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photo Mary Ann O'Donnell

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Masthead

Letters to the Editor are welcomed, by post or via the Internet.

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On the Trolley Bus Ring

Vladimir Skrebitsky

Translated from the Russian by Avril Pyman

I

It was yet another day he hadn't done his stint — not making the round even of half the trolley buses running along the Garden Ring, not picking up even half the cancelled tickets from the floor. If things were to go on like that, he'd simply get the sack: who would want such a worker!

But what could he do, how could he make it in such a jostle – just as you try to bend down, they almost lay you out. Everyone's in a hurry, no one cares for you, everyone's got their work, their own problems.

His work consisted of picking up tickets. He had to go through all the trolley buses of the "B" (Belt) route making sure not a single ticket was left lying on the floor. His shift started at eight and ended at five, with a one hour lunch break. Then, obviously, someone else had to take it over. But that was not his responsibility. He wasn't complaining. After all, this job wasn't any worse than many others. Take, for example, one of his neighbors, who was a cashier at a food store: sitting in her booth all day long, asking which department, clicking her abacus . . . What was so much better about that?

His other neighbor was a waitress at a cafeteria. He would go there during the lunch break. It was very convenient because the cafeteria was located just opposite the trolley bus stop. He would eat his lunch and, losing no time, go back to work. As for him, though, he would never, not for love nor money, agree to work at a cafeteria. He wasn't into stationary jobs: he needed to be always on the move, always traveling, changing places, keeping himself continually busy. That, after all, is the very essence of any job. That's why it feels so scary to

think you might lose it. It's not that you'd have nothing to live on – you could manage somehow – his allowance was small, anyway. But having nowhere to go, nothing to do – that's what was really terrifying! What's the use saying that housework is never done, not in a hundred years. Nonsense. You can't stay indoors for long, the walls start closing in on you. Being at loose ends is equally absurd. You've got to work – you can't live without it. If only it could be a little bit better organized. But how? How did one set about it?

Several times he tried to think through the matter, but nothing ever did come out. The thoughts were absolutely hazy, he couldn't even remember who had assigned him to this job, who had told him what to do, when to start and when to end his work. Definitely, there was someone, for he couldn't have devised it all by himself. But, when he tried to think about it, he had a somewhat uneasy, uncomfortable feeling, as if something inside him was being displaced. He even felt nauseated. That's why after two or three unsuccessful attempts to find out, he realized this kind of activity wasn't good for him. And, after all, did it really matter? He knew for certain that he had to turn up at work, he knew where and when, he knew what he was supposed to do. So, what else?

There were times, however, when he suspected he wasn't doing quite the right thing. But who hasn't had such suspicions? To think about that was just pointlessly racking your brain. Sometimes he was overcome with an idea that nothing had ever needed to be done in the first place: do it or not – what did it matter? But this idea seemed so disgusting that he always tried to fight it off. It didn't stay long, anyway.

Oh, no. Not always. Sometimes it did. And it didn't just stay, it pressed down on him, squeezing him flat. Then, he would stay in bed for a day or two or three. It felt so sickening both inside and outside: as if everything was covered with slime, and there was only one desire left — to fall asleep and never wake again.

But then it would pass. He would wake up in the morning – as if nothing had happened. Everything forgotten. Hard even to bring it back to mind – what was it, why was it? He wouldn't want to remember it, anyway. Everything bad seemed to have been scrubbed off him, and he again needed to go to work. And how good it felt!

On that day, he couldn't stay late at work. He needed to go to the Polytechnic Museum. Some kind of exhibition was on, something related to trolley buses. He wouldn't say it interested him that much, but there was someone he had to meet there. Or, rather, someone

had told him he should visit the exhibition and hinted that he was also going to be there himself.

He had never seen the man before. He had unintentionally struck up a conversation with him on the trolley bus, having noticed the man seemed interested in his work.

Normally, he wouldn't talk to passengers — what was there to talk about: they were getting to work and he was at work; to each his own. But that man's look was very earnest, as if thoughtful; probably, that's why he had dared to accost him. What's more, as he was telling him about his work, the man didn't smile not once, but instead kept nodding, and even looked slightly sad as if he felt sorry for him. He had even wanted to cheer the man up, telling him not to worry because his job wasn't that bad, after all.

Then, it seemed to him the man couldn't make up his mind whether to tell him something or not. And then, the man had decided to tell him about the exhibition, saying that he should definitely visit it . . . and shot him a significant kind of glance. And then added that he was certainly going to be there himself.

He had agreed without a second thought and even pretended the exhibition interested him very much. Leaving the trolley bus, he had again confirmed (on his own, this time nobody urged him to) that he'd be sure to be there that evening, and inquired about the exhibition's closing time. The man bent his head and closed his eyes, as if to say it was a deal and they'd see each other again tonight.

As soon as he got off the trolley bus, he realized he shouldn't have made this arrangement. What use to him were that exhibition and that man? Why the hell should he go there, who made him promise all that?

How he hated the idea of going there, how stupid it all was!

He started talking himself into doing it, but somehow got so confused and felt such anguish that he was almost willing to fling himself under a car.

As always, his work saved him. While he was scuttling between trolley buses, trying to decide which one was better to board, his anguish started to dissipate. It was not so tragic, after all; maybe the exhibition would arouse some interest in him. If only it had been possible to end his work a little bit earlier and take a break first.

But how! He could hardly get home and have a cup of tea, when the exhibition closed at seven . . .

When he pushed into a crowded Metro carriage, the absurdity of the idea of going to this exhibition became absolutely clear to him. He must have been a total idiot to let himself agree to anything so stupid.

"All right, all right, since it happened, it couldn't be helped" — he kept on reassuring himself – "I'll just drop in for a minute without looking at the exhibits, what the hell use are they to me! I'll just ask the man what he wants from me, and go back home. Go back and hit the sack!"

Near the entrance to the Museum, a small crowd had gathered, but he immediately recognized the man he was expecting. He was standing away from the others, hiding behind a newspaper. He went right up to him. The newspaper was lowered. Behind it was an old man he didn't know wearing spectacles.

He entered the vestibule. A group of people beside the cloak room were trying to hide someone. He went straight through the middle. They gave way, there was no one behind them.

. . . Already half an hour had passed and he'd been walking around the museum, feeling different people staring at him, yet nobody came up to him or tried to ask him questions.

Indifferent as he was to all the items on display, he nevertheless couldn't fail to notice that the exhibition had virtually nothing to do with trolley buses. From the fragments of overheard conversations, he understood it was a Japanese industrial exhibition which, among other items, featured automobiles but definitely not trolley buses. Displayed in the center of one of the halls was a Japanese racing car.

The exhibition was becoming less and less crowded. He thought his man would come when the place became completely empty.

There was a young couple standing beside the racing car. The young man was trying to push his girl friend onto the driver's seat. She resisted his efforts, giggling. Suddenly, a bell sounded.

"Dear guests, it's seven o'clock already. We are closing. Please vacate the premises."

He was left alone with the racing car. "What? What does it mean? Am I allowed to go?"

"Young man, are you going to spend the night in here?"

An old man wearing a red arm-band approached him.

No, he wasn't going to do that. He felt hope stirring inside him. Without stopping or looking back, he went to the cloak room and, next minute, was engulfed by the street.

He was walking in a blissful, relaxed mood, teasing and comforting himself.

"What a silly boy. Dreaming up such dumb things! Where did you get such ideas? Why did you frighten yourself so? Are you that important? Whoever needs to follow you? What kind of a big shot do you think you are?"

The evening city was radiating good will. The Metro welcomed him hospitably, and he enjoyed spreading out in his seat. Well, as a matter of fact, today hadn't gone so badly after all. A good day's work done in the morning. It hadn't gone so well in the afternoon, though. But we'll make up for that tomorrow. After work, he had been to that exhibition. True, that bit hadn't gone so well, either. He smiled again.

"Oh, what a softy. You can't behave like other people. You didn't even take a look at the exhibits. Imagine remembering only that racing car. But never mind! This is not the last day. Maybe some other day you'll go there again. Maybe that man will come too, after all. He must have been meant it for the best suggesting you go there . . . Oh, what a softy . . ."

He remembered how nervous he had felt, running to the Metro. This time, he wouldn't be in such a hurry: he'd take a nice stroll, return home, have his tea and then fall asleep. . .

Interesting, had they finally finished building that house in Lev Tolstoy street? Will it have loggias or not? . . .

He started dozing and nearly missed his stop.

II

Working in autumn was especially difficult: it grew dark early, passengers didn't wipe sleet off their feet, and it felt almost disgusting to pick up tickets in the slush, not to mention the fact one could easily miss them.

Passengers, however, seemed a different sort of people to him. Crossing the threshold of a trolley bus, they became a part of the world which he had been consecrated to serve. He regarded them as guests, pupils – peevish, ungrateful, but nonetheless familiar. Because of their bad manners or out of mere carelessness, they threw tickets on the floor – while his

job was to pick them up and arrange them in neat piles on his bookshelf at home, because nothing made by human hands deserved to be discarded and trodden in mud. . . As a matter of fact, he was doing the same thing everybody did at his work place: maintaining the necessary balance without which the whole world would have long ago been plunged into chaos and filth.

But, outside trolley buses, all people seemed alien to him. He had almost no communication with his neighbors in the communal flat. What was he supposed to talk about? Once home, he immediately locked himself up in his room and was happiest when no sound from outside penetrated his seclusion. Without turning the light on, he would sit down on the sofa, put a cushion under his back, and feel how the emptiness started taking shape inside him. All the happenings of the past day and many events from previous days, various thoughts and memories, haphazardly accumulated in his head, were compressed into great compact layers and gradually peeled away, leaving him more and more hollow. And he himself turned into an emptiness absolutely detached from the life about him. Although this life, resembling a dirty sewer, continued to make itself felt through a loudspeaker blaring from the street or through a tape recorder squealing behind the wall, he became indifferent and unsusceptible to it. Becoming void, he soared over roof tops, higher and higher. The world, seen from so high above, no longer seemed to him as abominable and disgusting. Sometimes he would be transported to other parts of the universe where he saw different cities and slate roofs, and streets which somehow seemed familiar to him, but he knew he couldn't go beyond that point: this was the beginning of slumber, which he didn't like at all. It was enticingly sweet but also very deceptive: at any time it might turn into something abhorrent. He liked to be a void. . . That was his life-style – when he came back from work, nobody was allowed to enter his room and disturb him.

Only one neighbor was permitted to enter his room – the lady who worked at the cafeteria. She would do the room and bring food for supper. It had started long ago, when his mother was still alive. They had been friends, his mother and this lady. Mother, of course, was much older, and her friend used to come and complain that her husband had left her. Mother would soothe her, saying that, perhaps, living without a husband was even better. And then she, in her turn, would complain of her poor health and of what would happen to him when she died. At that time, he was doing really badly. He hadn't yet found this job and was loafing in the street or staying in bed all day. So, when his mother was taken to the

hospital, this lady had brought him there twice, and when his mother finally died, hadn't be able to decide how to tell him about it. She was pacing the room, dusting here and there, moving this or that . . . and finally she had been struck by the indifference with which he accepted the news. She had almost forced him to go to the funeral (at that time, he had just got the job and had to establish himself). During the burial ceremony, everybody wondered at his being so cold and indifferent. But he went to the cemetery again in the evening, alone this time, and wept like a madman, burying his face and hands in the mound of fresh earth, not because he missed his mother but because he didn't want to live any longer and didn't want to go back to that filthy house, to that empty room. . .

Next morning, he went to work and, for the first time in his life, realized what great happiness and deliverance it brought him.

III

He woke up well rested and refreshed, and, lying in bed, thought over everything he had to do during the day. It was pleasant thinking, his mind was clear and concentrated, his thoughts weren't slipping away. He envisaged the whole day before him, step by step: how he'd get up, go to work, say hello to the driver of the first trolley bus, inspect the aisle between the seats, apologize to the seated passengers and look for possible tickets under their feet, walk to the rear of the trolley bus. . . He tried to picture the details as clearly as possible, and when they became fully clear to his inner view, he turned the picture off so that his conscious mind would become void, and now he knew he had to be up and going or else some filth would creep into this emptiness, and then the whole day would be ruined.

He went out to the street with a sensation of hazy lightness. There were people standing at the trolley bus stop. He approached them as if he were just an ordinary passenger like them. As if for him also the trolley buses were just a means of transport and not his work, not his vocation. He leaned against a tree trying to guess which one of the trolley buses would come first. He might recognize any of them by sight. They were his fosterlings, his children: big-browed, willful, sometimes a bit silly, each with its own character and its own little ways. . . That one, for instance — the Bullet-Head, always gets his contact shaft snapped off the wires. . .

But this morning, it wasn't the Bullet-Head who came first. It was the Gentleman. He gave it that nickname himself. This one, indeed, was a real gentleman, you couldn't call it otherwise: always correct, fast, extremely well-functioning. Very warm and clean inside. People who came aboard always felt they had to behave themselves here.

He didn't spend much time on the Gentleman. Actually, there was nothing to do at all. Not a single ticket was seen on the floor. Under the back seat, there was a cigarette butt. He picked it up and got off near the Gorki Park Metro station. The next trolley bus hadn't appeared yet and he again leaned against a tree and started watching the passing cars. Well, another working day begun. There were some three or four trolley buses to catch – then it would be lunch time. And after lunch, the end of work would be in sight. So, days raced by. A day might look as if it would never end, but just turn around, and you'll see it's been gone in a wink, and you begin to count in years, not days. You couldn't remember well when this or that actually happened – just the odds glimpse. Once, he was getting off a trolley bus which hadn't yet come to a halt, and sprained an ankle – when was that? Two or four years ago; hard to say. So many years had passed since he started working on trolley buses, but it seemed as if it was only yesterday when he picked his first ticket from the floor. . . By a mere accident, following some vague instinct. He saw a ticket lying on the floor, bent down and picked it up: first this one, then another and already he was looking deliberately to see if he could find any more. . . That's how it all started.

Only then did he realize that with these tickets the sprawling minutes could be bound together, that by collecting them he might even set in motion the stopped clock of time. This was his mission in life, his profession, this was what he had been called into God's world to do, just as anyone else might have been called to be a pilot or a head of a government. Here, the knot of his days was tied up, and everything that previously had been no more than a pastime, found sense and justification. Here, he finally realized why he had to get up in the morning and go to bed in the evening. Now everything was explained, everything in its proper place. . .

He stood, leaning against a tree and watched cars speeding by. It was one of those days in October that seem to fall out of continuity, existing as if on their own. And every thought appearing on such a day existed on its own and dissolved quietly in contemplation as do jet contrails in the sky, as does the soul exposing itself to peace and hope.

He stood and thought how beautiful it must be in the country now. Next Sunday, early in the morning, he'd go somewhere for a whole day of wandering through forest glades and coppices, enjoying still distant landscapes. . . On such days, the Lord himself admires the beauty of the world he created. . .

He thought that, in fact, he had little to complain of in his life – as far as the most important things were concerned, it was quite a success. For instance, how lucky he was to work on trolley buses. Neither on those smart-alecky buses, nor on the gloomy tramways banished to the city outskirts and crushed by their inferiority complex, but precisely on trolley buses: stately, unhurried, never overtaking, like swans circling. . .

He inspected several more trolley buses, lunched, worked for another couple of hours and, riding past the street clock in Smolenskaya Square, saw it was already a quarter past five and his working day was already fifteen minutes overtime. . .

He quickly ran up the stairs to his apartment. This day's end seemed just as unclouded as its beginning had been: now he was going to rest awhile, have some tea and then go to the last showing of a movie. It was a new French comedy. Apparently, some silly stuff again, but he didn't care. After another worthwhile day, how pleasant it was to relax in a dark cinema and then unhurriedly return home, thinking about his Sunday outing.

IV

She had promised to come at seven p.m. but he had completed his preparations already by six o'clock. On this day, he had intentionally gone to work one hour earlier in order to be able to leave in the same way. He knew it was allowed. On the way back, he was lucky to buy a small bouquet of Michaelmas daisies that decorated his room quite nicely. He thought he might afford this even without such a special occasion: just a few little flowers, but the room began to look quite different. It was even hard to believe. His room had everything he needed: the dining table at which he ate, the sofa on which he slept, several chairs and the old chest of drawers which he never opened but knew contained linen. On the chest of drawers, there were a TV set which he never watched so he didn't even know whether it was functioning or not and an enlarged photo of his mother set into a frame.

It was an amateur photograph taken during the war. Mother, wearing a nurse's uniform, looked relatively young.

To make a long story short, he had everything an ordinary man might need; probably, only a pet was lacking. And now, these flowers. . .

Unfortunately, he wasn't able to find a vase for the flowers, so he had to put them into an empty milk bottle. Then he produced two cups with saucers and two little jam dishes. He didn't know which kind of jam she preferred, but, happily for him, there was nothing to choose from at the grocers', so he bought some mixed preserves, hoping that she wouldn't be too demanding on their first date.

So, once the preparations were over, he had only to wait. When she arrived, he would have her seated on the sofa and start telling her about himself. He would tell her about things he'd never told anybody else. He would talk to her as he talked to himself but even better, much better. In fact, he talked to himself every day, but this time he'd be talking with her — it would be so different. Probably, she would want to watch TV. He turned the power switch on to make sure the TV worked.

She hadn't said straight out that she would come at seven. Maybe she was shy about her aunt, his neighbor, whom she was visiting on the day she had made the date. She hadn't once addressed him directly, but she had looked at him several times when he came into the kitchen, given him a smile, and then, on leaving — and he had somehow or other been hanging around in the hall – she had several times distinctly repeated today's date, and, afterwards, somewhat less loudly, the time – 7:00 p.m. – and then looked at him once again. What else needed to be said! He was the kind of person who was very quick in the uptake, for whom a nod was, on occasion, every bit good as a wink. Just one special intonation, just one sideways glance, and everything was clear to him. When anything was not clear from the outset, then however much people talked and explained it never became any clearer.

That work of his required precisely these qualities: always being tense, high-strung; overlooking nothing, having in-depth understanding and perception of each and every passenger. Such work wasn't suitable for just anyone, only special people were required for it, the people like him. There had been no admission examination — they saw right through you straight away, and you were required to follow suit.

He had this intuitive understanding not only of people but of animals as well. When their flat was being renovated, his mother had sent him to live with his aunt's family. They

had a little dog there, not a pedigreed one: quite an ordinary, simple dog, a mongrel. But it was such a clever, intelligent creature. He was aware of it all the time, sensed all its feelings as his own. They would sit at the dining table and it would be standing close he felt on pins and needles, unable to eat, aware of the poor little dog all the time, feeling for it, how it must be not to be fed. And, during the night, he would also sense the dog, its yearning, its uneasiness and, because of that, would feel ten times more uneasy than it did and couldn't even sleep. Finally, he had became so upset by the dog that his mother had had to bring him home, not waiting for the renovation to end. Other people had no empathy for the dog. They'd just feed it in a corner of the hall and let it out for a walk, but the rest of the time it might just as well have not existed.

He glanced at his watch. Three minutes past seven.

What if she doesn't come?

Nonsense, nonsense. She said she would.

What if she doesn't come?

That sort of thing couldn't happen, he knew it for sure. . .

What if she doesn't come?

She can't not come. She promised. . .

Still, if she doesn't come after all, then what?

I don't know, I don't know.

He dithered and came up to the table.

What if she wouldn't come? At that moment, the bell sounded from the hall. A weight fell from his heart. He cast a final glance at his room and ran to open the door.

But it wasn't she. It was a neighbor's son coming home from school. Somehow he decided to use the doorbell although he had a key. . .

He returned to the room. Something had happened. Before, he had been communicating, talking with someone. But now this link was broken.

He suddenly felt very strange: as if something had passed from his chest down to the lower abdomen, then ran like a chill from spine to neck and then back to his chest. . .

What if she doesn't come? She won't come. It is quite clear she won't come now. What made you think she would? Idiot. Trolley-bus-crazy idiot. She did promise! Ha-ha. Idiot. Idiot. She'll be watching television. Ha-ha.

Everything inside him was jerking: down his back, in his chest, he couldn't pull himself together, everything was shaking. Idiot. Idiot. He collapsed on the sofa. All right, then! Ah, if that's the way it is! He felt a supple living rod between his fingers. Ah well, if she doesn't come – I don't care. Damn her!

And, as soon as he started doing it, he became aware of himself, and all the muck both inside him and on the walls instantly took shape, heaved and spread along the rod, started quivering, shaking . . . more, more, and more again. Suddenly it burst, then everything fell away, so that only the emptiness remained inside him and he was the emptiness. . . A kind of fog came down: a winter day, he and his mother in the country, skiers speeding downhill . . . he would grow up and learn to ski, but there is a lion looking at him from a page of a large wild animal picture book and he is drawing spectacles around the lion's eyes; there at the dacha the path is so fragrant in the evening, the older boys are playing volleyball and he is told not to get in the way, but in the evening he may go and watch the steamboat. . .

But she won't come: not today, not tomorrow – never! So the tension inside him begins to build again, and he doesn't need to watch television with her on the sofa, not in the least; this, this is what he needs. . .

After he had done it again and then again – everything collapsed, nothing was left.

V

The weather had been bad for three days now. It was hard to imagine that just a little time ago it had been so clear, sunny and nice. Now it was pouring rain, rain drops were drumming on the sill, flowing down the panes, everything was filled with a uniform gray mass that never let up from dawn to sunset, only growing more and more impenetrable.

He was lying fully dressed on the sofa, covered by a blanket, a pillow under his head. His damp socks and shoes were scattered on the floor nearby. He didn't go to work: rose at about two in the afternoon, lunched at the cafeteria, getting himself all drenched on the way, and went back to bed. He had been feverish for the whole day; after lunch he fell into an unpleasant sleep and woke up with a headache. By evening, he was feeling really rotten and couldn't even imagine how he would get himself to work tomorrow, but he had to go.

Usually, he was allowed to miss a day or two. Not that it was officially permitted, but all the signs were that his seniors were prepared to overlook a temporary absence. He took advantage of this opportunity every now and again. But now it was different: a monthly safety-on-the-roads campaign was underway, so all the transport workers were required to adhere to the strictest discipline. He was always hearing that tardiness and absenteeism were considered absolutely unacceptable; he might be fired even for the slightest breach. He understood only too well what being out of work would mean to him: staying within four walls, having nowhere to go; or hanging out at loose ends in the street as he had done before. . .

It was about nine o'clock, when the door opened and his attentive neighbor appeared on the threshold. She entered the room, closed the door, and stood there for some time without turning on the light or saying anything. Then she came closer to the sofa.

"Why are you lying there with your clothes on?" He didn't answer.

"Are you ill or what?" Again he didn't answer.

She went back to the door and turned on the light.

"Today we had chicken puree soup. I brought you some. Would you like some?" He shook his head.

"Why?"

"Don't want anything."

"Have you eaten today?" Still no response.

"Anything happen?"

She sat on the edge of the sofa and adjusted his blanket. Then she touched his forehead and looked at the damp shoes.

"Hey, you've got a temperature. Good heavens! That's all you need! You haven't even got another pair of shoes. You'll have to forget about going out tomorrow. Understand?"

He stared in front of him gloomily and kept silence. Then he forced himself to say:

"Tomorrow I've got to work."

"No, you don't have to, you have a temperature and nobody goes to work running a fever."

"I'll get fired."

"No, you won't. They don't fire people who are ill. It against the law."

" I have to go."

She fell silent, thinking.

"Let's do it this way," she said finally. "You'll stay in, and I'll go there and arrange everything. I know they value you. So they'll allow you to stay at home for several days."

"How can you do it if you have no authority?"

"But I do have the authority, the ultimate authority. You want me to show you the document, I can do that."

No, he didn't need to be shown anything, he never had believed in all that paperwork. Something moved inside him, started melting, flowing. . . Yes, yes, how was it that he hadn't known it before, of course she had the authority. He even knew where from: from his mother. His mother had also been invested with immense authority, she could take a great many things on herself, had been able to relieve him of many worries. He had shunned her during her last years, though, wishing to be independent. . .

Half an hour passed, and he was still crying, not ashamed of his tears and the idiotic way he looked.

She was sitting beside him, looking straight ahead with a strange fixed stare. Every now and then she stroked his hair and, when he started sobbing harder, she repeated again and again:

"There, there. I'll arrange it. Everything's going to be all right, everything's going to be all right."

Eight Poems

Karen Kevorkian

Willow and Pecan, Hackberry and Huisache

Not a language of grief
the well rehearsed green chorus
bends to one side. A sleek blackbird erupts.

Somewhere
a chainsaw. Somewhere
a leaf blower. Somewhere

a clock ticks in a room
where doves query *one-two*
and three hah hah over there
collect
a pear go comb
your hair go say
a prayer oh don't
be scared opulent

pink flames at the window
western sky graying

shadow wants the streets

still body on the bed. Dove lusters
Go now. Go.

Oh oh oh from the trees.

What It's Not

The day before snow hills crest subatomic, dyed turquoise
of the Indian tourist bracelet, reactor pool
chaos. Wind rattles
coin colored cottonwood

coin of stories told to children not memory's alloy
coin of light on still water

or when a stranger takes your arm asks tonight where you'll sleep.
Coin of rejection coin of the quick response

holding onto the coin of silence coin of the empty room
coin of the red wine in the glass.

Country dark is not the well understood city dark
its neon and taillight. Country dark is pitch

never mind the star-gabbling sky.
You can't buy your way out of it.

Wind ruffles black fur
as if beauty helped. Art is long buddies.

Glossy black cows give full attention
heifers with calves pulling at their tits.

A combine rakes a new mown field for the last time
scrapes a final bale or two from leavings.

Now the calves are gone.
The cows holler all night.

Country flares on the radio. *I need a good man. Oh yeah.*

Tell it to the highway.

Run your hand across the hillside
a pale brown nap against the palm. Soft furred
neck of a toothless horse

gumming a carrot. Not so cold today the wind dying down
small leaves of the blue alfalfa

pushing one way and another
a crowd scene by Eisenstein, the pheasant
hiding itself

as it ran ducking its body low and flat

a wake of ripple through the blue
anyone could track.

Yellow cottonwood leaves fall to earth, wealth
to kick through on a green lawn in the arid West
thick as snow falling silvery

on bronco bucking cowboys in plastic domes stacked by the checkout

of the Sheridan Wal-Mart. In the blue field

feathers spill
not from a pillow
soft brown or slightly copper where filaments
thin near the tips
and on the road the gold brown heap

greenish black head neck twisted.
Two scared up in the same place today

dun female and gaudy male. Clumsily
he ran from the field then was airborne so heavily
anyone could bring him down.

. . . tooke her, and lay with her, and defiled her

Genesis 34

Yawning, she did not look closely at the skin
on the backs of her well shaped hands and wrists, that network

of concentric grooves and parallelograms
like crisscrossings on clay soil when a dry spell

follows rain. Rubbing her hands, she began to consider
time, though not yet death. He was in her dream,

turning to look at her, with eyes that looked black but she knew
their true shade, a dark, almost reddish, brown. She put

a single finger to his eyebrow, his eyelid, each corner
of his mouth, as though to indicate a choice

of what was rarest among so much beauty. She considered
the outward form, pleasure warming

her breasts and her arms and her body's inward parts, no voice
naming foul, not yet *a thynge soyled*

a mayde deflouered, the convolvulus furling
its tissue bell. She touched her lips to it

she shook her head. Remaining absolutely still she held her breath
like someone listening, then broke away,

rose and sighed, putting hand to unruffled hair. He was
prudish and half naked,

she whitely dressed by the glare of noon. Color flamed in her cheeks.
She did not yet not love herself .

The Dozen Crows Calling Blackly

White bodied woman at the window
of the brick house that rouges
a white morning. *Come back to bed*

from the unwound sheets. Only what's observed
the black crow caw

not a dog's bark
black diagonal echo
unwinding peel
knife paring
seeking pith every morning

gray squirrel shooting down a wet limb
every morning the slide down

an arm raised against
eyelids' red scald

Soft Music

the empty, very empty, great empty, and all empty
Highest Yoga Tantra

Lowspread the live oak leaves rattle

money in a cup. Fat whitewing doves
teeter on the power line. Soft music

having severed any relationship with
the body, she does not think
"my body"

a fingernail ringing, four times,
a crystal rim,
a hesitation between
the first two calls and the last

a middle place
lasting seven days but these days
are very long
millions of years
what absurdity

Grapelike sparrows in the eaves
soft racheting wings. Sweet fuss.
Usually no one in the room.

The emaciated woman
hairless gaunt woman

lift of shoulderblades wings' absence

and after death a hungry ghost exits
from the mouth. If it is to be born
a god of desire,
the navel

Bruised (needle scars) flesh puckers
breeze quivering over smooth water
rainpocked sand

She raises a skinny arm to feel fog-hovering new hair
pats her head carefully

a god of magic
the ear

Knees give way. One hand steadies on the wall.
the other feeling what must be hair. A white mist
like wet dark limbs around them green haze collects.

a human exits from the eye

Are the leaves solid black?
No the sky's grimed gauze
tunnels into the room where TV bodies
lie oddly angled in blooming loud fire

deafness within deafness
only smoke

fireflies appearing
in the dark
she does not know
what to call them

she cannot understand
what is rough what is smooth

Silken reassurance this tangle
the final diving into deep water

very clear emptiness
mind of the clear light

black and silklike sweet
licorice mucky
earth savor

Nothing Moving

Nothing moving even skin and bones

bamboo holding breath above that euphemism
grass. Then a wavering lazily

like paper streaming. This there this not there
a body live and then a flutter

and a body still. Like burnt matches
smell of fennel comes into a room

where he readies for the tunnel with its blindness.
He lies in dark and waits for roiling orbs of light. Sometimes

a silver flutter like a manta ray.
Sometimes a woman.

Are you afraid?
No.
Not even at the trembling bed

though someone seemed to sit down
someone seemed to lie beside him. Soon

dark again and soon the bed was still. So much coming going

the opening mouth its barking squeak. Then another.
Muscles loosen.

Everything is over now I can assure you.
There is no breath.
As if twitching bedclothes

she curved the legs and then the creature seemed to merely
sleep. This there this not there you can't follow.

Lizard Dream

Lightning zippers the dark while the house riffs
electrified nonsense
night's threadbare song.

A green lizard hesitates on the doorframe,
one two one two shaking its
thumbnail wedge head

grass labyrinths, wings descending.

Ease her
from her chair, walk her to the bed. White sheets feel good.

Rain-scattered bird eggs on the driveway in the morning,
needle-holed, membranes pierced. Drenched
cannas loll toward the house
red tongues blabbing.

Genesis

I

inconspicuous flowers

the base of some leaves cupped like the bowls of spoons

the milkweed seed's fine tuft of silk hair
the wind takes

the pulpy tissue of cholla

the touched stamens of the prickly pear flower
that curl and twist inward

the longflowered four o'clock that only lives at dusk
when the pure white flowers unfold

long purple filaments and orange antlers

the hawkmoths with extremely long tongues

madrone gingko magnolia the sacred datura also pure white
but the margins tinged lavender

the hawkmoths stumbling
from one flower to the next

stiff and succulent and armed with sturdy spines at the tip
the century plants that live much less than one hundred years

bats and hummingbirds visit
the bats' bright yellow pollen stained heads

dusky
their fragrance
she calls it

silvery foliage and magenta flowers of locoweed

the listlessness the staggers the blindness the death

she is
large and clumsy
smiling

II

the shrieking jay appears at the door
diving from the coin sized leaves of the oak

a hand to protect her eyes and on the path
the still warm
blue tufted
small bird

she lifts it
its weight less than air

at the base of the tree a bed of blue vinca growing

she parts the fingertip leaves
and closes them over the small body

in her palm almost nothing

and only then is the bird overhead silent

though not too far away a black dog barks

maybe it wants water

III

male and female the skin so warm like velvet on the bone

claiming dominion over everything that moves

in the cool of the day they hid
damp leaves sliding around her body

now the serpent more subtil
and the small lithe lizard pauses
under his chin a red bubble inflates

a sparrow lands on a limb and then another sparrow
lands on the first sparrow and there is a sound
like bells clinking

who told you you were naked
it will hurt to bear children
your husband will rule you
the land will bear thistles and thorns

her flame gutters and in her eyes ash

his shadow falls over her he was still

bringing her food
she turns her face toward him

oh not that face he cries

you will eat your sweat with your bread
until you return to dust

she looks at her fingers
nails rippled like sand
needlelike curlicues of skin flinging themselves
away from the bed of the nail
little skin flags

everyday the leaves rust
pale tan spatters and wrinkled pink
louverings of bone

am I going to die now if so I would just like to
get it over with

IV

hang on

trust me

you know I
love you

don't you

sunset's confusing shock and then the
inking in

V

shale limestone dolomite chert

shallow marine origin of sandstone
supporting post oaks acacias cacti
the Edwards plateau and the Riogrande plain

a hidden salt bed
moving and dissolving

the small green lizard
pausing on a rock near spiky aloe

each day hot and then wet

the soaked earth exhaling

the cool the dank the small the biting the rasp the hard

the absence that is night

VI

she pleads
don't make me cry

she is detaching now you must let her go

as if the black shapes named leaves
force themselves through the gauze
between her and it
whatever the it is

the air green the unstoppable grass and green water
lapping at the door where up the wall
gray snails labor

everything
smells like damp sheets that lie
molding in a pile

at the last rough dispersal

the rankling grass of the yards whose wax smelling trees
something long hidden in all this
ugly green
the too many voices the too much
rain talk bird talk car tires
shushing a wet street

then a collision
of air

dark chorale

her dream of lizards heat birds and bristling grass
her what if
there will never be another dream

each blade at sharp angle fierce tickle

not
was I happy
but
what was pleasure

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Being Gazed Upon

G. L. Mind

". . . whatever it is eyeballs do."
Pat Barker, *The Eye in The Door*

In a tavern only a short walk away from the University of Chicago, I caught a man gazing upon me. My husband had asked me to wait there for him while he visited an old colleague at the Divinity School. I sat at a small table by the window reading Pat Barker's Resurrection Trilogy, happy to be reading, even happy to be waiting. Then, when I glanced up for a moment, I noticed a man looking at me, steadily and contemplative. An unpleasant feeling, like dirty water seeping up a wick, rose through my body. Would he speak to me? Was he going to say something provocative? Something insulting? From a small table, eight or ten feet away, his shallow eyes lingered upon me, wide and apparently unblinking. I glanced back at him, looked away, and then, feeling a small twinge of shame, I let my eyes return to his. I knew that returning his gaze, even for the briefest instant, was a mistake. Yet the urge to look back was irresistible. In the corner of his right eye, nestled between the bridge of his nose and the eye itself, he had a tattoo of a spider. Spreading in its descent, the web fell down his acned cheek. His thick shock of urinous blond hair straggled down his temples, lank and unkempt. His nose seemed slightly twisted, perhaps misshapen from a blow. He wore a stained tee shirt. His upper arms bulged as he supported his head in his hands. On his tuberose forearms, tattooed bats hung, fur-brown and dangerous, from the crook of each elbow. (Though now, his arms held erect in a chin-bearing position, they appeared to be standing upright, their tiny rodent heads hooded within the cusps of their folded wings.) His arms were skewed outwards so that I would not miss the bats. In unbroken silence, he preened, he strutted: gaze on my works.

What did his gaze mean? I looked away once more, and then, again, hesitantly, I met his eyes. I was drawn to them, compelled, though I found them disturbing, even menacing. The second time I glanced at him, I could see that his irises were inky blue, like the scales of a cold-water fish. In one eye, red threads criss-crossed the white ball. Someone, I guessed, had struck him solidly and hard. No doubt, he would have deserved that blow. Sitting uneasily at my table, Pat Barker now resting spine up on the tabletop, I knew instinctively that this large man could easily overpower me or, if we met on a street, drag me into a waiting car. Watching him gaze at me, I tried to figure out what I should do next. I could get up quickly and flee. I could return his challenge and wait to see what happened. I could verbally admonish him and, most likely, precipitate a violent outburst, a string of filthy words. If I challenged him, I might inspire him with the idea of waiting for me outside the tavern. In the way of violent men, he might even wait for Nick to come back and attack him in my place. I could also try to ignore him. Unless he actually spoke, I would not have to acknowledge him. Mentally huddled, I sat across from him, silent, doing my best not to return his gaze, hoping that someone else would distract his attention. Eyes down, pretending to concentrate on my glass of merlot, I tried to work out his intention. It was a combative gaze, though obviously not an invitation to personal conflict. It was not evident that it was an invitation to have sex with him, either. He wanted to intimidate me, but probably not to seduce me. He may have seen me as a contemptible bookish woman. Perhaps I struck him as a woman lacking a genuine sexual drive or as one, too accustomed to academic neighborhoods such as this, who had forgotten, or had never known, how a "real" man could perform.

There was something about me, no mistaking that, which provoked him, urging his challenge. His frank gaze invited me to become intimidated. He seemed to be inviting me to create a fictional world in which his part would be to stand out as dangerous, singularly volatile. His imagined voice, hushed and minatory, thrust itself through my mind. "Now I have become" (I felt sure he would gleefully say) "your worst nightmare." Within my own fictional world, that which I had just been invited to create, I would feel uncertainty, fear and anxiety. I might, or might not, feel sexual desire. For him, that might not have mattered.

There are many kinds of looks, but a gaze is peculiar. It is a steady look. It is not a dirty look, though it may be "dirty" in some sense. (The man's gaze made me feel dirty, among other complex sensations, but it was hardly a dirty look.) A gaze is never wild, though it may be mad. A gaze may not actually last long, but it is never a blink, neither hasty nor abrupt. It cannot be confused with a glance or a glimpse. There may be a battle of gazes. The gazer may "avert his gaze" under pressure or threat. I was afraid, and had no way to explore this option in Chicago. A gaze's steadiness reflects thoughtfulness. It indicates a mind at work (somewhere, unknown and remote) thinking, drawing inferences, contemplating. It is

the opposite of a stare. A stare shows dispassion, even an implacable lack of emotional connection. It is the look of an animal contemplating prey, or that of an android. (Tracking and identification data scroll down a head's-up screen covering its field of vision.) A stare, heartless, without empathy, is the way you might expect a psychopath to consider you before making his kill. Men seem to understand the weight of intimidation that a stare can convey: in many sports, such as boxing, the initial stare-down is a ritual of domination. Even in make-believe, a stare displays an aggressive contempt and indifference: pitiful bug, I am going to destroy you. However brief, a gaze indicates thoughtfulness. The gazer seems to contemplate the person he gazes upon and even to invite connection.

Many gazes, perhaps most, are sexual. You will be kidnapped into an alien world where you, or a mental image of yourself, will be stripped, tortured and raped. This is the gaze that feminist thinkers, since Laura Mulvey's 1991 essay in the New Left Review, have insisted upon: transgressing, violating, male kidnapping. Such gazes are aggressive, predatory and proprietary. They project the gazer's physical strength, his potential power (over you). His unwanted interest, precisely because unwanted, may be intensely disturbing. You may begin to tremble, free-floating anxiety flooding through your body, and to wilt, sweat trickling, like drops of ice-water, down your ribs. You may experience yourself as vulnerable, captured, already trussed up. In this way the gaze exerts power, as feminist theorists argue that the patriarchal gaze invariably does. The male gaze implies the gazer's superiority. (He can look at you in this way; you can only grow angry, turn away, hide, seek to flee. He can possess you.) Even if the gazer is small, a lecherous runt, the mere fact of gazing makes him tower over you. You will know, even without being told, that, in his mind's-eye, he is looking at your unclothed body. Being on the receiving end of such gazes is always a terrible moment.

Still, you may be drawn towards the gaze, succumbing to the gazer's proclamation of mastery. This may happen when a gaze also suggests a compliment. Then (no matter how you respond) the gaze proclaims the gazer's amazement, his wonder at your presence, his understanding that you are spectacular. This distinction may seem a trifle, a difference without import. Yet it does illustrate that the act of gazing may proceed from very different motivations and, like other similar insults (such as stalking), may engage you on a high as well as on a low level.

What does it mean to be "gazed upon"? It may be either a threat or a compliment and even both at once. You may feel exposed, even undressed (if the gaze is of a certain kind, if it seems to exert a certain kind of power), reduced, rendered contemptible, raped. Another's gaze may seem ominous, threatening, abrasive. You may sense yourself on the edge of violence, watching death eyeball you. As well, there are gazes that seem only to wor-

ship, or to gaze in wonder or awe in honor of your beauty or style. That kind of gaze will not be hostile, though it may be disturbing and unwanted. If you try to imagine how the gaze works for the gazer, to grasp its interior structure, it may turn out to be vastly more complex than a simple threat, or even a determined exercise in domination. After all, you have been invited into a kind of play. You have been asked to join a game of make-believe, even if you would have preferred to refuse the invitation. You have been invited to play the role of a character in someone else's fictional world. In a sense you have been kidnapped. You have been snatched out of your own world to play a part in another's imaginative world.

What has happened is analogous to having a writer, perhaps even a good friend, transform you into a character. Looked at in this way, being made the subject of someone's gaze, even if it seems hostile, might act like a tribute. It will be a reward that has been graciously extended towards you because your beauty, your physique, your personal demeanor has drawn someone's eyes. The man with the spider and bat tattoos who gazed upon me was intimidating, though I did not much fear actual in-the-world violence. His physical bearing made a powerful impact, constructing an interpretive frame around his act of gazing. The world into which he appeared to invite me was not one I wanted to visit. Considering the implications of the threat that had been made, and the interpretive frame that I had been offered (the spider, the bats), I felt that I had been terrorized, carried off, transformed into the unwilling participant in a scenario that I did not understand, nor even have a means to grasp. When the terrorist kills or maims you, it is quite impersonal. You have simply been invited to play a role in his terror-scenario. The script requires an unsuspecting victim. Knowing that the man in the Chicago bar had fixed his gaze upon me, I could only guess at his script, but my guess terrified me. When I glanced up to return his gaze, I saw myself reflected in his imagination, splayed-out and helpless beneath him.

The man in the tavern was doing something else as well. He was inviting me to imagine him. This act turns Mulvey's hypothesis upside down. What happens when someone solicits another's gaze? He calls out to you to look, to fix your gaze upon him (or her). Look at me! Gaze upon me! Gaze on my works. Now the polarities of the gaze are reversed. Now you are being invited to create your own fictional world in which the other person can play a distinctive role. You are not being asked to become a terrorist since the gazed-upon person has volunteered. He wants to be kidnapped, carried off into some brilliant scenario within your imagination. But what would the point be? Suppose that you have been invited to gaze upon someone whom you have never met, never before seen. This person will have sent out signals, or perhaps laid a snare—a hairstyle, a body part, an ornament (tattoo, ring or stud, even a brand or scar), a corporeal style, accomplishments, works. Your gaze will fix upon some aspect of this person: size, good looks, style, talent. At this moment, you will have

been invited to create a world in which the other person proves to be a magnificent lover, an overwhelmingly desirable person, someone quite unlike your previous experience. Human beings often wish to be imagined. (There can be pleasure, if equivocal, in finding yourself re-imagined as a character in someone else's tale.) They may receive a nip of pleasure from seeing their names in print or from figuring in someone else's narrative. To-be-looked-at-ness, never a simple motivation, runs through many human activities shaped as a desire for celebrity in fashion, sports and entertainment or politics and war.

A soliciting gaze invites you actively to play another person's game. Take me to live with you and be your love. Imagine my always-ready, my never-failing Jovian tumescence. Imagine my lush openness, my Venusian warmth. Expressed in its simplest terms, the game is to invite you, a stranger, to kidnap the gazer. In the world that you will imagine, the gazer's proffered set of features, the symbols of her or his desirability, will contrast to your memories of other people, to your daily experience. You will have been nudged into making a comparative judgment upon other people whom you know and may hold dear. (Who knows? You may be motivated to step out of your new imaginative world to introduce yourself within the actual one. In that event, the gazed-upon person will have snared you, led you, perhaps against your better judgment and even all your disciplined habits, into an in-the-world situation in which he may become your actual lover, or murderer. By analogy, a chat-room seduction is a stylized context for soliciting a virtual gaze.) Soliciting another's gaze, through visible plumage or cyber-avatars, involves a complex courtship, like a peacock strutting or a bower bird building fancy dream-nests. The works become evident, having been thrust out into full view, but the intention only slowly manifests its shape.

I do not know whether the tattooed man in Chicago wanted me to imagine him or was fulfilled by imagining me. At the time, I felt a woman's normal sense of violation, of sensing that I was being undressed, fondled and raped in an unknown man's imagination. Now I am less certain. The tattoos were intended to attract attention. The way he turned his arms outwards to expose the hanging bats indicated that he wanted me to imagine him, regardless of whatever he was doing with my image in the same moment. Looking back, the best reading I can give for his gaze is that, primarily, he wanted me to imagine him, even though, secondarily, he may also have been imagining me. It was an equivocal situation, impossible to categorize precisely, but it did illustrate the double-sidedness of the gaze.

I can make the concept of the soliciting gaze clearer by reference to an explicit instant. The most theatrical solicitation of another's gaze that I have ever observed happened in Broome, an old pearl-diving port and now a tourist "destination" on Australia's northwest Indian Ocean coast. Here is how it took place.

A young man working behind the boutique bar at the Cable Beach International Hotel told us that once everyone swam in the nude, but now people conscientiously wear bathers on Cable Beach. Nick believed him. I had doubts. Surely, not everyone, even in Australia, likes to swim in the nude. Not everyone, surely. If he was telling the truth, then the triumph of swimming suits might show the impact of Civilization. More likely, the new Cable Beach International Hotel cast an invisible force field. Tourists, American and Japanese, mostly, stay in the hotel and swim on the beach. The thinking in Broome must be that the sight of naked locals would be disturbing to the foreigners and, indirectly, hurt commerce. Sometime in the past ten years, nude swimming on Cable Beach mostly ceased (though who knows what happens after dark when the lifeguards have gone home?). Nick and I had come to the wild Northwest only to encounter international modesty.

Quite a way north of the wide, white sand beach where most of the tourists swim, the local people do, I learned, occasionally disrobe and swim happily naked in the surf. Walking north, past a collection of scattered black rocks exposed at low tide like the indeterminate bones of an extinct species, I found them. They were bare and bronzed, indifferent to ultra-violet rays, in the late afternoon and early evening. Their vehicles were parked on the sand. There, out of sight or nearly so, Broome's traditional beach-ways survived in fragments.

Walking along that part of the beach, I noticed a young man, in the nude, wading parallel to the beach. When I came back a hour later, heading for the bar at the Cable Beach International Hotel, where I had agreed to meet Nick, the man was walking naked on the beach. It took me several minutes to catch up to him while he stepped back into the water, where he stood ankle deep in the swishing surf, occasionally walking a few steps one way or the other. Over to the east, under the sand hummocks, the evening camel train of tourists was forming. A dozen or more, mostly young men and women, guests at the hotel were taking the chance to ride camels a mile or two northwards along the beach. Each one of them would have been told, as we had been told two evenings earlier, that feral camels were common in the Australian outback, especially in the Kimberley. Harnessed and kneeling, the camels they were preparing to ride were anything but feral, but why worry about reality when you have been given a legend? Broome nearly chokes on its own legend-making. The local tradition of bronze-skinned, healthy nude surfers is a central legend.

As I watched the tourists scramble up on the kneeling camels, gaudy in their red harness and trappings, I suddenly understood why the man was walking, so prominently exposed, through the ankle-deep surf. He was there to reveal himself, to be a sexual epiphany for the tourists. He had a muscular upper body with thick, Captain Aussie biceps and lush, razor-cut black hair. He had, I saw immediately, a working-man's body. Only his forearms

and a v-shaped wedge of skin below his neck were tanned. His legs were a dead give-away. They were maggot-pale, thin and spindly as mulga, strikingly in contrast to his sun-darkened arms. The toothpick ordinariness of his legs showed that he did not work out in gyms. His heavy, upper-body musculature could only have come from hard, physical work. His flaccid penis hung impressively thick. I couldn't remember ever having seen one quite like it.

I walked by him looking away towards the camel-train that was forming. Actually, I felt a strong urge to gaze, to weigh and measure him in my imagination, but I had determined not to give him satisfaction. I cloaked my imagination in rational analysis. After I had passed him, I met another woman in a red Speedo one-piece suit, cut high on her hips. She was walking along the sand from the direction of the Cable Beach International Hotel towards the exhibitionist. She possessed an athlete's body—a woman in her late thirties, trim, muscular, tanned all over, unmistakably healthy and close to the local mythology. Unlike the naked man, she evidently worked out in gyms. I sat down on a flat, exposed shelf of rock so that I could observe how she would confront the man with the hero-sized member. She handled the situation well. As soon as she saw him and guessed his intentions (to call her attention to his endowment one way or another), she turned into the water, making a distinct disgust face, her nose crinkling and her mouth pursed. She swam out for about twenty meters and then swam back in beyond the stretch of beach where the man was pretending to walk. He would get no pleasure from shocking her. Nothing about him would excite her.

What kind of reaction would he have been expecting? If the athletic woman in the red one-piece had looked at him, perhaps stared for a moment, or, better yet, gasped and jerked away, it would have been a bonus. What he clearly hoped for was to be noticed by one of the young women climbing onto the camels. Perhaps when she saw him she would be so dazzled, so consumed by desire, that she would send her card over. Her hotel room number would be written on the back. Perhaps he kept his hopes modest and only waited for a young Japanese woman, equipped with the inevitable camera, to take a photo or two. (I observed two of the young women take out binoculars and train them upon the exhibitionist.) He may only have wanted a foreign woman to compare him favorably to her under-equipped lover. Watching him preen himself, I suspected that he must feel that, given his natural gift, he should have had better luck in life than he had yet scored. He had come to the beach, not in the usual truck, UTE or SUV, but on a little red Yamaha 250cc motorbike. The affable young man at the bar would have said, I guessed, that he was a no-hoper attempting to compensate. He had a natural advantage that, in some other world, might have brought him a Dirk Diggler success. In this world, never fully esteemed if never unnoticed, his endowment may have given him only a corrosive sense of resentment. On that day on

Cable Beach, as he strutted in the surf, no women seemed to give him a second thought or even to look at him more closely than at the sea itself.

An exhibitionist struggles through personal flamboyance to evoke in others a world that has not yet (and may never) come into existence. Flamboyance lends imaginary wings to the mud-bound. Through the startling to-be-looked-at-ness that the exhibitionist creates, a path opens and a fictional world appears. In the imaginary worlds that he sought to solicit, the exhibitionist on Cable Beach must have hoped to star, his cape wrapped gracefully about him, the desired of all desiring. He must have dreamed that he would startle the Japanese girls on the hotel's camel train out of their sexual complacency, seeming for them to be masterful, exceeding all familiar proportions, irresistibly desirable. In his dreams, he would have been well worth the trouble of inviting into their rooms.

Was he wrong to think this? Perhaps not. At least two young Japanese women had taken the trouble to examine him through binoculars. Two women who had encountered him posing had gone out of their ways to ignore him, but one at least had felt an nagging desire to look. Leave aside the sleazy crassness of exposing himself to young women whom he couldn't have known (and, after all, it was a beach where nudism was still quietly practised), and concentrate upon the problem of soliciting another's gaze. Flamboyance is a visual rhetoric: an exaggerated case of flaunting at least one impressive feature. Visual rhetorics exaggerate details and highlights a small range of features at the expense of all other possible ones. In a similar manner, if in a different medium, the internet chat-room constitutes a place of personal streamlining and enhancement: age, looks, availability, all subsumed in the need to capture another's attention and to become, in that unseen person's mind, an exalted image of oneself.

A spider nesting in the corner of the eye? Bats hanging from the crook of the elbow? I read these as the corporeal expression of desire. Look at me! the man in the Chicago tavern strutted about (without moving) silently commanding, gaze on my works: I am capable of all, I cross all boundaries; beyond both disgust and fear, I transgress social order. Watching him invite me to imagine him, I could overhear his silent whisper: I lead life to its excess. It was a kind of seduction. He invited me to contemplate his striking tattoos, his demeanour and general bearing. He prompted an aesthetic, far more than a sexual, response. The young man on Cable Beach, without clothes, with no feature to boast other than his penis, was startlingly flamboyant in a narrow, specialized manner. What made the difference? The man in the Chicago tavern was not attractive, his hair was unkempt and the color of morning pee. Still, his tattoos were entrancing works of art. His flamboyance, which he might not have recognized, was aesthetic, a visual rhetoric. The man on Cable Beach was handsome, his hair was professionally cut and black as the collied night. His flamboyance, which was genuine if

rather local, hung upon his sexual promise. He displayed his single magnificent endowment as a lure. In his own self-seeing, he had transformed his penis into a beacon to compel women's eyes into a ravished gaze. His was a wholly a corporeal rhetoric. He wanted to compel women to invite him to penetrate their minds, taking up residence within their imaginations.

The soliciting gaze is very different from the aggressive, kidnapping gaze. Still, it is not innocent. It may even be intensely disturbing. You may not want a stranger, however gorgeous his features or impressive his parts, residing, perhaps for life, in your imagination. Think again of the two instances I have given in this essay: each man's flamboyance lay in the act of preening himself in an effort to attract another's gaze. Strutting into a stranger's vision, each displayed himself where, before, he had not been noticed. At least one of the men did not gaze upon the women he met in order to kidnap them, but sought to tempt others into kidnapping him. Each offered himself as the glamorous material from which to build an imaginative world. Such offers are common. Many people, it seems, desire to be imagined and to occupy a well-lit nook in someone else's mind. Taunting and baiting, the man in Chicago is still there, glowering at me. His works, his tattoos, remain as vivid as fire. Once you have returned the other person's gaze, accepting his invitation and constructing his suggested world, he will be yours, private and disturbing, for as long as your mind imagines.

With Darwin at Down

K. A. Timiriazev

with a Letter by L. N. Bell

Note: Last year, Leon Bell, the distinguished plant physiologist whose autobiographical writings appeared in our most recent issue, sent us two typescripts, published below, and a book about Darwin's house by the English Heritage Society. Kliment Arkadievich Timiriazev (or Timiryazev) (1843-1920) was the renowned founder of Russian studies in plant physiology and genetics and an ardent Darwinist. Near the end of his life, he welcomed Lenin's accession to power. We don't pretend to have more than a passing acquaintance with the complex scientific and ideological battles within early Soviet biological sciences and would welcome informed comment; but we thought the freshness of Timiriazev's memory of Darwin, written by a strong-minded researcher in pursuit of knowledge, yet candid about his belief in the affinity of science and Liberal politics based in reason and liberation, would interest our readers. N.B.: Down House is located in Downe, Kent, and is an English Heritage museum. —KM

http://williamcalvin.com/bookshelf/down_hse.htm

Leon Bell's Letter

October 30, 1983
Moscow

P. Titheradge
Custodian of Down House
Downe, Kent

Dear Mr. Titheradge:

You may recall that at the beginning of September there was a visitor from Moscow. That was me and I asked you if you had any material in the museum about the Russian plant physiologist K. A. Timiriazev visiting Darwin at Down. You said that there did not seem to be any and asked me if I could send some. This is what I can now report.

In 1939 the works of Timiriazev were published by the Selkhozgiz (which deciphered means Agricultural Publishing House) in ten volumes. The title of the VII volume is called "Charles Darwin and his Teaching". Part 1 of the volume consists of four papers:

1. "Darwin as a model of a scientist". This was a public lecture at Moscow University in 1878 and contains 34 pages.
2. "An outline of Darwin's theory" (140 pp, 1865)
3. "Charles Darwin and the semi-centennial of Darwinism" (1909, 27 pp).
4. "The significance of the revolution made by Darwin in modern natural science" (1896, 15 pp).

Part 2 of the volume is called "A rebuke to the anti-Darwinists". It consists of various polemical papers in defense of Darwinism, some of them written in very strong terms.

Finally the volume contains a number of articles written by Timiriazev which were not included in earlier editions of his work. They are:

1. "A short outline of the life of Charles Darwin" (1910; 9 pp).
2. "A visit to Darwin at Downe" (1909; 17 pp).
3. "The first jubilee of Darwinism" (1908, 10 pp).
4. "Cambridge and Darwin" (1909, 61 pp).
5. "Darwin" (a short biography for a Russian encyclopedia, 1912, 12 pp).

The paper which I think would be of greatest interest to you is "A visit of Darwin at Downe"; I also found the "Cambridge and Darwin" paper to be very interesting, particularly since I had been in Cambridge 3 times during my visit to England.

I will try to get a translation of "A visit…", but that may take time. In the meantime I can offer you this short summary.

Timiriazev, who was a young man of 34 was travelling in Europe in 1877. In England he wanted to visit Hooker at Kew Gardens but only got as far as Thiselton-Dyer (I'm not sure about the English spelling of this name). He asked the latter if he could help him meet Darwin. Dyer said the most he could do was to write to Francis Darwin. With this letter Timiriazev rode by train to Orpington, walked the three miles to Downe, describing in sympathetic words what he saw and experienced during the walk and also his impressions of Down House.

Tim. was met by Francis Darwin to whom Tim. presented his autographed book "Charles Darwin and His Teaching" for his father. The two were soon joined by Darwin's wife and a few minutes later Darwin himself unexpectedly entered the room. After a few customary remarks Darwin and Tim. began discussing the status of plant physiology in England (which Darwin considered to be virtually nonexistent). Darwin then began questioning Tim. about his work and on learning that he was studying the role of chlorophyll in photosynthesis exclaimed that "chlorophyll is probably the most interesting of organic substances," a phrase which Tim. and his followers liked to repeat.

The conversation then turned to science in general and Darwin invited his guest to the greenhouse in which he was carrying out experiments on insectivorous plants. On returning to the house they were offered coffee and after having presented an autographed photograph to Tim., Darwin excused himself and left the room. However, he soon returned to say a few words about his position regarding the Russo-Turkish war over Bulgaria.

After refusing an offer to be taken back to the station by horse, Tim. walked part of the way with Francis and soon returned to London.

I have recently visited Timiriazev's flat in Moscow which is now a museum. There is a picture there depicting Darwin and Tim. in the greenhouse, a reminder of the visit to Down.

I also dropped into the Darwin museum which essentially is a biological museum devoted to the theory of evolution. There is very little there (as far as I could see) about Darwin himself.

If there is any additional information you would like to have please let me know and I will try to help as much as I can.

Sincerely,

L. N. Bell

Institute of Plant Physiology of USSR Academy of Sciences

With Darwin at Down

On the centenary of his birth on January 31, 1809

K. A. Timiriazev

Preparing in July 1877 to go from Paris to English which I had earlier visited as a tourist I wanted this time to penetrate into its scientific circles. To this end I sought the advice of Professor Degueren, Academician with Jardin des Plantes (Botanical Gardens), who though known for this work in agrochemistry was always interested in the physiology of plants. He was one of the few Frenchmen in whom I encountered something more than the purely external and rather cold civility. There was something hearty and friendly about his manner in spite of the difference of age and status in scientific hierarchy that separated us. He usually addressed me as mon jeune ami (my young friend). Besides, unlike most Frenchmen at the time, he was well disposed towards the English and had visited England more than once. he told me that from his own experience he knew what importance the English attached to letters of recommendation and said he would try to get me one from the director of Jardin des Plantes, Academician Dequen, known for his extensive knowledge of horticulture, to some outstanding English botanist. A few days later I called at [on] Dequen and received a letter from him addressed to Sir Joseph Hooker, Director of the world-famous Botanical Gardens at Kew new London. Seeing on the envelope the name of Darwin's closest friend I resolved there and then that I would overcome any obstacles to see Darwin. Now, looking back over 50 years I could justify my persistence in my own eyes by the fact that for 45 out of these 50 years I have loyally served Darwinism, propagating, defending and developing it, but at that time I would myself have been hard put to it to find an explanation why I wanted to meet him more than any of the legion of his ardent adherents scattered over the face of the earth. To have some tangible pretexts I dug up from my suitcase a coy of my book Charles Darwin and his Doctrine, whose first edition had been gathering dust for some 15 years at some book dealers' in St. Petersburg, made it look as elegant as only Paris book-binders were capable of, provided it with the dedication pleading with all sincerity my "profound respect and unbounded admiration", and set out on my way.

The following morning upon my arrive at London I was already at Kew, that paradise for any botanist and any lover of plants which has not hundreds but tens of thousands of visitors every day and with whose treasures I had been familiar from my previous trips to England. This time, however, I made straight not for the wonderful garden or the unique greenhouses but for the director's house, or rather what I took to be one, i.e. a modest cottage of grey brick with ordinary windows overgrown with creeping and flowering plants. I

rang the doorbell rather confidently but when the door opened I was stunned at the sight of the most magnificent old butler in embroidered livery I had ever seen. To my none-too-confident question, "Is the director at home?" he replied with unhurried dignity: "This is not the director's home, it's the home of the Duchess of Cumberland, Aunt of her Majesty the Queen". Then, seeing that he was dealing not with some important Englishman impinging on Her Majesty's privacy but simply an ignorant shabby foreigner of whom there were a good many in the botanical gardens next door, he graciously stepped into the middle of the road and with the gentle and elegant movement of his hand indicated the way to an exactly the same kind of cottage occupied by the director. Here a new disappointment was in store for me: I as told that the director himself was so old and so busy that he could not receive strangers and was directed to his assistant and, as I was later to learn, his son-in-law, Mr. Tisselton-Dayer, now Sir William, who has since succeeded his father-in-law as the director and has now retired due to old age. Meanwhile, Hooker himself is still going strong, working, making speeches, at the age of 92! It was not until some time later that I was able to meet him. In fact it was twenty years later. And a year ago he kindly sent me a photograph of himself working at his desk piled high with collections of herbs. Who knows what a cultural legacy a whole nation can draw from the ability, not uncommon among its best representatives, to live a conscious and productive intellectual life for some 70 years!

Mr. Dayer apologized on behalf of his father-in-law and said that he was willing to offer me any cooperation in letting me see and work in the garden, but when I said I wanted to visit Darwin he raised up his arms and began to protest that it was an impossible thing to do. He explained to me that Darwin was in constant ill health, that his family were carefully protecting him from intruders and that it was very difficult to get into Downe unless one had a coach sent out to pick one up at the station which, of course, not being acquainted you would not do. Last but not least, Mr. Dayer himself would not dare to trouble Darwin by asking him to receive me. But I persevered; I said that I did not need any coach because we Russians are used to pilgrimages and even if they did not receive me I would not consider that to be unnatural under the circumstances. Little by little he began to yield and we finally agreed that he would supply me with a letter but not to Darwin but his younger son Francis, or Frank, as they called him then — last year's President of the British Association — a title with an English scientists preserves forever in his Academic record. "He will show you what he can; but I warn you once again that you may waste a whole day and never see Darwin." As we parted he advised me to go later in the day so as to reach Downe after three o'clock when Darwin's working day was usually over. With this letter in my pocket I was quite happy: there was nothing insolent about my behavior because the time of Darwin's son of course was not so precious as to make him unable to spare me half an hour of it.

The next day a train was taking me to the south of London past the once famous but now somewhat cloying and trivial Crystal Palace of Sidenham, past the historic Chiselhorst and soon came to a stop at a small station called Orpington. One couldn't help thinking of the paradoxes of-world fame. The place which provided the last refuge for a villain who had started his career with a bloodbath on December 2 and drowned it in the blood of Sedan is familiar to anyone. [Napoleon III-KM] And if I asked any street urchin where ex-empress Eugenia lived he would have readily showed me the road; but here in Orpington it did not occur to me to ask anyone the way to Darwin's place. I asked how to get to Downe because, as I had been told, there was no carriage available at the station or anywhere near.[1] This was my first walk in an English country place so well known to me from English novels. In my youth I made a living by English translations and many yards of Bulwer, Dickens and Eliot had passed through my hands. Later I enjoyed the scenic beauty of England: the cliffs of Landsend eternally lapped by the oceans and which young Turner had once walked all over, or the charming banks of English lakes where Ruskin as a child first became aware of the beauty of nature, and where Darwin spent his last summer. But there was a kind of beauty too in this monotonous gently undulating Kent valley with winding roads bordered by hedgerows, scattered villages and, most important, wonderful, well-tended centuries-old oaks and elm-trees. In England of course there is nothing approaching the Russian forests but it would be safe to say that he who has not been to England has not seen a real tree.

First I had to walk along a broad highway. In order not to lose my way and take the wrong turn I had to ask the way from people at the village pub, from a passing cabman who had stopped to water his huge horse (I couldn't help thinking of our puny peasant drudges) and to have a tin of bitter which a German with his poetic cast of mind would describe as combining des Weines Geist, des Brodes Kraft (the spirit of wine and the strength of bread), or from labourers in the field who were working hard because it was the heat of the harvest season. At last I reached a turn to the right and found myself on what we would describe as a country road except that it was just as well paved as the highway lined by the hedgerows much praised by poets. The road soon reached a park with the light gate and a beautiful lodge. I was beginning to think that I had missed my turn and would have to go back. But a watchman soon appeared, asked me whether I was going to Downe. If my memory doesn't fail me the park belongs to Lubbock, a well-known amateur scientist, now Lord Eubury. As I emerged from the park I caught sight of roof tops and the dome of a small village church which must have been Downe. As I approached I noticed that the village was situate to the

1 That reminds me of another pilgrimage, to Byron's Newstead. When I asked the station master there where I could find a cab he replied, "I fear you are in the wrong place," which meant something like, "You must have lost your way, we don't have any cabs here."

right and that on the left-hand side there was a stone wall and behind it a garden with large and diverse trees. Knowing that Darwin was something like a church elder and much loved by the people of Downe I boldly addressed the first man I met with the question, how to get to Mr. Darwin, to which he replied, somewhat reproachfully, "You mean, Doctor Darwin? This is his garden, only you have to approach the house from the other end." Since then I have had many occasions to note that the English, even the commoners, set great store by academic titles. For example, the people at Brentwood, where Ruskin lived, invariably referred to him as "Professor". There was nothing particular about the view of the house from the road with its kitchen and outbuildings, but the same could not be said of the facade which gave into [onto] the garden. It had a cosy and picturesque look thanks to an asymmetric turret-like structure and most important to the creeping green plants that covered it from top to bottom.

The door was answered by an old butler, most probably the one of whom Francis Darwin said in his reminiscences, "We had come to see him as a member of the family". He looked at me with a mixture of surprise and admonition: surprise, because I had come on foot and admonition because, as everyone else in the family he was afraid of intruders. But he mellowed when I told him that I only wanted to see Mr. Francis and handed him the letter. In a moment Mr. Francis appeared. he looked very young although he must have been approaching thirty (since he is now approaching sixty). He showed me into the drawing room warning me that it was unlikely that I would see his father who gets excited talking to strangers, which he should not do considering his ill health. I hastened to agree and gave him my book and made to go but he told me to stay and said he would see if his mother would like to meet me, and that she probably would. In his absence I surveyed the room. It was a usual English parlour with a mantle-piece, a veritable "family hearth" around which were the seats usually occupied by its inhabitants, with Darwin's comfortable chair and a smaller one, a writing desk, apparently the favourite place of Mrs. Darwin. Along the walls and in the corners there were a few établissements and on the wall facing the fireplace two windows with a door in between. Near the left window there was a small writing desk on curved legs with all sorts of bric-à-brac which obviously belonged to Mrs. Darwin. Everywhere there was the simplicity and cosiness of an English home. There door opened into the garden without a single step or even a threshold — *de plain pied*, as the French say — right onto a space covered, as in most European gardens by fine gravel, very inconvenient for flimsy shoes but a good protection against mud and slush so common on our roads. There was a light gallery running the length of the parlour forming what was locally called a verandah, and under it were flowerpots and easy-chairs, including Darwin's chair with a high back known from numerous photographs.

Frequently the son led in Mrs. Darwin, an amiable old woman, without a shade of primness or a desire to show off her worldly manner and her way with guests, with a simple and easy grace that bespeaks a truly educated and cultured person.[2] Her tone and her conversation did not reveal a trace of provincialism or strain in dealing with strangers. Incidentally, I could never tell the difference between a Londoner and a provincial, while the difference between a Parisian and a provincial is frequently noticeable, and a typical Berliner is the most provincial of all Germans. Unfortunately I was too anxious to see Darwin to pay much attention to her and only the moving and heartfelt things that the son wrote about her in the memoirs about his father made me aware of how much humanity is indebted to that modest unassuming woman who had performed her quiet feat of love: by daily and constant care she had allowed her husband, who had hardly known a day of full good health and had despaired of his life thirty years ago, to complete his Herculean work.

A few minutes later, and quite unexpectedly, Darwin entered the room. I have already had occasion to describe my first impression of him.[3] It must be said that the familiar portrait of him with a long grey beard was not yet known at the time. The only known portrait of him was one in the German edition of his "Origin of Species" (and in my book Charles Darwin). That portrait, dating back to the 1850s shows him as a man of about forty, well-shaven and with trimmed side-whiskers and because the portrait showed him from the waist up one could not help seeing him in one's mind's eye as a shortish plump man looking rather like a businessman or perhaps a sportsman but certainly not a profound and great thinker. And now I was confronted with an impressive old man with a large grey beard, deep-sunken eyes, whose calm and gentle look made you forget about the scientist and think about the man.[4] It couldn't help comparing him to an ancient sage or an Old Testament patriarch, a comparison which has often been quoted since.

I do not remember exactly how our conversation began but I do remember that it was he who opened it and I was spared the embarrassment of explaining or justifying my awkward call, my intrusion into the house of a great man and a tireless worker telling himself diem pertidi (lost day) when he failed to accomplish the day's task, the man who had become a recluse to avoid visitors taking away his time and his health, which was exactly what I was

2 Mrs. Darwin was the granddaughter of Wedgwood, a famous potter who founded a porcelain plant and whose charming wares made from drawings by the famous Flaxman and reminding one of antique stones are so valued by connoisseurs.

3 Darwin as a type of scientist. In: Charles Darwin and His Theory.

4 It was not until I had returned from Downe to London that I came across a very curious photograph showing Darwin, Mill, Spencer, Ruskin and two less famous English writers. I could never find out whether such a meeting had actually taken place or whether the photograph had been cleverly assembled by the artist; all the people look like their best portraits but Darwin was for the first time portrayed as he has gone down in history.

doing on the occasion. I know only that in a few minutes after our conversation began I saw him as a very kindly and gentle man and felt that I had known him for a long time. But this was not the complacency of an old man who had accomplished all he had ever set out to accomplish and, away from the vanity of the world, is looking down on other people's youth with condescension. There was no trace of an old man's deductiveness or sentimentality about what he said. On the contrary he spoke in a lively boisterous manner interspersing his speech with jokes and pointed irony and hew as interested in questions of science and life. Nor were there any of the questions that Europeans, even educated ones commonly ask of Russians such as, "Is it true that it is very cold in Russia and that you have many bears?" It is true though that when his wife asked whether I would like tea or coffee he hastened to answer for me, "Coffee of course. How can you offer tea to a Russian?" Proving that he too shared the common Russian prejudice that Russian tea is better than European, a prejudice which in olden days was explained by saying that "tea does not like the sea."

But when our conversation drifted to serious scientific subjects it assumed a purely English character. Learning that I was studying plant physiology he immediately confounded me with a question: "You must have felt it odd to find yourself in a country where there is not a singly botanist-physiologist?" Only a true Briton, proudly aware of his nation's virtues, can be so candid about its shortcomings know that acknowledging them is the only way to get rid of them. I could not help agreeing to that, with the reservation, however, that I had found one and "he was the greatest of all ages and nations." From this question and the conversation that followed, I guessed that I had come to Downe at a very opportune moment (though I only learnt it with certainty many years later). It is known that after publishing his Origins of Species and other works which look at particular sides of his theory Darwin concentrated on botany, more specifically experimental and physiological botany. All this special research was designed to prove the usefulness of his theory as a "working hypothesis". At the time of my visit he was already engaged together with Francis on a piece of research that provided the content of a volume called "The Power of Movement in Plants".

And there he must have been confronted with the fact that English science which had given the world so many outstanding researchers in the related field of descriptive botany and the physiology of animals — not to speak of other areas — had not in the past hundred years produced a single botanist physiologist and did not even have a single laboratory equipped for this kind of research. But I only learnt that for certain 30 years later after reading his letter to Mr. Dayer written a few months after my visit. I cannot resist the pleasure of quoting this letter here. "I am deeply convinced," wrote Darwin to Mr. Dayer, about the organization of a plant physiology laboratory at Kew for those who wanted to undertake deeper investigations — "that it would be a great pity if the physiological laboratories already

built were not supplied with the best instruments. It may be that some of them will become outdated before they are used. But this is not an argument against acquiring them because a laboratory without instruments is of no use and the very fact that there are instruments may prompt the idea of using them. You at Kew as the guardians and disseminators of the botanical science will at least fulfill your duty and if your laboratory is not used the shame will be on our educated society. But until bitter experience teaches me otherwise I will not believe that we have fallen so far behind. I think the German laboratories could serve as an example but Timiryazev from Moscow who has travelled all over Europe, visited all the laboratories and who is so good a fellow could provide us with a better list of the necessary instruments."[5] As if divining the question that "there are no people before people", a saying which, though not always true of the great satirist's country was undoubtedly true in the land of the great scientist. I need hardly had that our common expectations were soon fulfilled and the Jordrel laboratory at Kew — a tiny house less than an auditorium at any of our universities — became a centre that produced some research which has already become classic. From plant physiology the conversation switched to my work[6] and learning that I was making a special study of chlorophyll he promptly said the words that I have since quoted many times. They were amazing words to come from a man who was removed from chemical and physical science: "Chlorophyll is perhaps the most interesting organic substance." It is interesting that his last article which appeared a few days before his death was about chlorophyll. Then he asked me what else, apart from Kew interested me in Britain from the botanical point of view. I said that I was planning to go to Rothamsted (a well-known agronomy experimental station, the first in Europe) and said that in terms of the teaching about "the struggle for survival" the current experiments of the changing composition of the meadow flora due to the use of fertilizers was of some interest. While I was talking he made signs to his son and when I finished he said reproachfully, "You see, the man has come from across the world and he is going to Rothamsted tomorrow and we still have not been there." And Again, it was only many years later when the first volume of his letters appeared, that I learnt that Darwin was at the time planning a large series of experiments with artificial-cultures as a means of changing forms and had entered into correspondence on this matter with Gilbert, a well-known chemist from Rothamsted. At about the same time he conceived with amazing penetration his experiments in obtaining artificial plant growth (in nuts, etc.) and methods of experimental study of the laws of evolution. In the 30 years since that time no progress has been made on that matter. I mentioned this as proof that Darwin constantly,[7] and more par-

5 More Letters of Charles Darwin, Vol. II, p. 417.
6 Along with the book, I gave him the offset copy of my paper just presented to the Paris Academy.
7 Beginning from the famous page in his notebook, 1837.

ticularly in recent years was leaning towards a new area of science which, if not a necessary component of "Darwinism", is its natural extension, as I have pointed out more than once.

From botany we went on to discuss science in general. Darwin was particularly pleased that he had found among young Russian scientists some ardent supporters of his theory, referring most frequently to the name of Kovalevsky. When I asked him whom of the two brothers he had in mind — probably Alexander, the zoologist — he replied, "No I believe that Vladimir's work on paleontology is even more important." I quote these words because the unfortunate Vladimir Anufrievich (Kovalevsky) was never a "prophet in his own land". If my memory does not fail me he had flunked an M.D. examination in paleontology, the subject on which he was already a world famous authority. In the midst of this conversation Darwin startled me with a question: "Tell me, why do these German scientists quarrel so much among themselves?" "You are in a better position to judge," I replied. "How is that? I've never been to Germany." "Yes, but this must be another proof of your theory: there are probably too many of them. It's another example of the struggle for survival." He was taken aback for a second and then burst out laughing heartily. At last I managed to broach the subject which I had long wanted to talk about and which engaged him at the moment and he offered to go out to the greenhouse where he was conducting his experiments with insectivorous plants.

In spite of the fact that it was a hot July day (albeit a cloudy one) and the greenhouse was within a short walking distance, his wife and son brought a short overcoat and the soft felt hat that are so famous now from his photographs. In front of the verandah there was a large English lawn trimmed like velvet on which you could nevertheless walk freely, sit or lie about. The flowerbeds were nothing special. The greenhouse in the opposite corner of the garden was small, the kind that any Russian landowner could afford for his hortensias and pelargonias. It was light and airy thanks to the light iron frame and clear glass, just like in Holland. Only later I learnt from his letters how long he had hesitated before allowing himself such a luxury which was not a luxury at all but a necessary aid to his work, how glad he was when it was ready at last and he began to receive not ordinary flowers but exclusively "botanical" plants from Kew and from the best gardens in a country famous for its gardens. Tending plants is known to have been Darwin's biggest passion. His earliest portrait as a child show him with a flowerpot in his hands. On the threshold of the greenhouse we were met by an old gardener, the very gardener whose comment on Darwin was recently recalled by Lubbock at the jubilee meeting of the Linnaeus Society in 1908: "A good old man, it's a pity though that he can't find a proper occupation for himself. Just imagine: he stands and peers at a flower for several minutes. What man with something serious to do would behave in that way?"

At that time Darwin was working on an answer to the accusation that he had not proved how insects [insectivorous plants? -KM] benefited from the animal food and that this process was not eating but decay under the influence of bacteria. I saw a series of pans with Drosera turf; each was divided into two halves by a tin plate; the leaves of one were fed with meat and the leaves of the other were without any meat food and it was obvious that the former were much larger than the latter.

Showing me his nurslings Darwin spoke in a very pacific tone as if defending and justifying himself that he "was probably right", and that the results of the experiment spoke in his favour. Meanwhile we know now from the memoirs of his son that no objection vexed him as much as this one.[8]

When we returned home coffee had arrived, and the talk assured a more general character. it is known that Darwin was obliged to rest in the afternoons and that during that time his wife read aloud to him. For the most part these were novels of somewhat inferior quality but with a happy end. But sometimes by way of an exception he had something serious read to him. On that occasion the book on his desk was McKenzie-Walles' well-known book about Russia. I must say that in spite of the 15-odd years that had passed since the abolition of serfdom in Russia many people in Europe still remembered that peaceful revolution that had liberated some 20 million peasants (with land) in particular in the light of the bloody war for the liberation of Negroes in America. During his round-the-world voyage Darwin had come to hate slavery, and this led him (and not him alone) to see the future of the Russian people in the rosiest of colours. Another question that interested him was free thought that was beginning to manifest itself in Russia. "A society in which such books as Buckle's History of Civilization (a fact probably borrowed from McKenzie-Walles) are widespread and where they freely read books by Layell [Lyall?] and Darwin's The Origin of Man", he said, "cannot revert to traditional views on the basic questions of science and life."

Two or more hours sped by, and although I did not notice any trace of weariness in his voice he got up to say goodbye explaining that conversation with anyone except members of his family excites and tires him, deprives him of sleep and that that he was not sure whether we would not be punished for that day's self-indulgence. "You will probably want to have my portrait which looks more like me than the one attached to your book," he said approaching his wife's desk and producing a photograph of himself, most probably homemade, and immediately signed it writing the date, 25 July, 1877.[9] Saying goodbye he went to lie down but soon, to everyone's surprise, came back with the words: "I forgot to tell you

8 It was made by Batalin on the basis of experiments whose fallacy has since been proved.

9 The portrait, one of the most faithful I know, is included in my book Outline of the Development of Biology.

something. At this moment you will meet many foolish people in this country who think of nothing but involving Britain in a war against Russia. I assure you that the sympathies of this home are on your side and every morning we take up our newspapers wishing to read about your new victories."

These words can only be properly assessed in a historical perspective. And that requires a small digression on the subject of English liberals and Russian patriots. One should remember that the Liberal Government of Gladstone had fallen shortly before that and that some of the far-sighted Russian patriots led by Katkov, welcomed the advent of a conservative government confident that it would have sympathy for the Russian government which had already embarked on the road to reaction. I remember that Moskovskiye Vedomosti openly described as "vieux ramolli" ("old wreck") the man whom the whole world had already proclaimed to be a "grand old man". But in that vieux ramolli there woke up the former lion, the Gladstone who had fulminated against the "king of the bomb" who had destroyed his own cities, confined people to hideous prisons, the people to whom Naples would later erect monuments, and by that exposition he attracted the sympathy of Europe to the side of the Italian people who were fighting for their liberation. This time Gladstone used the "Bulgarian atrocities" as his battle cry. He called on the English people to bury their age-old suspicions of the Russian government and extend a hand to the Russian people who were ready to come to the aid of the oppressed. The movement assumed a scope unprecedented even by English standards but the Tories beloved of Katkov remained in power. The rest is well known. Disraeli pushed Russia into singled-handed confrontation and then in agreement with the "honest broker" [Bismarck -KM] (another idol of Katkov) managed to snatch the fruits of hard-won victory from the victors. Darwin's words meant that he took the side of the "grand old man" and not of his triumphant opponents.[10] It is heartening to remember that in a country to which one looks for comfort every time one becomes apprehensive about man's future the sympathy of its greatest thinker, like that of its greatest statesman, was with the Russian people in the year of its trial. It is doubly heartening to remember this today when there is a glimmering hope of an entente cordiale between the two peoples at a time when the Russian people no longer dreams of liberating other peoples — finding itself too hard pressed for that — and is itself fighting for bare survival.[11]

The words I quoted were the last I heard from Charles Darwin. When he left, Mr. Francis offered to show me his study. It is by now well known through photographs — a

10 In a questionnaire sent to him by Hulton, the question "What is your political adherence" he replied: "Liberal or radical."

11 These words refer to 1909. Now (1918) it is the degrading of the ruling elite of the British people that makes one "fearful for man".

small room with an ordinary fireplace, a simple writing desk in the middle and a small couch on which the tireless worker lay down when his illness got the better of him. What struck me about the study was complete absence of what we call a "library". Darwin was known for his rather original attitude to books. If anyone could sincerely despise him it was the book lovers or rather the book maniacs who value the book as an object and would not allow themselves to cut an old publication in order not to depreciate its value to the antiquarian, or provide cheap trash with precious bindings. Darwin valued the book only for what he needed in it and so he tore out the pages that he needed and thus avoided cluttering up his desk and room. An even more modest room was shown to me on the upper storey. It was apparently occupied by Francis himself and also housed a kind of make-shift laboratory for experiments involved in Darwin's last major work The Power of Movement in Plants which he had already begun.

It was time to think of returning home. Declining the kind offer of a cab I set out on my way back on foot. Mr. Francis accompanied me part of the way. But presently we were surrounded by a merry, laughing swarm of young boys and girls. Darwin introduced me to all of them. They were the "Lubbocks" (and their guests?) who injected a cheerful note in the serious life of the Downe recluse, as we have read in Darwin's letters. Since then I have often recalled that meeting on a deserted English country road. These cheerful boisterous young people playing in the open air did not to be reminded of the Joys of Life and the Beauties of Nature, the titles of Lubbock's books which have been translated into Russian.

Not wishing to keep Francis away from the merry company I bid him goodbye and hurried to catch my train. It was cool and the way back seemed shorter to me.

Upon return to London, in spite of the late hour, I could not help sharing my impressions with Dmitri Nikolayevich Anuchin who was in London at the time. He unloosed a flood of reproaches on me for having made my pilgrimage in secret, depriving him of a chance that would never present itself again etc. etc. I remember trying to justify myself and saying that I had been sure my visit would be a failure and that I hated him to see a door slammed into my face and that in any case it was not my fault that the greatest scientist had turned out to be the most affable of men.

This article was first published in the *Rosskiye Vedomosti* newspaper,
Vols. 24 and 25 for 1909, and was included in the collection
In Memory of Darwin (Moscow, 1910). This text is taken from Timiryazev's book
Science and Democracy (Moscow, 1920) -Ed. (translator)

Sites

Down House, home of Charles Darwin http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server.php?show=ConProperty.102

A tour of Down House by the biologist William Calvin http://williamcalvin.com/bookshelf/down_hse.htm

Timiriazev State Biology Museum (Gosudarstvennyi Biologicheskii Muzei imeni K.A. Timiriazeva) Moscow (in Russian) http://www.gbmt.ru/ru/museum/

Overview of the museum http://travel.yahoo.com/p-travelguide-2789219-timiriazev_state_biology_museum_gosudarstvennyi_biologicheskii_muzei_imeni_k_a_timiriazeva_moscow-i;_ylt=AhpCS9jIOGJckbfojH00SK3gFWoL?action=describe

K. A. Timiriazev bibliography http://catalog.lib.washington.edu:2082/search/dTimm,+Erika/dtimm+erika/-38%2C-1%2C0%2CB/frameset&FF=dtimiriazev+k+a+kliment+arkadevich+1843+1920&1%2C%2C12

Cine-Truth 13 (October Anniversary)/Kinopravda 13 (Oktiabr'skaia) documentary film (scroll down) http://www.osa.ceu.hu/db/fa/910-0-2-1.htm "…project of a monument to Timiriazev, Pokrovskii, Sosnovskii, and Timiriazev's son speaking at the meeting…."

Leon Bell's autobiographical essay "An American Boy's Life in the Soviet Union" appeared in Archipelago, Vol. 8, No. 4 http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-4/bell.htm.

Morning Tea

Mary Ann O'Donnell

Text and Photographs

Jersey girls who have frequented Chinatown know it as dim sum, a meal served by waitstaff pushing carts piled with stacks of bamboo steamers and serving platters. When the server pauses at our table, we choose our favorite dishes: honey-pork buns, shrimp dumplings, egg tarts, steamed breads, blanched vegetables with sauce, and braised meatballs, which are then transferred from cart to table. Another server passes by and hungry brunchers select from a display of warm soymilk, regular milk, and, possibly, yogurt. A third server approaches the table, this time offering less familiar delicacies such as cow stomach lining, stewed pig intestine, and pickled chicken claws. At the end of the meal, a floor manager counts the empty steamers, bowls, and plates, multiplies the total by a fixed price, and hands the bill to the nearest person at the table. Sipping the last of now cold jasmine tea, we look at each other and smile; this is why we take the PATH into the city, for a taste of Chinese culture.

Cantonese speakers generally refer to their tradition as yam cha, "to drink tea," but when inviting a friend to a meal, will also mention the time of day. Throughout Guangdong Province, there are restaurants that open from five a.m. to midnight, serving morning tea, lunch tea, afternoon tea, dinner tea, and late-evening tea. Nevertheless, morning tea is by far the most popular form. Older Cantonese men and women gather at six a.m. to read newspapers and chat over a pot of tea and basket of dim sum. A few hours later, housewives meet their friends at those same tables, their pre-school children in tow. Nearby, China's new managerial elite hold business power teas at upscale teahouses. Morning tea is a custom that provides Guangdong's diverse population, rich and poor, young and old, and men and women with a common cultural identity: Cantonese. Indeed, northern Chinese immigrants

and visitors to Guangdong frequently point to yam cha as an example of a distinctively regional culture.

Yet, cultural maps, especially those "translated from," obscure landmarks as often as they illuminate unexpected detours; and, more often than not, our maps bring us home again even when we think we're on another road. Clearly, Jersey girls and Beijing tourists use different maps to locate morning tea. For us, dim sum is a metonym for all of China. In contrast, northern Chinese distinguish between the culture of their home towns and that of Guangdong province. Yet, Guangdong natives make even finer distinctions, reminding us that the adjective "Cantonese" derives from the anglicized name for the provincial capital of Guangdong, Canton, which is officially known as Guangzhou. It does not, however, accurately describe the languages and traditions characteristic of other Guangdong cities, where morning tea is drunk, but Hakka, Chaozhou, or even Hokkien spoken. All this to make a simple point. New Yorkers, Beijing sophisticates, and urban Cantonese have drawn dim sum onto very different maps, begging the question: Were we ever really mapping the same territory? And, given that we all live on the same planet, how do we learn to read each other's maps?

The difficulty of mapping cultural territories becomes even more apparent when trying to survey Guangdong's second city, Shenzhen, which has denied its provincial origins, instead placing itself at the shifting center of Beijing's post-Mao political field. In 1980, Deng Xiaoping designated Shenzhen to be China's first special economic zone, where China's post-Mao regime could begin dismantling the planned economy and erecting one open to market forces. For many in the West, the establishment of Shenzhen signaled the triumph of capitalism; some went so far to call it the end of history.

Yet, in retrospect, it seems that few of us knew this place or how we got here. Established just north of Hong Kong, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone fundamentally restructured Cold War topographies. Crossing from the Chinese side of the bamboo curtain, Socialists encountered a world in which market forces functioned like forces of nature. Capitalist aborigines weathered plummeting rates of return, adapted to rising costs, and when possible harnessed these forces to profitable ends. Moving from our side of the bamboo curtain, we discovered a parallel universe. Revolutionary gales had ripped through feudal villages and left agricultural communes in their wake. Socialist natives had learned to survive an unstable political climate, where collectivization, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution had selected for political astuteness, Party loyalty, and the ability to harness these forces to radical ends.

Before 1980 Shenzhen was a rural hinterland, with roughly 300,000 farmers living and working in agricultural and marine communes. In fact, the area constituted a Cold War

no-man's land between socialist China and colonial Hong Kong, where both small-scale skirmishes and secret accommodations characterized relations between communists and capitalists. During the Cultural Revolution, for example, Red Guards had come to the border to wave cherished copies of Mao's Little Red Book, promising to liberate Hong Kong's proletariat, while disgruntled others ran or swam across the border to join the colony's enslaved masses. At the same time, locals smuggled genealogies and outlawed heirlooms to Hong Kong relatives for safekeeping, while the Maoist regime sold agricultural products to Hong Kong merchants in order to earn hard currency. Thus, the decision to make Shenzhen a special economic zone was not arbitrary. Reformers hoped that Hong Kong capitalists would invest in Shenzhen, jumpstarting the new economy. They believed geographic and cultural proximity, in addition to economic self-interest, would facilitate the process. After all, Hong Kong, they emphasized, was a Cantonese city, where global capitalism had thrived.

The 1980 reforms quite literally set China in motion. Under Mao, the Chinese state had kept citizens in their place by regulating housing and job opportunities. In order to move from a village in rural Guangdong to Guangzhou, for example, a worker needed to be first transferred from an agrarian to an industrial work unit, which would then provide him and his family with housing. After 1980, however, people could not only work for themselves, but also look for jobs in the new businesses that others set up, wherever the job existed. In turn, loosening employment restrictions created housing and rental markets. The effects of these changes transformed Guangdong, and nowhere more than Shenzhen. As both Hong Kong and domestic capital first lurched, then charged into the new city, factories mushroomed. Workers migrated from secure jobs in national enterprises to try their luck on Shenzhen's labor market. By 2005, it was clear that Chinese citizens had voted with their feet. In the twenty-fifth year of its existence, Shenzhen's migrants totaled eleven to thirteen million people, depending on who and how you counted, boasted one of the fastest growing economies in Asia, and had replaced rural communes with postmodern skyscrapers, rice paddies with superhighways, and village markets with housing estates, shopping malls, and, of course, teahouses.

Ten years ago, at a morning tea in Shenzhen, a Beijing economist explained, "Living in Shenzhen is like living in a foreign country." He continued, "I feel more at home in Taipei. Everything here is different—the language, the food, the customs." The others at the table nodded their agreement.

One of his students added, "Cantonese people really understand capitalism. Northern people come here and get fleeced because we haven't totally reformed our system. Relative to that of Shenzhen people, our economic consciousness is too old-fashioned."

In keeping with Northern Chinese cultural maps, he used the adjectives "Cantonese" and "Shenzhen" interchangeably, as none of the scholars at the table came from Guangdong. I had arrived in Shenzhen from New Jersey, by way of Houston, Texas. The teahouse workers seemed, mostly, to be migrants from other parts of China. The waitress was from Fujian, the manager from Hunan, and the busboys were speaking in Anhui dialect. Everyone else in the restaurant addressed each other in Mandarin, the national language, rather than Cantonese, the provincial lingua franca. The chef may have been a Guangzhou native or a Cantonese-trained immigrant; whatever his hometown might have been, he had added Sichuan appetizers and Shanghai sweets to the teacart, which suggested a non-traditional approach to yam cha.

Academic mapmakers, each of us at the table was a scholar committed to charting the new social formations that had arisen in Shenzhen. The economist's research focused on how to use Shenzhen's history as a model for accelerating economic reform in western China. He was particularly interested in identifying economic laws that had universal applicability, regardless of local culture or political climate. "That way," he explained, "The government could institute favorable policies, which in turn, would naturally lead to economic growth." His students explored the discrepancies between international and Chinese trade conventions, and one had even proposed a way to finesse those differences with respect to tariffs. They shared an assumption that economic change could be legislated.

By contrast, I had arrived thinking that global capitalism had compelled China to initiate economic reforms. In order to make my point, I observed that Shenzhen lived like Houston; it was familiar, but at the time I couldn't quite say how. They agreed: China was adjusting to global capitalism. And then the conversation swerved. They lamented at how slowly the rest of the country was modernizing. They wondered what was special about Guangdong that enabled these processes to flourish and, once identified, they hoped to legislate that characteristic nationally, bringing local economies more inline with international conventions.

Aware now of how the Chinese state might allow residents to redeploy Cantonese cultural forms to capitalist ends, I realized how that morning tea had highlighted new relations between Shenzhen's emergent capitalist, managerial, and laboring classes, as embodied by the restaurant owner, the professor, and the waitress. Moreover, I understood how that economic process could be charted on political maps. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say, I understood that I had persisted in mapping as economic what my colleagues understood to be fundamentally political in nature. Under Mao, the Chinese state had fixed people's places in the world through control of housing and employment opportunities. Today, a market "with Chinese characteristics" regulates access to those opportunities. I use the word "regu-

late" to call attention to a political understanding of this process. A restaurant owner who had worked as a kitchen helper opened a teahouse and made enough money to send his child to private school. Both opening a restaurant and attending a private school are economic acts that have only become possible through political changes. A professor who once had guaranteed employment through the university system learned to take on consulting jobs because his salary was insufficient to purchase a house. Under Mao, he would have been guaranteed housing and could have conducted research during the time he now spends consulting. A waitress who would have otherwise become a farmer's wife served food she could not afford to eat, yet still managed to save enough money to buy high heels and makeup, which only thirty years ago had been condemned as bourgeois.

I suspect that Chinese people, Cantonese included, experience Shenzhen as being "like a foreign country" because, even though morning tea is indigenous to the region, the meaning of dim sum has changed as the socialist planned economy has given way to capitalist market forces. And, from 1949 to 1979, that's what capitalism was in China: foreign, which is perhaps why none of us knew where we were. My colleagues from Northern Chinese seemed disoriented by the marketing of a regional cultural form, while familiar with this brand of ethnic consumption, I kept thinking I had inadvertently returned to New Jersey. And it wasn't just about tea. The earth has shifted and the meaning of other cultural forms—Mandarin, factories, Hong Kong capital, and skyscrapers—has also changed. Once signs of nationalism, collective progress, unjust colonialism, and running dog capitalism, these forms now actualize both opportunities for savvy individuals to move ahead, and obstacles for members of oppressed groups to overcome. Struggling to come to terms with the scale and scope of their revolution reformed, Shenzhen migrants have borrowed from local place names, describing their experience as an encounter with Cantonese culture.

I understand the urge to survey new territory in terms borrowed from an outdated cartography. To the extent my research failed, it failed because I am still learning how to read Chinese maps. On the bright side, to the extent my research succeeded, it succeeded because I have a native's sense of capitalism. Unlike my colleagues, I wasn't surprised when private corporations cut back on medical benefits in order to bolster profit margins. But this doesn't mean that Chinese people are now living in our world. It means that our world has changed, too. The question is how long we will continue to use outdated cultural maps to understand China, and, by extension, ourselves.

To illustrate some of the ongoing cultural tensions and economic contradictions that shape Shenzhen, I have photographed a teapot at sites where Cantonese culture hovers above awareness, and then suddenly gives way to the increasing foreignness of daily life: a gated community, built by workers who live in temporary housing; the Shenzhen-Hong

Kong border, which is a part of China that Chinese citizens need a passport and visa to visit; and a construction site, where American, Japanese, and Hong Kong blueprints are being realized. It is a cheap, white porcelain teapot, mass-produced for use in restaurants. I found it discarded near the Houhai land reclamation site, one of the largest civil engineering projects in China. Like the adjective, Cantonese, which lumps together otherwise unconnected activities because they occurred in Guangdong, the teapot integrates visually disparate places simply because I placed it there, calling attention to the surveyor's tracks. A friend told me he felt these images too forced, artificial; another said she appreciated their deliberate randomness. Both comments seem to the point. I too have borrowed from Cantonese culture in order to make myself at home in Shenzhen.

Curbside Teapot

Speed Bump Teapot

Land Reclamation Teapot

Shenzhen-Hong Kong Border Teapot

Balmy Teapot

photo ©Mary Ann O'Donnell

Pedestrian Underpass Teapot

photo ©Mary Ann O'Donnell

Rainy Day Teapot

Reliable P.I. Teapot

Pedestrian Overpass Teapot

Sanitation Worker with Teapot

Gated Community with Teapot

Greenification Teapot

Inadvertent Still Life with Teapot

Migrant Worker with Teapot

Lion's Mouth Teapot

The Cold War and The War On Terror

Norman Birnbaum

When Henry Kissinger conducted American policy in Viet Nam his proclaimed priority was to maintain the "credibility" of the United States. The U.S. would concede nothing to its enemies and indeed inflict devastating, if not annihilating, punishment on them for opposing our imperial will. There was a difficulty. He knew that we were defeated in Viet Nam, and his diplomacy provided a decent interval before our Vietnamese allies were left to their fate. A generation later, Dr. Kissinger has now instructed the nation that our credibility is again in question, We cannot leave Iraq to its fate (not yet at any rate) without suffering a total loss of prestige. The scholar-diplomat suggests that Iraq's neighbors must be involved in a solution, but the great realist refrains from mentioning Iran. As to the obvious, that the invasion of Iraq with its murderous brutality, manifest incompetence, and pervasive hypocrisy has already destroyed our credibility, Dr. Kissinger prefers discretion.

Still, like the ghost in Hamlet, his appearance reminds us of things past. The War on Terror is the bastard offspring of the Cold War. Like the Cold War, its American protagonists make it the central element of national politics, and impose their obsessions on the rest of the world. As was the Cold War, the War on Terror is a gigantic public works program, providing employment for experts, ideologues and charlatans , and constituting a rationale for limitless expenditures, civil and military, in the chimerical pursuit of "security." Mobilizing the nation for the "war" gives American government an increasingly authoritarian cast. Enlisting other nations in it gives us at least partial sovereignty over them. It also gives many of our journalists, lacking knowledge or critical distance from power, the means to interpret a reality which they cannot otherwise master.

In 1889 Jacob Burckhardt decried "les terribles simplificateurs." What would he have said of our world? In the struggle against Communism, much of western political thought lost its capacity for differentiation , its very sense of reality. Was the enemy Russian expansionism or Stalinist tyranny? The geopolitical struggle of the U.S. with the U.S.S.R. intensified after de-Stalinization and the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet conflict. Soviet offers of mili-

tary and political détente were rejected. If the Soviet Union supported repressive regimes and insurgencies in the Third World when convenient, the United States sponsored dictatorial and exploitative governments. The imagery of a relentlessly aggressive enemy with an absolutist ideology lasted until, with Gorbachev, the edifice collapsed. In large parts of western Europe it had already been undermined by justifiable public skepticism.

Just as the anti-Communists of decades ago ignored the inner tensions within Communist states (and the lack of revolutionary zeal of much of the movement), the strident proponents of an Islamist menace ignore the divisions and problems of the Islamic world. The notion of a drive for a new Caliphate, from Indonesia to Morocco, is an absurdity. In the face of the American inspired reign of ignorance and untruth, it is striking how some Europeans have lost critical and historical sense.

They have even accepted the widespread American view that September 11 marks a world historical turning point. It is indeed important. Viewed apart from American narcissism (frequently expressed in whining self-pity), it represents the end of a certain kind of American exceptionalism. After the war of 1812, nations other than Great Britain (excepting Canada) were limited by economic and geographical constraints in their capacity to bring war directly to the American homeland. That ended with the threats of Chinese and Soviet missile attacks. Cuba, to this day, is joined to the United States in a system of mutual assured destruction. Cuba has no nuclear weapons, but in the event of a U.S. invasion or a U.S.-sponsored insurrection, its armed forces might be able to destroy American nuclear power plants and render large parts of the southeastern United States inhabitable. As potentially devastating as the inter-continental attacks envisaged in the Cold War, or Cuba's present capacity for retaliation, these had and have little that was arcane or mysterious about them. By contrast, the suicidal Islamists of September 11 are quite inaccessible to the average American imagination—and the complex chains of causation that led to the event defy the ordinary American capacity to depict world history. An uncoordinated global alliance resisting American power (including segments of European society imperfectly described as conservative) is an obvious fact which our foreign policy elite, or much of it, would be embarrassed to have to explain to its less sophisticated fellow citizens. That accounts for the vulgarities of discussions of "anti-Americanism" (or the denunciation of the Europeans, especially, as insufficiently martial). Above all, it accounts for the preposterous view that the United States is threatened with terminal destruction by an organized movement directed from Pakistan's Northwest frontier or a system of caves in Afghanistan. An heterogeneous grouping of antagonists certainly will be reducing American power in the next decades—with considerable assistance from the incompetence of our elites and the ignorance of our citizenry. In this context, the War on Terror is part of the problem and not the solution.

The ideology of a War on Terror has its uses. It diverts attention, of course, from the less than sublime moral and political performance of our new Manicheans. In the Cold War, the United States was careful not to press accusations of human rights abuses against the Soviet Union too strongly, lest the United Nations deal with the racial segregation lawful in this country until forty years ago. Now the campaign for democracy has limits: the votes of Hamas, the U.S. agrees with Israel, must not be allowed to count. There is our own structurally imperfect voting system. The continuing struggle of many American citizens to preserve our constitutional liberties from our own government's depredations is increasingly central to our politics. Time after time, it is reported that the New York City Police infiltrated peace demonstrations with provocateurs. They are not the only police force reported doing so.One is reminded of "old Europe."

The reminder was reinforced when, recently, the Joint Chiefs of Staff wrote to The Washington Post to protest a political cartoon they disliked—evidence not only for their opportunistic servility to the Bush White House but for the accelerating authoritarianism and militarization of American public life."

The Cold War was conducted by ideological and material interest groups —arms manufacturers, a military-political apparatus monopolizing huge resources, and in Europe those who having been anti-Communist in Italy from 1923 to 1945, in Germany from 1933 to 1945, in Spain from 1936 to 1975 , sought a retroactive legitimation. It was also conducted by intellectuals; some of the most prominent amongst them, organized by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, accepted the covert funding of its projects by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The exposure of C.I.A. funding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its network of academics and journalists in the late 1960s led the late Irving Howe to declare that anti-Communism had become a racket. The matter was put in a British voice by The New Statesman, when it congratulated Irving Kristol—who edited the monthly Encounter for the Congress—for his skill "in making freedom pay." What the activities of the Congress achieves may have repaid, upon reflection, the C.I.A.'s investment of very small amounts of money. Its publications, and the watchdog and police functions in academic matters undertaken by prestigious figures like Raymond Aron and Isaiah Berlin, created a climate in which thinking about alternatives to the Cold War was made more difficult.

Writing in The New Yorker before his public disenchantment with the Iraq War, George Packer invited intellectuals attached to freedom to follow the example of their ancestors and to found an organization like the Congress of Cultural Freedom to support the noble aims of George Bush. He did not mention the careerist cynicism, the ideological opportunism, and the sheer sordidness of much that the Congress did. At the moment, part of

the foreign policy apparatus and a considerable number of the academics, former officials, and publicists concerned with foreign policy are in a considerable rush to take their distance from the White House and, of course, the ideologues supporting it. Not all of the latter are neo-conservatives; many are imperial unilateralists who see no need for sentimentality about democratization. It is striking that many publicly ask for covert funding of "moderate" or "secular" groups and thinkers in the Islamic nations—although insofar as these groups and thinkers do exist, they have good reason to fear being designated as American agents.

Many of our "experts" are, in fact, intellectually deficient. Their knowledge of history is often shallow or non-existent, their capacity to understand different cultures (even those of the Europeans) limited. They talk mainly to one another and fear nothing so much as being thought eccentrically attached to intellectual independence. An especial difficulty attaches to university studies of Muslim nations, since the Israel lobby and groups allied to it claim the right to practice surveillance of these programs, and purport to have detected in many of them large amounts of bias against Israel. This is part of a larger campaign against university faculties for their want of clear commitment to national purposes and values. The campaigners have not explained how universities supposedly critical of our nation's role in the world have managed to produce McNamara, the Bundys, the Rostows, Kissinger, James Schlesinger, Shultz, Brzezinski, Rice, and Wolfowitz, as well as more academic spokesmen for empire like Bobbitt, Gaddis, Hanson, and Donald Kagan. As for opinion articles produced by Washington's centers of research , many are best understood as statements of candidacy for posts in the foreign policy apparatus.

President Bush was widely regarded as performing poorly until September 11 gave him a chance to pose as national leader—a pose now disintegrating. Israel, meanwhile, with its strong lobby in the U.S., has an obvious interest in exaggerating the Islamic threat. It is experienced in deforming American policy, having used the issue of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union to sabotage the efforts at détente undertaken by Nixon, Ford and Kissinger. The War on Terror has enlisted those in Europe who regard America as a benign big brother, or a reliable paymaster. In the rest of the world, a familiar set of American clients, Arab tyrants, Indonesian and Pakistani generals, and Latin American thugs, have effected a seamless transition from Anti-Communism to sworn enmity to Terror. Their uninterrupted enjoyment of American funding and protection is a measure of the seriousness of the U.S. commitment to democracy.

The Israel lobby is now exceedingly active. It has detected signs of weakness in the American attitude to the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian election—weakness in suggestions by some American commentators that if Hamas renounced resistance to occupation and accepted the legitimacy of the state of Israel, the United States might be prepared not to

cripple the Palestinian Authority by terminating economic assistance (and might refrain from putting pressure on the European Union to do the same). The Ambassador of Israel has for his part written to the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times to instruct their editors and readers that the newspapers had furthered terrorism by allowing representatives of Hamas to defend its positions in opinion pieces. No doubt, the Amobassador, in his defense, could say that many American pliticians would agree with him. Nonetheless, his effrontery is still somewhat surprising. It is also unnecessary. In an especially preposterous trip to the MIdeast, Secretary of Rice attempted to persuade Arab regimes fearful of their own opinion that they should join, in effect, Israel and the U.S. in sabotaging the Palestinian Authorty on account of the Hamas victory.

Meanwhile, the chaos in Iraq demonstrates how ineffective is U.S. power.

The War On Terror has assumed theological dimensions. The U.S. Christians of the right clearly think that they are fighting a global reconquista against Islam. Their visions of history are in any event apocalyptic, and the attack on the Twin Towers was a gift to them. The subsequent frenzies of chauvinism are entirely reminiscent of the Cold War. A nation struggling with cultural and economic conflict unites—if in an inauthentic community. The definition of Terror (and the charge of insufficient energy in opposition to it) is frequently as vague as the use of the accusations of Communism, pro-Communism or weakness in the face of Communism—applied to Arbenez, Mossadegh and Nasser, Quadros and Allende, and to great figures like Nehru, Brandt, and Mandela. In the United States, charges of aiding the enemy are used daily in domestic political confrontations—just the other day by the President. to defame those who took exception to his abuse of power in the matter of wiretapping.

The United States has indeed been attacked, abroad and at home, and the bombings in Bali, London, Madrid, and (earlier) Paris attest the scope of problems that also includes the conflicts in the Holy Land and Kashmir, in Chechenya and Sinkiang, and severe internal difficulties in Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Tunisia. This very incomplete list (one could add Iran and Turkey) is prima facie evidence that so undifferentiated a phrase as Terror tells us nothing. As China and Russia, the former Soviet republics, Cuba and Viet-Nam, the former states of the Yugoslav federation, struggle with their problems, we see how vacuous was the term "Communist" to describe them—just two decades ago.

There is no substitute for historical knowledge, reflectiveness, and sober political judgment. The career paths to high status in our foreign policy elite do not invariably reward these traits. American politics does not always encourage integrity: witness the cynical performance on the Mideast of Senator Hillary Clinton. There is, to our nation's credit, revolt in

the Congress and the American foreign policy apparatus by those not totally devoid of knowledge—and self respect. The sooner the rest of the world rejects the idea of a War on Terror, the larger the chances of an American return to reason.

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The 'Nigga' in New Orleans

Leonce Gaiter

It was more than obvious. Large portions of New Orleans would never be rebuilt. Soon after Katrina, a reporter and I agreed on this. Too many of the people in the most devastated areas were poor. Too many were black. And, in the context of American history, those are crimes of history for which they must pay. Just as those like them have always paid, and will continue to pay.

"You're nothing if you're poor and black," my New Orleans-reared mother used to say. Clawing her way to a comfortable middle-class with her Louisana-bred husband, this was her desperate way of goadingme into non-acceptance —non-acceptance of the '60s status quo of the all-black school, the segregated neighborhood, the "comfort zone" of black life as it stood back then. It was her warning that, at worst, the majority has contempt for you, and at best, is simply indifferent to you, and your sufferings or hardships. "You're on your own," she was saying. 'There is no country behind you, no countrymen support you, no government promotes your interest."

You're on your own.

Throughout history, blacks got the slops. Slaves ate what was left after the white folks took the best. Blacks were allowed to live only where white folks didn't want to. Thus, black neighborhoods are often the most vulnerable to natural, and man-made, disaster. When I lived in the then middle-class Ponchartrain Park area of New Orleans, the streets regularly flooded during the summer heavy rains. Six inches of water for children to play in. It receded an hour or so later. To me, it was just one of many freakish novelties that marked this place malevolent, foreign, as somehow antithetical to my well-being. Though young, I found its climate insufferable, its insects primordial, its flora sinister, its racism pernicious. New Orleans seemed a place where I could never have the best. It seemed a place where folks like me were limited to what the white folks let us have. My antipathy was so strong it has lasted for decades. Once I had a choice in the matter, I never returned to New Orleans.

Instead of "home"—the place that made my mother and father and all of my relatives what they were—New Orleans was a threat—a negative object lesson in acceptance. With large black swaths of the city largely decimated, it's now much easier to articulate why.

Black New Orleanians rightly take a lot of pride in having built communities from the shards and pieces they were allowed in this deep south former slave port. The community ties date back generations, with family homes and land regarded reverentially. In many cases, it was the only thing of value people had. Holding onto it was everything.

That's why the prospect of losing homes and land is so devastating in New Orleans' poor black communities. It was the only thing so many had. They had sacrificed, fought, scraped and struggled for generations to own, and now . . . it's gone. It's particularly galling that it's gone because of incompetence, indifference and inaction. But that's what my mother warned me about. It's the warning of which black New Orleanians, and black Americans in general, take too little heed.

Pride in accomplishment is natural, but don't dare ignore that the accomplishment is built on a foundation of impoverishment and limits imposed from without. Yes, blacks built a community, but we built in a disaster zone—because that's the only place in New Orleans where we were allowed to build.

The Brown University professor of sociology John R. Logan found that damaged areas of New Orleans were 75% black. Undamaged areas were 46% black. Yes, blacks lived in the most dangerous, flood-prone areas. According the the *Boston Globe*, the Logan study "found that if New Orleans' returning population was limited to the neighborhoods undamaged by Katrina, about half the white population would not return and 80% of its black population would not."

History dictated that 80% of New Orleans black population rely on a government of the majority to protect them from looming disaster. Predictably, the federal government shirked that responsibility. Prior to Katrina, the Bush administration was warned that a devastating hurricane striking New Orleans was among the most likely U.S. disaster scenarios. However, subsequent to that warning, the administration cut New Orleans flood control funding by 44%. According to the Washington Post, ". . . President Bush's lofty promises to rebuild the Gulf Coast have been frustrated by bureaucratic failures and competing priorities. . . ." From the federal government, Louisiana will get 6.2 billion dollars to help an estimated 200,000 homeowners. Mississippi will receive 5 billion to help an estimated 50,000. And that is for New Orleans homeowners—the comparatively affluent ones. The contempt tinged with hatred for the black and poorest was brutally crystallized in a statement from Rep. Richard H. Baker, ten-term Republican from Baton Rouge. " We finally cleaned up public

housing in New Orleans," he was overheard telling lobbyists. "We couldn't do it, but God did."

"You're on your own," my New Orleans-reared mother insisted.

Pride is a strange thing. American descendants of African slaves were forced on penalty of death to accept little more than scraps throughout most of this nation's history. When we, through dint of sheer creativity, work, and will turned those scraps into homes and communities, we took great pride in the accomplishment. However, it is at our peril that we don't realize that the accomplishments are built, quite literally, on shaky ground—that the pride must be tempered with practicality. There are aspects of the past that we cannot "recover" or "rehabilitate." Through will, work and pride, we cannot elevate low-lying land and stop the winds from blowing. And now we know that we cannot expect governments of the majority to care enough to preserve our past, or value our pride, or our history.

The fact that we were denied our rights to live securely is a point of pain. That we built communities from that denial is a point of pride. With Katrina, the painful root of that pride emerged; and it devastated so many of us.

How many orchids can you grow in fetid soil? We've managed many: Music, art, literature, forms of speech and worship so powerful that they've seduced the majority into imitation. But there are limits. We cannot cling desperately to lands earmarked for destruction by no less than nature—just because we were forced to do so in the past.

The cast of the film "Crash" appeared on a recent Oprah Winfrey show. The discussion turned to the word "nigger." Winfrey said she found the word irredeemable. Some of the black male cast members differed. Some noted the distinction between the word "nigger" and the term "nigga," the latter, they claimed, being a non-racist endearment. For centuries, whites used "nigger" to humiliate and utterly dehumanize us. It suggested we were less than dogs in the speakers' minds. We weren't people. We were "niggers." Disposable. Utilities. Property. Owned. Chattel. Since slavery, it has been used as a reminder—to insist that we're still less than human. The word still stinks of violence. You hear it, and you're ready to fight or flee. It's the inevitable soundtrack to a hate crime.

Hundreds of years ago, blacks so internalized the hatred and dehumanization under which we lived that we began calling each other "nigger." I remember hearing my father and his friends say, "That nigger don't know a goddamned thing about. . ." "That nigger is so rich he doesn't know what to do with his money." They might be discussing someone they loathed, or someone they admired, but either way, "nigger" could be attached. The use of the word suggested a brotherhood—a brotherhood of the despised. It suggested ingestion of the class of the accursed.

I never understood the use of the word; I never used it. I was raised in mainly white environments. Only rarely lived in all-black ones. I was never part of a large community of blacks for a long time and never felt myself someone worthy of reference—through brotherhood or hatred—as "nigger." That may be my loss. It may be my gain. But to me, the insistence that the word has been neutered because blacks use it with each other is absurd. It still seems the tag of a community of the accursed. That you accept that status, even speak of it with pride, does not elevate it. "Nigga," is "nigger." That white boys now use it with each other is just another piece of noble savage wannabe-ism—insiders toying with outsider poses, safe in the knowledge they will never suffer its consequences. With "nigga," again we desperately take the scraps we were given—ignoring the historical hatred from which they sprung—and try to mold them into a source of pride. We took the low-lying land in New Orleans—forced to ignore the historical hatred from which access sprung—and fashioned from it a source of pride—for a while, until history, as it will when your pride lets you forget it, snatched the last word.

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www.archipelago.org/vol3-4/gaiter.htm.

Living With Guns

An Occasional Series in *Archipelago*

> A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.
>
> Second Amendment,
> Constitution of the United States

Americans and our guns may be inseparable. In thirty states it is legal to carry a concealed handgun with a permit. All sorts of people carry. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, for instance, where Archipelago is based, it is lawful to carry a permitted concealed weapon into a community recreation center. Although citizens of Virginia often oppose the regulation locally, particularly in urban areas, only the state legislature, not town or city councils, can make it unlawful.

Last November 2 was Election Day in the Commonwealth. In Charlottesville, two citizens decided to affirm their Second Amendment right and test community reaction to the sight of a shotgun carried openly into a polling place. One citizen was Joan Schatzman, who has written for this journal, who borrowed a shotgun, carried it in the prescribed manner, and walked into several polling places around town. Her accomplice was George Loper, our town archivist, who photographed the caper. Here is Loper's story:

> In May 2004, the Virginia General Assembly passed a law erasing any local ordinances prohibiting the carrying of guns, concealed or in the open, in public places, including City Council chambers, recreation centers and polling places.
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> There are laws against distributing literature too close to the door of your polling place. And that there are laws against bringing alcohol into a polling place. There are laws against smoking in polling places. There are laws against carrying a concealed

weapon into a place that serves alcohol for on-premises consumption? There are laws which prohibit exhibiting campaign material such as a political button supporting a particular candidate], so as not to influence any person from casting their vote. But there are no laws with respect to carrying concealed or unconcealed weapons into polling places in the state of Virginia.

Well, not all polling places. Virginia does have some restrictions with regard to bringing weapons onto school property and into a place of worship. And, Universities and colleges typically have policies about bringing weapons onto campus. But these are exceptions.

It used to be that guns, both unconcealed and concealed (with a permit), were allowed into the Virginia State Capitol, where in at least one case, shots were fired. And, in October 2002, the Virginia House of Delegates defeated a proposal "to ban all guns except police weapons in the state Capitol and General Assembly office building in Richmond."

However, last March, a "joint committee of delegates and senators passed a rule requiring [individuals] to hold a concealed gun permit to bring in a firearm, even if they plan to carry it openly," leading a member of the Virginia Citizens Defense League to whether this might lead the Virginia General Assembly to allow localities to impose new restrictions on packing heat and to complain, "It's do as we say, not do as we do."

"Members of the same group caused a stir in Northern Virginia last year, when police were called out several times after members wore their guns openly to restaurants, including Starbucks and Champs. Carrying a gun openly is legal in Virginia, however, and each instance was resolved in their favor."

With this in mind, I thought it might be interesting to engage Joan Schatzman in a piece of performance art, to learn how folks might respond to an open shotgun carried into a local polling place.

Back in November 2001, a resident new to Virginia was surprised in Nelson County to witness a gun at the polls. At Charlottesville Recreation Center (a former Armory Building), folks hardly batted an eye.

Across this country, our civic debate about guns is generally formed as the right to carry versus gun control. But in those terms, the National Rifle Association controls the territory. It has the money, the membership, a huge database, and very effective lobbyists to get what it wants. The Virginia gun law, for example, which forbids local regulation, was pushed

by the N.R.A. The N.R.A. is the Commonwealth's most generous corporate political donor, and gives only to the Republican Party. The Republican Party, as it happens, holds the majority in both the Senate and House of Delegates, though the Democratic candidate, our lieutenant-governor, Tim Kaine, won the governorship in the election. The polling places into which Joan Schatzman carried the (broken) shotgun voted heavily Democratic.

On the other hand, last month in Richmond – was Loper prescient? – a Delegate caused headlines when he accidentally discharged a gun in his legislative office.

> RICHMOND, Jan. 26 -- Del. John S. "Jack" Reid had gone through this morning routine dozens of times. He'd reach into his pocket, pull out his small semiautomatic .380 handgun, release the clip and store the weapon safely in the desk drawer of his office on the seventh floor of the Virginia General Assembly Building.
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> But something went wrong Thursday. Reid's pistol, which he said he carries for protection, fired as he popped the clip from the handle, sending a single bullet into the cushion of a bulletproof vest that was hanging from the back of his closed office door. . . .

Del. Reid belongs to the N.R.A. Nationally, pressing its agenda among both parties, the N.R.A. rules the U.S. Congress (where some prominent Democrats are also members), and any number of state legislatures. It has very good friends of the highest rank in the White House and the Justice Department.

In any room, the man with the gun dominates the conversation.

Yet, the N.R. A. is not the only defender of, or partaker in, a citizen's right to bear arms, particularly for hunting. Living in Alaska in the late 1970s, I was taught to shoot both long gun (though, by happenstance, not a shotgun), and pistol, and when I lived in a small bush community, being an unattached woman, I thought it prudent to keep my rifle, a lever-action .22 Remington, by the door. I got rid of the gun when I left Alaska.

And I was in the Charlottesville Recreation Center, my polling place, when Joan Schatzman carried a shotgun into the room. Loper was correct: nobody batted an eye. (We are very nice people and don't like to fuss.)

We are told, and perhaps we feel, that "everything has changed" in America since 9/11. Does it mean that more people now carry guns, or that they approve of the possibility of carrying guns, or that they imagine – contrary to what they've always thought – that they might even need to learn how to shoot a gun?

Since the London bombings, on July 8, 2005, have more Britons decided they ought to be a gun-toting nation? In Spain, after the Atocha bombings of 3/11/2005, did Ma-

drileños seek to bear arms? How does America look now from Europe?

(How do we look, now, to ourselves?)

We began this occasional series before the September attacks in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, before the United States retaliated against Afghanistan, before Bush invaded Iraq. By then, the question of how we live with guns seemed almost trivial, as we struggled to learn as much as possible about the altered state of our national security. But the question doesn't go away, and isn't, we think, entirely separate from the long war this president says we had better learn to live with. So Archipelago will continue to seek out writers of various backgrounds to contribute to this edgy conversation. Our premise is, in this nation, we live with guns. They aren't going to go away. How did this happen? Can their use be moderated; should it be? For the sake of peace among ourselves, what are we willing to give up?

And then, what about the war?

—Katherine McNamara

Links

Second Amendment Annotations http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/data/constitution/amendment02/

Packing.org http://www.packing.org/state/

Brady Center for Gun Control http://www.bradycenter.org/

NRA Rules for Gun Safety http://www.nrahq.org/education/guide.asp

George Loper, "Packing Heat at Charlottesville Recreation Center http://loper.org/~george/archives/2005/Nov/922.html," Loper.org http://loper.org/~george/

_____, "Joan Schatzman Affirms Her Second Amendment Rights http://loper.org/~george/archives/2005/Nov/907.html," photos, Loper.org http://loper.org/~george/

Index to Coverage of Gun Issues http://george.loper.org/~george/trends/2005/Nov/987.html, Loper.org http://loper.org/~george/

Chris L. Jenkins and Rosalind S. Heiderman, "Gun-Toting Delegate Misfires at Va. Capitol http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/26/AR2006012601129.html," *Washington Post*, Friday, January 27, 2006

Joan Schatzman, "The Peace March in New York During the Republican National Convention http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-3/schatzman.htm," *Archipelago*, Vol 8, No. 3, Autumn 2004

In this Series:

"The Fight for Kansas: The Letters of John and Cecelia Sherman," by Mary-Sherman Willis http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-3/willis.htm

"Why They Shot Us," by Marilyn A. Johnson http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-3/johnson.htm

"John Dee and Jack Carmen," by Alex Keegan, this issue

John Dee & Jack Carmen

Alex Keegan

John Dee sleeps now, naked, in a white room. In the morning, he will rise, dress and take up his chair. They will take down the front wall of his room and he will sit so he can look out at the Capitol.

When this all took off, one of the things John Dee asked for was this view of the White House. Then, when the guns started piling up, he said, "Please, can we take down the railings?" but they said they couldn't. Instead, they said, they would build his white room higher, lift him up so he could see the growing pile, and behind it all, the pure white building. To meet John Dee now, you walk up fifty white wooden steps and the whole thing creaks.

John Dee sits in front of the White House. The Washington Post says he's a bigger target than the President, but, unlike the president, he is unprotected. Anyone can come, that's the deal, John Dee said, no exceptions; and he has made them agree, no searching, nothing, and no armed guards. If someone decides he's John Dee's killer, it's OK, he told them, really, it's OK.

As John Dee sleeps, I wait, writing in the book. I'm dressed in simple stuff; grey sweatshirt, grey pants, grey socks, just the way John will dress when he rises. John Dee knows I think I saw into his soul once but he tells me every day, "No, Jack, I am an ordinary American, that's the point. That's why we wear grey, why we do things simply."

I understand this and I know it's why we don't allow cameras on the ever-growing trestles under the chair where John spends the day. And I know why John resists the calls for him to speak on television, why he refuses to talk to the NRA or the lobbies against private guns. He says all we have to do is be examples. He says all we have to do is be prepared to die.

Before this started, John Dee lived in Binghamton, NY. He had a business there refurbishing office furniture, using druggy ex-prisoners as help, jittery types, fly-triggers. So when he announced he was giving up guns, and putting a sign outside his house to say it was gun-free, the TV people came round. That was the first time John said, "It's OK, America, if you need to, come kill me." Within a week his wife had left him and gone to L. A.

I have the footage of that interview. I watch it a lot. Dee says "America, if you need to, come kill me, " and this reporter guy, he tries to snigger to camera, like you might when some kook says he's Jesus Christ.

"No, really, " John Dee says, and he goes inside, comes out with a chair and sits down. He smiles at the reporter. Then he says, "Maybe you could set up cameras, get yourself a scoop?"

When you look at the video you just know that John Dee is real. It's the quiet way he speaks, the utter calm in his face. Looking from here, it's as if he knew that if someone just stopped and started swimming the other way, all this was bound to happen.

The reporter eventually went away. I guess footage of a man sitting on a chair in his yard wasn't considered great television then. John Dee just sat there until it got cold, then went inside.

In the morning, when John Dee came out, a man was there with a gun. John Dee smiled and sat down in his chair. He asked the man had he seen the sign, didn't he know John Dee would have nothing to do with guns? The man said he knew that. He said Dee was one dumb mother-fucker and the NRA was already taking bets on whether he'd live a week.

"And will I?" John Dee said.

There isn't film, but I know from John Dee what happened then. This guy lifted his arm and John Dee was looking the wrong way at a piece. Maybe he was scared, but he smiled and told the man it was OK. The man was there for America, wasn't he? And John Dee had already told America that it could kill him if it needed to.

The man was skinny, jumpy. It turned out he had a history of mental stuff and shouldn't have been able to get a gun. He jerked down the path to John Dee, stuck the gun to Dee's temple and twitched, "You–You dumb. You dumb!"

This guy shook, locked, shook, the gun still pointing, but John Dee stayed perfectly still, accepting, passive, until the man stopped shaking, then like in some slow ballet, like some bird-dance unfolding at a frame a second, Dee moved his head, the man moved his, they looked at each other, and then the man gave up his gun. John Dee put it on the floor.

That was how it started, a skinny would-be killer with the shakes and John Dee who told him it was OK, really, it was OK. That afternoon an old man brought his . 22 to the

yard. He told John Dee that if he ever used it, he'd miss anyway, so he put it down by John Dee's chair. Then a black woman brought a gun she had stolen from her son's room. "Bless you, " she said, "I hope you don't get hurt too bad," then a squad car came and John Dee was taken in. Then they let him go, and he went back to his yard.

The next morning a small pile of guns was laid at John Dee's gate and the police came again and took them away. A crowd had gathered and the reporter was back. Then the police told John Dee he was attracting the wrong types and that if he was to continue his sit-out, he should do it in a prescribed place.

That afternoon, someone drove by – some say it was kids, three black, one white, some say it was a car sent by one of the gangs – and they sprayed John Dee's yard with bullets. The camera shows John Dee flinching at the first bang but then he begins to smile. The camera shakes, wobbles, and falls away, like a Vietnam newsreel but then it comes back up. It shows broken windows, and a little of John Dee's chair which is splintered. Dee is still smiling. Then someone in the slowly recovering crowd shouts, "Hallelujah!" and tosses a small white hand-gun into the yard. There is applause.

The camera pans the crowd and then goes back to John Dee. A smidgeon of blood is on the back of both his hands and from nowhere, a medic appears, but John Dee waves him away politely. The medic is all-American, tall, blond, no more than twenty-five. He looks at John Dee's face, lit by the low afternoon sun, pauses, then shakes his head and turns away. But as he leaves the yard he turns again, looks at John Dee and raises his white arm in a quiet salute. A helicopter chatters overhead.

The next day there were more guns, and the next more again, but then two policemen were left outside the yard, a squad car opposite. The guns almost stopped coming and John Dee spoke to the cameras. "Please, ask the police to leave me alone, to take away their protection. I've already said, America, it's OK, come to me."

But the police insisted. There were legal and illegal guns being dumped in a Binghamton yard, available to anyone, criminals, a passing child. If John Dee continued to sit in his yard, they would continue to be present.

The press and TV loved it, of course. An American couldn't sit in his own yard without armed guards, even when he asked not to be guarded? It was a media dream, perfect for the lawyers, and a ready-made career for kooks, crazies, copy-cat martyrs, and me.

I went outside into my yard the same day John Dee shook his head, gave up, got off his chair and went inside. I heard that day over a hundred JD-Sit-Outs began to add to the two dozen that had started earlier that week. I knew most of them were nothings, like I said, kooks, crazies, copy-cat martyrs, but I was serious. I knew it right at the start, the way a guy sometimes knows a thing way-down deep. But I didn't know why.

I guess, looking back, it was a sixth-sense or something, but when the Time-Life video came out, (this was later), it had one close up of John Dee's eyes, a zoom shot which just sailed in on his face, right at the moment he was saying, "It's OK, really. America, if you need to, come kill me." There was a light there, something so real and deep and definite in the way John Dee had decided to do what was right, that his soul shone out, straight at me.

The next day, I threw my guns in my trunk and drove towards Binghamton, but I was still half-a-day from there, four or five hours from the organized line that had grown up, the stalls and T-shirt vendors, when I heard John Dee had gone back inside.

I pulled off the road, into the dust and weeds at the side of the highway. Ahead I saw three cars do just the same, as if every one of the drivers had just heard what I'd heard and like me, they couldn't go on. I knew right then that I would sit outside, in my own yard, with my own sign, and if needs be I would out-sit the police if they came; that I would wait for the man with the gun who would come for me.

You know this is a looking-back because of who I am now, what I was brought to do, but right then, I confess my emotions were not of such a fine spirit as John Dee's. I had wanted him to win and when I saw he had lost, I set my mind to follow in his honor, to do what they wouldn't let him do. But unlike John Dee, I wanted someone to come to me who wouldn't lay down his gun; someone who would take away my despair.

My sit-out made the local news when I started, made the local-TV when I was shot, got a mention in the New York Times when I came out of the hospital and set to sitting outside in my yard again. Then I was forgotten, and I guess so was John Dee, and we were locked away in the small minds of America with all the other crazy things that make us, Stealth Bombers, Oklahoma City, Charles Manson, Silence of the Lambs on Widescreen.

But then it was a year and two months since I'd first gone out in my yard and a year to the moment since I'd been shot. Maybe news was quiet or maybe some reporter really wanted to know where I was coming from, but I found myself talking to a camera, a bit jaded and out of it, my talking skills not as sharp as they were before I first heard of John Dee.

I knew that if the Lord wanted it so, here was a chance of sorts. I didn't have the light shining from my soul like John Dee, nor did I have that soft, sure drawl of his, but I knew that I had to try my hardest not to let these TV people make a fool of me, and more so, not let them make a fool of John Dee's memory. I remembered that the day I was in my car going to John Dee, so were lots of other guys, women too, driving in their pick-ups or whatever, and that every gun dropped in John Dee's yard was a statement, and every one was one less to kill with. I was trying hard to remember that saying about lighting a candle rather than just complaining about how dark it had gotten.

So I just sat there and listened to this smooth, white-toothed woman from TV, one minute sympathetic, then talking with that edgy whine a woman takes up when she wants to put you down, then speaking with authority, and not too kindly, about me and John Dee. She finished and the bright lights went out. That was when I got up from my chair.

I went to the camera. I asked was it on and right then the woman reporter swept back into view, flicking her hair back, her eyes wide, her face refixing itself. She had a microphone and was circling her hand. Technical guys were slapping open cases, spilling cups of coffee and frantically pushing plugs.

"And we are here, " the woman began, sort of breathy, excited, "with Jack Carmen in his yard, one year to the day from his near-fatal shooting. And Jack still says, no guns, he will sit in his yard, the only free man in America."

"I never said that, " I said, leaning down to the microphone. Then I knew it didn't matter what I said if they wanted to twist stuff around. I forgot the woman and her microphone, I just looked at the crouching guy with his camera and stared down into its ugly glass mouth.

"I'm here, " I said, "only because you wouldn't let John Dee lead us out of slavery to freedom, " but no sooner had this come out and I was thinking, "Oh, sweet Jesus, let me say something that's my own and from the heart."

Then I just said, looking at the lens, "I'm tired, John Dee, and I'm not so much scared as I'm lonely. I been here a year, and they've brought me three hundred seventeen guns. Now I'm lucky to get one a week, but I still get them, John. They haven't stopped coming."

I knew the TV wanted more, but I was learning that sometimes a man can be his own testament. I sat down, and even though the reporter woman tried, I didn't speak again. I simply smiled, not like John Dee, you understand, but the best one ordinary man can. Eventually, as I knew they would, they went away.

The next day a boy dropped me a pistol, then a woman came and crouched by me and whispered I was brave. She said if I was going to continue could she bring me something now and again, a blanket, food maybe? I don't know why, but I said, "Bring flowers." She nodded, then she touched my hand and left me.

John Dee turned up three days later. There was a short line of people bringing guns and he joined it, so grey and small I didn't see him stand there. When he came to me – after a woman who found her little girl with her pearl-handled . 22 – he just stood.

I had got into some habit of not lifting my head and this person just waited, knowing I would have to look up, and when I did I was looking at John Dee. I guess I was about to

get up out of my chair but John Dee stopped me and waved me to sit, then he squatted down and said would it be all right if he just shared my day?

The next person in the line was a kid maybe eighteen, with a square jaw and built like a line-back, so I called him forward, trying to look regal or profound or something. I knew people seemed to need that. He was a sweet kid, softer in the eyes than any part of his body. He just wanted to say thank-you, he said. He didn't have a gun, but now he knew he'd never need one.

I'd been taking to sitting in the evenings under the porch light waiting in case just one more person would come along, but when the line ended, John Dee said, "Jack, it's cold, let's go inside." I looked into the street and when I was sure it was empty, I said OK.

What we talked about that evening, what got me here, well, those things are a bit private, but John Dee told me about the Peace Foundation and how he had been invited by the President to set up his chair in front of the Capitol. He wanted me there with him, he said. John Dee said he had given up, but I had given him the inspiration to start again. He asked me to be his witness.

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The surrender lines are amazing. By sun-up they stretch out of sight along Pennsylvania Avenue and a small world of commerce shadows them, selling hot-dogs and T-shirts. Once there was a service selling guns so folks would have one to give up, but that went. The people just want to meet John.

It's strange how people see us now. There are still kooks and cases, of course, there used to be many, and even now, every fiftieth guy who comes up the steps is dressed in fatigues and practicing his thousand-yard stare, but even the crazies and world-enders are somehow quieted.

The old guys are interesting. Sometimes they tell John how once they used their gun. Maybe they caught a burglar or someone tried to take their car and being armed saved their day. But always, when it happens they seem relieved to be giving up their weapons. They walk away less laden. They breathe a deep breath, and sometimes John Dee will put his arm around them and together they'll look at the pistols and rifles on the White House lawn, the ones at the bottom already rusting, eager to become dirt again.

And John Dee says what he always says, "Be proud, be brave, thank-you," and these old men, many who fought for their country, they cry because they've finally discovered what courage really is, and they cry because they see the glorious, obscene pile of death trying to hide the White House. Sometimes they look like a spirit has left them and I think they

may crumple, but most times it's like a new one has entered and they stand taller, more American. But all of them want to stay and look again at the mountain, and behind it, the white, white buildings.

~ ~ ~ ~

Now John Dee is awake. For breakfast he has coffee, orange juice, and a bowl of Cheerios. He dresses in his soft grey clothes, stretches, then comes to talk to me. He always says the same thing. "Today it's supposed to happen, Jack, and if it does, please let it. I'm just one ordinary American." Like always he sweeps a hand towards the pile, now more than ten million weapons, a small percentage of the nation's deep hurt. "All that matters is they keep coming. What matters is someone sits here."

It's gotten so sometimes we joke and we say John Dee's breakfast prayer together. Maybe I'll grin or punch John Dee's grey shoulder. He's older now, much, much older, yet we've only been here two years. It's a long haul, he says, and he knows he won't see it through, but then he grins and he reminds me of the city gun-collections, the clean schools, the gang-member from Watts who drove a truck full of guns into a lake and stayed with it as it sank, the cancer being sucked out of our country with nothing but kisses.

We start at five minutes past seven in the morning, as soon as the front wall comes down. The workmen melt away and John confirms he can see no policemen, no soldiers, that the man who will kill him today is free to do so.

We know that National Guardsmen and marines are protecting the rusting pile, but they are hidden behind boarding that is covered in peace-graffiti and flowers. We know that out of sight are patrol cars and mounted policemen, and we know far distant, in the sad ghettos of Washington they still kill each other, still stumble into gunfights on street-corners or blunder from a 7-11 into cross-fires. But that is now, John Dee says, and if we are patient. . .

Today, the first up the steps is a young man. He looks like the blond medic who tried to treat John Dee. He is shy, gentle, and I wonder if he's gay. Then he tells John Dee that when he was twenty-two he shot his lover in an alley, and he nods to me as if he knows I'd guessed.

But now he has forsaken the gun, he says, and he drops a pistol on to the floor. Then he waits, looks for John Dee to nod, takes out a silver derringer, and drops that too. He turns and stands above the crowd and throws his ammunition into the sky. This has become a tradition and every afternoon workmen arrive to begin sweeping up from underneath the trestle. Then the young man – his name is Peter – signs the book where I sit, turns

to look out over Washington, and like so many, he breathes deep as if the air is full of Thanksgiving.

We have a rule that only one person comes up the steps at a time. The tower has grown and John Dee fears its height has made it progressively weaker. A steward waits at the front of the line, and lets out the next man, just as Peter is stepping down. The two men pass, and something in the electricity between them makes me think that a killer is climbing the stairs. The knowledge is not fear-bringing; I am only frightened I may not be able to allow John Dee to die – that I will betray him.

I will discover the man is called Christos. I watch as he reaches the top of the trestle and I step forward to shake his hand. He is dark, about fifty, perhaps Turkish or Albanian, and his neck is tight. His eyes are slightly too large, faintly yellow, and I think they bulge. "I have guns, " he says.

The beginning of what happens next, I have seen many, many times before. When the Washington Sit-Out began we would get a crazy a day, then maybe one every other day, two a week, then almost none. We know the world hasn't yet pulled back from wildness, so we presume that some aura now surrounds John, myself, the trestle, and the growing pile of guns.

Christos reveals his gun – it will turn out to be an illegally-owned . 38 – and flourishes it with an air of superiority as if his very owning and drawing it is supposed to surprise us.

"I am America!" Christos says, with an accent so strong it takes me a second to back-track and work out what he has said. "I am America and today I take you up on your free offer. I kill you." There's spittle around his mouth and he shakes, almost as if he's stifling a giggle.

John Dee has been here before. "It's OK," he says. "If you need to, it's OK."

"See, I kill you." Christos says.

"Yes," John Dee says. "I believe you. I don't want to die. I'd like to be an old man. I would like to live in Florida, play checkers and complain about the heat. But it's OK, really it's OK."

"See, I kill you." Christos says, and I know then that this one will not be paralyzed by the forgiveness in John Dee, will not look like a bemused puppy and begin to waver.

"John Dee," I say, "this is—"

I hear John take a long deep breath. "It's OK, Jack."

"See, I kill you." Christos says.

"Would you like a juice?" John Dee asks in his gentle, curious voice. "We have water, if you would prefer it, or Jack can make you coffee. Everyone who climbs these steps is a friend."

"See, I kill you," Christos says.

John nods his head. "Yes, I understand you. I promise you, it's OK. Jack will not interfere, will you Jack? You'll be a good boy, yes?"

I stand up, to relieve tension. I tell Christos I am an observer, a recorder.

"An', I kill you, too!" Christos says.

I nod, whatever.

Christos drinks some orange juice, then he asks John Dee to stand and they walk to the front of the white room to where the steps lead down the trestle, where by looking out they can both see the rusting guns and the White House below them. Christos raises the gun and I realize that John Dee is so relaxed he has his hands behind his back, one finger of one hand clasped in the palm of the other. I'm behind them but I can only see that Vietnam War moment where a Viet Cong soldier was executed in Saigon.

"John, " I say softly, "they'll think your hands are tied."

"Thank-you, Jack, " John Dee says, and he lets his hands drop to his side. Below, the crowd murmur stops. Somehow they seem to know that this gunman is committed, that John Dee's day has finally come.

These minutes are so charged, so slow and I know they are final. I want to say something, to honor my friend, but then, as I am about to speak, the air about me changes and Christos crumples. There is a hole in his face from a marksman's bullet. I have heard no sound.

The pain. I know immediately this is a betrayal, that we have never been unprotected, that whoever has arranged for a hidden sniper to protect us, still doesn't understand, that the whole point is not to save John Dee.

We have been betrayed, and the crowd, the long line of Americans is betrayed. But worse, I know they will think they are betrayed by John Dee, and by me, his witness. It's over. I know it, and as if to emphasize this, I see someone break from the line, wave his gun and begin to walk away.

Then John Dee calls out, "Wait!" his voice huge and filling, and only then do I realize that the world below us is almost silent.

The man pauses, and John Dee picks up his murderer's gun and holds it high. I see the man's body change, then his focus turn to John Dee who is speaking, not to the crowd, for they are too far away, but for the record.

"I told America, come kill me if you must. This was my pact. This is why Americans are prepared to take their own small risk, to be courageous enough to forsake the weaponry which enslaves us."

He points the gun at himself. "John Dee did not betray you," he says. He puts the gun under his chin and pulls the trigger.

I don't know how long I am still, but then I go to the open space, look down, and wait. I wait because what I have to do now is painful. I wait, for though I know I can summon the small courage to take John Dee's place I don't yet know if I can do what he has made me promise to do.

I look again at the rising day. The White House gleams in fresh sunlight and before it, squalid metal settles into the earth. The crowd, Washington, America, looks up to me.

I am crying. I pick up John Dee's body. His scalp is sticky with his blood but his face is undamaged. I kiss him and hold him, but then, with the air going from me, I throw him away, off the edge of the steps, and down, onto the grass where Peter's bullets lay. I look to the crowd. I look out at America. I look at the White House.

I take a deep breath, one last look at John Dee's body, then down at the Stewards.

"Next!" I say, and take my seat.

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Memoria Nera

John Palcewski

I

I was conceived the first week of June, 1941, in the back seat of a '37 Ford in a driveway in Youngstown, Ohio, around two or three in the morning when all the bars had closed. My mother yielded to my drunken father because he always got so bent out of shape when he didn't get exactly what he wanted. She knew it would be over real quick, so what the hell. A couple months later she realized what a horrid mistake she'd made that night.

When I was eleven a neighbor lady named Caroline told me that my mother was not dead—as my father had told me—but lived on the other side of town. "She calls all the time asking how you're doing, Johnny," Caroline said. "She loves you very much."

Her name? Elizabeth. Betty for short.

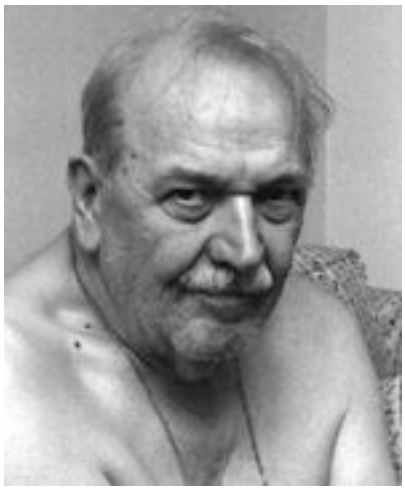
I confronted my father. I said I wanted to see my mother. And I asked him why he'd lied to me about her. "Because she's a fucking whore," he replied.

She was a breathtakingly beautiful woman from an Irish family named Joyce. Their house was full of books, and they all gathered around the grand piano and sang sentimental songs, and read poetry aloud. Elizabeth—my mother!—loved opera. Her favorites were Verdi, Puccini, and Bellini. Every Saturday she listened to the Texaco Metropolitan Opera broadcast, a habit I picked up, too. My father, of course, had no use for any of this. He loathed her for her artistic bent, but mostly for throwing him out. And what's more he hated me. Why? Because every time he looked at me, he saw her.

Forty years later, I took a picture of my mother sitting in a chair in the living room, dozing. She was in the final stages of dementia, and no longer recognized anyone. She was infantile, incapable of speaking. Everyone told Bully he ought to put her in a home. They said he couldn't go on changing her dirty diapers and bed sheets, and bathing, dressing, and feeding her. There's only so much a man can be expected to do. But Bully said there was no

way he'd put her in a nursing home where she'd be mistreated by those people. He'd heard what goes on in those places.

She died about three months later. Bully? He died of heart failure not long afterward. They all said that he didn't want to live without her.



II.

When I learned the whole story I didn't doubt my mother had sufficient reasons for abandoning me.

On March 29, 1940, my sister Roberta Lee was born. Ten months and twenty-four days later Elizabeth went into the bedroom to check on her baby, and found it motionless, pale blue, and cold. She shook Roberta, begged her to wake up. But she was dead. Elizabeth called the ambulance. As they arrived my father came in, staggering and slurring. When they told him the bad news he blinked, unable to comprehend the words. He kept blinking and shaking his head. Finally he collapsed to his knees, his hands over his face, and he moaned.

Josephine, my grandmother, finally showed up. Her sharp eyes darted here and there. She noticed that the bedroom was cool. The window was open about two inches at the bottom. She turned, faced Elizabeth. "This is your fault," my grandmother intoned. "You're an unfit mother."

My father rose from his sobbing. Elizabeth expected him to come immediately to her defense. To point out that Dr. Tamarkin had seen Roberta two days before, and had reassured Elizabeth it was just a bad cold, and that in time it would pass. But my father said nothing. He stood close to tall, grim-faced Josephine. His glaring, angry, and reproachful eyes said he agreed with his mommie. All this was Elizabeth's fault. "Do you leave a window open all day and night during the winter, especially when a baby has a cold?" Josephine said.

I first heard the story from my father, shortly after he told me I couldn't see my mother anymore. "Your sister Roberta Lee died because that fucking whore was unfit as a mother," he slurred. "Unfit. That's right, unfit."

After the funeral, my mother left him. She happened to find a small apartment adjoining the cemetery, and from her bedroom window she could see Roberta Lee's gravestone. She'd sit there for hours, staring at the little granite block. My father kept calling. He said they should get together for a few drinks and talk. He said he needed her. Honest to God. She shouldn't just throw his precious love away.

III.

Saturday, December 31, 1955, 11:35 PM. I'm in the basement, gently tweaking the tuning knob of my short wave radio to keep the signal clear. The BBC has a program about Halldór Kiljan Laxness, who'd recently won the Nobel Prize for Literature. "When he was fourteen, Laxness published his first article in a newspaper," the announcer says. "During his career he wrote fifty-one novels, poetry, plays, travelogues, and short stories." I love the cultivated English accent of that announcer. It makes him sound like he knows exactly what he is talking about.

"Johnny!" my father calls from the head of the stairs.

"What?"

"Time for bed."

Bed? That sounds odd, because this is New Year's Eve. And what's he doing still at home, anyway? Why isn't he out there celebrating?

"I'm not ready for bed."

"Get up here right now, or do I have to come down and get you?"

Oh, Christ.

We climb the stairs to the second floor. I go toward my room. He says, "You're sleeping with me tonight."

"What?"

"You heard what I said."

"I'd rather sleep in my own bed."

"Goddamnit, get in here. Now."

I crawl into his bed, move to the far side, and turn my back to him. But he reaches over and pulls me close. He is so lonely. He needs so much to cuddle. To spoon. He needs me to make him feel better. I feel his groin pressing against my ass.

The window faces the street. I stare at the slats of the blind. And I wait. Then come the noisemakers, tooting horns, fireworks. "Happy New Year!" voices shout. "Happy New Year!" I hear all that, but then I don't. By then I learned how to hear and feel nothing.

IV.

Monsignor Kasmirski and I sit on a bench in Crandall Park, at the edge of a large pond. Oaks and poplars rustle in the breeze. Canada geese spot us, and come swimming over.

"Understandably, your father is deeply distressed by your decision to go live with your mother, my son," Monsignor says. "Your father truly loves you, and doesn't want you to go away. When he spoke to me this morning tears were streaming down his face."

I turn my head. I can see him bawling. I've seen it many times before.

"Have you considered the consequences of your decision?"

"Yes, Monsignor. I'll be with my mother, and I'll be happy."

"But what about your father?"

"I could visit him."

Monsignor reaches into a paper bag and tosses out pieces of stale bread. The geese waddle out of the water and lunge hungrily.

"Visit him? After such a profound betrayal?"

Face burning, I look downward and say nothing.

"You are at an important crossroads in your life, my son," he says. "It's unfortunate that you're obliged to make such a grave decision, since you are still a child. But we do not choose the cross our Lord requires us to bear. We must accept it, without question. Now, I want you to think about this."

"Yes, Monsignor."

The holy man tells me there is but one moral choice. I must not go live with my mother, Elizabeth, but rather I must remain with my father, because that will keep me in this parish where I'll continue my Catholic education. And at the appropriate time I'll go on full scholarship to the Jesuit seminary, to study for the priesthood.

"You know how important that opportunity is, don't you?"

"Yes, Monsignor."

"You also know what Augustine teaches us: 'The measure of loving God is to love him without measure.' This means you must abandon everything, including a mother's love."

These Canada geese. All they care about are the bits of stale bread the holy man is tossing to them. For these birds, it's sufficient nourishment.

Monsignor Kazmirski continues: "And on purely ethical grounds, well, you must consider the impact your decision to live with your mother would inevitably have—not just

on yourself, but on others. How do you suppose your father will feel? Your aunt? Your uncle? Your cousins?"

I look at Monsignor. "It's not like I'd be going to another country," I say.

"But listen, my son. Your father nurtured you for nearly ten years. And to whom would you be going? Is it not to a woman who abandoned her husband and her infant son, and sought a divorce?"

I say nothing.

"Your mother's acts were unquestionably immoral and sinful," he says. "Which is why she was excommunicated."

"But my father is a sinner, too."

"We all are sinners," Monsignor Kazmirski says quietly.

The sky darkens, the wind picks up. We head for the park's exit. I have to walk quickly to keep up with Monsignor Kazmirski's long steps.

"I want to live with my mother," I say.

"Yes, you do. But you can not ignore the facts. Your mother made no attempt to communicate with you for nearly ten years. Unlike her, your father didn't abandon you. True?"

"Yes, Monsignor. But . . ."

I can't finish the sentence. I wish I could tell him about the zillions of cockroaches that scurry for cover when I turn on the kitchen light in that empty house. Or my father puking in the bathtub at three in the morning, because he can't use the shit-clogged toilet. Or all those belt whippings he seems to love giving me.

"You need to think about this, " Monsignor Kazmirski said. "But you know what you must do. In the name of God."

The judge is bald, stately and plump. His rimless glasses reflect the bright light of the windows, so I can't see his eyes. That big man with a fat neck does not smile, up there on his bench in the echoing, marble courtroom. My father and his lawyer sit at one table, and my mother and her lawyer are at the other.

"I can't hear you, speak up," the judge says, clearly annoyed.

"I said I want to live with my father."

"That is your choice?"

I lower my head, look at my hands.

"Yes," I whisper.

"Speak up!"

"I said YES."

My mother's lawyer says something I don't understand. My father's lawyer rises, and speaks for a while and I don't understand him either. I can't think, my brain is too numb. Then the judge cracks his gavel, a sharp explosive sound that startles me.

My father's nostrils flare in triumph. He shakes his lawyer's hand, and then he throws a hateful glare at my mother.

I have no recollection of what he said in the car on the way home. But I do remember clearly that he went out to celebrate after he dropped me off. I didn't mind. I had the house to myself.

Late that evening in the darkness I'm lying on the living room couch. From the radio's loudspeaker comes the saccharine strains of Brahms's "Lullaby." Obscenely sweet. Utter pathos. Pathetic.

How could I not weep?

V.

I open the drawer to the left of the sink. Surprised cockroaches scurry for cover. The old butcher knife lies alongside the greasy plastic tray that contains a rusty potato peeler, several ladles, a narrow spatula, spoons, forks, screwdrivers, pliers, and a dusty roll of black electrician's tape. I sit down on the stool in the corner, and examine the knife.

The house is empty and silent, except for the hum of the refrigerator. The knife's handle is cracked, its flat-headed brass rivets have long ago lost their sheen. The blade is narrow, eight or nine inches long. The steel is dark-colored, mottled. But it still has a point, and its edge is sharp.

Maybe my grandmother had used this knife to cut bread. There were lots of things in that house that she'd probably used. Big, dark blue speckled pots in the basement. A funny looking washing machine with an oversized wringer attachment.

She probably used this knife that time she lopped off the head of a live chicken she'd brought home from the farmer's market. I was only about four or five years old, but yes, I remember her deft, decisive movement, the flash of the blade, the spurting of crimson, and that chicken running crazily across the basement floor, headless. Later came the smell of singed feathers, of the steam from boiling water.

I grasp the handle with both hands, hold the blade pointing toward my chest. I lightly rest the point on my sternum, and see myself falling forward, holding that knife in place so that on impact the floor will drive the blade home.

If I do it right, death will be quick. Won't it? That's the way it's shown in the movies and on TV. When a guy gets stabbed in the chest he drops instantly, is dead before he hits the ground. A matter of seconds.

I am ready. Ready right now. I stand up.

Heavy pounding in my chest. Rapid shallow breaths, in and out. A tingling in my arms. A light-headedness, a nauseating sensation of things rushing along too quickly.

Now.

Go ahead.

DO it!

Honk of a horn out on the street. Rushing sound of tires. I raise my head.

Inside a house you can't tell which way a car on the street is moving. The walls absorb and consolidate sound waves, thus masking all directional quality.

The sound of a moving vehicle is subject to physical laws, and involves the contraction and expansion of wave forms. An oncoming vehicle compresses the waves so that from a fixed position you hear the sound as rising in pitch, whereas an outgoing car's motion rarefies waves so its pitch appears to be falling. The Doppler effect.

It's EASY you fucking coward.

Just fall forward!

Now!

Pitch, intensity, and timbre are the three basic properties of sound. Pitch is expressed as the number of Hz, or cycles per second. On a saxophone the note A above middle C is 440 Hz. Doubling the frequency produces a note an octave higher; halving the frequency renders a note an octave lower. Sound travels at about 1,100 feet a second.

I look down at the knife.

Another car drives by on the street in front of the house.

Yes, everything is held together by the immutable laws of physics. The sound produced by a moving car remains at a constant pitch, excluding of course the variations brought on by increases or decreases in the engine's rpms. It's all a matter of relativity, point of view.

Ah, fuck it.

I walk over, put the knife back in the drawer.

The pounding in my chest diminishes. I breathe easier, deeper. I lock my fingers, push outward. The bones pop satisfactorily. I yawn. Blink.

There are other examples of relativity. For instance, if you're riding your bike in a shower the falling rain strikes your face at an angle governed by the speed you are traveling.

But for a person you pass, who is standing still on a curb, the rain is falling straight down. Your forward movement creates the angle.

As soon as you stop moving, well, the rain again falls straight down.

Which it had been doing all along.

VI.

My father and I were in the kitchen. He'd just come in pretty loaded, even though it was only six in the evening. He owed me fifty dollars for working in his tuxedo rental shop during the summer. I asked him to please give me the money because I wanted to buy some stuff before I left for Air Force boot camp.

"I ain't giving you shit," he slurred.

I'd done a good job for him. I did every single thing he wanted me to do, and he knew it, because he repeatedly checked my work, as if he needed to find something wrong with it.

"Come on. You owe me the money."

"What's the matter, are you fucking deaf? I said I ain't giving you shit."

"Why?"

He gave me an intense glare of disgust. The man was just full of it, literally overflowing with anger, resentment, and hatred.

"I don't have to give you a reason. Now get your skinny ass the fuck out of here."

"You owe me the money," I said.

He grabbed the big glass ashtray on the table, and in a clumsy drunken motion hurled it at me. I quickly moved my head to the side; the ashtray lightly grazed my cheek, bounced off the wall, and rattled along the floor. It didn't break. I turned. He staggered toward me.

I seized his shoulders and slammed him, hard, against the kitchen sink's cabinet. He was as light as a bird. The muscles of his arms were flaccid, mushy. I'd expected great resistance, strength. But he had virtually no substance. So this is what terrified me all those years?

He got up and lunged toward me again. And again, I grabbed him by his arms and this time threw him even harder against the cabinet. He fell to the floor. He drew up his knees, and groaned.

Trembling, I kneel beside him and put my face close to his. I say the words slowly and clearly: *"If you ever raise your hand to me again, motherfucker, I'll kill you."*

I heard later that I'd broken four of his ribs. He was in the hospital for a few days, then they sent him home. No, I didn't get any satisfaction out of my violent act. It took me a couple decades to get over the trauma of that symbolic patricide. All I ever wanted from him was to stop hurting me.

Was that too much to ask?

VII.

In the middle of the night my father would stagger up the steps, and come into my bedroom. With a sigh he'd sit down and begin mumbling: *"I love ya, Johnny. Honest to God, I love ya."*

He wept as he repeated those words over and over again. Then he'd bend down to kiss me and I'd smell his stench of booze, cigarettes, vomit and foul underarm sweat.

"I love ya, Johnny. I mean it. I wish things were better. Honest to God."

Even as a child I saw it for what it was: puerile sentimental bullshit. Drunk talk. If he loved me so much, why did he glare at me all the time, even when he was sober? Why did he make it so clear that he wished I had never been born?

And those whippings.

He'd pull off his belt in a quick motion, and he'd grip my shirt collar, and I'd squirm, trying so hard to avoid the biting sting of that whistling strip of hard leather. The more he hit me, the more he wanted to. Like a frenzy. His rage seemed limitless.

When I was about fifteen he got pissed at something I'd done or said, and grabbed me. I don't know why, but suddenly my fear vanished. I just stood still. I did not try to avoid the blows. He lashed out two, three, four times, on my back and buttocks, but I just stood there silently.

He'd never experienced such a thing before. His victim no longer squirming, fighting, bawling, trying so desperately to escape. In that silent state I no longer felt any pain.

He stopped, belt dangling at his side, and stared at me, uncomprehendingly. I turned my head and said, "Are you through?"

The poor guy didn't know what to say. But from then on, whenever he got angry and reached for his buckle, he'd suddenly remember that scary episode and stopped.

Shortly after I was born he'd set up some sort of savings account for my college tuition. But he stopped talking about it by the time I turned ten. In my senior year in high school, everybody was thumbing through college catalogs, trying to figure out where to go. These kids were talking to their parents about it, obviously.

But I knew that such talk was impossible with my father. He didn't want to hear anything about what I wanted, or needed. He'd get angry when I showed him my shoes with run-down heels, or my underwear in shreds, or my jeans with holes revealing both of my bony knees. He made me feel as if I were asking for something extravagant or unnecessary, or that all I could ever think about was MYSELF. As if wanting shoes or decent clothes was criminal.

So the issue of college—or indeed what I would do when I graduated high school—was for several weeks just up in the air, unresolved. He made it clear that he never wanted to talk about these things. And that was it. So what was I supposed to do?

Well, I finally decided we had to talk. With a grim look and a long sigh, he sat down on the couch. "Listen, Dad," I said, "I need to know if you are going to pay for my college. Or what."

He slowly shook his head. "No," he said.

"Why?"

"You wanna know why?"

"Yes. Tell me."

"Because you ain't got it in ya."

When he said that, I recalled the thing he told me a couple years earlier in a sudden fit of candor. "You know all those A's you got at St. Xavier's?"

I nodded. "Yes."

"Well I always thought the nuns gave you those good grades because they felt sorry for you, coming from a broken home."

You ain't got it in ya.

Well, all right, I thought. I'll just go to Plan B, which was enlisting in the Air Force. Down at the recruiting office in the Post Office building I'd taken an aptitude exam, so they could decide which career field to put me in. The sergeant said that I'd gotten the highest score ever recorded.

So I said sign me up, sir. He replied that since I was still only seventeen I'd have to get parental permission.

"What the fuck is this?" my father wanted to know.

"It's an Air Force parental consent form."

"I ain't signing it."

"What?"

"I said, I ain't signing it."

I paused three seconds. Then I heard myself saying, "Sign it or not, I don't care. But I'm leaving, one way or another."

He signed.

VIII.

In late August 1959, in boot camp at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, I came in first on the obstacle course, beating out all the muscle-bound jocks. Me, the skinny runt, showing up those ex-high school football players! They finally came staggering across the finish line, huffing and puffing, and dropped to the ground, exhausted. I stood in triumph, basking in the glow of approval on the drill sergeant's face. "Airman Palcewski obviously has more desire than any of you lazy assholes," he said.

After graduation they sent me to the Air Force Intelligence School at a base outside Wichita Falls. In eight months I learned how to select enemy targets by examining aerial reconnaissance photographs. I was the best in my class. Along the way I won a case of beer for correctly identifying a strange looking building that had what looked like a racetrack on its top. It was an automobile construction plant in Munich, Germany, where they ran tests of the vehicles on the roof. I'd read about it earlier, in an issue of Popular Science magazine.

My first duty assignment was at a Strategic Air Command base near Amarillo, Texas. The 4128th Strategic Wing had a couple dozen B-52 bombers loaded with nuclear weapons, always on standby, ready to destroy the USSR and China in the event of WWIII. This awesome nuclear arsenal was the embodiment of the early 60s' geopolitical theory of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), designed to prevent major war, and—amazing to say—it succeeded.

My job was to assist Intelligence Officers prepare "navigators' combat mission folders," which were very much like the handy little road trip planners the American Automobile Association used to make for its members. The folders contained detailed aeronautical charts that showed the way from Amarillo to Vladivostok, Peking, and other major targets in Russia and China. They also included my specialty— "artwork radar predictions," which were my carefully hand-drawn simulations of what targets would look like on a B-52 navigator's radar screen when the plane got there.

I won a commendation from SAC headquarters in Omaha for devising a simple way of making a complicated calculation involving radar images, which new calculation saved the Air Force millions of dollars worth of man-hours each year. At an awards ceremony attended by all personnel, Wing Commander Colonel Cridland handed me a $50 savings bond and a nice certificate, suitable for framing. A photographer took a picture of the presentation, which appeared in the base newspaper.

In the winter of 1961, I took leave and got a hop on a C-47 to Youngstown. My mother wept when she saw me, all spiffed out in my elegant blue uniform. She was so proud of me! "Ah, what a fine young airman!" she said. So did my uncle Jack, her brother, a former Navy lieutenant.

I found my father sitting hunched over a drink at the bar in the Mahoning Valley Chapter of the Polish League of American Veterans. What did I expect from him? I suppose I thought he'd smile broadly, and congratulate me for my achievement. But he turned, and blinked, like he just couldn't comprehend what had suddenly appeared before him. He wasn't interested in my telling him of my adventures in Strategic Air Command Intelligence, nor anything else along those lines. It was clear from the look on his drunken face that he believed I was making it all up.

IX

Whenever my computer breaks down, as it regularly does, I get a flash of mild anxiety because it represents a loss of control. Sudden noises do the same thing.

This neurosis comes from one night when I was awakened by my father whipping me with his belt. I'd run away earlier that day, and he couldn't find me, and I guess he'd been out looking for me for a long time. His furious drunken assault confused then terrified me.

I suppose my aunt Jane had chewed him out, humiliated him in front of others. "What's the matter with you, Chester?" she asked. "Why can't you keep track of your own son?"

Of course she didn't bother to ask him why little Johnny had run away. Could it be that the child just can't bear any more of his whippings?

X

My cousin, Albert Hoffman, once told me: "Johnny, when you were a kid you were a sissy."

Well, why was I a sissy? And why aren't I one now?

You might call a whipped dog a sissy. He grovels, he whimpers, he pees on the floor, he's afraid of his shadow, because he knows his master at any moment will whip him again. He's on a leash, he can't run. The only effective strategy—the only one at his disposal—is to

belly up in submission. His instincts tell him that if he does this in the presence of the Alpha Male, well, he just might get off. If he's lucky.

The allegory breaks down because my father was never a true Alpha Male. He attacked only women and children. He didn't have the balls to take on another man, who wouldn't hesitate to kick his sorry cowardly ass.

I've often wondered: Why was my mother so drawn to that needy and perpetually angry man? Why didn't she dump him when she had the chance? But of course that line of thought leads to the existential realization if she had indeed walked away, I wouldn't be sitting here right now, pissing and moaning.

My father was the biggest mistake in her life. And in my father's glaring eyes I was the only mistake. But my mother made it clear to me I wasn't. "I'll always love you," she said.

I look through this pile of old photographs. Most of them are of an extraordinarily beautiful little girl surrounded by parents and relatives who literally shower her with adoration, affection, affirmation. I hear their laughter, and my uncle Jack's flawless pitch-perfect tenor voice at the piano, singing Deirdre of the Sorrows. And I think, Christ, what a pity she allowed my father to poison her life the way he did.

But then at least she had the good fortune to find a real man in Bully, who honored his commitment to her to the very end. When she sunk into the blackness of dementia, he stood by her. He refused to put her in a nursing home, as everyone told him he ought to do. No, he just went about the daily business of changing her diapers, cleaning her dirty sheets, bathing her, dressing her, feeding her. He didn't find excuses, he didn't run.

During my last visit to Youngstown I sat down and made sure Bully understood how much I admired him for that. "The plain fact is," I said, "If I found myself in your shoes I don't think I could do it."

I didn't go to my mother's funeral, or to his a couple months later. Not out of disrespect for their memory, but rather because—thank God—we'd already made peace. We had no unspoken words, no unfinished business between us.

XI

My grandmother Edna, a hard-drinking and headstrong Irishwoman, told me many times I was her favorite little boy, because we were exactly alike. The story was that in the early 1900s she gave up her vaudeville singing & dancing career and got married in Ohio to one Frank Joyce, whose ancestors lived in a small village in the Maum Valley, to the west of Lough Mask in the northern part of County Galway, Ireland.

She liked to say that she was just the latest in an unbroken line of rogues and criminals. Her grandfather, Jack, for instance. During the Great Famine he was convicted of sheep stealing and subsequently transported from Dublin to a penal colony in New South Wales, Australia.

Edna may have left vaudeville, but she never gave up singing, dancing, smoking, and drinking. She did what she pleased. Always. Frank thought that once his wild wife gave birth to baby Jack, and then Betty, she'd settle down. Not a chance. Look at the picture. It's Edna and her daughter Betty, my mother, at the Avalon Ballroom in Youngstown, Ohio, having a good time. Frank is at home, with the dog, listening to the radio play-by-play of the Cleveland Indians game.

I've always liked being a direct descendant of an Irish sheep stealer and a vaudeville trooper. It's an interesting story. And, more important, this history provides all the explanations and excuses I ever need for my own outrageous behavior.

After all, it's in my blood. Right?

XII

July 23, 1998

Hello, it's me. I've been thinking that I'm getting older. And so are you. There's a lot of unfinished business between us, so maybe we ought to try to sort it out while we still have a chance. I think a good way to start would be for you to write me a long letter. About you and my mother, all the stuff that led to your separation, divorce. My sister Roberta. You've never talked to me about any of this, so maybe after all these years it's time. The whole truth.

If you don't want to do this, well, then this is my final good bye to you. I wish you the best.

John

So I wrote it out in longhand, in black fountain pen ink on a sheet of good bond paper. I didn't type the words because I thought they'd appear even more impersonal than they already were. Folded the single sheet in thirds, put it in an envelope. Wrote his name and address on the front of the envelope in block draftsman's letters, affixed sufficient postage. Opened the front door, but saw it was raining. I put the envelope in a plastic zip-lock bag and walked it over to the mailbox, five blocks away.

One time I said to my father: "Let's talk, okay?"

And he squinted, as he always did when he was drunk. "Talk? You wanna talk? Okay. What do ya wanna talk about, huh? Come on. Tell me."

I wanted him to tell me the whole story of how I came to be. And why my mother left him. She'd already told me her version, so it was only fair that I give him an opportunity to tell me his.

For Christ's sake, dad, give me an identity. Tell me I have a good reason to be here, that I belong. Tell me that between you and my mother there came something of value. Tell me about your father, what you felt about him, how he treated you. Give me a history, some sense of family origin. As it is, I have nothing. I'm fucking empty. I don't belong anywhere.

He shook his head. No way. Now get lost.

XIII

On the 7th of July 1970, in the maternity ward of Lenox Hill Hospital on Park Avenue in Manhattan, I witnessed the birth of my daughter, Lara. She emerged bright-eyed, fully alert. I held her in my arms briefly before they wrapped her up in a white blanket and put her into an incubator. My little daughter appeared to be fascinated by everything around her in that brightly lit room. Those big, beautiful eyes of hers went from one thing to another.

Half an hour later I made two telephone calls. First one to my father.

"Congratulations," I said. "You're a grandfather."

I went on to describe what I had just seen. A miracle. No words can really describe it. You know?

"I have good news too," he said.

"Oh?"

"Yeah. I just bought a new car."

And then I called my mother.

"Congratulations," I said. "You're a grandmother."

She wanted to hear more. And more. About how Lara looked, how much she weighed, and so on.

"So when are you coming to see her?" I asked.

I heard a gasp. "You mean after all those terrible things I've done you still want me to visit?"

"Listen, I keep telling you, it's all water under the bridge. Of course I want you to come."

My mother was in our apartment on West 83rd Street four days later. I told her she could stay as long as she wanted. We had plenty of room.

In 1982, well into a solid career as a corporate magazine editor, photojournalist and literary fiction writer, I decided that I needed to go back to college and get my degree. I figured that given my intellectual pretensions, I ought to have a piece of paper to back them up.

Four years later I sent out invitations to everyone I knew. At the conclusion of my graduation ceremony, with a diploma in my hand, I strolled across the lawn in front of the library. And to my astonishment, there he stood. My father. It was a most awkward conversation.

"When did you arrive?" I asked.

"I was at that baccalaureate service in the church yesterday," he said.

"Oh? I didn't see you," I said.

He looked me up and down.

"You know, you look like a little kid in that outfit," he said.

A little kid? I was forty-four years old. And that outfit included a big, shiny medal on a silver chain, which I'd just received for being inducted in Alpha Sigma Lambda, the national honor society for continuing education students.

"Hey," he said, "we oughta get together for a few drinks tonight, huh?"

"As it happens," I quickly replied, "I've already made plans. You should have called to let me know you were coming."

I wasn't about to let him spoil this important day. No way in hell. But nevertheless he didn't look at all disappointed. I suppose that was because he knew he'd have those drinks whether I went with him or not.

"Oh, okay," he said. "Maybe some other time."

"Sure," I said.

That was the last time I saw him.

XIV

In mid-January, 2005, the phone rang. My girlfriend, Maria, said she'd just called my father. I asked her why.

"Because," she replied, "I thought if I got to know him I might understand you better."

But the woman who answered Maria's call said she could not bring Chester to the phone, because he'd passed away five months ago.

"What?" Maria said.

"He died," the woman replied angrily, and she spelled out the word. "D. I. E. D." Then she hung up.

I went to the web and checked the obits in the Youngstown Vindicator. Yes, Chester Palcewski's death suddenly occurred the morning of August 22, 2005. And,

". . .he will be sadly missed by all who knew and loved him."

I'm not among those in the list of his survivors. Nor are Lara and Stephen, my children, his grandchildren.

Chester Palcewski, 89

AUSTINTOWN. Chester Palcewski, 89, passed away unexpectedly Monday morning [August 22, 2005] at his home. He will be sadly missed by all who knew and loved him.

Chester was born Feb. 20, 1916 in Youngstown, a son of the late Casimir and Josephine Hoffman Palcewski, and was a lifelong area resident.

He attended The Rayen School and served in the U.S. Army during WWII.

A tailor by trade, Chester owned and operated Bouquet Tuxedo Rentals on Mahoning Avenue in Youngstown for many years and also worked at Masters Tuxedo Rentals. He was a member of the Nativity of Christ Orthodox Church and PLAV Post No. 87.

He leaves his wife, Anne Stefanoski Miladore Palcewski, whom he married Nov. 1, 1966; four stepchildren, Joann (the late John Jr.) Panko of Palentine, Ill., Sandra (Frank) Burkosky of Solon, Elaine (Richard) Luchansky of Pawleys Island, S.C. and Nicholas (Donna) Miladore of Boardman; nine grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren.

A brother, Alex, and a sister, Jane Hubler, are deceased.

Family and friends may call from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday at Kinnick Funeral Home, 477 N. Meridian Road in Youngstown, and from 9:30 to 10 a.m. Saturday at Nativity of Christ Church.

A prayer service will be held at 7 p.m. Friday at the funeral home and funeral services will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday at the church.

Interment will take place at Lake Park Cemetery.

JUDGMENT DAYS

Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King Jr.,
and the Laws That Changed America

Nick Kotz

Let Us Continue

The challenge was immediate and immense. From the moment the rifle shots in Dallas catapulted Lyndon Baines Johnson into the presidency, he knew he must convince a grief-stricken nation that he could unite the country and lead it through the crisis. Although Johnson had served as Senate majority leader beginning in the 1950s and as vice president for almost three years, his public image was hazy at best. The first opinion surveys after the assassination showed that many Americans had doubts about whether he was up to the job. A Louis Harris poll on November 24 reported that one-third of the population believed that the southerner would slow down action on civil rights. Other polls showed that 70 percent doubted Johnson could carry on as well as Kennedy, and 67 percent claimed to know "next to nothing" about the new president. But Johnson didn't wait for polls to tell him that he had to move swiftly to win the confidence of Americans who mistrusted, disliked, or simply didn't know him.

From his first moments as president, Johnson reached out to leaders of the nation's diverse interests — governors and members of Congress, corporate executives and organized labor, church and religious leaders, and perhaps most important, liberals and civil rights organizers. With many liberals, Johnson had to overcome suspicions, feuds, and misunderstandings that had been decades in the making. He knew that no Democrat could govern effectively, much less win the presidency in his own right, without the support of the

party's large and powerful liberal wing. With the 1964 election less than a year away, he had little time to spare.

The new president worked from sunrise until late into the night — taking part in ceremonies for President Kennedy, meeting with governors and foreign leaders arriving in Washington for the funeral, shaping the budget headed for Congress, urging the Kennedy Cabinet and White House staff to stay on, while reaching out by telephone to dozens of influential Americans. To all of them Johnson's message was clear: The country faced a crisis that required national unity and continuity. As president, he personally needed and welcomed their advice.

Johnson began November 25, 1963, his third full day as president, by walking in the funeral procession from the White House to St. Matthew's Cathedral with the late president's widow and brother Robert. He did so over the strenuous objections of the Secret Service, whose leaders, fearing yet another assassination, wanted him to ride in an armored car.

Watching the procession from a crowded sidewalk, anonymous among the weeping thousands, was a dispirited Martin Luther King. King had flown to Washington from Atlanta the previous evening for the funeral. He was deeply disappointed that the Kennedy family had not invited him as an official guest.[1] The battle-scarred minister came anyway, standing unnoticed among the throngs watching the funeral cortege with its riderless black horse, the veiled widow, and the new president pass by.

On the day after the assassination, King had issued a statement saying that he believed that "President Johnson will follow the path charted by President Kennedy in civil rights. . . . It does not at all mean a setback." King felt that Johnson, with his "statesmanlike grasp of the problem and great political sagacity," was "equipped to be affirmative in getting congressional results" on civil rights. The statement clearly delivered a compliment and at the same time issued a challenge.

Turning to the Reverend Walter Fauntroy, the SCLC associate who stood beside him on the sidewalk, King remarked, "If they can take out a president, they can take us out, too." At least, the two ministers agreed, "Lyndon Johnson was no George Wallace." They speculated hopefully that Johnson might have "freed himself from the racism of his region." But King could not overcome his own despair. "We're still a ten-day nation, Walter," he said gloomily, referring to his sense that the country seemed unable to focus on a single issue such as civil rights for more than ten days. Three months had passed since the heralded

1 King might have felt less slighted if he had known that Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Whitney Young of the National Urban League were guests only because President Johnson had intervened with the Kennedy's at Young's request.

March on Washington and King's dramatic "I Have a Dream" speech. Now civil rights legislation was again stalled, black children had been killed in a Birmingham church bombing, and a president who had just started to show promising signs of support for their cause had been assassinated.

President Johnson telephoned King the evening of the funeral, reaching him at 9:40 p.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City, where he and other civil rights leaders had gathered to decide how they should deal with the new president. They were comparing their opinions of — and experiences with — Lyndon Johnson, debating how the assassination would affect the pace and direction of their movement, and discussing whether to call off scheduled demonstrations or convert them into memorials for the slain president.

Most of the leaders had been impressed by Johnson's support for civil rights as vice president. Yet they still had reservations about how committed the tall Texan was to their cause. They had not forgotten that during his first twenty years in Congress, Johnson had opposed every civil rights bill. Civil rights veterans still remembered candidate Johnson in the 1948 Senate race, his career hanging in the balance, shouting at audiences, "I voted against the so-called and misnamed civil rights bills, and I expect to continue fighting them in my six years as senator." Johnson's position on civil rights had evolved over time, but his reputation was that of a political wheeler-dealer without ideological bearings and a fierce defender of the Southwest's oil and gas interests.

Johnson began his telephone call to King by thanking the minister for his public expression of confidence. In his folksy, intimate style, the new president immediately engaged King as a confidant and partner in his effort to get results from Congress. "It's just an impossible period," the president explained. "We've got a budget coming out that's practically already made, and we've got a civil rights bill. . . .We've got to just not give up on any of them. . . . I'm going to call on Congress Wednesday to just stay here until they pass them all. They won't do it, but we'll just keep them here next year until they do, and we just won't give up an inch."

"Well, this is mighty fine," replied King. "I think one of the great tributes we can pay in memory of President Kennedy is to try to enact some of the great progressive policies that he sought to initiate." "I'm going to support 'em all!" Johnson replied. "And I'm going to do my best to get other men to do likewise, and I'll have to have you-all's help. I never needed it more than I do now."

"Well, you know you have it. And just feel free to call us for anything," said King, speaking for the group. "Regards to the family," he added.

"Thank you so much, Martin," Johnson replied. "Call me when you're down here next time and let's get together — and any suggestions you have, bring them in."

In that brief telephone exchange, King politely hinted at what the civil rights movement wanted most from Lyndon Johnson: his commitment to pass the bill formally proposed by the late president five months earlier.

The legislation had not yet been approved either by the House or by the Senate, where it faced a certain filibuster from opponents in the all-white southern delegation.

Independently, Johnson and King had reached the same judgment: the outpouring of admiration and affection for the late president — along with widespread feelings of grief, remorse, and guilt — had created a compelling opportunity for action. Both men were instinctive masters at seizing unexpected openings and turning them into victories. "Now's the time to shove in our stack, boys," Johnson would exhort his allies when they held the high political cards. In similar fashion, King pressed his demonstrators relentlessly when he sensed the possibility of a decisive victory.

Martin Luther King, the minister and passionate orator, expressed surprisingly little public emotion at Kennedy's death. In his Thanksgiving Day sermon six days afterward, King mentioned the assassination only perfunctorily, preaching instead on the black experience of slavery in America. Meeting privately the next day with Donald H. Smith, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, King suggested coolly and pragmatically that Kennedy's death might actually improve prospects for civil rights legislation. "I think that we still have the possibility for a strong civil rights bill," King told him. "It may well be that the president's death will speed this up. Because I'm convinced that, had he lived, there would have been continual delays and attempts to evade it at every point and water it down at every point. But I think his memory . . . will cause many people to see the necessity for working passionately and unrelentingly to get this legislation approved."

Although he admired and even envied Kennedy's easy, graceful political style, King judged him strictly on the way he responded to the plight of black Americans. In King's view, the late president had repeatedly been slow to deliver on grand promises. At the time of Kennedy's death, King was furious at the way the president and the attorney general were handling a civil rights confrontation in Albany, Georgia. Curtly rejecting King's fervent appeals, Robert Kennedy had insisted on prosecuting nine black demonstrators for picketing a store owned by an unfriendly white merchant, but did nothing to punish white mobs that were terrorizing the demonstrators. Not a single white attacker had been arrested. Meeting with the attorney general about the case, King had erupted in a rare display of anger. He found ludicrous Robert Kennedy's claim that he was only dispensing "even-handed justice."

◊

Lyndon Johnson immediately focused on gaining a mastery of civil rights and other critical domestic issues, but he could not ignore a nagging problem nine thousand miles away. In a visit toWashington, Henry Cabot Lodge, the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, had told Johnson, as the president put it, that "it's going to hell in a hand basket out there." Three weeks before President Kennedy's assassination, the United States had sanctioned a coup that resulted in the assassination of Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem. Now there was continuing chaos, Lodge told Johnson. The new president expressed his considerable "misgivings" about "whether we took the right course in upsetting the Diem regime," and about influential members of Congress "who felt we should get out of Vietnam." But then Johnson came to a quick, firm conclusion.

"I am not going to lose Vietnam," he told Lodge. "I am not going to be the president who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went." Two days later Johnson signed a National Security Action Memorandum reaffirming U.S. determination to assist the people and government of Vietnam "to win their contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy." The United States would maintain its level of financial support and of "advisers" — whose numbers had risen from 685 to 16,700 during John Kennedy's nearly three years in office.

After meeting with Lodge, Johnson revealed his underlying motives in a conversation with aide Bill Moyers. "I told [Lodge] to go back and tell those generals in Saigon that Lyndon Johnson intends to stand by our word, but by God I want something for our money. I want 'em to get off their butts and get out in those jungles and whip hell out of some Communists. And then I want them to leave me alone, because I got some bigger things to do right here at home." From the outset, Johnson drew a connection between success in Vietnam and achieving his goals for overarching social reform at home. If he were going to equal or exceed Roosevelt's New Deal, Johnson believed, he had to satisfy conservatives in Congress by bringing Vietnam to a successful conclusion.

Not all of President Johnson's friends agreed that he should wrap himself in the cloak of the martyred president. Senator George Smathers, a Florida Democrat, told Johnson in a telephone call that he had the opportunity and freedom to chart his own course. Smathers suggested that Johnson start by dropping Kennedy's tax cut plan, which had the Senate tied up, blocking other important legislation.

"No, no, I can't do that," Johnson replied. "That would destroy the party and destroy the election and destroy everything. We've got to carry on. We can't abandon this fellow's program, because he is a national hero and people want his program passed, and we've

got to keep this Kennedy aura around us through this election." Speaking with the conservative Smathers, Johnson talked the tough, pragmatic politics of necessity. With others he sounded sincere in his desire to pursue civil rights vigorously on moral grounds.[2] At a long meeting at The Elms that first week, Johnson's advisers debated how he should handle civil rights. When one veteran insider cautioned the president against expending his early goodwill on the controversial legislation, Johnson loudly retorted, "Well, what the hell's the Presidency for?"

Was LBJ acting out of political necessity or out of conviction? If political necessity, how long would it last? Those questions were on the mind of James Farmer, executive director of the Congress of Racial Equality, as he met with the president in the Oval Office. Farmer thought that Johnson radiated an optimism bordering on euphoria as he described his plans to fight for civil rights legislation. Farmer listened, fascinated, as Johnson periodically interrupted their conversation to take telephone calls in which he vigorously lobbied senators to support the civil rights bill.

"Mr. President," asked Farmer, "why are you doing this?" Johnson answered by describing the humiliations experienced by his college-educated cook, Zephyr Wright, and her husband whenever they traveled in the segregated South. In Johnson's vivid story, Mrs. Wright, denied the use of "whites only" restrooms, would have to "go squat in the middle of a field to pee." A key feature of the proposed civil rights law called for eliminating segregated public accommodations, including motels, restaurants, restrooms, movie theaters, parks, and swimming pools.

Then, with a twinkle in his eye, Johnson gave Farmer another explanation for his civil rights advocacy. "To quote a friend of yours," he said, "free at last. Thank God almighty, I'm free at last!" In quoting Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, Johnson intimated that now that he had reached the presidency, he was free of the political constraints that had bound him during twenty-seven years as a representative and senator and even as vice president. In his first years in Congress, Johnson had told civil rights advocates that his vote for a civil rights bill would only guarantee his defeat in the next election. By 1957, as a Senate majority leader who hungered for national office, Johnson had begun to change his position on civil rights. Demonstrating extraordinary political and parliamentary skills, he had steered through Congress the first civil rights law enacted since Reconstruc-

2 After his presidency had ended, Johnson told his biographer Doris Kearns, "I knew that if I didn't get out in front on this issue [civil rights], the liberals would get me!"

tion.[3] For his efforts he was condemned by southerners as a traitor to his region and race and by liberals for pushing through a toothless piece of legislation. Now Johnson had to win over those who had scorned his performance in 1957, including Roy Wilkins, who had called the 1957 law "soup made from the bones of an emaciated chicken which had died from starvation." Wilkins also compared Johnson's next civil rights bill, three years later — which sought to guarantee black voting rights — to prescribing "liniment to cure a tumor."

Now Wilkins, sixty-two years old and in his ninth year as the NAACP's executive director, was the first civil rights leader President Johnson summoned to the Oval Office. A slim, immaculately dressed man, Wilkins spoke with the dignity and authority of the leader of the nation's largest and best-known civil rights organization. Despite his contempt for Johnson's handling of the earlier civil rights bills, Wilkins had been impressed by Johnson's performance as vice president, particularly his work chairing the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, which sought to end job discrimination and segregation by government contractors. When Wilkins had complained to Johnson about racial discrimination at the Lockheed Corporation's Georgia airplane plant, the vice president had acted quickly to remedy the problems. Over the years, Wilkins had judged Johnson to be not a "visceral segregationist" but a product of his political circumstances.

When the NAACP leader entered the Oval Office, the president pulled his own chair up to Wilkins's so their knees almost touched. Johnson poked his finger in Wilkins's chest, thrust his nose within an inch of Wilkins's, and declared, "I want that bill passed!" Moreover, Johnson said, he wanted the legislation approved intact — without compromise or weakening amendments. In 1957 and 1960, Majority Leader Johnson had watered down stronger bills passed by the House in order to get them through the Senate, and black leaders feared that he would follow the same tactic as president. Johnson spent the rest of their forty-five-minute meeting telling Wilkins how he expected him and other civil rights leaders to lobby Congress to pass the bill.

Wilkins's doubts about the president's intentions were largely dispelled by the meeting. In past dealings with Johnson, even though they often disagreed, Wilkins had found him forthright, a man of his word. Now he believed that Johnson had committed himself to go much further on civil rights than ever before. Leaving the meeting, Wilkins told White House reporters that the president would push the civil rights bill both out of "his own convictions" and because of "political necessity."

Wilkins's experiences with Lyndon Johnson were quite different from his dealings in

3 The 1957 Civil Rights Act established a Commission on Civil Rights and a civil rights division in the Justice Department, and made it a crime to interfere with a person's right to vote in federal elections.

the Oval Office with John F. Kennedy. Kennedy had been "polite and sympathetic on all matters of basic principle, but too often evasive when it came to action." Although Kennedy portrayed himself as "dry-eyed and realistic," Wilkins had thought that the young president was too "green," lacking in understanding of "what was possible in Congress, and in his knowledge of the South." In contrast, Wilkins believed that "Johnson knew exactly what was possible" in dealing with Congress, and was more forthright in saying what he would do. Whereas Kennedy had been reluctant to pressure members of Congress to support his program, Johnson was a master of persuasion. Kennedy's greatest contribution was to help change "the moral climate of the country, the first step before civil rights legislation could be passed," Wilkins decided. But it would take an entirely different kind of president — a Lyndon Johnson — to get a strong civil rights bill enacted into law.

Even as they worried about Johnson's deep ties to the South, black leaders based their hopes to some extent on a story from black folklore. Blacks would finally gain their freedom, the story went, after the arrival of an enlightened white southern leader. The folktale received new attention as black leaders discussed what they could expect from Johnson and how they should deal with him.

There was something else about Johnson's southern roots that the black leaders found significant: any southern white politician who dared take up the cause of civil rights did so knowing full well that his commitment would expose him to rejection by his closest white southern friends and allies. Advocating civil rights could spell defeat in the next election. There was a real cost, politically and personally, for a southerner that the northern white politician did not face. Therefore the southerner's commitment demonstrated true courage.

As Johnson sought the support of a succession of black leaders, he reached back to his past and passionately described the populist roots that had animated his early political career. Meeting with Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), Johnson reminisced about how "Mary McLeod Bethune put my integration diapers on me during my NYA days." Bethune, an intimate of Eleanor Roosevelt and founder of the NCNW, served as deputy director of the National Youth Administration, one of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs. At age twenty-six, Lyndon Johnson had been the youngest state director of the NYA, which funded jobs for unemployed youths during the Great Depression. Bethune had lectured an initially reluctant Johnson that "you represent the federal government, and the NYA is a federal program" — and that therefore the program must serve all youths, not just whites. "From that point on," Johnson told Height, "I

never questioned. I was an agent of the federal government."[4] The reminiscence created an important connection for Johnson: as a young woman, Dorothy Height had served as Bethune's personal assistant.

Johnson also reminded black leaders of his experiences in the late 1930s as a young Texas congressman who proudly marched under the banner of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his progressive New Deal. As a freshman congressman, Johnson had gone to the White House to protest to the president that Agriculture Department programs grossly discriminated against black farmers in his congressional district. Johnson had been one of only three representatives from the South who dared to support Roosevelt's bill to establish a minimum wage. As a freshman, he had brought one of the nation's first public housing grants to Austin — and directed part of the funds to housing for blacks and Mexican Americans. Critics noted that the housing was segregated and that Johnson often did more for whites than for blacks. Still, he was among the rare southern politicians who risked white disapproval by openly supporting measures to help his black constituents. In return, blacks in Texas supported Johnson, even knowing that in the 1930s and 1940s he had voted against civil rights legislation that would have eliminated the poll tax[5] and made lynching a federal crime.

Johnson's ambitions were tied to another populist influence that he seldom talked about out of political caution. It was all right to acknowledge Franklin Roosevelt as a personal mentor. But Johnson also was an admirer of Huey Long, the legendary "Kingfish," who built a huge populist following as governor of Louisiana, as a senator advocating a radical and highly controversial "Share the Wealth" plan, and as a politician ambitious enough to challenge FDR himself for the presidency.

Horace Busby, who had joined Johnson's staff in 1948 and served as an idea man and speechwriter, recalled Johnson's enduring fascination with Long as he listened to the president discuss his plans and ambitions for the second night running, and into the morning of November 24. After dinner at The Elms, Johnson got a rubdown from his masseur Olaf Anderson and then slipped into a pair of white silk pajamas — the kind LBJ believed had

4 Johnson did not follow Bethune's instruction in 1936 to integrate his state advisory board. If he did so, Johnson wrote Washington, whites would not cooperate, and the program would be killed. His solution was to form separate white and black advisory boards. At the same time, Johnson doubled the number of jobs at two black colleges despite warnings from his mentor, Texas governor James Allred, about the political consequences of placing any jobs in black colleges.

5 Blacks in Texas won the right to vote after the Supreme Court of the United States in 1944 ruled unconstitutional the "all-white Democratic primary," the winning of which was tantamount at the time to election.

been worn by Huey Long. As a young congressional aide to Representative Richard Kleberg of Texas in the early 1930s, Johnson had studied everything he could about Long. He seldom missed an opportunity to hear Long speak in the Senate. He and a friend from Oklahoma took one of Long's secretaries out to dinner and questioned her about her boss's interests and habits — including how he dressed and what he liked to eat. What most fascinated Johnson was how Long had amassed political power and then won adoration from his constituents by using that power to secure government services for them. Long had paved Louisiana's muddy network of rural roads and helped the poor, while avoiding the virulent racism then virtually universal among southern politicians.

Johnson talked with Busby until 3 a.m. about all the things he wanted to accomplish — pass strong civil rights legislation, reform immigration laws so they didn't discriminate against immigrants who were not from England and western Europe, build up the Social Security system, and complete the agenda of the New Deal. Most important, he wanted to provide health care for the elderly and guarantee federal support so that no American would be denied an education for lack of funds. In Busby's view, Johnson not only wanted to accomplish great things but also yearned to be loved by the people, as he imagined Huey Long had been. Long's rambunctious, outsized personality may not have been cut to fit the image of the successful politician in the age of television, but Lyndon Johnson still identified with the Louisianan as much as he did with Franklin Roosevelt.

As her husband spoke with Busby, Lady Bird Johnson sat at her dressing table nearby, getting ready for bed. Listening to her husband talk endlessly about his White House plans, she said, "Thank God there's only ten months of this to go." The new first lady was counting the months until someone else would be elected president. "No, Mrs. Johnson, it's going to be more like nine years," replied Busby, adding to the remaining time in Kennedy's term the two four-year terms Johnson could serve in his own right. "Don't say that," Lady Bird protested as she adjusted an eye mask and went to bed.

In a meeting earlier that same evening at Johnson's office in the Executive Office Building across from the White House, Walter Heller, chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, told Johnson about a program to fight poverty that he had been designing for President Kennedy's consideration. Johnson seized upon the idea. "That's my kind of program," he said. "We should push ahead full tilt." Johnson instructed Heller, an economist from the University of Minnesota, to spread the word to his liberal friends that the president was not a "conservative budget slasher." "If you look at my record," Johnson told him, "you would know that I'm a Roosevelt New Dealer. As a matter of

fact, John F. Kennedy was a little too conservative to suit my taste."

Continuing his exploration of the poverty issue and reconnecting with his liberal past, Johnson invited two of his oldest friends from his New Deal days, social worker Elizabeth Wickendon and her husband, Arthur Goldschmidt, to The Elms for Sunday supper. "I have a very difficult problem," Johnson confided to them. "I feel a moral obligation to carry on the things that Kennedy proposed, but I have to have issues I can take on as my own. I have to get reelected in a year." Johnson told them that he was considering making poverty his issue.

Less than two weeks after becoming president, Johnson wrote a public letter to the National Welfare Association promising "a national assault on the causes of poverty." Suddenly a complex political dynamic was transforming a proposed modest investigation into the causes of poverty into a full-blown "War on Poverty," though the strategy and the weapons to fight the war had yet to be chosen. Competition between the new president and Kennedy aides carrying their fallen leader's banner quickly drove up the political stakes. The expansion of Johnson's agenda from securing civil rights to fighting poverty was propelled by multiple forces: his old populist instincts, his desire to find his own issues, his need to heal old quarrels with the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, and his competition with the Kennedys. Although he publicly praised the fallen president at every turn, Johnson would begin privately pointing out that he was succeeding with Congress where Kennedy had failed.

As Senate majority leader, Johnson often had scorned liberal senators as impractical — more interested in rhetoric than in results, hidebound against compromise, and devoid of political savvy.[6] One of his favorite jokes was, "You know the difference between cannibals and liberals? Cannibals eat only their enemies!"

To achieve results in an ideologically divided Senate, Johnson had had to perform a constant juggling act — seeking courses of action that would command the votes of both liberal northern Democrats and conservative Democrats from the South. Had he failed, a coalition of conservative Republicans and southern Democrats could have controlled the Senate. Johnson had achieved legislative results, including the 1957 and 1960 civil rights

6 Ironically, John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert shared much of Johnson's jaundiced view of the politics of liberals. The Kennedys prided themselves on their pragmatism and scorned the high-minded idealism of liberals whose rhetoric was not coupled with results. Attorney General Robert Kennedy, in a conversation with two aides, said he'd rather deal with Senator James Eastland of Mississippi than with some of the Senate liberals. At the time, Eastland, a plantation owner and unyielding segregationist, chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee, from whose doors no civil rights legislation had ever emerged.

laws, however much they might be criticized by liberals who believed that his compromises better served the interests of President Eisenhower and the Republicans than their own.

Blinded by their passion and their personal dislike of Johnson, the liberals denied their majority leader any credit, even for two remarkable accomplishments: Johnson had succeeded in getting the Senate to censure Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin for recklessly slandering political opponents as Communists,[7] and he had defeated an effort by the body's right-wing conservatives to strip power from the Supreme Court after its 1954 decision declaring school segregation unconstitutional. In those fights, the liberals had made the fiery speeches while Johnson worked behind the scenes, employing shrewdness, guile, and a knowledge both of Senate rules and of the members themselves to win victories. Other senators shared conservative Iowa Republican Bourke Hickenlooper's view that the wheeler-dealer majority leader was a man whose partisanship was exceeded only by his "personal opportunism."

Most politicians, whether friend or foe of Lyndon Johnson, struggled to comprehend the complexity of this leader, with his huge ambition and extravagant personality. Former representative Helen Gahagan Douglas, a liberal California Democrat, onetime actress, and intimate Johnson friend, thought she knew what the nation was in for when Johnson became president. She catalogued his contradictory qualities: "Ambitious, driving, alert, careful, calculating, secretive, seemingly with inexhaustible energy, sensitive to criticism, vain, an explosive temper that could erupt over the smallest details, a natural talent for organization, a listener — not a reader, a legislative director, organizer — not a legislative designer, an activist — not a planner. LBJ perfected the plans of others. He was an operator, and I say that in the best sense, not a creator."

With key members of the liberal establishment, Johnson tried with words and deeds to assuage the bitter feelings left over from old political feuds. To that end, Johnson did something that had been virtually unthinkable in the past: he apologized. He admitted that he had been wrong. No telephone call Johnson made in the early days of his presidency was more difficult than his conversation November 23 with Senator Ralph Yarborough, a Texas Democrat who led a liberal faction in the Lone Star State that often opposed Johnson. The division between liberal and conservative Democrats in Texas ran bitter and deep. Only the day before in Dallas, Yarborough had ridden in the same car as the vice president only because President Kennedy had insisted. The day before the shots rang out in Dallas, Johnson

7 Johnson defeated McCarthy by waiting until the Wisconsin demagogue overplayed his hand. When McCarthy attacked the Episcopal bishop G. Bromley Oxnam as a Communist, Johnson told an ally that "McCarthy just made a fatal mistake." Oxnam was a close friend of Senator Harry Byrd, the conservative southern patriarch, who then joined the fight and brought with him the votes needed to censure McCarthy.

was still pressing several of his Texas congressional allies to challenge Yarborough in the 1964 Senate primary. Now everything had changed. Johnson told Yarborough he needed his support and Yarborough pledged to give it. In return, Johnson asked the conservative Democratic faction not to oppose Yarborough's bid for reelection.

On his second Sunday in the White House, Johnson called in James Rowe, a liberal Washington insider who had begun his political career as a clerk to Supreme Court justice Oliver Wendell Holmes and then as an aide to Franklin Roosevelt. It was Rowe who had pushed Johnson to support civil rights legislation in 1957, arguing that the Democratic Party could not regain the presidency without proving its dedication to the interests of black voters in the big cities. Rowe's tolerance of Johnson's petulant tirades had run out during the 1960 campaign. When the vice presidential candidate made one petty demand too many, Rowe quit. The two had parted angrily and had barely spoken in three years.

Now Johnson admitted to Rowe that he had been out of line during the campaign. He wanted to mend their relationship and needed Rowe's support. Rowe, ever the gentleman, tried to take the blame for their quarrel, to which Johnson responded, "Damn it, can't you be content to be the first man the thirty-sixth president of the United States has apologized to?"

Next Johnson reached out to Joseph Rauh, chairman of Americans for Democratic Action and a key strategist and lobbyist for the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. Rauh had denounced Johnson as majority leader for selling out to his Deep South friends on the 1957 civil rights bill. At the 1960 Democratic convention, Rauh had taken the floor to denounce Kennedy's choice of Johnson as his running mate. Now Johnson asked Rauh to fly with him to the funeral of former New York senator Herbert Lehman, a liberal hero. The president then brought his former detractor to the White House, where the two men agreed to work together to pass the new civil rights bill.

Johnson then sought to make peace with Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois, whom Johnson had humiliated during a civil rights debate in the 1950s. Douglas, a white-maned liberal orator, had distinguished himself as a professor of economics at the University of Chicago and then as a fifty-year-old marine enlistee in World War II. Of all the Senate liberals, Douglas had been the most determined opponent of Johnson's highhanded leadership style and his temporizing on civil rights. Now Johnson invited Douglas to his Texas ranch, where he apologized for his rude treatment of the Illinois senator. "He said we'd had many disputes," Douglas later recalled, "but in looking back, he felt that it was mostly his own fault — which I thought was very handsome of him."

As Johnson drove Douglas and others around his ranch in the heart of the Texas hill country, he talked of growing up there in the early years of the century. From those central

Texas hills, with their thin soil, mesquite trees, and struggling farmers came the rural populism that shaped Johnson's early political career. He often recited for guests his family history — how he had started out in the political footsteps of his father and grandfather, both of whom had served in the Texas state legislature, where they had opposed the Ku Klux Klan and championed the rights of the workingman.

There were few blacks in Blanco County, so Johnson never experienced anything like the stratified and segregated plantation society of the Deep South. But there were lots of poor white people who tried to scrape by farming. Johnson's father had failed as a farmer, and money was scarce as Johnson grew up. He vowed never to fail as his father had. Johnson identified with underdogs, even after he had become a rich and powerful senator backed by and often serving the interests of the state's wealthy oil and business men.

At his ranch, Johnson entertained visitors in his swimming pool and on harrowing rides in which he would startle unsuspecting guests by driving his amphibious car straight into the middle of Lake Lyndon Baines Johnson. He told them of the upbringing that had shaped his character and influenced his ideas, including the story of how his grandmother and her children had hidden in a cellar under a trapdoor while marauding Indians ransacked their house.

Born in 1908, Johnson was the last president to have experienced the final vestiges of the American frontier. He would show visitors the one-room schoolhouse where he had begun his education and tell them of his heart-rending experiences as principal of a dilapidated school attended by poor Mexican American children in rural Cotulla. From his own meager salary Johnson had bought school supplies and paid for extracurricular activities. Later, when he served as debate coach at a high school in Houston, he again used his own money to help poor Mexican American children.[8]

Johnson would tell his visitors about his proudest accomplishment: bringing electricity to the farmers and ranchers in his sparsely settled congressional district. Before he was elected to Congress in 1937, there had been no electric power in the thousands of square miles of the hill country. First Johnson persuaded President Roosevelt to approve dams on the Colorado River to generate power. Next he won special approval from the Rural Electrification Administration to install power lines through vast stretches of country with a population density of less than one person per square mile. The project, built between 1937 and 1948, brought the hill country people into the twentieth century. For the first time, they could listen to the radio, draw water by electric pump instead of by hand, wash clothes with-

8 In Cotulla, Johnson would buy an ice cream cone for a different child every day from the ice cream vendor who came by the school since he didn't have enough money to buy cones for all of them.

out backbreaking labor, and light their homes. The grateful voters remained loyal to Lyndon Johnson all their lives.

By the time guests such as Senator Douglas left the LBJ Ranch, they had a better understanding of their old adversary: Lyndon Johnson was more than a political operator with slicked-back hair, hand-tailored suits, and a domineering personality. Douglas decided that Johnson was sincere, and that securing civil rights was more important than nursing old political grievances.

From a small sitting room on the second floor of the White House where she recorded her daily diary, Lady Bird Johnson could see the procession of leaders arriving to meet with the president. She found it painful to watch Johnson's relentless courtship of men like Joe Rauh, who she felt had unfairly excoriated her husband and his native region. She was particularly upset when the president virtually ordered conservative Texas congressman Joe Kilgore, the Johnsons' close friend, not to challenge Johnson's political foe Ralph Yarborough for reelection. Lady Bird feared that Lyndon's wooing of the liberals and the intensity of the civil rights struggle would damage her relationships with members of Congress from the Deep South and their wives, who had been the Johnsons' closest friends in Washington. She understood and agreed with her husband's push for civil rights,[9] but it still angered her that the South's most strident critics never acknowledged the region she loved for its beautiful land and its gracious people.

She had grown up Claudia Alta Taylor, nicknamed Lady Bird as a child, in the town of Karnack in East Texas, where her father, Thomas Jefferson Taylor, a prosperous merchant, landowner, and community leader, was called "Boss" Taylor by the black sharecroppers. It was an environment vastly different from Lyndon Johnson's hill country, which was more a part of the Southwest. Karnack belonged in Deep South plantation country, and Lady Bird Taylor was raised in the manner of a southern gentlewoman. She was bright and well educated, with a master's degree in journalism from the University of Texas. Lyndon Johnson, still a congressional aide at the time they met, had swept her off her feet in a cross-country courtship that he pursued as relentlessly as any political campaign. After eight weeks of impassioned letters, roses, and exhortations to her father, she agreed to marry him. He called her "Bird." She became the anchor in his life, radiating serenity in the most difficult

9 Like her husband, Lady Bird Johnson was first sensitized to the cruelties of discrimination by the experiences of their servants. In the 1950s Mrs. Johnson was horrified when ambulance companies in Washington, D.C., refused to pick up Zephyr Wright, the Johnson's black cook, after she fell on an icy sidewalk and broke her leg. Senator Johnson finally demanded and got help for Mrs. Wright.

times. On the afternoon of November 22 it was she who had made the telephone call to their daughter Lynda Bird, an eighteen-year-old student at the University of Texas. "Lynda, the president has been shot and killed," Lady Bird told her calmly. "We are fine, on the plane flying back to Washington. You go over to the governor's mansion and be with Johnnie Connally. You'll be safe there." Lynda was struck by how self-controlled her mother always was, in contrast with her tempestuous father. With patience and inner strength, Lady Bird Johnson constantly saved her husband from his worst excesses. Lyndon Johnson depended on and trusted his wife's judgment like no one else's.

His whirlwind round of meetings was important, but the acid test came on November 27, 1963, at 12:30 p.m., as Lyndon Baines Johnson entered the chamber of the House of Representatives. Johnson knew that this address to a joint session of Congress would be the most important speech of his life. All of the private entreaties he had made to leaders of government, business, labor, churches, the news media, and the civil rights movement would be for naught if he did not connect with the American people. Dressed in a dark blue suit, speaking in a quiet and controlled voice, Johnson began his speech: "Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of the House, Members of the Senate, my fellow Americans — all I have I would give gladly not to be standing here today. The greatest leader of our time has been struck down by the foulest deed of our time."

In uttering those few words, Johnson identified with the grief felt by millions of Americans. His central theme was that he would continue the policies and maintain the spirit of John F. Kennedy. After quoting the 1961 inaugural address in which Kennedy had declared, "Let us begin," Johnson now affirmed, "Let us continue."

Then Johnson boldly seized the moment: "No memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy's memory than the earliest possible passage of the civil rights bill for which he fought so long. We have talked long enough in this country about civil rights. We have talked for one hundred years or more. It is time now to write the next chapter, and to write it in a book of law."

No president from the South had ever uttered such words — much less a president who had opposed every civil rights bill offered during his six terms as a Texas congressman in that very House chamber. Now, Johnson left no doubt about his meaning, or about his commitment.

"I urge you again, as I did in 1957 and again in 1960, to enact a civil rights law so that we can move forward and eliminate from this nation every vestige of discrimination and oppression that is based upon race or color. There could be no greater source of strength to

this nation both at home and abroad. . . . The time has come for Americans of all races and creeds and political beliefs to understand and respect each other. So let us put an end to the teaching and preaching of hate and violence. Let us turn away from the fanatics of the far left and the far right, from the apostles of bitterness and bigotry, from those defiant of law, and those who pour venom into the nation's bloodstream."

Johnson's speech was interrupted thirty-four times by applause. It struck a positive chord around the nation, spawning widespread public sentiment that Johnson was indeed up to the job of succeeding Jack Kennedy as president. The response from the civil rights community was immediate and generous. Martin Luther King Jr. called the speech "a heroic and courageous affirmation of our democratic ideals." Roy Wilkins said that Johnson had provided "a profound sense of new hope." But the political importance of what Johnson had just done was summed up best by black comedian and activist Dick Gregory. "When Lyndon Johnson finished his speech," cracked Gregory, "twenty million American Negroes unpacked."

The impact of Johnson's first presidential address came in part from where he chose to make it. He rejected the idea of a televised speech from his desk in the Oval Office, choosing instead the halls of Congress, where he reminded his former colleagues that "for 32 years Capitol Hill has been my home. I have shared many moments of pride with you, pride in the ability of the Congress of the United States to act, to meet any crisis, to distill from our differences strong programs of national action." He knew most of the people there well. Many were his friends. Some were enemies. But all appreciated his declaration that he respected the independence of the legislative branch and his vow to govern with Congress as an equal partner.

Although civil rights was his most dramatic theme, Johnson addressed other issues, too. He committed himself to the major proposals of the Kennedy–Johnson administration: medical care for the elderly, federal aid to elementary and secondary education, commitment to a strong national defense, loyalty to the nation's allies, maintenance of a stable economy, prudence in government spending — themes that were reassuring to a wide range of Americans, including those who did not support the president's passionately declared commitment to civil rights. In historical terms, Johnson had described the major unfulfilled promises made by a series of Democratic presidents, from Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal to Harry Truman's Fair Deal to Jack Kennedy's New Frontier. Few in the audience realized just how long Johnson had dreamed of gaining the power to fulfill those promises, and to compete with Roosevelt in accomplishments and in winning the love of an appreciative people.

In the first critical days, Johnson used all the techniques of persuasion — known collectively as "the Johnson treatment" — that he had used to dominate the Senate as its

majority leader from 1955 until his inauguration as vice president in 1961. He knew the intricate details of the most complex legislation. He possessed an encyclopedic knowledge of each senator's interests, strengths, and weaknesses. He knew which senators to flatter, which to promise favors — and, when necessary, which to threaten. Most often, though, Johnson's appeal of last resort was to urge a senator to put the national interest above his own. Almost from the first moments of his presidency, Johnson employed the "treatment" toward achieving his greatest priority: passage of the civil rights bill.

The Johnson treatment was highly physical. He would stand nose to nose with another senator and literally press the flesh of a hand, an arm, a shoulder. At six foot four, Johnson loomed over most men and women, and he employed his size as another resource for dominating others. "He'd get right up on you," Hubert Humphrey recalled. "He'd just lean right in on you. . . . He was so big and tall he'd be kind of looking down on you, then he'd be pulling your lapels, and he'd be grabbing you."

Johnson also outworked the other ninety-nine senators with an energy and intensity few could match. "Let's reason together," he would say as he reached for consensus. Not every senator liked Johnson. Some resented his ceaseless hunger for power and his arrogance. Yet most admired his ability to make the Senate work effectively on the public's business.

Now, on an even larger political stage, Johnson sought to persuade men and women from broad range of interest groups to follow his leadership. Courting the liberals and civil rights activists was essential. But Johnson also needed support from conservative Democrats and Republicans, including those opposed to granting equality to 20 million black Americans. Perhaps no consensus could be reached with diehard southerners on civil rights. But that issue aside, he still sought consensus.

In those first days of his presidency, Johnson reached out with extraordinary gestures to a wide range of Washington power brokers. Early one morning, he stopped his limousine at the home of George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, and rode with him to the White House. Over breakfast the president pledged his commitment to Meany's top priority: passage of the civil rights bill. The next morning, he repeated the same limousine-and-breakfast routine with Charles Halleck, the Republican leader of the House. Normally cantankerous and highly partisan, Halleck left the White House clearly charmed and pleased by his visit — and pledging to cooperate with the new president.

With the conservative Senate barons — the powerful committee chairmen — he offered a menu of enticements. For John McClellan, the crusty Arkansas scourge of wasteful government spending and corruption, Johnson promised to attack fraud and waste in defense contracts. And he followed up on his words with action, instructing Defense Secretary

Robert McNamara to cut Pentagon spending even by the politically sensitive method of closing unneeded military bases.

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As an essential part of his legislative strategy, Lyndon Johnson set out to break the coalition of southern Democrats and conservative Republicans that had held up President Kennedy's top legislative priorities, civil rights and tax reduction. The tax bill was needed to stimulate a sluggish economy. The civil rights bill was a response to legitimate grievances long ignored and to the growing wave of black demonstrations, which both Kennedy and Johnson feared could escalate into rebellion. The southerners' strategy — planned by Richard Russell of Georgia, the most powerful member of the Senate — was to stall the tax bill as long as possible in order to delay and defeat the civil rights bill. With the start of a presidential election campaign only months away, the southerners hoped to drag their feet on civil rights until the summer political conventions forced adjournment of Congress.

Revising Kennedy's legislative strategy, Johnson decided to concentrate first on the tax bill — the less difficult fight to win. Once the tax legislation was out of the way, Johnson planned to bring the civil rights bill to the Senate floor for a fight to the finish against the segregationist bloc. The key to passing the tax bill was to overcome the opposition of Virginia's Harry Byrd, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and an ardent opponent of government spending.[10] Byrd had held the tax bill hostage in his committee, refusing even to hold hearings.

Johnson speculated with his advisers that Byrd might be persuaded to release the bill if Johnson could cut the proposed federal budget, which was expected for the first time to exceed $100 billion, a number with great symbolic significance for opponents of government spending like Harry Byrd. Johnson told his aides to find ways to reduce the budget. "Unless you get that budget down around $100 billion," said Johnson, "you won't pee one drop." Then Johnson personally arranged all the details — including a menu of potato soup, salad, and vanilla ice cream — for a private lunch with Byrd in a small room next to Johnson's office.

Harry Byrd was a proud southern aristocrat, patriarch of a political machine that ruled the Commonwealth of Virginia and, as he saw it, guardian of the U.S. Treasury against reckless spending. At Byrd's command, Virginia had defied the U.S. Supreme Court by

10 In Lyndon, his oral biography of President Johnson, Merle Miller describes Senator Byrd as a "steadfast opponent of most of the twentieth century."

closing its public schools rather than integrate them. From their Senate years together, Johnson liked Byrd and had found ways to work with him. Now, over dessert, Johnson maneuvered the strong-willed Virginian toward a budget figure he would accept. If he could bring the budget below $107 billion, the president asked, would Byrd permit the tax bill to come to the Senate floor? "Too big, Mr. President, too big," Byrd replied. Johnson asked the same question with successively lower totals. Repeatedly Byrd shook his head "no." Finally Johnson asked, "Just suppose I could get the budget somewhere under $100 billion. What would you say then?"[11] Reluctantly, Byrd agreed that he would allow the bill to come up for a vote in the full Senate.

At his first legislative breakfast with Democratic congressional leaders on December 3, President Johnson laid out his strategy for passing the civil rights bill. Over scrambled eggs and bacon, he discussed the obstacles facing the bill with Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana, House Speaker John McCormack of Massachusetts, and House Majority Leader Carl Albert of Oklahoma. Ahead loomed the immense task of breaking the filibuster that would be mounted by the determined segregationists from the Deep South. But the first roadblock was the House Rules Committee, where chairman Howard Worth Smith, an ardent segregationist from Virginia, had kept the bill bottled up. Smith, who ruled northern Virginia as his personal duchy within the political empire of Senator Harry Byrd, refused to call committee meetings whenever his dictatorial power was threatened. When "Judge" Smith, as he was called, wanted to block a bill, he simply retired to his farm outside Washington.

To get the bill to the House floor, Johnson and the legislative leaders agreed to employ a seldom-used parliamentary procedure called a discharge petition. The leaders would file a petition to strip the bill from Smith's committee and bring it before the full House for consideration. A majority of the House — 218 members — would have to sign the petition. The tactic seldom succeeded because the committee chairmen and other senior members would band together to repel any threat to their power. In taking on Judge Smith, however, Johnson hoped to do more than bring a successful discharge petition; he was sending a message to Congress and the country. In the drive to overrule Smith's power, Johnson would use the bully pulpit of the White House to demonstrate his determination to move the stalemated Congress forward.

11 The budget gambit with Byrd was Johnson at his manipulative best. But there was a cost to Johnson's credibility. Both Byrd and the White House press corps felt later that Johnson had deceived them by first suggesting that the budget would far exceed $100 billion so he could claim a great triumph.

In a series of meetings, telephone calls, and public statements, Johnson hammered at the message that he was going to push a strong civil rights bill through Congress. He knew he had to convince friend and foe alike that he would not bargain away provisions to gain its approval, as he had done in 1957 and 1960. "I want that bill passed without one word changed," the president repeated to Americans for Democratic Action lobbyist Joseph Rauh and Clarence Mitchell of the NAACP. Next he delivered an important message to Senator Richard Russell, leader of the southern opposition — and a Johnson mentor, benefactor, and friend.

Lyndon Johnson's rise to power had been aided by a knack for cultivating mentors who helped advance his career. Johnson had made himself useful to a series of powerful men and women, beginning with the president of Southwest Texas State Teachers' College, where he received his degree in education, and going on to include President Franklin Roosevelt, House Majority Leader (later Speaker) Sam Rayburn, and Richard Russell. In Rayburn and Russell, Johnson befriended aging, lonely bachelors. He not only served as their loyal lieutenant but also brought them into his home, where Lady Bird cooked their favorite foods and the Johnson daughters, Lynda and Luci, affectionately called them "Mr. Sam" and "Uncle Dick." Johnson was unstinting in his devotion to the senior legislators, who recognized his promise and assisted his rise in Congress. With Russell's support, Johnson had become assistant minority leader, minority leader, and then, at age forty-six, majority leader of the Senate. Johnson's critics saw his courting of Rayburn and Russell as the actions of a sycophant. But Johnson had apprenticed himself to masters of the art of politics, much as an ambitious young carpenter might seek to learn his trade from a master craftsman.

On December 7, Johnson invited Russell to the White House for a swim and a leisurely lunch. Afterward, in the Oval Office, he delivered a firm message to his old friend. The subject was civil rights. "Dick, you've got to get out of my way," Johnson said. "If you don't, I'm going to roll over you. I don't intend to cavil or compromise."

"You may do that," Russell replied. "But it's going to cost you the South, and cost you the election."

"If that's the price I have to pay," Johnson answered, "I'll pay it gladly."

For decades, the Democratic Party's ability to win the presidency and to control Congress had depended on the "solid South." What Russell was warning — and Johnson clearly understood — was that his advocacy of civil rights would likely precipitate a southern political realignment to the Republican Party.

As Johnson had expected, Russell carried the president's message back to the other southerners in the Senate: the South should not expect any more compromises on civil rights from Lyndon Johnson. Asked whether Johnson would weaken the bill, Russell replied, "No.

The way that fellow operates, he'll get the whole bill, every last bit of it." The die was cast. No quarter would be given — by either side. Either Russell and his lieutenants would stop the bill with a monumental filibuster, or the nation would get its strongest civil rights law since Lincoln.

Johnson sent another signal to his fellow southerners. "You've got a southern president," he told them. "If you want to blow him out of the water, go right ahead and do it, but you boys will never see another one again. We're friends on the q.t. Would you rather have me administering the civil rights bill, or do you want to have Nixon or [Pennsylvania governor William] Scranton? You have to make up your mind."

Demonstrating his usefulness to the South, Johnson pushed through the House cotton legislation that provided several billion dollars in aid to southern farmers. To win that vote, he lobbied House Speaker McCormack and Chicago mayor Richard Daley, who controlled the eleven votes of the Chicago delegation, to back the farm supports. McCormack and Daley opposed helping southern members of Congress who voted against civil rights and other social legislation, but they responded to Johnson's appeal. By passing farm relief, Johnson demonstrated to the southerners and to conservative midwestern Republicans that he had the power to see that their needs were met — or not.

Using his support for the cotton bill as a lever, Johnson got a few southerners to sign the civil rights discharge petition. In a telephone call to Harry Provence, a Waco, Texas, newspaper editor and Johnson supporter, the president told him to ask if Texas Democrat William Robert Poage, chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, would also sign the petition — after first reminding Poage of Johnson's help on the farm bill. Poage refused, but half a dozen Texas congressmen did sign — out of loyalty to Johnson and at risk to their political careers.

For the civil rights legislation to prevail in Congress, strong Republican support was required, and from his first days in office Johnson sought GOP votes. He had to have at least seventy Republican signatures on the House discharge petition, and he would need most of the Senate Republicans to defeat a filibuster there. He asked the Republican leaders for support, but he also sent them a tough political message. His chosen messenger was conservative Texas banker Robert Anderson, Treasury secretary in the Eisenhower administration and a close Johnson friend. The president told Anderson that if Rules Committee chairman Smith succeeded in stalling the bill until March, it would not pass in 1964. "Now, this country is not in any condition to take that kind of stuff. . . .Roy Wilkins told me yesterday that Negroes will be out in the streets again if we don't make some little progress."

Johnson told Anderson he wanted the Republicans to know that "you're either for civil rights or you're not. You're either the party of Lincoln or you ain't. By God, put up or shut up. This is it. If you are, you sign the [discharge] petition to consider it. If you're not, why, just get over there, by God, with Jim Eastland[12] and Howard Smith, and stay [there]."

If Republicans opposed the civil rights bill, Johnson told Anderson, "I believe we can dramatize it enough that we can wreck them. But I don't want to do it that way, but when a man won't even give you a hearing . . . that is just getting too damn rough."

Johnson reached out to all the centers of power in America on civil rights. He called the executives who ran the television networks, national newsmagazines, and major newspapers. On December 2 he phoned Katharine Graham, publisher of the *Washington Post*, to ask for her newspaper's editorial support for the petition to bring the civil rights bill to the House floor. Johnson had been a close friend of Kay Graham and her late husband, Philip, for years, and he now turned on the Johnson treatment full-throttle. He flirted mischievously: "I hear that sweet voice on the telephone, and I'd like to break out of here and be like one of those young animals on my ranch — jump a fence." He told her how much he missed Phil Graham's wise advice. He tried flattery, saying that the commission to investigate President Kennedy's assassination should be called the "Kay Graham Commission" because it was her newspaper that had suggested the idea. As a personal favor to her, he agreed to speak at an upcoming meeting of the American Book Publishers Association. Finally, he chided the Post for writing about sex scandals on Capitol Hill rather than about the civil rights crisis. "Whether [a Senate official] had a girl or whether he didn't is not a matter that is going to settle this country," Johnson said, "but whether we have equality or justice is pretty damn important." He asked Graham to publicize as "anti–civil rights" the name of any member of Congress unwilling to permit the bill to get a hearing on the floor of the House. The Post supported the discharge petition, running strong editorials for three consecutive days after the president's conversation with Mrs. Graham.

In his first twelve days as president, Johnson pushed every lever of power he could reach to create a tide of public sentiment that Congress should move forward on civil rights. On December 3, the day after speaking with Katharine Graham, he held his first meeting as president with Martin Luther King Jr., the civil rights leader who Johnson knew could exert the greatest influence on American public opinion.

12 James Eastland had blocked consideration of the bill in the Senate from his position as chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

At Our Own Risk

Katherine McNamara

> "I never imagined I would live to see the day when the United States and its satellites would use precisely the same arguments that the apartheid government used for detention without trial. It is disgraceful ... One cannot find strong enough words to condemn what Britain and the United States and some of their allies have accepted."
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> Archbishop Desmond Tutu,
> quoted in "Blair Calls Camp in Cuba an 'Anomaly,'"
> *New York Times*, Feb. 18, 2006

> "America's idea of what is torture is not the same as ours and does not appear to coincide with that of most civilised nations," – British High Court Judge, Justice Collins, yesterday. The British High Court is not al Jazeera. It's the highest legal authority in America's closest ally. By endorsing and practising torture, as defined by U.S. law and international treaties, the Bush administration is turning this country into a rogue nation.
>
> Andrew Sullivan http://time.blogs.com/daily_dish/

What We Did on Our Hiatus

For the last year, *Archipelago* has been on hiatus. We needed a rest; we needed to reassess what *Archipelago* stood for and hoped to accomplish; we were ready to try something new. We asked, Can *Archipelago* learn to stand on its own? We thought: we need a board, and regular funding, and salaries, and a staff. Oh how furiously we mused, and read, and daydreamed, and wrote proposals.

After all that, we don't yet know whether *Archipelago* will have a future. But if it is to have one, we realized, we had to learn some hard new facts. Then we reminded ourselves of old ways of thinking, about the good, the true, the beautiful. We recalled where we came from and what we stood for.

Why Does This Matter?

Archipelago has been published on the World Wide Web since March 1997. I envisioned it as a kind of threshold between traditional print journals and the Web, bringing literary and (even) print values to the digital media. Serious publishing had changed, even, it seemed, become endangered, with the conglomeration of media corporations, their fear of the Internet, and the corrosive effects of commercial mass entertainment on the old high and popular cultures, all of these combining in darkling ways to devalue whatever "literary publishing" was thought to be.

This journal's intention was to offer works of literature, the arts, and opinion to a cosmopolitan readership which, often, had been formed in or influenced by more than one culture or society. Did such people exist, and did they actually look for good writing on the Web? I thought so; I was pretty certain I wasn't alone. *Archipelago* opened with an idea, a little money, some very good writers, and no publicity. By last summer, 17,000-19,000 of you, 'unique visitors,' pointed your browsers here every month. About three-fourths of you were located in North America; the rest, around the world: very nice for a journal that did its best to be international in its outlook.

Archipelago was fortunate, having had just enough financial backing, in enjoying a remarkable, essential, editorial independence. We kept costs of production fairly low by keeping technology as simple as possible, and because good people donated time and services. The Internet proved truly a swift means of distribution by which this journal crossed borders social, political, economic, and of *genre*.

However, the technology we used has changed. We work now in high-speed (cable or DSL) Internet access, called, for short, broadband. This technology enables speed of access and complexity of presentation. *Archipelago* began trying out the possibilities several years ago, and we are ready, we think, to expand fully into broadband production.

But broadband is not only technology, it is also part of our social infrastructure: *it is a public asset*. Broadband resides on the public airwaves, to which rights of access are granted or leased by the body politic for the sake of the greater or common good. Around the world, commentators and practitioners are saying insistently that broadband access to the Internet is, and *ought to be recognized as, a public utility,* like electricity and clean water, and so, routinely available to all of us.

Perhaps most important, however, we should recognize that broadband means a *critical cultural space*. It is the only international commons that has not been wholly taken over by

commercial, corporate, or governmental ownership. As editor and publisher, I am aware that in some small way this journal helps shape and preserve the common culture, or the cultural commons, of the arts, literature, and opinion. These "cultural commons" are the most direct, uncensored[1] way individual, shaped voices can be heard across borders, the voices of writers, artists, and thinkers, who speak out of their particularity. They represent us to ourselves, as we are, for good or ill, and as we might become.

As of June 2005, sixty-eight percent of the American population had Internet access; nationally, thirty-six percent of users were connected to the Internet via broadband; but the U.S. is listed as only sixteenth in the world for our access per person to high-speed connection to the Web. Canada and the United Kingdom have instituted public programs for providing nationwide broadband access, particularly to rural areas, rather like our great national rural electrification projects of the 'Thirties. In the European Union, even in the new accession states, broadband is common. Internet access is taken as a public utility in wired cities like Ennis, Ireland, while in the U.S., Philadelphia and Portland, Ore., have provided WiFi, or public-access wireless spaces, as an essential part of their municipal infrastructure, and Manassas, Virginia, operates its own broadband-over-powerlines Internet service. In August 2005, eleven rural counties in Virginia were named as candidates for a similar b.o.p.i. connection. For the rebuilding of the wrecked New Orleans, someone in an official position proposed building public WiFi into their new infrastructure; but – this is to be expected, unfortunately – the local phone carrier, Bell South, immediately opposed the plan as a threat to corporate profits.

As I wrote above, the Web is also an instrument and medium of the cultural commons, the unenclosed space in which artists and thinkers encounter and converse with their diverse audiences. We should have learned from the disaster that television became – the vast wasteland, Fred Friendly called it early on – that any new technology can quickly be bent to supremely commercial interests. While there are many excellent web sites, we have no national public broadband, as we have (or had) National Public Radio and the Public Broadcast System. At this moment in our history, when "public" has come to mean dumbed down and exploited, that is just as well.

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1 But watch the continuing story of China's subordination of Yahoo, which was complicit in causing the arrest and incarceration of at least one (although possibly more) Chinese citizen, for allowing access to "forbidden" sites. Simultaneously, old Party stalwarts have written a public letter denouncing the Party's regular censorship. Yahoo is an international, capitalist company willing to allow its market values overcome whatever social responsibility it may have to western constitutional values of freedom of speech. See, for instance, Rebecca McKinnon regularly at *Rconversation* http://rconversation.blogs.com/; and *Global Voices* http://www.globalvoicesonline.org/, an aggregator published out of Harvard of blogs from around the world.

America is almost universally regarded as a cultural wasteland: ". . . [I]ts governance, its cultural heritage and its people are no longer widely respected or admired in the world. . . Although the US received high marks for its popular culture, it ranked last in cultural heritage, a measure of a country's 'wisdom, intelligence, and integrity' . . . ." This, from a recent article in the *Financial Times*, reporting on a business poll taken world-wide, conducted for marketers and executives.

> The US is increasingly viewed as a "culture-free zone" inhabited by arrogant and unfriendly people, according to study of 25 countries' brand reputations.
>
> The findings, published online today, will add to concerns that anti-Americanism is hurting companies whose products are considered to be distinctly "American".
>
> The Anholt-GMI Nation Brands Index found that although US foreign policy remained a key driver of hostility, dissatisfaction with the world's sole superpower might run deeper.
>
> "The US is still recognised as a leading place to do business, the home of desirable brands and popular culture," said Simon Anholt, author of the survey. "But its governance, its cultural heritage and its people are no longer widely respected or admired by the world...."
>
> Although the US received high marks for its popular culture, it ranked last in cultural heritage, a measure of a country's "wisdom, intelligence, and integrity", according to Mr Anholt. ("World turning its back on America," *Financial Times* http://news.ft.com/cms/s/77868922-0228-11da-9481-00000e2511c8.html)

"Corporations will shape our future values."

In 1999, an energetic professor of management named Jim Collins pointed out in managerial language what was by then obvious: that international corporations were more powerful and influential than any government, including ours, indeed, that governments were losing even their moral authority; and so:

> The point is that well-managed corporate entities—be they for-profit or not-for-profit—have become the dominant productive vehicle in society. And now we've reached a point where a leading chief executive can conceive of his company having three times the importance and relevance to the world of the U.S. federal government.

> This raises profound questions of executive responsibility. . . .[2]

Indeed, it does. We lived now, wrote Collins, in the "corporate state," a phrase that should have given pause to anyone familiar with the twentieth century. All, or most, organizations, even non-profits, he said, are "well-managed," and the largest corporations have the force to influence, even cause, social change, "[f]or good or bad." "But is social responsibility a high enough standard?" he went on to ask.

> With the corporate model becoming the dominant vehicle of human productivity, might corporations need to shift from being socially responsible (adhering to society's values and rules) to socially progressive (consciously shaping societal values)?

Jim Collins's idea – that corporations are going to shape our values; or rather, that it is *corporations* which will *give moral and ethical direction to societies* – is startling, for at least three reasons that I observe: because of the grim history of corporate states; because of the unpleasant implications for whatever our notions of democracy are (who elected corporations to have such power over our lives?); and because, although he proposes that corporations ought well to promote "progressive" ideas, such as green thinking and community service, it is entirely possible that they would (and do) promote reactionary and sociopathic values, such as eliminating health care benefits and declaring their pension funds bankrupt. In short, such corporations have broken the social contract by which we the people have long agreed to share our common risk. These ungoverned corporations are changing our societies so that each of us must look out for himself, all risk on his own shoulders and no fall-back position.

Fortunately, Jim Collins discovered another big idea, in fact, a mitigating, major social truth: that socially (or mission)-directed organizations are *not "like businesses."* "Socially-directed organizations" include, for instance, small publishers, colleges and universities, arts and cultural organizations, religious groups, and charities, and, surely, governments.

Most of us in the non-commercial world knew that. Collins's service was to translate it into a fact-based language that might ring true to the corporate planners, accountants, and marketers who have flooded the boards of non-commercial organizations. And not only non-commercial ones: our occasional series "Institutional Memory"[3] has looked into the huge change of purpose within the trade book industry. The publisher Michael Bessie, an

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[2] Jim Collins, "Corporations Will Shape Our Future Values," jimcollins.com http://www.jimcollins.com/lab/brutalFacts/index.html#.

[3] "Institutional Memory" http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-1/schocken.htm

old-fashioned man, told me, "The important question about the publishing industry is: how well does it serve literature?"

Book publishers have never lived in a pretty world, but they once served literature with a certain functional modesty. They chose their business, or it chose them, because they preferred to live a bookish, so to speak, life. Their return on investment was counter-cyclical to the economy. They distributed costs across the list, rather than (as, crazily, as is now the case) expecting *every* book they publish to make a profit. They kept their debt service low. They – the memorable ones – were like W.W. Norton, the estimable employee-owned house that promised, "The Norton imprint on a book means that in the publisher's estimation it is a book not for a single season but for the years."[4]

When you've made a good book, or a good journal, you must turn your resources toward publishing it to the world; that is your purpose, and what you must do well. It is knowing what you do well, what your taste, education, and experience make possible; it is doing the very best you can for the best of what is available to you. In these socially-directed and cultural organizations, *distributive power*, not the corporate hierarchy is the proper form of relationship. This does not mean that strong minds will not operate; it means you do not treat your colleagues as employees, or imagine you can make them more "efficient" by asking them to time their tasks the way lawyers and accountants do, or spend more time in meetings than on the work at hand. You don't distract them with irrelevant nonsense. If they are editors, for instance, they ought to edit, and know how to do it.

Not long ago I learned about another small, fine, non-profit magazine that is about to become mediocre, because it has pushed away the editor that made it into a thoughtful, well-written publication. The new board treated her as an employee instead of the colleague she was, interfered with her relations with her authors, and asked her to reorganize her editorial staff in a way that was bound to undermine their spirit. Marketers and organizational experts have many skills, but if they don't know how to bend them to the service of the non-commercial, non-profit organization they want to make "more efficient," or more "responsive," or more "economically viable" in profit-oriented terms, they will ruin what they govern.

Jim Collins put this another way: "We must reject the idea – well-intentioned, but dead wrong—

> that the primary path to greatness in the social sectors is to become "more like a business." Most businesses—like most of anything else in life—fall somewhere between mediocre and

[4] Their logo now says "Books That Live": the same intention, not so stuffy.

> good. Few are great. When you compare great companies with good ones, many widely practiced business norms turn out to correlate with mediocrity, not greatness. So, then, why would we want to import the practices of mediocrity into the social sectors?

"The critical question," he writes, "is not 'How much money do we make?' but 'How can we develop a sustainable resource engine to deliver superior performance relative to our mission?'" Of course, as in the case of the small magazine and its good editor, now gone, the mission and performance were already in place. The board made a mess of them. If they would not listen to their editor, they might at least have read Collins, who argues for the necessity of good judgment. "Lack of resources is no excuse for lack of rigor—it makes selectivity all the more vital."[5]

"What did you do in the war, Daddy?"

For some time, people have been telling me that *Archipelago* is partisan. They disagreed with the political commentaries in my Endnotes, or thought I was advocating the election of generic Democrats rather than the best candidates for the good of the country. Friendly advisors warned *sotto voce* that potential funders and board members would not care to contribute to this journal. "Your politics are your biggest problem," a well-wisher said. I was sure she was right. Rather more often, others have written in agreement and support. From Europe, especially after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, came e-mails from readers heartened to learn that not everyone in America approved of our president. According to polls and the mainstream media, Bush was immensely popular; in those years, public dissent was rarely heard or reported, except in a minor key, or among people who knew and trusted each other. Even so, now and then came the quiet, approving word that an Endnote had been read by a distinguished Washington editor or an old Pentagon hand, who had passed it on to colleagues.

All along, I have *not* been writing about party politics. Since the election of 2000, I have been writing about the state of the nation and the undisputed direction in which this president was turning it. In June 2002, let us remember, the president spoke at West Point

[5] Jim Collins, "Text excerpts from Good to Great and the Social Sectors, Why Business Thinking Is Not the Answer http://www.jimcollins.com/lib/articles.html#." Business writers like Jim Collins are most helpful to managers like me, who must persuade funders and others that the work they do and the organization they direct have their own proper structures, without our having to adopt a language and way of thinking that subverts our purpose. More than helpful, too: Collins and his like are our tutors in the rigors of organizing so as to flourish amid global corporatism.

about national security and declared it was his official policy, without precedent in our history, to make premptive war if he thought it necessary.[6] Some months later, during what was clearly – despite presidential denials – the run-up to an invasion of Iraq, I was driving to Washington, while listening to one of those earnestly compelling radio discussions that make a dull drive almost lively. The topic was the new Bush Doctrine and the coming war of choice. A clip was played from Bush's West Point speech. That was my moment of revelation. In my mind's eye I saw, as if on a graph, a red line peaked at the instant "premptiive war" was uttered. America had just been tipped into a precipitous decline of power and prestige, and she would never be so great again as at that moment, because this president had undermined her moral bearings. "I will not be a good German," I found myself saying. *Archipelago* would become – this was required of one privileged to hold such an instrument – a point of opposition, however small this literary journal was.

The corruption, incompetence, and mismanagement, the lying and secrecy and warmongering, are so pervasive in the higher reaches of government, and so evident, that the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* have now all but abolished their habitual euphemisms and, mostly, stopped looking away. In Washington, you hear the word "impeachment" spoken seriously, regularly; the right-wing, Moon-owned paper *Washington Times* reports that the White House has an impeachment strategy team.[7] This administration may be the very model of the corporate state, as Jim Collins called it: not the responsible one he envisioned, but mediocre, thrown up from the dark side, having come to office intending to expand its own power and deploy it for the benefit of its kind rather than the larger good.

I have never wanted to write about politics; but, as the president has told us repeatedly, this country has changed. We are known in the world as being a nation that condones torture. We have the highest prison population per capita in the world. Capital punishment is legal at the federal and state levels. People of conscience, I read, who oppose abortion as a sin and a crime against humanity, and would earn respect for their principled beliefs, voted for Bush because he stood with them on that moral issue. Perhaps therein lies the ground of the true American tragedy, for in doing so, they opened the door to premptive war, torture

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[6] George W. Bush, Graduation Speech at West Point, June 2002 http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/vp01.cfm?outfit=pmt&requesttimeout=500&folder=339&paper=380.

The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002 http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf.

[7] I have searched for the article on-line, but only seen excerpts republished on Daily Kos http://www.dailykos.com, which obtained it/them by way of another source. The article is "Impeachment hearings: The White House prepares for the worst," Insight Magazine, January 29, 2006, excerpted (with explanation of source) at Daily Kos http://www.dailykos.com/storyonly/2006/1/24/92959/3483.

as official policy, warrantless spying, lying and secrecy at the very highest level of the American government. Our Constitution is gravely threatened; our president enlarges executive power beyond legal bounds, and argues that his powers of war – a war he initiated – authorize illegal and ungoverned power, with no accountability to the citizenry. His party is the monopoly party of the federal government. I think that it is for other people of conscience within that party to work at turning this nation back from the precipice to which Bush and Cheney and their cohort have driven us.

I did not expect to write about politics. Politics is the work of the polity, the citizenry, in whom sovereignty resides under our Constitution. It is not the work of literature or the arts. It is however, a subject of informed, carefully considered opinion. In some unimaginable future it may become evident that I have been wrong, these last five years, in my judgment of Bush and his government, and, equally, of how to publish this journal; but in the present danger it seems to me a publisher's responsibility to have taken that risk. What I saw, read, and was told gave me a perspective and language not always available to our readers, when the mainstream media were not, with certain exceptions, reporting the story accurately. It was our early sense that the *narrative had changed*: that this nation rapidly lost both power and influence in the world, that our moral standing had been brought shockingly low, that the very basis of our governance was being altered without our consent. This was not a matter of mere personality; the changes in our governance since the Reagan-Thatcher years are structural. I was educated in the history of Europe and am haunted by the specter of the "good German" who went along with law and authority while his murderous government made (preventive) war on the world and its own citizens. I do not make this analogy lightly, but in sadness.[8] I think this nation will be called to account for

[8] See Jane Mayer, "The Memo, How an internal effort to ban the abuse and torture of detainees was thwarted," The New Yorker, posted Feb. 2, 2006:

> ……
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> Just a few months ago, Mora attended a meeting in Rumsfeld's private conference room at the Pentagon, called by Gordon England, the Deputy Defense Secretary, to discuss a proposed new directive defining the military's detention policy. The civilian Secretaries of the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy were present, along with the highest-ranking officers of each service, and some half-dozen military lawyers. Matthew Waxman, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for detainee affairs, had proposed making it official Pentagon policy to treat detainees in accordance with Common Article Three of the Geneva conventions, which bars cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment, as well as outrages against human dignity. Going around the huge wooden conference table, where the officials sat in double rows, England asked for a consensus on whether the Pentagon should support Waxman's proposal.

Bush's war and the havoc his government has let loose in the world. When I am called to account, I can only hope I will have answered.

Last autumn in Dublin, Theo Dorgan,[9] the poet and broadcaster whose writing appeared in our last issue, suggested we add a "Politics" page with links to reputable blogs and media reporting, edited by a sharp reporter. From his side of the Atlantic, America looks both monolithic and confusing: where should Internet readers look for reliable information and analysis? A digest in *Archipelago* would, he proposed, make this journal even more authoritative. I admit, I was taken by the idea; but, in fact, other sites have done it better. We will continue to offer thoughtful commentaries and incisive polemics, however, hoping to widen our growing national recognition of why we are in a very bad place. It's going to take a long time and strong political will to move ourselves out.

A Broad Band

A clever man observed that there are, generally speaking, three types of magazines: "mass market general interest magazines [which are] focus-grouped and market-tested to within an inch of their lives"; "[s]pecialist interest magazines [which] know their audiences intimately"; and a third, "more nebulous category, one where the subject matter varies but the governing sensibility remains consistent. . . . The linking thread [of this last category], of

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> This standard had been in effect for fifty years, and all members of the U.S. armed services were trained to follow it. One by one, the military officers argued for returning the U.S. to what they called the high ground. But two people opposed it. One was Stephen Cambone, the under-secretary of defense for intelligence; the other was Haynes. They argued that the articulated standard would limit America's "flexibility." It also might expose Administration officials to charges of war crimes: if Common Article Three became the standard for treatment, then it might become a crime to violate it. Their opposition was enough to scuttle the proposal…. (con't. http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/060227fa_fact)

The memo of her title, by Alberto J. Mora, the former Navy general counsel, to the Inspector General of the Navy, is "Statement for the Record: Office of General Counsel Involvement in Interrogation Issues http://www.newyorker.com/images/pdfs/moramemo.pdf."

See also, Gregory Djerdjian, *The Belgravia Dispatch*, for a conservative's principled reading of Jane Mayer's article http://www.belgraviadispatch.com/2006/02/more_on_mora.html.

[9] Theo Dorgan, "Sailing for Home," http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-4/dorgan.htm *Archipelago*, Vol. 8, No. 4.

course is that the magazine's editor . . . is interested in all [sorts of] things and has the courage to assert that his readers will find themselves similarly fascinated."[10]

I hope that *Archipelago* belongs to this last, wonderfully "nebulous" category. It is the best and most pleasing of categories we could aspire to, and so, we hope, of benefit to the international cultural commons – and to our "archipelago of readers" – that has come to make inventive use of the World Wide Web.

With our next issue, *Archipelago* will begin its tenth year of publication. Nine years of *Archipelago*, its archive always available, surely have exhibited a range, depth, and quality of well-made offerings, backed by editorial judgment and attractive design; and shown that we are prepared for this next step, the reconfiguration of *Archipelago* as a broadband publication. By this I mean that we share with our friends and colleagues the keeping of the cultural commons, and the civic responsibility of opening access to the Internet everywhere as a public utility.

But perhaps most important, at *Archipelago* we would thereby examine and test the absolutely crucial idea that an independent, international, public broadband publication of quality can be sustained as a non-commercial enterprise, and thus, would do our part to help restore the historic American standard of "public" as meaning the highest common good.

I am grateful to the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities http://www.virginia.edu/vfh/
for a special projects award that has allowed me the leisure to think about *Archipelago* and its future.

March is National Poetry Month http://www.poets.org

[10] David Honigman, "Brain Waves," Financial Times August 10, 2005.

Previous Endnotes:

In the Fortified City, *Archipelago*, Vol. 8, No. 3 http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-4/endnotes.htm

Some Notes on the Election and Afterwards, *Archipelago*, Vol. 8, No. 3 http://www.archipelago.org/vol803/endnotes.htm

A World That Begins in Art, Vol. 8, No. 2 http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-2/endnotes.htm

Incoming, Vol. 8, No. 1 http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-1/endnotes.htm

The Only God Is the God of War, Vol. 7, No. 3 http://www.archipelago.org/vol7-2/endnotes.htm

"Where Are the Weapons?" Vol. 7, No. 2 http://www.archipelago.org/vol7-2/endnotes.htm

Patriotism and the Right of Free Speech in Wartime Vol. 7, No. http://www.archipelago.org/vol7-1/endnotes.htm

A Year in Washington, Vol. 6, Nos. 3/4 http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-3/endnotes.htm

Lies, Damned Lies, Vol. 6, No. 2 http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-2/endnotes.htm

The Colossus, Vol. 6, No. 1 http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-1/endnotes.htm

The Bear, Vol. 5, No. 4 http://www.archipelago.org/vol5-4/endnotes.htm

Sasha Choi Goes Home, Vol. 5, No. 3 http://www.archipelago.org/vol5-3/endnotes.htm

Sasha Choi in America,Vol. 5, No. 2 http://www.archipelago.org/vol5-2/endnotes.htm

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The Double, Vol. 3, No. 4 http://www.archipelago.org/vol3-4/endnotes.htm

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Kundera's Music Teacher, Vol. 1, No. 4 http://www.archipelago.org/vol1-4/endnotes.htm

The Devil's Dictionary; Economics for Poets, Vol. 1, No. 3 http://www.archipelago.org/vol1-3/endnotes.htm

Hecuba in New York; Déformation Professionnelle, Vol. 1, No. 2 http://www.archipelago.org/vol1-2/endnotes.htm

Art, Capitalist Relations, and Publishing on the Web, Vol. 1, No. 1 http://www.archipelago.org/vol1-1/endnotes.htm

Contributors

Leon Bell was born in Texas in 1918 and moved with his family to Moscow in 1931. He was trained as a nuclear physicist and later became a internationally-respected plant physiologist and biophysicist with expertise in photosynthesis. With his wife, Ira, Prof. Bell lived until 1992 in Russia; they now live in New York. The author's brother, David (Davie), still in Russia, survived World War II, became an English teacher, and taught for many years in the city of Dubna, 70 miles north of Moscow and the home of the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research. Prof. Bell is the author of "Energetics of the Photosynthesizing Plant Cell" (Soviet Scientific Reviews Supplement Services, Physiochemical Biology, Vol. 5, 1985), and THERMODYNAMICS OF LIGHT ENERGY CONVERGENCE, with N.D. Gudkov (The Hague: SPB Academic Publishing, 1993). His "An American Boy's Life in the Soviet Union" appeared in *Archipelago*, Vol. 8, No. 4 http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-4/bell.htm.

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http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/HistoryOther/CulturalHistory/?ci=0195158598&view=usa (Oxford University Press, 2001). He is working on a memoir (FROM THE BRONX TO OXFORD – AND NOT QUITE BACK). He calls attention to his article, "The Coming End of Anti-Communism," *Partisan Review*, Volume 29, Summer, 1962. ("*Plus ca change* …")

Leonce Gaiter http://www.leoncegaiter.com/ was brought up in New Orleans, Washington D.C., Germany, Missouri, Maryland and elsewhere. His writing has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine, The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, Salon*, and in national syndication. His short fiction "Live at Storyville" www.archipelago.org/vol3-4/gaiter.htm appeared in *Archipelago*, Vol. 3, No. 4. His New Orleans noir, BOURBON STREET, was published by

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Born of an Irish mother and Welsh father, **Alex Keegan** http://www.alexkeegan.com left school at fifteen with no qualifications, joined the Royal Air Force to escape, became hopelessly "lost" there resulting in a court martial and imprisonment for refusing an order and then refusing the punishment. After leaving the RAF he did an assortment of low-paid jobs while studying and eventually earning two university degrees and then a Masters in Creative Writing. In December 1988 he survived a 36-death train-wreck in Clapham, London, and decided to use this second chance and write full time. In 1992-97 he sold five mystery novels but then switched to writing literary short fiction. He has been published worldwide in hard-copy and on the web. His story "Ernie the Egg" was the inaugural story for Atlantic Monthly Unbound and he can also be seen at Blue Moon Review, Mississippi Review and Eclectica. Alex Keegan runs an on-line teaching school on-line, "Boot Camp Keegan http://p220.ezboard.com/bbootcampkeegan," and is editor of Seventh Quark magazine http://www.alexkeegan.com/7Q/.

Karen Kevorkian kk2ga@Virginia.edu was born in San Antonio, Texas. Her book of poems, WHITE STUCCO BLACK WING was published by Red Hen Press (Los Angeles (http://www.redhen.org/bookDetail.asp?bookID=79, 2004). Her poems and stories appear in many journals as well as *The Drunken Boat* (http://www.thedrunkenboat.com/kevorkian.html) and in a recent anthology of work by artists and writers, *the land of wandering* (http://www.upress.virginia.edu/books/printmakers_left.html). She's a member of the poetry board of *Virginia Quarterly Review* and teaches at the University of Virginia.

As a reporter for the Des Moines Register and the Washington Post, and as a freelance writer, **Nick Kotz** has won the Pulitzer Prize for national reporting, the Sigma Delta Chi Award for Washington correspondence, the Raymond Clapper Memorial Award, and the first Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Award. His study of American military leadership won the National Magazine Award for public service. His book WILD BLUE YONDER: MONEY, POLITICS, AND THE B-1 BOMBER won the Olive Branch Award. JUDGMENT DAYS: LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON, MARTIN LUTHER KING JR., AND THE LAWS THAT CHANGED AMERICA is his fifth book examining American history and public policy. He has also written A PASSION FOR EQUALITY: GEORGE WILEY AND THE MOVEMENT (with Mary Lynn Kotz); LET THEM EAT PROMISES: THE POLITICS OF HUNGER; and THE UNIONS (with Haynes Johnson). He is Distinguished Adjunct Professor at the American University School of Communications, and was Senior Journalist in Residence at Duke University. A magna cum laude graduate of

Dartmouth College, Nick Kotz did graduate study in international relations at the London School of Economics, and served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps. He is married to Mary Lynn Kotz, a journalist and author; their son, Jack Mitchell Kotz http://www.jackkotz.com/, is a photographer. An interactive forum with Nick Kotz about JUDGMENT DAYS will take place during the month of March, on his publisher's Web site, here: http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/forums/forum.jspa?forumID=7; and on March 24, he will appear at the Virginia Festival of the Book http://vabook.org/program/friday.html. *Archipelago* will podcast his panel in our next issue.

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An anthropologist by training, **Mary Ann O'Donnell** has lived in Shenzhen, China's oldest and largest Special Economic Zone, since 1995, where she posts her "Shenzen Fieldnotes http://maryannodonnell.livejournal.com/." With the poet Steven Schroeder, she has organized the site "A Walk in Shenzhen http://home.earthlink.net/~awalkinshenzhen/index.htm." Off-line, Mary Ann O'Donnell has published academic papers and literary translations. Readers interested in furthering the conversation are welcome to contact her by e-mail mary_ann_odonnell@yahoo.com.

John Palcewski Palcewski@gmail.com has been a publishing house copywriter, wire service photojournalist, magazine editor, music/drama critic, literary novelist, and fine arts photographer. His work appears in the literary and academic press and a number of publications on-line. Author of a literary novel in manuscript entitled DROWNING http://www.Palcewski.com/JP/Opening.htm, Palcewski lives in a vineyard's villa near the village of Forio, on Ischia, a small volcanic island off the coast of southern Italy. He holds the Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism from Moravian College, and studied photography and videotape production at New York University. He maintains this website http://www.Palcewski.com/JP. Two of his photographs appeared in Archipelago, Vol. 6, No. 1 http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-1/palcewski.htm.

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News of our Contributors

Joel Agee (IN THE HOUSE OF MY FEAR) and **Katherine McNamara** (NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH, A JOURNEY INTO THE INTERIOR OF ALASKA) will appear at the Virginia Festival of the Book http://www.vabook.org/program/friday.html, Charlotteville, Virginia, on Friday, March 24, 2006. Joel Agee's "Foreword to 'The End'" appeared in the last issue of *Archipelago*, Vol 8, No. 4 http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-4/agee.htm. Katherine McNamara is the editor and publisher of this journal.

Nick Kotz, a chapter of whose book JUDGMENT DAYS appears in this issue, will appear at the Virginia Festival of the Book http://www.vabook.org/program/friday.html, Charlottesville, on Friday, March 24. A podcast of that event will be in our next issue.

Nicholas Benson's translation of **Attilio Bertolucci**'s VIAGGIO D'INVERNO has just been published as WINTER JOURNEY by Free Verse Editions of Parlor Press http://www.parlorpress.com. Four of Bertolucci's poems, and Benson's translations, appeared in Archipelago, Vol. 8, No. 3 http://www.archipelago.org/vol8-3/bertolucci.htm.