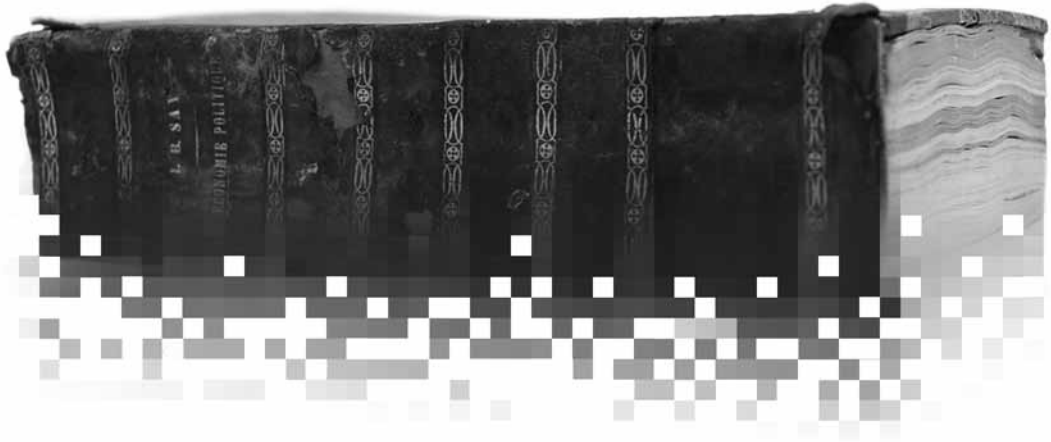




## The Global Canon



This special edition of *World Policy Journal* has been two years in the making. In the fall of 2008, we assigned the novelist and screenwriter Warren Adler to speculate on the world of literature and creativity in 25 years. Almost as an aside, Adler suggested that whatever the nature of creative expression, there is one certainty—that there will never be a Global Canon. The Western Canon, which has held sway since the time of Chaucer and Shakespeare, will continue to provide inspiration to the world's writers and thinkers for the foreseeable future, Adler wrote, and certainly for the next quarter century.

We had more readers comment on this single, passing remark than any other we have published in recent years. We wanted to take a moment (or, actually, half of this issue) to examine this idea in depth, from the perspective of those who create and are, in turn, influenced by the work of their peers and those who have gone before them. Is there, as *World Policy Journal* suggests in every issue, a truly global network of creativity—not only in the written word, but in art, drama, music, film, television and beyond? The answers arrived and the results, we believe, will surprise and entertain. For the first time in our quarter century as a publication, we consider poetry, music, painting, internet art, film from Nigeria, plays from Peru—the entire gamut of human creativity—to arrive at the conclusion we suspected from the start: That today, for perhaps the first time in human history, a Global Canon has arrived.

We begin our journey, as always, with the Big Question—a panel of experts address the issue of a Global Canon and wonder if such an odd construct exists, where it arrived from and where might it lead. Our “Anatomy” dissects the making of a music video shot by Philip Andelman, an American film director in Budapest. “Map Room” shows us in vivid, graphic detail the density of library holdings around the world, especially the interconnections and sizes of online digital libraries (the new mantra of the librarian community).

Much of the debate and speculation surrounding the Western Canon vs. the Global Canon revolves around the written word, as observed by Horace Engdahl, a veteran steward of the academy that awards the Nobel Prize for Literature. Joel Whitaker takes on a broader tableau, and as the founding editor of *Guernica*, an organization devoted to exploring the creative mind across cultures and media, describes how the canon has taken a mongrel form. Rounding out the Western vs. Global debate are two literature professors who teach the Canon and discuss how their increasingly worldly students have informed their curriculum. We then turned it over to a number of the world’s most creative practitioners of the arts, who demonstrate through their words, pictures, music and ideas how each day they are stretching the nature of the Canon: Salvadorian painter Mayra Barraza, Dutch Internet artist Rafael Rozendaal, Peruvian playwright Gonzalo Rodriguez Risco, Israeli composer and musician Asaf ‘Mojo’ Avidan, Dominican collage photographer Pollo Diaz and, at the heart of Nigeria’s movie industry, filmmaker Franco Sacchi.

Steven Soderbergh, the astonishing Oscar-nominated film director who has crisscrossed the planet seeking new influences, new ideas to transform into magical images, sat down with World Policy Institute senior fellow Sylvana Paternostro and *World Policy Journal* editor David A. Andelman to explore the world of cinema and creativity—and the influence of those who came before him. Rounding out our exploration of art from around the globe, Eric Hoyt explores the strange and universal truths revealed by reality television’s worldwide formats.

On other subjects, the issue takes readers on a photographic journey into the pits of a Ghanaian gold mine, while across the same continent, Jonathan Ewing, a Stockholm-based foreign correspondent, spent weeks in Ethiopia on a voyage underwritten by The Nation Foundation to investigate the role of private oil companies in the brutal abuses by the Ethiopian army at the frontier with Somalia. Michael J. Jordan, a Bratislava-based reporter who lived for years in Budapest, traveled to northeastern Hungary to report on a resurgent right-wing party on the verge of a major power breakthrough.

In this issue, *World Policy Journal* also publishes the two winners of our first writing contest, undertaken in conjunction with Peace Corps Direct, the alumni association of the U.S. Peace Corps. The goal was to uncover the most innovative or best-articulated suggestions for achieving food security in Africa. A five-judge panel awarded J.T. Simms, a Peace Corps alumnus from rural Niger, for his “Ingenuity, Peanut Butter and a Little Green Leaf,” and Michael Norton, on “Microinsurance, Brick by Brick.”

Former U.S. State Department counselor David Phillips examines Kosovo’s corrupt underbelly in his chronicle of the world’s youngest nation. Finally, *World Policy Journal* editor David A. Andelman explores the pernicious consequences of censorship and the abuse of press freedom around the world in his regular column, “Coda.”

—The Editors