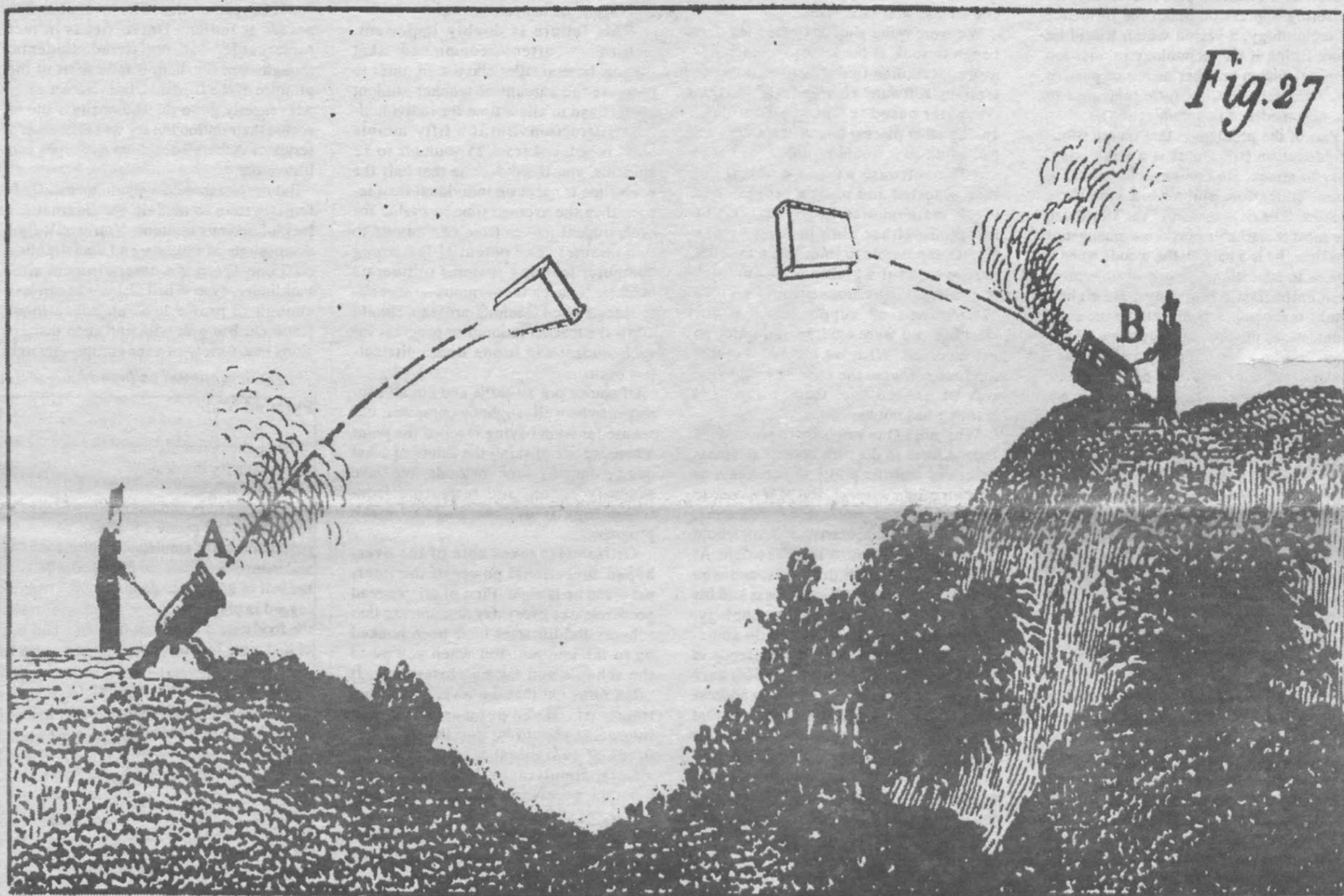


# The BOOKPRESS

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE LITERARY ARTS

Volume 8, Number 3      April 1998      Ithaca, New York      FREE

## Battle of the Books



Jack Sherman

**Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust**

Daniel Jonah Goldhagen  
Random House  
640 pages, \$16.00, paper

**The Myth of Rescue: Why the democracies could not have saved more Jews from the Nazis**

William B. Rubinstein  
Routledge  
288 pages, \$25.00

**F.D.R. and the Holocaust**

Vern W. Newton  
St. Martin's  
304 pages, \$49.95

### Edward T. Chase

A raging "battle of the books" is breaking out over the Holocaust's causes, unique nature, and historic impact. As Geoffrey Hartman writes in the current *Partisan Review* (No. 1, 1998), "The culture of remembrance is at high

tide.... At present, three generations are preoccupied with Holocaust memory." They are the eyewitnesses, including child survivors; their children; and grandchildren, "who treasure the personal story of relatives now slipping away.... As the tide recedes and eyewitnesses pass from the scene, public memory of the Shoah, so crucial to contemporary thought, is increasingly affected by new events and contexts—by the continuance of history."

Although the word "holocaust" did not appear in the nation's newspaper of record, *The New York Times*, until 1980, the word suddenly appeared over 600 times from 1995 through last year! The international bestsellerdom of Daniel Goldhagen's book, the continuing uproar over Swiss banks' and confederate insurance companies' withholding assets of holocaust victims; the investigations of the provenance of art looted by the Nazis now in the world's greatest museums and collections; the twenty some different national commissions established to investigate the inadequacies of the American and British governments in accepting Jewish refugees and

their failure to provide early warning of the Nazis' implementation of their eliminationist program; the role of the Catholic Church and the Vatican and their previous centuries of anti-Judaism; the 50th anniversary of the Nuremberg Trials—all have contributed to this unprecedented new focus on the Holocaust. "A moral confrontation is taking place and some chapters of the history of Europe will have to be rewritten," asserts Avi Beker, Executive Director of the World Jewish Congress. The Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert writes "Ignorance about those who have disappeared undermines the reality of the world."

The crescendo of intense interest has been bolstered not only by controversy and ever-richer new archival and historic data, but also by the emergence of new Holocaust museums and historic exhibits in recognition that the Holocaust, among the greatest crimes in history, was probably the defining event of the 20th century. I myself have recently attended three different major conferences of experts on the Holocaust addressing these issues.

What heightens the interest in the con-

troversies is both the eminence of the writers involved and the involvement of so many differing scholars. At stake is our deepening understanding of humanity's course in the 20th century. Thus, eminent historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. writes of Prof. William B. Rubinstein's book *The Myth of Rescue* that it "is a commanding work of historic criticism. Professor Rubinstein's vigorous analysis of a terrible time in history should bring to an end the long and understandably emotional debate about the possibility of saving more victims of Hitler's Holocaust." It is already clear this book not only won't end debate but in fact is precipitating more heated and profound debate. Concomitantly contradicting Schlesinger, the review of the Rubinstein book by Oxford historian Prof. Richard Overy (Oct. 10, 1997) in the *Times Literary Supplement* ends by dismissing the book as "both absurd and unprovable," a "fatally flawed" work, an insult to historic scholarship. Prof. Robert E. Herzstein, author of the Waldheim exposé *The Missing Years* and of authoritative books on Hitler Ger-

continued on page 5

# ABC's of Computer Learning

To the Editor:

In your March issue, William Griffen took on the topic of the technology of electronic communication and its effect on education, and indirectly on our lives. It's an important issue, one of the most important of our time, and his handling of it was romanticized and disappointing.

Griffen is right to notice that despite a lot of hype, the new technology has not yet done much to improve education, at least at the high school level. But he reacts to that failure by rejecting the technology, which leaves him with vague generalities (Christopher Lasch musing on "what if we change our point of view" and Paul Goodman romantically lecturing teenagers on how to demand a real education) and an inappropriate myth (Huxley's vision of a cheerful proletariat happily suffering oppression under the influence of technology, a vision which would be more fitting if the technology in question were television or other means of passive entertainment, but has little relevance to the new media of communication).

Part of the problem is that on questions of education Bill Gates is a straw man, easy to attack. He knows almost nothing about education, and he is a simplistic idealist. The richest man in the world and the most remarkable corporate manager of our time, he is a babe in the woods when it comes to education, capable of little more than enthusiastic ramblings. He rightly intuits that computers and electronic communications ought to revolutionize education, but he is apparently void of any understanding of how that might happen. The chapters on education in his treatise, *The Road Ahead*, are breathlessly rhapsodic but without real insight.

In fact, Griffen's nearly Luddite attitude toward technology (fueled by his suspicion that technology is a product of the marketplace which is dominated by business interests) is almost a mirror opposite of the computer-culture's ideology, which glorifies the marketplace (which it credits for the rapid advancement of technology, forgetting the massive role of governments in that process) and assumes the marketplace will generate endless technological innovation which in turn will solve all problems, and efficiently at that. In the culture which is emerging among internet users, any interference with the marketplace is regarded as a kind of censorship, which is confidently challenged. As one maxim puts it, the internet regards censorship as a defect and routes around it. And the internet culture regards virtually any imposed limitation even limits on encrypted communications as censorship. The ideology of the internet is a particularly confident and headstrong version of libertarianism, which is the more resilient in that it is based on real qualities of a remarkable system of communication. At such a moment in history, who can complain of a little exaggeration?

Since neither Griffen's retreat from technology nor the hype he rightly criticizes will do much for education, what are some of the real issues? As people who have spent twenty years working on the cutting edge of new media, and who have for several years been looking earnestly at the question of how to improve our educational system, we are vitally interested in the answer.

One of the simplest and most obvious ways that computer technology could help education is by making available effective computer-based learning. There are many areas of content and skills which could be taught very efficiently through computers. Such teaching would use classic Skinnerian programs, small bites of material with constant positive reinforcement. The principles are well known and well established.

We were quite shocked when we first began to look at the state of contemporary education to find effective computer teaching software. Having seen effective computer based teaching (at Cornell, among other places) two decades ago, we had assumed it would be ubiquitous. It is not. The software we assumed was out there—tested and proven programs to teach mathematics at all levels, for instance—either did not exist or was almost impossible to find. When the elite private school which one of our sons attended got a generous grant to set up a computer-based support system for learning, we were excited and quick to get involved. What we learned was that the best software the experts could find was of limited use. Computer-based learning has not happened.

Why not? One important reason does indeed have to do with corrupt business practices and the political economy, as Griffen might suspect. But it is closer to his home turf of professional educators. Textbook companies have a stranglehold on school systems. Vice-President Al Gore, whom Griffen dismisses, and who is an easy target with his stiffness and his convert's zeal for the new technology, saw the problem and tried to do something about it. He called a conference in Washington, DC to confront software companies about their failure to address educational needs. Their reply was that they could not penetrate the market, for two reasons: because textbook companies were too powerful, and because the educational systems were simultaneously slow to accept new materials and subject to quick-changing jargon and fadism.

The combination is deadly to innovative educational strategies—by the time they fight their way through the bureaucracy they are regarded as old hat. In working with professional educators we have found that serious discussion of reform is constantly interrupted because someone uses a word or phrase which

was part of an educational fad and is now considered discredited. Trying to talk about education is like walking through a mine field of loaded language. And all those fads and fashions, current or discredited, play into the hands of the textbook companies which constantly adapt with superficial changes and make enormous profits on products which remain substantially the same while they change just sufficiently to undermine the used textbook market and to require schools to invest anew.

One friend of ours who has been fighting to get some new materials into use in school systems points out that the textbook companies have contracts with all the educational experts. "They can virtually own the top people in a field for twenty thousand dollar a year consulting contracts," he laments.

This failure is doubly important. Reformers often recommend that schools have smaller classes, in order to increase the amount of teacher-student contact and to allow time for individualized instruction. But if a fifty-minute class is reduced from 25 students to 12 students, and if we assume that half the class time is spent on individual instruction, then the average time available for each student moves from one minute to two minutes. The potential for strong computer learning systems to liberate teachers to teach is enormous—especially since a good teaching program should allow the teacher to monitor progress for each student and to see where difficulties occur.

Of course not all skills and not all subjects can be well taught by computer, but we are far from having reached the point where we are pushing the limits of what can be done by such methods. We have scarcely begun, and retreating from technology is not the way to make progress.

Griffen also takes note of the overhyped educational power of the internet—and he is right. First of all, we read press releases every day announcing that schools and libraries have been hooked up to the internet. But when you go to the schools and take a closer look, it often turns out that the level of connection is trivial. To put a school on the internet it should be possible for hundreds of individual students to have access, simultaneously. Few schools have the necessary computer terminals and fewer still have the appropriate connections. One school system we looked at had a computer with internet capability and a connection in every school—and had been declared to be "wired," to the point of being touted in the national press. However, the service which provided the connections for the schools could only handle 28 simultaneous dial-in users (and there were 85 schools). That's one connection at a time for each

of 28 out of 85 schools.

Misleading announcements of this kind are common—they are the rule, not the exception. In New Orleans there are at least two cyber-cafes each of which has a higher bandwidth connection to the internet than the entire public school system!

The hype does not stop with bureaucratic press releases. Many Americans have seen advertising from giant computer companies boasting of what the internet has done. One famous ad features the daughter of an Italian peasant explaining that her father was able to study agriculture because IBM had put the library at Indiana University on the internet. A viewer would be reasonable in assuming that that meant every book, or most of the books, in that library could be read on line. The level of online access at Indiana University is in fact remarkable, for registered students, though even for them it falls short of the promise of the IBM ads. But internet users who eagerly go to the University's site to access their online library will encounter a series of Access Forbidden messages and little more.

But despite these disappointments, Griffen is wrong to disdain the internet for lack of serious content. You won't find discussions of poverty and social policy on Time-Warner's entertainment site, Pathfinder, even if Bill Gates was careless enough to praise it as an educational resource. But you will find such discussions in a variety of user groups—though

*continued on page 11*

## Pyramid Mall

"Maybe the pyramids were malls for the dead!" I like this. It helps on our obligatory excursions to pet store and penny's past dioramas of amulets and balms, the hell of household goods lugged in plastic bags, the food courts with their flak of bickering families.

The air is clotted with cologne. The jars on shelves gleam jelly beans and cold cream. And the manikins flaunt their bony thighs, faces flat, abstruse. We know that look though we have no guide, no news to carry home, no way out save through the parking lot.

Whatever we escape with is less than our lives.

—Deborah Tall

Deborah Tall edits the Seneca Review. She is the author of three books of poems.

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# The Case for Amistad

## Cushing Strout

In *Amistad*, Steven Spielberg shows the same power to dramatize political and social historical evil as he did in *Schindler's List*. This time he focuses on the brutalities of the African and Spanish slave trade. In both films, the decency of a single outstanding individual is a center of interest. The context of the Amistad case is a rich one, involving Africa, Spain, England, and America, both North and South. It includes as well Christian abolitionism in New England, professors from Yale Divinity School, and influential political figures, such as the opportunistic President Martin Van Buren and the highly principled former president, John Quincy Adams. He was known as "Old Man Eloquent" for his antislavery role in the House of Representatives; and the film reaches its dramatic highpoint in his argument before the Supreme Court of the United States on behalf of the black slaves, who had broken their chains and taken control of the Amistad. Adams has to work against the Van Buren Administration's attempts to curry favor with Southern politicians by accepting the Spanish claims for returning the slaves to Spanish owners, who were actually in violation of recent but unenforced Spanish law against the slave trade.

As in all historical films, there has to be a margin of artistic freedom for invention, going beyond what historians know. The issue is always whether or not the inventions are seriously anachronistic or in keeping with the time and place of the story. *Amistad* invents a moving conversation, taking place after the trial is over, between the black leader Cinque and Adams, who have come to hold each other in respect and affection. Cinque asks Adams how he found his winning words to the Court. Adams tells him that he had found them by remembering that the Negro had spoken of how in his tribe the search for wisdom always led backwards to its ancestors. We understand Adams's gracious reply, for during his argument we have seen him walk past the busts of Jefferson, Madison, Washington, and John Adams, before pointing to the preamble of a framed document on the wall, Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. Adams reminds the Court of the famous rhetoric about the "self-evident" truths that "all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

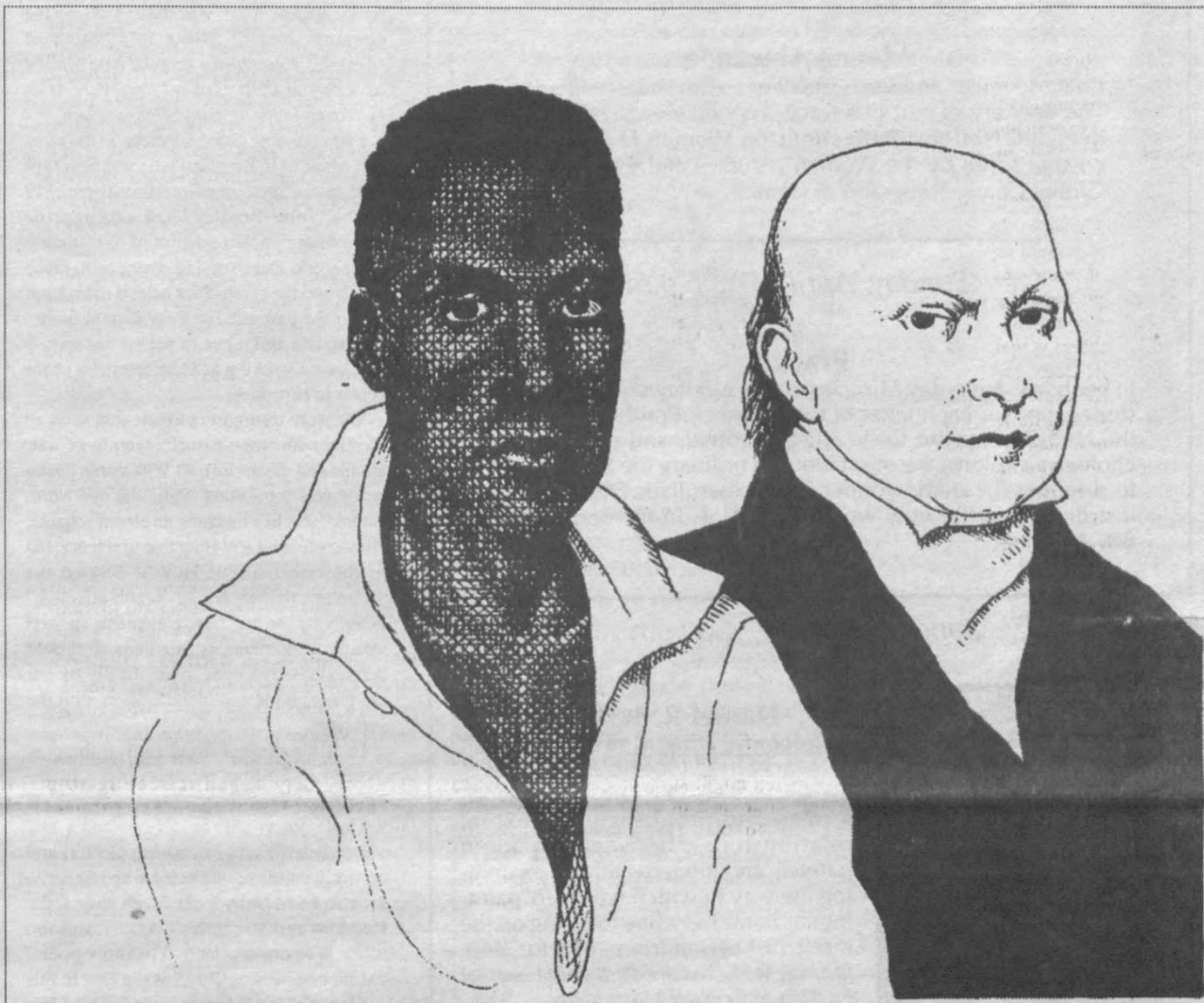
In historical fact there were two copies of the Declaration in gilded frames on the walls of the Court building, and Adams did refer to them. First, he read to the Court from the Official Journal of the Executive Administration, an article by a Southerner, which Adams believed was an attempt by the Van Buren administration to influence the Court; and he quoted its argument that "war, conquest, and force have produced slavery," as "the natural state of man," as proved by Cain's murder of his brother. "Is that a principle recognized by this Court?" Adams asked. Then, pointing to a framed copy of the Declaration, he went on: "Is it the principle of that declaration?"

He gave credit to "the bright intellect of the South" for clearly seeing that only the idea of war as the natural state of man could rightly serve as a cornerstone for slavery. Adams, as Emerson remarked, is "no literary old gentleman, but a bruiser, and loves the melee... He is an old roué who cannot live on slops, but must have sulphuric acid in his tea." Anthony Hopkins masterfully captures this combative side of the man, who was fretfully worried that he might lose the case by dint of his aging body's lack of endurance or his

inability to control his penchant for sarcastic indignation. In the film, Adams says to his fellow lawyers that the case is really about "the nature of man;" and in the Court, Adams took the high ground by saying "the moment you come to the Declaration of Independence, that every man has a right to life and liberty, an inalienable right, this case is decided. I ask nothing more in behalf of these unfortunate men than this Declaration."

the possible natural inferiority of the Negro, feared miscegenation, and endorsed the colonization of freed Negroes in Africa. The revisionists, however, ignore his later criticism of his earlier prejudiced speculation; and they obscure the agreement between him and Lincoln with respect to the colonization program—that it should last only until the Emancipation Proclamation. Moreover, they neglect the importance of Jefferson's

cal moments when the saddle jumped from the prick of the burr. There were ironies in that moment because the seaman, whom a Yale professor finds to act as translator for communicating with the Mende-speaking blacks, has been rescued from a slaver by the British, who had freed their own slaves and induced Spain to outlaw the importation of slaves into Spanish territory and to make freedom possible for those born to slave parents after 1820. The



Don Karr

The historian Simon Schama, writing in *The New Yorker* about *Amistad* and other films about history, thinks he has scored by saying that apparently we are supposed to forget that Jefferson owned about two hundred slaves and freed only five in his will. The criticism is in accord with a climate of opinion that has in recent years declared an open season against the master of Monticello. None of these revisionists has found any new evidence or any new psychological sophistication. Mostly they have reanimated old quarrels by appealing (as Conor Cruise O'Brien does) to conservatives, such as Edmund Burke, the enemy of the French Revolution that Jefferson supported, or (as Joseph P. Ellis does) to John Adams, whose political career, after their warm collaboration during the Revolution, led him into opposition to the new Democratic Party that Jefferson had built.

The revisionists have recycled older caricatures of Jefferson as a duplicitous politician, a parochial Virginian, or a visionary Francophile ideologist. John Quincy Adams' grandson Henry, in his great history of the administrations of Jefferson and Madison, called attention to his own fascination with Jefferson's "contradictions" in character and deed, but he cautioned that Jefferson, unlike most presidents, could not be drawn with broad strokes, but only with "a fine pencil" and a sensitivity to subtle lights and shadows. Not the revisionist historians, however, but a historical novelist, Max Byrd (*Jefferson*), has known how to use such a pencil.

The problem is posed by the facts that Jefferson did speculate prejudicially on

proposal that Congress, under the Articles of Confederation, prohibit slavery in any of the new territories after 1800, a provision that lost in 1784 by only one vote. A magisterial historian of slavery in Western culture, David B. Davis, has pointed out that while Jefferson's opposition to slavery was never public or unequivocal after 1784, if he had died then, he would have enjoyed the reputation of being "one of the first statesmen in any part of the world to advocate concrete measures for restricting and eradicating Negro slavery."

Jefferson and his colleagues belonged to a Revolutionary generation that did much to put slavery on the moral defensive in America; and Adams was faithful to that generation's best ideals in carrying on and extending that struggle with more moral passion and political consistency than Jefferson, who, as a member of the plantation economy, was ever able to attain. But by inscribing in the Declaration his formulation of a liberal republican philosophy of natural rights and a democratic government by the consent of the governed, Jefferson provided standards which reformers like Adams and Lincoln could treat as maxims for developing a free society. In doing so, as Robert Penn Warren pointed out, he "defined ourselves and what we stood for" in a document that put "a burr under the metaphysical saddle of America—you see that saddle's going to jump now and then as it pricks."

Steven Spielberg, with dramatic eloquence and unblinkered respect for the many ironies in the episode, has shown us in the Amistad affair one of those histori-

American enemy of '76 was now illustrating the point that John Quincy Adams made in Court about the Declaration's preamble.

The film eloquently portrays the blacks' sense of bewildered alienation in the strange new legal wrangling of the American world, and their curiosity about the Protestant Christianity of the New England abolitionists, who have befriended them as potential converts to the gospel. It gives vivid voice to Cinque's moving passionate appeal at the trial in New Haven: "Give us free! Give us free!" When they are at last freed by the decision of the Supreme Court, their ardent longing is for their African homeland in which they had first been kidnapped by fellow Africans and sold into slavery. The printed epilogue to the film tells us that when Cinque returns he finds his family sold into slavery and his homeland ravaged by civil war. When did you last see an American film about the race problem in which so many ironies of history were taken into account?

My only regret about the film is its irritatingly omnipresent musical soundtrack, which is seldom meaningful and often detrimental to hearing the dialogue.

Cushing Strout is the Ernest I. White Professor of American Studies and Humane Letters, Emeritus, Cornell University. His *Using a Knife instead of a Fine Pencil, a review of Joseph P. Ellis's American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson*, will appear in the Spring issue of *The Partisan Review*. A longer essay on the new revisionists is forthcoming in *The Sewanee Review*.

## Off Campus

## At The Bookery

This presentation is part of our ongoing series of readings and talks upstairs in the DeWitt Mall.

Saturday, April 4, 4:00 p.m.

## Meena Alexander,

Poet, novelist, and essayist Meena Alexander will speak at The Bookery as part of a three-day conference called "Genders and Nations: Reflections on Women in Revolution," co-sponsored by the Women's Studies and the Gender and Global Change programs at Cornell.

Sunday, April 5, 4:00 p.m.

## Prartho

In her book, *Everyday Miracles*, made up of twenty-six evocative stories, one for each letter of the alphabet, Prartho—a student of the Neo-Zen master Osho, single mother, and counselor/psychologist—explores the miraculous in ordinary life and inspires us to discover the daily wonder in our own lives. Once a Cornell instructor, Prartho now writes and paints in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Sunday, April 19, 4:00 p.m.



## Daniel R. Schwarz

In *Reconfiguring Modernism*, Prof. Schwarz brings together thirty years of experience on the subject of modernism and proposes inter-textual relationships between modern painters and modern authors, examining the way in which we "read" paintings as narrative while focusing on the modernist period from 1890 to 1940. Daniel R. Schwarz is a professor of English at Cornell University.

Sunday, April 26, 4:00 p.m.

## Meredith F. Small

Each culture, and often each family, offers advice and directives on the right and wrong way to raise and care for infants. In *Our Babies, Ourselves*, her groundbreaking book on "ethnopediatrics", Dr. Small discusses the way different cultural and ethnic caretaking styles affect the health, well-being, and survival of infants. Meredith F. Small is a professor of Anthropology at Cornell University.

Sunday, May 3, 4:00 p.m.

## Denise Gelberg

In *The "Business" of Reforming American Schools*, Dr. Gelberg describes how popular business management theories and production processes have been imported into schools during periods of societal upheaval to create a sense of order and efficiency while producing a workforce acceptable to employers. Denise Gelberg, Ph.D. teaches in the Ithaca School District.



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## Song of Herself

River of Stars: Selected Poems of  
Yosano Akiko

Sam Hamill and Keiko Matui Gibson,  
translators  
Shambhala Press,  
134 pages, \$11.00

## Edward Dougherty

Living in Hiroshima, the first city to experience nuclear war, I was startled to read the opening lines of Whitman's "Song of Myself": *I celebrate myself/ And what I assume you shall assume/ For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.*

I was standing on the streetcar, in the sway and whine of it, the metal pole was firm support in the motion of reading there. My friend, John Bradley, had sent me the Shambhala pocket edition of Whitman's great work, and over and over again, those words and the sympathies behind them leapt out of the past and from my distant homeland to live and move in me, as my spouse and I were working as volunteers at a peace center in Hiroshima.

We were trying to cultivate just such an identity with others (usually victims of war, atomic and otherwise), so Whitman's declaration was comforting. Still, that one word, "atom," was like touching an electric charge. How contemporary! How true to science and to the imagination! How it echoed the awareness that we are all "bomb-affected," literally by the radioactive elements spewed into the atmosphere by hundreds of nuclear detonations, and more symbolically by our compassion for and identification with the survivors.

In this context, I first heard of the poet Yosano Akiko from members of the Japanese women's movement. Most of the people we had contact with in our two and a half years at the World Friendship Center, and certainly those we interacted with regularly, were women. Many looked with envy at the freedom and strength of American (and other Western) women. Yosano's poem, "Mountain Moving Day," is the first in this collection of the "Modern-style Poems." It is a tribute to these same qualities in Japanese women:

*Mountains were just sleeping for a while.  
Earlier they had moved, burning with fire.*

Knowing how mountainous and volcanic the Japanese islands are, this image reflects the land and its people. Using the structure of haiku, the poem seems to be about geography, until the crucial pivot and the final couplet. Then the surprise-awareness brings the previous images into sharper focus:

*All the sleeping women move  
now that they awaken.*

From the perspective of a late 20th-century American, these words may feel almost quaint, but having lived in Japan (if only for a short time), I sense their power, their chal-

lenge, and their contemporaneity—the same vital experience I had with Whitman while in Asia.

The selection of Yosano's free verse and tight, five-line *tanka* is a lovely introduction to this book, and Sam Hamill and Keiko Matui Gibson do a fine job providing a context for her work. Her love life was scandalous in 1900, and I think would be even now, but its significance lay in the challenge it represented to the Emperor system.

The linchpin in the chain of causes that led to World War II, the Emperor system is a political, religious, and social network of loyalties that even now suffers little open protest. An excellent investigation of this is Norma Field's *In the Realm of a Dying Emperor: Japan at Century's End* (Random House 1993). Field's book profiles four individuals who openly defy the system for different reasons, and the strong reaction they provoke, including death threats from the radical right.

Yosano entered this fray during the Japan-Russo War of 1904. The editors and translators say

She was the first poet in Japanese history to publicly and openly criticize the emperor, an act which so infuriated the populace that her house was stoned.

It was not only the open defiance, but doing so in the context of war, which influenced people so much. The poem, "You Shall Not Be Killed, Brother!" mourns Yosano's younger brother in the "besieging army at Port Arthur."

*Did your parents raise you  
for twenty-four years  
to kill and to die?*

Using questions and appeals to him to think about others, Yosano extends her argument to the Emperor, himself.

*The honorable Emperor would not personally  
engage in the war.  
Since the Emperor's heart is so merciful,  
how could he possibly ask  
others to shed blood  
and die like beasts  
and believe dying is honor?*

Not all her poems are so openly social, but they all emerge from a depth of passion that cannot be contained by convention and custom. The book's substantial 127-page sampling of Yosano's poetry represents her range from sensuous (and angry and envious) love poems, sad farewells, and self-affirming gestures to these political/social pieces. Through them all, from the *tanka* to the looser free verse poems, Yosano sought "a poetry that requires the author to look directly into the heart to reveal the true emotional complexity found there," as Hamill and Gibson write in their introduction.

It is this honest rendering of human complexity that makes Yosano's poems seem so contemporary. As Whitman said in "Song of Myself," *Do I contradict myself?/ Well then I contradict myself. / I contain multitudes.*

Yosano writes:  
*In return for all  
the sins and crimes of men,  
the gods created me  
with glistening long black hair  
and pale, inviting skin.*

I heard many "sins and crimes" while in Hiroshima—women corralled by Japanese soldiers as sex slaves; biological and medical experiments done on POWs in Harbin, China by Unit 734; the wretched combat scenes all over the Pacific region; and the lifelong suffering of the survivors of the atomic bomb—just hearing them made me want to turn away. But if consolation can be found in the passion of a single human heart, it is certainly there in Yosano's verse. As she put it, "Poetry is the sculpture of real feelings."

Edward Dougherty is the former editor of *Mid-American Review*. His poems have appeared in *The Other Side*, *International Quarterly*, and *Abiko Quarterly*. He currently lives and works in Elmira, New York.



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Gary Kass

# Battle

continued from page 1

many, in a long critique in the *Journal of Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, upcoming) pinpoints substantial errors and oversights by Rubinstein.

It is evident that the preponderance of Holocaust survivors and scholars reject Rubinstein's thesis, and indeed have offered overwhelming testimony on the intransigence of U.S. and British immigration bureaucrats, including accounts by Jews who managed to escape wartime Europe. As a veteran book editor, I myself have read scores of manuscripts detailing horrifying instances of Jews denied help as well as accounts of almost incredible escapes.

In a related and most heated controversy, Goldhagen is demanding a retraction of the "fallacious, annihilative" charges against him in the new Holt book, *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*, by Ruth Birn and Norman Finkelstein. That book reprints the two authors' earlier articles, one by Birn in the *Historic Journal* (1997), the other by Finkelstein in the *New Left Review*. Holt has been urged by some to withdraw the book from publication. This has triggered violent disagreement among academic specialists, some endorsing publication of the book with blurbs, others denouncing it.

Meanwhile, fresh attention is being directed to earlier books, hitherto largely overlooked, that directly rebut the thesis that wartime efforts to rescue Jews would have been fruitless. Edwin Black's book of 1984, *The Transfer Agreement* (Macmillan), a winner of the Carl Sandburg Award for Nonfiction, recounts how 20,000 to 30,000 Polish Jews were enabled (though bankrupted by the Nazis) to reach safety in Palestine during the 1930's until 1941. And Alfred Kazin, a friend of the late Varian Fry, relates in his review (*New Republic* February 9, 1998) of the new exhibit "Assignment: Rescue, the Story of Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee" at the Jewish Museum in New York City, how approximately 2,000 persons, most of them prominent Jewish artists and intellectuals, were rescued from the Nazis in occupied France.

Stories by Holocaust survivors lucky enough to flee, a few with visas, and others who escaped by hook or crook, continue to be published. Typical is an upcoming book by Harvey Fireside, professor emeritus at Ithaca College, that graphically recounts the plight of Jews like himself as a boy in Vienna, who were victims of the American State Department spearheaded by the anti-Semitic Breckenridge Long, overseer of U.S. consular officials issuing visas. Breckenridge's infamous directive to consuls that visa applications be "postponed, postponed, postponed" has become a staple of evidence proving how anti-Semitic American bureaucrats thwarted the efforts to escape of many Jews. Fireside relates how he and his father were miraculously rescued and made it to America through Italy.

Rubinstein states his thesis bluntly: "Not one plan or proposal made anywhere in the democracies by either Jews or non-Jewish champions of the Jews once the mass murder of the Jews had begun, could have rescued one single Jew who perished in the Nazi Holocaust." He dismisses wartime plans to alleviate the suffering of Europe's Jews as "risible and fatuous." Even though he later admits that "some Jews" were indeed rescued or escaped, but these cases were "extremely limited in number and effect." Small wonder.

The most trenchant and comprehensive rebuttal of Rubinstein's position, and the

central topic of the February 8-9, 1998 Cardozo Law School conference, "The Holocaust: Moral and Legal Issues Unresolved 50 Years Later" is that the Nazi mass-murder of Jews became known to the British government through their decrypted radio intercepts in July and August of 1941. Rubinstein's incorrect contention is that the Allies were ignorant of the Nazis' genocide operations until 1943 and 1944. Panelists at the Cardozo Law School conference were virtually unanimous in questioning, if not condemning, Churchill and the highest echelons of the British government for their failure to warn the Jews and other potential victims of the Nazis' eliminationist plans, contending that many thousands, if not millions, of lives might have been saved.

Conference speakers dismissed the British excuse that no warning could have been given without revealing to the Germans that their secret codes had been broken, since precautionary warnings could well have been explained as generalized intelligence derived from agents and escaped witnesses. Instead, as Fredric Raphael writes (TLS, November 1997), as late as 1944, no warnings of the Nazi genocide were beamed in the direction of those who were being herded onto the trains which took them to their deaths. Raphael points out that "failure to come to the aid of (persons in danger) is now a crime in French law."

At the heart of the Cardozo Law School (Yeshiva) conference, and its most fascinating deliberation, was the issue of exculpation; the relative guilt or innocence of perpetrators and bystanders. While blame of the British for their failure to provide early warnings was unambiguous (and it was pointed out that their closing of Palestine as a potential Jewish refuge exacerbated the problem), the other Allied nations, notably the U.S. and the Soviet Union, also bore condemnation. What was left unanswered, was the date when the British first informed the others of their summer 1941 intercepts. It was established that, in March of 1944, President Roosevelt did repeatedly issue warnings, calling upon the citizens of Hungary, Germany, and other countries to resist their governments and personally help the Jews.

The gadfly journalist Sidney Zion, at the Harvard Club-Leo Baeck Institute symposium "F. D. R. and the Holocaust: Did the President do all He Could to Save European Jewry" summed up the reality in a bitter (if overstated) reproach to the cliché excuse that the only way to save the Jews was to win the war: "We won the war and all the Jews were dead, so thank you very much for the notion that all we had to do was win the war and we'd save the Jews."

At that same Harvard Club symposium, John Weitz, author of biographies of Ribbentrop and Schacht, and himself a Jewish German emigré who became a wartime O.S.S. hero, declared, "I came to the conclusion quite clearly that we—the Jews—just didn't matter that much. There were other things that were more important." This put me in mind of several private meetings and luncheons I had attended with the late John McCloy. While McCloy was not anti-Semitic as the point man under World War Two Secretary of War Stimson, he might have successfully argued for the bombing of Auschwitz or its railheads. But he had other priorities, other loyalties, for him the Jews "didn't matter enough."

Edward T. Chase is the former editor-in-chief of New York Times Books and senior editor at Scribner.

## Hero of the Hive

You are the bee who dances and in dancing tells the others where the flowers are.

Nothing so crude as "left at the third traffic light." Here, a single wing flap wrong could spell disaster.

There is pollen and there is not pollen, and most of the world is not pollen.

You are the one who figured out the way, and remembered the way.

No two bees could do what you have done.

Are you the same as Wednesday's bee or Thursday's bee, or does every day bring a new hero of the hive?

But this is not every day. This is this day, and you are the bee who is dancing.



## First Encounters

You are early *homo sapiens* encountering neanderthal man for the first time: It happens in Germany or France.

You're just out to pick up some eggs or meat, and you stop to contemplate (hey, you can contemplate) those holes in the sky where the light drips through at night when, boom, you're face to face with him. Not entirely unfamiliar (your oversized brain processes this information at lightning speeds)—your brother-in-law has that same flat head and simple face, but this is different:

it's obvious that this one is actually *supposed* to look this way—it seems to suit him. You bite your tongue to keep from swaggering into, "this town isn't big enough..."

He, bless his soul, signals you over to his cave, which he shows you proudly. Very quaint and rustic, a sort of primitive...

Wait, what's that over there? Appears to be a type of crude burial area.

You may have underestimated him:

these people do understand what it means when one of them dies. You can't help wondering, in some wicked, knowing little way, if they understand what it means for all of them to.

You make a note to yourself to educate them in that regard.

—Steve Friedman

Steve Friedman is a lawyer and poet who lives in Philadelphia.

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# Something Rotten

## Christopher Furst

Paul West, author of sixteen novels and several nonfiction books, is a prolific and original voice in contemporary fiction. His work combines stylistic boldness with metaphoric power, and ranges through several periods of history: Victorian London in *The Women of Whitechapel*, the rape of Nanking in *The Tent of Orange Mist*, the life of a young John Milton in *Sporting with Amaryllis*. *Terrestrials*, his

PW: You see, the answer is that these images just come and I use them. I don't inspect them for their overt meaning.

CF: Which brings me to another point, the word "gratuitous," in the sense of something "freely given."

PW: At least as I experience the act of writing, the writer is given a great deal. People who ask questions about the act of writing always assume that every-

I'm trying to sum up the experience; it's very difficult to do. It seems to me writing happens on various levels simultaneously. One is the level of the architectonic, another is texture, and there are many other levels as well: interruption, the level of the lost form, the thing that won't come back because you're doing something else, so you waste time looking for it. All of this goes into the act of writing.

CF: This sounds very much like the

write a posthumous book in which I name names. And nail nails.

CF: Do you have a title?

PW: I do. I'm going to call it *Something Rotten*. It will not be that long. It'll have its good side, its genial side, but the chapter that will count is called "Proctology."

CF: Sounds like something Rabelais would write.



Photo by Kathy Morris

most recent novel, follows the story of two American spyplane pilots shot down over Africa, and the aftermath of their lives stateside. It explores friendship and betrayal, the poetry and technology of flight, and the seismic adjustment to ordinary life for old Cold Warriors.

West has received the Lannan Prize for Fiction, and *The Tent of Orange Mist* was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Sven Birkerts calls West "one of our heroic writers. Reading his novels, we remember that style wedded to imagination is a nitroglycerin compound."

I visited him in Ithaca to talk about his work, imagination, and the state of current fiction.

CF: Let's talk about the inspiration for your most recent book, *Terrestrials*.

PW: There was some idea plucking away at me and finally a phrase came through: "The paradox of the fortunate fall." It came back. Here are these two elite, rather self-satisfied, heroic spies suddenly brought down into the African desert. It's a fortunate fall because they come to learn more about themselves and they discover that life can be lived on a much lower plane. It's almost an allegorical novel, though that wasn't necessarily my intention.

CF: You have these fallen angels landing on the burning lake right there at the beginning.

thing you do is calculated and deliberate and planned. But a great deal of what I do is done in a sort of trance-like condition. I get into a receptive state of mind and something begins to arrive. One of the fancy words, which I guess still is current, is "donnée." It's a gift—a phrase, or a scene, or a sentence. You say, thank God, or thank somebody, and write it down, then something else arrives. Only people with a sort of erector-set mentality masquerade successfully as wholly calculating. I think anyone working on a fairly ambitious level who claims he is deliberate is a liar. Or else he has no imagination, no inspiration.

CF: And yet the architecture comes through in what you do.

PW: Well, it will have architecture. I've discovered that, maybe because the mind is the way it is, architecture builds itself. You don't write without architecture. It's second nature to build it and to construct it carefully as you go. Do I have a systematic plan? Not really. I very often plan things in the act of writing.

CF: You experiment sentence by sentence.

PW: Yes. The experimentation is on the level of texture. There is another piece of the mind that is carefully guiding what is going on along the way—

Romantic idea of inspiration.

PW: It's a dirty word nowadays. If you're going to write for a living and you don't have inspiration, your life is going to be very, very difficult. You'll never be dragged screaming into the next book by a new idea. The problem with wannabees is that they either don't want to do the work, or can't face the kind of honesty you have to cultivate. You have to say I know what works for me, and work within that. Most people won't do that. They'll want a formula—how do I write a well-made novel?

CF: I'm thinking of the journalistic attack on so-called flowery writing.

PW: A lot of people slam away at what they call self-indulgence: Fancy, flowery, artsy-fartsy. They wholly ignore a great deal of the best literature. Don't forget the female judge at the National Book Award, who, apropos of nobody and nothing, screamed into the phone while we were having a conference call, "I'm sick and tired of all this masturbatory writing." And nobody knew what she meant. So I asked who's written masturbatory work? She said Proust, Faulkner, Joyce, Nabokov, Woolf. Two of us started to laugh. I asked her what was wrong with masturbation anyway. She had no idea what she was talking about. That was her slam. I have a lot to say about the literary world, and I haven't finished. I want to

PW: Rabelais is not a bad precursor.

CF: He has a list of what his ecclesiastical enemies were doing in hell.

PW: You're right. He was one of the first writers I latched onto. My God, what wonderful freedom to do this, almost what you like. I guess people don't read the Marquis de Sade, either. Well, I got a little bored with him. Rabelais is so much better than Sade. He's more interesting. The trouble with Sade is he's monotonous, he never saw the opposite. With really good writers like Beckett and Nabokov you always get the other idea, a shadowing. These people have enough wit to see the opposite of what they're doing and that always invigorates whatever goes on. In Nabokov you have the handsome son of well-to-do arty parents, but there's always the specter of total deprivation, of all this being removed and becoming a displaced person in Berlin. That's what makes Nabokov so powerful: there's the panoply and then only a millimeter away is total deprivation. I was thinking of his story "Solus Rex," about a fellow who thinks he has solved the riddle of the universe. He checks into a hotel so as to concentrate on the problem even more, and then they hear him screaming in his room. It's one of Nabokov's more enigmatic stories.

CF: Stylistically it foreshadows *Pale Fire*. He was working on it just before he

# in the State of Fiction

sailed from France in 1940, and he wished that he'd continued it, for it promised to open up a new stylistic avenue in Russian.

PW: I think it's Nabokov's most Beckettian piece, and why didn't he finish it? I suppose the answer is that he couldn't. He'd reached the unsayable.

CF: Nabokov used to teach a course that students nicknamed "Dirty Lit."

PW: Well, Dirty Lit would be a good course. I'm not sure I have not taught it in my time. Proust is dirty lit, according to certain critics. They call him "mauvy" Proust, who writes dirty things about brothels and rats. They ignore the 99% that's not about brothels and rats. However, dirty Proust is a great consolation to me. He's not a phrasemaker. I was thinking the other day of the writers I still read, Faulkner and Proust, are not phrasemakers. They have a very peculiar noise that they make, and they tend to make their effects by piling things up, whereas writers like Nabokov, and maybe even Beckett, are phrasemakers. Very often a line of Beckett has more punch than a whole paragraph of some of these other guys. So I'm grateful for Beckett. Not the plays, though. I don't get much from the plays. But the novels — superb stuff to reread, you get much more on the second and third reading. I don't think Beckett realized how close he was to himself in some of those. Someone told me they had to strap him in his chair in his last months while he watched TV. That was it. If there's anything more Beckettian than being strapped in your chair and watching TV, with no cricket, what a fate. That was pure, pure Murphy.

CF: Talk about being absorbed by a character in your own fiction.

PW: I taught Beckett's fiction for twenty years, and I had enormous fun, and my students had fun. They used to write to him and he would send them presents, autographed books, always in French. Then they would come with trembling hands saying, "Beckett wrote to me! And he sent me this." There it was, scrawled away.

CF: Look at the different kinds of styles he wrote in—the early freer style and then the later, pared-down one that's nothing like the kind of minimalism you get from its practitioners here.

PW: With Beckett—I wouldn't use the word minimalism—it's a Swiftian economy. He has this wonderful mind behind it all, so that even if he seems pared down, it's only to make a certain phrase more pungent and copious beyond all measure. Beckett is in the business of distillation, of being concise. But what's being made concise is enormous learning and a vast amount of upset.

CF: One thing I see you doing in *Terrestrials* is pay homage to Beckett.

PW: Yes. I learned a lot from Beckett. Perhaps all that people learn from him is the courage of their own phrasemaking. Some say Beckett comes out of the tradition of phrasemaking, and some say I come out of the tradition of stream of consciousness. I don't think there's a stream of consciousness. There's a puddle, or there's a pool, or there's a swamp. I think I straddle both schools, and people don't know what to do with me. It seems to me that — what did Nathalie Sarraute call it? — subconversation, that's not really had its full play in the novel. People think a lot more than they actually say. Some of that is worth exploring, as she discovered. I've

always wanted to do that. So in this case, although it's clear they're occupied with physical procedures, especially flying the plane, they also have bundles of thoughts that could be expressed, although they themselves are not doing so.

CF: This seems to me much more interesting than the straitened idea that such and such a character is limited by a certain education, a certain job, and therefore could never think such thoughts.

PW: I remember people in publishing houses used to push this and say, well, you can only write about a child in a child's language. I've never heard such twaddle in my life. A competent narrator will write in narratorial language, whatever that narrator wants to do. It has nothing to do with a child's idiom.

CF: Imagine Benjy writing his section of *The Sound and the Fury*.

PW: I'm very glad he didn't. It's very strange to find people who say, here's an orchestra, and the one thing we don't want is a conductor. They want them all playing their own version.

CF: Even John Cage conducts, if you will.

PW: John Cage is a very interesting figure, especially with *Prepared Piano*. If you're dealing with an ancient language like English, you're dealing with a prepared piano anyway. You have all of its conversations, all of its previous uses, as well as the way the thing has shaped itself through people's epiglottises. I find that absolutely fascinating. You're not dealing with something that was invented in 1945. It's something that goes back to Indo-European, the squawks and harumphs of people whose names we'll never know. Literature can do a lot of things. It can be almost musical in its effects, probably more than musical. You have to live dangerously to do it. You need your Rabelais behind you, and Henry James, Proust, Djuna Barnes and Woolf. These are the great models.

CF: Do you think American writing is becoming parochial?

PW: You've raised a very interesting point, and that is, in a sense — putting poetry aside for a minute — fiction has almost no standing as an art form. It's regarded as, I don't know what category it's in, imitation margarine. It's supposed to be a commonplace, mercantile thing like toothpaste, to be used and spat out. Not pondered, or kept, or given as a present. I think the attitude of people towards nonfiction has a lot to do with this. They say in some sort of censorious, puritanical way that fiction is not real, that fiction is cowardly and evasive, blah blah blah. Well, it always was. Fiction is metaphorical. It isn't documentary. I'm not sure where this notion came from that fiction is documentary. Maybe it's because initially, in say, the 18th century when fiction began to grow, it was an instrument used by a specific social class for defining itself.

CF: And there's Defoe writing things that look very much like documentaries.

PW: Which is entertaining, provided you don't regard it as a novel. The novel is a wholly different growth. But it didn't begin to become so only in the 19th century, it was already there in people like Rabelais and Thomas Nashe.

CF: And if you go back to the Romans —

PW: And the Greeks. They're taking licentious liberties. Somebody like Longus is taking liberties way back when.

CF: The *Satyricon*, too.

PW: That's a good example. Why punish fiction for appearing to become what it has always been. I don't know, I haven't figured it out. It has to do with puritanism, it has to do with hypocrisy. People somehow don't like to be caught reading ambitious fiction. I don't know why.

CF: You seem to have a more receptive audience in Europe, especially France.

PW: The most considered, most imaginative, most pensive accounts of my stuff come from the French, most often in *Le Monde*, which is a very friendly newspaper. They always give me the front page. They have a small team who write about serious fiction. I'm very grateful to Gallimard and the French critical reviewing constituency. With them, you don't have to argue the seriousness of fiction. It's a given. In America, and I think in England too, and possibly in Germany, fiction has somehow lost its clout. But not in Latin America.

I don't know why this curious inhibition about fiction, which is actually the magic carpet, and always was — read the *Arabian Nights* for God's sake — it's a means of transporting your imagination in the context of the writer's imagination. Fiction is there to supplant the world that is around you, and if it's not doing that I'm not sure its fiction. It's like this idiot who reviewed me when *Amaryllis* came out. He belabored the point that, in fact, Milton did not have a black girlfriend, and how could I presume that he did. And how could I read Milton's mind? Didn't I know Milton was dead? And on and on. The other book he reviewed with mine was also about Milton, Milton in America. He actually went to the trouble of saying we know well that Milton did not go to America, as if this has any bearing on anything. Here is this gorgeous implement, the imagination, and people keep bitching at it, saying it's not trustworthy, its dangerous, it'll provoke revolution. Damn right. I'm the guy who makes Stauffenberg [Count Von Stauffenberg, in *The Very Rich Hours of Count Von Stauffenberg*] narrate in English his own execution twice, and then go on to write the novel. Malraux, in talking about art, had the right idea: There's nothing new. The things that Picasso was doing are things that were done in Africa long before. And today, the magic realists are just reclaiming ancient privileges. One should. The Bible is a monument to magical realism. Perhaps people would find 20th-century literature a lot easier if they realized how old-fashioned it was. Guy Davenport likes to bring in the classics, mixed with Kafka. It's an exciting mix, but he gets little thanks for it.

CF: Just think if Shakespeare had never used the classics or Renaissance sources. Not a single play set in Italy, nothing set in Rome, nothing based on Holinshed.

PW: I used to say to my writing students, God help them, always write about what you don't know. For instance, if you're determined to write and you say to yourself, what do I know about train stations in Sebastopol. The answer, obviously, is nothing. Well, go and get a guidebook and find out.

Research it. imagine what it's like to go from station to station in Sebastopol.

CF: We've seen a spate of dramatizations of Jane Austen novels. Do you think that movies and television are reviving the public's interest in reading?

PW: They claim this is generating a whole new generation of readers. But what are they reading? They're reading kitsch. There's almost nothing else. If publishers insist on making 20 percent profit, instead of the traditional three, or at most five, and have gotten rid of their best editors, and are humiliating their best authors, by and large not buying the books they write, then the kitsch is going to take over. And they will make their 20 percent, which is utterly contrary to the old idea of publishing as a "gentleman's profession" in which you expected to lose money on literature and pay for it by producing books on chess and cooking.

CF: And some publishers engage in the cant of saying they give the public what they want.

PW: The public is not as gullible and dense as some booksellers and publishers, but the public is being swindled. They're being told there's no cake, that they'll have to eat stale bread the rest of their lives. Because if they eat cake they will get above themselves somehow, they will become intellectuals. So people are surrounded by all this swill. Badly conceived books — they're really non-books.

CF: What are you working on now?

PW: I've finished a novel about Wyatt Earp that should be released next year. I enjoyed making up the letters he writes to a nun. And I'm working on a novel that deals with the Gunpowder Plot and Catholic martyrs.

Chris Furst is a freelance writer living in Ithaca.

## A Brief Review of Ted Hughes' *Birthday Letters*

From England comes exciting news: Breaking at last his vow of silence, The Poet Laureate, Ted Hughes, Recalls at length the misalliance Between himself and Sylvia Plath. He was, he feels, cast as the baddy, Made the object of her wrath, Because she saw in him 'Daddy', Who died when she was only eight. For him the story is simple and sad: Sylvia was the victim of Fate; Otto's betrayal drove her mad.

But here's the problem with Ted's theory (This he still has not confessed): His postpartum infidelity Left her alone, angry, depressed. Granted, he could not have known She soon would commit suicide, But once her fragile life had flown, How could his fault be denied? That blame should be affixed is not The moral of this tragic tale. Responsibility's our lot: It must be taken when we fail.

—John Bowers

John Bowers is a professor of linguistics at Cornell.

## Fiction

## Dahab

Louis Friedman

We had coffee with Ezra in the dining room at six a.m., then followed him out to the dusty white pickup loaded with crates of fresh green and yellow mangos. I sat in the middle so Ezra wouldn't stroke Kati's leg or brush past her breast every chance he could. I wanted to avoid anything that would mar our last few days together, even though she assured me these wouldn't be our last days at all.

We drove south through a barren landscape: desert to one side and sea to the other, no trees, houses, no telephone poles. Mostly we were surrounded by relentless blue sky. Ezra was a quiet old Yemani who spoke little English, even though he had a Canadian wife and eleven children back at the kibbutz. Now and then he'd smile, point to something, and make a comment in a guttural, unintelligible Hebrew. We passed Ein Bokek, Masada and Sodom that way, then stopped for felafel in Arad before descending into the Arava Valley and the long final approach to Eilat. Ezra was in a hurry, and by noon he was dropping us off at the main square.

Eilat seemed like a big city to two people accustomed to quiet rural life. Kati and I looked both ways before crossing the street and consulted each other on every decision. We did manage to buy candles, bottled water, cigarettes. I put a bottle of vodka on the counter at the store, and Kati came up behind with two more.

"We can use these for trading in Sinai," she said.

All stocked, we took a bus along the beach to the border crossing. I watched the shore as we drove, and beyond it the Jordanian town of Aqaba, Eilat's estranged sister city, looking like the poor relative that she was, a shoddy and distorted reflection of Eilat in the sparkling water of the bay.

The border crossing was at Taba; it wasn't much. Nations had squared off over these four hundred yards of brown dirt beach front, but I couldn't see why. The bus let us off near a white mobile home with several army jeeps parked outside. A large sign announced in three languages, "ISRAEL PASSPORT CONTROL." Inside, four people shuffled paperwork behind a cheap plywood counter. A girl in an army uniform yawned and took my passport. She didn't open it, just looked at the gold American eagle stamped on the blue cover. She lazily brushed the embossed emblem with the pad of her thumb. Kati's Swedish passport received greater scrutiny.

"You understand," the soldier said, I'm only doing this for your own protection. She emptied Kati's pack onto the counter and examined each item. "Has anyone given you any letters or packages to deliver for them?"

"No."

"Who packed your bag?"

"I did."

"Where did you pack it?"

"At Kibbutz Ein Gedi."

"Do you know Miriam's husband?"

"Ezra? He drove us to Eilat this morning."

The girl smiled and stamped the passport. Israel is a small country; we weren't surprised the girl knew people at Ein Gedi.

We exited into bright sunlight. Three hundred yards down the highway stood the tan buildings that marked the Egyptian side of the border. As we approached I saw a fence across the road, and soldiers with machine guns. Beyond were many buildings and vehicles. I tensed as I neared the first soldier. I was in sandals and kibbutz indigo shorts, my rolled up tee shirt serving as a shoulder pad for the duffel of provisions slung over my shoulder. Passport held before me like a shield, I walked through the gate with no eye contact, head rigid, eyes looking straight ahead to the looming mountains of Sinai on the horizon. Kati trudged along beside me, her football matching mine as we crossed the border in a single stride. Another soldier pointed us to the first building in a dusty row of wooden cabins where a man in an officer's uniform sat at a single desk. His was the only chair in the room.

"Passport," he demanded. He held out his hand and we each gave him our passport. He

leafed through them. "You need insurance stamp. You go Sinai, you need stamp. Next door." He turned his head back to the newspaper on his desk. We walked out and over to the next cabin. A sign read INSURANCE OFFICE. There a man sold us stickers for ten dollars each. We took them to the next in the row of buildings, this one labeled BANK. A man with a tie licked our stamps and placed them in our passports. He inked a large seal and pressed a red emblem over the stamps. We each gave him twenty dollars and he gave us each fifteen dollars' worth of Egyptian money.

"Commission." He smiled. Then there were no more buildings, only another gate where another soldier looked at my passport with its stamp and seal, handed



Adam Berenstein

it back to me and waved me through. I walked through the gate and into Sinai, then stood and waited for Kati. The soldier was taking a little more time with her, talking and trying to joke. I looked away. There was a bare stretch beside the road that was being used as a parking lot. Several decrepit taxis were parked, their Bedouin drivers waiting for business. There was a dilapidated bus also, an old Leyland Royal Tiger. Next to it, a small group of prospective passengers sat awaiting departure. I wanted to reach Dahab quickly, before the group waiting for the bus. I approached a Bedouin boy sitting on a battered light blue Peugeot. "How much to Dahab?" "How many people?" "Two." "Five. Each." "Three. For both." "No." "O.K. Here is five for two. Take it." I held it out to him and he took it. We tossed our gear in the trunk and climbed into the back seat; the driver returned to his seat on the hood. "Let's go," I called. He ignored me. I got out and walked to him. "Come on." "I wait," he said. "For what?" "More people." I looked back at the border crossing. It was a dusty still life, no one moving, and on the road beyond, no one walking down from Taba. "There are no more people," I told him.

"More come," he replied with confidence.

"How many do you need?"

"With five I go."

I walked over to the bus and the small crowd waiting to board. "I have a taxi to Dahab with room for three more. Five bucks apiece, same as the bus. Let's go; we're leaving now." There was some conversation and then three people came out of the pack, Germans, two girls and a boy. We all climbed into the Peugeot and the driver, Hamed, fired up and departed.

Kati and I sat in the front seat with Hamed, the three Germans in back. They were volunteers from a kibbutz in Galilee. It was hot in the car even with the windows open, and after the first few minutes we ran out of things to say. There was something hypnotic about the drab Sinai landscape rolling past, the

monotonous droning of the old Peugeot's motor, the rhythmic flapping of a patch on one tire. Kati fell asleep, slumped against the door. I reached over her and pressed the lock down. In the back seat the German girls were both dozing. Fritz, the German boy, was smoking and staring out the window at the sea. I pulled out a pack of cigarettes, lit one, and handed it to Hamed. He looked about twelve years old, thin and dark. He wore a Bedouin kaffiyah, torn jeans, no shoes, and a tee shirt with the single word DISCO. He sucked on the cigarette extravagantly. I lit one for myself. "You live at Dahab?" I asked him.

"I Dahab? No. Na'ama." Na'ama was another village farther down the coast. "Na'ama very beautiful. Tourists come to see algom."

"What is it?"

"Plants in the water."

"Coral?"

"Yes, corals. Beautiful corals." He took a last draw of the cigarette and tossed the butt out the car window. I had been at Na'ama once before, ten years earlier. It was Sharm el Sheik then, we made it one word - Sharmelshak. The Israelis razed Sharm when they left, and Na'ama sprang up haphazardly soon afterwards. I had seen the coral then; beautiful. But since then Egyptian fisherman had worked the reef with dynamite. Their explosions stunned the fish and sent them floating to the surface to be picked up in nets. In a few years the reefs were mostly destroyed, and the fish scarce. A shame.

I looked out the window; the terrain we were passing was flinty and barren: low stone hills, vast fields of scree, high mountains misty in the distance. Gradually the hills got taller and closer to the road. They were granite, dull greens and reds mottled with veins of black. Kati awoke. "Where are we?" she asked.

"Halfway," I answered her.

She lay her head against my shoulder. "I feel good. I'm happy we're together." She squeezed my hand in hers.

"Me too," I said.

We reached Dahab in the late afternoon. Hamed dropped us off on the highway outside of town. He was going on to Na'ama. We stood on the road getting everything out of the taxi and one of the German girls asked me, "Where are you staying?"

I nodded toward the cluster of low huts nestled in a crotch of the bay. "Over there, in a hoshah."

"Do you think there is one for us?"

"I don't know. Probably. Ask." I picked up my bags and Kati and I walked away. The Germans held a little conference. I waved to them, and we walked the hundred meters or so to the village.

A small boy ran over to us as we entered the ring of grass huts. "You want hoshah?"

"Yes."

"Come." He led us to a hut in the circle. I shook my head and pointed to one nearer the sea.

"That one."

"O.K." We walked over to it and the boy pushed open the low metal door, a piece of sheet scrap fastened on with twine. The floor was clean sand, the walls reed, the ceiling dried palm fronds. We negotiated the price, agreeing on a dollar a night. I gave the boy a pack of cigarettes and told him to bring me some of the local Bedouin tobacco in exchange. He nodded and left.

Kati went looking around while I set up the hut. I spread blankets in the sand and put our bags in the corner farthest from the door. I buried the passports a foot deep in the sand floor, then lay down on the blanket for a nap. When I awoke it was twilight. Kati was asleep beside me. It was colder, and a breeze off the bay rustled the palm fronds above us. I shook Kati awake.

She opened her eyes and didn't know where she was for a second. There was a flash of terror on her face and then she relaxed. "I'm hungry," she said.

Outside the ring of huts, lined up down the beach were other, larger buildings, cafes and Bedouin teahouses also made of reeds, fronds, and scrap. The first one we came to was a low structure, open toward the sea. Inside were shallow pits dug in the sand with a fire in each pit. Around the pits sat people on carpets, drinking tea, eating, playing backgammon and talking. There were torches stuck in the sand on either side of the doorway and tinny reggae music blared from a tape deck hidden in a back room.

We saw the three Germans. They called us to join them. "I see you decided to stay in the village," I said to them as we sat down. Fritz didn't look very impressed with Dahab so far but the two girls were excited. "Isn't this great?" gushed the shorter one. I hadn't noticed in the taxi so much but she was unusually beautiful. The flickering light from the fire glinted red and gold on her hair, her teeth glistened. It was hard not to stare at her. Fritz began to look even less impressed. Kati was busy talking to the other girl, Geli. They were Rika and Geli. I didn't know which one Fritz was with - maybe he didn't know yet himself. A lot of people come to Dahab to decide things like that. We ordered food, and sat and talked around the fire. Some other people joined us, a Dutch couple, an American, three Israelis. It was surprising to see them there. Most Israelis stopped coming to Sinai after the shooting at Ras Burka a year before, but these three were unconcerned. They were city boys, chachakim from south Tel Aviv, down on the Sinai coast to party and maybe to meet some traveling women. One of them was already sitting next to Rika. Their heads were close together and they were laughing at something.

We ate rice and felafel then washed it down with tea. Fritz lit a joint and passed it around the circle. We watched the full moon rise over the Saudi coast. It came

# Dahab

over the tops of the mountains gold, and turned silver as it rose. The tide rose with it, and the water was lapping the edge of the teahouse, a few feet from where we sat.

"Tomorrow begins Ramadan," one of the Israelis was saying to Fritz. "There will be fasting all day and a big feast at sundown." Suddenly the atmosphere in the teahouse seemed stifling. The long ride down and the nap had given me a headache, and I was tired of watching the interaction at the teahouse. Kati was playing backgammon with one of the Israelis, her back to me. I got up, walked down the beach and stood at the water's edge. Everything seemed wrong. Kati wanted to have a good time here, but I couldn't get the thought out of my mind that I'd never see her again after she got on the airplane back to Sweden. I stared out at the sea, the small waves black and silver in the moonlight. Nothing ever goes as planned. I felt guilty for not being satisfied, for not remaining in the teahouse and socializing.

"What are you doing?" a voice behind me asked. I turned: Rika. Her eyes seemed to shine.

"Looking," I answered. "What are you doing?"

She smiled. "I wanted to talk to you. When I turned around you were gone. Is something the matter?"

"No. I just felt like walking on the beach."

"May I join you?"

"Why not?"

We walked along the beach in silence. A few hundred yards away from the Bedouin village we came to the trunk of a palm tree lying half embedded in the sand. We sat on it and watched the breakers come in. Rika asked me if Kati was my girlfriend.

"Yes. But in two days she'll be back home in Sweden."

"What will you do then?"

"I don't know. Go back to my kibbutz, I guess."

"Will you see her again?"

"I don't think so."

"Do you want to come to Na'ama with me?"

I looked at her. "Aren't you with Fritz?" She made a face. "Not at all."

"I'd like to come to Na'ama with you. That wouldn't be very fair to Kati though, would it?"

"I don't know. That is between you and her."

We stood facing each other. In my mind Kati was nearly gone, already receding. But we had to finish it out.

"I guess not," I said to Rika.

"I understand. Maybe we better walk back now. Your girlfriend is probably wondering what happened to you." She spoke without sarcasm, but it stung me to hear it like that.

I walked Rika back to the teahouse but I didn't go in. Instead I returned to my hut

and stretched out on a blanket. It was dark, broken slivers of moonlight seeping in through the roof of palm fronds. The cool sea breeze blew through the reed walls. I fell into a dreamless sleep.

"Sweet sweet." I awoke.

"Sweet sweet," a voice called from outside. A shaft of sunlight was square in my face, through a hole in the roof. Kati was sprawled next to me, still asleep. I poked my head out the rusty metal door and saw a small Bedouin girl, five or six years old, standing outside the hut. In her hand she clutched a wad of flat Bedouin pita bread dripping with honeywater, the typical Dahab breakfast. I bought two and brought them inside. I shook Kati gently to wake her and we had breakfast, spitting out the grit that was on the pita. The sun was already high and it was warm in the hut. We would go for a swim.

Outside, in the circle of huts, everyone was preparing for the day. The Israelis were haggling with a Bedouin sitting in a taxi. Fritz was buying some pitas from the little girl. In front of the teahouse an old Bedouin with some chickens was negotiating with the Sudanese proprietor. They were too far away for me to hear, but I could see what was going on. The old man clutched the chickens by their legs and they hung upside down, limp and thin, their heads brushing the dirt. The Sudani had his arms out to the side and his palms turned upward as if saying, "That's as high as I can go."

Farther away, on the other side of the huts back towards the highway, two people were loading backpacks into the trunk of a taxi. A flash of blonde reflected in the sun. Rika, on her way to Na'ama. With her was Jeff, the quiet American from the teahouse the night before. So I turned away, vaguely jealous though I had no reason to be.

Kati came out and we walked up the beach. Beyond the huts were pens filled with sheep, goats, and camels. The beach was littered with their droppings. We continued past that place and walked several kilometers until we could only just see the Bedouin village, tiny huts around the curve of the bay. We didn't talk much as we walked. I had nothing to say, and Kati was still half asleep.

We came to a place we liked. There was an indentation in the beach, another palm tree half buried, sideways in the sand. We put our things down on the tree trunk and waded into the sea. It was waist deep as far out as I wanted to go, the water warm and clean. I dove under and then came up just as a wave broke over my head. I swallowed some sea water and let myself be washed back up on the shore. Enough play. I came out and stood dripping in the sand. Kati was swimming, thirty or forty yards out. She dove, then surfaced nearby, then under again.

I lay on my towel by the section of palm tree and watched her. The sun was already high and beginning to bake the beach with a dangerous intensity. I couldn't see any colors; everything was a glaring black and white. Kati still swam, a little farther out. There were sharks in these waters but it wasn't something to worry about. A shark attack never happens to someone you know. When she dove her feet flashed white in the sun and then a moment later her head would come up.

There were books lying on her towel with her things. I picked one up. Kurt Vonnegut in Swedish. I started leafing through it and a sheet of paper fell out. It was a half-written letter that began "Kare Jan," Dear Jan. I don't read Swedish so it seemed harmless to look at it. Halfway down the page I came to a sentence I did recognize though, one Kati had taught me, "Alske dig," Swedish for "I love you." The letter was dated a week earlier. I carefully replaced it in the book and put it back with her other things. Now I understood why Kati insisted on returning to Sweden first instead of coming to the States with me in the fall. I didn't feel anything about it really. Everything seemed all right. I wasn't offended. My sense of unease vanished. Now I understood the quietness, the awkwardness, the long looks Kati had been giving me. She knew as well as I that we wouldn't see each other again after this trip.

Kati came out of the water and stood in front of me, dripping on the sand. It was a hot and beautiful day. I squinted up at her from where I lay on the towel, the sea behind her and then far off across the water, mountains. I wanted to say something but I couldn't say what I felt. It was a pang, a sudden fondness, almost love, a regret, a flash of realization that someone was waiting for her back home.

"Maybe you shouldn't go to Sweden, Kati. Why don't we just stay here?"

"Forever? I don't think so."

"Sure?"

"Yes."

There was no more to say. I wondered how soon Rika would arrive in Na'ama. Kati lay on her towel and picked up the Vonnegut book. I sat up and looked around. Behind me, across the beach was a stand of palms. Beyond that, a wide empty, rocky field stretching all the way to the road that paralleled the beach, the highway back to Taba. Beyond that, the high mountains of Sinai loomed, their tops faintly lavender in the mix of sunlight and haze. On the rocky field before the road was movement. A string of camels, tiny in the distance, plodded northward, a rider on the rearmost beast.

Louis Friedman is a writer and teacher in Cincinnati, Ohio. His story, *Tel Aviv Bus Station*, was published in *Jewish Currents* magazine.

## St. Barths

The stealthy sigh of night  
Smells of money.  
There are no discs here  
No La Bamba Samba band,  
No glad-ragged rattler  
Of slot machines  
No elevator  
Anywhere.  
They close the airport at dusk.  
Fokker fumes give way  
To lime and frangipani.  
Do you hear  
The delicate clatter of silverware,  
A knife brought down  
On sweetbreads, the crystal windchimes  
Clinking Margeaux?  
A discreetly hushed-up chatter.  
A rush of russet silk.  
No buzz.  
A mosquito sucks your earlobe  
And leaves a tiny jewel, a ruby  
Red adornment. You never heard  
Her coming.

Above your head,  
Fixed stars standing honor guard  
While a white cruise ship  
Of a moon charts  
Her dumb journey and slowly sails  
A broad wake across an oceanic sky.  
By your feet  
Lies the lazily heaving sea,  
Asleep like an old sheep dog  
After a long day of chasing sheep.  
It's the most orderly of nights,  
Not a real night, more the neat  
Inside of a Rolex.  
No cries, no tears,  
Nobody is dying here.  
You are wedged  
—for now—  
In a minute hiding place,  
A polished ledge between  
Moving cogs, and grinding teeth,  
Shielded from that tidal hour-hand  
Time keeper, mine sweeper,  
Erasing all marks made,  
yours too.

You pay for this, this is what  
You pay for.

—Gunilla Feigenbaum

Gunilla Feigenbaum lives in New York City and is a regular contributor to *The Bookpress*.



Bente King

Virginia Woolf once mused that no biographer had ever been "subtle enough and bold enough to present that queer amalgamation of dream and reality, that perpetual marriage of granite and rainbow" that is an artist's life. Mitchell Leaska has now answered this daunting challenge. Leaska is the author of what Leonard Woolf called "the most illuminating study of Virginia Woolf's novels that I have ever read." Leaska is uniquely placed to write this deeply informed and moving literary biography.

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\$23.50 • 291 pages • History • Doubleday

# Red White and Blues

Blues for America: A Critique, A Lament, and Some Memories  
Doug Dowd  
New York Monthly Review Press,  
330 pages, \$38.00

Joseph A. Palermo

Former Cornell University professor Doug Dowd's latest work, *Blues For America*, is an engaging mixture of social analysis, memoir, and history, all presented with a personal touch. A scholar of breadth and scope, Dowd has written extensively on 20th-century American capitalism. Born in San Francisco on December 7, 1919, (a day of "infamy" he jests), to a Russian-Jewish mother and an Irish Catholic father, Dowd's baptism as a political activist came in 1937 during the San Francisco general strike (which he describes in detail). In 1949, Dowd received his doctorate in economics from the University of California at Berkeley, and in the early-1950s he joined the Cornell Economics faculty, where he taught for seventeen years.

As Dowd approaches the beginning of his eighth decade of life, what better time to depart from the standard scholarly style and venture into writing an overview of the major upheavals of this century and his place within them? The book is further evidence that his perspective as a social scientist stems foremost from his profound moral abhorrence to the poverty, wasted lives, and injustices that plague our economic order.

Dowd's flair for vivid writing matches the depth of his compassion. Like the early 20th-century social critic Thorstein Veblen (about whom Dowd has written extensively), he possesses a biting, ironic wit. Whether he is explaining the intricacies of Keynesian economics, the "financialization" of the American economy, the balance of payments deficit, or the underlying causes of "stagflation," in Dowd's hands even the most arcane economic concepts become engaging and understandable.

Dowd, like other economists working from a Marxist framework, rejects the amoral stance taken by most of his colleagues in the profession who have internalized the assumptions of the discipline and accept as "normal" the daily economic exploitation of most of the world's population. He assails economists for their ethical blinders and for formulating policies that serve the political power and pecuniary interests of transnational capital. In Dowd's view, most economists sidestep the deep structural flaws inherent in capitalism, which he sees as a crisis-dependent system of class domination.

Dowd stresses the interaction of broad socio-economic categories he calls the "big four": capitalism, industrialism,

nationalism, and colonialism. He explains how these "isms" have provided the backdrop for 20th-century history and the role of these larger structures in creating the international climate for the Great Depression and the two world wars. There has been a "frenetic dance" among these "clusters" of social forces, Dowd argues, which has brought out the worst in all four of them and has had the effect of spinning modern society in uncontrollable (and undesirable) directions.

Borrowing an idea from the novelist John Dos Passos, Dowd employs subheadings set off by different print types within each chapter. Historical events come under the subheading "Snapshots;" journalistic descriptions are under the heading "News Flash;" and personal recollections are prefaced by "Story." The result is a provocative combination of good-humored recollections, minor rants, and solid social-scientific inquiry that throws light on the irrationalities of modern capitalism: its waste of resources and human lives, its fueling of racism and greed, and its tendency to promote repressive governments and militarism. Infusing this critique with real-life examples from his six decades as a political activist, Dowd illuminates the vital nexus between political theory and practice.

In part one, "From Chaos and Convulsion to the Good War," Dowd focuses on the economic forces that contributed to the outbreak of the world wars and the Great Depression. Despite the physical hardships of the 1930s, Dowd characterizes those years as a decade of heightened solidarity and cooperation among ordinary people that preceded "the age of consumerism run amok."

In part two, "The Second Coming of Capitalism," Dowd discusses the rise of the United States as a global power and "the long expansion" of the U.S. economy in the post-war era. According to Dowd, the fusing of the Cold War "superstate" with the "supercorporation" provided a temporary institutional framework for the sustained growth of the economy at a rate faster than it has grown before or since. While this growth allowed for rising real incomes for the majority of the population, it was structurally flawed, and Dowd does an excellent job explaining why this post-war prosperity could not be maintained.

Dowd's chapter on the 1960s, "Fasten Your Seatbelts," focuses on his role in the national anti-Vietnam war movement, in which he played a significant role as a founding organizer and steering committee member of the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (the "Mobe"). Given that Dowd was teaching at Cornell at the time, there are many Ithaca references. Dowd describes his close friendship and anti-war work with Father Daniel Berrigan, S.J., (who was a chaplain

at Cornell). He also tells the story of the rise of the underground "Glad Day Press" and his trials and tribulations working with the Cornell chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society, S.D.S. (one of the largest chapters in the nation).

However, readers looking for an insider's critical analysis of what went wrong with the New Left will not find it here. A major disappointment of the book is Dowd's unwillingness to grapple with some of the key questions raised by the decline of the Left. If the "Movement" arose from the grass roots and reflected the will of millions of Americans, what forces were at work which caused its precipitous decline? How did American politics, which promised so much by way of progressive social reform in the 1960s, transform itself into the "eras" of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan?

Given today's absence of a broad left movement in America, along with the rise of the often internecine struggles between aggrieved groups associated with "identity politics," Dowd's failure to come to terms with the lessons of the movement in which he played such an important role is unfortunate. By skipping over the deep problems that were inherent in the New Left, he denies the reader the benefit of his insights, which no doubt would be engaging and important. As for his assement of the achievements of the anti-war movement, Dowd says only that it succeeded in preventing the use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam.

In the election of 1968, the Peace and Freedom Party drafted Dowd to be Eldridge Cleaver's vice-presidential running mate; he accepted the candidacy primarily because the V.P. slot would have fallen to fellow Mobe steering committee member Jerry Rubin, whom Dowd loathed for tactical and personal reasons. Soon after, Dowd traveled to Hanoi with Noam Chomsky and Richard Fernandez.

In part three, "Paradise Lost," Dowd discusses the rise of "stagflation" in the 1970s, and the ethic of greed of the 1980s, which, he argues, exacerbated the extant structural discontinuities in the economy. He calls Richard Nixon "the Houdini of political dirty tricks," who sported the "rictus smile of a bowing undertaker." Nixon's and Henry Kissinger's chief crime, in Dowd's view, was the "terrible stew of policies" they unleashed in Southeast Asia that culminated in the "secret" bombing of Cambodia.

In the chapter on the 1980s, Dowd sees Ronald Reagan as "the greatest con man in U.S. political history," whose policies tripled the national debt, wasted hundreds of billions of dollars on "defense," and helped to create a political environment friendly to racist appeals, religious fundamentalism, and militarism. Dowd believes that neither Nixon nor Reagan could have

been elected in more prosperous and stable economic times, and that there is a direct correlation between the sinking real incomes of most Americans and the political lurch to the right in those years.

Drawing from a welter of historical, economic, government, and journalistic sources, Dowd explains the underlying economic reasons why the real income of the lower four-fifths of the population has steadily declined since 1973. In Dowd's view, what is new to the post-Reagan policy debates, however,

is the sudden rebirth and widespread acceptance of nineteenth-century brute capitalism and the anointed offspring of the Holy Family: balanced budgets and the demonization of deficits, deregulation and privatization, cuts to the bone of social expenditures, the application of IMF monetarism to the leading as well as the led economies, and so-called trading agreements (NAFTA, GATT), which serve to rationalize and facilitate production 'outsourcing' to lands of cheap labor and no ecological safeguards while decimating job possibilities at home.

Capitalist ideological forms that glorify consumerism and place private profit over the common good, Dowd argues, have provided the "steely center" of a political culture now dominated by a "harsh conservatism." But this structural argument absolves the Left of any responsibility for failing to stem the conservative tide; Dowd misses another opportunity to grapple with the limits and mistakes of the earlier movement in which he participated.

Despite his deeply pessimistic analyses of the present economy and his dire interpretations of the past, Dowd remains hopeful about the possibility of social transformation. In Dowd's view, the answer to the ascendant forces of the right lies in arduous "solidaristic political efforts." Labor must be "re-humanized" and "decommodified" through greater union organization; the poor must be mobilized into a political bloc that, along with labor, can challenge the leaders of both major political parties who have become the indentured servants of multinational corporations.

Moving toward a more economically just society is a daunting, but not impossible task, Dowd insists. The bottom line is that "everyone seeking work is entitled to a job" at "a livable not minimum wage." And "if businesses cannot function satisfactorily without the economic mistreatment of labor (or natural resources)," he concludes, "those businesses should cease to exist or be subsidized. Period."

Joseph A. Palermo is a doctoral candidate in American History at Cornell whose dissertation is on Senator Robert F. Kennedy's final years.



**Black and Blue**  
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On the first day of the sit-ins, in Nashville, Tennessee, eight young black college students found themselves propelled into the leadership of the civil rights movement, as the movement - and America - entered a period of dramatic change. The courage and vision of these young people changed history. David Halberstam, a twenty-five year old reporter, was assigned to cover this story...

## The Children

David Halberstam

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# ABC's

continued from page 2

the content won't be screened and filtered and certified as accurate. The medium is decentralized, it is a relatively inexpensive place to publish, and it is chaotic and difficult to search. It has plenty of capacity for mischief and for benefit, but on the whole it is clearly liberating.

A medical reference called MedLine, for instance, which abstracts articles in thousands of medical journals, is fully available on the internet. When a friend of ours, living in Canada, was diagnosed with a form of cancer, we were able in a few hours to pull the most recent three years of medical research—and we learned that the standard state-of-the-art treatment for her disease was not approved by Canadian public health—a matter of great controversy there. The result was that she was able to obtain appropriate treatment. Knowledge is power indeed.

Some of the most exciting resources on the internet (such as powerful databases and user groups) were there before the WorldWide Web offered a graphic interface and the web is still most powerful as a medium for presenting text-based information in a graphic environment that makes it easy to access. Much of the most touted stuff on the web—its animated graphics and interactive tricks—is almost irrelevant to its usefulness as a medium of communication. It is easy to find silliness and extravagance on the web, still easier to find commercialism, shallow entertainment, and self-serving propaganda. But none of that should blind us to the fact that this is a powerful, naturally democratic, decentralized, and virtually uncontrollable medium of communication.

If a conspiracy of the ruling class created the internet to keep the masses ignorant and easily manipulated, they screwed up bigtime. When there were tanks outside the seat of government in Moscow, a friend of ours in New Orleans, a Russian-speaking Ukrainian national, sat in his office, watching CNN and communicating by fax and e-mail with people inside the building—whose only reliable source of information was through such communications. Similar stories have emerged from China. E-mail is the ultimate samizdat medium of publication. Click once and the cat is out of the bag, world wide.

Idealogues of internet freedom of speech like to point out that the US was unable to shut down Iraq's communications on the

internet during the Gulf War of 1991. They are delighted by this, not because they are confident supporters of Saddam Hussein or even horrified observers of the war and its effects. They delight in the resilience, the versatility, and the adaptability to hostile circumstances, of the medium. The internet was designed by the military to provide communications which could survive a nuclear attack. Perhaps it has worked.

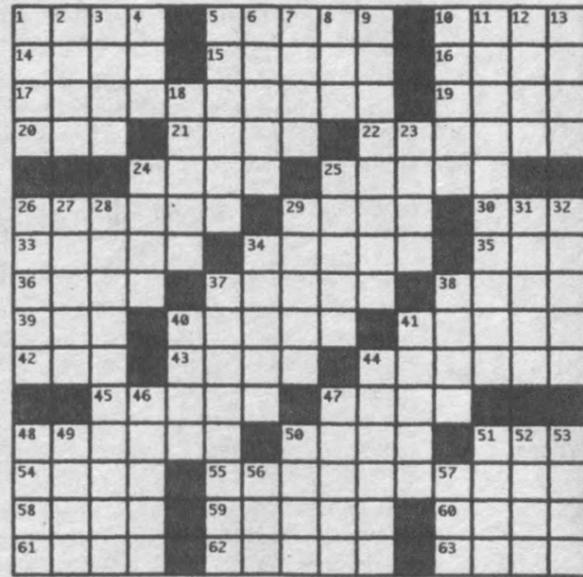
In any case, if parents or children want to know what teachers should be teaching them to make it possible for them to help build a better future for all of us, one answer is clearly that they should be teaching computer skills—how to use computers to store information, to manipulate information, and to communicate and how to control those computers through programming and information management. To think otherwise is laughable or tragic or both.

Teachers, however, are often ignorant of the new medium and reluctant to learn how to use it. They are one of the most serious obstacles to educating the current generation of school children in electronic communications. It is therefore particularly distressing to see Griffen, a professor of education, encouraging such reluctance.

Teachers and parents should be worrying about universal access to electronic communications, about going beyond the much touted "E-Rate" which will give schools and libraries subsidized internet access (a position which came out of an FCC committee chaired by Russell Frisby, Chairman of the Maryland Public Service Commission and a co-consultant on some projects with our company). The E-Rate is a good idea but it is not enough.

It is a terrifying prospect that while educators like Griffen are dragging their feet over whether the new technology has anything to offer education, a combination of factors will produce a society in which some people understand electronic communication and some do not, some have access to it and some do not. If that happens, which group do you suppose will have more money, power, independence, and a better future? And where do you want the kids in your public school system to be?

—Gary Esolen and Valeri LeBlanc  
The Media Revolution, Inc.  
New Orleans, Louisiana



Adam Perl

Across

1. Strike foe
5. Holding
10. Not tutti
14. Ghostly
15. Increase
16. Pool accessories
17. Silk-stocking
19. Sicilian sight
20. Legal matters
21. Attention getter
22. Recyclable item
24. Flower holder
25. Brace
26. Fix up
29. Soup du \_\_\_\_
30. Teller alternative
33. TV sitcom
34. Insults
35. "\_\_\_\_ loves you.."
36. Kind of jet
37. Short story
38. Where most people live
39. \_\_\_\_ deferens
40. Angler's accessories
41. Fusion
42. Naval officer, for short
43. Neglect
44. Guarantee
45. Heroes
47. They may be high
48. "Go \_\_\_\_ tangent"
50. "\_\_\_\_, the man"
51. "\_\_\_\_ Boot", 1981 film
54. Reposed
55. Disadvantaged
58. Song for two
59. Exercise
60. Mine entrance
61. Some are split
62. Abates
63. Overtake

Down

1. Prod
2. Fear, for one
3. Mighty range
4. Contest
5. Tell, for one
6. "The Crucible" setting
7. "The King and I" locale
8. Tricky curve
9. Kind of baby
10. Altercation
11. Overmatched
12. Singer Horne
13. "No man \_\_\_\_ island"
18. Boca \_\_\_\_
23. Tang ending
24. Young ending
25. Types
26. Dig
27. Western NY town
28. Secret
29. One of the Leigh's
31. Object
32. Civil War General
34. Mikhail's successor
37. With honors
38. Pub orders
40. Maine sight
41. "\_\_\_\_ de Chine"
44. Mikimoto's specialty
46. No-nos
47. Plant part
48. Shoppe modifier
49. Satyr
50. Certain defense systems
51. Art movement
52. Damaged, in a shop
53. Quick way to JFK
56. Second amendment supporters
57. Kind of dog

Answer to puzzle in next month's edition.

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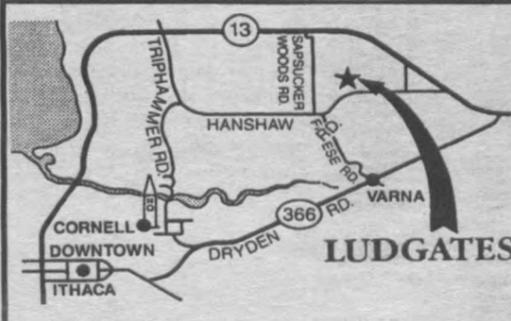
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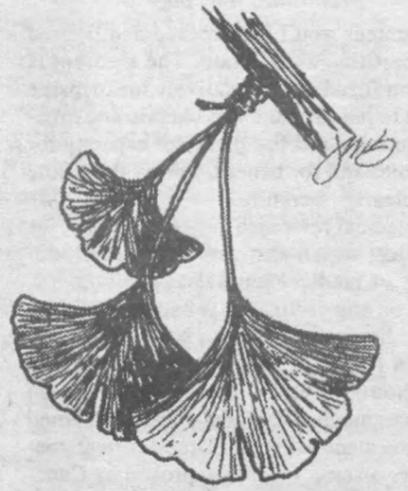


*In 1960, I was an eyewitness to the student uprising in North Korea, which toppled the government of President Syngman Rhee. I was an eyewitness to the military coup which ousted the civilian government in 1961.*

*I returned to the US in 1963, and except for personal friendships, had little contact with Korea for several years. But in the early 1970s, news began to reach me of renewed repression and violence, especially against students, workers, newspaper people, and human rights advocates among religious groups, which was where my work had been. Many of these heroic people were my friends and acquaintances. In 1975, I was asked to chair a coalition of church groups in Canada and the USA whose goal was to support the human rights struggle in Korea. I did so for fifteen years and made many trips to South Korea and one to North Korea.*

*In 1982, a group was privileged to offer support to doctor Kim Dae-Jung, his wife Mrs. Lee Hee Ho, and their family when they were forced into exile by the dictatorial regime then in power in Seoul. They returned in 1984, and began a long political effort to bring democracy and freedom to South Korea. Doctor Kim's efforts finally resulted in his election in December, 1997, as Korea's president. It was my privilege, along with many friends in the international human rights network, to attend Li's inauguration (on February 25, 1998) as the president of the republic.*

—Peggy Billings



**Korea, 1974**

They come in the night to arrest our friends  
or round them up by day  
with guns our taxes paid for.  
We fight back with cables to ambassadors  
and testimony before Congressional committees.  
We cut our rage  
to fit the cloth  
of a terrible bureaucracy.

Sometimes we blunt the sharpest edge.  
Usually, we cannot.

They call in the family to claim the body,  
carefully explaining (and offering proof)  
that he took his own life.  
We fight back with cables to ambassadors  
and smuggled copies of secret trials.  
We cut our rage  
to fit the cloth  
of a terrible bureaucracy.

How foolish we must seem,  
fighting terror with post-cards!

**Leaving Seoul—1963**

I lived a decade in another tongue  
and sold my soul to silk and polished brass.  
I spent years looking out over slate roofs  
with gargoyle tiles to the first green of May  
and left-over blossoms from April's store.  
I took for my own kin her sharp mountains,  
and wore beneath my skin her azure sea.  
I wore beneath my skin the azure sea.

I was drowning in April—breathing the  
last air left in my lungs which was not hers.  
It was time to go—or to never go.  
I walked the streets and wrapped my mind  
in ginko leaves one final time,  
and then came home.

**Villanelle of Villains**

*After hearing a radio discussion between  
intelligence experts on the difference between  
torture and persuasion*

The art of terror must be learned by heart  
step by step, as in a French country dance.  
It has its rules, like any other art.

First, draw a face. Then make the dark eyes dart  
back and forth, spectacles aslant.  
The art of terror must be learned by heart.

Sketch in the mouth, and draw the lips apart  
in a smile, like the spark of new romance.  
It has its rules, like any other art.

Don't worry about errors at the start.  
One man erased, more or less, is the chance  
You take, for terror to be learned by heart.

In serious cases, you may depart  
from mere technique to high exuberance.  
Break all the rules, like any other art.

What mark divides our craft from simple force?  
We cross that line without a backward glance.  
The art of terror must be learned by heart.  
It has its rules, like any other art.

**Prisoner # \_\_\_\_\_**

They said he was never there.  
There was no record of transfer.  
There was no uniform issued.  
There was no cell assigned.

They said they might have assigned # \_\_\_\_\_  
to a shadow on the wall.  
To a half eaten piece of bread.  
To a torn blanket.  
To a sound-proofed scream

**To the Martyrs of March 1, 1919\***

What if stones  
Were the other half of April  
What if grief  
Were the other half of May  
What if tears  
Were where the morning gathered  
What if pain  
Were the lapsing of each day  
What if blood  
Were the only fruit of summer  
What if madness  
Were the only song you sang  
What if terror  
Were your cooling board  
What if Han\*\*  
Were what your name became

What if sorrow  
Were the only snow in winter  
What if terror  
Were your only fire  
What if madness  
Were the only poems you mastered  
What if blood  
Were your only open sky

What if pain  
Were your marriage-bed  
What if tears  
Were your only dance  
What if grief  
Were the only flowers you gathered  
What if stones  
Were your inheritance?

*\*Anniversary of Korea's patriots' uprising against the Japanese occupation, which was brutally suppressed, and led to the establishment of an international underground movement. The movement lasted until liberation in 1945.*

*\*\* Korean word for "suffering."*

*Peggy Billings is a poet who lives in Trumansburg.*



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