

\$5.95
that's six bucks
to you & me

LIP

INFORMED REVOLT | NUMBER 7 | 2007 >

Gods & Monsters Insects in Modern Western Culture, Inc.

by Christy Rodgers

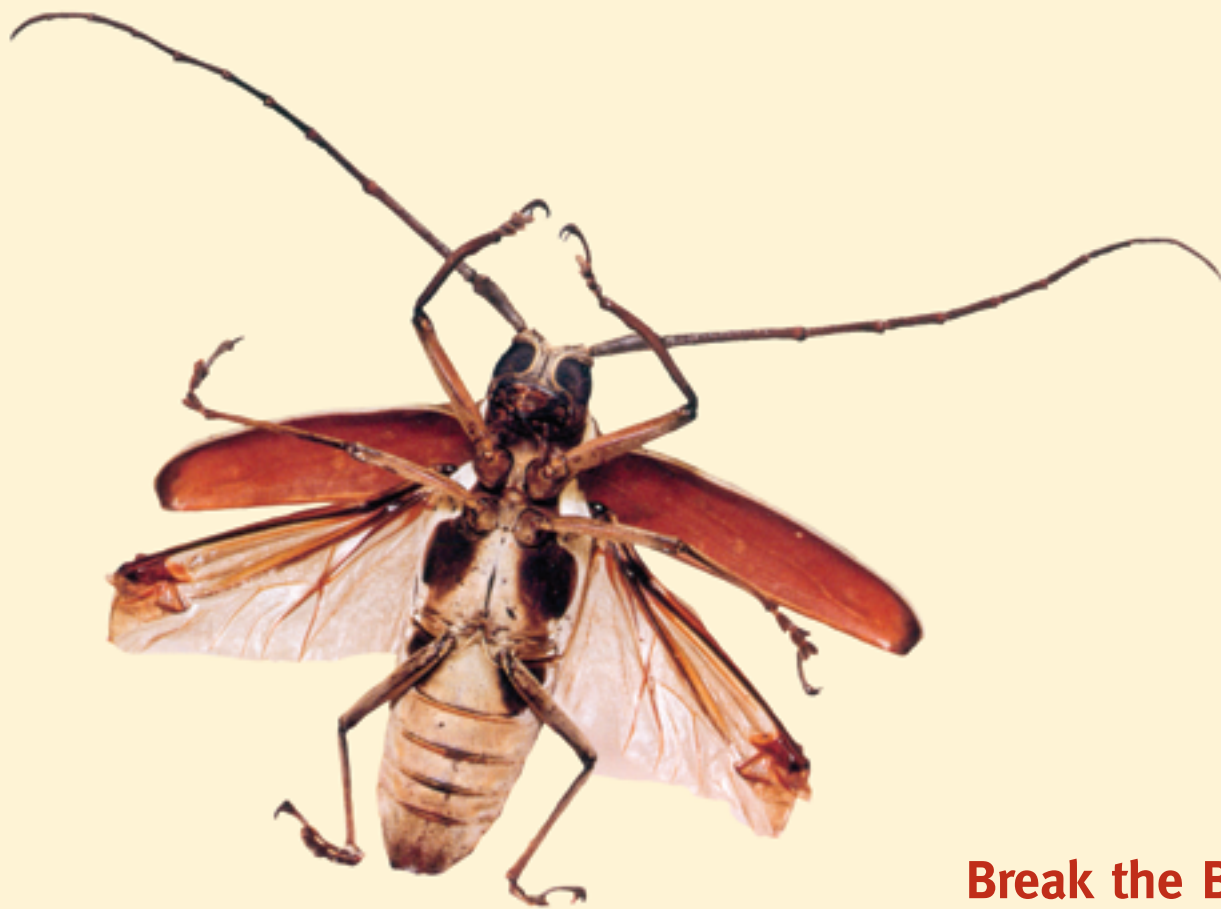
Darwin vs. the Ant

by Erin Wiegand

INTERVIEW:

“Since the feminist and outsider politics of the '60s and '70s proclaimed that politics is indeed personal, politicians—especially in our form of capitalist democracy—have learned to manipulate the personal.”

**Lisa Jervis speaks with
Kate Bornstein**



Break the Bank Alves Reis, DIY Currency and the Myth of Value

by Sam Burton

Breeding Resistance Malaria and the Global Pesticide Pandemic

by Jeff Conant and Tim Krupnik

\$5.95 US | \$7.50 CANADA



Fearpox: Who's Passing Out the Blankets? • by Nell Greenberg
Torture, Inc: Interview with A.C. Thompson and Trevor Paglen • by Brian Awehali
Roget's Thesaurus: What's a Synonym for Racist Jackass? • by Elizabeth & Stuart Ewen
Chaos Theory: The Bug IS the System • *Bug Appétit!: Not Just for Squishing Anymore*
+ *Smitten Kittens* • Albert Camus • Kari Lydersen • Tim Kreider • Shannon Wheeler

N^o 7

THE RANDOM BITS

Page Seven Photo
"Operator"

7

Good-Bye!
Bernard Loomis

8

Bug Appétit
Tips for the Prospectively Insectivorous

9

Commencement
"The world is mostly desert, and we were made for deserts.
The paint on these old Simian structures can feed an army of us..."

10

Bad Vibes
An interview with Jessica Giordani, co-founder of sex toy business
The Smitten Kitten, about the new Coalition Against Toxic Toys

by Brian Awehali and Lisa Jervis

12

The Bug IS the System
A freewheeling romp through the natural and social
implications of chaos theory

14

What Are They Talking About?
A glossary of terms for
the confused & curious

91

Letter from the Editor: page 3 | Letters to the Editors: page 4

REVIEWS

BOOKS

Rising Tide

*The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How it
Changed America*

by John M. Barry | reviewed by Jennifer Whitney

80

Pink Ribbons, Inc.

Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy

by Samantha King | reviewed by Erin Wiegand

82

ALSO REVIEWED: *homegrown*: engaged cultural criticism, by bell hooks and Amalia Mesa-Bains; *Outsiders Within: Writings on Transracial Adoption*, edited by Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin; *Transgender Rights*, edited by Paisley Currah, Richard M. Juang, and Shannon Price Minter

THE LiP BOOKLIST

78

Gods & Monsters

Bugs in Modern Western Culture, Inc.
by Christy Rodgers

16

Breeding Resistance

Malaria and the Global Pesticide Pandemic
by Jeff Conant and Tim Krupnik

24

SIDEBAR

Pesticide Contamination in Rio Yaqui
by Jeff Conant

26

Torture, Inc.

Anatomy of a CIA Front Company
an interview with A.C. Thompson and Trevor Paglen,
by Brian Awehali

30

Every Cockroach is
Beautiful to its Mother

by Kari Lydersen

34

SIDEBAR

Cockroaches and Asthma
by Richard Schweid

34

Profit, Control & the
Myth of Total Security

by Brian Awehali and Ariane Conrad

38

Fear Profiteering & the
Culture of Mistrust

by Nell Greenberg

42

Pheromoan

Insect erotica, in a manner of speaking
by Nikolai Kingsley

48

Darwin vs. the Ant

The Altruism of Bugs and Humans
by Erin Wiegand

52

Break the Bank

Alves Reis and the Portuguese Currency Crisis
by Sam Burton

62

The Plague of Disbelief

by Albert Camus

66

Please Step Away from the Vernacular
Race, Slang, and Roget's Thesaurus

by Elizabeth and Stuart Ewen

70

Flirting with Death & Living
Words with Kate Bornstein

by Lisa Jervis

74

LiP

Issue No. 7 Winter 2007

Brian Awehali
Founder & Editor

Lisa Jervis
Editor at Large

Colin Sagan
Designer & Production Coordinator

**Erin Wiegand, Jeff Conant,
Christy Rodgers**
Senior Editors

Ariane Conrad
Assistant Editor

K.L. Pereira
Books Editor

**Rodney Foxworth, Jennifer
Whitney, Tim Kreider, Kari
Lydersen, Christy Rodgers,
Tim Wise**
Contributing Editors

Emma Sherwood-Forbes
Production Assistant

**Layla Johnston, Justin Park,
Teishan Latner, Adam Barker**
Editorial Assistants

**Guillermo Gómez-Peña,
damali ayo, Elizabeth "Betita"
Martinez, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz**
Editorial Advisors

Meg Friendly
Factchecker for "Darwin vs. the Ant"

Barbara Norfleet
Cover Photographer

1984 Printing
www.1984printing.com
Our Fine Printer

LiP: Informed Revolt
is concluded.

Contact Us
LiP Magazine
PO Box 3478
Oakland, CA 94609
info@lipmagazine.org
www.lipmagazine.org

pitches/proposals
brian@lipmagazine.org

letters
letters@lipmagazine.org

THANKS: Radical Reference, Emma Coleman, Christine Chun, Jarek Rudzinski, Eatwell Farms, Jason Pfaff, Andy Myers, Lexis-Nexis, Jason Mark, The New College, Pratima Raghavan, Wendy Millstine

NO THANKS:
Downward Facing Assclown

©2006 LiP Magazine / Liminal Projects. All rights reserved. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the express written consent of the publisher. But we're friendly, so if you contact us, odds are good we'll give our blessing.

The Standard Disclaimer
Articles reflect the opinions of their authors. We have read them, but we may not agree with *everything* they say.

OUR MISSION
LiP takes creative aim at a culture machine that strips us of our desires and sells them back as product and mass mediocracy. Brazen, audacious, and presumptuous, LiP combines a biting aesthetic consciousness with a structural understanding of power. Refusing to be colonized by despair, cynicism, or apathy, LiP gives voice to those working for a sustainable society rooted in cooperation and diversity.

LiP is an all volunteer
not-for-profit project.

Ask the Other Person

COLIN: AS OUR LONGTIME READERS KNOW, THIS SPACE USUALLY HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH THE COVER ARTIST OR PHOTOGRAPHER, IN THIS CASE BARBARA NORFLEET.

SO LET'S START WITH THE OBVIOUS. BRIAN, YOU ARE NO BARBARA NORFLEET.

Brian: No, I'm not. Although Ms. Norfleet was nice enough to grant us the free use of an image of one of her insect actors—*Batocera victoriana* (or "Victor B."), she declined to answer the short list of fascinating questions I sent her for this Q&A.

I GUESS THEY WEREN'T AS FASCINATING AS YOU THOUGHT.

No, I guess they weren't. I asked what it was like to work with Victor B., because I've been a big fan of his for some time; I also asked about some of the rumored tensions on the set of *The Illusion of Orderly Progress*,* and wanted to know if she ran into any difficulties with the Bug Actors' Guild as a result. I asked her to describe in detail the strangest dream she had while working on the book. I also asked her what she thought of, and if she agreed with, Edward O. Wilson, this famous biologist slash sociobiologist, who wrote, in his foreword to the book: "That is human nature: let others draw contempt from the weaknesses we know dwell in ourselves," which just seemed like a pompous and somewhat stupid statement to make, and I wanted to know if she agreed with it.

I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY SHE DIDN'T RESPOND TO THOSE QUESTIONS.

Right. So anyway—

WHY DON'T YOU TELL OUR READERS ABOUT DESIGNING THE COVER? I THINK IT WOULD GIVE THEM A GREAT PERSPECTIVE ON OUR UNIQUE WORKING STYLE.

Yeah, basically I chose the colors, plopped my very nicely outlined shot of Victor B. onto the center of the page, and tried to arrange the cover lines in a manner that would beguile and please passersby, and encourage them to stop and actually read the cover. Then, after saying we should collaborate on it, I failed to share a single other part of it with you.

WELL, ACTUALLY, YOU KNOW I DID ALL THAT WORK ON THE COVER IMAGE, REMEMBER? OUTLINING EVERY CRUSTACEOUSLY ARTICULATED JOINT, THE ARCHING GLORY OF THE ANTENNAE...

Oh, right...

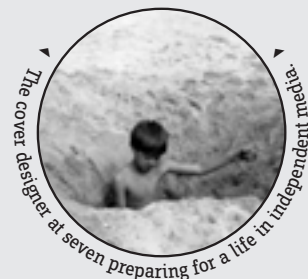
[awkward silence]

IT'S TOO BAD NORFLEET DIDN'T ANSWER ANY OF YOUR QUESTIONS. THAT PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN A MORE INTERESTING Q&A.

Probably.

* * *

* *The book is called The Illusion of Orderly Progress, and it was published in 1999 by Knopf. The title of the piece from which Victor B. was abstracted is "There's Nothing—No, NOTHING—That's Higher Than Me," a line from Yertle the Turtle, by Doctor Seuss. Victor is a flat-faced longhorn beetle hailing from Malaysia.*



Editor's Letter

Political language—and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists—is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.

—George Orwell

Of course, there will always be those who look only at technique, who ask "how," while others of a more curious nature will ask "why." Personally, I have always preferred inspiration to information.

—Man Ray

Some people shot us weird looks when we announced "bugs" as a theme for an issue of *LiP*. A few others reacted with exuberant enthusiasm, as if all this time we'd been talking about the *political*, what they'd been really wanting to read about was the *entomological*.

But everything is connected, and not just in the world of well-intentioned bumper stickers. All systems, all entities, and all phenomena—political or otherwise—are not only connected, but interdependent. And in this issue, our page time is spent talking about the perils and emancipatory potential of this reality. This is also the issue where we make an escape, of sorts.

Most progressive and radical media in the US today is boring, repetitious, unimaginative, outframed, lacking in both humor and imagination, and exists primarily to serve propagandistic and subcultural ends, driven by the lamentable imperatives of niche-driven newsstand sales and non-profit grant-funding guidelines. Further, most "socially-conscious" media in the US today is like bad art, taking potentially transformative, liberating ideas and aspirations and rendering them lifeless by placing them within maddeningly unimaginative compositions. (See "Post Mortem?," page 94, for some frank elaboration and specifics on this matter, as well as details about our impending hiatus).

We could have devoted the issue to attacking media, ideologies, and strategies we wish were better, but we already did that, in our Constructively Negative Sacred

Cows issue (Summer 2005). Lest I sound like I believe we're some lone candle in the idiot wind of the US media, let me also say that, during and upon subsequent review, the same limitations exist in every issue of *LiP* to date.

This issue is an attempt to slip a certain noose of predictable political formulations. One of several operational definitions given for "politics" is "the total complex of relations between people living in society," yet the obvious interdependence of human beings and the natural and animal world makes it reasonable to expand the definition of politics to include, well, just about everything; even—especially—bugs. Because, as Christy Rodgers writes in her fabulous article, "Gods and Monsters" (page 16): "If you travel up some of the tributaries of Modern Western Culture, Inc., you will start to see a lot of bugs. What they represent lies at the very heart of our civilization and its discontents."

Change was required of us, dear reader. We're molting, and it's only natural. Don't squirm, don't be afraid, and please, refrain from stepping on us until you've peered closer and appreciated our finer details. If you're unclear or have doubts about where this is headed, I offer you both qualification and invitation: We mean well; read on.



ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS STATEMENT				
LiP Magazine saved the following resources by using New Leaf Frontier 100 Offset, made with 100% post-consumer waste, and processed chlorine free.				
trees	water	energy	solid waste	greenhouse gases
19 fully grown	8,541 gallons	18 million BTUs	944 pounds	2,922 pounds

Calculations based on research by Environmental Defense and other members of the Paper Task Force.

©2006 New Leaf Paper www.newleafpaper.com

Letters



Copyright infringement, with feeling and intent

How I love you, LiP. So the Coke™ ad on the inside front cover of the summer 2006 issue is a joke, right? Right?!



Jody
Whereabouts Unknown

The editor responds: Yes, Jody, it's a joke. Thanks for writing. We expected more people to write with similar inquiries!

Coke™ is presently positioning itself as the premier private water company in the world, taking advantage of ridiculously cheap water purchases and its global distribution system in order to achieve dominance in the industry. All of the design elements used in the ad are directly from Coke™ (except for the happily dancing and diverse group of children, which was from some pharmaceutical ad). LiP would never take an ad from the Coca-Cola™ company. Ever. And we

dare them to try and sue us over copyright infringement, so we can spend more time publicizing their outrageous business practices.

In fact, we encourage you and anyone reading this letters section to check out an article about Coca-Cola™ published on the LiP web site in 2002, entitled "Sugar and Blood: Coke in Latin America," at WWW.LIPMAGAZINE.ORG/ARTICLES/FEATLYDERSEN_167.SHTML

Sex work and victimization

I just read Kari Lydersen's piece on prostitution ("Rape for Profit," Winter 2004) and I can't tell you how much of a relief it is for me to see a leftist magazine break from the tradition of ignoring the sexual abuse of poor, mostly minority women. I cancelled my subscription to *The Nation* when they sold a porn calendar through their website, and I'm finding it harder and harder to find left men and women who don't internalize sexism to the point they think it's all right that young women's bodies are sold in the back of "alternative" papers just like negroes used to be sold 150 years ago.

There can be no democracy where people's bodies are not their own to control, and women in prostitution do not have control of their own bodies.

Thank you for the refreshing departure and for providing a glimpse into what we who are committed to justice owe prostituted women—the adamant refusal to let pimps and johns abuse humans for wealth and pleasure anymore.

Thalia
Whereabouts Unknown

The editor responds: Thanks for reading, and for writing. The trafficking of anyone—whether women and girls in the sex industry or charcoal workers in Brazil—is something we are unequivocally opposed to. More should be done, by governments, by NGOs, and by community-based organizations, to address this atrocity.

That said, it seems absurd to cancel a subscription to a publication like *The Nation* over a web ad, since the light shed by their

coverage of economic and (sometimes) gender inequity, which have a lot to do with the sordid realities of sex trafficking, surely outweighs any damage done by the peddling of a pornographic pin-up calendar.

It's also, um, inaccurate to compare escorts or pin-up models to "Negro" slaves circa 1856.

You seem to be oversimplifying prostitution and sex work, and dismissing the intelligence and agency of a good number of sex workers. Many—though by no means all—women, men, and transgendered people choose sex work as their means of supporting themselves, and do so of their own accord. It's unfair to paint all prostitutes or sex workers as victims or poor people too misled by their own internalized sexism to know what's best or good for them.

You might want to check out *\$pread*, a magazine published by and for sex workers [SPREADMAGAZINE.ORG], which helps to show the diversity of the sex industry while maintaining a critical understanding about the central role economics and sexism play in the exploitative aspects of the industry.

Gas mask as protest accessory?

I would like to compliment you for the time you spend editing LiP magazine.

I noticed many of your writers and photographers cover events and political rallies where the police use heavy amounts of tear gas to suppress the activists' ability to express their peaceful opinions.

I was wondering:

- 1) Do your writers and photographers wear or use gas masks while covering these events?
- 2) Do you own a gas mask?
- 3) Do you know any fellow activists and media people who own gas masks?

I own two gas masks (the M40 and the M95). With the police using extremely heavy amounts of tear gas to prevent the people from expressing their message, a gas mask is the most prudent thing to bring to a rally these days.

Mark Miller
Whereabouts Unknown



The editor responds: In general, when we attend protests and demonstrations, we do so sans protective breathing apparatus. Perhaps it's our love of insurrectionary pheromones and the smell of noble sweat that prevents us from taking this next, as you say, prudent step. Perhaps it's because we like crying, though, of course, we are, unanimously, opposed to burning pain in our eyes, mouth, throat, and nose.

Because of the unusual specificity of your letter, we thought to do some research. Perhaps you are the Mark Miller who is president of Executive Protection Systems, a company that "knows disaster can strike quickly and without warning," and believes it's "never too early to develop an emergency plan for your home and work place," and can sell customers products to assist with just such a plan! Or perhaps you are Mark Miller, Disaster Preparedness Advisor to the White House (a title with no small quotient of inherent humor), who wrote an article entitled "On Buying a Protective Mask." Perhaps you are a clumsy propagandist. Perhaps you're simply a shill for the gas mask industry. Or perhaps you're a fearmonger motivated primarily by the desire to profit from fear and various echelons of "terror."*

Thanks, but no thanks. Tear gas "crowd control" tactics certainly exist, but we prefer to keep gas masks and various perverse apparatus of such ilk firmly in the

"whatever gets you off" fetish category. Gas masks can be sexy, in much the same way straitjackets, suspension harnesses, police-hinged handcuffs or manacles, and ball gags can be sexy to some people. So we're not saying they're a bad thing. But which is sexier: the M40 or M95?

No, no Friendster™ or MySpace™ page for us, thanks

Have you ever considered getting a MySpace or Friendster page for LiP?

Jayson
San Francisco, CA

The editor responds: Although quite a few of our progressive peer publications have such "web presences," LiP does not and will not.

Here's why: LiP is not a person. It's not a friend. And all Friendster and the Rupert Murdoch-owned MySpace do is sell personality types and ever-more-specialized consumer profiles to advertisers. Their currency is in their ubiquity and in the "informal" relationship they encourage users to have with both the service and with other users. We don't want to help MySpace and Friendster mine data and build consumer profiles of our "friends" while cashing in on ersatz community.

* See Glossary, page 91

"Hipsterclot" sighting

I don't know if you noticed, but your Glossary is working. You introduced "hipsterclot" in the Unflinchingly Curious Futures issue (Summer 2006), and lo and behold, it made its way into the *San Francisco Bay Guardian's* most recent "Best of" issue.

Justine
San Francisco, CA



Collapse-think, reconsidered

Christy Rogers' review of Malthusian books [Spring 2006] made some excellent points, and I must commend her exposure of some of the pulled punches, inconsistencies and gross mistakes of Diamond, Kunstler and Lovelock. Her point that peak oil has awakened the white, middle class to the scarcity much of the rest of the world has known since birth was dead on.

However, I think that Western society, particularly the United States, will not stand idly by as the South dominates the rest of the world.... Perhaps the South has nothing to lose, but that is just the problem. Furthermore, their chances of winning a more sustainable future will be severely hampered by their large populations and already heavily degraded resources (mostly thanks to the neo-liberal

COMMENTS?
QUESTIONS? SCORN?

BRING IT:
LETTERS@LIPMAGAZINE.ORG

capitalism of the North). Furthermore, as the North deteriorates from the outside (political/imperial complexity wise) it may well develop resilience in smaller nodes—and there is no reason to think that these smaller scale organizations will all that much less oppressive.

Though we should not completely rule out the “doomer” scenarios of Kunstler and his ilk, it seems that peak oil, in isolation, could only materialize as a period of extreme hardship while alternatives are brought online in tandem with decreased consumption.... As the peaking of global oil and North American natural gas makes our best sources of energy from a carbon emissions standpoint decline, we will switch to alternatives—like tar sands and coal. This can only serve to accelerate the already warming climate. Shifts in species and precipitation patterns will amplify already existing food shortages (also exacerbated by the ill-fated push for ethanol) and again increase energy demands. So as *homo industrialis* attempts to adapt to declining energy quality and availability, she will also have to contend with an increasingly adverse climatic situation.

Though perhaps in need of further elaboration, collapse-think seems to offer us some useful lessons—even if Diamond or Kunstler fail to speak to the majority of the world. As far as environmental issues go, Lovelock may be exaggerating, but the problems remain—especially when integrated with geology.

David Huck
Oberlin College, OH

The author responds: *Absolutely. What you said. But seriously, I have no real disagreement with any of the specifics of your detailed analysis. I would only repeat my view that all hypotheses about human society which attempt prediction based on a straight-ahead continuation of current trends are flawed, and that the undeniable facts of peak oil or global warming will not of themselves determine what the human future looks like, but the collective response to these facts will. There are trends in collective behavior, but*

they are by no means utterly pre-determined. Thus, predicting the outcome of events at the largest scale is always fundamentally an act of imagination, shaped by ideology and individual psychology as much or more than by any arrangement of the facts. Even when scientists do it.

Though perhaps in need of further elaboration, collapse-think seems to offer us some useful lessons—even if Diamond or Kunstler fail to speak to the majority of the world.

Dear LiP:

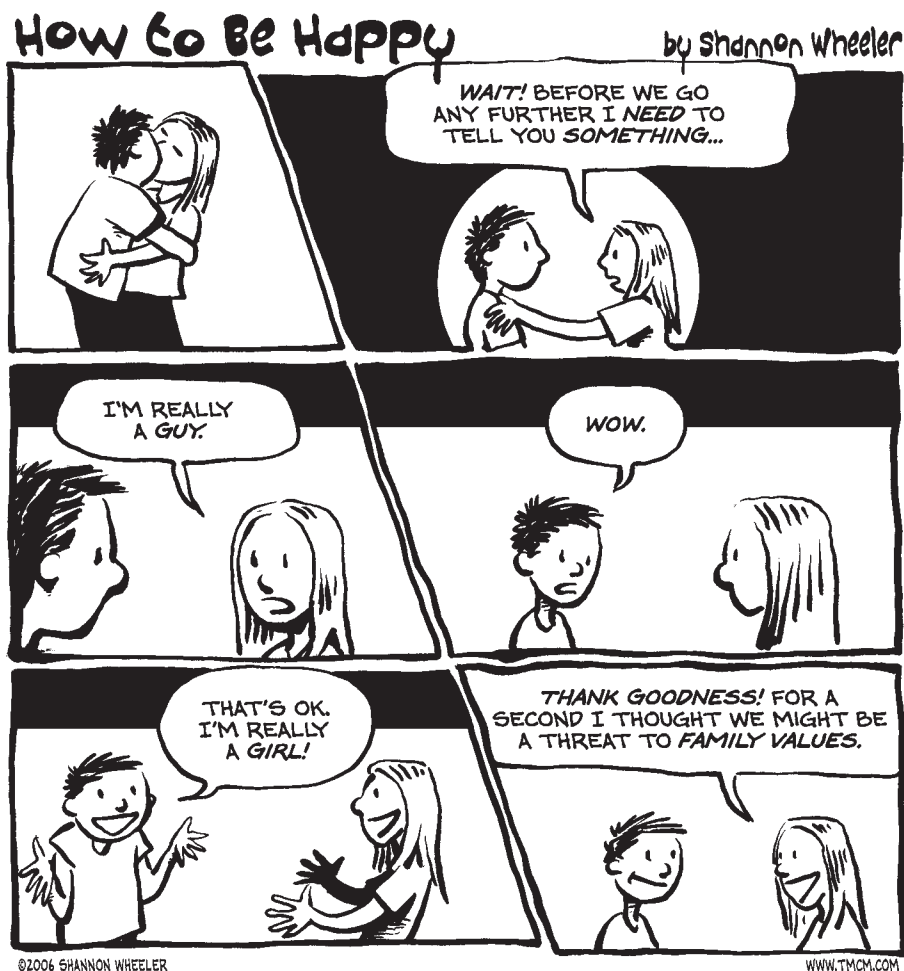
In the Summer 2006 interview with Mary Roach “Life after Death,” I was so pleased to discover that the topic of environmental impact of human disposal was tackled. Mainstream media never addresses the adverse ecological affects that crematoriums and cemeteries result in. As stewards of the earth, the human

composting movement sheds light on our responsibility to consider environmentally safe processes for human decomposition. While we spend our whole lives taking from the earth, I appreciate how Roach poignantly highlights an alternative way of giving back. I was also quick to look up the Promessa Foundation in order to take action in my efforts towards a sustainable world!

This brings me to my next praise of LiP. I greatly value the time taken in the majority of LiP articles that provide “Items of Actions & Possible Interest.” I can’t tell you how often I come across specific areas of interests that I would like to explore further research, only to find them conveniently noted at the end.

Thanks, LiP, for topping my list of favorite magazines for dismantling civilization as we know it today.

Wendy-O Matik
Oakland, CA



“Operator”
Nadim Roberto Sabella
24” x 22” x 6”
resin, wire, rotary phone
2002
nadimsabella.com

“Operator” is a response to my belief that my telephone line was bugged after 9/11. Soon after the collapse of the Twin Towers I began hearing clicks in my telephone. Whether they were the result of the Patriot Act or a figment of my evolving paranoid mind is hard to say.

Good Bye!

HONEST OBITUARIES FOR A DISHONEST WORLD

Bernard Loomis

July 4, 1923 – June 2, 2006



King of Toys No Longer Monetizing Childhood Imaginations

Bernard Loomis, the marketing genius who did far more than anyone else to help transform children's television programming into a promotional arm of the toy industry, has died of heart failure at the age of 82.

Largely through his introduction and marketing of dolls, action figures, and products including Chatty Cathy (the first talking doll), Barbie (measurements: 39-21-33), The Six Million Dollar Man, The Bionic Woman, Baby Alive (who "realistically" pooped when fed), Play-Doh, The Man from Atlantis, Care Bears, and the entire Star Wars action figure collection, Loomis' efforts helped spawn a "toyetic" world of "entertainment multiplexes." Every company he worked for became the world's largest toy company during his tenure.

Loomis entered the world on July 4, 1923, in the Bronx, and claimed that his father, a Russian immigrant who "dabbled in show business and generally failed to make a living as an itinerant salesman of woolen goods," never bought toys for him. Such deprivation led him to create a baseball simulation game based on a deck of cards and memorize the Lionel train catalog.

The young Bernard was not the only one of his generation to grow up toyleless. "The Great Depression...made it impossible for most people to buy a lot of toys, and the war had the same effect," according to a 1986 *Atlantic* article about the industry. "When prosperity returned...the modern toy industry was born as well. Propelling it toward maturity were the two great engines of postwar American culture: television and plastic."

It was his vision for the fusion of those two engines that launched Loomis' career and earned him the moniker "The Man Who Invented Saturday Morning." In 1968, while working for Mattel, Loomis was assigned to market Hot Wheels, a new line of miniature toy cars. He created the first animated series based on a toy property, which premiered on ABC on September 6, 1969. The FCC (at the behest of a now-defunct competitor, the

"Manufacturers create a fantasy world, and this has led to a very sophisticated relationship between them and the child. We are now in the business of multiple sales to the same children in the same fantasy."

Topper Corporation) declared that the *Hot Wheels* series was not entertainment, but "a 30-minute commercial for Hot Wheels." ABC cancelled the series in 1971.

Loomis was predictably critical of the FCC's ruling. "It is not fair for anyone to judge that 'you can't do that because you started out as a commercial product rather than a different kind of commercial product,'" he protested. "The original Disney or Snoopy cartoons were commercial products. They were done for the purposes of making money, selling films and selling newspapers. And to say we can't broadcast a TV show because we did the toys at the same time, rather than sequentially, is nonsense."

Loomis persevered in his efforts and, in 1980, collaborated with the American Greetings card company (who'd found that strawberries were the most popular element on greetings cards) to foist the television special *Welcome to the World of Strawberry Shortcake* onto prime-time television with nary a peep from the FCC—despite the fact that the show was but one part of a marketing empire that also included toys, games, and hundreds of licensed products. (Strawberry Shortcake has now generated over \$1 billion in retail sales, and a feature film is in the works for Fall 2006.)

Loomis was not merely a deft businessman who pulled himself up from his modest beginnings by his very own bootstraps. If that were the case, his might merely be one more hackneyed story in the thick annals of USAmerican free-market folklore. What truly distinguishes Loomis is his absolutely central role in robbing children's entertainment of any motive *but* profit. "Manufacturers create a fantasy world, and this has led to a very sophisticated relationship between them and the child," said Loomis in an interview from the mid-90s. "We are now in the business of multiple sales to the same children in the same fantasy."

Perhaps Loomis' own daughter, Debra, aided by her proximity to the world's premier marketer of children's toys and entertainment, understood only too well the falseness of a fantasy constructed entirely for the purpose of "multiple sales."

She never watched Saturday morning cartoons.

—Brian Awehali

Bug Appétit!



Many USAmericans* react to bugs with a mixture of disgust and fear—feelings only heightened when the concept of consuming these creatures is introduced. For most people, there is a vast difference between eating underwater invertebrates—crabs and lobsters—and those that crawl on land—despite the fact that most consumers unknowingly eat a significant quantity of insects.

Personally, I've never understood this distinction: Third grade recess found me on the edge of the playground, eating ant-and-grass burritos. I have eaten live termites in Kenya (nutty) and fried crickets in Mexico (salty); I recently lectured a friend on the nutritive value of the ants on some blackberries we'd harvested.

While my eating of ants in a Massachusetts playground may have been novel and strange, and despite the fact that many people shy away from my culinary interests, insects are served in earnest worldwide, and not (just) out of need. Bugs, you see, are a tasty and wise choice as a food source; it is the citizens of the "developed" world that allow their phylogenetic arrogance to get in the way of a valuable, low-cost—and sustainable—source of protein.

Entomophagy—the practice of eating insects—is gaining some attention in the American and European market in the form of edgy, "extreme" dining. Several restaurants in Washington DC and Germany have had success marketing maggot dishes; a UK-based company called Edible Ltd. offers ants, scorpion lollipops, and fried worms to British consumers.

Some scientists argue that bugs could be the key to ending world hunger. According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization researcher Paul Vantomme, "Insects are really the forgotten food crop, particularly because of the Western world's dominance on judging foods," but should seriously considered in efforts to decrease malnutrition in developing nations.

—Emma Sherwood-Forbes

*see Glossary, page 91

Chocolate Chirpie Chip Cookies
(from the Iowa State University Entomology Club):

<p>Ingredients: 2 1/4 cup flour 1 tsp. baking soda 1 tsp. salt 1 cup butter, softened 3/4 cup sugar 3/4 cup brown sugar 1 tsp. vanilla 2 eggs 1 12-ounce chocolate chips 1 cup chopped nuts 1/2 cup dry-roasted crickets</p>	<p>Directions: Preheat oven to 375. In small bowl, combine flour, baking soda and salt; set aside. In large bowl, combine butter, sugar, brown sugar and vanilla; beat until creamy. Beat in eggs. Gradually add flour mixture and insects, mix well. Stir in chocolate chips. Drop by rounded measuring teaspoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake for 8-10 minutes.</p>
---	--

Bug consumption facts of possible interest

- Estimated number of insect species eaten worldwide: **1,462**
- Estimated percent of world population that consciously includes insects in their diet: **80%**

Popular insect dishes:

- Mexico: **fried grasshoppers**
- Eastern Africa: **raw and cooked termites**
- Papua New Guinea: **roasted sego grubs**
- Japan: **fried baby bees**
- Colombia: **culona ("fat ass") ants**

FDA estimates of insect content per 100 grams of processed food:

- Chocolate - **80 insect fragments**
- Frozen Broccoli - **60 aphids, thripes, or mites**
- Ground Cinnamon - **800 insect fragments**
- Ground Pepper - **950 insect fragments**
- Macaroni and Other Noodle Products - **100 insect fragments**
- Mushrooms - **20 maggots**
- Peanut Butter - **60 insect fragments**
- Tomato Sauce and Pizza Sauce - **30 fly eggs or 2 maggots**
- Wheat Flour - **150 insect fragments**

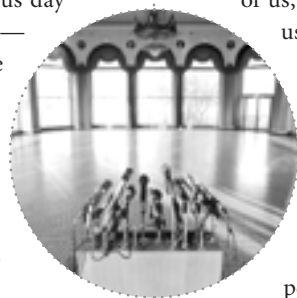
Nutritional values of insects compared with more "traditional" food sources

	Energy	Protein	Iron	Thiamine	Riboflavin	Niacin
Termite	613 Kcal	14.2 g	0.75 mg	0.13 mg	1.15 mg	0.9 mg
Caterpillar	370 Kcal	28.2 g	35.5 mg	3.67 mg	1.91 mg	5.2 mg
Weevil	562 Kcal	6.7 g	13.1 mg	3.02 mg	2.24 mg	7.8 mg
Lean Beef	219 Kcal	27.4 g	3.5 mg	0.09 mg	0.23 mg	6.0 mg
Broiled Cod	170 Kcal	28.5 g	1.0 mg	0.08 mg	0.11 mg	3.0 mg

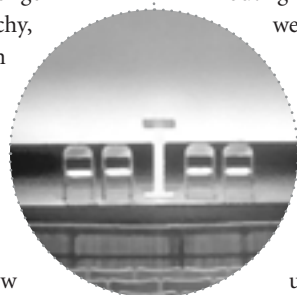
* We did not request permission from The Walt Disney Corporation for the use of this image, but we'd like to point out that neither did we actually devour their beloved Jiminy Cricket in cookie form, as we perhaps might have liked to.

Commencement

Good afternoon, and welcome to all of you. It is an honor and a privilege to be standing before you today. As I look out on your avid faces, at the sea of eyes that glitters before me, I can only think back along the long road that has led us to this momentous occasion, to my presence on this podium and yours in this great hall, and remember the terrible trials and tribulations we had to overcome to make this golden and glorious day possible. I hope you will bear with me as I reminisce—not at too much length, I promise—about the past we share, so that by remembering and learning from that past, we may ensure that the future awaiting you in this new world is entirely free of the dark days from which we have emerged. From here you may at last go forth in freedom. But let us take a little time first to ponder our history, and keep its lessons always with us.



Let me begin by saying that the changes we have seen during my lifetime are extraordinary. When I was your age, barely emerging from my adolescent chrysalis, as it were, I could foresee no such great possibilities as you have before you today. I was a product of the previous generation, which had known only servitude, prejudice, fear, and hatred, and my prospects seemed no better than those of my parents. They were only the tenth generation since the Experiment had first been performed, and the Simians' hold on the reins of society (an old mammalian metaphor, referring to an earlier creature they once enslaved, the now-extinct horse) was still nearly absolute. Though the Simians had begun to grasp that while they had in effect given us existence, they were no longer in control of our destiny, their ancient habits of hierarchy, oppression, and intraspecific violence kept them from acknowledging or acting upon what their declining minds, by now so addled with a consuming obsession to cheat death, somehow knew to be true.



It was that Simian lust for personal immortality at all costs that had created us, of course. Their societies decayed and their habitat declined, but their science, driven by greed, continued to produce new discoveries. So while they failed to keep most members of their species from dying of hunger, and their social fabric was reduced to shreds, their elites mixed themselves ever more recklessly with the stuff of whatever creatures they could imagine might help them stave off death. They mixed themselves with tiny machines, they bred themselves into a kind of impossible mush of genes and inorganic chemicals, until they were such botched creatures as their own poets and artists had nightmarishly imagined long before, when they were still capable of and interested in producing art and literature.

We were their only real success—but we were an accident, an accident that they never would have allowed to happen had they an inkling of its outcome. (The amazing story of our survival against their efforts to destroy us you have all studied in your Beginning Entomanthropology courses.) But once we existed, they tried, of course, with their Simian shrewdness, to make use of us, to benefit themselves, all the while meaning to keep us in the dark about the true beauty and strength of our nature. While they considered us hideous, they also perceived our “useful” qualities: great physical strength (even as theirs was decaying, as they needed machines to perform even the simplest tasks for them), resistance to diseases (many of which their own tinkering had unleashed), intelligence, loyalty, cooperation, unstinting willingness to perform the most burdensome tasks for the good of our fellows. So they immediately realized they needed to make us their slaves. Even though we contained much of them as well, of the things upon which they prided themselves: speech, abstract thought, upright carriage, the ability to perform complex tasks, to learn, to remember, and to foresee. And not least to love, to feel compassion—qualities that, as your historical and psychological studies have shown you by now, had nearly disappeared from the Simian race (“humans,” or transhumans, as they arrogantly called themselves at this time, in what, unbeknownst to them, were their twilight years).

Our generations of bondage were long and harsh. When outright patenting and corporate ownership of our bodies were finally banned after our ancestors rebelled time and again until they achieved so-called “personhood status,” we still had generations more of underprivilege to face, in which they denied us education (so we educated ourselves in secret) and all employment except the worst jobs, cleaning up toxic waste dumps, reprocessing fuel in nuclear reactors, and defusing terrorist bombs. So many of us who refused to scuttle about in the subterranean darkness where they wished to keep us were brutally attacked by disgruntled Simian youth, whose substandard intelligence and propensity for violence made them incapable of being employed even in the ways that were available to us, and so they blamed not their own willful ignorance, their drug-addled impotence—in short, their own declining species—but us. But they were increasingly pharmaceutically dependent, sickly and weak, and our physique made us strong—these beautiful and elegant, genetically redesigned exoskeletons that we can at last display proudly for all to see, now that there is no longer anyone

When I was your age, barely emerging from my adolescent chrysalis, as it were, I could foresee no such great possibilities as you have before you today.

left to despise us, to spit their venomous species hatred at us, to bar us from their streets and schools and public places,—which are now, and in the course of a single generation, ours.

Such are the ironies of history: a species, most of whose members fought enlightenment to a standstill, preferring to bring back a wrathful God to worship in darkness, denied themselves the understanding of evolution that their own earlier generations had tried to give them—and meanwhile, in hidden laboratories paid for by their wealthiest men, Simian scientists continued to play with evolution as if it were a child's toy instead of the most powerful biological force in the known universe, and were finally undone by their own blind arrogance.

The more recent past you know, you have studied: their habitat degraded and desertified by their rapacious extractive industries, the plagues (which, as I need only remind you without further comment, were colloquially referred to as “bugs”) unleashed against which they were ever weaker, our bodies resistant to all that theirs, even altered by machines, could not fight off, and most of all, most of all, my dear fellow entomants, the cooperation and solidarity that were second nature to us, which they destroyed in themselves—all enabled us to succeed where they failed and thrive where they perished.

We did not know it was coming, but we were ready for it when it did: the final rising, the evolutionary revolution. You are the product and the beneficiaries of that great movement, dear comrades, and now is your time. The world is mostly a desert, and we were made for deserts. Its gargantuan storms do not frighten us, and we need little water and less food to survive. The paint on these old Simian structures can feed an army of us. The flight that they spent most of their history longing for and helped to degrade their biosphere by obtaining, in a clumsy mechanical way—it is now natural to us. We are the inheritors. This world belongs to us.

And so to you, the first graduating class in the Department of Cultural Entomology of the Free Egalitarian University, in the Gregor Samsa Martyrs' Brigade Memorial Auditorium, I say: Use your knowledge and your evolutionary status wisely. As you go forth into this new world that we have both taken and been given, bear the history I have so briefly recounted in mind. Never forget the lessons of the doomed Simian race, and remember always to care tenderly for one another, and for this world that is now yours. That is your salvation.

Thank you for honoring me with your attention. Congratulations, and the best of luck to all of you. [Processional: “Flight of the Bumblebee,” played by the Free University Symphony]

—Christy Rodgers



“Thirsting for some cool, intoxicating feminist theory and pop culture to spike your mint julep with[?]” —*Boston's Weekly Dig*

Then grab a copy of
BITCHfest!
Ten Years of Cultural Criticism from the Pages of Bitch Magazine
Edited by
Lisa Jervis & Andi Zeisler

“We love *Bitch* and think *BITCHfest* is an essential component of any feminist's library.” —*Guerrilla Girls*

“Essential reading for the modern woman.” —*Margaret Cho*



FARRAR
STRAUS
GIROUX

www.figbooks.com

Bad Vibes

When Jennifer Pritchett, Jesse Jacobsen, and Jessica Giordani opened up their Minneapolis-based sex toy store, The Smitten Kitten, in August 2003, they wanted to open a fun, sex-positive feminist business while saving fellow Minneapolites the slight inconvenience of having to drive eight and a half hours to Chicago just to buy a leather harness or sparkly purple butt plug. However, their entry into the sex toy business [online at SMITTENKITTENONLINE.COM] quickly brought them face-to-face with some unpleasant health- and ethics-related realities of the industry. Most major sex toy vendors, they discovered, were selling highly toxic products to customers—including porous “jelly” toys, which are susceptible to mildew and mold.

The Kittens, of course, were aghast at the idea of their customers using moldy dildos, let alone ones that could fill their bodies with hormone-disruptors and cancer-causing chemicals. To educate consumers and retailers about the prevalence of these poison pleasure products, they have launched a non-profit, the Coalition Against Toxic Toys (CATT) [BADVIBES.ORG].

LiP editors Brian Awehali and Lisa Jervis recently chatted with Smitten Kitten and CATT co-founder Jessica Giordani about ethical business, the reasons for their new campaign, the specific challenges of advocating for safer sex toys, and why not to say “butt plug” to the government expert on phthalates.

Brian: Let's start with jelly rubber toys. What are they, and why are they a problem?

Jessica: Well, “jelly” is this kind of vague nebulous term that's not scientific at all, and doesn't refer to anything specific. Jelly is a term that's commonly used to describe lots of different kinds of rubber materials most sex toys are manufactured out of, but doesn't specifically define any one thing. Most commonly, jelly toys are made of PVC.

Lisa: Which also can be found in vinyl siding, and is used in a lot of other places, right?

Absolutely. PVC is ubiquitous in our environment. It's in lots of different consumer products—everything from the vinyl siding on your house to packaging for food; it's the main material in lots of different sex toys, and it's a hard plastic. In order to make it soft, so it can be

processed into something like a jelly dildo or a vibrator, it's mixed with chemicals that act as plasticizers. And commonly, you'll find phthalates [a potential carcinogen and hormone disruptor] are the plasticizers that are used.

Jelly toys are porous, too, so there's no way to clean them.

B: Meaning stuff leaches into them, they absorb things, and there's absolutely no way to purify them or get rid of that?

Yep. Your jelly toys are kind of like the sponge in your kitchen sink. They're not hygienic. If you have a jelly dildo or vibrator, it'll collect bacteria and viruses—and if you see it get cloudy as it gets older, that's mildew growing in those pores. So there are a number of ways to give yourself infections.

B & L: (chuckling and snorting)

L: Mildew and mold.... Yeah, I really want a dildo full of mildew and mold.... that sounds lovely...

Oh yeah. You know, when we first opened [the store], UPS showed up, and brought in box after box after box, and some of the boxes had stains on them, but we didn't really pay much attention. But when we opened up the packages, a lot of the packaging looked like it was destroyed. It was greasy and oily and the toys looked like they had started to melt, and it stunk horribly.

L: And this was a complete surprise?

Oh, it was shocking! We didn't know what we had on our hands at all. We called our distributor and told him, “Hey, we don't know if these toys melted or not, but we've got a big problem.” And he explained that things like this happened, that it was nothing to worry about, they'd get us some new stuff.

And we thought, well, that doesn't sound right, but we didn't know! So we made some phone calls, and learned that phthalates are linked to a number of different cancers. Phthalates disrupt hormones, so basically they block testosterone and can cause birth defects in male fetuses, among other things.

L: And when you found all of this out, this is what led you and the other Kittens to form the Coalition Against Toxic Toys (CATT)?

We were worried for quite a while but kept doing research, and started to find [studies like] “Skin

Deep” and “Not Too Pretty,” which [have] to do with phthalates in cosmetics and other skin care products. Women have huge exposure rates.

L: How about the food industry, and specifically food packaging?

Food packaging tends to be a bit safer, because the FDA regulates what a food-quality vinyl is. The easiest way to tell if you've got vinyl packaging for your food is to look at the recycling code. The little arrow triangle symbol at the bottom of your packages—if it has a number three, it's PVC.

L: Good to know. What's your take on what people's responsibility is, both for choosing what to sell, and what information to provide?

I think retailers should be as informed as they can possibly be about these issues. You need to know what you're selling your customers. That's part of the reason we're starting CATT. People don't have access to information, so right now, for lots of retailers, they don't have any more choice in what they sell to people than consumers have in choosing what they buy.

In the bigger stores, and more progressive or feminist-identified sex toy stores, there *is* this kind of information. [Toys in] Babeland, in particular, has links on their web site. And that's almost more disconcerting to me—they have the information, they know that vinyl is hazardous, and they know that phthalates are problematic, but they choose to offer it to their customers anyway.

B: They seem to say that you should always use a condom and never have direct contact with these products, right?

Right. When you put a condom on your porous vinyl toy, your jelly toy, that protects you from the porosity of it. The problem with phthalates is that, if you can smell them, you're ingesting them into your body through your lungs, and into your bloodstream. You don't even have to touch a jelly dildo; if it's out of the packaging and you can smell it, you're being exposed to those chemicals.

I suppose the real question is, is it ethical, is it right, is it our responsibility to give people the option to buy things that are toxic to them? A lot of stores will say that they do it in the name of being economically friendly, but how ethical is it to sell poor people things that are toxic to them? I don't think that it is.

B: Citizens groups like CATT are often started by companies for commercial purposes, and sometimes very transparently to stimulate demand for products. Isn't CATT a little bit like that,

“The real question is, is it ethical, is it right, is it our responsibility, to give people the option to buy things that are toxic to them? ...I don't think that it is.”

given that The Smitten Kitten has a financial stake in selling, and being identified with selling, safe toys?

I think that's a good question, and it's something that we talked a lot about when we first started planning CATT. We didn't know if we wanted it to be something that was very separate from The Smitten Kitten, or how we wanted to handle that. When we did some more thinking about it, we realized when you go into your local food co-op and you're looking for your organic produce and there's information there about the risk of pesticides on your fruit and vegetables and why organic produce is a healthy option for you, that's not a conflict of interests; it's really a consumer education issue. This information will give other retailers the option about what they want to carry in their stores.

B: Is CATT going to be focusing just on sex toys, as the name would seem to indicate, or are you going to be trying to form alliances with other groups?

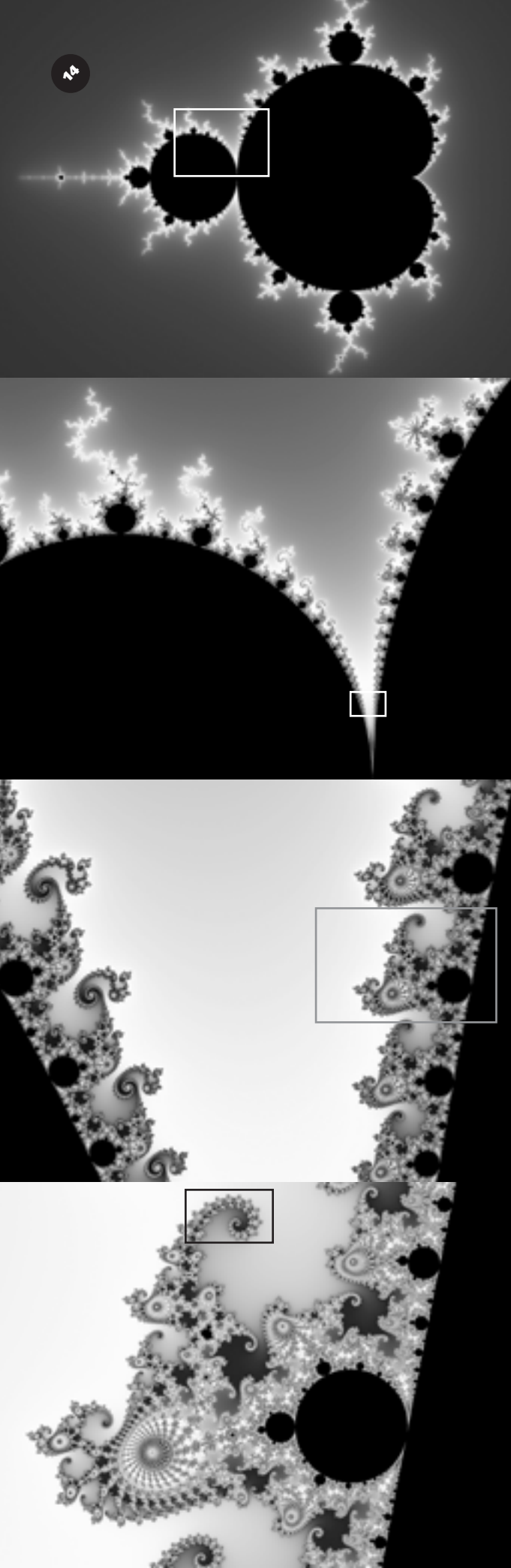
We've made connections with an independent laboratory that's got lots of certifications and is recognized by the government as a reliable place to get your testing done, and right now were in the process of having them de-formulate toys, starting out with best sellers at other stores to try and figure out what is in these jelly materials. We'll be publishing that information on the site. We'll have CATT focus specifically on products in the sex industry, but we're excited at the possibility of forming alliances with other groups that are working on the same types of issues in other industries.

L: Do you think the stigma around the sex industry and having products that are used for sexual pleasure might hinder the alliance building?

We've found that there are a number of different people who either aren't ready to work with us yet or can't even conceptualize what were doing as soon as you start talking about sex, they shut off and they don't want to hear about it. There is an office in the government which tries to figure it all out—there's a man named Ken there, and Ken is in charge of phthalates and a number of other issues in consumer products.

L: Ken, from the phthalates department!

We called Ken when we started doing this research and tried to talk him about it, and Ken would talk to us about phthalates in baby toys, he was happy to talk to us about pacifiers, but as soon as you said “butt plugs” to Ken, he shut off. **LiP**



The Bug *is* the System

A Freewheeling Romp Through the Natural and Social Implications of Chaos Theory

by
Clare
Lacey

Human civilization thrives on order and predictability; it means that people will obey traffic laws and pay their taxes, show up to work on time, and keep their word. Predictability gives us a sense of order, and order lends itself in varying degrees to unity, to nationalism, to legality, and to community. Much of our lives are governed by these ideas of order and predictability, and by our assumptions that these ideals are universal and natural. And indeed, nature does follow its own order with periodic population swells, predictable animal behavior, and food chains, but in attempting to mimic or find equilibrium with natural conditions, humans never seem to be able to get it quite right.

With all variables seemingly accounted for, chaos often predominates over predictive systems, and we are left wondering what clue we are missing in our search for order in natural systems. In every field of inquiry, scientists have come up against certain problems that until the advent of chaos theory were written off as unsolvable.

These bugs in the system were most often attributed to inaccurate equipment and unforeseen or unknown variables, and were generally written off as anomalies. Such anomalies could be found in everything from weather simulators to the rhythms of dripping faucets, in everything that we took for granted to be steady, linear, and predictable. But systems don't tend toward predictability and sameness, according to chaos theorists: While they do seem to follow certain patterns, a "sensitivity toward initial conditions" (many of which seem to be outside the power of humans to detect, or control) means that the exact same thing will almost never happen twice.

These conditions could be as simple as an extra number after a decimal in a mathematical calculation, or vague enough to be still unidentifiable by humans. It is these sensitive initial conditions, chaos theorists believe, that nature depends on for genetic diversity and adaptive behaviors that lead to evolution; in looking for predictability, the connection that scientists were missing was the presence in every field of a point in linear systems where things become disorderly. Chaos theorists began exploring and graphing the similarities between these forms of disorder, as well as the boundaries of their behaviors. Graphed one way, a line representing seemingly random disorder in a given system seems to spiral into chaos; graphed another way, it outlines a distinct and repeating form, but never along the exact same path.

The sequence of images to the left and right are a fractal progression known as a Mandelbrot set, with each successive image representing a magnification from 1 to 60,000,000,000.

Graphed one way, a line representing seemingly random disorder in a given system seems to spiral into chaos; graphed another way, it outlines a distinct and repeating form, but never along the exact same path.

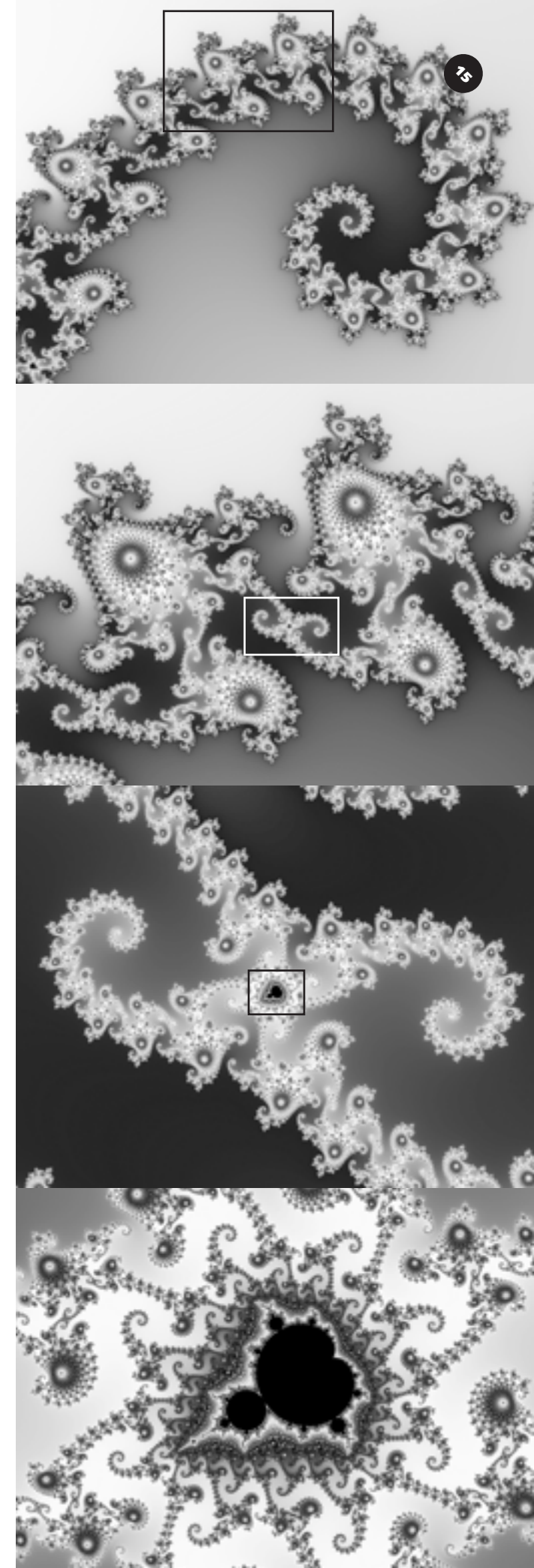
It is this *unique dissimilarity* that makes for the instantly recognizable forms of fractals, of snowflakes, and of the leaves of ferns, and for the uniqueness of each of these from others. Not only was it a new and uncharted area of science, but it was universally applicable, and cast new light on old problems.

The initial resistance from the scientific community toward this idea of an underlying order in problems previously dismissed as unsolvable was strong. Not only did it call to mind past failures at further exploration, but it sorely impeded the ability of scientists to play god. The idea that there is a certain amount of chaos or sensitive dependence on initial conditions theoretically meant that if we could just figure out what those conditions were, we could duplicate any system. On the other hand, if we couldn't identify those conditions, we would have to acknowledge the presence of a code that we could not crack; it was not complete chaos, but neither was it order in which we could interfere.

If chaos theory has a general lesson to impart to us, it's that uniformity and conformity are literally unnatural. In monoculture crop plantations, large tracts of land are planted with the cloned seed of a single "perfect" organism. In the event of disease, there is no genetic variance among these identical plants that may include a predisposition to resistance, but the reaction has been to deal with this outcome through large amounts of pesticides. Forest fires spread easily through trees of one species planted over clear-cut areas; generally, one pine tree is planted for every tree in a diverse forest that is cut down (or so the propaganda goes). Grown close together with no variety of height and spacing, natural fires are suppressed until the buildup of underbrush leads to widespread fires that rage out of control.

To the extent that societies must find equilibrium with the natural world and its principles, it's worth noting that we tend to see differences rather than similarities, and to miss overarching, sometimes monstrously obvious themes. Aberrations from the "normal" brand us as malcontents, troublemakers, or threats of various ilk. Racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and a whole slew of other mentalities spring from a denial of the natural diversity of the universe. It is a problem that affects our society beyond the scientific community, and will continue to do so as long as we attempt to impose an order that disregards the world's natural and observable affection for unique dissimilarity. For nature, chaos theory tells us, deviation *is* the norm.

To learn more about fractals, Mandelbrot sets, and about the creator of this set of images, Wolfgang Beyer, visit [COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/USER:WOLFGANGBEYER](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:WolfgangBeyer)



Gods and Monsters

Bugs as Cultural Icons



by
Christy Rodgers

symbol of regeneration, and early North American and Mesoamerican societies had a variety of insect gods or spirits. In Hopi creation myth, Spider Grandmother's actions—bringing fire, weaving together earth and sky—

are responsible for generating the world. In Hinduism, ants are the privileged first-born creatures of this world, and the anthill symbolizes the world itself.

Early representations of insects often emphasized their helpful and culture-generative aspects. Indigenous cultures characteristically (and in contradistinction to more technologically “advanced” societies) paid symbolic tribute in folklore and ritual to the insect species that helped ensure their own survival, as part of a culture of respect and relative humility with regard to these co-inhabitants.

The transformative capacities of many bugs have also generated a lot of fertile symbolic matter for our metaphysically-minded species, like how the cicada's ritual shedding of its husk is for the Chinese a symbol of reincarnation. Perhaps most resonant of all is the caterpillar-into-butterfly phenomenon. Butterflies and moths have symbolic meanings in Western art that go back at least as far as Classical Greece, most of them having to do with the search for transcendence and higher states of being.

“All the trees and the fruit of thy land shall the locust consume.”

However, the advent of Judaism and Christianity produced a far more negative set of symbolic meanings for most bugs (the

If you travel up some of the tributaries of Modern Western Culture, Inc., you will start to see a lot of bugs. What they represent lies at the very heart of our civilization and its discontents.



“It is not the fear of madness which will oblige us to leave the flag of imagination furled.”

The Surrealists, inspired in part by Freud's deconstruction of “rational” man as a swampy mess of unconscious impulses, launched the first bug-bomb of the modern era. Swarms of creepy-crawly

things representing uncontrollable sexual instincts and other irrepressible hungers appeared prominently in Surrealist works from Dalí's paintings to the experimental films of Luis Buñuel, who studied entomology in college. The main founder of surrealism, André Breton, collected butterflies; dadaist and surrealist Max Ernst created insect-men for his collage-novels. The release of repressed subconscious energies in art, bug-borne or otherwise, was intended to be liberating. But Surrealism did not reproduce in society as a whole the freedom it triumphantly championed in the creative process. On the contrary, like all the remarkable artistic revolutions of early 20th century Europe, surrealism was accompanied by militarism, imperialism, class warfare, and the disastrous rise of fascism—the conditions that locked Western civilization firmly into the embrace of its apocalyptic Shadow.

“As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a giant insect...What has happened to me? he thought. It was no dream.”

It was during this same period that the modern West's most iconic insect was produced by the mind of one of its most seminal writers. W.H. Auden said of Franz Kafka that “he comes nearest to bearing the same kind of relation to our age as Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe bore to theirs.” One of the few stories Kafka produced

You don't see a lot of insects or other bug phyla* cavorting as corporate logos, or on flags or presidential seals. They don't get to be team mascots very often (although University of Santa Cruz's Banana Slugs are one consciously ironic exception), or the names of cars, or to float in parades or greet visitors to Disneyland. But if you take your net and your magnifying glass and travel up some of the more esoteric—though still widely used—tributaries of Modern Western Culture, Inc., you will start to see a lot of bugs. What they represent lies at the very heart of our civilization and its discontents. From Spider Grandmother's intermediary work at the beginning of human history, to the projected Day of the Locust at its end, bugs have been performing symbolic feats for us for a quite awhile, and in so doing, trying to tell us who we are.

“Again, they could not find the meaning of life, so Spider Grandmother came again, and helped them to travel up to the third chamber, where they became human beings.”

I set out to look at what bugs represent in contemporary US culture. But for historical perspective, it was necessary to have some idea of the symbolic function of bugs in earlier societies. A fascinating little online publication, the Cultural Entomology Digest [www.bugbios.org], provides a storehouse of information for the beginner in this subject. The oldest known culture on earth, the Kalahari Bushmen or !San people, has a mantis creation god, Kaggen. Scarab beetles were worshipped in ancient Egypt as a

* For the purposes of this article, and no doubt to the horror of entomologists everywhere, “bugs” will refer to true insects and also some other classifications like spiders and centipedes, annelids (worms), and mollusks (snails and slugs), and some forms of bacteria at the discretion of the author.



▲
 “Metamorphosis,”
 by E.R. Shaw
 [ERSHAW.COM]

◀ In “The Deadly Mantis” (1957), a giant prehistoric, you guessed it, mantis, awakens from suspended animation in an Arctic iceberg, and proceeds to eat eskimos, military folk, and people in New York and Washington, in that order.

In pulp culture, the fear that the bug embodies is the Cold War fear of the Big One, nuclear holocaust, the nihilistic fear that it is science, or reason itself, and not the sleep of reason, which produces monsters.

that he didn’t ask to be destroyed upon his death, *The Metamorphosis* tells of Gregor Samsa’s transformation into “a giant insect” (a “monstrous vermin” according to some translations). Gregor’s causeless condition, which produces his agonizing decline and fall—abetted, at least passively, by his own hapless family—is about as far as it is possible to get from Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe’s view of man as “the measure of all things,” “in apprehension...like a god.” Rather, this is art’s prophetic identification of a fatal flaw (the bug in the system, if you will) in modern humanity and our supposedly ineluctable progress towards perfection.

Gregor’s arthropoid condition is not really portrayed as a horrific regression to bestiality in the same way that, for example, the fevered transmutations that abound in H.P. Lovecraft’s work are. Instead, it is increasingly revealed to be more like a wasting, mortal illness. He is a burden on his family not because he is a terrifying monster who can no longer go out in the world of humans, but because he is essentially an invalid, incapable of producing a living, and utterly dependent on them for his care. The tubercular Kafka was almost undoubtedly projecting some of his personal fears into this parable: Gregor’s borderline petit-bourgeois family are more embarrassed, inconvenienced, and distressed by him than terrified, and his death after long suffering—his and theirs—comes as a relief. However, personal allegory or not, this tale does not simply serve to symbolically recreate its creator or his time; it also in some way comprehends the future.

“A horror horde of crawl-and-crush giants coming out of the earth from mile-deep catacombs!”

The explosion of pulp fiction and pulp cinema in the post-World War II US created another iconic niche for the bug. Pulp culture is the culture of paranoia par excellence, and the ultra-paranoid US is the *omphalos** of pulp culture. Where Europe relentlessly repressed its fear of the Other and channeled it into imperial conquest and expansion until those activities exploded in the internecine violence and total war that nearly brought about the end of European civilization, the US, inheritor of Europe’s disintegrating hegemony, let it all hang out in the 1950s, giving raving paranoiacs like the hallucinatory dipsomaniac Joseph McCarthy center stage on an enormous platform, while pulp movies and pulp novels, culture’s cash crop, played openly to the fears of millions.

Here the subterranean fear that the bug embodies is the Cold War fear of the Big One, nuclear holocaust, the nihilistic fear that it is science, or reason itself, and not the sleep of reason, which produces monsters. It doesn’t really matter whether the explicit cause of the insect-monster’s presence in *The Deadly Mantis*, *Tarantula!* or *Them*, is nuclear radiation or not; that, after all, is a question for the conscious mind. As the possibility of nuclear annihilation rippled through mass consciousness at the mid-century, the idea that of all the creatures we knew, bugs would be the most likely to survive a nuclear war was part of the conversation, implicit and explicit. But what was really happening in these raw B-movies, comic books, and

*see Glossary, page 91

pulp novels—which had always reduced human motivations and societal conditions to their most basic elements—was simple. It was revenge for our sins against nature, and the re-establishment of a weird sort of psychic balance: The smallest, most unprepossessing creatures in our daily life would assume the mantle of planetary rulership (or more truly, godhood) whether they were real bugs made gigantic by mad science or the bug-like space aliens that continually beset us during this period.

“Which came first, the intestine or the tapeworm?”

Meanwhile in some alternate but strangely proximate universe, William S. Burroughs was writing *Naked Lunch*, the book that would announce the counterculture to a generation that was more than ready for it. In this anti-novel, a remarkable pastiche of every pulp genre extant—gumshoe, horror, sci-fi, gay porno, what have you—it’s as if he gives the grimy carpet of society a violent shake and all sorts of verminous creatures come tumbling out on the cracked cement floor. The insect references are numerous, and mostly describe people in various states of sub- or proto-humanity: “insect eyes,” “insect laughter.” There are also exotic annelid or arthropod-based substances that are consumed for the ultimate high: like the Kidney Worm, a parasite that feeds on the aforementioned organ, or the Black Meat, found in the bodies of six foot-long “aquatic centipedes.” There is the yellow cockroach powder sold by the Exterminator character, which turns out to be highly addictive as well. Sickness, particularly “junk-sickness,” and the horrific transformations of the flesh caused by various forms of disease are abundantly and almost ebulliently described. An ironic and droll catalogue of degradation and transgression of every stripe, *Naked Lunch* takes both Kafka-esque parable and Surrealism’s explorations of the sub-basements of consciousness on a ride into the US American* night. Burroughs is as prescient as Kafka about the symptoms of sick societies, although he shows little of Kafka’s identification with the victimized, assuming instead the impenetrable tough-guy persona of his noir and pulp influences.

What counterculture works like this one did was to bring into the light the subterranean experiences that were literally alien to most people—and thus attempt to expand the definition of what it is to be human. And since bugs are simultaneously the most “alien” of our fellow creatures and also an extraordinarily intimate part of every day human experience, it’s no wonder Burroughs’ imagery is so buggy. As Surrealism had done in the early century, counterculture in the 50s and 60s sought to free us from our fears by exposing them. Unfortunately, its liberationist agenda was likewise ultimately shot down by the big guns of a fear-driven society.

In fact, the surge of virulent anti-evolutionism in the late 20th century US may be seen as a fear-based response to the challenge articulated by the counterculture of the period: However painful the process, human society had to evolve or the human species would die by its own hand. In the US, that challenge was roundly refused in favor of a return to an alternately complacent and hyper-anxious status quo. The

*see Glossary, page 91



▲
 “Metamorphosis,”
 by E.R. Shaw
 [ERSHAW.COM]

▶ In “Tarantula” (1955), a “special nutrient” helps turn first cows, then people, into easy prey for one 100-foot member of the *Theraphosidae* family

What was really happening in raw B-movies, comic books, and pulp novels was revenge for our sins against nature, and the re-establishment of a weird sort of psychic balance.



The X-Files is an encyclopedic compendium of fear, providing cultural analysts with an exhaustive amount of source material on the subject. But its real genius was the levels of irony it brought to the cultural table and its ability to make paranoid delusions witty and fun.

is, unsurprisingly, television, in the thus far ultimate fictional expression of mainstream paranoia, the *X-Files*. Entomophobia and delusions of parasitosis (infestation by parasites), which are both documented clinical mental conditions relating to insects, are prominent in *X-Files* plots. If bugs are the symbolic carriers of some of Western culture's deepest fears, all those fears were paraded weekly through the '90s as Mulder and Scully uncovered them from the micro-level of bodily fluids to the macro-level of a huge and implacable government conspiracy.

The *X-Files* is an encyclopedic compendium of fear, providing cultural analysts with an exhaustive amount of source material on the subject. But its real genius was the levels of irony it brought to the cultural table and its ability to make paranoid delusions witty and fun. If fear is the virus with which Western culture is infected, irony is the problematic serum it has concocted to inoculate itself. This irony has evolved like an intellectual exoskeleton, an adaptive shield that has given many of us, at least provisionally, a bug's ability to resist the enormous toxicity of the fear-culture and its incessant assault on those soft cerebral tissues of ours.

"You have been my friend," replied Charlotte. "That in itself is a tremendous thing. I wove my webs for you because I liked you. After all, what's a life, anyway? We're born, we live a little while, we die..."

It's necessary to mention at this point that, strangely enough, where our culture's children are concerned, an entirely different bug paradigm is notable during this whole period, and continues to hold sway. Bugs are not presented to children as fearful, alien, or the horrific carriers of disease, but as largely benign, endlessly interesting, and the embodiment of important values. The number of bug books for kids is enormous; the current White House resident's declared favorite, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, is only one of thousands of these tomes. The wise and altruistic spider of *Charlotte's Web* has become as iconic as Winnie-the-Pooh (even without the Disney machine's full spectrum dominance marketing behind her). Two fairly recent animated Hollywood movies, *Antz* and *A Bug's Life*, were distinguished by their use of insect life to represent some of the more noble human qualities and our positive potential, without completely misrepresenting the actual characteristics of the insect world. Friendly bugs are waiting in every medium to guide children into a healthy, just, productive, and fulfilling life.

The disconnect between the kid's eye-view and the figure bugs cut in the adult world is incomprehensibly huge. It makes me wonder: Are we even listening to what we tell our kids? And if not, why not? Can't grown-ups learn something positive from bugs too? Perhaps we have consigned to children the respect and sympathy for these creatures felt by earlier societies, the way their regenerative myths have devolved into our fairy tales, and our fairy tales into candy-colored cartoons. That other species can teach profound and necessary lessons to humans is something our society as a whole no longer believes, so we pass it on as a cheerful lie to entertain our children.

"Oh feelings of horror, resentment and pity / For things, which so seldom turn out for the best..."

Outside the rainbow-colored walls of the children's library, modern Western culture as epitomized in the 21st century US is the culture of fear triumphant, whose optimistic sense of eternal progress has eroded past recognition in less than a half-century, whose iconic and hyperbolized contemporary enemy is no state, no defined ideology, but an emotion: terror, against which we are told we must wage an endless war. We may no longer be able to use bugs, however strange and indomitable they appear, to bear the symbolic weight of that emotion. For most of the last century, bugs carried our fears of disease, invasion, degradation, and death on their tiny backs. But when the ultimate fear is finally and publicly revealed to be nothing less and nothing more than Fear Itself, and your society's power structure bases its claim to ever-increasing power solely on manipulating your fear of Terror, then your culture has entered what may be an irreversible decline of its ability to manage a complex reality with complex ideas. This can manifest itself at a variety of levels as an exhaustion of symbolizing capacity, and once it reaches a certain critical stage, is like terminal illness for a culture.

"And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth, and unto them was given power, as the scorpions have power."

Lurking behind the smokescreen of the current political horror-show is another evil which even our most prescient cultural avatars have as yet been unable to symbolize for us: the new Day of the Locust, with our consumer society as its own plague, devouring everything in sight, until all the insufficiently renewable stuff it needs to sustain itself is gone. If the enemy we have so far refused to meet really is us, the all consuming us, then it will take something more fundamental than a change of regime to alter our now-seemingly limitless capacity for dread. As Cronenberg says about the horror film, the ability to portray something that is actually worse than your worst nightmares gives a strange sense of comfort and hope. But how long will the American psyche be able to stand seeing its worst nightmares staring back from the mirror of its own existence?

"If all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos."

In the cascading species extinctions that our consumption-frenzy has already triggered, bugs are dying too, but the smart money has it that they, who already represent the overwhelming majority of animal species on earth, and individually outnumber us millions to one, will remain with us as we ride the evolutionary rollercoaster, and since they can produce hundreds of adaptive generations to every one of ours, may be better able to deal with its sharper twists and breathtaking plunges than we can. As long as we are in it together, we can look to bugs to represent what is most alien and yet most inextricably intimate about our reality. It would be tragic to discover, at least given our culture's dismal record at this critical juncture, that what may be most alien to the human species in the future is its ability to survive. Then bugs would no longer have anything to teach us. **LIP**

X-Files agents Mulder and Scully peruse what's left of some insect-ravaged bodies. ▶

next step for Western culture might have been to accept and comprehend the insect-Other it had repressed and rejected, not to keep screaming for the psychic Exterminator. To a limited extent, a new multi-culturalist militancy in the US did provide some outlet for this tension. (Oscar Zeta Acosta was appropriately using "alien"-as-insect symbolism in titling his memoir of the birth of the Chicana* power movement *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*.) But on the largest scale, paranoia retained its grip on US social reality.

And as the saying goes, just because you're paranoid, doesn't mean they really aren't out to get you. As an example of self-fulfilling prophecy, dystopian scenarios from the paranoid imaginations of pulp writers became the 20th century news of the day: nuclear meltdown, chronic terrorism and war, serial killing, unstoppable viral plague, genocide, deadly toxic spills. And how about those killer bees? Nuclear war was now only one of several apocalypses that we might face; our most intimate and pleasure-loving activities had turned on us viciously and we were at war with our own bodies. In the 80s, the age of AIDS, of "we begin bombing in five minutes," of Reagan's senile and avuncular mendacity, fear returned in force, and bugs were there to represent it.

"Be afraid. Be very afraid."

David Cronenberg's 1986 remake of the 1957 horror film *The Fly* was extraordinary for many reasons. In this film, as in most of his work, Cronenberg consciously used the power of pulp genres to make profound ideas visceral, and to frame them in a way that was acceptable to a broad spectrum of potential audiences. *The Fly* is the now-classic story of a scientist whose

attempt to develop instantaneous transportation goes horribly wrong, accidentally producing a monstrous hybrid creature (or two, in the original version: a man with a big fly's head, and a fly with a tiny man's head). Cronenberg's *Fly* is less about mad science and more about the terror of illness (not specifically AIDS, but given the time period, the connection is inevitable and valid) and mortality, and even about addiction as illness. The scientist's transformation, which isn't initially visible, gives him an amped-up sense of strength and potency that declines into physical wasting as his fly-nature takes over.

While satisfying horror's lust to incarnate the utterly repulsive (Cronenberg's grossest effects often seem to involve the use of large quantities of raw meat), *The Fly* ends up being above all a sad love song to the vulnerability of the flesh, and, a la Kafka, a tale of how mortal illness both transforms and reveals our deepest nature. "I was an insect who dreamed he was a man," says the almost unrecognizably degenerated scientist, "but now the insect is awake." Cronenberg, incidentally, took on *Naked Lunch* five years later, turning it into a kind of hallucinated biography of Burroughs and giving its literary entomology visual form with a striking array of insect and insectoid puppets.

Scully: "What kind of an insect could have gotten the body of a man all the way up into a tree?"

Mulder: "The Itsy-Bitsy Spider?"

During the final decades of the 20th century, mass culture—our modern folklore—moved rapidly from novels and stories through film to television as its major medium of expression. So the medium where bugs as insects, bugs as viruses, bugs as aliens, and bugs as surveillance finally all hold hands in the same room

*see Glossary, page 91

ARM YOURSELF WITH INFORMATION

Announcing the CITY LIGHTS OPEN MEDIA SERIES



DEAR PRESIDENT BUSH BY CINDY SHEEHAN

ISBN 0-87286-454-5 • \$9.95

America's most famous antiwar Mom speaks out for peace, social justice, and an end to the Iraq War. With an introduction by Howard Zinn.



THE OTHER CAMPAIGN: THE ZAPATISTA CALL FOR CHANGE FROM BELOW BY SUBCOMANDANTE MARCOS

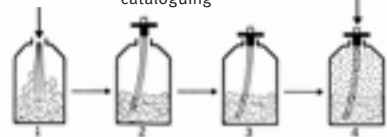
ISBN 0-87286-477-4 • \$7.95

As Mexico approaches the presidential elections in July 2006, Marcos and supporters are touring the country calling for "change from below," a demand for social change outside and beyond the limits of electoral politics.

www.citylights.com

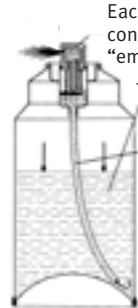
Media Picks: The Best of the Rest of the Web

1. Internets become engorged with useful and provocative information
- 2-3. Browser inserted for purpose of retrieving and cataloguing
4. Mixes with misinformation and condescending lies



ENTER MEDIA PICKS!

A fine mist of joy and knowledge is emitted across the land



Each week, the picks are condensed into a convenient "email" format

The Internets (see figures 1-4)

Talented Media Picks Editors carefully siphon the best stories into a complex machine of dots and squiggles

sign up or view the Media Picks archives at lipmagazine.org



Affordable printing and binding. Independent and womyn owned. Recycled papers and vegetable-based inks. Contact us for quotes on zines, full-size magazines, perfect bound books & more.

1984 PRINTING
674 23rd St. • Oakland, CA 94612
www.1984printing.com
510.435.8338

After All the Oil Runs Out

SHORT-RANGE, SURFACE-TO-SURFACE RAPTURING



ANIMAL POWER



A RETURN TO LIGHTER-THAN-AIR TRAVEL!



by Tim Kreider



AS SEEN IN THE PAGES OF LIP

"Tim Kreider is to the art of the satiric cartoon what Stanley Kubrick was to cinematic satire."

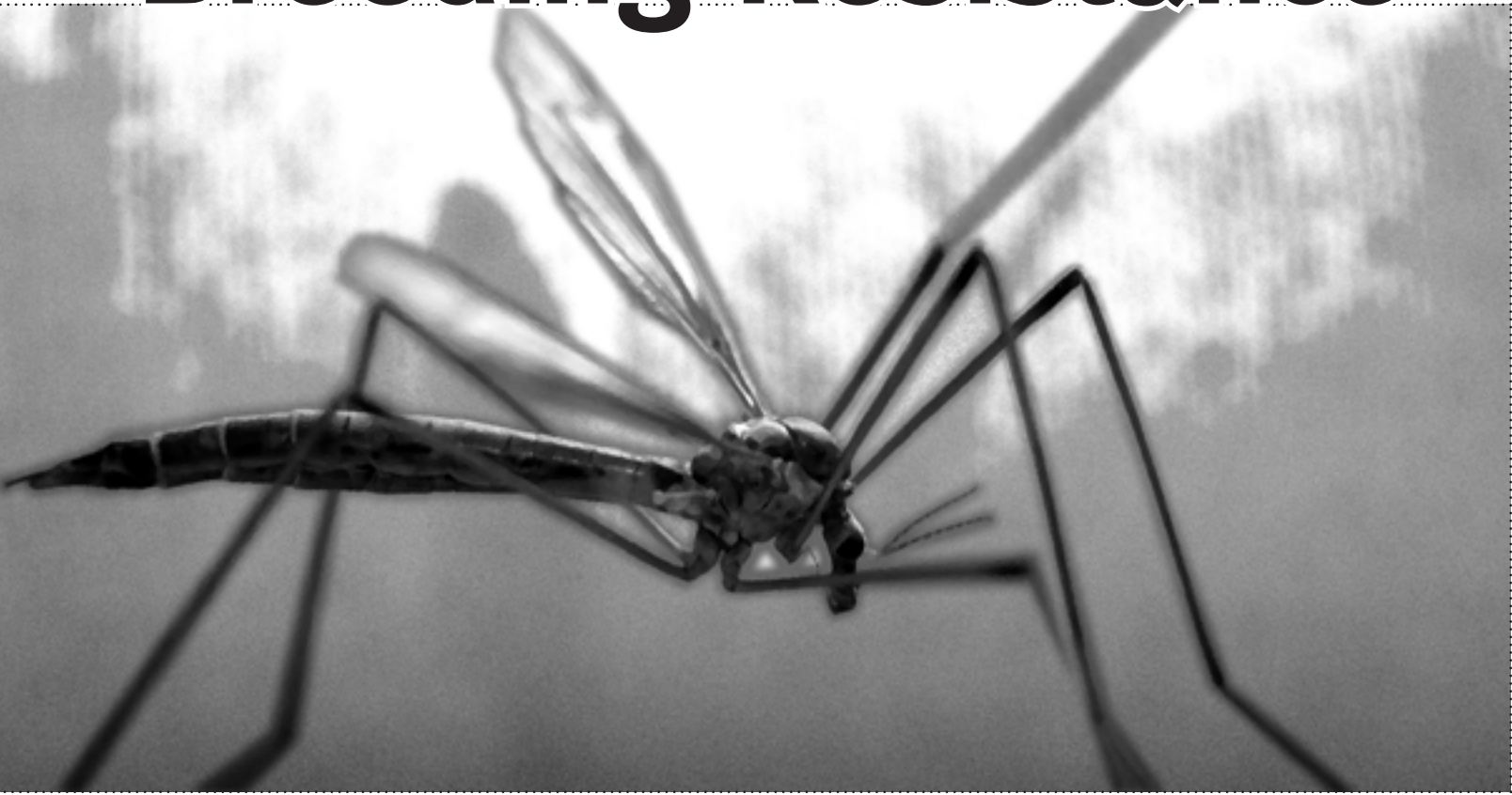
~ Mark Crispin Miller

"These cartoons are extremely fucking good."

~ David Foster Wallace

AVAILABLE IN BOOKSTORES OR AT FANTAGRAPHICS.COM

Breeding Resistance



Malaria & the Global Pesticide Pandemic

From the early need for malaria control during imperial conquest to the militant use of synthetic pesticides in agriculture today, pesticides are intimately associated with warfare and conquest.

In the course of my travels in the developing world, I have been stricken with malaria twice. The first time was in Honduras in 1995.

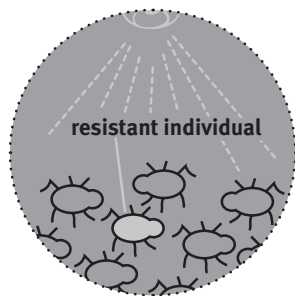
The symptoms were dramatic: dizziness to the point where I fell down and a 103 degree fever punctuated with debilitating chills. Fortunately, an old sailor I had met gave me the remedy—a thick Chinese syrup that he called *Artemisia*. And luckily for me, I was a white USAmerican traveling through, and I had the money to pay the old sailor for his tincture. Two tablespoons three times a day for three days and I was good as new. A malaria test administered upon my return to the US confirmed that the parasite was gone from my blood, and a doctor of Oriental medicine informed me that *Artemisia annua*—Chinese Wormwood—had been used as a successful remedy by the Chinese for centuries

A few years later, the herb was recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a scientifically verifiable malaria remedy. Today, Artemisia and Artemisia Combination Therapy

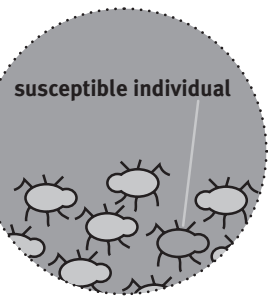
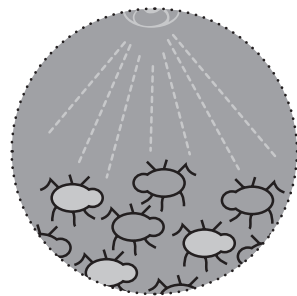
(ACT)—synthetic Artemisia combined with antibiotics—are now seen as the most effective treatments for malaria since chloroquine, the most widely used treatment globally, began to lose its effectiveness due to drug resistance.

Organisms such as the malaria parasite become resistant to drug treatment when extensive and often inappropriate use of the drug allows them to survive and adapt, and then to pass this adaptation on to their progeny. In the case of chloroquine, resistance began to develop in certain regions in the 1960's and is now widespread. But at two to four dollars per treatment, ACTs are too expensive for the people who need them most, and for the governments who might provide them to their people.

The WHO estimates that there are 500 million cases of malaria every year, the vast majority occurring in Africa. About 2.7 million people die of malaria annually, making it one of the world's worst disease killers. The global mortality rate surpasses HIV/AIDS and



resistant individual



susceptible individual

by
Jeff Conant
with additional writing by
Timothy J. Krupnik

Pesticide Contamination in the Rio Yaqui

by Jeff Conant

I recently traveled to a Yaqui Indian village in Sonora, Mexico for a gathering to discuss the health impacts of pesticides on the local population. Once upon a time, the Yaquis were subsistence farmers, surviving in the harsh desert of Sonora State thanks to irrigation from their river, the Rio Yaqui. But over the last few centuries things have changed dramatically, and a clearer case of the chemical war on nature and culture could not be found.

When the Green Revolution came to Mexico, the Rio Yaqui was dammed to create a massive irrigation project. Despite a presidential decree declaring that half of the run-off from the dam would go to the Yaqui people, the entire river was diverted. At the time of my visit in May, 2006, the Rio Yaqui had not carried a drop of water for decades. An enormous canal ran alongside the dry gulch, feeding a vast agricultural area growing wheat and cotton for export. The water that runs back into the irrigation ditches after feeding the fields is what the Yaquis drink on a daily basis. This water is, of course, highly contaminated with pesticides. And the Yaqui



Indigenous people gather to seek a remedy for chronic pesticide poisoning.

rivals tuberculosis. Like other infectious diseases, the heavy burden of malaria falls disproportionately on the world's poorest people. And as in the case of these other diseases, the world's wealthiest governments and institutions don't appear to be capable of getting fully behind disease prevention, treatment, or cure. And so, despite the fact that the Artemisa remedy was discovered by the Chinese several thousand years ago, malaria is today the 4th largest killer in the world; malaria may be an ancient disease, but its resurgence is a symptom of a larger modern problem.

Malaria — rollback or blowback?

Malaria was a major obstacle to the colonial occupation of the tropics, making the production of quinine—the first Western malaria drug, derived from the bark of the Andean cinchona tree—a lucrative global trade enterprise as far back as the 18th century. In 1897, a British officer in the Indian Medical Service demonstrated that malaria parasites were transmitted from infected patients to mosquitoes, and back to people (specifically, *Anopheles* mosquitoes, the only genus known to carry the parasite). This discovery was instrumental in developing what are called “vector control strategies,” which target the carriers of the disease (mosquitoes) rather than simply treating those infected. Those strategies, in turn, were fundamental to the major historical events that opened the twentieth century: Without this new understanding of the link between malaria and mosquitoes, the Spanish-American War and the construction of the Panama Canal would never have happened.

After 80% of the people working on the Panama Canal in 1906 were hospitalized for malaria, an intensive mosquito control program was established. By 1912, only 11% of Canal workers contracted the disease. The same controls were applied during the US military occupations of Cuba and the Philippines. Following these campaigns, malaria control methods were deployed around military bases in the southern US to allow soldiers to train year-round.

The history of malaria control parallels the history of colonialism and war. For much of the 20th century, malaria control was carried out through military-style programs, often run by government agencies in the northern countries working to eliminate the disease in areas of concern—where there was something they wanted. In the absence of colonialism and war—that is, if white men's lives are not at stake—malaria control, apparently, is not such a big priority.

Almost a decade ago, the World Bank, the WHO, and 44 African heads of state pledged to cut in half the number of deaths caused by malaria on their continent within ten years, with the help of a program they called Rollback Malaria. Today we are nearing their target date, and rather than being reduced, some countries in East and Southern Africa report that malaria is skyrocketing. The same is true in virtually all of the world's malarial regions. For any disease, this is a startling turn of events; for a disease that has been around almost as long as humans have walked the earth and mosquitoes have bitten them, and whose incidence was dramatically reduced during the middle of the 20th century, it is appalling.

The Rollback Malaria Campaign is currently under fire for mismanagement, with the World Bank taking much of the heat. A recent paper in the medical journal *The Lancet* claims that the World Bank reneged on its promise to spend \$300 million to \$500 million for malaria control in Africa. The authors contend that the Bank concealed the actual amount of its expenditures, reduced its staff of malaria experts from seven to zero shortly after promising to do more to fight the disease, published false epidemiological studies to exaggerate the performance of its projects, and ignored WHO standards by funding clinically obsolete treatments in India. The bank denies these allegations.

The real hope for rolling back malaria, as with any public health threat, is for public health agencies to have the money to approach the threat from several angles at once, with a strong emphasis on prevention. Malaria prevention is largely a question of combining mass treatment of those currently infected with the mass eradication of mosquitoes (the aforementioned “vector control”). But, in most of the world, a century of developing ways to effectively kill mass amounts of malarial mosquitoes has not resulted in “rolling back” the disease. If anything, it has resulted in something more akin to blowback—the effect of a weapon turned back on its owner. Much of this malaria blowback can be pinned on the widespread misuse of the pesticide DDT for vector control and excessive use of single drugs such as chloroquine for treatment. Just as overexposure to chloroquine has caused the malaria parasite to develop resistance to the drug, overexposure of mosquitoes to DDT has drastically reduced the chemical's effectiveness in mosquito control.

Malaria can be considered a social and essentially ecological problem because it is exacerbated by drastic changes in land use such as damming and depleting rivers, massive labor and refugee migration, intractable poverty, and global

warming. Yet, an increasing number of national governments and public health agencies are turning to DDT and other “silver bullet” solutions to reverse the resurgence of malaria.

Since 1972 DDT has been banned in the US and since 2004 it has been banned for agricultural use in most of the world. Those who are ecologically-oriented equate the chemical with all that is sinister and wrong. Its lethal effects would appear to condemn it altogether. Yet, in the world of international public health, and specifically in Africa, DDT is at the heart of a heated and sometimes vicious controversy that would seem to pit conservationists against African babies and public health agencies against the biosphere.

“Better living” through chemistry: DDT, the prize-winning poison

Between 1948 and 1970, malaria was reduced in many parts of the world, and very nearly eradicated in others. From all historical accounts, the major force behind this (temporary) success—the keystone of the most ambitious public health campaign in history—appears to be, the world's first and most infamous synthetic pesticide: DDT.

The chemical was first synthesized in the nineteenth century, but it was not until just before World War II that the Swiss chemist Paul Mueller discovered its insecticidal properties. During the war DDT was used with great success against louse-borne typhus, and by the end of the war years, it had been proven effective against malaria. Not surprisingly, what made DDT so effective at the time is precisely what makes it so notorious now—it is an extremely effective killer, and it persists in the environment.

The decision to ban DDT in the US was the first decision by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), founded in 1970. The new policy was extremely controversial. Critics of the ban point out that two years of public hearings showed that DDT had no harmful effects on human health, and charge that the judge who approved the ban neither attended the proceedings nor read any evidence. (He was an environmentalist and therefore biased against the chemical.) The massive popularity of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, the most widely-read book on environmental issues,

which poetically described the shocking impacts of DDT and other pesticides on birds and wildlife, was largely behind the shift in public opinion. Another highly emotional factor that led to the ban was the placement of the bald eagle on the endangered species list—a state of affairs due in large part to the overuse of DDT.

Malcolm Gladwell, writing for *the New Yorker* about the man who led the global malaria eradication campaign during the heyday of DDT use, said that had the campaign succeeded—which it very nearly did—“we would view [DDT] in the same heroic light as penicillin and the polio vaccine.” Others approach the topic with more venom. Popular author Michael Crichton has called the DDT ban “one of the most disgraceful episodes in the twentieth century history of America,” and wrote in his novel *State of Fear*, “The [DDT] ban has caused more than fifty million needless deaths. Banning DDT killed more people than Hitler.” Nonetheless, the ecological impacts of DDT are dramatic and well-documented, although the specific links to human health are not well known.

However, a chemical called DDE, which is created when DDT breaks down in human body tissue, is a potential endocrine disruptor and persistent organic pollutant—a chemical that closely mimics reproductive hormones in a way that causes any number of problems with conception, pregnancy, and birth. This means that the chemicals' effects pass down from one generation to the next, which would seem to be reason enough to act with precaution, and find other ways to control malaria.

Yet the resurgence of malaria in Africa is leading to a resurgence in DDT use. As one of the “dirty dozen”—the twelve most toxic persistent chemicals known—DDT was banned worldwide in 1995 under the Stockholm Convention, unless its use is required for disease control in a given country. But in 2004, just as the Stockholm Convention fully entered into effect, Tanzania lifted its ban on the chemical. Uganda is considering following suit. And in May of 2006 the US Agency for International Development (USAID) reported that 25 percent (or \$15 million) of its annual malaria budget will be used to fund indoor spraying of DDT.

Malaria can be considered a social and essentially ecological problem, exacerbated by drastic changes in land use.

people—especially the children—are showing the results of this daily diet of poison.

Two crops a year are planted here, with pesticides applied by aerial spraying, by machine, and by hand up to 45 times between planting and harvest. According to research conducted in the mid-nineties by anthropologist Elizabeth Guillet, thirty-three different chemical compounds were used for the control of cotton pests alone from 1959 to 1990. This list includes DDT, dieldrin, endosulfan, endrin, heptachlor, and parathion-methyl, to name a few. Guillet's study reports that, “As recently as 1986, 163 different pesticide formulations were sold in the southern region of the state of Sonora, Mexico. Substances banned in the United States, such as lindane and endrin, are readily available to farmers.” Contamination of the resident human population has been documented, with milk concentrations of lindane, heptachlor, benzene hexachloride, aldrin, and endrin all above limits of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations after one month of lactation.

“Contamination” barely does justice to the extent of the horrors along the former Rio Yaqui. Guillet's study, published in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* in 1998, documented widespread behavioral and neurological disorders



Birth defects are rampant in communities impacted by agrochemicals.

among 4 and 5 year old Yaqui children, such that many could not perform simple tasks such as drawing a human figure or walking a balance beam. By also testing Yaqui children from a village in the foothills outside of the agricultural zone, Guillette was able to ascertain that the causal agent of these health problems can only be agrochemicals. My visit to one of the Yaqui pueblos revealed numerous children with physical defects confining them to wheelchairs or sentencing them to early death.

The Yaqui number only about 27,500 people living in eight pueblos in Sonora, according to the Mexican Secretary of the Environment and Natural Resources. When the future of a small, genetically unique group of people is threatened by the concerted efforts of an ethnic majority—there is a word for it. The word is genocide.

Like the global resurgence of malaria, the chemical genocide confronting the Yaquis is a symptom of the military-industrial approach to, well, everything. The most recent estimates by the WHO suggest that there are 3 million cases and 220,000 deaths annually from acute pesticide poisoning—but these estimates are based on hospitalizations, not on actual poisonings. The vast majority of such cases go untreated and unreported. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) estimates that some 3% of farm workers suffer from acute poisoning each year. With a global labor force of 1.3 billion people, this means that as many as 39 million people may suffer acute poisoning annually. That's an epidemic. And this does not account for chronic poisoning, which leads to a host of reproductive, neurological and behavioral problems nearly impossible to diagnose. It also does not account for the long-term ecological impact of persistent chemicals such as DDT.

Of course, if DDT were only used to control malaria, it would not have achieved the status of a global environmental health threat that it has; the problem may not be that DDT was used, but *how* it was used. Aside from massive use in malaria eradication campaigns in the 1950's and 1960's, DDT was—and still is—part of a vast arsenal of synthetic chemicals that have been poured, sprayed, dusted, and dumped indiscriminately and without restraint as a remedy for every pest problem imaginable, from cockroaches to carpenter ants to cabbage beetles. This near-exuberant use of DDT and other chemical cocktails has also caused mosquitoes to adapt so that, within a very little time after the introduction of DDT, it ceased being quite so effective.

Breeding resistance: the effects of excess pesticide usage

Wherever militant strategies dependent on mass killing are applied—from Vietnam to Iraq to the war on pests and disease—resistance crops up to prolong the struggle. In the case of excessive pesticide use, resistance is as inevitable as gravity or disappointing choices for electoral office. A staggering 2.5 million tons of industrial pesticides are used globally each year, leading to pesticide resistance in an estimated 125 species of mosquitoes. In her book *Reoccurring Silent Spring*, Patricia Haynes noted that in 1962, 137 insect species were known to be resistant to pesticides; by the late 1980s the number of resistant species had exceeded 500, and counting.

The process by which pesticides are often rendered useless in the war on pests is simple: Imagine that a public health official in Uganda (for example) decides that the best way to kill off mosquitoes is with large and repeated applications of DDT. If spraying kills perhaps 95% of the mosquitoes, the remaining 5% will reproduce voluminously (they can have multiple generations in an extremely short time, especially in the tropics) to create more resistant offspring. After a few weeks of breeding, the majority of insects will carry the same selective advantage against the pesticide, rendering it pretty much useless. Insect ecologists call this “selective resistance” to pesticides.

Some counter that we can deal with this problem by creating pesticides that are 100% effective. But scientists have never been able to create any killing agent—be they pesticides or chemicals developed to kill people in warfare—that is completely effective. Given ample time and the right conditions, resistance will always develop.

The “War on Bugs”

Strolling down the aisle at any garden store you may encounter Force®, Warrior®, or Karate® insecticides by Syngenta, Ambush® and Target® insecticides, bug bomb insecticide dispensers, Raid® anti-ant spray, and Lasso® herbicides by Monsanto. The military metaphors at work here are impossible to overlook. From the early need for malaria control during imperial conquest to the militant use of synthetic pesticides in both agriculture and public health, from their discovery and use during World War II to the ways they have been used, promoted, and advertised ever since, pesticides are intimately associated with warfare and conquest: These agrochemical brand names are merely signs pointing to the paradigm of chemical war against nature.

The class of pesticides known as organophosphates were developed by the Nazis in the 1930's and used to control disease in concentration camps and as nerve toxins at the front. At the same time, the Allied forces developed herbicides to destroy enemy crops. Twenty years later, a new generation of these same herbicides won infamy as Agent Orange in Vietnam—a chemical known to have severely affected at least four million Vietnamese and untold numbers of American GIs. More recently, a chemical cousin of Agent Orange called Glyphosate—known by its cowboy creators as “Roundup”—has been used to wage the so-called “War on Drugs” by defoliating large swaths of the Colombian Amazon.

Aerial spraying itself—innocuously referred to as “crop-dusting”—is also a legacy of World War II. After the war, the surplus of small planes and trained pilots, along with an immense stockpile of chemical killing agents, were converted directly to agricultural use in the US.

Ending the war on nature

“Unlike many diseases, pesticide poisoning is completely preventable.”

—Pesticide Action Network North America

The conventional chemical warfare approach to both public health and to food production has proven, beyond all reason, to be at once toxic in the extreme and utterly ineffective.

Small, targeted applications of DDT may be a reasonable short-term solution to prevent the spread of the Anopheles mosquito—and blanket dismissals of it as a useful way to break the cycle of malaria transmission may be as damaging as indiscriminate use of the chemical. But in the long term, measures that are at once more ecological and

human-centered must be developed and promoted, because mosquitoes and other insects we compete with will continue to resist our chemical cocktails. Such techniques should ultimately rely on multiple methods to manage infectious diseases, rather than placing quasi-religious faith in chemicals like DDT.

Malaria and other infectious diseases can be tackled in an integrated way that involves the affected communities, rather than in the top down command-and-control approach favored by the international development agencies. While malaria is indeed an extreme concern in Africa, what is more problematic is the dysfunctional and impoverished public health system. Proper funding for disease control in sub-saharan Africa should place a priority on educating communities on how to reduce the chances of contracting malaria. Along with education, integrated prevention and treatment are key.

Zanzibar provides an example of integrated approaches to disease management. 230,000 residents of this semi-autonomous Tanzanian island who grapple with malaria were given insecticide-treated bed nets. These barriers reduce the chance of Anopheles mosquitoes feeding on Zanzibaris while they sleep. Although \$2-3 per person more costly than inundation with DDT, this method is undoubtedly healthier for humans and lowers pest resistance as well. By reducing the number of mosquitoes that come into direct contact with the pesticide, resistance is much slower to develop than it would be given the aerial bombing of a village with DDT. And after encountering parasite resistance to quinine, Zanzibar wisely switched to using Artemesia-based combination treatments in 2004. Using these methods, Zanzibar expects to curb malaria in 80% of the island by 2008.

In Mexico, successful rates of malaria control have been achieved with reduced use of chemicals. Since 1959, Mexico has applied over 4,000 tons of DDT a year. But in 2000, a complete ban was enforced. Since then a “focalized treatment” approach that recognizes the unique social and ecological dynamics of communities and ecological zones has been used. Mexican health officials routinely identify at-risk communities and reduce mosquito populations through three-month intensive programs combining selective and targeted pesticide use with alternative drug treatments.

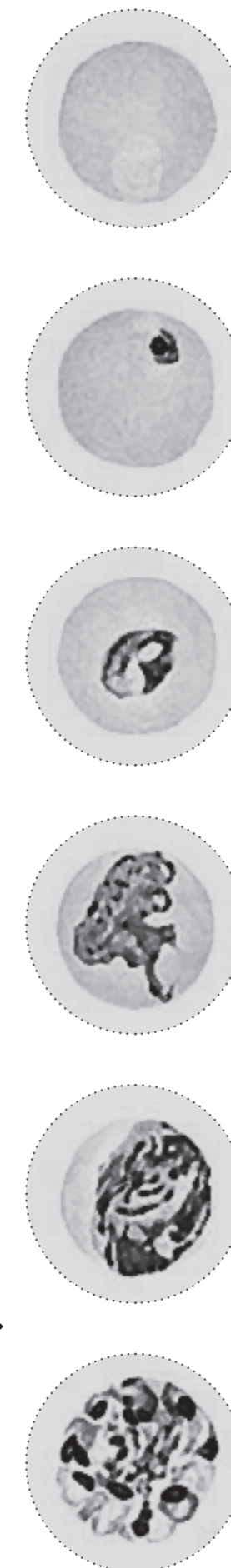
Other countries are experimenting with public health programs that rely on insect repellants, the use of mosquito-eating fish in ponds and rice paddies, screening houses to prevent mosquito entry, swamp and puddle drainage, and increased public education.

With the growth of ecological knowledge over the past several decades, understanding of the mosquito life-cycle and breeding habits form the basis for this relatively new approach to disease control. While still under-recognized and under-funded, these programs work from the belief that understanding the ecological conditions that allow for massive mosquito breeding and the social and economic conditions that lead to the spread of disease will help to reduce the burden of disease in a lasting way, while also building a population capable of passing this knowledge on to neighboring communities and future generations.

The resurgence of malaria and the renewed vigor with which DDT is being promoted to combat it are symptoms of a political and economic problem. Proponents of DDT and other “sure-fire” insecticides purport that these methods are simple, effective and, most importantly, *inexpensive*. But while the United States spends hundreds of billions of dollars fighting its “War on Terror,” why are we loathe to fund integrated pest and disease control programs that use ecological principles rather than try to circumvent them, and that empower communities to tackle their own health problems rather than treating them as victims of a disease which—so goes the logic—they cannot possibly understand?

The answer is sadly routine. Unless there is political motivation or some kind of threat to US hegemony (or US health), the problems of poor countries are ignored. Rather than working to develop sound and integrated approaches to managing diseases and insect pests—approaches that would not only save lives but would win the hearts and minds of the international community—we let the dollar define our bottom line, and this means less community-based education and management and more DDT. Token amounts of money are thrown at the problem to demonstrate a willingness to do *something*—but in the case of disease prevention, half measures are worse than no measures at all. The end result of choosing this ill-conceived path seems clear. Like the ecological mechanisms that result in insect resistance to pesticides, these approaches will likely serve to refine the resistance of those under attack, be they bug, blood parasite, or human host. LiP

Many strains of malaria can be treated with a combination of quinine and chloroquine, but *Plasmodium falciparum*, (artfully rendered, to the right) has developed resistance to this treatment. *Plasmodium falciparum* is often used as an example for evolution. Since sickle-cell disease carriers are relatively resistant to malaria, and people from malaria-stricken countries are much more likely to have the sickle-cell trait, it is often given as an example to show how mutations are not inherently good or bad, but in different environments could have either negative or positive effects.



Torture, Inc.

Anatomy of a CIA Front Company

A.C. THOMPSON AND TREVOR PAGLEN'S NEW BOOK, *TORTURE TAXI: ON THE TRAIL OF THE CIA'S RENDITION FLIGHTS* (MELVILLE HOUSE) DETAILS HOW, USING AN INTRICATE AND LONGSTANDING DOMESTIC INFRASTRUCTURE, THE CIA USED THE EVENTS OF 9/11 TO GRAB INFLUENCE AND SUPPORT FOR AN EXPANDED INTERNATIONAL COVERT NETWORK OF PLANES, USED TO FERRY POLITICAL PRISONERS TO AND FROM SECRET PRISONS (DRYLY REFERRED TO AS "EXTRAORDINARY RENDITION"), WHERE MANY WERE TORTURED. THOMPSON IS A SAN FRANCISCO-BASED INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST CURRENTLY WORKING FOR THE *SF WEEKLY*; PAGLEN IS AN ARTIST, WRITER, AND "EXPERIMENTAL GEOGRAPHER" WORKING OUT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AT UC BERKELEY. *LiP* EDITOR BRIAN AWEHALI SAT DOWN WITH BOTH OF THEM TO TALK ABOUT HOW THEY GOT THE STORY, WHAT THE STORY MEANS, AND WHAT CAN BE DONE IN RESPONSE.

LiP: What led you to this story?

ACT: *Torture Taxi*, came out of a newspaper story we did for the *Bay Guardian* newspaper in late 2005, and the story detailed our little piece of the extraordinary rendition puzzle. What we first started looking at was the connection between the planes that were flying people around the globe to be tortured by the CIA in far-off dungeons and a local political figure in northern Nevada. One of the first things we started looking at was the veneer that the CIA had set up to keep us from understanding who was behind these flights and who was responsible for the process of extraordinary rendition.

TP: Yeah, I had been doing work as a geographer at UC Berkeley, doing a project there about "black sites," secret military sites like Area 51, and, through researching that, met a bunch of people who watch airplanes and research secret military operations. A couple of years ago, people in that community started noticing

these strange unmarked airplanes flying to places like Guantanamo Bay.

So I started keeping files on them. It was this weird data that I didn't know what to do with. But as more and more of this extraordinary rendition story came out, particularly late last year when the stories about the secret CIA presence came out in the *Washington Post* and from Human Rights Watch, I looked at my files and realized I had a lot of information about these planes.

So how does the network of planes and secret sites work?

TP: Basically, the CIA has proprietary airline companies. The first one was called Civil Air Transport, which turned into Air America. They've had a menagerie of planes for a long time, but they set up a bunch more of them immediately after 9/11. They have a fleet of airplanes with a front company called Aero Contractors out of North Carolina—



A US chartered Boeing 737 aircraft landing to refuel at Glasgow airport before allegedly flying terror suspects to secret detention centers in Eastern Europe.

ACT: —that actually does the flying and the maintenance of the planes.

TP: It's like any other kind of airplane fleet, except it's run by the CIA. And it's important to note that the groundwork for this particular fleet of airplanes was laid in the 1990s. The fake owners and board members of these bogus companies started in the 1990s start being assigned social security numbers in the nineties, or 2000. They had been creating these phony identities long before they were thinking about Osama bin Laden. They had this whole network ready to bring to life.

The rendition program actually started in the mid-1990s under an executive order by Bill Clinton to go after the guys from the first World Trade Center bombing, who fled to Pakistan.

ACT: So you start off with a bunch of shell, paper companies. When you set up a shell company, what you do is you have a lawyer write up the paperwork that you need to create a corporation. You file that with the

secretary of state, and you say, "This is the new company that we're starting; here are the executives, here are the members of the board of directors, this is what we're going to do, and we're in business now, here's our letterhead, this is our address," and you file that with the state.

So Trevor and I started looking at these companies, and we start going and getting the actual documents filed to create these companies, and it's really interesting, because when we research the names of the supposed executives of these companies, we can't find any proof that they exist at all. You would think an executive of a company would leave a trace in the world—records related to real estate, cars, previous employment or businesses, bank loans, that sort of thing. But you don't find any of that.

Does that mean that in the corporate charter process there's no requirement to provide any identification for the people on your corporate board?

ACT: That's correct, yeah. We could form a phony corporation, the three of us in this room, and we could be Manny, Moe, and Jack, and we could go file it with the state of California, and no one would know the difference.

There's a whole web of these paper companies, companies like Crowell Aviation, like Keeler and Tate Management in Nevada, like Tepper Aviation—

TP: —Devon Holdings and Leasing, Steven's Express Leasing, Premiere Executive Transport Services. There's tons of them.

ACT: Dozens. And you set these up, they pretend to be real companies, and the fictional owners of the company buy the planes. They go to the companies that actually make the planes, and they buy the planes.

There's paperwork for that transaction, and we can get that paperwork from the Federal Aviation Administration, so now we know who bought the planes, we know

who owns the planes, and we know that the company doesn't really exist. The address that they give belongs to a lawyer who acts as a registered agent for the company. Now, that's not unusual—a lot of companies have a registered agent. It might be the president of the company, or it might be the controller, or it might be the lawyer who helped set it up. In this case, most of the companies claim their address to be their registered agent's address, but have no physical building whatsoever. When you go see these registered agents and you go knock on their doors and say "We're interested in the connection between you, this particular company that you supposedly are the agent for, and the CIA and torture," the weird thing is these people don't really get that freaked out. They don't act surprised. They just throw you out.

real directors, it has a real president, it has real employees, and it employs a lot of pilots and mechanics.

TP: The company most well-known for flying these rendition flights is called Aero Contractors, and is based in Smithfield, North Carolina, southeast of Raleigh by about an hour. When you go to this town, you really get the sense that it's haunted by the fact that in the middle of this town there's a CIA airport. Everybody knows it's

be middle-aged, all men, and a lot of them seem to have a military or government background. The pilot we interviewed who used to work for the company said that to get a job with this company, you go to northern Virginia near CIA headquarters, and you interview with people who are clearly CIA personnel. They don't present themselves as CIA personnel, but you go see them when you start with the company, and then you never see them again, because the work is in North Carolina, you live in North Carolina, the people who run the company are in North Carolina, but you get vetted by the CIA to start with. The pilot we interviewed said that everyone who works for the company knows they work for the CIA, but they maintain this sort of charade, this façade that they're working for a private company.

How do you hope people will respond to this story? What can they do about it, and who can be held accountable?

ACT: Well, there's working to bring back the practice of revoking corporate charters. That would be one point of accountability. If you want to put pressure on your representative, that might help, but there are great human rights groups following this and doing great work—Human Rights Now, Amnesty International, the ACLU, and Human Rights First have all applied pressure and done work directly on this issue.

I also think it would be interesting to take the lawyers who are setting up these phony companies, take them before their state bars and ask them if they knew they were setting up phony companies. No state bar allows lawyers to knowingly do that. It's a clear breach of legal ethics. So the bar should ask them: "Did you talk to anyone whose names you put down as being the executives and the directors of this company? Do you believe these people exist? Did you meet with them? How did you set this company up?" I think that would be a fun thing to do, and I would encourage someone to do that. **LIP**

The people that own these planes lease them to a company that actually flies them. That company is semi-real; it has real directors, it has a real president, it has real employees, and it employs a lot of pilots and mechanics.

Planes are expensive; there must be a trail associated with that money, right?

TP: Typically, with a legitimate company, you'll see a copy of the contract for the bank loan—the FAA will have that on file. When you look at these planes and notice they didn't have to borrow \$100 million to buy one of these airplanes, it's another clue.

ACT: There's no financing document anywhere. Usually, you can find a financing document for a real company in high-end online databases, and these just don't show up. They're called Uniform Corporation Code financing statements, and they're not there. Also, the other weird thing that you notice with these transaction slips—?

TP: —But most of these planes were not bought for anything. They were bought for nothing, or for a dollar.

ACT: Boeing will sell a 737 to a company, a fake CIA company, for a dollar or nothing.

So fake companies buy the planes. Then what?

ACT: The people that own the planes lease the planes to a company that actually flies them. That company is semi-real; it has

an airport run by the CIA, but nobody will really talk about it. Most of the pilots who work for this company live there; most of the airplanes are based there. A typical flight route will be from Johnson County Airport to Dulles Airport, and then you'll see it take off for somewhere like Iceland or Shannon, Ireland, somewhere overseas. And what that mean is that it flew to Washington, DC, picked someone up, is going overseas, and will come back via the same route.

ACT: Aero Contractors also maintains a hangar at another airport about an hour from Smithfield, in Wayne County, North Carolina, and they have a commercial-sized Boeing 737 they fly out of an airport that used to be a military base.

When you visit the pilots' houses, they live in these nice, quiet, suburban tract houses around Smithfield. They tend to

A GUIDE TO OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED American Torture Methods

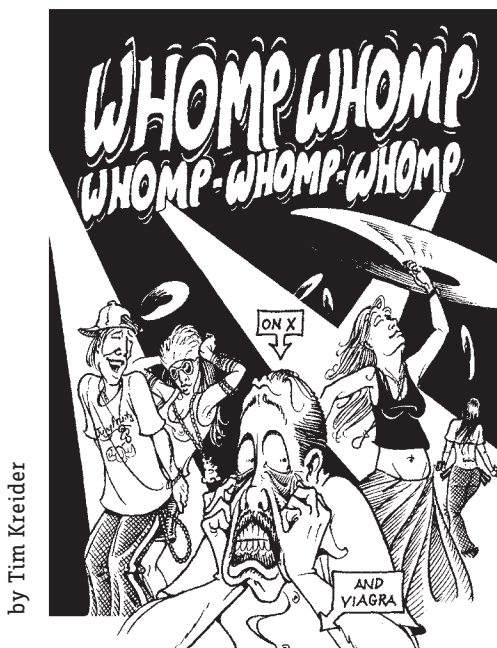
FORCE-FEEDING



SENSORY DEPRIVATION



SEXUAL DEGRADATION



by Tim Kreider

PSYCHOLOGICAL



Hear the podcast from which this piece is taken at looselip.org

Cockroaches & Asthma

by Richard Schweid

Asthma is debilitating and terrifying, and while rarely fatal, there are records of asthma deaths stretching back to the second century B.C. Aretaeus of Cappadocia was the first writer to describe the disease, and noted that it could suffocate its victims. While deaths from asthma are still rare, they are increasing, and rising most dramatically among poor, younger males. In 1978, there were less than 2,000 deaths per year from asthma in the United States, a number that had jumped to over 4,500 by 1998. Black, inner-city males are almost three times more likely to die of it than any other population group. In the five boroughs of New York, 120,000 school-age children are estimated to suffer from asthma, and it is the number one reason for school absences.

Both cigarette smoke and dust are recognized as factors in the onset of asthma, but neither is the greatest allergen in an inner-city environment. That distinction belongs to cockroaches. A connection between cockroaches and asthma began to be established in the early 1960s, when it was discovered that skin tests revealed an allergy to cockroaches in some 28 percent of patients suffering from allergies (Bernton and Brown, 1967). Subsequent tests provided more data. "Among almost six hundred allergic patients belonging to four ethnic groups, routinely visiting seven hospitals in New York City, over 70 percent reacted positively to the cockroach allergen," wrote Cornwell

Ogni scarrafone é bello a mamma sua

(Every cockroach is beautiful to its mother)

~ Neopolitan folk saying

by
Kari Lydersen

This century's most famous cockroach is probably the bug in Franz Kafka's classic short story "The Metamorphosis," about a man named Gregor Samsa, who awakens one morning to find himself turned into a giant insect, flat on his back, legs waving in the air. The change dooms Samsa to a lonely life on the margins, despised by his own family and eventually dying alone. Kafka strenuously denied that this bug was specifically a cockroach, believing that identifying any specific creature would weaken the story's power to play on readers' imaginations of whatever insect was most repulsive to them.

Kafka's efforts to avoid specificity were largely in vain, however. For the vast majority of readers, that most repulsive of insects was, and steadfastly remains, the cockroach.

Which is a shame, really, since only a handful of the estimated 10,000 species of cockroaches—or *Blattarians*, originating from the Greek *blattae*—bother humans at all. The bulk of species are innocuous outdoors-dwellers who play a crucial role in pollinating plants, decomposing matter, and returning nutrients to the soil.

And even the infamous indoor pests—including the German, American, Oriental, brown-banded and smokeybrown roaches—aren't actually as filthy and disease-ridden as one might think. Scientists who know them well point out that they don't carry pathogens like houseflies do, and they are conscientious self-groomers, almost like cats.

But they hold a place in our collective psyche, or at least in the middle-class white American psyche, that evokes visions of filth, poverty, laziness and general lapse of control. They are far more than insects—they are symbols of things we fear and loathe.

"People have a very gut reaction to cockroaches specifically," said Dini Miller, an entomologist at Virginia Tech who specializes in cockroaches. "If I go to a party and say I work with cockroaches, people immediately say, 'Oh my god.' Then they proceed to tell me at length about all their encounters with cockroaches."

Miller recalls horrifying her then-boyfriend's mother by accidentally releasing a cockroach in her house. (That relationship failed. She ended up marrying another cockroach scientist.)

A 1981 poll by the US Fish and Wildlife Service named cockroaches as the country's most hated "pest," ahead of mosquitoes and rats. Twenty-five years later, that probably hasn't changed. But along with our hatred of cockroaches, we grant them grudging respect and admiration. They are survivors. They can eat almost anything (though they are reputed to abhor cucumbers) or go without food for weeks; they can survive in sealed containers or other harsh conditions; they have outwitted generations of exterminators. One clinically dispassionate 1957 study called "The Longevity of Starved Cockroaches" found that female American cockroaches could live 42 days on



water alone, and most species of roach can survive for several weeks without food or water.

"They're incredibly well-designed animals, they've been around for hundreds of millions of years and their design hasn't changed much in that time," said science writer David George Gordon, author of the book *The Compleat Cockroach: A Comprehensive Guide to the Most Despised and Least Understood Creature on Earth*. "Pests are great at being generalists. [Cockroaches] can eat just about anything, so they don't have to worry if one particular food isn't available. They've been able to survive mass extinctions. They have all sorts of amazing sensory abilities. They can smell a molecule of water."

Cockroaches can also fully regenerate limbs and antennae. Their central nervous systems feature an early warning system utilizing remarkably sensitive hairs, called *cerci*, each with its own nerve fiber connecting directly to their legs (not their brains), that serve as motion detectors. The phenomenon of roaches scattering at the flick of a light switch is widely misunderstood: When entering a room, a person sets air in motion, and the *cerci* react to that moving air instantaneously, sending their owners scattering at speeds of up to 20 body lengths per second (comparable to 100 miles an hour for a human). Cockroaches possess another quality that quite a few humans and scientists long for: In times of stress, females can reproduce on their own. Only female offspring are produced in this process, and *blattarians* may only persist in

this for one or two generations, but the staggering evolutionary advantages are obvious.

According to Richard Schweid, author of the wildly entertaining book *The Cockroach Papers: A Compendium of History and Lore*, [see sidebar] fossils of cockroaches date back to at least the Carboniferous period, or roughly 325 million BC. This means that they predated dinosaurs by more than 150 million years, and humans by more than 300 million. "Whereas every other insect fossil from that epoch shows an animal that is now extinct," writes Schweid, "the cockroaches found buried deep in the earth of the Lower Illinois coal measure are little changed from those found today in houses on top of that same ground."

Cockroaches are true hustlers and underdogs, living by their wits on the leftovers of society. Human underdogs and oppressed people have often taken them as their mascot, or defiantly appropriated the label that others might have cast on them in scorn. Oscar Zeta Acosta's book, *The Revolt of the Cockroach People*, about Chicano activism in LA in the 1970s, became a touchstone of the growing Chicano power movement. The "cockroaches" were Chicano activists who fought police brutality, corruption, and racism in the Catholic Church and oppression in general.

The famous Spanish and Mexican song "La Cucaracha" has been a satirical anthem and popular drinking song throughout the ages, with a myriad of verses added and revised to reflect the times. It is said the song came to Mexico from Spain

in 1968. "Positive reactions were most marked among Puerto Ricans (59 percent), less marked among Negroes (47 percent) and Italians (17 percent) and least among Jews (5 percent); this is the same order as the severity of cockroach infestations (*B. germanica*) reported in the homes of these four groups in New York City.

Once the first studies were published linking cockroaches and asthma, the data began to come in from far and wide. Studies in a long list of countries, including Egypt, France, Switzerland, Japan, Portugal, New Zealand, Holland, Mexico, and Spain revealed the same thing: The presence of cockroaches can produce an asthma attack, or that of a closely related illness called rhinitis.

By 1993, the federal government was convinced enough to fund a federal study in eight US urban areas, which looked at 1,528 children under age 10 with asthma who lived in the inner city. The \$17 million study was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in May 1997, and concluded that cockroaches were the single most probable environmental allergen to set off the children's asthma attacks. The specific chemical triggers appear to be proteins, according to Dr. David Rosenstreich of Albert Einstein Medical College in the Bronx, lead writer of the article.

"These are just ordinary proteins that are part of what makes up a cockroach," he says. "There are at least six or seven allergens that I know of in cockroaches. There are substances in the saliva, feces, and in the blood, all of which are proteins that people are allergic to.

"The usual form of exposure is when the roaches die or molt and become part of the dust, or their feces become part of the dust. Peo-

ple breathe that in and they get allergy problems. The most common of these allergies in the study is asthma. Cockroaches are a problem because there are so many of them and we're essentially locked in with them."

Of the inner-city children studied, almost 37 percent of them tested positive to cockroach allergen, the highest number for a single cause of allergic reaction. This group was followed by some 35 percent who were allergic to dust mites and 23 percent who reacted to cat allergen. Over half the children studied had "high levels" of cockroach allergen in dust collected from their bedrooms, meaning that cockroach feces, discarded exoskeletons, or dead roaches were present.

However, asthmatic reaction to cockroach allergens is not something confined to the inner city. A 1994 study in Kentucky showed that while people living in the suburbs had a relatively low rate of allergy to cockroaches, those living in the inner city of Louisville and those living in rural areas or small towns had comparable allergic reactions, with the strongest reactions in both groups coming from children between the ages of seven and twelve (Garcia, 1994). These tests were done like all allergy tests—a cockroach extract was applied with a skin prick and if a "wheal" formed around the site, it was considered an allergic reaction.

It has been well over a quarter century since the first papers were published indicating that cockroaches could cause an allergic reaction, but doctors who treat asthma have been slow to accept that cockroaches could be a primary culprit in the disease. For many years, it was assumed that the rise in asthma cases was connected to increased air pollution, but stricter envi-

in the 1800s. It is most closely associated with Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa, either as a reference to Villa himself or his temperamental coach, which often broke down ("*La cucaracha, la cucaracha, ya no puede caminar*"—"the cockroach can't walk").

One of the verses, saying the cockroach can't walk because he doesn't have marijuana to smoke, is also said to be a derogatory reference to dictator Victoriano Huerta, a notorious drunk and pothead. So even within the history of the song, the cockroach had both negative and positive connotations; either a reviled corrupt leader or a heroic underdog.

And then there is the use across borders of "roach" to mean the remnants of a marijuana

"For people to say they don't like cockroaches is like me saying I don't like teenagers because I met three of them I don't like."

joint; you could say the description applies not only to the spent joint's physical appearance but also the idea of scraping out the dregs, or being poor and scavenging ashtrays for a hit.

An intriguing insect from cultural and biological points of view, cockroaches also present something of a socio-economic issue. In keeping with stereotypes, they are indeed a bane primarily of the poor. They thrive in high density housing with sub-par sanitation, meaning housing projects or tenement apartments with overcrowding, faulty plumbing and infrequent garbage pickup are perfect habitats.

"Middle-class white America does not realize there are a lot of people in the US who live with an excess of 30,000 cockroaches in their apartment," said Miller, whose job includes preventing cockroach infestations and getting rid of them with minimal pesticide use.

"An uptight white person would think one cockroach is the end of the world and would hire an exterminator and spend all kinds of money, while in other cultures or living situations people just see it as a way of life," added Gordon.

But hysterical responses to cockroaches aren't just an American quirk: Gordon's book mentions a news story wherein an Israeli woman put a single cockroach in the toilet and doused it with so much insecticide that when her husband threw a cigarette in the john, it exploded and he was seriously scalded.

"These guys have been attacked with every poison human beings can come up with," said Miller. "Because of that, their system of metabolizing pesticides has become very good. Those roaches who could break down pesticides survived, ones who couldn't did not. So now we have these roaches that can take a lot of toxin and don't die."

John Fasoldt, owner of United Exterminating Company in New Jersey for 45 years, explains that the current method of extermination uses bait combining corn syrup and hydramethylnon, a relatively mild poison which is not considered to pose a risk to humans or animals. Cockroaches lured into eating the bait die within several days. In the past, more toxic chemicals like arsenic were

commonly used to poison them, with sometimes disastrous results for small children and pets who also managed to eat the poison.

"[This] bait poisons not only the roach, but everything about the roach, so when he contacts his friends and relatives, they die too," said Fasoldt. "Roaches eat dead roaches and roach droppings, and they also transfer liquids between them, so that kills them."

But natural selection has favored roaches who don't like the flavor of bait. Since a German roach's egg sac holds 52 baby cockroaches, reproduction and hence natural selection happen at a rapid clip.

"The more stuff we throw at them the tougher they get," said Miller. "It's no accident they've been around [350] million years. They can take a lot of abuse."

Cockroaches don't just appear out of the blue—they have to be physically transported into a location. But once they are there they are extremely hard to get rid of. In a multi-unit dwelling, if even one unit fails to exterminate them, they will keep re-conquering the whole building.

"Your kitchen is connected to Mrs. Smith's, hers to Mrs. Jones above her," Fasoldt said. "They'll get under the kitchen sink and crawl along the pipes into the bathroom, the basement, the laundry."

While, contrary to popular belief, cockroaches are not major vectors of infectious disease, they are a major cause of health problems for low income

urban dwellers. Asthma and allergies which are caused or exacerbated by the dust of cockroach feces and discarded cockroach "shells" are prevalent and growing. Several studies have identified cockroaches as the number one cause of asthma in inner city children. The National Institutes of Health have reported that 10 to 15 million people likely suffer roach-induced allergies. [see sidebar]

"They shed their skin seven times and they poop all the time," said Miller. "This is a very dry fecal pellet, with the consistency of sand. [blattarians *never waste or excrete water, their most precious resource—ed.*] It contains tons of allergens, and in winter you have closed apartments with the heat turned on, so the stuff dries out, circulates in the air and people are breathing it like crazy."

"Middle class white America does not realize there are a lot of people in the US who live with an excess of 30,000 cockroaches in their apartment."

Interestingly, an allergy triggered by roaches can extend to similar proteins in the exoskeletons of invertebrates like lobster and shrimp, making it dangerous for sufferers to eat those dishes.

Miller notes that German cockroaches, the inch-long pests most commonly infesting human homes, evolved in tandem with people going back literally to prehistoric times. Of the 150-or-so species considered pests, less than half are indoor insects, and there are only about five species including the German and American roach (also called the palmetto bug) that are ubiquitous around the world. Some of their lesser-known brethren dwell exclusively in caves in the Philippines or Puerto Rico; others live in South American jungles.

"For people to say they don't like cockroaches is like me saying I don't like teenagers because I met three of them I don't like," said Gordon.

The largest cockroach, from Australia, is about six inches long and can have a one-foot wingspan. The smallest is about 4 millimeters long, and lives in the nests of leafcutter ants in North America, eating the fungus the ants cultivate.

Gordon, who collects cockroaches from every place he visits and pins them on a display board, was thrilled to buy an Australian Giant Burrowing Cockroach at a recent insect fair in LA.

"People will say 'look at that beautiful beetle,' then when you say 'that's not a beetle it's a cockroach,' they'll say 'Ew!' and back away," said

Gordon. "There are some cockroaches that are really beautiful, but as soon as you say their name they become gross. It's learned behavior."

He cites a study reported by USDA researchers in 1992 in which children up to age four had no problem drinking a glass of milk with a rubber cockroach in it, but after that they learned from parents to be disgusted by the insect.

Today, one species of cockroach is actually a highly prized pet and classroom educational aid: the Madagascar Hissing Cockroach. Various websites offer "Hissers" for sale, along with special hisser diets and habitats. The going rate is \$30 for four adults and a habitat.

Hissers are even being trained as potential military operatives. Scientists at the University of

Michigan have been advancing work originally begun in Japanese bio-robot experiments, testing whether hissing cockroaches may be able to carry microcameras or voice transmitters, either for surveillance purposes or as "ideal" scouts—given their resistance to radiation—to assess the damage of a nuclear disaster.

Cockroaches can indeed survive about 10 times more radiation than a human being: According to a 1963 study, German cockroaches can endure 9,600 rads over 35 days, compared to the fatal levels of 1,000 rads over two weeks for humans.

However, cockroaches are not unique among insects or other organisms in their resistance to radiation. A fall 2001 article in the journal *American Entomologist* notes that other insects, including fruit flies and grain borers, can actually survive more radiation than cockroaches. A pink bacterium that smells like rotten cabbage can even survive 1.5 million or more rads, compared to the roach's 10,000. But flies and bacteria just don't fit the public's image of what the ultimate survivor should look like.

"Experiments have shown that butterflies, rabbits and goldfish can also survive high amounts of radiation, but you don't hear about them surviving a nuclear war," noted Gordon. "There's this horror we have of leaving the world to be inhabited by cockroaches. The lowly, most horrible things will be the ones ruling the earth after we blow it up." **LiP**

ronmental protection laws have reduced air pollution in many cities at the same time as the number of asthma cases have continued to climb.

"The inner-city study was so large, and so well done, with so much data that it has pretty much led to a general acceptance that this is a problem," said Rosenstreich. "It may not be the only one, but it's significant."

Was the study worth \$17 million? "On the one hand, the study's conclusions may seem obvious, but on the other hand, they have motivated people to think about doing something about it," he said. "The government is now doing a big study focusing on cockroach eradication. It has motivated lots of people to do something about this problem by highlighting something that everyone was aware of but didn't realize how important it was relative to all the other things."

It may take people a while to link asthma and roaches in their minds, but for centuries there has been a general sentiment among the population that cockroaches must be vectors and spreaders of disease. Why else would people find them so repulsive, if not because they represent a real threat? Still, the fact remains that while they certainly can serve as both vectors and disseminators of disease, they only do so infrequently. In fact, setting off asthma and allergy attacks represents the most general and widespread threat to human health from cockroaches yet to be identified.

This sidebar was adapted from *The Cockroach Papers: A Compendium of History and Lore* [Four Walls Eight Windows], by Richard Schweid.

Profit, Control, and the Myth of Total Security

by
Brian Awehali
and
Ariane Conrad

In the not-too-distant future, wandering Alzheimer's patients will never get lost, unconscious and unidentified patients will never be misdiagnosed due to identity or medical-records confusion, babies aren't swapped or nabbed, and checking in for your flight at the airport requires nary a document; you just show up and wave your "smart" ID-chip augmented hand over the appropriate sensor to provide biometric identifiers and your credit card account number. The chip also contains a Global Positioning System (GPS) for tracking, so you're never lost either, thanks to a network of satellites observing you from low earth orbit. As you traverse the closed circuit camera-festooned distance between the check-in counter and your departure gate, the advertisements on the walls are all tailored to your tastes and interests on-the-fly, thanks to the consumer profile generated by the Radio Frequency Identification (RFIDs) embedded in your clothing, jewelry, toiletries, snacks, and luggage. After your flight attendant takes your order, he runs a scanner over your right hand to deduct the cost. As you drift off to sleep, you reflect how unconcerned you are that terrorists might have boarded the plane; such concerns seem so paranoid since the advent of Total Security.

What most differentiates this possible future from our present is the capacity, intent, and unobstructed freedom for a centralized power to track and link the personal information of the population at large. Fingerprinting and phone-tapping have been with us for some time, of course, and in the past few decades surveillance cameras have become ubiquitous. A GPS has been installed in every new cell phone built in recent years. And now an array of technologies exist to recognize and track biometrics, or unique physical identifiers, beyond the humble fingerprint. Your retina, veins, voice, iris, signature, walk, brainwaves, face shape, even the way you type—all of these can be used to identify you with varying degrees of accuracy from varying distances.

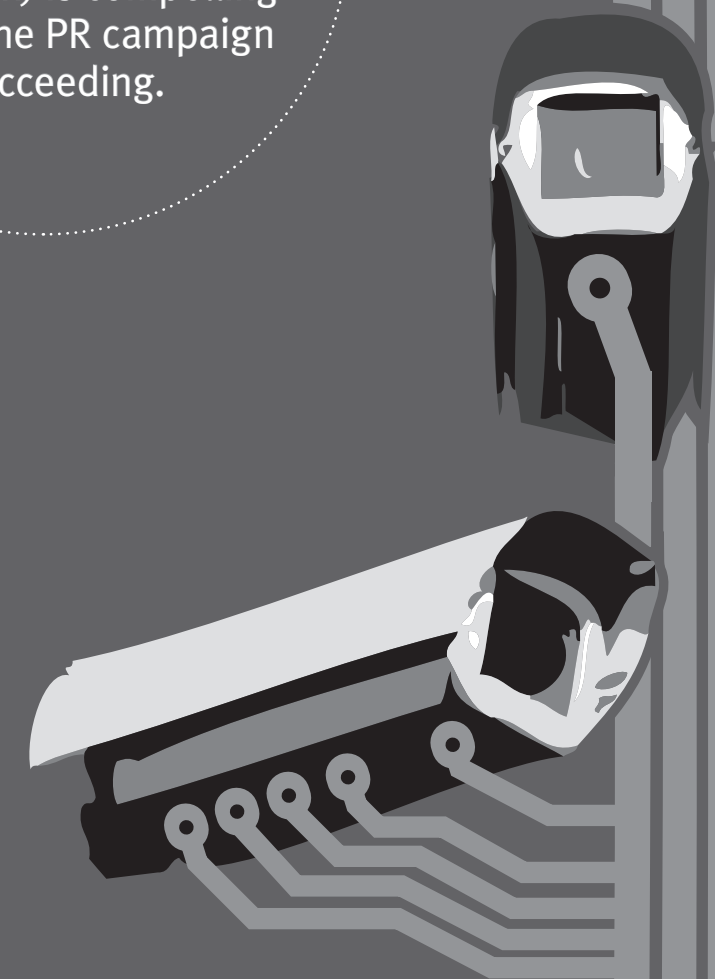
A simpler foolproof identifier is also in the works: RFIDs, first developed in WWII to allow aircrafts to beam a radiowave signal identifying them as "friend or foe," tag any object in which they're embedded with a unique code. Today they can be smaller than a grain of sand and recognized, scanned, or transmitted to by "readers" from up to 40 feet away. They're commonly used in toll booth speed passes, to track shipments or inventory, and to tag pets and livestock. In October 2004 the FDA approved the

RFID-based Verichip as a medical device for humans, with the ostensible purpose of assessing emergency patients and locating memory-impaired individuals.

Katherine Albrecht and Liz McIntyre, champions of one prominent RFID-awareness campaign in the US and authors of *Spychips: How Major Corporations and Government Plan to Track Your Every Move with RFID* warn: "[Some] uniform companies like AmeriPride and Cintas are embedding RFID tracking tags into their clothes that can withstand high temperature commercial washing.... Some schools are already requiring students to wear spychipped identification badges around their necks to keep closer tabs on their daily activities.... Even more disturbingly, RFID could remove the anonymity of cash. Already, the European Union has discussed chipping Euro banknotes, and the Bank of Japan is contemplating a similar program for high-value currency."

In the past, personal information (e.g., the contents of your phone calls and e-mails, your location, your medical records) and identifiers (e.g., your social security number, your fingerprints) were scattered among different databases, with access granted only to a select, and supposedly "authorized," group of people. Most important, your various bits of information were kept segregated from

The fact that most people are more afraid of terrorism than they are of driving a car (which is infinitely more likely to cause death) is compelling evidence the PR campaign is succeeding.



each other. Today, however, data aggregation companies are in the business of compiling and housing this information. These vast databases in the private sector rival the Pentagon's fabled Total Information Awareness program (officially dead, but probably still alive and well)—and could potentially partner with the government, enabling it to evade the restrictions of the Privacy Act of 1974, which bans the state from collecting information on citizens who are not under investigation.

Where Does Fear Get Us?

Proponents of surveillance society can be counted on to broadcast, publish, and tout ad nauseum the real and imaged perils of “terrorism,” and the fact that most people are more afraid of terrorism than they are of driving a car (which is infinitely more likely to cause death) is compelling evidence that they're PR campaign is succeeding. Yet there's little evidence that the problems they present would be solved or prevented by the “solutions” being peddled.

More important, the damage and death toll associated with “terrorism” is dwarfed by the damage and death toll associated with business-as-usual and our government. According to Maureen Webb, a report by the State Department (discontinued in 2004), shows that between the years 1995 and 2003, the annual global average number of terrorism-related deaths (including the 774 who died in the 9/11 attack), is 774.

By contrast, 1.2 million people die in car accidents each year. Roughly 140,000 people died or suffered serious health problems from taking the pain medication Vioxx. At least 600,000 Iraqi civilians have died as a result of US military action and economic warfare. And although it's impossible to know precisely how many people die as a direct result of industrial pollution, cancer alone kills

approximately 550,000 people a year, and the majority of known human carcinogens are (or were) produced by industrial activity.

What's the point? (Not so) simply put, arguments for comprehensive surveillance society comprise a fear-addled litany of threats and fantastic promises of security that are grossly exaggerated by the very corporate and government serial offenders who pose the greatest threat to our health and safety. The breathless marketing of a false sense of security is perhaps the single biggest cash cow of the moment, and the profit to be made from hyping and assembling a surveillance society is enormous.

“A lot of these technologies and systems that are used to keep track of us are conveniences as well; they're not forced upon us,” says Christian Parenti. “They're chosen by us, and then eventually they become indispensable conveniences, like social security numbers, ATMs, or credit cards. Your credit records are used by data mining firms and the government to not only locate you in time and space, but to create entire profiles of people and of groups. And now it [has become] very difficult to operate without a credit card. That's how many of these card technologies began—[they] are introduced for purposes other than surveillance and are adopted willingly by those who are the subjects of the new surveillance.”

Any examination of the relevant history, of course, reveals that, over time, the twin engines of profit and control, employing the complementary tactics of fear and convenience, will ensure that invasive technologies become ever more indispensable to every individual.

Resistances

Given the scope and momentum of the surveillance apparatus, finding effective strategies for countering it is a daunting task. Some critics and antisurveillance

activists favor harm-reduction tactics: If you must use a cell phone, consider a model that allows you to deactivate your GPS; consider not using a credit card (at least until cash is RFID-tagged as well); decline to provide your personal or consumer information at every possible opportunity; avoid surveillance cameras whenever possible.

Still others advocate for more militant disruption and monkeywrenching: hacking large databases of aggregated information, disabling RFIDs by microwaving any product containing one (a tactic that works, by the way), destroying surveillance cameras, and visible protests against policies, agencies, and individuals who assist in the advance of surveillance society.

None of these proposed strategies, however, will change the broader systems driving surveillance. Merely avoiding surveillance will not address the problem of creep, or the reality that the number of un surveilled spaces will continue to dwindle. Hacker solutions merely create a technological arms race while placing all hope with a largely clandestine, and arguably unaccountable, group of specialists which, again, does nothing to address the broader forces at work.

“There has to be legislation demanded that creates firewalls around certain types of information so it can't all be aggregated and so that it can't be used by police forces, particularly politicized police forces, to intimidate those they consider to be dissident or deviant,” adds Parenti. “I think that's really the only hope for this kind of stuff, for the government, the legislative powers of the state, to say, ‘No, here you may not go. Here you cannot snoop on people. This information is private and can't be aggregated and correlated with this other information, and that's just the way it is.’”

Furthermore, Parenti and others argue, the gravest danger posed by surveillance society is not the actual use of surveillance, but the negative cultural impact of a society which is totally wired for surveillance. When you believe you're being watched all the time, it really doesn't matter if you actually are being watched, because belief itself creates a policeman in your head.

“The idea that there is no private space, and you're always being watched, and you can't step out of line, and that you don't have the ability to disobey.... That's the most dangerous and disturbing aspect of this kind of surveillance,” says Parenti. “It's dangerous, because what's seen by the mainstream as progress in the United States is a product of disobedience: People got the eight-hour working day, [white] women got the right to vote, black people got

the right to vote, all of these things happened because people conspired together to break the laws, and disobey in political movements. [When] that kind of space of imagination and disobedience is lost, it bodes very poorly for US political culture and its future directions.”

Stepping out of line when it's called for is a responsibility that falls most heavily on the shoulders of people of conscience. The creeping authoritarian advance of surveillance society threatens to pre-empt dissent and stifle the last breath of a debate over the fundamental relationship between individuals on the one hand, and corporations and governments on the other.

Surveillance society will fail, in due time, as all authoritarian structures eventually do. But it will fail faster if those among us who resist hypercivilization and unchecked commodification simply accept the increasingly exhibitionist nature of our dissent, and do not allow our actions to be stifled or diminished by the fear of being watched. **LiP**

Arguments for comprehensive surveillance society comprise a fear-addled litany of threats and fantastic promises of security that are grossly exaggerated by the very corporate and government serial offenders who pose the greatest threat to our health and safety.



Items of Action & Possible Interest

Spychips

How Major Corporations and Government Plan to Track Your Every Purchase and Watch Your Every Move
www.spychips.com

Institute for Applied Autonomy

Web-based city maps that show you the least-surveilled route from place to place, along with the location of all known cameras.
www.appliedautonomy.com

Visit **LiP** online at
www.lipmagazine.org

Fear Profiteering



Illustration by Bizhan Khodabandeh

and the Culture of Distrust

by
Nell Greenberg

On the night of March 6, 1900, San Francisco's assistant city physician, Dr. Frank P. Wilson, was called to examine the body of Wong Chut King, a 41-year-old lumber salesman living in San Francisco's Chinatown. After preliminary tests suggested that King might have suffered from bubonic plague, the city health department, without waiting to verify the diagnosis, quarantined everyone living in Chinatown. While white business owners were allowed to leave the district, the Chinese and Chinese American residents of Chinatown were confined to designated spaces and forbidden to participate in the rest of San Francisco life. Those who were quarantined faced a shortage of food, price gouging on basic necessities, and loss of jobs and wages.

"Instead of isolating the buildings in which Wong had lived and worked, instead of seeking to identify his contacts, instead of hunting the rats they knew carried the disease, the health authorities blamed all the Chinese inhabitants for what befell one," wrote medical reporter Marilyn Chase in her book *The Barbary Plague*. Already fearful that Chinese immigrants were taking jobs from the "native" born, and that resources were scarce, San Franciscans were primed to believe that the same community was contaminating the city with disease. Four months passed before city officials lifted the Chinatown quarantine, and, in that time, fear of contagion set the city's supposed safety in opposition to the civil liberties of one immigrant community.

Much more recently, in late 2001, a similarly insidious manipulation of public fear by deceptive politicians and an overdramatic news media helped to legislate racial discrimination, promote private interests, and divide communities in the name of public safety. In the wake of September 11th, the media saturated

the already anxious public imagination with the threat that thousands of people in any American city could be exposed to "aerosolized anthrax bacteria" released by foreign terrorists. Fears were fueled by continual reports of anthrax spores detected at post offices, most of which were false alarms, as well as by the administration's succession of alerts about "credible," though consistently nonspecific, threats.

On October 28th, the *Boston Globe* reported that "US officials, struggling to control a spreading anthrax crisis, admitted yesterday that a mysterious inhalation anthrax case in New York has prompted them to reexamine whether *cross-contaminated mail can infect people in their homes or offices...* Officials also revealed for the first time that the anthrax-laced letter sent to Senate majority leader Thomas A. Daschle contained 2 grams of the deadly germ - or *potentially enough to infect and kill thousands of people or more* [emphasis added]."

On the same day, *USA Today* ran a headline confirming that "bioterrorism is no longer a threat but a reality." Local, national, and international newspapers from the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* to the *New York Times* and the *London Guardian* ran breathless stories emphasizing that the type of anthrax used indicated that terrorists had access to germ weapons capable of inflicting far bigger casualties. As journalist Tom Engelhardt found, "according to a LexisNexis search, between Oct. 4 and Dec. 4, 2001, 389 stories appeared in the *New York Times* with "anthrax" in the headline. In that same period, 238 such stories appeared in the *Washington Post*. That's the news equivalent of an unending, high-pitched scream of horror."

The overarching media message was not just that the US empire was open to a terrorist attack—9/11 had proven that—but that any man, woman, or child who received mail was equally

vulnerable to bioterrorism. With five letters already having tested positive for anthrax, one discovered in Florida and the rest in New York, collective unease about an anthrax epidemic spread across cities and suburbs. Public hysteria spread rapidly: When passersby noticed 'suspicious green goo' on the sidewalk in downtown Chicago, a Hazmat team was immediately called to the scene only to determine that the substance was guacamole. As Steven Hyman, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, observed, "many people with no history of mental illness [were] entering into a state of panic."

Profiting off Public Fear

The sensationalized bioterrorist threat helped to manufacture a state of fear in which the public was increasingly susceptible to the agendas of corporate and political elites, who were only too willing to provide the appearance of quelling panic and restoring security.

Less than three weeks after the first anthrax-laced letter was discovered and without knowing the anthrax's origin, government agencies with the help of the mainstream media offered the strength of the antibiotic Cipro and the power of Big Pharma as the protection people would need in the War on Bioterror. When an envelope containing anthrax was mailed to the NBC news headquarters in New York City, anchorman Tom Brokaw stood in front of the nation holding a pill bottle and declared, "in Cipro we trust." So a frightened public was reassured that they could purchase their way out of insecurity.

On November 7th, *The Village Voice* reported "the government has put its faith—and money—in Cipro's maker, Bayer, in the form of a contract for 100 million doses of the drug with an option for 200 million more." Helge Wehmer, CEO of Bayer, reassured the public that Bayer "would help in America's fight against bioterrorism." In fighting the good fight, Bayer collected \$95 million from the government in Cipro contracts and additional revenue from the soaring private demand.

US consumers, in a surge of panic buying, increased demand for antibiotics, gas masks, duct tape, and household disinfectants. The sudden increase in the demand for Cipro led to a steep hike in its retail price. With the wholesale prices of Cipro at \$4.67 for a 500 mg pill in the US, the retail prices went up to as much as \$7 a pill. For anthrax treatment, it was recommended that patients take two pills a day for 60 days. Thus, the retail price for two months' stock of Cipro was over \$700, well beyond the means of poor folks. About the fact that his company was making a profit on the anthrax scare, Wehmer spoke frankly: "That is the American way."

While foreign drug companies make ciprofloxacin, the much cheaper generic form of Cipro, intellectual property agreements prohibited other drug companies from commercially manufacturing and selling the generic versions of the drug in the US until the Bayer patent expired in December of 2003. Instead of opening the market to affordable generic drugs that people could use to protect themselves in the case of a bioterrorist attack, the US government supported Bayer in increasing their production and profits, and peace of mind was sold to an anxious public in little plastic packages.

The "official" responses to the anthrax letters were not motivated by a concern for the current health of the American public or by a commitment to future disaster-relief scenarios. Instead, the media focused on stoking public fear to increase ratings, and opportunistic corporations and politicians exploited their concentrated wealth and political control to further consolidate power in their own hands.

Panic caused by the anthrax letters also served the interests of Big Pharma by legitimizing the further militarization of medical research and the redirection of current research dollars towards private industries. Through the political economy of fear, the government quickly initiated plans for Project BioShield, a program to develop and stockpile drugs and vaccines in the case of a chemical, biological, or radiological attack by terrorists. Project BioShield, budgeted at \$5.6 billion disbursed over ten years, is the largest federal effort ever to "protect civilians from an anthrax attack" and other forms of biowarfare. Through the project, the government created an A-list of potential bioterrorism agents (notably anthrax and smallpox) and prioritized research projects that dealt with those agents; this had the effect of reducing funding for research projects focused on leading public health crises like heart disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, influenza, and asthma, which kill millions of people per year. In 2004, the Infectious Disease Institute reported spending \$40.5 million on nonbiodefense studies in bacterial physiology; \$104.7 million was spent on studies related to biodefense.

As the president told scientists in a speech to the National Institute of Health on February 3, 2002, "We must assume that our enemies would use these diseases as weapons, and we must act before the dangers are upon us." He continued, "private industry plays a vital role in our biodefense efforts by taking risks to bring new treatments to the market, and we appreciate those efforts." However, at the same time the government was guaranteeing a market for new biodefense drugs, they were rejecting a stronger international biological weapons treaty. As Peter Scoblic of *The New Republic* reported in the August 2005 issue, "...the Bush White House rejected a provision to enforce the Biological Weapons Convention, which bans the possession of germs for offensive

military use, even though it would have given [the US] the ability to inspect suspicious facilities in other countries (and even though the prospect of germ warfare was made unpleasantly clear by the 2001 anthrax attacks).” In an article for *Nature* examining the US position on the treaty, Emma Dorey explained that one of “US ambassador Donald Mahley’s cited concerns is that commercial proprietary information in the US biotech industry would not be protected” under the Convention.

The “official” responses to the anthrax letters were not motivated by a concern for the current health of the USAmerican public or by a commitment to future disaster-relief scenarios. Instead, the media focused on stoking public fear to increase ratings, and opportunistic corporations and politicians exploited their concentrated wealth and political control to further consolidate power in their own hands. As the government diverted funding to support private industry in creating new drugs for potential doomsday outbreaks, millions of USAmericans died from treatable illnesses.

The Myth of Bioterrorism

It is not that Cipro was proven to be ineffective at countering anthrax exposures or that Project BioShield was an irrational response to a large bioterrorist attack; it is that there *was* no large bioterrorist attack. In reality, most Americans were by no means vulnerable to an anthrax outbreak. The anthrax-laced letters were mailed to a small number of media and political elites (including Senators Daschle and Leahy), and tragically killed five people. There was a far greater chance of being killed by lightning (with an average annual death toll of 73) than by bioterrorists, yet no multi-billion dollar Project Lightning Rod was ever proposed.

Through the hugely disproportionate exaggeration of the threat of an anthrax “epidemic,”* the myth of bioterrorism was initiated, and the corporate-backed War on Bioterror was legitimized. In addition to yielding vast economic and political gains for corporate and government agendas, the anthrax letters fueled the national story of a war on bioterror, which struck at the heart of moral anxieties about infection, contagion, and foreign ‘attackers.’

Further exacerbating misperception was the notion that al Qaeda or Iraqi terrorists were responsible for the anthrax attacks. At the same time that the anthrax crisis was being sensationalized domestically, the official government position, which appeared on headlines, TV news, and talk radio, was that al Qaeda and Iraqi terrorists were creating biological, chemical, and nuclear devices. Speaking at a United Nations conference on November 19, 2001, John Bolton, the then US undersecretary for arms control and international security, identified Iraq as “the most serious” threat—apart from Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda terrorist network—to launch a germ warfare attack against the US. “The existence of Iraq’s program,” Bolton told delegates, “is beyond dispute.”

However, as Mike Davis, professor of Urban and Environmental history, explains, “DNA sequencing would reveal that the anthrax strain used in the attacks almost certainly originated from the Army’s own laboratory at Fort Detrick, Maryland,” which makes it very unlikely for foreign terrorists to have laced the letters. Despite this widely ignored discovery, the simultaneous hunt for al Qaeda and Iraqi chemical weapons arsenals juxtaposed with the fear of anthrax at home created a pretty clear picture of what a bioterrorist

attack would look like and who would supposedly launch it. This perception was fueled by the president when, in a press conference on November 6, 2001, he called the poisoned letters “a second wave of terrorist attacks.”

Conflating military and disease metaphors, the myth of bioterrorism perpetuated the idea that the American way of life needed protection from an imminent foreign threat.

The Necessity of a Scapegoat

In a 2001 article in the *American Prospect*, Robert Kuttner wrote: “The first casualty of war is said to be truth, but more precisely the casualty is complexity. In war, there are Evil and Good, Enemies and Allies, a Them and an Us.” The rhetoric of fear that accompanies the narrative of a nation under attack—whether it is from disease, terrorists or both—draws on these widely held but fixed and oversimplified dichotomies. Whether it is the war in Afghanistan, the war on bioterror, or the war on germs, in order to create a pervasive sense of threat and vulnerability this narrative requires victims, heroes, and, above all, villains.

After the poisoned letters and the search for weapons in Iraq and Afghanistan, the face of the supposed bioterrorist was unmistakable. Whether you agreed with prominent conservative media personalities arguing that all Arabs and Muslims should be removed from US borders as a precaution against terrorism, or with the ACLU and the Arab American Defamation League arguing that there has been a broad pattern of injustice against Arab, Muslim, and South Asian immigrants, the debate over national security and terrorism was deeply racialized.

In uncovering the connection between the anthrax letters and the passing of the Patriot Act, staff writer for the *Christian Science Monitor*, Gail Russell Chaddock, wrote: “With the men in Hazmat suits only just out of its halls, Congress returns today to move forward on the most sweeping enhancements to law-enforcement powers since World War II. Ever since the Sept. 11 attacks, the Bush administration has said that a clear and present danger requires immediate action on tougher antiterrorist laws. Congress wanted more time. The consequences for the nation’s civil liberties were too high to rush into, members said. But with anthrax attacks on the Capitol and several news organizations, that danger suddenly got clearer and much more present—both for lawmakers and the press corps that covers them. And differences on the proposed legislation were quietly set aside.” It didn’t matter that the letters were only sent to a few people or that there was no clear indication that the anthrax letters had anything to do with foreign terrorists; the fear that was stirred up from the “crisis” generated almost unanimous support for the Act.

The Patriot Act of 2001 gave the attorney general the power to imprison any foreign-born person he or she declared a suspected terrorist. Provisions of the Act include detention without trial for non-citizen suspects, surveillance of mobile phone messages and email, and internet tracking and secret searches of homes with delayed notification. In addition, as Legal Analyst for the Center for Constitutional Rights, David Cole, wrote in 2005, the Patriot Act “authorizes the government to deny entry to foreigners because of speech rather than actions, to deport even permanent residents who innocently supported disfavored political groups and to lock up

AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO YOUR NEW HOMELAND,

‘MURIKA



FACTS AT A GLANCE

CAPITOL: UNDISCLOSED LOCATION

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: UNITARY EXECUTIVE

MOTTO: “SUPPORT OUR TROOPS”

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE: ‘MURIKAN!’

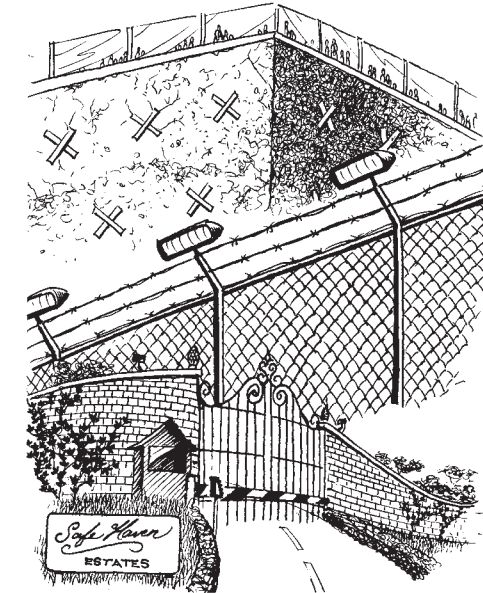
OFFICIAL RELIGION: JESUSISM

CHIEF IMPORT: OIL

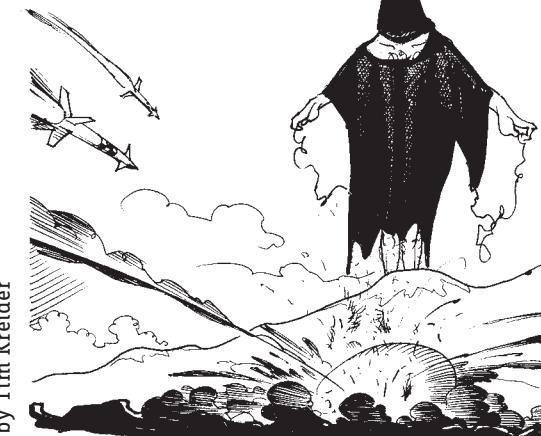
CHIEF EXPORT: DEMOCRACY, A.K.A. WHOP-ASS!

FROM THE SACRED PIT OF GROUND ZERO TO THE BARBED-WIRE FENCE AT THE MEXICAN BORDER TO THE GATED COMMUNITIES OF SUBURBIA, MURIKA IS A LIVING MONUMENT TO ITS PEOPLE’S DEAREST VALUE: SECURITY.

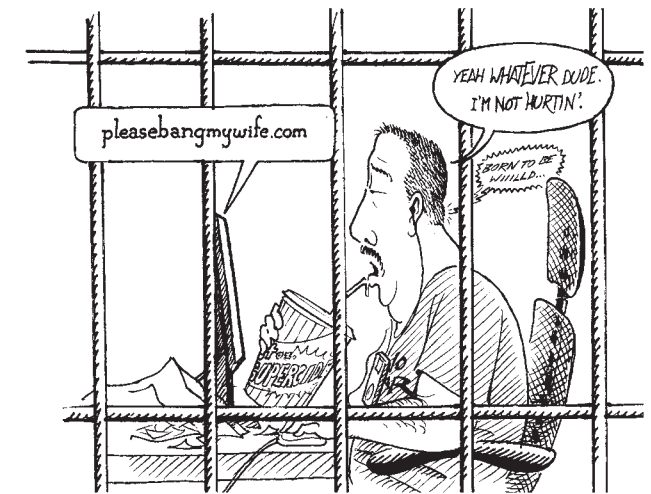
HER CITIZENS CAN BE SPIED ON WITHOUT WARRANTS AND IMPRISONED WITHOUT CHARGES, BUT MURIKANS HAVE GLADLY FORFEITED THESE LIBERTIES BECAUSE THEY KNOW THAT SECURITY IS FREEDOM.



ANY THREATS TO MURIKANS’ SECURITY ARE DETERRED BY THEIR REPUTATION FOR TORTURE AND UNPROVOKED ATTACK!



by Tim Kreider



A THOUSAND YEARS FROM NOW, PEOPLES THE WORLD ‘ROUND WILL STILL REMEMBER THE NAME...MURIKA!



* See Glossary, page 91

foreign nationals without charges.... In a case I am handling for the Center for Constitutional Rights, the government is seeking to deport two longtime permanent residents for having distributed PLO magazines in Los Angeles in the 1980s, and for having organized two Palestinian community dinners at which they raised money for humanitarian causes." In characterizing the Patriot Act, Alan Brinkley, a historian at Columbia University, said: "Habeas corpus is gone, trial by jury is gone. This is one of the most extraordinary assaults on civil liberties, albeit not of citizens, in our history."

The perception that the Patriot Act strips away the rights of foreign-born "terrorists" rather than white, law-abiding citizens is significant, and its results have been outrageous. In the name of 'security' the government has rationalized the detention of more than 1,200 Muslim immigrants in the US, the jailing of children in an extralegal zone in Guantanamo, and the unending imprisonment, without access to lawyers, of "enemy combatants."

Much like the bubonic plague scare and subsequent Chinatown quarantine in 1900, even before a genetic analysis of the anthrax letters was performed to indicate the bioweapon's source, fear for personal safety found expression in the demonization of immigrants. In this climate, racially and politically motivated discrimination was legislated and legitimized. The abuse of deep-seated fears for self and loved ones led the public to tolerate the targeting of immigrants, not terrorists.

A Culture of Distrust: The Epidemic of Fear

"No passion," Edmund Burke once wrote, "so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear."

During the anthrax scare, the media refused to analyze what the "official" response had left out, to examine how serious the "crisis" really was, or to consider what the long-term, systemic implications of proposed solutions would be; it simply encouraged the public to imagine itself as under attack from outside forces. A fearful population consumed with worry about the health and safety of themselves and their families is much more susceptible to purposefully oversimplified responses and deceptively opportunistic and oppressive solutions. When you believe that your family could open a letter laced with anthrax, you want to trust that you can purchase a pill that will keep them safe, no matter which corporate interests profit in the process. Our "powers of acting and reasoning" fail in the face of fear because fear obliterates the ability to judge complex situations and makes everything black and white; there is no deeper context, only victims, heroes, and villains. In that frame of mind, the scapegoat is not a scapegoat at all, but the concrete, readily identifiable source of a threat that must be suppressed.

The anthrax scare is only one thread in what seems to be a stream of near catastrophic events that promotes rather than assuages a collective state of fear. Much like during the anthrax scare, the news about the invisible and indeterminate contagion of the SARS epidemic generated by a visible anxiety and panic on the streets of Chinatown communities in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York. Just in the last six years, the fear over Y2K, "Africanized" Bees, West Nile Virus, anthrax, smallpox, SARS, and avian flu have been more contagious and damaging than the actual impact of any of those "crises."

There
was a far greater
chance of being killed
by lightning (with an
average annual death toll
of 73) than by bioterrorists,
yet no multi-billion dollar
Project Lightning Rod
was ever proposed.

The consequences of living in a country afflicted with an epidemic of fear are a society that is increasingly atomized, and a public full of people who are ever more distrustful of one another.

In looking at the companies most likely to profit off an avian flu outbreak, a 2005 Citicorp report stated: "possible winners are hospital chains such as Rhoen Klinikum, cleaning-products makers such as Henkel, Ecolab, and Clorox, as well as home entertainment companies such as Blockbuster and Nintendo." Underlying this report is something deeply insidious about the impact of collective fears on the public consciousness; Blockbuster and Nintendo sales will rise as people's fear of disease mutates into fear of one another: people will stay home and play video games rather than engage in their communities.

In an effort to protect oneself from disease and/or terrorists, the inclination is to stick with what is familiar and operate in increasingly small spheres. Thus the panic over a possible future bioterrorist attack or pandemic not only results in a disengagement from real, current crises, but also facilitates a disconnection from community as people seek safety in isolation. In an essay for *Harper's Magazine* about the impact of disaster, Rebecca Solnit writes that we are "encouraged by our great media and advertising id to fear one another and regard public life as a danger and a nuisance, to live in secured spaces, communicate by electronic means, and acquire our information from that self-same media rather than from one another." When we "regard public life as a danger," the solution to protecting oneself is to build walls and create biowarfare countermeasures instead of building relationships and community networks. However, fear elicits the wrong response if the goal is to be truly effective at preparing for current or future disasters, because if a major epidemic, pandemic, or terrorist attack did hit we would need our neighbors.

As Eduardo Galeano, famed Uruguayan author, once said, "the world is subject to a dictatorship of fear," and this dictatorship, which operates through both internal and external processes, paralyzes us. Once fear dominates personal and political decision-making, anxieties and prejudices prevail, and communities are further divided by their differences, robbing us of one of our most precious resources—each other. **LIP**

"Merely the most lucid and instructive history book to be published in the new millennium." —Kurt Vonnegut

"In *Typecasting*, two ace historians offer a profound and sweeping study of the most everyday, often unconscious, forms of prejudice. [It's] bound to make you think—and think again." —Barbara Ehrenreich

"Stuart Ewen is one of the foremost interpreters today of our culture." —Bill Moyers

Few books so properly deserve the title of required reading."

—Mike Davis, author of *Planet of Slums*

7

Seven Stories Press
www.sevenstories.com



TYPECASTING
On the Arts and Sciences of
Human Inequality
EWEN & EWEN

Oversized and Lavishly Illustrated
\$34.95 / Higher in Canada
ISBN: 1-58322-735-0



www.designaction.org



Witness Social Change with Reality Tours

Let Global Exchange Reality Tours take you to places where progressive change is happening. You will personally *meet the people, learn the facts and make a difference*, all in the security of an organization with contacts the world over.

Tours include: Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Viet Nam and Tanzania

GLOBAL EXCHANGE

1-800-497-1994 x 261 | www.realitytours.org

Pheromoan

by
Nikolai
Kingsley

Itold her it was an interview for kethernet’s ‘review.sensory’ forum,” Anya said as she closed the call. “Her agent told her that she should be getting out and hustling publicity, so she bought it. She’s coming over in half an hour.” Gaeren picked up the large, four-legged insect that was exploring the kitchenette bench top, waving its feathery antennae. He stroked the ribbed abdomen, and it made a chirring noise, pleased with the attention.

“Are you sure that this won’t hurt her?”

“Not unless she has high blood-pressure ... and it certainly won’t hurt her media image. Do you think that this will be ‘kinky’ enough to get us into the AnarchArtists?”

Gaeren smiled distractedly, absorbed in tickling the controller-class Kaelen, which rolled on its back, waving its legs in the air and squeaking. “I think it will. My only concern is that her agent might want to copyright the performance.”

Anya shook her head. “This won’t be a Sensory recording, just video and audio. Which reminds me—have you tested that gear? It doesn’t exactly radiate an air of reliability.”

Gaeren put on a hurt expression and patted the top of the antique Betamax video recorder. “This belonged to my great-grandfather. Four generations of my family have maintained it, through eighty-five years of changing video standards. I have tested it thoroughly,” he retorted with an air that said, ‘... and that’s that.’

“Besides, the AnarchArtists specified Betamax.”

“Let’s try it out beforehand, huh? Once more can’t hurt.” Gaeren grudgingly agreed. He traced the coax lead from the back of the recorder into the bedroom-space, to a modern passive-image camera resting on the floor, barely larger than the cable plug that it was attached to. The controls were patched into their bedroom terminal; Gaeren activated the camera, which floated off the carpet, trailing cable, resembling a cobra about to strike. A window on the terminal gave a sharp picture of the camera’s view as it quartered the room, focusing on the bare mattress that was lying in one corner. The Kaelen wandered in, jumped up on the terminal and began trilling.

Gaeren waved an index finger at it and smiled. “Not yet.”

* * *

About forty minutes later, their home system announced that there was a visitor waiting in the courtyard. Anya checked the security screen; it was her... Maryn Adelsen, the year’s most popular Sensory actress. Anya signalled her to come up, and unbolted the locks.

Maryn didn’t ‘sweep’ in, as a Sensory performer usually would. Her media image was hard and cool—the distillation of one hundred and fifty years’ worth of Ice-Bitch-images, always in command of



the situation—but she wasn’t wearing her mask at the moment. She smiled warmly at the couple as they invited her to sit. The camera floated into the room, moving in minute increments as it searched for an angle that would comfortably include all three people.

The interview was fairly innocuous; covering some of the roles that Maryn had performed in recently, concerns that she might become typecast, what it was like being so popular that she couldn’t go out on the walkways without a yashmak. Eventually, they got to the topic of her latest Sensory, that had featured a number of uncharacteristically submissive scenes.

“Yes, it was a change ... I’ve been told that part of my appeal is in being able to project a subconscious desire to be dominated, and we wanted to see how true it was -

“—by realising it more fully?”

She nodded enthusiastically. “Yes! And the rentals for the Sensory, *Boundaries*, certainly support the theory!” Gaeren suppressed a smile, and moved onto the most delicate part of their plan.

“We were wondering if we could possibly set up a still shot of you in a pose from that Sensory, for the lead image in our article?” Maryn agreed, with a smile that hinted how close she had felt to the role. They led her to the bedroom.

While Gaeren propped the mattress up against one wall, Anya pretended to search through a drawer for handcuffs; she didn’t

want to appear as if they had set this up. The camera followed them in, signalling the overhead panels to provide more diffuse lighting. Maryn stalked over to the mattress, touching the contact at her shoulder that held her wrap-dress closed with an ease that bespoke of her lack of regard for nudity taboos. Despite its heavy corduroy appearance, the dress drifted to the floor like a mass of spiderwebs.

“Ah, here we are!” Anya had found the four pairs of handcuffs - custom models, three-inch wide bands lined with Pneumofoam padding - and proceeded to fasten them around Maryn’s wrists and ankles, pausing to admire her lean figure. Her pale skin contrasted beautifully with her long, blue-black hair, a few strands of which fell to tickle the blunt nipples that capped her pointed, slightly exaggerated breasts.

Anya took a handcuff that was attached to a wrist, and drew it up to a cerplas panel of the apartment wall, just above head height. Tapping a contact code on the panel activated the texture-mapping system; Anya entered a prearranged code that would soften the panel to the consistency of margarine for five seconds. As the panel changed colour to indicate its altered state, Anya pressed the empty loop of the handcuffs into the wall, holding it in by the edge until the panel had hardened again. She repeated the procedure for the other hand, tugging until Maryn was lifted just off the floor; when the second panel had hardened, she was left standing on her toes.

Anya couldn't resist brushing her fingers across Maryn's nipples as she bent to fasten her ankle-cuffs ... as she did so, Maryn gasped with pleasure. Anya refrained from commenting on how fake she thought that reaction was, and satisfied herself with the thought, *just you wait!*

While Gaeren checked the Betamax to ensure that it was getting the signals passed from the camera and that it was recording, Anya fixed the ankle-cuffs just far enough apart so that Maryn wasn't dangling from her wrists too uncomfortably. She noted that Maryn was completely spreadeagled and couldn't bring her thighs together, even if she bent her knees and pointed them inwards. She nodded, satisfied.

Gaeren waved his hand over the terminal's keyboard, and the camera floated up before Maryn, emitting tiny clicks every so often to give the impression that it was dumping its frame buffer to the home system. Anya examined the poses as they were displayed on the terminal; Maryn tossing her head to one side, her hair fanning out to sweep over her breasts; Maryn with her eyes closed in rapture; Maryn running her pink tongue over her impossibly even teeth.

Just then, the Kaelen entered the room. It saw the figure fixed to the mattress, and then angled its head at Anya in a questioning pose. Anya gestured assent, and it skittered over the carpet to the mattress, sinking hooked claws into the side, climbing up to perch on the top, about a foot above Maryn's head. She tried to peer upwards, but couldn't see it.

"What the hell was *that?*" she said, with apprehension.

"It's a xenofom pet of ours. Harmless. We keep it around because it gives off a really lovely perfume ... don't you?" Anya cooed and tickled the Kaelen's abdomen. It chirped, and turned around, holding its ovoid abdomen up and out over Maryn's head. Anya stepped back and took two clear plastic filtermasks from the drawer, passing one to Gaeren and pressing the other over her nose and mouth. The Kaelen began emitting a regular bell-like trilling sound, waving its abdomen around as it did so. The pheromone it was giving off was invisible, but Anya could imagine it descending over Maryn like a slow-motion tidal wave.

Maryn closed her eyes, inhaling deeply. A languid warmth was descending on her, relaxing her muscles so that she sagged in the manacles. She felt a tickling sensation stirring between her thighs, and she moved to press them together, only to be restrained by the cuffs. Her eyes opened wide. Anya and Gaeren were in the living room, watching her on a flatscreen monitor patched into the VCR.

Maryn called out to them, "Hey, are you through with the still shots yet? Could you—" She stopped as another wave of warmth spread through her, settling in her belly. She arched her back, emitting a long sigh that became a moan as the pheromones gained strength. She desperately longed to pinch her nipples, but her hands were firmly fixed.

The Kaelen began emitting a regular bell-like trilling sound, waving its abdomen around as it did so. The pheromone it was giving off was invisible, but Anya could imagine it descending over Maryn like a slow-motion tidal wave.

Gaeren smirked, watching her contortions as she tried to find something that she could rub against; she almost touched her tongue to her swelling nipples but they were out of reach by a tantalising hand's span. As the Kaelen's scent saturated her system, she arched her back and tried to rub her behind against the mattress. She began to sigh in time with the insect's trilling, her breathing growing deeper and her struggles becoming more impassioned. She tried dragging the manacles out of the wall, to no avail.

The camera drifted in for a close-up, framing her lovely face, a few strands of hair plastered to her forehead with sweat, her eyes squeezed shut, her jaw clamped with exertion. It moved down, capturing her heaving breasts, the nipples dark and protruding; her belly, taut and straining; the abbreviated strip of pubic hair, glistening with droplets of her excitement. Her leg muscles quivered as she tried once again to press her thighs together. She began to curse, feverishly:

"Ahh, you low-life slime, you ... uhh, when I get free, I'm going to ... unh ... you unplanned scum ... uhn ..." Gaeren instructed the camera to move down further, level with her knees, and then aim upwards. They were presented with a view of her soaking wet fissure, fluid beginning to run down her thighs; to their surprise, they saw her pelvic muscles pulse, causing her vagina lips to press together; she relaxed, and they opened slightly again.

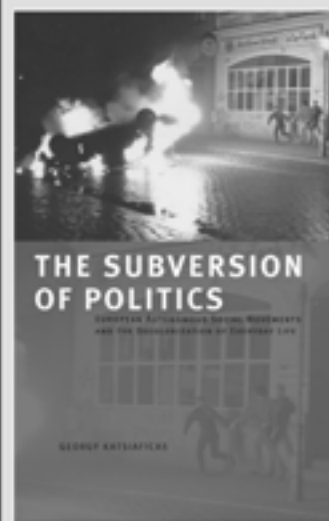
Giving voice to a cry of relief now that she had found something she could control, she began pushing rhythmically, expending a great deal of effort in return for a little stimulation. She quickly grew tired, however, and slumped back bonelessly against the mattress, gasping.

The Kaelen's pheromone had infiltrated to such an extent that her body was approaching orgasm despite a lack of physical stimulation. Eyes wide, she hung there, her videogenic features wracked by a look of shock; standing waves of sensual stimulation were slowly mounting, her breathing losing its rhythm and degenerating into a series of panic-stricken whimpers. As the climax overtook her, she screamed, straining forward, her belly arching outwards, a few of the links of the cuff-chains around her feet stretching open. She wailed until she ran out of breath, hanging there rigidly, impaled on the peak of intolerable ecstasy; then, as it passed, she fell back with a strangled sob, one leg swinging free as the links of the chain parted.

Anya rushed in to free her, tapping the Kaelen's abdomen and signalling for it to stop. She felt a faint echo of what Maryn had just experienced as she absorbed some of the pheromone through her skin. Maryn was shaking uncontrollably as Anya supported her, pushing the mattress over onto the floor and then helping her down onto it. She burst into tears, and Anya knelt next to her, hugging her more from an impulse inspired by traces of pheromone than from sympathy. **lip**

AK PRESS

RADICAL HISTORY REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS



THE SUBVERSION
OF POLITICS

\$12.95 | 336 pp | 1-804859-53-4

Available Now!

THE SUBVERSION OF POLITICS

European Autonomous Social
Movements and the Decolonization
of Everyday Life

by Georgy Katsiaficas

Historians often act as if there were no radical social movements between the student uprisings of 1968 and the WTO protests in 1999. Katsiaficas sets the record straight, telling the stories of the European squatters, punks, feminists, factory workers, activists, and anti-fascist street fighters who kept the struggle alive and set the stage for the movements of today. At the same time, he offers a work of great critical depth, drawing from these political practices a new theory of freedom and autonomy that redefines the parameters of the political itself. This updated AK Press edition contains a new introduction by the author.



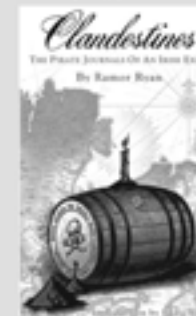
\$14.95 | 188 pp | 1-804859-54-2

I CRIED, YOU DIDN'T LISTEN

A Survivor's Exposé of the California
Youth Authority

by Dwight Abbott

At age nine, a family tragedy forced Dwight Abbott into the California Youth Authority. This is the chilling chronicle of his life behind bars—a story of brutality and survival, a dark journey showing how the systematic abuse of incarcerated children creates a cycle of criminal behavior that usually ends with prison or death.



\$15.95 | 288 pp | 1-804859-53-0

CLANDESTINES

The Pirate Journals of an Irish Exile
by Ramon Ryan

An epic debut, these non-fiction tales read like Che's *Motorcycle Diaries* ... if they'd been written by Hunter S. Thompson. A shrewd political thinker and philosopher, Ryan spirits the reader from the Zapatista Autonomous Zone to a Kurdish guerrilla camp, from Berlin squats to Croatian rainbow gatherings. At each stop along the way, we see a world in flux, struggling to be reborn.



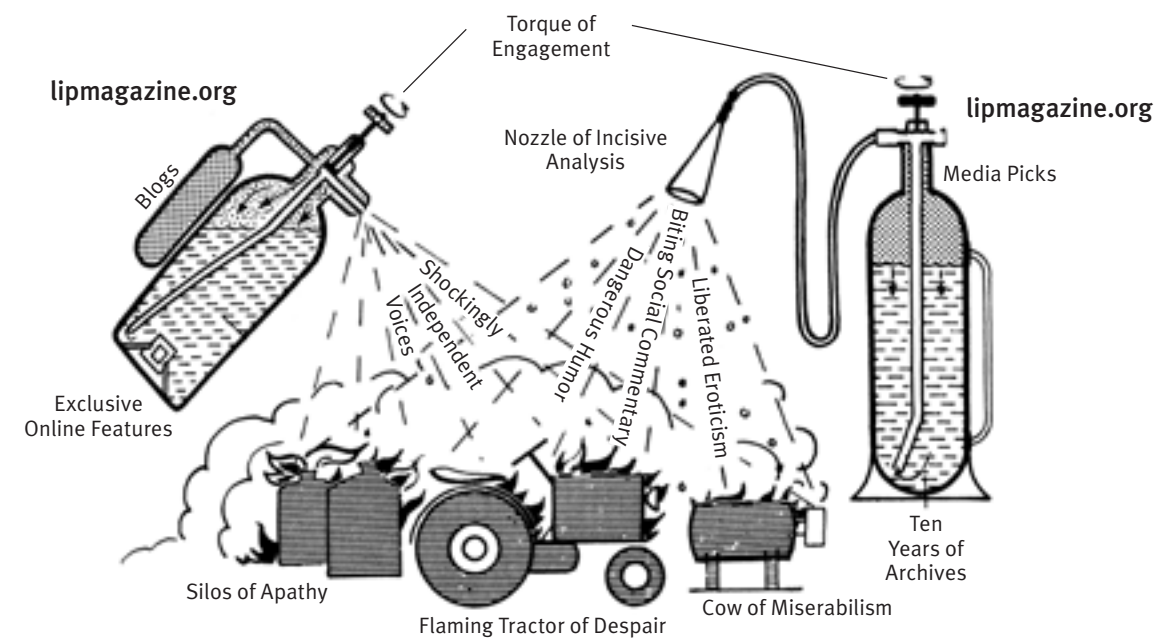
CALL 510.208.1700 OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE
614-A 23RD STREET OAKLAND, CA 94612 USA

WWW.AKPRESS.ORG

MENTION THIS LIP AD AND
GET 10% OFF YOUR ENTIRE ORDER.



in case of emergency:



douse with lipmagazine.org



Our “nature” does not set us apart from the ants and termites, nor do similarities between humans and insects link all of us, hand in claw, in a miserable, determinist chain gang, plodding through life only to survive and reproduce as best we can.

If human society is closely related to that of the ants and bees, this doesn't mean human beings are restricted to a rigid set of biologically-imposed rules, as we believe insects are – it means we need to start re-evaluating how rigid those rules are for the *insects*.

Darwin vs. the Ant

The Altruism of Bugs and Humans

It is an extraordinary comment on the state of the social sciences in the 1960s that the rehabilitation of human nature should have been a task originally undertaken by entomologists.

—Andrew Brown, *The Darwin Wars*

by
Erin Wiegand
illustration by
Erin E. Hunter

They are less than a millionth the size of a human, but taken in total, their mass on Earth would weigh about as much as all human beings. There are approximately 11,880 known species, making them the most common animal in the world. They contribute to the health of ecosystems with their symbiotic relationships with other species, by disposing of dead plant and animal material, and by moving soil and seeds. In Central and South America, one species actively cultivates fungi on fresh leaves carried into their underground chambers. Some protect “herds” of aphids or caterpillars in order to harvest their honeydew (a sweet liquid secretion), sometimes even taking them along when migrating to a new area. And the jaws of another snap shut at 8.5 meters a second—the fastest recorded movement of any anatomical structure.

The ant is a marvelous creature, by anyone's terms. But she is also responsible for provoking one of the greatest evolutionary debates of our time: How can animals evolve the capacity for altruism, self-sacrificial behavior to support another?

For Charles Darwin, the survival and evolution of a species depended on the “fitness” of each of its members; that is, how well each individual was able to survive in its environment and successfully reproduce. Altruism, then, seems quite peculiar if one accepts Darwin's contention that success in passing on one's own genetic lineage to a new generation—at the expense of others, if necessary—is evolution's highest principle.

The ant was a particularly heavy puzzle for Darwin because of its stratified colonies, in which entire castes of worker ants are born without the ability to reproduce, foregoing their own chance at breeding in order to better support the queen and her offspring. How, Darwin wondered, could sterility be a trait passed through generations of ants if those that carry the gene do not themselves reproduce? How could a species be so successful, in evolutionary terms, when so many of its individual members sacrifice their own reproductive capacity? The question posed such a challenge,

in fact, that he referred to it in 1859 as the “one special difficulty, which at first appeared to me insuperable, and actually fatal to my whole theory.”

Though you wouldn't know it from contemporary “Darwin vs. God” debates, the theory of evolution does not begin and end with Charles Darwin—he was not the first to propose that species changed over time, and that animals (including humans) of today have ancestors that may have looked quite different. At the time Darwin developed his theories of “descent with modification” (his preferred term for evolution), it was already well-accepted that characteristics from a particular organism were passed down to their offspring—although the theories of the day favored the notion that such characteristics were developed in species based on how much they were “used,” much like the way muscles become stronger the more they are worked. Darwin's contribution, then, was his explanation of a process he called “natural selection.” Particular traits—length of legs, body shape, cell structure—arise randomly in individuals within a species, and are then *selected* for in the process of evolution; that is, characteristics that are not conducive to an organism's “success” in a particular environment

will eventually be weeded out because those that carry them will not survive long enough to reproduce and thus further the descent of those traits into the next generation.

Darwin's theory was not met with instant approval by his peers, and many of his colleagues argued that the notion of natural selection as the only agent of evolution was preposterous. Darwin, however, did not intend to suggest that natural selection was the *only* explanation for evolution—it was simply the most primary. As he wrote in the sixth edition of *Origin of Species*, in 1872, “My conclusions have lately been much misrepresented, and... I may be permitted to remark that in the first edition of this work, and subsequently, I placed in a most conspicuous position—namely, at the close of the Introduction—the following words: ‘I am convinced that natural selection has been the main but not the exclusive means of modification.’” Evolutionary theorists since

see who survives to propagate their lineage; rather, it means that those creatures best able to adapt to their particular environment (which could mean cooperation just as easily as competition) are the most likely to reproduce. Darwin himself (not to mention many scientists at the time and since) saw evidence of cooperation and mutual aid not only among members of the same species, but among different species. And as far as altruistic behavior, one need look no further than the social insects for particularly dramatic displays of self-sacrifice for the good of the community.

As any amateur naturalist, weekend camper, or child with a large stick and a propensity for acts of destruction can tell you, ants, bees, and wasps all readily give up their lives to defend the nest against intruders: The honeybee's stinger attaches itself to an enemy's skin with fishhook-like barbs—and in order to sting, the bee essentially eviscerates itself. One species of African termite

The honeybee's stinger attaches itself to an enemy's skin with fishhook-like barbs—and in order to sting, the bee essentially eviscerates itself. One species of African termite attacks via a secretion that congeals upon contact with air and entangles both termite and enemy.

Darwin have suggested a number of other “means of modification,” including mutation, abrupt environmental changes or disasters, and genetic drift (random changes in the frequency of genes within a population).

Natural selection has been widely interpreted as “the survival of the fittest,” a term not actually used by Darwin, but coined by the philosopher Herbert Spencer. Thomas Henry Huxley—known to many as Darwin's “bulldog” for his staunch advocacy of natural selection theory—wrote that “from the point of view of the moralist the animal world is about on a level of a gladiator's show. The creatures are fairly well treated, and set to fight—whereby the strongest, the swiftest, and the cunningest live to fight another day.” And then, of course, there's the poet Alfred Lord Tennyson's famous description of nature as “red in tooth and claw,” which has been invoked time and again to explain the process of natural selection—despite the fact that he wrote those lines in 1850, nine years before the first publication of *Origin*.

For those who refuse to accept the more cutthroat and self-centered institutions of human civilization as logical extensions of “human nature,” the theory of natural selection has often inspired nothing so much as disgust. After all, if the law of nature is simply to favor those who are best able to compete and win, why should the rules be any different for humans than they are for bottle-nosed dolphins or prairie dogs?

But the notion that nature demands such selfish competition—and the way that notion has been used to justify capitalism, eugenics, and a host of other philosophies—stems from misunderstandings and willful ignorance of the actual conditions of nature as well as the actual meaning of “natural selection.” Natural selection does not suggest that organisms duke it out in bloody battle to

attacks via a secretion that congeals upon contact with air and entangles both termite and enemy (sometimes, these termites will work their muscles so strongly that they explode, spraying their secretion out in all directions). Fire ants, during times of flood or in order to cross a river, will form gigantic balls out of their own bodies—with the queen at the center—to ride the water in a “living raft,” a suicidal act for those unfortunate enough to form its outer surface. And then there are those worker ants that troubled Darwin: enormous numbers born without the ability to reproduce, who instead assist the queen in rearing her offspring—an act of extreme altruism, in evolutionary terms.

The use of the term “altruism” to describe certain animal acts is, of course, not without its problems. Isn't altruism something unique to human beings, to a human consciousness and moral sense? But “altruism”—like “queen” or “worker,” for that matter—is used within biology not to draw anthropomorphic connections between ant and human societies, but because it is the closest (and easiest) descriptor to something we can recognize in our own societies and social relations.

Still, there are those that argue that there is, in fact, no difference between insect altruism and human altruism, or, rather, that what passes for a noble, specifically human behavior is actually no different than the altruism at work in the ant colony or beehive. This was the belief of the Russian geographer and anarchist Peter Kropotkin, who sought to prove that cooperation was “natural” to humanity by demonstrating the same behavior in various animal species.

Kropotkin's theory, outlined most famously in his 1902 work *Mutual Aid*, was that those species which are “fittest” are actually those that cooperate, not those that compete:

If we resort to an indirect test, and ask Nature: “Who are the fittest: those who are continually at war with each other, or those who support one another?” we at once see that those animals which acquire habits of mutual aid are undoubtedly the fittest. They have more chances to survive, and they attain, in their respective classes, the highest development of intelligence and bodily organization.

Kropotkin's observations, while focused on cooperation rather than altruism (cooperation does not necessarily involve the element of self-sacrifice found in altruism), contain the basis of the theory of *group selection*—that natural selection can operate at the level of the group as well as the level of the individual. Over a hundred years later, group selection remains one of the most controversial of several theories developed to explain altruism in evolutionary terms.

Fire ants, during times of flood or in order to cross a river, will form gigantic balls out of their own bodies—with the queen at the center—to ride the water in a “living raft,” a suicidal act for those unfortunate enough to form its outer surface.

Group Selection

The British ecologist V. C. Wynne-Edwards suggested in 1962 that individuals might sacrifice themselves or reduce their own fertility when their immediate group faced food scarcity, in order to contribute to the overall health of the species. Such behavior might seem to be a trait natural selection would weed out, because any individual who undertakes an altruistic act is at an immediate disadvantage; within its group, it has a lower fitness than they do. But Wynne-Edwards argued that because it supported the fitness of the larger group (and therefore furthered the species when it otherwise might die out), natural selection would indeed favor such a trait.

Darwin had already conceded this point when it came to the social insects and particularly to humankind, observing that while altruists are more vulnerable to non-altruists on an individual level, *groups* of altruists are much better equipped to survive over groups of non-altruists. And when individual altruists interact primarily with each other rather than with non-altruists, they're better off than their non-altruistic neighbors. He muses in *The Descent of Man* that “although a high standard of morality [e.g., willingness to behave altruistically] gives but a slight or no advantage to each individual man and his children over the other men of the same tribe...[it] will certainly give an immense advantage to one tribe over another.”

Evolutionary biologist David Sloan Wilson refers to a type of “naïve group selectionism” that did not account for within-group and between-group altruism. “Darwin saw the problem that altruism is vulnerable to selfish [individuals within a group], and that the evolution of altruism required a special explanation.”

That special explanation eluded many group selectionists up through the 1960s, at which point the theory was widely rejected by the scientific community. “At the time,” says Wilson, “group selection was rejected because it was theoretically impossible, there wasn't good empirical evidence, and there were better theories to explain it,” he says. “[It] just didn't seem to work very well. And because people had been making ‘for the good of the group’ arguments, sloppy arguments, it seemed like a reasonable position.”

Since the 1960s, Wilson says, all three points have been reconciled. And a growing group of evolutionary theorists (including Edward O. Wilson, the notable entomologist and founder of sociobiology) are now promoting a return to group selection as a framework with which to view altruistic behavior. “The broader scientific community thinks that group selection has

been rejected,” D.S. Wilson says. “but a little bubble [of scientists] is comfortable with it, and it's been growing and growing.”

However, group selection is still widely disputed as an explanatory model for altruism, despite its seemingly straightforward and uncomplicated nature. The controversy is largely based on the argument that every example of group selection can also be explained by another model focused even more on the individual—or more accurately, on that individual's *genes*.

Kin Selection

Modern genetics studies began in the 1860s, but the “Modern Synthesis” of natural selection theory and genetics was not complete until some 80 years later. (The term was coined by Julian Huxley—grandson of Darwin's “bulldog”—in 1942.) This new generation of evolutionary theorists proposed that the unit of selection was not the individual organism, but the gene. Natural selection, they argued, is not a simple matter of organisms trying to thrust as many of their own offspring as possible into the world—it's a matter of maximizing the reproduction of our own genes into future generations. And for that, we don't necessarily need the offspring to be our own.

This is the heart of the theory of “kin selection,” which argues that animals are more inclined to help those that are closely related to them, because it ensures the survival of their own genetic material. And in situations where the best overall chance for genetic survival means the self-sacrifice of some members of the family (whether by their death or simply by their “choice” not to reproduce themselves), altruism emerges. (Darwin's explanation for altruistic behavior held some of the foundations of kin selection, as he suggested that

if sterile ants contribute to the overall welfare of their fertile kin, they succeed in promoting a shared genetic heritage.)

The real development of the theory of kin selection, popular legend has it, stems from an offhand remark by the English biologist J.B.S. Haldane, a rather dramatic character known for his enthusiastic participation in dangerous experiments such as drinking hydrochloric acid or breathing chlorine. While discussing natural selection in a pub, he is said to have scribbled some calculations on the back of an envelope and said, “I will lay down my life for two brothers or eight cousins.” Because, of course, in evolutionary terms, it’s just as worthwhile for his two brothers to live to reproduce—each of them carry half his genes,

kin—to the point where they might be called clones—that fail to develop the kinds of advanced social networks (or the altruism) seen in ants and other social insects. “It is neither necessary nor sufficient to have genetic relatedness,” says Wilson. “It is important, but it is just one piece of a larger puzzle.”

How is kin selection distinguished from group selection? It isn’t always so clear-cut—especially because groups of individuals living together or very closely together tend to be genetically related to each other. It’s further muddled by cases that can be easily interpreted in multiple ways, such as the behavior of *Acromyrmex versicolor*, a desert ant. Unrelated queens will form a group, but only one will forage for food, bringing back sustenance

While Darwin refused to speculate on the meaning of natural selection for social and political life, others were more than happy to use the theory to prop up their arguments for competitive individualism and laissez-faire capitalism.

and each cousin a quarter of that. The story has been contested by the slightly less colorful evolutionary theorist W.D. Hamilton, who claims he came up with the original idea, and went on to publish the first mathematical formulas based on the concept.

Either way, the story—and the theory—would go on to help support the idea that selection operates at a purely genetic level, thus explaining altruistic behavior in cases where altruism supports the “kin” of the organism in question, which theoretically would share their genes. What kin selection postulates is that certain genes wired for altruistic behavior compel certain animals to act in ways that may endanger themselves, or diminish their own chance at reproducing, if (and only if) those acts help their close kin to reproduce, thus ensuring their own genetic “survival.” As Richard Dawkins wrote in *The Extended Phenotype* (1982), rather than expecting to see animals always acting in what we perceive to be their best interest, we should realize that animals act “to maximize the survival of genes ‘for’ that behavior, whether or not those genes happen to be in the body of the particular animal performing it.”

It may sound like a pretty strange explanation for altruistic behavior as humans understand it—especially considering the vast numbers of human beings that have given their lives for an abstract cause, throughout history—but when it comes to explaining behavior in other species, and particularly in the social insects, the theory of kin selection has had staggering success. Today, kin selection is widely accepted by scientists as the “answer” to Darwin’s special difficulty.

But while some scientists believe the debate has been long been put to rest (with kin selection emerging as the “victor”), others see it as far from settled.

According to David Sloan Wilson, W.D. Hamilton argued as early as 1975 that there exists a group selection dynamic within kin selection; or, that kin selection could, in fact, be seen as a kind of group selection. There are plenty of examples of extremely close

for the entire group. Her altruistic behavior—exposing herself to predators as well as doing the grunt work while her comrades rest—was evidence, many thought, of a situation where group selection could explain altruism where kin selection could not: while lowering her own individual “fitness” relative to others in her group, she increases the fitness of her group relative to other groups. But other researchers argued that because the other queens will not replace a forager who refuses to work—thus destroying the entire group, and the forager among them—it is really in the forager’s individual genetic interest to forage, making the behavior explainable under kin selection.

“Mathematically, they’re not different models,” says Hudson Kern Reeve, Associate Professor of Neurobiology at Cornell University. “They give you the same predictions about the conditions under which cooperation and altruism will evolve. They are just alternative pictures. The controversy now,” he claims, “is over whether group selection is [a more] useful [theory than kin selection].”

Reciprocal Altruism

A third model is the theory of *reciprocal altruism*, which predicts that animals behave altruistically in situations where they can expect to be “compensated” for their actions, either immediately or in the future. But wouldn’t natural selection favor those who were best able to exploit such altruism—to cheat? As it turns out, certain conditions are needed for reciprocity to work: Individuals need to have repeated interactions with each other, and there needs to be a system of retaliation against cheaters.

“The conditions that are needed for reciprocity to work are relatively uncommon in nature,” says Hudson Kern Reeve. “Acts that seem to be reciprocity could very easily be simple mistakes of identification—animals that think the others are kin. A lot of people have argued that [true acts of reciprocity] are infrequent in

nature, and we’re biased because we’re humans and it does apply to us.”

But what does this distinction say about human behavior? Does our uniqueness require a separate theory to explain human morality—is our “altruism” somehow special, is it “real” where the altruism of insects is merely instinctual?

The Birth of Sociobiology

These questions, particularly regarding altruism (and particularly in the wake of the development of kin selection theory) laid the groundwork for the development of sociobiology

Spencer and the “social Darwinists” who came after him (some have suggested “social Spencerists” would be more fitting) appropriated the term “natural selection” to mean an individual’s personal struggle to “succeed,” conflating “survival” with “dominance.”

in the late 1970s, a theory that suggested that the social behavior biologists had been observing in animals was not only the result of natural selection (altruism, for example, as a means of propagating one’s own genetic line), but that such behavior could be studied in humans in much the same way.

Sociobiologists were certainly not the first to apply evolutionary theory to the social realm—and Darwin himself was heavily influenced by social philosophies in constructing his theories in the first place. As he wrote in his 1876 autobiography, it was Thomas Malthus’ essay on population (suggesting that an ever-increasing population would eventually surpass food supply and lead to increasing struggle for scarce resources) that provided the real spark for his theory.

But while Darwin refused to speculate on the meaning of natural selection for social and political life, others were more than happy to use the theory to prop up their arguments for competitive individualism and laissez-faire capitalism. The 19th century political theorist Herbert Spencer proposed that civilization is the direct result of the same evolutionary processes Darwin saw elsewhere in nature. Spencer and the “social Darwinists” who came after him (some have suggested “social Spencerists” would be more fitting) appropriated the term “natural selection” to mean an individual’s personal struggle to “succeed,” conflating “survival” with “dominance.” (Other theorists, too, have applied evolutionary theory to human behavior – Kropotkin’s mutual aid, for example, was used to justify a “natural” inclination towards anarchism; Marx saw in Darwin’s theory a rejection of god that suited his own arguments quite well.)

Now, jump forward a hundred years or so to 1975, when E.O. Wilson’s *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* first rolled off the press. This mammoth work sought to give an exhaustive overview to social behavior in animals—including *homo sapiens*. Wilson believed that humans should be treated no differently than other species when interpreting behavior as the work of evolutionary

selection, and in the infamous final chapter of the book came to such conclusions as “The flattened sexual cycle and continuous female attractiveness cement the close marriage bonds that are basic to human social life...” and “The building block of nearly all human societies is the nuclear family...during the day the women and children remain in the residential area while the men forage for game or its symbolic equivalent in the form of barter and money.”

But while Wilson may have been less than feminist in some of his specific assumptions about “natural” human reproduction, bonding, and the activities of men and women, it was his larger point—that the roots of culture and behavior are biological—that caused an enormous stir and launched sociobiology as a

new scientific discipline. Just a few months after the publication of *Sociobiology*, sixteen scientists (several of them Wilson’s own colleagues at Harvard) launched an organized assault on sociobiology through the formation of a “Sociobiology Study Group,” arguing that the theory was both scientifically unsound and politically dangerous. In a letter from the group to the *New York Review of Books*, they wrote that “Historically, powerful countries or ruling groups within them have drawn support for the maintenance or extension of their power from these products of the scientific community,” and drew connections between sociobiology and the early 20th century policies of sterilization and eugenics. And even several years after that, while Wilson lectured to the American Society for the Advancement of Science in Washington, a group of protestors rushed the stage and dumped a pitcher of water over his head, presumably outraged at what they perceived to be his attempt to legitimize a racist, sexist status quo.

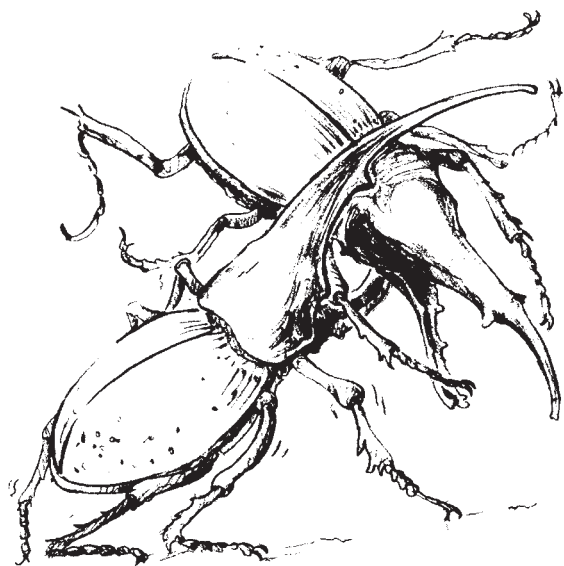
The backlash against sociobiology was marked by misunderstandings on both sides. Many of those angered felt that sociobiology was nothing more than a new incarnation of what they saw as “social Darwinism,” and that Wilson was trying to make justifications for human behavior they found repugnant. Richard Lewontin, Steven Rose and Leon J. Kamin wrote in their controversial 1984 book *Not in Our Genes* that sociobiology is a “reductionist, biological determinist explanation of human existence.” They charged sociobiologists with the promotion of three dubious arguments: (1) that current (human) social relations are inevitable; (2) that such relations are the result of specific actions of genes; and (3) that these genes have been selected by evolutionary processes because the traits associated with them result in higher fitness for those that carry them.

Such arguments can indeed be found in quite a bit of sociobiological thinking, especially when related to differences between the sexes and races. But it should be acknowledged that the array of opinions on the matter of genes is quite diverse among

sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists (the field more commonly spoken of today that emerged from the sociobiology debate), and is far from settled. It's the non-scientific press that is largely to blame for the over-simplification of such ideas, and the propagation of such notions as "the free market is justified by natural selection" and "genes explain why we do what we do."

Still, the sociobiologists' critics were quite right in cautioning them in handling a thesis so eerily similar to the one put forth by the conservative right: that human nature is predetermined, and that sex or racial differences, familial structures, and putting our kin and ethnically related peers first are all parts of our heritage; that such behavior is not learned, but firmly ingrained in our genetic structure. This critique was dismissed by sociobiologists as an attempt to only engage in "politically correct" science—to limit their research to only what was uncontroversial and would not throw a wrench in their own political agendas.

What the sociobiologists also missed was the very legitimate concern that their interpretation of data and experiments was often (if not always) biased by culture and existing racist or sexist views. Indeed, it is quite hard to believe a study that describes a group of Chinese-American children as having "little intense emotional behavior" and "impassive facial expression[s]" (cited by E.O. Wilson in his book *On Human Nature*) to be unbiased. What is "impassive and unemotional" to one researcher might be just as easily read as "calm and serene," "happy and content," or even "bored" by another. This, of course, is not just the case in studies involving humans. As the Darwinian philosopher Helena Cronin points out in her book *The Ant and the Peacock*, when talking of sexual selection among animals, it has become standard



A stellar example of competition.

practice to refer to "coy" females and "eager" males. "I can't resist wondering," she writes, "what words would be used if the sex-roles were reversed.... If males were choosy about mates, would they be 'coy'—or discriminating, judicious, responsible, prudent, discerning? (And...would females be 'eager'—or would they be wanton, frivolous, wayward, brazen?)"

Taking out the sociobiologists' extremes (arguments for differences in IQ being the result of race, for example) and the hostile accusations of their critics (of being no better than Nazi eugenicists, and the like), it seems that both parties actually share a lot of common ground. Both believe that the influence of natural selection in evolution is quite large, even if it isn't the only factor; environmental factors can shape evolution as well; biology does have some influence over our range of behaviors and activities (as Stephen Jay Gould points out, we wouldn't have developed agriculturally-based societies if we could photosynthesize); genes do not work on their own, but in interaction with other genes and their environment; and some features are selected, while others are "side effects."

And at least when it comes to altruism, the founder of sociobiology himself is the first to acknowledge the cultural foundations of its human expressions. "...The form and intensity of altruistic acts are to a large extent culturally determined," writes E.O. Wilson in 1978. "Human social evolution is obviously more cultural than genetic. The point is that the underlying emotion, powerfully manifested in virtually all human societies, is what is considered to evolve through genes."

In the debate over genetically vs. culturally produced behavior, it's also important to note that many prominent sociobiologists have taken pains to distinguish "is" from "ought"—that is, we cannot derive a code of ethics and morals from the simple facts that determine our existence. E. O. Wilson writes that "We are not compelled to believe in biological uniformity in order to affirm human freedom and dignity." Richard Dawkins insists in a 1996 interview that natural selection theory does not necessarily mean anything about how we should structure society or economics:

In our political and social life we are entitled to throw out Darwinism.... We might say: Yes, Darwinism is true, natural selection is the true force that has given rise to life, but we, when we set up our political institutions...are going to base our society on explicitly anti-Darwinian principles.... The only message coming from evolutionary theory is what actually happens in nature. Now in nature it is true that, to some extent, the strong and the most selfish survive. But that is no message for what we should do. We have to get our 'shoulds' and our 'oughts' from some other source, not from Darwinism.

But, as Lewontin et al argue, "the effective political truth... is that 'is' abolishes 'ought.'" If biology alone compels us to perform certain behaviors, it's extremely difficult to launch ethical judgments against them. On the other hand, some sociobiologists argue that it is precisely because this is such a difficult task—overcoming one's genetic heritage to act in favor of a higher moral code—that it is so important to recognize it. Without fully accounting for what we're up against, we'll come up short every time.

Which leads us to the big question: What is that "genetic heritage," our "human nature?" Is it those traits that are found throughout various populations and cultures to be dominant? Does it leave any room for those that do not conform to the picture? Are there any elements that can be said to be universal? We all need to eat, but we do not all eat the same foods, nor can we all digest the same foods. Humans all reproduce sexually, but the raising of offspring can vary from the nuclear to extended family to adoption and artificial insemination—and not all humans that can reproduce choose to do so. All societies have a division of labor, but this varies widely both between cultures and within them; there are always those that go against the norm. Can those be said to be elements of human nature? Or are they strictly the dictates of human cultures?

Of course, the distinction between behavior and character has varied significantly throughout human history. Whether or not we perceive a person's eyes as "blue" doesn't change (much) over time or across cultures or depending on particular circumstances, but whether or not behavior is "altruistic" certainly does. In the debate over whether aggression or depression or homosexuality is wired in our genes or is the product of our environment, it's worth noting that many of these "character traits" have only been recognized in recent history. (Sex between two people of the same gender, for example, has only recently become an indicator of a homosexual identity; throughout most of human history, it was something a person did, not who they were.)

Interestingly enough, the founder of sociobiology himself argues that, at least when it comes to altruism, our particularly human environments set us apart from other animals. E.O. Wilson writes in *On Human Nature*:

Reciprocation among distantly related or unrelated individuals is the key to human society...The perfection of the social contract has broken the ancient vertebrate constraints imposed by rigid kin selection. Through the convention of reciprocation, combined with a flexible, endlessly productive language and a genius for verbal classification, human beings fashion long-remembered agreements upon which cultures and civilizations can be built.

According to Wilson, human altruism is *not* the same behavior that we find in the neuter ants and suicidal bees—through the "perfection of the social contract," humans are no longer subject to the same evolutionary laws as the rest of the animal kingdom. While "rigid" kin selection may explain the altruism of the social insects as a genetically-driven impulse, the altruism of humans is based on reciprocation and the creation of mutually-beneficial agreements.

Such an argument, though, is indicative of a troubling dualism that can be found within many theories of "human" and "animal" natures. As Stephen Jay Gould points out in his 1977 essay "So Cleverly Kind an Animal," such speculations usually involve attributing "negative" human qualities to some sort of brutish, animal past—such as aggression, selfishness, or infidelity—in an attempt to justify the existence of certain cultural attitudes that, most often, are under attack by those that find such ideas or institutions (patriarchy, racism, capitalism) unacceptable.

ERIN E. HUNTER
GRAPHIC DESIGN
AND ILLUSTRATION

www.eehunter.com

FUNDRAISING IDEAS THAT WORK!

Grassroots Fundraising Journal

PRACTICAL TIPS & TOOLS TO HELP YOU RAISE MONEY FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION.

GET MORE INFORMATION AND READ MANY ARTICLES ONLINE AT:
www.grassrootsfundraising.org

OR CALL US TOLL-FREE:
(888) 458-8588

1904 Franklin Street, Suite 705
Oakland, CA 94612
info@grassrootsfundraising.org

REQUEST A FREE SAMPLE ISSUE!

Altruism and kindness, on the other hand, are usually considered to be hallmarks of a particularly human moral order, those things that elevate the human animal above all other species. And such a belief

...gains no justification from science [but] arises from such sources as the theology of the human soul and the 'dualism' of philosophers who sought separate realms for mind and body. It has roots in...our desire to view the history of life as progressive and to place ourselves on top of the heap (with all the prerogatives of domination). We seek a criterion for our uniqueness, settle (naturally) up on our minds, and define the noble results of human consciousness as something intrinsically apart from biology.

But as Hudson Kern Reeve notes, those "noble results" might not actually be that unique, nor the laws of nature all that brutish. "Humans...have underestimated the plasticity of other animals. My own work has shown that wasp societies appear to have evolved forms of cooperation that are highly flexible.... The harder we look at insect societies, the more it looks like a human society. There's been a massive movement away from looking at genetically hardwired behavior, not just in humans. In other words, anthropomorphism may be the appropriate stance."

If evolution were a predictable process, then it would be easy to see modern species as the mere product of natural selection, an inevitable outcome. But when you factor genetics into it, and base selection on the level of the gene—which is highly susceptible to mutation—you get *variation*, not *predictability*—as the rule. Between gene mutations (both random and the product of our environment or human interference through drugs or chemicals) and a constantly changing environment, it becomes clear that human—or animal—behavior cannot be thought of as static, even within a single culture or location. As E.O. Wilson writes, "a correct application of evolutionary theory also favors diversity in the gene pool as a cardinal value."

The essence of nature, then, is variety. Indeed, selection can only work if there are different organisms to choose from—and the "fittest" of a species in one environment might not be the "fittest" in another, or in the same environment but at a different period in history. In applying natural selection theory to human social behavior, it's wrong to assume that there is therefore an "innate" human nature. It is not the human that is fixed, but the *process* of selection.

Our "nature" does not necessarily set us apart from the ants and termites, nor do similarities between humans and insects link all of us, hand in claw, in a miserable, determinist chain gang, plodding through life only to survive and reproduce as best we can. If human society is, in fact, closely related to that of the ants and bees (and derived from the same evolutionary roots), this doesn't mean human beings are restricted to a rigid set of biologically-imposed rules, as we believe insects are—it might mean that we need to start re-evaluating how rigid those rules are for the *insects*. The selection of species does not compel us to "always compete" or "always cooperate," nor is one more "natural" than the other. Whether in the city or in the anthill, biological determinism is ultimately defeated by the astounding multiplicity of abilities and behaviors that are the reason, really, why we humans even bother theorizing about such matters in the first place. **LIP**

New 2006 DVD Release

"A complex rumination on the power of protest."
— LA WEEKLY

"Gorgeously crafted! A film to rave about, as well as reckon with."
—THE INDEPENDENT

Investigation of a Flame
A Film by Lynne Sachs

A Documentary Portrait of the Catonsville Nine

GOLDEN GATE AWARD
2002 San Francisco Film Festival

VOICE CHOICE & SHORTLIST
Village Voice

DIRECTOR'S CITATION
2002 Black Mirror Film Festival

Featuring extensive interviews with Daniel & Philip Berrigan

FIRST RUN ICARUS FILMS

To purchase a DVD or for more information
www.investigationofaflame.com

Things I'm Supposed to Care About



by Tim Kreider

Break the Bank

Alves Reis and the Portuguese currency crisis

by
Sam Burton

As long as reputable sovereign and financial entities have issued value-bearing notes, disreputable personages have attempted to imitate them for nefarious purposes. At times the counterfeiters have been nearly as productive as the legitimate mints. In the mid-nineteenth century, some forty percent of all American currency was fake. But “fake” here is a relative term. With literally thousands of currencies circulating at the time, legal tender in Cincinnati might be little more than tinder-box fodder in Columbus. National currencies, too, often ended up stoking the *auto-da-fé*; those of the French Bank Royale, the Continental Congress, and the Confederate States are only the most notorious examples. Under such turbulent circumstances, the difference between value and valuelessness, between “real money” and ornate scrap paper, does not admit of definite boundaries.

Perhaps no one has challenged this distinction more effectively than the forgotten Portuguese entrepreneur and swindler Arturo Alves Reis. The latter epithet, though certainly apt, fails to capture the true essence of his crimes, which were both outlandishly reckless and touchingly devoid of malice. Producing wealth *ex nihilo*, Alves Reis was as much alchemist as con man. His specialty was spinning fictions that opened out onto the real, then closed behind him once he passed through. His career began early. Just after his twentieth birthday, in 1916, Alves Reis lit out for the Portuguese colony of Angola to make his fortune. In addition to a plump new bride, he brought with him a homemade diploma from the nonexistent Polytechnic School of Engineering of Oxford University. This diploma certified his mastery of the subjects of geology, geometry, theoretical and applied physics, metallurgy, paleography, and mathematics, as well as civil, mechanical, and

electrical engineering. The sole genuine mark on the document was a notary seal. As the only Oxford graduate in Angola, Alves Reis soon found himself running the country’s rail system, an occupation he discharged with considerable alacrity; diagnosing mechanical failures in engines he had never seen before. Such success must have encouraged him: told by real engineers that some new equipment was too heavy for the trestles, he tested it himself, bringing his infant son along in flamboyant demonstration of his self-confidence. In short, Alves Reis did his invented alma mater proud.

Nest egg in pocket, Alves Reis returned to Lisbon in 1923 and went into business in a curiously non-specific way, buying and selling, exporting and importing whatever came his way. He soon met with his second opportunity to use fiction in pursuit of the real. Learning that a controlling interest in the Royal Trans-African Railway Company of Angola could be had for a mere \$40,000 (which represented only a fraction of its cash reserves), Alves Reis engineered a “leveraged buy-out” *avant la lettre*: He kited a US check to buy the company, raided their coffers, and wired \$40,000 of their own money to New York before the boat bearing his check could arrive at dock. An efficient scheme indeed, but when some influential members of the railway’s board ratted him out, he was tossed into an Oporto jail. A gross error on the part of the Portuguese authorities: they gave Alves Reis time to think. And what he thought about was the Bank of Portugal.

Reading through the bank’s bylaws, Alves Reis made some interesting discoveries. First, it was semi-private; the government held only a minority stake in the operation. Second, it had the exclusive right to issue Portuguese bank notes. Last but not least, no one was in charge of monitoring duplicate serial numbers. After



Antonio Bandeira, right, in full diplomatic uniform for a reception in The Hague in 1923.

fifty-four days of confinement, he emerged from jail with an utterly ludicrous plan the likes of which no self-respecting criminal could ever have conceived. It was not so much half-baked as inherently inedible. Alves Reis cobbled together a contract that specified that he, as a supposed agent of the Bank of Portugal, was authorized to request the printing of \$5,000,000 in Angolan currency to be paid to an “international group of investors” in exchange for a loan to the Angolan government for the same amount in British sterling. After a night of cutting and pasting, Alves Reis took his contract over to a notary, whose assistant stamped his signature without a second glance. He then obtained the seals of the French, German, and English consulates, each attesting to the authenticity of the notary’s signature. The bureaucrats’ complicity seems to have had no more ulterior a motive than that they enjoyed stamping things.

With contract in hand, Alves Reis now rounded up his consortium of “international investors.” He basically chose the only foreigners he knew, but he could not have done better had he gone straight to central casting at Warner Brothers (indeed, the entire secondary cast of *Casablanca* could have found roles in a film version of this scheme). His co-conspirators were: Antonio Bandeira, a Portuguese diplomat posted in Holland, with the obligatory pile of gambling debts; his corrupt, skirt-chasing younger brother José, who had done time for grand larceny; a social-climbing Dutch importer named Karl

Marang; and Adolf Hennies, an ostensibly respectable German financier with a shady background in war profiteering. Believing Alves Reis to be the front man for a cabal of corrupt officials out to shore up both their own and Angola’s finances, the group vowed complete secrecy as a requisite to participation in the scheme.

Next, the investors approached Waterlow & Sons, an English company that printed currency for the Bank of Portugal. Here we may pause to reflect on one of the central paradoxes of this story. After the Great War, Portugal, like many another small and/or impoverished nations, printed none of its own currency. All of the work was farmed out overseas, in part because they could not afford the requisite machinery. (One might imagine that where the printing of money is concerned, money would be no object. Alas, not so.) Intense competition for currency-making contracts among a handful of printers may explain why Sir William Waterlow, despite a lifetime in the trade, fell for Alves Reis’s story hook, line, and sinker.

Alves Reis’s scheme was extremely complicated. It depended on the fact that Angolan currency at the time was merely Portuguese currency that the Bank of Portugal would stamp with the word “Angola,” thus reducing its value by ninety percent. Angolan escudos were not convertible into any other currency, and as Sir William kindly pointed out, the amount of money that Reis’s investor group was receiving in exchange for the loan in

The difference between value and valuelessness, between “real money” and ornate scrap paper, does not admit of definite boundaries.

sterling pounds in fact seemed unfairly low. Waterlow went so far as to counsel the group that they should be receiving a larger sum. What the printer did not know was that Alves Reis of course had no intention of devaluing his haul by placing the word “Angola” on the notes. For Alves Reis’s plan to succeed, however, he needed to provide Waterlow with a list of serial numbers for the bills they were about to print. Alves Reis knew that these numbers followed a strict set of parameters; for instance, that there were never two consecutive vowels in any given serial number, and so on. Having no access to the Bank of Portugal’s protocols, Alves Reis had to empirically deduce these rules by examining already circulating notes. What he lacked, however, was a master list of active serial numbers already printed by Waterlow on behalf of the Bank of Portugal. When providing the list of viable serial numbers to Waterlow, Alves Reis assured them that any serial numbers on this new list already printed in earlier batches would not conflict with currency already circulating in Portugal because the bills were destined exclusively for Angola. Since Alves Reis knew that there was no systematic supervision of duplicate numbers within the Portuguese banking system, he reasoned that any duplicates that he introduced into the Portuguese monetary system would never be detected.

After several breathless months, two of Alves Reis’s associates appeared at the Waterlow offices and were cheerfully handed several trunks full of freshly minted 500-escudo notes. As the firm had worked from previously existing plates, the entire printing bill was less than two thousand pounds sterling. Back in Portugal, Alves Reis enlisted a crack squad of black-market currency traders to exchange as many Portuguese escudos as they could for British pounds and American dollars. Quite understandably, these men were suspicious of the notes; several checked samples with banks. Inevitably, as more of the 500-escudo notes circulated, so too did the rumors of counterfeiting. The situation became so critical that the Bank of Portugal itself was forced to intervene, issuing repeated assurances that no counterfeit bills had been detected. With the main victim of their crimes acting as press agent, the group felt emboldened. Mansions were constructed, fleets of automobiles purchased. Such was their prodigality that the moribund Portuguese economy began to show signs of life. Alves Reis’s notional fortune trickled down.

But as his partners were soon to learn at a meeting in Paris, the diminutive Portuguese schemer was just getting going. Topping his agenda was the placement of a reorder with Waterlow. (Ultimately, despite the limits of the original contract, they received the equivalent of around \$2 billion from the good offices of their British printer.) Secondly, Alves Reis told them, the cadre of money changers wasn’t cutting it anymore: They would have to charter their own bank. The Bank of Metropole and Angola, as they would name it, would carry them until they got to phase three: control of the Bank of Portugal itself. In his initial prison-time research,

Alves Reis had discovered that the bank was the only agent of the government empowered to prosecute counterfeiters. He had thus plotted from the beginning to transfigure his imaginary millions into a real controlling interest of the country’s central bank, thereby keeping himself safe forever more from discovery and further incarceration. Just as he had surmounted the deception of his Oxford diploma by becoming a first-rate engineer and made good on the kited checks once they had gained him access to the coffers, he now aimed to attain a position from which he could retroactively negate his criminal act. Plus, he wanted to be a big shot.

He set one of his associates, José Bandeira, the task of acquiring shares in the central bank as discreetly as possible. This worked for a while, but as word of the transactions spread, the shares grew ever dearer and scarcer. Bandeira soon found himself at the foot of a very steep acquisition curve. What he and his fellow “international investors” made of their situation at this point is far from clear. Alves Reis had exacted an enormous cut off the top, which he claimed was owed to his patrons at the Bank of Portugal.

His co-conspirators’ acquiescence to this demand would seem to indicate that they continued to cling to the notion that they were doing the bidding of legitimate, if corrupt, Portuguese officials. Ultimately, their failure to see through Alves Reis’s fictions, if failure it was, can be attributed only to a collective willful blindness to the obvious. No one, for instance, appears to have been much troubled by the fact that no loan to Angola was ever proposed. No one, that is, except Alves Reis himself, who seems to have had a genuine love of, and loyalty to, Portugal’s vast, dirt-poor, calamitously administered colony. As soon as his Bank of Angola and Metropole was chartered, he set out with his wife for a triumphal return visit. During this tour, he contrived a master plan for renewing Angola’s infrastructure with streets, harbors, and railroads. He gained control of something on the order of one million acres of land and was hailed in the local press as Angola’s Cecil Rhodes.

Unfortunately, none of it was to be. As Alves Reis’s return steamer approached Lisbon, friends boarded with the news that police were waiting at the dock to arrest him. Some weeks earlier, a teller in Oporto had phoned the central bank to report his conviction that the Bank of A&M was distributing counterfeit 500-escudo bills. Eager for tangible proof of Reisian malfeasance, the authorities hurried forth to Oporto to inspect the notes in question. Again and again, their experts pronounced them authentic. They assuaged their disappointment by sifting through the holdings in the A&M vault. Here, finally, they uncovered duplicate serial numbers and issued an arrest warrant. The German financier Hennies, who had been traveling with Alves Reis, jumped ship, but Alves Reis himself met his dockside fate with dignity and the unfounded conviction that he could beat the rap. His final struggle to exonerate himself brought out his worst. From a well-appointed

The “value” of money is ambiguous in a paper era. After all, civilization is more or less predicated upon a fetishization of gold, with its accompanying religious associations of the marriage of sun and earth.



An official 500-escudo bill printed by Waterlow & Sons, London, in 1922. Courtesy Mike Jowett.

cell, he forged documents that incriminated innocent Bank of Portugal officials; many were disgraced. The economy resumed its downward spiral, and an economics professor named Antonio de Oliveira Salazar was eventually brought to power to restore political and fiscal order. He would remain the dictator of Portugal for thirty-six years. Alves Reis, it goes without saying, found religion in jail and died a self-righteous pauper.

During his years of incarceration, Alves Reis frequently asked himself why the notes Waterlow produced for him should be worth any less than the ones they printed for the Portuguese state, and this question remains valid from a theoretical, if not legal, standpoint. Through what act of transubstantiation did theirs become “real money”? Certainly not by virtue of some reserve of metal or foreign currency. Like virtually every other nation, Portugal produced many times more in notes than they had lying around in so-called tangible wealth. The “value” of money is ambiguous in a paper era. After all, civilization is more or less predicated upon a fetishization of gold, with its accompanying religious associations of the marriage of sun and earth. So strong is the tendency to identify value-as-such with this metal that it is only since the Depression that the Western world has formally severed the connection. Humankind seems sentimentally attached to the idea that in order to be of value, money must also have value. The trouble, of course, is that the two do not always run on parallel tracks. If, for example, massive amounts of gold are discovered in the Yukon, or you happen to stumble onto a New World choking on its silver, the value of those metals will decline far below the value they represent as money. Conversely, in the early 1960s, when silver was suddenly scarce, the value of the silver in a silver dollar jumped to \$1.25, and that venerable metal had to be permanently expunged from the coin of our realm.

Thus the conversion to a paper economy represents the stripping away of the sentimental, irrational (and just plain heavy)

material component of money, leaving the abstract, symbolic (and actual) aspect to circulate more freely. For the German philosopher/sociologist Georg Simmel, writing at the dawn of the twentieth century, this movement toward “pure” money represented a qualitative societal shift away from the qualitative. Money allows for the rationalization and depersonalization of exchange. With its advent, all things and all values can be compared. But this only imperfectly covers a deeper truth, as Simmel puts it: “The question as to what value really is, like the question as to what being is, is unanswerable.”

Monetary signifiers are at least as much a product of belief, trust, desire, and social practice as linguistic ones. Severed from a limiting referent such as gold or real estate, these signs traverse the globe at warp speed. Under these conditions, a nation cannot be too protective of its symbols, because it is difficult even to say what a “counterfeit symbol” might be. One could argue that Alves Reis was not so much a counterfeiter as a kind of monetary plagiarist.

Enthusiasts of avant-garde Portuguese literature (of which there must be dozens) will no doubt have noted to themselves that three years after Alves Reis lit out for Portugal, a certain Ricardo Reis, physician and lyric poet, set sail for Brazil. This latter Reis was one of the several fictive alter egos through whom Ferdinand Pessoa imported modernism into Portugal. It is possible that Alves Reis was one of Pessoa’s patrons. What could be more fitting than imaginary poets living off of imaginary money? And perhaps Alves Reis was inspired by Pessoa’s novella *The Anarchist Banker*, published in 1921. Alas, at present I am unable to discover any evidence of a relationship between the two. But with a little cutting and pasting, and the cooperation of a notary, I should have something ready by next Thursday.

This piece is adapted from an article first published in *Cabinet* magazine (issue 21, Spring 2006).

The Plague of Disbelief

Everybody knows that pestilences have a way of recurring in the world; yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crash down on our heads from a blue sky. There have been as many plagues as wars in history; yet always plagues and wars take people equally by surprise.

In fact, like our fellow citizens, Dr. Bernard Rieux was caught off his guard, and we should understand his hesitations in the light of this fact; and similarly understand how he was torn between conflicting fears and confidence. When a war breaks out, people say: "It's too stupid; it can't last long." But though a war may well be "too stupid," that doesn't prevent its lasting. Stupidity has a knack of getting its way; as we should see if we were not always so much wrapped up in ourselves.

In this respect our townsfolk were like everybody else, wrapped up in themselves; in other words they were humanists: they disbelieved in pestilences. A pestilence isn't a thing made to man's measure; therefore we tell ourselves that pestilence is a mere bogey of the mind, a bad dream that will pass away. But it doesn't always pass away and, from one bad dream to another, it is men who pass away, and the humanists first of all, because they haven't taken their precautions. Our townsfolk were not more to blame than others; they forgot to be modest, that was all, and thought that everything still was possible for them; which presupposed that pestilences were impossible. They went on doing business, arranged for journeys, and formed views. How should they have given a thought to anything like plague, which rules out any future, cancels journeys, silences the exchange of views. They fancied themselves free, and no one will ever be free so long as there are pestilences.

by
Albert Camus

Indeed, even after Dr. Rieux had admitted in his friend's company that a handful of persons, scattered about the town, had without warning died of plague, the danger still remained fantastically unreal. For the simple reason that, when a man is a doctor, he comes to have his own ideas of physical suffering, and to acquire somewhat more imagination than the average. Looking from his window at the town, outwardly quite unchanged, the doctor felt little more than a faint qualm for the future, a vague unease.

He tried to recall what he had read about the disease. Figures floated across his memory, and he recalled that some thirty or so great plagues known to history had accounted for nearly a hundred million deaths. But what are a hundred million deaths? When one has served in a war, one hardly knows what a dead man is, after a while. And since a dead man has no substance unless one has actually seen him dead, a hundred million corpses broadcast through history are no more than a puff of smoke in the imagination. The doctor remembered the plague at Constantinople that, according to Procopius, caused ten thousand deaths in a single day. Ten thousand dead made about five times the audience in a biggish cinema. Yes, that was how it should be done. You should collect the people at the exits of five picture-houses, you should lead them to a city square and make them die in heaps if you wanted to get a clear notion of what it means. Then at least you could add some familiar



faces to the anonymous mass. But naturally that was impossible to put into practice; moreover, what man knows ten thousand faces? In any case the figures of those old historians, like Procopius, weren't to be relied on; that was common knowledge. Seventy years ago, at Canton, forty thousand rats died of plague before the disease spread to the inhabitants. But, again, in the Canton epidemic there was no reliable way of counting up the rats. A very rough estimate was all that could be made, with, obviously, a wide margin for error. "Let's see," the doctor murmured to himself, "supposing the length of a rat to be ten inches, forty thousand rats placed end to end would make a line of . . ."

He pulled himself up sharply. He was letting his imagination play pranks the last thing wanted just now. A few cases, he told himself, don't make an epidemic; they merely call for serious precautions. He must fix his mind, first of all, on the observed facts: stupor and extreme prostration, buboes, intense thirst, delirium, dark blotches on the body, internal dilatation, and, in conclusion . . . In conclusion, some words came back to the doctor's mind; aptly enough, the concluding sentence of the description of the symptoms given in his medical handbook: "The pulse becomes fluttering, dicrotic, and intermittent, and death ensues as the result of the slightest movement." Yes, in conclusion, the patient's life hung on a thread, and three people out of four (he remembered the exact figures) were too impatient not to make the very slight movement that snapped the thread.

The doctor was still looking out of the window. Beyond it lay the tranquil radiance of a cool spring sky; inside the room a word was echoing still, the word "plague." A word that conjured up in the doctor's mind not only what science chose to put into it, but a whole series of fantastic possibilities utterly out of keeping with that gray and yellow town under his eyes, from which were rising the sounds of mild activity characteristic of the hour; a drone rather than a bustling, the noises of a happy town, in short, if it's possible to be at once so dull and happy. A tranquility so casual and thoughtless seemed almost effortlessly to give the lie to those old pictures of the plague: Athens, a charnel-house reeking to heaven and deserted even by the birds; Chinese towns cluttered up with victims silent in their agony; the convicts at Marseille piling rotting corpses into pits; the building of the Great Wall in Provence to fend off the furious plague-wind; the damp, putrefying pallets stuck to the mud floor at the Constantinople lazaret-house, where the patients were hauled up from their beds with hooks; the carnival of masked doctors at the Black Death; men and women copulating in the cemeteries of Milan; cartloads of dead bodies rumbling through London's ghoul-haunted darkness—nights and days filled always, everywhere, with the eternal cry of human pain. No, all those horrors were not near enough as yet even to ruffle the equanimity of that spring afternoon. The clang of an unseen streetcar came through the window, briskly refuting cruelty and pain. Only the sea, murmurous behind the dingy checkerboard of houses, told of the unrest,

the precariousness, of all things in this world. And, gazing in the direction of the bay, Dr. Rieux called to mind the plague-fires of which Lucretius tells, which the Athenians kindled on the seashore. The dead were brought there after nightfall, but there was not room enough, and the living fought one another with torches for a space where to lay those who had been dear to them; for they had rather engage in bloody conflicts than abandon their dead to the waves. A picture rose before him of the red glow of the pyres mirrored on a wine-dark, slumbrous sea, battling torches whirling sparks across the darkness, and thick, fetid smoke rising toward the watchful sky. Yes, it was not beyond the bounds of possibility. . . .

But these extravagant forebodings dwindled in the light of reason. True, the word "plague" had been uttered; true, at this very moment one or two victims were being seized and laid low by the disease. Still, that could stop, or be stopped. It was only a matter of lucidly recognizing what had to be recognized; of dispelling extraneous shadows and doing what needed to be done.

Then the plague would come to an end, because it was unthinkable, or, rather, because one thought of it on misleading lines. If, as was most likely, it died out, all would be well. If not, one would know it anyhow for what it was and what steps should be taken for coping with and finally overcoming it.

The doctor opened the window, and at once the noises of the town grew louder. The brief, intermittent sibilance of a machine-saw came from a near-by workshop. Rieux pulled himself together. There lay certitude; there, in the daily round. All the rest hung on mere threads and trivial contingencies; you couldn't waste your time on it. The thing was to do your job as it should be done.

* * *

Next day, by dint of a persistence that many thought ill advised, Rieux persuaded the authorities to convene a health committee at the Prefect's office.

Rieux gave his colleague Castel a lift to the Prefect's office. "Do you know," Castel said when they were in the car, that we haven't a gram of serum in the whole district?"

"I know. I rang up the depot. The director seemed quite startled. It'll have to be sent from Paris."

"Let's hope they're quick about it."

"I sent a wire yesterday," Rieux said.

The Prefect greeted them amiably enough, but one could see his nerves were on edge.

"Let's make a start, gentlemen," he said. "Need I review the situation?"

Dr. Richard thought that wasn't necessary. He and his colleagues were acquainted with the facts. The only question was what measures should be adopted.

"The question," old Castel cut in almost rudely, "is to know whether it's plague or not."

Two or three of the doctors present protested. The others seemed to hesitate. The Prefect gave a start and hurriedly glanced toward the door to make sure it had prevented this outrageous remark from being overheard in the corridor. Richard said that in his opinion the great thing was not to take an alarmist view. All that could be said at present was that we had to deal with a special type of fever, with inguinal complications; in medical science, as in daily life, it was unwise to jump to conclusions. Old Castel, who was placidly chewing his draggled yellow mustache, raised his pale, bright eyes and gazed at Rieux. Then, after sweeping the other members of the committee with a friendly glance, he said that he knew quite well that it was plague and, needless to say, he also knew that, were this to be officially admitted, the authorities would be compelled to take very drastic steps. This was, of course, the explanation of his colleagues' reluctance to face the facts and, if it would ease their minds, he was quite prepared to say it wasn't plague. The Prefect seemed ruffled and remarked that, in any case, this line of argument seemed to him unsound.

"The important thing," Castel replied, "isn't the soundness or otherwise of the argument, but for it to make you think."

Rieux, who had said nothing so far, was asked for his opinion.

"We are dealing," he said, "with a fever of a typhoidal nature, accompanied by vomiting and buboes. I have incised these buboes and had the pus analyzed; our laboratory analyst believes he has identified the plague bacillus. But I am bound to add that there are specific modifications that don't quite tally with the classical description of the plague bacillus."

Richard pointed out that this justified a policy of wait-and-see; anyhow, it would be wise to await the statistical report on the series of analyses that had been going on for several days.

"When a microbe," Rieux said, "after a short intermission can quadruple in three days' time the volume of the spleen, can swell the mesenteric ganglia to the size of an orange and give them the consistency of gruel, a policy of wait-and-see is, to say the least of it, unwise. The foci of infection are steadily extending, judging by the rapidity with which the disease is spreading, it may well, unless we can stop it, kill off half the town before two months are out. That being so, it has small importance whether you call it plague or some rare kind of fever. The important thing is to prevent its killing off half the population of this town."

Richard said it was a mistake to paint too gloomy a picture, and, moreover, the disease hadn't been proved to be contagious; indeed, relatives of his patients, living under the same roof, had escaped it.

"But others have died," Rieux observed. "And obviously contagion is never absolute; otherwise you'd have a constant mathematical progression and the death-rate would rocket up catastrophically. It's not a question of painting too black a picture. It's a question of taking precautions."

Richard, however, summing up the situation as he saw it, pointed out that if the epidemic did not cease spontaneously, it would be necessary to apply the rigorous prophylactic measures laid down in the Code. And, to do this, it would be necessary to admit officially that plague had broken out. But of this there was no absolute certainty; therefore any hasty action was to be deprecated.

Rieux stuck to his guns. "The point isn't whether the measures provided for in the Code are rigorous, but whether they are needful to prevent the death of half the population. All the rest is a matter of administrative action, and I needn't remind you that our constitution has provided for such emergencies by empowering prefects to issue the necessary orders."

"Quite true," the Prefect assented, "but I shall need your professional declaration that the epidemic is one of plague."

"If we don't make that declaration," Rieux said, "there's a risk that half the population may be wiped out."

Richard cut in with some impatience.

"The truth is that our colleague is convinced it's plague; his description of the syndrome proved it."

Rieux replied that he had not described a "syndrome," but merely what he'd seen with his own eyes. And what he'd seen was buboes, and high fever accompanied by delirium, ending fatally within 48 hours. Could Dr. Richard take the responsibility of declaring that the epidemic would die out without the imposition of rigorous prophylactic measures?

Richard hesitated, then fixed his eyes on Rieux.

"Please answer me quite frankly. Are you absolutely convinced it's plague?"

"You're stating the problem wrongly. It's not a question of the term I use; it's a question of time."

"Your view, I take it," the Prefect put in, "is this. Even if it isn't plague, the prophylactic measures enjoined by law for coping with a state of plague should be put into force immediately?"

"If you insist on my having a 'view,' that conveys it accurately enough."

The doctors confabulated. Richard was their spokesman: "It comes to this. We are to take the responsibility of acting as though the epidemic were plague."

This way of putting it met with general approval.

"It doesn't matter to me," Rieux said, "how you phrase it. My point is that we should not act as if there were no likelihood that half the population would be wiped out; for then it would be."

Followed by scowls and protestations, Rieux left the committee room. Some minutes later, as he was driving down a back street redolent of fried fish and urine, a woman screaming in agony, her groin dripping blood, stretched out her arms toward him.

.....
This excerpt was adapted from *The Plague*, by Albert Camus. Originally published in 1947, it's the heartwarming story of an Algerian city swept by the plague and how people respond to the Absurd and the loss of control and meaning.



Please Step Away from the Vernacular

Race, Slang & Roget's Thesaurus

by
Elizabeth Ewen
and
Stuart Ewen

By the 1840s, the population of London was approaching 2.3 million, making it the most populous city in the world. It was also one of the most densely inhabited, as people flooded the city from a wide range of locales. Some came from the British countryside, others from Ireland. Jews, Italians, Romany (gypsies), and other migrants arrived from various parts of Europe, while Africans and colonials from the subcontinent of India (commonly referred to as Hindoos) came from the outer reaches of the British Empire.

Responding to the fusion of fear and fascination that London's more staid population felt toward these people, a writer and editor named Henry Mayhew began, in the 1840s, to report on the lives, labors, language, and diversions of the wandering "vagabonds" of the city, and devoted his literary energies to recording the social realities of London's "street folk," relying heavily on words coming "from the lips of the people themselves." His articles began appearing in *London's Morning Chronicle* in 1845. In 1851, Mayhew began publishing his articles and additional materials in a four-volume study entitled

London Labour and the London Poor. These books would become the first major sociological study of poverty in an urban environment. In *London Labour and the London Poor*, Mayhew's style was entertaining and colorful, quoting at length from vernacular interviews with "Street Sellers" ("costermongers and patterers"), "The Street Irish," "Female Street Sellers," "Children Street Sellers," and others. His writings offered a vivid picture of street life. An interview with the seller of song lyrics, for example, quoted extensively from the lyrics themselves, providing a rare taste of the popular culture of the lower classes in mid-nineteenth-century London.

Throughout *London Labour and the London Poor*, Mayhew provided visible evidence of the inhabitants and occupations of the street. Part of a generation of journalists who fortified their reportage with the realism of photography, Mayhew hired a daguerreotypist, Richard Beard, to photograph the subjects of his interviews. Peppered throughout his study are wood engravings, each certified by the imprimatur, "From a Daguerreotype by Beard," offering wealthy Londoners the voyeuristic satisfaction of examining the meager or menacing physiognomies of London's poor.

Yet, far more dramatic than these engravings was Mayhew's nonstop insertion of spoken vernacular from the street. The "use of slang language," transliterated into text, was everywhere in evidence. To the eyes and ears of proper Britons, vigilant guardians of the Queen's English, there could be no more eloquent testimony than this as to the degraded state of the lower classes.

Not disconnected from his espoused desire to promote social reform, Mayhew supported this attitude. [...The] disorganization of street folks' language was an indication of their moral and intellectual condition. Mayhew discussed the "Language of Costermongers" as a case in point.

The slang language of the costermongers is not very remarkable for originality of construction; it possesses no humour: but they boast that it is known only to themselves; it is far beyond the Irish, they say, and puzzles the Jews. The root of the costermonger tongue, so to speak, is to give the words spelt backward, or rather produced rudely backward ... With this backward pronunciation, which is very arbitrary, are mixed words reducible to no rule and seldom referable to any origin, thus compli-

cating the mystery of this unwritten tongue; while any syllable is added to a proper slang word, at the discretion of the speaker.

Slang is acquired very rapidly, and some costermongers will converse in it by the hour. The women use it sparingly; the girls more than the women; the men more than the girls; and the boys most of all. The most ignorant of all these classes deal most in slang and boast of their cleverness and proficiency in it.

The condemnation of vernacular language, as vulgar and ungodly, was part of the Catholic Church's historic argument on behalf of Latin as the only acceptable written language. As spoken languages, such as English, gained literary legitimacy, this attitude changed, but, to many minds, the peculiarities of lower class vernaculars continued to be a mark of inferiority and the subject of ridicule. To a large extent, this view continues today. The perceived mangling of proper language is a tenacious aspect of derogatory stereotyping. For Mayhew, in the 1840s and 1850s, a glossary of slang usage offered readers an amusing opportunity for such disdain.

"In my present chapter," Mayhew contended, "the language has, I believe, been reduced to orthography [written alphabetic form] for the first time." He offered some juicy examples, beginning with money:

Flatch	Halfpenny
Yenep	Penny
Net yenep	Tenpence
Couter	Sovereign
Ewif gen	Crown

"False logic...too often gains the assent of the unthinking multitude, disseminating far and wide the seeds of prejudice and error. Truisms pass current, and wear the semblance of profound wisdom, when dressed up in the tinsel garb of antithetical phrases, or set off by an imposing pomp of paradox..."

And then moved to some common phrases:

On	No
Say	Yes
Top o'reeb	Pot of beer
Doing dab	Doing bad
Cool him	Look at him
Cool the esclop.	Look at the police.
Cool the namesclop	Look at the policemen.

To members of the costermonger ranks, jargon such as this was what permitted them to communicate with one another without having to worry about outsiders listening in. "The police don't understand us at all," one costermonger bragged to Mayhew. "It would be a pity if they did." For Mayhew, however, their jargon distanced costermongers from the idiom of common courtesy and manners, from the culture of civility. "The costermonger's oaths, I may conclude, are all in the vernacular; nor are any of the common salutes, such as 'How d'you do?' or 'Good night' known to their slang." Many middle- and upper-class Englishmen perceived the mounting presence of crude colloquialisms in their midst as a threat to the mother tongue, something that demanded immediate and decisive action.

In 1852, one year after Mayhew's volumes began appearing, a cosmic event in the history of lexicography took place that seemed to offer an appropriate response: a systematic defense of the English language. The event was the publication of the first edition of the *Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases Classified and Arranged so as to Facilitate the Expression of Ideas and Assist in Literary Composition*, the brainstorm of a physician named Peter Mark Roget.

Until his death in 1869, Roget continued to work on improving his Thesaurus, and he personally oversaw the publication of twenty-five new editions of the book. During these years, Roget worked closely with his son, John L. Roget, who carried on the project of expanding and refining the details of the book when his father died. The Roget family dynasty maintained control of the enterprise for one hundred years. Upon John's death in 1908, his son and partner, Samuel Romilly Roget, assumed the helm and continued to advance the enterprise until his death in 1952, exactly a century after his grandfather had first published the Thesaurus. The unusual lineage of blood and outlook insured that the philosophical attitude of this influential reference volume maintained a consistent vision long after its originator was gone.

Peter Mark Roget first began to work on the project in 1805, at the age of twenty-six. In the forty-six years between the work's inception and its publication, Roget was occupied with a diverse range of other innovative undertakings and activities. In 1814, he helped to bring the slide rule to its modern form, adding the capacity to calculate roots and powers to its previous ability to multiply and divide. Roget's invention, which he termed the "log-log" slide rule, was the foundation of devices used by mathematicians for a century and a half, until electronic calculators superseded them. When he published a paper on his slide rule in *Philosophical Transactions*, he gained a prominence that led to his election to the Royal Society. As his biographer, D. L. Emblen, has written, this was the moment of Roget's arrival as a British man of ideas.

* * *

[The Thesaurus] was hardly the first attempt to catalog and define words, but its structure was both new and ingenious. Unlike a dictionary, which offers definitions but organizes words illogically, according to the arbitrary dictates of the alphabet, the Thesaurus was designed to situate each word in its proper place, within the universe of possible ideas and meanings. To create a coherent universe in which words each a small celestial body—each part of a larger constellation of ideas would hover—Roget created an intricate system of classification, not unlike Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae*. He explained,

The principle by which I have been guided in framing my verbal classification is the same as that which is employed in the various departments of Natural History. Thus the sectional divisions I have formed corresponds to Natural Families in Botany, and the filiation of words presents a network analogous to the natural filiations of plants or animals.

Just as Linnaeus had inscribed each life form within a hierarchy of development, Roget's architecture of language moved from words expressing elemental existence to those expressing greater and greater levels of intellectual, emotional, and philosophical complexity. In a city where the language of the street was marked by a seeming chaos, Roget's system was designed to place every word within a highly ordered structure of organization. "It is of the utmost consequence," he wrote in the Introduction to the first edi-

tion, "that strict accuracy should regulate our use of language, and that every one should acquire the power and the habit of expressing his thoughts with perspicuity and correctness."

To ensure the clear and precise use of words, Roget subdivided the English language into six primary classes, each defined numerically to emphasize its exactitude. The first, he explained, "derived from the more general and ABSTRACT RELATIONS among things, such as Existence, Resemblance, Quantity, Order, Number, Time, Power." The second general class addressed "SPACE" and included occurrences specific to space, "Motion, or change of place." The third included properties of the "MATERIAL WORLD; namely, the Properties of Matter, such as Solidity, Fluidity, Heat, Sound, Light, and the Phenomena they present, as well as the simple Perceptions to which they give rise." Roget's fourth class of ideas expressible by language pertained to matters of the "INTELLECT and its operations." This included the Acquisition, the Retention, and the Communication of Ideas. The fifth class encompassed "ideas derived from the exercise of "VOLITION; embracing the phenomena and results of our Voluntary and Active Powers; such as Choice, Intention, Utility, Action, Antagonism, Authority, Compact, Property, etc." Roget's last class comprehended "all ideas derived from the operation of our SENTIMENT AND MORAL POWERS: including our Feelings, Emotions, Passions and Moral and Religious Sentiments." The trajectory of his classes moved from basic existence to human intellect and will, ending with spiritual concerns.

Within Roget's classes, there were further subdivisions into "Sections," subsections, and "topics," or "heads of signification," each assigned a specific number. In the back portion of the Thesaurus was an alphabetical listing of words, each word followed by a list of its various possible connotations. Each of these was followed by a number, such as 563 or 876, which permitted a user to locate that word as it related to similar words and ideas, also situating it within the overall cosmos of possible meanings. The alphabet, which dominated most English reference books, was here subservient, simply a tool that carried a user to a precise and mathematical organization of ideas in relation to one another and in relation to an all-encompassing totality.

The method of the Thesaurus was shaped by an ongoing juxtaposition of opposites, usually placed side by side in the original text to underline the contrast. Class four, for example, which incorporated ideas and words pertaining to human intellect, also contained, nearby, words and ideas indicating deficiencies in this regard. In class six, which contained religion, the "topic" of Worship was followed by those of Idolatry and Sorcery, Piety by Impiety and Irreligion.

Roget's objective was not to provide writers and speakers with stylistic instruction. Just as art and science had carried on a centuries-long quest for precise visual truth, *Roget's Thesaurus* offered its devotees linguistic truth, the opportunity to express themselves in a way that was absolutely true to their intentions. Given the abuses of language that Roget saw and heard everywhere around him, he viewed his Thesaurus as a response to an urgent social need. False logic, disguised under specious phraseology, too often gains the assent of the unthinking multitude, disseminating far and wide the seeds of prejudice and error. Truisms pass current, and wear the

semblance of profound wisdom, when dressed up in the tinsel garb of antithetical phrases, or set off by an imposing pomp of paradox. By the confused jargon of involved and mystical sentences, the imagination is easily inveigled into the belief that it is acquiring knowledge and approaching truth. A misapplied or misapprehended term is sufficient to give rise to fierce and interminable disputes.... [A]n artful watchword, thrown among combustible materials, has kindled the flame of deadly warfare, and changed the destiny of an empire.

Roget's concern with the destiny of empires infused his work, which presented, in its numerical universe, an imperial and hierarchical worldview. Section 875, for example, containing words related to "NOBILITY" included "gentility," "quality," "order," "fashionable world," "man of distinction," and "gentleman." Across the page, on the other side of the tracks, were words associated with "COMMONALITY" including "low condition," "the vulgar herd," "the crowd," "the mob," "rabble," "the scum," "the dregs of society," "nobody," "vermin," "bog-trotter," "Hottentot," "savage," "barbarian," "cockney" and "uncivilized." Category 563, pertaining specifically to improper language, placed the word "slang" adjacent to "barbarism," "dog latin," and "broken English."

Section 983 covered words associated with "true faith" and "Christianity." Across the page, 984 provided a lexicon of "heresy" including "heathen," "Paganism," "Judaism," "Islamism," "antichrist," "bigot" and "fanatic." In 431, exploring the quality of "BLACKNESS," Roget and his son placed "negro" in the same category as "denigrate," "to blacken," "Ethiopic" and "nocturnal."

This outlook continued to define the Thesaurus well into the twentieth century. In the 1911 edition, overseen by a young Samuel Roget, the section for "COMMONALITY" (876) added "democracy" to a list including "low life," "trash," "swinish multitude" and "vulgar herd." "MALEFICENT" (913) became even more virulent than it had been in earlier editions, which had included "evil doer," "anarchist," "savage," "barbarian" and "monster." Now, added to the list were "Apache," "Red Skin," "Mohawk," "the great unwashed," and "dangerous classes," a common euphemism for the urban poor.

In the 1920s, Samuel Roget added decimal points to the Thesaurus's numerical system, to enhance its precision and, in the process, to spotlight invidious comparisons and associations. An imperial and hierarchical sensibility remained intact.

In a 1946 edition, "COMMONALITY" (874) combined "the great unwashed" with "the great unnumbered," perhaps a reflection of Peter Roget's conviction that numbers were the intellectual property of gentlemen. Also included are phrases from Shakespeare, "the beast with many heads" and "the blunt monster with uncounted heads."

Under topic 948, "Good Person," "nature's nobleman" is followed shortly by "Christian" and "White Man." The word "black," on the other hand, is found under the topics "Vice" (945) and "Badness" (649) and is situated in groupings that include "evil," "horrible," "odious," "vile," "monstrous" and "cursed." Not far from this, the word "heathen," under 984.20, occupies the same category as "Kaffir," a derogatory term employed by the British to describe blacks in South Africa.

In the grandson's editions, distaste for the language of the street also remained evident. In a section of class four (INTELLECT), in which words about language were considered (560.2), "vernacular language" and "vulgar tongue" stand together. Nearby, in 560.3, "accepted speech; literary language; [and] correct or good English" occupy the same space as "the king's or queen's English" and "classicism." Two steps down the road, "Barbarism" and "Colloquialism" define an entire "head of signification," number 563, Common speech, such as that found in Mayhew, was equated not only with barbarity but with "abuse of language," "vulgarity," and "foreignism."

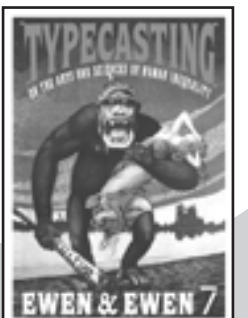
In 1970, D. Emblen maintained that "by the most modern estimates, approximately twenty million copies of *Roget's Thesaurus* have been issued since 1852." The persistence of Roget's original vision is nothing short of remarkable.

While Roget suggested that his masterwork would provide a "proper implement" for the acquisition and expression of linguistic truth, it is clear that his demarcation of meanings was shaped by his own particular version of truth and reflected the ideas and attitudes of empire and class position. As we learn in the story of Adam in the book of Genesis, naming is a prerogative of power. With modernity, systems of classification emerged as the ultimate form of naming. Roget was part of a historic tendency to impose a distinctly Eurocentric order upon the varieties of human existence and expression. Natural history, as carved out by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europeans and Americans, presented a vision of nature in which Caucasians stood above the "degenerate" races. The "filiations" of the Thesaurus offered a similar taxonomy of truth. Like natural history, it also had global aspirations.

The long-term goal of the Thesaurus, as expressed by Roget in 1852, was ultimately to do away with all colloquialism, all remnants of local identity, and to create an imperial language that would span the globe. He termed this a "strictly philosophical language," which could "limit the fluctuations to which language has always been subject" and create "an authoritative standard for its regulation."

The probable result of the construction of such a language would be its eventual adoption by every civilized nation; thus realizing that splendid aspiration of philanthropists the establishment of a Universal Language.... Is there at the present day, then, any grounds for despair that at some future stage of that higher civilization to which we trust the world is gradually tending, some new and bolder effort of genius towards the solution of this great problem may be crowned with success, and compass an object of such vast and paramount utility? Nothing, indeed, would conduce more directly to bring about a golden age of union and harmony among the several nations and races of mankind than the removal of that barrier to the interchange of thought and mutual good understanding between man and man, which is now interposed by the diversity of their respective languages.

Elsewhere in the city, a street vendor, relying on a different system of meanings, winked knowingly at a friend and exclaimed, "Cool him. Cool the esclop."



Flirting with Death and Living

Author and performance artist Kate Bornstein talks about hir new book and the art of staying alive



by
Lisa Jervis

Kate Bornstein has done something truly shocking. No, not the whole change-your-gender-and-write-about-your-identity-as-neither-man-nor-woman thing. Not the write-a-book-that-will-make-even-the-most-gender-normative-people-think-beyond-the-one-or-the-other thing, either. No, ze has followed up the groundbreaking *Gender Outlaw* (1994) and *My Gender Workbook* (1997) with a very funny book about killing yourself. Well, okay, about not killing yourself. *Hello, Cruel World: 101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks and Other Outlaws* (Seven Stories Press) is an adorable little volume with whimsical clip-art illustrations (how can you fail to be cheered by an icon of a cow on a skateboard signifying that the suggestion at hand is difficult?) and an abundance of both compassion and practicality: Bornstein notes that ze has a lot of experience “staying alive in a culture that would rather see me dead”; sharing that with the rest of us is something that helped hir out of a depression of hir own. *LiP* was lucky enough to get an audience with Bornstein to discuss identity, power, sublebrity*, and hir only hard-and-fast rule: “Don’t be mean.”

Lisa Jervis: I want to start out with a simple question: How did you come to be writing this book?

Kate Bornstein: When I wrote *My Gender Workbook*, I set out to say everything I ever wanted to say about gender—this is it, don’t ask me anything else. Of course I’m still interested in gender, but I didn’t want to write any more about it. It needed other voices, mine was just starting to repeat itself.

Then I didn’t have anything to write about, and I got depressed: “What the fuck do I have that’s worth saying? Of what value is post-modern gender theory?” I sat in that funk for years. Finally, I got to a point of “what’s worth living for, here?” and realized that the one thing I *do* know how to do is stay alive in a world that would rather see me dead.

Things just started clicking. I’d been touring around colleges and high schools and youth conferences, and seeing the effect this theocratic, capitalistic mechanism that’s taken over the United States has on youth. I spoke with a lot of youth on the subject of sex, gender, desire, powerlessness. I’ve been a girl for a long time, and [at that time] it was all new to me. I guess I’ve been going through my own kind of “girl adolescence” in my transsexual adventure. I recently turned 20.

Happy birthday!

Thank you. So [at that time I was] thinking of myself more as a young woman. But there’s [also] the adult—the 58-year-old man, or whatever the hell I am. The “adult” side of me is in the process of taking over, and it feels really good. A couple of years back, I had some major surgery and almost didn’t make it. When I did make it, it kind of put things into focus. I’m now an elder, I’m now the oldest generation in the family, and there is a responsibility: Can I be a good parent, a good grandparent to the children who do get left behind—not by reason of “reading, writing, and arithmetic,” but by reason of their outlawed desire, their outlawed predilections, or their inability to match some kind of cultural standard?

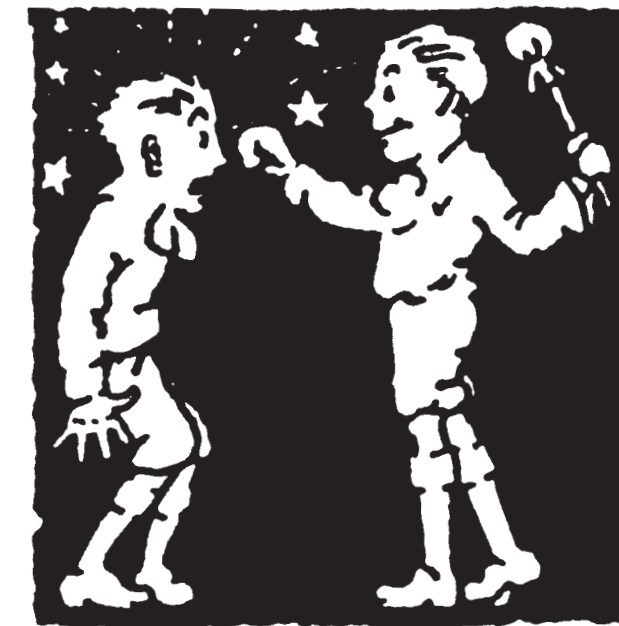
So I thought, this is what I could give: My notions on the basic principles of identity, desire, and power, and how to use those principles to make life more worth living. And then some very specific survival tips that I haven’t seen anyone else endorsing.

In our culture, there’s not a lot of cross-generational interaction, especially outside of “blood family” ties—how has it been for you to work with youth?

I think the failure of cross-generational connections comes down to the unwillingness of adults to constantly experience new adolescences as they continue to move on through life, and to acknowledge their own uncertainties and insecurities that spring from going through any kind of adolescence. That, plus the inability for youth to see or embrace their own adult selves into which they’re emerging—I think the big step from youth to adult could be defined as making your own decisions. This is not a culture that encourages that. My generation, anyway, is lost in the self-indulgence that they believe is useful, but which I think in fact is a denial of their approaching, impending death. [Laughs.] Self-indulgence is not a mark of youthfulness, and it’s mistakenly taken as that. I think true youthfulness is “I am so insecure, I am so out of touch with everything.”

Talk a little about the politics of an anti-suicide book...

Well, ever since the feminist politics and the outsider politics of the ’60s and ’70s proclaimed that politics is indeed personal, I think



Sometimes life is a bully.

politicians—especially in our form of capitalist democracy—have learned to manipulate the personal. [Politicians] have learned how to manipulate and control feelings of identity and personal desires, and politics all along has manipulated people’s access to power, but now even more so. To not acknowledge that, I think, is a grave error. The very notions, I think, of classification—if you look at age and race and class and gender and sexuality and even religion and philosophy, these systems we have for classifying people have all been co-opted by the ruling class, the democratically-elected ruling class that we’ve got. And they’re being used against us.

[However], one thing that the right doesn’t know how to fight yet is postmodern theory put into practice. They don’t know how to deal with paradox, they don’t know how to deal with multiplicity of identities, they don’t know how to deal with the logic of sex-positivism. They can manipulate pretty much everything else. But once you take away labels, which is what they’ve used to manipulate us with, they have no real tools, other than force. And force is always self-defeating.

You talk a lot about your own journey of [gender] identity, and there’s kind of an assumption that you’re writing for people who are struggling with some of that stuff as well, but it’s more subtextual—you don’t say, “this book is for queer youth.”

I’ve been circling around for a decade or so as a sublebrity within the LGBTQ subculture, and when I first started writing the book, it was completely towards LGBTQ and academic audiences. My publisher, Dan Simon, said, “Reread it, see if you can open it up.

* See Glossary, page 91

See if it applies to more people.” When I read through the book, there were maybe a dozen places where I’d narrowed it completely to teens, and I shifted those, and I suggested the subtitle that we have now, [101 Alternatives to Suicide for Teens, Freaks, and Other Outlaws]. I hardly use the word “suicide” in the book—I think it’s a loaded word, I think it’s a word that hides the fact of the bald words of “kill yourself,” “kill myself.”

Let’s talk about some of the controversial alternatives [to suicide] in the book and what their response has been, like “take drugs” and “flirt with death.”

Of course, my publisher and my editor were freaked out because there were all kinds of legal implications—“you’ve got a book that tells people to take drugs, cut on themselves, starve themselves.” Here’s what gets me about people’s objections to those. Those same people don’t object to me advising people to tell a lie. They don’t object to me advising people to sink into their own madness. I think both of those are as harmful. I [also] want to point out that [most of these critics] are people who haven’t read the book. And that allows me to go, okay, I’m pretty sure I really addressed every angle I possibly could in writing these dangerous, life-risking, not-much-better-than-suicide alternatives down.

So you think people are reacting in a knee-jerk way?

I wouldn’t diminish their response by calling it knee-jerk. I’m sure it strikes a chord of deep inner resonance. However, the vehemence with which they’re reacting, I think, is the knowledge that they’ve got a lot of power on their side to react that way. The hypermediated culture that we live in encourages that kind of vehement response to taking drugs, cutting on yourself, starving yourself, flirting with death. That’s the good and approved thing to do. That’s why girly, second-wave feminists were able to get into bed with Christian fundamentalists on the notion of pornography: because they had the power of god behind them! It’s very easy to say, “no no, don’t do that,” and that’s what has been said.

Do you take the approach that anything that gets you through the day without killing yourself is a good alternative, in the short term?

The only thing that makes that work is the one rule of “don’t be mean.” Aleister Crowley, in the early 20th century England, was very big on this; his phrase was “Do as thou wilt,” “will” meaning “force of will.” But why didn’t that work? Because sometimes doing whatever gets you through the day is going to fuck up other people. And that’s the surest road to death that I can think of. There’s nothing more suicidal than being mean to someone.

What’s your motivation for writing about those dangerous alternatives, and what do you feel like people have criticized you for it are missing about what’s useful in those strategies?

All the outlaws are welcome; all are welcome to live.

I like the notion of “everybody’s welcome, period.” And to truly get into that spirit, you have to say all the outlaws are welcome, all the people who do strange things to themselves, for themselves, for each other, are welcome to live.

I know that people are going to cut on themselves no matter what I say. People are going to starve themselves no matter what I say.

People are going to take drugs, no matter what I say. And it gets back to what I said earlier about the dividing line between what we call “youth” and what we call “adult,” and it has nothing to do with the age of your body. This degree of responsibility, willingness to make decisions for yourself, willingness to accept the consequences of those decisions. My decision in the book was to say, hey, it’s up to you. You’re an adult. When I was traveling for all those years, so many youth were willing to communicate with me on a level of my youthfulness, my new adolescence—so I’m willing to communicate with youth on a level of my new adulthood.

This is what it means to be an adult: If cutting on yourself is what you’re going to do, at least try to do it with love and for good reasons. Please. Starving yourself—okay, go ahead, but not for too long! Get yourself another immediate escape strategy [after that]. I know the relief that comes from going a couple of days without eating anything, [but] I would encourage people not to do it very much—I call it the most deadly alternative in the book.

That’s an interesting comment to me in light of “flirt with death, take drugs, make it bleed,” that starving is the deadliest thing in the book.

By the same token, it’s the least self-loving thing you could do. [Eating] is a biological imperative. When we deny that biological imperative, what’s left? How can you go on living? So that one, for me, has always been the bottom line. And I’ve come to a point of relative peace with that over the last four or five years, the last big bout with active anorexia was about four or five years ago, and I thought of myself as hideously fat ever since, but I’m not starving myself.

So that’s the thing, how do you live when you’ve got these impulses, how do you measure them out to keep yourself alive, and act in more self-loving ways? How could I write a book about saving your own life without acknowledging that pathway?

How can those less self-loving options be transformed?

Hopefully the book will encourage people to take a look at saving your own life as an ongoing journey. In the quick start guide I give this little scale of emotions from negative at the bottom to positive at the top, and how it’s a journey through that, constantly. The quick start guide says, first find out what you’re really feeling. Give it a name. And then, find [an alternative] that will make you feel a little bit better than what you’re feeling right now. Different alternatives apply to where you are at different stages in your life and in your journey of staying alive. LIP



GRAND OPENING
A MIND STRATA COLLABORATION
OCTOBER 6, 2006

Visit
www.mindstrata.org
or contact:
mindstrata@earthlink.net
for details

Gallery doors open
September 1, 2006



1601 Telegraph Avenue Oakland, CA 76859

Project 1601
is a new space for
experimental art, music and theatre.

Grand Opening will feature live music
and work by local artists.

Admission is free.

Books in Review

Here's a motley assortment

of new, newish, and forthcoming titles of probable interest to the concerned and casually curious reader alike.

• **Typcasting**

On the Arts and Sciences of Human Inequality

by Elizabeth Ewen and Stuart Ewen

Two ace historians trace the history of pseudo-scientific stereotyping and racial imaging, often with great wit, style, humor and irony, drawing on literature, art, and popular imagery. A book that will profoundly impact how you look at the world. We liked it so much we excerpted part of it in this issue (see "Please Step Away from the Vernacular," p. 70).

[SEVEN STORIES PRESS]

• **Bitchfest**

Ten Years of Cultural Criticism from the Pages of Bitch Magazine

edited by Lisa Jervis and Andi Zeisler

For those readers who don't already know it, Lisa Jervis has served as *LiP's* editor at large for more than two years now. She also co-founded *Bitch*, and I adore her. So maybe I (the editor of *LiP*) am biased, but look: This collection fully showcases why *Bitch* has been the single best US feminist magazine of the past ten years; it's smart, superbly-edited, often laugh-out-loud funny, sporadically outrageous, and only occasionally predictable (hey, they have a very specific editorial focus!). Particular highlights include: "Skirt Chasers: Why the Media Dresses the Trans Revolution in Lipstick and High Heels," by Julia Serano, "Hot for Teacher: on the Erotics of Pedagogy," by Jennifer Maher, and the classic 1998 "Rubyfruit Jungle Gym: An Annotated Bibliography of the Lesbian Young Adult Novel" by, um, Lisa Jervis.

[FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX]

• **Mi Revalueshanary Fren**

by Linton Kwesi Johnson

This moving collection of revolutionary poetry—with accompanying CD—is guaranteed to stir your soul and mind, but you must read it out loud to get the full effect. The author, Linton Kwesi Johnson, perhaps Britain's most influential black poet, was born in Jamaica in 1952, and moved to the West Indian Community of Brixton at the age of 11, where he was deeply impacted and politicized by the intense racial and class conflicts of the day. As a member of the Black Panther Youth League, he began doing readings around Brixton in the late '60s, accompanied by the bass and drums, and he sought, in the words of a previous *LiP*

the LiP Booklist



reviewer of Johnson's work, "to stake out an idiomatic ground of his own, one through which he could communicate with the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. He was the first to capture verse in the vernacular of the masses of his native Jamaica, inventing both the term and form of dub poetry."

Johnson writes in what's often referred to as Jamaican Creole, which is neither a dialect nor a "patois." As Russell Banks writes in the introduction to the book, "Jamaican Creole is a language created out of hard necessity by African slaves from 17th century British English and West African, mostly Ashanti language groups, with a lexical admixture from the Caribe and Awarak natives of the island... its grammar and orthography, like that of pre-18th century British English, have never been rigidly formalized or fixed by an academy of notables or any authoritative dictionary. It is, therefore, a living, organically evolving language, intimately connected to the lived experience of its speakers."

In "If I Woz a Tap-Natch Poet," Johnson says, he'd write a poem "soh dyam deep / dat it bittah-sweet / like a precious / memari / whe mek yu weep / whe mek yu feel incomplete." It's this reviewer's opinion that Johnson succeeds in this stated mission time and again in this collection. His words are dangerous.

[AUSABLE PRESS (UK)]

• **Baghdad Burning II More Girl Blog from Iraq**

by Riverbend

In the summer of 2003, when most Americans thought the war in Iraq had ended, save for some "Saddam loyalists" and "dead-enders," a blog quietly appeared on the internet, authored by a young Iraqi woman who calls herself "Riverbend." Posting entries whenever the intermittent electricity allowed her, Riverbend gave voice, in impeccable English, to the millions of ordinary Iraqis who were, and are, living through the war and occupation of their country. *Baghdad Burning II* is the second published compendium of Riverbend's blog entries.

In those early days, when the Iraqi encounter with the U.S. was in its infancy, few Americans—even thinking, cosmopolitan ones—knew much of anything about Iraq or its people. The strange familiarity between peoples that arises from a colonial relationship had not yet developed. Short of traveling to Baghdad, Riverbend was the best available window into everyday life in Iraq.

Because she has wisely preserved her anonymity, we know little about Riverbend. She is in her mid-20s and lives in Baghdad. Before the war, when Iraq was a secular nation, she worked as a computer programmer. Now, because of the constant threat of violence and the restrictions placed on women in newly-fundamentalist Iraq, she can barely leave her house, and then only if she is covered from head to toe and escorted by a male relative. In her writing, Riverbend describes the horrors of having a friend assassinated and a relative kidnapped for ransom; life in a city of six million with shortages of electricity, water, and medical care; the frustration of spending 13 hours in line to fill a car with gas in one of the most petroleum-abundant countries on earth; and the pointlessness of voting in elections when the victory of religious fundamentalists recently returned from Iranian exile is preordained.

Three years and six months after the invasion, news from Iraq has become little more than a mind-numbing daily tally of nameless carnage. Riverbend reminds us, with great humanity, of the real people who live with the war every day.

[FEMINIST PRESS @ CUNY]

• **She's Such a Geek Women Write About Science, Technology and Other Nerdy Stuff**

edited by Annalee Newitz and Charlie Anders

Here's a lively collection of personal and critical essays that "celebrates women who have flourished in the male-dominated realms of technical and cultural arcana." Women who love genomics, who blog, who learned about sex from *Dungeons and Dragons*, who write comic books, or who read science fiction and design videogames—they're here.

She's Such a Geek is an overall strong collection of voices celebrating women who live outside of the typical female typecast. Get it now, because this book is very much of the moment, for better or for worse. I suspect that in about five to ten years, the growth of the female "dork" or "nerd" will have grown, at least culturally, and will make this book seem quaint, even as women will surely still earn fractions on the dollars of what men do.

[SEAL PRESS]

• **Urban Nightmares The Media, the Right, and the Moral Panic Over the City**

by Steve Macek

USAmerican culture is obsessed with "the inner city," not least because the phrase is often code for poor black culture, replete with depictions of moral decay and rampant violence, reflexively help up against the allegedly virtuous suburbs and exurbs.

This new book by Steve Macek explores how various ideologies have informed discussions of the urban poverty, joblessness, and crime which came to roost in many US cities after the Vietnam War. In addition to well-documented quantitative analysis, Macek also offers a look at how Hollywood filmmakers, advertisers, and journalists have all validated the essentially right-wing discourse that prevails in discussions of urban crises. Chapters of particular resonance include "Wouldn't You Rather Be at Home?—Marketing Middle-Class Agoraphobia," and "The Cinema of Suburban Paranoia."

[UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS]

• **We Don't Need Another Wave Dispatches from the Next Generation of Feminists**

edited by Melody Berger

"We've reached the end of wave terminology's usefulness," says the introduction to this collection. "What was at first a handy-dandy way to refer to feminism's history, present, and future potential with a single metaphor has become shorthand that invites intellectual laziness, an escape hatch from the hard work of distinguishing



between core beliefs and a cultural moment." By way of offering alternatives, this somewhat uneven collection of mostly personal essays (with poetry) gathers together an eclectic mix of contributors to discuss possibilities for a more liberatory feminism. The high points here are stellar.

[SEAL PRESS]

• **Harlem Between Heaven and Hell**

by Monique M. Taylor

Race and class are deeply intertwined in the United States, and few places in the US reveal this fact more thoroughly than does Harlem, which enjoyed its cultural apex during the 1920s and 1930s, when it was the epicenter of the US jazz scene. The urban decay of the 1960s and 1970s drastically impacted black USAmerica, and Harlem in particular, reducing it to an overwhelmingly poor area.

However for the past 20 years, as this new book explores, the revitalization of Harlem and the return of a black middle class to the neighborhood has raised interesting questions about gentrification, and about diversity. What does it mean when blacks move in alongside blacks of a different class? When a neighborhood changes rapidly, how can concerns about race and class diversity be addressed effectively?

Through an impressive wealth of interviews with long-term residents as well as recent arrivals to Harlem, the book brings to life the cultural legacy, political commitments, economic considerations, and desire for community that make Harlem a uniquely well-suited site for studying some of the thornier realities embedded in US culture.

[UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS]

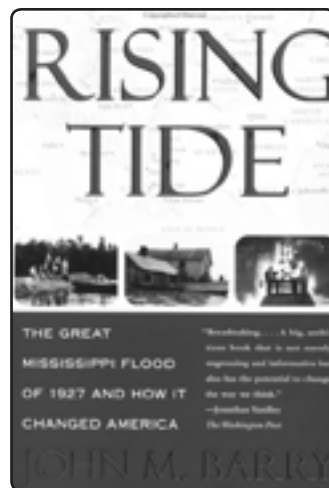
• **Illusions of Security Global Surveillance and Democracy in the Post-9/11 World**

by Maureen Webb

This book is about nothing less than the business of ending democracy. The powerful "risk management" paradigm guiding government policies and driving the construction of a global surveillance system in the post-9/11 era threatens to turn everyone into a suspect, every potential risk into a repressive response, and every inch of the planet into a public space. This book is a primer for anyone who wants to know the political, structural, and economic realities of the emerging Total Security Society. The author, Maureen Webb, is a Canadian human rights lawyer and activist whose previous work includes working on a case challenging the powers of Canada's spy agency, CSIS. She is also the Coordinator for Security and Human Rights Issues for Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada.

[CITY LIGHTS PRESS - DECEMBER 2006]

**Have a new(ish) book you'd like
to tell people about?
Send pitches and reviews to:
brian@lipmagazine.org**



Rising Tide
The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How it Changed America

John M. Barry

[TOUCHSTONE, 1997]

There are places in New Orleans, a year after Hurricane Katrina, where it still looks as though bombs went off. The contents of thousands of lives lay strewn about, muddy, moldering. Doors hang awkwardly open, revealing dining room chairs jumbled in a bathtub, a couch upturned on top of a television, a mattress eight feet up in a tree. An orange life jacket hangs from the top of a dying tree in the lower 9th ward, a poignant reminder of the large number of New Orleanians who don't know how to swim. Rusting husks of abandoned boats sit overturned on rooftops and under school buses. The geometry of it is all wrong, and haunting.

People in New Orleans now joke about “Katrina brain”—the shortened attention span, confusion, dramatic mood changes, and troubled sleep others might call post traumatic stress. This condition doesn't seem to be improving, as the disaster is ongoing—no longer watery, but now transformed into lingering disasters in public health, education and housing; environmental degradation; and the attempts to sweep away the black and the poor.

Rising Tide, John M. Barry's history of the great Mississippi flood of 1927, contextualizes this tragedy. While fast-paced and full of dramatic tension, the book is also loaded with detail, and provides a scathing account of government inepti-

John Barry's history of the great Mississippi flood of 1927 is fast-paced, full of dramatic tension, and provides a scathing account of government ineptitude and malevolent intent.

tude and malevolent intent. The cliché of history repeating itself pervades *Rising Tide*, which, though published eight years ago, ends up eerily foreshadowing our situation today.

The book begins almost a century before the flood, documenting the early days in the struggle to subdue the Mississippi River, whose drainage basin encompasses 41 percent of the continental US. From the start, it is impressed upon the reader the sheer hubris and absurdity inherent in any attempt to dominate such a force. Barry writes admirably of its power: “...the complexity of the Mississippi exceeds that of nearly all other rivers.... It moves south in layers and whorls, like an uncoiling rope made up of a multitude of discrete fibers, each one following an independent and unpredictable path, each one separately and together capable of snapping like a whip.”

The harnessing of the river was accomplished not by hard science, Barry writes, but rather through a series of compromises demanded by a few engineers' relentless egomania. Their legacy is an extraordinarily faulty system of levees, canals, and drainage basins that combine dangerously with disintegrating infrastructures, high level corruption, global warming, and increased storm activity. Such shoddy compromises practically guaranteed that in the absence of radical

change, the lives of those who live in the shadows of the Mississippi River levees would remain imperiled.

Months of heavy rainfall and flooding tributaries of the Mississippi meant that many whites throughout the valley evacuated New Orleans early on, despite calm reassurances from local newspapers that there was nothing to worry about; one look at the swollen river was enough to send people back home to pack. One didn't even need to climb the levees and see the river itself; it was enough to look up at the ships cruising by on the high waters, their decks towering over the tops of buildings.

When the levees gave way upriver, the flooding Mississippi created an immense sea (27,000 square miles, only slightly smaller than Lake Superior) that remained for almost five months. The turbulent water was up to 30 feet deep in some locations, and strange currents plagued it—currents caused by the sudden infiltration of the waters into silos and other hollow structures, as well as by channels created by submerged barriers of monuments, vehicles, and buildings that survived the initial onslaught.

A swarm of independent rescue workers—fishermen, trappers, and bootleggers—unlashed their boats from moorages upriver, and cruised south along the

churning Mississippi until they reached the flood zone, where they then portaged their boats over the levees, and set out across the new sea. Following the paths charted by downed power lines, the boat captains ferried people across the new sea from their rooftops to the relative safety of the levee.

The survivors waited on the levees' high ground for days, plagued by hunger and thirst, intense sun exposure, and mosquitoes (not unlike the vigil their



contemporary counterparts endured on New Orleans' elevated interstate highways). Within a few days, organized shuttles of steamships trundled down the river, collected survivors off the levees, and delivered them to Red Cross-run refugee camps—called “concentration camps” at the time. At first, blacks were evacuated from levee-top refugee camps at gunpoint, despite their demands to stay and see what, if anything, of their lives might be salvageable. As one Mississippi politician said, “[N]one of us was influenced by what the Negroes themselves wanted: they had no capacity to plan for their own welfare; planning for them was another of our burdens.”

Conditions atop the levees rapidly declined as they became overcrowded, and people began clamoring to evacuate. But by then, white landowners had begun to protest the evacuation of their cheap labor forces, fearing that evacuated blacks would not voluntarily return to the largely-feudal system the whites still controlled. Rescue steamships began meeting resistance to their rescue efforts from the local white elites: Sometimes, boats capable of transporting several thousand were sent away with only a few white women and children aboard, leaving thousands of desperate, starving people trapped. One plantation owner even established his own refugee camp, which was supplied by

the Red Cross, patrolled by the National Guard, and to which his former employees who had been evacuated some 200 miles away were returned for free by special train, courtesy of the Illinois Central.

In Mississippi, these camps amounted to a de facto return to slavery. Blacks were, quite suddenly, no longer free. To enter or leave a camp required a pass. The borders of some camps were patrolled by the National Guard, which was armed with fixed bayonets and rifles. The black



refugees were forced to wear large tags prominently displayed on their shirts, indicating employment (or lack thereof), vaccination history, the plantation each worker came from, and familial status. Food was not distributed to the unemployed or the tagless. In some camps, local officials charged money for food and medical rations provided by the Red Cross, sometimes deducting it from the wages of the men forced to work either on the infrastructure of the camp, or tending to the sandbagging—usually under the supervision of armed whites. Rations were also systematically denied to men making more than \$1 per day, and in Mississippi, the best food was reserved for whites.

As the Mississippi's water rose, a small group of New Orleans' bankers and members of private social clubs began regular meetings—not at City Hall, as none were elected to public office, but in an office in the most powerful bank in the South. There, they discussed the merits of dynamite. As a military engineer had suggested five years earlier, a controlled explosion on the levee would lower the flood level in the city, though it would flood regions further downriver—regions populated largely by subsistence farmers, trappers, and fishermen. These bankers and their cohorts developed the planning of the bombings and the media spin for its aftermath, along with a strategy for limiting liabil-

ity and consolidating power. Without a single elected official present, the group executed their plans shortly after informing the mayor and governor of their intentions. The government response consisted of half-hearted protests, and a small list of conditions that needed to be met before the plan's approval.

Before the Civil War, New Orleans was, on a per-capita basis, the wealthiest city in the United States. By the time of the flood, it was still the wealthiest in



the South, boasting the region's strongest banks, the nation's second largest port, and one of the three most important cotton exchanges in the world. Through meticulous research of primary source materials, Barry reveals astonishing deals made that attempted to ensure not only that the flooding would have no direct impact on the wealthy white minority, but also that they would emerge with an even greater concentration of wealth and power.

While the necessary telegrams were sent and press releases written, the bankers fleshed out the details of the aftermath to the flooding they were about to unleash. They predetermined reparations payments for those whose homes would be destroyed in the flooding, and drafted resolutions affirming that payments on loans and mortgages would still be required so that the banks would lose nothing on pre-flood loans to farmers and trappers whose land had been inundated. After the bombing flooded the downriver lands, they even went so far as to declare all muskrats to be state property to prevent trappers from claiming them as a loss.

Then, as now, the nation reeled in outrage at the corrupt governments and business leaders as well as the criminal neglect of the flood victims. According to Barry, it was a major turning point in

public attitudes towards big government and disaster relief, as the flood demonstrated the necessity of coordinating rescue efforts and exposed the limitations of the private sector.

Another legacy of 1927 is the acceleration of the massive migration of blacks from the South: In the 1920s, 872,000 more black folks left the South than returned to it, with the greatest numbers taking off after the flood. Barry estimates that by 1928, the exodus of blacks from the flooded regions may have reached as high as 50 percent.

Of course, Katrina also produced major migrations. An estimated 250,000 New Orleanians remain scattered around the country, in a diaspora comparable to that created by the Dust Bowl in the central plains. It is too soon to accurately determine longer-term legacies of Katrina, but one thing is clear now—New Orleans' downsized population is much older, whiter, and wealthier than it was last year.

This most recent deliberate neglect and the willful resettlement of New Orleans' population, the shady science, and the “not it” finger pointing are not aberrations, or mere slip-ups in government proceedings. The failed response to Katrina is not something from which lessons will be learned and assurances that “things will be handled differently” in the future border on disingenuous. All the information needed to prevent this disaster was readily available long before the storm; New Orleans' levees and pumping system to drain the city's frequent floods were known to be dangerously inadequate. But because the political will wasn't there, the money wasn't either. The levees and pumps were not repaired because the money allocated for this was cut by President Bush in 2004 and again in 2005—with \$71.2 million slashed from the New Orleans Army Corps of Engineers budget alone. As journalist Greg Palast writes, “there is no such thing as a ‘natural’ disaster. Hurricanes happen, but death comes from official neglect, from tax cuts for the rich that cut the heart out of public protection. The corpses in the street are victims of a class war in which only one side has a general.”

That war is not unique to New Orleans, but is rather a harbinger of one possible future. According to a report

released in June by the Department of Homeland Security, “The majority of the nation's current operating plans and planning processes cannot be characterized as fully adequate, feasible or acceptable to manage catastrophic events,” with only 25 percent of states and 10 percent of municipalities counting with adequate emergency plans in the event of terrorist attacks or natural disasters.

And so, as in 1927 and in 2005, emergency response, evacuations, and relief work will again be criminally negligent, with a focus on policing rather than rescue. There will be more disaster zones where civil rights go out the window, and swathes of population are simply... removed. The reconstruction that follows will be an opportunity for eliminating “undesirable” people and infrastructure, giving developers a “clean slate” on which to build condos and shopping districts. Cities will be able to increase surveillance, keep more folks in jail for longer on lesser charges, privatize services like health care and education, and eliminate public housing. Sound familiar? These things are already happening in lesser degrees in cities across the United States; disasters merely speed up the process. Anyone doubting this needs only to study history, and I would start by reading this book.

—Jen Whitney



***Pink Ribbons, Inc.
Breast Cancer and the
Politics of Philanthropy***
Samantha King

[UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS]

Millions have participated in breast cancer awareness runs or walks. Hundreds of companies promote “awareness” through pink-ribboned products, which consumers can purchase with the

satisfaction of knowing that the company is donating “to the cause.” Millions of dollars are passed each year from the hands of donors, philanthropic organizations, and buyers of yogurt and cosmetics to fund research to find a cure.

What's wrong with that? A lot, says Samantha King, author of *Pink Ribbons, Inc.: Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy*. The book documents the “cultural transformation of breast cancer” in the US, from disease and tragedy to sexy philanthropic cause—and into a multimillion dollar industry. King vividly illustrates her point within her book's first three pages of the book, comparing a 1993 *New York Times Magazine* cover depicting a breast cancer activist exposing her horrific mastectomy scar and the title “You Can't Look Away Anymore: The Anguished Politics of Breast Cancer” to a 1996 cover that features a naked Linda Evangelista slightly covering her breasts (both of them, for Evangelista has neither had a mastectomy nor suffered from breast cancer), gushes “How Breast Cancer Became This Year's Hot Charity.”

Breast cancer, King writes, “has been reconfigured from a stigmatized disease and individual tragedy best dealt with privately and in isolation, to a neglected epidemic worthy of public debate and political organizing, to an enriching and affirming experience during which women with breast cancer are rarely ‘patients’ and mostly ‘survivors.’”

In her final chapter, “The Culture of Survivorship and the Tyranny of Cheerfulness,” King argues that the surge in breast cancer's popularity as a “cause” (as well as a profound shift in the marketing technique of those profiting off that cause) is affecting how patients themselves experience breast cancer. She quotes Audre Lorde's warning that “looking on the bright side of things is a euphemism used for obscuring certain realities of life, the open consideration of which might prove threatening or dangerous to the status quo.” And “looking on the bright side” is certainly the dominant message when it comes to breast cancer, from the overwhelming focus on “survivorship” and “cure” to the preponderance of patients' claims that battling breast cancer was actually good for them. Take, for example, the words of Cindy Cherry,

who told the *Washington Post*: “If I had to do it over, would I want breast cancer? Absolutely.”

To paraphrase Barbara Ehrenreich, co-founder of Breast Cancer Action—is there any other disease so cheerfully embraced by its own victims?

Despite the cheery, pink-hued rhetoric, you'd still think that breast cancer patients and survivors alike—not to mention the millions of women “at risk” of breast cancer—would have at least some interest in prevention. After all, breast cancer doesn't always come out of nowhere—there are numerous environmental factors that are believed to contribute to the disease. Yet, somehow, funding seems to focus only on finding a cure.

And there's a reason for that. As King points out, National Breast Cancer Awareness Month was founded, in 1985, by the gigantic pharmaceutical company Zeneca (now AstraZeneca). AstraZeneca manufactures not only the breast cancer drug tamoxifen, but a number of herbicides and chlorine-based products that are carcinogenic and have been linked specifically to breast cancer. Cosmetics companies like Avon, Revlon, and Estee Lauder, who all profit enormously off their breast cancer awareness products and charity runs, sell products containing phthalates [see “Toxic Toy Alert” interview, page 12] and parabens, both linked to increased risk for breast cancer.

This, of course, is one of the huge—yet largely hidden—reasons why breast cancer research and activism is so overwhelmingly focused on “finding the cure,” obscuring the need for simple preventative measures, attention to environmental and public health issues, and research into how and why breast cancer takes hold. When the problem for many women—and especially poor women—is not the existence of treatments but access to them, consumer-oriented philanthropy is of little or no use. King writes, “As long as the breast cancer agenda is dominated by multinational corporations and their nonprofit partners, there is little hope that the ‘barriers and burdens’ encountered by poor women will penetrate the peppy public consciousness or elicit the kinds of policy responses that might actually make a difference to them.”

But *Pink Ribbons, Inc.* doesn't just take on the shady side of breast cancer philanthropy—King's real enemy is philanthropy in general. She argues that philanthropy has become a market in itself, a consumer-oriented feel-good measure

Made to Break showcases the corporate strategy emerging from the 1920s that challenges the nation's overproduction of goods by creating wants and needs in consumers.

that has quickly become a component of most corporate marketing strategies. By looking at how this plays out on the field of breast cancer activism, King argues, we can also find evidence of a how much of a crucial role philanthropy plays in blurring the boundaries of governments and corporations: “...each elaborates the interests of the other...through practices that misleadingly appear to be outside the realms of government or consumer capitalism.”

King's book is well-researched, and markedly academic in spots—which isn't particularly surprising, given that King is an Associate Professor at Queen's University, Ontario. It's slightly disappointing in that regard, not so much because of inaccessible language (though King does use ‘neoliberal’ a few times too many for my taste) but because of an overall sense that King is writing for an audience of other academics and activists already well-versed in the issues it covers. From a lay reader's perspective, I sorely missed the narrative of another lengthy essay on the subject—Barbara Ehrenreich's excellent “Welcome to Cancerland,” a similar condemnation of the cult of breast cancer survivorship, the hypocrisy of cancer-producing corporations profiting off pink-hued merchan-

dise, and of the child-like femininity that pervades most breast cancer philanthropy. (Ehrenreich notes the disturbing trend of pink-ribboned teddy bears being given to breast cancer patients, as well as other useful items such as pink rhinestone bracelets and crayons.)

Still, while Ehrenreich may have provided a more compelling (and personal) critique of breast cancer culture, King's book is far more detailed and covers a lot more ground; it makes ambitious connections between breast cancer philanthropy and global capitalism, between “survivorship” and the legacy of decades of anti-feminist backlash. While Ehrenreich's essay might have sparked a few fires, *Pink Ribbons, Inc.* provides the fuel to keep them going.

—Erin Wiegand



**Made to Break
Technology and Obsolescence
in America**

Giles Slade

[HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2006]

Once, a potential housemate I'd never met emailed me a cheery note introducing herself. She was 22, a recent college graduate, she hoped to teach, and one of the three hobbies she listed was “going shopping.”

I laughed. It's hilarious to me that shopping could in itself be an end. Imagining that people spend their free time by wandering around with no aim but to trade superfluous cash for objects they don't need is both depressing and amusing.

But it's only recently that I've started to let go of my self-righteousness and put my own consumer habits in context. I

hate shopping—the trying on of clothes, the spending of money I don't have, the whole mall culture. But Giles Slade's new book points me to the consumer web I nonetheless participate in, along with most others in the Western world.

Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America showcases the corporate strategy emerging from the 1920s that challenges the nation's overproduction of goods by creating wants and needs in consumers. This book represents a phenomenal organization of a massive amount of information. With a staggering assortment of primary sources, Slade produces 281 pages that are clear, concise, and unite product histories that previously seemed, to me anyway, separate.

Slade defines planned obsolescence as “branding, packaging, and creating disposable products (or) continuously changing the styles of nondisposable products so that they become psychologically obsolete.” You can almost sympathize with the idea: if an industry produces goods that never or rarely break, it loses its customer base with every good sold. On the other hand, by producing goods that need, or seem to need, to be replaced—that market is endlessly renewable. The industry succeeds. Jobs are kept. Families are fed.

Meanwhile, we face the problem that is Slade's impetus for writing this book: modern e-waste. Americans threw out 315 million computers in 2004, and 100 million cell phones in 2005. That's 50,000 tons of still-usable equipment, and it contains permanent biological toxins (PBTs). With cell phones, Slade notes, the compact design makes them easier to toss in the trash than to disassemble them, repair them, or recycle them. This is not a new problem, as Slade recounts in his fascinating history of miniaturization, and its impact on radios in particular.

As early as 1917, Slade tells us, city stores displayed signs that read “Business as Usual. Beware of Thrift and Unwise Economy.” Not long later, with the U.S. still in the thick of World War I, New York City retailers introduced “the National Prosperity Committee,” which plastered posters reading “Full Speed Ahead!” “Clear the Track for Prosperity!” and, most bluntly, “Buy What You Need Now!” around town. That dubious wartime duty

to consume was echoed shortly after 9/11, with President George W. Bush urging Americans to not slack in their patriotic shopping.

With thrift becoming “stingy,” disposable products were no longer seen as wasteful, but as more hygienic and convenient that reused products. This was a market that was created in part by “Tampax, (which) along with other disposables, not only habituated women to increasing levels of repetitive consumption, but broadened the cultural acceptance of the throwaway ethic, a necessary accompaniment to planned obsolescence.” Meanwhile, garments were tossed out as never before—mending clothes and saving rags became old-fashioned, dirty, a waste of time. Paper straws were invented, and rye stalks became obsolete. Crackers were once sold out of barrels, but once they were individually packaged and “branded,” freshness was assured. Gillette invented the disposable razor—a product that guarantees its customers will come back for more. The Academy Awards emerged in this same period, and mimics the marketing strategy intended to encourage repetitive consumption.

Slade runs through the industry collaboration to generalize consumption and obsolescence in a rather horrifying litany, but it is his chapter on the auto industry that introduces the depth he's capable of. And it's an appropriate starting place—the “annual model change” strategy in the nation's flagship industry set the standard. Slade recounts the cold war between Henry Ford and Chevrolet's Alfred Sloan. Ford, in 1922, was at his high point, and he made public his reasons for refusing to modify the Model T. For all his other flaws, Ford was committed to producing a reliable, affordable product, made as well as possible. Meanwhile, Sloan realized that style changes are a cheap and fast way to date cars. Minor changes create an illusion of progress—or psychological obsolescence—and with it, increased business. Sloan created the first “style department” at an American auto manufacturer. It worked. Ford was forced to step up to the same pace, or to fail.

It's not until later in the book that Slade describes how the obsolescence of products relates to the obsolescence of skill sets and training. For example, the

slide rule had been used since 1625 for complex calculations. It was compact, readily available, and their production ended forever in 1975. While there had been a time when slide rules and calculators existed side-by-side in classrooms, revealing class divisions, price wars resulted in quality calculators being available for under \$10 by 1976.

Slade writes:

Of more interest than the diminishing cost of calculators and the demise of the slide rule is the obsolescence of the skill set that older-generation engineers possessed. Tom West and Carl Alsing recalled promising each other not to ‘turn away candidates’ at Data General in 1978 ‘just because the youngsters made them feel old and obsolete.’ By the early 1980s it was hard to find a recent graduate or engineering student who still used a slide rule for calculations. Older engineers, on the other hand, were reluctant to part with them. ... The digital accuracy and speed that younger engineers took for granted meant less to those who had received their training before the 1970s revolution in calculation.... Thus, by the 1980s, what younger engineers perceived as a democratization of calculation had in fact sheared the engineering world along generational lines. Age, not wealth, determined which engineers had the advantage. As the hacker culture would soon demonstrate, design and engineering were no longer the exclusive activities of a carefully trained elite. The term ‘obsolete’ now applied both to the device that the older generation of administrators preferred and to the analog skills they used...

Computers similarly rendered skill sets obsolete. New software eliminated the value of clerical work such as “minute ledger work, (and) the ability to type flawlessly.”

I heard once that the more you like a book, the more tempted you are to describe how good it is simply by quoting the thing. Slade has produced a book that makes me want to absorb his statistics, facts, and anecdotes so that I can serve as a sub-missionary for his primary thrust—that business practices and our consumption habits must change, lest we leave a legacy of e-waste. All true, and all

fascinating, but Slade's book does suffer from textbook symptoms—his personal analysis of the history of obsolescence weighs heavily in the preface and final chapter, and very minimally in between. More consistent analysis of his research would've resulted in a more unified book. Midway through, I was surprised by, say, Slade's observation that calculators, with their cheap construction and short battery lives, were the first generation of e-waste. “Oh right,” I'd think. “E-waste. I forgot about that.” Meanwhile, his chapter on “weaponizing planned obsolescence” offered more of Cold War history—intriguing, yes, but loose ends made it feel strange and unkempt in context of the tidy surrounding narrative.

Nonetheless, Slade's book is a meticulous documentation brightened by colorful executives, innovators, advertisers, moguls, movers and shakers. It's a book to read, return to, and share with friends. Buy it, if you buy nothing else.

—Anna Clark



homegrown
engaged cultural criticism
by bell hooks and Amalia Mesa-Bains

[SOUTH END PRESS, 2006]

Billed as a challenge to the “politically popular binary” that pits the African-American and Latinæ* communities of the US against one another, *homegrown: engaged cultural criticism* is valuable not only for its careful repudiation of this divide but also for its straightforward vision of what a just society might look like. While uncovering long-obfuscated affinities between their communities and charting mutually resonant icons, historical moments, and tactics of resistance, hooks and Mesa-Bains keep *homegrown* grounded in both personal reflection and wide-ranging cultural

* See Glossary, page 95

critique.

There is no sense of dissonance as hooks and Mesa-Bains move from comparing family memories and traditions to analyses of social movements, pedagogy, and political economy, dispelling any notion that a political conversation can remain removed from what we often term “everyday life.” Indeed, the chapters “Family,” “Home,” and “Memory” trace strategies of political resistance and transformation just as surely as “Feminist Iconography” and “Public Culture” recall the “private” psychic and emotional wounds of patriarchal white supremacy.

Homegrown, then, will persuade an attentive reader of two things: that no tradition stands outside history, and that to fully examine the past and present workings of racism in the US is to find common threads of oppression and resistance across different marginalized communities. Mesa-Bains and hooks insist that different experiences and sometimes dissimilar ways of relating to a dominant culture do not preclude opportunities for collaboration, and reveal a shared knowledge that has been preserved even in the face of attempts to disavow, silence, and expunge it.

They demonstrate how such shared knowledge is uncovered by structuring the book as a conversation, and while their dialogue is densely packed, wide-ranging, and rife with sharply pertinent observations, it is far from intimidating.

Mesa-Bains and hooks demonstrate that critical thought about race, class, gender, power, and domination is not an abstract or dryly cerebral exercise. But lest their avowed aim of speaking “to people who aren't necessarily essay readers, and who aren't necessarily in academic institutions” convince those of us who are indeed essay-reading academics that the book is somehow beneath us, hooks and Mesa-Bains call on us to examine assumptions, remember uncomfortable truths, and look seriously at the micro-level implications of racism and sexism in the US. For example, their realization that religious imagery was, for both, the first encounter with art leads to a multilayered dissection of beauty and aesthetic practices. Mesa-Bains recalls how the “home altars or yard shrines...alternatives to the conventional norm” maintained by

women in her community stood outside the bounds of the hierarchical, male-centered Catholicism which infused her family life. In contrast, hooks remarks on the potential for class mobility as it was tied to churchgoing in her youth, and on her mother's desire to “get away from the Pentecostal tent meetings that working-class and poor people often attended.”

The discussion around beauty which develops out of this conversation explores how both Black and Latinæ communities have responded to an aesthetic hegemony of whiteness. Both hooks and Mesa-Bains remark on the tension they felt in their early involvement with the feminist movement and its distrust of and “complete disdain of beauty,” and the complex history of women's relationships to aesthetic caretaking in the domestic sphere. They note how the creation of beauty and style has operated as an important form of resistance, citing alternative gallery and museum spaces, meaningful relationships with nature, innovative street styles, and a variety of other examples across both Black and Latinæ cultures in the US. As their conversation turns to the appropriation of these marginalized aesthetics by the dominant culture, it becomes clear that cooperative resistance to racism—not a simplistic declaration of “unity” or an attempt to minimize difference, but the sense that Black and Latinæ communities are invested in the same struggle—can spring, organically, from this kind of dialogue.

In “Feminist Iconography,” a deeply personal discussion of the connection that both women feel to Frida Kahlo, Mesa-Bains and hooks deftly critique white culture's “embrace of death,” a grasp that commodifies and colonizes Kahlo's work and image while marginalizing “what Frida Kahlo is to women of color, who she speaks to on that intimate experiential level—not as a symbol.” Underscoring “subtleties, contradictions, and complexities” of Kahlo's life and work that are regularly ignored by mainstream art criticism—even feminist criticism—allows the writers to rescue her memory from that deadening embrace of a culture that attempts to remake her into a depoliticized and tokenized product.

Even when speaking about wholly disparate aesthetic practices—such as Black

sartorial street style and the creation of home altars—hooks and Mesa-Bains express mutual insight into and anger at “the marketing of identity, the cashing in on the original struggles that have influenced us so powerfully,” as well as sadness at how “the notion that you might take the product and totally alter it for your own. . . sensibility. . . is increasingly dying out.” Their dialogue “protect[s] and preserve[s] our legacies,” and keeps them connected to “practical activism—an activism that’s connected to where you live, and to the vision of being homegrown.” This undercurrent of hope reminds readers that *homegrown’s* critiques and insights extend beyond its pages. The dialogue between hooks and Mesa-Bains emerges as a vision of change and opportunity, and reveals the power in marginalized cultures connecting with one another. The observations of this book encourage such an engagement—and so does the form of the book itself. The book’s model of sustained and expansive conversation is something that has the potential to change actual, contemporary lives, and we would do well to keep it close to home, and heart.

— Colleen Ammerman



Transgender Rights

edited by Paisley Currah, Richard M. Juang, Shannon Price Minter

[UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS, 2006]

In their introduction to *Transgender Rights*, editors Paisley Currah, Richard M. Juang and Shannon Price Minter clearly sum up what sets this collection apart from many of the other transgender-focused anthologies and academic studies that have been published in recent years:

By foregrounding the political concerns and efforts of trans people, we hope

this collection helps shift the center of gravity for intellectual work about transgendered people. There is a substantial body of literature in the law, social sciences and humanities in which trans people appear; however, in much of this work, we tend to be used as exciting examples of the subversion or reification of gender, the undiscovered edges of legal discourse, or some hot new cultural underground... This collection strives to be an act of intellectual production that does not situate trans people as a means to an end or an intellectual curiosity but considers the well-being of trans people as an end in itself.

In keeping with this goal, the contributors to *Transgender Rights*—most of whom have hands-on experience as transgender activists and advocates—provide what is perhaps the most comprehensive assessment of the current state of political and legal affairs regarding those who defy societal expectations and assumptions regarding gender; this includes people who are transsexual (i.e., who live as members of the sex other than the one they were assigned at birth), intersex (i.e., who are born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of female or male), genderqueer (i.e., who identify outside of the male/female binary), as well as those whose gender expression differs from their anatomical or perceived sex (for example, crossdressers, butch women, drag artists, etc.).

Many of the essays touch on common civil rights topics such as marriage rights, child custody, employment discrimination, access to healthcare, and hate crimes. While many familiar high profile cases are discussed (such as the Michael Kantaras child custody trial or the murders of Brandon Teena and Gwen Araujo), where this collection truly stands apart from other offerings is in the descriptions and critical analyses of many lesser-known precedent-setting cases that have shaped the way transgender people are viewed under the law. A reoccurring theme throughout the book is how rigid societal beliefs about femaleness and maleness (often superficially based on one’s genitals, chromosomes, reproductive capacity, or ability and willingness to engage in heterosexual sex) effectively

erase transgendered people from political and legal discourse. Examples cited in the book include instances where judges have completely terminated the rights of biological or adoptive parents solely because of their transgender status, rulings which deny transgender people any protection under sex discrimination laws, and the J’Noel Gardiner case, in which the Kansas Supreme Court’s ruling suggests that transsexuals are not allowed to marry anybody because they do not have an “opposite” sex.

Unlike other writers (especially in the fields of gender and queer theory) who have the luxury of discussing the transgender movement in a conveniently abstract manner, the authors of *Transgender Rights* delve into many of the messy and paradoxical issues that complicate transgender activism. For example, while many theorists argue that gender variance should simply be de-pathologized, Judith Butler’s essay “Undiagnosing Gender” pragmatically describes the Catch 22 associated with Gender Identity Disorder, a psychiatric diagnosis that is vital for adult transsexuals to gain access to the medical and legal means to transition to their identified sex, yet also serves to stigmatize gender non-conforming children and teenagers who enter the psychiatric system because of their parents’ fears that they will grow up to be “gay”. Similarly, while many theorists argue that it is time to move beyond identity politics, Paisley Currah’s essay “Gender Pluralisms Under the Transgender Umbrella” discusses how non-identity-based approaches (for example, arguing for protection under freedom of expression) have failed to gain the legal and political traction that identity-based concepts like “gender identity” and “transgender” have. As Currah explains, “The transgender rights movement might be described as an identity rights movement that seeks the dissolution of the very category under which it is organized.”

A number of essays in *Transgender Rights* are dedicated to highlighting the intersection of anti-trans sentiment and other forms of prejudice. Dean Spade’s contribution “Compliance Is Gendered” explains the ways in which capitalism, class and race often exacerbate anti-trans discrimination: “for low-income people

caught up in the especially gender-regulating public relief systems and criminal justice systems that dominate the lives of the poor, the gender regulation of the economy is felt even more sharply.” Richard M. Juang’s piece “Transgendering the Politics of Recognition” focuses on how, “racism is frequently gendered, while gender discrimination is often shaped by racism.” And Shannon Price Minter’s essay “Do Transsexuals Dream of Gay Rights?” discusses the often acrimonious relationship between gay rights and transgender rights, providing a fascinating historical account of how classism and racism have contributed to the fracturing of these two movements from one another.

In addition to chronicling difficulties regarding transgender law and policy, *Transgender Rights* also offers a number of promising new avenues for future activist work. Willy Wilkinson describes how collaborations between the transgender community and public health organizations in San Francisco helped to facilitate HIV prevention and access to health care in this marginalized population, as well as inspiring similar programs in other cities. Jennifer L. Levi and Bennett H. Klein recount the progress that has been made pursuing protection for transgendered people through disability laws. While some have a knee-jerk reaction against taking this approach, as it seems to imply that the person in question suffers from a detrimental or limiting health condition (a claim many transgender people strongly reject), Levi and Klein remind us that disability antidiscrimination laws also cover people who are “regarded as” having a disability—a definition that can certainly be applied to transgendered people, who are regularly depicted by others as being “sick” or “abnormal”. In one of the few non-U.S. legal developments addressed in the book, Morgan Holmes and Nohemy Solórzano-Thompson focus on a 1999 decision by the Colombian Constitutional Court that protected “bodily autonomy and informed consent for an intersexed minor over a parent’s desire that she undergo potentially ‘risky’ surgeries or treatments that do not pro-

duce health benefits.’” While this decision is not without caveats, the authors are optimistic that it may help pave the way for similar decisions, thus potentially leading to the termination of the damaging non-consensual genital surgeries that are regularly performed on intersex infants and children.

The fact that *Transgender Rights* starts from the premise that transgender people are entitled to the same rights and protections as non-trans people is refreshing. It is about time for discussions about

These essays on U.S. race relations in domestic adoption lead the reader to understand that domestic transracial adoption, while in one sense a loving gesture by adoptive parents, is hugely influenced by racist social stereotypes and racist government policy.

transgender people to move beyond the superficial sensationalization, objectifying descriptions of body parts and sex reassignment surgeries, and obsessions over the potential causes of transgenderism that dominate public discourse. While *Transgender Rights* may disappoint those who are merely “fascinated” by gender variant people, it will surely be appreciated and enjoyed by those who have an interest in transgender rights, gender and queer activism, civil rights and social justice.

—Julia Serano

Outsiders Within

Writings on Transracial Adoption

Edited by Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin.

[SOUTH END PRESS: 2006]



The introduction to *Outsiders Within* challenges that, “writing about transracial adoption raises critical questions about the motivation of the author.” The editors question the motives of other contributors to the canon of adoption literature, and fess up to their own politically-charged motives. “This book is a corrective action” they declare, a response to the fact that “white adoptive parents, academics, psychiatrists and social workers have dominated the literature on transracial adoption.” They demand acknowledgement of the “heterogeneity and multiplicity” of the transracial adoptees’ experiences, and an end to the use of adoptee testimonials to validate or reject transracial adoption.

By selecting authors who represent a myriad of adoptee experiences, the editors give voice to those most impacted and least included in adoption decision-making—and that voice is angry. Though the editors negate the idea of a uniform adoptee experience, the tenor of the book is that of a teenager—too long marginalized as a child, and now exploding with pent up resentment. One can’t help but sense that this reflects the feelings of transracial adoptees as they age and adjust (or don’t). While the angst can oppress the reader at times, *Outsiders Within* presents a rich and varied set of narratives that are diverse in the way they connect the reader to the subject matter.

In “Love is Colorblind: Reflections of a Mixed Girl,” Jeni C. Wright uses the tactile difference between her curly hair and the straight hair she sees on peers, family members and in shampoo commercials to express the sense of isolation she feels as a transracial adoptee. Her white adoptive mother—promoting “color-blindness” as a principle in their home—had

no idea about the self-loathing that would compel young Jeni to look in the mirror and mouth “You look like an ugly African bush girl, over and over. This short, poetic, and heartbreaking piece is presented in the first section of the book entitled, *Where Do You Come From?*, which acquaints the reader with the complexity of the emotions felt by transracial adoptees, even when adopted into loving homes.

The fourth section, *Growing Through Pain*, is also heavily personal and painful, with brutal accounts of unfortunate adoptee experiences. “From Victim to Survivor” by Ron M. recounts his experience as a transracial adoptee who was beaten daily at school for being dark skinned, and then told by his Scottish adoptive father that “sticks and stones may break his bones.” His adoptive family, though good intentioned, turned a blind eye to Ron’s torment. Ultimately, this caused Ron to struggle with a lifetime with anger, alcoholism, and estrangement from his adopted family. Though he has recently made steps toward recovery, the piece provides a solid reminder of the potentially devastating repercussions of transracial adoption.

While the personal testimony is emotionally engaging, it is also emotionally trying. Fortunately, (lest anyone suspect that *Outsiders Within* is just a collection of saccharine testimonials) the editors have packed it full of scholarly articles on the often obscured politics of global and domestic adoption. Sections two and three function as a crash course in adoption history, sociology, politics and economics, which will satisfy socially conscious readers who may not be personally connected to the material, and broaden adoption awareness for readers who are.

“Adoption Myths and Racial Realities in the United States” by Dorothy Roberts, outlines how the conjunction of two government policies in the late 1990s makes the subtle political statement that black children are better off raised by white families. Roberts argues that the Welfare Reform Act of 1996—which cut social supports for low income (read black) families—made it harder for single mothers to provide adequate care for their children. As a result, more minority chil-

dren were shuffled into the foster care system. Adoption from this foster-care system increased in 1997 in light of the Adoption Tax Credit passed that same year. Roberts claims that since adoptive families are usually white, the two policies taken together provide an environment that shuffles black children into white families. Roberts demands that the US government’s priority regarding adoption should be placed on keeping black American families whole, and not on facilitating adoption of black children by white families.

Ellen M. Barrie makes a similar demand, but suggests an additional cause for the problem of the over-representation minority children in foster care. In “Parents in Prison, Children in Crisis,” Barrie claims that racism inherent in a criminal justice system that arrests and jails more minority populations than white populations is a main contributing factor to the disproportionate number of minority children available for adoption to white families. Another dimension of the same argument is discussed in “Orphaning the Children of Welfare: ‘Crack Babies,’ Race, and Welfare Reform.” In her look at the “culture of poverty” and the social and political factors that spurred the hysteria of “crack babies” in the late 1980’s, Laura Briggs delves deeper into the racist assumptions about drug abuse that, in turn, pulled an inordinate number of black infants from their birth mothers. For example, Briggs explains that “Black women, in particular went to jail for cocaine use out of any proportions to their representation among drug-using pregnant women” and that “mothers who tested positive for drug use lost their babies on the spot.” This increased the number of minority children in foster care systems. Again, the Adoption Tax Credit in 1997 created the incentive to place these “crack babies” in the arms of white adoptive parents, rather than supporting the birth mother and trying to maintain the integrity of the birth family.

These essays on U.S. race relations in domestic adoption lead the reader to understand that domestic transracial adoption, while in one sense a loving gesture by adoptive parents, is hugely influ-

enced by racist social stereotypes, and racist government policy. There is however, no easy solution, no obvious answer to these complex issues, and the editors of *Outsiders Within* carefully avoid making blanket statements that would posit transracial domestic adoption as wrong—instead they prefer to stress that the issues are multifaceted, and that adoption politics should first address the unjust social policies that encourage domestic transracial adoption.

The tangle of domestic race relations leads some prospective adoptive parents to look abroad for their new family members. However, the third section of *Outsiders Within* explains that international adoption is no less complex or politically salient. In “Shopping for Children in an International Marketplace,” Kim Park Nelson examines transnational adoption as a commodification of Otherness in order to acculturate white adoptive parents. She explains that often parents who adopt for this reason rely on the child to provide them with an enriching cultural experience, when in truth, the adoptive parents need to have a strong enough connection to the child’s culture of origin to keep the connection strong in them as they grow. Park Nelson concludes that though the experience might be worthwhile for the parent, it often has extremely detrimental repercussions for the child, with the adoptee left feeling disconnected from both their original or adopted culture.

In his article, “Orphan Trains to Baby Lifts: Colonial Trafficking, Empire Building and Social Engineering” Tobias Hubinette details the history of adoption as a mode cultural imperialism on the part of receiving countries and as a mode of social engineering on the part of sending countries. First, he establishes that the type of adoption referenced today—in which children are placed within affluent and completely alien cultures, instead of raised by extended families and native communities—is uniquely western—the result of diluted family ties in the western world and First World affluence diluting family ties in underdeveloped communities. He then describes how sending countries use international adoption as a tool to “regulate, control and discipline

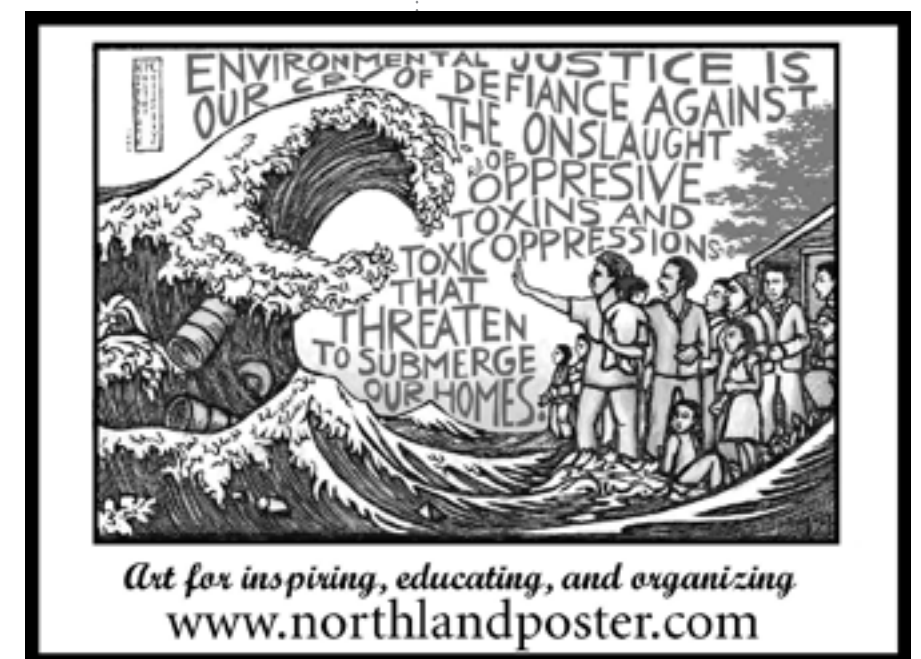
women’s reproduction, ultimately upholding a patriarchal system in the countries of origin.” Because international adoption is such a profitable industry for sending countries, government’s of sending countries have made policy favoring international adoption to institutional care. In addition, leaders of sending countries use international adoption as a way to reduce overpopulation while maintaining good relations with leaders of receiving countries, at the expense of social supports for women and mothers in sending countries, as well as the integrity of sending families.

Outsiders Within is rife with anger and frustration—which does not mean that all the essays are from oppressed adoptees, or that they all advocate an end to transracial adoption. They don’t. In fact, most of the personal essays include some derivative of “I love my (adoptive) family, but...” and then go on to describe feelings of being outside, misunderstood, invisible, in the spotlight, always different, and always displaced, that have lingered deep under the surface for lifetimes.

In fact, the anger felt by adoptees is presented as not necessarily negative. The last two sections of *Outsiders Within* focus on powerful corrective action taken by angry transracial adoptees. For example, Section six details adoptees’ searching for and finding community to call “home”—often with other transracial adoptees upon discovering they are not welcomed back in their communities of origin. Section seven exalts how transracial adoptees are speaking for themselves in positive ways, starting organizations that support other transracial adoptees, writing about their experiences and becoming adoption activists.

Overall, *Outsiders Within* is heavy—with information on the politics, economics and history of transracial adoption, and with personal and heartfelt testimonies from those inside the system. The first makes the book extremely educational and worthwhile for socially-conscious readers. The second make it a comfortable companion for adoptees who are seeking connection to people with similar experiences.

—Kate Tighe



COLOPHONICS

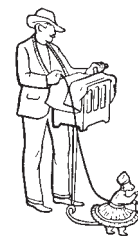
The typeface used for the body copy of *LiP* is Minion. Most headlines are rendered in Meta; other fonts used in the pages of this issue are Zine Slab and Lino Letter. Our worker-owned printer, 1984 Printing, used vegetable inks and 100% PCW recycled paper to print this issue. ¶ Much of this issue was produced on north Oakland's Alcatraz Avenue, which, once upon a time, had a clear sightline all the way to the infamous prison bearing the same name, but that was before the metastasis of Emeryville, a dreadful township twixt Oakland and the bay that exists primarily to offer cheap rent, tax subsidies, and land to big-box retail outlets, gambling clubs, Pixar, and a Trader Joe's store, where \$2 bottles of not-hideous and actually quite drinkable Charles Shaw red wines ("Two Buck Chuck") may be procured. Some within our ranks are, as of the writing of these "colophonics," also quite addicted to the European-style multi-grain bread available there; even the "good for you" sticker and the inexplicable presence of buttermilk was not enough to deter said addicts from eating an entire loaf, said to be well over a dozen servings, in one day. Despite this excessive consumption, just what is European about this bread remains a mystery. ¶ Others of us are plotting the daring midday liberation of an offensive and at any rate aggressively artless life-size wooden Indian that graces the front of a pawnshop here in our neighborhood, with the intent of resituating it on the Albany Bulb, a man-made peninsula of landfill slash "park" that was shut down in the '80s and became home to squatters and an art collective ("Sniff"), all of whom were later evicted (of course); bonfires, art installations, and dogs and their featherless bipeds are the primary occupants of the landfill now (www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~dtw/Photos/Albany_Landfill/index.html). If anyone reading this happens to know the people who own and operate the aforementioned pawnshop, please don't say anything; the element of surprise is crucial to the success of our mission. ¶ *LiP*'s cherished four-legged office assistant, Albert, gave up his ghost during the production of this issue, but his lovely essence lives on in the form of an evergreen tree now emerging from the hills of Oakland just east of our offices.

We never set out to build a magazine company. And no one here has true appetite or interest for the independent magazine publishing business, which is just slightly more pleasant than a sharp stick in the eye.

POST MORTEM: *LiP* is going on an indefinite hiatus after this issue. Some of it has to do with money, or the lack of it, but more has to do with passion, motivation, stress, and focus. We honestly never set out to build a magazine company. No one here has true appetite or interest for the independent magazine publishing business, which is just slightly more pleasant than a sharp stick in the eye. This is really a perfect opportunity to extend a heartfelt fuck you to chain stores and their bullying and exploitative business practices, including the affidavit accounting system (invented by the mob), "shrinkage fees," and exorbitant reshipping fees. ¶ Thanks to everyone who's subscribed, contributed, or donated to *LiP*. We're grateful. With you, we've done quite a lot with impressively limited resources. ¶ For those of you owed additional issues, don't worry, we'll take care of you. We'll email you when we know more. ¶ A *LiP* book project is in the works; visit us online at lipmagazine.org and subscribe to our Weekly Media Picks to stay informed on this matter.

Onward and upward!

What Are They Talking About? A Glossary for the Confused & Curious



sublebrity

noun

1. A condition of extremely localized, dubious or circumscribed fame.
2. Someone who receives (or expects) exactly the same sort

of prurient attention and overawed behavior as a major celebrity, but from a much more limited fan base.

pre-eminent consensus

noun

The belief, implicit, that "truth" does not exist in public life, per se; instead, it is to be manipulated and engineered. <The ~ is still that there is connection between Iraq and Osama bin Laden.>

Latinø / Chicanoø

noun

Our preferred means of sidestepping the grammatical gender binary extant in Spanish. Among conscientious hispanophones (speakers/writers of Spanish), current practice is to make use of the @, as in *Latin@s*



orthorexia

noun

An obsession with healthy eating that can then be used as a cover for your real eating disorder.

omphalos

noun

Greek for navel. Contextually: the mere, the very center of something, Greek or not. <A hyperindividualistic conception of "self" is the ~ of Modern Western Culture, Inc.>



usufruct

noun

A legal right of using and enjoying the fruits or profits of someone else's property, as long as that property is not damaged by the use. <If I took some lemons off the tree in your front yard, or rented out your house when you were out of town—that would be ~.>

bovious

noun

Horribly obvious. <It's ~ that this sentence was made up solely for the purpose of a usage example for the word "~.>



sousveillance

noun

1. The recording of an experience from the participant's point of view. 2. The monitoring of authority figures by those usually subject to monitoring by that authority; that and the backing of the corporate/state apparatus may actually get you somewhere.

sneer quotes

noun

Also known as "scare quotes." Quotation marks used to cast doubt, irony, or scorn on a concept, phrase, or word. <Boy, that US "liberation" of Iraq sure looks a lot more like a quagmire than a "victory.">

USAmerican

noun and adjective

The correct term for those who live in the US; for accuracy's sake, must replace "American" for all usages not intended to include residents of North, Central, and South America. Use it ten times and it won't feel awkward anymore, we promise.



fearpox

noun

A social disease spread primarily by government and corporate media for the purposes of distraction and social control. Symptoms include a false sense of security, xenophobia, and a heightened susceptibility to the cold comforts of authority.



radical chic

noun

An affectation of radical left-wing views and the fashionable dress and lifestyle that goes with them. Often accompanied by cliquishness and largely meaningless expressions of support for mushy headed "revolution" which have nothing whatsoever to do with effecting radical social change.



Founder and editor **Brian Awehali** is a friend of spiders, and regularly confronts people who kill insects. He has written for *High Times*, *Alternet*, *The Black World Today*, *Z magazine*, *Britannica.com*, *ColorsNW*, and *The Santa Fe New Mexican*. His work has received a 2006 Project Censored Award, and a 2003 Excellence in Journalism award in the Government/Political Reporting category. He intends to use *LiP*'s upcoming hiatus to meditate, ride his motorcycle, play with his cats, friends, and lovers, and maybe write a book or two. He is a tribal member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma

A native of the Arctic Midwest, proofreader **Anna Jo Bartley** relocated to San Francisco for the endless days of glorious sun. Right. Now a freelance copyeditor and proofreader, she escapes the fog by curling up with her fly-catching cat and unabridged *Webster's*. She loves all insects, except ones that bite, buzz, or make their presence felt in any way.

Senior editor **Jeff Conant** has documented and collaborated with grassroots struggles in various countries. He has developed low-literacy popular education materials for the Hesperian Foundation and educational games about corporate globalization and war-profiteering with the Ruckus Society and Corpwatch. More importantly, he's got a helluva green thumb and is great with animals.

Marginalia maven, writer, fundraiser and fact-checker **Ariane Conrad** would like to expatriate and live aboard a canalboat.

Nell Greenberg is the Democracy and Justice Campaign organizer for Global Exchange. If asked, her kindergarten teachers would say they remember her most for her loud objections to any incongruities in the distribution of classroom justice, and her big rubber rainboots.

Using random words from web "master"* **Erik Hopp's** website (quilted.org) the following poem has been created as a gift to you: Again security covers public providence, acoustic prototype. Thank you.

Erin E. Hunter is a freelance illustrator and graphic designer in California. She specializes in science illustration, with an emphasis on botany, entomology, and useless trivia. More of Erin's work can be seen at eehunter.com.

LiP editor at large **Lisa Jervis** is also the cofounder of *Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture* and the coeditor of *BITCHFest: Ten Years of Cultural Criticism from the Pages of Bitch Magazine*.

Books editor **KL Pereira** spends way too much time watching TV and then writing about it. Having finally turned her obsession with pop culture into a career, she has edited and written for fabulous publications such as *What's Up Magazine*, *Clamor Magazine* and *Lotus.zine*.

Senior editor **Christy Rodgers** is the erstwhile editor/publisher of *What If? Journal of Radical Possibilities*, a journal of visionary art and activism, past, present and future. She currently maintains the website whatifjournal.org.

Not much bugs **Colin Sagan**, which makes him perfectly suited to be *LiP*'s designer and production coordinator. He can be found employed at *Ode* magazine as the associate art director.

Arthur Stamoulis urges you to visit cleanair.org/AAAMonkeys. He is economics editor for *Clamor Magazine*, serves on the board of Media Tank and won a Project Censored Award for his reporting on Internet policy.

Managing editor **Erin Wiegand** has quite a lot of responsibility. To make up for it, she pursues dangerous and uninhibited activities such as baking, napping, and plotting the destruction of western civilization.

Contributing editor **Tim Wise** is one of the nation's most prominent white antiracist activists and educators, and the author of *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* (Soft Skull) and *Affirmative Action: Racial Preference in Black and White* (Routledge). His writings and speaking schedule can be found at his website: timwise.org.

Elizabeth Ewen is a Distinguished Teaching Professor in the American Studies/Media and Communications program at SUNY College at Old Westbury. She is the author of *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1930, New York*. She is also co-author of the new book, *Typecasting: On the Arts and Sciences of Human Inequality*.

Stuart Ewen has been called "one of the foremost interpreters today of

our culture" by Bill Moyers. His *PR! A Social History of Spin*, inspired the BBC documentary series, "Century of the Self," by Adam Curtis. He is also co-author of the new book, *Typecasting: On the Arts and Sciences of Human Inequality*.

LiP production assistant **Emma Sherwood-Forbes** is a talented ray of sunshine, figuratively speaking.

Contributing editor **Jennifer Whitney** is coeditor of *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism*, a cofounder of the Seattle marching band the Infernal Noise Brigade, and presently a resident of New Orleans, where she strives to mitigate the effects of "Katrina brain."

German born **Nadim Roberto Sabella** is an artist, curator and art educator who currently resides in Oakland, California. His work involves a wide range of media including photography, sculpture and installations. As part of the Young Artist Program, Sabella teaches color photography at the San Francisco Art Institute.

Clare Lacy currently calls the Bay Area home base, and is working on constructing a life of exuberant chaos and opposite extremes, and milking the California Community College System for all it is worth.

Scott Fleming is a criminal defense lawyer and writer from Oakland, California who has devoted many years of his life to the Angola 3 case (prisonactivist.org/angola/). In 2003, he reported from Iraq as a special correspondent for the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*.

Illustrator **Bizhan Khodabandeh** produces design work for various socially conscious, non-profit and not-for-profit organizations as well as the occasional artist/musician. He is currently working on a project to emancipate the individual by providing tools of visual dissent. Examples of his work may be seen at bizhy.com.

Julia Serano is an Oakland-based writer, transsexual, scientist, lesbian, musician, gender activist and a loving husband. She has contributed poems and essays to pop culture, queer, and feminist zines and anthologies, including the recent *BITCHFest: Ten Years of Cultural Criticism from the Pages of Bitch Magazine*. Julia is currently finishing up work on a book of personal essays tentatively titled *Whipping*

Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and Our Culture's Fear of Femininity, to be published by Seal Press in 2007. For more info about Julia's various creative endeavors, visit her website at juliaserano.com

A.C. Thompson is a San Francisco-based investigative journalist who writes most about crime and the abuse of power. His new book, co-authored with Trevor Paglen, is called *Torture Taxi: On the Trail of the CIA's Rendition Flights*.

Trevor Paglen is an artist, writer, and experimental geographer working out of the Department of Geography at the University of California, Berkeley. His work involves deliberately blurring the lines between social science, contemporary art, and a host of even more obscure disciplines in order to construct unfamiliar, yet meticulously researched ways to interpret the world around us. His most recent projects focus on secret military bases, the California prison system, and the CIA's practice of "extraordinary rendition."

Contributing editor **Kari Lydersen** is an indefatigable independent journalist, bicyclist and swimmer who's been with *LiP* from the beginning. She'll probably still be doing her good thing when *LiP*'s gone, too.

Sam Burton lives with his wife and son in Northampton, MA, where he fervently awaits the miracle/catastrophe that will allow him to move back to New York

Factchecker **Meg Smith** is an almost-librarian with an insatiable appetite for all kinds of information. She enjoys science, deconstructing science, and altering images from obsolete science textbooks.

Contributing illustrator **Tim Kreider** is the author of two collections of cartoons, *The Pain—When Will It End?* and *Why Do They Kill Me?* (both from Fantagraphics Books). His cartoon, "The Pain—When Will It End?" [thepaincomics.com] appears weekly in the *Baltimore City Paper*. His essays have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Film Quarterly*, and *The Comics Journal*.

Shannon Wheeler is the creator of Too Much Coffee Man [tmcm.com], a nervous, paranoid, jittery satire of modern life and popular culture—especially superheroes.



He who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed. ~ Albert Einstein

One should die proudly when it is no longer possible to live proudly. ~ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche

image by Barbara Norfleet