

## Tekst 6

### Poor little ex-rich people

CAROL TAVRIS

Mel Krantzler and Patricia Biondi Krantzler  
DOWN AND OUT IN SILICON VALLEY  
The high cost of the high-tech dream

- 1 California is prone to gold rushes. We have them every few decades, starting with the discovery of actual gold in 1849: just lying around like pebbles! The image was irresistible, and people all over the world yielded to it, packing away their brains along with their winter clothes as they set forth to get rich fast. California was known as the Golden State ever after. The dream of the quick riches to be found here lasted long after the search for gold in particular turned to dust.
- 2 The latest gold rush in California began in the mid-1990s in Silicon Valley, a sprawl of cities in the northern part of the state. (The area got its name, the authors of this book explain, in the early 1970s, when a reporter sought to describe the emergence of the microchip companies that were setting up shop there.) “Literally thousands of new companies sprung up overnight”, write Mel Krantzler and Patricia Biondi Krantzler, “and almost every one of them was presented in the media as the birthplace of numerous millionaires”. People were investing small amounts of money and becoming rich almost immediately and ordinary investors were assured that they could do the same. Young people in their teens and twenties suddenly commanded gargantuan salaries. Silicon Valley became the symbol of fast wealth, fast times, youth and beauty: the California dream reincarnated.
- 3 This was too good to last, of course, and it didn’t. With the stock-market crash of 2000, the bubble burst. Fortunes made in a week collapsed in a week. And, as the Krantzlers observe, just as in the original gold rush only a tiny percentage of prospectors actually became wealthy – leaving the rest to perish financially and emotionally – so in 2000 a few multimillionaire company heads remained, while their businesses went bankrupt or “downsized” and thousands of their employees lost their savings, their hopes, and their jobs.
- 4 American psychotherapists know where the gold is, too, and the Krantzlers are director and co-director of a psychotherapy service that itself sounds like a California parody: The Creative Divorce, Love, and Marriage Counseling

Center. Their observations about the dark side of Silicon Valley life – the high rates of drug use, divorce, depression and fear; the dawning realization that money can’t buy you love – stem, they say, from their work counselling hundreds of CEOs, managers, engineers, computer programmers and other employees in the high-tech industry. Thus the reader is prepared for sad stories of poor little rich people, and poor little ex-rich people.

- 5 But *Down and Out in Silicon Valley* is better than that. Though written in a light, popular style, it is deeply political, placing the story of the rise and fall of Silicon Valley firmly in the context of the corruption of unregulated corporations and their exploitation, in this case, of naive, young, inexperienced workers. With no unions to represent their interests and ignorant of the lessons of history, the young dreamers who flocked to Silicon Valley were easily gulled by managerial lies that they weren’t “workers” but just “one big happy family” along with management. They were unprepared for Silicon Valley’s vicious patterns of discrimination based on age (employees are over the hill at thirty, irrespective of their experience or knowledge) and gender. And, blinded by optimism, individualism and greed, they were unprepared for their sudden, heartless “terminations”.
- 6 The irony, observe the Krantzlers, is that the same employees who despised the label of “worker” and who gloried in the Ayn Rand philosophy of I’ve-got-mine-and-to-hell-with-you, and reviled “government interference”, show no hesitation about appearing at the unemployment office where they stand in line waiting to obtain their unemployment checks. They apparently are unaware that the checks they receive are coming from a government-operated program (fought for and won by millions of demonstrating men and women in the 1930s) and that they receive their checks precisely because they are unemployed *workers*.
- 7 The Krantzlers are psychotherapists, and to them, being “down and out” refers not only to a state of unemployment and lost income but also to psychological states of despair and loneliness – the “high cost” of their subtitle, the price of the obsessive quest for wealth. This is hardly a new message for Americans, though the Krantzlers convey it eloquently through their research and case studies, and though it always bears repeating for each generation.

# Eindexamen Engels vwo 2006-II

## ■ Tekst 6 Poor little ex-rich people

- 2p **18** □ Geef van elk van de onderstaande beweringen aan of deze wel of niet in overeenstemming is met de inhoud van de alinea's 1 en 2.
- 1 California's prosperity is based on the enormous quantities of gold found in the nineteenth century.
  - 2 Most of the investors in the microchip industry were young people.
  - 3 The media made Silicon Valley sound synonymous with wealth.
  - 4 The rise of the microchip industry reconfirmed California's image as the Golden State.
- Noteer het nummer van elke bewering, gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".
- 1p **19** ■ How can the reviewer's overall tone in paragraph 3 be characterised?
- A As emotional.
  - B As mocking.
  - C As neutral.
- 2p **20** □ Geef van elk van de onderstaande beweringen aan of deze wel of niet in overeenstemming is met de inhoud van de alinea's 4 en 5.
- 1 The authors of *Down and Out in Silicon Valley* are just as naive about the Californian dream as the employees in Silicon Valley.
  - 2 The reviewer does not take the Krantzlars' professional observations seriously.
  - 3 *Down and Out in Silicon Valley* links the mental problems of the people working in Silicon Valley to their materialistic attitude.
  - 4 *Down and Out in Silicon Valley* exposes the ruthless attitude of the employers in Silicon Valley.
- Noteer het nummer van elke bewering, gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".
- 3p **21** □ Geef van elk van de onderstaande beweringen aan of deze wel of niet in overeenstemming is met de inhoud van de alinea's 6 en 7.
- 1 Former Silicon Valley employees do not object to benefiting from a system they seemed to hold in contempt.
  - 2 The future of the Silicon Valley industry ultimately lies in the hands of the U.S. government.
  - 3 *Down and Out in Silicon Valley* describes psychological distress in the context of financial aspirations.
  - 4 The pursuit of dreams of big money and happiness has claimed victims throughout American history.
  - 5 *Down and Out in Silicon Valley* suffers from the moralistic tone of its authors.
  - 6 The reviewer ends on a cynical note because of Americans' never-ending material aspirations.
- Noteer het nummer van elke bewering, gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".