

couple honeymooned in Europe as the Count and Countess. In Paris they rode about in a carriage pulled by a matched pair of snow-white horses. An Egyptian footman unrolled a velvet carpet whenever they stepped from the carriage.

Upon their return to the Klondike, Belinda became the manager of the Gold Run Mining Company. When she took control of the company it was bleeding red. Within 18 months she had it making millions again. The "count," meanwhile, was using millions of Belinda's money to invest in European business ventures, but the Great War ruined his fortunes. He went quite mad and spent the rest of his life institutionalized.

Through hard work and daring gambles, Belinda recovered her lost fortune. One of her new businesses was the Dome City Bank of Alaska. When an investor accused one of Belinda's sisters of embezzling from the bank, Belinda collared the man and horse-whipped him until, in the words of the *Fairbanks Times*, he "cried like a baby." The man later claimed that Belinda had two men help her. "I needed no help," she replied. "Twenty friends, all old sourdoughs of Alaska, begged to be allowed to take the work off my hands, but it was a family affair and I attended to it to the best of my ability. A blackmailer simply received a little Alaska justice."

Belinda eventually left the Far North and built a large estate near Yakima, Washington. She lived there until shortly before her death at the age of 95 in 1967.

I suspect that if some professor told Nancy Kelsey or Belinda Mulroney, or the thousands of heroic sisters who came between them, that they were oppressed, repressed, and brutalized victims, they might give that professor a little Alaska justice. ■

*Roger D. McGrath is a historian in California.*

**An Aug. 23 Republican staff report issued by the House Intelligence Committee reflects the growing pressure by neoconservatives in the Bush administration to toughen American policy towards Iran.**

The staff report, which was made public by chairman Peter Hoekstra, criticizes the American intelligence community for lack of hard intelligence on Iran's alleged WMD program. The report was based on unclassified source information and was written by former CIA analyst Fred Fleitz, who most recently was a staff aide to John Bolton. The Fleitz report is critical of Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte for making little progress in developing better information on Iran and relies on Israeli sources regarding the state of Iran's nuclear program. U.S. intelligence has estimated a five-to-ten-year scenario for Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapon, while the Israelis are forecasting six months. The report is a weapon that will be used by neocon Republicans like Newt Gingrich and *Weekly Standard* editor Bill Kristol to further justify a get-tough policy with Iran. Both Kristol and Gingrich have expressed impatience with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's support of multinational diplomacy, and Kristol advocates an immediate U.S. bombing campaign directed against Tehran. American intelligence officials responded privately to the report by noting that it was an attempt to "politicize" the intelligence analysis on Iran, just as was done with intelligence on Saddam Hussein prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. They also note critically that Israeli intelligence on Iran is no better than was Israeli intelligence on Hezbollah prior to the Lebanese invasion.



**Last month, Israel's Mossad sent an assassination team to the Syrian capital of Damascus to carry out the killing of Khalid Meshal,**

the head of Hamas in exile, but Syrian intelligence apparently spirited Meshal away to a safe haven before the attack could be mounted. Ironically, the Israelis were disguised as international aid workers assisting Lebanese refugees. In 1997, Meshal survived a botched assassination attempt while he was living in Jordan. Mossad agents using Canadian passports injected poison into his ear in the street, but two Israelis were caught. King Hussein of Jordan demanded and received the antidote to the poison in exchange for the return of the two men.



**Afghanistan has set another record for opium cultivation, up by 40 percent since 2005.**

The poppy crop has become so lucrative that in many areas it has led to a de facto alliance between the Taliban and local warlords to resist government eradication efforts. Fully 371,000 acres of poppies are under cultivation and Afghanistan now supplies more than 90 percent of the world's heroin. With 70 percent of the local economy derived from drugs, the country is quickly moving towards becoming a narco-state, and even its president, Hamid Karzai, has admitted that many government ministers get payoffs from drug traffickers. The Karzai government and the U.S.-led coalition fear going after drug production too aggressively because many poor farmers might join the Taliban if their livelihood were taken away. Ironically, the Taliban completely eradicated poppy production in 2000.

*Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates.*

# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*The Science of Sleep*]

### Perchance to Dream

By Steve Sailer

"The Science of Sleep," a surrealist romantic comedy by famed music video director Michel Gondry, is a manic but sweet-tempered reverie about why no woman in her right mind should fall in love with a truly imaginative artist, such as, say, Michel Gondry.

The young Mexican leading man, Gael García Bernal, freed from the portentousness of playing Che Guevara in "The Motorcycle Diaries," is sublimely charming as Gondry's alter ego, shy and self-absorbed Stephane, a childlike graphic designer whose inability to tell his waking life from his outlandish, ever mutating dreams beguiles and exasperates the girl next door, Stéphanie (Charlotte Gainsbourg).

The boyish Gondry, whose video biography is aptly entitled "I've Been Twelve Forever," may strike some viewers as terminally twee, but many will find his "Science of Sleep" a funny, sad, and dazzling slice of the Ambien Age.

The profundity of dreams has been overrated from the Old Testament through Freud, whose now fading renown was launched by *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Gondry sides instead with Vladimir Nabokov, who complained of dreams' "mental mediocrity." The director sees his dreams as amusing raw material for his personal artistry, "a big sea of all the events of my life."

Back in the mid-1980s, when the music-video boom was at full flood, I worried that, surely, video directors would soon exhaust all the visual ideas imaginable. I remembered, though, that in the 1820s after poor, depressed John Stuart Mill had briefly found solace in melody, he had become similarly "tormented by the thought of the exhaustibility of musical combinations." Well, composers turned out to have a few more tunes up their sleeves, so, I reasoned, music videos would survive as well.

And yet, they almost didn't. The art form entered creative freefall, viewer boredom set in, and MTV largely switched to pioneering reality television.

It was easy for a music-video director to be proclaimed a genius in the 1980s when everything was new, but to make a mark in the been-there-done-that 1990s, as the Frenchman Gondry did starting with his clip for Björk's "Human Behavior" in 1993, required exceptional talent.

Gondry shared a Best Original Screenplay Oscar for 2004's "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind," in which he directed Jim Carrey as a man who has his memories of his ex-girlfriend surgically erased, but it was a gift because screenwriter Charlie Kaufman was that exceptional film's auteur. Gondry's cinematic contributions to "Eternal Sunshine" were relatively subdued because the emphasis was on Kaufman and Carrey finally achieving artistic restraint.

In "The Science of Sleep," however, Gondry's set-design inspiration runs joyously amok. More surprisingly, Gondry's trilingual screenplay is so deft that it's impossible not to wonder if Kaufman did a rewrite. (Gondry denies it.)

Having long lived in Mexico with his recently deceased father, Stephane is

lured by his mother back to the Paris apartment where he was born with the promise of a dream job at a promotional calendar company. (Because Stephane speaks French no better than the Parisians speak Spanish, most of the film's witty dialogue is in their mutual second language, English.) He optimistically shows the owner his portfolio of the paintings he has done for his definitively inappropriate idea of a calendar of "disastrology," with July, for example, represented by TWA Flight 800 exploding in flames over the Atlantic. Instead, he is put to work pasting the names of the sponsoring auto parts wholesalers into pinup calendars for garages.

Bored by his duties, he retreats into his boyhood hobbies of constructing whimsical inventions like the One Second Time Machine and napping. He increasingly slips into a dream world apparently fabricated out of materials found around his house. (Gondry's do-it-yourself aesthetic resembles a 3-D version of Terry Gilliam's animation for "Monty Python.") Asleep, Stephane is the popular host, cameraman, and drummer of "Stephane TV," filmed with a cardboard camera on a homemade set soundproofed with egg cartons.

Unfortunately, he suffers from one of those only-in-the-movies medical conditions where he can't tell wakefulness from sleep, with comic consequences for his job—he's not putting in enough hours at the office even by French standards—and faltering attempts at romance with Stéphanie. She is enthralled by his originality and childish neediness but is also aware, as Gondry ruefully explained in an interview, that Stephane is "a little insane ... Being down-to-earth is a more attractive quality for women." ■

Rated R for language, some sexual content, and nudity.