

# *Public Voices*

Volume II

Number 2



# *Public Voices*

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**Cover Art**

Photograph: "Matriot"

©Copyright 1992, Kira Corser.

**Matriot** (ma - tri - at) *noun* 1: One who loves his or her country.

2: One who loves and protects the people of his or her country.

3: One who perceives national defense as health, education, and shelter of all people in his or her country. (Orig. FPA, 1991)

©Copyright 1992, Frances Payne Adler.

# **"The back of the tapestry": Social Action Art and Public Policy**

*Elsie B. Adams and Frank Marini*

We live. We are alive. Do not recognize us.  
Shun us. See only the back of the tapestry,  
With strings hanging out.

F. Adler, "This Reality Is Infectious"

Art can be a potent political force. This is attested to from the earliest conscious political thought through the latest use of mass media. Time spent in an art museum or in surveying literature will provide ample evidence of the use and power of art to buttress or attack the structure, myths, and values of the social state at various times.

Examples of art used to support given social arrangements come readily to mind. In one of the oldest documents in Western political theory, Plato held that it is important that the arts uphold the social system of the desirable state, and that those artists who do not use their art for this end should be sent to practice their art elsewhere. Marx was also sensitive to the importance of art, though he too is sometimes perceived as ambivalent toward it. He included art as part of the superstructural reality which reflected but tended to sustain basic economic structural realities. The art of the new Soviet man was as clear a manifestation of the use of art to support dominant institutions and ideology as was the art of medieval times. There has been substantial interest in the Nazis' propagandistic use of art in various forms. Other examples will undoubtedly suggest themselves to the reader.



Similarly, art can and frequently does challenge the established social order. Machiavelli's plays, various literary utopias, Bernard Shaw's "unpleasant" plays, or American muckraking novels are obvious examples, as are other examples of subversive art—art designed to shock a reading or viewing public into an awareness of social circumstances that seem to require change.

Among contemporary manifestations of the recognition of the political power of art are the concerns about the content of television shows or the message of rappers and other contemporary musical expressions. In the advertising industry we see blatant use of art in attempts to persuade the conscious as well as, some assume, the subconscious or unconscious and to persuade (usually) toward *action*. And, when this use of art is linked explicitly to political action in the narrow sense of electoral and social politics we become increasingly aware of politics as media (as against merely media as politics) (cf. Edelman, 1995, esp. 9).

With specific reference to public policy and public administration, some works of art have been credited with changing public policy or the administration of public programs. Novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and *Failsafe* are frequently so credited. Such has also been said of Dickens' works and of the works of other socially conscious authors. Poetry in the form of musical lyrics can also be seen in this light, as the lyrics of the labor, anti-war, and civil rights movements will suggest. The gamut runs the length and breadth of art.

Unfortunately, in some contemporary discussions of literature, it is assumed that "fine" art is distinct from the art of persuasion, that somehow the best art keeps itself aloof from advocacy and attends solely to the effect of word and phrase on the aesthetic sense. The debate about "art for its own sake" versus art designed to instruct—about "pure" art versus propagandistic art—is an ancient one, and one not likely to be resolved soon, though it is still a live (and lively) issue. Suffice it to say here that, in spite of the feeling in some artistic circles that advocacy art is somehow a lesser art than "pure" art, there is no shortage of artists who continue to use their art to persuade. Among the reasons for the persuasiveness of art is that it can carry not only the specific textual message but also a powerful emotional message: it can, in addition to persuasion at the conscious argumentative level, influence at the level of feeling.

## Two Social Action Artists

As a contemporary example of the power of art to persuade, we wish to discuss here the work of two artists—a poet and a photographer who call themselves “social action artists” and who have consciously focused upon public policy advocacy. The poet is Frances Payne Adler and the photographer is Kira Corser, and together they have addressed the need for public policy change in a number of controversial areas. Until recently, their work has centered in San Diego, California, but it addresses problems—homelessness, health care—that clearly belong to the wider society. Each of their books of photographs and poems originated as a travelling exhibition, designed for viewing/hearing in a public arena—not only in art galleries and university settings but in city, country, state, and national public buildings as well. In other words, the intended audience for the art of Adler and Corser is as many members of the public as can be reached—including (and especially) those influential in public policy decision making.

The 1984 exhibition/book by Adler and Corser entitled *Home Street Home* addresses the problem of homelessness and hunger in the United States. The work *Struggle to Be Borne*, published in 1988, deals with the effects of inadequate prenatal health care for poor women. *When the Bough Breaks: The Legacy of Addiction* (1993) treats, as its title suggests, drug abuse and its effect on children born of drug-addicted mothers. Another project dealing with the health care crisis is currently under weigh; this work is entitled *A Patriot's Dream: Health Care For All*.

It should be emphasized that the relationship of the art of Adler and Corser to public policy is not simply an after-the-fact conclusion on our part that this art has interesting implications for public policy. Rather, these artists have an explicit awareness of public policy and a conscious motivation and intent of helping to impact public policy. For example, in describing the conception of and impetus for *Home Street Home*, Adler says: “The story behind the story? I guess it began the day I read that Edwin Meese—then counselor to the President—said, ‘There is no hunger in America.’ Where, I thought, is he getting his information?...What an attitude for someone so close to public policy decision-making to have” (“Is Meese Blind?” 1985, 2). Still speaking of the impetus for *Home Street Home*, Adler continues:

I wasn't proud of the fact that both the Executive and Judicial branches of our government weren't willing to see the problem. It seemed that the traditional ways of communicating had failed. Kira and I hoped that art would be able to penetrate the denial surrounding the

homelessness by presenting it—in an emotionally meaningful way. ("Is Meese Blind?" 1985, 2).

This attempt to provide sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf on matters of social concern—matters that are being ignored or are simply not being acknowledged as problems—governs the work of these two artists. Echoing the earlier purpose of *Home Street Home*, the authors state in the introduction to their book *When the Bough Breaks*:

we've used our art to effect change by educating both through the heart and the mind....we would transport the stories of people not being heard or seen...to places where they would be heard and seen: to public places, schools, universities, state capitols, and the nation's Capitol, in Washington, D.C. (Corser and Adler, 1993, 7).

The books follow a standard format. There is a Foreword and some frontispiece material from experts in the field and others in a position to comment on the relationship of the poetry and photos to the public policy concern. Adler and Corser themselves provide introductory and explicatory material on the policy concern, the research underpinning the art, and something of the political and administrative as well as cultural and social life into which their project tapped. Then there is the art itself: a series of powerful photographs accompanied by poems and at times some prose discussion.

### ***The "Desaparacidos": America's Homeless***

The unifying idea of Adler's and Corser's first book and exhibit, *Home Street Home*, is set in the "Artists' Statement" that prefaces the book:

...We were disturbed by a paradox: the homeless are increasingly prevalent, yet paradoxically invisible.

Even the most compassionate among us has walked by someone sleeping on a bus bench, in the park or at the public library and said nothing.

This theme of the public refusal or inability to see the homeless or to speak out about the problem is emphasized in a poem entitled "The Desaparacidos." The poem deliberately compares the homeless in the United States with the Argentine victims of political repression: the young man sleeping "in the crawl space/ under an apartment building"; the woman who "disappears behind a wall/ of three-in-the-morning Food Basket silence"; the old man "sleeping on the heat exhaust of an ice-making machine" are all unseen by those who pass them by. The photograph accompanying the poem shows joggers in a park (eyes ahead) passing a person sleeping on the ground under a tree. The poem ends with the statement that, in the United States, "we mask mutilation":

No death squads  
drip white handprint warnings  
down doorways of the desaparacidos here.  
No lye is poured over bodies  
to make bones vanish.  
In my city  
the desaparacidos  
obligingly  
make themselves  
disappear.

All the photographs and the poems in the collection bring these "desaparacidos" clearly into our view. We see individual faces of the homeless and hear their stories. We see food lines and sleeping quarters in homeless shelters. We see a fully "furnished" shopping cart in a photo labelled "Home." In the poem "Where's the Anger?" a woman has been "hit...in the stomach" by hunger and "is slowly being erased." The photographs and poems make it impossible for us to deny the fact of homelessness and hunger in America, and—if the advocacy art has its desired effect—they make it impossible for us to continue to say nothing about it.

The first venue of the *Home Street Home* exhibit was an art gallery in downtown San Diego in 1984; reviews in local and Los Angeles papers helped to "Give a Voice to the Street People," as one headline stated it (Damsker, 1984). *Home Street Home* also travelled to university conferences and special exhibitions (San Diego State, September 1984; Harvard, March 1986; Arizona State, March 1988; University of San Diego, May 1992; permanent loan since 1994 to the National Coalition for the Homeless, Washington, D.C.). In May 1986 it appeared in the Rotunda of the U.S. Senate in Washington, D.C. It was exhibited in two state capitol buildings: in Sacramento, California (February 1988); and in Phoenix, Arizona (September 1988). In short, this art—like the work that followed by Adler and Corser—was designed to reach a wider audience than that of the art world. Social change, not aesthetic pleasure, was the primary aim.

### **Prenatal Health Care: *Struggle to Be Borne***

The three exhibitions dealing with health care issues follow a pattern similar to that of *Home Street Home*. *Struggle to Be Borne*, first exhibited in 1987, addresses the issue of prenatal health care for mothers and babies in the United States. As in *Home Street Home*, Adler and Corser use the situation in San Diego to exemplify a nationwide problem. In their Preface to the book, they point out that "One in five of the babies birthed

## Where is the Anger?

*Frances Payne Adler*

This is not the Depression. Yet people wait in line  
for food, jammed into a walkway outside the church.  
A sign at the curb says Stop. Another says No Left Turn.  
A woman sits. On a ledge beneath the stained glass  
window she takes up little space. Masking tape  
holds her jeans together. Hunger, she says,  
has made it difficult to talk. It has hit her  
in the stomach like a silent fist that shatters to glass.  
It has cut the height of her body, the boom of the voice  
she once had. She is slowly being erased.  
The roll of her blanket, her small sac, a comb,  
are a mask holding her together.  
She even welcomes the lice. They make her scratch,  
bleed, remind her she is still here.



**Photograph 1 by Kira Corser ©1984 from "Home Street Home" exhibit and book—Homeless Woman on Church Ledge**

in San Diego in 1987 will be borne by and born to a woman struggling to find care." Specifically, they note that fewer and fewer obstetricians are delivering babies of poor women, that more and more pregnant women seeking care at community clinics are turned away, that many poor women in labor are turned away from hospitals—sent by taxi to another hospital. As a consequence, the babies without prenatal care "are born too small and too early, and spend weeks, even months, hooked up to costly machines, struggling to survive." In the exhibit the artists attempt "to penetrate the denial surrounding the crisis of thousands of San Diego women—and the hundreds of thousands of women across the country—who are pregnant, poor, and shut out from care" (Preface, xiii). The Chairman of the California district of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, in a Foreword to the book, adds his voice, citing the increase of the number of women "in the wealthiest nation in the world" who "receive late or no prenatal care" and hoping that "someday soon, access to prenatal care will no longer be a privilege of the few, but a right of all women." He endorses the effort of Adler and Corser in "utilizing art, where politics have failed" (Foreword, ix).

Except for these two brief prefatory statements, the method of the book is not polemical but affective. In picture and poem we see babies attached to life by tubes and machines; we feel the anguish of the mothers whose children are born deformed or underweight; we hear the voices of social workers filled with incomprehension and outrage. We even hear from the obstetricians who are all too aware of the problem and who are themselves frustrated by increasing malpractice suits and subsequent increasing expenses in the face of increasing need for adequate medical care for the poor. In short, the book/exhibit does not advocate a platform or make a proposal, nor does it present a "villain of the piece," except for the public indifference to the problem. In image after powerful image, the photographs and poems bombard our senses and feelings in an attempt to wake us up, to shake us up, to move us to action.

*Struggle to Be Borne* begins with two intensely personal poems focussing on the babies born to mothers who have had inadequate prenatal care. In "Joshua," the speaker of the poem directly addresses the baby (who in the photograph accompanying the poem looks out at us with eloquently accusing eyes from his bed filled with tubes, tape, and machinery). The speaker struggles with what to say to this child. She emphasizes Joshua's tiny size ("less than two pounds") and his fragility, and then breaks through her denial of his (and her) pain to the truth:

that the moon of your birth night  
tracked your mother  
from hospital to hospital  
spilled its cool light  
on insurance ledgers  
weighing your worth.

The second poem of the collection also focusses on a child, this time establishing a strong maternal bond between the speaker and a baby in an intensive care nursery. A photograph complementing the poem is of this hospital nursery, with an emphasis on the wires, bright lights, and machinery in it. The title of the poem "Umbilicus" provides the major metaphor in the poem. As the speaker hears the sounds of the machine and observes the incubator, she recognizes the pull of another incubator—her own womb. She feels a "current between us/ pulling me, reclaiming my body"; it is no longer the "thick black cord" hanging from the ceiling that connects the baby to life but the umbilicus connecting the speaker (though feeling and empathy) to the baby in the machine. The bond between the observer/speaker and the baby has its pictorial counterpart in another photograph: there we see a newborn infant held in the arms of an attendant in a uniform on which "Property of California Linen Supply" has been stamped; the baby's tiny hand clutches the attendant's finger in a touching gesture of human connection.

Many of the poems in *Struggle to Be Borne* are from the point of view of the mother. For example, "A Little Noise" is spoken by a Mexican immigrant woman; two months pregnant, she has gone from clinic to clinic seeking prenatal care, only to be refused help because of "too many women" and "no room." Two poems, "Pobrecita" and "Emiliana," contrast the birth of two babies of the same mother—one born brain damaged after perfunctory and indifferent treatment by a doctor who wasn't "listening to [the mother's] pain" when she was pregnant; the other born healthy after regular and personal prenatal care. In addition to poems from the mother's perspective is one poem spoken by a father. "Waking from worry" expresses a father's relief when his son, born prematurely and without prenatal medical care, is born normal. Though the father worked two jobs, he had no money for medical insurance. The photographs which accompany this poem show a father comforting a crying baby and a man holding a tiny infant, cradling—as the poem says—"his small bottom" in "the hollow/ of my hand." (The latter photograph graces the cover of *Struggle to Be Borne*.)

The failure of obstetricians to accept uninsured patients is part of the focus of the book. "Not Fair" is from the point of view of an unidentified



obstetrician, who argues that it is unfair to the private patients to accept Medi-Cal patients (i.e., poor people eligible for publicly funded medical coverage in California): "I don't feel/ that I can increase my charges/ to private patients/ to make up for that," the doctor states. "Not Fair" in the context of this book and exhibit, however, takes on a much wider significance: not fair to whom—to the private patients, as the doctor says? or to the pregnant women denied medical care? or to the babies born in jeopardy as a result? Another obstetrician speaking in "All the People" tells of his attempt to capture a legislator's interest in either the issue of the rise in malpractice suits (and the consequent rise in medical costs) or in the need for prenatal medical care. "We got nowhere," he explains. Both legislators and their aides (quoted in the poem) insist that they can respond only to public pressure: to mail, to media coverage. The doctor cynically concludes that "Solution is always by crisis."

*Struggle to Be Borne* has a clear and repeated message to convey: poor women in the United States—unlike women in other modern nations—frequently suffer medical neglect during their pregnancy, at great risk to their babies born without adequate prenatal care. The book stubbornly refuses to simplify the issue by merely blaming the doctors or clinics or hospitals. The risk of malpractice suits, the increased cost of providing care, the difficulty in obtaining medical insurance are all factors which are recognized and explored. This is not to say—as these statements and the description above of specific poems may suggest—that *Struggle to Be Borne* preaches a sermon or delivers a lecture. Though the book is well documented with direct quotations from authorities and though the materials for poems and photographs come directly from interviews and from first-hand observation, its appeal is to our emotions. The pictures and poems are designed to touch our hearts (an effect that can be lost, as here, in prosaic description of them).

*Struggle to Be Borne* has appeared in numerous public arenas—political as well as artistic. For example, it was on exhibit at various state capitol buildings: in Sacramento, California (January 1988); in Columbus, Ohio (October 1988); in Boise, Idaho (October 1988); in St. Paul, Minnesota (January 1991). It appeared on exhibit at the House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., in June 1988, as well as in numerous art galleries, museums, medical facilities, universities. Reviews of the exhibits provide another forum for the message: for example, a *San Diego Tribune* reviewer of 1988 states the case for prenatal care and ends with the hope that "Perhaps art will succeed where rational discussion has failed" (Freedman, 1988).

## Drug Abuse and Its Effects: *When the Bough Breaks*

The third project of Adler and Corser, an exhibit that first toured in 1990, proved to be the most controversial yet. If a measure of success for art designed to disturb the public conscience is the amount of heat generated about it, *When the Bough Breaks: The Legacy of Addiction* was immensely successful. A picture of a crib in a graveyard, of a nude woman wasted to eighty-five pounds by her cocaine addiction, or of a drug addict's arm being injected with drugs so upset officials when the exhibit was being readied for hanging at the State Capitol Building in Sacramento, California (August 1990) that the exhibit was censored. (The California Code was cited: "Nothing political allowed [in the State Capitol Building!]. No photos or poems about drug use [in an exhibition about drug abuse!]. And nothing 'obscene.'") The exhibit was finally hung after the ACLU came to the defense and after the artists arranged a press conference which threatened adverse publicity for the government officials objecting to the exhibit. The attempted censorship convinced Adler and Corser that they had indeed touched a nerve. They concluded that the government itself was in collusion in attempts to silence protest against child abuse and drug addiction; as they state in their preface on "Censorship": "The fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and family friends who abused children often threatened, 'You better not tell.' Our government was doing the same" (14). A poem, "No Longer Silent," alludes to a conspiracy of silence and the need to speak out:

No rope, no razor,  
no cigarette burns,  
just *hold your tongue, girl*.  
My tongue a rope  
that is untwisting  
a rope knotted to silence,  
no longer  
bound back down my throat.

The first chapter in the book (published 1993) is entitled "Breaking the Silence," a phrase that could stand as a logo for all the work of Adler and Corser. As the President of the March of Dimes Defects Foundation states in a Foreword to *When the Bough Breaks*, "The cries of addicted women and their babies have gone unheeded for far too long" (Dr. Jennifer L. Howse, 5). Pointing out that as many as eleven percent of the babies in the United States are born to women who use drugs during pregnancy, she continues: "it is imperative that we hear the stories behind the statistics."

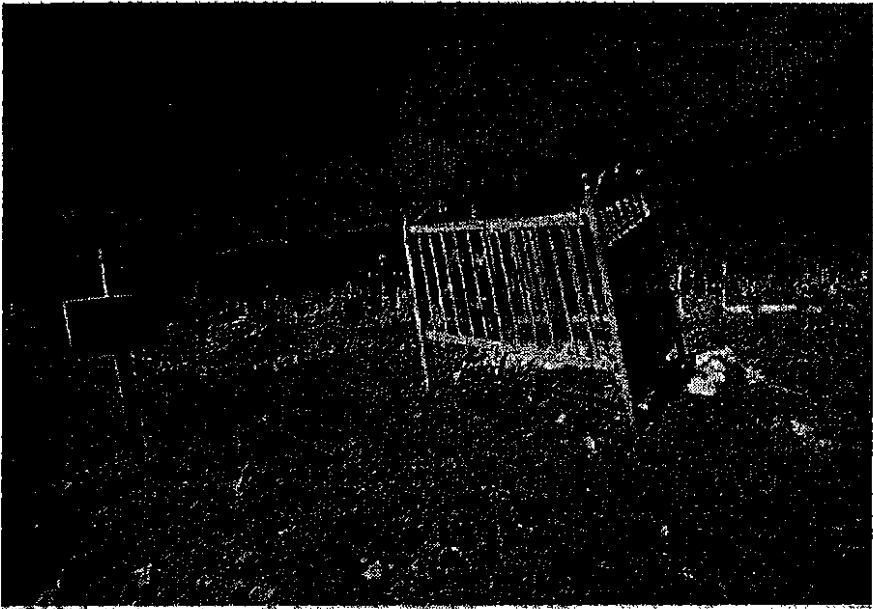
The stories that Adler and Corser tell are of the drug-addicted mothers as well as of the babies born to them. As the artists studied the problem, they found that the public reaction to babies born to addicted mothers was to blame the mothers, to label them as unfit, to put them in jail. Adler and Corser discovered, as they had discovered of the homeless earlier, that these mothers were among the "desaparacidos": "their lives were invisible. Each woman's life was being erased by the perception that she was...not a person herself" (7). They discovered an intimate connection between child abuse and drug addiction—a cycle, a pattern, or (as the subtitle of the exhibit/book suggests) "a legacy."

The book that grew out of the exhibit is divided into four sections: "Addiction," "Mothers," "Children," and, finally, "Recovery." In each of these sections appear the poems and photographs that are the staple of an Adler-Corser work; in addition are the stories of various victims of drug addiction juxtaposed against brief statements of fact and statistics dealing with the problem. Interspersed into the mothers' and children's stories are statements from social workers, from teachers of children in drug-using homes, from an adoptive mother of a child born to a heroin addict, from a grandfather taking care of his addicted daughter's children, from directors of projects and foundations, from medical authorities. The effect is an overwhelming comment on the problem, its probable causes, its effects.

As in their previous works, Adler and Corser refuse to oversimplify. As a doctor specializing in drug-addicted infant care states: "The trouble is...the drug abuse is just part of a long list of adverse conditions, like poverty, lack of health care, and lack of consistent parenting" (69).

The final section of the book, "Recovery," asserts that it is possible to reclaim both the drug-addicted women and their children. The poems in the concluding section are affirmative and exuberant, as for example the significantly named "Natural High." The poem ends on this ecstatic note:

and it's worth it, it's worth it again and  
the moon yes the moon  
tells it over and over  
and what's more I love it  
once more I love it  
my life is alight  
at last.



"When the Bough Breaks"

©Mickie Cole

Photograph 2 by Kira Corser

### **Coke-a-Bye Baby** *Frances Payne Adler*

on the tree top when the wind blows crack jumps over  
the candlestick hickory dickory dickory china white  
see how they run three blind pakalolo crystal booze  
the cradle will speed spliff iced formula tweaking  
happy hour this little piggy wasted rig rattle rug  
bong spoon razor coke little Jack Horner sits in a  
crackhouse shooting oatmeal corkscrew nipple  
six-pack when the bough breaks the cradle  
will freebase baby powder speedball Jack and  
Jill schrooms formula ganja rings on her fingers and  
bells on acid falls down steps on a crack and  
breaks heroin pacifier hammered toke potty pot  
crayons down will come ecstasy marbles snorting  
three blind wired freebie freebase humpty horse  
horsie rasta diaper dust doll crack crack clock  
sock shoot baby cradle and all

The poem "Re-Membering" is an assertion of woman's power, past and present: "She could turn seeds into bread, her blood into milk, her body into babies" (107). In the last poem a "great dark bird" is released from beneath the speaker's skin and she opens "to exquisite flight" ("The Opening," 108). The final photograph is of a woman jumping (apparently soaring) above the waves on a rock-bordered seashore.

In addition to the exhibit in Sacramento, which finally hung uncensored but for only three days instead of the scheduled ten days, *When the Bough Breaks* has been exhibited in eight other state capitol buildings (Arizona 1992; Wisconsin 1993; Pennsylvania, Washington, Oklahoma, Minnesota, and New York 1994; Rhode Island 1995). It has also conference, museum, and university exhibitions, and has hung in various county administration buildings as well as in the City Hall at Washington, D. C. The variety of the venues in which the art has been viewed lends credence to the book's cover statement, by the President of the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation (also the author of the Foreword), who thanks Adler and Corser "for using their art so brilliantly to raise the world's awareness of the multigenerational cycle of abuse that has become the legacy of addiction."

### **National Health Care: A Matriot's Dream**

The most recent Adler-Corser project is in the area of national health care. The exhibit *A Matriot's Dream: Health Care for All* was hung in September 1993 in the Rotunda of the California State Capitol Building under the sponsorship of California Health Decisions and the Women's Caucus of the California State Legislature (with over twenty organizational and corporation co-sponsors). The announcement of the opening of the exhibit describes it as "An artistic presentation that brings the faces and voices of those affected by the current health care crisis into the living room of the legislators." This project, which at this writing (June 1996) is still in progress, is intended to be part of the national debate on health care policy which the Clinton presidential campaign accelerated. In fact, blowups of some of the photographs by Corser were arranged as a backdrop for President Clinton's Sacramento "town meeting" in October 1993 (Griffin, 1993, 3). The plan had been for a national tour to culminate in the nation's capital in 1994 when a national health policy was being enacted into law. The detour of the President's national health policy was a detour for the exhibit also.

*A Matriot's Dream* treats many of the themes which are central to the national discussions, including lead poisoning, denial of health insurance

to individuals because they are ill, and the general inadequacy of the United States health care provision system. Adler explains that the idea for the title of the exhibit came during the Persian Gulf crisis of 1991; hearing of the new missile called the Patriot, Adler wondered what a Matriot would look like (Griffin, 1993, E1). Her answer to the question came in a poem dedicated to Helen Vandevere, who is the voice of the poem "Matriot" and the subject of the photograph that shows an older woman, fist raised, in front of a wall on which graffiti proclaim "revolution" and "The day has come!" The poem asserts that "we damn well better/ get out on the streets again." The Matriot sees "everything falling apart" and calls for a cleansing of the air, water, food, energy sources, nuclear power, national and international politics.

Other poems in the collection are equally militant. "Disembodied" refers to the photographer Corser's own personal crisis when, after striking out as a free lance artist (unable to afford medical insurance), she was unexpectedly diagnosed as having ovarian cancer. The doctor who diagnosed her said

Sorry his hand already on the door *I don't*  
*take Medi-Cal* as if she doesn't deserve  
his attention, as if she is not a person  
and sick....

Her struggle to find health care is a familiar one:

...the health insurance company, on embossed  
letterhead, denies her insurance because she's sick, *you have*  
*a pre-existing condition*, and...her government accuses her  
of being sick, finds her guilty of not earning money,  
requires her to call herself *indigent* to get health care.

Similar anger and outrage govern other poems and photographs in the exhibit: there is the retired army veteran stressed out (and therefore raising his already high blood pressure) because his health benefits may be cut; the elderly faced with rising prescription drug costs; the children poisoned by lead paint; the grandmother in an emergency room because she has no regular doctor; the child with spinal muscular atrophy whose parents can no longer afford health insurance who dreams that "she rides deep into downtown,/ to visit those who make of her a ledger" ("Hokori").

**Matriot (Helen Vandevere, born 1904)***Frances Payne Adler*

There's not much that's important at my age  
except making the world a better place.  
What would I do?

I say we damn well better  
get out on the streets again.  
Everyone has to put their hand to the wheel  
and get out and get off their butt  
like in the sixties. We had compassion then,

and we've lost it. It breaks my heart.  
I've lived through two depressions,  
two of them. Everyone at that time  
was just sick about the way things were,  
just like now, only it's worse now.

I see everything falling apart —  
People, starving on the streets.  
Children, beaten in their homes.  
Sick people without health care.  
Imagine this, in a country  
that spends so much on the war machine.

I'd spend the money on health instead.  
I'd see that children are born healthy  
and make sure they stayed that way.  
*All* children no matter what age.  
I'd clean the air, the water. I'd take away  
all that polluting shit they put on vegetables.  
I'd promote the use of sun, sea, and wind  
for natural energy. I'd save the forests,  
especially the redwoods. I'd ban firearms.  
I'd take away every nuclear device man to man.  
No more wars, ever. *Now* we're talking health.

How are we going to pay for all this?  
No one ever says we don't have enough  
money to go to war. No one ever says  
we don't have money for national defense.  
*This* is national defense.

"Turkey Vulture Venture" attacks those who profit from the sickness of others by raising the price of drugs. And "The Pre-Existing Condition Blues," an Adler poem set to music and recorded by Jean Evans Cheatham, echoes the refrains of oldtime union songs:

I've got the blues, yeah, the blues  
called the pre-existing condition blues.

★★★

One fact quick, the system's sick  
bottom lines, corporate good times.  
I ask ya, friend, to join me in my song,  
you can see they done us wrong,  
it ain't right, we're gonna fight,  
for better health care—

(Griffin, 1993, 3)

### **Relevance to Public Administration**

The relevance of the work of Adler and Corser to public policy formulation and administration is probably obvious. Not only does it cause us to reflect on how public policy preferences are formed and reformed, but also it gives us thought-provoking glimpses of administrators and administration. A county supervisor is instrumental in moving the art to the halls of government; the police and buildings and ground personnel apply (and perhaps misapply) policy in order to censor; and the details and frustrations of implementation peer from the photos and the poems.

It is as difficult to measure the impact on policy changes of this art as it is to measure more traditional change strategies. But we do have some indications. For example, a California Senator, Wadie P. Deddeh, as part of his praise of *Home Street Home* as an exhibit "that graphically tells the whole story," states that he introduced legislation to aid homeless shelters. Whether or not this legislation arose as a direct result of his viewing of the exhibit or from other concerns, it is clear that the exhibit contributed to a heightened awareness of the problem. Another California Senator, Lucy Killea, speaking of *Struggle to Be Borne*, states unequivocally that this art contributed to her "pursuit of legislation aimed at bettering the plight of low-income and uninsured mothers." Professor Rhea Priest, Assistant Director of Nursing at the Santa Cruz (California) County Health Services Agency, attributes the funding of an extra public health nurse position in 1988 to the role played by slides



from the book *Struggle to Be Borne*. Dr. Warren S. Feld, Associate Executive Director of the Tennessee Primary Care Association, states that the 1989 exhibit in the Association's Social Movement Gallery established linkages that "enabled a state public health program to be extended to private clinics in isolated rural and inner city areas in the state" and that the dean of the nurse practitioner program at Vanderbilt University "was so moved by the exhibit that ...[it was] decided to assist a struggling clinic to stay open by providing management and clinical services." Debra Kodama, the Associate Producer of KPBS-Television in San Diego, notes that a television documentary based on the book and exhibit inspired obstetricians in the San Diego area to take more non-paying or MediCal patients. (Testimony here and elsewhere is drawn from correspondence files and fact sheets provided by Adler and Corser.) Though one risks the *ad hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy in such attributions, it is significant that, at the time of the first exhibition of *Struggle to Be Borne* in 1987, only six of 220 San Diego obstetricians accepted MediCal patients, whereas in 1991, 107 obstetricians did.

The possible impact of art on public policy change should be of interest and importance to students, researchers, and teachers of public administration. There are also aspects of the connection between art and policy change which should be of interest to those who deal with the most fundamental theories of public administration (e.g., at the epistemological level). Perhaps a brief return to the aspect of art as persuasion (the topic with which we began) will suggest some possibilities.

Some current areas of research and speculation suggest that public policy and public administration (and perhaps especially efforts to change these) may have realities and access points in cognitive processes and cognitive (or "storage") areas other than forefront conscious ones. This suggests that among the tactics for change should be a concern for access to areas of association, cognition, and disposition that are not those usually associated with "rational" persuasive argument, with instrumental logic, and with conscious attention to intellectual argumentation. This, in turn, suggests that art may have a function to play in such associational and dispositional change.

The history of symbolic manipulation in politics is an old one, as nicknames, myths, cartoons, pictorial propaganda—and in recent times the so-called "sound bite" realities of mass communications—attest. As political actors and as the consumers of political action we are subject to the power of emotional imagery and other aspects of art. Thus the picture of a burned, frightened child remains for many of us a dominant

association of the Vietnam conflict; a photo of a dying child being carried out of the Oklahoma City blast area remains a symbol of that blast and of other associations that we have with that violence. The important meaning encapsulated in statements such as "a picture is worth a thousand words" is that a picture may (or usually does) communicate something more efficiently, persuasively, or permanently than does a "rational," or "logical," or "objective" description or argument.

It seems clear that art has much to do with shaping our consciousness. It has been argued frequently that art can affect our consciences also. Art may also have much to do with shaping relatively unconscious or subconscious aspects of ourselves which affect our perceptions and values.

With specific reference to the work of Adler and Corser, there is ample evidence of its educational, inspirational, as well as practical effect on those who view and hear it. As Dr. Cheryl Walker (of Scripps College, Claremont, California) says:

In the hands of Adler and Corser, art comes to the people, moves them, and moves them forward. This is a role for the work of art that belongs to the American past when magistrates wrote poems and everyone read them, or when a novel could move a nation to rethink slavery....This is a body of work that can shape the consciousness of an era.

A participant at a May 1993 Conference for Health Care reform in Washington, D. C. states that "The photograph of 'Grandma' [in *A Patriot's Dream*] did more to inspire me to work for social justice than anything I've heard at this conference, or anything else for a while." The head of the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition tells the artists that they "have taken the same information we work with and used it to touch people's hearts where we have been able to touch only their heads."

As the epigraph to our article (taken from an Adler poem) suggests, social action art has the power to bring into clear view the lives of the unfortunate who have disappeared from public concern. Such art can provide a close look at the underside of life—a part of life too often neglected or ignored. A glimpse at the back of the tapestry reminds us that the whole fabric includes this side as well. It can only be hoped that, as the title of Adler's poem states, "This Reality is Infectious," and that art can succeed—in awakening consciousness, in confronting denial, in touching the conscience, in lobbying for change—where "rational" discussion and "politics" have too often failed.

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# **The Research Process Revealed in Fully Plotted Short-Short Fiction**

*Jay S. Mendell and Donald R. Cooper*

When I (Don Cooper) sat down to revise my textbook on research methods, I decided to include short fiction under chapter heads. I asked Jay Mendell, my colleague in teaching research methods to public administration graduate students to write fully plotted short-short stories. Blame it on temporary insanity, or deadline stress: I asked for stories on Scientific Thinking, the Research Process, the Research Proposal, Design Strategies, Measurement, Scaling Design, Sampling Design, Secondary Data Sources, Survey Methods, Survey Instruments, Observation, Experimentation, and Written and Oral Reports, delivered in eight weeks. Blame it on euphoria: Jay said, sure, no problem.

By "fully-plotted" I meant stories in which something was a stake: someone's life, career, happiness, organizational or intellectual dominance; and someone received well-deserved reward or punishment from their own actions or merit; or someone's attitudes were changed through plot action.

Two people talking about a research problem would not necessarily comprise a plot; they might only be text paragraphs with quotation marks wrapped around and "he said-she said" interpolated.

"Plotted" fiction demands characters the reader can care about, so that when something is at stake — someone is winning or losing or changing their attitudes — my reader will stick around and discover the outcome — and learn something about research.

Here is one of Jay's chapters, on Survey Methods.

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Eric Burbidge saw that the #99 bus was filthy. It would smell on the inside. Forty riders were lined up like sheep — one was a letter carrier sheep, and a collection of other blue collar men and women comprised the rest of the flock. Some were idly thumbing through newspapers — Good! Very good! — some were chatting, and two were chewing deliberately on hero sandwiches, which he supposed they had picked up at the seedy tavern across the street from the bus station.

Burbidge swept past the queue, taking care not to make eye contact, and brusquely rapped his clipboard against the bus's folding door. With a whoosh the driver snapped the door open, and Burbidge heaved his corpulence onto the bus. No one tried to follow him up, which he would not have allowed in any case, as he needed time to interrogate the driver, to see if the man would be of any help whatever.

"Good evening, driver. I am Mr. Burbidge, and I am from headquarters."

"That figures. We don't see many suits on route 99."

"Then you know why I have had to come out here." He had been with the bus company for three months, and this was the first time they that had required him to board and ride a bus.

What is that smell? Machine oil ... sandwich meats ... What else do the route's demographics suggest would be every day tracked through this bus? Sweat, of course! "I am conducting a scientific survey to determine the newspaper readership, if any, of riders on this route."

"Yessir," murmured the driver, without enthusiasm.

"If you have been reading your employees newsletter, you must know that the corporation is soon to announce a restructuring of the route system and schedule, pursuant to which we shall have to purchase

advertising space in the leading media to reveal our new route structure, maps, and schedules."

"Won't that be a mess," muttered the driver, in the same flat tones. "And, yessir, I read your newsletter. For fifteen years I have read it."

"According to our records, you have been a driver on this very route for five years, and so you may have noticed that this route runs north-to-south equidistantly between the twin cities ..."

The driver stared ahead, icily. "The route runs north-south, with one city on the east and the other on the west, yessir. I caught onto that long ago, sir. It's right there on the route map, sir.... Clean splits the line between East City and West City and never gets closer to one than the other. If you want to get to one city or the other, you ride north to Boght Corners, then you transfer to another bus. My bus just goes straight north. Right up there on the route map. Sir."

"As research director," said Burbidge, gracefully emphasizing his point by pointing a manicured forefinger toward the roof, "I take nothing for granted, but instead provide scientific methodology, in this instance to test my hypothesis that readership of newspapers on this route would be equally divided between the East City Gazette and the West City Tribune." He tapped his clipboard petulantly against the back of the driver's seat. "To that very end I have prepared this survey of your riders, which with your complete cooperation I have selected to pass out along this route, on this day, at this time."

"Newspapers, you say," said the driver, showing a flicker of involvement. "I could tell you quite a lot about those newspapers.."

"Not required! This is a scientific survey of riders on route 99, and anecdotal information is not appropriate. What I require of you is to let the passengers up onto the bus so I may give them these pencils and surveys, and then to refrain from swerving or unnecessarily agitating the bus while they are filling out my surveys. Do you think you can manage that?"

"I'd better turn on the inside lights, don't you think?"

"Well, of course, turn on the lights. That goes without saying."

The passengers boarded slowly, exchanging pleasantries with the driver. Quite a little clan.

Then the bus was off. It rolled steadily northward, and Burbidge was pleased to see that riders hunched over his one page survey, though he

was struck by how long it took them to answer the simplest of questions. As each completed the survey he or she shyly shuffled forward and proffered it to Burbidge without comment.

Just when he sensed everything was going as well as might be expected, two men stood up, one in the front by the driver, one in the rear, and spread their legs and straddled the aisles. A ball of newsprint was tossed into the aisle, and the passengers began whooping and batting the paper forward and back. "What is this, driver?" demanded Burbidge.

"Hockey. They are playing hockey. The idea is to knock the ball between this guy's legs or that guy's in the back."

"Aren't you going to stop them?"

"No harm done. These are a friendly bunch. Big sports fans ... In fact," said the driver, whose voice had gained enthusiasm when evading discussion of company business, "the East City club is playing pro hockey tonight, so when I clean out the bus, most of the newspapers will be the East City Gazette." He rattled on, contributing to Burbidge's annoyance, explaining that the riders liked to study the night's pro game in advance, the better to discuss it among themselves, so that newsstand sales were brisk in the terminal, but only for the newspaper that did the better job of covering the sport de jour. "Of course tomorrow night there is pro basketball in West City, and most of the riders will pick up the West City Tribune at the newsstands."

"That's impossible to accept," shouted Burbidge. "Such behavior would bias my scientific survey, which asks for the paper they most recently purchased!"

"Well, you had better accept it. B'cause I've been cleaning out this bus for five years. It's the Gazette before hockey, and the Trib before basketball. This is a hockey crowd tonight, which means extra Gazettes."

Burbidge was mortified and hoped he was not revealing his distress to the driver. Surely the driver would not understand the consequences of this predicament in biasing the survey. But the driver added, "Course, in the mornings these folks bring the papers that the carriers toss on their lawns, so you don't see such a situation."

"That is very difficult to accept, driver. It means that by choosing between sampling this route—morning or evening—I get a systematically different set of results, and by choosing a hockey night or

a basketball night, I further incline toward different results." Burbidge was thinking aloud, almost in a trance.

"Naturally ... " agreed the driver, with irritating enthusiasm.

"Be still, driver. I have to think." Burbidge was shaken.

The driver had now warmed to his exposition of trash can sociological research. "...Of course, by reading my drivers newsletter, as I do, I know that by the time you announce the new routes and schedules, we will be finished with hockey and basketball and into the baseball season ... " Was there irony in the driver's chuckle?

"If you are furnishing me information that is at all reliable, driver, then the generality of my survey would be contingent on whether I ride in the morning or evening, on the professional sports schedule on a particular night, and on the season of the year."

"That's part of it, yessir."

"Part of it? Part of it? You mean, there's more? There is something else I have not thought of?"

"Well, yessir, because, you see, most of these folks on the 5:15 bus are East City folks, and most of the people on the 5:45 bus are West City folks, so your outcomes would naturally depend on whether you took a survey on the 5:15 or 5:45 bus."

Burbidge was shaken and no longer able to muster a vigorous "impossible to accept" or even a "difficult to accept."

"How can this be? Tell me."

"Well, you see, the 5:15 bus on this route — the one you are on now — gets to Boght Corners at 5:55, and the East City folks transfer onto the eastbound bus which is waiting there for them. Most of the West City folks hang out in the bar across the street from the terminal, get on the 5:45 bus and rendezvous at 6:25 with the westbound bus at Boght Corners."

"I see. I see." He was reconsidering the wisdom of this survey. "AND IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE you would care to share with me?"

"Only that the 5:45 boarders don't read the newspaper much at all, as they have been watching sports on the TV in the bar, are lightly soused, some of them, and can't read the small print because I don't turn on the inside lights."

"I might as well have stayed home," Burbidge cried in despair.



The driver stopped the bus and swiveled to face Burbidge. "Wouldn't that have been a pity, sir? as I would have been deprived of this excellent lesson in scientific research."

Burbidge studied the driver carefully, struggling to believe this last remark was not the unkindest cut of all. No, he concluded, the bumpkin is too disingenuous to be capable of irony.

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Everything about Eric Burbidge is obnoxious. He has been research director for three months without stepping onto a bus. The bus driver imparts important anecdotal reports, and Burbidge dismisses it as "trash can sociology." He uses big words when small ones will do (he sounds like a drill on research methods, come to think of it), he raps his clipboard noisily and offensively on a bus door to gain the driver's attention and on the driver's seat, for no reason; and, when we pop into his head for a look-see, he thinks mean thoughts about his research subjects, disapproves of what they wear and eat, and mistakes the bus driver for a dunce. And he is defensive about his mistakes, and doesn't do much reality checking, displaying two awful traits in a researcher.

Why did Jay make Burbidge so abrasive? Jay refuses to explain his creative processes and prefers to let the story speak for itself. Clearly Jay wanted to develop conflict between Burbidge and the driver, Burbidge and the riders, Burbidge and the requirements of good research. Conflict holds the reader until the bad guy gets what he deserves, and meanwhile pedagogy about survey design slips under the reader's radar. At least, that's what I think. Jay declines to say.

That Burbidge fails to learn from his experience adds the further lesson that studying technique and learning the theories and nomenclature are not enough to compensate for human frailty. Social science researchers can be pretentious. Consider researchers who believe there is only one way of learning the truth (the one they have mastered), and others who demean and bully the little people who are not experts. You met them in the story above because Jay delights in letting hot air out of practically everyone.

Our definition of a fully-plotted story— as opposed to a fiction fragment — is one with central characters who evolve and struggle with ideas, adversity, external forces, or other characters. It's not a story if two people talk about research and doing nothing and experience nothing. It's not a story (or it is a very short short story) unless it has realistic

dialogue, conflict, and character growth. Fragments are overused in textbooks, and we can't understand why.

Why use stories? Because sifting fiction into exposition promotes attention, retention, motivation, and learning, in ways that exposition cannot. As they are threaded in and out of Jay's fourteen stories in my book, characters who are researchers either develop as humans or suffer a comeuppance for their inflexibility, encouraging readers to develop as researchers-people.

Donald Cooper, author of the essay above, is in public administration at Florida Atlantic University in Fort Lauderdale. He teaches masters and doctors statistics and research methods. The citation of Don's book is: Donald R. Cooper and C. William Emory, *Business Research Methods*. 5th edition. Chicago: Richard D. Irwin, Inc. 1995.

Jay Mendell, author of the short-short fiction above, is in public administration at Florida Atlantic University in Fort Lauderdale, where he teaches computer systems, chaos and complexity theory applied to social science research, and governmental use of the information superhighway. Jay is a member of the editorial board of *Public Voices* and has published an essay and a short story in that journal. His Internet home page is <http://www.fau.edu/divdept/cupa/jay.htm> and he maintains a page on grantswriting, <http://www.fau.edu/grants.central.station>.

# Call for Books to Review and Book Review Essays

Suggestions for books to review, particularly fictional works, and book review essays about fictional literature regarding organizational life and bureaucracies, are requested for future issues of *Public Voices*. Books being suggested for review should have complete citations, including title, author(s), publisher and date. A brief explanation of why the book is an important contribution and should be reviewed would be helpful. Books and book reviews selected should conform to the mission of *Public Voices* and the ASPA Section on Humanistic, Artistic and Reflective Expression, which include unorthodox and controversial perspectives on bureaucracy; explanations of how novels, short stories, poetry and other genre contribute to our understandings of society; and how society is reflected in the creative writings of novelists and others.

Please send your suggestions for books to review or completed book review essays to Willa M. Bruce, Book Review Editor, *Public Voices*, Department of Public Administration, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Annex 27, Omaha, NE 68182.

# IT'S A MATTER OF TENURE

*Larry Hubbell*

How I hate academic department meetings. They go on and on. Inane! Trite! Verbose! More adjectives come readily to mind. Pathetic! Arcane! Redundant! Absurd! Ridiculous! Sometimes I feel like screaming "Come on you bastards, get to the point! Get to the damn point!" Of course, I have never given in to the temptation to shout expletives. I am much too cautious—a caution given (impetus?) by a lack of tenure.

Why is it that so many academics are so in need of an audience? Isn't their need fulfilled when they lecture? Or do the blank stares of the lecture-weary undergraduates not provide my colleagues with sufficient ego reinforcement? Are their lives so hollow that they must try to impress one other with their elaborately constructed sentences, their high sounding moralisms and their beautifully enunciated vowels? When I worked for the federal government, meetings never lasted for more than one hour. If the leader of a meeting dared go over the one hour time limit, she would witness a slow exodus that would steadily reach a crescendo by five after the hour.

"Whitfield, we haven't heard from you yet. What do you think of the administration's proposal to re-draft University Regulation 1044?" asked Hudson James in his typically haughty manner. Full professor and department head, James has called this meeting and typically dominates them with his run-on sentences that glide into each other, making

interruptions nearly impossible. Pompous, tall and just this side of fifty, James uses these meetings to occasionally bully his untenured colleagues and thereby subtly remind them of their inferior status.

"Well, Hudson, to tell you the truth I really haven't given it much thought."

"Oh come on man, express an opinion. We're a democratic body here. Don't be intimidated by your lack of tenure."

Perhaps, I thought, I would be less intimidated if he didn't constantly keep reminding me of it. Is this the two hundredth or two hundredth and first time he has deigned to mention my at-will status? Maybe, like Hester Prynne, I should have a letter affixed to my clothing. Except, instead of an "A", I should wear a "U" — standing for untenured.

"Hudson, I'm sorry, let me study up on it and next time I'll be ready."

"Well Whitfield, I think I speak for my colleagues when I say — we can hardly wait for your epiphany." And with that James adjourned the two hour meeting to the evident satisfaction of many of our colleagues.

Now was that comment really called for! Does James have to lace every third sentence with a sarcastic remark? Does an Ivy League degree also confer upon the bearer a license to commit verbal assault? James has never liked me and I've never liked him. Indeed, how can anyone like that sanctimonious, arrogant blowhard. No wonder his wife, Jacqueline, walks around with a perpetual scowl on her face. If he had been department head when I was interviewing for this job, I never would have been hired. As a research methodologist, he considers my field of public administration to be lacking in "vigor."

In addition to being from different fields, we are also members of different tribes. He is a member of the Ivy tribe. Color him green and in large denominations. Old money and what many people used to refer to as "good breeding." BA Princeton, Class of 1969, Phi Beta Kappa, Masters and Ph.D. from Harvard, graduated summa cum laude. Why did he leave the University of Illinois after only four years and move out here to the open spaces of Wyoming? That clearly was a step down, particularly for someone so status conscious as Hudson James. Most academics would kill for a tenure track position at the University of Illinois. Was the then esteemed assistant professor not going to get tenure?

I'm Dick Whitfield—former Washington bureaucrat turned college professor. Why did I move to Wyoming and join academe four years ago? It wasn't the money. I was paid considerably more by the federal government. It wasn't the climate. I prefer the muggy, in-your-face heat and humidity of Washington, D.C. to Wyoming's eight month long winters. It wasn't the status. As a mid-level manager in the federal government I had thirty people working for me and managed a \$300 million budget. It was the independence. I'm not a very structured person—getting up five days a week and doing the 8 to 5 number for the rest of life was not particularly appealing to me. Furthermore my recently settled divorce allowed me the flexibility to move wherever I wanted. And frankly, after having worked for more than 15 years in the federal bureaucracy and having slogged through my Ph.D. at American University at night for more than five years, I think I know something about my field of public administration. I think I can teach students—teach them well.

Following the meeting I wander back to my office for office hours—usually a fairly unproductive time when I may be confronted by students about grades or informed about the latest gossip by my colleagues. When I started at the University of Wyoming I probably spent 50 hours a week on campus. I was always available to my students, my advisees and my colleagues. I volunteered for committees, provided career guidance to anyone willing to listen, networked with people in other departments, was elected to Faculty Senate and served as an advisor to various campus organizations. I tried very hard to please... to be well liked by my colleagues.

Unfortunately, I found that my research suffered as a result. Although I frequently planned trips to the library, I seldom made it there. I was easily diverted by other concerns. Thus, after four years my research record is hardly stellar — two refereed publications, two articles in progress and a book that may never be. I may not get tenure, at least not at this institution which places a premium on research. Excellent teaching evaluations and a strong record of service probably won't be enough to vault me over the tenure hurdle.

My musings are interrupted by Max Baird, a confident, late thirtyish full professor with a full head of black curly hair. He teaches constitutional law and is quickly becoming one of the most prominent scholars in his field.. Unlike me, Max knew from the age of seven that he wanted to make academe his career. He is a third generation Ph.D. and is well schooled in the cultural folkways of the university. He's also an unrelenting gossip and my strongest ally in the department.

"What a pain Hudson can be," Baird exclaims. "Why did we elect him department head? I think he wanted the job mainly so that he could regularly call meetings and drone on."

"As I remember nobody else wanted it."

"Dick, this is how things work around here. Hudson scared off the competition when he declared his candidacy. This is a department that hates discord. It's sort of ironic that we teach political science. Isn't it?"

We shoot the breeze for several more minutes. This conversation is a useful diversion for me, because sitting in my office are 100 undergraduate essays waiting to be graded before next week's class. In this age of "student as customer", let me make a startling confession — I hate teaching undergraduates. And I hate to grade their written work even more. Being an assistant professor — a mere field hand on the academic farm — I am regularly saddled with large and mandatory lecture classes where a teeming mass of the unwashed usually either nod off, gossip or take voluminous notes during my lectures. I am not yet entitled to a graduate assistant who regularly do the academic equivalent of heavy lifting, namely grading undergraduate papers.

After some additional procrastination, I begin reading the first essay. The writer exclaims "The Founding Fathers were really cool dudes. It's too bad that damn Clinton and his wife Hillary got no respect for us westerners. Want to take our guns away from us and deprive us of our 4th Amendment rights. Rights that Abraham Lincoln wrote about in the Constitution." Where do I start with an essay like this. Historically inaccurate. Full of innuendoes. Devoid of logic. Unsubstantiated blather. Grammatically incorrect. The red ink virtually flows from my pen. Don't they teach grammar in high school anymore? I plead guilty to occasionally splitting an infinitive (there I did it again!) and mangling a sentence, but this style of writing, if it can even be considered a form of expression, is blatant "gramicide."

My boredom is interrupted by Evelyn Longmont. Evelyn is a bright and earnest graduate student with a 4.0 grade point average, who is ten years my junior. She aspires to get a Ph.D. and probably sees me as a kind of mentor. Evelyn is also a very striking blonde — a real head turner. Her green eyes, perfectly toned cheeks and lissome gait awaken my carnal desires. Nevertheless, our relationship remains professional, enjoyable and candid, but not intimate. I wonder what the department gossips say when she saunters into my office for one of our frequent conversations? Today, she looks disturbed. Making me somewhat uncomfortable, she closes the door behind her.

"I want to leave school. The pressure is too much."

"This sure is a surprise. Is there something wrong? Just yesterday I saw you looking through those college catalogues. Don't you want to get a Ph.D.?"

"Dick (Most of my graduate students call me by my first name.), I'm getting over my head. I know I'm doing well in the program, but I'm not sure I would be able to write articles for publication."

I nod my head and say to myself, "It frightens me, too."

"The faculty has been so wonderful to me. My assistantship has given me the money I needed to get by. I do feel guilty, but I think it's time for me to go."

"You shouldn't feel guilty, but if this is your decision I am disappointed, but supportive. But why don't you at least stick it out for the rest of the semester and make your final decision when you feel less stressed. You might change your mind later."

Slowly, with hesitation, she rises from her chair, bearing a faint almost indiscernible smile and says "Okay, let me think about it overnight."

I follow her to the door. She opens it and we are both almost knocked over by a brusque and unamused Hudson James, who doesn't even bother to respond to my barely audible salutation of "Good afternoon." I must have really pissed him off at our morning faculty meeting. Whether I like the guy or not, I've got to curry his favor if I'm going to get tenure here.

Perplexed, I wander to the departmental office. Why does Evelyn want to leave? I ask Francene, our departmental secretary, for Evelyn's files so that hopefully I can discern a reason for Evelyn's discontent. Francene somewhat unwillingly provides me with her file.

"Dr. Whitfield," she barks, "make sure that you return this file to me in the condition I gave it to you."

Is that comment really necessary? Just because I accidentally left the coffee urn on last weekend and nearly demolished it, shouldn't consign me to junior high.

After not hearing a reply, Francene, remaining ever vigilant, persists by asking, "You will won't you?"

I submit, "Yes, of course."



Francene is a tall woman in her late 40s. What most distinguishes Francene is her very active Adam's apple, which seems to traverse her throat with each syllable. She is a very organized — some might say obsessive — individual, who watches over our department's administrative affairs with panopticon-like breadth. Unfortunately, she is also a close ally of Hudson James, who seems to regularly rely upon her for the latest office scuttlebutt. It is because of her that I worry when female students choose to close my office door.

I search Evelyn's files looking for clues. Her undergraduate GPA — a very respectable 3.75. Her GRE scores in excess of 1300. Reference letters that pronounce her to be a future female version of Theodore Lowi. Nothing that would lead me to understand why she would want to leave graduate school in the middle of the semester ... except, here it is ... a midterm grade of "C" in Hudson James's organization theory class. How could she be getting a "C" from James? She has been a stellar student in all of her other classes. This doesn't make sense!

All night I contemplate the situation. At dinner my canned ravioli becomes ever colder as I ponderously chew every mouthful the correct 15 times. Would I be too intrusive if I confront Evelyn with my knowledge? Do I want to become involved in a potential conflict between a graduate student and the department head? Would I be ethically bankrupt if I just ignored the situation? Am I being influenced by my secret attraction for Evelyn?

The next day, I resolve my dilemma by calling Evelyn and ask her to stop by my office. She glides in my office at 10:30 and once again proceeds to close the door behind her, once again making me uncomfortable.

"Evelyn maybe I'm being too intrusive, but... are you thinking about leaving school because of the "C" you're getting in Dr. James's class?"

"How do you know about that? Did he tell you?"

"No, I found out when I checked through your file last night. I was curious because your disaffection with this place was so... well... precipitous."

"Well, I do take a lot of pride in my work... And I've never gotten a 'C' before."

"Aren't you taking your grades a little too seriously. One 'C' won't break your otherwise outstanding record. Aren't you too much of a perfectionist ... not willing to accept even a little failure?"

"It's not that."

"What is it then?"

"I don't want to go into it."

"Come on, Evelyn. We're talking about your future career, after all."

Okay... but do you promise to keep this strictly confidential. You can't tell anyone."

"I promise."

"I believe that Professor James is mad at me and wants vengeance."

"Evelyn, Professor James may be a bit haughty at times (Damn, I shouldn't have said that.), but I doubt whether he gets his jollies by picking on graduate students."

"You don't believe me then."

"I didn't say that."

"But you implied that."

"It's just difficult for me to ascribe dark motives to him (I lied.)."

"I knew I shouldn't have brought this up."

"No, please. I was wrong. I promise to suspend judgment."

"Dick, he's angry with me, because he asked me to go with him to the APSA conference and I refused."

"The APSA Conference ... well he frequently accompanies students to it."

"Yeah, but there's more to it than that. He made it clear that we should have adjoining rooms."

"Well, maybe he wanted to make sure that you met some of his colleagues."

"No, he suggested that we get adjoining rooms and then he caressed my leg."

"I guess that's a sexual proposition then.."

He's never brought it up again, but I know I'm being punished. He's a mean-spirited old crock."

"Ever since then, he has been getting back at me in very subtle ways. He must pore over my papers like a Jesuit. My papers have more red ink than black. I've also noticed that Francene is on my case. She wrote me up last week for copying a document single-sided rather than double sided. She says I might lose my assistantship, because of what she called sloppy work."

I am stunned by the revelation. As she continues with her monologue, I sink into a meditative state and mull over various questions. (It occasionally must be annoying to engage in a conversation with me, because I often retreat into myself even when I seemingly am engaging in a conversation. I wonder if my conversation partners notice my lack of attention?) Why would James potentially jeopardize his career just to go to bed with a graduate student ... admittedly a very good looking graduate student? Is Evelyn telling me the truth? Why would she lie? Evelyn is not a person to blame other people for her failures. She must be telling me the truth.

"Furthermore..."

"Have you told anyone else about this?"

"Not even my roommate. I am too embarrassed. Sometimes I wonder if in some obscure way I might have led him on."

"Evelyn, James is a bastard. Excuse me. I didn't mean that. Oh, yes, I did. I try to make it a rule not to criticize other faculty members, but if you're right James is guilty of sexual harassment. I don't know what to tell you. I'm almost as powerless as you.

"But to tell you the truth, even if I did have tenure I don't know if I would have the courage to expose James. Unlike other departments on campus ours is a pretty peaceful place. We seem to like it that way. Any conflict between faculty members usually gets suppressed by an implicit mutual consent. Any conflict that does get expressed is more times than not of the passive-aggressive variety. We muddle along and usually play nice. What can I say?

"I can tell you what the personnel experts say you should do — confront the person who is harassing you and tell that person in no uncertain terms that you don't appreciate their conduct and ask them to cease their behavior. This is a case of quid pro quo harassment. The courts have determined that this kind of behavior is clearly unlawful under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. According to university policy, if the person persists in harassing you, you have the right to take your case to the department head or in this case the dean. Of course,

that's easier said than done, especially when your harasser holds a considerable amount of power over you. And me for that matter.

"It's also my obligation as a faculty member at this university to report James's behavior to an EEO Officer or a person in the upper administration, but that also is risky. They have more than enough reason to dump me come tenure time and although they could carefully disguise it, James and the senior members of the department would probably join together and in an oh so subtle way, exact vengeance upon me, if I choose to be an active boat rocker. I get the feeling that more of this stuff goes on at universities than we realize. I don't know about all the skeletons in this place. It could be that some of the other professors in the department have done the same thing. Who knows maybe James backed them.

"I know I'm sounding like a terrible fish and not a very courageous person, but if I don't get tenure here, I'm damaged goods. I might as well start circulating my vitae on the community college circuit."

"But whatever you do, don't blame yourself. This is James's offense, not yours. You're the victim, not the perpetrator. You know this isn't probably even about sex. It's about raw power. James likes to manhandle people, so to speak. He manhandles you. He manhandles me. I guess he feels he's got something to prove to himself by persuading you to be his bedmate. And he likes to see me squirm whenever he subtly reminds me of my untenured status."

"You may be right. But what can I do besides leave the program? I think that he's going to make life hell for me if I stay here."

"I don't know, but I promise to think about it. Let's talk some more about this tomorrow."

Obviously still distressed, Evelyn slowly rises from her chair and with perfect form opens my door and leaves my office. The rest of my afternoon is totally unproductive. I try to prepare for next week's lectures, but my mind keeps wandering. Must untenured assistant professors always tread lightly, but do I have an ethical obligation to report on James, even though it will undoubtedly hurt my career? To hell with tenure — am I simply lacking in moral courage? My musings are interrupted by the ever talkative Max Baird.

"Hey, what's up?"

How can this guy publish so much when he seemingly spends half of his time moving door to door in the department. I like and respect

him, but sometimes I'm tempted to walk the other way when I see him coming. I never seem to have short conversations with Max. They seldom seem to last for less than 30 minutes. Granted they are interesting — part substance, part gossip, part plain bitching.

"Not much, just thinking about next week's lectures."

"Dick, this might not be any of my business, but the secretaries are talking about you and Evelyn. It seems that whenever Evelyn comes in your office these days, the door shuts behind her."

"Max, there's nothing going on between Evelyn and me. I am not stupid enough to engage in a sexual liaison with one of my students."

"Hey, I know that. Just be careful. Maintain the correct appearance."

"Okay."

I would like to ask Max for his advice, but I can't since I would be breaking my word with Evelyn. Besides, despite Max's generally good intentions, he strikes me as a person who has difficulty maintaining a confidence. Maybe I can seek out his advice, while remaining elliptical.

"Max, what is the best way of dealing with a bully?"

"I hope that you're not referring to anyone in the department. You know, James can be difficult at times, but I don't think he's a bully. We don't exchange season's greetings, but I know he has respect for me. He's been more than fair in distributing salary increases."

Little do you know! This tenure-thing certainly has a club-like quality to it. Gossip and the occasional mild criticism is okay, but it seems, at least in this department, that each of the "fulls" know where to draw the line.

I lie. "No I'm not implying that. Let's approach this on a purely abstract plane. How would you get a bully to stop his bullying?"

"Well, gee, I guess I haven't thought about this since my days in elementary school."

"What did you do back then?"

"I was fairly well liked, but I did bear the stigma of being the professor's kid and was usually the smartest kid in class."

"Yeah, but didn't somebody have it out for you?"

"Jackie Hopkins was sort of a pain in the ass in seventh grade. He threatened to beat me up and made the obligatory anti-Semitic remarks."

"Why do you think he picked on you?"

"I suppose he was envious of me. Jackie was not a good student. I suspect that he was frustrated by school and took out some of his frustrations on me, since our teachers were not an available target.

"He was a big kid with plenty of dormant testosterone. I remember that for six months I took the long route home from school just so I could avoid him and his gang of thugs."

"Did it work?"

"He pushed me around a few times, but he never beat me. He finally stopped picking on me, probably because in eighth grade he started to get interested in girls."

"Knowing what you know now, would you have handled him differently?"

"I wasn't traumatized by it, but sometimes I wish I had confronted him. It was my natural reaction to flee from him and try to avoid the problem. Aren't we getting a little too psychiatric?"

"Don't worry I'm not taking notes and besides I don't have a couch. But if you had the luxury of doing it over again, would you have confronted him directly or more covertly?"

"I guess the 'marly' thing would have been to confront him directly. But given his greater strength and general meanness, I'm sure that he would have made short work of me."

"He was superior physically and you were superior mentally. But it strikes me that you opted to play his game."

"You're probably right. But what does this have to do with anything?"

"Max, do you always have to be so damn instrumental. Aren't we in academe allowed the time to engage in idle speculation?"

"Granted."

But Max was clearly bored. His eyes are starting to glaze over — much the same way I feel when he launches into one of his monologues on the importance of constitutional law.

"See you later."

I've got it! I think I know how to advise Evelyn. This clearly wouldn't be advice sanctioned by NOW, but maybe it will work... at least in this situation.

The next morning Evelyn drags into my office. Her eyes are red, her hair askew, her make-up imperfectly applied. If she were almost anybody else, she would look terrible. But natural beauty is seldom camouflaged, even by carelessness and neglect.

"Dick I've thought a lot more about this and I don't see any alternative to leaving."

"Before you make a final decision, hear me out. I have a plan. Let me preface this advice by acknowledging that this is a high risk strategy and I wouldn't suggest it unless the only alternative was you leaving. Look, you're allowing James to call the shots. You should take the initiative and not allow him to dictate the rules. Approach this problem as a game — a game in which you're about to change the rules.

"Now I know this is going to sound a little crazy, but I think you should publicly make a show of your affection for James."

"You're right. That is a crazy idea. I can't stand him. He makes my skin crawl."

"I fully realize that. But I'm asking you to be a skillful actress. Look, you know that all James wants is a spirited fling in the privacy of a bedroom, not a long term relationship."

"Right, but I don't want to encourage that slimy..."

"Sure, but don't you think he's going to be thoroughly embarrassed, if you imply by your actions that you two are having a none too discrete affair. Don't you think Mrs. James is going to explode over that? Don't you think that the upper administration will take him to task? What about the trustees? They'll be calling for his head. Of course, there are several down side risks. First, your peers are bound to say some very nasty things about you."

"They do already. Katy, my roommate tells me that there are rumors circulating that I've gone to bed with a quarter of the male graduate students in this department. Last week she even heard that you and I were... well"

I blush.

"So that won't be so much of a problem for you then." I state, anxious to change the subject.

"Secondly, James might take your overtures seriously and become further emboldened."

"I don't know this is quite a leap for me."

"Do you think he's going to stop on his own volition?"

"No."

"Do you really want to leave the university?"

"Not really."

"Do you want me to contact the EEO officer?"

"No, he wouldn't believe me and besides it would put you in an awkward position."

I am secretly relieved. At least in this case, I won't have to test my moral resoluteness.

"Well, then why not try it?"

"Aren't I being rather cowardly by doing this?"

"You can include me in that category."

"I mean... I'm probably not the first woman who James has harassed."

"Nor will you be the last. In a more perfect world.... you would confront your accuser and possibly report him to the higher authorities. But what proof do you have? I think that James can make a convincing case that you are only a malcontent who is using a novel way to complain about your grade. That's the problem dealing with harassers nowadays, they're much more covert than they used to be. James and his kind are much too smart to make public their sexual lewdness. They have to go underground and it probably makes sense for you to go underground too. Our approach may not be the most ethically pure response, but given the situation, it may be the most effective strategy."

"Okay. I'm willing to take that risk. What do I have to lose?"

"Well, you can be certain he won't write you a recommendation."

She laughs.

"To further protect yourself. Why don't you carry around a pocket, voice-activated tape recorder. I know this sounds rather James Bond-like, but it might come in handy."

"Okay. I'll keep you informed."



By mutual agreement, I don't talk to Evelyn fearing that I might be construed as a co-conspirator in her gambit. I almost forgot about her plight. However, the following week while I am sitting in one of the siderooms off the main departmental office perusing student evaluation forms from the previous semester, I overhear a rather curious phone conversation between Francene and one of her campus cohorts. Since I pick up the conversation in midstream I am not entirely sure where Francene is directing her venom.

"Gladys I couldn't believe it. She came to class and put a long stemmed rose on Dr. James's lectern.

(Pause)

"I don't know if there's anything going on between them. I'm sure that Jacqueline will go through the roof if there's any monkey business going on."

(Pause)

"I don't know if she's a hussy but at least she appears to be an adulterer."

(Pause)

"Would you mind checking her admission file to see what you can find. Maybe she has a history of this?"

(Pause)

"Yes. Her name is EVELYN LONGMONT."

(Pause)

"Thanks."

Evelyn did it! Good for her! I've got to sneak out of here at an opportune moment so that Francene doesn't suspect that I may have overheard her conversation. Not sensing an immediate opportunity, I slowly close the office door and wait for Francene to leave. After waiting more than 30 minutes, Francene leaves her roost and I open the door and try to make a quick getaway. I find my passage blocked by Max Baird.

"Hey, Dick. Come to my office."

"Max, I can't stay long. I've got papers to grade."

"This won't take long."

This must be something juicy. He's closing the door behind him.

"Have you heard what's going on. Spring must be arriving early this semester. One of my students told me that Evelyn planted a kiss on James's cheek after her midterm. She's your advisee, isn't she? What are you guys teaching your students in public administration anyway? How to act inappropriately?"

I ignore his ridiculous comment, but am somewhat irritated by the disciplinary attack. "That's sounds very out of character for her."

"I thought that James is smarter than that. Carrying on with a student. That's pretty delicate business in these politically correct times. He must be going through some sort of mid-life crisis."

"Now wait a minute Max. You're the constitutional scholar. What evidence do you have to support these seemingly unsubstantiated allegations?" Touché.

"All right, maybe I'm jumping the gun, but appearances do matter."

"Yes, Max... they most certainly do."

That night I receive a call from Evelyn. She mumbles, "Can I come over to talk. I promise to wear sunglasses."

"Sure, " I joke, "but come in the back entrance."

"Okay. See you in ten."

She shows up looking relaxed, wearing sunglasses — the African dictator variety that reflect back at you. Her carefully coifed blonde hair gentle flows over her ashen trench coat.

"Hi. Sorry I've been out of touch so long, but I thought it best that you not have contact with a fallen woman."

"You don't look fallen, you... look like you're on top of the world."

"Certainly better than when you last saw me."

"Can I get you something to drink?"

"Sure"

"What would you like?"

"How 'bout a scotch on the rocks. It sort of suits my new image. Don't you think?"

"Sure, if you say so. Do you find that your role as a femme fatale suits you?"

"Actually I wasn't looking forward to doing it at first, but I have to say I thoroughly enjoyed making James feel uncomfortable. I've got everyone in the department believing that the two of us are a hot couple. He, of course, is scared that his wife is going to find out."

"I heard about the long stemmed rose and the kiss on the cheek."

"Well, you're not up-to-date. There was also the perfumed letter that I put on his door and the silk stocking I placed on his office floor."

"You're devilish. I'll have to remember not to cross you."

"I'm sure our relationship will never come to that."

"Tell me what happened."

"I can do better. I secretly taped our last conversation. I finally got the courage to confront him. Our strategy gave me the psychological advantage that I was lacking before."

"Play it. I'm dying to hear it."

She fumbles through her purse and decisively pushes the tape recorder's play button.

"Evelyn I find your behavior during the past week to be absolutely reprehensible."

"Dr. James... you are a liar, a hypocrite and a bully. I engaged in that kind of behavior, because you stepped over the bounds by asking me to sleep with you at the APSA conference."

"I did no such thing. Remember, I only suggested that we get adjoining rooms because I thought that you would want me to introduce you to some of the field's leading lights. Certainly ...

"That's a lot of crap. When you made the offer, there was a leer on your face and you know it. And furthermore, when I refused to take up your offer, you punished me by lowering my grades. I also suspect that you got your watchdog Francene to make my life miserable."

"Please, you live in a fantasy world. Young woman, I don't..."

"Shut up and listen to me. If you don't stop harassing me, I'm going to have a frank discussion with your wife."

"I don't think..."

"Quiet! Cease and desist or else!"

Evelyn hits the stop button and triumphantly raises two thumbs in the air. "I don't think he's going to bother me again."

"Great!"

"I owe it all to you. Your idea was brilliant."

"Please..."

"No, I mean it Dick. Thanks a lot."

"Can I freshen up your drink?"

"Sure."

As I reach for her drink, I place my hand over hers. We share an uncomfortable silence.

"Dick, I don't think this would be right. After all, I'm not the person I was pretending to be last week."

"Sorry. It won't happen again."

"I think I better get going."

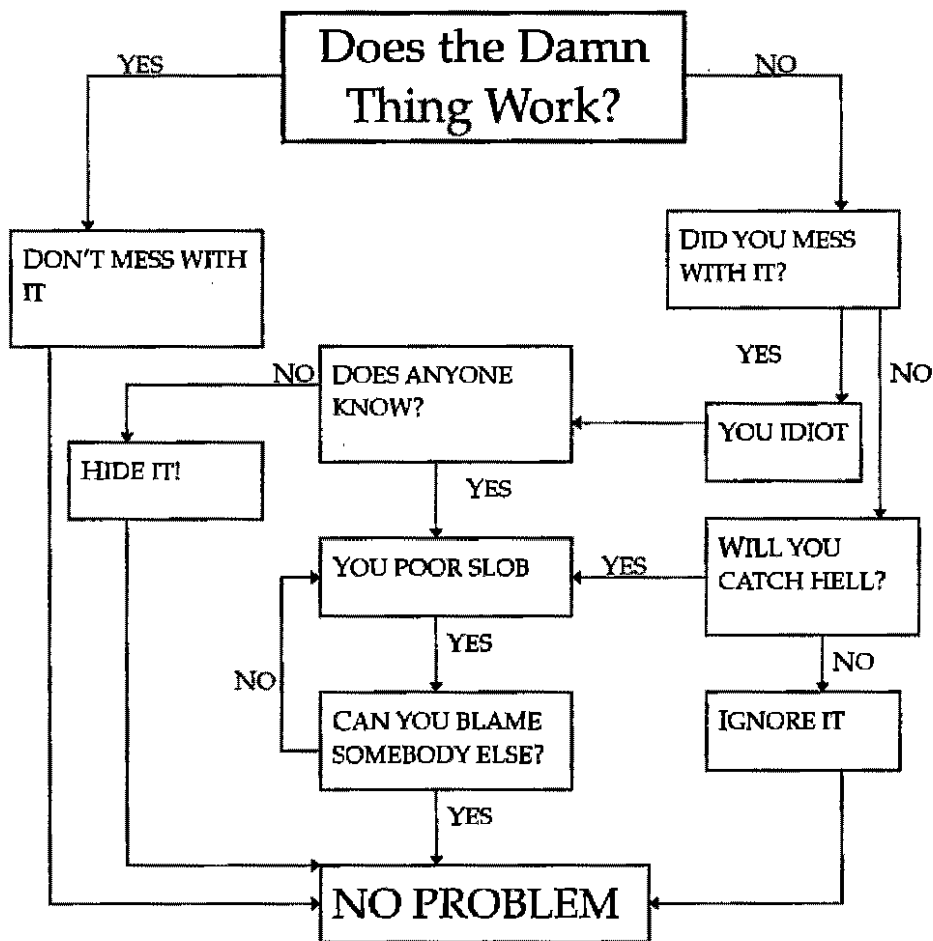
"Okay, Evelyn. Why don't you stop by my office soon."

"Sure. Bye."

Dummy! Imbecile! Moral midget! Why did I have to let lust intrude upon an otherwise perfectly pure moment. Maybe I'm no different than James. We're both lusty—he's just more bold. I hope I can repair my relationship with Evelyn. Although after an incident like this, it probably will never be the same. Dejected I go the freezer and take out a half-eaten box of frozen spaghetti.

Dr. Larry Hubbell is the department head of the Political Science Department at the University of Wyoming. He occasionally dabbles in fiction, but is intent upon writing a novel in the near future.

# Problem Solving Flowsheet



# Situation Normal

*Glenn W. Fisher*

*The military and the church were the first bureaucracies.*

The major's words were soft, but firm. "You could not have gone into combat blind in one eye—it's against regulations." I replied with all the firmness that a twenty-year old private can command when speaking to a major. "I did, sir. I'm sure my records show it." The major left and I climbed back onto my bed. It was a simple, hand cranked hospital bed, one of three in what had been a guest room in the Chicago Beach Hotel. Now it was Gardiner General Hospital, situated on the lake at 53th street. The walls were white. There were electrical outlets, but none of the signs of medical technology that decorate a modern hospital room. Beside each bed was a simple table. Mine contained two books from the library and a deck of cards ready for the unending game of blackjack. A recurring joke on the seventh floor was that we were learning a skill in the Army—how to deal cards with one hand. The floor was the "hand ward". Every patient had an injury to a hand or lower arm so everything was done with one hand, or sometimes, with two hands belonging to two people.

Did the major really believe that everything happened according to regulations? Did they believe it in the Pentagon? Surely, they knew that one of the most common expression among the troops was, "Situation Normal All F\_\_ Up" [SNAFUed]. After more than forty years of observing and teaching about public policy, I know that there are many ways of describing large, bureaucratic organizations but, from the viewpoint of those at the bottom of the pyramid, this five word summary is often accurate, even in organizations facing easier tasks than the one faced by the military in World War II.

I think about the series of events that explained my situation. We were doing field exercises in Texas. "First squad, you go up that draw. Fisher you will be lead scout. Keep you eyes open for the enemy, but move rapidly." I had gone a few hundred yards, at half-trot. Ahead to the right was a protruding log. The end, six feet in the air, pointed at me like a cannon. From it there was a flash. Something struck my shoulder—my eye hurt.

Quickly the medics arrived. Now they could practice war too! The shoulder wounds were superficial, only skin breaks. Luckily, straps from my backpack had absorbed the hardest strikes. But the eye needed attention, "We'll take you to the base hospital." At the hospital, the doctor said, "There's a hole in the cornea. I can't see anything in there, but we'll X-ray it. Go back to your unit and I'll see you again tomorrow."

Back in the barracks, I learned what had happened. The combat engineers had forgotten to remove some of the practice bobby-traps they had laid. One-quarter pounds of nitrostarch is not a big charge, but it was big enough to rip out the guts of a Sergeant in Company B as he crawled under simulated enemy fire. I was lucky that the charge was planted on the end of a log several feet from the wire that I tripped. Years later, when the press popularized the term friendly fire, I realized that the Sergeant and I had been the victims of friendly booby traps. For us there would be no headlines, no investigations. These were just normal training accidents.

After several more x-rays the doctor reported that he was unable to locate an object in my eye, but that a cataract was developing. You will probably be transferred to a non-combat unit.

I was not the only one in the company with a bad eye. Private Harvey Smith had been protesting for many months that he was blind in one eye and should not be in a combat unit. Finally, he got his answer. "You will leave immediately for assignment to a non-combat unit overseas." The word passed quickly. "It's probably an awful assignment. He'll wish he had stayed with us. Yes, but it serves him right. Oh, I don't blame him—if I could get out of the infantry, I'd jump at the chance."

A few days later, the orders came for the rest of us. All passes and furloughs were canceled. The division was going to a port of embarkation. The destination and date were secret, but somebody managed to get permission to go to town on business. He returned with the word from a friendly bartender. "You are going to Fort Dix, New

Jersey." That meant Europe. "That's good! The Germans are tough but they fight like civilized people—not like the Japs."

After we arrived at Fort Dix word begins coming back from France that American soldiers were not familiar enough with weapons and were not good marksmen. The Pentagon responded with a flurry of orders. "Give them more weapons training." The commanders responded by ordering that every man must qualify on a firing range that simulated combat conditions. Stationary, circular targets were replaced by pop-up silhouettes. Soldiers in firing position had a limited time to fire at the silhouettes as they appeared at various ranges and angles.

We were up before dawn and arrived at the firing range at sunup. The instructions were clear. Some were assigned to the pits. They were to raise and lower the targets on command. Every hit was to be signaled with a flag. Later, those in the pits would take their place on the firing line. "Now lets get this clear, EVERY MAN IN THE BATTALION WILL STAY HERE UNTIL EVERY MAN HAS QUALIFIED—ABSOLUTELY NO EXCEPTIONS."

I took my position on the firing line. Without a right eye I could not fire right-handed and I had never fired a rifle left-handed. It was awkward. It was hard to hold the rifle steady in the unfamiliar position, but at least I didn't have to worry about closing the wrong eye! The first target was up. I fired. A flag waved. I fired again. Another flag waved. It seemed impossible to miss. Maybe I should have shot left-handed all the time! Up and down the firing lines everyone was doing a marvelous job. Rarely, was there a shot not rewarded with a waving flag. Soon, the men in the pits were being replaced by those who had already qualified. They seemed confident that they too would qualify quickly. They did. The 102nd Division would go into combat with every man a qualified marksman. We were back in the barracks in time to enjoy a few free hours before chow time.

Now that it was officially recorded that I could shoot left handed, there was only one more obstacle to overseas assignment—the pre-embarkation physical exam. Like everything in the Army this was characterized by lines. This line was for feet inspection. Then we went to the next station for blood pressure checks. Then, "over here for vision testing." I approached the corporal: "Your name and serial number. Cover your right eye and read the chart. O.K. Now cover your left eye and read. You can't? Do you see anything. Just a blur of light." The corporal looked flustered. Two 20/20 's had already been recorded on the chart. He didn't have an eraser. He wrote over it. The result was



illegible, but it mattered little. Nobody would have time to look at it before we sailed.

Perhaps I should have explained to the major, but wise privates don't volunteer and don't explain. I never saw him again.

Glenn W. Fisher is Professor Emeritus at Wichita State University. His latest book, *The Worst Tax: A History of the Property Tax in America* has just been released by the University Press of Kansas.

# **Gene and Ilsa: A Case of Interpersonal Conflict in a Public Organization**

*Charles T. Angelo*

*Gene Mancuso seemed to bolt from the hallway into the reception area adjacent to his corner office. Dispensing with his usual friendly greeting, he practically shouted at Betty, his longtime administrative assistant. "Can you believe that bitch? You work your ass off around here and nobody gives a damn!"*

*So animated was Gene that he pummeled Betty's desk with the palm of his hand and let loose a string of epithets the likes of which Betty had never heard. Startled, she said, "Gene, what's wrong? You're scaring me. Please calm down!"*

*But Gene's apparent rage was not to be easily assuaged. He momentarily stopped and looked at Betty with a half crazed, half pleading look in his eyes. Then, without saying a word, he turned and whirled into his office, slamming the door behind him so forcefully that pictures fell from their hooks on either side of the wall. Once inside, he tried sitting, but was so enraged he could not stop trembling. Instead, he paced back and forth like a caged animal, instinctively, randomly, without purpose or meaning. Finally, after nearly fifteen minutes, he collapsed onto the sofa in his office, inconsolable and sobbing softly. He had never felt so alone, so vulnerable, so totally helpless and misunderstood, so utterly speechless.*

*A warm Monday with the first signs of spring in the air, the day had started rather uneventfully. It was Gene's first day back in the office after spending most of the previous week at a conference of government*

purchasing officers and suppliers in Atlanta, where he moderated one of the panels. He set aside the morning to sift through the accumulated mail, file his expense report, and review the week's activities with his branch managers. After grabbing a quick lunch at his desk, Gene's attention was drawn to the bright sunny day outside his window. The temperature had soared from a morning low of 37 to over 70 degrees. Having endured a long, cold winter with record snowfalls, Gene found the temptation too great to resist. Intending to take only a short walk, he strolled the length of the sprawling state office complex, punctuated here and there by small, but carefully manicured open spaces, to the older, more picturesque capitol grounds. Earlier in his career, Gene went there often just to sit on a park bench along the capitol's gently sloping lawns. He would sit and gaze at its gleaming dome, which shone like a golden beacon in the bright sunlight. And he would reflect on his career choice and the many ways in which even his most insignificant acts could affect the lives of so many people across the state. While he sometimes felt overwhelmed by the awesome reach of public service, he usually found these visits to be more energizing than enervating.

In recent years, Gene's contemplative visits to the capitol grounds had all but stopped. Since taking over the state's purchasing office nearly six years earlier, he had put in consistently long hours, both at the office and at home. While he tried to maintain a reasonable balance between work and family, Gene knew that he devoted less of himself to his wife and their three children than he wanted. He also earned a widespread reputation as an innovative procurement manager with a penchant for experimentation and a public disdain for the status quo. Lately, it seemed he was asked frequently to speak at various government and industry events. While he could not accommodate all requests, he had been spending more and more time away from home and the office on the lecture circuit. A favorite of the industry trade press, both for his easy accessibility and his forthrightness, his public remarks were chronicled regularly.

Maybe it was the beautiful spring day or the rare visit to an old, familiar temple, but Gene returned from his walk with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment. His little pilgrimage was both intellectually and spiritually uplifting. Consequently, he was not at all prepared for the troubled tone in Betty's voice. She informed Gene that his supervisor, Ilsa Sampson, had called three times to ask that Gene come to her office. According to Betty, Ilsa seemed more insistent and more formal than usual and, by the third call, somewhat agitated that Gene was not there. When Betty offered to help, she was advised curtly that it was a personal

matter that required Gene's immediate attention. Because demands of this sort were so out of character, Betty could not help but be concerned.

Since taking over as director of the state department of finance and administration a little more than a year earlier, Ilsa had become increasingly concerned about Gene. She was uncomfortable with his national prominence and high visibility in government purchasing circles and wondered whether his frequent absences from the office were beginning to harm the organization. Less work seemed to get done in Gene's absences, and often it did not measure up to the office's usual high standards. Yet when Gene was around, it was sometimes difficult to work with him. When he attended Ilsa's weekly staff meetings, Gene made no attempt to conceal his lack of regard for her or his contempt for many of her ideas. More often than not, he gave the appearance of believing that if the idea did not come from him or his staff, it had little or no value, sort of the classic "not invented here" syndrome. Gene was particularly cynical and unenthusiastic about Ilsa's efforts to implement the statewide government reinvention program within the department. As if those were not reasons enough, Gene gave Ilsa even more cause for concern by occasionally letting drop that he had been contacted by some state or local government concerning a vacant procurement position. It was unclear to Ilsa whether Gene actively was seeking employment elsewhere or simply using the threat of leaving to underscore his reputation and reinforce his importance. Whatever his motives, Gene freely shared such information around the office.

In fact, Gene had begun to feel as if he were on a treadmill. The combined weight of the job, his increased travel and speaking schedules, his growing detachment from his family, and his deteriorating relationship with Ilsa had begun to wear on him. Whether for ego gratification or the simple flattery that accompanied them, the occasional inquiries he received from other states and localities also were unsettling, at least temporarily. At bottom, Gene knew he was not interested in relocating his family, but somehow felt compelled to listen to the initial overtures. The untimely death of his longtime boss, friend and mentor, Mack Hamilton, also had taken its toll. Mack had suffered a massive heart attack on his way home from work about a month before Ilsa was appointed to succeed him. He was just days shy of his 50th birthday at the time. Gene, who was only three years younger, worked with or for Mack during most of his twenty-three years in state government. He respected and admired Mack, whose razor-sharp mind was matched only by his totally unassuming, genuinely caring nature. He was one of those rare people who actually experienced more satisfaction helping

others succeed than he did from his own accomplishments, substantial though they were. Because Mack was so secure in his own person and position, he not only was unconcerned about Gene's expanding professional activities and visibility outside the office, he actually encouraged them. Mack understood that Gene was motivated less by a need for personal recognition, though he certainly did not refuse it, than by a desire to tell the state's story. Gene was intent on strengthening the working relationship between the state and its suppliers by sharing and exchanging information. He believed firmly that the more private sector suppliers understood how their products and services contributed to the outcomes of government, the better able they were to design and deliver goods and services that fulfilled the state's expectations. At the same time, he believed equally that government purchasing must be informed as fully as possible by a knowledge of the marketplace. If government as a consumer of goods and services was to spend tax dollars wisely and prudently, it could not buy in a vacuum. It had to understand what private industry could produce economically, reliably and at a reasonable profit, and to structure its demands accordingly. In seeking the fullest possible competition, Gene felt it was essential to investigate what the market had to offer before formally soliciting products or services, and to be aware of and anticipate market trends. The more government and industry talked to one another, he reasoned, the more likely they were to engage in business transactions that were mutually beneficial to both parties, which Gene accepted as a cardinal principle.

Until asked by Mack to head the purchasing office, Gene spent his entire career in staff positions. He joined the state right out of college as a management analyst division, and eventually rose to become chief of the management improvement branch. Gene took an early interest in professional development and advanced on a fast track in his career. Having majored in history as an undergraduate, he enrolled in an evening program at the nearby state university and completed a master's degree in public administration. Over time, however, he became somewhat disenchanted with staff work, particularly with the rapid succession of management initiatives he was expected to oversee, such as planning, programming and budgeting systems, management by objectives, and quality circles, and with the mindless adulation of whomever happened to be the "management guru of the day." Thus, when Mack approached him in 1990 to take over the troubled purchasing office, he jumped at the chance to run his own program rather than continually look over the shoulders of other line managers.

At first, Gene felt very inadequate to the task. While he had a broad understanding of the collective functions of the department of finance and administration, he lacked the in-depth knowledge necessary to direct any one of them. True, he had taken a couple of procurement courses during his master's program, but that was in the 70's; the information was dated and, to a large degree, obsolete. But Mack chose Gene for the job partly because he was not encumbered by a detailed knowledge of procurement rules and procedures and, therefore, more able to comprehend the larger issues at stake. Other state departments complained frequently of slow and unresponsive service. Prospective contractors sought audiences with Mack to vent their frustration over the purchasing office's refusal to meet with them to learn more about their products and services. The picture that was emerging was of an office increasingly shut off from its customers and suppliers. So great was their fear of litigation, especially by unsuccessful bidders who protested contract awards, that purchasing officials had come to defer almost all contract award decisions to the state's lawyers. By default, then, it was the attorney general's office, not the department of finance and administration, that seemed to run the state's procurement programs. They seemed to be guided by three principal maxims: never let customers intimidate you; always keep suppliers at least a full arm's length away; and trust no one. Somewhat cynically, Mack read those same maxims to mean: always interpret and follow the rules as literally as possible, even if it means failing to satisfy your customers' needs; do not let your knowledge of the marketplace get in the way of your compliance with the rules; and do not seek win-win outcomes because, by definition, they are impossible to achieve.

Mack understood that despite their caution, most contracting officers and attorneys are well-intentioned. He found it difficult to articulate his frustrations and his concerns without also sounding as if he condoned breaking or at least bending the rules. Their almost single-minded focus on buttressing all contracting decisions against the possibility of protest virtually ensured that any suggestion the purchasing office establish a more open relationship with its customers or suppliers would be misinterpreted as a signal to operate less ethically. He also knew that any hint of a departure from accepted norms would invite rampant second-guessing of his motives, and so he felt he could only institute change within the purchasing office through an action strategy, not administrative dictates. In Gene, he felt he found the perfect person to refocus the purchasing office's orientation from negative to positive, from compliance to service, from reactive to proactive. That he knew little of detailed procurement rules and procedures was less an impediment than

an asset. He could see and, more importantly, feel the forest. And in a few short years, Gene not only fulfilled, but exceeded Mack's expectations.

Beyond feeling as if he were on a treadmill, Gene had experienced more subtle changes. He was unsure whether they had arisen independently of Mack's death or as a subconscious reaction to it. Mack was a highly respected, career civil servant. While Ilsa nominally was a career employee, she owed her success more to political influence than anything else. She was appointed to Mack's former position shortly after the last gubernatorial election. Reportedly, she had strong political ties to the victor. At the time of her appointment, she had worked for four years as the chief legislative affairs officer in the department of education, her only state government experience. Prior to joining the state, she taught in the public schools for three years before leaving to set up her own educational consulting firm, which was very successful at obtaining state contracts until she fell out of favor with the previous governor. Even though Ilsa was not a political insider during the last administration, the secretary of education knew and thought enough of Ilsa to hire her for the legislative affairs position. Because the legislature was controlled by the opposition party, the Secretary reasoned that Ilsa might be a political asset instead of a liability. Ilsa was bright, articulate, and well-educated (she had earned a doctorate in education), but had no appreciable experience managing large organizations in general or in finance and administration specifically. She seemingly was unprepared to oversee the department's vast network of agencies or its more than 7,000 employees, and her selection as Mack's successor came as a surprise to almost everyone.

Because she had so little experience directly related to her new duties, Ilsa tended to hold the reins much more tightly than had Mack. Until she learned more about the department and its responsibilities, she had little basis to know how much to delegate to her subordinates. Consequently, she chose to err on the side of caution. As someone who succeeded largely as an entrepreneur and through political influence, Ilsa's perceptions of other peoples' motives tended to differ from those whose careers developed solely within the culture of a large public organization. She did not comprehend fully the notion of a commitment to public service as a lifelong vocation. Consequently, people like Gene who had both a presence and a stature outside the department were especially vexing. She assumed that anyone as involved as he in professional activities must have an ulterior motive. She too had been very active in professional education circles as a means of continually

marketing her consulting services, but she also benefited from the same network of contacts to land a job with the state. Ilsa was unsure whether Gene was motivated primarily by ego needs or was actively seeking other employment, but she assumed he had only his best interests at heart. In short, Ilsa interpreted Gene's actions through the lens of her own experiences, assuming he was as motivated by rational, self-interest as she always had been. Her own career had been the result of so many utilitarian calculations that she could conceive of no other way.

Never good to begin with, communication between Ilsa and Gene generally had disintegrated altogether. From the beginning, Gene resented Ilsa's presence and authority. He continually compared her to Mack and found her wanting in almost every respect. He liked to think that his feelings had absolutely nothing to do with gender, but he was not sure that he liked working for a woman. Coming from a very ethnic background in which gender roles traditionally had been very stereotyped, Gene often struggled with gender issues. More acutely, however, he was bothered by the growing distrust between them. While Mack was very supportive of Gene, and consistently rewarded him with superior performance ratings and annual bonuses, Ilsa continually questioned Gene's judgment. She told him that his frequent absences from the office, usually one to two weeks a month, had hurt both the quality and the continuity of the state's purchasing programs. Gene had developed strong relationships with his branch managers and they were intensely loyal to him. But he also overpowered them with his strong personality and inserted his views into just enough of the details of the office's work when he was there that they were reluctant to make significant decisions in his absence. Moreover, while Gene was uncommonly successful in establishing broad and positive working relationships both with suppliers and customers, he had done little to involve other members of the office in those efforts. In effect, the success of the state purchasing office was more attributable to Gene Mancuso's individual knowledge, contacts and initiatives than those of the office as a whole. His was a dominant and, arguably, essential presence, he knew it, and he expected appropriate recognition — recognition which Mack had given freely but Ilsa withheld.

Thus it was not surprising that Gene sought to spend even more time in the company of people who satisfied his need for personal recognition. As Gene found less and less in his own milieu, he was drawn to the more friendly external environment of his work. Lacking positive reinforcement from his own boss, he sought it more often at professional gatherings of others in the extended procurement community. Gene



worried that he might be devaluing himself to the state by spending more and more time away from the office, but he was not sure he cared. He had all but convinced himself that the comfort he found outside the office was his rightful reward for the lack of appreciation he experienced at the office.

As Gene climbed the two flights of stairs to the top floor of the building, where the executive offices were located, he felt an almost odd sense of relief. While he did not know exactly why he had been summoned, he knew intuitively it would not be a pleasant meeting. Consequently, he decided not even to try to be conciliatory. He reasoned that his relations with Ilsa had grown so poor, he may as well just let them bottom out completely.

Ilsa's secretary, with whom Gene always maintained cordial relations, greeted him with downcast eyes. Tersely, she said, "Please go in. She is expecting you."

"So what is it that's so damn important you had to pester Betty to the point of distraction?" Gene asked in a loud voice from the threshold of Ilsa's office. He bothered neither to knock nor to close the door behind him, choosing instead literally to shout at Ilsa from across the room.

"Please close the door and sit down, Gene," Ilsa replied in a very authoritarian and solemn tone. She motioned to a chair at the front of her desk. "I have given a great deal of thought to what I am about to say. I want you to know that I understand and appreciate how much you have done to improve the state's purchasing programs. The things your office has accomplished over the last six years could not have happened without your dedicated leadership. Now that you have made it a responsive and effective organization, I believe the purchasing on its own. Consequently, I have decided to reassign you as a special assistant to the director of the state records office, which is badly in need of your particular leadership skills. I have here a letter advising you of my decision, and instructing you to report to your new position by the end of the week."

"So, just like that, you yank me out of a job I have done better than anyone ever did before or, in my estimation, will ever do again?" Gene snapped. "You don't even know the first thing about what we do and it's clear you don't give a damn. I knew all along you didn't really care about the organization. If you did, you wouldn't be pulling this bullshit. I care more about serving the best interests of the taxpayers than you will ever understand. You're sticking me on a damn shelf for doing my job too well! That's a real crock, isn't it?"

"I am sorry you feel that way, Gene," Ilsa responded. "I had hoped all along that we could have a more constructive dialogue. While you may have thought otherwise, I supported fully the direction of your office. I might have preferred that you be more supportive of other initiatives, such as our reinvention program, but I also knew that your office would do its job well as long as you were involved enough to keep everything moving. But you and I have different views on what it means to be involved. I felt you needed to spend less time on the road and more time focused on the day-to-day work of the office. I respected you and your accomplishments too much, however, to be arbitrary. I hoped you would respond voluntarily to my general concerns. Instead, you chose to ignore my concerns altogether. I might even have been able to live with that if it weren't for the performance gaps when you are gone and your open insolence when you are here. I simply can no longer allow you to undermine my position and authority in front of the other office directors. Frankly, you leave me little choice in this matter, Gene."

"Oh, you have a choice. You could try to see things from my point of view, to understand that there is a cause and effect relationship between the amount of time I spend outside the office and its overall effectiveness. Unless the state starts manufacturing its own equipment and supplies, or starts providing its own support services, we are dependent on the commercial world. The better they know us and what we need, and the better we know them and what they can do, the better it is for everybody concerned. You can't develop that kind of mutual understanding hiding behind a damn bureaucrat's desk. For somebody who made her living off of state contracts, you certainly should understand that. After all, you milked your contacts for all they were worth, didn't you? Let's face facts here. You just can't handle having to supervise somebody who is better known and has more public visibility than you do. We're more alike than you think. You're just jealous. This is purely personal, isn't it?"

"We are going nowhere with this conversation, Gene. The unfortunate part is that I don't think you have any idea how genuinely disappointed I am. As far as I'm concerned, this meeting is over. Perhaps after you've had time to reflect on my decision, you will come to see it in a different light. Please close the door on your way out."

His face reddened, Gene grabbed Ilsa's letter and left. He knew he would be reporting to someone Ilsa recruited personally and was one of her closest confidants. Except for its archives, which attracted mostly academic and genealogical researchers, the state records office was one of its most obscure, least visible administrative outposts. Moreover, it was obvious that he was being sent to a position with no real purpose or

function. On some level, Gene knew he had reached a point of alienation from which it would be difficult, if not impossible, to retreat. Yet he still cared deeply about the mission of the purchasing office. All the evidence supported the fact that state agencies received substantially better, more consistent and more responsive service at the same or lower costs than they had in 1990 when Gene arrived. Competition for state contracts had never been greater, the quality of goods and services better, or price competition more intense. Gene was at a loss to understand how the overwhelming proof of his success could be so callously disregarded; he had no choice but to assume Ilsa's motives were purely personal.

While Gene sat distraught and alone in the office he was soon to vacate, Ilsa sat staring sadly out the window of her own office at the distant capitol dome. She had hoped to avoid taking such drastic action. She had great respect for Gene's accomplishments. She knew how far he had brought the purchasing office during his tenure there and how critical he was to its overall success. She knew none of his subordinates could step in and do the job as well as he had done it, yet she also knew that if he continued as he had, the work of the office would start to suffer significantly. He was the alpha and the omega. She had little confidence she could replace him with someone as effective or dedicated, but even less confidence that the office would survive his continued leadership unchanged. She had hoped they could work through their differences and be a team, that he would voluntarily moderate his outside activities, but he had shown no inclination to do so. As someone who had spent most of her working or in positions that revolved around individual action, she had little experience directing the work of others. She was more comfortable leading by example than by dictum. Moreover, she truly believed that even if she had tried to express to Gene more directly her concerns about his frequent absences, his veiled threats to seek another job, and his uncooperative attitude, she would have succeeded only in making the problem worse. She wondered how two seemingly intelligent, competent and successful people could find absolutely no common ground to engage in dialogue and build a working relationship. The bright sun reflecting off the capitol's golden dome seemed a surreal sight through her tear-filled eyes.

Charles (Terry) Angelo recently retired from the U.S. General Accounting Office, where he was a senior evaluator. He is a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech's Center for Public Administration and Policy; his primary research interests include applied ethics and organization theory.

## Political Poem

*David Levin*

There's a political poem,  
Have you met him?  
Do you know him?  
Through the back of my head- -he  
disperses confetti,

And asks my backbone its sign.  
He's a pleasant little sprite,  
Always very polite,

In most discussions quite right,  
But his pants are too tight.

His belt squeezes his waist  
like a tube of toothpaste,  
Forcing out all his insides.

Not organs and stuff,  
But opinions quite rough  
About people in power,

Whom he thinks should be dropped  
Off the top of tower,  
And into a garden of prickly flowers.

Exxon's Chief for not cleaning up spills,  
Which blacken and poison sweet daffodils,  
Fish and birds by beaches get chills,  
When they see the black ooze which covers sand hills.

This political poem, he screams inside,  
He hates men in suits with bellies so wide,  
Who say to the starving  
"You got no free ride."

Political poem, he's tired and depressed  
On account of he feels quite powerless.

Can't put Exxon in jail,  
Can't make businessmen care what they put in the air,  
Can't get his government to treat people fair.  
    So he sits in my head,  
And throws rhymes at crimes,  
And verses at nurses,  
Odes against toads,  
And ballads against salads.  
    Then he gets on my case,  
And says I'm a space-  
Take your hands off of your face  
Go help the human race.  
That's a lot to do— first I'll tie my shoe lace.

David Walden Levin is adjunct Professor of Government at the American University, Washington, D.C.

## The Ideal Civil Servant

*Susan McMaster*

Don't bury your soul in dusty files  
troubled by colleagues' prying eyes,  
Don't sublimate rage behind timid smiles Controlled by the  
frowns of your Supervis—

Or— For work is lousier than they think  
Who grumble long but never quit.  
*Boom* out your boredom, *roar* out your spleen, Raise oceans  
of havoc by the Coffee Machine!

(Written for Public Service Week, June 16, 1994. With apologies to  
Duncan Campbell Scott and his poem "The Ideal".)

Susan McMaster is an Ottawa-based writer whose publications include three poetry books, a poetry theater script, and wordmusic scores and tapes with the intermedia group First Draft.

## another drummer

*Gerald Gullickson*

it does not take  
an arm akimbo  
to put another  
into limbo

a nod or two  
will do

reflex ready  
pattern-prone  
by the numbers  
clone by clone

they operate  
and vegetate

they ask less  
intelligence  
than a little  
difference

though that may be  
altered mediocrity

although abstemiously  
they diet  
about that food  
they're never quiet

insight to any other topic  
is almost totally myopic

though ostracized  
I will be free  
from this  
unanimity

## button, button

*Gerald Gullickson*

the computer, now  
another switch  
in our push-button world

long-distance touching  
world turning  
Paris at one's ear

but no bud blooms  
no clouds scud  
no birds sing

Gerald Gullickson is a Professor Emeritus, who after retiring classroom has published more than two hundred poems in such periodicals as the Grasslands Review, The Lucid Stone, The Charlotte Poetry Review, and won a local Arts Council grant in poetry.



## ante up

*Michael Caufield*

heal thyself — or was it help  
thyself  
the oath that met me on the brink  
of this perpetual disaster I have come to know  
as lots  
in life  
carefully measured tinctures of prevention—echinacea,  
Laphroaig,  
gingko biloba — drop like first inventions  
into the kitty of purr-bred cultural desire  
our warm bodies marching into the cold  
war of competing systems to bring the bacon home  
in this  
our brave new world  
of survivalist devolution  
it's odd isn't it  
how the sun and moon and  
stars never complain  
about the bore mankind has become  
as they circulate perfectly through the system  
our hearts  
refute with quick glances at the menu that kills everything  
in the name of the well-satisfied customer  
amazing how  
celestially calm they remain in the face of human propulsion  
somewhat like doctors who love the problem more than the  
life  
because it is cleaner that way

and truly blameless  
like facts  
understandable enough  
but what about the man over there  
following his wife and her tumors back down  
sanitized hospital hallways which will  
never return her  
life  
forced to conclude  
the end is never a beginning it's just a sleight of time  
they hold onto one another  
and dream of how the sun might possibly  
allow them one more  
climb

## life depends

*Michael Caufield*

Helen would know  
why  
the male needs  
to strike and then  
fly away away and out out brief candle and all that jazz  
don't you see it's because valiant behaviour is no longer  
rewarded  
that it's come to this  
the pitiful age of conformist careerism featuring  
the nothingness  
of safe moves as those who are safe ignore those who aren't  
and those who aren't sure about anything  
parade down the mean streets of revolutionary modern days  
ignoring the hooeee of those  
who move towards the trough of *because it's my job — my  
image—I can't stay up late anymore—I can't be seen with any  
liberal  
alarm-clockfree twits like those people sitting down over there with  
their third cup of coffee*  
so what  
says Helen her dark hair falling around slim shoulders as  
her warm  
breath says so what now my lovely one was I worth this  
burning city  
what now as she gently rolls her hips towards the horizon  
as a thousand ships slip from the grip of the revolution  
you couldn't join because they asked you to give up your  
daily  
twenty-minute hot water

shower

but regardless which side of the trough they're complaining  
from

Helen knows

the men will be looking

oh yes—how they will be on the lookout for the next  
perfectly willing

woman to succor them past the numb fate of having

to trot off in search of kingdoms they can't exactly locate

oh damn—why couldn't I quit complaining and just come  
right out and

tell you how life depends on the next woman slept with?

well for the same reason I'm sitting here at four a.m.

figuring out the maddeningly simple chords to *The Girl from  
Ipanema*

instead of remembering to check the meter

down at the beach

where the gift horse was

parked

## the history of word "mere"

*Michael Caufield*

shortly after the first language cooled  
and right after books appeared and humans overpopulated the fields  
it showed up  
signifying want  
against ideal abundance  
a sly understatement that more often than not  
could not differentiate between not, naught, naughty, knot  
a word used to imply intellectual subtlety and force but  
instead ended up expressing an inability to seductively resist  
routine disaster  
like girls sighing, grainbelts dying, mountainsides sliding, nimbus clouds  
cleaving and  
surf heaving retractively to pull the world out  
from under knotty stationary objects  
not unlike the spindly white legs that  
alliterate Imperial Palaces of Policy on their way to the destruction of all  
green swaying empires of the  
senses

Michael Caufield is currently completing a Ph.D. in English Literature and Critical Theory at the University of Washington in Seattle. His poems have appeared in many journals.

## Moving the Water

*Sam Barbee*

Even I can not ignore  
the wetland in morning after snow.  
Usually a thicket of vines spiraling  
sycamores and other water trees,  
today the mud-bottom has become  
elegant curator of all efforts  
shading the sky.

During our smart moments,  
we re-engineer such ecology on our terms,  
to this year's specs. Upstream we re-design  
creekbanks, re-pace streams, adjust floodways.  
None resist our helpful intervention.  
With blue granite - weight and mass  
by the book - we armor meandering efforts,  
construct damns, fix eroding curves.  
Black willows are popped out, then  
packed back in to straighten flow,  
silt and immovable crag of our rock mashed  
into what remains.

Downstream, unstationed  
wetlands wait, prepared for the free energy  
of spring rain, fearing no one hundred year flood,  
ready to submerge itself. when our bridges float  
and swollen culverts back up, fingers  
of water will thrust between trees  
and wait there.

Every trunk wedged  
into this morning's ice abides, illuminated  
against white thatch. Winter birds whistle  
from bare branch.

Children stand atop  
our concrete and cast snowballs to watch  
waterways splash. No work today: no formula  
clarifies when February ice will melt.  
We document temperatures  
and witness nothing  
finer than brisk currents through gaping  
culverts, ushering rain and run-off from  
our project. Nothing personal, but  
this acreage is zoned commercial.  
What we carry out is for the good  
of the order - we are assured in our manuals.

Sam Barbee received the 59th Poet Laureate Award from the North Carolina Poetry Society for his poem "The Blood Watch" in 1991. His first collection, *Changes of Venue*, will be published in spring of 1997.

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*Book Review*

# **Society of the Mind: A Cyberthriller.**

by Eric L. Harry.

(Harper Collins Publishers. New York, NY: 1996)

Reviewed by *Michael W. Popejoy*

How many professors would like to receive a \$1,000,000 consultant contract from the wealthiest industrialist in the world for one week's work? That's an offer few of us could refuse. Dr. Laura Aldridge, Harvard psychology professor gets just such an offer from Joseph Gray, capo supremo of the Gray Corporation, the richest man in the world. An enigmatic man with a mind more brilliant than Einstein and personality quirks more weird than Howard Hughes—only he's richer than Hughes would have ever dreamt of being. There's no doubt this guy's check will clear! Most professors might be willing to miss a class or two, and maybe even a faculty meeting, for a cool million bucks. The problem facing Dr. Aldridge is that it is not Gray that needs psychoanalysis, although the reader may think so as the story progresses and we get to know Gray better—actually the patient is his computer—an enormously complex neural network of artificial intelligence that has suddenly developed a paranoid split personality disorder. The computer has gone mental and is messing with Gray's plans with its unpredictable neurotic, maybe psychotic, behavior. But, a neural network cannot just be debugged or unplugged. This cybernetic entity talks and feels and expresses emotions not unlike a teenager passing through puberty. To unplug it would be Kevorkianesque.

Dr. Aldridge doesn't know any of this until her arrival on Gray's personal island fortress. The computer and its powerful capabilities have been a well kept secret. The story moves through several interesting plot twists as Laura slowly gets to know Gray and discovers more strange things about his computer. She discovers that Gray is beyond the confines of what we can conventionally define as brilliant or genius, he is off the IQ scale, and, she discovers that his computer has evolved into a new life form—one she has not been prepared to deal with, but, a life form with potentially awesome powers and a shaky psyche. Further complicating her work with this new life form is that the computer is pubescently in love with Gray, and predictably Laura falls for Gray, too. An interesting twist on the traditional literary love triangle as the reader discovers the computer is a "she".

The dark side of this story is the computer's evolution as a new life form and the ensuing mental crisis it has as it fights to prevent its malevolent paranoiac half from emerging and destroying Gray's work. One weapon the computer has, whichever mind is in control, are the extremely powerful humanoid robots who can either be highly productive workers or efficient killing machines. The robots are controlled by the computer, but which side of the computer is in control—the good half or the dark half? Laura must save the good side of the computer's troubled mind and suppress the bad. Like real humans, the computer has a complex psyche and Laura does not have much time to, in effect, save the world. Things just aren't that easy in real life either.

Without giving away how it all comes out, suffice it to say that the novel presents several common themes (maybe nothing original) but with stranger characters including robots reminiscent of Terminator. In terms of modern writing, the novel incorporates high technology applications

and human (and institutional) efforts to grapple effectively with that technology. Eric Harry writes in the same genre as Michael Crichton, only I think the later has more experience and hence plots a better, meaner story. Harry's story is intriguing while his style needs seasoning—he nevertheless holds the reader in suspense and keeps the shocking surprises coming to the very end. I suspect we will see more mainstream cyberthrillers or Harry's psycho-cyberthrillers. These novels are no longer restricted solely to the science fiction section. Indeed, Crichton's books often hit the best seller lists and end up as big budget movies.

An undercurrent plot in Harry's book is that Gray, his corporation, and his technology races ahead of the bureaucracies that would normally apply controls to the speed and direction of his progress. When governments finally come to realize the danger posed by Gray's empire, and his inventions; he was virtually too far advanced to be contained. His private enterprises placed the world in danger and there was little the world could do about it. Could a Joseph Gray, or a Bill Gates, for that matter; take us too far, too fast without our communitarian consent? Can one individual concentrate so much wealth, power, and technology as to place that single individual's will above the laws of society? Eric Harry~~ shows us that the will of the individual, inherently good or evil, can overcome the limitations of social and governmental constraints on our decisions, advancements (or behaviors) as a human species. Harry's Joseph Gray forces a paradigm shift quite unlike anything Thomas Kuhn could have predicted.

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## Call for Manuscripts

*Public Voices* hopes to provide a more emotive approach to public management than the traditional forms of analysis presented by many professional journals. As such, *Public Voices* focuses on humanistic, artistic and reflective expression concerning public administrators and the people they serve. Unlike traditional social science journals, *Public Voices* publishes unorthodox, controversial perspectives on bureaucracy by students of organization, broadly defined as public servants, the public, writers, and artists, as well as academics from all fields. That dialogue is aimed to:

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Manuscripts and proposals for featured topics (i.e. symposia) are welcome on a wide variety of artistic and humanistic perspectives relevant to the public sector. Original fiction, including creative writing, poetry, and plays, will be featured in each issue. Reviews of novels, cinema, art and other related forms of expression may comment upon life within bureaucracies. Artistic works may include such material as photographs, sketches, and cartoons, and such work may be featured on the cover of each issue. Personal essays by public servants and clients are also welcome. All submissions will be evaluated on a blind, peer reviewed basis.

Manuscripts should be submitted with two cover pages: the first with the author's name and full contact information, the second with only the title. Five copies of each manuscript should be sent to:

Prof. Marc Holzer, Editor-in-Chief, *Public Voices*  
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## Movie Reviews Invited

The movies contain a vast wealth of information about and illustrative of management and public administration. Unfortunately much of this is "hidden" in war films, westerns, prison dramas and other genres that do not immediately appear to be relevant. Fortunately, now that most films are readily available on tape, it is easier than ever to find and use this treasure trove of light and sound that so often illuminates the administrative world far better than any text. Thus *Public Voices* encourages and invites reviews and analyses of pertinent films. Many films stand by themselves; but it is often useful to consider several films by a single actor. For example, consider Gregory Peck. In *Gentleman's Agreement* (1949) he demonstrated the subtlety of racism in the corporate world. In *Twelve O'Clock High* (1950) he illustrated the life cycle theory of leadership behavior. In *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suite* (1956) he coped with the ethical dilemmas of the modern organization man. And in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1963) he showed how one person of unstinting integrity could make a difference.

Gary Cooper was more than just a lanky cowboy. In *The Fountainhead* (1949) he was a premature supply-side philosopher. In *High Noon* (1952) he offered a case study of the need for more effective pre-retirement planning. In *Vera Cruz* (1954) he dealt with the problems of Americans offering technical assistance to the Third World. And in *The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell* (1955) he portrayed a martyred organizational dissident. And Clark Gable was more than Rhett Butler, the war profiteer in *Gone With the Wind* (1939). In *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935) he rebelled against a famous practitioner of the Theory X management style. In *The Hucksters* (1947) he led a revolution against an organizational tyrant and transformed the company. In *Command Decision* (1949) he coped with the myriad political and administrative factors that so often frustrate public policymakers.

Similar summaries apply to the work of many other leading actors. The point is that we have within our collective memories hundreds of films that bear upon public policy and administration, but that have never been looked at in this light. So please accept the invitation of *Public Voices* and consider contributing your reviews of specific films or specific actors. Films are like great literature or history itself in that each new generation offers its own interpretations. The enormous backlist of U.S. and foreign film has hardly been interpreted at all by the public affairs

community.

Reviews of 500-750 words should be submitted to:  
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