes wildlife management of all kinds, which has only anthropomorphized, domesticated, and otherwise packaged the wild into something no longer mysterious or sacred. “If you go to Mecca and blaspheme the Black Stone, the believers will feed you to the midges, piece by piece,” he writes in an irritable rant that stops just short of defending ecoterrorism. “Go to Yellowstone and destroy grizzlies and grizzly habitat, and the believers will dress up in bear costumes, sing songs, and sign petitions. This is charming, but it suggests no sense of blasphemy.”

On the same shelf are Rachel Carson (alarmist!) and, necessarily, Edward Abbey, gun toter, womanizer, carnivore, and runner of the mouth. “Crusaders for virtue are an awkward embarrassment to any society,” he wrote of protestors gathering outside a nuclear weapons plant. “They force us to make choices: either

side with them, which is difficult and dangerous, or condemn them, which leads to self-betrayal.” Immoderate Abbey, his words salted with hypocrisy and braggadocio, declaring earth his religion and reading Thoreau by a campfire. For him, it was very much about the birds. The battle had not been lost, and the fight was for wild nature and our chance to be a part of it, not

for something existential or abstract. But he was born a few generations ago, when, I suppose, that goal still seemed possible. ■

**DARCY COURTEAU** is a writer living in Washington, D.C. Her work has appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Oxford American*, *The American Scholar*, and elsewhere.

*A Paean to Darkness*

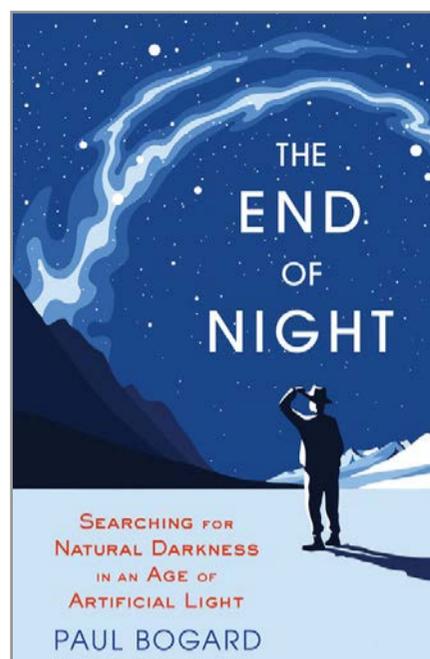
## THE END OF NIGHT:

### SEARCHING FOR NATURAL DARKNESS IN AN AGE OF ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

REVIEWED BY **NATHALIE LAGERFELD**

AT AGE 18, PAUL BOGARD HAD A LIFE-CHANGING vision. Stepping outside his youth hostel at the edge of the Sahara, in a remote town where nomadic tribes gathered to barter and trade, he saw “a storm of stars swirl[ing] around me”: the night sky as he had never seen it before. Even his family’s cabin in rural Minnesota didn’t have views like this, almost completely untainted by human light pollution. “I saw the sky that night in three dimensions,” he writes. “The sky had depth, some stars seemingly close and some much farther away, the Milky Way so well defined it had what astronomers call ‘structure,’ that sense of its twisting depths.”

He was looking at what was already then a rarity—a sky that probably ranked a class 1 or 2 on the Bortle scale, a system for measuring light pollution that orders skies from 9 (brightest) to



By Paul Bogard  
Little, Brown  
325 pp. \$27.00

1 (darkest) that was devised by amateur astronomer John Bortle in 2001. In the developed world, even rural nights rarely dip below a Bortle 3; the young Bogard was clearly struck by all the detail he had been missing. “The night pressed its impression,” he writes, “and a lifelong connection was sealed.” This sense of connection pervades *The End of Night*, Bogard’s paean to a type of deep darkness most Americans have lost to ever-brightening artificial lights.

Bogard, a James Madison University writing professor, builds a case that our view of the stars is a part of our cultural heritage worth preserving. This project took him to both light and dark places around the globe, a journey



BABEK TAFRESHI / SSPL / GETTY IMAGES

**A meteor pierces the night sky over Iran's Zagros Mountains.**

he organizes into chapters 9 through 1, in an echo of the Bortle scale. He started out in Las Vegas, where the intense beam shooting from the tip of the Luxor Hotel disrupts the feeding and migration patterns of local birds.

Neon glare isn't the only way to light a city, Bogard points out. In France, for instance, the lighting designer François Jousse has made it his life's work to illuminate Paris's monuments with a soft, romantic glow; his techniques include setting lamps underneath bridges, so that pedestrians see by the shimmer-

ing reflection off the water below. Nor does dimmer lighting—such as the gaslights that still illuminate some London streets—necessarily give an advantage to muggers, Bogard says, citing several studies on urban crime. Instead, by forcing pedestrians' eyes to adjust to darkness, it helps them see further into shadows where potential attackers could hide.

But in the United States, at least, it's proven difficult to enact sweeping lighting changes based on what many regard as essentially aesthetic considerations—especially when most of the population

doesn't really appreciate the aesthetics in question. Though Flagstaff, Arizona, successfully passed anti-light-pollution legislation, the beauty of the stars is barely ever mentioned as a rationale. Instead, most citizens regard the law as necessary only to preserve the viewing power of a nearby observatory. To Bogard, this perspective seems limited. It is, as one astronomer he quotes put it, "like asking why the Grand Canyon is important and saying, 'Oh, we need that so that the geologists can study the rocks.'"

Even practical reasons aren't always enough to motivate people to dim the lights. An estimated 100 million birds die each year from collisions with human-built structures. This number could be reduced "overnight" by dimming the exterior lights that shine on office towers, according to one activist. Even risks to human health go largely ignored. Exposure to artificial lights may exacerbate the sleep disorders that affect 70 million Americans; by impeding the production of tumor-fighting melatonin, it may also contribute to an increased incidence of cancer among night-shift workers.

That may be why many of the dark-sky activists Bogard interviewed devote themselves to arranging epiphanies like the one he experienced in the Sahara. Park rangers in Maine lead unlighted

night walks through Acadia National Park, inviting guests to test their natural adaptations in roughly Bortle class 2 darkness, often for the first time. By teaching people to appreciate the importance of darkness to "charismatic places we already love," these advocates hope to overcome our "environmental generational amnesia": We consistently underestimate how much darkness we have lost, since we have no way of knowing what night was like in our parents' time, or our grandparents'. In this way, dark-sky experiences can expand our perspective not only out into the cosmos, but also back into the past.

**We consistently underestimate how much darkness we have lost, since we have no way of knowing what night was like in our parents' time.**

Having a back-to-nature experience doesn't always translate into changing one's everyday surroundings. Bogard hints that one big obstacle to taming light pollution is NIMBYism—the "not in my backyard" attitude people

adopt when they refuse to make a personal sacrifice for the sake of an agreed-upon societal good. A college-town police chief he interviewed blamed increased lighting on safety-obsessed parents who “couldn’t get campus bright enough”; a lighting engineer suggested that gas-station owners install brighter and brighter lights to compete with one another, since no one wants to be the dimmest business on the block.

It’s unfortunate that Bogard didn’t personally interview any of these NIMBYists. Their objections might have

illuminated some of the challenges dark-sky advocates face even if educational efforts are successful. If other environmental campaigns have taught us anything, it’s that awareness alone is rarely sufficient for people to change their behavior. Even if it doesn’t contain the whole story, *The End of Night* makes a strong case that this debate should happen, and sooner rather than later. ■

**NATHALIE LAGERFELD** is a writer living in Chicago.

*The Business of Fighting*

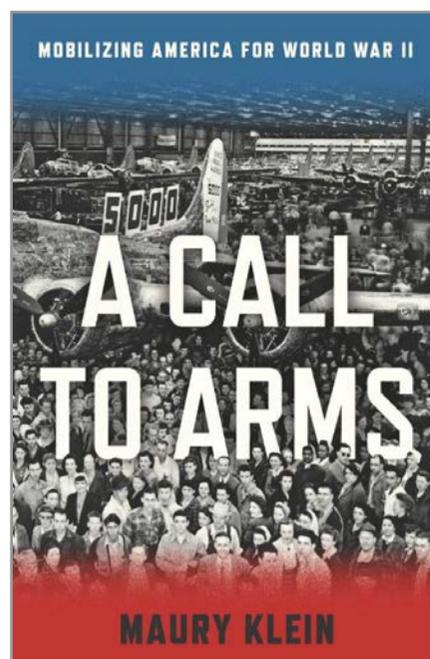
## A CALL TO ARMS:

### MOBILIZING AMERICA FOR WORLD WAR II

REVIEWED BY MARK REUTTER

TODAY, WHEN THE MILITARY CONSUMES nearly 60 percent of Washington's discretionary spending, it's hard to imagine that, less than a century ago, Portugal and 16 other nations fielded bigger armed forces than that of the United States. On the brink of World War II, American infantrymen were still carrying the same Springfield rifles that had been standard issue in the first great war. While the fact that America was wretchedly unprepared for World War II is embedded in nearly every account of the global conflict that started with Adolf Hitler's invasion of Poland in September 1939, the subsequent mobilization of the American "home front" in support of the war effort has become the stuff of legend.

Having manufactured a mere 1,700 warplanes before 1939, American factories turned out 325,000 more by 1945, as well as 88,000 tanks and 2.5 million



By Maury Klein  
Bloomsbury Press  
897 pp. \$40.00

machine guns. While the United States didn't always produce the best equipment (German Panther tanks made mincemeat of American Shermans), it did produce the *most* weaponry, which ultimately turned the tide against Hitler and imperial Japan. This immense undertaking has been the subject of many books, most recently Arthur Herman's *Freedom's Forge* (2012) and Paul Kennedy's *Engineers of Victory*, published earlier this year. In *A Call to Arms*, Maury Klein, a professor emeritus of history at the University of Rhode Island, offers his own sweeping saga of how bureaucrats and businessmen converted a Depression-ravaged economy into what President Franklin D. Roosevelt would call "an arsenal of democracy."



BETTMANN / CORBIS

During World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "arsenal of democracy" churned out more weapons than any other nation. In 1942, workers at a Firestone Tire and Rubber plant in Akron, Ohio, assembled anti-aircraft guns.

America's initial reluctance to enter the war was compounded by the public perception that businessmen were pushing the country into the conflict to make a profit. After World War I, many munitions factories had been shuttered when they lost their government contracts and

**Many Americans feared that businessmen were pushing the country into the conflict to make a profit.**

in the face of public antiwar sentiment. "In their bitterness," Klein writes, "many people found a convenient scapegoat in the war industries and vowed never to repeat that mistake." But of course, eventually the nation's attitude changed. "To many a U.S. citizen," reported *Time*, "the screaming headlines of the German smash through Belgium and down into France came like an unremitting, seven-day Orson Welles broadcast of an invasion from Mars."

Foremost on Klein's radar screen is President Roosevelt. Klein credits FDR for his early attempts to awaken an

isolationist country to the threat posed by Hitler and for pushing mobilization forward through gifted oratory and “blank-check” spending. Others who stride across the book’s stage include Henry Kaiser, builder of the indispensable “ugly duckling” Liberty ships that ferried supplies to America’s far-flung troops and allies abroad, “rubber czar” William Jeffers, the squabbling New Dealers Harry Hopkins and Harold Ickes, the courtly banker Bernard Baruch, the waffling War Production Board chief Donald Nelson, and the thundering isolationist and United Mine Workers boss John L. Lewis.

Klein interweaves descriptions of his cast of characters with accounts of the challenges the American war machine came up against. Initially, Japan and Germany made headway toward hobbling American shipping and cutting off the country’s sources of important raw materials. (Silk, for example, essential to the manufacture of parachutes and bags for the powder charges in large guns—until the development of nylon—had been sourced primarily from Japan.) Conflicts flared in Washington over procurement policies, as civilian authorities demanded that the top officers in the Army and Navy speedily specify what equipment they needed, and military

leaders protested that they couldn’t know with certainty “when they did not know where or against whom they might have to fight.” Rationing had to be imposed on the public.

Klein is an agile writer and a well-respected business historian. Among his previous books are a provocative reinterpretation of Jay Gould as a corporate builder rather than stock-kiting speculator, a three-volume history of the Union Pacific Railroad, and a deft biography of the Union Pacific’s strong-willed owner, Edward H. Harriman. In *A Call to Arms*, however, he loses his way. After a breezy opening, the book sags under a morass of details, and is further burdened by “colorful vignettes” written by contemporary newsmen and the recollections of ex-officials. Relying on secondhand accounts, Klein muffs critical details about the steel industry and even short-changes the railroads’ role in transporting troops and munitions to the two coasts.

But missing most from these pages are the men and women who built the ships, bombs, and planes that made victory possible. At the outset of the book, Klein cites a chilling statistic: “More Americans died in industrial and work-related accidents at home than in combat overseas.” But he never elaborates on this startling assertion—nor even provides a reference

for it. We get the caustic flavor of union leader Lewis's bombast ("Nobody can call John L. Lewis a liar and least of all Franklin Delano Roosevelt!" he once said), but never a feel for the sweat and camaraderie of the nearly half a million coal miners who fed the war factories.

Across 900 pages, only a score of paragraphs are devoted to the women who flocked into the workforce—"Rosie the Riveter" and her thousands of sisters. The black migration from the South to wartime jobs in Detroit and other cities is portrayed in somewhat more detail. Klein spends three pages on the social conflicts in Detroit that sparked a race riot that left 25 blacks and nine whites dead in 1943, but the book could have used much more of this kind of material.

In seeking to cut through the gauzy sentimentality of TV anchorman Tom Brokaw, who famously dubbed the war's participants "the greatest generation," Klein loses sight of the most profound lesson of World War II: Namely, that

the average Joes and Rosies believed in the fight for freedom. Ordinary Americans' investment in the war—and their willingness to make personal sacrifices to aid the country—was what made it, as Studs Terkel observed, "the good war."

In assessing Roosevelt's leadership in the 1951 book *Struggle for Survival*, FDR economic adviser Eliot Janeway noted that the president "looked to democracy and not to leaders" to win the war. "Democracy's mass reservoir of energy and faith" was the bedrock upon which those impressive material and technological accomplishments lay. Or, in Janeway's koan-like formulation, "A victory small enough to be organized" by bureaucrats and businessmen would have been "too small to be decisive" against our ferocious foes. ■

**MARK REUTTER**, who has twice been appointed a Wilson Center fellow, is the author of *Making Steel: Sparrows Point and the Rise and Ruin of American Industrial Might* (2004).

*Holy High Rollers*

## BLESSED:

### A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN PROSPERITY GOSPEL

REVIEWED BY **RANDALL STEPHENS**

THEY ARE AS UBIQUITOUS ON THE AMERICAN landscape as the split-level home or McDonalds drive-through. Churches with epic names like World Overcomers, Victory International, and Word of Faith International Christian Center are visible from highways throughout the country. Christian television networks Daystar, TBN, and CBN air preachers such as Joel Osteen, Joyce Meyer, and T. D. Jakes, who promise the spiritual and material rewards of faith. Their books—with titles like *Become a Better You* and *Can You Stand to Be Blessed?*—are sold in Walmart stores. Their congregations claim 20,000 members or more. To paraphrase H. L. Mencken: Heave an egg out of your Ford Focus window and you might hit a prosperity gospeler, wearing a snazzy three-piece suit and diamond cufflinks.

Versions of the prosperity gospel have long animated the faithful in America.



By Kate Bowler  
Oxford Univ. Press  
337 pp. \$34.95

The idea that God rewards the righteous with good health, wealth, and happiness has driven the belief and practice of Pentecostals, charismatics, and evangelicals of various stripes. For the blessed, passages from the Bible such as 3 John 1:2 unlock treasures from heaven: “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” To critics, it all looks too much like pyramid-scheme religion. But the faithful see clear promises in the Old and New Testaments, just waiting to be claimed. The check that arrives out of the blue, an inheritance, a surprising pay raise, or a real estate deal that seems too good to be true all are signs of God’s overabundance. Stalwarts remain on the lookout for the hand of God.



TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

**Oral Roberts, an early champion of the prosperity gospel, stands before the Tulsa, Oklahoma, headquarters of his ministry, the Abundant Life Building, in 1962.**

In a lively book on the subject, Kate Bowler observes that “prosperity theology turned to the cross as the solution to all human needs. Jesus’s death and resurrection abolished not only sin and disease but also poverty.” Bowler, an assistant professor of the history of Christianity in the United States at Duke Divinity School,

fuses ethnography, religious studies, and cultural history to tell a fascinating story of this influential movement.

The prosperity gospel is a major strain within evangelicalism, but the two are not synonymous. There are many evangelical Christians who do not embrace the gospel of wealth, and even recoil at the movement’s name-it-claim-it theology (the belief that the faithful have been promised much in the Bible, but must articulate that claim to get those blessings). To many within the conservative Protestant fold, the prosperity gospel’s brazen divine materialism is as much bad taste as it is bad theology. In 2009, a

branch of the Lausanne Movement, an organization founded in part by Billy Graham, described the prosperity gospel as “false and gravely distorting of the Bible.”

Bowler expertly traces the movement from its origins in the late 19th century as it spun out of Holiness and Pentecostal churches. The growth of this material

Christianity paralleled and was occasionally even linked to the metaphysical religion of the day. Mind cure, Christian Science, proto–New Age mental magic, and various transcendental schemes inspired millions. Most of these religious strains focused strongly on the connection between the spiritual/psychic and material worlds. In an era of proliferating elixirs for health complaints, the faithful looked to heaven for relief.

E. W. Kenyon, a pioneering radio preacher and early-20th-century champion of the health and wealth gospel, took inspiration from the divine healing movement of his day and drew an eager following. African-American preachers in subsequent decades—Elder “Lightfoot” Solomon Michaux and Father Divine among them—carried the message into black communities. The guarantee of riches and relief uplifted followers in the brutal Jim Crow era. Aware of shifts in theology, culture, and politics, Bowler shows how new generations of proponents and laypeople reformed the faith to fit their needs.

Bowler zeroes in on the men and women in the pew, with an ethnographer’s keen insight. Proponents run the spectrum from angry-eyed apocalyptic Christian Zionists to soft-spoken holy therapists. Many of them live in suburban

and exurban communities. Few find their way to the chilly climes of New England, far removed from the Bible belt. Followers care deeply for each other and for potential converts. Food drives, drug rehab programs, and inner-city outreach extend their work beyond church walls. Their faith communities are vital centers for the down-and-out as well as the successful small-business owner.

**Believers have wanted their ministers and revivalists to look the part, to model unimaginable success.**

Yet the author mostly tells the story of the high-profile movers and shakers, and for good reason. Strong personalities dominate the movement’s history—starting with early stalwarts of the mid-20th century such as Oral Roberts and Kenneth Hagin. Over the decades, believers have wanted their ministers and revivalists to look the part, to model unimaginable success. The aptly named Creflo Dollar, a “pastorpreneur” with unequaled charm, founded the non-denominational World Changers Church

International in Georgia and has confidently faced down several scandals. At one point he assured his congregation, “I own two Rolls-Royces and didn’t pay a dime for them. Why? Because while I’m pursuing the Lord, those cars are pursuing me.”

In the eyes of the movement’s critics, this mix of God and mammon is despicable. In 1955, the influential theologian Reinhold Niebuhr spoke frankly about what he saw as a vacuous, feel-good gospel. From his perch at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, Niebuhr warned that “there is nothing in this religion of Biblical faith.” It amounted, he said several years later, to “a soporific for tired businessmen.” Later in the 20th century, many evangelicals wondered about the implications of the prosperity doctrine. What did it have to do with the message of Jesus? asked writers in *Christianity Today*. Were the poor responsible for their poverty, or the sick for their infirmities? As Bowler indicates, prosperity practitioners deal with these issues in widely different ways. Some throw up their hands and assume that such nettlesome questions won’t have an answer this side of eternity.

Detractors have not just protested the prosperity gospel’s aesthetics and

theology. Egregious wealth and fraud also top the list of indictments. Bowler briefly discusses the scandals that, like demons from hell, have plagued key leaders, including the double-whammy sex-and-finance imbroglio that toppled Jim and Tammy Bakker’s empire of Christian kitsch. Televangelists Robert Tilton and Jimmy Swaggart made headlines with bold claims about God’s riches that would pour down on the saints. On television, Tilton earnestly asked viewers to send prayer requests to him. Then a news program aired footage of those requests after they had been pitched, by the ton, into the trash. Swaggart also hoisted himself with his own petard. He was vicious in denouncing the sexual sins of others, including Jim Bakker, but in 1988 his own Christian empire began to crumble as he confessed to picking up prostitutes.

Then there have been embarrassments of riches that were just . . . well, embarrassing (e.g., the \$23,000 toilet seat in Joyce Meyer’s opulent home). Bowler briefly notes Senator Chuck Grassley’s 2007 investigation of some of the most famous prosperity preachers. But otherwise, discussions of the tension with other Christian groups and the negative attention of the media are missing in this book. Filtering out the outrage

from noninitiates may help us get a clearer picture of the prosperity gospel movement and reveal more about the beliefs and desires of believers. Still, scandal, intrigue, and outside scorn have shaped the movement considerably, and to ignore them to the extent Bowler does is to overlook an important dimension of adherents' experience.

In a superb conclusion, Bowler asks about the "Americanness" of the prosperity gospel, which, she observes, deified and ritualized the American dream. A Gatsbyian hope runs rich in American soil, whether sacred or profane. To borrow from Fitzgerald, prosperity preachers

bank on "the orgasmic future that year by year recedes before us." The promise of health and wealth, Bowler says, has also fared well overseas, making the prosperity gospel a leading religious export to the global South. Bowler compellingly describes the allure and the power of it all. ■

**RANDALL STEPHENS** is reader in history and American studies at Northumbria University, in Newcastle upon Tyne, England. He is an editor of the journal *Historically Speaking*, coauthor of *The Anointed: Evangelical Truth in a Secular Age* (2011), and author of *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South* (2008).



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*The Wilson Quarterly* (ISSN-0363-3276) is published in January (Winter), April (Spring), July (Summer), and October (Autumn) by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004-3027. Complete article index available online at [www.wilsonquarterly.com](http://www.wilsonquarterly.com)

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