

SUMMER 2009

TANGENTS

THE JOURNAL OF THE
MASTER OF LIBERAL ARTS PROGRAM
AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY



IN THIS ISSUE...

Essays by John Devine, Dawn Garcia, Julia Roever,
Cy Ashley Webb

Sketch by Blair Beebe

Fiction by Andy Grose

Poems by Robert Brown, Tamara Tinker

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VOLUME 8

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PUBLISHING NOTES

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Thoreau at age 44, ambrotype August 1861, courtesy Library of Congress.

Hannah Arendt, commemorative stamp (1988), Deutsche Bundespost, wikimedia.org/wiki.

Sea Shore by Jon Sullivan, pdphoto.org

"Megamarcha" *La Opinión* 26 March 2006: A1.

"¡A las calles!" *La Opinión* 25 March 2006: A1.

Table 1 from *Invisible No More: Mexican Migrant Civic Participation in the United States*. Conference report, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, (Washington, D.C.: 4-5 November 2005) 3.

San Francisco high school students marching in support of immigration reform, 1 May 2006. Photo by David Pham, www.flickr.com/shapeshift.

Greek temple, Photo by Kevin Rosseel, Washington, D.C., courtesy www.morguefile.com

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

We are proud to present this issue of *Tangents*, the *Journal of the Stanford Master of Liberal Arts Program*. This eighth edition presents a diverse group of works by students and alumni that deal with the following questions:

- ✦ What effect did the Spanish-language media have on creating a focus for protest on the immigration problem?
- ✦ How does Hannah Arendt's concept of 'public space' relate to the Internet?
- ✦ Does Hannah Arendt's definition of totalitarianism apply to the present regime in Iran?
- ✦ How did Thoreau elevate walking to a metaphor for living?

In addition, there is a trilogy of short fiction, a personal sketch, and the work of two poets.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

It is interesting to note that both the essay on Spanish language media and the one on Hannah Arendt deal with the concept of 'public space' or a 'counterpublic,' where groups outside of the mainstream can communicate their needs.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Because of budget limitations, this will be the last issue of *Tangents* until the fiscal situation improves. If there is a group of MLA alumni "angels" who would like to take *Tangents* under its generous wing during these difficult financial times, please contact the MLA office.

We hope that *Tangents* has succeeded in showcasing the varied talents of the MLA participants, and that the magazine can continue publication in the near future.

TRILOGY *of* SHORT FICTION

by ANDY GROSE

1 SOMEBODY'S HOMETOWN

Approaching, you first see the rows of poplar trees standing in long ranks. And looking closer, you see scattered houses, something yellow, wooden fences. The patchwork of a town. A quilting of high hope and need and next-of-kin thrown across the desert alkali that pours like a thin batter from the Oquirrh mountains north into the Great Salt Lake. Then front porches, swings, outhouses, narrow streets, flower beds a-quarrel with irises, sunflowers and hollyhock. Lilacs hard against old stone chimneys, vacant lots lush with weeds. The smell of goats. Then roses. A whole sunset of rosebushes along a wooden fence.

But first the poplars, like a row of tall green feathers.

To the west beyond, hogback hills loaf up from the sloping soil, rising in the heat of the constant, dry, back-blistering wind. A wind parched by its endless chase across the desert. All night it has pursued the host-white moon, all day the flaming golden-monstrance sun. A gritty wind that molds what it can't push aside, and sculpts the poplars on the ditch banks into graceful wings.

Above a false horizon of train tracks, you see the mines and mills and power plant, all struggling together to pull the copper traces from the stingy earth, a penny at a time. Turning tons of ore into a few ounces of pure metal.

Ditches scratch their way for miles to water gardens, long straight rows of vegetables, lettuce, peas, squash and cantaloupe, things most unnatural in the hostile soil, which must be tricked by the black magic of cow dung and chicken shit.

An orchard out behind the calving shed, one placenta planted beneath each peach tree to supplement the barren earth.

Toward evening when the cricket count keeps company with the temperature, two boys with hair chopped shorter than the proud green front lawns race their bicycles home, their ice cream covered fingers sticking to the handle grips, their arms tattooed with weed pitch.

They glide in great circles, like calipers, around the weedy fields, ignoring the tractor ruts, unaware of the alfalfa perfuming their oasis. Mapping what will all someday be gone.

A herd of centaurs seems to burst out of the dusk, only to resolve into three pony-tailed girls, giggling, bareback on their horses, cantering into a cornfield, where they slide down catlike to run between the rows in laughing hide and seek. Until their mothers, women all as foreign as the flowers in their gardens, come out onto many porches, calling out in many accents—Greek and German, much Italian—to come in for dinner.

Called them to come away from where the ring-necked pheasants wait like plow-clods for darkness, not knowing about autumn, with the hunting and the guns. When pheasants hang like feathered corn husks, cooling, before they too come in for dinner, stuffed with finest allspice and dry bread.

Slowing as you pass, you might see, through an open window, a dark haired woman wiping flour from her hands, as a girl who spent the whole day in a tree-house counting love on kernel rows, sits nodding over a tin-toned piano, whose sounds are blended with the crickets and the wind. A girl whose own child, married well, will one day play the same piano on long cold winter evenings for her newly widowed mom.

And a turnip-faced man, reading, silent, perching on a stock-still front porch swing, against a white washed wall, a man who keeps three parakeets that never sing in cages full of last year's newspapers.

A giant gold fish in a large bowl on a window sill sparkles in the horizontal shaft of setting sun, sharp and clear, between two crochet curtains stained by winter frosts.

A little further on, a voice as gentle as a dove-coo finally coaxes a boy, a boy who worries, from a fruit cellar where he has been for hours, sitting in the coolness with their preserves. The peaches from the fertile orchard. Tomatoes as misshapen as newborn babies' heads. Whole chickens, pressure cooked, stuffed into a row of wide-mouthed two-quart jars. Summer stored against the coming winter. Before he leaves he checks the apple barrel one more time. He knows about bad apples, and fears he might become one. Then he glances at the few potatoes, watching from the dark, where they poke fingers out of their own eyes, long white fingers with green nails. He thinks of Hansel and Gretel and wonders if potatoes, too, are afraid of being eaten. Knowing there will be a bedtime snack he brings a jar of boysenberry jam, purple and bittersweet, leaving his favorite black raspberry for another time.

There is a library, a widow's gift, and still the finest house in town, its grand screen porch all closed in, set apart for children's books, row after row. *Black Beauty*, *Tarzan*, *Ivanhoe*, *Crusoe*, *Gulliver*. Whole worlds of imagination and escape, whispering on long low shelves, waiting for curiosity to bring the children to them. Dog-eared, innocent-looking books which only a few boys and girls will hear.

The spinster librarian, hands as soft as cat's paws, keeping track of each child's two-cent fines with proper dignity, knowing every book they've read, asking them about their pets, those animals nobody ate. Fond herself, since childhood, of lizards, snakes and polliwogs—which somehow ate themselves to become frogs.

Then you're leaving town, past the red brick school house, formal, solid as a bank, and back out to the burning alkali, the western desert toward Nevada, over the hard-scrabble gravel, bone-dry washes, on a tumbleweed-lined highway winding along steep ravines, watching out for sudden storms, flash floods that seize the desert like the lightning does the sky—sudden, violent, everywhere then vanishing.

Back into the endless desert pursued by the ceaseless wind.

Maybe glancing back, once, at the weathered poplars poking up like feathers on a dead bird's wing.

2 GEORGE WAS NOT YOUR AVERAGE BOY

George was not your average boy. Not like the rest. His mother would admit that much. But this last year she had begun to fear something was wrong. George never seemed to know where one thing stopped and something else began.

These days she did not know what to think.

So, it was awkwardly—for what mother is willing to find fault with her only son—that she sat in her parlor trying to make small-talk over tea. She had been putting off this often-offered meeting with her good friend's friend, the doctor. Indeed, she might have put it off a good while more, if they had not dropped in—quite unannounced—as they had.

Just chancing by the neighborhood, they said. And, she thought, who knows. Maybe they would have some new ideas.

George, bless his heart, was outside in the garden, playing. Alone, as usual, peaceful as a bug.

Just being George, she smiled, offering more tea.

At which her good friend whispered something to the doctor, knowingly.

George did play alone a lot. He loved the underneath of things. He picked the gum off table bottoms. He could smell the people who had put it there for him. He could hear them, still chewing. See their teeth still sparkling in the gum.

He saved things he found underneath chairs, to study at night. Cigar butts, food wrappers, a plastic toy. A leather glove with crisp, curled fingers. Once a little girl's shoe, its tongue torn. Half unlaced. A pretty shoe that smelled like smashed grasshopper guts and lemon soap. He still slept with it underneath his bed.

George would tell you, if you ever asked—and if he cared to answer—that he never played alone. His garden friends, the insects, always played with him. And he knew a lot of insect games.

The flowers talked to him. And when they whispered among themselves, he listened carefully. He could tell which flowers told him lies. Which ones must do as they were told or die.

George liked the irises best. They were brave warriors, with their feathery war bonnets, which he twisted off, to line up in crazy rainbow rows along the rock rim of the garden pool. He loved their long green legs, which he broke at the knees, to let them pray for mercy.

Once they were dead, he rubbed their fuzzy beards across his lips, their goodbye kiss. He chewed the ends off their flat green swords, so licorice-like. But never until they, his brave iris friends, were dead.

As the parlor company watched, not quite seeing clearly through the lovely leaded windows, waiting for the tea to cool, George took the tallest iris—the chief, with its bruise-blue bonnet—and wrapped its arm-blades tight behind its back—a katydid—to roast, later in the fireplace. Licorice smoke.

The daisy never blinked its eye. When he gouged the oily black spot out, it kept on staring at him, stupidly. Even in the little pool, drowning, it turned over on its back to watch him, ignoring the koi hiding underneath the lily pads.

The frogs, who knew enough to close their eyes, unless he hit them with a rock, had better manners than the daisies. But the frogs were cowards, and they would escape into the trees to become birds, chirp-croaking as they hopped about the limbs.

As the adults lingered in the parlor, George got hungry.

He thought he saw a loaf of bread among the bricks beneath the water tap. A square, red loaf of bread hiding among the bricks. Its crust was mossy and trowel-scarred, one corner chipped and mortar stained. When he pried his treasure from the ground, its underneath was alive with centipede crumbs, rich with spicy ants. Layered with jammy slug slime, which spread over George's lips and chin as he licked at his loaf.

He saw a butterfly, fluttering down onto the armrest of his mother's garden swing. Coming carefully from behind, he grabbed it by the wings and snapped the tiny head off with his nails, before he spread the butter-yellow wings onto his bread. As he chewed the butterfly head, the strong sweet flavor filled his mouth, like something else he could not quite recall.

There was a whole host of the yellow butterflies. He caught a dozen. They were very dumb. He rubbed them one by one into the buttery side of his red brick loaf. Their heads became a crunchy chewing gum.

Then George heard noises at the garden gate. He studied the bright afternoon sun streaming through the great house, in one side and out the other, narrow shafts of light, straight as needles. There were three people, and he did not know their voices. The light was cutting off their heads, throwing long pointy shadows at him. The shadows, black and shifty, pausing here and there, coming closer, gave him time to hide.

George hid underneath the faucet, where his loaf of bread had been.

The dripping of the tap grew louder and louder, the itchy-bitsy spider drops of water landing one by one where his head rested, each drop radiant in the brilliant sun, a bullet-bit of rainbow just for him. Some drops lit in his eyes, their magic colors dying. Others on his eyelids, bleeding off into his ears, drowning the voices. He chewed the drops landing on his tongue. So, so soft.

He slipped out of his shirt and shorts and smeared the rainbow wetness up under his arms. In between his legs. Wet and naked he felt quite invisible.

The voices began crying his name.

And just then a smell he loved enveloped him—the soft rose smell of his mother's perfume. The sweet, safe smell he could find in a crowded room. George took a deep, deep breath and closed his eyes.

And then he ran.

He ran toward the wonderful smell. Throwing his arms behind his nakedness, streaked with iris dust, golden with the wings of broken butterflies, dripping rainbow, he ran.

George leaped into the smell. He felt long fingernails dancing all over his skin. Heard music as they played across his back. His eyes burned with happy tears as he kept crawling, snuggling into the smell, deeper and deeper.

He laughed and wiggled, insanely happy, as the thorny tendrils of the rose bush ripped and shredded him.

Then all was still, the voices silent.

Slowly, the garden filled again with gentle sounds. The insects playing by themselves, the koi stirring about the surface of the pond. The cooing of the frog-voiced birds.

And, as George suckled on a rosebud, soft and blood-red as those blooming on his back, his mother knew all that she had to know.

LOVE BITES

3

A spider crawled, methodically, across the dog's face, drawn to the swarm of tiny flies about the entrance of the cave where a shaft of sparkling morning sunlight crept down from the granite overhang, turning the night ice on the narrow ledge into glistening water drops, each alive with the new day.

The man knew that he had fallen asleep only when he woke to the new light. So bright it brought tears to his eyes. The fly-buzz confused him until he gained a squinting focus. The spider had one of the flies, going about its spider business, as the buzz continued unaware.

Amazing, he thought, insects still alive after the night. So cold it froze his boots before they'd even reached the cave. And as he tried to move, he realized that he could not feel his feet.

The snowstorm yesterday had caught them unprepared, the lone hiker and his ancient dog. No gloves, no matches. And worse, really, no excuse. They'd hiked this same trail many times, up to the falls, only five miles out. He knew October, thought that they had enough time.

October was so lovely in the valley, blazing yellow and glittering gold. Each breeze scattering fiery red and mauve leaves from the first hard freeze, the bright cinders of the dying summer floating in the crisp, clear air.

It was his fault. To misjudge nature so. To be tricked by old habits.

Just a quick hike. That was all. Then their shared swim, like always, in the river, moving slow and warm at summer's end. No one to see them slipping into the deep pool by the overhanging willows. Then good-bye until next spring, when the icy rush of melting snow would make the river welcome only for the dog, who loved the river anytime, and didn't mind the cold.

Wind had whipped sharp leaves, red and amber flashes, between their legs on the low trail, but he thought only how playful they felt. Nature's confetti for the change of seasons.

The dog's excitement was seductive, pulling at his sleeve to hurry up, running ahead, spinning on the narrow path, panting, waiting for him.

But the fault was all his. Not nature's. Not the dog's.

When he finally spoke, the dog did not respond, and only after several minutes, listening, believing that he heard her breath, did he reach out to rub her head.

Her hair was stiff and matted to her nose, which was ice-cold and frozen.

The buzz went on, each fly in harmony with its own kind.

After a minute he brushed two of them from her frosty eyelid.

The spider had disappeared.

In a way, he might have known. She had been oddly quiet yesterday, before the hike. And then the sudden snowstorm, wind-whipped, swirling, blinding, had exhausted them, still only half way back down the winding trail. He had to carry her to the cave, and for a long way before that he'd had to wait, shivering, for her to catch up.

She didn't seem to recognize the cave, although they'd used it many times. As shelter from the summer rains. For cozy lunches in out of the sun. Never, before, to sleep.

He forced himself out of the cave and stomped his feet until he could tell when they hit the ground. Until he could keep his balance on the slippery ledge, for the snow was already melting into slush.

As he carried her back toward the valley, odd memories came unbidden. A word spoken in thoughtless haste. That funny flower righted in an upset vase, its broken stem propped on an unopened bud. Their sleeping bags zipped tight together to keep warm, just the two of them, so many times.

His feet burned in the muddy boots. His arms, where he had locked them in a deadman's grip across her back to carry her, as if she were a sleeping child, were leaden.

He crossed the meadow, unaware of the tall wet grass, of the running rivulets of melted snow fan-tailing past him into the river. Not hearing the slush of his own footsteps.

No one saw him slip the body of the dog into the deep pool by the overhanging willow trees. Saw him run his fingers through her rich black hair, untangling it to billow, clean, in the lovely, lovely river on that perfect autumn morning.

No one heard him murmuring—goodbye, sorry, thanks for everything.

Or watched the body spinning slowly, as if it were trying to lie down, then turning to slip from the calmness out into the rising river, heaving with the storm runoff.

Then moving, faster, capturing the river's rhythm. Loping out of sight.

No one saw the lone man standing in the river, biting on his hand.

SPANISH-LANGUAGE AND DIGITAL MEDIA: A NEW COUNTERPUBLIC SPHERE IN CALIFORNIA

by Dawn Garcia

Ethnic media in the United States—immigrant and ethnic newspapers, magazines and broadcast media mainly produced in languages other than English—have long acted as advocates and educators for those more comfortable reading and listening in their native language. Today, at least one-fourth of the entire U.S. population and 80 percent of adults in minority communities are reached by media in languages other than English—on television, online, on radio and in print (Bendixen 11). While there have been newspapers in languages other than English in the United States for more than two centuries,¹ the variety and reach of ethnic media has grown exponentially in the past few decades.

Nowhere has this phenomenon been more prominent than in California, home to nearly one-third of the nation's ethnic newspapers, Web sites, television and radio stations. In the spring of 2006, a constellation of factors created a watershed moment for California's largest ethnic media sector—Spanish-language media—that launched ripples across the country. Spanish-language media, its adult audience and their high school-aged children, used old media technologies (Spanish-language newspapers, radio and television) and new media technologies (text messaging and social networks, including MySpace) to play a historic role in America's heated immigration debate and create a new public sphere for an important national conversation.

What occurred was unprecedented: in a series of peaceful protests that began on March 26, 2006, millions of people, many of them undocumented immigrants, took to the streets across the nation in the largest demonstrations seen in decades. That morning, seemingly out of nowhere, more than half a million people² appeared on the streets of downtown Los Angeles (the largest Spanish-language media market in the U.S.), a sea of brown, dressed in white, waving American and Mexican flags and marching to City Hall with their children in support of immigrants' rights.



FIG. 1

They called it a “*Megamarcha*” (Fig.1). Similar marches of thousands of undocumented people and their friends suddenly surfaced in dozens of cities across the nation in the days and weeks that followed: Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, New York, Phoenix and Washington, D.C. This happened not just in the big cities but also in America's heartland: Des Moines, Iowa, Garden City, Kansas and Omaha, Nebraska, just to name a few. In all, the number of marchers who turned out in support of immigrants' rights in more than one-hundred protests in cities across the country in the spring of 2006 ranged from conservative estimates of 3.5 million to close to 5 million people (Table 1), considered by some counts as the largest mobilization in the nation's history.³ How did this happen?

Most outside the Latino community were amazed at the numbers of undocumented immigrants on the streets during these marches, people who more often avoid the spotlight as the growing workforce of janitors, nannies and other service workers behind the scenes in nearly every restaurant, car wash, childcare center and office building. Where did all these people come from? “It was as if a huge part of the U.S. population that until now had only existed as an abstract statistic had suddenly emerged from the shadows, to become an active part of American politics,” wrote one newspaper columnist (Oppenheimer, “Hispanics”). Meanwhile, in the next few days and weeks after the first marches, thousands of students walked out of high schools all over California and in cities outside of California as well, including Dallas and Phoenix (Fig. 2). Many of these students were the English-speaking children of undocumented immigrants, joined by other high school friends who supported the marches.



FIG. 2

Why they marched is easy to answer: They were on the streets to protest House Bill 4437, also known as “The Border Protection, Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005.” It was a controversial bill by Representative James Sensenbrenner, a Republican from Wisconsin. The bill would have made undocumented immigrants, and those who helped them, criminals. The marchers held up signs advocating for a comprehensive reform of immigration laws, to allow a path to legalization for the estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants now living in the United States, thereby giving them a chance to participate in the American dream. The Sensenbrenner bill ultimately died in the Senate, but it was passed by the U.S. House.

How the marches were organized was the real question. How did 500,000 people in Los Angeles, 300,000 people in Chicago and 2,000 in places like Greenville, South Carolina and Little Rock, Arkansas become motivated to abandon their long-held anonymity and march in the open, knowing to wear white clothes, when to arrive, and where to go?



FIG. 3

While the first marches in Los Angeles may have been a surprise to many English speakers, they were not a surprise to Spanish speakers, who really couldn't avoid hearing or reading about them. *La Opinión*, the largest Spanish-language newspaper in Los Angeles and in the nation, promoted the marches on its front page the day before with this headline: “*A Las Calles!*” (To the Streets!) (Fig. 3). Spanish-language television in Los Angeles publicized the marches with public service announcements giving the date, time and place. One station, KMEX-TV in Los Angeles, even gave a name to the march effort: “*Pisando Firme*” (Walking Strong), and urged viewers to march “with pride, with dignity, with order, for your children, for your people, for your community.” KMEX-TV's evening news program is the top-rated newscast among Spanish-language viewers in Southern California, and in recent years has been rated either first or second in adult viewers for newscasts in Los Angeles—in Spanish or English (Nusbaum, Television).

But the largest force in promoting the marches, and what really made a difference, was Spanish-language talk radio. Thousands of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles, many of them undocumented, listen to one of the dueling morning radio shows hosted by celebrity DJs as they get up early and head in to work. The DJs exhort their listeners in Spanish to “wake up, wake

SELECTED IMMIGRANT RIGHTS MARCHES SPRING 2006			
City	Date	Estimated Turnout (lower and upper bounds)	Sources
Los Angeles	5/1	650K–700K	LA Times, La Opinión, ABC News
Chicago	5/1	400K–750K	Chicago Tribune, Univision
Dallas	4/3	350K–500K	Dallas Morning News
Los Angeles	3/25	200K–500K	LA Times, La Opinión
Washington	4/10	180K	New York Times
Chicago	3/10	100K–300K	Chicago Tribune, CBS2 Chicago
New York	4/10	100K	New York Times
Phoenix	4/10	100K–250K	Arizona Republic, Washington Post
San Jose	5/1	100K	San Jose Mercury News
Atlanta	3/24	80K	Atlanta Journal Constitution
Fort Myers	4/10	75K	Orlando Sentinel
Denver	3/25	50K	Denver Post
Denver	5/1	50K–75K	Denver Post, La Opinión
Detroit	3/27	50K	Detroit Free Press
Houston	4/10	50K	Houston Chronicle Forbes
San Diego	4/3	50K	San Diego Union Tribune
Atlanta	4/10	40K–50K	Atlanta Journal Constitution, Houston Chronicle
San Francisco	5/1	30K	San Francisco Chronicle, AP
St. Paul	4/9	30K	Minneapolis Star-Tribune, AP
Washington	3/6	30K	Chicago Tribune
20 Largest Events Totals		2.7M–4M	
Totals Spring 2006		3.5M–5M	

up, wake up!," accompanied by spirited music, laugh tracks, and mildly off-color jokes. The DJs have cartoon-like names to match, such as Ricardo "El Mandril" (The Baboon) Sanchez and Renan "El Cucuy" (The Boogeyman).

But most notable of them all is Eddie "El Piolín" (Tweety Bird) Sotelo. Tweety Bird is a childhood nickname given to Sotelo for his large lips and pint-size stature. The nickname has stuck. "Piolín por La Mañana" or "Tweety Bird in the Morning," has been described as "the biggest radio show that most Americans have never heard of" (Fears). The Piolín show, recorded near Los Angeles, is nationally syndicated and broadcast in 47 markets across the country—including Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Miami, Phoenix, San Francisco and New York—many of the cities where there were megamarches in spring 2006. Piolín is one of America's top-rated morning radio show hosts, rivaling Rush Limbaugh for ratings in 2006 (Nusbaum, Radio).

But, "Piolín por la Mañana" is not "agenda" radio, like that of Rush Limbaugh. Until the spring of 2006, the broadcast was best known for its lively mix of humor, *norteño* music, and good-natured ribbing of listeners who would call in to the show. Why then were the radio DJs the most effective of all Spanish-language media in organizing the marchers? It was

their strong connection to their listeners, which includes a history of providing on-air counseling for everything from medical care and housing to immigration advice, that made these disc jockeys ideal instigators for the marches. Along with a coalition of religious, community and civil rights activists in the Latino community, these Spanish-language disc jockeys encouraged undocumented immigrants to take to the streets. The disc jockeys gave instructions (which were largely followed) for a peaceful mass protest: carry American flags, bring the kids, pick up your trash and wear white for peace.

And, at the same time, the nation witnessed the accompanying power of new communication tools whose impact is only beginning to be realized as an organizing force for change around the world. Until recently, cell phone text-messaging and social networking sites were mostly thought of as tools for chatting with friends and sharing pictures, not organizing political movements. Howard Rheingold, an author and media scholar at Stanford University, coined the term "smart mobs" to refer to collective political action via mobile media. He said that while much has been written about the role of print and literacy in the emergence of the democratic public sphere, these new forms of communication technologies could be as transformative, and "possess a power that has, on many occasions, proven mightier than physical weaponry" (Rheingold, "Mobile Media" 226).

Rheingold noted that the power of cell phone text messaging, in coordination with Internet tools such as listservs, blogs and social-networking sites like MySpace, has shown up around the world as a way to coordinate street demonstrations, monitor elections and help get-out-the-vote campaigns in countries as different as Ghana and Hungary, Italy and Kenya, Sierra Leone and Spain, and the United States.

The social networking Web site MySpace, which lets people link to friends and create profiles with photos and music, was especially important in coordinating the high school students' walkouts around the country in support of immigrant rights. Students posted messages on their MySpace pages, giving marching instructions that were read by other high school students in neighboring school districts, and the walkouts spread.

While there have been many studies noting the fact that fewer Latinos use the Internet than the dominant population, Latinos are connecting to the communications revolution in a different and perhaps even more democratic way—via cell phones. A study

in 2008 by the Pew Hispanic Center found that almost 60 percent of Latino adults have a cell phone and almost 50 percent of Latino cell phone users send and receive text messages on their phones (Fox 14). That's exactly what they did on the day of the marches, spreading the word that helped create a new political public sphere through the mobilization of immigrants' rights marches larger than any seen before in the United States. The cultural power of Spanish language media in California, whose impact had been felt mostly within its own circle, was transformed into a broader political force that could not be ignored by the larger, English-speaking public.

Some may argue that ubiquitous cell phone text messaging, millions of MySpace visits and the Spanish-language radio stations heard nearly everywhere in California and elsewhere now make those forms of communication a part of the greater public sphere, not a separate counterpublic sphere. But it is the unequal balance of power of Spanish-language media to the mainstream English-language media, the outsider quality of undocumented immigrants, and the youth of those using MySpace and mobile media, that together qualify their constituting a counterpublic domain.

This phenomenon is part of a historical pattern of counterpublics or "alternative public spheres" that have developed and evolved in societies where groups outside of the mainstream have invented spaces and methods to communicate who they are, what they need and what they believe is worth fighting for. But now, a counterpublic sphere shifted from cultural to political sphere in a way never seen before.

At the time of the 2006 marches, the United States found itself in turmoil about immigration, with no clear resolution in sight, and this continues today. Some non-Latinos worry about a loss of jobs, and raise questions of national identity and border security. But at the same time, proposed restrictions on immigration cause employers to fear worker shortages. Immigrants, who have made America their home, face increasing hostility and, in the past year, raids, increased deportations and imprisonment. With an estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. as of 2006, and 500,000 more arriving every year (Passel 2), almost everyone—whatever their view on immigration—believes something must be done. Should there be a path to citizenship for all who are working and living in the U.S., should they all be sent home, or is there something in between?

While undocumented immigrants come to the U.S. from dozens of countries, the focus (and in some

quarters, anger) is clearly aimed at Mexicans, who are the largest group, accounting for more than 50 percent of all undocumented immigrants to the U.S. (Passel 2). Today, even second- and third-generation Mexican-Americans living here legally worry that immigration restrictions will raise suspicions towards anyone who looks like them. Protests held on May 1 were tied to an effort dubbed "The Day Without Mexicans" after the 2004 movie of a similar name. Mexican immigrants and their supporters across the U.S. were urged not to go to work or to shop that day.

What has changed in the lives of these immigrants and in the political landscape for Spanish-language media to have such a powerful pull? Several differences now make the role of Spanish-language media distinct from ethnic media's role in the past. First, the sheer growth of Latino communities of California has created more opportunities for Spanish-language media to be a much more powerful and effective political player, as the increasing number of immigrants, some of them undocumented, try to find their place in a nation that has often not included them in the public conversation.

Today, at least one-fourth of the entire U.S. population and 80 percent of adults in minority communities are reached by media in languages other than English—on television, online, on radio and in print.

Secondly, the use of media is different than in the past: Some of the top-rated radio stations in the nation's largest cities now are Spanish-language stations. Spanish-language radio stations have climbed to the top of the charts in big cities like Miami, Chicago and New York, and have made big gains in smaller cities, like Louisville, Kentucky; Des Moines, Iowa; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Greensboro, North Carolina and Omaha, Nebraska. Arbitron, a company that tracks radio trends, noted in its 2007 report on Hispanic Radio Today that the number of Spanish-language radio stations hit a new record: 730 stations, an increase of 24 percent since 2002.

Third, a mix of old and new technology has made ethnic media more accessible and able to penetrate more deeply into communities than ever before. Whereas in the past, immigrants in the U.S. had mostly small-circulation print Spanish-language news

sources and local radio, today's ethnic media landscape includes far-reaching national radio and television networks, syndicated radio programs and new forms of communication, including cell phone text messaging and social networking web sites.

Finally, the increasingly shrill rhetoric aimed at undocumented immigrants from conservative commentators and political pundits—who spewed forth sweeping condemnations of immigrants as everything from welfare cheats to terrorists—convinced a number of undocumented immigrants to listen to the urging of Spanish-language media and others to stand up and join the marches, despite the potential dangers of deportation for those living in the U.S. without the proper documents.

Many of the marchers vociferously rejected claims by advocates of the Sensenbrenner legislation that it would help protect the nation from terrorism. "When did you ever see a Mexican blow up the World Trade Center?" said David Gonzalez, 22, a legal immigrant marching with his family in support of immigration reform. "Who do you think built the World Trade Center?" (Associated Press, "Immigration").

What does the future hold? Will the "Today we march, tomorrow we vote!" posters waved by some at the megamarches prove to be correct? Or will the "Sleeping Giant," as the Latino vote is often called, continue sleeping? Will the crisis in the U.S. economy and efforts to crack down on illegal border crossings actually slow undocumented immigration, changing the equation? Some studies show that second-generation immigrants stop needing ethnic media as they learn English, although the demographics of the Mexican immigrant population may not bear that out. Will Spanish-language media continue to have the power it now wields?

One of the most hopeful signs to come out of the creation of a counterpublic—and perhaps one of the unexpected consequences of Latino population growth—may be the reemergence of active public debate on key issues in the United States. After years of bemoaning a disengaged citizenry, the marches created a new political reality, one that blows open the door for heightened civic participation. This is the promise and the premise of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. While some fear the consequences of immigration they term illegal, it is somehow fitting that the well of liberty may need to be freshened by the activism of recent immigrants who are seeking a legal path to becoming full participants in American society.

It bears repeating that we are a nation of immigrants. As each wave of immigrants has successfully fought for its rights—individual and as a collective—it has not only wound up bolstering their status, but reaffirming the principles that have made the United States one of the world's most powerful and enduring democracies. The counterpublic sphere created by Spanish-language media, the rise of celebrity radio disc jockeys, and the accompanying viral effect of new technologies to mobilize massive immigrants' rights marches in the spring of 2006 could eventually merge with the public sphere, and the two could finally become indistinguishable.

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NOTES

- ¹ Benjamin Franklin published one of the first foreign-language newspapers in North America, the German-language newspaper *Philadelphische Zeitung*, in 1732 (Burt 46).
- ² According to Los Angeles Police Department estimates, as reported the next day in all the major media.
- ³ The immigrant rights marches in the Spring of 2006 were the largest marches ever in many U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, Chicago, Phoenix, Dallas, Fresno and San Jose (Bada 39). In total, estimated at 3.5 million to 5 million, they exceeded the size of most of the largest marches in U.S. history including the March for Women's Lives in 2004, global anti-war protests in 2003 and the Million-Man March in 1995.

TWO POEMS

by Tamara Tinker

EGYPT

for Anne

My brown-haired sister is reading to me in bed about ancient Egypt where the afterlife was as important as life. The pharaoh, she says, was mummified so that he wouldn't really die.

I imagine that we entombed our recently-departed grandmother in the bedroom closet. No longer needing food or air, she is comfortable there, and remains near us.

My sister is unconcerned with any death more recent than a pharaoh's. But the deaths to come—our mother's, her daughter's—will wind her so tightly in grief that she can do nothing except write her own dark history.

Oh, that my blond mind might know the depth of her brown-eyed sorrow. That having learned it, I could forget. My sister is frail now and diabetic, wears only loose-fitting clothes. The shadows watch her, waiting.

I keep her, in memory, in her night-gown in bed beside me, the big book with pictures of the dead an entertainment until sleep lowers our eyelids in that well-lit room.

TABLEAU OF CALIFORNIA

after Wallace Stevens

Bray of rock star in digital paddock
Who falls from gall to lanolin shine
And holds his sleeping newborn still.
Fame and anonymity are one;
Loveless monsters, yet beloved,
They make the angel with two navels,
Hog the camera, steal the scene.

Cotton warp and woolen weft
Cradle illumination, such
As loquat rooting on sundeck
And bouvardia blooming in dinette.
Unless you go from day to day
You'll be chased from night to night.
Take the baby with you, darling;
Serenade her and be done.

HANNAH ARENDT'S CONCEPT OF "PUBLIC SPACE" AND ITS RELATION TO THE INTERNET

BY JULIA ROEVER

Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) was one of the most influential political philosophers of the twentieth century. She was born into a German-Jewish family, and studied under philosophers such as Heidegger and Jaspers. In 1933, she left Germany after the National Socialists under Hitler came to power. After several years as an emigrant in France, she came to the United States in 1941 and soon held a number of academic positions and gave lectures at American universities such as Princeton, Chicago, and Berkeley. Arendt has been characterized as "one of the great outsiders of twentieth century political thought, at once strikingly original and disturbingly unorthodox" (Canovan, p. 1). It was a conscious decision by Arendt not to join any predefined intellectual camp or political-philosophical school of thought (Wild, p. 123). Partly as a consequence of this, Hannah Arendt's relevance for



come to mind when looking at a distinctly modern political phenomenon: the emergence of a global forum for political debate, i.e., the "blogging" culture of the Internet with its potential for a virtual "space of appearance" in the Arendtian sense. The recent rise of Internet-based blogs, forums and wikis confirms Hannah Arendt's optimism about the willingness and

ability of individuals to actively engage in public discourse once entry barriers have been lowered. The modern-day place of assembly or "agora" (J. Williams, p. 201) Hannah Arendt had in mind when she wrote about the space of appearance can be seen in the virtual realm of the Internet and the blogosphere.

Hannah Arendt's view on politics was colored by her personal experience of totalitarianism (Canovan, p. 202). She wrote: "Liberalism, the only ideology that ever tried to articulate and interpret

the genuinely sound elements of free societies, has demonstrated its inability to resist totalitarianism so often that its failure may already be counted among the historical facts in our century" (Arendt, in an unpublished article, as quoted by Beiner, p. 373). She also was convinced that the representative element of liberal democracy had contributed to the crises of the 20th century: "Representative government is in a crisis today, partly because it has lost, in the course of time, all institutions that permitted the citizens' actual participation, and partly because it is now greatly affected by the disease from which the party system suffers: bureaucratization and the two parties' tendency to represent nobody except the party machines" (Arendt, CR, p. 89).

Some modern, mostly neoconservative thinkers share these concerns about the deficiencies in liberal democracy. If the value of democracy, they say, "lies solely in its capacity to allow individuals to maximize their interests, there is no compelling reason why those individuals should defend that order if their interests might be better served by its destruction" (M. Williams, p. 312-3; Kristol, Reflections, p. 50). What both Arendt and modern political thinkers are aiming at is the underlying interpretation of freedom as freedom from interference that is at the core of liberal democracy. The concept goes back to John Stuart Mill. He recognized that in large democratic societies there is a danger of tyrannical rule by the majority over the minority (Mill, p. 46) and that there need to be limitations to the power of the majority. By identifying certain civil liberties upon which the state could not encroach, Mill laid the groundwork for the predominant model of liberal democracy today with its negative conception of liberty (Berlin, pp. 9, 12) and the notion that individuals are in principle free to pursue their self-interest as long as they do not harm others (Cunningham, p. 28). This view of modern democratic society is what Arendt took issue with: it was not enough to have a collection of private individuals voting separately and anonymously according to their private opinions. Only the sharing of power that comes from active civic engagement and common deliberation can provide each citizen with a sense of active political agency, and thus a sense of true political freedom (d'Entreves, p. 30).

Hannah Arendt turned to classical ideals of citizenship and democracy that, in her view, were better suited to safeguard modern societies against the danger of totalitarianism. To Arendt, only a strengthened democracy with republican political institutions, "built in the space between plural men and kept in being by their active consent" (Canovan, p. 201), could provide citizens with any incentive to participate actively in the democratic process. Freedom, as Arendt understood it, was not a function of will or sovereignty of the individual, or the absence of interference; rather, "freedom consisted in having a share in the public business" (Arendt, OR, p. 115). It "could only exist

in public ... it was the man-made public space or market-place which antiquity had known as the area where freedom appears and becomes visible to all" (Arendt, OR, p. 121). Her concept of freedom is linked to her notion of power: for Arendt, "power corresponds to the human ability not just to act, but to act in concert" (Arendt, CR, p. 143). Freedom is then seen as something that appears in the interactions of plural beings. Arendt saw the American Revolution as one of few historical examples where freedom in this sense was realized even though she questioned whether the American Constitution succeeded in realizing this concept of freedom fully for future, post-revolutionary generations (OR, p. 133). She wrote: "This freedom they called ... 'public happiness,' and it consisted in the citizen's right of access to the public realm, in his share in public power — to be 'a participator in the government of affairs' in Jefferson's telling phrase —

as distinct from the generally recognized rights of subjects to be protected by the government in the pursuit of private happiness even against public power" (Arendt, OR, p. 134). Arendt claimed that the liberty to appear in a public space in political discourse with other citizens takes precedence over freedom in the negative sense, and to be deprived of the former is a more serious deprivation (Beiner, p. 369). While she did not deny the existence of the private sphere of life and the need for its protection, she was concerned

THE PARTY SYSTEM SUFFERS FROM BUREAUCRATIZATION AND THE TWO PARTIES' TENDENCY TO REPRESENT NOBODY EXCEPT THE PARTY MACHINES.

that the freedom of the individual (Berlin's "negative freedom") was insecurely provided for unless protected by active political participation of citizens in the body politic (Beiner, p. 370). Arendt's point was that the enjoyment of civil liberties and "limited government" — however great an achievement this is — should not be mistaken for true political freedom (Arendt, OR, p. 220).

These ideas place Hannah Arendt in a tradition of thought known as classical republicanism.¹ This strand of thinking refers to a political philosophy that draws both on the experience of democratic life in the ancient Greek *polis*, as expressed in the writings of Aristotle; and on classical republican writers and thinkers such as Cicero, Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and

deTocqueville, as well as Jefferson and Madison. It centers on the idea of promoting a specific conception of the good life as consisting of active citizenship and healthy republican virtue (Lovett, p. 9). For this group of thinkers, freedom has always been something public, possessed and enjoyed by citizens who were engaged in their *res publica* (Canovan, p.212).

Hannah Arendt's civic republicanism stands in marked contrast to the interpretation of this classic idea by other political thinkers who have drawn on civic republicanism for their political thought. Thinkers like Kristol and Strauss take the idea of republican virtue quite literally. To them, restoring classical republican virtues means "acknowledging the centrality of values and mores, appreciating the institutions of civil society" (M. Williams, p. 316). Their agenda is concerned with "a commitment to ideals, to the meaning of the nation in a heroic sense capable of mobilizing individuals to virtuous action in the public sphere domestically, and in foreign policy internationally" (M. Williams, p. 317). They see the American republic as "a nation embodying *universal* values whose greatness resides precisely in the fact that its founding principles are not limited to the United States itself." They draw upon the symbolic legacy of figures such as Adam Smith, and yet advocate a certain set of values, 'character,' and a focus on individual and civic responsibility. But the combination of ideas from classic republicanism, and a set of specific virtues in the political thought of these thinkers, leaves the door open for subjective morals to be prescribed as fundamental virtues. Irving Kristol, for example, in the context of republican values, talks about the need for censorship of pornography and obscenity (Kristol, Reflections, p. 51).

In stark contrast to this strand of political thought, Hannah Arendt's version of the classical republican ideal was very different. Arendt was deeply opposed to any attempts to govern politics through ideology or philosophy (Owens, p. 273). In her view, such endeavors were destructive to political freedom. She was convinced that politics involved matters of opinion rather than an absolute truth (Arendt, BPF, p. 247) and relied on human pluralism and spontaneity to come to terms with new and unprecedented issues a society faces. She was critical of philosophers since Plato who have tried to construct absolute standards and impose them on the realm of human political affairs: "Plato ... describes the ideas as what 'shines forth most' ... Only in the *Republic* were the ideas transformed into standards, measurements and rules

of behavior, all of which are variations ... of the idea of the good." (Arendt, HC, p. 225) If people could be convinced that there were immutable standards governing the realm of human affairs, standards only available to the philosopher, then the wisdom of the few could take precedence over the fluctuating opinions and beliefs of the many (Villa, p. 93). Arendt warned that the hierarchical ordering of philosophy over politics was a denial of the fundamental relativity of all political opinion and action (Owens, p. 275). She was therefore deeply suspicious of the notion of natural law (Canovan, p. 221).

Arendt implicitly recognized the binding character of civil (negative) liberties provided for in liberal democracy. But more importantly to her was the promotion of active citizenship and a commitment to the *res publica*. These can be described as functional values that are necessary to ensure that public discourse and participation of the citizens can take place. But she strongly opposed a preset standard of human thinking and conduct, a standard of certain individual mores and virtues that in other political thinkers had often been attached to the idea of classical republican virtue. Arendt's republicanism put human pluralism and public discourse at its center and rejected the notion of transcendent standards in favor of the "fundamental relativity of the inter-human realm" (Arendt, MDT, p. 27).

Hannah Arendt's postulation of a space for public discourse touches on the most recent technological innovations within the Internet: weblogs, discussion boards and wikis can be seen as the new global public space for debate. These developments have revolutionized political communication and can carry real political weight. As we have seen recently, they have made a profound impact on American presidential campaigns. Hannah Arendt placed active participation by committed citizens and political discourse at the center of her version of classical republicanism. A key feature of her viewpoint is what she called the public space, or the space of appearance. The public space lies *between* individuals: in it, they can move, speak, and act (Canovan, p. 225). What the public space offers is "the opportunity of moving between different points of view by talking about common affairs" (Canovan, p. 227). In Arendt's view, the public space was an essential requirement of democracy in that it gives individuals a "public stage" (Canovan, p. 135) where they can fully realize the republican virtues of active participation. In other words, citizens who actively participate in public debate become stakeholders in

the democratic process to a much larger degree than in a model where they merely form a political opinion in private and vote for or against a given political candidate. Since any political candidate can at best only partially reflect the political preferences and opinions of an individual, a system that does not provide for a space or an institution to engage in public discourse will necessarily leave citizens with a certain sense of being disenfranchised from many political issues.

While Arendt acknowledged that at least in some democracies citizens managed to form their opinions in public debate (she pointed to demonstrations against the Vietnam war and televised hearings of Senate committees), she was concerned that this happened only informally, without the shelter of an institutionalized structure.² As a consequence she developed a strong interest in the idea of a council system as an intermediate institutional structure to connect citizens to the government. This was not Arendt's own invention, but something that had repeatedly emerged during the course of revolutions (Arendt, OR, p. 265). She pointed to the "*commissions pour les travailleurs*" in the revolution of 1848, the Paris Commune in 1871, the "*soviets*" in Russia in 1905 and 1917, and to the "*Arbeiter- und Soldatenräte*" in Germany in 1918/19 (Arendt, OR, p. 265). It was the brief re-emergence of this sort of council during the failed Hungarian Revolution of 1956 that led her to regard them as a practical possibility (Canovan, p. 235). Arendt never developed this idea into a concrete proposal for implementing councils into the constitutional system of the United States, but it becomes clear that Arendt was rather pessimistic about the realization of active citizenship in the current system without the protection of a legally institutionalized public space.

Changing the constitution and implementing a council system or other participatory measures seems unlikely and in light of previous experiences a risky proposition. But it can be argued that today's improved participatory opportunities via the Internet have already had an impact on the political process in liberal

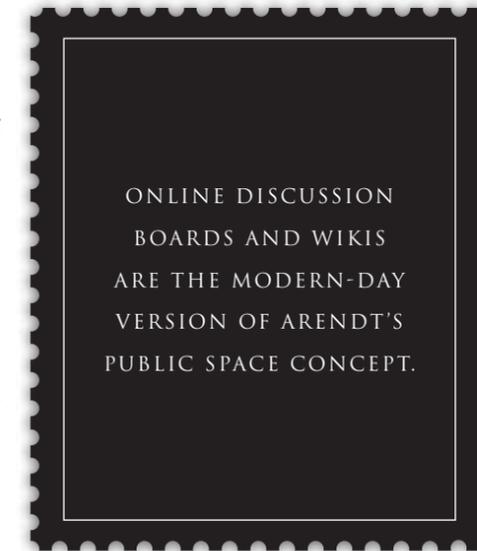
democracies. In contrast to older means of mass communication like radio and TV broadcasting, and newspapers with their unidirectional communication, the Internet today allows users to produce and distribute content almost as easily as they receive it (Barton, p. 178). This is due to the most recent technological innovations, in particular blogs, discussion boards, and wikis.

The term "blog," a contraction of "weblog," refers to a webpage with minimal to no external editing, providing online commentary, periodically updated and presented in reverse chronological order, with hyperlinks to other online sources (Drezner/Farrell, p. 2). Visitors are invited to blogs to add comments to an existing post, but cannot directly post content themselves. The blogosphere has grown at an astronomical rate: as of May 2007 the estimated number of blogs was at 70 million, with approximately 100,000

new blogs being created every day (Drezner/Farrell, p. 2; Sunstein, p. 87). Online discussion boards or Internet forums are web applications for holding electronic discussion and posting user-generated content. Typically discussion boards have a forum administrator who has the ability to edit or modify content on the forum. Several prominent public online forums cater to writers and readers interested in politics or philosophy.³ Online discussion boards quickly enable groups of users

and enter a rational critical debate. Unlike blogs and discussion boards, wikis do not distinguish between authors and readers, allowing visitors to create new pages and edit and even delete existing content. The best-known example is the online encyclopedia "wikipedia."

One common feature of all three online writing environments is that they allow users to create and publish content very easily and at low cost. The software tools needed are mostly easy to use and available for free downloads (Barton, p. 178). This is what profoundly differentiates them from the traditional media of mass communication that dominated public debate during Hannah Arendt's lifetime and still do. In mass communication, media messages are sent from



the media institutions to the general public, not the other way around. This is in part due to the fact that the technologies required for mass dissemination of messages are complex and expensive, keeping entry cost high. Not only does this create a de facto barrier for ordinary citizens to produce and publish content, it also contributes to the development of large media conglomerates that dominate the news and entertainment markets (Barton, p. 181; Chaffee/Metzger, p. 366). In a recent definition by C.W. Mills, this type of publicity has resulted in the creation of a “mass” rather than a “public” (Barton, p. 181, quotes Habermas and Mills for definitions of these terms). According to that distinction, in a “public,” virtually as many people express opinions as receive them, and public communication is organized in a way that allows for individuals to immediately and effectively reply to any opinions expressed in public. In a “mass,” far fewer people express opinions than receive them, and it is difficult or impossible for individuals to answer back effectively. Blogs, online discussion boards and wikis have the potential to create a “public,” rather than a “mass,” because the communication in blogs and forums is bidirectional.

But, some critics have asked, do users really engage in a public discourse or do they tend to visit only blogs and forums that reflect the views they already hold, thus only reinforcing their opinions (Sunstein, p. 92; Drezner/Farrell, p. 6-7)? This phenomenon, called “cocooning” by Internet users and “cyberbalkanization” by communication experts, is the subject of controversial debate. Experts and bloggers who doubt that “cocooning” is a serious issue point to the fact that a large part of the blogosphere is devoted to criticizing and commenting on other people’s posts. To criticize and comment, users need to read what others have said, then write about it and post their thoughts. Typically, quotes from the opponent’s post are included, as well as links to it. The links are the most important way users travel through the blogosphere (Drezner/Farrell, p. 7). A study conducted by Horrigan et al. about the 2004 election supports that view. It shows that Internet users and blog readers had greater overall exposure than others to political arguments, including those that challenge their political opinions and preferences (Study quoted in Drezner/Farrell, p. 7).

Another question is whether online political debates in blogs and forums carry any political weight. Only if they do can one truly compare them with the ancient Greek *agora* that was Hannah Arendt’s model for the public space. Bloggers point to “success stories” such

as Senator Trent Lott’s resignation from his position as Senate Majority Leader in 2002 (Drezner/Farrell, p. 3). Most political analysts agree that the blogosphere played an important role in his downfall. Other examples include media scandals such as the *60 Minutes* story on President Bush’s National Guard service, where bloggers played a pivotal role by raising doubts about the authenticity of documents used in that report (Drezner/Farrell, p. 3).

Because the Internet is a low-cost medium that allows two-way-communication, it has also revolutionized online campaigning. Blogs and online discussion forums allow the candidate to establish an ongoing dialogue with supporters, volunteers and campaign staff (Rice, p. 4). Howard Dean’s 2003/2004 Democratic presidential primary campaign is widely credited with being one of the first to incorporate heavy use of the Internet (Rice, p. 4). The most recent successful example was the campaign of then Senator Barack Obama, which was able to raise an unprecedented amount of funds from a very wide range of supporters. For example, in April 2008, the campaign raised \$31 million, with the average donation at \$91. Online donations comprised 88% of donations to the campaign in January 2008.⁴

One way to look at these developments is that candidates have mastered the use of Internet technology for their campaigns. But another way to see this is that supporters rely on the Internet to interact with and influence their candidates. In this sense, Internet-based blogs, online discussion boards and wikis can be regarded as the modern-day version of Hannah Arendt’s public space, the virtual *agora*, where users can engage in a public debate about political issues and disseminate their opinion in a way not imaginable just several years ago. Hannah Arendt’s ideas about civic participation therefore remain highly relevant today.

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NOTES

¹ Canovan, p. 202; the terminology is not always coherent: a good explanation of the terms “civic humanism,” “civil republicanism” and “classical republicanism” is given by Lovett, p. 1, 9-11. Cunningham, p. 54, places Arendt in “civic republicanism.”

² Canovan, p. 235, quotes Arendt’s letter to Karl Jaspers, 19 Feb. 1966.

³ Barton, p. 182: the Internet Infidels (www.infidels.org) discussion board with more than 13,000 registered members is a good example.

⁴ Arrington, at: <http://www.techcrunch.com/2008/02/04/obama-sets-record-with-januarydonations-online-donations-88-of-total/>

TWO POEMS

by Robert Brown

OED REX

(A Song for All Serious Students of Greek Tragedy Sung to the Tune of Steve Martin's King Tut as Performed on Saturday Night Live)

Oed Rex. Oed Rex.

Now when he was a young man, he never thought he'd see
People buying books just to read about the King.

Oed Rex.

When he was a newborn,

Oed Rex.

he was taken to Cithaeron.

(They thought he was dead.
That's what the Servant said.)

Oed Rex. Oed Rex.

Oed Rex.

He solved the riddle of the Sphinx.

Oed Rex.

He fought Apollo's jinx.

Well, first he killed his papa,
Then he nailed Jocasta.

Oed Rex. Oed Rex.

Oed Rex.

Talk about a drama:

Oed rex.

Fornicatin' with his mama.

His mom—Jocasta—lied,
Then committed suicide.

Oed Rex. What a hex!

Oed Rex.

Maybe not so wise:

Oed Rex.

Poked out both his eyes.

What he did was vile,
But the lady liked his style.

Oed Rex. Oed Rex.

Oed Rex.

Talk about a drama:

Oed Rex.

Had four babies with his mama.

Perhaps it was a test,

But it ended with incest.

Oed Rex. Oed Rex.

Oed Rex.

Now he's become famous.

Oed Rex.

As a tragic ignoramus.

It was such a bonus

To end up at Colonos.

Oed Rex. Dead Rex.

Now you can read about him just before you go to bed,
With the visions of his exploits dancing in your head.

Oed Rex.

So that's the tragic truth.

Oed Rex.

I know it's quite uncouth.

Talk about a drama:

Fornicatin' with his mama.

Oed Rex. Kinky sex.

Oed Rex.

Just one more thing to say:

Oed Rex.

Oed is relevant today.

He'd be simply overjoyed

If he could read Sigmund Freud.

(Oed Rex. Complex Rex.)

(Oed Rex. Complex Rex.)



AT MOSS LANDING WITH SEAN

Do you remember
when we walked
at the edge of the water
looking for a perfect sand dollar:
one unspoiled by motorcycle tires
or the tedious tides?
*Every so often,
you would run ahead—
like the least sandpiper—
only to be disappointed by a broken shell
or the hollow carapace of a desiccated crab.*
Then—at last—we found it,
half-covered by the sand:
a miracle sea star—
the perfection only our eyes would touch—
like the sun and the moon flying high
like kites
in the innocent sky.
Do you still remember?

Thirty years after the Iranian revolution, the new theocracy is generally characterized as a totalitarian regime. However, analysis is sparse and often inconclusive as to why Iran qualifies as such. Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* provides the necessary analytic framework to deal with this problem.

Although Arendt focused on Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany, for Arendt, totalitarianism was not just about Russia and Germany, but about the movements that took place in these countries. Arendt's model of a totalitarian state, describing the similarities between the Soviet and Nazi regimes, can be used to evaluate the present Iranian regime. Using such a model is not an academic exercise; rather, it allows discussion of a country that is critical to the balance of power in the

hegemony) was shared by Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, and post-revolutionary Iran.

Ruhollah Khomeini's international aspirations are enshrined in Article 11 of the Iranian constitution, which mandates that "the new Islamic Republic [is] duty-bound to pursue a pan-Islamic objective for the political, economic and cultural integration of Islamic nations" (Zabih 36). While the constitution favors non-alignment in foreign policy, it also provides for defense of the rights of all Muslim people, regardless of nationality. In this sense, the Iranian constitution embodies the wide-ranging concept that Khomeini had advanced since the 1960s and continued to espouse during a 1980 radio address on Radio Tehran, saying "we should try hard to export our revolution to the world" (Khomeini 22). Khomeini seems to acknowledge

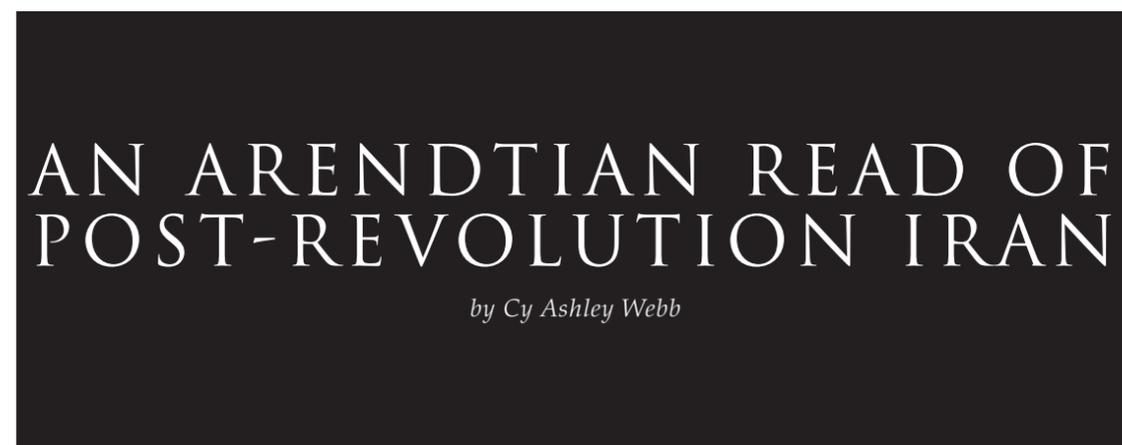
and a May 25, 1985 attempt to assassinate the Kuwaiti Amir. In addition to these assaults, the Iranians were implicated in a long list of lower-key activities which kept Tehran's pressure felt by the nations along the Gulf. These included, among other things, the hijacking of Kuwaiti aircraft (May, 1985; April, 1988) to pressure Kuwaiti authorities to release Shi'ite terrorists, in addition to attacks on public places (such as cinemas, restaurants, etc.) and oil installations (June, 1986; January, 1987) (Karsh 33).

Although the aforementioned attempts to extend Shi'ite hegemony throughout the Gulf satisfy Arendt's requirement that totalitarian governments foster permanent revolution by creating international instability, in actuality Iran's extraterritorial ambitions (either pan-Islamic aspirations or actual territorial

country into the comity of nations" (Arendt, *Origins* 393). Iran's failure to pursue international ambitions in the Gulf suggests that it is not a true totalitarian state. Menshri concludes that while "Khomeinism in one country" has not become an officially programmed policy ... Tehran has certainly come a long way from the vision of an Islamic order formulated upon seizing power" (Menshri 53). This situation merits close observation however, in light of the recent provocative behavior of the current conservative regime.

INTERNAL INSTABILITY

In addition to intentionally creating international instability, Arendt asserts totalitarian governments create internal instability through the eradication of



Middle East without resorting to one-dimensional analyses such as typified by incendiary references to "axis of evil."

INTERNATIONAL INSTABILITY

The need to create instability — usually through international ventures — is Arendt's first criteria for a totalitarian government. According to Arendt, a movement that is "all-comprehensive in its ideological scope and global in its political aspirations" runs the risk of becoming "frozen in a form of absolute government," thus necessitating what Trotsky called "permanent revolution" (Arendt, *Origins* 392). Suggestive evidence of "permanent revolution" includes international aggression, provocation, and "defensive" buildup. Arendt asserts "totalitarianism in power uses the state administration for its long-range goal of world conquest" (Arendt, *Origins* 392). The emphasis on extraterritorial ambition (via territorial or ideological

some of the risks of which Arendt writes, saying "If we remain in an enclosed environment we shall definitely face defeat" (Khomeini 22).

While holocaust denial, nuclear ambitions, the Iran-Iraq War, and the 1979–1981 hostage crisis are frequently cited as evidence of the regime's provocation of international instability, these events do not overshadow Khomeini's other attempts at 'exporting revolution' through pan-Islamic ventures throughout the Gulf in the early and mid-1980's. Efraim Karsh points to an abortive attempt to "topple the Bahraini regime by means of volunteers that would be landed in the tiny sheikdom." Although "Iranians postponed their premature plan" in response to warnings from the British, "they have never shelved it altogether and in December 1981, the Bahraini authorities exposed an Iranian plot to overthrow the regime, arresting 73 terrorists" (Karsh 33). Other extraterritorial forays include repeated attacks against Kuwait on December 12, 1983 (explosions directed against various targets)



ambitions) remained largely unfulfilled because of the exigencies of the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988). On the verge of being overwhelmed by Iraqi forces in an imposed war, Khomeini was forced to focus upon more nationalist concerns. David Menshri notes "since the outbreak of the war, Khomeini himself has begun to use nationalist terminology" (Menshri 51). Although such language is expected during wartime, it is nonetheless surprising, as Khomeini had "rejected nationalism as an imperialist plot intended to divide and weaken Islam" (Menshri 51). Khomeini's ability to rationally limit international ambitions in response to external stimuli is exactly the opposite of the totalitarian state described by Arendt. Arendt notes that while one would expect a non-totalitarian state to forsake international ambitions because in times of crisis "extreme demands and goals are checked by objective conditions," this limitation does not occur in totalitarian states. She points to the failure of the Munich Pact and the Yalta Agreement to "reintegrate the totalitarian

predictability in human affairs and the internal creation of 'permanent revolution.' She writes:

In the Soviet Union, the need for permanent revolution took the form of general purges [which] became a permanent institution of the Stalin regime. A similar impulse was found in Nazi Germany in the form of a racial selection which can never stand still. ... The point is that both Hitler and Stalin held out promises of stability in order to hide their intentions of creating a state of permanent instability. (Arendt, *Origins* 391)

Turning to Iran, it can be argued that post-revolution purges of the army, university and political competition meet this criterion of permanent instability.

Purges of the Iranian army immediately after the revolution are reasonably well documented, although specific numbers remain uncertain. Chaim Herzog

estimates that prior to the beginning of the war in 1980:

12,000 had been purged, 10,000 of them from the army. Thus, the Iranian army lost over half its officers in the ranks of Major to Colonel. The air force reported that it lost half of its pilots and 15–20% of its officers, NCOs and technicians. ... Those who survived the purges are supervised by 'spiritual guidance officers,' just as the post-purge Red Army officers were supervised by political commissars (Herzog 258).

Zabih concurs with this estimate, but suggests that the extent of the purges was substantially larger as he writes "what was left of the conventional armed forces,

East or the West will be purged so that the universities may become healthy places for the study of higher Islamic teachings" (Khomeini 24). Khomeini closed the universities in 1981, purged approximately 90% of all professors, and encouraged widespread book burnings. Upon reopening, many students were discouraged from registering.

As one of the seven members of the Senior Cultural Revolution Panel, Dr. Abdulkarim Soroush was involved with directing the purges and book burnings. Now an important opposition leader, Dr. Soroush tries to minimize his role in events immediately after the revolution. In a 2007 interview Dr. Soroush claims that the "Cultural Revolution Committee was established not to close universities but to reopen them. ... The committee was trying to reopen universities as

of scholars visiting from abroad qualifies as the destabilization that Arendt argues is characteristic of totalitarian governments. That this harassment takes place alongside extrajudicial killings and politically motivated executions indicates that the killings have never (in Arendt's terms) "stood still."

Arendt is clear to point out that purges and instances of terror could be indicators of a mere tyranny—which she differentiates from a true totalitarian state. For Arendt, a more controlling indicator of the nature of the state is the mass destruction of individual people through the eradication of the "moral person in man" and the "juridical person in man." (Arendt, *Origins* 447, 451) Since these are the strongest criteria of the totalitarian state, each will be taken up separately.

have accepted such a death. The totalitarian state lets its opponents disappear in silent anonymity (Arendt, *Eichmann* 232).

In Khomeini's Iran, something very different was happening. "The preparation of living corpses" (such as the basij paramilitary forces composed of children and expendable males who are not fit for regular military service) was precisely brought about through the state's encouragement of martyrdom. Here, the state obliterates the individual through manipulation of preexisting Shi'ite religious impulses (such as reenactment of the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali)—which is a slightly different achievement.

Confusion regarding martyrdom notwithstanding, the murder of the moral person in man has not been

HANNAH ARENDT PROVIDED THE NECESSARY ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK TO DEFINE TOTALITARIANISM.

A TOTALITARIAN REGIME IS NOT INEVITABLE IN IRAN.

reduced to about one-fourth of their pre-revolutionary strength, became the object of systematic indoctrination, with the Shia mullahs functioning like political commissars" (Zabih 51). Subsequent military tribunals were condemned by Amnesty International. The overall magnitude of the purges indicates Khomeini's need to create internal instability. The extent of the Iranian army purges far exceeded the military purges that took place in the Soviet Union prior to the Stalinist era. The extent of the purges and the creation of the Pasardan (Revolutionary Guard) are evidence of Khomeini's global paranoia and wariness of the military. Large-scale military purges create internal instability—such as was demonstrated by the inadequacies of the Pasardan, the voluntary militias, in the very early days of the Iran-Iraq war.

Military purges were also accompanied by purges in other areas. Khomeini's anti-intellectualism was clearly evident in his March 21, 1980 radio broadcast which stated "professors who are in contact with the

soon as possible and it achieved this goal in a year and a half" (Ghaffarian 1). However, in this same interview, Soroush revealed that 900 professors had been purged, and others beaten in the name of religion. Soroush's protestations also stand at odds with remarks he made shortly after the revolution. A July 19, 1980 New York Times article quotes Soroush as saying "'the student committees are our arms inside the universities. If they have good evidence of SAVAK links against someone, he goes like that.' He snaps his fingers" (Kotch).

Unlike the military purges, harassment of scholars remains an ongoing threat. As recently as July 17, 2007, the *New York Times* reported on the televised "confessions" of Haleh Esfandiari, a scholar at the Washington-based Woodrow Wilson International Center, and Kian Tajbakhsh, an urban planner with ties to the Open Society Institute financed by George Soros. Like Ramin Jahanbegloo, an Iranian-Canadian scholar arrested last year, Esfandiari and Tajbakhsh were charged with espionage. The ongoing harassment

OBLITERATION OF INDIVIDUALITY

Arendt views a true totalitarian state as one that completely obliterates the individuality of persons living under the regime. She claims that "the preparation of living corpses" is brought about through "the murder of the moral person in man. This is done in the main by making martyrdom for the first time in history impossible" (Arendt, *Origins* 451). Given that the Iranian state encouraged martyrdom, Arendt's analysis seemingly precludes the conclusion that Iran was a totalitarian state. However, a closer reading of Arendt is required: Arendt defines martyrdom as a way to achieve individuality through opposition to the state. Arendt clarifies this further in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, saying,

It belongs among the refinements of totalitarian governments ... that they don't permit their opponents to die a great, dramatic, martyr's death for their convictions. A good many of us might

completely achieved in Iran. The International Crisis Report (ICR) of October 15, 2003 describes a "stiffening deadlock between conservatives and reformists. Various opposition voices exist within Iran including intellectual and clerical dissidents such as Grand Ayatollah Montazeri and Mohsen Kadivar. But all must operate under the threat of arrest and other intimidation." Although attempts to squelch opposition remain meaningful, the level of oppression does not seem to rise to the "murder of the moral person." In describing the disarray and discontent in Iran, the ICR cites a large protest in 2003 of approximately 10,000 persons during which

protestors chanted slogans calling for, among other things, 'freedom' and 'referendum'—an increasingly popular battle cry among young protestors which implies a popular vote on whether to change the regime. More radical protestors cried disparaging remarks

against Supreme leader Khomeini as well as the late Ayatollah Khomeini that were once unthinkable in a public place (ICR 5).

Once again, given the lack of total mass control over dissent, one senses that while Arendt may have characterized the Iranian state of the late 1970s and early 1980s as totalitarian, she might be more likely to characterize the present regime as a tyranny with totalitarian ambitions rather than a complete totalitarian state.

KILLING THE JURIDICAL PERSON IN MAN

In addition to murdering the moral person, Arendt maintains that the aim of the totalitarian state, ... is to kill the juridical person in man.

This was done, on one hand by putting certain categories of people outside the protection of the law, and forcing at the same time, through the instrument of denationalization, the non-totalitarian world into recognition of lawlessness. (Arendt, *Origins* 447)

Such denationalization strips the individual of the rights granted by the state, leaving them in a literal no-man's land. Khomeini's creation of a purely Islamic state achieves this end because it has the effect of de-nationalizing both non-Muslims and non-observant Muslims. The most crucial aspect of the fourteen general principles in the Iranian constitution is the *a priori* definition of the Iranian political system as a specifically Islamic republic. The associated Bill of Rights "is generous on individual freedoms, except that all actions deemed anti-Islamic were automatically banned" (Wright 73). While it can be argued that a ban of all anti-Islamic activities does not put a significant number of people outside the law in a state where the majority are Muslim, it should be noted that during the Iranian Cultural Revolution, even devout Shi'ites commonly ran the risk of being outside the law because they were not sufficiently observant. Similarly, putting women outside the law through religious sanctions achieves the same end.

CONCLUSION

Although the factors leading one to characterize Iran as a true totalitarian state appear to shift over time, they never have completely vanished. While the creation of both internal and external instability has become

more muted than in the years immediately after the revolution, such instability enjoys an unfortunate revival under the current conservative regime. Arendt would no doubt concur that the creation of a purely Islamic theocracy has the effect of "denationalizing" non-Islamic citizens and putting them outside the law, thus satisfying her criteria of "killing the juridical in man." However, recent demonstrations against the present regime suggest that "the murder of the moral person in man" remains incomplete. Such positive signs suggest that a totalitarian regime is not inevitable and the struggle of some within Iran against oppressive leadership continues.

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THE HERO: A PERSONAL SKETCH ¹

BY BLAIR BEEBE

The fire truck sped down to the far end of the runway. Ten seconds later the telephone rang in the small hospital at the U.S. Naval Air Station, Guam. The squadron executive officer, better known as the XO, was calling to alert us that an incoming aircraft had an injured air crewman on board and would land in ten minutes. A hospital corpsman jumped into the seat behind the wheel of our ambulance, and I climbed in next to him. We headed for the runway.

Our ambulance served as a rolling hospital and looked like a big grey box on wheels. A person six-feet-tall could almost stand, but not quite. We could breathe for a patient using a bag and mask, and we could even place a tube in the trachea to create an airway. The ambulance carried an EKG monitor and cardiac defibrillator, and we could give intravenous fluids and administer the same drugs available in a well-stocked emergency department.

I began to imagine the possibilities that we might encounter with the injured air crewman. The hospital corpsman on duty who took the phone call was certain that the XO had said "injured," and not "sick." An occasional air crewman flying out of bases in Vietnam had come in with malaria, dysentery, or typhus, but they were sick, not injured or wounded. Guam was two thousand miles from Vietnam, so why didn't the pilot do an emergency landing earlier—in the Philippines for instance? My squadron's planes had been flying over North Vietnam, but after a mission, they usually landed on the carrier or "in-country." They rarely flew all the way back to Guam, and they would never chance a three-hour flight with a seriously injured crewman. He must have been injured during the last half of the flight, or else the pilot would have turned back. And, what kind of injury would have caused the pilot to alert the station before landing? That alone indicated something serious.

I was a flight surgeon, and for the past few months, I had been attached to VAP-61, a squadron of carrier planes with support facilities on Guam. Almost all of the students in my medical school graduating class two years before had received draft notices to serve in the military during the Vietnam War. After one year of internship at a hospital in Philadelphia, I opted to volunteer for the School of Aviation Medicine in Pensacola, Florida to receive six months' special medical training, and at the same time to undergo basic flight training in the Navy's flight school. The Navy had been launching high-performance jets from carriers for only a few years, and the training program for my generation of flight surgeons was designed to help us learn as much as possible about the hazards that aircrews faced as a kind of laboratory for the new specialty of aviation medicine.

Flight surgeons were not surgeons; the term was part of the salty jargon on which Navy thrived. The flight crews always called me “doc,” never Lieutenant Beebe. We could handle most medical emergencies, do minor surgery, manage some fractures, and perform the one function that the air crews dreaded: we could ground any airmen who we considered unsafe to fly. I worked part of the time on Guam, either at the small naval air station hospital or at the full-service naval hospital ten minutes away, and part of the time I was on deployment on the aircraft carrier USS *Coral Sea* or at air stations in the Philippines and in Vietnam. On this day, I was on duty at the naval air station where I had expected a quiet, uneventful day.

The XO was already standing at the end of the runway next to the fire truck and was talking to the tower on the radio. He was undistracted by my approach, and wore a frown while staring intently at a spot on the ground and listening to the air traffic controller. His khaki uniform was neatly pressed, despite the humid tropical weather, and was ornamented only with the silver oak leaves of a commander and the gold wings of a naval aviator.

“What happened?” I interrupted.

“It’s an A3. A panel on the canopy blew out.”

An A3 was the biggest jet aircraft on a carrier with a large canopy over the cockpit that enclosed its three crewmen. Because of its size, the canopy was constructed of a patchwork of thick Plexiglas panels, one of which must have blown out causing a sudden decompression. Our squadron’s aircraft performed photo and infrared reconnaissance, and they flew some of the most dangerous missions in the Vietnam War, because they had to fly slowly at low altitude between the mountains to get their pictures. The ever-improving North Vietnamese antiaircraft gunners found our big, slow A3s to be easy targets, and we had already lost several aircraft and their crews. A fragment from an antiaircraft burst could have pierced a Plexiglas panel, but this panel blew outward. My thoughts shifted to the types of injuries that might result from a sudden decompression.

The XO finished talking on his radio and turned to me with the details. The A3 had just taken off from Guam and was heading back to the carrier. They were climbing up to their cruising altitude when the panel from the canopy blew out without any apparent cause. One of the crewmen, a photo technician, had just unbuckled his seat belt, and the sudden decompression sucked him outside the cabin. Luckily, one of his boots jammed between the instrument panel and the side of the cabin, trapping him half-inside and half-outside. Airspeed at the time of decompression was about four hundred nautical miles per hour, and the blast of icy air buffeted the upper half of his body against the outside of the aircraft.

“Did he have a parachute?” I asked.

“No parachute. It’s in the seat pan, and he had just unbuckled, so he’d be dead now if his foot hadn’t caught.”

“Are the pilot and navigator all right?”

“Yeh, they were still buckled in. The pilot slowed the aircraft, and the navigator grabbed the photo tech’s leg and pulled him back into the cabin. His flight helmet was gone. Ripped off by the air blast. He’s unconscious, and his face is all swollen. They have an oxygen mask on him. They’re descending now, and the aircraft will be below ten thousand feet soon. They’ll be landing in about five minutes.”

“Ask the tower to find out if the crewman is breathing.”

A minute later the XO responded: “The navigator isn’t sure about his breathing. He started CPR.”

A small aisle separated the seats of the pilot and navigator and extended back to the photo technician’s seat. They were able to stretch out the crewman in the aisle to administer first aid, but I wondered how long it had been since the navigator had attended a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) refresher course. Flight crewmen often postponed attending classes; they never knew from one day to the next where they would land. Sometimes it was back on the ship, sometimes at Da Nang or Bien Hoa in Vietnam, sometimes at Cubi Point in the Philippines, and sometimes all the way back to Guam where the technologically-advanced photo labs were located. Flight operations in the Gulf of Tonkin off Vietnam were complicated for many reasons, but especially for reconnaissance aircraft serving requests from many sources on the ground. The flight crews had plenty on their minds, and often spent hours planning for just a few minutes over a target. Flying at low altitude in the mountains is dangerous even without antiaircraft guns shooting at them.

It sounded like a bad head injury—possibly fatal. I radioed the main naval hospital from the ambulance to warn them that an unconscious crewman was coming in, probably not breathing, and that we had a resuscitation in progress. We would be able to breathe for him temporarily in the ambulance using a bag, but at the hospital, they could take over with a mechanical ventilator in the ICU using equipment that we didn’t have at the small six-bed hospital at the air station.

I had never heard of a blowout of a canopy panel, and my mind wandered back to the accident. I asked XO if he had ever heard of one like this.

“Never.”

The XO had flown more than one hundred fifty combat missions and was a U.S. Naval Academy graduate. A few years later he was to become an admiral. He just stared silently at the approach end of the runway, lost in his own thoughts about the crewman. Several of our friends from the squadron had been killed over North Vietnam, but this accident seemed stupid and unfair after all that the flight crews had been through.

I told the hospital corpsman that we would meet the aircraft on the runway as soon as it stopped rolling. He already knew. He had heard my conversation with the XO and had started checking our equipment in the ambulance. He was just 19 years old, and this was only his third week on “the island,” but he seemed competent. Navy hospital corpsman received excellent training, so he would have attended many first aid classes about the care of an unconscious victim. All navy hospital corpsmen knew the basic “ABCs:” airway, breathing, and circulation.

Meeting all emergency landings was routine for the station firemen, so it was comforting to have extra hands available to help lift the crewman into the ambulance. The landing would be in three minutes, and we all searched the sky at the approach end of the runway. Runways at airports for jets typically extend for almost two miles with an additional mile of clearing at either end to remove obstacles to low flying aircraft. The airport was also wide enough to allow for taxiways, hangars, and parked aircraft. Even though much of Guam was a jungle, the naval air station with all of the

trees removed resembled a desert with a fine layer of coral dust mixed with sand everywhere. The reflected heat and humidity on Guam in the middle of the day was suffocating, especially out in the open on a runway. We were sweating for two reasons: the heat and our fear for the air crewman. No one spoke as the plane touched down.

As the A3 rolled to a stop, the ambulance and fire truck raced over to meet it. We immediately noticed the missing canopy panel on the port side. The navigator lowered the injured crewman through the hatch in the bottom of the fuselage to the hands of the firemen below.

"He's still unconscious!"

"Let's get him into the ambulance quickly!"

Firemen and hospital corpsman snatched the crewman and placed him onto a stretcher in the back of the ambulance. I climbed in to begin a quick examination to establish whether or not he had a pulse and was breathing, but before I could even look at the patient, the doors were slammed shut and the ambulance lurched forward, accelerating rapidly and hurling me against the back doors. With siren screaming and lights flashing, the hospital corpsman driving the ambulance raced toward the naval hospital. I hadn't noticed his growing anxiety as the plane approached, and had not reminded him that we would first examine the crewman to determine whether we needed to continue CPR. If the crewman had not been breathing, I could have safely begun mechanical ventilation en route with a mask and bag. With breathing assured, excessive speed would have been unnecessary. The corpsman had never before participated in a real emergency, so my failure to reassure him and to review with him our priorities during the few minutes before the plane landed was a teachable opportunity lost.

The trip to the hospital from the runway normally takes about eight or ten minutes, but my hospital corpsman behind the wheel was determined to make it in less. We skidded around the several sharp turns in the road, and each time I was thrown from one side of the ambulance to the other. I had anticipated using a small collapsible seat next to the patient's stretcher, but there hadn't been any time to set it up. I used all of my strength to avoid careening against the stretcher or the side of the ambulance. I couldn't maintain my balance enough to even look at the patient and still didn't know whether or not he was breathing. After one sharp turn, I found myself on the floor with the patient on top of me. He probably weighed about 200 pounds, plus his flight gear and boots, and so I was having trouble breathing too. The next sharp turn rolled him back onto the stretcher, and I could breathe again, but I gave up trying to move.

After the longest seven minutes of my life, the ambulance finally screeched to a halt at the entrance to the emergency department. Hands reached into the back of the ambulance, grabbed the patient, and rolled him into the hospital. Dazed, and almost as bruised as the patient, I pulled myself together and staggered after him into the hospital. There, two physicians were standing next to the stretcher talking to the patient—talking to the patient! The patient was awake!

"Good work," proclaimed one of the physicians. "You got him breathing again; he's fully conscious."

I was stupefied! The ride in the ambulance had been awful, and now the patient was not only breathing, but he was conscious—and talking! My fears about his dying or

suffering brain damage evaporated, and an enormous relief poured over me. Apparently, the air crewman had suffered a concussion during the buffeting after the decompression but was now waking-up. His face was swollen and bruised like that of a heavyweight boxer after fifteen rounds, but he looked otherwise unharmed. I tried to explain to the doctors and nurses in the emergency department about the wild ambulance ride, but they showed no interest in me. They were quizzing the crewman.

"Do you remember what happened?"

"No, what am I doing here?"

"Do you remember being in the airplane?"

"Yes, I remember taking off, but I can't remember after that."

"Where were you going?"

"Back to the ship."

They pointed to me. "Do you remember this doctor?"

"Sure, he's our flight surgeon, but I haven't seen him today."

"You stopped breathing, and he's the one who got you started again in the ambulance."

With no amount of persuading could I convince anyone that I had been completely helpless bouncing around in the back of the ambulance, and that the patient had regained consciousness spontaneously. He probably had never stopped breathing in the airplane, but in the scramble of the emergency, the navigator took no chances and started CPR on the unconscious crewman. Certainly the crewman had suffered blows to the head causing a concussion, and the lesser oxygen level at high altitude probably worsened his unconscious state, but most concussion victims wake up eventually. This time, the air crewman just happened to awaken during the ambulance ride, and everyone mistakenly thought my first aid had brought him around.

The corpsman and I were still on duty, and we had to return soon to the air station with our ambulance in case of another emergency. This time I was the driver—a very slow driver and still very shaken. When we arrived, a huge crowd was waiting for us led by the XO. They had already heard by radio that the crewman was alert and talking.

"Here comes the hero!"

"You saved him!"

I was bewildered. "I didn't do anything. I was rolling around in the back of the ambulance like a pinball."

"Listen to that modesty."

"All you did was save his life."

NOTE

¹A chapter in the book *Doctor Tales: Sketches of the Transformation of American Medicine in the Twentieth Century*, Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2008.

NATURE STROLL: A WALK THROUGH LIFE WITH THOREAU

by John Devine



In an essay entitled “Walking,” Henry David Thoreau states that he intends “. . . to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society” (Thoreau 225). One naturally wonders how Thoreau could write about walking, such a commonplace activity, to promote the closeness of man’s relationship to nature. But Thoreau’s essay, especially the initial portion that ostensibly concerns walking itself, does not focus on the commonplace mechanics of walking. Quite the contrary, Thoreau uses walking as a metaphor for living. So when he discusses how to take a walk, he also advances his concept of how to live a life. Vital to this concept is what Marcus Aurelius (in the meditation above) cautioned us never to forget—the nature of the world, a person’s nature, and how a person relates to nature. Thoreau feels that people should integrate nature into their lives, i.e., become part-and-parcel with nature in a balanced and harmonic manner. He urges a unique harmony or rhythm that resonates between man and nature.

Thoreau then develops a design for the way people ought to live, urging walking as an indispensable instrument to achieve that design. Thoreau’s descriptions of walking reveal that he intended this physical act to allow people to move from their usual life to a spiritual one. He begins his essay with a discussion of the derivation of the word *saunter*. According to Thoreau, the most probable definition comes from the middle ages, when people roved about the country, and begged alms for the purpose or pretense of going *à la Sainte Terre* (i.e., to the Holy Land) (Thoreau 225). By alluding to the saunterer, as opposed to the walker, Thoreau introduces more meaning to the physical act of walking. A saunterer walks purposefully, not mindlessly. Moreover, the saunterer participates in a spiritual journey. As Thoreau notes, “They who never go to the Holy Land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds; but they who do go there are saunterers in the good sense such as I mean”

Don't ever forget these things:

The nature of the world.

My nature.

How I relate to the world.

What proportion of it I make up.

That you are part of nature, and no one can prevent you from speaking and acting in harmony with it, always.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

(Thoreau 225). Thoreau, who rarely left the vicinity of Concord in Massachusetts, certainly did not mean an actual trip to the Holy Land, but rather a figurative journey to a spiritual place. To this end, Thoreau observes, “It is true, we are but faint-hearted crusaders, even the walkers, nowadays, who undertake no persevering, never-ending enterprises” (Thoreau 225). Walking then is not just a simple physical perambulation from one place to another, but a means whereby people might spiritually and ceaselessly transport themselves from one place to another and then another. Consequently, to the modern crusaders, walking permits a continual spiritual trek.

For Thoreau and his crusaders, the physical act of walking must not be thought of as coterminous with the spiritual aspects that walking might provide. The utility of walking lies not in exercise, but in the ability to transport the whole self, both physically and mentally and spiritually, to a new place. “If you would get exercise, go in the search of the springs of life” (Thoreau 228). Thoreau lamented, “I am alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit” (Thoreau 229). Walking *qua* walking is only relevant for him to the extent that it provides pathways for a mental or spiritual journey.

Thoreau’s exhortation to others to avail themselves of the pathways of a spiritual journey, along with his references to the crusader and the Holy Land, are revealing because, in so many ways, he lived in a manner similar to an ascetic monk from the middle ages. In the twelfth century, the monks in the Cistercian religious orders actively sought out the most ascetic circumstances, including voluntary vows of poverty and chastity. Significantly, this occurred at an epoch in history when people were innately ascetic. So a Cistercian monk existed under the harsh circumstances of the times, harsher still for following the Rules of Saint Benedict, and harshest of all, as a member of a

Cistercian monastery. “All of the monk’s activities, including his literary activity, can have no motivation other than spiritual, and spiritual motives [were] always called upon to justify all his actions” (LeClercq 24). In the same way, Thoreau, who voluntarily assumed a life of indigence and continence, repeatedly alludes to the spiritual motives for his activities, particularly those related to walking. Thoreau urges people to change their lives by abandoning their earthly ties and seeking mystical ones, as in a religious conversion. “If you are ready to leave your father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again,—if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man, then you are ready for a walk” (Thoreau 226).¹ This reflects the Gospel of Saint Luke, where Jesus said to the multitudes,

If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple . . . So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. (Gospel of Saint Luke 14:25-33)

This sets forth the condition of discipleship. Thoreau uses similar words to define the conditions for his own call to the discipleship of walking, and therefore, a discipleship to living. But a discipleship to walking must not be conflated with religion. For Thoreau, the discipleship of walking is “. . . a sort of fourth estate, outside of Church and State and People” (Thoreau 226).

As he undoubtedly realizes, exhorting others to undertake a similar spiritual journey, through a constant encounter with nature, necessarily requires different motivations. To those that do not walk at all, he sardonically credits them for not ending their own lives.

When sometimes I am reminded that the mechanics and shopkeepers stay in their

shops not only all the forenoon, but all the afternoon too, sitting with crossed legs, so many of them,—as if legs were made to sit upon, and not to stand or walk upon,—I think that they deserve some credit for not having all committed suicide long ago. (Thoreau 227)

To those that walk only intermittently, he uncharitably alluded to the waning energy of the elderly.

As a man grows older, his ability to sit still and follow in-door occupations increases. He grows vespertinal in his habits as the evening of life approaches, till at last he comes forth only just before sundown, and gets all the walk that he requires in half an hour. (Thoreau 228)

While a hostility or unsociability seemingly pervades these remarks,² they reflect his intention “. . . to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society” (Thoreau 225). Accordingly, he is less constrained by civil or social

People can correspondingly obtain sustenance by ruminating as they walk.

Thoreau relays an anecdote about a traveler asking Wordsworth’s servant to show him the poet’s study. The servant replies, “Here is his library, but his study is out of doors” (Thoreau 228). Wordsworth’s own “ruminations” therefore occurred not inside his library, but outside.

As Seamus Heaney once quipped, “Wordsworth at his best, no less than at his worst, is a pedestrian poet,” which wittily alluded to Wordsworth’s mode of composing out of doors while walking (Jarvis 90). Interestingly enough, William Hazlitt remarked that Wordsworth “preferred walking up and down a straight gravel-walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption” (Jarvis 90). Given this latter fact, a question Thoreau asks inevitably arises. “When we walk, we naturally go to the fields and woods: what would become of us, if we walked only in a garden or a mall?” (Thoreau 229) He most probably would lament Wordsworth’s methodical and



THOREAU CONSTANTLY SOUGHT NATURE AS A TEACHER AND COMPANION.

standards, especially when those standards preclude an individual from becoming one with nature. For Thoreau, the importance of life resides in a search for the authenticity of nature. Therefore nature, along with the ability to encounter it, becomes the paramount end for Thoreau, not an amiability toward others.

Since Thoreau is so adamant about the importance of the individual’s encounter with nature, he repeatedly emphasizes the benefits of walking as a means to achieve this. “Moreover, you must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates when walking” (Thoreau 228). Thoreau’s declaration reflects his sense of humor, as he makes a pun on the two primary senses of the word *ruminare*. To ruminate can mean to chew the cud—as any ruminant animal might do—or it can mean to mediate or reflect upon. Thoreau was not alluding to the importance of chewing a cud, but instead was making a humorous play on the word. His humor raises an interesting point—a camel possesses the ability to obtain and digest physical sustenance while actually walking.

uninterruptible walking, primarily because Wordsworth had not encountered more of nature. But recall that for Thoreau walking always served as a means to an end, allowing an integration of the self with nature, and Wordsworth seemingly possessed that integration.

The integration or cohesion of the individual with nature in a balanced manner plays a critical role for Thoreau. He suggests a need for proper balance, most notably when he is living outdoors, which “will no doubt produce a certain roughness of character, will cause a thicker cuticle to grow over some of the finer qualities of our nature” as compared to living indoors, which “may produce a softness and smoothness, not to say thinness of skin” (Thoreau 228). But he suggests striking the appropriate balance as follows:

Perhaps we should be more susceptible to some influences important to our intellectual and moral growth, if the sun had shone and wind blown on us a little less; and no doubt it is a nice matter to proportion rightly the thick and

thin skin. But methinks that is a scurf that will fall off fast enough,—that the natural remedy is to be found in the proportion which the night bears to the day, the winter to the summer, thought to experience. There will be so much the more air and sunshine in our thoughts (Thoreau 228-229).

Thus is the need to seek the influence of nature inexorably guided by the requirement to obtain proportion in one’s life,³ unlike the lives of shopkeepers, “who confine themselves to shop and offices the whole day for weeks and months. . . .” (Thoreau 227) and villagers, who “are wayworn by the travel that goes by and over them, without traveling themselves” (Thoreau 231). Thoreau sought a contemplative and experiential balance in his own life, most visibly by his writing during the mornings and walking in the afternoons, allowing a particular rhythm of composition and perception.

Charles Ives, however, equates Thoreau’s relation to nature as more of a ‘submission,’ to achieve balance,

But his [Thoreau’s] eagerness throws him into the lithe, springy stride of the specie hunter—the naturalist—he is still aware of a restlessness—with these faster steps his rhythm is of shorter span—it is still not the “tempo” of Nature—it does not bear the mood that the genius of the day calls for—(it is too specific)—*its* nature is too external—the introspection too buoyant—and he knows now that he must let Nature flow through *him* and slowly—he releases her more personal desires to her broader rhythm, conscious that this blends more and more with the harmony of her solitude; it tells him that his search for freedom on that day, at least, lies in his submission to her, for Nature is as relentless as she is benignant (Ives 67-8).

Thoreau vigorously exhorts us in his essay “Walking” to go to nature as spiritual and intellectual journeymen seeking the integration and proportion that nature obligingly offers. “There is in fact a sort of harmony discoverable between the capabilities of the landscape within a circle of ten miles’ radius, or the limits of an afternoon walk, and the threescore years and ten of human life” (Thoreau 229-230). This is a harmony that Thoreau so passionately urged others to seek. In

so doing, the hope arises that the true rhythms and harmonies of life can be enjoyed. It is essential, and it is timeless.

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NOTES

¹Thoreau’s words are interestingly compared to those of Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essay “Self-Reliance,” where he stated, in relevant part, “Live no longer to the expectation of these deceived and deceiving people with whom we converse. Say to them, ‘O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth’s. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no law less than the eternal law . . .’” (Emerson 145).

²In Odell Shepard’s essay about walking entitled “The Peaceable Kingdom,” he observed that “Thoreau often showed good sense when he was not striking attitudes and trying to make people gasp” (Zochert 133).

³The need for proportion in life apparently occupied Thoreau’s thoughts for decades. Twenty years before “Walking” in his essay “A Winter Walk,” Thoreau noted, “A healthy man, indeed, is the complement of the seasons, and in winter, summer is in his heart” (Thoreau—*Excursions* 110).

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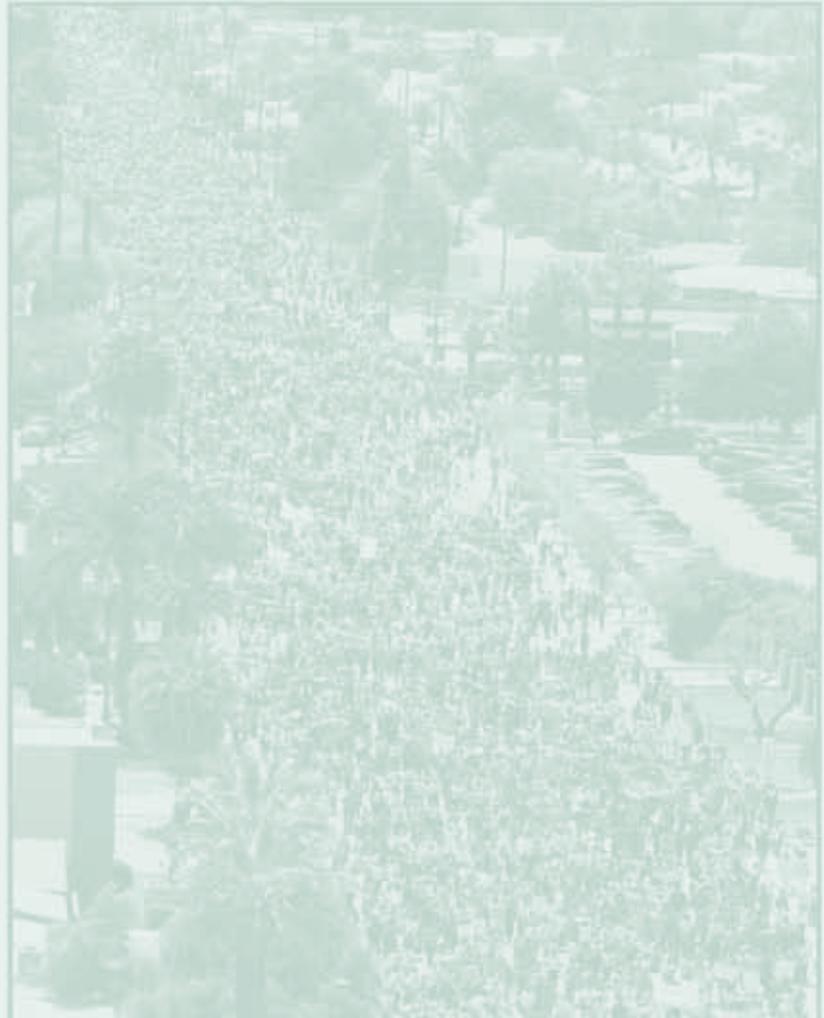
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