

Papa cannot forget, and by the end of the book, armed with just a spear as he walks in the moonlight, Papa "could see the Mountain high and square topped and shone white in the moonlight and I hoped I would not run onto anything to kill."

Despite the repressed and narrowing solipsism of *True at First Light*, its evocation of the insomniac's terrified loneliness reminds us of Hemingway's writing at its most touching, acute and beautiful best, the prose, say, of his early stories. And as if he knew this, in his mythical Africa, he sleeps with his head cradled on a pillow that, filled with balsam needles, smells of his Michigan boyhood. Sadly, *True at First Light* also symbolizes the past: the end of Hemingway's writing life. For soon he could no longer sleep; his paranoia swelled, his

thinking frazzled and he complained of weight loss, nervousness and the government men who pried into his life, bugging his telephone and reading his mail. Anti-American sentiment made staying in Cuba difficult, the Bay of Pigs made it impossible. He was displaced, confused and in despair. Twice he went to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, where he underwent enough electroshock treatment to produce permanent brain damage and pretty much insure that he would never write again.

Reynolds says that when Ernest Hemingway put a shotgun to his head in the early hours of July 2, 1961, he finally found an end to his story. Not true in any light. It was the end of Hemingway's life but not the end of a disconcerting story that, for now at least, still plays on. ■

tainty the United States possessed during the cold war's early and middle years. In the eighties came Flora Lewis. Another Europeanist, Lewis described a changing Continent—restless on its eastern flank, restless within NATO and the embrace America extended across both oceans. Back in the archives, you can find "Foreign Affairs" columns in which the limits of the franchise are tentatively tested. But you will never find one in which the limits are made visible.

I have never much liked the column, I confess. Its relationship to power is ethically questionable—a fatal flaw. But rereading Sulzberger and Lewis, one is struck by certain things nonetheless. They had an appreciation for complexity and diversity—not just out in the wild dark beyond the Western alliance but within it, too. This must have come partly from their many decades of life and work abroad. But it also reflected how America understood the world then. Cold war Washington barely tolerated difference among other nations—and too often didn't—but Americans knew it was there, in the wide world they were forever misunderstanding. One is also struck today by what is not in the old columns. They display the confidence of Americans writing amid the American Century, certainly. But rarely, if ever, are they triumphant or righteous. They don't have anything to prove. Globalism, just around the corner in Lewis's later years, goes unmentioned.

Globalism's Pen Pal

PATRICK SMITH

THE LEXUS AND THE OLIVE TREE: Understanding Globalization.

By Thomas L. Friedman. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 394 pp. \$27.50.

Of all the people the *New York Times* has invented, in its newsrooms and bureaus as well as in its pages, Tom Friedman is surely among the most curious. He extols democracy's virtues but urges us to reimagine nations as corporations rather than polities. He is a globalist and a futurist and a techie

true believer, but he thinks people should be separated according to race, ethnicity and religion. He looks out upon the world and sees the decentralization of just about everything—only to applaud the power of Washington and Wall Street, with bombs or bond ratings, to destroy any society that strays from the reigning orthodoxy. Friedman writes with bluster and bullying conviction. But when you read enough of him, you recognize that the beer-belly prose style masks a deep uncertainty—an intellect in over its head.

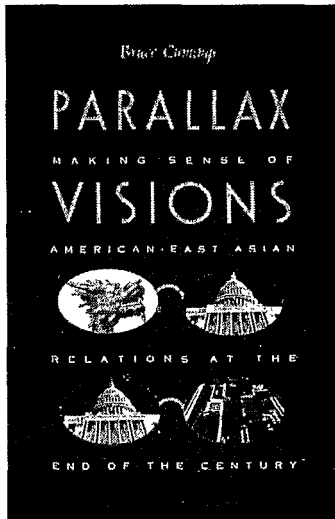
These contradictions are evident enough in "Foreign Affairs," the prominent column Friedman writes in the *Times*. But it's a forgiving format—twice-weekly, 700 words an outing. You have to line up a lot of Friedman's pieces to discern the lapses in logic, the presumption, the dearth of imaginative thinking and the well of jingoism from which he draws. This is why Friedman's new book is, in a perverse kind of way, to be welcomed. *The Lexus and the Olive*

Tree reminds us that Friedman is worth understanding—not as a thinker or an analyst but as a phenomenon. In both column and book, he expresses the incoherence at the core of US thinking about the post-cold war order. And the medium is part of the message: In Friedman's shrill, insistent tone we hear the sound of a nation that cannot admit that it is dispensing with principle in its international conduct in favor of power and profit alone.

Friedman stepped into the inner sanctum when he took up "Foreign Affairs" in 1995. Launched as "In Europe" in the late thirties, the Op-Ed column has ever since been among the most sensitive assignments at the paper. It requires a certain kind of conjuror—someone who can write opinion while knowing and observing the unwritten code of official thinking. Even when the column diverges from the established line, as it must struggle to do if it is to pass for a fresh view of things, it has to stay faithfully within that carefully drawn circle by which Washington defines acceptable perspectives. In the fifties and sixties, C.L. Sulzberger, scion of the *Times*'s proprietors, captured the twilight of that patrician cer-

It is startling to read Friedman against this background. In *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, he is quick to note his place in the lineage. He thinks happily of himself as "a tourist with an attitude." I couldn't agree more, except that I read it as an apt summation of two critical weaknesses. Friedman is a tourist—no more, no less—who travels with a heavy bag of ready-made notions. Until he came along, at least "Foreign Affairs" was written from abroad; at least it had the habit of listening to others. Friedman moved the column to Washington and more or less dispensed with listening—the exceptions being the American elite and the sound of his own voice. He arrived on the nation's most influential opinion page after faithfully following then-Secretary of State James Baker—by numerous accounts, another ethically questionable relationship, a poor substitute for experience in any case. If you find moments of tension in Sulzberger's and Lewis's clip files, in Friedman's there are none. His column is not analysis struggling against limits. It's much closer to masquerade—official thinking dressed up as opinion.

Patrick Smith, a correspondent abroad for many years, is the author most recently of *Japan: A Reinterpretation (Vintage)*.



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Globalism is Friedman's subject as the cold war was Sulzberger's and Lewis's. It's the explanation for everything, as he makes clear at the opening of *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. "I believe that if you want to understand the post-Cold War world, you have to start by understanding that a new international system has succeeded it—globalization," Friedman writes. "What is new is the system, what is old is power politics, chaos, clashing civilizations and liberalism." Did your neck snap slightly as you read this list of old things? Mine did. But it's a fair warning of what is to come. We are not going to read what Friedman reasons out so much as what he believes. It's no small distinction, for globalism here is not a set of ideas, or an analytic framework, or a process. For Friedman (as for many others, it must be said), globalism is nearer to a religion.

As in all religions, there is much mystification in Friedman's globalism, with a few simple credenda at the core. In the best of all outcomes, the Lexus of globalism will not overrun all that the olive tree stands for—rootedness, community, identity. But as Friedman has acknowledged in his column, globalization is essentially the world's Americanization, ready or not. It's Big Macs and US accounting standards in Rio and Lagos and Paris and New Delhi. America sets the global rules—"rules that revolve around opening, deregulating and privatizing your economy." The globalization process is also driven by communications technology and results in "the three democratizations"—of technology, finance and information. Later on, there's a fourth: the democratization of decision-making. This is key. It helps produce "super-empowered individuals"—and lots of decentralization. Ever so gradually, though, the global system comes to look like the decentralized corporation Friedman describes some way through the text: You can make all the decisions you want, whether you're an individual or a nation, so long as they conform to the fixed strategic design. Transgressions are not taken lightly.

There are many problems with this schema. They flow from two fatal failures. First, Friedman can't see anything in context; he does not believe in history. He wants to think that the world began all over again when the Berlin wall fell. It's a familiar assertion, especially among Americans. It is fatal here because it prevents Friedman from understanding the essential nature of globalism—what it is. He's right to say that in many respects it amounts to Americanization. But he doesn't see the implications of his own observation. Globalism merely repackages the fundamental fallacy Americans advanced around the world during the cold war: To modernize meant to Westernize; to progress you must be like us. This was sometimes dressed up as "modernization theory" and was a core tenet of cold war ideology. The world was never at peace with this notion, of course; modernization theory was long ago discredited. But Friedman grasps none of this. Reading him, one is convinced he is unaware of the intellectual background of his own themes.

Neither does Friedman understand the relationship between economics and culture—his second fatal failure. As any modestly thoughtful economist will tell you, economic systems are functions of culture. The two are not separable. Financial markets, regulatory regimes, trade policy—they are all expressions of the societies in which they are embedded. It's not a complicated

idea. To illustrate it, one need only consider the connection between the mainstream American preference for radically unregulated markets and the radical strain of American individuality.

This doesn't simply pass Friedman by: He's not even in the neighborhood. He is forever confusing culture with such things as fast food and laptop computers, which are merely products. To consume or use them has nothing to do with buying into the culture that made them. Time and again this error of understanding leads him astray, devastating his entire argument long before the end of the book. "Today cultures are offered up for global consumption and tested against one another over the Internet and through satellite television and open borders in a brutal Darwinian fashion," he writes. "In today's global village, people know there is another way to live, they know about the American lifestyle, and many of them want as big a slice of it as they can get—with all the toppings. Some go to Disney World to get it, and some go to Kentucky Fried in northern Malaysia." This is Eisenhoweresque—and was unworthy of serious comment even in Ike's day.

Friedman's evident ignorance of the ideas he purports to trade in produces so many unresolved contradictions that one hardly knows where to begin. There is the ridiculous apposition in the title: *humanity's first autonomous economic system, accepted by all, independent of all political and social orders. America is history's first benevolent hegemon.* Friedman's unified world is as deeply divided as the one the cold war gave us—between elites and the rest, those who submit and those who don't. For all of us, it is corporatist—which is to say, deeply undemocratic. These problems are too big for any attentive reader to miss. What is actually being said about democracy, power, decision-making, authority, "sound economics," the management of markets and technology? You'll never see the bottom for all the muddied water. In an early chapter, international brokers and traders can overturn any government they dislike, elected or not. Later on, this "electronic herd," as Friedman calls them, are cast as the world's most powerful force for democratic rule. In another chapter, governments have no economic role other than to maintain unfettered markets. Later on, Friedman applauds European farm subsidies for preserving the south of France. "We need these kinds of social safety nets for our cultures," he writes. "Politicians have to educate the public about the value of such cultural safety nets and have to be willing to sell them." There's no figuring this sort of thing out. After a time, it's hard to avoid concluding that it's either confusion on a grand scale or dishonesty by design.

Friedman has a dismaying habit of treating complicated things too simply and making simple things endlessly complex. The focus-pocus is relentless: Amazon.com and Amazon.country; DOScapital 6.0; the Golden Arches Theory of Conflict Prevention; MIDS, meaning Microchip Immune Deficiency Syndrome. But there's nothing terribly new in any of this. Indeed, the idiotic devices proliferate in proportion to the unoriginal thinking. In journalists' terms, Friedman has written his book from the established, muddled middle of the globalism story, not its forward edge. Globalism's here, it's good for you and there's nothing you can do about it anyway: That's the message. It's old—an incomplete picture; even conservative thinkers such as Edward Luttwak, aware that we've got a problem on our hands, have

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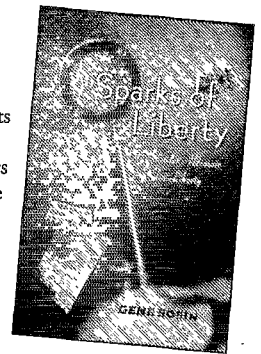
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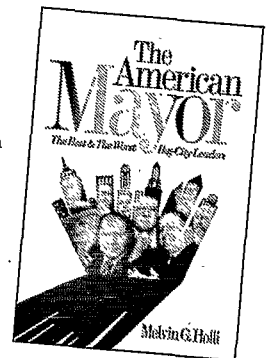
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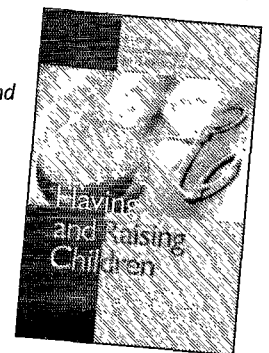
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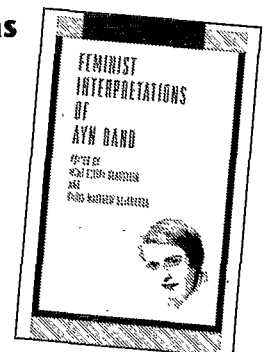


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moved on from there. The relationship between markets and society—above all, the question of which serves the other—cannot be ignored. Neither can free-marketeers any longer hope to wish government out of its economic role.

It's not surprising that Friedman is less than current here when you consider his sources—another of the book's defining flaws. There is simply no depth behind it. You sense trouble when you discover that his first chapter, "The World Is Ten Years Old," takes its title from a Merrill Lynch ad. From there it's on to Forrest Gump, Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers (now tapped by President Clinton to replace the departing Robert Rubin), *USA Today*, a bevy of brokers, high-tech tycoons, media wise-men and the CEOs of this, that or the other multinational. His favorite sources, he says, are hedge-fund managers. None of these sources are objectionable, of course. The crowd is distinguished, rather, by those missing.

No opposing views in this happy narrative? Funny you should ask. There's a chapter called "The Backlash," but Friedman fills it with people whom reporters like to dismiss with the word "disgruntled"—unhappy Arabs, a perplexed Brazilian mayor, the ever-convenient Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir bin Mohamad. These people don't have ideas. They have "emotions and anxieties." No economists, historians, philosophers, past or practicing, pro or con? Early in the volume, Friedman flicks at Schumpeter's notion of creative destruction. Other than that, you will wade through these pages in vain if you're looking for intellectual architecture. As to an alternative view of globalism, its direction and its many destructive consequences, I see three possibilities, and I'm undecided: Friedman is unaware there is an opposing perspective; he knows there is one but doesn't want to discuss it; or he knows there is one and wants to discuss it, but doesn't have enough command of the arguments. By way of comparison, put Friedman next to William Pfaff, whose columns are published in the *International Herald Tribune* and syndicated by the *Los Angeles Times*, or William Greider, author of *One World, Ready or Not*. On the very subject Friedman insists is his own, he pales.

Method is another limitation in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. Friedman claims to eschew "grand theories" of any sort. "That's why when people ask me how I cover the world these days, I answer that I

use two techniques: I do 'information arbitrage' in order to understand the world, and I tell stories to explain it." Friedman devotes many pages to explaining information arbitrage and what he calls his "six-dimensional thinking." As near as I can make out, this means talking to his chosen few sources and considering what they say. Stories are what Friedman uses to get his complicated points across to us, his simple readers. The book teems with them, one atop the other.

And there are any number of gems. A

Friedman's stories mimic the disease of our media; the anecdotes strip context and keep us in the historical present, rather like television.

favorite, for its sheer simplicity, comes near the beginning of the book, where Friedman recounts his first days as a columnist. He's at the Okura Hotel, a five-star establishment in Tokyo, and has ordered oranges from room service. The waiter arrives with orange juice. Friedman sends him away, and he returns with oranges peeled and sectioned. "'No, no,' I said, shaking my head again. 'I want the whole orange.'" There's more than a page and a half of this, but he finally gets his oranges. And the moral of the tale? "For me, an inveterate traveler and foreign correspondent, life is like room service—you never know what you're going to find outside your door." Truly, this is American journalism at its very zenith.

Friedman's "democratizations" are the occasion for many stories. But they are complicated, because democratization is never quite what he implies. Selling computers to Americans has nothing to do with the democratization of technology. Mass-marketing is the elusive term here, and from the telephone to the Zip drive, it has never altered the quality of our democracy. Technology is a means, never an end. But confusing this is standard procedure for mesmerized neoliberals.

When Friedman wants to illustrate democratized decision-making, he runs into another bind. For one thing, he is determined to avoid any serious discussion of politics in his book; for another, quite the opposite of democratization and decentralization is occurring in the way we make both corporate and national decisions. What's the story here? I fear the reader won't believe me. Friedman finds a wheat farmer with a new piece of gear that produces a yield map of every acre on his spread. "Once he was armed with his own deeper information about his farm," Fried-

man writes, "Wagner was able to deconcentrate and 'democratize' his fields. He was able to shift decision-making down to each acre...."

You may gasp, as I did, but Friedman's stories are essential to the edifice. What does it tell us that he wants us to think about democratic stalks of wheat instead of democratic people? Or that his closest encounter with a Japanese in this book involves a room-service waiter? In a word, the storytelling permits Friedman distance—distance from the reality of the various things he purports to describe, distance from ordinary life as globalism actually affects it. It is the mechanism by which he avoids context.

Through his stories, he can pretend to give us the whole picture while avoiding that very thing. It's the disease of our media, of course. The anecdotes keep us in the historical present, rather the way television does. "The World Is Ten Years Old": Only an American could support such a notion. From Cambodia to Chile, Guatemala and beyond, the globe is nearly obsessed with history and memory. Alone in the world, only Americans want to pretend that history somehow ended with the cold war and that there's no need to examine it.

"I think people need to live apart before they can live together." This extraordinary thought—white South Africans once had a word for it—doesn't appear in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. It couldn't, so wholly is it out of phase with the globalist mythology. It was in a recent Friedman column, but it tells us something about the book he has written and something about who Friedman is. It suggests that there's a lot more "olive tree" in Friedman than he wants us to know.

When Friedman arrived in Washington, he tells us in the windup before his pitch, he had no grasp of global affairs, no worldview. And as he explains almost touchingly, he needed one in a hurry if he was going to make a success of his column. There's a revelation here. It concerns "the hidden constraints on journalists," in Pierre Bourdieu's phrase. Friedman being Friedman, fair to say, he couldn't have written any other account of globalism than the one he has given us—even if he had wanted to. To me, this explains one of the book's most peculiar features: On the one hand, we get the fervent, unswerving belief of the ideologue, and on the other, some combination of shtick and salesmanship instead of analysis. It's almost as if Friedman were playing for time, which would account for writing that is often sloppy

and has an improvised quality about it.

I find *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* a disturbing book. It's not simply that it's inadequate or irresponsible, although it's both. The issue raised is larger. It has to do with the advancing weakness of our institutions. To put the question bluntly, Is this the best we can do? In this case, at this moment, rigorous, detached investigations

into humanity's course, and America's role in it, are more or less urgent. But that requires a genuinely confident nation with confident institutions, and Americans can't claim either. This is why we are content to tell ourselves stories. It's a fast world, all right. To read Friedman's book is to wonder no longer why we can't see where we're going in it. ■

neoliberalism's effect on specific areas.

Chomsky's book comprises a series of articles that analyze some of the mechanisms that make the global economy tick, while underscoring the alarming consequences of globalization. The pages are packed with data and case studies—some not yet published in mainstream media—that are used to debunk prevailing myths.

While explicating the general trends underlying neoliberalism, Chomsky also pays special attention to the United States, analyzing its hegemonic role in world politics. As University of Illinois communications professor Robert McChesney points out in the book's introduction, the US government pushes "trade deals and other accords down the throats of the world's people to make it easier for corporations and the wealthy to dominate the economies of nations around the world without having obligations to the peoples of those nations."

For example, USAID and the World Bank intervened in Haiti's economy, replacing subsistence farming with agro-exports. Chomsky points out that "before the 'reforms' were instituted, local rice production supplied virtually all domestic needs," but "thanks to one-sided 'liberalization,' it now provides only 50 percent.... By such methods, the most impoverished country in the hemisphere has been turned into a leading purchaser of U.S.-produced rice, enriching publicly subsidized U.S. enterprises." The consequences, Chomsky concludes, "were the usual ones: profits for U.S. manufacturers and the Haitian super-rich, and a decline of 56 percent in Haitian wages" due to massive unemployment.

The market serves those with money, neglecting those trapped in poverty; and increased poverty, Chomsky points out, has a direct impact on the quality of democratic life. People living under dire conditions—the UN estimates that the disparity between the richest and poorest 20 percent of the world population increased by more than 50 percent from 1960 to 1989—have fewer opportunities for communal and personal development. And freedom without opportunities is like "a devil's gift."

While the connection Chomsky draws between the global economic order and the decline in democratic practices is insightful, I have one major reservation. If social justice is the objective, then trade will always need to be constrained, because the market does not have the capacity to make political distinctions, and it invariably treats everyone and everything as a commodity to be exchanged. In this age the state is the only force that can stand up to the market and check it. Chomsky intimates this on a few

Neoliberals' Paleomarkets

NEVE GORDON

PROFIT OVER PEOPLE: Neoliberalism and Global Order.

By Noam Chomsky. Seven Stories. 175 pp. Paper \$15.95.

In a book of interviews published a few years ago, *Chronicles of Dissent*, Noam Chomsky recounted a childhood incident that shaped his life. One day during first grade, a group began taunting a fat boy from his class. Chomsky wanted to defend him but fled instead. Following the event he was totally ashamed, and he determined never again to run away. "That's the feeling that stuck with me," he says. "You should stick with the underdog." Sixty-five years have passed, and Chomsky remains faithful to that commitment, as evidenced by *Profit Over People*, his new book.

Since the demise of the cold war, received wisdom suggests that we are witnessing a rapid growth in democratization. Yet, if democracy is not merely a term attributed to a set of political procedures but also involves concrete "opportunities for people to manage their own collective and individual affairs," then democracy, according to Chomsky, is actually under attack.

Chomsky argues that there is an ongoing conversion of people from participants to spectators, maintaining that this trend is also found in Western industrialized countries. In the United States people have fewer opportunities to influence policies because of what Chomsky calls the "corporatization of America." By reducing "big government," decisions are transferred from the one form of power that happens to be somewhat accountable to the public into the hands of corporations, whose CEOs are, politically speaking, like tyrants, having little if any respect for the American public.

The ironic twist about this trend is that corporations have not acquired their power through fair play in the free market but

rather as a result of government assistance. By making this claim Chomsky goes beyond Susan Strange's important book *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* (1996). Strange depicts international political economy as a confrontation between big business, international bureaucrats and insurers on the one side, and state sovereignty on the other. She argues that economic actors have in many ways managed to usurp the power that had previously been in the hands of political actors. Chomsky's nuanced analysis of current political trends discloses a slightly different picture. He suggests that there is an alliance between the state and economic players. Although corporations support minimizing government, they want governments to maintain a degree of power since government intervention and not the rules of the free market insure a corporation's dominance.

Thus, contrary to the dominant neoliberal doctrine, which suggests that economic globalization points to the demise of the nation-state and to the free market's success, Chomsky shows that globalization is the result of ongoing government interference and precipitates poverty and ecological destruction. By disclosing the overarching patterns of neoliberalism, *Profit Over People* complements a number of studies—for instance, Thomas Klak's *Globalization and Neoliberalism: The Caribbean Context* (1997) and Gerardo Otero's *Neoliberalism Revisited: Economic Restructuring and Mexico's Political Future* (1996)—that have examined

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