

been bolder, more vivid. Or, to change the metaphor, her clever insights and musings should have found their way into a novel—in the manner, say, of a modern Trollope. Perhaps in that novel there might have been more room to say what these Washington characters, at least the elected ones among them, were trying to accomplish, and in what ways they remained involved with citizens outside the Beltway. Throughout her long career, Greenfield cared much about such things, and her last work would have been richer for her reflections on them.

—HARRY MCPHERSON

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***THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM:  
Why a Worldwide Worker Surplus  
and Uncontrolled Free Trade  
Are Sinking American Living Standards.***  
By Alan Tonelson. Westview. 225 pp. \$25

In the 1990s, the Washington consensus held that free trade and deregulated markets would best promote prosperity in countries at all stages of development. This “neoliberal” consensus was shared not only by conservatives and libertarians but by center-left advocates of the Third Way, such as Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, who sought to reconcile progressive redistribution programs with free-market economics. Tonelson, a research fellow at the U.S. Business and Industry Council, provides a well-informed and often witty assault on the conventional wisdom.

He argues that economic globalization, by enlarging the pool of low-wage labor, tends to reduce wages in advanced countries—a point now acknowledged by some free-trade supporters, such as Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati. Tonelson writes that the trade-induced “movement of U.S. workers from high-wage industries to low-wage industries has hit U.S. wage levels with a double whammy. It has lowered wages by greatly reducing the number of Americans working in high-paying jobs [in the manufacturing sector]. In addition, it has just as greatly increased the number of Americans competing for jobs in the lower-paying service sector.” To make matters worse, immigration has depressed service-sector wages further. California, he observes, “was importing people while exporting their likeliest jobs.”

This is dangerous, Tonelson argues, because “alone among the industrialized first world countries, the United States has a large population with what might be called Third World levels of education and skills. Other countries can in theory let labor-intensive industries like apparel or traditional manufacturing industries like textiles and steel migrate abroad without undue social fallout. . . . The United States, however, has more to worry about.”

In addition to questioning the conventional wisdom about how free trade and mass immigration affect ordinary Americans, Tonelson argues that other countries do a better job of promoting the interests of their companies and their workers. For example, China, South Korea, and many other developing nations require U.S. multinationals “to transfer technology, to provide investment capital for other parts of the buyer’s economy, or to purchase goods completely unrelated to the original transaction.” Such governments strategically shape the pattern of global trade and investment, contrary to the oft-heard claim that the global economy is shaped by market forces before which governments stand powerless.

Tonelson’s alternative to the free-market consensus is a robust American economic nationalism. Such a policy might hurt some developing countries hoping to export to the U.S. market, he acknowledges, but “when trade policy is the chosen tool of U.S. economic development policy, our nation’s most economically vulnerable citizens bear the brunt of the costs.”

Some of Tonelson’s arguments can be questioned. For example, he does not consider the possibility that automation, by shifting workers from high-wage factory jobs to low-wage service jobs, would have the same effects as the expatriation of industry to low-wage countries. And his critique of the neoliberal economic consensus is unlikely to change the views of those who identify free trade with intellectual clarity and moral virtue.

But with the failure of free-market “shock therapy” in Russia and Eastern Europe, the Asian financial crisis, and the collapse of the high-tech stock bubble, free trade has hardly inaugurated the golden age of global prosperity that neoliberals promised. Whether

one agrees with Tonelson or not, *Race to the Bottom* is a timely book.

—MICHAEL LIND

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**THE MONEY AND THE POWER:  
*The Making of Las Vegas and Its  
Hold on America, 1947–2000.***

By Sally Denton and Roger Morris.  
Knopf. 479 pp. \$26.95

It takes effort to make Las Vegas boring, but Denton and Morris have produced an opus so dense and tedious that it sinks like a second-rate mobster in concrete shoes. God forbid they should dress up their Latinate compound sentences with a few colorful anecdotes, or assemble an original history of the place from primary sources. Instead, they rehash tales told a hundred times—Meyer Lansky, Benny Binion,



Estes Kefauver, Kirk Kerkorian, Steve Wynn—and they lace each story with moralizing about corruption in high places.

Power is not a new topic for the husband-and-wife team. Denton is the author of *The Bluegrass Conspiracy: An Inside Story of Power, Greed, Drugs, and Murder* (1990); Morris's books include *Partners in Power: The Clintons and Their America* (1996). Here they argue that the "shadow capital" of Vegas had a hand in, among other things, the Kennedy assassination, the Bay of Pigs, Watergate, and Iran-contra. And they blame Vegas's dirty money and dirty politics for creating "an end-of-century America whose economy was dominated by a corporate oligarchy controlling much of government finance and business."

Denton and Morris have written not a history

of Vegas but a history of organized crime, which for most of the past 50 years operated out of Vegas simply because the juice went further there. What's really needed is a history of Vegas after 1986, when the last truly wired mob enforcer, Anthony "The Ant" Spilotro, was found buried in an Illinois wheat field, and the corporate wolves, led by Steve Wynn, moved in. But the authors devote just one slender chapter to Vegas in the '90s, choosing instead to dwell on dead Italian dons and the weasels who worked for Howard Hughes.

Denton and Morris have a grim view of gambling itself, calling it the only industry that produces nothing of lasting value. Couldn't the same be said of Coca-Cola or, for that matter, 90 percent of movies? And they're revolted by the influence peddling that has made Nevada into a greedy corporate fiefdom with "kept men" occupying almost all major political offices. That's certainly a sad thing for Nevada—and perhaps for Mississippi and other states that have embraced the hydra of legalized gambling—but it's an old story in America, and better told by Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris in *The Green Felt Jungle* (1963).

Although there are occasional flashes of insight here, notably in the portraits of weak men who begin with high ideals and are beaten down by the enormity of Vegas's single-minded hunger for lucre (crusading *Las Vegas Sun* publisher Hank Greenspun, Senator Paul Laxalt), the dots don't connect. Las Vegas remains an island through which the money passes on its way somewhere else. The most you can say is that, thanks to the city's laissez-faire attitude, we know where the bad guys' clubhouse is.

—JOE BOB BRIGGS

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**LOOKING FOR LOVEDU:  
*Days and Nights in Africa.***

By Ann Jones. Knopf. 268 pp. \$25

Journalist Jones and Kevin Muggleton, a photographer she has just met, hatch an impromptu plan to drive the length of Africa. The result is an epic road trip from Tangier to Cape Town—and a look at what happens when a middle-aged New Yorker and a Briton half her age and twice her size spend too much time in a Land Rover that's disintegrating almost as fast as their friendship.