**2016**

**201601**

There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On weekends Mr. Gatsby’s Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with scrubbing-brushes and hammer and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before.

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York-every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulp-less halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler’s thumb.

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors-d’oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.

By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived-no thin five-piece affair, but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors and hair shorn in strange new ways, and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile. The bar is in full swing, and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside until the air is alive with chatter and laughter and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names.

The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter is easier, minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out at a cheerful word.

The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same breath-already there are wanderers, confident girls who weave here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a sharp joyous moment the centre of a group, and then, excited with triumph, glide on through the sea-change of faces and voices and color under the constantly changing light.

Suddenly one of the gypsies in trembling opal, seizes a cocktail out of the air, dumps it down for courage and, moving her hands like Frisco, dances out alone on the canvas plat-form. A momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his rhythm obligingly for her, and there is a burst of chatter as the erroneous news goes around that she is Gilda Gray’s understudy from the Follies. The party has begun.

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby’s house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. People were not invited-they went there. They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island, and somehow they ended up at Gatsby’s door. Once there they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby, and after that they conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks.Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission.

I had been actually invited. A chauffeur in a uniform crossed my lawn early that Saturday morning with a surprisingly formal note from his employer-the honor would be entirely Gatsby’s, it said, if I would attend his “little party” that night. He had seen me several times and had intended to call on me long before but a peculiar combination of circumstances had prevented it-signed Jay Gatsby in a majestic hand.

Dressed up in white flannels I went over to his lawn a little after seven and wandered around rather ill-at-ease among swirls and eddies of people I didn't know-though here and there was a face I had noticed on the commuting train. I was immediately struck by the number of young Englishmen dotted about; all well dressed, all looking a little hungry and all talking in low earnest voices to solid and prosperous Americans. I was sure that they were all selling something: bonds or insurance or automobiles. They were, at least, agonizingly aware of the easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for a few words in the right key.

As soon as I arrived I made an attempt to find my host but the two or three people of whom I asked his whereabouts stared at me in such an amazed way and denied so vehemently any knowledge of his movements that I slunk off in the direction of the cocktail table-the only place in the garden where a single man could linger without looking purposeless and alone.

**201602**

The Term “CYBERSPACE” was coined by William Gibson, a science-fiction writer. He first used it in a short story in 1982, and expanded on it a couple of years later in a novel. Neuromancer, whose main character, Henry Dorsett Case, is a troubled computer hacker and drug addict. In the book Mr. Gibson describes cyberspace as “a consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators” and “a graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system.”

His literary creation turned out to be remarkably prescient. Cyberspace has become symbolic of the computing devices, networks, fibre-optic cables, wireless links and other infrastructure that bring the Internet to billions of people around the world. The myriad connections forged by these technologies have brought tremendous benefits to everyone who uses the web to tap into humanity’s collective store of knowledge every day.

But there is a darker side to this extraordinary invention. Data breaches are becoming ever bigger and more common. Last year over 800m records were lost, mainly through such attacks. Among the most prominent recent victims has been Target, whose chief executive, Gregg Steinhafel, stood down from his job in May, a few months after the giant American retailer revealed that online intruders had stolen millions of digital records about its customers, including credit- and debit-card details. Other well-known firms such as Adobe, a tech company, and eBay, an online marketplace, have also been hit.

The potential damage, though, extends well beyond such commercial incursions. Wider concerns have been raised by the revelations about the mass surveillance carried out by Western intelligence agencies made by Edward Snowden, a contractor to America's National Security Agency (NSA), as well as by the growing numbers of cyber-warriors being recruited by countries that see cyberspace as a new domain of warfare. America’s president, Barack Obama, said in a White House press release earlier this year that cyber-threats “pose one of the gravest national-security dangers” the country is facing.

Securing cyberspace is hard because the architecture of the Internet was designed to promote connectivity, not security. Its founders focused on getting it to work and did not worry much about threats because the network was affiliated with America’s military. As hackers turned up, layers of security, from antivirus programs to firewalls, were added to try to keep them at bay. Gartner, a research firm, reckons that last year organizations around the globe spent $67 billion on information security.

On the whole, these defenses have worked reasonably well. For all the talk about the risk of a “cyber 9/11”, the Internet has proved remarkably resilient. Hundreds of millions of people turn on their computers every day and bank online, shop at virtual stores, swap gossip and photos with their friends on social networks and send all kinds of sensitive data over the web without ill effect. Companies and governments are shifting ever more services online.

But the task is becoming harder. Cyber-security, which involves protecting both data and people, is facing multiple threats, notably cybercrime and online industrial espionage,both of which are growing rapidly. A recent estimate by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), puts the annual global cost of digital crime and intellectual-property theft at $445 billion-a sum roughly equivalent to the GDP of a smallish rich European country such as Austria.

To add to the worries, there is also the risk of cyber-sabotage. Terrorists or agents of hostile powers could mount attacks on companies and systems that control vital parts of an economy, including power stations, electrical grids and communications networks. Such attacks are hard to pull off, but not impossible. One precedent is the destruction in 2010 of centrifuges at a nuclear facility in Iran by a computer program known as Stuxnet.

But such events are rare. The biggest day-to-day threats faced by companies and government agencies come from crooks and spooks hoping to steal financial data and trade secrets. For example, smarter, better-organized hackers are making life tougher for the cyber-defenders, but even so a number of things can be done to keep everyone safer than they are now.

One is to ensure that organizations get the basics of cyber-security right. All too often breaches are caused by simple blunders, such as failing to separate systems containing sensitive data from those that do not need access to them. Companies also need to get better at anticipating where attacks may be coming from and at adapting their defenses swiftly in response to new threats. Technology can help, as can industry initiatives that allow firms to share intelligence about risks with each other.

There is also a need to provide incentives to improve cyber-security, be they carrots or sticks. One idea is to encourage internet-service providers, or the companies that manage Internet connections, to shoulder more responsibility for identifying and helping to clean up computers infected with malicious software. Another is to find ways to ensure that software developers produce code with fewer flaws in it so that hackers have fewer security holes to exploit.

An additional reason for getting tech companies to give a higher priority to security is that cyberspace is about to undergo another massive change. Over the next few years billions of new devices, from cars to household appliances and medical equipment, will be fitted with tiny computers that connect them to the web and make them more useful. Dubbed "the internet of things", this is already making it possible, for example, to control home appliances using smartphone apps and to monitor medical devices remotely.

But unless these systems have adequate security protection, the Internet of things could easily become the Internet of new things to be hacked. Plenty of people are eager to take advantage of any weaknesses they may spot. Hacking used to be about geeky college kids tapping away in their bedrooms to annoy their elders. It has grown up with a vengeance.

**201603**

You should treat skeptically the loud cries now coming from colleges and universities that the last bastion of excellence in American education is being destroyed by state budget cuts and mounting costs. Whatever else it is, higher education is not a bastion of excellence. It is shot through with waste, lax academic standards and mediocre teaching and scholarship.

True, the economic pressures-from the Ivy League to state systems-are intense. Last year, nearly two-thirds of schools had to make midyear spending cuts to stay within their budgets. It is also true(as university presidents and deans argue)that relieving those pressures merely by raising tuition and cutting courses will make matters worse. Students will pay more and get less. The university presidents and deans want to be spared from further government budget cuts. Their case is weak.

Higher education is a bloated enterprise. Too many professors do too little teaching to too many ill-prepared students. Costs can be cut and quality improved without reducing the number of graduates. Many colleges and universities should shrink. Some should go out of business. Consider:

Except for elite schools, admission standards are low. About 70 percent of freshmen at four-year colleges and universities attend their first-choice schools. Roughly 20 percent go to their second choices. Most schools have eagerly boosted enrollments to maximize revenues (tuition and state subsidies).

Dropout rates are high. Half or more of freshmen don't get degrees. A recent study of PhD programs at 10 major universities also found high dropout rates for doctoral candidates.

The attrition among undergraduates is particularly surprising because college standards have apparently fallen. One study of seven top schools found widespread grade inflation. In 1963, half of the students in introductory philosophy courses got a B-or worse. By 1986, only 20 percent did. If elite schools have relaxed standards,the practice is almost surely widespread.

Faculty teaching loads have fallen steadily since the 1960s. In major universities, senior faculty members often do less than two hours a day of teaching. Professors are “socialized to publish, teach graduate students and spend as little time teaching(undergraduates) as possible,” concludes James Fairweather of Penn State University in a new study. Faculty pay consistently rises as undergraduate teaching loads drop.

Universities have encouraged an almost mindless explosion of graduate degrees. Since 1960, the number of masters’ degrees awarded annually has risen more than fourfold to 337,000. Between 1965 and 1989, the annual number of MBAs (masters in business administration) jumped from 7,600 to 73, 100.

Even so, our system has strengths. It boasts many top-notch schools and allows almost anyone to go to college. But mediocrity is pervasive. We push as many freshmen as possible through the door, regardless of qualifications. Because bachelors’ degrees are so common, we create more graduate degrees of dubious worth. Does anyone believe the MBA explosion has improved management?

You won’t hear much about this from college deans or university presidents. They created this mess and are its biggest beneficiaries. Large enrollments support large faculties. More graduate students liberate tenured faculty from undergraduate teaching to concentrate on writing and research : the source of status. Richard Huber, a former college dean , writes knowingly in a new book How Professors Play the Cat Guarding the Cream: Why We’re Paying More and Getting Less in Higher Education: Presidents, deans and trustees ... call for more recognition of good teaching with prizes and salary incentives.

The reality is closer to the experience of Harvard University’s distinguished paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould: “To be perfectly honest, though lip service is given to teaching, I have never seriously heard teaching considered in any meeting for promotion ... Writing is the currency of prestige and promotion.”

About four-fifths of all students attend state-subsidized systems, from community colleges to prestige universities. How governors and state legislatures deal with their budget pressures will be decisive. Private schools will, for better or worse, be influenced by state actions. The states need to do three things.

First, create genuine entrance requirements. Today's low standards tell high school students: You don't have to work hard to go to college. States should change the message by raising tuition sharply and coupling the increase with generous scholarships based on merit and income. To get scholarships, students would have to pass meaningful entrance exams. Ideally, the scholarships should be available for use at in-state private schools. All schools would then compete for students on the basis of academic quality and costs. Today's system of general tuition subsidies provides aid to well-to-do families that don't need it or to unqualified students who don't deserve it.

Next, states should raise faculty teaching loads, mainly at four-year schools. (Teaching loads at community colleges are already high.) This would cut costs and reemphasize the primacy of teaching at most schools. What we need are teachers who know their fields and can communicate enthusiasm to students. Not all professors can be path-breaking scholars. The excessive emphasis on scholarship generates many unread books and mediocre articles in academic journals. “You can’t do more of one(research) without less of the other(teaching),” says Fairweather. “People are working hard-it’s just where they’re working.”

Finally, states should reduce or eliminate the least useful graduate programs. Journalism (now dubbed “communications”), business and education are prime candidates. A lot of what they teach can-and should-be learned on the job. If colleges and universities did a better job of teaching undergraduates, there would be less need for graduate degrees.

Our colleges and universities need to provide a better education to deserving students. This may mean smaller enrollments, but given today’s attrition rates, the number of graduates need not drop. Higher education could become a bastion of excellence, if we would only try.

**2017**

**201701**

It’s 7 pm on a balmy Saturday night in June, and I have just ordered my first beer in I Cervejaria, a restaurant in Zambujeira do Mar, one of the prettiest villages on Portugal’s south-west coast. The place is empty, but this doesn't surprise me at all. I have spent two weeks in this area, driving along empty roads, playing with my son on empty beaches, and staying in B&Bs where we are the only guests.

No doubt the restaurant, run by two brothers for the past 28 years, is buzzing in July and August, when Portuguese holiday makers descend on the Alentejo coast. But for the other 10 months of the year, the trickle of diners who come to feast on fantastical fresh seafood reflects the general place of life in the Alentejo: sleepy, bordering on comatose.

One of the poorest, least-developed, least-populated regions in western Europe, the Alentejo has been dubbed both the Provence and the Tuscany of Portugal. Neither is accurate. Its scenery is not as pretty and, apart from in the capital Evora, its food isn't as sophisticated. The charms of this land of wheat fields, cork oak forests, wildflower meadows and tiny white-washed villages, are more subtle than in France or Italy’s poster regions.

To travel here is to step back in time 40 or 50 years. Life rolls along at a treacly pace; there’s an unnerving stillness to the landscape. But that stillness ends abruptly at the Atlantic Ocean, where there is drama in spade. Protected by the South West Alentejo and Costa Vicentina national park, the 100 km of coastline from Porto Covo in the Alentejo to Burgau in the Algarve is the most stunning in Europe. And yet few people seem to know about it. Walkers come to admire the views from the Fisherman’s Way, surfers to ride the best waves in Europe, but day after day we had spectacular beaches to ourselves.

The lack of awareness is partly a matter of accessibility (these beaches are a good two hours’ drive from either Faro or Lisbon airports) and partly to do with a lack of beach side accommodation. There are some gorgeous, independent guesthouses in this area, but they are hidden in valleys or at the end of dirt tracks.

Our base was a beautiful 600-acre estate of uncultivated land covered in rock-rose, eucalyptus and wild flowers 13 km inland from Zambujeira. Our one-bedroom home, Azenha, was once home to the miller who tended the now-restored watermill next to it. A kilometre away from the main house, pool and restaurant, it is gloriously isolated.

Stepping out of the house in the morning to greet our neighbours-wild horses on one side, donkeys on the other-with nothing but birdsong filling the air, I felt a sense of adventure you normally only get with wild camping.

“When people first arrive, they feel a little anxious wondering what they are going to do the whole time.” Sarah Gredley, the English owner of the estate, told me. “But it doesn't usually take them long to realize that the whole point of being here is to slow down, to enjoy nature.”

We followed her advice, walking down to the stream in search of terrapins and otters, or through clusters of cork oak trees. On some days, we tramped uphill to the windmill, now a romantic house for two, for panoramic views across the estate and beyond.

When we ventured out, we were always drawn back to the coast-the gentle sands and shallow bay of Farol beach. At the end of the day, we would head, sandy-footed, to the nearest restaurant, knowing that at every one there would be a cabinet full of fresh seafood to choose from-bass, salmon, lobster, prawns, crabs, goose barnacles, clams... We never ate the same thing twice.

A kilometer or so from I Cervejaria, on Zambujeira’s idyllic natural harbour is O Sacas, originally built to feed the fishermen but now popular with everyone. After eating platefuls of seafood on the terrace, we wandered down to the harbour where two fishermen, in wet suits, were setting out by boat across the clear turquoise water to collect goose barnacles. Other than them the place was deserted-just another empty beauty spot where I wondered for the hundredth time that week how this pristine stretch of coast has remained so undiscovered.

**201702**

I can still remember the faces when I suggested a method of dealing with what most teachers of English considered one of their pet horrors, extended reading. The room was full of tired teachers, and many were quite cynical about the offer to work together to create a new and dynamic approach to the place of stories in the classroom.

They had seen promises come and go and mere words weren't going to convince them, which was a shame as it was mere words that we were principally dealing with. Most teachers were unimpressed by the extended reading challenge from the Ministry, and their lack of enthusiasm for the rather dry list of suggested tales was passed on to their students and everyone was pleased when that part of the syllabus was over. It was simply a box ticking exercise. We needed to do something more. We needed a very different approach.

That was ten years ago. Now we have a different approach, and it works. Here's how it happened (or, like most good stories, here are the main parts. You have to fill in some of yourself employing that underused classroom device, the imagination.) We started with three main precepts:

First, it is important to realize that all of us are storytellers, tellers of tales. We all have our own narratives-the real stories such as what happened to us this morning or night, and the ones we have been told by others and we haven't experienced personally. We could say that our entire lives are constructed as narratives. As a result, we all understand and instinctively feel narrative structure. Binary opposites-for example, the tension created between good and bad together with the resolution of that tension through the intervention of time, resourcefulness and virtue-is a concept understood by even the youngest children. Professor Kieran Egan, in his seminal book “Teaching as Storytelling” warns us not to ignore this innate skill , for it is a remarkable tool for learning.

We need to understand that writing and reading are two sides of the same coin: an author has not completed the task if the book is not read: the creative circle is not complete without the reader, who will supply their own creative input to the process. Samuel Johnson said: A writer only begins a book. A reader finishes it. In teaching terms, we often forget that reading itself can be a creative process, just as writing is, and we too often relegate it to a means of data collection. We frequently forget to make that distinction when presenting narratives or poetry, and often ask comprehension questions which relate to factual information-who said what and when, rather than speculating on “why”, for example, or examining the context of the action.

The third part of the reasoning that we adopted relates to the need to engage the students as readers in their own right, not simply as language learners; learning the language is part of the process, not the reason for reading. What they read must become theirs and have its own special and secret life in their heads, a place where teachers can only go if invited.

We quickly found that one of the most important ways of making all the foregoing happen was to engage the creative talents of the class before they read a word of the text. The pre-reading activities become the most important part of the teaching process; the actual reading part can almost be seen as the cream on the cake, and the principal aim of pre-reading activities is to get students to want to read the text. We developed a series of activities which use clues or fragments from the text yet to be read , and which rely on the students innate knowledge of narrative, so that they can build their own stories before they read the key text. They have enough information to generate ideas but not so much that it becomes simply an exercise in guided writing; releasing a free imagination is the objective.

Moving from pre-reading to reading, we may introduce textual intervention activities."Textual Intervention" is a term used by Rob Pope to describe the process of questioning a text not simply as a guide to comprehension but as a way of exploring the context of the story at any one time, and examining points at which the narrative presents choices, points of divergence, or narrative crossroads. We don't do this for all texts, however, as the shorter ones do not seem to gain much from this process and it simply breaks up the reading pleasure.

Follow-up activities are needed, at the least, to round off the activity, to bring some sense of closure but they also offer an opportunity to link the reading experience more directly to the requirements of the syllabus. Indeed, the story may have been chosen in the first place because the context supports one of the themes that teachers are required to examine as part of the syllabus-for example, “families”, “science and technology”, “communications”, “the environment” and all the other familiar themes. For many teachers this is an essential requirement if they are to engage in such extensive reading at all.

The whole process - pre-, while and post reading - could be just an hours activity, or it could last for more than one lesson. When we are designing the materials for exploring stories clearly it isn't possible for us to know how much time any teacher will have available, which is why we construct the activities into a series of independent units which we call kits. They are called kits because we expect teachers to build their own lessons out of the materials we provide, which implies that large amounts maybe discarded. What we do ask, though, is that the pre-reading activities be included, if nothing else. That is essential for the process to engage the student as a creative reader.

One of the purposes of encouraging a creative reading approach in the language classroom is to do with the dynamics we perceive in the classroom. Strategic theorists tell us of the social trinity, where by three elements are required to achieve a dynamic in any social situation. In the language classroom these might be seen as consisting of the student, the teacher and the language. Certainly from the perspective of the student-and usually from the perspective of the teacher-the relationship is an unequal one, with the language being perceived as placed closer to the teacher than the student. This will result in less dynamic between language and student than between language and teacher. However, if we replace" language with narrative and especially if that is approached as a creative process that draws the student in so that they feel they “own” the relationship with the text. Then this will shift the dynamic in the classroom so that the student, who has now become a reader, is much closer to the language-or narrative-than previously. This creates a much more effective dynamic of learning. However, some teachers feel threatened by this apparent loss of overall control and mastery. Indeed, the whole business of open ended creativity and a lack of boxes to tick for the correct answer is quite unsettling territory for some to find themselves in.

**201703**

Once again, see thing, residual anger has burst forth in an American city. And the riots that overtook Los Angeles were a reminder of what knowledgeable observers have been saving for a quarter century: America will continue paying a high price in civil and ethnic unrest unless the nation commits itself to programs that help the urban poor lead productive and respectable lives.

Once again, a proven program is worth pondering: national service.

Somewhat akin to the military training that generations of American males received in the armed forces, a 1990s version would prepare thousands of unemployable and under educated young adults for quality lives in our increasingly global and technology-driven economy. National service opportunities would be available to any who needed it and,make no mistake, the problems are now so structural. so intractable. that any solution will require massive federal intervention.

In his much-quoted book, “The Truly Disadvantaged”, sociologist William Julius Wilson wrote that “only a major program of economic reform” will prevent the riot-prone urban underclass from being permanently locked out of American economic life. Today, we simply have no choice. The enemy within and among our separate ethnic selves is as daunting as any foreign foe.

Families who are rent apart by welfare dependency, job discrimination and intense feelings of alienation have produced minority teenagers with very little self-discipline and little faith that good grades and the American work ethic will pay off. A military-like environment for them with practical domestic objectives could produce startling results.

Military service has been the most successful career training program we’ve ever known, and American children born in the years since the all-volunteer Army was instituted make up a large proportion of this targeted group. But this opportunity may disappear forever if too many of our military bases are summarily closed and converted or sold to the private sector. The facilities, manpower, traditions, and capacity are already in place.

Don’t dismantle it: rechannel it.

Discipline is a corner stone of any responsible citizen’s life. I was taught it by my father, who was a policeman. Man of the rioters have never had any at all. As an athlete and former Army officer, I know that discipline can be learned. More importantly, it must be learned or it doesn't take hold.

A precedent for this approach was the Civilian Conservation Corps that worked so well during the Great Depression. My father enlisted in the CCC as a young man with an elementary school education and he learned invaluable skills that served him well throughout his life. The key was that a job was waiting for him when he finished. The certainty of that first entry-level position is essential if severely alienated young minority men and women are-to keep the faith.

We all know these are difficult times for the public sector, but here’s a chance to add energetic and able manpower to America's workforce. They could be prepared for the world of work or college an offer similar to that made to returning GIS after World War II. It would be a chance for 16-to 21-year-olds to live among other cultures, religions, race sand in different geographical areas. And these young people could be taught to rally around common goals and friendships that evolve out of pride in ones squad, platoon company, battalion-or commander.

We saw such images during the Persian Gulf War and during the NACC Final Four basketball games. In military life and competitive sports, this camaraderie doesn’t just happen; it is taught and learned in an atmosphere of discipline and earned mutual respect for each other's capabilities.

A national service program would also help overcome two damaging perceptions held by Americas disaffected youth: that society Just doesn’t care about minority youngsters and that ones personal best efforts will not be rewarded in our discriminatory job market. Harvard professor Robert Reich’s research has shown that urban social ills are so pervasive that the upper 20 percent of Americans-that “fortunatefifth” as he calls them-have decided quietly to “secede” from the bottom four-fifths, and the lowest fifth in particular. We cannot accept such estrangement on a permanent basis. And what better way to answer skeptics from any group than by certifying the technical skills of graduates from a national service training program?

Now, we must act decisively to forest all future urban unrest. Republicans must put aside their aversion to funding programs aimed at certain cultural groups. Democrats must forget labels and recognize that a geographically isolated subgroup of Americans-their children in particular-need systematic and substantive assistance for at least another 20 years.

The ethnic taproots of minority Americans are deeply buried in a soil of faith and loyalty to traditional values. With its emphasis on discipline, teamwork, conflict resolution, personal responsibility and marketable skills development, national service can provide both the training and that vital first job that will reconnect these Americans to the rest of us. Let's do it now before the fire next time.

**2018**

**201801**

“Britain’s best export,” I was told by the head of the Department of Immigration in Canberra, “is people.” Close on 100, 000 people have applied for assisted passages in the first five months of that year, and half of these are eventually expected to migrate to Australia.

The Australians are delighted. They are keenly aware that without a strong flow of immigrants into the workforce the development of the Australian economy is unlikely to proceed at the ambitious pace currently envisaged. The new mineral discoveries promise a splendid future, and the injection of huge amounts of American and British capital should help to ensure that they are properly exploited, but with unemployment in Australia down to less than 1.3 percent, the government is understandably anxious to attract more skilled labor.

Australia is roughly the same size as the continental United States, but has only twelve million inhabitants. Migration has accounted for half the population increase in the last four years, and has contributed greatly to the country’s impressive economic development. Britain has always been the principal source-ninety percent of Australians are of British descent, and Britain has provided one million migrants since the Second World War.

Australia has also given great attention to recruiting people elsewhere. Australians decided they had an excellent potential source of applicants among the so-called “guest workers” who have crossed their own frontiers to work in other parts of Europe. There were estimated to be more than four million of them. And a large number were offered subsidized passages and guaranteed jobs in Australia. Italy has for some years been the second biggest source of migrants, and the Australians have also managed to attract a large number of Greeks and Germans.

One drawback with them, so far as the Australians are concerned, is that integration tends to be more difficult. Unlike the British, continental migrants have to struggle with an unfamiliar language and new customs. Many naturally gravitate towards the Italian or Greek communities which have grown up in cities such as Sydney and Melbourne. These colonies have their own newspapers, their own shops, and their own clubs. Their inhabitants are not Australians, but Europeans.

The government’s avowed aim, however, is to maintain “a substantially homogeneous society into which newcomers, from whatever sources, will merge themselves”. By and large, therefore, Australia still prefers British migrants, and tends to be rather less selective in their case than it is with others.

A far bigger cause of concern than the growth of national groups, however, is the increasing number of migrants who return to their countries of origin. One reason is that people nowadays tend to be more mobile, and that it is easier than in the past to save the return fare, but economic conditions also have something to do with it. A slower rate of growth invariably produces discontent and if this coincides with greater prosperity in Europe, a lot of people tend to feel that perhaps they were wrong to come here after all.

Several surveys have been conducted recently into the reasons why people go home. One noted that “flies, dirt, and outside lavatories” were on the list of complaints from British immigrants, and added that many people also complained about “the crudity, bad manners, and unfriendliness of the Australians”. Another survey gave climate conditions, homesickness, and “the stark appearance of the Australian countryside” as the main reasons for leaving.

Most British migrants miss council housing, the National Health scheme, and their relatives and former neighbors, Loneliness is a big factor, especially among housewives. The men soon make new friends at work but wives tend to find it much barer to pet used to a different way of life. Many are house bound because of inadequate public transport in most outlying suburbs, and regular correspondence with their old friends at home only serves to increase their discontent. One housewife was quoted recently as saying: “I even find I miss the people I used to hate at home.”

Rents are high, and there are long waiting lists for Housing Commission homes. Sickness can be an expensive business and the climate can be unexpectedly rough. The gap between Australian and British wage packets is no longer bi, and people are generally expected to work harder here than they do at home. Professional men over forty often have difficulty in finding a decent OD. Above all, perhaps, skilled immigrants often find a considerable reluctance to accept their qualifications.

According to the journal Australians Manufacturer, the attitude of many employers and fellow workers is anything but friendly. “we Australians,” it stated in a recent issue, “are just too fond of painting the rosy picture of the big, warm-hearted Aussie. As a matter of fact, we are so busy blowing our own trumpets that we have not got time to be warm-hearted and considerate. Go down ‘heart-break alley’ among some of the migrants and find out just now expansive the Aussie is to his immigrants.”

**201802**

Some of the advantages of bilingualism include better performance at tasks involving “executive function” (which involves the brains ability to plan and prioritize), better defense against dementia in old age and-the obvious-the ability to speak a second language. One purported advantage was not mentioned, though. Many multilinguals report different personalities, or even different worldviews, when they speak their different languages.

It’s an exciting notion, the idea that one’s very self could be broadened by the mastery of two or more languages. In obvious ways (exposure to new friends, literature and so forth) the self really is broadened. Yet it is different to claim-as many people do-to have a different personality when using a different language. A former Economist colleague, for example, reported being ruder in Hebrew than in English. So what is going on here?

Benjamin Lee Whorf, an American linguist who died in 1941, held that each language encodes a worldview that significantly influences its speakers. Often called “Whorfianism”, this idea has its sceptics, but there are still good reasons to believe language shapes thought.

This influence is not necessarily linked to the vocabulary or grammar of a second language. Significantly, most people are not symmetrically bilingual. Many have learned one language at home form parents, and another later in life, usually at school. So bilinguals usually have different strengths and weaknesses in their different languages-and they are not always best in their first language.For example when tested in a foreign language, people are less likely to fall into a cognitive trap (answering a test question with an obvious-seeming but wrong answer) than when tested in their native language. In part this is because working in a second language slows down the thinking. No wonder people feel different when speaking them. And no wonder they feel looser, more spontaneous, Perhaps more assertive or funnier or blunter, in the language they were reared in from childhood.

What of “crib” bilinguals, raised in two languages? Even they do not usually have perfectly symmetrical competence in their two languages. But even for a speaker whose two languages are very nearly the same in ability, there is another big reason that person will feel different in the two languages. This is because there is an important distinction between bilingualism and biculturalism.

Many bilinguals are not bicultural. But some are. And of those bicultural bilinguals, we should be little surprised that they feel different in their two languages. Experiments in psychology have shown the power of “priming”-small unnoticed factors that can affect behavior in big ways. Asking people to tell a happy story. for example, will put them in a better mood. The choice between two languages is a huge prime. Speaking Spanish rather than English, for a bilingual and bicultural Puerto Rican in New York, might conjure feelings of family and home, Switching to English might prime the same person to think of school and work.

So there are two very good reasons (asymmetrical ability, and priming) that make people feel different speaking their different languages, We are still left with a third kind of argument, though. An economist recently interviewed here at Prospero, Athanasia Chalari, said for example that:

Greeks are very loud and they interrupt each other very often. The reason for that is the Greek grammar and syntax. When Greeks talk they begin their sentences with verbs and the form of the verb includes a lot of information so you already know what they are talking about after the first word and can interrupt more easily.

Is there something intrinsic to the Greek language that encourages Greeks to interrupt? People seem to enjoy telling tales about their languages’ inherent properties, and how they influence their speakers. A group of French intellectual worthies once proposed, rather self- flatteringly, that French be the sole legal language of the EU, because of its supposedly unmatchable rigor and precision. Some Germans believe that frequently putting the verb at the end of a sentence makes the language especially logical. But language myths are not always self-flattering: many speakers think their languages are unusually illogical or difficult-witness the plethora of books along the lines of “Only in English do you park on a driveway and drive on a parkway; English must be the craziest language in the world!” We also see some unsurprising overlap with national stereotypes and self-stereotypes: French, rigorous; German, logical; English, playful. Of course.

In this case, Ms Chalari, a scholar, at least proposed a specific and plausible line of causation from grammar to personality: in Greek, the verb comes first, and it carries a lot of information, hence easy interrupting The problem is that many unrelated languages all around the world put the verb at the beginning of sentences. Many languages all around the world are heavily inflected, encoding lots of information in verbs. It would be a striking finding if all of these unrelated languages had speakers more prone to interrupting each other. Welsh. for example, is also both verb-first and about as heavily inflected as Greek, but the Welsh are not known as pushy conversationalists.

**201803**

Once across the river and into the wholesale district, she glanced about her for some likely door which to apply. As she contemplated the wide window and imposing signs, she became conscious of being gazed upon and understood for what she was-a wage-seeker. She had never done this thing before and lacked courage. To avoid conspicuity and a certain indefinable shame she felt at being caught spying about for some place where he might apply for a position, she quickened her steps and assumed an air of indifference supposedly common to one upon an errand. In this way she passed many manufacturing and wholesale houses without once glancing in . At last, after several blocks of walking, she felt that this would not do, and began to look about again, though without relaxing her pace, .A little way on she saw a great door which for some reason attracted her attention was ornamented by small brass sign, and seemed to be the entrance to a vast hive of six or seven floors. “Perhaps,” she thought, “they may want someone” and crossed over to enter, screwing up her courage as she went. When he came within a score of feet of the desired goal. she observed a young gentleman in a grey clerk suit. fumbling is watch- chain and looking out. That he had anything to do with the concern she could not tell, but because he happened to be looking in her direction, her weakening heart misgave her and she hurried by, too overcome with shame to enter in. After several blocks of wiling, in which the uproar of the streets and the novelty of the situation had time to wear away the effect of her first defeat, she again looked about. Over the way stood a great six story structure labeled “Storm and King,” which she viewed with rising hope. It was a wholesale dry goods concern and employed women .She could see them moving about now and then upon the upper floors. This place she decided to enter. no matter what. She crossed over and walked directly toward the entrance. As she did so two men came out and paused in the door. A telegraph messenger in blue dashed past her and up the few steps which graced the entrance and disappeared. Several pedestrians out of the hurrying throng which filled the sidewalks passed about her as she paused, hesitating. She looked helplessly around and then, seeing herself observed, retreated. It was too difficult a task. She cold no to past them.

So severe a defeat told sadly upon her nerves. She could scarcely understand her weakness and yet she could not think of gazing inquiringly about upon the surrounding scene. Her feet carried her mechanically forward, every foot of her progress being a satisfactory portion of a fight which she gladly made. Block after block passed by. Upon street lamps at the various corners she read names such as Madison, Monroe, La Salle, Clark, Dearborn; and still she went, her feet beginning to tire upon the broad stone flagging She was pleased in part that the streets were bright and clean. The morning sun shining down with steadily increasing warmth made the shady side of the streets pleasantly cool. She looked at the blue sky overhead with more realization of its charm than had ever come to her before.

Her cowardice began to trouble her in a way. She turned back along the street she had come, resolving to hunt up Storm and King and enter in. On the way she encountered a great wholesale shoe company, through the broad plate windows of which she saw an enclosed executive department, hidden by frosted glass. Without this enclosure, but just within the street entrance, sat a grey-haired gentleman at a small table, with a large open ledger of some kind before him. She walked by this institution several times hesitating, but finding herself unobserved she eventually gathered sufficient courage to falter past the screen door and stood humbly waiting.

“Well, young lady,” observed the old gentleman, looking at her somewhat kindly-- “what is it you wish?”

“I am, that is, do you-I mean, do you need any help?” she stammered.

“Not just at present,” he answered smiling. “Not just at present. Come in sometime next week. Occasionally we need someone.”

She received the answer in silence and backed awkwardly out. The pleasant nature of her reception rather astonished her. She had expected that it would be more difficult, that something cold and harsh would be said-she knew not what. That she had not been put to shame and made to feel her unfortunate position seemed remarkable. She did not realize that it was just this which made her experience easy, but the result was the same. She felt greatly relieved.

Some what encouraged, she ventured into another large structure. It was a clothing company, and more people were in evidence.

An office boy approached her.

“Who is it you wish to see?” he asked.

“I want to see the manager, ” she returned.

He ran away and spoke to one of a group of three men who were conferring together. One broke off and came towards her.

“Well?” he said, coldly. The greeting drove all courage from her at once.

“Do you need any help?” she stammered.

“No,” he replied abruptly and turned upon his heel.

She went foolishly out, the office boy deferentially swinging the door for her, and gladly sank into the obscuring crowd. It was a severe set-back to her recently pleased mental state.

**2019**

**201901**

When it came to concealing his troubles, Tommy Wilhelm was not less capable than the next fellow. So at least he thought, and there was a certain amount of evidence to back him up. He had once been an actor-no,not quite, an extra-and he knew what acting should be.Also, he was smoking a cigar, and when a man is smoking a cigar, wearing a hat, he has an advantage; it is harder to find out how he feels. He came from the twenty-third floor down to the lobby on the mezzanine to collect his mail before breakfast, and he believed-he hoped-that he looked passably well: doing all right. It was a matter of sheer hope, because there was not much that he could add to his present effort. On the fourteenth floor he looked for his father to enter the elevator, they often met at this hour, on the way to breakfast. If he worried about his appearance it was mainly for his old father’s sake. But there was no stop on the fourteenth, and the elevator sank and sank. Then the smooth door opened and the great dark-red uneven carpet that covered the lobby billowed toward Wilhelm’s feet. In the foreground the lobby was dark, sleepy. French drapes like sails kept out the sun, but three high, narrow windows were open, and in the blue air Wilhelm saw a pigeon about to light on the great chain that supported the marquee of the movie house directly underneath the lobby. For one moment he heard the wings beating strongly.

Most of the guests at the Hotel Gloriana were past the age of retirement. Along Broadway in the Seventies, Eighties, and Nineties, a great part of New York’s vast population of old men and women lives. Unless the weather is too cold or wet they fill the benches about the tiny railed parks and along the subway gratings from Verdi Square to Columbia University, they crowd the shops and cafeterias, the dime stores, the tearooms, the bakeries, the beauty parlors, the reading rooms and club rooms. Among these old people at the Gloriana, Wilhelm felt out of place. He was comparatively young, in his middle forties, large and blond, with big shoulders; his back was heavy and strong, if already a little stooped or thickened. After breakfast the old guests sat down on the green leather armchairs and sofas in the lobby and began to gossip and look into the papers; they had nothing to do but wait out the day. But Wilhelm was used to an active life and liked to go out energetically in the morning. And for several months, because he had no position, he had kept up his morale by rising early; he was shaved and in the lobby by eight o'clock. He bought the paper and some cigars and drank a Coca-Cola or two before he went in to breakfast with his father. After breakfast-out,out, out to attend to business. The getting out had in itself become the chief business. But he had realized that he could not keep this up much longer, and today he was afraid. He was aware that his routine was about to break up and he sensed that a huge trouble long presaged but till now formless was due. Before evening, he’d know.

Nevertheless he followed his daily course and crossed the lobby.

Rubin, the man at the newsstand, had poor eyes. They may not have been actually weak but they were poor in expression, with lacy lids that furled down at the corners. He dressed well. It didn't seem necessary- he was behind the counter most of the time-but he dressed very well. He had on a rich brown suit; the cuffs embarrassed the hairs on his small hands. He wore a Countess Mara painted necktie. As Wilhelm approached, Rubin did not see him; he was looking out dreamily at the Hotel Ansonia, which was visible from his corner, several blocks away. The Ansonia, the neighborhood's great landmark, was built by Stanford White. It looks like a baroque palace from Prague or Munich enlarged a hundred times, with towers, domes, huge swells and bubbles of metal gone green from exposure, iron fretwork and festoons. Black television antennae are densely planted on its round summits. Under the changes of weather it may look like marble or like sea water, black as slate in the fog, white as tufa in sunlight. This morning it looked like the image of itself reflected in deep water, white and cumulous above, with cavernous distortions underneath. Together, the two men gazed at it.

Then Rubin said, “Your dad is in to breakfast already, the old gentleman.”

“Oh,yes? Ahead of me today?”

“That’s a real knocked-out shirt you got on,” said Rubin. “Where’s it from, Saks?”

“No, it’s a Jack Fagman - Chicago.”

Even when his spirits were low, Wilhelm could still wrinkle his forehead in a pleasing way. Some of the slow, silent movements of his face were very attractive. He went back a step, as if to stand away from himself and get a better look at his shirt. His glance was comic, a comment upon his untidiness. He liked to wear good clothes, but once he had put it on each article appeared to go its own way.Wilhelm,laughing, panted a little; his teeth were small; his cheeks when he laughed and puffed grew round, and he looked much younger than his years. In the old days when he was a college freshman and wore a beanie on his large blonde head his father used to say that, big as he was, he could charm a bird out of a tree. Wilhelm had great charm still.

“I like this dove-gray color,” he said in his sociable, good-natured way. “It isn’t washable. You have to send it to the cleaner. It never smells as good as washed. But it’s a nice shirt. It cost sixteen, eighteen bucks.”

**201902**

By the 1840s New York was the leading commercial city of the United States. It had long since outpaced Philadelphia as the largest city in the country, and even though Boston continued to be venerated as the cultural capital of the nation, its image had become somewhat languid; it had not kept up with the implications of the newly industrialized economy, of a diversified ethnic population, or of the rapidly rising middle class. New York was the place where the “new” America was coming into being, so it is hardly surprising that the modern newspaper had its birth there.

The penny paper had found its first success in New York. By the mid-1830s Ben Day’s Sun was drawing readers from all walks of life. On the other hand, the Sun was a skimpy sheet providing little more than minor diversions; few today would call it a newspaper at all. Day himself was an editor of limited vision, and he did not possess the ability or the imagination to climb the slopes to loftier heights. If real newspapers were to emerge from the public’s demand for more and better coverage, it would have to come from a youthful generation of editors for whom journalism was a totally absorbing profession, an exacting vocational ideal rather than a mere offshoot of job printing.

By the 1840s two giants burst into the field, editors who would revolutionize journalism, would bring the newspaper into the modern age, and show how it could be influential in the national life. These two giants, neither of whom has been treated kindly by history, were James Gordon Bennett and Horace Greeley. Bennett founded his New York Herald in 1835, less than two years after the appearance of the Sun. Horace Greeley founded his Tribune in 1841. Bennett and Greeley were the most innovative editors in New York until after the Civil War. Their newspapers were the leading American papers of the day, although for completely different reasons. The two men despised each other, although not in the ways that newspaper editors had despised one another a few years before Neither was a political hack bonded to a political party. Greeley fancied himself a public intellectual. He had strong political views, and he wanted to run for office himself, but party factotum he could never be; he bristled with ideals and causes of his own devising. Officially he was a Whig (and later a Republican), *but he seldom gave comfort to his chosen party*. Bennett, on the other hand, had long since cut his political ties, and although his paper covered local and national politics fully and he went after politicians with hammer and tongs, Bennett was a cynic, a distruster of all settled values. He did not regard himself as an intellectual, although in fact he was better educated than Greeley. He thought himself only a hard-boiled newspaper man. Greeley was interested in ideas and in what was happening to the country. Bennett was only interested in his newspaper. He wanted to find out what the news was, what people wanted to read. And when he found out he gave it to them.

As different as Bennett and Greeley were from each other they were also curiously alike. Both stood outside the circle of polite society, even when they became prosperous, and in Bennett’s case, wealthy. Both were incurable eccentrics. Neither was a gentleman. Neither conjured up the picture of a successful editor. Greeley was unkempt, always looking like an unmade bed Even when he was nationally famous in the 1850s he resembled a clerk in a third-rate brokerage house, with slips of paper--marked-up proofs perhaps- -hanging out of his pockets or stuck in his hat. He became fat, was always nearsighted , always peering over spectacles. He spoke in a high-pitched whine. Not a few people suggested that he looked exactly like the illustrations of Charles Dickens’s Mr. Pickwick. Greeley provided a humorous description of himself, written under the pretense that it had been the work of his long -time adversary James Fenimore Cooper. The editor was, according to the description, a half-bald, long-legged, slouching individual “so rocking in gait that he walks down both sides of the street at once.”

The appearance of Bennett was somewhat different but hardly more reassuring. A shrewd, wiry Scotsman, who seemed to repel intimacy, Bennett looked around at the world with a squinty glare of suspicion. His eyes did not focus right. They seemed to fix themselves on nothing and everything at the same time. He was as solitary as an oyster, the classic loner. He seldom made close friendships and few people trusted him, although nobody who had dealings with him, however brief, doubted his abilities. He, too, could have come out of a book of Dickensian eccentrics , although perhaps Ebenezer Scrooge or Thomas Gradgrind comes to mind rather than the kindly old Mr. Pickwick .Greeley was laughed at but admired ; Bennett was seldom laughed at but never admired; on the other hand, he had a hard professional competence and an encyclopedic knowledge of his adopted country, an in-depth learning uncorrupted by vague idealisms. All of this perfectly suited him for the journalism of this confusing age.

Both Greeley and Bennett had served long, humiliating and disappointing apprenticeships in the newspaper business. They took a long time getting to the top, the only reward for the long years of waiting being that when they had their own newspapers, both knew what they wanted and firmly set about getting it. When Greeley founded the Tribune in 1841 he had the strong support of the Whig party and had already had a short period of modest success as an editor. Bennett, older by sixteen years, found solid commercial success first, but he had no one behind him except himself when he started up the Herald in 1835 in a dingy cellar room at 20 Wall Street. Fortunately this turned out to be quite enough.

**201903**

Why make a film about Ned Kelly? More ingenious crimes than those committed by the reckless Australian bandit are reported every day. What is there in Ned Kelly to justify dragging the mesmeric Mick Jagger so far into the Australian bush and away from his natural haunts? The answer is that the film makers know we always fall for a bandit, and Jagger is set to do for bold Ned Kelly what Brando once did for the arrogant Emiliano Zapata.

A bandit inhabits a special realm of legend where his deeds are embroidered by others; where his death rather than his life is considered beyond belief; where the men who bring him to “justice” are afflicted with doubts about their role.

The bandits had a role to play as definite as that of the authorities who condemned them. These were men in conflict with authority, and, in the absence of strong law or the idea of loyal opposition, they took to the hills. Even there, however, many of them obeyed certain unwritten rules.

These robbers, who *claimed* to be something more than mere thieves, had in common, firstly, a sense of *loyalty* and identity with the peasants they came from. They didn’t steal the peasant's harvest, they did steal the lord’s.

And certain characteristics seem to apply to “social bandits” whether they were in Sicily or Peru. They were generally young men under the age of marriage, predictably the best age for dissidence. Some were simply the surplus male population who had to look for another source of income; others were run away serfs or ex-soldiers; a minority, though the most interesting, were outstanding men who were unwilling to accept the meek and passive role of peasant.

They usually operated in bands between ten and twenty strong and relied for survival on difficult terrain and bad transport. And bandits prospered best where authority was merely local-over the next hill and they were free. Unlike the general run of peasantry they had a taste for flamboyant dress and gesture; but they usually shared the peasants' religious beliefs and superstitions.

The first sign of a man caught up in the Robin Hood syndrome was when he started out, forced into outlawry as a victim of injustice; and when he then set out to “right wrongs”, first his own and then other people’s. The classic bandit then “takes from the rich and gives to the poor” in conformity with his own sense of social injustice; he never kills except in self- defense or justifiable revenge; he stays within his community and even returns to it if he can to take up an honorable place; his people admire and help to protect him; he dies through the treason of one of them; he behaves as if invisible and invulnerable; he is a“loyalist”, never the enemy of the king but only of the local oppressors.

None of the bandits lived up fully to this image of the “noble robber” and for many the claim of larger motives was often a delusion.

Yet amazingly, many of these violent men did behave at least half the time in accordance with *this idealist pattern*. Pancho Villa in Mexico and Salvatore Giuliano in Italy began their careers harshly victimized. Many of their charitable acts later became legends.

Far from being defeated in death, bandits’ reputation for invincibility was often strengthened by the manner of their dying. The “dirty little coward” who shot Jesse James in the back is in every ballad about him, and the implication is that nothing else could have brought Jesse down. Even when the police claimed the credit, as they tried to do at first with Giuliano’s death, the local people refused to believe it. And not just the bandit's vitality prompts the people to refuse to believe that their hero has died; his death would be in some way the death of hope.

For the traditional “noble robber” represents an extremely primitive form of social protest, perhaps the most primitive there is. He is an individual who refuses to bend his back, that is all. Most protesters will eventually be bought over and persuaded to come to terms with the official power. That is why the few who do not, or who are believed to have remained uncontaminated, have so great and passionate a burden of admiration and longing laid upon them. They cannot abolish oppression. But they do prove that justice is possible, that poor men need not be humble, helpless and meek.

The bandit in the real world is rooted in peasant society and when its simple agricultural system is left behind so is he. But the tales and legends, the books and films continue to appear for an audience that is neither peasant nor bandit. In some ways the characters and deeds of the great bandits could so readily be the stuff of grand opera-Don Jose in “Carmen” is based on the Andalusian bandit El Empranillo. But they are perhaps more at home in folk songs, in popular tales and the ritual dramas of films. When we sit in the darkness of the cinema to watch the bold deeds of Ned Kelly we are caught up in admiration for their strong individuality, their simple gesture of protest, their passion for justice and their confidence that they cannot be beaten. This sustains us nearly as much as it did the almost hopeless people from whom they sprang.

**2021**

**202101**

The gorilla is something of a paradox in the African scene. One thinks one knows him well. For a hundred years or more he has been killed, captured and imprisoned in zoos. His bones have been mounted in natural history museums everywhere, and he has always exerted a strong fascination upon scientists and romantics alike. He is the stereotyped monster of the horror films and the adventure books, and an obvious (though not perhaps strictly scientific) link with our ancestral past.

Yet the fact is we know very little about gorillas. No really satisfactory photograph has ever been taken of one in a wild state; no zoologist, however intrepid, has been able to keep the animal under close and constant observation in the dark jungles in which it lives. Carl Akeley, the American naturalist, led two expeditions to Uganda in the 1920s and now lies buried there among the animals he loved so well; but even he was unable to discover how long the gorilla lives, or how or why it dies, nor was he able to define the exact social pattern of the family groups, or indicate the final extent of their intelligence. All this and many other things remain almost as much a mystery as they were when the French explorer Du Chaillu first described the animal to the civilized world a century ago. The Abominable Snowman who haunts the imagination of climbers in the Himalayas is hardly more elusive.

The little that is known about gorillas certainly makes you want to know more. Sir Julian Huxley has recorded that thrice in the London Zoo he saw an eighteen-month-old specimen trace the outline of its own shadow with its finger. “No similar artistic initiative,” he writes, “has been recorded for any other anthropoid, though we all know now that young chimpanzees will paint ‘pictures’ if provided with the necessary materials.” Huxley speaks too of a traveler seeing a male gorilla help a female up a steep rock step, and gallantry of that kind is certainly not normal among animals. It is this “humanness” of the gorilla that is so beguiling. According to some observers he courts and makes love the same way as humans do. Once the family is established it clings together. It feeds in a group in the thick bamboo jungles on the mountainside in the daytime, each animal making a tidy pile of its food-wild celery, bamboo shoots, and other leaves - and squatting down to eat it; and by night each member of the family makes its own bed by bending over and interlacing the bamboo fronds so as to form a kind of oval-shaped nest which is as comfortable and springy as a mattress. The father tends to make his bed just a foot or two from the ground, the mother a little higher, and the children are safely lodged in the branches up above.

When he walks the gorilla takes the main weight on his short legs and rests lightly on the knuckles of his hands at the end of his very long arms. When he stands upright a full-grown male rises to six feet, but with that immense chest he is far heavier than any normal man could ever be. Six hundred pounds is not uncommon. His strength is incredible-certainly great enough to take a man in his arms and wrench his head off.

Gorillas appear to talk to one another in high-pitched voices, not unlike those of women, or by smacking their lips or striking their cheeks, and the female, if alarmed, will scream. The male is capable of making a frightening demonstration in the face of danger. He stays behind while his family gets away, rising to his feet and uttering a terrifying roar. Sometimes he will drum on his chest and shake the trees around him with every appearance of uncontrollable fury. In extremity he will charge.

But all this is no more than shadow boxing as a general rule, for the gorilla is a gentle, kindly creature, a most forgiving ape who lives at peace with all the other animals, and his reputation for savagery and belligerence is nothing but a myth. When the animal charges, the thing to do is to stand your ground and look him in the eye. Then he will turn aside and slip away through the undergrowth.

**202102**

In the town there were two mutes, and they were always together. Early every morning they would come out from the house where they lived and walk arm in arm down the street to work . The one who always steered the way was an obese and dreamy Greek. In the summer he would come out wearing a yellow or green polo shirt stuffed sloppily into his trousers in front and hanging loose behind. When it was colder he wore over this a shapeless gray sweater. His face was round and oily, with half-closed eyelids and lips that curved in a gentle, stupid smile. The other mute was tall. His eyes had a quick, intelligent expression. He was always immaculate and very soberly dressed. Every morning the two friends walked silently together until they reached the main street of the town. Then when they came to a certain fruit and candy store they paused for a moment on the sidewalk outside. The Greek, Spiros Antonapoulos, worked for his cousin, who owned this fruit store. His job was to make candies and sweets, uncrate the fruits, and keep the place clean. The thin mute, John Singe, nearly always put his hand on his friend's arm and looked for a second into his face before leaving him. Then after this goodbye Singer crossed the street and walked on alone to the jewelry store where he worked as a silverware engraver. In the late afternoon the friends would meet again. Singer came back to the fruit store and waited until Antonapoulos was ready to go home. The Greek would be lazily unpacking a case of peaches or melons, or perhaps looking at the funny paper in the kitchen behind the store where he cooked. Before their departure Antonapouloes always opened a paper sack he kept hidden during the day on one of the kitchen shelves. Inside were stored various bits of food he had collected-a piece of fruit or samples of candy. Usually before leaving Antonapouloes waddled gently to the gassed case in the front of the store where some meats and cheeses were kept. He glided open the back of the case and his fat hand groped lovingly for some particular dainty inside which he had wanted. Sometimes his cousin who owned the place did not see him. But if he noticed he stared at his cousin with a warning in his tight, pale face. Sadly Antonapoulos would shuffle the morsel from one corner of the case to the other. During these times Singer stood very straight with his hands in his pockets and looked in another direction. He did not like to watch this little scene between the two Greeks. For, except drinking and a certain solitary secret pleasure, Antonapoulos loved to eat more than anything else in the world.

In the dusk the two mutes walked slowly home together. At home Singer was always talking to Antonapoulos. His hands shaped the words in a swift series of designs. His face was eager and his gray green eyes sparkled brightly. With his thin, strong hands he told Antonapoulos all that had happened during the day.

When back at home, Antonapoulos sat back lazily and looked at Singer. It was seldom that he ever moved his hands to speak at all-and then it was to say that he wanted to eat or to sleep or to drink .These three things he always with the same vague, fumbling signs. At night, if he were not too drunk, he would kneel down before his bed and pray awhile Then his plump hands shaped the words Holy Jesus,or God, or Darling Mary, These were the only words Antonapoulos ever said. Singer never knew just how much his friend understood of all the things he told him. But it did not matter.

They shared the upstairs of a small house near the business section of the town. There were two rooms. On the oil stove in the kitchen Antonapoulos cooked all of their meals, There were straight, plain kitchen chairs said for Singer and an overstuffed sofa for Antonapoulos. The bedroom was furnished mainly with a large double bed covered with an eiderdown comforter for the big Greek and a narrow iron cot for Singer.

Dinner always took a long time, because Antonapoulos loved food and he was very slow. After they had eaten, the big Greek would lie beck on his sofa and slowly lick over each one of his teeth with his tongue, either from a certain delicacy or because he did not wish to lose the savor or the meal-while Singer washed the dishes.

Sometimes in the evening the mutes would play chess. Singer had always greatly enjoyed this game, and years before he had tied to teach it to Antonapoulos At first his fiend could not be interested in the reasons for moving the various pieces about on the board.Then Singer began to keep a bottle of something good under the table to be taken out after each lesson The Greek never got on to the erratic movements of the knights and the sweeping mobility of the queens, but he learned to make a few set, opening moves. He preferred the white pieces and would not play if the black men were given him. After the first moves Singer worked out the game by himself while his friend looked on drowsily. If Singer made brilliant attacks on his own men so that in the end the black king was killed, Antonapoulos was always very proud and pleased

The two mutes had no other friends, and except when they worked they were alone together. Each day was very much like any other day, because they were alone so much that nothing ever disturbed them. Once a week they would go to the library for Singer to withdraw a mystery book and on Friday night they attended a movie. Then on payday they always went to the ten-cent photograph shop above the Army and Navy Store so that Antonapoulos could have his picture taken. These were the only places where they made customary visits. There were many parts tn the town that they had never even seen. The town was in the middle of the deep South. The summers were long and the months of winter cold were very few. Nearly always the sky was a glassy, brilliant azure and the sun burned down riotously bright. Then the light, chill rains of November would come, and perhaps later there would be frost and some short months of cold. The winters were changeable, but the summers always were burning hot. The town was a fairly large one. On the main street there were several blocks of two-and three-story shops and business offices. But the largest buildings in the town were the factories, which employed a large percentage of the population. These cotton mills were big and flourishing and most of the workers in the town were very poor. 0ften in the faces along the streets there was the desperate look of hunger and of loneliness. But the two mutes were not lonely at all. At home they were content to eat and drink, and Singer would talk with his hands eagerly to his friend about all that was in his mind. So the years passed in this quiet way until Singer reached the age of thirty-two and had been in the town with Antonapoulos for ten years.

**202103**

Like many historical films,Amadeus is far from a faithful account of what is known about the period and the people that it portrays. Events are exaggerated, condensed and simplified, *and the complexity of real characters is reduced to suit the needs of a dramatic contrast between good and evil*. Such historical liberties are often bemoaned by experts, but few have seemed to mind the wayward story points of Amadeus. This is no doubt partly attributable to the film's high entertainment value: it is an unusually lively and funny historical film. It revels in the boyish humor and high spirits of its main character, the composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), played with jubilant gusto by Tom Hulce. But the film's appeal is also attributable to Mozart's music. The composer's vulgar hijinks serve as a contrast to the transcendent beauty of his music, beautifully performed on the soundtrack by the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Thus,even the most stringent historical purists couldn't help but find something to enjoy in Amadeus.

For all its liberties, the story is actually based on a real rumor that circulated in Vienna in the 1820s. While gravely ill, the rival composer Antonio Salieni (1750-1825) confessed he had murdered Mozart decades earlier by poisoning him. Salieri was suffering from dementia at the time of this confession,and he later withdrew it, but some — including Mozart's widow Constanze —chose to believe the claim. More than 150 years later, the English playwright Peter Shaffer based the story of Amadeus not just on Salieri’s confession but also the idea that Saleri had suffered from a deep and bitter jealousy of Mozart throughout the ten years that they both lived and worked as composers in Vienna. In the fun-loving Mozart,the story goes, Salieri saw a true genius—one who made his own talent and accomplishments appear mediocre—and this drove him on a vendetta that ultimately culminated in murder.

Shaffer’s story makes for great drama, but it is, of course, biased against Salieri. In fact, at the time, Salieri was regarded as the more accomplished musician and composer. From the 1770s through the 1790s, he composed dozens of operas, many of them proving popular and considered innovative. A mark of his prominence was his appointment to the influential post of Kapellmeister, or musical director, to the court of Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II Salieri was also a teacher whose pupils included Ludwig Van Beethoven, Franz Liszt and Franz Schubert. In his private life, he may not have had Mozart's exuberance but nor was he the lonely and celibate man played with such convincing severity by F. Murray Abraham in Amadeus. Salieri was married at the time he knew Mozart, and he fathered no fewer than eight children.

If Salieri had little reason to fear or resent Mozart’s success, there was naturally a degree of rivalry between two men working in the same profession and in the same city. Salieri (born near Verona) and Mozart (born in Salzburg) belonged to separate musical groups, and Italian and German opera fell into and out of favor during this period. The composers were therefore vying for work, including the prestigious post of musical tutor to the Princess of Wurttemberg, which Salieri successfully attained. As composers,they saw their operas' debut side by side, yet there is little evidence of any animosity between them. Mozart did complain in a letter to his father that Joseph II favored Salieri over all other composers, but that observation was an accurate one. Both Mozart and his father suspected that, behind the scenes, Salieri tried to undermine Mozart's success, but these were hardly unusual suspicions in a field so reliant on patronage. In public, fellow composers reported that Mozart and Salieri were friendly with another. Shortly after the premiere of Mozart's The Magic Flute, Salieri attended a performance with Mozart, and applauded warmly and vigorously. Thus, any ill feeling between Mozart and Salieri was borne by the former rather than the latter - contrary to what is strongly depicted in Amadeus- and it stemmed from Salieri’s status and success rather than his perceived mediocrity.

Mozart’s resentments were those of a younger man struggling for position in the world. Although he had talent, he spent many years struggling to find a suitable post or patronage. He and his father travelled widely during his youth, seeking a distinguished appointment but finding mainly low pay and occasionally humiliating circumstances. It was in the period alter 1781, when Mozart defied his father and decided to live and work independently in Vienna that his career nourished. In the space of ten years, he found great success with the operas. *The Abduction from Seraglio (1782), The Marriage of Figaro (1786), Don Giovanni (1787) and The Magic Flute(1791)*. These were composed alongside his piano concertos, symphonies and chamber music, and together with his work as a performer and teacher, his success brought a high income. Mozart's money troubles were the result of excessive spending, and his volatile temperament, rather than any malicious schemes against him. His death, at the age of 35, was not considered suspicious at the time as he had been ill for weeks with a fever. While it is true that he had a commoner's funeral, in 18th-century Vienna this was not unusual for a man of non-aristocratic standing. It certainly was not a mark of his downfall or ignominy, as implied by the film. At his death, Mozart was second in stature only to Salieri as Vienna's most prominent musician and composer.

The drama of *Amadeus* stems not from historical accuracies, but from our contemporary knowledge that Mozart’s music and reputation have survived for centuries-and continued to find new, zesty audiences —while Salieri’s name and work quickly faded. Mozart's secondary status during his own lifetime thus appears unjust and unwarranted, and he is invested with the role of the struggling artist and unappreciated genius. This may be shaky history, but the film has enough laughter, conflict, romance and tragedy to please any opera lover, except perhaps for Salieri himself, who undoubtedly would have told the tale in an altogether different key.

**2022**

**202201**

Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tidewater dog, strong of muscle and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego. Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted dogs, and the dogs they wanted were heavy dogs, with strong muscles by which to toil, and furry coats to protect them from the frost.

Buck lived at a big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. Judge Miller’s place, it was called. It stood back from the road, half hidden among the trees, through which glimpses could be caught of the wide cool veranda that ran around its four sides. The house was approached by gravelled driveways which wound about through wide-spreading lawns and under the interlacing boughs of tall poplars. At the rear things were on even a more spacious scale than at the front. There were great stables, where a dozen grooms and boys held forth, rows of vine-clad servants’ cottages, an endless and orderly array of outhouses, long grape arbors, green pastures, orchards, and berry patches. Then there was the pumping plant for the artesian well, and the big cement tank where Judge Miller's boys took their morning plunge and kept cool in the hot afternoon.

And over this great demesne Buck ruled. Here he was born, and here he had lived the four years of his life. It was true, there were other dogs. There could not but be other dogs on so vast a place, but they did not count. They came and went, resided in the populous kennels, or lived obscurely in the recesses of the house after the fashion of Toots, the Japanese pug, or Ysabel, the Mexican hairless, —strange creatures that rarely put nose out of doors or set foot to ground. On the other hand, there were the fox terriers, a score of them at least, who yelped fearful promises at Toots and Ysabel looking out of the windows at them and protected by a legion of housemaids armed with brooms and mops.

But Buck was neither house-dog nor kennel-dog. The whole realm was his. He plunged into the swimming tank or went hunting with the Judge’s sons; he escorted Mollie and Alice, the Judge’s daughters, on long twilight or early morning rambles;on wintry nights he lay at the Judge’s feet before the roaring library fire; he carried the Judge’s grandsons on his back, or rolled them in the grass, and guarded their footsteps through wild adventures down to the fountain in the stable yard, and even beyond,where the paddocks were, and the berry patches. Among the terriers he stalked imperiously, and Toots and Ysabel he utterly ignored, for he was king, king over all creeping, crawling, flying things of Judge Miller’s place, humans included.

His father, Elmo, a huge St.Berard, had been the Judge’s inseparable companion, and Buck bid fair to follow in the way of his father. He was not so large, he weighed only one hundred and forty pounds, -for his mother, Shep, had been a Scotch shepherd dog. Nevertheless, one hundred and forty pounds, to which was added the dignity that comes of good living and universal respect, enabled him to carry himself in right royal fashion. During the four years since his puppy hood he had lived the life of a sated aristocrat; he had a fine pride in himself, was even a trifle egotistical, as country gentlemen sometimes become because of their insular situation. But he had saved himself by not becoming a mere pampered house-dog. Hunting and kindred outdoor delights had kept down the fat and hardened his muscles;and to him, as to the cold-tubbing races, the love of water had been a tonic and a health preserver.

And this was the manner of Buck in the fall of 1897, when the Klondike strike dragged men from all the world into the frozen North. But Buck did not read the newspapers, and he did not know that Manuel, one of the gardener’s helpers, was an undesirable acquaintance. Manuel had one besetting sin. He loved to play lottery. Also, in his gambling, he had one besetting weakness-faith in a system; and this made his damnation certain. For to play a system requires money, while the wages of a gardener’s helper do not lap over the needs of a wife and numerous progeny.

**202202**

Early this winter, the hundreds of climbers making plans for spring-summit attempts-on Mount Qomolangma suddenly faced a new set of rules. In December , the Nepalese government decreed that it would no longer issue permits to blind, solo, or double-amputee mountaineers for any of its high peaks. Furthermore, all expeditions would have to employ at least one Sherpa and would be forbidden from using helicopters to reach high camps.

The regulations fit a pattern established by Nepal's Ministry of Tourism, which in the past few year:has issued a series of proclamations--climbers must announce plans to set records, trekkers must carry location beacons--that suggest improved management of its high-altitude peaks, Each new declaration generates a rush of international news reports about authorities making strides toward addressing safety at the top of the world. The truth is a lot more complicated.

Mountaineering is big business Industry experts estimate that it generate some $26.5 million in tourism income each year $11 million of that coming from Qomolangma climbers with around alone. The enduring obsession of the Western media with tragic deaths on these far-off snowy peaks has resulted in a lot of free marketing. Nepal's Ministry of Tourism, perhaps concerned that all the morbid tales might drive climbers to Qomolangma’s less used Chinese side, has gained some control of that narrative by broad casting more positive developments through the Nepalese press. But the rules announced to date would do nothing to mitigate the dangers of climbing Qomolangma even if had the resources and conviction to enforce them which it doesn’t.

Making a huge, hugely popular mountain safer is possible. On Alaska’s Denali,full time climbing rangers conduct safety checks of many teams and are mobilized for rescue operations. On Argentina's Aconcagua,rangers patrol all high camps, and until recently, permit fees included the cost of helicopter rescues. Adopting similar policies in Nepal would be a good start.A longer list of true reforms would include ordering all climbers to have previously summited a 7,000-meter peak,requiring non-guides working above Base Camp to take a course at the Khumbu Climbing Center（hundreds have done so since it was founded in 2003), and capping the total number of climbers on the mountain at 500 per season, including support staff. That last policy would both reduce dangerous crowding and help keep the mountain clean.

Unfortunately, these kinds of rules are less likely than ever to be instituted on Qomolangma, owing to the rise of budget guiding companies. Beginning in the early 1990s, Western outfitters established commercial mountaineering on the Nepal side of the peak by attracting clients willing to pay as much as $65,000 to be guided to the summit. That business model dominated for more than two decades, bringing an estimated 9,000 ambitious, and inexperienced.

As in many markets savvy entrepreneurs saw opportunities for disruption. Lower-cost guiding companies, some founded by Westerner sand others by Nepalese, slowly gained attraction by offering Qomolangma climbs for as lite as a third of the going ate among high-end outfitters. Then came 2014, when16 Sherpas died after a serac collapsed onto the Khumbu lcefall. part of the main route from Base Camp to Camp I. In the wake of that tragedy a small group of Sherpas demanded that the Nepalese government establish regulations that would improve working conditions increase pay, boost life-insurance coverage, and provide a funeral stipend. Ultimately, Sherpas received a bit more insurance-the minimum payout was doubled from $5,500 to $11,000-but not much else.

Partly in response to media attention of these events Nepali-owned guiding companies have continued to gain influence and market share on Qomolangma. The shift away from foreign control of the mountain is welcomed by many in the climbing community. Another positive development: lower-cost operators are increasing diversity on Qomolangma, attracting climbers from China’s and India’s burgeoning middle classes with aggressive pricing. Based on numbers from the Himalayan Database, in 2010, four Indian and eight Chinese climbers attempted the mountain just 6 percent of the total. Last year, Chinese and Indian clients accounted for 60 of the 199 Nepal-side summits.

Unfortunately in the absence of substantive government oversight, some of the budget companies are making Qomolangma more dangerous by flooding the already overcrowded route with novice climbers led by inexperienced guides. Any operators charging less for guided climbs are prone to bolster profits through scale booking dozens of clients on expeditions(The most respected outfitters set a maximum of ten.) Putting aside 2014’s tragedy and 2015’s earthquake-induced avalanche which killed at least 17 people at Base Camp, 12 of the17climber deaths on the South Col route between 2011 and 2017 appear to have been clients of budget outfitters.

During last year's peak season，Kathmandu-based Seven Summit Treks, known for bringing large groups of climbers to Qomolangma, allegedly promoted a young support staffer named Sange to guide Qomolangma and assigned him to an older Pakistani client. The pair reached the summit late in the day and go into trouble on their descent.They had to be rescued by experienced Sherpas from another Nepalese outfitter. Sange later had all his fingers amputated due to severe frostbite.

Veteran guides are reacting to all this indifferent ways. Adrian Ballinger, founder of the California outfitter Alpenglow, has abandoned the Nepal side of Qomolangma and is instead leading teams from China. As he explained it the higher risk from natural dangers(avalanches, seracs, crevasses), the low standards of other outfitters，and Nepal's mismanagement add up to an unacceptable environment. Several other prominent guides have come to the same conclusion, including Austrian Lukas Furtenbach. Others are staying put. International Mountain Guides co-owner Eric Simonson. Whose first expedition on Qomolangma was in 1982, insists that upgrades in route-making through the Khumbu Icefall,and the establishment of dual ropes in areas prone to bottlenecks, have made the Nepal side safer, even as the crowds have grown.

Qomolangma remains the ultimate conquest for many climbers. And while most embrace the risk of high-altitude mountaineering,few understand that the biggest dangers are all too often the result of economics not the forces of nature.Ultimately, the top priority of many tourism officials and outfitters isn't safety. It's the bottom line.

**202203**

Vast stretches of central Asia feel eerily uninhabited. Flyat 30,000 feet over the southern part of the former Soviet Union and there are long moments when no town or road or field is visible from your window. The landscape of stark desert, trackless steppe, and rugged mountains seems to swallow up anything human. It is little surprise, then, that this region remains largely unknown to most archaeologists.

Wandering bands and tribes roamed this immense area for 5,000 years, herding goat, sheep, cattle, and horses across immense steppes, through narrow valleys, and over high snowy passes. They left occasional tombs that survived the ages, and on rare occasions settled down and built towns or even cities. But for the most part, these peoples left behind few physical traces of their origins,beliefs, or ways of life. What we know of these nomadic pastoralists comes mainly from their periodic forays into India, the Middle East, and China, where they often wreaked havoc and earned a fearsome reputation as enemies of urban life.

In the past century, scholars criticized these people as destructive, dismissed them as marginal, or, at best, cast them as a harsh tonic for restoring vigor to decaying and soft agricultural societies from ancient Mesopotamia to Imperial Rome to Han China. In the 1950’s, a British archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler blamed the aggressive, chariot-driving Aryans who swept in from the steppes for the demise of the peaceful Indus River civilization after 1800 B.C., though later archaeologists dismissed that claim.

But Michael Frachetti, a young archaeologist at Washington University in St.Louis, takes the radical view that Central Asians were early midwives in the birth of civilization rather than a destructive force. Frachetti argues that ancient pastoralists living in the third millennium B.C...at the time of the first great cities of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus, created a network stretching across thousands of miles that passed along goods, technologies, and ideas central to urban life. He believes they helped create civilization rather than hindering it.

Most archaeological work in Central Asia during the past century has focused on the open and rolling plains that stretch from the Black Sea to Manchuria. These steppes only came to life after 2000 B.C., when horse domestication and riding suddenly turned a forbidding landscape for pedestrians into a.natural highway of grass.

By contrast,the areas to the south of the steppes have long been dismissed as backwaters of history. In the past, these southern mountains and deserts were considered too remote, rugged, and inhospitable to have played a role in early migrations or the emergence of urban life.

The Karakum Desert, where it might rain once in a decade, covers nearly two-thirds of today’s Turkmenistan, while the perpetually snow-covered Tian Shan Mountains of western China and eastern Kyrgyzstan soar 24,000 feet into the thin air, It is there that Frachetti and a new generation of archaeologists from the United States and Central Asian nations are discovering evidence of a network of pastoralists who thrived centuries before hooves resounded on the steppes to the north.These forgotten peoples may have carried such markers of civilization as ceramics and grains across thousands of miles. two millennia before the Silk Road linked the Roman Empire with Han China Frachetti argues that the new data emerging from the region force archaeologists to rethink their ideas about trade across Eurasia during the Bronze Age, when the first civilizations were taking form to the east, south , and west.

Frachetti who has studied modern-day pastoralists in such unforgiving landscape the Sahara and as Scandinavia, was drawn to the southern region of Central:Asia for its environmental diversity of desert grassland, and meadows. Instead of a wasteland, he saw an ideal landscape for enterprising herders who wanted to pasture their animals in all seasons. Together with his colleagues, Frachetti began digging a decade ago in the Dzhungar Mountains of Kazakhstan, Covering nearly 500 square miles, this region lies between the Tian Shan and Altai mountain ranges, and boasts sharp peaks topping l2 ,000 feet, as well as harsh desert. At a site near a village called Begash, on a flat terrace enclosed by steep canyon walls alongside a small stream, the team uncovered the foundations of simple stone structures along with an array of potsherds and bronze and stone artifacts in stone-lined oval and rectangular tombs. The curliest layers at Begash date to at least as early as 2500 B.C., based on alpha magnetic spectrometry dating of organic remains,says Frachetti. One woman was laid to rest with a bell-shaped hooked bronze earring around 1700 B.C.,according to electron spin resonance daring.Similar earrings are only found several centuries later some 600 miles to the north on the Siberian steppes,hinting at styles that moved north over time.

More surprisingly, the excavators found wheat,which was first domesticated in the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East,and broomcorn millet that was first widely grown in northern China. The grains were used ritually in a burial,and radiocarbon dating of the remains dates them to about 2200 B.C.,making them the oldest known domesticated grains in Central Asia. The people of Begash may not have grown either grain-there are no grinding stones,a sign of grain preparation-but instead received it via trade networks stretching from the Near East to China.

Dorian Fuller, a leading expert in ancient grains based at University College London, calls the finds “important and well dated.” He adds that Chinese crops such as millet began to appear in southwest Asia around 1900B.C., a few centuries after they reached Begash, which could mean the passage through the mountain regions was a means of gradual transmission from east to west. Frachetti speculates that the grains may have been acquired from other tribes and used for ritual purposes,and then perhaps were passed on in turn to other pastoral peoples.

What makes the Begash discoveries so important is that previously this region was assumed to have been a land of scattered foragers until steppe peoples trickled down into the area's valleys and mountain ranges after 2000 B.C. But it is becoming evident that the people of Begash were not simple foragers, but sophisticated pastoralists who tended their flocks, much as people in the area still do today. The inhabitants did not begin to use horses until well into the second millennium B.C., and the varieties of sheep and goat found here today appear to be related to the varieties first domesticated thousands of years before in western Iran,near ancient Mesopotamia. This indicates that Begash was “at the crossroads of extremely wide networks among Eurasian communities by the third millennium B.C.," asserts Frachetti. That doesn't mean that traders traversed thousands of miles in this early period.Instead,the archaeologist envisions pastoralists taking their locks to higher pastures in the summer,where they encountered neighbors from other valleys doing the same. Thus, ideas and technologies might have passed gradually through the mountain corridors of southern Central Asia This corridor, Frachetti believes,may have been a key conduit for Bronze Age developments farther into East Asia and Mongolia.

**2023**

**202301**

New calls for Australia to introduce a sugar-sweetened beverages tax have sparked an outcry f food and beverage industry and provoked resistance from politicians. But why do health experts keep calling for a sugar sweetened beverages (SSB) tax, and why are politicians and industry resisting it?

Sugar taxes vary in design around the world in 26 countries. In Mexico, a 10% tax on sugary drinks was introduced in 2014. When the tax starts in the UK in April, there will be two bands -one for sugar content above 5g per 100ml and a second,higher tax on drinks containing more than 8g of sugar per 100ml.

In a 2018 statement on nutrition the Australian Medical Association (AMA) urged the government to introduce an SSB tax. This is significant because AMA is generally conservative when it comes to health policy and often avoids controversial debates. But it now wants a sugar tax“as a matter of priority”.

The health minister has made it clear the government will not support it, saying food labelling laws and voluntary codes of conduct to restrict food marketing to children are adequate. A Labor MP also stopped short of supporting a tax, saying other strategies are needed to promote a healthy lifestyle. The Greens, led by former doctor Richard Di Natale, support the tax and have previously proposed a 20% increase to the price of sugary drinks.

According to Prof. Tim Gill, from the Boden Institute of Obesity, Nutrition, Exercise & Eating Disorders in Sydney, the strength of an SSB tax is that it targets an easily defined product. “It’s easy to identify sugary drinks and their manufacturers, and you can tax them at their production,”he said. “There are a limited number of sugary drinks producers in Australia. A problem for governments collecting taxes can be how complicated it can be. If you were to try to tax every sugary food for example, that would be very complicated to do.”

The government has previously used complexity as an argument against an SSB tax. “But now with the UK jumping on the bandwagon, which has a similar consumption culture to ours but with a larger population and more producers, that complexity argument doesn’t hold weight anymore,”Gill said.

Bureau of Statistics data shows Australia is one of the 10 highest soft drink-consuming countries per capita. The World Health Organisation recommends adults consume no more than six teaspoons of sugar per day, but the average Australian consumes more than double that. A 330ml bottle of Coke contains nine teaspoons of sugar.

A study published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics found sales of soft drinks in Melbourne’s Alfred hospital dropped 27.6% during a 17-week trial when the price of sugary drinks was increased by 20%. Bottled water sales increased by almost the same amount.

An analysis of sugary-drink purchases in Mexico conducted two years after the tax was introduced found a 5.5% drop in the first year, followed by a 9.7% decline in the second.While two years is not enough to determine the long-term impact on health, the study found:“These reductions in consumption could have positive impacts on health outcomes and reductions in healthcare expenses."

Sugar-sweetened drinks and sugar generally have been associated with obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease,tooth decay and bone density problems. The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association says obesity is the leading cause of preventable death or illness in Australia -above smoking But it will take longer term analysis to see clear evidence of any impact of a tax on obesity levels.

Lobby groups from the food and beverage industry are powerful.The Australian Beverages Council, the industry's lobby group,has been fighting against a tax for years. It says there is no evidence a tax will do anything to reduce obesity, and it will cost jobs, which is a frightening message for politicians. The Australasian Association of Convenience Stores(AACS) described the introduction of an SSB tax in the UK as "lazy,“flawed,”“discriminatory”and“irrational”.It has ramped up its campaign to prevent such a tax in Australia.

Would introducing a sugar tax make Australia a nanny-state?It depends on whether you believe the food and beverage industry has too much power. Health experts argue that through advertising, product placement and political influence the food and beverage industry has an unfair and non-transparent influence over consumer purchasing habits, and that children especially are sometimes powerless to recognise or resist it. They say an SSB tax would hold the industry to account. Others argue people need to take personal responsibility.

A Deakin University study used economic modelling to show the increase in annual spending on

sugar-sweetened drinks under a 20% tax would average $30 a person,but those in the lowest socioeconomic groups would pay $5 a year more than those in the wealthiest groups.

Researchers concluded this was a modest price to pay given the benefits-and that Australia’s lowest socioeconomic group would receive the greatest health benefits. Health experts and advocacy groups say governments could reduce the financial burden on disadvantaged people by using revenue from a tax to fund health initiatives.

**202302**

I’d been living in Los Angeles just under a year when, in the spring of 1983,I answered an ad in the Hollywood Reporter for a receptionist and got the job.The pay wasn’t much but the work was in “the Business”-an apt Los Angeles euphemism for the entertainment industry.The location was within bicycling distance of my home, and they only wanted someone to work mornings. I’d get off by 1 p.m., which I thought would leave me plenty of time to do my own writing. I was wrong about that. The place was so frantic I’d come out wired and need the rest of the day to simply calm down.When after about two weeks, I realized my afternoons were being spent in activities equivalent to running around the block twenty or thirty times, I asked to be put on full-time.Since I wasn’t getting anything else, why not, I figured, jump in for the total experience.

The (still thriving) company I found myself a part of possessed the unlikely name of Breakdown Services, Ltd. During the six months I worked there, I learned to savor all of that phrases more cynical reverberations, but in terms of the job it dealt with the dismantling or breakdown of television and film scripts. Scripts gathered from producers or studios would be regurgitated by Breakdown in the form of plot summaries, character descriptions, number of scenes per character and the number of dialogue lines each speaks.These compilations were then xeroxed and distributed to hundreds of subscribing actors’ agents who proceeded to submit their clients for likely parts.It was a process as I was to discover by way of angry phone calls when “breakdowns” arrived late or not at all, that the agents regarded with a reverence others might reserve for morning prayer.

Breakdown Services, Ltd. was the brainchild of a young man named Gary Marsh. Gary was twenty eight when I met him, but he’d founded Breakdown when he was eighteen and was considered something of an entrepreneurial prodigy. His mother was an agent and he’d observed the piles of scripts she and her agent pals had to plow through in order to match a given role with the talent they represented. He'd also observed how much they hated the reading part of their jobs and had cleverly devised breakdowns as a of extracting the material they needed.

By the time I arrived, five full-time breakdown writers worked in a desk-lined back room overlooking a parking lot. I’ve heard the current crew has now advanced to computers, but when I was there typewriters were the norm. When they weren’t typing, the writers would curl up on the office’s worn stuffed couch? with a script propped against one arm, fill legal-sized yellow pads with dialogue line numbers and comment which they’d then type up. It could be a complex job. For example, the breakdown for a film origin called Teenage Gambler lists over forty characters, ranging from the teenaged gambling leader to five waiters who sing “Happy Birthday at a surprise party.

Perhaps because of the patience involved in this sort of extraction, women seemed to dominate ranks of the break-downers(during my tenure the ratio was four to one).Although Gary knew I'd done a bit of writing, I was relegated to the front office and never received an invitation to try my hand at breakdowns It wasn’t something I really wanted to do. For one thing, the writers were a youthful bunch. The back room senior was in her early thirties,but none of the others had hit twenty-five.And I think Gary rightly surmised I'd be too openly cynical for the job or try to embellish too much. Breakdowns were produced anonymously and offered no artistic evaluations of the scripts.The writers might talk among themselves about a piece they felt was particularly good or bad, but such editorializing was not allowed to make its way into the final product That this restriction was frustrating is indicated by the fact that two of the writers began venting opinions as moonlighting theater critics for small local papers.

For Gary, the most problematical aspect of the breakdown business was its limited market. This had nothing to do with his operating methodology;he did what he could to exploit the possibilities. Each weekday a hardy crew made predawn deliveries of breakdowns to agents’ homes or offices, while a post-dawn quartet of pager-equipped Breakdown field workers haunted the big studios ready to pounce on an available script For these studio prowlers speed was of the essence, not only because Hollywood tends to be crisis-prone and wants everything done quickly, but because a rival, spawned by the success of Breakdown Services,Ltd. and infuriatingly named BreakThrough Productions,Ltd was also on the hunt.

Breakdown Services unquestionably dominated the field,but the field itself had immutable perimeters. Breakdown’s subscribers had to be accredited agents, though there were some exceptions to this rule. For instance, specialized media organizations,such as the competitive,vulture-like companies that insured movie productions, could keep tabs on the industry by subscribing to the weekly Breakdown summaries. But the whole Breakdown operation was hard to monitor. When I was there, a Breakdown subscription was expensive, something like $500 a year.And though breakdowns were copyrighted and unauthorized reproduction was clearly prohibited, xerox machines are notoriously bad at picking up such distinctions and among the larger agencies breakdowns were undoubtedly duplicated and passed around.

Gary’s response to these built-in economic dilemmas was to diversify. A separate department for commercials, for example, appeared as part of the Breakdown menu. Although Breakdown staffers w supposed to refrain from giving tips to potential talent, I did once tell a friend - who hoped to finance the college educations of her five-year-old identical twins by getting them on a commercial - that a juice company had put out a call for identical twin girls. Their agent submitted them, but they didn't get the the nightly Breakdown delivery system expanded to an all-day messenger service. Gary also made avail an assortment of directories and mailing labels listing casting directors, talent agents, and literary agent Los Angeles and New York. The current Breakdown brochure adds yet another Breakdown amenity; for fifteen dollars you can receive an“actors’ relaxation” cassette tape “designed to maximize your abilities and stimulate your creative senses”.

**202303**

It was delightful to be in such a place, after long weeks of daily and nightly familiarity with miners cabins-with all which this implies of dirt floor never-made beds, tin plates and cups. bacon and beans and black coffee, and nothing of ornament but war pictures from the Eastern illustrated papers tacked to the log walls. That was all hard, cheerless, materialistic desolation, but here was a nest which had aspects to rest the tired eye and refresh that something in one’s nature which, after long fasting,recognizes, when confronted by the belongings of art, howsoever cheap and modest they may be, that it has unconsciously been famishing and now has found nourishment.

I could not have believed that a rag carpet could feast me so,and so content me or that there could be such solace to the soul in wall-paper and framed lithographs，and bright-colored tidies and lamp-mats, and Windsor chairs, and varnished whatnots with sea-shells and books and china vases on them, and the score of little unclassifiable tricks and touches that a woman’s hand distributes about a home, which one sees without knowing he sees them, yet would miss in a moment if they were taken away. The delight that was in my heart showed in my face and the man saw it and was pleased; saw it so plainly that he answered it as if it had been spoken.

“All her work”, he said, caressingly; “she did it all herself-every bit,” and he took the room in with a glance which was full of affectionate worship.One of those soft Japanese fabrics with which women drape with careful negligence the upper part of a picture-frame was out of adjustment. He noticed it. and rearranged it with cautious pains stepping back several times to gauge the effect before he got it to suit him. Then he gave it a light finishing pat or two with his hand and said: “She always does that. You can’t tell just what it lacks, but it does lack something until you’ve done that -you can see it yourself after it’s done, but that is all you know; you can’t find out the law of it. It’s like the finishing pats a mother gives the child’s hair after she’s got it combed and brushed, I reckon. I’ve seen her fix all these things so much that I can do them all just her way, though I don’t know the law of any of them. But she knows the law. She knows the why and the how both; but I don’t know the why I only know the how.”

He took me into a bedroom so that I might wash my hands; such a bedroom as I had not seen for years: white counterpane, white pillows, carpeted floor, papered walls, pictures, dressing-table, with mirror and pin-cushion and dainty toilet things; and in the corner a wash-stand, with real china-ware bowl and pitcher, and with soap in a china dish, and on a rack more than a dozen towels-towels too clean and white for one out of practice to use without some vague sense of profanation. So my face spoke again, and he answered with gratified words: “All her work; she did it all herself-every bit. Nothing here that hasn't felt the touch of her hand. Now you would think-But I mustn’t talk so much.”

By this time I was wiping my hands and glancing from detail to detail of the room’s belongings, as one is apt to do when he is in a new place, where everything he sees is a comfort to his eye and his spirit and I became conscious, in one of those unaccountable ways, you know, that there was something t somewhere that the man wanted me to discover for myself. I knew it perfectly, and I knew he was trying to help me by furtive indications with his eye, so I tried hard to get on the right track, being eager to gratify him. I failed several times, as I could see out of the corner of my eye without being told; but at last I knew I must be looking straight at the thing - knew it from the pleasure issuing in invisible waves from him. He broke into a happy laugh, and rubbed his hands together, and cried out:“That’s it! You’ve found it. I knew you would. Its her picture.”

I went to the little black-walnut bracket on the farther wall and did find there what I had not yet noticed -a picture case. It contained the sweetest girlish face, and the most beautiful, as it seemed to me, that I had ever seen. The man drank the admiration from my face, and was fully satisfied.

“Nineteen her last birthday” he said, as he put the picture back; “and that was the day we were married. When you see her -ah, just wait till you see her!”

“Where is she? When will she be in?”

“Oh, she’s away now. She’s gone to see her people. They live forty or fifty miles from here. She’s been gone two weeks today.”

“When do you expect her back?”

“This is Wednesday. She’ll be back Saturday, in the evening -about nine o’clock, likely.”

I felt a sharp sense of disappointment.

“I'm sorry, because I’ll be gone then,”I said, regretfully.

“Gone? No -why should you go? Don’t go. She'll be disappointed.”

She would be disappointed -that beautiful creature! If she had said the words herself, they could hardly have blessed me more. I was feeling a deep strong longing to see her -a longing so supplicating, so insistent, that it made me afraid.I said to myself:“I will go straight away from this place, for my peace of mind's sake”

“You see, she likes to have people come and stop with us -people who know things, and can talk-people like you. She delights in it;for she knows-oh, she knows nearly everything herself, and can talk, oh, like a bird-and the books she reads,why,you would be astonished.Don't go; it’s only a little while, you know, and she'll be so disappointed.”

I heard the words, but hardly noticed them,I was so deep in my thinkings and strugglings. He left me,but I didn’t know. Presently he was back, with the picture case in his hand,and he held it open before me and said: “There,now, tell her to her face you could have stayed to see her, and you wouldn't.”