

# W

The WILSON QUARTERLY  
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# Q

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# EDITOR'S COMMENT

## Tomorrow's Calling

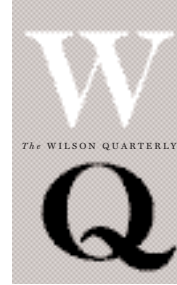
Where will America be without Alan Greenspan? For the better part of two decades, he has been not just the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board but the nation's chief prophet. As he steered the economy through one crisis after another, he seemed to acquire supernatural powers of anticipation, and when he began to speak about matters far beyond his normal purview, from the looming crisis of social security to the distant implications of deficits, people listened intently. Always he spoke in Delphic fashion, in words that required divine guidance to decipher. If Greenspan had declared that we must attack global warming, or the curse of halitosis, wheels would instantly have been set in motion.

The apotheosis of Alan Greenspan is a reminder that despite all our efforts to see tomorrow in the black and white of a computer printout, the future still belongs, pleasingly, to the realm of magic. Our fascination with tomorrow keeps us turning to astrologers, stock-market gurus, and freelance seers of every sort. "Hard" scientists and social scientists are inspired by the urge to predict, and today's political leaders offer visions of tomorrow as eagerly as yesterday's handed out turkeys and free booze. "What's next?" is the great implicit subject of the human conversation.

When *The Wilson Quarterly* was born 30 years ago, that question elicited gloomy responses. History was said to be on Marx's side, and Japan was coming up fast in the passing lane. America was running out of energy, literally and figuratively. But that has never been the spirit of the *WQ*. So it seems only fitting to celebrate our 30th anniversary by looking with curiosity and optimism toward the future.

We're also using the occasion to introduce an entirely new look. Designer David Herbick has done a wonderful job of creating a *WQ* that more faithfully expresses what the magazine really is—a serious publication that invites a wider public into the too-often rarefied discussion of ideas, in every realm of thought, that are shaping our time and will shape the times to come.

—STEVEN LAGERFELD



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**F**or many readers, the WQ is not just another magazine. Throughout the WQ's existence, its readers and editors have been embarked together on a common journey. We have shared a commitment to looking at issues from more than one side, an aversion to spin and superficiality, and a deep curiosity about new knowledge in every corner of the world.

As the WQ celebrates its 30th anniversary, it is stronger than ever, and the editors are full of plans for the future. But we need your support. In a media world dominated by the cool, the quick, and the cynical, the revenues that flow to the WQ and other serious independent publications from subscriptions and other sources are not sufficient to cover all costs.

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# LETTERS

## EYES ON CHINA

THE WQ HAS PUT TOGETHER A FINE group of articles [“Inside the Chinese Mind,” Autumn ’05] that provoke reflection about the China that is emerging. In Anne Thurston’s thoughtful and personal recollection of Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong [“An Optimist’s Life”], we can trace in a single life the influences that are shaping China today.

Thurston describes an idealistic intellectual who, after studying abroad, returned to China only to suffer through first the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and then—just when Chinese politics had seemed to right themselves—the traumatic crushing of student demonstrators at Tiananmen Square in 1989.

It seems at first a tale of wasted brilliance, but it was Fei Xiaotong who won in the end. Against all odds, he has, almost single-handedly, brought into being the field of sociology in China. Just as important, his perseverance and idealism helped restore the place of the intellectual in Chinese society after nearly a century of marginalization and worse. No one who seriously examines contemporary China can ignore the quality and diversity of ideas developed and argued there.

Perhaps Fei Xiaotong’s most important legacy is his field of study; sociology may be the key intellectual enterprise in contemporary China. One hears all the time about the “rise of China,” but what worries Chinese decisionmakers is the

fragility of their society. At least 50 million workers were laid off from state-owned industries beginning in the late 1990s, and the urban work force grows by about eight million a year, infused by a large cohort of youth. Over the last decade, perhaps 100 million people have migrated from rural to urban areas, yet, through natural population growth, today more people live in rural areas than when China began its reforms in 1978.

Although living standards have improved for the vast majority of Chinese, the “olive-shaped” pattern of income distribution typical of middle-class societies is still a long way off. Sociological studies show a very small number of people at the top of the system, followed by a somewhat larger but still financially insecure group of “middle-class” people who cling to their newly acquired status only with difficulty. Those who have done well or reasonably well under the economic reforms are still greatly outnumbered by the millions of workers and peasants who have little chance of economic advancement—and considerable chance of downward social mobility.

This precarious social structure exists at a time when social needs are multiplying. China’s population is aging rapidly, and the ratio between employees and dependents is becoming daunting. Meanwhile, social security benefits tied to state-owned enterprises are disappearing before a comprehensive new social security system has been created. To the extent

that there is such a system, it is almost completely confined to the urban areas.

What type of society will China become in the future? What sort of challenge will it pose to the world? The answers depend on how well the government manages the far-reaching social changes under way. Fei Xiaotong laid the foundation; now we will see if those who follow him exhibit the same creativity and determination.

**Joseph Fewsmith**

*Wilson Center Fellow*

*Professor of International Relations*

*and Political Science*

*Boston University*

*Boston, Mass.*

## MUSLIMS IN AMERICA

PETER SKERRY’S “AMERICA’S OTHER Muslims” [WQ, Autumn ’05] was a welcome contrast to the clash-of-civilizations warnings about invading, olive-skinned hordes from the East. Skerry reminds us that there is an indigenous side to American Islam and that Westerners, in this case African Americans, make up a sizable portion of America’s Muslims. His profile of Imam W. D. Mohammed and *The Mosque Cares* highlights the futility of grouping all Muslims in America into an “us” versus “them” dichotomy. At the same time, Skerry skillfully holds his stethoscope over some of the most important intramural rumblings inside the belly of American Islam.

Yet the most organized Muslim movements in America are not necessarily the most important (or the most numerous), even if they are easier to study. A survey

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of the most influential African-American (not to mention white American) Muslims would show a minority to be followers of Imam Mohammed. While this detracts nothing from the Imam's monumental contributions, it does suggest that his importance today, and in the future, may be far less than it was 25 years ago, when he courageously redirected his father's movement into Sunni Islam.

It is doubtful that The Mosque Cares, Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, and the National Community, led by Imam Jamil Al-Amin (formerly H. Rap Brown), make up the majority of African-American Muslims. In a city such as Philadelphia—a major center of African-American Islam—this is certainly not the case. Skerry seems to recognize this and introduces the HSAAM (historically Sunni African-American Muslims) for balance. But the latter appear almost as anomalous exceptions to the more formally organized norm.

In fact, the majority of America's "other Muslims" probably have very weak or no institutional affiliations and defy neat categorizations. This would include the growing numbers of Hispanic and white American Muslims. The future direction of American Islam may be determined far more by voices emerging out of informal rather than formal affiliations of Muslim Americans.

In any case, the highly racialized, hegemonic discourses into which American Islam has been forced will be a major challenge confronting America's "other Muslims." Already, the unspoken connection between "Muslim" and "non-white" masks a racist nativism and fortifies "us" and "them" divisions. Meanwhile, white America's struggle with its own religious past continues to force Islam into loaded conversations with secular, Enlightenment thought instead of with

Judaism or Christianity. From this posture, Muslim Americans are rarely able simply to speak but must, on some level, apologize.

Detectable even in the interstices of as empathetic a treatment as Skerry's is a tendency to commodify African-American Muslims and evaluate them primarily, if not solely, in terms of the service they render the dominant culture. (Compare this with treatments of Jewish Hasidim, the Amish, or even the Christian Right.) Muslims, in other words, even those whose American genealogy goes back to the days before the Founding Fathers, must work to ensure the psychological comfort of the dominant group.

Of course, 9/11 undoubtedly plays a role here. But even in this context, if we are to speak about the challenges that Muslims pose to America, we should speak about the challenges that America poses to its Muslims. If we are to be the



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America we think we are, we can diminish our Muslims only at the expense of diminishing ourselves.

**Sherman A. Jackson**

*Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies  
The University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor, Mich.*

THE QUESTION OF CHANGE OR EVOLUTION within religion is most often the encounter of some given religious tradition with modernity. But the religious tradition that, historically, came to terms with modernity so fully as to seem almost a part of it is liberal Protestantism. The American Revolution was made by Protestants who were not at war with the Enlightenment, and deists who were functionally at peace with Protestantism.

From within that intellectual synthesis or, at any rate, that intellectual *entente*, the question of change within religion



became, essentially, one of change within some religion other than Protestantism—Judaism and Roman Catholicism, first, but all others in their turn. Could they negotiate the same accommodation that liberal Protestantism had? Many modernists and like-minded Protestants were inclined to say no.

In our very recent past, the view was widespread that the Jews could have no place in the modern world because they were a historical fossil, in Arnold Toynbee's famous dismissal, incapable of forming a democracy of their own or assimilating into an existing democracy. Catholics could not accommodate modernity, either, because papism was inherently, transparently despotic. Hopes were not high for Russia or any peoples within the sphere of Russian Orthodoxy because Eastern Christendom had never undergone a Reformation and its peoples had never known Enlightenment; Russia knew only the knout. More recently, pessimism has been voiced for all East Asian nations: Because of Confucianism, they will never emerge from authoritarian rule. As for the Islam now on so many political minds, the term *Islamofascism* has been coined and is understood to owe rather more to Islam than to any fascism of Western articulation; thus, the phrase *Arab democracy* is spoken of as a virtual oxymoron.

In one instance after another, cultures and religions allegedly incapable of democratic governance and modern acculturation have brought off both feats and yet, in important ways, remained themselves. What makes the difference? Because religion is the adoption by the many of the vision of a charismatic few, I believe that it is those few who make the difference. I do not wish to succumb to some kind of "power of one" romanticism. Broad, impersonal socioeconomic factors matter greatly.

Yet there does exist such a thing as conversion, and religion as a phenomenon in human history and culture is uniquely capable of translating individual conversion into a shift in the behavior of a group. Peter Skerry's story of an individual conversion—that of W. D. Mohammed—followed by the mass conversion of the 50,000 or so members of what had been the Nation of Islam is a carefully documented, richly interesting example of this process.

**Jack Miles**

*Author, God: A Biography (1995) and Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God (2001)  
Los Angeles, Calif.*

PETER SKERRY CREATES A FALSE dichotomy between the aspirations of African-American Muslims and "immigrant" Muslims. Beyond a few isolated quotes, he provides little support for his thesis that there is a widening schism between Muslims of African-American origins and those who recently immigrated to America.

Imam W. D. Mohammed is regarded as an all-American Muslim leader. Skerry insinuates that the absence of any mention of the Patriot Act in a Mohammed sermon implies acceptance of its draconian measures. To suggest that African Americans would be spectators to eroding civil liberties, which they struggled hardest to secure for all Americans, is absurd.

There is absolutely no contradiction between Mohammed's message of self-empowerment and immigrant Muslims' aspirations in America, the land of opportunity. Muslims in America are working hard to establish themselves economically, socially, and politically. Immigrant Muslims, along with their African-American brethren, have established a number of institutions serving various commu-

nity needs.

American Muslims are rapidly evolving toward a new identity that is just as at home with Islam as it is in America. It is unrealistic to expect that African Americans, who have experienced centuries of slavery and segregation, and immigrant Muslims, who are barely a generation old in America, will forge a monolithic sociopolitical bloc overnight.

American Muslims, immigrant or indigenous, consider core American values to be consistent with Islam. Chief among these are the norms of hard work, entrepreneurship, and liberty; civilian control of the military; the clear institutionalization of political power; a diffused process of making public decisions; and a functioning civil society that gives voice to competing interests within a country.

Surveys of American Muslims show that more than three-quarters are involved with organizations that help the poor, sick, homeless, or elderly. Seventy-one percent are involved with a religious organization or a mosque, and more than two-thirds have been involved with school and youth programs. A little more than half have written to a media outlet or to a politician on a given issue. A majority believe that individuals, businesses, or religious organizations in their communities have experienced discrimination since September 11, yet 93 percent favor participation in the American political process.

Such an integrationist disposition does not imply acquiescence to attitudes that Muslims perceive to be hurting America as much as they are hurting Muslims. Chief among those are the increasingly worrisome twin phenomena of rising Islamophobia at home and anti-Americanism abroad. A lack of meaningful dialogue between policymakers and American Muslims is an immediate concern [Continued on Page 9]





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508-204-1500  
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# FROM THE CENTER

## PROMOTING THE PUBLIC SPIRIT

AT THE ELEGANT MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART in Monterrey, Mexico, a crowd of hundreds looked on this past November as the Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship was presented to Don Lorenzo Zambrano, chairman and CEO of the multinational cement-manufacturing giant CEMEX. Don Lorenzo is among Mexico's most generous and creative philanthropists, noted especially for his support of programs designed to give Mexicans the opportunity to own their own homes.

At the Wilson Center, we have long believed in the importance of recognizing men and women who exhibit unusual public spirit. Our two principal means of bestowing that recognition have been the Woodrow Wilson Award for Corporate Citizenship and, for individuals in public life, the Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service. As the Center continues to expand its international reach, we have begun in recent years to identify worthy recipients outside the United States. The ceremony in Monterrey was the ninth such event we have sponsored abroad, and in coming months we plan to host ceremonies in São Paulo, Calgary, Helsinki, and Athens.

One of the striking things about these international events is how enthusiastically they are received. In large part, that is a reflection of the esteem in which the award recipients are held. In Vancouver, nearly a thousand people came to applaud Michael Harcourt, the former premier of British Columbia, and industrialist-philanthropist William Sauder, the founder of International Forest Products. In Sydney, we honored entrepreneur Frank Lowy, cofounder of the Westfield Group, for corporate citizenship, and we were proud to recognize Australian prime minister John Howard for public service, in our first such citation of a head of government. In a taped message, President George W. Bush saluted the prime minister, observing that "the award pays tribute to those who have shown a special commitment to free and open

debate and demonstrated strength of character in working for thoughtful public policy."

In extending the reach of the awards, we are acting in accord with the international character of the Wilson Center. We hope to promote and publicize around the globe the values of public-spiritedness, intellectual engagement, and international dialogue that are as fundamental to the Center as they were to Woodrow Wilson himself. The ceremonies are usually accompanied by a scholarly program—a practical demonstration of the value of sharing knowledge and ideas to build international understanding. Best of all, the events leave a legacy of scholarly activity, because the Center uses the funds raised by the awards dinners to maintain and enlarge its programs of study and exchange with the host countries.

Which brings me to a second reason why I think the awards ceremonies have been so enthusiastically received. In many countries, the hunger for better dialogue with the United States is palpable, and the Wilson Center embodies the ideal of free and open discussion. Angus Reid, the Canadian cochair of the advisory board of the Wilson Center's Canada Institute, explained to *The Vancouver Sun* that bilateral issues get very little serious attention in the United States. Like our other divisions, the Institute fills the need for "a place for much more reasoned debate than the courtroom or the world of political rhetoric."

Political debate these days—and maybe *any* days—is often cacophonous. The Wilson Center provides a zone of quiet—a neutral forum where scholars and policymakers from around the world can discuss issues of mutual concern at a civilized volume. By recognizing the work of exceptional men and women through the Woodrow Wilson Awards, we hope to widen that discussion and to support and recognize the efforts of innumerable other public-spirited individuals around the world.

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[ *Continued from page 6* ] to community leaders because its absence thwarts the desire among vast numbers of American Muslims to be empowered and enlightened citizens of the United States of America.

**Parvez Ahmed**

*Chairman of the Board  
Council on American-Islamic Relations  
Washington, D.C.*

**MEDITATING ON SPIRITUALITY**

IN "SPIRIT WARS" [WQ, AUTUMN '05], Leigh Schmidt argues that American political liberals should embrace individualistic "spirituality" as a means of countering the influence of conservatives and traditional Christians. Schmidt points to Barack Obama as one who wants to "reconnect progressive politics with religious vision" and quotes the senator as saying, "My mother saw religion as an impediment to broader values, like tolerance and racial inclusivity. She remembered church-going folks who also called people nigger. But she was a deeply spiritual person, and when I moved to Chicago and worked with church-based community organizations, I kept hearing her values expressed." Schmidt also appears to be impressed with Rabbi Michael Lerner and his ideal of an "Emancipatory Spirituality." In Lerner's analysis, "The liberal world has developed such knee-jerk hostility to religion" that those "who actually do have spiritual yearnings" have been marginalized.

The vagueness of both these statements undermines any claim to their seriousness. What exactly is *spiritual* about Lerner's "spiritual yearnings"? Where did Obama's mother discover her "broader values"? What is their specific content? Without reference to some specific truth claim or structured thought, all this is little more than nonsensical wordplay, sim-

ilar to pragmatist William James's definition of spirituality: "Susceptibility to ideals, but with a certain freedom to indulge in imagination about them. A certain amount of 'otherworldly' fancy."

Personally, I have more respect for a clearheaded secularist than for someone who espouses this kind of mind-numbing relativism. If spirituality simply means a "susceptibility to ideals," does it even matter what those ideals are?

Paul Powers of Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, got it right: "Softheaded spiritualism is its own form of fundamentalism. The suggestion that the 'true essence' of all religions is spirituality implies that if only people were not so stupid as to believe what their tradition teaches them, they would see that behind all this mere cultural baggage is the supreme 'spiritual' truth. . . . Why American liberals who seem so happy to embrace difference in various contexts want, when it comes to religion, to sweep [different truth claims] under the rug of some invented, undefined, supposedly universal 'spirituality' remains one of the true religious mysteries of our times."

In reality, it isn't such a mystery. Spirituality is all that remains when truth claims are removed. Spirituality represents little more than an effort to claim higher "values" without the demands of truth, revelation, and obedience. Of all people, Christians should be the first to see this for what it is—an effort to replace the Christian faith with an empty "spiritual" shell. Biblical Christianity is profoundly spiritual—but Christian spirituality is an expression of Christian truth, not its substitute.

**R. Albert Mohler Jr.**

*President  
The Southern Baptist  
Theological Seminary  
Louisville, Ky.*



# FINDINGS

BRIEF NOTES OF INTEREST ON ALL TOPICS

## High Holy Days

### *The good-faith drug defense*

Peyote, a small, mescaline-laden cactus that grows in Mexico and Texas, enjoys unique status in American law. Peyote possession is a felony—unless you're a Native American planning to use the hallucinogen during a religious ritual. This exception, created by Congress in 1994, evidently marks the first federal statute to distinguish between sacramental and recreational use of a mood-altering substance since 1919, when the Volstead Act exempted "wine for sacramental

purposes" from Prohibition.

Now, the 130 or so American members of a Brazilian faith called União do Vegetal (UDV) want what an estimated 300,000 Native American "peyotists" have: the right to possess and consume their psychedelic sacrament without fear of arrest. During UDV services, worshipers drink hoasca, a tea that contains the hallucinogen dimethyltryptamine (DMT). The Supreme Court heard their case November 1, and is expected to rule by the end of June.

Oposing any hoasca exemption, government lawyers tried to distin-

guish the peyote law as reflecting "the *sui generis* political status of Indian Tribes" (several justices sounded skeptical at oral argument), and insisted that a victory for UDV would vastly complicate the war on drugs. If DMT gets a pass, what about other unlawful sacraments? In a new study of intoxication, *Drunk the Night Before* (Univ. of Minnesota Press), Marty Roth contends that "most religions, major or minor, institution or cult, can be said to have a drug of choice." No doubt, too, recreational drug users would establish sects of convenience, just as LSD and marijuana habitués of the 1960s launched the Neo-American Church (its hymns included "Puff, the Magic Dragon"). Government lawyers also noted that the recreational popularity of DMT appears to be growing; because its hallucinations last less than an hour, DMT has been dubbed "the businessman's trip." Recreational use of peyote, by contrast, has been limited. It "tastes terrible" and frequently induces nausea and vomiting, says Robert C. Fuller, the author of *Stairways to Heaven: Drugs in American Religious History* (2000). "Why would anyone want to do this just to see strange lights?"

Along with its (so far) unique



In Salt Lake City's Exchange Place Plaza, Gary Tom (left), a Pipe Springs Paiute, and James "Flaming Eagle" Mooney, of the Seminole Tribe, celebrate a Utah Supreme Court decision affirming use of peyote in Indian religious ceremonies by performing a Sacred Pipe Ceremony in September 2004.

legal status, peyote can lay claim to another distinction: More than a century ago, it became the first hallucinogen studied in the laboratory. Many researchers of the 1890s weren't content merely to ferret out the drug's alkaloids, either—notwithstanding its flavor, they tried peyote for themselves, Daniel M. Perrine reported in an article published in the *Heffter Review of Psychedelic Research* in 2001. "Oh, I wish I could talk with Ingersoll just for a minute," exclaimed a peyote-tripping chemist named Erwin Ewell, referring to famed atheist Robert G. Ingersoll. "I could convince him that there is a heaven. I see it. I see the angels in the streets of gold." When the psychologist Havelock Ellis tried the drug, he witnessed "a vast field of golden jewels, studded with red and green stones, ever changing," along with "many hours" of other hallucinations that resembled "living arabesques."

Not everyone beheld angels or arabesques. "I had two days spoiled by a psychological Experiment," the philosopher and psychologist William James reported in 1896. Neurologist Weir Mitchell had given him a peyote sample and promised "the most glorious visions of color—every object thought of appears in a jeweled splendor unknown to the natural world," James recounted in a letter to his novelist brother, Henry. "It disturbs the stomach somewhat but that, according to W.M., was a cheap price, etc.

"I took one bud 3 days ago, vomited and spattered for 24 hours and had no other symptom whatever except that and the Katzenjammer

[hangover] the following day. I will take the visions on trust."

## Metanfiction

### *The book of books*

University of Nebraska Press recently published an edited volume that features, among others, the chapters "Analyzing Anthologies," "Anthologizing 'World Literature,'" "The Economic Challenges to Anthologies," and "Ideology of Headnotes." That's right: *On Anthologies* is an anthology about anthologies.

## Self-Satisfied Mind

### *Blowin' in the wind of the past*

In *Chronicles: Volume One* (2004), Bob Dylan recounts a circa-1970 encounter with an elderly eminence of American letters. The poet Archibald MacLeish, nearly 80, invited Dylan, not yet 30, to his Massachusetts home to discuss working together on a musical. Along with talking about the project—an adaptation of a Stephen Vincent Benét story—MacLeish praised Dylan as a "serious poet" whose "work would be a touchstone for generations," and quizzed him about his boyhood heroes, the meaning of some of his lyrics, and his thoughts on the work of T. S. Eliot. The collaboration didn't pan out, but, the folksinger writes, "It was great meeting him, a man who had reached the moon when most of us scarcely make it off the ground. In some ways, he taught me how to swim the Atlantic."

Dylan's account may be as jum-



Bob Dylan may have been the voice of his generation, but was a bust when it came to writing musicals.

bled as his metaphors. In a new memoir, *Present at the Creation, Leaping in the Dark, and Going Against the Grain* (Applause Books), theatrical producer Stuart Ostrow recalls that he and the director Peter Hunt were also there to talk about the musical—and they "spent the afternoon watching Dylan drink the house brandy as quickly as MacLeish could refill his snifter. [Dylan] never once responded to any question nor joined the conversation. . . . By the time we reached Act Two, he was asleep. We were dumbfounded."

"There does come a time . . . when you have to face facts," Dylan once observed, "and the truth is true whether you wanna believe it or not." Maybe in *Chronicles: Volume Two?*

## Misspeak, Memory

### *When your first-grader is smarter than you*

A child's memory generally strengthens over time, as the brain matures.

But, C. J. Brainerd and V. F. Reyna explain in *The Science of False Memory* (Oxford Univ. Press), brain development has the perverse effect of weakening one memory skill: accurately recalling words that are related to one another.

In a typical test, the subject sees a list such as “nurse, hospital, sick,” and later is asked whether a related word, such as “doctor,” appeared on the list. Children are far likelier than adults to give the correct response, and younger children are likelier to do so than older ones. Young children seemingly don’t recognize, or at least don’t rely on, the affinity of words in remembering them. Organizing our memories by category comes at a price.

## Censor Censored

*Dr. Wertham's comic villains*

In *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), psychiatrist Fredric Wertham famously proclaimed that comic books contribute to juvenile delinquency. The book helped spawn Senate hearings, an industry-produced Comics Code, de facto censorship, and the demise of the most lurid comics.

Even as some publishers noisily fought censorship, they quietly schemed to censor Wertham, according to Bart Beaty’s *Fredric Wertham and the Critique of Mass Culture* (Univ. Press of Mississippi). *Quest*, a newsletter of the comics industry, adopted a Lex Luthor tone: “[Wertham] cannot be reasoned with. He must be discredited and rendered ineffective. This is a job for the bomb disposal

squad. . . . He must be knocked out.” Before *Seduction of the Innocent’s* publication, the Lone Ranger Inc., Edgar Rice Burroughs Inc., Dell Publishing, and even Warner Brothers Cartoons threatened to sue the Rinehart Company if it published Wertham’s book. Rinehart was uncowed. Not so the Book-of-the-Month Club, which first made *Seduction of the Innocent* an alternate selection—Clifton Fadiman dubbed it “the most shocking book to appear in this country since Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*”—but, skittish about threatened lawsuits, withdrew it from the club’s list.

## The Almighty Cell Phone

*Encrypted messages*

Ever since Herr Gutenberg’s printing press, new technologies have been adapted to religious uses. Cell phones are no exception. In the Middle East, LG Electronics offers a phone with a compass that points toward Mecca and an



alarm to remind Muslims when it’s prayer time, according to Henrietta Thompson’s *Phone Book* (Thames & Hudson). Christians can sign up for daily Bible verses via cell phone text-messaging at [www.mfaith.com](http://www.mfaith.com), while [www.popemessage.com](http://www.popemessage.com) offers Catholics a daily message from the pontiff (Bible verses are free; papal missives cost 30 cents apiece). At

[www.biblesociety.com.au](http://www.biblesociety.com.au), you can download the entire Bible to your cell phone, courtesy of the Bible Society of Australia—but be warned, it’s in text-message shorthand: “4 GOD SO LUVD DA WORLD.”

In November, CBS News reported that cell phones now accompany many Irish into the grave. Family and friends may take comfort in being able to send text messages to the deceased, though one wonders about signal strength six feet under. More commonly, the phone played so prominent a role in the decedent’s life that, like a favorite necktie or ring, it seems a fitting accessory in death. Most funeral directors are glad to oblige, according to CBS, though they do ask that phones be turned off or set to vibrate. As one said, “You don’t want a phone ringing inside a coffin during a funeral.”

## Suicide by the Numbers

*Taking the measure of taking your life*

In *Why People Die by Suicide* (Harvard Univ. Press), Thomas Joiner briskly summarizes reams of studies on self-killing. “Men are approximately four times more likely than women to die by suicide” in most countries, he writes; only in China do female suicides outnumber male ones. In the United States, Caucasians commit suicide at about twice the rate of African Americans. Your suicide risk is also elevated if you’re a physician, divorced, or elderly, if you live in a rural county, if you’ve moved during the past year, if you regularly suffer from nightmares, or if you have tattoos.





# Reading the Future

**IF THERE'S A COMMON FAITH IN AMERICA, IT'S OUR FAITH IN THE FUTURE.**

Yet the live, irreducible core of optimism that drives the nation's development also leaves Americans without much enthusiasm for prolonged rational deliberation about the future. It doesn't help matters that so many predictions are shot through with error and politicization. And even when the forecasts are grim—social security is doomed, the ozone layer won't hold, the oceans will rise—we can't shake a deep-seated conviction that we'll be able to deal with any problem, personal, national, or global, once we finally turn our minds to it.

To mark the 30th anniversary of *The Wilson Quarterly* and launch the magazine into its next three decades, we're devoting all the essays in this issue to Americans' on-again/off-again regard for the elusive, insistent, menacing, promising, dim, bright future. We've tried to be sober and rational, of course, but in taking on a task as quixotic as prediction, nothing's more reviving than a little whimsy too.

# Has Futurism Failed?

*The effort to think systematically about the future began little more than a half-century ago, and the results so far have not been impressive. Today's futurists hope that more sophisticated methods will allow them to provide a better picture of what tomorrow may bring.*

BY DAVID REJESKI AND ROBERT L. OLSON

TO BE HUMAN IS TO PONDER THE FUTURE. FROM their very beginnings, human beings have tried to anticipate tomorrow. They noted the cycles of the seasons and fertility, the phases of the moon, and the changing of the tides. They looked for omens and portents, consulted seers and oracles, read entrails, and strove to find their fate in the stars. Many of these methods were, to put it mildly, suspect. In millennia of human existence, celestial calendars such as those erected at Stonehenge and New Mexico's Chaco Canyon stand out as rare examples of methods that transcended superstition and guesswork.

A fundamental change in human thinking about the future began in the 18th century, as technological change accelerated to a point where its effects were easily visible in the course of a single lifetime, and terms such as *progress* and *development* entered human discourse.

DAVID REJESKI is director of the Wilson Center's Foresight and Governance Project and the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies, a partnership with the Pew Charitable Trusts. ROBERT L. OLSON is a senior fellow at the Institute for Alternative Futures in Alexandria, Virginia.

Today, with the human species beginning to change the earth on a vast scale—altering climate and genetic structures, harboring weapons that can annihilate the planet—we have forever forfeited our ability to duck responsibility for thinking about the long-term future. But the responsibility to think does not automatically bring with it the capacity to do so.

Speculation about the future became more common as human beings increasingly reshaped the world during the 19th and early 20th centuries, though it was seen largely as entertainment, a diversion from the often stark realities of everyday life. Yet some of that speculation proved surprisingly close to the mark. In preparation for the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago, for example, luminaries from across the United States were asked to share their predictions for the next 100 years. Among the developments they foresaw: "Each well-to-do man will have a telephone in his residence"; "We will navigate in the air"; and "The entire world will be open to trade."



An optimist about the future and our ability to predict it, Herman Kahn, shown here at the Hudson Institute in 1969, exemplified the founding generation of futurists.

With the publication of his best-selling *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress Upon Human Life and Thought* in 1906, H. G. Wells became one of the first writers to examine seriously the social consequences of technological change (he was particularly acute in anticipating the pathology of urban sprawl). In 1926, Austrian filmmaker Fritz Lang gave the world what was perhaps the first science-fiction film, *Metropolis*. Set in the year 2026, Lang's masterpiece imagines the possible outcome of 100 years of industrial progress: a profoundly inequitable and mechanized world, in which hordes of workers labor in a subterranean city to maintain the pleasant existence of their masters in light-filled Metropolis.

It is difficult to mark with precision when studying the future became a serious business, but the change can be set somewhere soon after the end of World War II. In 1945, *The Atlantic Monthly* published an article that was, in retrospect, stunning in its scope and prescience. Written by Vannevar Bush, who was then director of the White House Office of Scientific Research and Develop-

ment, the essay was titled simply "As We May Think." Bush portrayed—two years before the invention of the transistor—the coming information revolution, describing everything from the personal computer, which he dubbed the "memex," to hypertext, digital imaging, and search engines. Here was the future as seen through the eyes not of a journalist, novelist, or huckster but of a scientist and government bureaucrat—who happened to be an adviser to the president of the United States. Though Bush's predictions were largely in the realm of technology, his overarching message concerned the need to organize the growing scientific enterprise and apply newfound knowledge to an ever-expanding set of national needs. This focus on planning coincided with a realization that the development of the atomic bomb had created the first truly existential threat to the entire planet.

The increasing power of government and the experience of totalitarianism provided fodder for a new generation of negative futures that blended technological forecasting with the dark underside of geopolitics, most famously in George Orwell's *1984* (1949). With its powerful image of a world in which people find themselves under constant sur-



veillance, the novel is still unfailingly disconcerting to those living in today's digital panopticon. In the classic 1951 science fiction movie *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, the alien Klaatu delivers a stark choice to Earth's Cold War leaders: "If you threaten to extend your violence, this Earth of yours will be reduced to a burned-out cinder." Many movies and comic books turned on the theme of government's failure to control atomic weapons and other new technologies, which inevitably fell into the hands of evildoers.

**W**ith the existential threat of nuclear weapons and the growing perception of superior Soviet science and planning after the launching of Sputnik in 1957, nervousness about America's place in the world spread beyond public-sector technocrats. In the late 1950s, *The New York Times*, in association with *Life* magazine, tried to stimulate a discussion on "national purpose" with a series of articles about the need for a clear national mission and long-term resolve in the face of the growing communist

potential enemies decades into the future. One response came from the U.S. Air Force, which created a new think tank called, simply, RAND (for Research and Development).

A key member of the early RAND staff was Herman Kahn, a man whose enormous intellect was nearly matched by his impressive physical proportions. Kahn stressed the need to bring together multiple disciplines to examine the future, a process he dubbed "interactive speculation." In his work exploring the possibilities of the use of fusion-based superweapons such as the hydrogen bomb, famously summarized in his 1962 book *On Thermonuclear War*, Kahn developed and applied "scenarios"—plausible stories of the future designed to tease out the assumptions of military planners and confront them with the possible outcomes of their decisions. (Kahn is often said to have been one of the models for director Stanley Kubrick's alarming Dr. Strangelove.) A new methodology was born, the first of many to emerge from RAND. In 1964, RAND researchers Theodore Gordon and Olaf Helmer introduced a second methodology,

called the Delphi technique, with the publication of a study of the future based on the carefully assembled conclusions of more than 100 experts in areas such as space exploration, scientific breakthroughs, and weapons technology.

**HERMAN KAHN, an early guru of the future, is said to have been one of the models for Stanley Kubrick's alarming Dr. Strangelove.**

threat. Yet much of the public discussion about the American future was still based on the informed speculation of elites and intellectuals rather than on any rigorous quantitative analysis of trends.

The demand for greater clarification of the future after World War II occurred just as new tools for quantitative and qualitative forecasting were becoming available. The complex technological challenges of the war had jump-started whole new fields of inquiry, such as systems analysis, operations research, and cybernetics, and the onset of the Cold War stimulated the need for further strategic planning on a large scale. Military and civilian planners were contemplating new weapons systems with such long development horizons that they needed new methods for assessing the capabilities of

RAND continued to shape futures research when key staff members, believing that their methods could be more broadly applied for the good of society as a whole, left to form other organizations—the Institute for the Future, in San Francisco; the Futures Group, in Connecticut; and Kahn's own Hudson Institute, in the suburbs of New York City. These and other groups brought new techniques to bear on problems of increasing technological and managerial complexity.

**I**n retrospect, we can see that there was a certain amount of arrogance and overselling of these approaches in the early days—as, for example, when a small group of RAND "whiz kids" migrated to Washing-

ton to work for Robert McNamara in the Department of Defense during the early 1960s. They wove together a number of systems-analysis and cost-benefit techniques to create the Pentagon's short-lived planning-programming-budgeting system and gave us the Vietnam War's obsession with "body counts." The limitations of these quantitative methods became even more obvious when they were applied to messy social problems. As historian Hugh Thomson observed, the systems-analysis enthusiasts learned during the era of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society that analyzing America's national defense needs was a lot easier than trying to solve ordinary urban problems in the city of Philadelphia.

**M**ore eclectic methods for exploring the future emerged between the mid-1960s and early 1970s, ranging from computer modeling to approaches drawn from the social sciences. At the Stanford Research Institute in California, Willis Harman developed methods combining systems theory with insights from academic disciplines such as sociology and the intuitions of some of the era's great minds. (Anthropologist Margaret Mead and Joseph Campbell, the noted student of myth, were among the celebrity intellectuals Harman persuaded to meditate, literally, on the future in the quiet chambers of his institute.)

The growing futures movement found a foothold in the private sector, initially through the activities of a group of thinkers working at Royal Dutch Shell in the late 1960s who brought Kahn's scenario planning to the corporation. Scenario planning is not designed to produce a single prediction but, rather, to prepare an organization for a number of plausible futures. No scenario

**Government might have responded better to Hurricane Katrina if it had embraced the lessons of contemporary futures thinking, which emphasizes preparing for several scenarios rather than zeroing in on particular predictions.**

can anticipate tomorrow's circumstances exactly, but by thinking through the consequences of different possibilities, a corporation (or a person or society) can be better prepared to meet the unexpected. One member of the group described the process as "planning as learning."

The Royal Dutch Shell team's experience illustrated one of the truisms of futures work, in the public sphere as well as the private sector: Devising scenarios and forecasts is perhaps the easiest part of futurists' work. Persuading others of the need to prepare systematically for the future is a much harder task. At Royal Dutch Shell, top executives slowly adopted the idea of mentally "practicing" for events they hadn't thought about and putting themselves in a better position to recognize early signals of such events as they approached—and the company was well served. As a result of its scenario exercises, for example, it faced up to the possibility of disruptions in the supply of oil from the Middle East and diversified its sources before the 1973-74 OPEC oil embargo. (Later, Shell was better prepared than its competitors to deal with the collapse of oil prices in the 1980s.)

By the beginning of the 1970s, the futures movement was attracting a good deal of public attention. “Future shock,” the idea embodied in Alvin Toffler’s best-selling 1970 book of that name, became a household term. Sociologist Daniel Bell’s more scholarly *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973) reinforced the

for example, commissioned an overview of the emerging field under its Research Applied to National Needs Program.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter asked the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the State Department to prepare a report on “probable changes in the world’s population, natural resources, and environment through the end of the century.” Published just before Carter’s defeat in the 1980 election, the sobering *Global 2000 Report to the President* fed shredders in the Reagan White House yet went on

**THE FUTURES MOVEMENT reached what was arguably its high-water mark in 1980, with the publication of *The Global 2000 Report* and *The Third Wave*.**

movement’s academic legitimacy. Frightening predictions, such as those in *The Population Bomb* (1968), by Stanford University biologist Paul Ehrlich, stirred public controversy. Despite the war in Vietnam, it was a time of general optimism in the social sciences: Economists aspired to engineer uninterrupted prosperity; sociologists hoped to address the root causes of poverty. In this intellectual climate, dozens of futurist courses and a number of degree programs on the future were created in colleges and universities around the country.

At the same time, the federal government began in earnest to embrace long-term thinking in fields beyond defense. Three government institutions began to devote serious resources to looking ahead: the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), the Congressional Research Service (CRS), and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), which produces the long-term federal budget projections that guide much of our political debate. By 1975, CRS had a Futures Research Group, with five analysts dedicated to helping Congress deal with longer-term issues. OTA produced assessments of emerging technologies in areas ranging from aging, agriculture, and alternative fuels to waste management. In 1978, Edward Cornish, the president of the World Future Society, declared that “Congress is definitely out ahead of the rest of the government in its futures activities. . . . Congressmen and their staff are searching for new ways to make government more anticipatory.” Congress was not the only arm of government with an interest in future studies. The National Science Foundation,

to become one of the most popular reports ever produced by the U.S. government, appearing in seven foreign languages and selling 1.5 million copies.

**T**he futures movement reached what was arguably its high-water mark in the United States in 1980. As *The Global 2000 Report* circulated among policy elites, Toffler’s *The Third Wave*, a compelling sketch of the information revolution’s social and economic ramifications, brought futures thinking to a mass audience. Images of an emerging “information society” were appearing in every future-oriented publication, and a general assembly of the World Future Society set an attendance record that has never been broken.

Yet a reaction against futures thinking was already under way. Critics could point to failed prophecies (what ever happened to the “leisure society” that Bell and others had predicted as a result of growing automation in industry?), conflicting forecasts (growth versus ecocatastrophe), and many examples of studies that lacked methodological rigor. Perhaps more important, many people were disturbed by some of the field’s images of the future. Economists, business leaders, and politicians had no problem with Herman Kahn’s optimistic scenarios of rapid worldwide economic growth, but most of them rejected the growing gloom-and-doomism in some futures work, such as the famous 1972 report to the Club of Rome, *The Limits to Growth*, with its headline-grabbing declaration: “If the present growth trends in



world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next 100 years. The most probable result will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity.”

Bell and other thinkers had once hoped for the rise of a disinterested discipline of future studies, but critics increasingly complained about the rise of pop futurism and politicization that yielded predictions that seemed too conveniently to suit their authors’ existing policy preferences. One such critic dismissed Carter’s *Global 2000* report as “globaloney.”

Frontal political attacks on the size and role of government, crystallized in the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980, reduced public confidence in the government’s ability to plan for and shape the future. The growing enthusiasm for market-based solutions undercut the very premises of public-sector long-term planning. The Futures Research Group at CRS was eliminated in the early 1980s, and Congress put OTA out of business in 1995, acting on a suspicion that its studies had a liberal bias and that its version of technology assessment was really about “technology arrestment.” In 1989, a former director of the Congressional Clearinghouse for the Future told an interviewer, “I think most people in the Reagan administration believed you didn’t really need to think through future problems if you didn’t see the government as being one of the big players in solving them.”

Another cause of decline in futures thinking has been the passing of many leading figures. The first generation of people to explore the future seriously included a high proportion of brilliant men and women who were eminent in their own disciplines but were attracted to the field because it allowed them to think on a larger scale. The loss of people such as Kahn, Mead, Harman, John McHale, Donella Meadows, Kenneth Boulding, and Buckminster Fuller lowered the IQ level, visibility, and legitimacy of the whole field.

Then came the roaring 1990s. American capitalism

was vindicated, globalization was in full swing, inflation was down, and the only trend that mattered was the direction of the NASDAQ. The touchstone year 2000 had been the subject of countless prognostications, from Edward Bellamy’s 1887 novel *Looking Backward* to Herman Kahn’s *The Year 2000* and *The Global 2000 Report*. But ironically, when 2000 arrived, long-term thinking in the United States was in sharp decline, and we were preoccupied with immediate problems such as the Y2K crisis. It didn’t help the case for a more forward-looking orientation that the biggest future issue in the public eye was a widely predicted meltdown of the world’s data systems as calendars turned over to the new millennium. The world held its breath, and nothing happened.

**T**hough myopic hedonism had American culture and politics in its grip throughout much of the 1990s, important developments were under way that would deeply affect thinking about the future. The epicenter of methodological innovation left the think tanks on the two coasts and shifted to a brilliant group of eccentrics in the New Mexico desert, at the Santa Fe Institute. Drawing on lessons from phenomena as diverse as ant colonies, Internet traffic, and life at Irish pubs, they began to develop theories and tools to take on the most critical weakness in our understanding of our

**A MAJOR CAUSE of the decline in futures thinking has been the passing of so many of its leading figures.**

evolving world: the concept of complexity.

The Santa Fe Institute attracted top-level people in many different fields, from neuroscience to meteorology. Their shared focus was an effort to understand the common underlying structural and behavioral features of complex systems that display properties such as self-organization. “We are trying to understand how patterns emerge from total randomness,” then-president Ellen Goldberg explained a few years ago.

This work on complexity has not solved the intrinsic difficulties in looking ahead, but it has brought something important to the effort: a sense of humility and awe before the difficulty of the task, and a better understanding of the limits of human cognition. It has highlighted the inability of trend extrapolation and mechanistic models of the world to capture the inherent uncertainties of open, nonlinear systems with complex feedback loops, in which small perturbations can sometimes cause large and unpredictable effects.

**W**hile it dampens hopes that prediction will ever achieve a high degree of accuracy, complexity theory points to better approaches in dealing with surprise, disruption, and uncertainty. We must both prepare for the unexpected, in part by constantly revising our “situational” awareness of the present, and work toward creating the kinds of long-term outcomes we want by crafting well-considered images of the future.

Simply being more attuned to the world around you is one of the best insurance policies against a surprise-filled future. Karl Weick, a professor of organizational behavior and psychology at the University of Michigan, has studied organizations that do a good job of “managing the unexpected” and found that they share a number of traits that have little to do with traditional notions of futures research. These “highly reliable organizations,” as he calls them, focus on failures and learn from them, do not simplify the complex, are hyperaware of their operations and surroundings, build in resilience to keep errors from cascading out of control, and distribute decision-making down and around, making sure that experts get heard, not just the boss. These characteristics make an organization “mindful” and better able to detect surprises when they are new, small, and insignificant—before they become five-alarm fires.

A recurrent theme in efforts to view social systems through the lens of complexity is that seemingly small perturbations in widely shared images of the future can sometimes open up large new realms of behavior possibilities, creating chain reactions of self-organizing change. This insight actually emerged in some of the early work in future studies. The economist Kenneth



**Surprisingly few American public figures today are able to speak with authority about the future. Alan Greenspan, who retires this year after 19 years as chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, is a rare example of one who does.**

Boulding put the matter clearly: “The human condition can almost be summed up in the observation that, whereas all experiences are of the past, all decisions are about the future. The image of the future, therefore, is the key to all choice-oriented behavior. The character and quality of the images of the future which prevail in a society are therefore the most important clue to its overall dynamics.”

The Dutch historian Frederick Polak, one of the founders of the futures movement in Europe, argues in his intellectual history of Western civilization, *The Image of the Future* (1973), that the heights of classical civilization, Judaic culture, Islamic culture, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the early industrial era were all preceded by daring imaginative leaps toward

new visions of human possibility. Turning to the present age, however, Polak offers a terrifying depiction of modern cultures that repress fears of what tomorrow may bring, their imaginative capacities crippled by pervasive cynicism, lacking any compelling vision of human possibilities beyond riches and technological power. Polak argues that the only hope for cultural revitalization lies in rekindling the social imagination and once again exploring the possibilities of a better society.

If what Boulding calls the “character” of our images of the future needs to be more positive and inspirational, what he calls the “quality” of those images needs to be realistic. Research by psychologists such as Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman at Princeton University and Martin Seligman at the University of Pennsylvania has shown that optimists often believe that they have much more control over events than they actually do. They tend to underestimate (often by orders of magnitude) the costs and effort needed to accomplish longer-term objectives. A willingness to dare is an indispensable quality, but in a nation of optimists the cautionary understanding of Kahneman and his colleagues is a useful tonic. It underscores the need to combine strongly positive images of the future with a willingness constantly to check reality against one’s convictions and perceptions.

**A**t the beginning of a new millennium, the future’s opportunities and dangers are calling, but we are largely deaf to them. We pay less attention to the long run today than we did in the 1970s. Michael Marien, who edits *Future Survey*, the leading review of books and articles related to the future, estimates that roughly half as many writings on the future are being published today as in the mid-1970s.

But this is not the whole picture. While formal study of the future declined in the United States, dozens of other countries launched elaborate foresight exercises to examine their futures in the post-Cold War order. These countries included Norway (Norway 2030), Germany (Futur), Great Britain (UK Foresight Project), Finland, Australia (Australia 2013), New Zealand (The Foresight Project), the European Commission (Europe 2010), Poland, and Kenya (Kenya Scenarios Project). The future is also being seriously explored through work on other

topics, such as “sustainable development”—but again, more outside the United States than within.

**T**hese efforts have surprising parallels in the private sector. While long-range planning in the public sector is frequently denigrated in the United States, many corporations are intensely interested in thinking about the future. Management schools and professional journals are full of discussions about the need to create “learning organizations” and other means to institutionalize constant adaptation to change. Businesses devote enormous resources to efforts to anticipate new markets, products, and technologies, and they are avid consumers of traditional economic and demographic forecasts. Many of the best-run transnational corporations have been developing sophisticated efforts in such fields as environmental scanning, issues management, and scenario-based planning.

Another hopeful development is the emergence of images of the future that appear to be both positive and realistic and that transcend many of the divisions and arguments of the past. The shift is visible in the many conferences organized by the World Future Society between 1971 and 2005. The earlier conferences were wracked by stormy debates: growth vs. no-growth, high tech vs. appropriate technology, conventional health care vs. holistic health, the political Left vs. the Right, and so on. Later conferences focused on more integrative and hopeful topics: “sustainable development” strategies to promote economic, environmental, and social well-being over the long run; an “environmental revolution in technology” that applies leading-edge scientific knowledge to develop environmentally advanced technologies; “complementary and alternative medicine”; and a “radical middle” politics that takes a long-term perspective, faces up to major challenges ahead, and seeks to find a higher common ground that integrates the best insights from the Left, the Right, and everywhere in between.

Perhaps the most important lesson for thinking about the future was summed up by Alan Kay, who created the computer interface that became the model for the first Apple Macintosh and then the basis for Windows. “The best way to predict the future,” Kay said, “is to create it.” ■

# America's Romance With the Future

*The celebrated American faith in the future was matched in the past by a willingness to sacrifice for a better tomorrow. Today, the faith endures but the commitment to sacrifice is in doubt.*

BY MARTIN WALKER

WHEN HE ANNOUNCED HIS BID FOR THE PRESIDENCY back in 1991, the then-governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton, spoke movingly of the teacher who had most influenced his thinking, a Georgetown University professor named Carroll Quigley. Quigley was known for ripping apart a copy of *The Republic* while he denounced Plato as the intellectual father of totalitarianism. But it was not the classroom pyrotechnics that most impressed the future president. Rather, it was Quigley's emphasis on the future in his foundation course on Western civilization. Clinton never forgot the professor's preoccupation—and not just because he was one of only two students in the class to receive an A.

"The thing that got you into this classroom today is belief in the future, a belief that the future can be better than the present and that people will and should sacrifice in the present to get to that better future," said Quigley. "That belief has taken man out of the chaos and deprivation that most human beings toiled in for most of history to the point where we are today. One thing will kill our civilization and

MARTIN WALKER, a former Wilson Center public policy scholar, is the editor of United Press International. His most recent books are *America Reborn: A Twentieth-Century Narrative in Twenty-Six Lives* (2000) and the novel *The Caves of Périgord* (2002).

way of life—when people no longer have the will to undergo the pain required to prefer the future to the present. That is what got your parents to pay this expensive tuition. That is what got us through two wars and the Depression. Future preference. Don't ever forget that."

It is tempting to dismiss this preference for the future as a truism, an instinct for clan survival hard-wired into the genes of all living creatures. Adults of every species exert themselves to feed and protect their helpless young. Hunter-gatherers learn to salt and dry today's meat against tomorrow's hunger, and the most primitive peasants learn to save precious seed corn for next year's harvest. But advanced societies have embellished and refined the instinct into something much grander: an array of deliberate policy choices. These include investment in police and standing armed forces, education and economic infrastructure, and social health and welfare. Advanced societies extend welfare provisions even to the elderly, though they know that there is little genetic advantage to be gained from such expenditure on those beyond breeding age. They make these substantial income transfers from the working population to the retired for reasons of social cohesion and human decency—and possibly also from an acute sense of the



propensity of the elderly to vote. Whatever the cause, this is an act of general political will that has little to do with the individual demands of our genes and everything to do with what we might call Quigley's Law: Successful societies are defined by their readiness to allow consideration of the future to determine today's choices.

The United States is a successful society today because over the past two or three generations it has applied Quigley's Law more thoroughly and more widely than any other society in history, and, in doing so, has shaped much of the world. Until 1940, the United States was not much more Quigley-minded than most other great powers. But the challenges of global war from 1939 to 1945, and the Cold

War thereafter, persuaded successive administrations of both parties to apply Quigley's principles on a global scale. There had been a hesitant precedent in the way that the British Empire crushed piracy, abolished the slave trade, established the principle of freedom of the seas, and built lighthouses and ports available to all. But the strategy by which the United States waged the Cold War was altogether more grandiose in conception and more transforming in its application.

That extraordinary generation of policymakers gathered around Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman—George Marshall, Dean Acheson, George Kennan, Paul Nitze, Paul Hoffman, and others—established, with bipartisan support, a series of global institutions that, in effect, created The West, the global economic machine that brought together the wealth, markets, and ingenuity of North America, Western Europe, and Japan. The policymakers set up the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for common security, the International Monetary



At the 1964 World's Fair, America's abundant optimism about the future combined with a willingness to sacrifice for it.

Fund for global economic stability, the World Bank for global development, the United Nations for global order, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade for the expansion of global trade. And they crafted inventive new instruments to help the war-flattened industries of Europe and Japan rebuild at American expense. The Marshall Plan, for example, which furnished Europeans with the dollars that enabled them to rebuild their factories and feed their workers (the offer was made to the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries as well), represented an annual disbursement of just over one percent of America's gross domestic product (GDP) for five years.

There was method to this altruism. The Western European economies were thereby enabled to contribute not only more effectively but also more willingly to common defense; NATO, in contrast to the Warsaw Pact and its dragooned members, was an alliance of consent.

The United States subsequently extended the pattern of altruism through the Pentagon's Special Procurements Fund, which pumped more money into rebuilding Japan than West Germany had received under the Marshall Plan. Because Japan became the industrial and logistic base for the Korean War, American taxpayers financed the ports, railroads, power stations, hospitals, and shipyards of modern Japan. They even paid for the first assembly lines of the Toyota Manufacturing Corporation, which was about to go bankrupt when it was saved by a Pentagon order for trucks.

The spur to this Quigleyan activity on a global scale was, of course, the national security of the United States: The nation needed forward bases in Europe and Asia and allies to share the burden of the Cold War. Yet America's grand strategists understood that, in rebuilding these allies, they

each accounted for less than a quarter of global GDP, and Japan for another 11 percent. The once-stricken competitors had long since become serious commercial rivals, in a large, prosperous, and competitive global economy that witnessed the decimation of American jobs in traditionally strategic industries such as coal, steel, and automobiles.

The Soviet Union, the West's great adversary in the Cold War, had its own plans for the future. At the Twenty-second Party Congress in 1961, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev pledged that within 20 years his country would be outproducing the United States in all the traditional sectors of industrial might: coal, steel, cement, fertilizer, tractors, and metal-cutting lathes. The pledge was fulfilled: In 1981, the Soviet Union outdid America in every one of those industries; it had successfully reproduced a mid-20th-century industrial economy. But the West by then was inventing a different kind of economy altogether, one based on plastic and silicon, on the new service sector, and on world trade. Even with the best of Quigleyan motives, an advanced society, such as the Soviet Union (which put the first man into space even as

**AMERICANS INVENT the future as statesmen and imagine it as writers, and they have traditionally been confident that the future will be splendid.**

were fostering formidable commercial competitors for the future, whose success might one day challenge the economic dominance that had allowed the United States to generate about half of all global economic output in 1945. American politicians certainly understood what was at stake, and, accordingly, they exacted various prices. Southern Congressmen, for example, insisted that American tobacco products be counted as Marshall Plan aid, which caused one British member of Parliament to complain, "The British Empire is being sold for a packet of cigarettes."

A far more important demand was "the open door," a requirement that the British, French, and Dutch colonial empires dismantle the imperial tariff system that gave their goods privileged access to colonial markets. This dovetailed precisely with the American strategy to promote world trade and thus boost American exports. As a grand design, it proved stunningly successful, although some Americans may have thought the price rather high. By 2005, the United States and the 25-nation European Union

Khrushchev was issuing his promises), can make disastrous choices.

That mistaken Soviet vision of the future ensured that the entire planet would eventually come to live instead in an American-designed future, whose contours were drafted in the furious burst of technological, cultural, and economic energy that powered the United States after it assumed its global role in World War II and the postwar world. Its films and popular music, its visual arts and literature, its assumption that a college education should be the norm, and its insistence on domestic comforts (appliances, central heating and air conditioning, family cars) have now all spread beyond the mass middle class that America invented and become the defining possessions of a mass middle class that is global. And with them have spread those essential underpinnings of the American creed: free press, free trade, free markets, and free elections.

We live now in that American future and call it globalization. And whatever the costs—personal, regional, envi-

ronmental—that have been paid by Pittsburgh steelworkers, Amazonian tribes, Nigerian villagers, or deracinated Muslims in Paris slums, the overall achievement has been stupendous. More people than ever before are clambering out of the absolute poverty of their ancestors and aspiring to join that mass middle class. James McGregor, chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China and author of the new book *One Billion Customers*, estimates that the market for private cars in China is already bigger than the markets of France and Germany combined, and within five years it will be twice as large again. By then, the Indian market, too, will be bigger than the combined markets of France and Germany. And so on. The biosphere groans under the strain, but the future of mass consumption that gripped the young Henry Ford 100 years ago, and that was implicit in the Cold War's original grand strategy, now pervades the world.

**H**ave we any clues as to how these new pressures are likely to affect human relationships and social change? We do—and these clues come from Americans. It is a remarkable feature of science fiction that, although Europeans invented the genre, Americans have produced its most thoughtful explorations of future societies. Jules Verne and Arthur Conan Doyle and H. G. Wells were fascinated by the future of *things*, of stupendous technology. American authors of science-fiction classics tend to have been intrigued rather by the future of *people*. Robert Heinlein wrote what is still the most accomplished description of a wholly free-market society in *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*. Isaac Asimov drafted laws of robotics (“A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm”) that are sure to come in handy fairly soon. And Philip K. Dick explored, among other themes, the personal relationships that are bound to develop between humans and androids (the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* was the basis of the movie *Blade Runner*), the nature of justice in a society where human behavior and even crime may be predicted (the short story “The Minority Report” became the movie *Minority Report*), and the likely outcome when virtual reality becomes all too plausible (“We Can Remember It for You Wholesale” reached the screen as *Total Recall*).

Americans, then, invent the future as statesmen and imagine it as writers, and they have traditionally been con-

fident that the future will be splendid—that today's debts will be tomorrow's fortune, that their citizenship holds a vast and generous promise that will inevitably be redeemed. The vision on the other side of the Atlantic has been altogether grimmer. “If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever,” wrote George Orwell in *1984*. That's far removed from the sentiment of the modern American sage Daniel Boorstin: “America has been a land of dreams. A land where the aspirations of people from countries cluttered with rich, cumbersome, aristocratic, ideological pasts can reach for what once seemed unattainable. Here they have tried to make dreams come true.” When Henry Ford said “History is bunk,” he was speaking a great truth for those millions of immigrants who had abandoned the old continent with its constipated social order and confining tradition. America was Hegel's “land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical lumber-room of Old Europe.”

The question now, however, is whether that vision still endures, whether the innate national confidence remains secure that made Ronald Reagan's “It's morning in America” resonate so powerfully. There are some troubling signs that Quigley's Law is no longer operating with the old American rigor. America as an economic community is no longer saving the seed corn. Indeed, it is no longer saving. Since 2002, America's annual net savings have failed to rise even to the miserable level of two percent of GDP. Europeans save about 15 percent of GDP, and the Chinese more than 35 percent. The federal budget deficit was \$412 billion in 2004, and the current account deficit (which used to be called the trade deficit) was \$666 billion. Combine those figures into a double deficit, and the United States in 2004 lived beyond its means to the tune of more than a trillion dollars. We learn from the bookkeeping of the Bank for International Settlements that these deficits were largely financed by the central banks of China and Japan, which bought dollars, Treasury bonds, and other U.S. securities. Thanks to the Chinese and Japanese savers who wanted Americans to have the money to continue consuming their exports, Americans were able to continue living in the style to which they had become accustomed, but which they could no longer afford.

In October 2005, the Council on Foreign Relations released a report, “Getting Serious About the Twin Deficits,” by Professor Menzie Chinn of the University of Wisconsin–Madison. (Chinn served on the Council of Economic

Advisers for Presidents Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush.) “Failure to take the initiative to reduce the twin deficits will cede to foreign governments increasing influence over the nation’s fate. Perhaps equally alarming, it will lead to slower growth, escalating trade friction, and reduced American influence in political and economic spheres,” Chinn wrote in the report. “Foreign governments and private investors, confronted with an endless vista of U.S. budget deficits, will tire of accumulating Treasury securities. Borrowing costs for the Treasury would then rise significantly and the dollar would fall sharply. The economy would slow dramatically, driven indirectly by a slump in the housing market or directly through falling private consumption.”

These are alarming warnings from a respected source. Perhaps the best antidote to the gloom is to recall that the United States has always been rather good at reinventing itself in the face of new challenges and changed times. It is barely

14 years since former Massachusetts senator Paul Tsongas won the New Hampshire presidential primary in 1992 with the slogan “The Cold War is over, and Japan won.” Since then, the Japanese economy has been virtually stagnant. The U.S. economy, which along the way developed the Internet and broadband technology, has grown by more than 40 percent. That is to say, the GDP of the U.S. economy has grown since 1992 by an amount greater than the entire GDP of Japan. It requires a breathtaking disregard for the lessons of history to bet against the resilience and vigor of the American economic machine.

One way to look at American history over the past century or so is to suggest that in the late 19th century the United States became the world’s farm, the source of cheap food that fed its own swelling population and much of the rest of the world. In the first two-thirds of the 20th century, it became the world’s workshop, the source of industrial innovations and goods, and, when needed, of munitions. Over the past generation, as European, Japanese, and Chinese manufacturers began chal-

lenging its dominance, the United States became the world’s graduate school.

The most recent ranking of the world’s universities (the criteria included the Nobel and other international prizes, articles cited in leading academic journals, research results, and academic performance) was published in 2005 by the Institute of Higher Education at Shanghai’s Jiao Tong University. Of the world’s top 10 universities, only two, Oxford and Cambridge, were not American. The third non-American university to make the list was Japan’s Tokyo University, at number 20. The highest-ranking non-British European university, at number 27, was Switzerland’s Federal

**OVER THE PAST GENERATION,  
in response to overseas challenges,  
the United States became the  
world’s graduate school.**

Institute of Technology in Zurich. America dominates the world’s brainpower and scores well on this classically Quigleyan measure of care for the future. If the global mass middle class is indeed straining the biosphere beyond endurance, it will be universities in America—if anywhere—that produce the research and innovation needed to repair the damage.

Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, the first volume of which was published in 1835, remains perhaps the most perceptive book ever written on the young republic. Tocqueville’s ideas and judgments have continued to ring true, including the cautionary notes he sounds along with his expressions of admiration. His celebrated warning about a singular American weakness provides the counterpoint to Quigley’s essential optimism: “The prospect really does frighten me that they may finally become so engrossed in a cowardly love of immediate pleasures that their interest in their own future and in that of their descendants may vanish, and that they will prefer tamely to follow the course of their destiny rather than make a sudden energetic effort necessary to set things right.” These many years later, Tocqueville’s concern seems more prescient and urgent than ever. ■



# Doom and Demography

*Decades ago, many population statistics seemed to point toward global calamity. Today, the world's population is indeed much larger—but it is also much healthier, better educated, and richer. Therein lies a lesson in the use and misuse of numbers.*

BY NICHOLAS EBERSTADT

For decades, the world has been haunted by ominous and recurrent reports of impending demographic doom. In 1968, Paul Ehrlich's neo-Malthusian manifesto, *The Population Bomb*, predicted mass starvation in the 1970s and '80s. *The Limits to Growth*, published by the global think tank Club of Rome in 1972, portrayed a computer-model apocalypse of overpopulation. The demographic doom-saying in authoritative and influential circles has steadily continued: from the Carter administration's grim *Global 2000* study in 1980 to the 1992 vision of eco-disaster in Al Gore's *Earth in the Balance* to practically any recent publication or pronouncement by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

What is perhaps most remarkable about the incessant stream of dire—and consistently wrong—predictions of global demographic overshoot is the public's apparently insatiable demand for it. Unlike the villagers in the fable about the boy who cried wolf, educated American consumers always seem to have the time, the money, and the credulity to pay to hear one more time that we are just about to run out of everything, thanks to population growth. *The Population*

NICHOLAS EBERSTADT is the Henry Wendt Scholar in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute. He is the author of *Prosperous Paupers and Other Population Problems* (2000) and other books.

*Bomb* and the Club of Rome's disaster tale both sold millions of copies. More recently, journalist Robert D. Kaplan created a stir by trumpeting "the coming anarchy" in a 2000 book of the same name, warning that a combination of demographic and environmental crises was creating world-threatening political maelstroms in a variety of developing countries. Why, of all people, do Americans—who fancy themselves the world's pragmatic problems-solvers—seem to betray a predilection for such obviously dramatic and unproved visions of the future?

Perhaps this American fascination is just a cultural foible—a penchant for a certain type of vicarious entertainment, no different in kind from, say, the famous British love of the murder mystery, and every bit as harmless. On the other hand, Miss Marple's British devotees did not actually believe that Britain was in the grip of a crime wave being stymied by little blue-haired ladies, whereas many Americans appear to take quite seriously each new warning about imminent and catastrophic fallout from a global population explosion.

But maybe the obsession has to do, rather, with America's hunger for—at times, near worship of—numbers. After all, the United States was a country of statistical pioneers. One of the very first acts of the newly formed U.S. government was a

national population count. Yet this fondness for figures can veer from the pragmatic to the preposterous. Pitirim A. Sorokin, the Russian émigré who became the first chairman of Harvard University's newly formed sociology department in the early 1930s, had a term for the problem. He called it "quantophrenia," a psychological compulsion to grasp for the numeric. Victims of quantophrenia, in Sorokin's wry diagnosis, obsess over numbers as descriptors, no matter how dubious their basis or questionable their provenance.

Perhaps we should chalk up America's fixation on Malthusian menace to the public's underdiscussed and still unacknowledged quantophrenia problem. Even in the land of the free, all numbers (and their interpretations) are *not* created equal. We can see this quite clearly if we reflect on the number-laden predictions about the purportedly devastating toll of the "population explosion" in the century that has just concluded.

**A**larmist assessments of the portending impact of the tremendous surge in humanity's numbers have been issued from all sorts of authoritative quarters: the United Nations, the World Bank, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, even the Central Intelligence Agency. Differing mainly in their presentation of details, the members of this grim chorus commonly asserted that the burgeoning number of mouths on the planet meant that more scarcity, poverty, and hunger were just around the corner—with the most severe suffering predicted for the rapidly reproducing Third World. In these predictions, in tandem with the ascending schedule of total human numbers, the human condition (at least in material terms) was always envisioned to decline. Food and everything else would become more dear, malnutrition more acute, desperate poverty more difficult to escape.

Yet these data-brandishing studies not only got their own numerical projections wrong, they even missed the basic direction of change. Troubled as the world may be today, it is incontestably *less* poor, *less* unhealthy, and *less* hungry than it was 30 years ago. And this *positive* association between world population growth and material advance goes back at least as far as the beginning of the 20th century.

Let us consider—or rather, reconsider—what took place in the 20th century's "population explosion." The basic story is well known. A precise count is impossible, but between 1900 and 2000 human numbers almost quadrupled, from around 1.6 billion to more than six billion; in pace or mag-

nitude, nothing like that surge had ever occurred. But why exactly did we experience a world population explosion in the 20th century?

It was not because people suddenly started breeding like rabbits—rather, it was because they finally stopped dying like flies. Between 1900 and the end of the 20th century, the human life span likely doubled, from a planetary life expectancy at birth of perhaps 30 years to one of more than 60. By this measure, the overwhelming preponderance of the health progress in all of human history took place during the past 100 years.

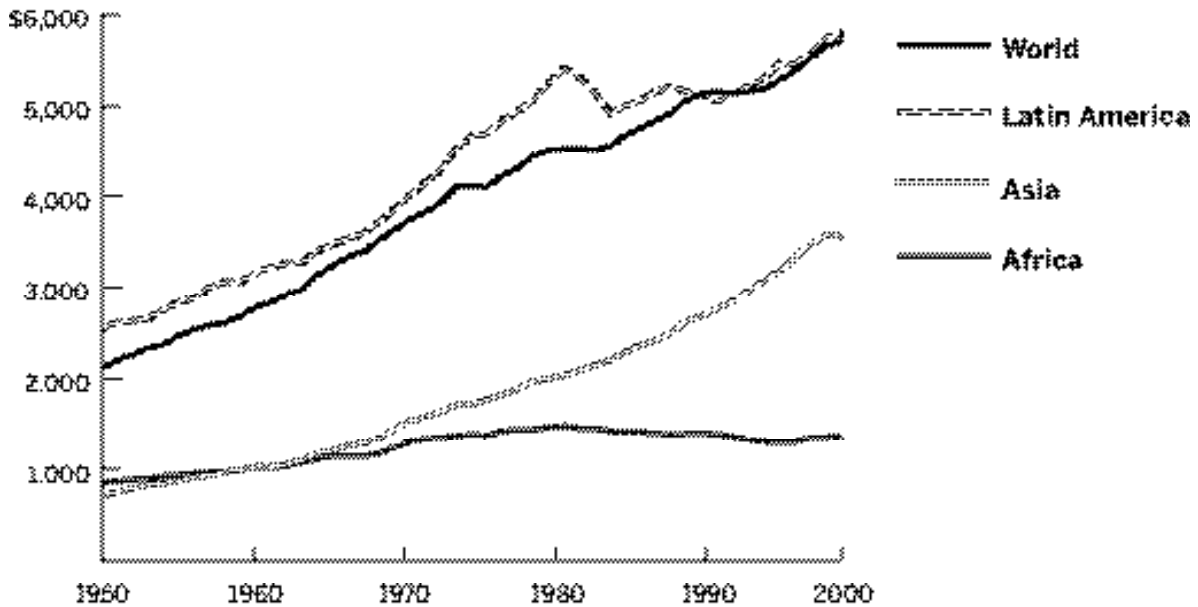
Over the past half-century, the reduction of death rates worldwide was especially dramatic. Between the early 1950s and the first half of the current decade, according to estimates by the United Nations Population Division (UNPD—not to be confused with UNFPA), the planetary expectation of life at birth jumped by almost 19 years, or about two-fifths, from under 47 years to more than 65 years. For the low-income regions, the leap was even more dramatic. Average life expectancy in these areas, taken together, surged upward by well over two decades, a rise of more than 50 percent. Even troubled sub-Saharan Africa—despite its protracted post-independence political and economic turmoil and the advent of a catastrophic HIV/AIDS epidemic—is thought to have enjoyed an increase in local life expectancy of more than one-fifth. (Practically the only countries to register no appreciable improvements in life expectancy over this period were the handful of "European" territories within what was once the Soviet Union; in the Russian Federation in particular, gains over these four and a half decades were almost negligible.)

Among the most important proximate reasons for the global stride forward in life expectancy was the worldwide drop in infant mortality rates. In the early 1950s, again according to UNPD estimates, 156 out of every 1,000 children born around the world did not survive their first year; by the beginning of the 21st century, that toll was down to 57 per 1,000. In "developed" countries, the infant mortality rate is thought to have fallen by more than 85 percent during those same decades, and by nearly 70 percent in the collectivity of "developing" countries. Even in troubled regions, great advances in infant survival were achieved. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the infant mortality rate is thought to have declined by nearly half, and Russia's infant mortality rate probably fell by more than 80 percent.

This worldwide drop in mortality literally transformed the life chances of the human species. So profound are these

## The Prosperity Explosion

(GDP per capita, in 1990 dollars)



Source: Angus Maddison, *The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective* (2001)

During the 20th century, especially its second half, the world's population surged but its wealth grew even more rapidly, as reflected in data on gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. One reason for the prosperity explosion: Population grew chiefly because people were becoming healthier, and thus more productive.

changes that life expectancy and infant mortality rates in the Third World today now approximate the levels prevailing in the rich countries shortly after World War II. The plunge in worldwide mortality, furthermore, is entirely responsible for the increase in human numbers over the course of the 20th century. This is a simple arithmetic fact. The "population explosion," in other words, was really a "health explosion."

The implications of a health explosion—of *any* health explosion—for economic development and poverty alleviation are, on their face, hardly negative. Healthier people are able to learn better, work harder, engage in gainful employment longer, and contribute more to economic activity than their unhealthy, short-lived counterparts. Whether that potential translates into tangible economic results naturally depends on other factors, such as social and legal institutions, or the business and policy climate. Nevertheless, the health explosion that propelled the 20th century's population explosion was an economically auspicious phenomenon rather than a troubling trend.

All other things being equal, the health explosion could be expected to contribute to the acceleration of economic growth, the increase of incomes, and the spread of wealth.

And, as it happens, the 20th century witnessed not only a population explosion and a health explosion, but also a "prosperity explosion." Estimates by the economic historian Angus Maddison, who has produced perhaps the most authoritative reconstruction of long-term global economic trends currently available, demonstrate just that.

Between 1900 and 2001, by Maddison's reckoning, global gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (in internationally adjusted 1990 dollars) nearly quintupled. Gains in productivity were globally uneven: In both relative and absolute terms, the developed nations enjoyed disproportionate improvements. Nonetheless, every region of the planet became richer. Africa's economic performance, according to Maddison, was the most dismal of any major global region over the course of the 20th century; yet even there, per capita GDP looks to have been roughly three times higher in 2001 than it was in 1900.

Suffice it to say that the 20th century's population explosion did not forestall the most dramatic and widespread improvement in output, incomes, and living standards that humanity has ever experienced. Though severe poverty persists in much of the world, its incidence has been markedly



Once seen as a catastrophe in the making because of its rapid population growth, India is now a rising Asian power and a rival to China. While population is still growing, political and economic changes have made entrepreneurs such as Sabeer Bhatia, one of the creators of Microsoft's Hotmail, the emblems of a new India.

curtailed over the past 100 years.

Maddison's estimates of global economic growth highlight another fundamental problem with the entire "overpopulationist" family of predictions about the future. With a near quadrupling of the human population in the 20th century, and a virtual quintupling in planetary GDP per capita over those same years, global economic output took a gargantuan leap. Maddison's own figures suggest that world GDP might have been more than 18 times higher in 2001 than it was in 1900. But GDP is a measure of economic output—and for the world as a whole, economic output and economic demand must be identical. If the demand for goods and services multiplied nearly twentyfold during the 20th century, humanity's demand for, and consumption of, natural resources must also have skyrocketed. Yet the relative prices of virtually all primary commodities *fell* over the course of the 20th century—in many cases, quite substantially.

Despite the tremendous expansion of the international grain trade over the past century, for example, the inflation-adjusted, dollar-denominated international price of each of the major cereals—corn, wheat, and rice—fell by more than

70 percent between 1900 and 1998. By the same token, *The Economist* magazine's industrials price index—a weighted composite for 14 internationally traded metals and non-food agricultural commodities—registered a decline, in inflation-adjusted dollars, of almost 80 percent between 1900 and 1999.

This 20th-century paradox—exploding demand for resources paralleled by pronounced declines in real resource prices—must not only be recognized as a basic phenomenon defining life in that era, but understood for what it tells us about how our modern world system actually works. After all, price data are meant to convey information about scarcity. These data would seem to indicate that the resources that humanity makes economic use of grew *less scarce* over the course of the 20th century.

There are explanations for this remarkable paradox. They are to be found, among other places, in the "knowledge explosion" that has helped to recast the operation of both business and society over the past century. Such explanations, however, are outside the "zero-sum" framework in which the "death by population" mindset is trapped. Indeed, in the worldview of



demographic doomsayers, the 20th century should never have occurred at all.

As we begin a new century, we can be fairly confident that we will hear plenty of new predictions about the coming “world population problem.” By some mysterious law of public discourse, “population” is *always* a “problem.” But just what kind of problem, this time? Though they are numerical products generated by precise and elegant mathematical techniques, long-term population forecasts have always at heart been a guessing game. The central uncertainty in such projections is not death rates—within normal peacetime limits, these can be predicted fairly well. (That, after all, is why life insurance companies can stay in business.) Rather, the problem is that science lacks any reliable method for anticipating future childbearing patterns—and birthrates happen to drive population change. Neither the postwar “baby boom” in rich countries nor these countries’ subsequent and continuing “baby bust” was accurately anticipated by demographers, and there is little reason to expect the profession’s prescience to be any better for other parts of the world, or in the years immediately ahead.

At this juncture, it may well be that more than half of the world’s population lives in countries with “sub-replacement” fertility—that is to say, places where current childbearing patterns, if continued indefinitely without migration, would lead ultimately to population decline. Some of today’s largest developed nations are expected to see population declines during the next 30 years, ranging from four percent in Germany to 12 percent in Japan (and even higher in Russia). But the great majority of current sub-replacement populations are in Third World states. Since desired family size is the single best predictor of a society’s fertility (at least in countries without involuntary population-control programs), this also means that a growing number of poor people the world over are *choosing* to have small families.

The degree to which sub-replacement fertility has become the norm today in low-income areas may still surprise the unprepared reader. According to national or international estimates, virtually all of East Asia is sub-replacement now,

and most of South America. So, too, are impoverished Vietnam and Myanmar (Burma). In India, incredible as it may seem, Calcutta, Mumbai (Bombay), and New Delhi (a visit to which city initially prompted a shocked Paul Ehrlich to write *The Population Bomb*) are all areas where child-bearing rates are below replacement levels. And in the Islamic expanse, sub-replacement fertility already prevails in such places as Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Iran.

How low can fertility rates go? We simply don’t know. Hong Kong, Macau, and Singapore all have birth patterns today that, if sustained, would imply barely one child per woman per lifetime. In northern Italy and other parts of Europe, fertility levels consonant with less than one child per woman are now evident. Some sociobiological theorists confidently assert that there is a lower limit to human fertility—that a majority of women will want to nurture and raise at least one offspring. But even if correct, that formulation would leave open the possibility of a world with an average of just over one half of one birth per woman per lifetime. On that schedule—bar-

**THE 20TH-CENTURY paradox—exploding demand for resources paralleled by pronounced declines in real resource prices—must be understood for what it tells us about how our modern world system actually works.**

ring the manufacture of human beings—the global population would decline by nearly 75 percent each successive generation.

To be sure, unless we suffer a cataclysm of the sort dear to the global predictions market, world population is set to increase for some time to come. But the era of the “population explosion” is clearly over. As best we can tell, world population growth rates peaked in the late 1960s and are barely half as high now. The inexorable corollary to sub-replacement fertility is population graying and, absent immigration, population decline. Get ready to read lots more about them.

Aren’t you glad to know that another “population crisis”—endangering our prosperity and the future of the globe—looms just around the corner? ■

# THE NEXT 30 YEARS

*To celebrate our past 30 years, the WQ asked 10 thinkers to speculate about the next 30. Their predictions about the future of love, war, language, culture—even what we'll eat—provide food for thought.*

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## *Will We Still Be Fully Human?*

By JOEL GARREAU

WE ARE AT A TURNING POINT IN HISTORY. FOR THE FIRST time, our technologies are not so much aimed outward at modifying our environment. Increasingly, they are aimed inward—at modifying our minds, memories, metabolisms, personalities, and progeny. If we can do that—not in some distant science-fiction future but in the next five, 10, 15 years—then are we not talking about altering what it means to be human?

Think of Barry Bonds, the baseball slugger implicated in the steroid scandal. We are already debating whether he should go into the record books as the same sort of human as the people whose records he broke. Now move out a few years. What happens if the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games feature genetically enhanced athletes dramatically different from their competitors, as some bioengineers matter-of-factly predict?

Our capabilities have been following paths of exponential change since the dawn of time. Biological evolution took millions of years to get from apes to hominids walking erect, usefully freeing up our hands. Cultural evolution

took 66 years to get from the first powered flight to walking on the moon. Now we have entered a third, engineered evolutionary phase—radical evolution, if you will.

In the last decade, we have become the first species to start directly altering and enhancing our intellectual and physical gifts. The amazing capabilities of our genetic, robotic, information, and nano processes—call them the GRIN technologies—are doubling every few months. All of the powers of our comic book superheroes from the 1930s and '40s are available or in development, from Superman's telescopic vision to the Shadow's ability to know what evil lurks in the hearts of men.

Bioconservatives such as Francis Fukuyama and Leon Kass of the President's Council on Bioethics view the familiar 1.0 version of human nature as providing stable continuity to our experience as a species, defining our most basic values. They make a principled case for continuing to experience anguish, decrepitude, and death. At the same time, their ideas as to how people might be convinced to avoid leaping to embrace the undeniable advantages conferred by the rapidly evolving GRIN technologies are not always persuasive.

The Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency is working on enhancing humans so that they can go seven days without sleep or food and not lose cognitive ability; display unlimited endurance; and regrow lost limbs the way tadpoles replace amputated tails. Five U.S. com-



*Old Black Magic* (1984), by Patrick Nagatani

panies are vying to produce, within three to five years, memory pills that might allow parents to buy an additional 200 points on their kids' SAT scores.

It may not be long before you run into a young lady so seriously modified that you might ask whether she represents a transcendence comparable to the difference between Neanderthals and today's humans. She might have a significantly transformed mind, memory, metabolism, and personality. You'd be curious whether this had changed her immortal soul.

When that day arrives, I propose the Shakespeare Test. You stick this object of curiosity into your hypothetical time machine and dial her back to 1603. You present her to the creator of both Othello and Caliban, who obviously knew something about human nature and humans' reactions to outsiders, and ask Mr. Shakespeare a simple question: "Do you recognize this creature as one of yours? Is she human?"

The deeper question is whether our GRIN technologies can alter the basics of the human condition. Can we imagine them changing the way we shape truth, beauty, love, or happiness? What if our thinking about what is attainable for humans is constrained by our narrow experience? Should we allow for the possibility that as we develop greater capacities, we will discover values that strike us as more profound than those we can realize now, including higher levels of moral excellence? After all, much of what we now consider natural is not necessarily desirable or morally good—cancer, malaria, dementia, aging, starvation, susceptibility to disease, murder, rape, racism.

In 1486, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola eloquently centered all attention on human capabilities in his manifesto of the Italian Renaissance, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. In it, God says to Adam, "We give you no fixed place to live, no form that is peculiar to you, nor any function that is yours alone. According to your desires and judgment, you will have and possess whatever place to live, whatever form, and whatever functions you yourself choose."

We have been attempting to transcend the limits of human nature for a long time. We've tried Socratic reasoning and Buddhist enlightenment and Christian sanctification and Cartesian logic and the New Soviet Man. Our successes have ranged from mixed to limited, at best. Once again, we are trying to improve not just our world but our very selves.

Who knows? Maybe this time we'll get it right.

■ JOEL GARREAU is a reporter and editor at *The Washington Post* and the author most recently of *Radical Evolution: The Promise and Peril of Enhancing Our Minds, Our Bodies—and What It Means to Be Human* (2005).

## *Will American Culture Heal Itself?*

By CAMILLE PAGLIA

I FORESEE NO RESOLUTION OVER THE NEXT 30 YEARS of the stalemate in American culture between religious conservatives and secular humanists, among whom I number myself. If there is any shift in power, it may well be toward the religious side. Muslim jihadists have forced a confrontation with Western culture, which they portray as irredeemably corrupt, from its callous materialism to its empty hedonism. Unfortunately, from my perspective, the most vigorous defenders of the West against this challenge have come from the right wing, where there is equal rejection of the 1960s legacy of theatrical individualism and unfettered sexual freedom.

Religion has been intrinsic to American culture since the immigration of Puritan dissidents. No force was strong enough to combat it until the rise of Hollywood, the new Babylon, in the early 20th century. I have celebrated Hollywood as an eruption of the West's buried paganism. But now the entertainment industry, which once drew from a vibrant milieu of popular performance (vaudeville, variety shows, operetta, musical comedy), has become a manic world unto itself—the only culture, aside from high-tech gadgetry, that young people know. In current movies, for example, there is an overreliance on glitzy special effects and dizzily rapid cutting, accompanied by neglect of basic matters of character, motivation, and setting. I am pessimistic about the ability of Hollywood to recover its creativity: Market forces are too strong (because of the staggering profits from world distribution), and studio decision-making is dominated by risk-averse corporate values.

The only answer to the competing tyrannies of religion and Hollywood is art. But art has never taken deep root in the United States; there is little sense that art represents the cultural heritage of the nation, as it does in Europe. The United States, which is still relatively young, began as a frontier society pragmatically focused on the future. Art was a luxury and frivolity. Fundamentalist Protestantism also discouraged image making on biblical grounds. Even today, art remains a minority interest. It has been a struggle in recent decades to defend even modest federal arts funding, a situation worsened by a series of bitter controversies over contemporary artworks of antireligious or pornographic content.



My hope is that, over the coming decades, art's spirituality can be demonstrated for a skeptical American public. This effort would require a massive conversion of the educational establishment at the primary and secondary levels. The authentic vision of the 1960s counterculture, which still inspires me, was of the magnitude of both art and nature. Yet over the past 35 years, a nihilistic brand of theory (poststructuralist and postmodernist) invaded American humanities departments. It excluded nature from its discourse and subordinated aesthetics to a crusading politics. I may agree with those politics, but I abhor the distortion and marginalization of art that have resulted.

Theory is thankfully ebbing, but what will rise in its place? I am betting that a young generation of scholars will take up the cause of renewed evangelism for art. Secular humanists who deplore the interference of religious activism in debates over public policy must begin to recognize that rote appeals for "social justice" are simply not enough: The soul too must be fed. Intellectuals must offer a spiritual alternative to religion—the kind of expansion of consciousness and refinement of perception that are the gifts of art.

CAMILLE PAGLIA is the University Professor of Humanities and Media Studies at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. Her most recent book is *Break, Blow, Burn: Camille Paglia Reads Forty-Three of the World's Best Poems* (2005).

## *Will Globalization Make Hatred More Lethal?*

By ROBERT WRIGHT

"LINK FOUND BETWEEN HATRED AND KILLING" IS not a headline that would sell many newspapers. But you might turn a few heads with "Link between hatred and killing changes in ominous way." Or—to put a finer point on it—"Ratio of killing to hatred slated to rise." This is one of the biggest stories of the last 30 years, and, probably, the next 30: the growing lethality of hatred.

Why has terrorism become public enemy number one? The most common answer—the rise of a brand of radical Islam that uses terror as its weapon—is true insofar as it goes. But the reason this weapon is so scary is that something deeper has changed: Technology now makes it possible for clusters of intensely hateful people to cause thousands, even millions, of deaths without using the political

or military machinery of a state. Yes, the hateful people most likely to exploit this fact today are radical Muslims, but even if this threat subsides, the generic threat will remain: Hatred is more lethal than it used to be. And the underlying technological trends will persist over the next three decades, making it more lethal still.

Some of these trends are fairly obvious. Tools for making biological weapons—fermenters, centrifuges, gene sequencers—infiltrate the industrial and academic landscape as biotechnology evolves. And though the spread of weapons-grade nuclear material doesn't have a similarly strong intrinsic impetus, regulation that would stop it has been lacking. Meanwhile, the emerging field of nanotechnology may introduce the inorganic equivalent of bioweapons: self-replicating, invisibly destructive microscopic machines.

But such obviously lethal technologies are only half the problem. There is also the insidious influence of information technology. Infotech, notably the Internet, makes recipes for weapons available to ever-wider circles. It is also a handy administrative aide for the terrorist on the go. A terrorist group can stay fluidly, elusively intact and then suddenly focus its energies to mount attacks.

What could be worse than a world in which technology is making grass-roots hatred more massively lethal? A world in which technology threatens to increase the amount of hatred as well.

The personal computer lets Al Qaeda cheaply generate polished recruiting videos, while the transmission of video gets easier, moving from videotape to DVD to streaming media. Among the emerging niches in the ultra-narrow-casting ecosystem of online video and audio: terro-vangelism. And the blogosphere, though potentially a medium for cross-cultural communication, tends to reinforce tribalism, as people settle into cocoons of the like-minded. (Witness the American Left and Right.)

Fifty years ago, a reasonable lodestone of foreign policy was to make sure all foreign governments either liked us or feared us. Today that won't suffice, because foreign governments no longer mediate all major threats to national security. Essential elements of future security range from the tough international regulation of lethal technologies to a new kind of focus on human well-being around the world. To the extent that people—Muslim or non-Muslim—feel bitterly resentful, alienated, or exploited by America or by globalization, we're all in trouble.

And maybe policy, though crucial, won't be enough. Hatred and intolerance are moral, even spiritual, problems. Great moral and spiritual changes tend to emanate from somewhere other than legislatures. Unfortunately, that's one of the few things you can confidently say about them. This part of the solution isn't nearly as predictable as the problem.

■ ROBERT WRIGHT, a Schwartz senior fellow at the New America Foundation, is the author of *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny* (2000) and *The Moral Animal: Evolutionary Psychology and Everyday Life* (1994).

## *Will Love Endure?*

By LAURA KIPNIS

IN THE FUTURE, LOVE WILL MAKE EVERYONE VERY happy. No one will do stupid things for the sake of love: no more sacrificing dignity, no more whining, so long to petty jealousy. In short, no more torment. Also, in the future love will last. Divorce rates will plummet, possibly into single digits. You won't suddenly realize that the person you've loved for the last decade is an entirely different person from the one you thought you knew. No one will "just get really sick of" a spouse or partner. Mates won't become boring because new depths will continually be revealed; there will be fascinating and novel things to talk about, unexplored facets of the relationship to plumb. Phrases like "for the sake of the children" will become as quaint as Victorian-era notions seem to us now. Not only will love endure, so will sexual desire—for one person, and one person alone—for the course of a lifetime. No more sneaking around or seven-year itch, no snooping through desk drawers or mysterious credit-card charges leading to screaming matches.

In other words, we will all be heavily medicated—even more so than at the moment, I mean: on new, even more effective versions of serotonin promoters or endorphin boosters or other forms of chemically synthesized beatitude. Pharmaceutical interests will have perfected a pill or patch for women whose sexual desire is flagging—according to the American Medical Association, some 43 percent of the female population. Finally, goodbye to "sexual dysfunction" in both sexes. (Promising results from testosterone patches for women are already being reported—with a \$100 million ad campaign planned for Procter & Gamble's Intrinsa, which everyone's hoping will be the female Viagra. So what if there





*Wedding* (1997), by Bo Bartlett

are suddenly a lot of women with mustaches?) And when those 43 percent of sexually indifferent women get a libido boost, husbands will stop fleeing intimacy or watching sports all weekend, and those “little things” of shared domestic life will no longer grate. Trust between the sexes will finally prevail. Men and women will discover that they’re really more alike than different. Or that they’re more different than alike, but that’s OK—*vive la différence!* And when everyone’s more maritally fulfilled, opposition to gay marriage will evaporate too. After all, shouldn’t everyone share the joy?

That old relationship snafu, lack of self-knowledge, will be a thing of the past as well. A saturation of talk-show therapeutics and self-help bestsellers finally will have solved that little problem. Your own motives will no longer be a mystery to you! Goodbye to “acting out” (though it was fun while it lasted, if less so for those on the receiving end). Other people will be transparent, too, because we will all be so much more psychologically *astute*. You will know absolutely where the other person stands. The mystery will be gone—but so will the terrifying uncertainty of romance.

So that’s one possible future for love: Between Big Pharma and pop therapeutics, we can finally overcome the human condition. It was always so annoying, wasn’t it? On the other hand, we might find ourselves muddling along much as we do at the moment: inelegantly. Unions will be formed, and dumb luck will have a lot to do with the outcome. And when unions fail . . . it will still always be the other person’s fault.

LAURA KIPNIS teaches in the School of Communication at Northwestern University. She is the author of *Against Love: A Polemic* (2003) and *The Female Thing*, which is forthcoming from Pantheon.

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## Will Religion Still Seem an Illusion?

By WILFRED M. MCCLAY

A CENTURY AGO, WESTERN INTELLECTUALS WERE sure they knew the eventual fate of religion. “The more the fruits of knowledge become accessible to men,” Sigmund Freud averred in his confidently titled book *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), “the more widespread is the decline of religious belief.” Religion was a psychological disorder, a “neurotic relic,” a collective fantasy built

upon unfulfillable infantile desires. Its presence should not be regarded as a lasting state. Instead, religion should be seen as an evolutionary way station, a condition that was, as Freud further elaborated it in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), “parallel to the neurosis which the civilized individual must pass through on his way from childhood to maturity.” Its days were numbered.

Today, such words look rather different. It is not so much that Freud has been discredited. It is, rather, that the secularist vision he so compellingly presented now appears to be just another mythos, another master narrative, another hubristic projection of human desire and ignorance into our vast, mysterious universe. Call it the mood of the postmodern, if you like. But what once seemed the ultimate in master narratives, the prospect of triumphant secular rationality endorsed by Freud, now seems a far more limited mythos than the ones it sought to replace. Its appeal is limited to a very small and demographically shrinking group, the university-bred elites of Western Europe and the United States. More importantly, it is a mythos that cannot provide the overarching meaning without which human existence becomes empty and directionless. Science is a magnificent human achievement. But it cannot tell us how to live, or what we should live for. The need for that kind of meaning is, for us humans, as deep and relentless as the need for food or water. It cannot be denied for long.

As we begin the 21st century, the secularism whose triumph once seemed as inevitable as the arrival of spring now seems a fading flower, while religion, in both traditional and novel forms, is in renewed bloom, and even making a play for full-scale reentry into public life. There is much more to this story than the worldwide resurgence of Islam. Writers such as Philip Jenkins of Pennsylvania State University, author of *The Next Christendom: The Rise of Global Christianity* (2002), have detailed the explosive growth of Christianity in the non-Western world. Many observers have even argued that the United States is experiencing a religious “awakening” today.

The story is equally about secularism’s lost élan. Even in such bastions of public secularism as France and Turkey, the airtight proscription of religious expression in public life is being reconsidered, while the more permeable American model is being looked at afresh. And who holds the moral high ground in China, the brutal

secularist government or the scandalously persecuted Christians? For better or worse, the older dream of a fully privatized religious faith and a fully secularized public realm seems to be losing its hold.

Some will find this development refreshing, some frightening. Most will see a very mixed bag. But one should not underestimate its complexity. The fact that a strongly religious American president has committed the United States to the building of a largely secular state in the Middle East as a bulwark against religious terrorism, and is doing so over the objections of largely secular elites in Europe and America, only begins to hint at the intricacy of the matter. Like it or not, religion will remain a major player in shaping world events, and those who want to will it away are indulging in illusions of their own. John Lennon's song "Imagine" will not be a reliable guide to the 21st century. That illusion has no future. The sooner we realize it, the better.

■ WILFRED M. McCLAY is the SunTrust Chair of Excellence in Humanities at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

## *Will English Become the Universal Language?*

By BARBARA WALLRAFF

SOME AMERICANS HOPE THAT 30 YEARS FROM NOW English will be the universal language. It won't. True, the United States is today a net exporter of English, and nearly all countries whose most common first language is something else are net importers. People in those countries value English because it is the language of innovation and prosperity and globalism and pop culture.

If we first-language English speakers lose our reputation for being forward-looking, obviously that will be bad news in its own right. But a corollary is that English will lose its competitive edge. Look what's happened to Russian. Now that schoolchildren in the former Soviet republics are no longer required to learn it, they don't bother. They're learning English instead. Why? Because English is the language of innovation, etc.

True, too, even if people don't admire us, they might value English if it were a global lingua franca. But the

varieties of English in use are diverging. After the United States and the United Kingdom, the country with the third-largest number of English speakers is Nigeria—assuming you count Nigerian pidgin as English, as most but not all linguists do. (Sorry, Canada and Australia—your populations just aren't large enough to put you ahead.) The country with the fourth-largest number of English speakers is thought to be India. Hardly anyone in either Nigeria or India, however, speaks English as a first language. In those countries, English is typically shot through with words and sentence patterns imported from local languages.

Not only that, but the world may soon have little use for a lingua franca. Software developers and linguists are inventing gizmos that will let people who lack a full command of English write it fluently. Others are at work on technologies that will turn writing into speech, and vice versa. Once solutions to those problems are found, we'll be within easy reach of getting instantaneous translations out of machines. At that point, who will need to learn English—or any second language?

Note that there's no hope whatsoever that English will become a universal first language. About three times as many people are native Chinese speakers as are native English speakers. The number of people who speak Hindi-Urdu, Spanish, or Arabic at home is in the same ballpark as the number of native English speakers. Those populations of native speakers of other languages are all growing faster than the population of native English speakers. Much the same is true within the United States. According to the 2000 census, about 18 percent of Americans speak languages other than English at home, and 4,361,638 households contain no one over the age of 14 who speaks only English or speaks it "very well."

The diversity of languages that immigrants bring us would be good news if the immigrants and their children would not only learn English (as nearly all of them do within a generation or two) but also retain their first languages. Among people involved in the world beyond their own communities, what's really on its way to being universal is the ability to speak more than one language. Of course, we should resist any erosion of the cultural factors that help keep English strong. But instead of hoping that English will remain in demand no matter what, we'd do better to welcome the



inevitable diversification of our nation's, and the world's, language portfolio.

■ BARBARA WALLRAFF is a columnist on language for *The Atlantic Monthly* and the author of three books, including *Word Fugitives*, which will be published in March.

## *What Is the Most Pressing Environmental Question?*

By BJØRN LOMBORG

MOST PEOPLE SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT THE STATE OF the world is getting worse—that poverty, malnutrition, and inequality are increasing, while the air and water become more polluted, forests continue to shrink, and global warming threatens humankind.

Yet the data tell a very different story. Humanity's lot has improved dramatically—not just in the developed world but in the developing world, where the poverty and malnutrition rates, both 50 percent in 1950, have dropped to 25 percent and 17 percent, respectively, and the illiteracy rate has dropped since 1970 from 80 percent of the population to 20 percent.

In the rich world, the environmental situation has improved. In the United States, the most important environmental indicator, particulate air pollution, has been cut by more than half since 1955, rivers and coastal waters have dramatically improved, and forest acreage is increasing. And these trends are generally shared by all developed countries. Why? Because we are now rich enough to care for the environment.

In much of the developing world, environmental indicators are getting worse. But these countries are only acting as we once did. They care first about feeding their kids before cleaning up the air. Affluence will make the environment a higher priority. In some of today's richer developing countries, such as Mexico and Chile, air pollution is already beginning to decrease. In the rich world, most people probably expect global warming to become the most important environmental challenge over the next 30 years. They're wrong.

Global warming is real. The trouble is that even large

amounts of money will buy very little improvement. The Kyoto Protocol, even with U.S. participation, would only postpone by six years the warming expected in 2100 if we do nothing, and would cost \$150 billion annually. For half that amount, the United Nations estimates, we could provide clean drinking water, sanitation, and basic health care and education for every single person in the world, now.

The main environmental challenge of the 21st century is poverty. When you don't know where your next meal is coming from, it's hard to care about the environment a hundred years down the line. When your kids are starving, you will slash and burn the rainforest; when you're rich, you'll be a Web designer in Rio and vote green.

The single most important environmental problem in the world today is indoor air pollution, caused by poor people cooking and heating their homes with dung and cardboard. The UN estimates that such pollution causes 2.8 million deaths annually—about the same as HIV/AIDS. The solution, however, is not environmental measures but economic changes that let these people get rich enough to afford kerosene.

How do we make a better world? This question was answered by the Copenhagen Consensus project. Here, eight of the world's top economists (including four Nobel laureates) established a global priority list based on elaborate assessments by 30 economics experts.

At the top of the list they put preventing HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, and malaria, and abolishing agricultural subsidies. These are the areas in which we can do the most good per dollar for the world. Kyoto ended up at the bottom of the economists' list because it would cost a great deal and do little good.

By investing in research and development that will make renewable energy cheaper, we can make sure that our grandchildren will be able to cut the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that cause global warming. But if we are smart, our main contribution to the global environment 30 years from now will be to have helped lift hundreds of millions out of poverty, sickness, and malnutrition while giving them a chance to compete in our markets. This will make a richer developing world, whose people will clean up their air and water, replant their forests, and go green.

■ BJØRN LOMBORG is the organizer of Copenhagen Consensus, adjunct professor at the Copenhagen Business School, and author of *Global Crises, Global Solutions* (2004) and *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (2001).

## Will Adolescence Become Interminable?

By JANNA MALAMUD SMITH

I DECIDED YEARS AGO THAT ADOLESCENCE IN THE United States ends at 32. Maybe 33. Thirty years from now, will the tipping point have ratcheted up to 50? It could happen.

For starters, parents' increasing longevity may take a further toll on children's maturation, as with those male apes that don't develop fully masculine features as long as more senior males dominate the pack. Keep the elderly fit, and the edgy but dependent 18-year-old may become the edgy but dependent 48-year-old still waxing his mohawk. It's already happening in Italy with *le mam-mone*, the grown sons who never, EVER leave home (though they sometimes rent studio apartments for entertaining girlfriends). Either the parents' hyperactivity keeps the *figli* from growing up, or the sons sacrifice their chance at self-sufficiency to keep mama or papa happy. Or, in light of the plunging birthrate, maybe long-suffering single children have to absorb parenting meant for six.

But the future length of adolescence also depends on what happens to childhood. Contemporary childhood pressures children intensely but seems to do little to make them feel ready for adulthood. No wonder adolescence protracts. Jerome Kagan, the Harvard University childhood researcher, has brilliantly suggested that the reason we must continually reassure our kids with love is that they're so useless for so long. For comparison, think about the indigenous four- or five-year-olds on a South Seas island capable of harvesting more protein for the family diet—by diving for crustaceans—than their parents can. These kids know their worth because they are contributing in a substantial way. They know how to become adults because they have spent childhood observing and excelling at the relevant skills. Dive into water. Retrieve clam. Repeat.

In the United States, the industrial revolution gradually split labor from home life. With more adult work in the office (and in the mind) and less in the home, kids stopped being able to closely observe their parents in

order to learn about their own route. The 20th century invented unending school as an alternative way to prepare them for their increasingly complex and abstract future labor. As one of our sons put it, "Remind me how calculus will help me cope later."

Meanwhile, psychologists defined childhood in the family as an idealized time of love and "development." But what constitutes the right love? Or the best development? Perplexed parents have responded to these nebulous questions by providing ever more tutors, soccer skills camps, and ballet lessons. They exhaust themselves carpooling kids ad nauseam and then try to convey love by cheering from the sidelines. Meanwhile, overpacked schedules and the focus on academic achievement guarantee that children have no opportunity to make real contributions to family survival or well-being. Most do no productive work. Instead, they endure a parasitism that is at once too driven, too deprived, and too indulged. No wonder they spend every free second in some virtual world—computer or television screens before them, iPods in their ears. If this trend continues, in 30 years adolescence may become an endpoint life goal for the lucky centenarian.

■ JANNA MALAMUD SMITH is a clinical social worker in private practice and teaches psychotherapy at Cambridge Health Alliance in Cambridge, Mass. She is the author of three books, including *My Father Is a Book: A Memoir of Bernard Malamud*, which will be published in March.

## What's Next on the Menu?

By JAMES MORRIS

THE TEMPTATION FOUR OR FIVE DECADES AGO WAS TO read the future of food in the powdery crystals of Tang. Launched in 1957, the same year as Sputnik, the orange drink later accompanied pioneering astronauts into space. It needed no refrigerator's chill. It could be stored in a cupboard or a pocket. It had more vitamin C than orange juice (and today has vitamin A and iron too). It was ready when you and a glass of water were. Tang was the fuss-free harbinger of what food might be in the future, a necessity still but not a distraction. Progress would bring steak lozenges, flounder pills, and broccoli gum. In the meantime, there was Metrecal in 1960, a diet drink that gave you, in a can, the nour-



“Fresh pepper on that, sir?”

ishment of a meal. Quickly, too, because you didn't want to linger over getting it down or you might accidentally taste it.

And in all the food time you saved with powders and pills and elixirs, you'd write a symphony or invent a vaccine.

But austere Tang was not the future after all. Instead, the latter decades of the 20th century saw the rise in America of a cult of cuisine downright Petronian in its ritualistic excess. Yes, pleasure will out, always, sooner or later, in everything; there's no surprise in that. And no plastic packet microshocked back to life from its freeze-dried state (“Clear!”) yields the soulful aroma of a slow roast. But who could have predicted that so many chicken-on-Sunday/meatloaf-on-Wednesday/steak-for-special-occasions Americans would become preoccupied with food—its provenance, purchase, preparation, presentation, consumption, and contemplation? The preoccupation was induced not by famine or shortage, as sometimes happened in the past, but by plenty. The food fetish in America, like the fitness fetish, falls to the predictable side of the lines of class and material sufficiency that fissure the coun-

try. Worry about where your family's next week of meals is coming from, and you fret less about the alphabetical gaps in your herb bin.

Cookbooks, catalogs, specialty stores, TV shows, and entire weekly sections of newspapers are now devoted to an elaborate liturgy of food. What mind games did the sly French win to make otherwise-sensible Americans—your friends and neighbors, maybe members of your own family, all good people, really—say *sous-chef* and *saucière* and *digestif*? And furnish their kitchens with mighty stoves, refrigerators high and wide as townhouses, and an arsenal of pots, pans, and utensils, the depth and diameter of each pot, the pitch of the sides of each pan, calibrated precisely to its purpose—this for boiling, that for steaming, braise here, sauté there, and fry only in a trailer? Of course, the formidable gear is not necessarily for use. Like books, collections can be for display only, and periodic dusting.

For playing out the fantasies unfulfilled in home kitchens, there are restaurants, more of them than ever. They premiere as movies once premiered and are

reviewed, starred, and—what else?—panned. And they have a cultural range that suggests the UN is stirring the pots. The exotic cuisines of choice for most Americans used to be Chinese and French, pizza and wurst being too domesticated to count. But variety is now here to stay, because so many new citizens from abroad have brought with them their recipes. We eat the native foods of countries we couldn't locate on a map, and of countries that exist on no map but whose disparate cuisines some antic chef has thought to fuse: Chinese-Slovakian, Belgian-Inuit. In our food pantheon of Hindu profusion, chefs are the major deities. We watch as they rise and fall, are worshiped and flambéed. Some withdraw in creative exhaustion, only to return reheated and do something previously unthinkable to a sea urchin.

What's the future of American foodolatry? To Americans 30 years hence, will we seem daft or relatively innocent—or perhaps just plain lucky to have had the luxury of indulgence? For, of course, the spell can be broken, but by a cure worse than the affliction: bad times that clear the palate and the mind by returning the nation from plenty to want.

■ JAMES MORRIS is a senior editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

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## Is Peace Possible?

By STEPHEN M. YOUNGER

IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT WE WILL ESCAPE THE scourge of war within the next three decades, but as more and more countries acquire means of mass destruction, it is time to ask whether peace is even *possible*. Are we doomed by some biological or social imperative to continue the violence of our past, or is there hope that we might find a different path?

Even a tentative answer would have profound implications for how we craft international policy, but scholars seem polarized over the very origin of human violence. Some attribute it to a fundamental flaw in our nature, perhaps a holdover from our hunter past; others think that the problem lies in the social systems that govern group behavior. Research based on observations of diverse cultures is beginning to shed light on this critical issue.

Most societies are peaceful at least some of the time,

and a few seem to have found the secret of avoiding violence almost entirely. Societies on Pacific islands such as Pukapuka, Kapingamarangi, and Manihiki have survived for centuries with remarkably little violence. Murders are extraordinarily rare, and only the oldest oral traditions mention wars.

What do these peaceful societies have in common, and what lessons can we, in our complex world, learn from them? For one thing, all of them have populations of fewer than about a thousand people—the maximum-size group in which everyone can still know everyone else and have a direct say in how they live. Decisions are made by councils typically composed of male elders who are heads of families. Also, these societies are isolated enough from their neighbors that contact is at best infrequent. But regardless of size or isolation, peace isn't free. Group members must remain ever vigilant lest someone upset the social balance. Many small societies are ruthlessly intolerant of bad behavior, enforcing peace with ridicule and ostracism that sometimes continue for years after the transgression. In short, they work at maintaining the peace.

This is not to suggest that we all retreat to tropical islands. But the existence of these societies does demonstrate that human beings can live peacefully under the right conditions. Peace seems to hold when people have a say in how their group is governed and when every group member commits to following the rules and to sanctioning immediately those who do not. These are lessons that we can apply in the modern world.

As individuals, we tolerate bad behavior in others by maintaining that it is not our job to correct them. On a global scale, countries go to war and engage in genocide, and sometimes little is done to stop them. As difficult as it is to change our tendency not to act, the threats posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction make it urgently necessary that we do.

We are growing up as a global society, and it is time to accept our responsibilities as individuals and nations. If we are to reap the benefits of peace, we will need to invest time and energy to *make* it happen. The next 30 years may represent a watershed in human affairs, forcing us to come to terms with what we are, where we have come from, and, most important, where we want to go.

■ STEPHEN M. YOUNGER is a senior fellow in the Theoretical Division at Los Alamos National Laboratory and a Wilson Center senior policy scholar.

# How to Think About Terrorism

*Will better intelligence and technology allow the United States to anticipate future terrorist attacks? History does not offer much reason for optimism, but there are steps we can take now.*

BY RICHARD K. BETTS

IN THE AFTERMATH OF SEPTEMBER 11, MANY Americans have embraced the belief, or at least the hope, that acts of terror can be prevented in the future. More-advanced technologies, better-trained people, and better-organized bureaucracies, it is thought, will shield us from danger by revealing the future more clearly than America's intelligence agencies were able to do before the Al Qaeda attacks. This hope goes naturally with the traditional "can-do" ethos of American culture. A little hard thinking shows the expectation to be futile, but a great deal more thought is required if we are to understand what we can reasonably hope to accomplish in combating future terrorism.

If we are ever to turn a clear eye on the threat of terrorism, we must begin by shedding three popular misconceptions: first, that the threat can be ended if we apply more energy, innovation, resources, and talent to counterterrorism, and that the reason for past failures was incompetence or insufficient effort; second, that the maximum effort

against all potential attacks that might be mounted inside the United States is either required or possible; and third, that the global war on terror is against terrorism—a tactic—rather than against particular political groups that use the tactic.

To prevent future terror attacks, what is needed above all is good intelligence. Compared with the numbers and strength of the people and institutions they target, terrorists are few and weak, and they are completely vulnerable if identified and located. Since the keys to terrorist success are conspiracy and surprise, the principal way to succeed in counterterrorism is to overcome the enemy's advantage of secrecy. After September 11, many people were outraged to learn that U.S. intelligence agencies had fallen down on the job in "connecting the dots"—that they possessed scattered pieces of information that might have allowed them to anticipate the attack if these pieces had been put together properly. It seemed obvious that if procedures were more careful and personnel more diligent, creative, and responsible, and if the resources applied to tracking potential terrorists were less constrained, disasters could be averted.

That is half true. Stronger efforts naturally raise the odds of success, but much more modestly than people expect.

RICHARD K. BETTS, professor and director of the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University, was a member of the National Commission on Terrorism. Among his books are *Surprise Attack* (1982), *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (1987), *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (1991), *Military Readiness* (1995), and *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence* (2003).





Connecting the “dots”—such as this photo of Mohammed Atta and another hijacker boarding a plane in Portland, Maine, on the morning of the September 11 attack—is the unending quest of intelligence services, but history suggests that the task will never be fully achievable.

Contrary to what many assume, the problem is not analogous to minimizing plane crashes or defending against hurricanes. Flying is the safest way to travel because an elaborate system of maintenance and safety measures keeps crashes from occurring more than once in a blue moon. If building better levees had been made as high a priority as airline safety, New Orleans might have been saved from Hurricane Katrina. But counterterrorism is not a fight against nature or a search for flaws that, though perhaps difficult to uncover, are not actively trying to hide. It is a fight against plotters searching for ways to negate or circumvent precautions. Stronger countermeasures can make it harder for them to find those ways, but cannot prevent them from succeeding occasionally if their efforts are strong enough.

Is this view too fatalistic? Unfortunately, the historical record of failure to prevent strategic surprises is overwhelming. In conventional warfare, victims usually misread

the evidence or miscalculate their responses, and they can suffer surprise even when their intelligence collection systems and defensive preparations are impressive. This happens for a variety of psychological, political, and organizational reasons. Complex bureaucracies misroute information; the amount of intelligence proves to be excessive rather than insufficient, and salient indicators are buried in a clutter of information; false alarms foster a “cry wolf” syndrome and make victims less sensitive to warning information; uncertainty leads decisionmakers to search for more information, which delays response; enemy deception derails the interpretation of warning data; the victim finds out that an attack is coming, but not where, when, or how it will occur, which hampers response; warnings are disregarded because the indicated attack seems strategically irrational for the enemy, and the evidence is explained away as diplomatic muscle-flexing. And so on. When these

cases are scrutinized carefully, it becomes evident that the failures are due more often to normal human limitations and to the skill of the attack's planners than to stupidity or irresponsibility on the part of the victim's officialdom. Organizational changes to fix the problems usually create new vulnerabilities in the process of fixing the old ones.

Hope springs eternal, and of course some measure of improvement is possible. The question is how much we can realistically expect. Inside the Washington Beltway, it has become popular to endorse a "transformation" of the

1960 was, by comparison, a golden age for intelligence collection. Sophisticated reconnaissance satellites and the technology for intercepting and decoding communications could effectively gather most of what was then needed to accomplish the primary missions of American intelligence: locating, counting, and tracking Soviet military forces, and monitoring compliance with arms control agreements.

Against terrorists, the primary mission is to find and track small groups of conspirators in the warrens of teeming cities or in remote mountain hideouts. In such locations,

high-tech collection systems are not as useful as on-the-ground reporting from human spies. But though there is agreement all around on the increased importance of such human intelligence, there is no agreement on how to get it when confronting alien cultures and committed enemy support networks in hostile

**THE NOTION THAT the 21st century requires a whole new approach for a whole new ball game may seem intuitively right, but it is, in fact, wrong.**

national intelligence system similar to the movement to transform the military forces for the 21st century. The notion that the century requires a whole new approach for a whole new ball game may seem intuitively right, but it is, in fact, wrong. The difference between the world of 2006 and that of 1999 is no more radical than the difference between the worlds of 1999 and 1992. Still, the contrary intuition is psychologically powerful, and when combined with the shock of September 11, it spawned assumptions that major changes in the system would produce major improvements in counterterrorism. The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which mandated the biggest reorganization of America's modern national intelligence structure since its founding in 1947, encouraged the notion that revolutionary change was under way.

What kind of shakeup *will* do the trick? The impetus for the transformation of the Defense Department has been the prospect of capitalizing on advanced technologies. Can America's comparative advantage in technology overcome deficiencies in intelligence as well? Doubtful. Getting sufficient information on highest-priority threats is harder than it used to be, because technology cannot get at much of what is needed. We can now see that the Cold War after

territory. America's minimal success in capturing fugitive Taliban leaders despite our offers of multimillion-dollar rewards is an unpleasant indicator of the difficulty.

With better human sources, more-advanced information technologies, and enhanced organizational coordination, intelligence can be improved and dots can sometimes be connected better than they were before September 11, but the analogy is to raising a batting average 10 or 20 percent, not to making the probability of air crashes minuscule. As long as the threat comes from plotters searching for an opening, the risks of attack will remain substantial. Not all of the risks, however, are of the same gravity, and we must choose those to which we will direct our greatest efforts at prevention.

The number of potential threats is limitless; the resources to combat them are limited. In practice, moreover, we sometimes prefer to keep risks higher than they might otherwise be because we want to keep the benefits we would lose by reducing them. In principle, we say that life is priceless; in practice, we set prices all the time. The most cited example is traffic safety. Americans accept tens of thousands of deaths from auto accidents each year as the cost of convenient transportation. If we wished, we could markedly reduce the number of fatalities by enforcing 45

mph speed limits, requiring all vehicles to have large, resilient bumpers, and establishing 20-year prison sentences for first offenses as a deterrent to drunken driving. But Americans simply do not wish to pay those costs just to save some thousands of lives.

Terrorists have innumerable targets and tactics among which to choose, so the issue for counterterrorism efforts becomes which risks to minimize and which to accept in some measure. The decision is easier for threats at the high and low ends of the spectrum than for those in the middle. In general, terrorist acts that can cause the greatest potential damage should be the first priority for preventive efforts, even if the probability of such acts is low, and those that are very probable but of low consequence should be third in priority. The actions that may occur *between* these extremes pose difficult choices because they are both moderately probable and significantly destructive, and the number of such possible actions that would be costly to counter makes the proper level of effort against them hard to estimate.

Fortunately, many operations that would be the easiest for conspirators to execute offer the least payoff. Assassinations, restaurant bombings, and hostage takings, for example, would horrify the public but would inflict death and damage on a relatively small scale. We might call them acts of “typical” terrorism, of the sort to which European countries adjusted when it occurred episodically in the 1970s and ’80s. Americans have not experienced such small blows often enough to take them in stride, but they could probably learn to do so if necessary. To reduce the toll from typical terrorism, we can invest heavily in standard police work, civilian vigilance, immigration controls, and other measures, without undertaking every imaginable draconian precaution—such as forbidding large gatherings of people, encasing restaurant tables in sandbags, or deporting all visitors from Arab countries—that would interfere with other interests.

**T**he terrorists Americans worry most about—Al Qaeda—have not seemed interested in campaigns of frequent, comparatively easy but puny actions. Rather, they appear committed to spectaculars such as the September 11 strikes, which offer a much bigger payoff of shock and awe. Spectaculars, however, are difficult to bring off, especially after September 11. Security crackdowns inside the United States and unrelenting pursuit outside

have made it harder for conspirators to gather, catch their breath, and stop looking over their shoulders long enough to develop and implement a complex, coordinated plan.

At the opposite extreme from typical terrorism is the highest-priority category of terrorist threat: the potential use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) inside the United States, weapons that could kill 10 times or more the number of Americans killed on September 11. The main threats are a nuclear detonation and the effective dissemination of potent biological weapons. Chemical weapons or a radiological “dirty bomb” would be less destructive, but in some circumstances they could still inflict high casualties or contaminate areas, with psychological effects greater than the material damage.

Attacks as spectacular as these are also the least likely. Building nuclear weapons from scratch is a process of greater complexity than folklore suggests, and probably well beyond the capacity of the Qaeda network. The greatest dangers at present are the theft of ready-made weapons from inadequately secured stockpiles in Russia or Pakistan and the sale of fissionable material by North Korea. Barriers against the effective use of biological weapons are lower than those against the use of nuclear weapons, but still high. Despite the popular notion that it is easy to whip up biological weapons in a bathtub, refining them for efficient dissemination that could infect tens of thousands of people requires exceptional skill and technology, and secure working areas. Though they would be difficult, such projects are clearly possible, and terrorist groups with the resources and organization, high motivation, and an undetected base of operations may well succeed eventually in deploying biological weapons. Under optimal operational conditions, the most potent biological agents would have as much killing capacity as normal first-generation nuclear weapons.

An effective WMD attack would be so devastating that this category of threat warrants maximum attention. To reduce the chances that terrorists can acquire or transport WMD, much has been done—through investment, for example, in detection mechanisms, the better tracking of dangerous materials, and the inspection of cargo coming into the country. To maximize the odds of prevention, however, efforts could go further, and tradeoffs with other interests should be made more readily than they are in regard to low-threat typical terrorism. As veteran strategist and policymaker Fred Iklé wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* (Aug. 5, 2005), “To send a man to Mars we have a generously

funded, well-integrated project; but to detect a smuggled nuclear bomb on its way to a U.S. city we allocate a puny fraction of those funds and scatter it among a multitude of disjointed studies that feed congressional pork.”

Scenarios for catastrophic WMD attacks range from tens of thousands of fatalities to hundreds of thousands, especially if multiple strikes are coordinated, as they were on September 11. More probable—because the technical obstacles are fewer—are attacks that are less awesome in their effects but still much worse than the typical terrorist incident that causes, say, 50 casualties. Some middle-range possibilities pose hard choices because the costs of mini-

that knocks down four or five 747s simultaneously is low—almost as low, perhaps, as the probability of what happened on September 11. Nevertheless, if such an event occurred tomorrow morning, no counterterrorism expert could claim to be surprised. How would political spinmeisters word tomorrow afternoon’s government press release to explain why every effort had not been made to prevent this type of attack?

Well, the statement might note that much has in fact been done to counter such a threat—efforts, for example, to find and buy or neutralize loose MANPADS, to institute the surveillance and patrolling of approaches to air-



**One nightmare of counterterrorism specialists is the large supply of shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles potentially available to terrorists. Yet it may make sense not to do everything possible to defend against them.**

mizing the risk are higher than they are for coping with typical terrorism, while the benefits are less clearly compelling than the benefits of preventing a mushroom cloud over Capitol Hill.

One middle-range example would be a set of strikes against airliners in flight by teams of terrorists with shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, or MANPADS (man-portable air defense systems). Counterterrorism experts have long known that such weapons exist in large numbers around the world, and that Al Qaeda or its ilk might obtain them. For various technical reasons it would not be easy for terrorists to deploy those weapons effectively, and the probability of a successful coordinated strike

port runways, and to develop antimissile systems for civilian aircraft. But how to explain why the onboard antimissile defenses that are already available—such as flare and laser systems—have not yet been installed (though the president’s own plane has such a system)?

One reason is the expense. According to a 2005 RAND Corporation report (*Protecting Commercial Aviation Against the Shoulder-Fired Missile Threat*, by James Chow and others), it would cost \$11 billion to equip U.S. airlines with antimissile systems and more than \$2 billion

annually to maintain and operate them, while the total federal budget for transportation security is well under \$5 billion. Another reason is that existing defensive systems are not optimally designed, and better technologies are in the works. Why invest now? Further, the available antimissile systems could have dangerous side effects if they were used, such as fires started by flares or people on the ground blinded by lasers. All of these may be reasonable grounds for delay in maximizing countermeasures against the potential MANPADS threat, given their dubious benefits and other demands on funds. But would the public understand why the hard choice had been made *not* to do everything possible?

Another hypothetical terrorist act would be the effective dissemination of aerosolized anthrax in several American cities on the same day, which might not kill huge numbers—since a good public-health response might save most infected people with antibiotics—but might nonetheless overwhelm response capabilities in some areas, exhaust stockpiles for treatment, and cause several thousand fatalities. In the days after such a disaster, the government would be called on to explain why it had not mounted a crash program to overcome the obstacles to mass vaccination against anthrax. These obstacles have been significant: the unsatisfactory quality of available vaccines, inadequate production facilities, cumbersome requirements to repeat vaccinations to keep protection active, negative effects on the health of some portion of those vaccinated, and more. But on the day after, would the public understand that hard choice?

As long as threats such as these are hypothetical, potentially numerous, less than monumentally catastrophic, and expensive to counter, the risks, of both their occurrence and their potential consequences, will be left higher than they could be. And as long as the threats do not become reality, these judgments will seem prudent. The morning after one of them *does* become real, the choices will be discredited. The way out of this dilemma is not obvious. Its very intractability highlights the point that people should think of the war on terror as being like the war on crime—a struggle in which success is measured not by final victory but by declines in the incidence and seriousness of attacks.

**T**errorism is not an enemy. It is a tactic used by an enemy in pursuit of a political objective. There will be no final victory against terrorism, but there may be victories that are close enough to final against particular political groups that use terror tactics. Italy's Red Brigades, Peru's Sendero Luminoso, Mozambique's Renamo, and America's Ku Klux Klan may not be extinct, but we do not worry much about them anymore. Victories, such as they are, usually result from a combination of forcible attrition and an evolution in the political contexts and social environments of these movements that reduces sympathy for their agendas. Effective counterterrorism thus needs to begin with an understanding of the political motives and incentives of terrorists and, where possible, with the ability to dampen them.

Understanding radical groups in other cultures is difficult. Insight requires a degree of empathy, and parochial observers find it hard to empathize with different worldviews, while cosmopolitan observers naturally find reactionary ideologies alien and unfathomable. It is also vital to distinguish between empathy and sympathy. Anyone who appears to sympathize with terrorists will be discredited as a source of wisdom on counterterrorism, but those who do not empathize with terrorists will not get far enough inside their heads to develop the maximum base of intelligence for counterterrorism.

Americans need not worry much about understanding terrorists who do not threaten us, such as the Tamil Tigers, the Irish Republican Army, or Colombian drug lords. But they must deal head-on with the problem of understanding the main group at which American counterterrorism efforts are now directed: Al Qaeda. Most normal Americans find it impossible to empathize with any movement that uses suicide bombers to kill large numbers of civilians, especially American civilians, because empathy requires admitting that somewhere in the world intelligent people regard U.S. policy as aggressive, oppressive, and murderous.

The prevalent urges to attack the "root causes" of terrorism are generally misguided and unconvincing, because they cite generic problems, such as poverty, religious fanaticism, or poor education, that exist in far more places than the few that spawn terrorists. If, however, we think of the root causes as the specific political grievances of the groups in question, the urge to focus on them is a good one. Confronting the enemy's political agenda will clarify just how much U.S. policy can or cannot do to reduce the incentives to use terror against our society, and determine whether counterterrorism has to rely on force alone to suppress the terrorist actions that flow from those incentives.

This does not mean that we should meet terrorist demands, but rather that *knowing* the enemy better increases the odds of finding an opening in his armor, or of figuring out better ways to use propaganda (what "public diplomacy" for the war on terror really means) to sway the populations whose allegiance is at issue. Dealing with future terrorism will require plenty of inventive intelligence activities, to be sure, but there will be no single technological or bureaucratic fix on which to pin all our hopes. Counterterrorism will require a lot of plain old politics and psychology. ■



# The Future Imagined

When we think about how we'll live day to day in the future, invention and a dose of romance usually trump the doomsday scenarios. Some of our dreamed futures are closer than we think; others are farther off than we may ever be able to reach. There's comfort in both prospects.





#### GETTING AROUND

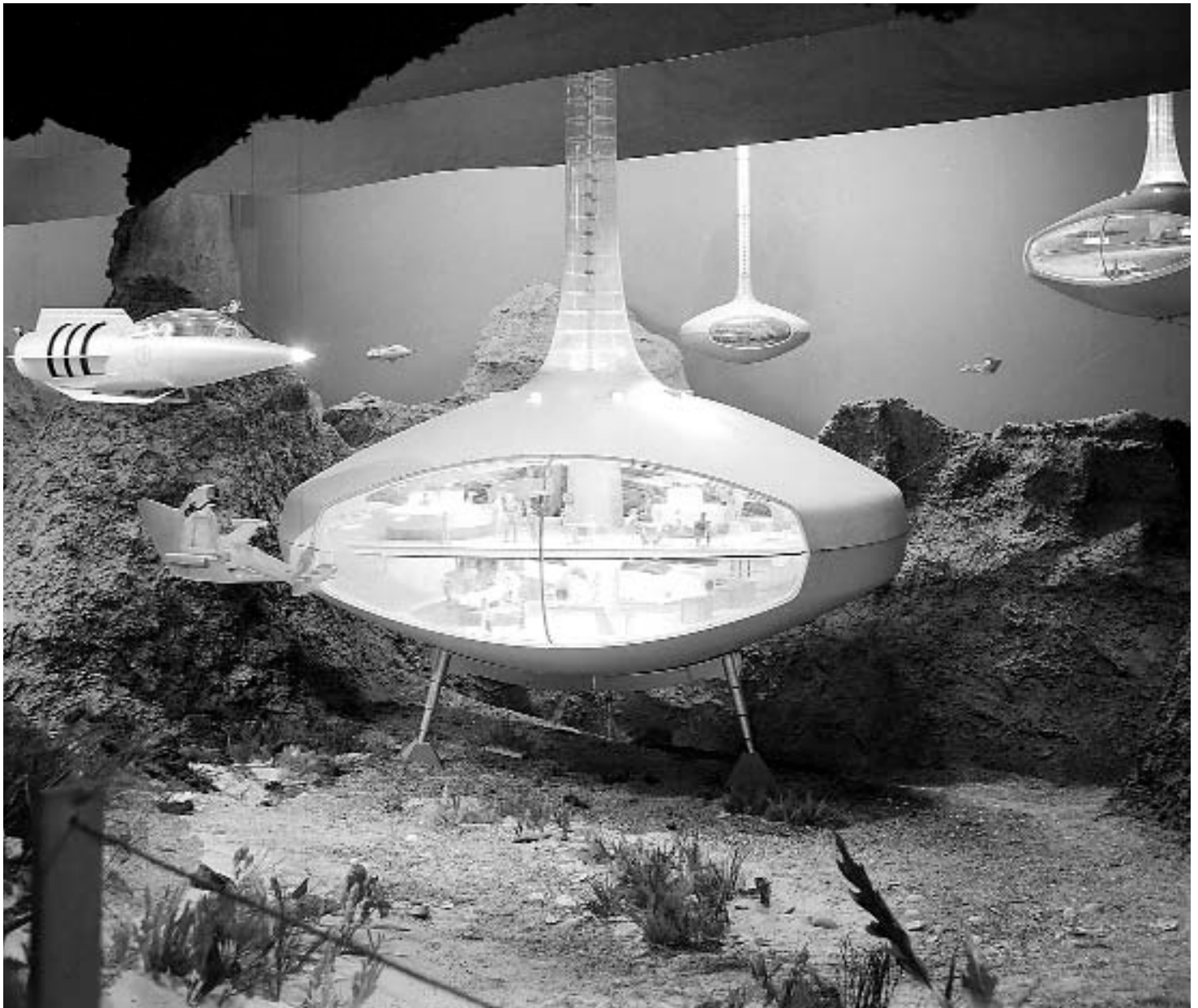
**ABOVE:** *How to get from here to there fast has been a human preoccupation at least since the invention of the wheel. The darkest side of *The Fifth Element's* (1997) view of the future 250 years from now may be that there's still too much traffic.*

**RIGHT:** *Star Trek's Captain Kirk and his sidekicks Commander Spock (right) and Dr. McCoy, better known as Bones, enjoyed the last word in commuter convenience. The starship Enterprise's transporter simply beamed them hither and yon through space.*

**FAR LEFT:** *In this 1950s vision of the suburban future, an artist imagined swell new vehicles, but Mom is still faithfully making her way down to the station to greet Dad as he arrives on the 5:21.*

**LEFT:** *A small future may be in the cards if Toyota's PM concept car is any indication of what's to come.*





## LIVING LARGE

**ABOVE:** *At the 1964 World's Fair in New York City, designers at General Motors seemed to have tapped their inner Little Mermaid. Their exhibit showed people living underwater and weekending at the Hotel Atlantis in "the sun-bright gardens of the sea."*

**ABOVE RIGHT:** *In 1957, Monsanto Chemical Company teamed with Disneyland and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to build the entirely plastic House of the Future. Twenty million people found it a nice place to visit but not to live, and it was torn down a decade later.*

**RIGHT:** *When Mickey Mouse's progenitors again dabbled in housing in 1994, they went retro. The Norman Rockwellian community of Celebration, Florida, started by a Walt Disney Company division, features compact "new urbanist" neighborhoods with picture-perfect picket fences.*



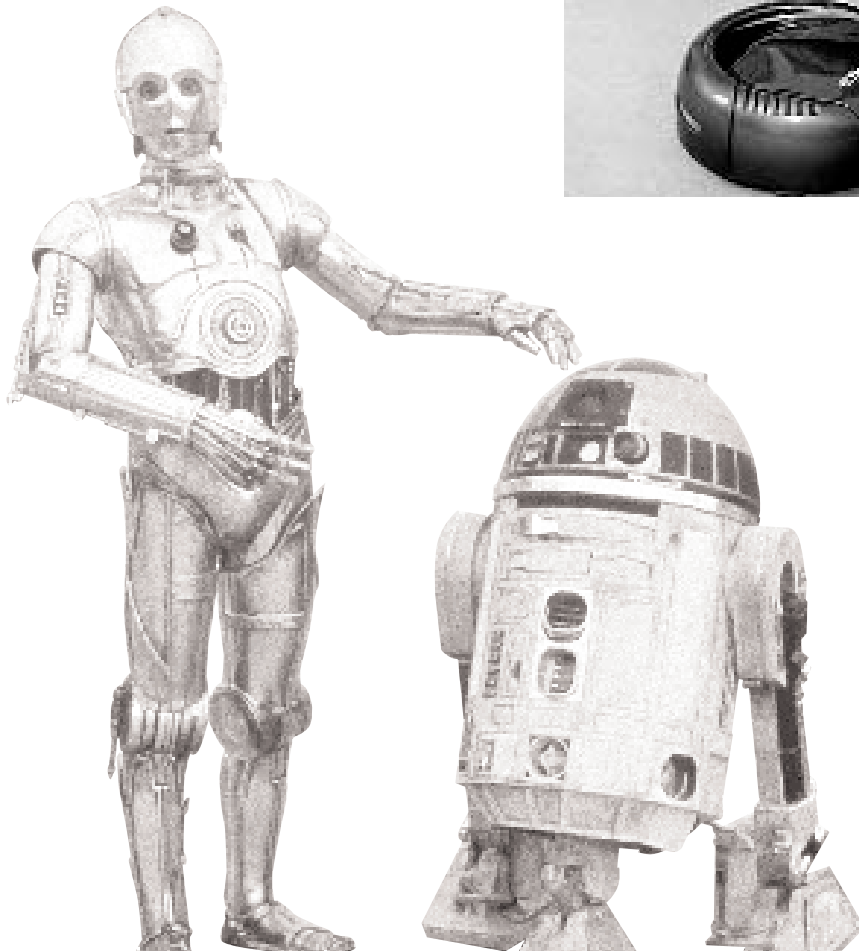


ROBOT DREAMS

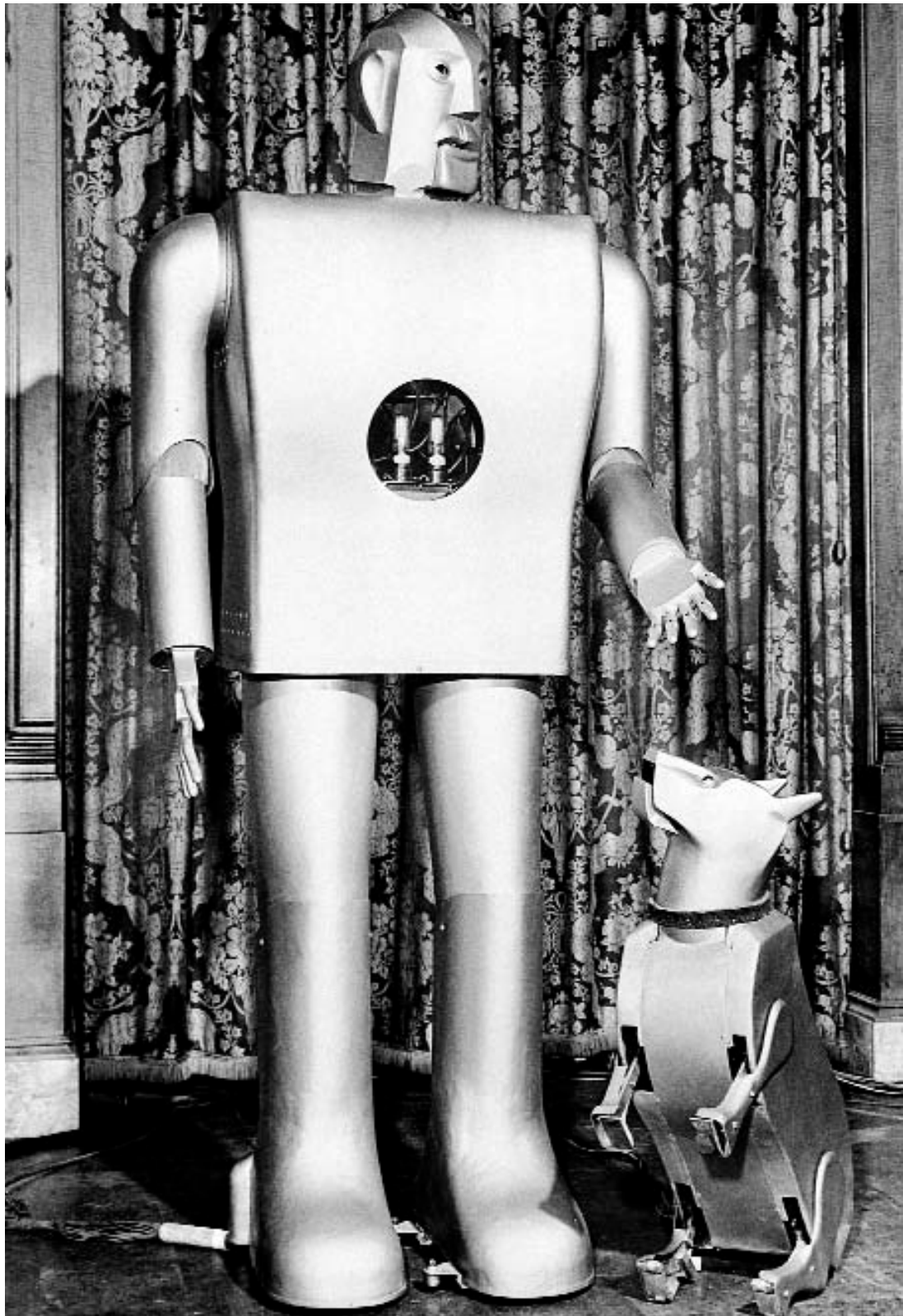
**BELOW:** *The Star Wars droids C3PO and R2-D2—Laurel and Hardy in a galaxy far, far away—had as much personality as any of the humans in George Lucas’s immense digital landscape (OK, they had more). They were smart and capable and concerned, the sort of robot pals you’d want by your side when you set out to save the universe.*

**RIGHT:** *In real life, a robotic vacuum cleaner looking like R2-D2 before his growth spurt prowls the floors of a home making fast work of dust.*

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** *Elektro, the eight-foot-tall mechanical man, and his dog, Sparko, were stars of the 1939 World’s Fair in New York City. Sparko could walk, sit up, and wag his tail, and best of all he didn’t need to be walked at 4 a.m.*









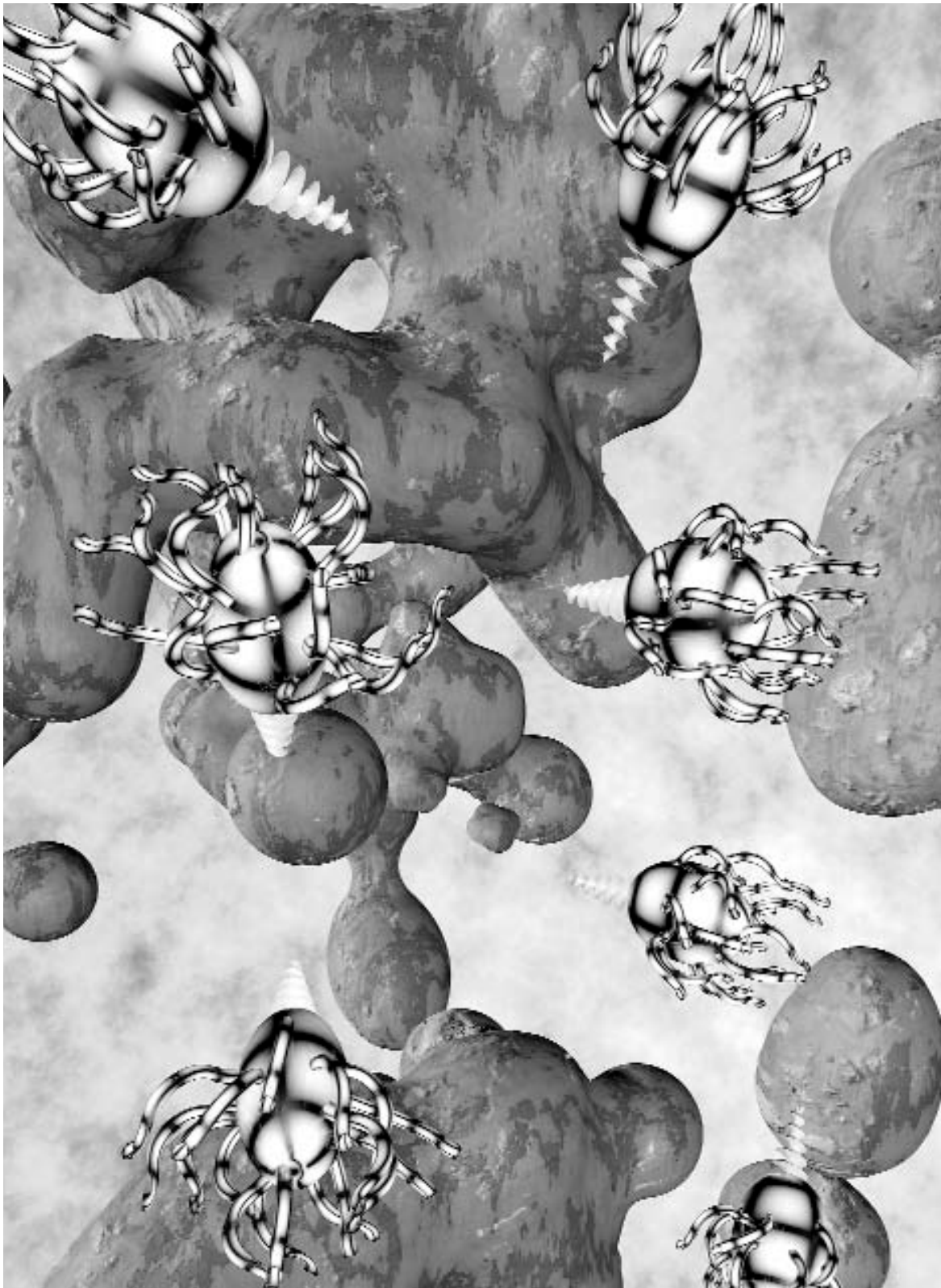
#### GADGETOLOGY

**ABOVE RIGHT:** *Chester Gould, the creator of Dick Tracy, imagined that a telephone might one day accompany us everywhere, as portable as a wristwatch. He might have curbed his imagination if he had heard the din of public chatter in the land today—outdoors, indoors, underground, and probably underwater.*

**ABOVE:** *Meanwhile, it's not just watches and phones that we'll soon be wearing but full-fledged computers—imaginary in the art above, but already real in the photo to the right—lest there be so much as a moment when we can't cling to the new lifeline of connection.*

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** *It will be a small world after all, if nanotechnology enthusiasts are right. Today's nanotechnology isn't up to much more than keeping your khakis from wrinkling, but tomorrow it's hoped that nanorobots will be marching out to attack cancer cells, as in this fancifully imagined scene, clean up oil spills, and assemble almost anything imaginable from scratch, atom by atom—just like the replicators in Star Trek.*







# Forever—Or Not

*Nearly anyone today can inscribe his name for eternity on the Web or have it chiseled in brick at his alma mater. Has the 21st century finally delivered immortality for all?*

BY ANDREW STARK

WE HAVE A BETTER SHOT AT IMMORTALITY THESE days than we've ever had before—not literal immortality, of course, or the biological immortality that results from perpetuating our genes through procreation, but the lesser immortality that comes from leaving at least some mark for generations to come that says, “I was here, and this is who I was.” For much of human history, only eminent artists or thinkers or public figures could hope to have their names live on in this way. But a canvass of the culture reveals that, in at least two ways, the kind of immortality that once was the preserve of the greats is now being democratized. Or so it is said.

Thanks to the Internet, claims D. Raj Reddy, a professor of computer science and robotics at Carnegie Mellon University, the possibility of “virtual immortality” is now available to everyone. Anyone can post material on the World Wide Web, and because the Web is impervious to the degradation that time inflicts on printed records, whatever it contains has the capacity to exist indefinitely in some form. True, Web sites currently disappear with alarming frequency, and so Professor Reddy might be overstating matters when he says that “we can feel confident” that our Web

postings will become part of the “permanent record of the human race.” But if what he says isn't true of every single Web site at this early moment in the Web's history, it's certainly true that, in principle and for the first time, the Internet offers the technological means whereby anyone can keep his or her work universally accessible indefinitely. That's why bloggers—those who on a regular basis post their autobiographical narratives, political musings, photos, and poetry online—so often express the inchoate hope that the Internet will allow them, as blogger Radley Balko puts it, to leave “their mark on the world” and achieve a kind of immortality (Balko, a 30-year-old “writer, editor, and wonk living in Alexandria, Virginia,” currently gets a respectable 8,000 visits a day on his blogsite, [theagitator.com](http://theagitator.com)). Blogger Joshua Claybourn, an Indiana University law student whose [intheagora.com](http://intheagora.com) appears as a link on numerous other Web sites, makes no bones about the matter: “I admit to considering the blog's impact on my immortality.”

In addition to the incipient promise of virtual immortality through the Internet, there's a second phenomenon that promises to bring a formerly restricted type of immortality within reach of us all. In days gone by, individuals whose names lived on after them affixed to buildings—museums, schools, universities, hospitals, and the like—were usually fig-

ANDREW STARK, a former Wilson Center fellow, is professor of strategic management and political science at the University of Toronto. His book *The Limits of Medicine* is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.



The blogosphere, where writers can post their thoughts and stories, is one of the new outlets for people with a yearning to see their names live on.

ures of some note. Now, with the burgeoning need for non-profit organizations to raise private funds, anyone can have his or her name placed on an institutional structure—for a price. This might seem more like the plutocratizing than the democratizing of immortality but for the fact that “naming opportunities” are available to people of all income levels. Those of more modest means can, for lesser sums, have their names placed on a classroom, a bench, or even an individual brick. And they often admit to seeking what Tasha Thomas, a fundraiser at Grant Medical Center in Columbus, Ohio calls “a little bit of the immortality that used to be available just to famous people.” “Call it an answer to the yearning for immor-

tality,” says *The San Francisco Chronicle*. “For a price, universities will carve the name of a generous benefactor in limestone or on an imposing building.” Or a brick.

Are we really living at the dawn of immortality’s democratization? Consider first the idea of immortality in cyberspace. We’re unlikely to confuse any of the other Louis Armstrongs on the Web with the jazz great. But things are different for us ordinary folks. A certain Michael Wood, one of many people to post comments on a site for people with the name “Michael Wood,” complained that “someone else’s [view will be] mistakenly attributed to me.” The Internet allowed Dave Gorman, who calls himself a “documentary comedian,” to discover 54



other people who share his name. “Before I did this,” he writes, “the words ‘Dave Gorman’ used to define me; now they don’t.” Of course, if you discover that your name is already being used by others in cyberspace, you can always, as innumerable bloggers now do, pick a singular pseudonym to distinguish yourself. But that merely makes the problem worse. If a person posts material online under a pseudonym, how will its everlasting preservation immortalize *him*?

We ordinary mortals, it seems, are not given enough unique names to differentiate all the distinct Web sites we will want to establish. The reverse difficulty confronts those who seek immortality by attaching their names to buildings, rooms, walls, and bricks: There are too many competing names for the suitable physical sites that institutions can or will establish. Even now, institutions increasingly face the need to tear down an old structure named for John Doe—a lab that’s obsolete, an auditorium that’s too small—to construct a new one, courtesy of a generous donation from

and faces drawn at random from a large database. Donors to institutions can always avoid these issues by giving anonymously, of course, but giving anonymously no more immortalizes the donor than posting pseudonymously does the blogger.

We ordinary would-be immortals face a further set of difficulties. Consider a donor to a university or a hospital, and let us assume that his name will remain embossed indefinitely on some kind of physical marker within the institution, even if transferred from pillar to post to plaque over time. In what sense would people 50, 100, or 1,000 years from now, noting Joe Blow’s name, think of Joe Blow and thereby contribute to his immortality? All that will pass through their consciousnesses is a name, with no accompanying narrative, no biographical information about the person attached to the name. In fact, after a time the name will cease to signify a person and identify simply the memorial itself. Last year, more than three decades after the closing of Emmett Scott High,

the town of Rock Hill, South Carolina, opened a brand-new secondary school. Many who had attended Emmett Scott decades ago wanted the new institution to bear the old one’s name. It’s clear that their aim was not to memorialize Emmett Scott the person. Rather, in the words of local resident Meredith E. Bynum, they wanted to

retain the name because “Emmett Scott was an outstanding school.” The new school would be a memorial to a memorial.

The irony is that in order for a memorial to call up someone’s memory, that person needs to be memorable independently of the memorial. A disease named for a famous patient, such as Lou Gehrig, makes us think of that person; so does a law named after a famous victim—James Brady, for example. But if the person is not memorable apart from the memorial, then it will not remind us of him. A reference to Parkinson’s disease or the Glass-Steagall Act brings to mind neither Parkinson, nor Glass, nor Steagall.

And though institutions often inscribe a few biographical words on a plaque along with the name, there is no more room for a real biographical narrative on a plaque than there is for an epitaph on a grave. That leaves the immortality-seeking institutional donor caught in an unfortunate space-time

**THE IRONY IS that in order for a memorial to call up someone’s memory, that person needs to be memorable independent of the memorial.**

Richard Roe. Institutions’ limited spaces dictate that, sooner or later, the name on an old structure will have to be folded into a differently named new one. That’s why, at Northwestern University, athletes play on Ryan Field at Dyche Stadium. Some libraries sell naming rights to bookcases and then, as well, to the individual shelves they contain.

This kind of cramping and overlapping of spaces can go on for only so long. Institutions are already beginning to place plaques commemorating old donors on central walls of honor, such as Hackensack University’s Margery S. and Charles J. Rothschild Jr. Recognition Gallery (a wall of honor itself offers a nice additional naming opportunity). Even on walls of honor, though, space is finite. There are already so many candidates for the new wall of honor for Jefferson County, Missouri, that it will consist simply of four television screens displaying, over the course of the viewing day, names

warp: The available spaces are too few for the names to be accommodated, and the span of time to be memorialized—the span occupied by the person's life—is too large to be commemorated adequately by any accompanying narrative.

Those who pursue immortality in cyberspace face a different challenge when it comes to biographical information. The Internet imposes no limits on the material bloggers can post, allowing them to record the most mundane or tangential details of their lives with a stream-of-consciousness flow. The blogger Craig Taylor says he faces a “challenge [in] refusing to let the promise of endless space act as an excuse to write about the size of my fingernail.” It is “the job of a blogger,” or so it seems to the commentator Andrew Ferguson, “to record his every neural discharge faithfully and minutely, leaving no thought unpublished.” Yet it's unclear that overly loquacious narratives, especially when they're consumed with the sorts of mundane activities we all share, memorialize a person any more effectively than overly curt ones. It would seem, then, that those who seek immortality online encounter their own kind of space-time warp: They share too few names to distinguish all the cyberspaces on the Web, and they post far too much narrative for the time periods being memorialized.

All of this provokes a question: Even if we assume that what's posted in cyberspace and inscribed in physical space will remain in perpetuity, is earthly immortality in fact available only to the extraordinary among us? Is the democratization of immortality an illusion?

Consider how immortality descends on the great. Great men of action get remembered, their lives become visible, *through* the media of various works—biographies that recount their acts, monuments that recall them—while great artists and thinkers get remembered *for* various works, for having created this painting or that novel or poem. Ordinary would-be immortals are forced to reverse these roles. Ordinary “men of action”—managers, lawyers, merchants—are not going to be immortalized by biographers or sculptors. Instead, the ordinary man of action has to create his own monument to himself—by donating to an institution, for instance, and having anything from a building to a brick bear his name. But this mechanism does not allow him to be remembered *through* the work—the building, the bench, the brick—the way great men of action get remembered through a work of biography or sculpture. Buildings, benches, and bricks hold no narrative. The Joe Blow whose name is on one of them may

have been anything from an adept fly-fisher to an arms salesman. At most, he'll be remembered simply *for* the work—for being the name responsible for the building, bench, or brick.

Now consider bloggers, the ordinary thinkers and “artists,” as blogger Eric S. Raymond describes them, who seek immortality online. The vast majority of blogs are not great works of art or thought *for* which their creators will be remembered. At best, individual bloggers can be remembered *through* the work, which is essentially autobiography and self-portrait, giving a sense, however choppy and unwieldy, of who they were and what they did.

In the final analysis, the kind of immortality bestowed on great artists and political actors will remain elusive to the rest of us. Perhaps nothing illustrates this quite so vividly as a particular caveat that institutional fundraisers frequently register: It's not quite true that nobody will remember Joe Blow years hence when they see his name on the Blow Building. His descendants will.

In fact, family members, viewing a named structure, are not just likely to be the only ones who'll recall the person named; they're also essential to ensuring that the name itself will remain, if not in its original location, at least *somewhere* in the institution. According to Jerry Rohrbach, director of planned giving at Temple University, when the time comes to raze a named building, institutions “contact family members still living and discuss with them other possible places” on which to put the old donor's name. But if there “is no longer any family,” says Ann Gleason, director of major gifts at Duke University, “after a few generations, the name will disappear.” When former Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau died in September 2000, a movement sprang up to rename the Yukon Territory's Mt. Logan after him. The descendants of William Logan vehemently objected, and the idea was dropped.

And so a last lesson for ordinary folks: To ensure that you'll perpetuate yourself by attaching your name to the physical world, you must also perpetuate yourself in the old-fashioned way. You must be fruitful and multiply. The same is true if you seek to memorialize yourself in cyberspace. Your works are most likely to survive on family Web sites—a growing number of sites are now devoted to family genealogies—for which those who carry your genes on into the future will be the primary audiences (and custodians). In the final analysis, the new democratization of immortality, imperfect as it is in so many ways, can be guaranteed only by the old. ■

# The Future Is a Foreign Country

*How we choose to think about what lies ahead may be more important in creating a future we can comfortably inhabit than all the technological change tomorrow will bring.*

BY EDWARD TENNER

IN THE EARLY 1990S, I VISITED THE PRINCETON house in which Albert Einstein had lived while a professor at the Institute for Advanced Study from 1936 until his death in 1955. It was one of many graceful Greek Revival structures built in the 1830s and '40s by a Massachusetts-born carpenter-architect, Charles Steadman, in what eventually became the fashionable western part of Princeton. For me, the real surprise in the house was Einstein's furniture, which had remained there as the property of the Institute. In the living room were several massive wooden cabinets in the neo-Renaissance style beloved by the upper-middle class during the opulent years after German unification in 1871. Einstein was known to scorn the pomp and formality of his bourgeois contemporaries. Why, then, were these giant pieces dominating the small, low-ceilinged space? One explanation is that the furniture had been inherited by Einstein's wife and cousin, Elsa, whose tastes were more conventionally German, and for whom the pieces may have been a precious link to an otherwise-lost heritage. But that does not explain why Einstein kept them after her death and left them to the Institute in his will (though he stipulated that his house never become a personal museum or shrine).

The example of Einstein is a good introduction to certain

EDWARD TENNER, a visiting researcher at Princeton University, is a former Wilson Center fellow. He is the author of *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences* (1996) and *Our Own Devices: The Past and Future of Body Technology* (2004).

dilemmas of contemporary thinking about the future, whose border we are always crossing. The first dilemma is whether to assume that changes will continue along current lines, or that offsetting forces will neutralize or even reverse them. This is a choice between extrapolationism and compensationism. The second dilemma is a choice between affirmation and balance—that is to say, between whether we should accommodate our tastes and surroundings to scientific and technological change or live a countervailing life. Einstein is a compelling figure for the study of futurism because values—the key to all futurism, no matter how objective it purports to be—were so important to him. The physicist Gerald Holton has underscored, for example, the influence of Goethe and German romantic philosophy on Einstein's quest for the unification of physics.

Let us consider, then, the merits of extrapolationism versus those of compensationism. Einstein and his scientific contemporaries had different ways of looking at future tendencies. The Hungarian-born physicist John von Neumann (1903–57), who believed in the generally benign power of future technology to improve the lot of humanity, could be called a conservative extrapolationist. In *The Fabulous Future*, a book of essays about the world of 1980 sponsored by *Fortune* magazine in 1955, he envisioned that atomic power would make energy too cheap to meter. He expected this almost-free energy, along with computer power, to enable us to select our climate, and he

thought that we should be prepared for serious domestic and international debates over how to use these newfound abilities. Though von Neumann's assertions have often been ridiculed, positive extrapolationism has sometimes proved justified. For example, reasonable flat charges for unlimited long-distance calling plans have been spreading, and most individual subscribers today pay a low flat fee for virtually unlimited Internet surfing. (Von Neumann's article, I should note, did not discuss these costs of information.)

Even in matters of energy, von Neumann's extrapolationism was not entirely wrong. Looking at the history of illumination from the domestication of fire by *Australopithecus* 1.42 million years ago to the introduction of the compact fluorescent lamp in the early 1990s, the economist William D. Nordhaus observed that the efficiency of lighting had increased from 0.00235 lumens per watt to 68.2778. From the heyday of ancient Babylonian oil lamps around 2000 B.C. to the early 19th century, the rate of increase in efficiency amounted to 0.04 percent per year. But in the two centuries between 1800 and 1992, it was fully 3.6 percent per year—and the quality of illumination was higher. So there had been a 1,200-fold improvement from Babylonian times to 1992. Nordhaus suggested that economists had been underestimating rather than exaggerating the impact of technological change on productivity and living standards. Today, rural Third World children can read by a light-emitting diode (LED) drawing only a tenth of a watt. A hundred watts can serve a whole village, according to the electrical engineer Dave Irvine-Halliday, founder of the Light Up the World Foundation. It is as though the 100-watt bulb in the architect lamp on my desk as I write this were divided into literally a thousand points of light.

Computing power has been increasing even more rapidly than lighting efficiency. The electrical engineering magazine *Spectrum* recently observed that, since the 1960s, the cost of producing transistors has dropped "from a dime a dozen to a buck for a hundred billion." Gordon Moore, a founder of Intel, predicted in the 1960s that the number of transistors on an integrated circuit would double every year. The actual time has turned out to be closer to 18 to 24 months, but the predictive power of Moore's Law shows no sign of slackening. It is the bedrock of extrap-



Masakazu Takahata's *Crossing* (1999) captures the mixture of trepidation and elation surrounding the coming of the new millennium and an era of seemingly unrelenting fast-paced change.

olationism, since whatever the goal, the brute force of more-powerful circuits appears to bring it closer every year.

Compensationists, by contrast, may welcome these trends, but they point to their self-limiting side. For example, as artificial lighting has spread over the past 100 years, it has interfered with natural human sleep patterns, and sleep deprivation reduces performance, increases the rate of accidents, and may even shorten lives, thereby offsetting the benefits Nordhaus cites. Computational power has countless benefits beyond the personal computer, but it also increases expectations as new versions of applications require all the new power—and often more. Faster new microchips also run hotter and draw more power, increasing the likelihood of blackouts.

And usability and reliability may actually decrease as processing power increases. That complaint is heard with greater frequency, for example, as luxurious new European automobiles grow more reliant on computer technology.

Higher expectations also tend to maintain real-price levels. Bill Machrone, former editor in chief of *PC Magazine*, has a law of his own: The computer you really want always costs \$5,000—whether an Altair 8000B in 1976 or a top-of-the-line Apple Macintosh G5 with a wide-screen, flat-panel monitor today.

In environmental futurism, extrapolation is usually a sinister rather than a benevolent force. After *Limits to Growth*, the 1972 report to the Club of Rome, many extrapolationists (usually on the political left) viewed the unchecked growth of population and the spread of industrialization as preludes to famine and ecological catastrophe. Fortunately, the report was wrong. Despite an expanding global population, food produc-

tion per capita has been increasing rather than dropping. Where hunger exists today, it is more likely to be caused by inequities of distribution than by shortfalls of production. Most demographers now predict that the world's population will peak in the middle of this century, then decline. But the good news for humanity does not necessarily extend to many other creatures, environmental advocates reply. The world's bounty has been paid for by dangerous levels of nitrogen in fertilizer, leading to perilous runoff into natural waters and a different food crisis: the impending collapse of many fisheries.

be wrong, but it's consistent with recent production trends and with the doubts of some specialists that the proved reserves of the major oil companies are as big as advertised. Its defenders also note that, in 1956, Hubbert correctly predicted the 1970 peak of U.S. domestic petroleum production.

Although many earth scientists are (negative) extrapolationists, most economists seem to have remained compensationists. Human ingenuity is "the ultimate resource," argued the late Julian Simon in a book of the same title. Economists can point to improved exploration techniques, new ways to recover previously uneconomical reserves, and, above all, a range of other energy sources (coal, biomass, natural gas, safer nuclear plants, solar power, and so forth). In addition, there are more-energy-efficient technologies, such as hybrid automobiles, that can be tapped if Hubbert was right. So the exponential development of technology will offset the gradual decline of petroleum production—if decline is indeed inevitable.

**THE CHOICE IS BETWEEN a material and artistic culture that reflects and even anticipates change and one that cushions the spiritual shocks of change.**

Global warming is the great battleground between extrapolationism and compensationism. Whatever the role of human activity in increasing the concentration of greenhouse gases over the past two centuries, a significant increase in global temperatures appears inevitable in this century. At least until the 1980s, as the historian of

science Spencer Weart observed in the journal *Physics Today*, climatologists doubted the very possibility of rapid change: "The experts held a traditional belief that the natural world is self-regulating: If anything started to perturb a grand planetary system like the atmosphere, natural forces would automatically compensate. Scientists came up with various plausible self-regulating mechanisms. . . . Stability was guaranteed, if not by Divine Providence, then by the suprahuman power of a benevolent 'balance of nature.'"

The principal battles being fought these days between compensationists and extrapolationists are about energy and, especially, climate change. Countering the positive extrapolationism of John von Neumann is the argument of some geologists, such as Princeton University's Kenneth S. Deffeyes, that we have already reached a global peak of oil production. This analysis, first advanced by M. King Hubbert in 1974, may

Today, both scientists and laypeople are more likely to envisage an unstable future and to worry about the robustness of natural systems. Yet the debate continues. The strongest positions are an extrapolationism that foresees likely catastrophic consequences and a compensationism that envisions a gradual trend with positive aspects that can be augmented by more market-based ingenuity. A leading exponent of the first alternative is Henry Jacoby, an economist at the Massachusetts Insti-



tute of Technology, who has used extensive computer modeling to arrive at a probabilistic view of global warming: There's a good chance that it will be gradual and amount to only a few more degrees Fahrenheit, according to Jacoby. There's also a small but disturbing chance that the increase could be as much as nine degrees. So limiting emissions will make little difference if temperatures rise slowly and by only a few degrees (to Jacoby, such limits are an insurance policy against the worst outcomes).

The reply of compensationists is not that nature can heal itself but that Simonian ingenuity will let us increase agricultural and industrial output while reducing greenhouse gases and even restoring the environment. The classic statement of this position is a 1996 essay by Rockefeller University scholar Jesse H. Ausubel. Ausubel cited encouraging long-term trends toward more-durable products (thanks to the use of stronger and lighter materials) and more efficient recycling. Those trends toward "dematerialization" and new energy technology could reduce emissions while letting the world return more agricultural land to its natural state; for example, with wood no longer a popular fuel, the forests of the northeastern United States have grown back in the past century.

What would Einstein say about these two models of the future? On the one hand, he believed in technological adaptability. He came from a family of electrical equipment entrepreneurs (though ultimately unsuccessful ones), and he even coined a new cooling system after reading about refrigerator explosions in Berlin. On the other, he did not try to foresee trends as von Neumann did. Einstein had little to say about the future precisely because he did not see it as being determined by scientists or engineers, or even by political constitutions. "Everything depends," he replied to a correspondent's questionnaire in 1948, "on the moral and political quality of the citizen."

**T**here's another question about the future, an ethical and aesthetic rather than a predictive one, and it concerns the cultural ties between past, present, and future. The choice is between affirmation and balance—that is to say, between a material and artistic culture that reflects and even anticipates change, using new forms and materials, and one that cushions the psychological and spiritual shocks of change by adapting familiar and reassuring themes. Should we espouse—affirm—values that are tied to the latest scientific trends and our expectations of future progress? The Italian futurist movement of the early 20th century called for the destruction of the

West's ancient culture to prepare for a new hard-edged scientific and technological age. Adherents of movements such as Extropy (founded in 1988 and devoted to unlimited progress through advanced science and technology) believe it is our duty to develop ourselves physically and culturally into a superior version of humanity.

But others draw the opposite conclusion. Precisely because the pace of change is so rapid, they say, we should turn to the reassurance provided by established and harmonious forms. The art, music, and architecture of the future, and especially of the present, should not be about DNA, nanotubes, or quantum computing. Appealing to nature and spirituality, our cultural lives should soften the shocks of innovation. Within traditional Eastern and Western faiths, and especially in New Age movements, many technical professionals find a counterbalance to the often-disruptive realities of technology. Unlike extrapolation and compensation, which are styles of predicting change, affirmation and balance are responses to ongoing or expected change. They're not verifiable by experience; they're the conditions that help us deal with experience.

Tacitly at least, Einstein was on the side of balance. Immersed in mathematics and science, he showed little interest in the advanced literary and artistic trends that sought to evoke relativity. In music and literature, Einstein remained true to the humanism he had absorbed in his youth. He once called classical music "the driving force" of his intuition. According to Robert Schulmann, former director of the Einstein Papers project, Einstein's musical tastes were grounded in Bach and Mozart; Beethoven was too passionately emotional for him. He did admire and befriend one contemporary experimental composer, the Czech Bohuslav Martinů, but Martinů was a loner among the avant-garde. How would Einstein have reacted to more-recent music invoking his ideas? Philip Glass and Robert Wilson's opera *Einstein on the Beach*, for example, which opened more than two decades after Einstein's death, would probably have bewildered him, with its cascade of multimedia images and its syllabic chanting. And he showed little interest in the ferment in painting and sculpture that characterized the interwar and post-World War II years.

It's probably in our visual surroundings, in architecture and design, rather than in music and art, though, that the tension between affirmation and balance is most apparent, especially in Einstein's case. Men and women may not often reflect on religious or philosophical principles, but they cannot avoid buildings, furnishings, and everyday objects. In design, too, Einstein resisted the harsh and hard-edged styles often associated with

future orientation. He did praise the architect Erich Mendelsohn's Einstein Tower, a multistory astronomical observatory in Potsdam named in his honor, but he praised it for its curving, "organic" shape, which did not reflect the architectural avant-garde of the day.

Einstein never worked in his namesake building. He was happy in the conservative setting of Princeton. Fuld Hall, the main building of the Institute for Advanced Study, completed in 1939, is standard institutional Federal. After Einstein's death in 1955, the Institute hired the Hungarian-born modernist Marcel Breuer to design a housing complex for visiting academics, and one of the streets was named in Einstein's honor. But the great physicist had never shown an interest in Breuer's high modernism. Einstein believed that his work was to seek timeless truths, not set a trend; he did not care if the science of the future was done in a building of the past. But not every pioneer of advanced thinking has been as content as Einstein to work in familiar and comfortable surroundings. Charles Simonyi, for example, who made a fortune as master designer of Microsoft's application software, built an expansive, architecturally innovative Seattle-area house that plainly reflects the ideas of an aesthetic and scientific avant-garde.

**B**oth attitudes toward the aesthetic future—embracing novelty and buffering it—have played out since the 1920s, when technological modernism reached its high point. In 1927, the city of Stuttgart sponsored a residential development of the future on a scenic hilltop above the city. Some of Europe's leading modernist architects, including Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, built the extensive complex. But the workers who were to be residents did not want picture windows and tubular furniture. They did not care about the factory of the future. They simply wanted as little as possible to remind them of their industrial workplaces of the present. Rejecting modernist idealism, they preferred the upholstery and knickknacks of the petite bourgeoisie. The complex was soon rented out to bourgeois intellectuals of Weimar Stuttgart, who were delighted to live in a community of tomorrow.

Today, little of the old industrial working class remains in the West. Most of us are now what the late management guru Peter Drucker called knowledge workers. There was a high-tech furnishings movement in the early 1980s, but today's professionals, by and large, are not interested in personal surroundings that evoke the Web. I saw this clearly in

2003 when I visited the "house of the future" on the Microsoft campus in Redmond, Washington. The house was actually a suite of rooms illustrating applications of new network technology. There was nothing overtly high-tech about the rooms; furnishings were warm, with lots of dark wood. The futurist component was the networked appliances, which could, for example, play back telephone messages with the callers' pictures or display a profile of someone ringing the doorbell. In this setting, technology represented security and support for an affluent way of life rather than a framework for living. Who wants to be challenged aesthetically at home after a hard day of symbolic problem-solving at the office?

Our techniques of forecasting the future (material extrapolation and compensation) and our cultural strategies for coping with it (affirmation and balance) have something in common: They're both expressions of expectations that shape the real future. In 1948, the sociologist Robert K. Merton coined the phrase *self-fulfilling prophecy*, and we're still working on many of the predictions of that era. We're also reverting to the familiar in the face of change, buying sentimental realist paintings and reproduction antiques. The future is indeed a foreign country, but it's also a place that we ourselves design, usually inadvertently. In the end, the interplay of expectation and behavior is what *creates* the future.

Fortunately, there are times when optimism about tomorrow produces works that continue to inspire hope for a better future. Perhaps the most visible of these works today are certain of the great laboratories built during the science boom of the late 1950s to the early 1970s. At the Salk Institute for Biological Studies (1965) in San Diego, architect Louis I. Kahn combined special steel with a type of concrete that had originated in ancient Rome; he used natural light throughout and channeled it with innovative reflectors to below-ground levels. Nine years later, Alan H. Rider conceived the elegant administration building of the Fermilab National Accelerator (1974) in Batavia, Illinois, with curved towers that created a space inspired by the cathedral of Beauvais. A herd of bison roams the grounds, which were designed as a sanctuary for native plants and animals.

The two buildings combine exuberant hope for the future with profound respect for human and natural heritage. In such great material visions as these buildings, extrapolation and compensation, affirmation and balance, coexist magnificently. They make us temporal immigrants feel immediately at home. ■

# In ESSENCE

A REVIEW OF ARTICLES FROM PERIODICALS AND OTHER SOURCES AROUND THE WORLD

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## POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

### Mob Rule

**THE SOURCE:** "In Defence of Mandarins"  
by Michael Lind, in *Prospect*, Oct. 2005.

IN AMERICA AND OVERSEAS, THE reputation of ruling political elites is plummeting. In France, the highly educated *Énarchie*, who formed the backbone of the civil service for many decades, are being blamed for the country's economic stagnation, while in Britain, senior civil servants have become figures of fun. In the United States, the "once-powerful northeastern establishment" has gone the way of the Chinese mandarins.

Governing elites first arose in response to a problem of democracy, writes Michael Lind, a New America Foundation senior fellow and author of *What Lincoln Believed: The Values and Convictions of America's Greatest President* (2005). The American founders, along with many later 19th-century thinkers such as Thomas Macaulay, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville, worried that universal suffrage would produce a "mobocracy." But those fears proved baseless, as a "meritocratic elite pro-

vided the natural leadership for a modern society." The old ruling class, built from an alliance between the aristocracy and the church, was supplanted by this new alliance between what Lind calls the "mandarinate" and the university. It served to check "the elective 'monarchy' of democratic executives and the majority 'tyranny' of democratic legislatures."

So what has gone wrong? Lind reports that the West's governing elites have come under attack on two fronts. Starting in the late 20th century, "in both parliamentary and presidential democracies, the chief executive has been elevated from first among equals to the status of a monarch." At the same time, there has been a crisis of legitimacy within the

In both parliamentary and presidential democracies, the chief executive has been elevated from first among equals to the status of a monarch.

elite, as the liberal arts education has moved toward "a more flexible pattern of instruction, including modern classics, modern history, and modern languages." Increasingly, education has come to mean mastery of some type of technocratic knowledge, and this, in turn, has altered the character of the high government official from generalist—think Clark Clifford—to professional specialist—think Karl Rove.

Lind believes that other cultural changes have made the mandarin "a scapegoat for all of the major forces in contemporary society." Free-market economists view government careerists as "plugs in the mouth of the market's cornucopia," while egalitarians, on the left, and populists, on the right, both reject the notion that good education is a prerequisite for manners and taste. In Lind's analysis, the prototypical minister who held sway for so many years in Europe and America was "an amateur, to the professional; a statist, to the libertarian; an elitist, to the populist; and a heathen, to the religious believer." What could be worse, he asks, than a society run by such people? His answer: "a society without them."

In Lind's view, the current political patronage system, with "Bushies," "Clintonites," and "Reaganites"

succeeding one another, is a clear signal that career public servants are a dying—and possibly already extinct—species. Yet the lack of long-term government officials, particularly in the United States, leaves the country—blown left or right by the ideological winds of the moment—susceptible to the very “mobocracy” the Founders feared.

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

## It's Always Politics

**THE SOURCE:** “‘Going Bipartisan’: Politics by Other Means” by Peter Trubowitz and Nicole Mellow, in *Political Science Quarterly*, Fall 2005.

AMERICANS LOVE IT WHEN POLITICIANS place principle above politics to act for the common good. But pull back the curtain and such displays of bipartisanship are still largely politics, say political scientists Peter Trubowitz, of the University of Texas at Austin, and Nicole Mellow, of Williams College.

Politicians put on bipartisan plumage when political circumstances call for them to win over centrist or swing voters outside their party. But bipartisanship is far from the usual practice in Congress. The authors’ analysis of roll-call votes since 1889 reveals that it has come in waves, reaching an all-time high in the 91st Congress (1969–71), when lawmakers voted in substantially bipartisan fashion 76 percent of the time. Bipartisanship went downhill after that—to a post–World War II low of 33 percent in the 104th Congress (1995–97), when Republicans gained control of the House of Rep-

resentatives for the first time in 40 years. There was a turn toward greater bipartisanship in congressional voting in the late 1990s, and during 2001–02 bipartisan votes reached 58 percent.

Bipartisanship in Congress is more likely to occur when the two parties are competitive nationally and lawmakers have to woo moderate voters, say Trubowitz and Mellow. That happened in the 1960s and 1970s, “when the regional foundation of the New Deal party system eroded and the Republicans became more competitive in the South.” Bipartisanship is also a feature of divided government, a consequence, for example, of the president’s having to appeal to moderate members of the opposition party to win congressional support. That’s what Harry Truman did in the late 1940s to gain backing from the GOP-controlled Congress for his Cold War foreign policy.

The state of the economy also makes a difference. In good times, partisan pressures on lawmakers ease. In hard times, increased pressure from labor on the Democrats and from business on the Republicans makes crossing party lines less likely. When the unemployment rate soared during the Great Depression, bipartisanship in Congress plummeted. And despite possible short-lived “rally round the flag” effects, bipartisanship does not appear to increase at times of international crisis. Today, write the authors, with the parties “increasingly regionally polarized,” the economy sluggish, and no end in sight to the war on terrorism, bipartisanship’s prospects don’t appear very bright.

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

## Supreme Shifts

**THE SOURCE:** “The Debate Over the Constitutional Revolution of 1937: Introduction” by Alan Brinkley and “The Constitution, the Supreme Court, and the New Deal” by Laura Kalman, both in *American Historical Review*, Oct. 2005.

MINDFUL OF PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. Roosevelt’s landslide reelection victory in 1936 and fearful of his “court-packing” scheme, the Supreme Court in 1937 suddenly reversed course and began approving New Deal legislation. At least, the reversal *looked* sudden at the time, and has been so regarded in the standard scholarly interpretation of what happened. But in the past decade or so, in a debate freighted with larger political implications, some scholars have argued that the change was actually the product of an evolutionary process occurring over a period of years.

By the end of 1936, the Court had struck down a series of New Deal measures, often by 5–4 decisions. In early 1937, a frustrated FDR proposed legislation that would have enabled him to nominate a new Supreme Court justice for each sitting justice above the age of 70—which that year would have meant adding six justices to the Court’s nine.

“The plan created a political firestorm” and damaged the president’s standing, writes Alan Brinkley, a historian at Columbia University. “But according to more than a generation of scholars, it also frightened the justices themselves.” Justice Owen Roberts appeared to jump from the conservative to the liberal side, joining a 5–4 majority in *West Coast Hotel v. Parrish* to uphold a state minimum-wage statute virtually identical to one the Court had

invalidated just months earlier. Two weeks later, he joined in a 5-4 ruling upholding a major New Deal measure, the National Labor Relations Act. The “switch in time [that] saved nine,” as a wit of the day put it, removed the Court as an obstacle to New Deal legislation and ended FDR’s bid to pack the Court.

In its 1937 decisions, the Court jettisoned the doctrine, established in *Lochner v. New York* (1905), that many federal and state government efforts to regulate wages and hours violated workers’ “liberty of contract” under the Fourteenth Amendment.

Summarizing the work of the scholars who have argued that the shift was not as abrupt as it seemed, Laura Kalman of the University of California, Santa Barbara, notes that Roberts himself wrote the majority opinion in an important 1935 case that paved the way for the 1937 “switch.” The



The Supreme Court began ruling in favor of FDR’s New Deal legislation in 1937 but not, some scholars now believe, because of his court-packing threats.

Court’s many narrow votes during the 1930s showed that its approach was in flux. Finally, Roberts himself denied being swayed by politics. Indeed, he had cast his vote in *Parrish* before FDR made his court-packing proposal.

At bottom, Brinkley and Kalman observe, this is a debate about how the Supreme Court changes its mind. Is the Court (and the law more generally) a creature of politics, as legal realists and other thinkers of progressive bent have argued? That’s the implication of the standard “switch in time” view of the 1937 events.

Or does the law evolve, as Brinkley puts it, through “a largely internal process, insulated from politics,” and based on constitutional principles and precedents? That’s a traditionalist view, but it has also been attractive to some of Kalman’s revisionist scholars, who worry that viewing

precedent-breaking decisions such as those of the 1960s and ’70s as politically inspired will deprive them of legitimacy. As for Brinkley and Kalman, they doubt that the Court is often moved by either pure principle or pure politics.

## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

# A UN for Our Time

**THE SOURCE:** “Anarchy and Order in the New Age of Prevention” by Thomas M. Nichols, in *World Policy Journal*, Fall 2005.

SINCE THE COLD WAR ENDED, THE campaigns of ethnic cleansing and genocide in Europe and Africa, the nuclear ambitions of rogue states such as North Korea and Iran, and

terrorist attacks, especially those of 9/11, have led many nations to question the idea of absolute state sovereignty, doubt the adequacy of deterrence, and look at preventive force in a new light. “A new age of preventive war” is upon us, and a reformed United Nations is needed to preside over it, contends Thomas M. Nichols,

a professor of strategy and policy at the Naval War College.

In the face of the crises of the 1990s, the UN’s performance “was dismal even by the reckoning of its supporters.” Its paralysis during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda cost many lives, and when genocide loomed in Kosovo five years later, the United States and its NATO allies “acted without the Security Council’s approval rather than risk a Russian veto.” After Kosovo, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan cautiously embraced “the principle that states could at times interfere in the



internal affairs of others.” Two years later, a Canadian-sponsored international commission went further, saying that the UN has a duty to stop mass murder and ethnic cleansing, and that when the evidence is clear, preventive military action might be warranted. Annan himself in 2005 urged that as a “last resort” in cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and other crimes against humanity, the Security Council should be able to “take enforcement action according to the [UN] Charter.”

Yet the UN as currently constituted appears dysfunctional. “If the United Nations cannot bring itself to condemn even the horrors of Darfur because such ‘naming and sham-

## EXCERPT

## Soft on Terror?

*All European governments are reluctant to drastically alter their legal systems and basic political approaches to terrorism. The issue of homeland security was raised and essentially settled a long time ago when these governments faced a more “indigenous” terrorism (Spain’s ETA, Ireland’s IRA, Germany’s Baader-Meinhof gang, and Italy’s Red Brigades). . . .*

*As far as European countries are concerned, the fight against terrorism is a matter of police and intelligence, not military action. The growing isolation of Islamic radicals in Europe should allow the Europeans to continue with this “soft” approach. . . .*

*However, this approach will never totally eradicate terrorism. The European tradition of terrorism and political violence that has forged the experience of the counterterrorist institutions makes it easier for young activists to become violent. Put somewhat differently, the stigma attached to carrying out violence is relatively weak in Europe.*

—OLIVIER ROY,

a professor at the School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris and author of *Globalized Islam*, (2004), in *Current History* (Nov. 2005)

ing’ can be stopped by reprehensible regimes eager to escape such censure themselves,” asks Nichols, “how can it be expected to exercise actual force against such regimes in the future?” The solution, he argues, is for the UN to stop admitting “illiberal regimes” to the 10 rotating seats on the Security Council, and to qualify the veto enjoyed by each of the permanent Big Five members by giving a supermajority of the council the power to override any veto.

Nichols believes that these reforms could be adopted if the United States and other major powers demand them, and threaten not to bring future issues of international security before the UN. Without such reforms, he says, the organization “will be doomed, at least as an arbiter of the use of force.”

## ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## Business the Beneficent

## A SURVEY OF RECENT ARTICLES

CORPORATIONS TODAY CLAIM that they can do well for their investors by doing good for their customers, their employees, their community, and even the environment.

Managers, says David J. Vogel, a professor of business ethics at the University of California, Berkeley, believe that a socially responsible firm “will face fewer business risks than its less virtuous competitors: It will be more likely to avoid

consumer boycotts, be better able to obtain capital at a lower cost, and be in a better position to attract and retain committed employees and loyal customers.”

The relationship between doing good and being profitable used to be regarded as much more indirect, writes Vogel in *California Management Review* (Summer 2005). After a court ruled in 1954 against a Standard Oil of New Jersey shareholder who had objected to the firm’s gift of

“his” funds to the engineering school of Princeton University, corporate philanthropy came to be widely accepted by large firms. Supporting civic, educational, and cultural activities and giving money to urban affairs programs and the like were seen as “enlightened self-interest,” because businesses had a stake in the well-being of the society that let them make their profits.

But things have changed, according to Vogel. “Increased domestic and international competition, threats of hostile takeovers, the concentration of ownership in the hands of institutional investors, and changes in the basis of executive compensation” have forced managers to justify their actions in terms of their contribution to the bottom line, not just to society’s well-being. Yet corporations have continued to expand their efforts to do good. Corporate social responsibility now includes everything from charitable donations, to voluntary expenditures on environmental protection, to paying Third World workers First World wages. And the doctrine that a big business is not bad business has helped make business careers much more inviting to young people.

Whole Foods CEO John Mackey argues that businesses can earn larger profits for their investors by *not* making that their primary goal. “The most successful businesses put the customer first, ahead of the investors,” he writes in *Reason* (Oct. 2005). Indeed, at Whole Foods, the mission is to serve “all six of our most important stakeholders: customers,

Proponents of corporate social responsibility fail to acknowledge the tradeoffs that must ultimately be made between doing well financially and doing good for society.

team members (employees), investors, vendors, communities, and the environment.”

In a classic article in *The New York Times Magazine* (Sept. 13, 1970), Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman argued that the corporate executive’s chief obligation was to investors; as the article’s headline put it, “The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits.” If “social responsibility” were not mere talk, Friedman said, executives would have to spend money in ways that were not in stockholders’ best interests—by passing over better-qualified workers, for instance, to hire hard-core unemployed individuals, with the aim of reducing poverty. That would be a disservice to investors, customers, and employees.

Three and a half decades later, commenting on Mackey’s argument in *Reason*, the 93-year-old Friedman says that the differences between Mackey and him are mostly “rhetorical.” He points out that, in his original article, he had observed that corporations often used “social responsibility” as “a cloak” to mask self-interest—a tolerable bit of deception, in his view, given the widespread hostility to business. If the particular socially responsible expenditures actually boost profits, then as a practical matter they’re OK with him.

Friedman doesn’t get it, Mackey says in a rejoinder: Whole Foods, Starbucks, REI, Medtronic, and thousands of other businesses “were created by entrepreneurs with goals beyond maximizing profits”—and those other goals “are intrinsic to the purpose of the business.” They’re not, in Friedman’s phrase, mere “hypocritical window-dressing.” The many stockholders of these corporations don’t seem to feel cheated.

In *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Fall 2005), Deborah Doane, a writer who heads a coalition seeking legal reform of the corporation in the United Kingdom,

maintains that proponents of corporate social responsibility fail to acknowledge the tradeoffs that must ultimately be made between doing well financially and doing good for society. There’s “little if any empirical evidence,” she observes, that the market can reliably deliver both short-term financial returns and long-term social benefits. And when the two goals



conflict, the quest for profits “undoubtedly wins over principles.” She thinks that government should exert more oversight of corporations.

But trying to prove that corporate social responsibility consistently benefits the bottom line would be as pointless as trying to show that advertising does, says Vogel. Moreover, social responsibility may work for some firms but not for their competitors. The market niche for relatively responsible firms may be limited. And a responsible firm’s success isn’t guaranteed to last. Even some celebrated exemplars, such as Ben and Jerry’s and Body Shop International, have run into financial difficulties lately. There’s a place in the business world for socially responsible firms, concludes Vogel, but “this place is at least as precarious and unstable as [that] for any other kind of firm.”

ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## Age of the Oligarchs

**THE SOURCE:** “Corporate Governance, Economic Entrenchment, and Growth” by Randall Morck, Daniel Wolfenzon, and Bernard Yeung, in *Journal of Economic Literature*, Sept. 2005.

THERE’S A FUNDAMENTAL REASON WHY the United States suffers more than its fair share of Enron-like corporate scandals—and it’s not that American executives are greedier than others. The ownership of big U.S. companies is dispersed among many stockholders, leaving effective control of the corporation—and greater potential for hanky-panky—in the hands of top executives. In virtually every other country in the world, corporate ownership is much more concentrated, and that cre-

ates problems of its own.

In Sweden, the Wallenberg family controls roughly half the total market capitalization of the Stockholm Stock Exchange, report Randall Morck, of the University of Alberta, and Daniel Wolfenzon and Bernard Yeung, both of the Stern School of Business at New York University. Italy’s Agnelli clan controls 10.4 percent of that country’s market capitalization. The 10 wealthiest families control 19 percent of corporate assets in Austria, 29 percent in France, 21 percent in Germany, and 11 percent in Spain. A study of East Asia reveals equally dramatic levels of concentration. The top 15 families control corporate assets worth 84 percent of the gross domestic product in Hong Kong, 48 percent in Singapore, and 39 percent in Thailand.

What’s most distinctive about foreign corporate structures, the authors say, is that the families *control* much greater assets than they actually *own*. They do so through “control pyramids” and other devices. In a highly simplified example, a family may operate a single holding company worth, say, \$1 billion, which owns 51 percent stakes in two other \$1 billion companies. The clan uses its control of the two firms, with a total value of \$2 billion, to get each to acquire 51 percent stakes in two other companies, and so on. Thus, the clan’s original investment can be leveraged many times over. Family members often cement their authority over firms farther down in the pyramid by installing relatives as executives.

Concentrated corporate control can have serious “economywide implications,” the authors say. Wealthy clans use their power to buy political influence and protect the business status quo. As corporate proprietors who are

interested in filling the clan coffers rather than in benefiting large numbers of stockholders, they can “bias capital allocation, retard capital market development, obstruct entry by outsider entrepreneurs, and retard growth.” A bank that’s enmeshed in a pyramid may, for example, be required to make loans to other pyramid members that wouldn’t qualify in a free market or to offer very favorable terms. Or a clan may channel funds from one firm in the pyramid to another ailing firm—or to the family bank account.

It’s impossible at this point to estimate what concentrated corporate control costs the world’s economies, the authors say, but they seem to think that “scandalous” will someday prove an apt description.

ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## Mysteries of Corruption

**THE SOURCE:** “Eight Questions About Corruption” by Jakob Svensson, in *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Summer 2005.

CORRUPTION IS THE NEW BÊTE noire of the globalized world, yet there’s a surprising degree of uncertainty among specialists about its costs and cures.

There’s even some doubt that corruption causes great harm to national economies, reports Jakob Svensson, an economist at the World Bank and Stockholm University. Scholars have yet to turn up much systematic evidence of the harm, and some, notably Harvard University’s Samuel Huntington, argue that bribery and other shady practices have a bright side, helping firms operate efficiently

in countries hampered by heavy-handed bureaucracies. “China has been able to grow fast while being ranked among the most corrupt countries,” Svensson notes.

Bribery, embezzlement, and other forms of corruption cost the world \$1 trillion a year, by one estimate. (If ill-gotten gains are put back in circulation rather than stashed overseas, corruption’s economic damage may be blunted.) Grotesque examples of corruption are legion. In Angola, where most people live on less than \$1 a day, nearly \$1 billion in oil revenues vanished from state coffers in 2001—three times the amount of all the humanitarian aid the country received from abroad. Corruption also distorts economic incentives. Studies show, for example, that in sub-Saharan Africa peasant farmers avoid rapacious officials “by taking refuge in subsistence production,” thus sacrificing productivity and living standards. Some firms inevitably specialize in gaining competitive advantage through political connections—a further drag on economic efficiency.

Research generally confirms the

Some scholars argue that bribery and other shady practices can help firms operate efficiently in countries hampered by heavy-handed bureaucracies.

commonsense proposition that corruption is greatest in countries with low levels of income and education. But there’s still great variation. Argentina, Russia, and Venezuela all rank relatively high in income, education, and corruption. Svensson adds that researchers have not produced much systematic evidence for the notion that history, culture, and religion are very influential—that former French colonies in the developing world, for example, have more regulation and therefore more corruption.

What can be done? “Most anticorruption programs rely on legal and financial institutions—judiciary, police, and financial auditors—to enforce and strengthen accountability in the public sector,” notes Svensson. But in many poor countries, those

very enforcement institutions “are weak and often corrupt themselves.” Pouring more money into them doesn’t seem to help. Another favorite prescription of aid donors and international organizations is to pay higher wages to civil servants. But that works only if enforcement institutions are strong.

Svensson’s own research suggests that the most corrupt countries are those that also most restrict economic activity and the news media. Selective deregulation of the economy, depriving bureaucrats and politicians of the leverage to extract payoffs, is one promising avenue of reform. Grass-roots monitoring is another. Between 1991 and 1995, local officials and politicians in Uganda siphoned off all but 13 percent of the grant money primary schools were supposed to receive from the central government. When Uganda’s government began publicizing the monthly transfer payments to the schools in newspapers, parents and school staff were able to act. In 2001, the schools got 80 percent of the money earmarked for them.

## SOCIETY

# The Tyranny of Cheer

**THE SOURCE:** “From Good Cheer to ‘Drive-By Smiling’: A Social History of Cheerfulness” by Christina Kotchemidova, in *Journal of Social History*, Fall 2005.

FORGET THE EAGLE. AMERICA’S national symbol should be that yellow smiley face reproduced on everything

from T-shirts to Wal-Mart billboards. As an outgrowth of its capitalist emphasis on individual self-worth, America has developed a national ethic of cheerfulness, writes Christina Kotchemidova, a culture and communication instructor at New

York University.

We didn’t always walk around with smiles on our faces. Early in American history melancholy prevailed, just as it did in Europe. Traditional Christianity promoted suffering as a path to spiritual refinement. Patience was definitely a virtue—especially since little could be done about perceived injustices in the early-modern Anglo-Saxon world.

But with the rise of the American middle class in the 18th century came

a new emphasis on human agency and individualism, and on the necessity of managing one's emotions in order to succeed. Economic ruin was often associated with a lack of moral and emotional control. "Moderns developed an impatience with helplessness, which was accompanied by a distaste for grief and later translated into male aversion to tears," writes Kotchemidova. "Since cultural meanings form by opposition, the opposite emotion to sadness—cheerfulness—began to serve as a symbol for virtue."

In the New World, European courtesy was being displaced by "a new, casteless nicety . . . based on friendliness." Among the first Europeans to note the trait was British journalist William Cobbett, a 1792 émigré who repeatedly commented on "the good humour of Americans" and wished English laborers were as happy. Other Euro-

peans linked good humor to egalitarianism and saw it variously as admirable or rude.

In the 19th century, Victorian women's culture redefined the home as a cheer-filled refuge from the world. Most strong emotions lauded

Today, want ads stipulate a cheerful personality, and advertisers insist that their products will make consumers smile.

in centuries past—romantic love, "healthy" fear, grief, motherly love, and so forth—came to be seen in the early 20th century as signs of immaturity. Individualism dictated cheerfulness as the most beneficial emotion, since it served the self, and the cheerfulness ethic insinuated itself into the workplace. By the

1920s, many companies—often helmed by managers raised in homes steeped in Victorian women's culture—were attempting to engineer a cheerful, anger-free, and thus more productive workplace. Popular writers spread cheerfulness as the gold standard through self-help books such as *A Little Book of Smiles and Joy and Sunshine* (1911) and *Enjoy Living* (1939). Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936), which praised the ever-smiling salesman, sold like hotcakes.

Today, want ads even for paralegal assistants and mortgage originators stipulate a cheerful personality, and advertisers insist that their products will make consumers smile. But all this cheerfulness has its price. Depression is much more prevalent in the West than it is elsewhere, Kotchemidova notes. Perhaps more people are diagnosed as depressed because cheerfulness is deemed the

## EXCERPT

## Scoundrels and Scholars

*In the academic world . . . in which superior virtue is routinely assumed, it appears that cheating is so endemic that it is ignored, or when exposed is treated with laxity, though here, too, whatever punishments are meted out tend to be harsher for more junior members of the hierarchy, and certainly more for students than faculty. Tenure committees are inured to the cooked resumé, the fudged attribution, the casual appropriation of the intellectual work of others; among faculty only the most exorbitant lapses tend to attract investigation or censure, and punishment seldom involves leaving the academy. Most offenders,*

*taking advantage of the ever-convenient threat of litigation, manage to negotiate a whitewash of some variety that enables them to move on unscathed to the next institution. The whole effort to detect and eliminate faculty wrongdoing is indeed so embarrassing, time-consuming, and often inconclusive that the American Historical Association decided, in 2003, to cease accepting complaints of professional misconduct and to stop conducting the formal adjudication of such cases. The Association justified its step by announcing that its past efforts "have not had sufficient impact either on the individuals involved in cases of misconduct, or on the profession as a whole, or on the wider public."*

—A. J. SHERMAN, author of *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918–1948* (1997), in *New England Review* (Number 3, 2005)



norm; but it could also be that people experience greater mental distress because they work so hard to manage their emotions. “Emotion labor”—nowhere more evident than on the faces of flight attendants—“takes its toll on the individual and often results in burnout, drug use, or alcoholism.” In 2003, Delta Airlines, for instance, spent \$9 million on antidepressants for employees and their dependents.

## SOCIETY

## Murder Metropolis

**THE SOURCE:** “Homicide in Los Angeles, 1827–2002” by Eric H. Monkkonon, in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Autumn 2005.

AS ANY FILM NOIR BUFF CAN attest, Los Angeles has a long, sordid history of murder. From its origins as a Spanish mission to the present day, Los Angeles’s homicide rate has placed it at or near the top of the list of most dangerous cities during almost every time period. Gruesome killings, such as the notorious “Black Dahlia” murder of Elizabeth Short in 1947, and celebrity murders, such as that of O. J. Simpson’s ex-wife, Nicole Simpson, in 1994, or of Robert Blake’s wife, Bonny Lee Bakley, in 2001, garner lurid media coverage and help reinforce Los Angeles’s reputation as a place where life comes cheap. There’s a tradition of violence that authorities may find difficult to break, writes Eric H. Monkkonon, a historian at the University of California, Los Angeles.

In its earliest days, when Los Angeles was still part of Mexico, the population was small, and it took only

two or three murders to give the settlement an inflated per capita homicide rate. Yet by the start of the 20th century, when Los Angeles had been a U.S. city for more than 50 years, its murder rate averaged higher than 11 per 100,000, “a figure about 1.5 times that of the whole United States and three times more than that of New York City.”

Monkkonon notes that there are some mysterious anomalies. What, for instance, accounts for the sharp decline in the homicide rate during the Depression (ironically, the period most often depicted in gritty novels such as 1939’s *The Big Sleep*)? Or for a similar decline in the 15 years after World War II? Stricter law enforcement and economic optimism are among the expert guesses.

It’s “astounding,” says Monkkonon, that in years prior to 1967 (when the data still indicated victims’ birthplaces), 67 percent of

Gruesome killings and celebrity murders help reinforce Los Angeles’s reputation as a place where life comes cheap.

those murdered were not from Los Angeles, which lends support to the notion that rootlessness and anomie explain some of the city’s peculiarity. Many of the killers also came from out of town, including Missouri’s William Edward Hickman, the abductor and murderer of 11-year-old Marian Parker in 1927, and Colorado’s Harvey M. Glatman, the 1950s serial murderer known as the Lonely Hearts Killer.

Monkkonon cites the high percentage of homicides ruled “justifiable” by the authorities (seven percent, or 3,345 deaths during the years he studied) as evidence that an



Movies such as *The Big Sleep*, with Humphrey Bogart, depicted Los Angeles as a city rife with violence. But during the Depression, when the novel was set, L.A. saw a rare dip in homicides.

ethic of “street justice” has reigned for much of Los Angeles’s history. Half of these justifiable homicides were committed by citizens with guns, suggesting “an armed population, some of whom may have been waiting for their chance.” Justifiable homicides peaked (as a percentage

of all homicides) during the 1940s, perhaps explaining part of the post-war dip in the homicide rate.

In 2003 the overall homicide rate for the city stood at 8.3 per 100,000 residents, as low as it was in the late 1960s, but still quite high, especially in a period when

other big cities saw declines in their murder rates. Monkkonon, in a bleak coda, expresses doubt that metropolitan Los Angeles, splintered into dozens of jurisdictions, can muster the concerted effort needed to “accept its history, and change it.”

## PRESS & MEDIA

# The Tabloid Solution

**THE SOURCE:** “Bye, Bye, Broadsheet” by Michael Wolff, in *Vanity Fair*, Oct. 2005.

“IT’S LIKE AN IPOD,” SAYS EDITOR Alan Rusbridger proudly of his new, petite *Guardian*. Shrank down to near-tabloid size, the venerable left-wing newspaper has become the third British broadsheet daily in the past few years to decide that small is beautiful. Could a shift to the smaller format be the salvation for today’s troubled American newspapers as well—or are these changes anachronistic newsprint’s last gasp?

The trend began in the fall of 2003, when the 200,000-circulation *Independent*, left-wing *Avis* to *The Guardian*’s Hertz, launched a parallel tabloid version of its broadsheet self—and immediately experienced a 20 percent rise in circulation. It soon

broke earlier vows of continued fidelity to the older format. “Going tabloid—with big, bold, lacerating, crowd-pleasing, anti-war, anti-American, anti-Blair front pages—does for *The Independent* exactly

what every worrywart (especially the ones at *The Guardian*) has said that the tabloid format would do: It makes everything louder, more simplistic, and appealing,” writes Michael Wolff, a *Vanity Fair* contributing editor.

The next desertion from the broadsheet ranks was far more shocking. Following swiftly on *The Independent*’s heels, *The Times* of

London—for two centuries the very model of “the billowing, luxurious, upper-class broadsheet, with its sweeping view of the world”—also turned tabloid. In the eyes of critics, this was only the latest chapter in the once-hallowed newspaper’s sad quarter-century descent into mediocrity under the ownership of Rupert Murdoch. Yet the tabloid format, Wolff points out, turned the paper’s blandness into a virtue in an era when people feel pressed for time. The new tabloid *Times* is “pure function,” a “news pill.”

Newspaper competition, a thing of the

## EXCERPT

### Death of the Scoop

*News is cheap, and the big Washington stories that transfix the media pack are in many ways the cheapest of all because all of the major outlets are on them together. Keeping track of who got which story first would be a full-time job, and an absurd one.*

*The true exclusive isn’t the story that beats the clock, or the pack. It’s the one that the pack never cared about. The one that reported the news so well, you remembered it days later, wanted to read it again, marveled at how it changed your understanding of the world. It’s the one that never had to call itself an exclusive, because that was obvious.*

—WILLIAM POWERS, a *National Journal* columnist, at *NationalJournal.com* (Nov. 4, 2005)

past in most American cities, is alive and well in London, which has five upmarket dailies and a half-dozen or so mid- and down-market tabloids. And the new quality tabloids have proven acceptable even to people whose upper-class status previously required them to turn up their noses at the rubbishy tabs. The broadsheet *Guardian*, whose circulation had been about 400,000, found itself losing readers not only to its left-wing competitor, *The Independent*, but to *The Times*, and even to a free morning tabloid put out by the mid-market *Daily Mail*.

*The Guardian's* "iPod" solution, unveiled in September, is a smaller paper that is about three inches taller than the standard tabloid and

Could a shift to the smaller format be the salvation for today's troubled American newspapers—or would it be newsprint's last gasp?

is trying "to do the opposite of what a tabloid does," observes Wolff. It retains the broadsheet's "classic, hierarchical, multi-story front page," and it preserves "that crucial, elemental newspaper distinction: the fold," which serves the editorial function of distinguishing the important front-page stories from the lesser ones. With this anti-tabloid "emphasis on order, discern-

ment, modulation," the great left-wing paper is hoping "to occupy the pride of place once held by *The Times*, as paper of record, as paper at the center of British political life." It's also hoping, of course, to win back the circulation lost to the other quality tabs.

Since *The Independent* went "compact," editor Simon Kelner says, 55 broadsheets around the world have followed suit, including, most recently, *The Wall Street Journal's* European and Asian editions. No major broadsheets in the United States have made the change yet, says Wolff, but there's little doubt that the big American newspaper chains, and even *The New York Times*, are watching "the British experiment" very closely.

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

# Cardinal Error

**THE SOURCE:** "The Design of Evolution" by Stephen M. Barr, in *First Things*, Oct. 2005.

WHEN CARDINAL CHRISTOPH Schönborn, archbishop of Vienna, lashed out at neo-Darwinism in a *New York Times* op-ed piece last summer, it was front-page news. After all, the cardinal reportedly is close to Pope Benedict XVI. Was Schönborn signaling that the church might align itself with the intelligent design movement, in opposition to the scientific theory of evolution? Such an alignment, notes Stephen M. Barr, a theoretical particle physicist at the Bartol Research Institute of the University of Delaware,

would contradict the Catholic Church's long-standing position on evolution.

Barr thinks the cardinal's op-ed argument is a muddle. Schönborn says that by neo-Darwinism he means "‘evolution’ as used by mainstream biologists." Yet elsewhere in the article, he writes that "evolution in the neo-Darwinian sense [is] an unguided, unplanned process of random variation and natural selection." Barr calls this Schönborn's "central misstep": "He has slipped into the definition of a *scientific* theory, neo-Darwinism, the words 'unplanned' and 'unguided,' which are fraught with *theological* meaning."

Christians believe that nothing in

the universe occurs outside God's providential plan. But, says Barr, that doesn't mean that "random" events can't occur within that plan. As used in scientific discourse, *random* "does not mean uncaused, unplanned, or inexplicable; it means uncorrelated." Consider an analogy: A writer of prose, unlike the author of a sonnet, does not make lines end in syllables that rhyme. As a result, the sequence of syllables will show no correlation between them—that is to say, they exhibit randomness. But that doesn't mean that the work was "unguided" or "unplanned," or that the words were not chosen. Similarly, Barr writes, "God, though he planned his work with infinite care, may not have chosen to impose certain kinds of correlations on certain kinds of events, and the motions of the different molecules in a gas, for example, may exhibit no statistically verifiable correlation."

The Catholic Church has said that intelligent design is a scientific question, beyond the capacity of theology to answer.

The International Theological Commission recognized that distinction in its 2004 report *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, which states that in “the Catholic understanding of divine causality, true contingency in the created order is not incompatible with a purposeful divine providence.” The intelligent design movement’s contention that “a purely contingent natural process” cannot explain all the available scientific data is, said the commission, a scientific question, beyond the capacity of theology to answer. The commission was headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger,

who is now Pope Benedict XVI.

The first formal statement on evolution reflective of the church’s teaching authority was the encyclical *Humani Generis*, issued by Pope Pius XII in 1950. The pope stated as dogma that the human soul, being immaterial, could not be the product of evolution, but he also said that the human body’s evolution from lower animals could legitimately be investigated as a scientific hypothesis.

In a 1996 letter to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Pope John Paul II reiterated Pius’s essential point, but added that much evidence had emerged in support of the theory of evolution, making it now “more than a hypothesis.” Schönborn, in his essay, dismissed John Paul’s statement as “rather vague and unimportant.” But if a papal letter to scientists can be thus dismissed, says Barr, how much doctrinal weight should be given to a cardinal’s column in a newspaper?

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## Not for Sale

**THE SOURCE:** “Markets, Morals, and Civic Life” by Michael J. Sandel, in *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, Summer 2005.

While it’s true that there are some things money can’t buy, are there some things it shouldn’t be *allowed* to buy? If some people are willing to sell their kidneys, for example, should they be permitted to? If so, then why not let them sell their votes too? In the moral analysis required to understand the limits of markets, argues Michael J. Sandel, a Harvard University political theorist, lies a road to understanding the true nature of freedom and civic life.

Many liberal critics object to sales of human organs and other market transactions on the grounds of injustice. The sellers are coerced, they argue. People who sell their kidneys are desperate for

## EXCERPT

## The Evangelical Thirst

*The caricature of American evangelicals as incurious and indifferent to learning is false. Visit any Christian bookstore and you will see that they are gluttons for learning of a certain kind. They belong to Bible-study groups; they buy works of Scriptural interpretation; they sit through tedious courses on cassette, CD, or DVD; they take notes during sermons and highlight passages in their Bibles. If anything, it is their thirst for knowledge that undoes them. Like so many Americans, they know little about history, science, secular literature, or, unless they are immigrants, foreign cultures. Yet their thirst for answers to the most urgent moral and existential questions is overwhelming. So they grab for the only*

*glass in the room: God’s revealed Word.*

*A half-century ago, an American Christian seeking assistance could have turned to the popularizing works of serious religious thinkers like Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, John Courtney Murray, Thomas Merton, Jacques Maritain, and even Martin Buber and Will Herberg. Those writers were steeped in philosophy and the theological traditions of their faiths, which they brought to bear on the vital spiritual concerns of ordinary believers: ethics, death, prayer, doubt, and despair. But intellectual figures like these have disappeared from the American landscape and have been replaced by half-educated evangelical gurus who either publish vacant, cheery self-help books or are politically motivated. If an evangelical wants to satisfy his taste for truth today, it’s strictly self-service.*

—MARK LILLA, professor in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, in *The New York Times Magazine* (Sept. 18, 2005)

cash; prostitutes are driven to sell their bodies by poverty, drug addiction, or other life circumstances. Sandel doesn't disagree, but the argument doesn't go far enough for him. What about cases in which there is no coercion? On a level playing field, are there no fundamental grounds for limiting markets?

Of course there are, and the reasons go back to why there are some things that money *can't* buy: The things themselves—from love to a Nobel Prize—would be completely corrupted by the transaction.

But there are plenty of potentially objectionable transactions that degrade the thing being sold without completely ruining it. And many of them are permitted. Consider honorary degrees, which universities often give to wealthy donors. The honor is some-

what diminished, but it survives.

What matters most in determining what's an acceptable transaction, according to Sandel, is "the moral importance of the goods that are said to be degraded by market valuation and exchange." That distinction, he admits, is not always clear. Is being a surrogate mother "morally analogous to baby selling"—as the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in the 1987 "Baby M" case—or "more like sperm selling, a commonly accepted practice"?

What about vote buying? If one accepts today's prevailing "interest-based" view of politics, there's no meaningful argument against it. If "the purpose of democracy is to aggregate people's interests and preferences and translate them into policy," Sandel points out, then there's no basis for

objecting if a politician wants to change your preferences with a Thanksgiving turkey or a hefty tax cut.

The only argument against vote buying that makes sense, Sandel insists, is that suffrage is an aspect of "the ideal of citizenship as the republican tradition conceives it." Politics is more than a market mechanism for expressing individual choices. Each individual shares "a moral bond with the community," including "a sense of obligation for one's fellow citizens" and "a willingness to sacrifice individual interests for the sake of the common good." To sell one's vote would be to degrade and corrupt the ideal of citizenship itself.

There are certain things, Sandel concludes, "that markets do not honor and money cannot buy."

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

# Yawning Questions

**THE SOURCE:** "Yawning" by Robert R. Provine, in *American Scientist*, Nov.-Dec. 2005.

WHO KNEW? THE COMMON, CONTAGIOUS yawn repays close study by anyone interested in understanding the neural mechanisms of human behavior. So says Robert Provine, a psychologist at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, who has become, he admits, something of "a yawn stimulus" himself after years of observing the activity. "Yawns are so infectious that simply reading or thinking about them can be the vector of an infectious response." And it's



**Yawns are almost irresistibly contagious, and therein lie neurological and psychological mysteries that scientists are still trying to understand.**

precisely their property of contagiousness that provides a basis for exploring "the neurological roots of social behavior, face detection, empathy, imitation, and the possible pathology of these processes in autism, schizophrenia, and brain damage."

We know that yawning appeared early in vertebrate history and that mammals and most other animals with backbones, including fish, turtles, birds, and crocodiles, engage in it. But we don't know *why* it appeared. (There's no basis for the popular notion that yawning is a response to high levels of carbon dioxide in the blood.) Contagious yawning evolved much later and has been shown to exist only in chimpanzees and humans (though not in children until they are several years old). The physical consequences of the yawn include "opening of the Eustachian



tube, tearing, inflating the lungs, stretching, and signaling drowsiness.” Yet all of these, Provine says, “may be incidental to its primal function—which may be something as unanticipated as sculpting the articulation of the gaping jaw during embryonic development.”

People begin to yawn early in their lives. Indeed, yawning has been observed in three-month-old fetuses—evolutionary evidence of how ancient the behavior is. It’s the contagious quality of the activity that’s especially intriguing. Provine reports that when test subjects watched a five-minute videotape of a man repeatedly yawning, they were more likely to yawn themselves (55 percent did) than when they viewed a tape of the same man smiling. In fact, viewers didn’t even have to see the man’s gaping mouth. It was apparently “the overall pattern of the yawning face and upper body” that produced a response, not any one facial feature. (That’s why politely putting a hand in front of your yawning mouth won’t halt the contagion.)

“Contagious yawning definitely does not involve a conscious desire to replicate the observed act,” Provine observes, but it’s possible, as some research into brain activity suggests, that someone who “catches” a yawn may be unconsciously expressing “a primal form of empathy.” Thus, contagious yawning can be linked to sociality. Some neurological and psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia and autism, that leave patients “deficient in their ability to infer or empathize with what others want,” apparently reduce as well their susceptibility to contagious yawning.

Provine believes that further study

will reveal the potential of using yawning to develop theories of mind and to help us better understand certain neuropathologies and psychopathologies. One day we may even come to grasp the circumstances of yawning’s evolutionary origin and define its primal purpose. Until then, the imperfectly understood activity will be, for Provine, “a reminder that ancient and unconscious behavior lurks beneath the veneer of culture, rationality, and language, continuing to influence our lives.”

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## It’s the Portions, Stupid!

**THE SOURCE:** “De-Marketing Obesity” by Brian Wansink and Mike Huckabee in *California Management Review*, Summer 2005.

WITH OBESITY ON THE RISE the food industry has been plagued by fears of becoming “the tobacco industry of the new millennium.” Its first response was denial. Then it took refuge in consumer choice. But Americans kept ordering Whoppers. It’s now time, argue Brian Wansink, of Cornell University’s Food and Brand Lab, and Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, for the industry (and its critics) to come to grips with reality: Human nature follows the path of least effort. People eat what’s easiest to eat. And the genetically programmed taste for salt, fat, and sugar isn’t about to go away.

When researchers compared a group of office workers who had bowls of Hershey’s Kisses placed on their desks with another group whose chocolates sat six feet away, they

found that those with the easier access ate nearly twice as much candy. Bigger food packages also encourage more consumption. For example, consumers given a jumbo box of spaghetti and asked to create a

Human nature follows the path of least effort. People eat what’s easiest to eat.

meal for two will use 15 to 48 percent more food than people given a smaller box.

But research may also point to a solution: Making people more aware of how much they’re eating encourages them to cut back. In a University of Pennsylvania study, one group of participants was given a tube of potato chips with every seventh chip dyed red, a second group a tube with every 14th chip dyed red, and a third group a tube with no dyed chips. People in the first group ate an average of only 10 chips, those in the second group 15, and those with no marked chips 22.

The lesson for manufacturers: By offering smaller package sizes or pre-packaged individual servings, they can make it easier for people to stop eating. Coca-Cola’s new eight-ounce cans—a third smaller than the standard size—are an example. Consumers even seem willing to pay more for the additional packaging that smaller portions require.

When it comes to overcoming those hard-wired human tastes for salt, fat, and sugar, a bit of deviousness may be needed—though Wansink and Huckabee don’t put it that

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## A Husbandman's Place

**THE SOURCE:** "Renewing Husbandry" by Wendell Berry, in *Orion*, Sept.–Oct. 2005.

way. They note that human perceptions of taste are far more open to the power of suggestion than we generally realize. Give test subjects an ordinary energy bar, for example, with a label falsely stating that it contains "10 grams of soy protein," and they'll rate it as less tasty than other folks will who know the truth. (Most people assume that soy tastes bad, according to the authors.) The lesson: Tasty words make tastier foods.

But there are some words food producers should avoid. Consumers who are told that a product is "new" and "good for them" will assume that it doesn't taste very good—as McDonald's learned when its McLean sandwich flopped. It's better to reduce the harmful contents of foods quietly—by making slight alterations, such as replacing fat with water, fiber filler, or air, while doing one's best to maintain their perceived taste.

What about product labeling? Wansink and Huckabee are skeptical that people pay close attention. A study of customers at Subway, which touts the dietetic sandwiches it includes on its menu and provides oodles of information about its offerings, found that those who order subs dripping with mayonnaise and cheese tend to be influenced by the advertising rather than the information; they vastly underestimate how many calories they're consuming.

It wouldn't take much to make America slimmer—a 10 percent reduction in daily calorie consumption would do the trick for most people. If the food industry doesn't get behind the cause, the authors warn, a rising tide of lawsuits and regulations will ensure that corporate profits, at least, get thinner.

WHEN GAS-POWERED TRACTORS appeared on the landscape a century ago, farmers began to lose their connection with the farm. To mourn that loss isn't merely to wax nostalgic, but to recognize the damage that mechanization and modern agricultural "science" have done to our world, says Wendell Berry, the noted writer and Kentucky farmer. "Husbandry"—the word itself sounds quaint from disuse—has become nearly obsolete.

"Husbandry is the name of all

the practices that sustain life by connecting us conservingly to our places and our world; it is the art of keeping tied all the strands in the living network that sustains us," writes Berry. "Most and perhaps all of industrial agriculture's manifest failures appear to be the result of an attempt to make the land produce without husbandry."

As farming became more industrialized, after World War II, farm families stopped producing the food for their own tables; economic imperatives withered the organic relationship between farmer and farm.

In reducing the art of farming to "animal science" and "soil science," says Berry, agriculturalists oversimplified it. "The husband, unlike the



One of modern agriculture's dehumanizing effects, say critics such as Wendell Berry, is a loss of human sympathy for animals, as evidenced by conditions on huge poultry farms such as this.

'manager' or the would-be objective scientist, belongs inherently to the complexity and the mystery that is to be husbanded, and so the husbanding mind is both careful and humble. Husbandry originates precautionary sayings like 'Don't put all your eggs into one basket'. . . . It does not boast of technological feats that will 'feed the world.'

Agricultural science ignores farming's larger context. The sympathy for "creatures, animate and inanimate," has been lost. Other casualties are local adaptation to the particular farm and field and coherence of form. "The farm is limited by its topography, its climate, its ecosystem, its human neighborhood and local economy, and of course by the larger economies, and by the preferences and abilities of the farmer. The true husbandman shapes the farm within an assured sense of what it cannot be and what it should not be."

The sense of limitlessness—of fuel, water, and soil—that gave rise to the recent focus on productivity, genetic and technological uniformity, and global trade has proven illusory, according to Berry. Massive single-crop fields and factory farms are unsustainable, and the necessity of local adaptation "will be forced upon us again by terrorism and other kinds of

political violence, by chemical pollution, by increasing energy costs, by depleted soils, aquifers, and streams, and by the spread of exotic weeds, pests, and diseases. We are going to have to return to the old questions about local nature, local carrying capacities, and local needs."

Husbandry can be learned anew in colleges of agriculture, Berry concludes, but only if many agricultural scientists become farmers themselves and learn to accept the practical limitations and the element of mystery that inhere in husbandry.

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## The War Against Error

**THE SOURCE:** "Scientific Error and the Ethos of Belief" by Lorraine Daston, in *Social Research*, Spring 2005.

FEW BOUNDARIES ARE AS FLUID AS the one between established knowledge and conjectural belief in the modern sciences, where new research can fundamentally revise, or even sweep away, the received wisdom of a particular discipline. "The price of scientific progress is the obsolescence of scientific knowledge," writes Lorraine Daston, executive director of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science and an honorary professor at Humboldt University in Berlin.

The modern sciences were born in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the problem of reaching an accommodation between knowledge and belief was born right along with them. During those centuries, Copernican astronomy and other discoveries overturned "a whole range of explanatory systems and empirical claims that had been accepted as eternal truths." Thinkers responded to the stunning exposure of error by devising philosophical systems that insisted that beliefs have explicit, reasoned justification.

The branch of philosophy that concerns itself

## EXCERPT

### Satanic Design?

*Many who accept the fact of evolution cannot, however, on religious grounds, accept the operation of blind chance and the absence of divine purpose implicit in natural selection. They support the alternative explanation of intelligent design. The reasoning they offer is not based on evidence but on the lack of it. The formulation of intelligent design is a default argument advanced in support of a non sequitur. It is in essence the following: There are some phenomena that have not yet been explained and that (and most importantly) the critics personally cannot imagine being explained; therefore there must be a supernatural designer at work. The designer is seldom specified, but in the canon of intelligent design it is most certainly not Satan and his angels, nor any god or gods conspicuously different from those accepted in the believer's faith.*

—EDWARD O. WILSON, emeritus professor at Harvard University, in *Harvard Magazine* (Nov.–Dec. 2005)

with the justification of belief—with how we know what we know, and how well belief matches up with the evidence for it—is epistemology. After the shocks of the 16th and 17th centuries, “worries about the possibility and reliability of scientific knowledge” inspired philosophers “from Descartes to Kant to Husserl and beyond” to plunge into epistemology. And being on guard against errors took on a moral as well as an intellectual dimension, in that the will was to have no less a role than reason in granting “assent only to those claims that, after thorough epistemological vetting, deserve to be credited.”

Daston posits three models of scientific error that arose within the distinctive historical circumstances of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, but that persist to this day as “a repertoire of epistemological diagnoses”: “idolatry,” “seduction,” and “projection.” All three are, in effect, errors of substitution, which

allow false beliefs to take the place of true knowledge. Idolaters, for example, so worship fallacious theories that they abandon the search for genuine enlightenment. Seduction, the second model of error, is a disease of the imagination, “the good-time girl of the mind.” The imagination can cause the mind to seal itself off from the real world and indulge in fantasy, “replacing real impressions derived from memory and sensation with fanciful but alluring systems.” These imaginary systems become “a refuge from the hard work of empiricism.”

Projection, the third category of error, is, in fact, an ancient human foible, but it became especially troublesome for scientists in the middle of the 19th century with the formulation of new philosophical conceptions of the objective and the subjective. The fear was that researchers might project too much of themselves and their preconceived ideas onto the evidence of nature rather

than simply absorb the evidence passively, objectively. “Only a heroic act of self-discipline and self-denial can rein in these projections,” Daston says.

Criticism of these three models of error came to take on an insistent moral tone, making it “a matter of rectitude as well as prudence to withhold credence from suspect propositions.” We withhold belief, then, not just because we’re fearful of making a mistake but because we’ve been told it’s our duty to do so. And we take refuge in the safe haven of skepticism, trusting nothing “until shown the evidence, bushels of it.”

Still, notes Daston, “minatory epistemology” has not gained the upper hand over science, which “has historically been risk-seeking with respect to belief”: “Successful science has historically erred on the side of maximizing knowledge, rather than on that of minimizing error—even at the cost of believing too much.”

## ARTS & LETTERS

# Chelsea Mourning

**THE SOURCE:** “Formalism and Its Discontents” by Jed Perl, in *The New Republic*, Sept. 12, 2005.

EVERYONE WHO THINKS THAT the art world has been, for decades, about as toxic and debased a locale as the fashion world can take a certain measure of satisfaction in recent developments: “Knocking the art world has become the latest art world

fashion,” says *New Republic* art critic Jed Perl. In other words, the very folks who’ve corrupted the scene have now come to recognize the corruption, and that has put a pall on their celebratory parties and dinners and receptions.

What especially troubles Perl is how little the general distress has to do with the quality of the art. The concern is mostly with “the social mechanisms of art: fairs, auctions, prices,

publicity. Art itself hardly enters into the discussion; and when it does, the works of art are interchangeable, impersonal, of as little value in and of themselves as a pile of plastic poker chips. Everything is merely product; the art is in the deal.”

Perl contends that what has occurred is a failure of aesthetic judgment so profound that people are afraid to confront it. “How does taste go so bad? *That* is the real question.” For him, the problem begins with the collapse of formalism, “a belief in the primacy of line and color and shape” that was “one of the greatest of all artistic faiths.” Formalism, which

reached its peak of influence in the decades after World War II, taught people to trust the evidence of their eyes when viewing a work of art, to see in the lines and colors and shapes and the relationships among them the whole of the work's achievement.

Yet even as Perl concedes the great glory of formalism, he acknowledges its shortcomings: "It failed to account for art's psychological dimensions, for how all kinds of meanings and metaphors become lodged in a work of art." If the primary impulse in making art were formal rather than emotional, and a painting were about no more than how it was made, formalism's rigorous quest for purity would inevitably meet a dead end—as it did, with the exhibition of blank canvases.

Formalism was always a partial response that professed to be the only response needed. Form is surely one of the things that make a painting work, but "what provokes or compels form or makes it convincing is multifaceted, ambiguous."

Perl believes that "for the artist, formal values play a vital part in a richer, far larger, and infinitely more complex equation." He argues that the most complex artistic expressions of our own time are those that acknowledge both "formalism and its discontents"—its shortcomings, its troubles—and seek to encompass the two. Such art will join, for example, an impulse for formal resolution with a narrative or metaphorical impulse. But Perl is dismayed that artists with the skill and imagination to produce art of that sort—among them, R. J. Kitaj and Jean Hélion—demanding a complex response from audiences, often fail to gain wide acceptance. "The hard fact is that the truly liberal

artistic spirit—the artist who embraces the many facets of creation, who seeks some private balance between authority and freedom—is anathema. With the end of the Age of Formalism, there has grown up a generation of curators, dealers, and collectors who, while they may find it unnerving to live without any concept of artistic authority, are unwilling to let an artist ever again lead the way."

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## What Price Independence?

**THE SOURCE:** "What Independent Film?" by Andrew Bujalski, in *n+1*, Fall 2005.

HERE'S ANOTHER VERSION OF that old if-a-tree-falls-in-the-forest question: If an independent film is made but no one watches it, does its artistic integrity matter?

The meaning of that epithet "independent"—attached to films as various as *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), Robert Rodriguez's *El Mariachi* (1992), and the oeuvre of John Cassavetes (*Faces* [1968], and *A Woman Under the Influence* [1974])—is difficult to pin down these days, suggests Andrew Bujalski, who has made two independent films himself.

Money seems to be the defining factor. The Independent Feature Project, which bestows the Independent Spirit Awards, has arrived at the vague formula that a film is independent until its budget reaches between \$15 million and \$20 million. After that, the bean counters, whoever they are, presumably have too much artistic control.

To the uninitiated, today's myriad film festivals indicate a golden age for independent film. Not so, says Bujalski. The roving bands of movie industry types who travel from one marquee film festival to the next generally want



It cost independent filmmaker Jonathan Caouette only \$218 to make his acclaimed autobiographical film *Tarnation* (2003). But distribution, along with rights to the film snippets and other material he incorporated, cost hundreds of thousands more. This scene from the film shows him with his mentally ill mother.



## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## Words at 10 Paces

**THE SOURCE:** “Why Experimental Fiction Threatens to Destroy Publishing, Jonathan Franzen, and Life as We Know It: A Correction” by Ben Marcus, in *Harper’s*, Oct. 2005.

to see premieres, so filmmakers seeking exposure at Cannes, Sundance, and Toronto are often out of luck. And the smaller, regional festivals willing to show a movie already screened elsewhere just don’t draw crowds. “Distribution is a harsh mistress who cares neither about your artistic integrity nor your ingenuity in pinching a production penny,” he notes.

Independent film success stories only prove that rule. Jonathan Caouette reportedly made his autobiographical film *Tarnation* (2003) for \$218, editing it with home computer software. But it took hundreds of thousands of dollars to acquire the legal rights to the music and film clips he employed. And a distribution company had to spend a lot more before *Tarnation* could come to a theater near you.

In this Darwinian environment, “coolness and savviness” are “the new path to indie legendhood.” Independent filmmakers are labeled “successful” when they manage to marry their visions to the market’s desires. Indie darling Gus Van Sant bear-hugged the commercial world with *Good Will Hunting* (1997) and *Finding Forrester* (2000), but has recently put out a trilogy of “idiosyncratic, contemplative” movies: *Gerry* (2002), *Elephant* (2003), and *Last Days* (2005).

“There is nothing wrong with the cinematic art form that the dismantlement of capitalism wouldn’t fix,” concludes Bujalski. “Until that time, miracles will continue to occur; being miracles, they will be defined by their scarcity. Though perhaps they will not all be divinely inspired.” Faust was last seen panhandling outside UCLA’s film school.

EFFORT IS THE LAST THING that’s supposed to be required of a reader of fiction these days, Ben Marcus observes, with considerable dismay: “Language is meant to flow predigested, like liquid down a feeding tube.” So fiction of the sort he writes (he’s the author of the short-story collection *The Age of Wire and String* and the novel *Notable American Women*), work that may appeal to the head before it appeals to the heart, and that tries to extend the boundaries of language and form, runs headlong into the wall of reigning critical orthodoxy: Fiction should be traditional, realistic, entertaining. It should not be a chore for readers, or it will alienate them. And if readers are put off, the market for literary fiction will collapse. Thus, the orthodoxy is a defense against an imagined doomsday scenario.

Marcus has nothing against literary realism, “a mode I relish for its ordered, pictorial approach to consciousness, its vivid choreography of settings and selves.” But he deplores the dogma that makes realism the only approved mode of fiction writing. Fiction, he argues, has to be open to experimentation—to the likes of James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, William Gaddis, and their heirs—or it will atrophy. Marcus believes that “new arrangements are

possible, new styles, new concoctions of language that might set off a series of delicious mental explosions.” But to act on that belief, he says, now gets you marked as “an elitist,” the enemy of “good old-fashioned novels,” someone out to wrinkle readers’ brows.

Marcus takes particular exception to the publicly expressed views of the novelist Jonathan Franzen, “if not the best novelist of his generation, then certainly the most anxious—eager for fame, but hostile to the people who confer it.” Franzen, who went mainstream in

Fiction, argues Ben Marcus, has to be open to experimentation—to the likes of James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, William Gaddis, and their heirs—or it will atrophy.

2001 with his critically acclaimed third novel, *The Corrections*, and suffered the lucrative indignity of great popular success when Oprah Winfrey chose the book for her book club, contends that “unapproachable literature” is being forced upon readers and is putting at risk the commercial prospects of the literary publishing industry. He’s especially harsh on Gaddis, whom he accuses of “writing obtusely just because he can, and secretly hating his own work.”

But Marcus dismisses as absurd the notion that writers who don’t produce realist narratives are actually doing harm, as he does the

notion that difficult writers are breaking a bond with their audiences. “Franzen decides that because he can’t enjoy Gaddis then no one can, and his conclusions all revolve around a bizarre belief that he is somehow the ideal reader for complex, difficult writing, when clearly he is not.”

The writing that Marcus himself

considers “difficult”—“horribly so”—is the characterless stuff that could have been written by anyone. He prefers to work with language “as a painter might with color, as a composer might with sound, as a dancer might with movement, to make something come to life inside our heads: experience, thought, action, feeling.” And he will not concede

that allegiance to the undiscovered possibilities of language and form makes him or other writers who share a similar commitment a threat to the survival of literature: “Maybe literature is fighting for its very life because its powerful pundits have declared a halt to all artistic progress, declaring it pretentious, alienating, bad for business.”

## OTHER NATIONS

# Being Australian

**THE SOURCE:** “John Howard’s Australia” by Rupert Darwall, in *Policy Review*, Aug.–Sept. 2005.

**AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER**  
John Howard’s decision to have his country’s troops join in the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 brought him nothing like the amount of political trouble his British counterpart, Tony Blair, has had to endure. One reason Howard escaped a lot of criticism is that he made Australia’s national interest in being allied with America the centerpiece of his public rationale for the decision. That’s something he wouldn’t have been able to do, argues Rupert Darwall, a consultant director of the London-based think tank Reform, if he hadn’t won a political debate in the 1990s about Australia’s national identity and place in the world.

The Labor Party’s Paul Keating began the debate soon after he became prime minister in 1991. He attacked the Australian attitude that “still cannot separate our interests,

our history, or our future from the interests of Britain,” and he urged his compatriots to embrace Australia’s “destiny as a nation in Asia and the Pacific.”

Well before the 1990s, notes Darwall, Australians had begun to update their sense of who they were. “The collapse of British power in the Pacific following the surrender of Singapore to Japan during the Second World War meant that from then on, American power was to be the cornerstone of Australia’s defense.” Although Robert Menzies, the country’s longest-serving prime minister (1939–41, 1949–66), described himself as “British to his bootstraps,” Australians began in the 1960s to edge away from

The idea that Australia is an Asian country was a hard sell to most Australians. Even prominent Asians see the country as *in* but not *of* Asia.

their country’s British roots—without rejecting them. But Keating went much further, ridiculing Menzies’s premiership for having “sunk a generation of Australians in Anglophilia and torpor.”

Howard, a member of the conservative Liberal Party, argued that Australia should build upon its political and cultural inheritance from Britain, not try to exorcise it. He “appropriated for the Liberal Party the working man’s sense of nationalism, which previously had been the preserve of Labor,” writes Darwall. “It is tied to Australia’s war experiences and values such as mateship, . . . a concept based on trust and selflessness and absolute interdependence.”

Keating’s pitch that Australia is an Asian country was a hard sell to most Australians. Even prominent Asians see the country as *in* but not *of* Asia. Nonetheless, many of Australia’s cultural and intellectual leaders applauded Keating. “For them, Canberra’s most important bilateral relationship should be with Jakarta or Beijing rather than Washington,” Darwall says. China’s economic power is growing, after all, while America’s, in Keating’s view, is likely to become less important.

In response, Howard argued that

the U.S. economy's significance to Australia and to the world economy will increase in the coming decades. He called Australia's relationship with America "the most important we have with any single country," resting not only on U.S. might but on shared values and aspirations. And none of those values would preclude Australia from seeking closer economic ties with China.

The "seemingly perpetual symposium on our self-identity," as Howard has termed the debate, ended in 1996 with his landslide victory and the defeat of the Keating government. Howard has won three elections since, the most recent in 2004. "Giving back to Australians the legitimacy to believe about themselves and their country what Keating had tried to deny them and consistently pitching his policies in these terms," writes Darwall, "have provided Howard his political equity."

## OTHER NATIONS

## Was It Genocide?

**THE SOURCE:** "Revisiting the Armenian Genocide" by Guenter Lewy, in *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2005.

NINETY YEARS LATER, THE MASS slaughter of Armenian men, women, and children driven from their homes by the Ottoman government during World War I remains a hotly disputed issue. Armenia even demands that an official apology from Turkey be made a condition for Turkish membership in the European Union. But were the deaths the result of genocide, as Armenians charge? Guenter Lewy, an emeritus professor of political science



A photograph taken in eastern Turkey documents a tiny fraction of the deaths inflicted on the Armenians.

at the University of Massachusetts, is skeptical.

Much about what happened those many years ago is murky, but no one denies that huge massacres took place. During World War I, the Ottoman Empire feared that the Christian Armenians within its borders were supporting Russia. During 1915–16, the Ottoman Turkish government forced hundreds of thousands of Armenian civilians from Anatolia across mountains to the Syrian desert and other points. Hundreds of thousands perished on the trek, with starvation and disease claiming those who were not murdered outright. There are no authoritative figures on the total number of Armenian deaths.

The key question, writes Lewy, author of *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (2005), is, Did the Young Turk regime in Constantinople (now Istanbul) organize the massacres? The case that it did, he argues, rests on three shaky pillars. The first is the actions of the postwar Turkish military courts, which convicted officials

of the Young Turk government of the crime in postwar trials demanded by the victorious Allies. The verdicts were based entirely on documents. In one deposition, the commanding general of the Turkish Third Army testified that "the murder and extermination of the Armenians . . . is the result of decisions made by the central committee of *Ittihad ve Terakki* [Committee on Union and Progress]," which had seized power in 1908. But the courts heard no witnesses, and there was no cross-examination of testimony. Even the Allies considered the trials "a travesty of justice," says Lewy. And all the original documents have been lost.

The second pillar of the argument for genocide has to do with the Special Organization (*Te kilat-i Mahsusa*). Historian Vahakn N. Dadrian, a leading proponent of the genocide thesis, claims that the Special Organization's "mission was to deploy in remote areas of Turkey's interior and to ambush and destroy convoys of Armenian deportees." But Lewy says there's no evidence for that. An American scholar, Philip H. Stod-

## OTHER NATIONS

## How to Talk European

**THE SOURCE:** “Manifesto” by Thierry Chervel, at *signandsight.com*, March 1, 2005.

WHEN THE FRENCH CELEBRITY-intellectual Pierre Bourdieu died in 2002, he left behind a slim, partly autobiographical volume, with strict instructions designed to thwart the celebrity-mad French press: The book must be published in Germany first. The scheme worked far better than Bourdieu could have imagined. When his *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* [Outline for a Self-Analysis] appeared in Germany in 2004, the French seemed utterly unaware of its existence. Only when it was published in France did the expected brouhaha erupt.

For all the talk of a new, united Europe, writes Thierry Chervel, the Bourdieu tale is typical of a much less exalted European intellectual reality. Each nation is increasingly absorbed in its own affairs, living in ignorance of significant political and cultural developments beyond its national borders. “The ignorance is greatest in large Western European countries where public debate is little more than self-contented thumb-twiddling. Talk is of national issues—political leaders, late-night comedy stars, and football scandals.”

European intellectuals do share one thing, according to Chervel: a “morbid fixation with America.” In their obsession with the United States as the source of all problems, they spare themselves the need for self-examination. “Is it really the fault of

dard, concluded in 1963 that the Special Organization played no role in the Armenian deportations. Lewy believes that the killings of the minority Christians were “more likely” the work of “Kurdish tribesmen and corrupt policemen out for booty.”

“The most damning evidence put forward to support the claim of genocide,” says Lewy, is the documents reproduced in Aram Andonian’s *Memoirs of Naim Bey* (1920). Andonian, an Armenian who had been deported from Constantinople, claimed to have obtained the memoirs of a Turkish official that contained many official documents. “Particularly incriminating,” says Lewy, are telegrams from the wartime interior minister, Talât Pasha, showing that he “gave explicit orders to kill all Turkish Armenians—men, women, and children.” But the documents—for which Naim Bey, an alcoholic and gambler, was paid, Andonian later revealed—may well be fake. Most historians and scholars regard them “at best as unverifiable and problematic,” Lewy says.

All in all, the charge of genocide has not been proven, he concludes. The Armenian partisans—like the Turkish nationalists who with equal fervor and certitude assert the Young Turk regime’s innocence—“have staked claims and made their case by simplifying a complex historical reality and by ignoring crucial evidence.” It would be better, as some Armenian and Turkish historians have suggested, for both sides to back off from the high-volume debate about genocide and instead join in seeking to establish and enlarge “a common pool of firm knowledge” about the tragedy.

Bill Gates or Steven Spielberg that the French are learning less German, and the Germans less French?” asks Chervel, who is cofounder of the German magazine *Perlentaucher* and the Web site [www.signandsight.com](http://www.signandsight.com), which features English-language summaries of articles by German public intellectuals.

To intellectuals such as Bernard Cassen, director-general of the antiglobalist French monthly *Le Monde Diplomatique*, the English language itself is an instrument of American imperialism, and its spread is part of a program to establish “domination of the mind, of cultural signs, frames of reference.” Cassen has proposed to stop the rise of English by promoting language groups within Europe: The “Romanophones” in the Romance-language countries, for example, would learn one another’s languages, while the Germans, Dutch, and Danes would form another group.

That’s just a recipe for more provincialism, in Chervel’s view. And “Cassen is wrong to maintain that the English language conveys only one ideology or the exclusive interests of a single country.” In criticizing America, for example, few can outdo the English-language al-Jazeera network or the Indian magazine *Outlook India*. After 9/11, the best news and background on Islamic terrorism and Afghanistan was in English, notably in *The New York Times*. “There was very little information in German or French.”

If Europeans are to talk to one another—and help save the English-speaking world from its own provincialism—they will have to have their conversation in English.

Also in this issue:

Terry McDermott on how terrorists are made

James B. Twitchell on a man who sold America the goods

Alex Beam on the character of New England

Benjamin Cheever on a stately Japanese dropout

Ann J. Loftin on a prickly playwright

Wilfred M. McClay on how technology rules our lives

David Lindley on the troubled introduction of polio vaccine

Lynne Lamberg on discovering life's timekeepers

James Gilbert on an illusory Utopia

# CURRENT BOOKS

REVIEWS OF NEW AND NOTEWORTHY NONFICTION

## When Britain Was Great

Reviewed by Martin Walker

TWENTY YEARS AFTER AMERICA'S SUCCESSFUL struggle for independence toppled the initial British Empire, its successor was established through three brilliant naval victories won by Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758–1805). The first came in 1797, at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent, off the coast of Portugal, when Nelson departed from traditionally rigid battle tactics to break the Spanish line and allow his commander, Admiral John Jervis, to crush Spain's fleet. The second came the following year, when Nelson's well-trained squadron of 14 ships caught the French fleet at anchor in Aboukir Bay, off the Egyptian coast, and captured or destroyed 11 of the French ships of the line. As a result of these two battles and the subsequent defeat of the French army left marooned in Egypt, Britain assumed control of the Mediterranean Sea, and thus of the route to India, and held it for another 150 years.

By 1800, the Royal Navy was larger than the combined fleets of France, Spain, and the Netherlands, the next three largest naval powers. In 1805, after his famous affair with Lady Emma Hamilton and a sea battle that asserted British control of the Baltic, Nelson was killed while annihilating what remained of the French and Spanish fleets in his third

great victory over the old naval enemies, the Battle of Trafalgar. He thus assured his small, aggressive, and rapidly industrializing island an unprecedented command of the world's oceans, one that was to endure well into the 20th century, until Britain's impoverishment through Pyrrhic victories in two world wars.

The 200th anniversary of Trafalgar, in October, was accordingly the occasion for prolonged nostalgic celebration in Britain, as well as special exhibitions and a host of books. The most scholarly and important of the books is *The Pursuit of Victory*, by Roger Knight, the veteran curator of Britain's National Maritime Museum.

Knight manages to knock down many of the Nelson legends concocted by patriotic 19th-century hagiographers. To begin with, Nelson was as prepared to flog his seamen as most other captains of the day (though not as much as his devoted flag captain, to whom he supposedly uttered the celebrated words,

**The Pursuit of Victory:**  
The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson.

By Roger Knight.  
Basic Books.  
874 pp. \$35

**After the Victorians:**  
The Decline of Britain in the World.

By A. N. Wilson.  
Farrar, Straus & Giroux.  
609 pp. \$32.50





Admiral Horatio Nelson was struck down at the moment of his greatest triumph, at the Battle of Trafalgar, on October 21, 1805. His almost mythical status in the pantheon of British heroes has, until now, stymied attempts to produce a scholarly, unbiased appraisal of his life.

as he lay dying, “Kiss me, Hardy”). He owed his astronomical early rise in rank to the patronage of his highly influential uncle, who was comptroller of the Navy Board. Nelson almost ruined his career, and earned the lasting displeasure of King George III, by his sycophantic deference to the king’s unruly and undisciplined son, Prince William, deservedly known as “Silly Billy,” who served under Nelson in the West Indies. Nelson was capable of harebrained military ventures, such as the disastrous 1797 assault on one of the Canary Islands, Tenerife, during which he lost an arm. He was also insubordinate, quick-tempered, and a strong supporter of slavery. Knight even presents evidence suggesting that Captain Thomas Foley of the *Goliath*, and not Nelson, was the one who spotted the opportunity to sail inshore of the anchored French fleet at the Battle of the Nile and hammer the unmanned sides of the French ships with the crucial first broadsides.

Nelson could afford to take risks because British ships, with their superior crews and gun

technology, could almost invariably outmatch the equivalent ships of other navies—at least until the advent of the equally well-trained and -armed and much heavier American frigates of the War of 1812. Not all British sailors, however, lived up to expectations, and Knight breaks the long code of silence that has protected those who hung back at Trafalgar, or fired wildly or not at all. Nelson’s famous Trafalgar proclamation, “England expects every man will do his duty,” appears to have been more pointed reminder to the faint-hearted than rallying cry to a band of brothers.

Such was Nelson’s place in the pantheon of British heroes throughout the era of naval dominance that Knight’s scholarly new biography, the first to be rooted solidly in contemporary documents and letters, might not have been possible until the sun finally set on the old Royal Navy and the empire it secured. Erudite and judicious, with no time for vainglorious legends or Victorian bowdlerization, Knight has written a

post-patriotic, and certainly a post-imperial, book on the central naval figure in the imperial saga.

By contrast, the novelist A. N. Wilson's history of Britain in the first half of the 20th century—or, more precisely, from the death of Queen Victoria, in 1901, to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, in 1953—is so steeped in imperial nostalgia that it is almost pickled. This is not a lethal criticism; indeed, it might not be possible for a writer to get under the skin of post-Victorian Britain without some instinctive sympathy for the era's class-consciousness and its myths of racial and political superiority. But when Wilson writes of “the obviously sensible option” of neutrality in 1914, or suggests that Hitler might have allowed the British Empire to continue as part of a negotiated peace in 1941 before turning to attack the Soviet Union, a rather odd agenda seems to emerge, which then blends into the old High Tory theme that what “stood in the way of American hegemony was British imperialism.” Accordingly, in Wilson's account, World War II usefully unfolds as a way that “America could kill two birds, not one. They could hope to rid Europe of a dangerous German dictatorship, but in doing so they could also reduce British power to negligible levels.”

This has become a rather more common theme in British political and intellectual circles of late, since the Bush administration and the Iraq war kicked awake a dormant anti-Americanism. And Wilson's narrative skills, eye for an anecdote, and entertaining style should ensure a considerable audience for this lively, provocative, and thoroughly idiosyncratic history. His account is peppered with splendid brief portraits of such figures as Kaiser Wilhelm, suffering an oedipal complex for his English mother; the progressive novelist D. H. Lawrence, urging mass euthanasia for the sick, the halt, and the maimed; and Queen Elizabeth (the wife of King George VI), using her umbrella to rap the impertinent fingers of black children who reached out to touch her limousine on a South African tour.

It is hard to dislike a book that combines such wide reading in the literature and letters of the period

with a salacious taste for upper-class gossip. Wilson ranges from the fashion for circumcision among upper-class Englishmen to the possibility that Lord Mountbatten slept with Noel Coward and Pandit Nehru—and that Nehru also slept with Mountbatten's wife while he and Mountbatten were negotiating the independence of India. Yet running through Wilson's narrative as a constant theme—indeed, as something close to an obsession—is America as the looming heir of empire. For instance, he construes Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* (1904), “arguably the greatest novel in the English language,” as an allegory of change, in that its American heroine stays in Old Europe “not as a pathetic exile—as so many previous Jamesian heroines had done—so much as an occupying power.”

“One of the sure signs that Britain was finished as a civilization, long before two world wars had bankrupted the British economy and dismantled the British Empire, was the cultural emptiness of the years 1900-1950,” Wilson

asserts. He dismisses E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) as a poor book given undeserved fame by its political correctness, slights D. H. Lawrence and H. G. Wells, dismisses James Joyce as an Irish exile, and sneers at Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon as “good-bad poets” (a concept he borrows from T. S. Eliot). In Wilson's judgment, this cultural hollowness symbolized the way “Britain was poised to die” while “America was poised, half-desperately, half-unwillingly, to take over the world.”

Yet there are hints elsewhere in the book that Wilson understands very well the grander context: Far more than by British decline, the first half of the 20th century was characterized by a general suicide of traditional European civilization that began in 1914 and became pathological by 1939. To pursue his theme of the American looting of the British tradition, Wilson explains at length how the Allied war effort depended on British scientific breakthroughs

The first half of the 20th century was characterized by a general suicide of traditional European civilization that began in 1914 and became pathological by 1939.

in radar, nuclear science, computing, and cryptography that were freely shared with the Americans. Unless matters scientific are to be excluded from any catalog of cultural achievement, Wilson thus confounds his own argument.

What Wilson is trying to say is entirely sensible: Britain freely chose to sacrifice its empire in order to defeat the attempts of the Kaiser, Hitler, and Stalin to achieve dominance over Europe. In one of his excellent subessays, he explores the origins of the song that accompanied the music Edward Elgar wrote for the funeral of King Edward VII in 1910. “Land of hope and glory, mother of the free,” it begins, and Wilson

acknowledges that most British people, and those of not a few other nationalities, would recognize the validity in those words—not an evocation of heroics in the Nelson mold, perhaps, but a determination to fight for what is seen as right and never to surrender. That double determination is the common bond that joins Nelson at Trafalgar, Lloyd George in 1918, Churchill in 1940, and possibly even Margaret Thatcher holding on to the Falklands in 1982, all in defense of their sceptered isle. ■

■ Martin Walker is the editor of United Press International. His most recent books are *America Reborn: A Twentieth-Century Narrative in Twenty-Six Lives* (2000) and the novel *The Caves of Périgord* (2002).

## Unmasking the Terrorists

Reviewed by Terry McDermott

THE EARLIEST ATTEMPTS TO discern the root causes of 9/11 began errantly, with what seemed a simple question: Why do they hate us? The us-them taxonomy was further reinforced by widespread talk of a clash of civilizations, as if such a clash were not only well under way but unstoppable. They're *evil*, the president told us repeatedly. They hate modernity, freedom, democracy, even skyscrapers.

With this as the operative explanation, little wonder that the dominant 9/11 narrative, which emerged almost before the dust settled in lower Manhattan and persists today, depicts the attackers as crazed fanatics. A great deal has been written about the 19 hijackers based on minuscule information, and one consequence has been the proliferation of rumor and its solidification into fact. You'll find conclusions strung on the thinnest of threads, almost all supporting the “fanatics who hate us” angle.

In late September 2001, when *The Los Angeles*

### THE MAKING OF A TERRORIST:

Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes.

Edited by James J. F. Forest. Praeger. 3 vols., 1,214 pp. \$300

*Times* assigned me to examine the roots of the attacks, this angle shaped my initial reporting. We knew by then that Mohamed Atta, the presumed lead pilot, had grown up in an ordinary household in Cairo, attended university, and gone to Germany for graduate school. I set out to learn what had transformed this mild-mannered architect into the crazed killer of 9/11, and, by extension, *who* had effected that transformation, who had recruited and turned him.

It took three years to find the answer. In the end, I was forced to admit that Atta and his cohorts were not recruits but volunteers. They delivered themselves. And they did so for a variety of reasons: broad historical trends, including the long, slow decline of the Arab world; specific political objections, including American support of Israel; devout if wholly misguided religious belief; psychological alienation; and self-aggrandizement. The very ordinariness of the motivations implies that these were not exceptional men. Rather, they were so common that there are likely to be a great many more just like them. I argued in my writing that unless we understand what drives these people,

we'll have no hope of stopping them.

Many Americans don't want to hear this message. They insist that the acts of 9/11 themselves prove the madness and malevolence of the terrorists. But consider: Over the centuries, according to terrorism researcher Clark McCauley, terrorists and other guerilla practitioners of political violence have killed approximately half a million people. By contrast, what might be called state terrorism—state-sponsored attacks against a country's own citizens, such as the Nazi campaign against German Jews, the Soviet gulags, Mao's massacres during the Cultural Revolution, and Pol Pot's blood-soaked march backward in history toward Year Zero—killed 130 million people in the 20th century alone. We have no apparent problem finding rational motives when states murder their own people, yet when faced with the much smaller number of terrorist murders, we seem unable and often unwilling even to contemplate rational motives.

The burgeoning library on terrorism can be divided by author into three broad types: works by journalists, by government insiders, and by academics or other experts. The contributions by journalists tend to be emotionally overwrought and episodic, with some notable exceptions, including Simon Reeve's *The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism* (1999) and Peter Bergen's *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (2001)—both, probably not coincidentally, predating 9/11—as well as Steve Coll's *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (2005).

The books produced within the counterterrorism establishment, such as Robert Baer's *Sleeping With the Devil: How Washington Sold Our Soul for Saudi Crude* (2004) and Richard Clarke's *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (2004), are often, though not always (see Clarke), less florid in their prose and more informed in their facts, and almost inevitably one-sided.

One would hope for more rigorous work from academics. Post-9/11, however, much of what has come from the academy has seemed beside the point. The scholarly work is too removed, and the work from think tanks often veers into polemics. Both sorts tend to be jargon-dense and not particularly fact-rich. There are exceptions, of course, including two books that focus more narrowly on terrorist socioeconomics and psychology, Marc Sageman's *Understanding Terror Networks* (2004) and Robert Pape's *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (2005).

The library of worthwhile works on terrorism is about to grow exponentially with the publication of a massive three-volume compendium, *The Making of a Terrorist*, edited by James J. F. Forest, director of terrorism studies at the U.S. Military Academy. Despite the ambiguity of the title (it isn't about the making of a particular terrorist, but the making of any terrorist) and the wanton disregard for pulpwood forests, this is a welcome, largely clear-eyed collection.

The three volumes examine, respectively, recruitment, training, and root causes. Each volume contains useful and original work by journalists, government officials, and academics. But the third book, dealing with root causes, is by far the most valuable.

Especially arresting are contributions by the aforementioned Clark McCauley, a professor of psychology at Bryn Mawr College, from whose "Terrorism and the State: The Logic of Killing Civilians" I drew the data on state-sponsored killing, and by Paul Pillar, yet another Central Intelligence Agency veteran—who knew so many CIA men had literary ambitions?—whose "Superpower Foreign Policies: A Source for Global Resentment" presents a lucid, important examination not just of terrorism's causes but of what (if anything) can be done to address them.

If you envision terrorism as rooted in broad, his-

These were not exceptional men. Rather, they were so common that there are likely to be a great many more just like them.

torical causes, it's no simple thing to devise a policy response that's likely to succeed. Posing the crucial question, Pillar asks "how much the resentment against the United States that can undergird terrorism is a product of what it *is* and how much is a response to what it *does*?" The former is the dominant cause, he contends, with American victories in "past clashes between two civilizations" as one element. "Simply being the big guy—on a block, or on the globe—probably also contributes to resentment mixed with envy or with suspicion of how the big guy will use his strength among some of the less powerful. In addition, some of what may be resented is intrinsic to the very concept of a superpower—the ability to project power and influence all over the world. In the case of the United States, much of that influence consists of a propagation of culture that is a result not so much of U.S. foreign policy but rather of globalization and U.S. economic strength. MTV and Big Macs have spread throughout the world—including the Muslim world, to the chagrin of the Islamists—not because of decisions made in Washington but because America is large, rich, and creative, and as such has a disproportionate influence on what flows over the world's airwaves and trade routes."

This isn't to say that there are no policy choices to be made, by the United States or other nations. In "Political Repression and Violent Rebellion in the Muslim World," Mohammed Hafez, of the University of Missouri–Kansas City, concludes that marginalizing internal dissent, as Middle Eastern governments do, almost invariably radicalizes it. Egypt, the source of much of radical Islam's intellectual justification, offers a prime example.

Incentives to commit acts of terrorism can also be provided by religions that espouse apocalyptic visions, according to Syracuse University political scientist Michael Barkun, in "Terrorism and Domsday." As the new millennium approached, for example, the FBI warned that religious extremists might resort to violence "in an attempt to facilitate the onset of Armageddon." But, as Barkun notes, apocalyptic beliefs prove to be woefully poor predictors of terrorism: Such beliefs may be held by "indi-

viduals and groups known to have contemplated large-scale terrorist attacks," but they're also held by vast numbers of nonterrorists.

The complexity of causes and influences documented throughout *The Making of a Terrorist* contrasts starkly with the simplistic motives that many American politicians ascribe to Al Qaeda. The misapprehension of the terrorist mindset has important consequences, for it forms the foundation of America's counterterrorist strategy. At its core, Islamist terror relies on a worldview that construes almost every action of the United States as part of the assumed American assault on Islam. Policies that fail to credit this worldview, consequently, may prove counterproductive to the ultimate goal of diminishing the number of terrorists.

The Iraq war is an excellent example. I spent much of the 18 months between 9/11 and the Iraq invasion in the Middle East. Everywhere I went during the first six months, I encountered tremendous sympathy and what seemed to be genuine affection for America. Over the subsequent 12 months, I began to hear ever more frequent complaints about U.S. goals in the Middle East and the possibility of an invasion of Iraq. I always replied that no matter what the Bush administration might want, there would be no invasion, simply because it would be so obviously counterproductive—it would drain the reservoir of international goodwill and multiply the number of terrorists. Up until the day of the invasion, I thought the tough talk was a ruse intended to bring Saddam Hussein to the negotiating table. I was prepared to admit the brilliance of the gambit. I wasn't prepared to credit the stupidity of the actual plan.

Some powerful people in the Bush administration seem to understand the problem, if only in hindsight. Consider this, from a 2003 memo by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld: "Today, we lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror. Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are



recruiting, training and deploying against us? Does the U.S. need to fashion a broad, integrated plan to stop the next generation of terrorists? The U.S. is putting relatively little effort into a long-range plan, but we are putting a great deal of effort into trying to stop terrorists.”

Implied but not asked in Rumsfeld's memo are fundamental questions about combating terrorists: Who are they? Does it matter who they are, or is it

enough to know what they do? What drives them? We don't seem any closer to the answers than we were on September 10, 2001, but at least now, with the help of work such as that represented in *The Making of a Terrorist*, we're beginning to ask the questions. ■

■ Terry McDermott, a writer for *The Los Angeles Times*, is the author of *Perfect Soldiers—The Hijackers: Who They Were, Why They Did It* (2005).

## IN BRIEF

### HISTORY

## The Gospel of You Can Do It

BRUCE BARTON WAS AMONG THE last major figures of the 20th century without a full-scale biography. Richard M. Fried, a history professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, has finally closed this gap. Why'd it take so long?

After all, Barton (1886–1967) was well known in his own time for three reasons that still resonate. First, he was a major force in advertising, not just in writing copy but in organizing one of the first multinational ad agencies. The agency became known as BBD&O and is still going strong as part of the worldwide holding company Omnicom.

Next, he was among the first popularizers of the idea of Jesus as one of us, out in the marketplace growing His Father's business. Barton wrote a best-selling book called *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925), which is still being read for its depiction of the Rotarian Jesus of the modern megachurch, the church of Let's Grow and Prosper.

And, finally, Barton was a politician who sold himself and his worldview with the consummate skill of—you guessed it—an adman. From 1937 to 1941 he was a congressman from Manhattan, and

### THE MAN EVERYBODY KNEW:

Bruce Barton and the Making of Modern America.

By Richard M. Fried.  
Ivan R. Dee.  
286 pp. \$27.50

he was almost elected to the U.S. Senate in 1940. His innovations in selling a political vision through clever use of media, especially images, are still emulated by today's spinmeisters.

If he did all that, why have we been so slow to pay him the heed he deserves? Part of the answer, as Fried makes clear, is that we have been slow to see that consumer goods, religion, and politics have something in common: In the modern world, they all have to be sold. Selling is what Barton knew.

After World War I, a market situation developed that hadn't been seen before. The West developed surpluses. There were surpluses of mass-produced items such as soap and cigarettes. There were surpluses of religion—yes, religion—as the multiple denominations of post-Reformation Christianity continued splintering into competing brands with scant differences. And, in a sense, there were even surpluses of political ideas, such as socialism, communism, and good ol' apple-pie democracy.

Sorting out these surpluses, generating distinctions where often little difference existed, exploiting consumer choice—these were the roles of the modern salesman. How did Barton do it? By telling stories with a promise of betterment.

Bruce Barton learned the power of the gospel of You Can Do It early in his career. Fried relates the famous tale of how, after college, Barton was working as sales manager of P. F. Collier and Son, publisher of books and magazines. As an issue of the magazine *Collier's* was about to go to press in

1912, a quarter-page still hadn't been filled. Barton knew that the company had a surplus of Dr. Eliot's Five Foot Book Shelf, a compendium of great books marketed under the celebrity title of the president of Harvard College. So he ripped out a picture of Marie Antoinette being carted off to her beheading, centered it on the empty space, and wrote a caption: "This is Marie Antoinette Riding to Her Death. Have you ever read her tragic story?" In the copy below, Barton spun the books' unique benefit to readers—cultural enrichment in less than 15 minutes a day. The surplus sold.

What's important about this seemingly trivial act is that Barton sold product by telling a story with the implied promise that one would be a better person for possessing it. He was to tell such stories about General Electric, Jesus, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. In a scary way, the stories are almost interchangeable.

Bruce Barton was the guy selling us the goods, the man everybody knew but no one could name. In a provocative sense, that's why we had to wait so long for his biography. It's been worth the wait.

—James B. Twitchell

## Ye Olde Yankee Encyclopedia

BEFORE I TORE THE WRAPPER off *The Encyclopedia of New England*, I made a list of 10 subjects that I thought a reasonably well-researched encyclopedia of the region should include:

1. The first Harvard-Yale crew race, held on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire in 1852.
2. At least one of three U.S. senators: George Aiken, Margaret Chase Smith, and Claiborne Pell.
3. The reason Connecticut is called "The Nutmeg State."
4. Marie Elizabeth Zakrzewska, founder, in 1862, of the New England Hospital for Women and

Children in Boston.

5. William Loeb, editor and publisher of New Hampshire's *Manchester Union-Leader*.
6. Boston Latin School.
7. Connecticut Valley cigar wrappers.
8. Vermont's anti-development law of 1969, Act 250.
9. The Radiation Laboratory at MIT, which helped perfect radar during World War II.
10. The 1970 Bobby Seale trial in New Haven, Connecticut.

Editors Burt Feintuch and David Watters, both English professors at the University of New Hampshire, score a solid 80 on this arbitrary test. Take away my fondness for rowing arcana—to their credit, they do include a meaty entry on the Head of the Charles regatta—and they get a 90.

Still, call me an old fuddy-duddy, but I think leaving out the Boston Latin School is worse than an oversight. Founded a year before Harvard College, Boston Latin is America's oldest school ("Sumus primi" is its motto, to drive home the point). Its students have included Cotton Mather, Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edward Everett Hale, Leonard Bernstein, and—though for some reason he goes unmentioned on Boston Latin's Web site—Louis Farrakhan.

One could play the exclusion game endlessly (racquetball and not squash?), but there's plenty to celebrate in this massive tome. It begins with one of the loveliest pieces of writing about New England that I've ever read, an elegiac foreword by the poet Donald Hall. He's the sort of ur-New Englander who can toss off a sentence like this with real authority: "New England is empty mills, new inventions, wooden scythes . . . and contrails from Logan and Pease Air Force Base streaking the blue air above the cellar hole of a farmer who came north after the Revolution to build his land."

What New England really is is six states, all of them pretty darned old by American standards: "the first old civilization . . . in America," as historian Bernard De Voto wrote. Generally speaking, Feintuch and Watters don't get suckered by the

### THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF NEW ENGLAND.

Edited by Burt Feintuch and David H. Watters.  
Yale Univ. Press.  
1,564 pp. \$65

*Yankee* magazine, purely nostalgic vision of New England that tour bus operators sell to outlanders during fall foliage season. The six states are still very much alive and kicking, albeit subject to some disturbing population outflows, as the *Encyclopedia* duly notes.

Regional encyclopedias have been enjoying a miniboom, with publishers attempting to duplicate the success of *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (1995), which itself replicated the success of the much-praised *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (1989). The last was organized thematically rather than in dictionary fashion, and the New England editors adopt the same approach. Yes, the arrangement introduces some aleatory effects. I was delighted to find a charming and informative entry under "Weather Lore," but I wondered why the quackish *Old Farmer's Almanac*, which is mentioned in "Lore," also warrants a separate entry. On the other hand, I'm not complaining that Richard Henry Dana Jr. appears in "Maritime New England" while Herman Melville is under "Literature." There's plenty of information about both of them, and of course it's easily located with the index.

An encyclopedia has to be useful, which this one is, and it might as well be fun, too; otherwise, why risk lower back pain by hefting it off the shelf? How many editors would think to include an entry for Elm Street, a fixture of almost every New England town I've ever lived in? Feintuch and Watters do, and they surround it with thousands of other fascinating and informative entries.

—Alex Beam

## The Key to America

HOW DO YOU WRITE THE

history of a river? The purist would probably stay within the banks of geology and geography, and that might suit some rivers just fine. But it won't do for New York's Hudson River. All the more reason, then, to salute Tom Lewis, author of *Divided Highways*:

**THE HUDSON:**  
A History.

By Tom Lewis.  
Yale University Press.  
340 pp. \$30



*Hudson River at West Point* (ca. 1889), by Olivia C. Starring

*Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (1997), who regards the Hudson as an epically beautiful stretch of waterway and landscape that did nothing less than shape the development of America.

Not that Lewis ignores geology and geography. Early on, he explains that there is more to the physical Hudson than its familiar lower course, running from Albany to New York City. The river originates many miles above Albany, in a small lake at the base of Mt. Marcy, the highest peak in the Adirondacks (the source was not discovered until 1872). And after it flows past Brooklyn and Staten Island into the Atlantic, it keeps on going, halfway to Bermuda, through a deep underwater Grand Canyon. When its flow ceases, the Hudson is some 895 miles southeast of its Adirondack source.

Having given the river its geographic due, Lewis launches into a fast-paced narrative that runs through four centuries of history more or less as straight and true as the lower Hudson runs through its abundant valley. That valley was a paradise of natural resources (especially timber) and wildlife (notably the beaver, a giant rodent much prized for its fur) when Henry Hudson sailed the river in 1609. The rodent attracted the Dutch, and fortunes were made, as they were to be made time and again over the centuries, courtesy of the river.

The history of the Hudson and its environs is, if anything, too rich, and Lewis cannot linger over events about which a reader longs to know more (his notes are a generous guide to additional

sources): the hit-and-miss existence of the colony of New Amsterdam; the settlers' relations with the Indians, and episodes of savagery and betrayal on both sides; the dominance of poltroons, those legendary landlords who owned hundreds of thousands of acres up and down the Hudson; the emergence of the British and French as successful rivals to the Dutch; the drama of the Revolutionary War, during which George Washington called the portion of the Hudson at West Point the key to America, and the British defeat at Saratoga altered the fortunes of the United States; the development of the steamboat, rival to the sailboat, encouraging faster travel on the river; the building of the Erie Canal, the waterway that joined the eastern and western slopes of the Appalachians and opened the center of the country to commerce and settlement; the building of a railroad, rival to the steamboat, along the river's eastern bank; the Hudson's progressive industrial fouling (it was an open trough of toxic water by the 1960s) and its eventual environmental redemption.

Familiar names drive these events—Stuyvesant, Arnold, Fulton, Clinton, van Rensselaer, Vanderbilt, Roosevelt—and Lewis deftly recounts how they

earned their familiarity.

But because there's more to the Hudson's history than war and politics and economics, he finds room as well, in a text enriched throughout by uncommonly appealing drawings, engravings, and paint-

ings, for the writer Washington Irving and the painter Thomas Cole and the crowds of other artists and forever-anonymous tourists who traveled the river in search of the sublime.

As Lewis tells the tale, the transformation of New York State impelled by the river seems to enact the larger economic, social, cultural, and environmental development of the nation. His narrative conveys something else, too, a reality more difficult to measure: the spirit of the Hudson River,

The Hudson River deserves a noble adjective of its own, but after reading Lewis's expansive appreciation, you may be hard pressed to choose just one.

which infuses the actions of all who experience its atmospheres, its lights, its roiling waters, its mountains, and its wild beauty. Rivers sometimes carry modifiers, such as the Mississippi's "Mighty." The Hudson deserves a noble adjective of its own, but after reading Lewis's expansive appreciation, you may be hard pressed to choose just one.

—James Morris

#### ARTS & LETTERS

## Escape of a Salary Man

THIS MEMOIR WAS PUBLISHED in Japan in 2000, after its author, a day laborer with a history of homelessness, submitted the manuscript on a lark and won the Kaikō Takeshi, a top literary award. The prose is so precise and dispassionate that one might suspect a put-on, but Ōyama Shirō—not his real name—is as committed to what passes for failure as most men are to what passes for success.

Born into a middle-class family in 1947, Shirō got off to a conventional start, graduating from university and becoming a "salary man." His yearning to fit in with corporate culture was overpowering but short-lived: "A sudden and unmitigated desire to absent myself from work would be accompanied by some psychosomatic disorder, which made me feel physically out of sorts." The process repeated itself in office after office, until, in 1987, he joined the ranks of the least skilled, working on cleaning crews and as a gofer on construction sites. Since forsaking his white-collar career, he has lived in squalid lodging houses or on the street.

"I have gone to very great lengths . . . to avoid the frustration and disillusionment that is brought about—inevitably, as far as I am concerned—by the kind of human interaction that accompanies nearly any job," Shirō writes, adding later, "When the time comes to take stock of things, it hardly matters to me if my existence has not been blessed by events

**A MAN WITH NO TALENTS:**  
Memoirs of a Tokyo Day Laborer.

By Ōyama Shirō. Translated by Edward Fowler. Cornell Univ. Press. 139 pp. \$21

that can be put in the 'plus' column. I will consider my life a success if I have reduced to the bare minimum—as close to zero as possible—those events that must be relegated to the 'minus' column.”

Upon winning the prize, Shirō took the money (some \$20,000) but refused to be lionized. In a postscript, he reports that he has stopped working as a day laborer and, to stretch his savings as far as possible, has moved out of the flophouse in Tokyo's most notorious slum where he'd shared a room with six other men. Instead, he announces almost cheerfully, he's back on the street. He buys his meals but figures he'll soon be scavenging food from the garbage: “I could then afford to buy a movie ticket. I'd take in one of those American suspense thrillers I like so much.”

All of this is recounted with a careful formality that keeps the reader at a distance. Shirō was every bit as pleased to learn that he needn't accept the Kaikō Takeshi in person as he had been to learn that he'd won it in the first place. The real Ōyama Shirō, he writes, is “an even more dull-witted and unattractive person than the one who appears in the pages of this book.”

In fact, the man in these pages is neither unattractive nor dull witted. He's a pathological loner who has slept only with prostitutes, has never formed a friendship that lasted, and has avoided his family for more than 20 years. But such failings are hardly uncommon in the economic stratum he inhabits. Nor—and this *is* odd—does he seem rebellious or even difficult. When children stone him in the park, he mildly observes that high school boys don't do this, only middle school boys “who think of the homeless as hurdles to overcome in the quest to secure their identity.” And he never tries to shake off the stigma of his marginal existence: “One's true self is that which exists in the gaze of other people.”

Ōyama Shirō may be living on the street, and perhaps rummaging through the garbage for dinner, but to those who read this splendid book, his true self will seem a model of decorum and restraint.

—Benjamin Cheever

## Tempestuous But Fun

UH-OH. THE JACKET COVER ADVERTISES this biography, the third to appear since Hellman's death in 1984, as the first to be “written with the full cooperation of her family, friends, and inner circle.” Hagiography, here we come?

No, not really. While Deborah Martinson, an English professor at Occidental College in California, clearly admires her subject, she doesn't stint on the scheming and husband snatching and fact fudging and badmouthing that went along with Hellman's brilliance, her unorthodox brand of loyalty, and her unstoppable high spirits. As a friend is said to have remarked at Hellman's graveside, “She was awful, but she was worth it.”

Hellman was born in New Orleans in 1905 to a family of eccentrics, grew up on the bayou and then in New York City, attended—indifferently—New York University, dropped out, and, at age 19, married Arthur Kober, a man both decent and talented, who later wrote 30 films and produced many Broadway plays. She tried to do the expected things, but wifely subordination just wasn't in her. By the time

she met Dashiell Hammett (also married), she'd flown the coop. Though she and Hammett lived together on and off for the next 30 years, first as lovers and later as friends, she never remarried; she simply bedded married men as she pleased.

Hellman went on to write several very successful plays, among them *The Children's Hour* (1934), *The Little Foxes* (1939), and the antifascist *Watch on the Rhine* (1941). She also wrote movie adaptations of her plays, along with other screen-

**LILLIAN HELLMAN:**  
A Life With Foxes  
and Scoundrels.

By Deborah Martinson.  
Counterpoint.  
448 pp. \$27.95



Lillian Hellman, shown here in the 1950s, wrote a number of successful plays, including *The Children's Hour* (1934) and *The Little Foxes* (1939).



plays, and engaged in world-class brawls with producer Sam Goldwyn. She tried her hand at other genres, too, collaborating (if Hellman the dictator could ever be said to have collaborated) with her friends Leonard Bernstein and Richard Wilbur on a musical production of *Candide*.

Though adept at self-promotion, she took writing very seriously, as both a teacher and a reader. Chekhov, she wrote in the introduction to a 1955 collection of his letters, was “a man of deep social ideals and an uncommon sense of social responsibility”—her highest praise—as well as a “workman” playwright for whom “the smallest stage movement has an end in view and is not being used to trick or deceive or pull fashionable wool over our eyes.”

In 1939, using the profits from her plays and screenplays, she bought a 130-acre farm in Pleasantville, New York, now a suburb but then deep country. There, she cooked, entertained constantly, farmed, gardened, hunted and fished, and raised chickens and other livestock, seeming to master her new environment instinctively. Later she would hold court on Martha's Vineyard for everyone from Norman Mailer to James Taylor. Mary Mahoney, a young woman who kept house for Hellman on the Vineyard one summer, wrote a cruel but no doubt largely accurate portrayal of her as litigious, insanely demanding, paranoid, monstrous; but then, no man is a hero to his valet.

Nearly every other aspect of Hellman's life has been disputed, including how much Hammett helped with *The Children's Hour* (Martinson convincingly shows his editorial guidance to have been critical), her overlong defense of Stalin and the Soviet regime (she finally recanted, but without much vigor), and the truthfulness of her three autobiographical memoirs, *An Unfinished Woman* (1969), *Pentimento* (1973), and *Scoundrel Time* (1976). Of the last, Mary McCarthy famously told Dick Cavett, “Every word she writes is a lie, including ‘and’ and ‘the.’”

What no one can deny is that Hellman drank more, laughed more, smoked more, fought more, and had a whole lot more sex than anyone does today. The pace and ferocity remained truly

staggering until her dying days, when she asked a friend at her bedside, “I was fun, wasn't I?” So even if Martinson isn't really telling Hellmanites anything they don't already know, readers encountering the fiend for the first time are guaranteed a fast ride as well as a realistically complex portrait. The worst thing about this book is Martinson's writing, which belabors certain themes ad nauseam (e.g., Hellman's “eroticism”) and serves up such doozies as “success separated herself from herself and others.” Were Hellman around to read it, one can imagine her imperious scorn.

—Ann J. Loftin

## T. S. Eliot's Love Song?

IN 1952, A CANADIAN professor named John Peter published an article in *Essays in Criticism* arguing that the narrator of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* had at some time fallen in love with a young man whose death by drowning he now

mourned. Eliot reacted furiously, proclaiming his “amazement and disgust” and threatening legal action if Peter disseminated the article further. In 1969, after Eliot's death, Peter republished his essay, along with a postscript that tentatively identified the narrator's lost love as Jean Verdenal, a French medical student whom Eliot had known in Paris in 1911. Verdenal was killed in World War I, and Eliot dedicated *Prufrock and Other Observations* to him in 1917.

Another scholar, James E. Miller Jr., of the University of Chicago, supported and extended Peter's interpretation in *T. S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land: Exorcism of the Demons* (1977). Since then, more biographical material has become available, including seven letters to Eliot from the hitherto virtually unknown Verdenal. Now Miller is back, with a biography that seeks to extend his argument about *The Waste Land's* narrator to Eliot's own early years. In Miller's view, Eliot's obvious distaste for sexual intimacy was due not to extreme fastidiousness and

### T. S. ELIOT:

The Making of an American Poet, 1888–1922.

By James E. Miller Jr.  
Pennsylvania State Univ.  
Press. 468 pp. \$39.95

reserve per se, but to a lack of desire for women. The poet had been in love with Verdenal, and his anguish over his beloved's death can be traced through a number of knotty passages in his poems.

This is a subject well worth exploring—Eliot's poetic images of sexuality are alarming enough to invite a host of theories—but doing so is doubly difficult: Eliot thwarted biographers by locking up many of his letters for decades and destroying others; and arguments for repressed homosexuality in figures from the past naturally have to be built upon ambiguity and indirection. Miller devotes a great deal of energy to his argument, but, in the end, the evidence falls short.

To begin with, Verdenal's letters (available since 1988) are ardent enough, but only as bouncy, self-conscious performances. They indicate a companionship based on youth, wit, and compatible literary opinions, and employ throughout the formal *vous*. Internal evidence from the correspondence suggests that Eliot didn't often write back. It also deflates a couple of Miller's 1977 conjectures: that Eliot and Verdenal traveled together in Europe, and that Eliot knew of Verdenal's death when he married Vivien Haigh-Wood—on the rebound, as it were. Moreover, Eliot's letters to others don't indicate much distress over Verdenal's death. He seems not to have heard about it until several months after the fact, and in a 1916 letter to Conrad Aiken, he assigns it fifth place in a list of personal news—after where he's teaching, what he's working on, how bad his finances are, and how his wife is feeling—and he goes on to say, "I am having a wonderful life nevertheless."

In dozens of places, citing evidence from the poems as well as the letters, Miller overargues his case. One especially stark example involves lines that Arnaut Daniel speaks in Dante's *Purgatorio*, Canto XXVI. Miller notes that one draft of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (which, he argues reasonably enough, is in part a self-portrait) includes as epigraph two lines from the Arnaut passage. Miller declares this "perhaps the most important revelation of the manuscript of the 'Love Song,' linking Prufrock to the band of those brought

together in Purgatory for the sin of same-sex lust." But this is simply wrong: Arnaut's group is atoning for excesses of *heterosexual* passion.

In the best parts of this book, Miller stops trying to shore up the ruins of his Verdenal theory and instead takes a lengthy, digressive look at the philosophical and literary influences on the early Eliot. He allows himself more than twice as many pages for this period as the previous best biography, by Lyndall Gordon, and thus can quote much more extensively from letters, poems, and the guesswork of other scholars. For a figure as elusive as Eliot, whose runic remains no two readers interpret the same way, this makes for a valuable compendium—a kind of do-it-yourself portrait kit.

—Brian Hall

## The Soul of Technology

IN THIS DENSE, LEARNED, AND eclectic study, John Paul Russo sounds the alarm, loud and long, about what ever-burgeoning technology is doing to our civilization and our very souls. "The future," he proclaims, "has taken shape." "The great transition" predicted for so long by figures such as Matthew Arnold "is finally over," and the world "powerless to be born" has settled upon us. Not that there's much to cheer in this dehumanized world. What class conflict was for Marx and instinctual urges were for Freud, the technological imperative is for Russo: the ultimate cause, the engine always running in the background, the underlying reality beneath all the visible phenomena.

Technology, in his view, has grown so pervasive and so minute in its regulation of our existence that we're rapidly losing the ability to imagine what we would be, and once were, without it. Computers and cell phones, along with a host of ever more powerful simulations of reality, have become the media in which we "live and move and have our being." And the consequences of this technological regime are almost entirely pernicious for the life of the mind.

**THE FUTURE WITHOUT A PAST:**  
The Humanities in a Technological Society.

By John Paul Russo.  
Univ. of Missouri Press.  
313 pp. \$39.95

Technological values have “trumped all others,” “decimated historical memory,” and “infiltrated education to the point of limiting the humanities and undermining their force.”

There’s a considerable intelligence operating in these pages. An English professor at the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Russo brings to his task an astonishingly wide range of reading, from ancient philosophers to modern novelists. He joins a well-established tradition of cultural critics who have shared many of the same concerns, including Henry Adams, Lewis Mumford, Jacques Ellul, Neil Postman, and Wendell Berry. He’s especially perceptive about the ways

*The Future Without a Past* is especially perceptive about the ways technology may have led us into a predominantly visual culture.

technology may have led us into a predominantly visual culture, a culture whose inattention to “the word” has left language devalued, and whose sense of connection to the past has atrophied almost beyond restoration.

The irony is that the decline of the humanities has been facilitated by the fecklessness of the disciplines’ most visible and honored practitioners.

Though stimulating, Russo’s book has some weaknesses. Its allusiveness and amorphousness combine to make it a challenging read. Moreover, Russo sometimes seems to assume what he wishes to prove. He takes the pervasiveness of the omni-technological life-world as a given, without providing the sort of evidence and argument that might persuade skeptics. Nor does he offer practical prescriptions for remedying the unfortunate condition he diagnoses. (More than once, he mentions monastic withdrawal as a method that worked in the past and might work now—though, to his credit, he acknowledges that such an approach may be “far-fetched.”) And he doesn’t help his cause when he gives in to hyperbole: “Never in the 500-year history of humanism in the academy has it been more disadvantageous to be a humanist—intellectually, socially, culturally.”

Still, the book’s failings are inseparable from its

considerable virtues, which in the end outweigh its faults. *The Future Without a Past* deserves a wide reading, particularly by those who believe that our technological enmeshment will substantially influence the future of our discourse, and who fear that, as Ralph Waldo Emerson long ago put it, “things are in the saddle and ride mankind.”

—Wilfred M. McClay

#### CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

## Warily Watching China

TO THE DISCOMFORT OF MANY Asia-watchers in the United States, China is rapidly expanding its influence in Asia. In this new book, Robert Sutter, a former Asia specialist with the U.S. government who now teaches at Georgetown University, carefully explores Beijing’s growing regional presence and what it may mean for the United States.

**CHINA’S RISE  
IN ASIA:**  
Promises and Perils.

By Robert G. Sutter.  
Rowman & Littlefield.  
297 pp. \$24.95

China has plainly become a major regional actor, but not necessarily a menacing one. As Sutter sees it, China today is less a challenger to the status quo



George W. Bush, shown here with first lady Laura Bush on the Great Wall in February 2002, has visited China three times during his presidency, but the future of U.S.–China relations remains uncertain.

than a contributor to regional order. Beijing seems content to abide by Deng Xiaoping's dictum to bide time while continuing to amass national power. But, Sutter warns, China could adopt a more aggressive posture in pursuit of its long-standing desire to secure its periphery from potential rivals.

Much like any other country, Sutter's China seeks to consolidate its strengths, expand its influence over neighbors, and thwart efforts by other large powers to impinge upon its interests—hence its active leadership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other international associations that don't include the United States. This is a foreign policy of pragmatism and careful calculation, not of ideology or inherent aggressiveness. It's a policy extremely sensitive to other powers, pushing and probing to gain incremental advantage but pulling back when it bumps against superior force. Foreign adventures have no place among China's priorities; the preoccupation of its leaders since the end of the Cold War has been to reinforce their continued rule through political stability and economic growth.

The United States looms large in these pages. Though not a neighbor in a geographical sense, America remains the preeminent power in Asia—an uncomfortable reality that shapes Beijing's every move on its periphery. And, as Sutter emphasizes, Washington is no passive observer; American action (and inaction) substantially influences Chinese policy in the region. China, in Sutter's apt phrase, is less a "responsible" than a "responsive" power. To reduce the likelihood of Beijing's becoming disruptive, he advises, the United States must pursue a firm and consistent policy, specifying clear lines that must not be crossed.

Sutter judges George W. Bush more successful than Bill Clinton in managing this difficult relationship, in part because of Bush's readiness to use power to punish U.S. enemies. Beijing has adopted a more accommodating posture toward the United States since mid-2001, based not on an embrace of Washington's notions of good international citizenship, but on a simple assessment of costs and benefits. Yet, Sutter warns, suspicion and opposition toward U.S. policy in Asia remain a "driving force"

in Chinese calculations. For American policymakers, he counsels a delicate balance. The United States must maintain its resolve to ensure that China stays on a generally constructive track in Asia, but it must also welcome China's recent signs of accommodation, lest Beijing revert to a less benign approach.

Sutter is properly modest in his assertions, freely conceding that the contradictory and inconclusive evidence about Chinese strategic thinking can support different conclusions. Many experts will judge unduly pessimistic his assessment of the most probable future of U.S.–China relations: the pursuit, by Beijing, of increased influence at the expense of American interests in the region. Others will admire his forecast as hardheaded. But no one will accuse him of naiveté about Beijing's long-range intentions. And that shrewdness is the great virtue of this entirely laudable book.

—Robert M. Hathaway

## Liberty and Security

IN THE NAME OF PROTECTING security since 9/11, top government officials have redrafted the rule book on American civil liberties. Philip Heymann and Juliette Kayyem, Justice Department officials in the Clinton administration who now teach at Harvard University, take careful stock of this profound shift in law and policy. In a remarkable and timely book, they seek to balance the competing demands of security and liberty, not simply in the abstract but through precise and detailed prescriptions.

They begin by cataloging recent security practices that "have too often given insufficient weight to concerns about democratic freedoms, human rights, lawfulness, and international relations." Due process requirements for suspected terrorists have been loosened, government secrecy has expanded, and the right to privacy has been reduced. Thousands of undocumented aliens have been rounded up and held in U.S. prisons and

### PROTECTING LIBERTY IN AN AGE OF TERROR.

By Philip B. Heymann  
and Juliette N. Kayyem.  
MIT Press. 194 pp. \$30

Many have protested the curtailment of civil liberties and human rights since 9/11, but few have proposed alternatives to safeguard liberty *and* security.

detention centers, without charges, for months, even years. Foreign detainees in American prisons overseas have been brutally abused and subjected to interrogation techniques verging on torture. American citizens have been arrested in the United States

and, as “enemy combatants,” denied access to legal counsel, while foreigners detained abroad and given the same designation have been held indefinitely and denied the protections of the Geneva Conventions.

Further, new methods of investigating terrorism have “increase[d] the risk of inhibiting free speech or association.”

Many authors have protested the curtailment of civil liberties and human rights since 9/11. Few, however, have proposed alternatives designed to safeguard liberty *and* security. Heymann and Kayyem, assisted by a bipartisan advisory panel of experts, venture into this uncharted territory, emerging with a map of “new rules and practices that simultaneously address national security, democratic liberties at home, legality and human rights abroad, and broader foreign policy interests.”

They do so by stressing three goals. The first is accountability: providing mechanisms for reviewing executive action. The particular type of review—administrative, congressional, or judicial—will depend on the context, but “a system of accountability must be developed if the country is to fully honor a system of divided, shared powers.” The second goal is transparency: providing sufficient information about security rules and practices so that Congress and the public can openly debate them. The third goal is assessment: establishing ways of determining whether a particular rule or practice does indeed reduce the threat of terrorism.

Using this framework, Heymann and Kayyem examine such controversial practices as coercive interrogation, indefinite detention, targeted

killing, the interception of communications, and the surveillance of religious and political meetings. In each case, they offer reasoned approaches for overseeing, assessing, and limiting or banning the practice.

How well does their balancing act work? It’s difficult to evaluate recommendations before they’ve been tested over time, and implementing many of these proposals may prove politically impossible: Security specialists are loath to surrender any authority, while civil liberties advocates resist any compromise of their principles. Still, as executive branch officials, members of Congress, and judges continue to develop rules for defending our security, they can profit from Heymann and Kayyem’s guidance on the equally urgent task of protecting our liberty.

—John Shattuck

## Cold Comfort

WHEN WRITER GRETCHEN

Legler decides it’s time to thaw her frozen heart, she heads to the coldest place on the planet. Courtesy of the National Science Foundation Artists and Writers Program, Legler travels from the Far North—the creative writing department at the University of Alaska—to the Far South—McMurdo Station, located at the edge of the Ross Ice Shelf, “nearly at the bottom of the world.” Her ostensible goal in visiting McMurdo, whose population ranges from 150 to 1,000-plus, is “to talk to the people who dwelled and worked in Antarctica, to find out about their lives, and to listen to them tell their stories about themselves and this icy place.” But like her hero, Henry David Thoreau, Legler really wants to explore the wilderness within herself.

The result is a series of lyrical portraits of people and places, whose standalone quality betrays their original role as essays or “prose poems” in literary journals. Legler visits the South Pole, spends a month on an icebreaker, climbs down into an

### ON THE ICE:

An Intimate Portrait of Life at McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

By Gretchen Legler.  
Milkweed Editions.  
195 pp. \$15.95



undersea observation tube, and hangs out with scientists of every variety. In addition to providing a comprehensive look at life in Antarctica, these portraits serve as occasionally clumsy jumping-off points for Legler's ruminations on her sister's suicide, her emotionally distant family, and her own shaky psychic state.

The humor that seems to characterize everyone who sets foot in Antarctica hastens Legler's defrosting. The bus that lumbers between the airstrip and the station is called Ivan the Terra Bus, for instance, while parishioners at the Chapel of the Snows are known as the Frozen Chosen. The scientists and support staff are as aware as Legler of the ludicrousness of their attempts to measure up to their predecessors in a place that now offers fresh basil, espresso makers, a bowling alley, ATMs, and Internet connections. Instead of battling the elements, they're checking their mutual funds.

The Antarctic literature is extensive—Legler discovers that even the walls of an outhouse are covered in scribbled excerpts from Apsley Cherry-Garrard's *The Worst Journey in the World* (1922) and other classic texts—and awash in testosterone. Legler's volume is a nice switch from the heroic tales of Robert Falcon Scott, Ernest Shackleton, and other early explorers, and a welcome addition to the tiny body of work featuring women in Antarctica, represented most notably by Sara Wheeler's *Terra Incognita* (1996).

Legler's book also offers the novelty of a lesbian perspective, with the question of whether she will let herself fall for a banjo-playing mechanic named Ruth providing the book's only real narrative drive. In bundled-up Antarctica, it seems, romance means parkas brushing or ice axes clanking against each other.

Toward the end of the author's six-month stay, she takes the "Polar Plunge," leaping into frigid water. "It was my birthday and I was born again," she writes. Although Legler leaves no mark on the outhouse wall, she leaves her readers with a fascinating look not only at Antarctica but at a woman coming back to life.

—Rebecca A. Clay

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## Test Case

THE POLIO VACCINE IS ONE of medicine's great success stories, but its development makes for a dirty, dangerous, and far from edifying tale. Mistakes were made, as the political phrase goes, and some of those mistakes cost lives before other lives were saved. In the first half

of his book, Paul Offit, a physician, achieves an almost thrillerlike intensity with a fast-paced account of the many tribulations and errors that preceded the Salk vaccine's momentous triumph. But in attempting to trace so much of the modern antagonism between our legal and medical systems back to a single source—the Cutter incident of the title—Offit allows outrage to overwhelm reason.

Early efforts, in the 1930s, to create a polio vaccine were, by modern standards, staggeringly irresponsible. Physicians tried to kill or inactivate infectious matter in ways that bordered on quackery, then without further ado injected the products into

**THE CUTTER INCIDENT:**

How America's First Polio Vaccine Led to the Growing Vaccine Crisis.

By Paul A. Offit.  
Yale Univ Press.  
238 pp. \$27.50



Jonas Salk, developer of an experimental polio vaccine, administers a test inoculation to a Pennsylvania youngster in 1954. The vaccine was soon rushed into production, but a contaminated batch led to a landmark liability case against one pharmaceutical company.

hapless children, many of whom died or suffered enormously. It wasn't until the 1950s that Jonas Salk devised a method to render the virus incapable of causing disease while leaving it sufficiently intact to stimulate the body's immune system to generate a potent response against the live virus. After a rushed but successful government-backed test in 1954 on almost two million children, federal officials decided—under enormous public and political pressure—to swing into full-scale production of the vaccine.

But Salk's instructions for making vaccine were more recipe than engineering blueprint, and the several pharmaceutical companies engaged to mass-produce the vaccine had trouble scaling up the process. Remnants of live virus contaminated many batches, and in 1955, one company, Cutter Laboratories of Berkeley, California, sent out quantities of vaccine that infected hundreds of thousands of children, severely injuring almost 200 and killing at least 10.

Then came the inevitable lawsuit, captained by Melvin Belli, who fashioned a high-profile career making legal innovations in everything from tort cases to Hollywood divorces. The unwelcome novelty here, Offit complains, is that although the Cutter jury concluded that the laboratory had acted in good faith and done nothing culpably wrong, the judge's instructions obliged them to impose damages on the company. Thus was born the legal notion of no-fault liability.

The result, according to Offit, is today's punitive legalistic culture, in which the minutest dangers, real or sometimes imaginary, blossom into multimillion-dollar payouts, and the quest to eliminate risk, far from making medicine safer, stifles innovation and keeps promising treatments off the market. But this grandiose contention doesn't hang together: Offit's own review of legal history shows that the Cutter decision fits into an evolution of liability law that started centuries ago and continues to this day.

Offit also inveighs against bad science in the courtroom, citing among several examples the case of an effective vaccine for Lyme disease that was

withdrawn from the market in 2002 after the manufacturer came under legal attack on extremely dubious scientific grounds. Lawyers browbeat juries into blocking life-saving medicines! It's a good punch line, with enough truth in it to warrant intelligent scrutiny. But Offit, having praised the Cutter jurors for evaluating the scientific evidence carefully, now wants somehow to blame them for the increasingly irresponsible decisions of their successors.

Today's litigious society is surely a remarkable phenomenon, but the Cutter incident is at most a small element in a plot vaster than Offit's book can handle. As it happens, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published a study on October 12, 2005, concluding that among the many factors making flu vaccine production commercially unattractive, legal liability issues represent only a minor nuisance. It may well be true, as Offit asserts, that the pharmaceutical industry is reluctant to spend money looking for new vaccines—but it apparently has limitless dollars available to create and market pills that help middle-aged men get firmer erections. Something's out of whack here, and you can't pin all the blame on nefarious lawyers.

—David Lindley

## The Science of Life's Clockwork

AS A BOY, CURT RICHTER LOVED to tinker with clocks and locks, dismantling and reassembling them by the hour. His curiosity about how things work and his finely honed mechanical skill

ended up serving him well: During some six decades at Johns Hopkins University's medical school, from graduate student in 1919 to emeritus professor still doing lab work in the 1980s, Richter made a series of pioneering discoveries, most notably about the internal clockwork that regulates behavior. In this conversationally written book, Jay Schulkin, a research professor of physiology and biophysics at Georgetown University, sur-

**CURT RICHTER:**  
A Life in the  
Laboratory.

By Jay Schulkin.  
Johns Hopkins Univ.  
Press. 187 pp. \$49.95

veys Richter's wide-ranging accomplishments and offers an informed perspective on his scientific legacy, though without providing much detail on his life outside the lab.

"Before Richter, there was a paucity of research investigation on animal activity," Schulkin writes. The few early researchers in biological rhythms had focused on plants. But as a Ph.D. student, Richter constructed rat "mansions," each with a central room, plus separate chambers for eating, drinking, running, climbing, burrowing, gnawing, and other specific behaviors. He hooked up devices to record the animals' every movement, which revealed cyclical patterns of behavior as well as sequential relationships between different behaviors, such as eating and resting. In his dissertation, *The Behavior of the Rat*, published in 1921, Richter asserted that innate mechanisms—not external influences—control behavior.

Richter soon applied his findings to humans by documenting cycles in illnesses, both mental and physical. He recognized that symptoms often wax and wane predictably at different times of the day, month, and year, a finding with important implications for treatment. Today's widely accepted recognition of seasonal affective disorder, with its depressive states that worsen during winter's short days, arguably grows out of Richter's work.

Having hypothesized the existence of an internal clock, Richter set about finding it. In the 1960s, he succeeded. The master clock that regulates daily and other biological rhythms in mammals, he wrote, is located in the brain's hypothalamus. Although surgical instruments of the time didn't allow him to pinpoint the clock itself, later scientists confirmed Richter's finding with more advanced tools. They identified a tiny cluster of timekeeping cells within the hypothalamus, which are activated by light signals transmitted from the retina via a specialized nerve pathway.

Richter's studies weren't limited to biological rhythms. In the 1940s, he explored what came to be called "learned helplessness." He found that wild rats immobilized even for a short while in a secure grip or in a bag wouldn't struggle when placed in a

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP,  
MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

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swimming tank. Having lost “all hope of escape,” he wrote, they simply let themselves drown. This research grew out of public-health efforts to exterminate rats in urban areas, though Richter thought it might also help explain sudden death in humans suffering extreme shock or fear. Richter also found that diets lacking salt, protein, fat, and other nutrients triggered hungers for those substances; and he explored nerve pathways that control motor reflexes in different mammals. He also developed techniques to assess spinal damage in American soldiers wounded in World War II, based on skin resistance and perspiration.

The author or coauthor of some 250 scientific papers and two books, Richter continued his lab work into his nineties. He received honorary degrees from the University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Pennsylvania, and was nominated for a Nobel Prize. When he died in 1988, at 94, he was eulogized as a giant in his field, or, more precisely, his fields—specialists in several disciplines now laud him as a founding father. As Schulkin suggests, Richter dedicated his long life to the pragmatic tradition of American inquiry exemplified by Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson.

—Lynne Lamberg

## Skinner's Utopia

THE AUTHOR OF THIS INTERESTING but oddly structured book set out to find an experimental community that embodied the model depicted in B. F. Skinner's novel *Walden Two* (1948). What she found were several mostly rural communities that tried, with every good intention and in a variety of ways, to institute a behaviorist way of life. But most failed. Even if they managed to survive, their success was almost a measure of the distance they had traveled from Skinner's initial blueprint.

Skinner, a longtime professor of psychology at

Harvard University, developed his theory of behaviorism—the teaching and conditioning of human behavior through positive reinforcement—starting in the late 1930s, while at Indiana University. In *Walden Two*, he imagined a society founded on his theory of behavioral psychology. Although the theory's outlines were clearest in the fictional Walden's schools, which used positive reinforcement as an incentive to learn, the entire community was organized to stimulate the most cooperative and socially useful behavior.

Hilke Kuhlmann, an assistant professor of American studies at the University of Freiburg, Germany, opens with a critical exploration of Skinner's novel and his later book *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971). She reprises many familiar criticisms of behavioral psychology, but also adds some compelling notions about characters in *Walden Two*. She goes on to suggest that Skinner himself is to blame for the failure of many of the *Walden Two*-inspired experiments, in part because he never addressed such matters as the basically undemocratic nature of his planning system. Kuhlmann depicts Skinner as a social philosopher fascinated by the theory of community founding but uninterested in the reality. What she doesn't explain is his novel's odd reception: Published in 1948, it became popular only in the 1960s.

Kuhlmann talked with participants from a number of so-called intentional communities, primarily in the United States, and includes several of the interviews verbatim in an appendix that constitutes almost a third of the book. She provides capsule histories of many of the communities, recording their proximity to or drift from Skinner's ideal. In the case of Los Horcones, a successful community in Mexico founded in 1973, she concludes that strong, charismatic leadership accounts for its longevity. Yet, in a curious footnote, she relates that her own hostility toward behaviorism prompted residents there to “break off all communication.” So her information remains incomplete.

The community given the most attention here is Twin Oaks, founded in 1968 in Charlottesville, Virginia. The history of Twin Oaks—the most successful and long-lived of the *Walden Two* commun-

### LIVING WALDEN TWO:

B. F. Skinner's Behaviorist Utopia and Experimental Communities.

By Hilke Kuhlmann.  
Univ. of Illinois Press.  
245 pp. \$35

ities—suggests that many of the novel's proposals are simply unworkable, including the behaviorist educational system and the elaborate work-credit arrangement. Kuhlmann asserts that Twin Oaks succeeded partly because its founders were willing to move away from Skinner's model, and partly because it developed a profitable business making hammocks. Most important, as the author discovered, the survival of Twin Oaks depends upon a consistently large turnover of members, which maintains newcomer enthusiasm for the communal experiment while preventing the institutionalization of discontent.

As an exploration of Skinnerian intentional communities, this account is a moderate success. The discussion of actual and defunct communities is informative, although more research on Los Horcones would have been welcome because it might have challenged the author's thesis that such experiments are virtually doomed to failure. Kuhlmann may be right in arguing that Skinner invented an unachievable Utopia. But that doesn't explain why we, as a society, continue to aspire to remote, planned communities that exist on the edges of Somewhere.

—James Gilbert

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## The Poet of the Psalms

IN JOSEPH HELLER'S 1984 NOVEL

*God Knows*, a wry first-person retelling of the life of King David, the monarch and psalmist quips that although no book of the Bible

is named after him, his story is the best one in there: "Moses has the Ten Commandments, it's true, but I've got much better lines."

These lines now find a deft interpreter in former U.S. poet laureate Robert Pinsky. Pinsky's own poetry, which can leap from one register of speech to another, experiments with the collisions, as he has put it, between "the worldly and the spiritual, the petty and the noble." An ear for such incongruities turns out to be just the sort of sensitivity needed to reimagine the life of David in this beautifully written book.

Pinsky observes that although we never get to see Achilles humbled by old age, for instance, or Lear in his youth, David's life, told mostly in 1 and 2 Samuel, comes to us complete. We see him as both handsome upstart shepherd and anguished old man, as "under-

## THE LIFE OF DAVID.

By Robert Pinsky.  
Schocken. 209 pp.  
\$19.95

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dog boy and calculating ruler,” and in an extraordinary range of roles between: “the skilled guerilla fighter, the great poet, the royal adulterer, the heartbroken father, the uniter of kingdoms.”

Pinsky brings to life David the musician, the “sweet singer of Israel” who composes many of the Psalms and achieves some of the Bible’s highest poetry, the irresistible lover whose very name means “beloved,” and the inventor of the idea of the Temple—the man who brings the Holy Ark to Jerusalem, where he sets about transforming his people “from a masked, uncataloged, exclusionary, taboo-ridden culture of tribes to a visible, enumerated, inclusive civilization.” But David is also the brutal warrior who kills Goliath, presents his predecessor King Saul with a dowry of foreskins from 200 massacred Philistines, sends Bathsheba’s husband to his death, and inspires the popular Israelite saying “Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands.” He is, in sum, both a flawed hero and a poet who sings the praises of heroes, as his eloquent elegies for Saul and Saul’s son Jonathan attest.

Pinsky’s book is neither a work of translation and commentary, like Robert Alter’s *The David Story* (1999), nor a scholarly attempt to get at a historical leader who lived in the 10th century B.C.E., like Steven L. McKenzie’s *King David* (2000). Instead, in lending the David story an imaginative density the biblical text possesses only in latent form, thereby freeing the original’s sheer narrative power, Pinsky’s volume resembles a modern performance of the classical Jewish art of exegetical embroidery known as Midrash.

All the more evident, then, is the one flaw in this brilliant act of conjuring a life by artfully retelling it: Pinsky glosses over the ways in which the David story has been received into cultural memory through the ages. He deprecates, for instance, traditional rabbinic interpretations that depicted David as pious, attributing them to “the hungers and terrors of the Diaspora.” This attitude seems to derive from Pinsky’s innate suspicion of religious modes of understanding: “David is more enigmatic than any purely Christian or Jewish paradigm: more tangled at the roots, and more proliferating, larger.” (Whereas Christian theologians have attempted to read David as foreshadowing Jesus, Pinsky instead suggests that the first son of Bethlehem

“can be understood as rendering Jesus a tremendous afterthought.”) The resistance to reductivist narrowings of meaning, admirable in itself, here prevents Pinsky from opening himself to the sometimes exquisite layers of reading that have accreted around this great story—one of which, thankfully, is now his own.

—Benjamin Balint

## Mission of Mercy

MARY JORDAN AND KEVIN SULLIVAN, husband-and-wife correspondents for *The Washington Post*, open *The Prison Angel* with a thunderclap. During a combined 40 years as journalists, “we have interviewed presidents and rock stars, survivors of typhoons in India, and people tortured by the Taliban in Afghanistan. We had never heard a story quite like hers, a story of such powerful goodness.” The story is that of Mother Antonia, an elderly nun who voluntarily lives in Tijuana’s notorious La Mesa prison.

It’s hardly where one would expect to find the woman born Mary Clark in 1926, a pretty blonde raised in Beverly Hills who married and divorced twice, had seven children, and achieved professional success selling office supplies and real estate. She started volunteering for a variety of charities in the mid-1950s, and in 1965, one of them sent her across the border with supplies for La Mesa prisoners. It was as if “she had come home.”

She made increasingly frequent trips to La Mesa, feeling that she was “being led.” After her second marriage ended in 1972, she decided to become a nun in order to be of greater service: “An American housewife could bring donated clothing and be appreciated by the prisoners in La Mesa, but a Catholic sister would be far more trusted,” the authors write. When none of the orders she applied to would accept a middle-aged divorcée, she wrote her own vows, designed and sewed her own habit, and chose the name Antonia in honor of her California mentor, Monsignor Anthony Brouwers. In 1978, with her children grown, Mother Antonia

### THE PRISON ANGEL:

Mother Antonia’s Journey From Beverly Hills to a Life of Service in a Mexican Jail.

By Mary Jordan and Kevin Sullivan.  
Penguin. 237 pp. \$24.95

sold her home in San Diego and moved into La Mesa.

For nearly three decades now, this “cheery little woman in a black-and-white habit” has dispensed blankets, peanut butter, advice, prayers, and hugs to murderers, rapists, thieves, transvestites, schizophrenics, psychotics, the sick, and the poor (some of them incarcerated because they can’t pay a \$10 fine). The prisoners so respect Mother Antonia that she can stop a riot. For its part, the Catholic Church has come around. When Pope John Paul II visited Mexico in 1990, Tijuana’s bishop chose Mother Antonia to carry the offertory gift to the altar during Mass. In 2003, the church permitted her to found the Eudist Servants of the Eleventh Hour, for middle-aged and older women who want to dedicate their lives to serving the poor.

The episode that perhaps best exemplifies Mother Antonia’s outlook concerns an assassin named David Barrón. After he and fellow gang members murdered one man and severely wounded another, Barrón himself was killed by a ricocheting bullet. “I knew nobody else would be allowed in to

see him, and maybe no one else would want to,” Mother Antonia tells the authors. So she goes to the morgue, arriving just after the autopsy. Across Barrón’s torso are tattoos of 19 skulls—one for each person he’d killed, the police tell her.

Mother Antonia touches Barrón’s hair and considers what drew him to the gang: “He finally found a place where he could say, ‘I belong. I don’t belong in school. I don’t belong with friends. I don’t belong in church. I don’t belong in my family. But I belong here. These are my guys. . . . I will die to be with them. I’ll kill to be with them.’” Mother Antonia doesn’t excuse Barrón’s crimes, but she prays to God to have mercy on him.

Deeply researched and elegantly written, *The Prison Angel* offers important insights into the Mexican justice system and the problems afflicting the U.S.–Mexico border. But above all, it takes its place among the best spiritual biographies of recent years. It is, indeed, a story of powerful goodness.

—C.M. Mayo

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#### CONTRIBUTORS

■ **Benjamin Balint** is associate editor of *Azure*, a quarterly journal published by the Shalem Center in Jerusalem.

■ **Alex Beam** is a columnist for *The Boston Globe*.

■ **Benjamin Cheever**, the author of the memoir *Selling Ben Cheever: Back to Square One in a Service Economy* (2001), as well as *The Good Nanny* (2004) and three other novels, is writing a book about running.

■ **Rebecca A. Clay**, a writer in Washington, D.C., has traveled to each of the world’s seven continents.

■ **James Gilbert**, a professor of modern American history at the University of Maryland, is the author of *Perfect Cities: Chicago’s Utopias in the 1890s* (1991) and other works.

■ **Brian Hall**, the author of three novels

and three works of nonfiction, is writing a novel about Robert Frost.

■ **Robert M. Hathaway** is director of the Wilson Center’s Asia Program.

■ **Lynne Lamberg** is the coauthor of *The Body Clock Guide to Better Health* (2001).

■ **David Lindley**, the author of *Degrees Kelvin: A Tale of Genius, Invention, and Tragedy* (2004), is at work on a history of Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle.

■ **Ann J. Loftin** is a writer and editor living in New York.

■ **C. M. Mayo** is the author of *Miraculous Air: Journey of a Thousand Miles Through Baja California, the Other Mexico* (2002), and the editor of *Mexico: A Traveler’s Literary Companion* (2005).

■ **Wilfred M. McClay**, the SunTrust Chair of Excellence in Humanities at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, is writing an intellectual biography of the sociologist David Riesman.

■ **James Morris** is a senior editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

■ **John Shattuck**, former ambassador to the Czech Republic and assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor, is the author of *Freedom on Fire: Human Rights Wars and America’s Response* (2003) and the CEO of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation in Boston.

■ **James B. Twitchell**, a professor of English at the University of Florida, is the author of *Living It Up: Our Love Affair With Luxury* (2002), *Branded Nation* (2004), and many other works.

# PORTRAIT



*Alf Disley, Smithfield  
Market, London  
By Beverly Conley  
Copyright © 1991*

## *Burdens of the Past*

Smithfield Market in central London has been the site of a meat market of one sort or another for nearly a thousand years. In *Oliver Twist* (1838), Charles Dickens described it as a place ankle-deep in mire and clamoring with the sounds of men and animals, a marked contrast to the sterility and stainless steel that characterize it today. Photographer Beverly Conley chronicled life at Smithfield in 1991, before European Union hygiene regulations eliminated much of its work force and altered the bloody physicality of labor there. Alf Disley, 84, was a meat porter, or “bummaree,” who had spent more than 60 years transporting meat from sellers’ stalls to buyers’ lorries in a wooden barrow, which empty weighed some 400 pounds. “I wanted to document this aspect of London work culture that had been handed down from generation to generation before it disappeared,” says Conley. For men such as Disley, the price of the future was the loss of their entire way of life.



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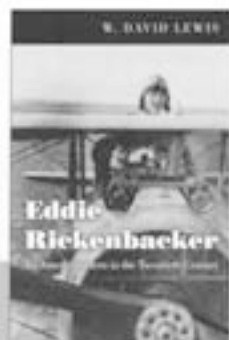
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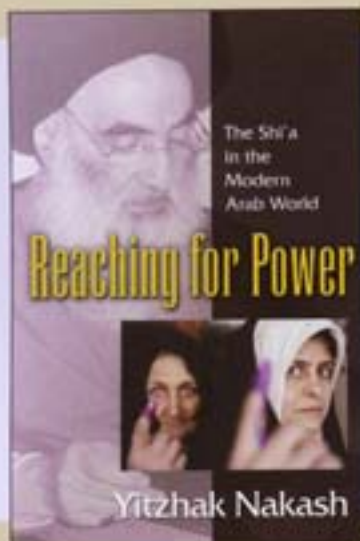
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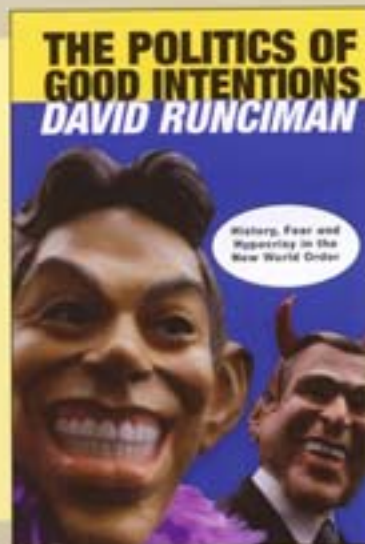
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