

stand their presence without also appreciating the Freudian wind and rain that brought them here.

The other shortcoming of *In Therapy We Trust* is the author's failure to address the question of "So what?" In the book's final pages, she briefly touches on the relationship of rising self-help to declining religious values. And on the very last page, she notes that "the other main problem with the therapeutic gospel is that the emphasis on individuals and mental healing often comes at the expense of considerations of the larger public good ... Starvation, illness, and warfare ravage the world while we obsess about anxiety, shyness, and denial." The consequences of "the therapeutic gospel" should have received much greater analysis, and my personal Euphorimeter would have registered much higher if the author had included a more extended discussion.

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Pablo and Pineapple Face

By Joshua Hammer

WHEN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT went to war against Latin America's drug barons in the 1980s, it couldn't have asked for better poster boys than Pablo Escobar and Manuel Noriega. Flamboyant bad guys who reveled in their notoriety, they were greedy, violent, and physically repellent to boot. Both men helped the U.S. government publicly reduce complicated Latin American drug politics to a simple duel between good vs. evil in which the U.S. military was justified in meddling.

Now, as the United States again ramps up its military involvement in Latin American drug wars, two new books revisit the stories of the Panamanian strongman and Colombian kingpin, as well as the U.S. government's sometimes hapless attempts to bring them down. These new books, of vastly differing quality, might serve remind for policymakers that there's no easy military fix to Latin American

drug politics.

In *Killing Pablo*, Mark Bowden tells how Delta Force, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the CIA, and an army spy unit known as "Centra Spike" pursued and helped to destroy Colombia's cocaine kingpin. *Shooting the Moon*, by David Harris, recounts the efforts by drug enforcement agents to build a case against Noriega—a campaign that culminated with 20,000 American troops being dispatched to Panama to haul "Pineapple Face" to prison.

Fresh on the heels of Steven Soderbergh's bleak film, *Traffic*, both books are reminders of an era when the Reagan and Bush administrations regarded

covert operations and direct applications of military might as a legitimate means of stopping the flow of drugs across the border—even as they resorted to violence and violations of sovereignty to achieve their ends.

Bowden has written the far better book. A veteran reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Bowden has produced a taut narrative along the lines of *Black Hawk Down*, his absorbing re-creation of the Olympic Hotel battle in Mogadishu in October 1993. Escobar's saga has been the grist for numerous magazine articles and books, and the early chapters of *Killing Pablo* sometimes feel like a clip job. But Bowden's portrait of Escobar—a pudgy hedonist who idolized the Mexican bandit-revolutionary Pancho Villa and combined public relations genius with an utter lack of conscience—brings to life one of the most mesmerizing villains of recent times.

The basic facts of Escobar's ascent are familiar. Beginning his criminal career as a car thief in the slums of Medellín, Escobar clawed his way to the top of Colombia's underworld just as cocaine replaced marijuana as the norteamericanos' recreational drug of choice. Along the way, Escobar became

an improbable folk hero. At the height of his power in the early 1980s, Colombia's media celebrated him as a "paisano Robin Hood," and he managed to get elected as an alternate delegate to Colombia's national assembly.

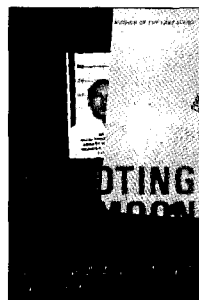
Beneath the calculated image making, however, Escobar was a brutal killer who ordered the murder of hundreds of Colombians. Bowden relates how the drug baron once ordered a servant suspected of stealing from him bound hand and foot and tossed into his swimming pool, where he drowned before horrified guests.

Escobar was also a Machiavellian schemer who ran circles around Colombia's feckless government. In one of the most memorable sections of the book, Bowden recalls the notorious deal he struck with Cesar Gaviria, Colombia's well-meaning, yet hopelessly naive, president. In return for his surrender, Escobar was housed in a customized mountaintop prison known as "La Catedral"—complete with saunas, discos, orgies, and unlimited freedom to run his drug empire.

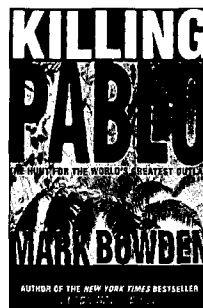
Gaviria ultimately decided to send troops into La Catedral in 1993 to haul Escobar off to a real prison. But the drug lord escaped during the armed assault, then escalated the bombing and killing campaign. Here Bowden offers some stunning new revelations in his account of the role played by Los Pepes, a clandestine

alliance of rival cocaine bosses, right-wing death-squad commandos, and vengeful relatives of Escobar's victims.

After years of fruitless attempts by Colombia's government to derail Escobar, this vigilante squad tracked down and killed many of his relatives and associates—helped by information provided by Centra Spike and other U.S. intelligence-gathering teams. Whether or not the Americans handed their intelligence directly to Los



SHOOTING THE MOON:
The True Story of an American Manhunt Unlike Any Other, Ever
by David Harris
Little, Brown & Co., \$26.00



KILLING PABLO:
A Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw
by Mark Bowden
Atlantic Monthly Press, \$25.00

Pepes is unclear, but the U.S. government was certainly not displeased by the bloody campaign. Ultimately, however, it was the Colombians, and not the Americans, who finally brought the drug lord down. *Killing Pablo* rises to a satisfying climax with the final cat-and-mouse game led by an aging Colombian colonel and his tech-savvy son, who followed Escobar for weeks through Medellín with a makeshift radio-wave tracking device.

Harris' *Shooting the Moon* could have used some of *Killing Pablo*'s taut narrative structure. Piecing his tale together largely from interviews with Drug Enforcement Administration agents involved in building the 1987 indictment against Noriega, Harris juxtaposes the DEA agents' dogged pursuit of Noriega with the sputtering diplomatic efforts to force him out of power. He tells how Noriega's efforts on behalf of the Nicaraguan Contras endeared him to such Washington powers as CIA director William Casey, who protected him from foes at State and the Pentagon.

Harris describes a litany of botched coups, bungled negotiations, and bureaucratic dust-ups that led inexorably to an invasion by new president George Bush, eager to prove his dedication to the War on Drugs. Still, it's a familiar tale. Fresher are some of the juicy details about Noriega's deals with the Medellín cartel and the parade of sleazy informants who assisted the DEA. Despite the ample supply of new information, however, Harris' story bogs down in a swamp of pumped-up prose and mangled syntax.

Harris has a knack for the wince-inducing turn of phrase: "Still in a state of shock at how far he had fallen, all the energy of his presence remained clenched inside himself," he writes. The book is studded with clichés, and Harris pads his text with numbingly extraneous details, and quotes his sources in unedited chunks filled with obscenity-laced macho talk that slow down the narrative.

In the end, Harris glorifies the grunts who did the spade work against Noriega but fails to offer a judgment on the invasion that landed him in jail. Was it, in the end, a bold expression of American resolve or the needless result of

high-level miscalculations? As Harris relates, there were several points between 1985 and 1989 when Noriega might have been nudged into a comfortable exile, sparing Panamanians the trauma of American soldiers shooting up their capital and killing several hundred civilians. But the author never makes clear just why the endless machinations failed. Hyping up the work of his heroic investigators, Harris seems to accept the notion that the American invasion was inevitable, and he offers no lessons for dealing with other tin-pot dictators.

Bowden offers a more jaundiced judgment on Escobar's killing. Six years after the hit, and a decade after Noriega was locked up for 30 years in a Miami penitentiary, the Medellín cartel is dead but the drug lord's successors live on. Cocaine production in Colombia continues to rise and kidnappings and murders are still a near daily occurrence on the streets of Bogotá and Medellín.

One would have liked, perhaps, a little more reflection on the U.S. government's current attempts to fight Colombia's cocaine producers by proxy: a half-billion-dollar aid program to

Colombia's military that threatens to widen the country's civil war with Marxist guerrillas. That lapse hardly detracts from *Killing Pablo*'s visceral power; it succeeds as a gripping morality tale in which evil finally gets its comeuppance. *Shooting the Moon*, on the other hand, is just one muddled slog to the finish line.

JOSHUA HAMMER is NEWSWEEK's Jerusalem bureau chief.

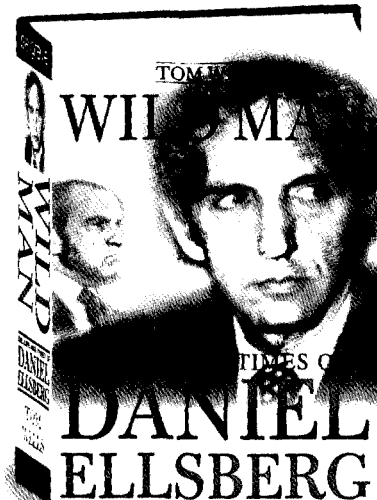
Civilization and a Malcontent

By Nicholas Thompson

IN HIS INTRODUCTION, FELIPE Fernandez-Armesto does his best to deter you from reading his new book, *Civilizations*. He warns that he has written it "in something like a frenzy, anxious to get down what I wanted to say before I forgot it," and, additionally, "few specialist readers have restrained or righted the judgments." If madcap, inaccurate writing isn't enough to discourage you, the

"A fascinating biography."

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