The background of the cover is a colorful, abstract painting of a city street. In the foreground, a person wearing a blue jacket and a white cap is seen from behind, carrying a large, dark bag. The street is filled with cars, including a yellow taxi, and buildings with various signs and lights. The overall style is expressive and dynamic, with a rich palette of blues, yellows, reds, and purples.

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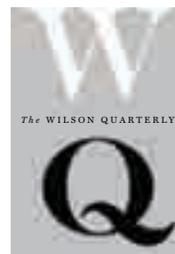
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*The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.*

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# EDITOR'S COMMENT

## The City Resilient

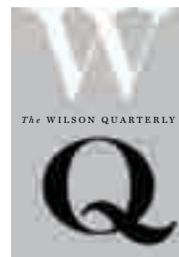
Thirty years ago, my morning commute took me on foot across New York City's West 42nd Street. It was not a good place to start the day. The street was lined with peepshows, porn theaters, and shabby shops, and its sidewalks were littered with trash and a smattering of unconscious human beings from the night before. Dante would have been speechless.

Today, critics complain that 42nd Street is too squeaky-clean, that it has been "Disneyfied." I prefer to marvel at the rebirth of the storied entertainment mecca New Yorkers once called the Deuce. New York City's rebirth is a particularly inspiring story, but it has been repeated to one degree or another—with a few notable exceptions—in cities across the country. Crime is down, business is up, and while Americans are not flocking back to live there, they now see downtown as an exciting (and safe) place to go. There is a sense that some of the last great urban problems, particularly improving public education, won't prove so intractable after all. At a time when the United States is beset by self-doubt, it's important to appreciate such triumphs.

For cities, as for people, resilience is a precious quality. In our cover stories in this issue, we have moved in for a street-level look at the sources of resilience that are reshaping American cities. In a revealing close-up, Tom Vanderbilt shows that while the 21st-century American metropolis won't be an industrial city, it cannot be a city without industry. Witold Rybczynski, the foremost observer of the city in our time, gauges the likely effect of the forces that seem to be propelling us toward much denser cities. From the sidewalks of Washington, D.C., Sarah L. Courteau explores the dilemmas of gentrification in her own changing neighborhood. City official David Zipper describes how he and others are working to build on the success of downtown retail revivals by recruiting grocery store operators and other retailers to help spread vitality to poor inner-city neighborhoods.

These writers take us a long way from 42nd Street, and that's the point. The urban comeback is a continuing story.

—STEVEN LAGERFELD



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# LETTERS

## DEFLATING THE PRISON BUBBLE

JOAN PETERSILIA'S ARTICLE "Beyond the Prison Bubble" [Winter '11] provides an insightful look at the problems of recidivism and the consequences of the failure to develop successful rehabilitation programs. She rightly sees room for improvement.

We would be wise also to consider the incentive structures surrounding the creation of criminal laws. For too long we have failed to examine the causes of criminalization, and allowed ourselves to criminalize conduct that ought not, in any just world, be criminal. Indeed, as legal scholar William Stuntz has noted, American criminal law "covers far more conduct than any jurisdiction could possibly punish."

Criminal law's wide mandate has more to do with politics than social necessity. Few if any groups regularly lobby legislators regarding criminal law. The groups that do are more likely to seek harsh penalties, and more criminal laws rather than fewer. As a consequence, political considerations give the legislator every incentive to be overinclusive in crafting criminal laws.

Moreover, the criminal justice system is exceedingly expensive to operate. Broad and overlapping statutes allow for easier convictions,

which, when combined with harsh penalties, induce guilty pleas and produce high conviction rates. This minimizes the costs of the cumbersome jury system and produces outcomes popular with the public.

Finally, the trend toward criminalization is aided by legislative reliance on the existence of prosecutorial discretion. When a broad and harsh statute produces an outcome that the public dislikes, blame falls on prosecutors for exercising their discretion poorly, and never with the legislators who adopted the overbroad statute in the first instance.

When constituents can be satisfied, institutional costs minimized, and blame avoided, is it any wonder that criminal legislation is often as expansive as possible? In reflecting on the problems of recidivism, we should not lose sight of the issue of criminalization as well.

**Paul Rosenzweig**

*Visiting Fellow, The Heritage Foundation*

*Professorial Lecturer in Law*

*George Washington University*

*Washington, D.C.*

JOAN PETERSILIA PROVIDES A REMARKABLY COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW OF THE UNITED STATES' UNMANAGEABLE AND UNAFFORDABLE PRISON SYSTEM. WHILE SHE OFFERS USEFUL ADVICE ON MAKING REFORMS TO TAME THE "PRISON-

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industrial complex," I am compelled to point out a profound omission in her account.

The prison system is a gigantic jobs engine that employs upward of 750,000 men and women in well-paying, unionized positions. A prison is one of the last places a person with a high school diploma can get a job that will support a middle-class lifestyle and a comfortable retirement. Many small towns across the country would wither without the local prison's contribution to the tax base.

The fewer prisoners there are, the fewer guards are needed. It is not a coincidence that guards' unions have

become big political players in many statehouses, backing all the “tough on crime” measures and the hardest of the hard-line politicians. It is a matter of job security. The system has evolved, whether purposefully or not, to virtually assure higher rates of failure.

Any attempts to shrink the prison population will be fiercely resisted. That should be obvious to any serious observer of the politics of crime and punishment. As the reformers ought to have learned in California, Petersilia included, coming up with rational, evidence-based solutions to the problems of prisons is the easy part. Figuring out how to translate those solutions into practices in institutions staffed by people whose self-interest runs counter to them, whose very livelihoods are threatened by the new policies—that is another order of difficulty altogether.

Not acknowledging this aspect of the problem will doom the prospects for finally deflating the prison bubble.

**Kenneth E. Hartman**

*Author, Mother California: A Story of Redemption Behind Bars (2009)*  
*Lancaster, Calif.*

IN “BEYOND THE PRISON BUBBLE,” Joan Petersilia gives an academic overview of President Richard M. Nixon’s war on crime. As someone who spent 44 years in prison and met thousands of maximum security prisoners, I would like to offer another perspective.

The view from prison of Nixon’s law-and-order campaign, which came in the wake of the urban riots of the late 1960s, was that the president was exploiting racial prejudice and white fear as a political strategy. In his 1973 State of the Union

address, he declared, “The only way to attack crime in America is . . . without pity.”

“No mercy” became a political mantra. Candidates for office who failed to embrace the new hard line or who favored the rehabilitation of prisoners were ruthlessly denounced. New jails and prisons, and the special interests who feed off them, sprouted and spread like kudzu; prisoners became profitable commodities. Sustaining prisonomics demanded that every bunk stay filled. An unprecedented demonization of prisoners fueled public wrath; educational and treatment programs ended, and clemency became a thing of the past.

Most long-term inmates eventually decide they want to be better than the worst thing they’ve ever done. At the Louisiana State Penitentiary, lifers are electricians, plumbers, carpenters, mechanics, paralegals, paramedics, barbers, and hospice workers; they run self-help clubs, tutoring workshops, and visiting-room concessions. Many are rehabilitated but stand little chance of ever leaving prison. And those who are released—in Louisiana, with \$10 and a bus ticket—often have nowhere to go and are ineligible for public housing and social services. Frequently, even the exonerated can’t find employers willing to hire them.

I do not share Petersilia’s assessment that the war on crime is one of our country’s “great success stories.” Policies and practices driven by mercilessness improve nothing—neither the criminal nor American society.

**Wilbert Rideau**

*Author, In the Place of Justice: A Story of Punishment and Deliverance (2010)*  
*Baton Rouge, La.*

## CRIME STOPPERS

PHILIP J. COOK AND JENS LUDWIG offer some excellent and creative suggestions for dealing with the behavior of individuals who commit crimes that get them sent to prison [“The Economist’s Guide to Crime Busting,” Winter ’11].

I believe that better results can be attained by focusing on the policies that determine who should go to prison, for which crimes, and for how long. That was an issue addressed within the criminal justice system from the 1920s through the 1970s, and during that time the incarceration rate was impressively stable. Then, as policy became politicized, we saw an exponential growth of the incarceration rate to the point that it is now four to five times that which prevailed until the early 1970s.

Dominating that growth was a tenfold increase in the incarceration rate of drug offenders. The public was frightened by the violence associated with crack markets and increasingly concerned that their children would get caught up in drugs. A political uproar fueled legislation that required judges to impose often draconian sentences.

But what good is the massive incarceration of drug offenders, who now represent more than 20 percent of state prisoners and more than 50 percent of federal prisoners? An incarcerated drug offender is simply replaced on the streets. Fortunately, there has been a significant drop in the demand for crack, reducing the violence associated with its market and pushing violent crime down to a level not seen since the 1960s.

We are now at a point at which we are starting to see a convergence of the Left, which is generally uncomfortable with punitive policies, and the Right, which is now very concerned with budget deficits. Thus, we may be in a position to redress the massive growth of the prison population over the past 30 years. To do so, we should consider the following steps: repeal the draconian laws that have been enacted in response to political pressures, or at least sunset those laws and review their effectiveness; make these changes retroactive to provide parole opportunities for the people sentenced under them; reconsider whether being sent back to prison is the best way to deal with a parolee who fails a drug test; and develop treatment-oriented alternatives to incarceration for drug-dependent offenders.

**Alfred Blumstein**

*J. Erik Jonsson University Professor of  
Urban Systems and Operations Research  
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Pittsburgh, Pa.*

PHILIP J. COOK AND JENS LUDWIG's article is part of a long-overdue broadening of perspectives in the economic analysis of crime and its control. Scholars long worked under the assumption that threatened punishment could be considered the "price" of violating a law. According to this tunnel-vision logic, the effectiveness of crime deterrents (such as hefty prison sentences) accords with the first law of demand: People will commit fewer crimes as the punishment grows more costly.

This fixation with penalty as a

price meant that other applications of economic approaches to the environments and incentives surrounding crime and law enforcement were not emphasized or encouraged. One doesn't have to embrace *Freakonomics* (2005) to appreciate how widening the lens of economic perspective can improve policy thinking. One can instead read Cook and Ludwig.

There is a second sea change in thinking about crime that informs and reinforces the Cook and Ludwig performance. A long-held central assumption of crime policy was that the criminal propensities of repeat offenders are fixed and predictable over long periods. The only antidote to repetitive crime was through incarceration, which led the prison population to grow fivefold. But the large crime declines in the 1990s and the 80 percent drop in crime in New York City (without any increase in incarceration) undercut the notion that criminal propensities are fixed and immutable. Where did all the criminals go? The new, more sophisticated appreciation of crime suggests that incarceration is an imperfect mechanism of crime reduction and that incentives that assume people can change have potential. This is a much more effective way to think about controlling crime.

**Franklin Zimring**

*William G. Simon Professor of Law and  
Wolfen Distinguished Scholar  
University of California, Berkeley  
Berkeley, Calif.*

**A BETTER FORM OF BAIL**

I WAS BOTH ENTERTAINED AND unsettled by Alex Tabarrok's roman-

tized description of the U.S. bail-for-profit system ["The Bounty Hunter's Pursuit of Justice," Winter '11]. In 1964, U.S. attorney general Robert Kennedy described this system as "cruel and illogical." The pretrial release of the accused, he said, is not determined by guilt or innocence, the nature of the crime, or the character of the defendant. The factor that determines release "simply is money."

The entire Western world has since outlawed bail for profit, with the exception of the United States. Why have they done so? Because this scandal-ridden approach results in the costly incarceration of low-risk defendants while it rewards those who have access to cash regardless of how they acquired it or the likelihood they will reoffend.

Most state laws require judges to consider both flight risk and potential danger to the community when making pretrial release decisions. The bail-for-profit industry and the colorful bounty hunters in Tabarrok's article are not concerned with preventing new crimes by their clients—such considerations are simply not part of their business model. Can we really expect an industry that profits every time one of its customers gets arrested and needs a new bond to aggressively seek to minimize fresh business opportunities?

The bail-for-profit industry and the author would have us believe that their reality-show model of justice is the only sensible approach. Bail reformers advocate the use of empirically validated risk measurements (instead of cash) to guide judges in determin-

[Continued on page 10]

# AT THE CENTER

## WOODROW WILSON CENTER WELCOMES NEW PRESIDENT

ON FEBRUARY 8, THE WOODROW WILSON CENTER's board of trustees ushered in a new era with the appointment of Representative Jane Harman (D-Calif.) as the Center's director, president, and CEO. Harman resigned her long-held congressional seat, telling reporters that "the opportunity to lead and shape the direction of the country's premier policy incubator—one with international reach and influence—is a thrilling next step for me."

Like her predecessor, Lee H. Hamilton, who represented Indiana's Ninth Congressional District in the House of Representatives for more than three decades before becoming director of the Wilson Center, Harman brings an insider's understanding of the ways the Wilson Center's offerings—public debate, research, and scholarship—can find traction in Washington and beyond. Hamilton's "centered, principled, and pragmatic" leadership of the Wilson Center will serve as an inspiration and guide, she said.

Raised in Los Angeles, Harman displayed from an early age the enthusiasm for policy that would eventually bring her to the Wilson Center. She attended the 1960 Democratic Convention and witnessed the nomination of John F. Kennedy for president. While working as a Smith College organizer for Young Citizens for Johnson in 1964, the high-spirited teenager wrote to her parents, "I'm flying! NEVER have I been so sure of my love for politics, for organizing, for leading—what a week! . . . I'm one of those freaks of nature they call super-energetic." She was passionate about learning as well: She graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1966, and earned her JD from Harvard Law School, where she was one of several dozen women in a class of 550.

Harman began her Washington career in the office of Senator John V. Tunney (D-Calif.). During the Carter administration, she served as deputy secretary to the cabinet and as special counsel to the Department of Defense.



Wilson Center president Jane Harman addresses the board of trustees on February 8 after accepting her appointment.

Along with her husband, Sidney Harman, the founder and then chief executive of a major audio equipment maker, and two of her four children, she moved back to California in 1991 and launched a campaign to represent an oceanfront stretch of Los Angeles County in the House of Representatives. She captured the seat and proved a popular congresswoman, winning reelection in every subsequent contest, though she sat out a term in the late 1990s to seek the Democratic Party's nomination for California governor. After the 2000 election, she returned to Congress.

Harman's 17 years in the House were distinguished by a commitment to a host of issues relevant to the work of the Wilson Center, including national security, environmental protection, and women's rights. She was also a member of the Blue Dogs, a coalition of moderate to conservative Democrats who prize fiscal prudence. Long an advocate of the idea that "the best policy is made in the center, on a bipartisan basis," Harman values the Wilson Center's commitment to nonpartisanship.

Her vision for the Wilson Center is characteristically ambitious. With Harman at the helm, expect more great debates on central issues in foreign and domestic policy and concerted efforts to involve more members of Congress and the executive branch. "The time is right for a new challenge," she said upon announcing her acceptance of the appointment, "and this is the right challenge."



Jane Harman, *Director*

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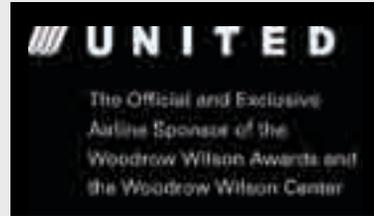
THE WILSON CENTER is the nation's living memorial to Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States from 1913 to 1921. It is located at One Woodrow Wilson Plaza, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004-3027. Created by law in 1968, the Center is Washington's only independent, wide-ranging institute for advanced study where vital cultural issues and their deep historical background are explored through research and dialogue. Visit the Center at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org>.

## JUMP-STARTING NUCLEAR HISTORY

WHAT DO WOODROW WILSON Center staff do when they think a crucial academic field is underdeveloped? They try to jump-start it. That's the goal of the Nuclear Proliferation International History Project (NPIHP), a new initiative spearheaded by Christian Ostermann, director of the Center's History and Public Policy Program, and Leopoldo Nuti, who heads the Machiavelli Center for Cold War Studies, in Rome. The project is being funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Policymakers and academics who deal with nuclear proliferation usually focus on its security and conceptual dimensions. They don't draw much on the history of proliferation, though it can provide valuable insight into today's challenges. "Having a better understanding of why countries proliferate, or choose not to, or choose to proliferate and then change their minds, can help officials craft better policies," says program associate Timothy McDonnell.

Project researchers will engage these questions in a manner foreign to policymakers but instinctive to historians: through archival research. Working closely with partner organizations, NPIHP will identify and promote opportunities for scholars to study nuclear-related documents in archives around the world. The



project plans to make its Web site ([www.wilsoncenter.org/NPIHP](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/NPIHP)) a treasure trove of translated documents accessible to researchers everywhere.

NPIHP will also record oral histories of key players in weapons programs, a particularly crucial resource in a secretive field where many decisions are not put in print. In Israel, the country's nuclear affairs are not physically documented but established in top-secret conversations. South Africa poses a different challenge: Apartheid-era officials destroyed documents related to nuclear weapons in an attempt to prevent a revival of the weapons program they shuttered in 1990.

NPIHP will award about eight fellowships annually to PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers. Junior researchers and practitioners won't be forgotten; this year NPIHP is sponsoring a two-week history-oriented "nuclear boot camp" geared toward people beginning their careers. They'll leave primed to apply the lessons of history to their work. In the words of McDonnell, "nuclear weapons pose incredible challenges to contemporary academics and policymakers—but we need to understand the past to manage the present."

**Joseph H. Flom**  
1923-2011  
*Former chair,  
Woodrow Wilson Center  
Board of Trustees*

[Continued from page 7] ing who can be safely released and who must be detained. This evidence-based approach neither favors the rich nor penalizes the poor but seeks to administer justice with a sharp focus on fairness and public safety—not on profits.

**Timothy J. Murray**

*Executive Director  
Pretrial Justice Institute  
Washington, D.C.*

## BEWILDERED IN THE BALKANS

A POPULAR JOKE IN THE BALKANS starts with a group of children asking a rabbi, “Please describe the situation in the Balkans in one word.” The rabbi answers, “Good.” The children say, “Perhaps you can use a few more words.” The rabbi responds, “Not good.”

In “A Glimmer in the Balkans” [Winter ’11], Martin Sletzinger captures “the dialectic nature” of the Balkans today. Preoccupied with Afghanistan and Iraq, Western policymakers think of the Balkans as a success. This is not how people living in the region feel. At the moment, the Balkan states are beset by a mixture of Greek-style economic problems, Berlusconi-type politics, and a Turkish ambivalence about the European Union.

The region’s elites are not sure how Balkan economies will grow in postcrisis Europe. How will multicultural institutions, built after a decade of war and fervent nationalism, be sustained at a time when leading European politicians are saying that multiculturalism is

dead? How can institutional arrangements made to stop the war be transformed into an effective guarantee of a common future? The impact of the EU’s current fiscal crisis on the Balkans can be best understood as a crisis of political imagination. Just two or three years ago, people in the region worried about living on the outskirts of Europe. Now they worry about Europe itself.

**Ivan Krastev**

*Chairman, Center for Liberal Strategies  
Sofia, Bulgaria*

MARTIN SLETZINGER’S ARTICLE offers an insightful perspective on the limitations of international involvement in the Balkans and beyond. I agree with many of his points, including his assertion that a major source of instability in the region is the unbalanced treatment of Serbia by the United States and the European Union.

Instead of using the term “nation-building” in thinking about the contemporary Balkans, however, I recommend “peace-building,” “state-building,” or what the U.S. Department of Defense calls “stability operations.” Nation-building is the process of making a country’s political and national units congruent, either by a homegrown government or by a third party. The U.S. effort in the Balkans falls short of being a genuine nation-building process.

**Harris Mylonas**

*Assistant Professor of Political Science  
and International Affairs  
The Elliott School of International Affairs and  
Department of Political Science  
George Washington University  
Washington, D.C.*

## RACE TO THE BOTTOM

ROBERT J. SAMUELSON MOSTLY gets it right in “Rethinking the Great Recession” [Winter ’11]. One of the outcomes of the recession he alludes to but doesn’t expound upon is the role education plays in creating “real” productivity. It deserves to be emphasized.

We have spawned two decades’ worth of employees who are unable to do math, don’t understand science (particularly concepts such as evolution and climate change), and can’t master engineering. The effect on real productivity has been devastating. Here in Silicon Valley, every company is either started or fueled by immigrants, largely from South and East Asia. In the future, these companies will be started there, not here. While we fritter away our time on Facebook (a technology that contributes virtually nothing to the economy and is laughably valued by Wall Street at \$50 billion), China is set to clean our clock in cleantech, nanotech, and even biotech patents over the next 15 years.

Unless we return to a leadership position in science and technology, we will lose the race with Asia by 2025. The role of our government should be to fund long-term basic research and development (the type private industry will never support) that will ultimately lead to breakthrough technologies. With massive cuts in federal and state government spending, we are consuming our own seed corn at precisely the time we should be planting it.

**Sunil Maulik**

*Posted on wilsonquarterly.com*

## INDONESIA'S TROUBLES

ROBERT PRINGLE HIGHLIGHTS THE ongoing debate about Indonesia and its trajectory ["Indonesia's Moment," Winter '11]. Optimists, who are often well-informed foreign observers, point to the country's strengthening Muslim-majority democracy (as if that were a puzzle to begin with), its humming economy, and the end of authoritarianism as evidence that it is doing well.

The pessimists, who are mostly middle-class Indonesians, believe that affairs are deteriorating. In their view, corruption is worsening, religious pluralism and social tolerance are diminishing, and unemployment is skyrocketing as the gap between the haves and have-nots widens.

Pringle's article focuses a little too much on the good and not enough on the bad. The challenges Indonesia faces have less to do with democracy or Islamic radicalism—which dominate commentary on Indonesia—than with political leadership and governance.

The importance of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's willingness to address thorny policy issues such as corruption, unemployment, and the protection of minorities cannot be overstated. Yet in the past year and a half, the president's overly cautious and image-conscious nature has prevented him from taking on the tough issues, leaving the country mired in one political scandal after another.

In a growing country of 250 million people spread out over 33 provinces and 470 districts and

plagued with increasingly complex social and economic challenges, the focus needs to be on improving governance rather than democracy per se. This means getting the bureaucracy to work more effectively, efficiently, and transparently, and in a manner that is publicly accountable.

This is, of course, a lot harder than it sounds—and one article can never do justice to the complexities of Indonesia's troubles. One place to start, though, may be with a more sober view of the policy challenges.

**Evan A. Laksmana**

*Researcher, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Jakarta, and  
Adjunct Lecturer  
Indonesian Defense University  
Tangerang, Indonesia*

## TREE HUGGING

"WHAT IS A TREE WORTH?" BY JILL Jonnes [Winter '11], provides an excellent exposition of the benefits of urban forestry. It shows how the planet functions not as a physical system but as a biophysical system, with the biological and physical components affecting one another.

Human-generated climate change is an indication that we have ignored this fundamental dynamic. Today, roughly half of the excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere comes from the burning of fossil fuels (the product of ancient biology and ecosystems); the other half (mostly over the last three centuries) has come from ecosystem degradation and destruction, which are largely the result of deforestation.

If extensive reforestation (along with grassland restoration and

agriculture improvements) took place, a significant amount of carbon dioxide could be pulled out of the atmosphere. The greenhouse-gas problem would not be completely solved, but it would be significantly ameliorated, and nature would be made more resilient to climate change.

The living planet needs the kind of care and nurturing that Theodore Roosevelt so eloquently advocated. If urban trees produce the benefits Jonnes cites, imagine the value of applying that attention to nature on a planetary scale.

**Thomas Lovejoy**

*University Professor  
Department of Environmental Science and Policy  
George Mason University  
McLean, Va.*

READERS OF JILL JONNES'S "WHAT Is a Tree Worth?" might want to know more about a new tool available through the latest iteration of i-Tree, Version 4.0, which builds upon the National Tree Benefits Calculator. The tool, dubbed i-Tree Design, is a graphic interface accessible via Google Maps that allows property owners to "plant" trees on virtual representations of their property. Once a tree is "planted," the tool shows the benefits that accrue from that tree type (larger is typically better) and tree placement. i-Tree Design is unique in that it can be easily used and understood by the layperson, whereas the earlier versions of i-Tree were geared toward forestry professionals.

**Mark Buscaino**

*Executive Director, Casey Trees  
Washington, D.C.*

# FINDINGS

BRIEF NOTES OF INTEREST ON ALL TOPICS

## Value-Added Classrooms

*Learn more, earn more*

Call it the eight percent solution. According to Eric A. Hanushek, an economist at the Hoover Institution, ousting the worst eight percent of America's public school teachers would produce substantial gains for the nation's economy.

Hanushek has found that a typical student may advance by a year and a half in achievement during a year with a good teacher, but by only half a year with a poor teacher. That can have financial consequences. According to Hanushek's calculations, a teach-

er in the 60th percentile (based on student scores on achievement tests) raises the average student's lifetime earnings by more than \$5,000; a teacher in the 84th percentile raises a student's earnings by \$20,000. With classes of 20 to 30 students per year, the increases add up. By the same token, a below-average teacher can diminish a student's earnings.

That's where the eight percent comes in, Hanushek writes in a National Bureau of Economic Research paper published in December. Replacing the bottom eight percent of teachers with merely average teachers would raise American educational

attainment to near the top of international comparisons. Based on historical patterns, according to Hanushek, that would raise the U.S. gross domestic product by more than \$100 trillion over the next 80 years and increase annual U.S. growth by more than one percent.

But teachers' unions don't think much of the eight percent solution. In a speech in February, Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, went after Hanushek by name: "We've seen people like Eric Hanushek, who may know a great deal about economics but little about pedagogy, try to reduce teaching to a number—a regression analysis—with the implication being that you can fire your way to good teaching. That's a flawed approach."

Nonetheless, Weingarten agrees that schools need to get inept teachers out of the classroom. In her speech, she proposed a process for doing so. Teachers would be evaluated based on classroom observations, lesson plans, student test scores, and other factors, she said. Those whose performance fell short would work with administrators on plans for improvement. After no more than a year, teachers



who still couldn't meet expectations might be removed. If necessary, an arbitration process would last 100 days at most. Adopting this process could "put to bed the issue of teachers who shouldn't be teaching," Weingarten said.

"It's refreshing to see that Randi is starting to talk in these terms," Hanushek says. "What we have learned, however, is that saying the right thing and doing the right thing do not always go together. Both schools and unions have decried the current evaluation systems for a long time, and both have promised to work together to improve them. Yet there are only a few examples where there has been any movement at all." He wonders whether Weingarten's proposal represents a "substantive change in outlook" or simply a response to the problems facing public-sector unions around the country.

Hanushek says he ran into Weingarten a few days before she delivered her speech. She told him, he recalls, "Your eight percent is giving me all sorts of problems."

## Control Yourself

### *Early uh-ohs*

In his late seventies, Leo Tolstoy supposedly said, "As I was at five, so I am now." That remark may be more apt than the one about all happy families being alike. A new study finds that behavior in children as young as three can predict troubles in adulthood.

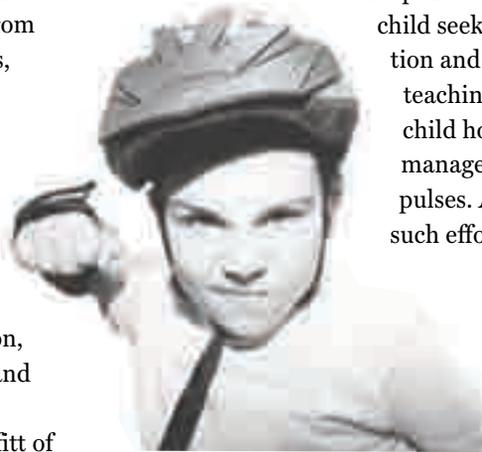
In Dunedin, New Zealand, researchers studied about 1,000

individuals from birth until age 32. During the period when the subjects were ages three to 11, the researchers gauged their powers of self-control, based on first-hand observation as well as reports from parents, teachers, and the children themselves. Among the measures were whether the children could handle frustration, wait their turn, and stick to a task.

Terrie E. Moffitt of Duke University and a dozen coauthors report the results in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (Feb. 15). When they reached adolescence, the children with low self-control were more likely to begin smoking, drop out of school, and become teenage parents. In adulthood, they were more likely to be raising their own children in one-parent households, to suffer from high blood pressure and other health problems, to be in debt, and to have criminal records. Compared with the children with the greatest self-control, those with the least were on average about three times more likely to experience those sorts of adverse outcomes as adults. The researchers found that a child's level of self-control is about as reliable a predictor of the future as IQ or family socioeconomic status.

Self-control, moreover, may be

easier to augment than intelligence and wealth. Research indicates that in many cases, a child's self-control can be enhanced by teaching the parents how to respond when the child seeks attention and by teaching the child how to manage impulses. Although such efforts don't



Here comes trouble

succeed with everyone, the Dunedin study suggests that even modest improvements could generate social benefits.

The new research reinforces what many earlier studies have found, notes Daniel Akst, a *Wilson Quarterly* contributing editor and the author of *We Have Met the Enemy: Self-Control in an Age of Excess* (Penguin). "There is," he says, "overwhelming evidence that self-control is associated with all kinds of good things in life."

## Seminal Unfairness?

### *Making the victim pay*

In cases of statutory rape, the victim sometimes has to send a monthly check to the wrongdoer. For example, a 34-year-old California woman had an affair with a 15-year-old boy in the mid-1990s. At his age, he was

legally incapable of consenting to intercourse. Nonetheless, when the woman had his baby, a judge ordered him to pay child support.

Such cases have come before several courts, law professor Michael J. Higdon of the University of Tennessee writes in an unpublished paper, and they've reached the same conclusion. Whatever the circumstances of conception, biological fathers are generally responsible for paying child support. In many states, the only exception is artificial insemination performed by physicians.

Higdon proposes a different approach. When a man can prove that sex was nonconsensual, as in the case of statutory rape, he ought to be excused from paying child support. "The time has come for courts to remedy this injustice," writes Higdon.

## Unforgettable?

### *Search censors*

Hugo Guidotti Russo, a cosmetic surgeon in Madrid, wants to liposuction his past. The Spanish newspaper *El Pais* reported in 1991 that Guidotti Russo had been accused of bungling a woman's breast surgery. He told *The Wall Street Journal* in March that he'd been cleared of any wrongdoing in the case, though the *Journal* reporters couldn't confirm it. Now the doctor wants Google to change its algorithm so that searches for his name won't bring up the *El Pais* article. The Spanish judge hearing the dispute has asked the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg for guidance.

Although other countries haven't taken the concept as far as Spain has, the European Convention on Human Rights protects privacy, which is increasingly being interpreted to include a "right to be forgotten." Freedom of expression—also protected by the convention—doesn't take precedence over privacy. In fact, privacy often seems to trump what one judge dismissed as the "fetish of the freedom of the press."

In some countries, Google does censor results. Germany, for instance, has ordered that it not supply links to neo-Nazi groups in search results. But Google says that no country has ever forced it to delete links to sites that don't themselves break the law, as Spain is trying to do with *El Pais*. (The Spanish right to be forgotten doesn't extend to news media and their Web sites.) Taking that step would have "a profound chilling effect on free expression," a Google executive told *The Guardian*.

Viktor Mayer-Schönberger, the author of *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age* (Princeton University Press), sides with the Spanish privacy regulators. Technology has revolutionized social memory, he says. Gaining access to particular information a few decades ago might have required a descent into musty archives or a vexing encounter with a microfilm reader. In the digital age, by contrast, "storage is cheap, retrieval has

gotten easy thanks to full-text indexing, and access through the Internet is now close to ubiquitous," he says.

"What we will see, not just in Spain but elsewhere, are debates about the role and importance of remembering and forgetting," adds Mayer-Schönberger. "And just as societies have a right to decide what kind of information should be outlawed, like child pornography, societies have a right to decide how easy remembering should be and for how long. . . . After all, it is our decision how we want to live and what we want to forget and remember—not Google's."

## Houses on the Hill

### *Family matters*

Why have comity and bipartisanship dwindled in Congress? Charles Gibson, the former anchor of ABC's *World News*, sought to find out by interviewing current and former members of Congress, staff members in congressional offices, and academic experts. He summarizes his findings in a paper published in January by the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy at Harvard University.

Although the people Gibson interviewed identified many factors, nearly everyone stressed the importance of legislators' families—specifically, where they live. In the 1980s, most members of Congress



Down the online memory hole?

moved their families to Washington. Today, by contrast, most families stay behind, and members typically fly home each Friday and return to Washington on Monday.

“Even those people who are fierce partisans or ideologues are human beings,” Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute told Gibson, “and if you are standing on the sidelines of a soccer game with a colleague from across the aisle . . . you’re going to have a harder time vilifying him as the incarnation of the devil when you get on the floor. We just don’t have that anymore.”

Ornstein suggested a couple of ways to encourage senators and representatives to move their families to Washington. Whereas Congress now frequently meets Tuesdays through Thursdays, Ornstein proposed that it convene five days a week, with one week off per month. He also recommended giving members housing allowances, which would enable them to establish adequate second homes; currently, they get just a \$3,000 tax deduction. More togetherness on the soccer fields, Ornstein reckoned, might lead to less discord on the Hill.

## Locked-In Expectations

### *Still happy*

Journalists pounced this February on a study published in the *British Medical Journal* in which Marie-Aurélie Bruno and five colleagues found that a majority of patients with locked-in syndrome (LIS)—people who are generally paralyzed and unable to communicate except by moving their eyes—report being happy. The longer

the patients have had LIS, the greater their sense of well-being.

Previous research had also found that people with LIS and other major disabilities say they’re happy, yet the *BMJ* study seemed to flabbergast the press and the public. Why? “It’s always somewhat shocking—quite counterintuitive—for any objective data to suggest that individuals who are profoundly disabled are in fact happy to the same self-reported degree as the rest of us,” says Elizabeth Price Foley, author of *The Law of Life and Death* (Harvard University Press). “There’s some sort of deep psychological disconnect between non-disabled and disabled folks, in which the former just can’t grasp what it’s like to be one of the latter.”

Research shows that supportive family and friends can generally help an individual live with even the greatest adversity. “We are highly social creatures, and we seem to find it very challenging to be happy all alone,” Foley says.

“Having people talk to us, touch us, show concern for us in little ways—these are the things of which happiness seems to be made.”

## Ayn Enthused

### *Better angels*

Fifty-four years after its publication, Ayn Rand’s sprawling paean to capitalism, *Atlas Shrugged*, has finally been filmed—at least the

first third of the novel, as part one of what’s projected to be a trilogy. Scheduled to open on April 15, the movie stars Taylor Schilling, who appeared on NBC’s *Mercy*, and features an actor named Edi Gathegi, who, according to *The Washington Post*, is “best known for appearing as a vampire in *Twilight* and one scene of its sequel, *New Moon*, until his character was ripped apart by giant animatronic werewolves.”

Though Rand isn’t around for the *Twilight* craze (she died in 1982), her own tastes sometimes ran to the lowbrow. In his chronicle of the 1970s, *Mad as Hell* (Knopf), Dominic Sandbrook writes that she adored the TV



Ayn’s Angels

series *Charlie’s Angels*, which she called “the only romantic television show today.”

In a 1979 interview, she said, “It’s not about the gutter. It’s not about half-wit retarded children and all the other kind of shows today. It’s about three attractive girls doing impossible things. And because they’re impossible, that’s what makes it interesting.”

—Stephen Bates

# The School Lunch Wars

*Sixty-five years ago, the federal school lunch program was created to make American schoolchildren healthier. Today, it's helping to make them fatter. Will a new law change the diets of millions of kids raised on French fries and chicken nuggets?*

BY KRISTEN HINMAN

WHEN COLOMBIA NATIVE BEATRIZ ZULUAGA, a professional cook for 20 years, became the admissions director at CentroNía's DC Bilingual Public Charter School in 2007, she thought she was leaving her old career far behind. Then she laid eyes on the trays in the lunchroom. Mashed potatoes from a box, chicken nuggets, chocolate milk—to Zuluaga, the processed fare didn't look fit for growing kids. At her last job, Zuluaga had cooked for 450 people a day. Surely she could take over the school's kitchen, no?

She unpacked her knives and started whipping up from-scratch dishes: lasagna with lentils, peppers stuffed with barley and turkey, roasted beets. The reformation did not go over well. One offense after another set the tongues of parents and teachers wagging. *What is that? How can you serve that to children? Why are you trying to turn my kid into a vegetarian?*

Three years later, Zuluaga has given up on the beets. But American cheese has been scrapped for calcium-rich provolone. White flour has been swapped for whole wheat in pizza crust. Fruit juice, high in sugar, is out. The school nurse is reporting fewer sick kids, and Zuluaga has chuckled at

least once when a parent remarked on the new efficacy of her child's bowel movements. More than a third of parents have participated in the school's nutrition workshops.

But when I visited the school last fall, all Zuluaga had to do to temper her optimism was walk into a DC Bilingual lunchroom and discover a chubby, misbehaving fourth grader relegated to a table facing the wall and going to town on his brown-bag lunch: an Oscar Mayer Lunchables "pizza." As the boy perched a piece of pepperoni and some shredded cheese atop a cracker, Zuluaga picked up the packaging to inspect its long ingredient list, then put it back down, crossed her arms, and frowned. I expected her to seize the opportunity for a teachable moment, but she was silent. Later she explained, "He didn't go to the grocery store and buy that."

Zuluaga's education, as it were, mirrors what's occurring in schools across America as proponents of whole—that is, minimally processed—foods try to introduce children to more nutritious diets through the \$9.8 billion federal school lunch program, which feeds about 32 million of America's 50 million schoolchildren every school day. One in three American children and teenagers today is overweight or obese. Last year, in a report titled *Too Fat to Fight*, a group of retired military brass blamed school lunches for the fact that an estimated 27 percent of American youth are too over-

KRISTEN HINMAN is a journalist based in Washington, D.C., who writes frequently about food. Her work has been published in *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, and *Slate*.



School lunches such as this one are a fat target in America's war against childhood obesity.

weight to serve in the armed forces. A study of Michigan sixth graders published in December found that regularly consuming school lunches was a greater risk factor for obesity than spending two or more hours a day watching television or playing video games.

First lady Michelle Obama, a former hospital executive, has made the war on obesity her defining cause, and put the school lunch program in her crosshairs. In December, thanks in part to her lobbying, Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which awards schools that meet certain nutritional guidelines an extra six cents per student meal. The extra pennies increase federal reimbursements for lunches above the rate of inflation for the first time in three

decades. The law, which cuts funds from future federal food-stamp benefits to cover the reimbursement hike, also grants the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) more power to police what's served in school cafeterias. In reality, though, the battle over school lunches is just beginning, as educators confront a culture that prizes its hamburgers and French fries.

How did a program that was designed to improve the nutrition of the nation's children become a culprit in the scourge of childhood obesity?

As early as the 19th century, some American schools operated their own school lunch programs, often with the help of volunteers. In the 1930s, in the midst of the Great Depression, the federal government began providing some funds for school lunches on an ad hoc basis. But many children still didn't get enough to eat. The problem was thrown into stark relief during World War II, when it was discovered that half of all draftees

who were deemed unfit for service were rejected because of malnutrition. In 1946, Congress passed the National School Lunch Act "as a measure of national security." The law guaranteed a free or subsidized midday meal for millions of needy children. It was also intended to teach America what to eat. "Not only is the child taught what a good diet consists of," noted a congressional agriculture committee report, "but his parents and family likewise are indirectly instructed."

During the Depression, when farmers were surrounded by mountains of unsold commodities and schools were full of hungry children, New Deal politicians had used the USDA to funnel surpluses to school cafeterias. Thus, when it came time to designate an authority for the new national lunch



**Even during the lean years of the Great Depression, educators had to coax youngsters—including these kids fed by an early federal lunch program—to drink their milk.**

program, the USDA seemed a natural choice. Schools would receive subsidized commodities and cash reimbursements in exchange for feeding low-income children lunches that met USDA nutrition standards. And so the same law that was supposed to ensure a nutritious midday meal for millions of kids also created an enduring market for American farmers.

It was up to state officials to administer the federal funds. For the first two decades student participation was low, partly because many schools lacked adequate facilities but also because local authorities often established the eligibility threshold with little regard for students' actual need. The poor results prompted Congress in the 1960s to establish a federal eligibility standard linked to the poverty level.

Today, students from families with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level (\$28,665 for a family of

four) eat for free. The school receives a federal subsidy of \$2.72 per meal. Children from families earning up to 185 percent of the poverty level pay 40 cents per meal, and the subsidy is correspondingly reduced. Other students pay the "full" price, an average of \$1.60. The government also provides a small subsidy for these meals, on the principle that child nutrition contributes to national security. (Even so, schools often are not able to cover the production cost of the "full" price meals and essentially make up the difference from the subsidies meant for lower-income kids. A controversial provision of the new law will rectify that by requiring some districts to charge more for full-pay lunches.)

Student participation doubled within the first few years after the federal eligibility standards were set. Educators suddenly found themselves in the food business. Poorer districts, particularly, didn't have functioning kitchens, or the money to improve them. It became standard practice for cafeteria staff to purchase ready-made heat-and-eat meals, whose less-than-palatable qualities made headlines once it was learned that much of the food was being thrown out. These reports, along with the fact that the government was subsidizing lunches for middle-income families

that could afford to pay full price, caught the attention of Ronald Reagan's cost-conscious administration. Among the resulting USDA proposals was the reclassification of ketchup as a vegetable—on the theory that replacing broccoli and lima beans with cheap condiments would reduce so-called plate waste. That idea caused a political uproar and was never carried out, but in 1981 Congress slashed school lunch reimbursement rates by a third and eliminated money for equipment.

Already making do with slim resources and now facing more budget pressures, some schools turned to professional vendors to replace the cafeteria ladies of old. At the same time, many schools added "à la carte" items that could be sold to anyone who could pay. Since the government didn't reimburse for à la carte fare, and thus didn't regulate its nutritional content, school officials were free to offer

French fries, nachos, and pizza. Some items were branded by fast-food companies such as Domino's Pizza and Taco Bell. Many schools also allowed companies to install vending machines that dispensed snack foods, candy, and soda, from which the schools kept a portion of the sales.

Consumption of government-subsidized school lunches began to fall off because of the "needy" stigma associated with the reimbursable meals. Kids who had once purchased meals at full price switched to the more tempting à la carte line. Some lower-income students simply went without. In response, cafeteria managers goosed the offerings to make them more enticing. Out went baked chicken, in came chicken nuggets; roasted potatoes gave way to Tater Tots. Cheap commodities were available from the government, in all the processed forms kids were believed to covet. USDA nutrition standards were lax enough that it was possible to satisfy the grain and protein requirements with, say, breaded and fried fish sticks, or the fruit requirement with sugar-laced canned peaches.

**I**n 1990, the USDA commissioned a comprehensive analysis of the school lunch program to see how it stacked up against the agency's Dietary Guidelines for Americans. In yet another bureaucratic oddity of the program, schools had to meet a different, and looser, set of nutrition standards. "The results were disturbing," recounts sociologist Janet Poppendieck in *Free for All* (2010), a survey of the politics surrounding school lunch programs. "On average, school lunches were deriving not [the recommended] 30 but 38 percent of calories from fats, not [the recommended] 10 but 15 percent from saturated fats. The meals were also found to be high in sodium. . . . Only one percent of schools were serving, on average, meals that complied with the dietary guidelines for percentage of calories from fat—one percent!"

Without allocating more money, Congress in 1994 required that school menus meet the USDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans. But what was on the plate changed very little. Today, less than 20 percent of schools cook lunch from

scratch. Eighty percent of schools exceed the fat allowance per meal. The average high school lunch has 1,600 milligrams of sodium—100 milligrams more than the daily amount deemed within healthy limits for children.

In the late 1990s, some school districts around the country quietly began removing vending machines or putting the kibosh on minimally nutritious à la carte programs. But the

**IN 1990, ONLY ONE percent of schools were serving meals that met the USDA's dietary guidelines for percentage of calories from fat.**

reformers who eventually drew national attention were two chefs who had far more ambitious goals. Alice Waters, whose Berkeley restaurant Chez Panisse was in the vanguard in serving seasonal and local cuisine, won over the California state superintendent of education with Edible Schoolyard, a garden project at a Berkeley middle school. By 2002, produce gardens had been established in more than 2,000 of California's 9,000 schools. The same year, Waters convinced the Berkeley Unified School District to hire Ann Cooper, who became known as "the Renegade Lunch Lady," to revamp its food service program with whole foods. (Cooper has since gone to work for the Boulder Valley School District in Colorado.)

To the California duo, the biggest culprit in the child nutrition crisis is the transformation of agriculture since World War II and the rise of agribusiness. Livestock is raised in mechanized indoor facilities rather than pastures, cash-crop monoculture has replaced the diversified family farm, and the food industry has undergone far-reaching consolidation. Today, only two percent of Americans—supported by government subsidies—produce food, and they do so at prices so low that the other 98 percent don't have much incentive to question the system. Pervasive marketing by fast-food companies pitching cheap children's "Happy Meals" and other convenience foods to working parents has helped establish a drive-through culture. The eat-your-vegetables ethos has given way to an emphasis on

food that can be put on the table quickly (if it's consumed at a table at all) and that children will eat without a battle royale every evening.

The view that poor-quality school lunches are the result of a broken food system has led food activists to see the USDA as part of the problem. How, they ask, can an authority responsible for helping agribusiness produce and market its output also be an effective nutrition watchdog in school cafeterias?

In 2009, two months after moving into 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Michelle Obama planted an organic kitchen garden on the White House lawn, a step of both symbolic and practical significance. With her backing, the USDA dusted off projects that promote local and regional food systems, rolling out a local-foods marketing campaign called "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food." Another initiative aims to help small and medium-size farms sell their products to schools.

What elevated Obama's whole foods advocacy above the charges of impracticality and foodie snobbery leveled at Waters and Cooper was the rollout last February of a campaign dubbed "Let's Move" that puts the focus squarely on health—and on those responsible for the well-being of children. "Our kids didn't do this to themselves," Obama said when she announced the wellness plan. "Our kids don't decide what's served to them at school or whether there's time for gym class or recess. Our kids don't choose to make food products with tons of sugar and sodium in supersized portions, and then to have those products marketed to them everywhere they turn. And no matter how much they beg for pizza, fries, and candy, ultimately they are not, and should not be, the ones calling the shots at dinnertime. We're in charge. We make these decisions."

In placing the blame for the obesity epidemic on corporate food processors, educators, and parents, Obama picked the right targets. Conventional agriculture isn't the main problem. If there were greater demand for less-processed ingredients, agribusiness companies could produce them. Nor is the USDA's jurisdiction of the program a real obstacle to reform. In the 1970s and again in 2001, the department pressed Congress for more regulatory authority over à la carte and vending machine offerings—only to come up short against the soft drink and snack food lobbies. The real problem—and the solution—is a lot

closer to the school lunch lines than Washington, or America's feedlots and farm fields.

About five years ago Linda Henke, superintendent of the Maplewood–Richmond Heights School District in suburban St. Louis, decided to start mingling with her high schoolers in the lunchroom. When she saw the array of Pop-Tarts, candy, and "cheese fries" that had been mainstays on the à la carte menu for years, she was disgusted. "It was the fish not seeing the water," she says of her years-long inattention to what her students were eating. She started to lay the groundwork for some drastic changes.

Three years ago, with the help of her congressman, Russ Carnahan, a local university, and a group of family farmers desperate for new markets, Henke began making over the district's food program. She prohibited candy and chips in the cafeterias and had all vending machines but one removed. She required that all the starches come from whole grain sources and banned the purchase of chicken patties and nuggets—processed chicken, period. Whenever possible, ingredients were to be Missouri grass-fed beef and pesticide-free produce. Local sourcing would allow the staff to order whole foods, which is not always an option when purchases are made through the USDA or a distributor. This way, the district could prepare the foods as desired—apples for apple-sauce, tomatoes for marinara and salsa, for example—while controlling for calorie, fat, and sodium content. An à la carte line was preserved at the high school, but it no longer serves cheese fries and other junk food.

When I visited last fall, I was struck by the positive vibe around the revamped program. A teacher said he'd lost seven pounds by eating in the high school cafeteria every school day for the previous three months. A senior girl who had embraced the changes from the beginning observed that even she was surprised when football players started eating salads. The elementary school's cook of 14 years told me her job is now harder, but it's rewarding. She recounted a recent visit to the school her sister's kids attend in Indiana. "They had all this processed food that we don't serve anymore, and I was thinking, 'This is farm country! If we're city people and we can cook, why can't they?'"

These reforms have not come cheaply. The meals cost from \$3.75 to \$4.25 apiece to prepare. Henke's board of education has allowed her to run the program at a deficit equal to roughly one teacher's salary. But if she wants to keep using



**At the Maplewood–Richmond Heights Middle School in St. Louis, Missouri, salad is cool, thanks to the efforts of a visionary district superintendent.**

local food sources, she has to convince a consortium of schools to buy in. The farms that have been supplying Maplewood–Richmond Heights on an experimental basis need to sell their food at great volumes to turn a profit. One of Henke's selling points to other school officials? Her cafeterias are selling 10 percent more lunches.

Administrators such as Henke, Beatriz Zuluaga, and others in Kentucky, Wisconsin, and Texas have revealed some important principles. It takes a tough-minded school leader to assert that nutrient-rich food is the right choice for kids—and that it's an appropriate use of government dollars. Kids will complain initially but will come around. And a number of collateral benefits follow when students eat well. Anecdotal reports from schools with healthful and flavorful food indicate that teachers have started eating with students, attendance rates are higher, and fewer students fall asleep in class or commit vandalism and violence at school.

So far, these cafeteria visionaries are the exception. Since 2004, the USDA has administered the HealthierUS School Challenge, awarding distinction, but no money, to schools that voluntarily improve the healthfulness of their meals. By last fall, only a paltry 841 of the 101,000 schools in the

National School Lunch Program (less than one percent) had received awards. That leaves a lot of schools that are still promoting Tater Tot Day and reheating frozen pizzas.

Food activists hope that the passage of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act will make a big difference. More money will buy better ingredients and pay for more staff to prepare foods from scratch. At least as important is the USDA's increased authority over the nutrition standards of all food served in schools, and the department's proposal to establish more rigorous standards, including two vegetables per meal, strict sodium limits, and, for the first time, maximum calorie counts.

It could take another generation to see meaningful change in the waistlines of American children. Yes, reform will require more government money. But at least as important is a stomachs-and-minds campaign aimed at the nation's adults: food service directors who cling to the argument that a child won't drink low-fat milk, so cookies 'n' cream-flavored milk is better than no calcium at all; parents who ask, *Why do you want to turn my kid into a vegetarian?*; and teachers who snort, *How can you serve beats to students?* ■

# What Is Hugo Chávez Up To?

*Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez has set alarms ringing with his efforts to create a global anti-American coalition. But in Caracas, critics say their bombastic president is giving away the country's wealth and getting snookered by his newfound friends.*

BY JOSHUA KUCERA

WHEN MUAMMAR AL-QADDAFI FACED WORLD-wide condemnation this past winter as he brutally struck back against a popular uprising, the Libyan dictator may have taken comfort from knowing he had at least one friend left: Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez. The two have forged close political and economic ties during Chávez's dozen years in office, and the Libyan leader had already bestowed the Qaddafi International Human Rights Prize on his Latin American ally and named a soccer stadium in Benghazi in his honor. In February, Chávez repaid the favors by offering to mediate a peaceful solution to the fighting—at a time when the rebels seemed likely to triumph—and defending his old friend on Twitter: “Teach another lesson to the extreme right-wing little Yanquis! Long live Libya and its independence!”

Chávez's quixotic intervention was only the latest of his efforts to play a role in world affairs larger than most leaders of a midsize Latin American coun-

try might hope for. But Chávez has emerged at a fertile moment in world history. The apparent waning of U.S. power has opened up the possibility of a new geopolitical order, and the worldwide financial crisis and the rise of China have shaken the conventional wisdom that capitalism and democracy are superior to the alternatives.

Chávez has seized the moment by forcefully declaring his intention to change the world. “What we now have to do is define the future of the world. Dawn is breaking out all over. You can see it in Africa and Europe and Latin America and Oceania,” he told the United Nations General Assembly in 2006. “I want to emphasize that optimistic vision. We have to strengthen ourselves, our will to do battle, our awareness. We have to build a new and better world.”

Of course, that speech is better remembered for Chávez's characterization of President George W. Bush as the “devil,” and his claim that the General Assembly chamber, where Bush had spoken the day before, still smelled of sulphur—only the most leg-

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**Is this rogues' gallery of Hugo Chávez's friends more than the sum of its parts? The Venezuelan president is shown with (clockwise from the top) Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi, Cuba's Fidel Castro, Russia's Vladimir Putin, and Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.**

endary example of Chávez's frequent and colorful denunciations of the United States.

Chávez's torrid rhetoric has earned him both admiration—in a 2009 opinion poll of several Arab countries, Chávez was the most popular leader, by a large margin—and fear. And he has backed up his anti-American rhetoric by courting nearly any country that challenges the United States, including Iran, Russia, China, Belarus, Libya, and Syria.

Under Chávez, Venezuela has spent billions on Russian rifles, fighter jets, and other weapons, and it recently won Moscow's help in developing civilian

nuclear power. Chávez has threatened to stop selling oil to the United States—the customer for more than half of Venezuela's output—and ship it to China instead.

It is the relationship with Iran and its president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, that makes Chávez most effusive and worries Washington most. Chávez has hailed the Iranian leader as a "brother" and as a "gladiator in the anti-imperialist struggle." Publicly, their two countries have collaborated to build joint banks, as well as car, tractor, and bicycle factories, in Venezuela. But much of the relationship is not trans-

parent, and there has been a great deal of heated speculation (though little hard evidence) that Venezuela has offered to host Iranian missiles on its territory and is cooperating with Russia and Iran on nuclear weapons development. Some say that the banks are being used to evade international sanctions imposed on Iran.

Chávez has also been accused of supporting FARC guerrillas in neighboring Colombia and Hezbollah terrorists in the Middle East. In 2008, the U.S. Treasury Department formally accused a Venezuelan diplo-

**MANY WASHINGTON OBSERVERS see Venezuela's foreign policy as nothing less than the embryo of a new evil empire.**

mat who had served in Lebanon and Syria of acting as a fundraiser for Hezbollah, and froze his U.S.-based assets. Last year, a Spanish judge charged a Venezuelan official with terrorism and conspiracy to commit murder based on evidence that he had helped coordinate training sessions involving operatives from FARC and ETA, the Basque separatist organization known for its bombings and assassinations.

Meanwhile, Chávez has been creating an alliance of like-minded neighbors in Latin America, which are also building their own ties with Russia and Iran. "Today Venezuela is accompanied by true friends," Chávez said in 2009. "They range from large countries like China, Russia, and Iran, to smaller countries in size but big in solidarity, like Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Bolivia, among others." Nicaragua and Ecuador are also on the list of friends.

**I**n Washington and other capitals, there is much speculation about what Chávez really intends to do with these new alliances. Are his foreign-policy moves, as he claims, the first steps in creating a post-capitalist world order independent of the United States and oriented toward justice rather

than corporate profit? Or do they have the makings of a Cold War reprise, leading us toward bloc-on-bloc geopolitical struggle (complete with the potential for a rerun of the Cuban Missile Crisis)? Or are they neither, amounting to little more than self-aggrandizing speeches and photo ops?

In an effort to get some insight into these issues, I traveled to Caracas in February to talk to diplomats, political figures, and analysts from both the pro- and anti-Chávez camps—there is very little middle ground in Venezuela—and see where they thought the country's foreign policy was headed, and what role these alliances play in it. It was not a topic government officials were very interested in talking about; they would much rather let the world know about their health care and

education programs (which, by all accounts, have been successful). Eventually, with great effort and the help of personal connections, I was able to meet a couple of government officials in their offices in Caracas's crowded, historic center, where our conversations were more often than not punctuated by the sounds of lively pro-Chávez rallies featuring equal parts salsa music and shouts for "*socialismo*" coming in the windows.

Opposition figures, contrary to Venezuela's reputation as a place where free speech is muzzled, were eager to talk about Chávez's new alliances. I got many invitations to their homes and offices in tranquil, elegant Caracas neighborhoods where sleek modern houses and apartment buildings stood behind walls topped with electric fences.

Many in Washington, Cold War nostalgists in particular, see Venezuela's foreign policy as nothing less than the embryo of a new evil empire. The relationship with Iran has aroused particular suspicion, with China and Russia seen as superpower patrons, and Syria and others as partners in a budding anti-U.S. coalition. Conservative think tanks hold frequent events on Venezuela's ties with China and especially Iran, and regularly publish alarmist



Venezuelans rally against a 2009 referendum to end term limits and allow Chávez to seek a fourth term. The pro-Chávez side won by a comfortable margin.

reports and op-eds on the topic. “The Tehran-Caracas alliance now represents the biggest threat to hemispheric stability,” contends Jaime Darenblum, a Hudson Institute scholar, in a typical example of the genre. The new chair of the House Committee on Foreign Relations, Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), has vowed to hold hearings on Venezuela’s relationships with Iran and Russia.

Chávez’s hero is Fidel Castro, and like Castro a generation ago, Chávez is using his position as leader of a middling regional power—along with fiery rhetoric and a resonant message of social justice—to reach for a global role. And Chávez has one advantage Castro didn’t: oil. According to one recent estimate, Venezuela has the second-largest oil reserves in the world, and even though its output has declined under Chávez, it is the world’s 11th largest producer, almost matching Kuwait. Chávez has used Vene-

zuela’s oil wealth not only to fund ambitious social programs at home but to gain influence abroad. That has allowed his nation of 28 million people, not much larger than Texas, to gain an outsized presence on the world stage.

While the list of Venezuela’s new allies may look like a global rogue’s gallery in Washington, among Chávez’s supporters in Caracas it looks like freedom—specifically, freedom from the United States. “Until 1999 [when, a year after Chávez was elected, Venezuela adopted a new constitution], our foreign policy was basically following the orders of the State Department,” said Carlos Escarrá, the garrulous chairman of the Venezuelan National Assembly’s foreign relations committee. Venezuelans especially objected to unbalanced trade agreements that they say would force them to buy U.S.-made products instead of cheaper regional alternatives. For exam-

ple, U.S.-promoted pacts such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas would forbid countries from buying less-expensive copies of costly drugs that are protected by U.S. patent law.

Chávez made some moves toward what he calls “multipolarity” in his first years in office—for example, by trying to reinvigorate OPEC and get it to support higher oil prices—but his resolve to radically change Venezuela’s foreign policy was hardened by a coup attempt in 2002. What exactly happened remains murky, but Chávez says it was orchestrated by the United States. If nothing else, the Bush administration recognized the coup leaders with unseemly alacrity. The incident “helped us to identify the empire as an aggressor, so we had to look out in the world to compensate, to create an equilibrium,” Escarrá told me. And if Washington doesn’t like Caracas’s new friends, so be it. “The U.S. isn’t the sheriff of the world anymore. So calling other countries ‘good’ or ‘bad’ is just McCarthyism. Now we have to speak of ‘sovereign’ and ‘nonsovereign,’” he said, meaning, respectively, free of U.S. influence and not free.

**H**ow do Chávez’s principles translate into practical foreign policy? Step one, of course, is knocking the United States off its perch, in particular so it can’t dominate the international organizations that Chávez blames for Venezuela’s past ills, such as the Organization of American States, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Chávez has also moved to create new regional organizations that exclude the United States and operate on what he considers more equitable terms, going so far as to provide for trade by barter rather than with money. These include Petrocaribe, which supplies oil to poor Caribbean countries at preferential terms, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which will include every country in the Americas except the United States and Canada when it is launched in Caracas in July.

The most advanced of these integration projects is the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas, or ALBA. Chávez founded the alliance to act as an alternative

to the U.S.-backed Free Trade Area of the Americas. ALBA, backers say, is shaping up to be a trade bloc oriented toward poverty reduction rather than investment and commerce. (The members include Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.) ALBA figures heavily in the government’s domestic political rhetoric. Liberation hero Simón Bolívar’s tomb, housed in a Caracas temple called the Pantheon, is now festooned with flags from all the ALBA countries, as is his birthplace in Caracas’s historic center. The government bought a Hilton hotel and renamed it Hotel ALBA; next to the shop selling swimsuits is a bookstore whose shelves are dominated by works of leftist political theory that are a far cry from ordinary beach reading, including books by Che Guevara, Mao Zedong, and the American anti-Iraq war activist Cindy Sheehan. The government also has opened a chain of ALBA shops that sell low-priced clothing from ALBA countries, such as \$5 pants made in Bolivia and advertised as “jeans for a socialist man.” (The knockoff Polo and Abercrombie & Fitch shirts the stores sell, however, strike a discordantly bourgeois note.)

For domestic audiences, Chávez does not create nearly as much fanfare around Venezuela’s alliances with Russia, Iran, and China as he does around ALBA. Indeed, when assembling an alliance based on justice and generosity, those are not the first countries one usually thinks of. But government supporters insist that even these new friendships are allowing Venezuela to take the first steps toward greater self-sufficiency and independence.

As justification for the country’s quest for Chávez-style sovereignty, his supporters frequently cite the saga of the fighter jets. The nation’s air force has operated a fleet of U.S.- and European-built aircraft since its inception. But in 2005, the United States moved to block weapons sales to Venezuela, not only by U.S. companies but by its allies as well. The justification was that the Chávez government had not done enough to combat human trafficking and terrorism—spurious pretexts, Venezuelans say. As a result, Israel was forced to freeze a \$100 million contract to repair and upgrade the nation’s F-16s, and 10 of the 30 in its possession remain grounded.

Washington also blocked the sale of Spanish military transport aircraft and naval vessels to Venezuela, using laws that allow it to veto sales of equipment that includes some U.S. parts. Those moves virtually forced Chávez into the Russians' arms, his supporters assert. In the last few years, he has signed contracts worth \$4.4 billion for combat and military transport helicopters, fighter jets, and small arms. Venezuela also has ingratiated itself with Russia by becoming one of only four countries in the world to recognize the Russia-backed breakaway Georgian republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

This raises an obvious question: For all the faults of the United States, why would Venezuela think that Russia (or China, or Iran) would be any more generous a partner? Won't Russia someday make the same demands on Venezuela that the United States has? I posed this question to Omar Galíndez, the academic director of Venezuela's government-run Pedro Gual Institute for Advanced Diplomacy Studies. "No, Russia is our friend," he said, adding that Moscow has agreed to help Venezuela develop the capacity to build parts for the equipment itself. "We have a strategic relationship, not a relationship of dependence."

One could ask similar questions about Venezuela's new ties to China. In 2008, the Chinese launched a Venezuelan communications satellite named the Simón Bolívar that Chinese engineers built under an arrangement with the Chávez government. The United States would only offer to sell space on one of its satellites to Venezuela, while China has offered to train engineers so that Venezuela will be able to build a satellite itself in 10 years, according to Carlos Escarrá. "The satellite will be used for health, education, and the development of all the people of Latin America," he said. "We wouldn't be able to do this without opening up our foreign policy to other countries."

There are, of course, simple alternative explanations: Russia and China are happy to take Venezuela's money and cheap oil. Neither has embraced Chávez as warmly as he has embraced them, and both see him merely as a willing customer for their goods, argued Julio César Pineda, a former Venezuelan diplomat who now hosts a foreign affairs show on the opposition television network Globovision. "Russia and China are closer to the U.S. than they are to Venezuela, but Chávez thinks he can move them

## RUSSIA AND CHINA are happy to take Venezuela's money and cheap oil, but they haven't embraced Hugo Chávez's agenda.

against the United States—it's absurd."

One Venezuelan blogger wrote at the time of the satellite launch: "The President stated, 'What does a satellite have to do with socialism? A capitalistic company launches a satellite to make money. This is an act of liberation and independence . . . to construct socialism within Venezuela and to work together with other countries,' something that I think is great. It is a shame that the Chinese did not think the same when they charged Venezuela \$241 million, on top of the \$165 million in the construction of the two ground control sites."

Many of the alleged social benefits of the deals with other countries exist, at least for now, only on paper. That has led to a widespread belief in Venezuela that the government is giving away more to its new friends than it is getting in return. "There are so many agreements, it's impossible to keep track of them all, but most of them are giving things up," said Arlan Narvaez, a professor of political economy at the Central University of Caracas. "It's [Chávez's] way of buying attention."

The most significant element of the China-Venezuela relationship is a \$20 billion loan Beijing pledged to Caracas, which is partly repayable in oil. Many Venezuelans worry that Beijing got by far the

best of the deal. The exact terms have not been made public, but a U.S. diplomatic cable released by Wikileaks quoted a Venezuelan state oil company official saying that China was getting the oil for about \$5 a barrel, then reselling it at a large profit.

Maryclen Sterling, a sociologist and radio host who is generally pro-Chávez, said that although she understands the necessity of new alliances, she is uneasy about how the government is going about it. “We’re in a war, and in a war the goal is to defeat the

publicized attacks by Chávez on press freedoms, the country has an aggressive opposition media and a sizable foreign press corps. And no one has come up with the smoking gun to prove the worst of the allegations.

Most circumstantial evidence suggests that cooperation between Venezuela and Iran is neither as nefarious as its critics tend to believe, nor as fruitful as its defenders claim. One U.S. diplomatic cable from Caracas, written in 2009 and released last year

by Wikileaks, concluded that there is little reason to believe the claims of nuclear weapons cooperation: “Although rumors that Venezuela is providing Iran with Venezuelan-produced uranium may help burnish the government’s revolution-

## THE EFFECTS OF CHÁVEZ’S foreign policy beyond Venezuela’s borders fall far short of the president’s rhetoric.

enemy, at all costs,” she said. But Sterling is not confident that Venezuela’s new allies will be any more selfless than the United States was. “Chávez is very naive in certain things, and in general we’re a naive country, and a lot of people say we’re doing terrible business,” she said. “I’m concerned that we could be trading one empire for another.”

In opinion surveys, Venezuelans seem tepid toward their new allies. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Project, in 2007 (the most recent year Venezuela was included in the poll) 48 percent of Venezuelans had a positive opinion of Russia. Only 16 percent had at least “some confidence” in Ahmadinejad. Meanwhile, 56 percent had a positive opinion of the United States—a slightly higher level of enthusiasm toward the Yanquis than Britons and Canadians had.

**W**hatever the effects of Chávez’s foreign policy at home, its potential impact beyond Venezuela’s borders falls far short of the president’s rhetoric. While it’s impossible to prove that Chávez is not helping Iran with its nuclear program, for example, there have been so many allegations, repeated for so long, that they are starting to lose their potency. Despite some well-

ary credentials, there seems to be little basis in reality to the claims.”

Those who suspect the worst of Chávez had a tantalizing morsel dropped in their laps in 2007 when the Venezuelan airline Conviasa and Iran Air inaugurated direct flights between Tehran and Caracas. To make it even more intriguing, the flights were said to be unavailable to the general public and free of normal security procedures. “These planes are most likely carrying bad actors from the likes of Hezbollah, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and the Guard’s Qods Force,” wrote Peter Brookes, a former Pentagon official, in *The New York Post*.

When I was in Caracas in February, I went to the Conviasa ticket office at the Hotel ALBA, and inquired about buying a ticket to Tehran. The agent told me that, unfortunately, the service had been canceled “about a year ago.” (She gave me a number where I could reach Conviasa’s public relations department for more information, but publicity is apparently not a priority for the airline; nobody ever picked up the phone.) In its day, the flight was something of a sensation among aviation enthusiasts, and there was a lot of chatter about it on their Web sites. The posts painted a picture of something more like a political boondoggle than a cloak-and-dagger oper-

ation. One German traveler who took the flight in 2007—and apparently had no trouble getting a ticket—said he had an opportunity to speak with the Iranian flight captain, who told him, “With every transatlantic flight from Tehran to Caracas we create a loss of more than \$100,000, but get compensation from the government.”

**V**eniran, the joint Venezuelan-Iranian car and tractor manufacturer, seems to be another triumph of politics over substance. I went to a Veniran dealer in Caracas to see about buying a car, but found that there weren’t any for sale. The salesman told me there was a waiting list from 2010 of more than 4,000 customers, while only a few dozen cars had been produced last year. (He also advised me not to buy a Veniran, arguing that although the initial price was low, many replacement parts are expensive imports.) A former Veniran employee told me that when the factory was being built, the

Venezuelan side skimmed on some key equipment, trying to reuse old assembly-line machinery instead of getting new gear. Predictably, it gummed up the works, setting back production.

Opposition leaders in Venezuela don’t criticize Chávez’s foreign policy on the grounds that it is opening the door for Hezbollah or Iranian nuclear weapons, but because Chávez is extravagant in subsidizing other countries for political reasons while Venezuelans need better schools and health care. In fact, spotlighting the danger of Venezuela’s new alliances only plays into Chávez’s hands, said Teodoro Petkoff, a leftist turned Chávez critic and editor of the Caracas newspaper *Tal Cual*. He brought up Representative Ros-Lehtinen’s threats to hold hearings on Chávez’s ties with Russia and Iran. “I’m very worried about the Republicans taking power” in the U.S. House of Representatives, Petkoff said. “They will be a big help to Chávez. Every time any American leader speaks against Chávez, he has material for one month of speeches.”



A Caracas wall mural celebrated Chávez’s 12th anniversary in power in February. Chávez says he will seek a new six-year term in elections next year.

Chávez's enthusiasm for attention, positive or not, is obvious. He thrives on conflict and on standing against the United States, and flaunting a close relationship with Iran achieves both of those objectives. "In general, he loves to cultivate an air of mystery, and particularly in this case [with Iran]. He knows it makes a lot of noise," said Elsa Cardozo, a professor of international relations at Universidad Metropolitana in Caracas. The official Iranian Fars News Agency quipped that the Veniran factory was "designed to produce three things: tractors, influence, and angst."

**T**here are signs, though, that Chávez's international influence is waning. Its apex may have come with his United Nations speech five years ago, or the Summit of the Americas in Argentina in 2005 when, with the blessing of then-president Néstor Kirchner of Argentina, a major regional power, Chávez directly challenged U.S. leadership in the region. But no countries have joined ALBA since June 2009, and polls have found that his popularity has declined substantially in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. As early as 2006, a *Latino-barómetro* survey of Latin Americans had him tied with President George W. Bush (at 4.6 on a scale from one to 10) in popularity. Classified materials released by Wikileaks have shown regional leaders speaking dismissively of Chávez. While Brazilian leaders have publicly embraced Chávez, in one U.S. cable Foreign Minister Celso Amorim is quoted saying, "His bite is not as bad as his bark," and in another, "Chávez is not a threat."

Other critics pointedly note that Chávez's claims of a commitment to justice are undermined by his embrace of some of the world's worst dictators. In the past he has praised Idi Amin and Robert Mugabe, and more recently, Hosni Mubarak and Qaddafi, arguing that the protests in Egypt and Libya were orchestrated by the United States. *Al-Jazeera English*, which promotes itself as the voice of the global South and would seem a natural ally of Chávez, has been highly critical of him for his support of the dictators rather than the people of the Arab world. The rebels in Libya, when they took Benghazi in early March, quickly

removed Chávez's name from the soccer stadium.

Chávez's embrace of dictators has turned off much of the European and global Left as well, according to Petkoff. Chávez does not realize that his message plays very differently in Europe, he said. "He doesn't understand what Iran or Belarus means for Europe. Iran is very far away from [Venezuela]; eight out of 10 Venezuelans don't know where Iran is. But for Europeans, Iran is a real problem. And 9.9 out of 10 Venezuelans don't know where Belarus is, but Europeans know that it's the last communist government in Europe, the last remnant of the Soviet empire."

Chávez's revolutionary, anti-U.S. efforts can perhaps be usefully compared with those of his idol, Castro. For all of the doom-and-gloom scenarios Chávez's new alliances have engendered, he has not gone nearly as far as Castro did in his heyday. Chávez has not sent troops or military aid to like-minded governments, as Cuba did in Angola and elsewhere, nor has he offered to host foreign military installations, as Cuba did with the Soviet Union.

Chávez's critics might respond, well, give him time. But Chávez also faces constraints that Castro did not. He does not have a superpower patron, as Cuba did (though Chávez reportedly hoped that China would fill that role), and he is limited by domestic politics. Although Venezuela may be creeping toward authoritarianism, it's not there yet. Chávez faces an election in 2012, and opposition figures believe they have a chance to win if they can agree on a good candidate. Getting cozy with Iran and China is not likely to be a winning campaign theme, especially if people perceive that Chávez's oil diplomacy amounts to spending money abroad that could go to domestic social programs and other needs.

But Chávez also has a unique opportunity. The United States' influence is declining, and many people are looking for something to replace the liberal model of economics and governance. By hitching his wagon to so many dubious allies, Chávez could be squandering a chance to promote an alternative. But if nothing else, his new alliances have gotten the world's attention. "If we weren't doing all this, you wouldn't be sitting here in my office," Escarrá, the parliamentarian, told me. "Venezuela isn't mute anymore." ■

# Classical Education in America

*The study of ancient Greek and Latin long ago vanished from most American classrooms, and with it has gone a special understanding of the values and virtues prized by Western civilization.*

BY DANIEL WALKER HOWE

THE CLASSICS DEPARTMENTS AT MOST AMERICAN colleges and universities today carry the whiff of nostalgia and old chalk dust. Latin and ancient Greek can't compete with vocational disciplines such as engineering, business, and medicine. Classics programs are small and underfunded, and when education budgets are squeezed, such programs are often among the first to go—the recent elimination of the classics department at the Albany branch of the State University of New York is but one prominent example. In 2009, the College Board, which administers the SAT and advanced placement exams to millions of high school students, discontinued the AP exam in Latin literature. Fewer than 2,000 students sat to translate Cicero and parse the poetry of Catullus the last time the test was administered. Though an AP exam on Virgil remains, the College Board's decision further marginalized classical studies in American education.

This state of affairs would come as a shock to the Founders. They believed that if a modern citizenry were to benefit from the lessons of history, its members had to know the history of Greece and Rome. And they viewed the young republic they were nurturing as in some ways a rebirth of principles first implemented in the Roman

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Republic. Recent books by Carl J. Richard, Caroline Winterer, and several other scholars emphasize the attention the Founders paid to classical learning. So what has happened to the classics in America since the Founding?

For several generations, classical antiquity remained alive and well in the American republic, both within educational institutions and in the larger society. American colleges required undergraduates to take Latin (and often Greek); they even usually demanded, as an admission prerequisite, that applicants have taken instruction in one or both languages. While Protestant, Catholic, and secular institutions differed on theology, in their emphasis on classics they occupied common ground.

Ever since the Middle Ages, a classical education had represented a synthesis of reason and virtue. Classical history and literature presented a panoply of heroes to admire and celebrate. Roman writers such as Cicero and the two Catos embodied not only the stern and self-denying virtues that appealed to Christian mentors but also republican values with special relevance to Americans, such as devotion to the commonwealth rather than to any special interest or faction. Besides, the effort of mastering the rigorous logic and grammar required to conjugate Latin verbs and decline nouns was itself regarded as a tool to teach young people self-discipline.

It was, by and large, white males who filled seats in classrooms and were therefore the beneficiaries of classical

learning. But when secondary academies and colleges for women began to appear in antebellum America, they taught Latin along with “feminine” pursuits including painting and needlework, and the classical emphasis on elocution inspired women’s rights activists such as Margaret Fuller. By the 1850s, a few schools in Northern cities offered a classical education to young free African Americans. Missionar-

put into the hands of the young student, can hardly fail to imbue his mind with the principles of liberty, to inspire the liveliest patriotism, and to excite [him] to noble and generous action, and are therefore peculiarly adapted to the American youth.” Modern history and modern foreign languages were eventually offered as electives at most colleges before the Civil War, but classics, along with some required

mathematics and science, remained the core discipline, as historian Carl J. Richard documents in *The Golden Age of the Classics in America* (2009).

Dickinson College in Pennsylvania was typical: Freshmen studied Sallust, Horace, and Xenophon.

## AT THE UNIVERSITY of Virginia, Latin remained the largest department as late as the 1850s.

ies among Native American people taught Latin as well as English in their schools, hoping to prepare some of the students to go on to college. More fundamentally, the missionaries were introducing native people to all aspects of Western civilization, from modern technology to Christianity, and they considered classical learning basic to that project of assimilation.

To be sure, there were those who agitated against Latin in the schoolroom. Benjamin Franklin criticized the focus on classical languages (though he was quite willing to make rhetorical use of his own hard-won classical learning in his writings). Eventually, universities responded to calls for more utilitarian training, establishing postgraduate schools of medicine, law, and divinity. At the undergraduate level, however, educators dug in their heels: The purpose of college was not to train students for a vocation, they insisted, but to improve their minds with a liberal education. Such an education was called “liberal” because it was intended to be liberating and hence suitable for a free person. (*Liber* means “free” in Latin.)

**T**he definitive defense of a traditional liberal education that centered on classics appeared in the Yale Report of 1828, drafted in response to a request by the Connecticut legislature that the university do away with its Greek and Latin entrance requirements in favor of modern languages. “The models of ancient literature,” wrote Yale president Jeremiah Day, “which are

Sophomores absorbed themselves in Cicero, Horace, Xenophon, and Euripides. Juniors took Sophocles, Euripides, Cicero, Juvenal, and Perseus. And seniors finished off with Aeschylus, Tacitus, and Terence. Even at the University of Virginia, famous for its elective system, students had to pass a Latin exam to graduate, and as late as the 1850s Latin remained the largest department.

At the beginning of the 19th century, undergraduate courses concentrated on the Latin and Greek languages themselves. Students translated texts and wrote compositions of their own in the ancient tongues. Educators interpreted aptitude for such exercises as a measure of general intelligence and believed that the texts provided models of virtue and vice. Soon, however, teachers set students to the task of analyzing the content of the assigned texts and the values of classical civilization in general. They also began to devote more attention to Greek as compared with Latin, as cultural historian Caroline Winterer notes in her elegant book *The Culture of Classicism* (2001). The shift reflected a changing America. The Greeks appealed to the rising Romantic movement in literature and the arts. While the Romans had celebrated republican virtues, the Athenians had embraced democracy and free thought. New attitudes found new reasons for studying ancient times.

From the Middle Ages until the late 19th century, knowledge of the classics thus provided educated people the world over with a common frame of reference. Physicians wrote their prescriptions in Latin; scientists still often published research papers in Latin to ensure a worldwide audi-



All eyes are on ancient Greece as Professor Herbert Wing Jr. instructs students at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania around 1945. But classical instruction in colleges across America was rapidly waning. In 1946, Dickinson stopped requiring bachelor of arts candidates to take Latin or Greek.

ence of fellow professionals. Lawyers buttressed their arguments with Latin phrases. Artists flattered their subjects by painting or sculpting them in togas. Architects designed buildings in the increasingly fashionable Greek Revival style that we sometimes call “Federal,” its Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns providing an idiom of dignity and rationality to a variety of American structures, including plantation homes, courthouses, banks, and churches. The United States was self-consciously constructing itself as a modern version of a classical republic. Congress met in a Roman-style capitol, where in 1841 sculptor Horatio Greenough installed his famous statue of George Washington cast as the Greek god Zeus. (Within a few years, Victorian sensibilities found Greenough’s half-naked Washington discomfiting, and it was removed. The statue now resides in the National Museum of American History.) Americans loved Greek and Roman names for new towns—Athens, Rome, Troy, Corinth, Ithaca, Syracuse. In Ohio alone, no

fewer than 35 towns were given classical names.

Classical standards were not only illustrative and decorative but in at least some areas profoundly influential. The authors of *The Federalist* justified balanced government, which the Constitution embodied, by invoking Aristotle and Polybius. Later, Southern politician and noted orator John C. Calhoun made use of classical political ideas in drafting his own distinctive constitutional doctrines. Early American voting requirements derived their legitimacy from classical philosophy. The ancient authorities had taught that a citizen should be “virtuous,” meaning that he should be dedicated to the welfare of the commonwealth, not his own self-interest. Voting qualifications were designed to keep the ballot in the hands of those who could exercise such civic virtue. Only men could demonstrate patriotic virtue through military service, so only men should vote. (Indeed, the word “virtue,” like “virility,” derives from the Latin *vir*; meaning “man.”) And only persons capable of exercising independ-

ent judgment could attain public virtue. Hence, only men of property should vote, since (in the days before the secret ballot) a servant would vote as his master told him.

Forty years ago, the eminent historian Gordon S. Wood asserted that the ratification of the U.S. Constitution marked “the end of classical politics.” He has since backpedaled. In

## CLASSICAL REPUBLICANISM remained prominent in American education, culture, and political life until the Civil War.

truth, classical republicanism remained prominent in American education, culture, and political life until the Civil War. Far from standing in opposition to the early Industrial Revolution, classical learning at first expanded in response to it. The new commercial middle class felt eager to acquire refinement, which it associated with classical knowledge. Coins with a classical goddess depicting Liberty, Grecian gowns for women, and home décor items such as mirrors encased in classical columns were popular. Steam-powered presses mass-produced classical texts printed on inexpensive paper for consumption by an increasingly literate public.

Both political parties exploited the classics to present their arguments. The Jacksonian Democrats played upon the classical republican virtues of thrift and distaste for luxury in their “war” on banks, especially the Bank of the United States. Missouri Democratic senator Thomas Hart Benton invoked the upstanding farmers of Virgil’s *Georgics* to advocate pricing western public lands as low as possible; his and fellow western congressmen’s efforts prevailed with the passage of the Homestead Act in 1862. The Jacksonians’ rivals, the Whigs, employed classical republicanism to warn against the dangers of an overmighty executive and to advocate balanced government. To them, Andrew Jackson’s rise to political power from a military background smacked of Caesarism.

Classical ideals of rhetoric and oratory governed 19th-century American practice. We still value eloquence, but in those days elocution was taught in school, according to rules laid down thousands of years earlier and transmitted

by modern teachers of rhetoric such as the Scottish professor Hugh Blair, whose work was widely followed in the United States. Public speaking was an art form, practiced by politicians, lawyers, preachers, lyceum lecturers, dramatic actors, and high school students. Their stylized performances attracted audiences that were often large and sometimes all-too-passionately engaged. In 1849, the bloody Astor Place Riot left 22 people dead after a dispute erupted between fans of two Shakespearean actors who had rival theatrical interpretations of *Macbeth*.

Dedicating the cemetery on the battlefield of Gettysburg in November 1863, the famous orator Edward Everett held forth for two hours. He described ancient Athenian funeral customs, particularly the burial of those who fell at Marathon in graves on that historic battleground, and concluded by invoking Pericles’ tribute to the fallen of the Peloponnesian War. Then President Lincoln delivered his two-minute address, perhaps the greatest piece of classical oratory in American history. Without formal education, Abraham Lincoln had absorbed the conventions of classical rhetoric through practical experience in law and politics. His address, as Garry Wills explains in *Lincoln at Gettysburg* (1992), demonstrated the Periclean model perfectly in its “compression, grasp of the essential, balance, ideality, and awareness of the deepest polarities in the situation.” Both speakers knew that the oratorical conventions they employed would resonate with an audience steeped in the classical tradition.

Before the war, as the debate over slavery grew increasingly bitter, Southerners had enjoyed a marked advantage when they appealed to the authority of the classics. Both Greeks and Romans had practiced slavery, and Aristotle lent his philosophy to its justification (though he gave his game away when he admitted that slaves were capable of friendship). American defenders of slavery such as George Fitzhugh, Thomas Dew, and George Frederick Holmes claimed that the enslavement of blacks undergirded the equality of white citizens in the South. They pointed to the cultural and artistic triumphs of Greco-Roman civilization as vindicating slave society. For their part, abolitionists made use of the ancient principle of natural law in their

arguments, but they usually invoked Enlightenment or Christian versions of it. Few abolitionists were willing to criticize classical civilization for countenancing slavery, fewer to celebrate the bloody slave revolt of 73 BC led by the Roman gladiator Spartacus.

Even while the classics enjoyed what Carl J. Richard calls their “golden age” of prominence in antebellum America, events were beginning to transform American life and politics. Although historians’ attention generally has been focused on Jacksonian democracy, American political culture was influenced at least as much by improvements in communications and transportation: the telegraph, the railroad, the steamboat, and the steam-operated printing press. The steam press, in combination with innovations in papermaking, facilitated the mass production of newspapers, magazines, and books, while the railroad and steamboat enabled their wide distribution. While these advances encouraged the proliferation of Latin and Greek

texts, both within and without the classroom, the new printed media also undercut the relevance and authority of elite classical republicanism.

The revolution in communications made political opinions and debates more widely available. This broadened the opportunities for political participation, as more people could learn about candidates, issues, and the decisions of government. States responded by liberalizing suffrage requirements and providing for presidential electors to be chosen by popular vote. No longer was political leadership to be confined to a leisure class whose members could afford to serve without salary. Nor did the classical rationale for a property-based electorate carry conviction any longer. Literacy replaced civic virtue as the desirable characteristic for a voter. Instead of a small-scale republic with the restricted citizenry of classical city-states, a continental empire with a mass electorate now seemed plausible, even desirable. Political parties, which the classically influenced Founders had equated with factionalism and hoped to prevent, seized the opportunities provided by the printed media



At the turn of the 20th century, black schoolchildren gaze on Horatio Greenough's once-controversial statue of George Washington cast as Zeus.

to distribute their pamphlets and broadsides. Improved means of transportation supported the parties' traveling election campaigns, whose songs, slogans, and parades resembled those employed by revivalists and circus promoters.

But classical learning and respect for the virtues it taught died hard. Displaced from politics and political philosophy, classicism found a new purpose in private life. Classical learning became a vehicle for self-cultivation, for the pursuit not of public influence or civic participation but of personal perfection. Thus, the place of the ancient languages in a liberal education could be, and was, reaffirmed. Toward the end of the 19th century, the ancient languages came to share with modern languages a new category, "humanities," so named because they nurtured the student's humanity and helped realize his potential.

The Greek and Roman classics have occupied a place in defining American culture exceeded in importance only by the Enlightenment and Christianity. The first overt challenge to their primacy in higher education came with the landmark Morrill Act of 1862, which established federally subsidized land-grant colleges for the study of agriculture and engineering. But the general de-emphasis of classics in the U.S. educational system after the Civil War was a broad phenomenon. Nor was it occasioned simply by the rise of natural science. Carl J. Richard perceptively argues that it was a consequence of a declining confidence in human reason and virtue that diminished respect for the ancient writers and the heroes they celebrated. Moral relativism undercut trust in the standards the classical authors had long embodied.

Study of the ancient languages and literature remained important in American higher and secondary education for about a century after classical republicanism began to lose its relevance to the American political system. As late as 1900, half the students in U.S. public high schools were taking Latin; then began a long, gradual decline. Classics had always had something of an elite image; after all, classical knowledge was the hallmark of gentility. But in 20th-century America, elitism came to seem like an accusation one needed to deny. Parochial and private schools maintained the classical standards longer than most public ones, but much of the incentive for Catholic schools to do so was removed in the 1960s, when the Mass ceased to be celebrated in Latin.

But all is not lost. Despite their curricular marginaliza-

tion, many great works of classical civilization are still read, though now mostly in translation. The texts of Plato, Aristotle, Herodotus, Thucydides, Homer, Virgil, and the Athenian playwrights are still studied in courses on literature, history, and philosophy. While we accord them less authority than Americans did a century and a half ago, we still hold the conviction that the ancient classics have enduring worth as sources of instruction and inspiration.

As they did in the 19th century, today the Greeks seem to speak to us more profoundly than the Romans, having originated many of the intellectual institutions we increasingly value as characteristically American: democratic politics, natural science, and free inquiry, to name a few. In a recent memoir, Garry Wills looked back over his own classical education, which culminated in a PhD at Yale. "Learning classical Greek is the most economical intellectual investment one can make," he wrote. "On many things that might interest one—law and politics, philosophy, oratory, history, lyric poetry, epic poetry, drama—there will be constant reference back to the founders of those forms in our civilization."

**T**here are still those among us who defend the value of classical learning. Ridgeview Classical Schools, a group of public charter schools in Fort Collins, Colorado, defines their mission this way: "So important has classical education been in the history of the West that it would only be a slight exaggeration to say that the march of civilization has paralleled the vibrancy of classical schools." At Ridgeview schools, Latin is mandatory starting in the seventh grade, and English itself is taught as a classical language. The schools have so many applicants that admission is by lottery.

Ridgeview Classical does not seem to me merely an eccentric holdout against modern trends in education. I did not myself enjoy the benefit of a classical education, though I studied Greek for a while as a gateway to the New Testament. But in learning about the history of classical education in the United States, I have come to respect many of the ideals for which it has so long stood, to believe that they transcend the limitations of time and place, and to hope for their perpetuation. The neglect of classics in our educational curriculum has been a loss for our civilization. It is not simply the ancient languages themselves but the spirit in which they are studied that has value for students today. ■

# THE CITY BOUNCES BACK

**A**MERICA'S CITIES ARE MOVING IN A NEW DIRECTION. Many urban ills remain, but cities' great progress in the battles against crime and other chronic problems has swept away the last century's sense of hopeless and ever-worsening urban crisis. The American city is not only reviving—it is reinventing itself for a new era.



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# Long Live the Industrial City

*Today's successful cities are often regarded strictly as idea labs where creative types gather. But as New York City's garment district illustrates, manufacturing is vital to the innovation that cities foster.*

BY TOM VANDERBILT

AGAINST A WALL IN R&C APPAREL'S CROWDED factory, in an unremarkable building on 38th Street on the far western edge of New York City's garment district, is a vast collection of sewing machines shelved with curatorial precision. The collection could be in a museum—many of the machines were built far back in the previous century, and are technically antiques.

For Ramdat Harihar, the factory's Guyana-born owner, who began his career sweeping garment factory floors, the machines are not obsolete, but tools for innovation. With a little tinkering—and an arsenal of cannibalized parts—they can be used to create entirely novel stitching effects, which find their way into the work of leading American fashion designers such as Anna Sui and Zac Posen. Sometimes, innovation demands using machines for new purposes; in one instance, a microwave oven—and a dash of vinegar—helped create a new pleat for Donna Karan.

R&C Apparel is in one sense an archetypal, almost metaphorical, New York garment district business:

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Immigrant laborers work on outdated machines in an old building in a well-worn neighborhood, doing the sort of work one imagines was long ago outsourced to cheaper locations. Indeed, most of it has been. Even as New York City was gaining in stature as a fashion capital in the latter half of the 20th century, its share of U.S. garment production underwent a full-tilt inversion, from a commanding 90 percent to less than 10 percent.

The story of this shift still haunts the district. "You couldn't walk on the sidewalk," says fabric wholesaler Bryan Kramer, recalling the jostling traffic of garment racks that once crowded the streets. Rodger Cohen, the second-generation owner of Regal Originals, keeps a tangible totem of the decline: a Pleaters, Stitchers, and Embroiderers Association wall calendar from the 1980s that lists some 400 members. "I'm the only unionized pleater left," he says. Across the street from his office, someone has hung in another office window a sign that reads "Save the Garment Center."

In the several months I spent researching the district as part of a team organized by the Design Trust for Public Space, I talked to everyone from designers to economists to one-man dress form manufacturing



**Museum pieces? Hardly.** Ramdat Harihar, owner of R&C Apparel in New York City's garment district, shows off one of the many old sewing machines that workers at his factory still use to produce innovative stitching effects for some of today's top fashion designers.

firms. (The team was convened in response to a proposal to alter the garment district's zoning that would have effectively killed the district off; the proposal has since been tabled.) It was not hard to imagine myself as a kind of industrial Indiana Jones, mapping the murky contours of a business hardly known for its transparency, plying dark warehouses where hulking machines sat mothballed, being handed business cards advertising long-abandoned embroidery crafts such as bonnaz, meeting workers whose average age was just south of retirement. When I asked Cohen what the learning curve was for a man who was working on complex pleating patterns—intricately geo-

metric, three-dimensional sculpture, really—he shot back, “There is no learning curve. The man spent his life doing it. There's nobody left who does it.”

But beneath the well-chronicled narrative of garment industry decline—perhaps captured most eloquently in the elegiac homage to glove making in Philip Roth's novel *American Pastoral* (1997)—I began to see another set of truths: that the garment industry is still New York City's largest manufacturing sector by employment; that the production, service, and supply businesses that remain play a vital, if underappreciated, role in the larger fashion industry of New York; and that even with the emergence of instant communications and far-

flung supply chains—not to mention the pressures exerted by landlords looking to convert industrial space into more profitable offices—there are still compelling reasons why this industrial network continues to cluster in midtown Manhattan.

It has become fashionable, in part due to the tireless work of urban studies theorist Richard Florida, author of *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) and *Who's Your City?* (2008), to think of cities as big idea labs—creativity skunkworks—where, in science writer Matt Ridley's infectious phrase, "ideas have sex." Often, perhaps in reaction to decades of prophecies of urban decline, this theorizing takes on the zeal of

a crusade. You'd be forgiven for thinking no idea has ever been hatched outside a metropolis. While not incorrect, this theory is incomplete. Yes, cities are filled with the modern-day equivalent of the *luftmenschen* (literally, people who "lived on air"), creatives who breathe WiFi. But in many sectors of the "creative industry," there comes a point when something physical must be made, and when, because of financial or time constraints, it makes sense to have it produced locally. Where I live, in Brooklyn, the jewelry designer down the block may need something fabricated in metal—and *yesterday!*—and so will visit a fabrication shop in the Navy Yard; the craft beer that a table of graphic designers is consuming was brewed down the street.

I don't have in mind the Industrial City of old, with its huge buildings housing cardboard box factories, but rather, as the design critic Karrie Jacobs said in describing Brooklyn's emerging manufacturing base, one that is "pre-industrial revolution in scale and postindustrial



**Back in 1955, the sidewalks of New York's garment district teemed with clothing racks and workers. Today, though overseas factories have drained away most of that business, the factories that remain are vital to the city's fashion industry.**

in strategy." Having manufacturing close to the locus of creation isn't simply a matter of convenience; the process of production can inform and shape the creative process itself. So before another "industrial" loft is converted to a fantasia of Bosch appliances and Brazilian teak floors, before another productive building becomes a midrange hotel for tourists, let us take a closer look.

**T**o understand how the garment district hangs on, it is worth considering why New York first became the nation's center of garment production—a mantle it claimed from the mid-19th century straight to the Nixon administration.

Blessed with deep ports, water (and later rail) connections to the rest of the United States, and easy access to oceans, New York City was a strategic nexus for the flow of goods, ideas, and people. As economist Edward Glaeser notes, in garment production, as with

sugar refining—historically, the city’s second most prominent industry—it made sense to center production at the point of entry for raw materials: textiles from England, silk from the East. By 1860, more than 80 percent of textiles imported into the country came through New York. This concentration of industry, with its talent and techniques, also sparked innovation; 19th-century New York gave birth to everything from ready-to-wear clothing to the Singer sewing machine. Even as New York’s role as a port declined, apparel production remained strong (owing in part, Glaeser notes, to the city’s small footprint and the continuing surge of immigrant labor).

But advances in communications and transportation—the real cost to ship goods dropped by roughly 95 percent over the 20th century—diminished New York City’s inherent geographic advantage in manufacturing. This narrative is interwoven in the personal history of any longtime “garmento,” shorthand for anyone who works in the business. Stuart Edelman, who makes outerwear for the upscale bag manufacturer Tumi, can trace an arc from working in his father’s business in the coat factories on 12th Avenue, to moving to New Jersey in the 1960s, to setting up production runs in South Korea in the 1970s. “Imagine a world of no fax machines, no FedEx,” he says. “If we made a sketch and sent it over to South Korea, it would take three or four weeks for the package to get there.” Now, an e-mailed “tech pack”—industry jargon for the specifications to assemble a garment—travels close to the speed of light, and FedEx deliveries from China arrive in two days. “We actually get it the next day, because of the time difference,” Edelman notes.

And so the question is not so much why the garment industry has shrunk and moved elsewhere, but rather why there continues to be a garment district at all. In asking this, we might as well be asking why cities continue to exist. “If we postulate only the usual economic forces,” observed economist Robert Lucas, “cities should fly apart.” Why would young designers scrape by in New York when they could materially live

better elsewhere? “People come to New York City because they want to be in fashion, and fashion came to New York because there were people who wanted

## TODAY, CITIES ARE filled with creatives who breathe WiFi.

to be in fashion,” says Simon Collins, dean of fashion at the internationally regarded Parsons The New School for Design.

People come to be near other people—to draw upon their expertise, to exchange ideas, to compete. The power of proximity has long been understood: the access to specialized knowledge and labor, the lower transaction costs, the “agglomeration effects” in which like breeds like. Large American clothing retailers such as Wal-Mart and Kohl’s may produce and sell globally, but they have design studios in New York City. Firms locate in the same place to gain a sense of what the competition is up to and to hire talent, to benefit from the spontaneous interchange that can happen in streets and elevators, while groupings of showrooms provide one-stop shopping for out-of-town buyers. “There is not a buyer who will go anywhere else,” says Danielle Shriber, owner and designer of the boutique fashion house Prairie New York. “People have trouble getting buyers to go downtown. I’m on 38th between Eighth and Ninth; most showrooms are on 39th between Seventh and Eighth. They see one block as a big hurdle.”

Even in an age of e-mail and overnight deliveries, fashion has particular reasons for desiring proximity. The industry requires a wide range of suppliers, specialized services, and skilled producers. Bringing a garment from sketch to rack requires the careful coordination of an entire just-in-time chain of production, involving any number of intermediate steps (that often involve working face to face), on a ruthlessly tight schedule. “It takes a lot of people to get something made,” says designer Shelley Steffee. “Even if it’s 12 garments. There are so

many hands that touch that garment.”

“Hand” is one of the garment district’s enduring metaphors. It begins with the “hand of the designer,” of course—the sketch that animates the idea. But this design does not develop in a vacuum. “There’s a naiveté to believing that a designer can do it alone,” declares Nanette Lepore, designer of a brand that bears her name and has 11 boutique shops around the world. Clothes require skilled hands. Hands to trace the patterns, hands to cut the fabric, hands to do the draping, hands to sew, hands to embroider, hands to fashion the intricate geometry of pleat patterns, hands to do specialized work such

**NEW YORK CITY’S RISE as a global fashion hub can be traced to a critical mass of manufacturers, suppliers, and artisans.**

as grading and marking, hands to carry all this back and forth. The work has an elegant tactility. In one shop, a worker puts polished stones on a fabric to smooth it out before cutting. In another, a worker uses sticks as weights as he rolls up a pleat pattern on a cardboard tube that will “bake” in a hulking steam oven. In still another, a seamstress deftly manipulates a complicated smocking machine, like a conductor working in colored thread rather than music.

The closer these hands are, the shorter the transit time, and the greater the control the designer can exercise over the final product. Fashion is an intensely iterative process in which time becomes an obstacle. “When you move into higher-end design, there is so much spontaneous creativity happening that you don’t want to wait a month to see your garments,” says Tina Schenk, owner of the pattern-making company Werkstett. “One design is based on another. You want to keep the process going, you want to continuously look at the things that you’ve been designing.” Andrew Rosen, a third-generation garmenter who founded Theory, a fashion company that now grosses half a billion dollars a year, remarks, “Just from an efficiency point of view, I can make clothes faster here. Which is not to say we haven’t

shortened the lead times in China—we have. But there’s a lot more logistics that need to happen from 12,000 miles away than from 12 blocks away.” As Edward Glaeser notes in his new book *The Triumph of the City*, one thing cities do well is eliminate the “curse of complex communication.”

And as any *Project Runway* viewer knows from those trips to Mood Designer Fabrics, the massive garment district emporium where the reality TV show’s contestants scout for chiffon and charmeuse, it’s important to have the raw materials of fashion within easy reach. Fabric needs to be touched. “It’s not a flat medium you’re working in,” says veteran designer Anna Sui. “When you gather a piece of fabric, sometimes because of the thickness of it or the loftiness or the bounceability of it, you never know how it’s going to react.”

Proximity comes at a price, of course, one that large-scale manufacturers—or the consumers who buy their products—typically do not seem willing to pay. But judging from what’s said by midrange designers who work in the garment district, selling clothes not for several thousand dollars but several hundred, the assertion that it’s too expensive to make things in New York City isn’t so iron clad. Prairie New York proprietor Shriber says that while quality is her main reason for working locally, overseas production prices aren’t much cheaper. “By the time you pay your customs duties, air freight, you’re pretty much at the same dollar amount.” As evidenced by the recent trend toward “onshoring,” in which companies including Caterpillar and General Electric have said they will recall some of the manufacturing they have done in China to the United States, a whole host of issues—rising transportation and production costs, a weak dollar, quality control irregularities, intellectual property troubles—lay along the inexorable drift toward the low-wage periphery.

All of this is not to propose that New York City is poised to regain its stature as an apparel manufacturing giant, or even that it should. But as the critical mass of manufacturers, suppliers, artisans, and technicians that remains is increasingly threatened by redevelopment



Designers such as Nanette Lapore (left) don't come up with their fashions in a vacuum. Here, she consults with a worker at a garment district factory.

and rising rents, it seems evident that the potential impacts range beyond the loss of jobs or the loss of skills. What's at stake is that layer of infrastructure, little seen but elemental, that has helped enable New York's rise as a global fashion hub.

The reason a city like New York still thrives, even after losing most of its industrial base, argues Richard Florida, is that economic success “no longer revolves around simply making and moving things.” Instead, he writes, “it depends on generating and transporting ideas.” Just as neuroscientists speculate that higher intelligence correlates with the number of network connections between neurons in the brain and the speed with which they communicate, the cities that function best are those with the “highest velocity” of ideas, and the most efficient and robust links between people. In fashion, ideas not only need materials and manufacturing processes to take shape, but arise from the interplay of designers and manufacturers itself. The closer the connections, the faster and more productive that interplay is.

Of course, as Elizabeth Currid, an urban planning scholar at the University of Southern California, points out in *The Warhol Economy* (2007), these sorts of creative exchanges are not purely economic in nature. “Agglomeration may be even more important to maintaining the social mechanisms by which the cultural economy sustains itself,” she writes. The key to understanding urban economics in the future, some argue, is in so-called nonmarket interactions—for example, an essential ingredient of success in the fashion industry is being around other people in the fashion industry, both at work and at play. New York City has become what sociologist Saskia Sassen calls a “post-industrial production site.” It is a place built for the spread of ideas. What the successful 21st-century city now produces is innovation itself.

Few cultural enterprises are as driven by innovation as fashion. “The first thing a customer asks when they come into a store is, ‘What's new?’” says Ron Frasch, president and chief merchandising officer of

the upscale department store chain Saks. “They don’t want to know what was, they want to know what is.” As a cultural product, fashion has a perilously short shelf life. “We will sell 60 percent of what we’re going to sell in the first four weeks the goods are on the

to a creative industry of immense importance to New York City. And while cheap transport and labor means manufacturing can be done anywhere, service sectors such as law and public relations—and, I would suggest, fashion—still tend to cluster, notes economist Jed Kolko, “because most services involve at least some face-to-face interaction.”

**CITIES DRIVE CREATIVITY because they bring together three vital ingredients: mutation, error, and serendipity.**

The service suppliers of the garment district act as an informal incubator. That word may conjure gleaming Silicon Valley office parks more than it

floor,” Frasch says. “That fact hasn’t changed in my entire career.”

But what makes innovation happen, in terms of both inspiration and execution? Inspiration speaks to the intrinsic qualities of New York City: a willingness to accept new people and ideas, proximity to others drawn by these self-selecting qualities, and the fast transmission of ideas. The world’s great fashion capitals—Paris, Milan, London, now Shanghai—also happen to rank among the world’s leading financial capitals. Like fashion, finance is dependent upon the fast transmission of information. (Even as face-to-face trading has declined on Wall Street, firms are co-locating the data centers of their automated trading operations in New Jersey because even on the Internet physical proximity equals speed.) That those four cities also happen to be their countries’ media capitals illustrates people’s desire to be close to that information, to report and transmit it. And so the city itself, ever novel, ever regenerating, looms as an inspiration.

does old buildings with dodgy elevators, but the end result is the same: Ideas and infrastructure get provided to start-ups. While the rise of New York City fashion is indelibly linked to names such as Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger, whose brands now do most of their manufacturing overseas, their businesses didn’t begin abroad. Most young and emerging designers start their careers working out of apartments, using money borrowed from family and friends, working in quantities that are well below an order that any overseas factory would accept, and often under sharp time constraints.

The garment district firms do more than simply supply needed services; their role extends to everything from knowledge transfer to financing to simple moral support. Hence the value of specialized tradesmen such as Paul Cavazza, who runs Create-a-Marker, a grading and marking service. (In the garment trade, grading is the creation of patterns for each size of an item of clothing, while marking is the art and science of cutting patterns to minimize fabric wastage.) “I had a young designer walk in here last night,” Cavazza told me. “He’s just starting his line. He came in here at six. I was here with him until 8:30, walking him through grading and marking.”

**W**hich brings us back to Ramdat Harihar and his sewing machines. Some might regard him as a vestige of a marginal industry. But Harihar—and all of the other manufacturers, specialized tradespeople, suppliers, and other workers who constitute the district—can also be seen not simply as cogs in the production business, but as suppliers of a vital set of value-added services

The garment district doesn’t merely provide a seedbed for the young designers who drive fashion; the iterative process conducted in proximity helps innovation itself happen. Quick turnarounds give designers test labs of a sort, with the final product often shaped by the manufacturers themselves.

“When you’re working on a higher-end collection,” says designer Shelley Steffee, sewers and pattern makers “are almost like designers themselves.” They help solve design problems, figure out ways to reduce costs in ramping up to larger-scale production, and even introduce new techniques. Another designer, Yeohlee Teng, says, “You could have a design you want cut in a certain way, and your designer could turn around and tell you, ‘I can get better yardage if you turn this piece around.’” In her fall collection last year, Teng used a sort of double-pleated “checkerboard” technique in a dress. This pleat came from Regal Originals, Rodger Cohen’s shop, just down the block. As Cohen told me, one of his workers accidentally fed an already-pleated piece of fabric into a machine, creating a striking effect. This mistake, made on a cluttered, ancient factory floor, has been transformed into valuable inputs in the image economy of global fashion.

**M**utation, error, serendipity: These are the ingredients that drive creativity, argues the popular-science writer Steven Johnson in *Where Good Ideas Come From* (2010)—and nowhere more so than in cities, where ideas, drawn from various subcultures crowded together, leak into a “liquid network” and “influence their neighbors in surprising ways.” Shana Tabor, a young designer who heads the Brooklyn-based In God We Trust accessories boutique, says, “I love days when I’m in the garment district, going up on an elevator to some place, and the door accidentally opens on a floor—and you’re like, ‘What are you guys doing in here?’” With each level come new possibilities.

The cluttered floor of Regal Originals, filled with machines whose own manufacturers have long gone out of business, is a kind of proof to the late urban critic Jane Jacobs’s famous dictum, “New ideas need old buildings.” It was the garment industry of New York City that provided Jacobs, in her classic text *The Economy of Cities* (1969), with a compelling story of how innovation—creative, technological, market—occurs. In the 1920s, a dressmaker named Ida Rosenthal began creating cupped undergarments as a service to help her clients achieve a better fit. The modern

brassiere was born. Eventually, the bras became so popular that Rosenthal and her partners quit making dresses altogether. The service became a product, which became the lingerie company Maidenform. As Jacobs wrote, “New work arises upon existing work.” Yes, the company left New York, but what’s important is maintaining the conditions—such as the chains of contractors and producers—that help get such ideas off the ground.

This sort of innovation is often unpredictable, and not nestled within clearly delineated boundaries. “When new work is added to older work,” Jacobs wrote, “the addition often cuts ruthlessly across categories of work.” A little over a year ago, Stoll, a German manufacturer of knitting machines, opened a facility in a ground-floor storefront on West 39th Street. While its latest high-tech machines silently hum in the front window, the place does not exist to sell machines. Rather, it is part showroom, part boutique production facility, part technical institute. Faced with a constricting customer base for its machines, Stoll was looking for a way to build its brand and its sales. The company identified a market for providing what it terms “fast-track samples”—quick one-off prototypes—to the myriad designers in the garment district, offering a benefit in time and quality versus sending things abroad. There is no more common complaint among designers than sample quality. The decreased turnaround time makes new things possible.

Creativity in fashion, as in any art, can originate anywhere, or come from anything: a splash of color on a billboard, the movement of a symphony, sunlight dappling through trees, even a new stitch. It is not surprising that cities tend to be hubs of creativity—there are more things and people to be inspired by, more knowledge transfer, and, importantly, more ways to bring this creativity into actuality. The point, it seems, is less preserving this or another industry for its own sake, or even championing the idea that people are making *things* in cities, than enabling the seedbeds that help create and sustain the empire of images and aura that is New York City’s fashion industry. The loss of even a single fabric supplier, like a ripple in a pond, is felt everywhere. “It’s like a coral reef,” says designer Teng. “You don’t know how the reef will survive and what it will do if certain elements are removed.” ■

# Dense, Denser, Densest

*Americans like their cities spacious. Will concerns about costs and the environment push them to rein in sprawl?*

BY WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI

LAST FALL, *FOREIGN POLICY* PUBLISHED WHAT IT called a global cities index, a list of 65 world cities ranked according to a variety of economic, cultural, and social indicators. Compiled by the consulting firm A. T. Kearney and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, the index measures business activity, the size of capital markets, and the flow of goods through airports and ports. It also takes into account cultural and information resources such as the number of performance venues, the extent of broadband access, international coverage in the local press, the degree of political engagement as measured by the number of think tanks and conferences, and university enrollment and education levels. The 2010 list predictably included global powerhouses and national capitals such as London, Paris, and Tokyo, but

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the United States had no less than six cities in the top 20—New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles (in the top 10), as well as San Francisco, Washington, and Boston.

Lists such as these have become commonplace, and American cities are often among the top ranked. It is hardly surprising that the United States contains so many leading global cities; after all, it is an economic superpower and a very large country. What is striking is that these cities are physically so different—large as well as small, old as well as new, horizontal as well as vertical, and sprawling as well as concentrated. Clearly there is no one-size-fits-all American urban template.

Consider New York, Los Angeles, and Washington.



The popular image of New York, the oldest of the three, is of a small island crammed with skyscrapers. The reality is different. Manhattan is at the heart of a metropolitan region that stretches over parts of three states, more than 3,000 square miles of cities, suburbs, and small towns. Even within the five boroughs there is considerable variety between, say, Queens, where homeownership is the norm, and Manhattan, where a majority of residents are tenants.

Compared to New York, Los Angeles is very new; 100 years ago the city had barely 100,000 inhabitants. Metropolitan Los Angeles has a reputation as a sprawling, spread-out place, yet its urbanized area is half the size of

**Los Angeles may look like the capital of sprawl, but it is more densely populated than metropolitan New York. Diversity in density and other traits is a hallmark of American cities.**

New York's. The Angeleno city fathers have worked hard to create a distinct downtown—with limited success so far—and Los Angeles continues to be a city of many subcenters (in that sense, at least, it resembles London). Unlike London, Los Angeles is not a walkable city, yet it is dense, with mile upon mile of cheek-by-jowl dingbats, boxy two- and three-story apartment buildings.

Washington resembles neither Los Angeles nor New York. Although there are tall buildings in Rosslyn, Vir-

ginia, just across the Potomac, downtown Washington has no high buildings at all, thanks to the District of Columbia's roughly 10-story height limit. Historically, many American cities had height limits—Los Angeles as late as 1957. The difference is that in Washington, thanks to congressional inertia, the height restriction has persisted, making Washington look more Parisian than American. The skyline consists of civic landmarks rather than skyscrapers—the Washington Monument standing in for the Eiffel Tower—and downtown is dominated by bulky office and apartment buildings. This mid-rise pattern extends quite far toward the periphery, instead of dropping off quickly to single-family houses, as it does in most American cities.

**W**hat about the other top-rated cities? Chicago's downtown Loop is as clearly defined as Manhattan—and similarly vertical—but the flat midwestern topography has allowed the urbanized area to extend unchecked in three directions—north, south, and especially west, far past O'Hare Airport. As a result, Chicago covers a larger area than any of the other six leading American cities except New York. The historic center of Boston is compact and walkable, and although there are some skyscrapers, there is no memorable skyline. On the other hand, metropolitan Boston spreads out more than either Los Angeles or Houston. Of the six global American cities, San Francisco is the outlier; not just the hilliest city, it is also the smallest in area. Hemmed in by water on three sides (as Oakland is contained by mountains), metropolitan San Francisco is less than a third the area of Boston, and packs in more inhabitants per square mile than any of the six global cities.

For that great analyst of urban life, Jane Jacobs, density was a critical measure of a city's vitality. Indeed, density affects the energy of streets and other public spaces, as well as the variety of amenities a city can support. In

addition, density dictates the type of mass transit that is viable—buses, streetcars, light rail, or subways. Yet density is not always what it appears to be. Los Angeles, somewhat counterintuitively, is extremely dense. So are San Francisco and New York. Chicago is somewhere in

between; Washington, given its height restriction—and the low density of its suburban fringe—is further down the list, although denser than either sprawling Chicago or Boston, a small city surrounded by extremely low-density suburbs.

Of course, the gross density of an entire urbanized region is a

crude measure. Boston (low gross density) and San Francisco (high gross density) both have walkable, high-energy centers and a relatively large number of downtown residents. The low and compact historic cities of Georgetown and Alexandria in the D.C. metropolitan area also have high residential densities, and the highest employment density is in the capital's mid-rise center, not Virginia's thriving Rosslyn-Ballston corridor or the outlying edge city of Tysons Corner, as one might expect. Although Los Angeles has a high gross density, its small downtown has only half as many residents as Chicago's. And of the six major cities, Los Angeles has the lowest share of workers using mass transit, since, unlike New York, Washington, and San Francisco, it lacks sufficiently high concentrations of people living within walking distance of transit stops.

The role of mass transit in cities is a reminder that urban density affects sustainability. It has been estimated that a Manhattanite's carbon footprint is a third smaller than that of the average American. Dense urbanization conserves resources in many ways: Urban buildings, whether apartments or row houses, are more compact and energy efficient; amenities are concentrated, which encourages walking; and public transit becomes an option. But even the densest American urban regions are not very dense compared to those of Europe. Greater Paris, for example, covers only about 1,000 square miles, and has a gross density of 10,000 inhabitants per square mile.

### America's Global Cities

	Population (millions)	Area (sq. miles)	Density (inhabitants/sq. mile)
Los Angeles	12.9	1,667	7,738
San Francisco	4.3	526	8,175
New York	19.1	3,335	5,728
Chicago	9.6	2,122	4,524
Washington	5.5	1,156	4,758
Boston	4.6	1,735	2,657

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010



Residents stroll on a greenway in Charlotte, North Carolina. Charlotte's very low population density is typical of many fast-growing U.S. cities.

Greater London, confined to 600 square miles, is even denser, with about 12,850 inhabitants per square mile. And the density of Asian cities such as Singapore is even higher than that. By comparison, the gross density of a typical American urbanized area is about 2,500 inhabitants per square mile.

There are a number of ways in which American cities could become denser. In vertical downtowns, tall buildings could simply get taller, or older office towers could be converted to residential use, as has happened in some business districts. The most common form of urban densification is the conversion of disused waterfronts, decommissioned Navy yards, and obsolete industrial areas into housing and office developments, an attractive strategy since it does not displace existing residents. In older city neighborhoods, taller structures could progressively replace three- or four-story row houses and low apartment buildings, though community resistance makes this a slow process.

Suburban densification is more challenging. In Philadelphia, where I live, it was common practice in the mid-20th century to subdivide large suburban estates into communities of single-family houses, but such open spaces in the suburbs are increasingly rare. Neighborhoods of single-family housing can be made denser by building clusters of smaller houses on what were previously large single-house lots, or by introducing row houses or low-rise apartment buildings. Both strategies involve radical changes to neighborhood identity, however. Perhaps the greatest challenge will be to increase density in the large planned-unit communities that have proliferated in the past few decades. In these, any change is constrained by homeowner associations in which even a small minority of members can effectively block alterations they find objectionable.

But after a century of spreading out, will Americans change their minds and draw together? Some observers maintain (hope) that the current economic recession will

encourage (force) home buyers to demand smaller homes and more densely planned communities. This result would be unusual, since previous recessions have not had similar effects. Consumers generally have short memories. Following the energy crisis of 1973, for example, Americans switched to smaller cars, but by 1984, when prices at the pump had dropped, gas-guzzling minivans appeared, soon to be followed by SUVs. In any case, choosing where

ing about these new growing cities is that they are much less rather than more dense. New York (the city, not the metropolitan region) contains 26,000 inhabitants per square mile, San Francisco 16,000, Chicago and Boston 12,000, and Washington and Los Angeles slightly fewer, but the new cities of the South and West rarely surpass 3,000 inhabitants per square mile, and the fast-growing city of Charlotte, North Carolina, has fewer than that. Jane Jacobs's teaching

notwithstanding, we appear to be spreading out.

The latest U.S. Census figures reveal that during the last decade, suburban areas outstripped cities in population gains. Moreover, *The New York Times* reports that "more than a third of all 13.3 million new suburbanites

## MANY AMERICANS WILL make fresh sacrifices rather than embrace life in denser urban areas.

one lives has never been a strictly economic proposition. It is always a trade-off among the affordability of housing, the length of commutes, the quality of neighborhood amenities—especially schools—and preferred lifestyles.

During the last decade, proponents of downtown living pointed to an increase in downtown residential construction as a harbinger of an urban renaissance, but empty condominiums in cities such as Miami and Chicago suggest that this boom was a product of the housing bubble rather than a signal of a significant change in home buyers' preferences. Similarly, the fact that the average size of new suburban houses—and lots—has recently shrunk for the first time in decades may be less meaningful than it is made out to be. In a recession, the only customers are first-time buyers who can afford only modest homes (which qualify for Federal Housing Administration mortgages, the chief form of housing finance during economic downturns). Meanwhile, larger houses are not being built because move-up home buyers are unable to sell their homes in today's weak housing market.

New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Boston grew modestly during the last two decades. (The size of Chicago and Washington hardly changed.) While these cities did better than the rustbelt cities, whose populations continue to shrink, younger cities such as Colorado Springs, Fort Worth, Atlanta, and Charlotte almost doubled in population during the same period, and Phoenix, San Antonio, and Albuquerque grew by more than a third. What is strik-

were Hispanic, compared with 2.5 million blacks and 2 million Asians." At the same time, the immigrant populations of small towns and suburbs increased the most, while those of the big cities remained flat, reversing the historical pattern of the past. Jobs and cheaper housing are strong magnets.

Changes in migration trends are a reminder that Americans have always shown a capacity to adapt. For example, when energy prices spiked in the summer of 2008, people quickly tightened their belts, driving less, walking more, turning down their air conditioners, and shutting off the lights. It is certainly possible that the cold recessionary shower will dampen earlier exuberance and accelerate a shift to urban living, at least among young college graduates and higher-income retirees. The question is whether the rest of us will embrace denser and more compact suburbs and cities, or whether we will depend on technological fixes such as electric and hybrid cars, more efficient heating and cooling systems, and alternative energy sources. I suspect the answer will be a bit of both. Some people will embrace urban density, but many will make sacrifices in order to continue the decentralized way of life they prefer. The heterogeneity that has always characterized American cities will continue to produce many different solutions to suit a large and diverse nation. ■

# New to the Neighborhood

*How can you be called an urban pioneer when you move to an inner-city neighborhood where families have lived for generations?*

BY SARAH L. COURTEAU

A YEAR AGO I MOVED INTO A ROW HOUSE IN NORTH-east Washington, D.C., two miles from the Capitol. I paid \$85,000, a price so low it's a punch line in a city where the average home sells for more than \$600,000. The hot water heater was missing, and the bathroom tub drained into a downstairs closet. My house inspector, a dead ringer for the gravel-voiced actor Sam Elliott, tramped silently from room to room, occasionally pausing to pronounce, "It's not proper." The house was in foreclosure and had been vacant for a couple of years, so when I found crayons under the old carpet, I was spared the guilt of imagining them in still-young fingers. But once, someone had loved this place. The backyard bloomed with rosebushes staked with weathered shoelaces. With an FHA-backed loan and a savvy contractor, I gutted the house and renovated it. I found myself realizing a dream I'd assumed was miles out of reach: I was a homeowner.

A white, single professional in my thirties, I moved into a neighborhood of modest houses that is almost 90 percent black and where about a third of the population lives below the poverty line. I'm a gentrifier, a category of urban resident that has become a

lightning rod for debates about the evolution of our cities. Last year, a study published in the *Journal of Urban Economics* found evidence of gentrification during the 1990s in the majority of the country's 72 largest metropolitan areas. But few places match the galloping pace of gentrification in the nation's capital. In the last 10 years, Washington's population has grown by five percent, after steadily shrinking since 1950. The white population is up by nearly a third. Since the 1960s blacks have been a majority in the District of Columbia, but that balance will likely shift in the next few years.

Unlike places such as Harlem in New York City, where yuppies have snapped up decrepit but once-grand brownstones, my neighborhood, which was originally settled by European immigrants, has always been working class. My two-bedroom is less than 800 square feet, upstairs and down, and lacks a basement. I love the neighborhood—known as Rosedale, after the recreation center on the next block—and feel proud and a little defiant to have pulled off a financial coup that's landed me a comfortable life in a place that some relatives and friends, and, especially, taxi drivers (who collectively form a modern Greek chorus of prophetic doom) describe as "sketchy." But it's with a mixture of pride and embarrassment that I hear myself called an urban pioneer. Because, of course, this is a

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After Martin Luther King Jr.'s death in 1968, rioters wreaked havoc on H Street N.E. in Washington, D.C. For decades the corridor was a virtual wasteland.

long-settled neighborhood. It's only new to me.

Many of my neighbors have lived in Rosedale for decades, and others can trace their roots back generations. They remember when the neighborhood was a mix of blacks and whites, before whites began to pick up and leave in the middle of the last century. They remember when blacks did their shopping on H Street because they weren't welcome in downtown department stores. They remember when the Rosedale playground was desegregated, largely due to the efforts of local resident Walter Lucas, who one day in 1952 led a group of black children over to play and was beaten and then arrested along with one of his assailants. They remember the riots that tore the area apart for three days after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 and left the area's commercial spine, H Street, in smoking ruins. Fifty-year-old Stephon Starke recalls that word went out that businesses would be spared only if they displayed a picture of King in the window. His father had put a picture in the window of their house, but not at the liquor store he owned off H Street. Two Great Danes kept the store safe, but many other black-owned businesses did not survive.

H Street was in decline even before the riots. After-

ward, though some businesses reopened, many damaged buildings remained vacant. The street was a mute reminder of social failure. Still, life went on. There were summer go-go concerts and afternoons at the Rosedale pool. Kids played in the streets under the watchful eyes of all the adults in the neighborhood. The 1970s saw the beginnings of the drug and crime epidemics that would become full-blown in the '80s. People started referring to parts of the neighborhood as "Vietnam," and residents installed bars on their windows and locked doors they'd once left unlatched. In 1980, James Hill, the proprietor of Hill's Market, where people sent their kids never worrying that they'd be shortchanged and old folks could buy food on credit, was shot to death in an argument over change for a newspaper and a pack of cigarettes.

After the riots, recalls 45-year-old Necothia Bowers, who lives in a house on E Street N.E. that her great-grandparents occupied, the area was abandoned by city authorities. Their attitude, she says, was, "Well, you did this. It's your mess to clean up." No longer. In 2004, the D.C. government approved a major redevelopment plan calling for more than \$300 million in (mostly private) investment in the mile-long commercial corridor of H Street that runs from Second Street N.E. to the Maryland



Today, businesses are opening, nightlife has returned, and newcomers are moving to the area. Here, people wander H Street during a 2009 festival.

Avenue intersection, three blocks from my house.

Today, H Street is an obstacle course of bulldozers and construction signs. An extensive streetscape project is under way, and track is being laid for a streetcar system that next year will connect this once-deteriorated artery to the Union Station transportation hub. Most evenings, young white partiers from other parts of the city and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs crowd into a string of new bars. During the day, foot traffic is sparser, and many of the faces are black. Muggings and break-ins do occur, but at about the same rate as in other parts of the city. A Rosedale gang known as the E Street Bangers is reportedly still active, though the only evidence I've seen of it is in graffiti. Serious violent crime is rare, and bar-goers and new residents are seldom targets. Long-abandoned buildings ring with the sound of pounding hammers, and a luxury apartment complex is rising on a vacant lot where a Sears once stood.

**T**he very origin of the word “gentrification” to describe the process by which an urban area is rendered middle class is not neutral. The eminent sociologist Ruth Glass is credited with coining it in 1964

to decry the changes in working-class London neighborhoods. Though the word has only been in circulation for a few decades, gentrification has become another of the litmus test issues that define who we are on the political and—in the eyes of some—moral spectrum.

The lines of conflict are readily apparent in the comments readers leave on blogs that cover Washington’s transitional neighborhoods. Some writers are angry that the neighborhood is changing at all; others are angry that it isn’t changing fast enough. Some want to control the change, ensuring that a curated mix of businesses is established—no chain stores, please, but nothing too “ghetto,” either. And some want to curate the people. Gentrification, though driven by economic change, often boils down to issues of race, even among diversity-celebrating gentrifiers. Elise Bernard, a 32-year-old lawyer who bought a house off H Street in 2003, has for years written intelligently and reliably about the area on her blog *Frozen Tropics*. Bernard, who is white, recalls a conversation she had with a college friend when she was contemplating renting out a couple of rooms in her house. “She wanted me to somehow racially balance the house, like bring in an African American and an Asian,

and I'm like, 'This is not *The Real World*. This is my house.'

When I started reading *Frozen Tropics*, I was taken aback by the racial tension running through many of the discussions. Most of the comments appear to be left by whites, though anonymity reigns. Last summer, when Bernard posted news of gunfire (no one was injured) outside XII, an H Street club that attracts a largely black

preneur just shy of 50. He recalls that when he arrived on H Street several years ago, after putting his quirky stamp on other parts of the city, "every block had a barbershop or a hair weave operation, a takeout, and a church. Other than that, you didn't have more than three or four businesses per block." He opened his first club, Palace of Wonders, a tongue-in-cheek burlesque bar, in 2006. Today he has a stake in half a dozen establishments on H

Street. Englert's aggressively funky imprint has made the street an entertainment mecca for people in search of an alternative to clubs with dress codes.

A brash Pittsburgh native who exudes a slightly unruly aura of intense activity, Englert has no patience

with hand-wringing over gentrification, or "gentri-fiction," as he calls it. "The only thing that is constant is change," he says when he meets me for an interview at the Star and Shamrock, a Jewish- and Irish-themed bar that's another one of his projects. "This was an Irish street, an Italian street, a Jewish street, then it became a black street. Why would it stop changing? That's the question. Why would anybody expect things to stay the same, when people live, die, move, improve their lives? I mean, who's gonna dig in and own the mantle?"

As an agent of change myself, I nod my head in agreement. Walking down H Street, it's hard not to feel a heady sense of inevitability. Change! Progress! And to hold the conviction that all the choices I make about how I live—the way I keep up my yard, the restaurants and shops I patronize, the kinds of foodstuffs I buy at the local grocery store—are contributions to a joint project of incremental improvement that's spread among thousands of households.

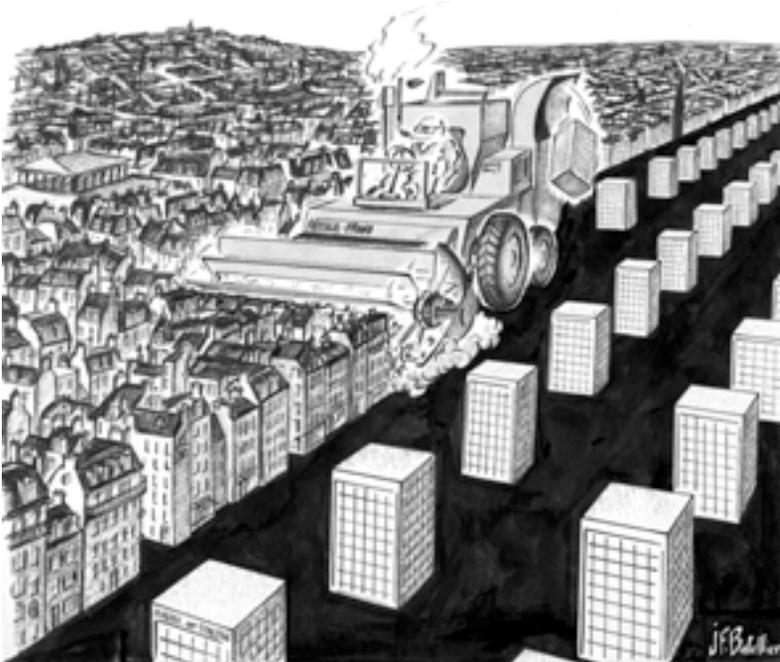
And then, walking home laden with groceries, I watch a tall teenage boy in front of me drop a crumpled white plastic bag, so casually that it seems it's drifted from his hand because he forgot he was holding it. It falls onto the sidewalk, where it slowly relaxes into uselessness. It is now a piece of trash. I ponder whether to stoop and pick it up and throw it into a nearby trash can. Wouldn't that constitute a censure not only of him, should he turn around and see me, but of the whole neighborhood, where trash

## THE KNOWLEDGE that I'm a sign of change my neighbors may not want has made me cautious behind my "Hello."

clientele, the item drew more than 70 comments. "Post all the 'oh it could have happened anywhere' nonsense you want, bleeding hearts," sneered one anonymous writer. "This type of crap only happens at joints like XII. . . . Cater to a predominately younger, black, male population, and violence will likely follow." Another, enraged by the "entitled racist yuppie mentality" of the neighborhood, wrote, "May your home values go to shit and may you each find a Burger King wrapper on your lawn!"

Absent in most of these discussions are the voices of those who have lived in the neighborhood all along. I've been met with abundant kindness since I moved to Rosedale. Still, as I ride beside local residents on the bus or pass them in the street, the knowledge that I'm a sign of change they may have mixed feelings about has made me cautious behind my "Hello." As I prepared to write this piece, I was struck time and again by people's willingness to talk to me, a gentrifier who had moved into their neighborhood and was, in essence, asking how they felt about it. Thelma Anderson, a retiree who has lived in the house a few doors down from me since the 1980s, told me she is glad that whites are back and that they don't show fear. But several longtime residents I spoke with expressed ambivalence. They're happy to see the neighborhood improving but unsure what their place will be in the H Street neighborhood of the future.

The man who's probably done the most to re-envision H Street is Joe Englert, a restaurant and nightclub entre-



The bitter memory of past urban renewal efforts colors perceptions of gentrification. In this artist's depiction, a ruthless farm combine chews up old neighborhoods and spits out new towers.

blows into streets and yards and forms middens in alleyways? But wouldn't walking by it be a kind of acquiescence? It's this sort of minute social calculus that's the mark of the self-conscious gentrifier, not quite sure of her status in the community.

Whites aren't the only drivers of gentrification. When I go for a drink at Langston Bar & Grille, a three-year-old soul food restaurant and bar a scant block from my house on Benning Road, at the eastern edge of the H Street scene, the place is full, the cocktails aren't cheap, and mine is often the only white face. Yet it's whites, not incoming middle-class blacks, who get the attention, as Lance Freeman, a professor of urban planning at Columbia University, observes in *There Goes the Hood* (2006), his valuable study of the attitudes of residents in transitional neighborhoods. The surprise at white faces, he writes, indicates "just how racially isolated many of America's inner-city communities had become."

What those faces mean lies at the heart of debates over gentrification. The assumption, so widely held that it's regarded as fact, is that gentrification is synonymous

with displacement. Adding to the subtext of forced relocation are bitter memories of inner-city revival efforts. The federal urban renewal program, engineered to usher the American city into postwar Corbusier-style order and modernity, destroyed some 1,600 black communities in American downtowns between 1949 and 1973, estimates Mindy Thompson Fullilove, the author of *Root Shock* (2004) and a professor of clinical psychiatry and public health at Columbia. The federal highway program also restructured many cities, razing swaths of poor neighborhoods and providing an easy route along which middle-class whites and blacks who were leaving for the suburbs could still commute to downtown jobs.

Quality studies of the residential impacts of gentrification are few, but those that exist largely don't support the notion that low-income residents are forced out of gentrifying areas en masse. In the study published in the *Journal of Urban Economics*, a trio of researchers that included University of Pittsburgh economist Randall Walsh analyzed nationwide Census data and found no such evidence, though they did confirm, unsurprisingly, that newcomers are more likely to be white, college educated, and better paid. Unexpectedly, the analysis also showed that in primarily black gentrifying neighborhoods, black high school graduates are responsible for a third of total income gains as the area's affluence increases. It's unclear, however, how many of those beneficiaries are longtime residents and how many are newcomers attracted by gentrification.

Columbia's Lance Freeman and Frank Braconi, former executive director of the nonprofit Citizens Housing and Planning Council, studied mobility patterns in New York City and found that poor households in gentrifying neighborhoods are *less* likely to move than poor households elsewhere. They concluded that neighborhood improvements induce residents to stay and that rent control laws—in force in cities includ-

ing New York and Washington—are quite effective at restraining rent increases in gentrifying areas. (Like Walsh and his colleagues, Freeman and Braconi used data from the booming 1990s. It's unclear if patterns have changed since the economic downturn.)

On the ground, the changes these studies record are the accretion of individual choices. For the past six years, Amanda Clarke, a black architect who moved to the United States from Jamaica in 1986, has made her home in Rosedale. A soft-spoken 40-year-old who lives three blocks from me, Clarke bought her house in a foreclosure auction in 2004 without even seeing the inside, during

**THE H STREET renovations are “improving the neighborhood,” admits a longtime resident, “but I don’t think it belongs to the blacks anymore.”**

the height of the D.C. real estate bubble when she couldn't snag a house elsewhere in the city. A couple of years later, she bought a vacant house across the street and rebuilt it from the ground up, designing it with clean modern lines and lots of light. It's a bright spot on the block when I pass by. Despite the slow economy, the house attracted multiple offers within days of being put on the market last spring. (The buyer, an Asian-American woman in her thirties who works as a management consultant at Deloitte, moved from a thoroughly gentrified D.C. neighborhood.) Clarke just sold a second rehabbed house, a block from her first project, and is preparing to start on a third.

Clarke knows that the homes she designs are attracting people from outside the neighborhood, but what, she asks, should she do differently? Build less attractive homes? Use inferior materials? “This whole idea of affordable, it's a tough one. What is affordable? What does that mean? Because if by definition things are changing, property values are going up as a result—just by the mere fact that all the vacancies are being renovated. Are you going to try to hold property values down? Do you renovate at a certain

level? Do you lower the level? What do you do?”

Not long ago, Necothia Bowens introduced me to Jacqueline Farrell, who in 1971 bought her house on E Street N.E. from a man she describes as the last white person then living in the neighborhood. Farrell, 61, whom everyone refers to as “Miss Jackie,” is a woman with a pleasantly husky voice and quick laughter known for her cooking. It was a Sunday afternoon, and her niece, Kym Elder, 44, who lives in Maryland and works for the National Park Service, was visiting. Patricia Lucas, 50, who lives across the street and whose father-in-law was the man who desegregated the Rosedale playground, joined us as well, as did Bowens. There was a lot of jocular reminiscing, and talk about the current changes to H Street.

“It looks good,” said Farrell. “It's improving the neighborhood, but I don't think it belongs to the blacks anymore.”

Elder chimed in, remarking to her aunt that she recalled the first time she rode down H Street and noticed white faces. “It was a spring night after dark. And I called you on the phone, and I said, ‘Oh, my God, where the hell am I? I'm riding past the Atlas [Theater], and they have little bistros. And they're not afraid.’”

Everyone in Farrell's living room was happy to see new storefronts and businesses healing over the scars of the 1968 riots. But they expressed concerns, too. There are rumors that an area high school is going to be converted to a charter school that will require students to apply for admission. Bowens is bothered that the two bars on H Street that mostly attract black patrons, XII and Rose's Dream, seem to get more scrutiny from the authorities than other bars on the strip. No one wants property taxes to go up. If you're not planning to leave, the concurrent rise in property values that gentrifiers like to celebrate isn't much consolation.

As for their new neighbors? Well, the early experience of those at Miss Jackie's house has been mixed. It was some years ago that the first white person in the new wave moved to the block. In their description, the fellow sounds like a poster child for bad gentrifiers. He called the police on his neighbors again and again for a litany of minor

infractions and walked his two fearsome Akita dogs through pedestrians on the sidewalk “like he was parting the Red Sea,” Farrell said. Since he left about a year ago—was foreclosed on, is the rumor—the block is peaceful again. But Elder is troubled that when she comes to visit her aunt in Rosedale and says hello to passersby new to the neighborhood, they don’t always return the greeting.

The real friction is with people who have moved in near Brown Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church on 14th Street N.E., which Farrell and Elder both attend. The newcomers have complained about parishioners parking on the surrounding streets on Sundays and the loud gospel singing that comes from the church. Some, Farrell suspects, get up early on Sunday mornings to park their cars just far enough apart that churchgoers can’t fit their vehicles in the spaces between. A few neighbors have even come into the church and interrupted services. “They came down and they talked to us like we were dogs,” Farrell said. Elder was equally incensed: “In the biblical days, they had people come into the services and try to disrupt them because they were ungodly. Well, literally, we have to have men at the doors of the church now because unfortunately our new white neighbors are saying, ‘Wait! Ya’ll parking? How long you going to be in services?’ I mean, coming into the house of the Lord, screaming and hollering!”

In general, it’s not the changes themselves that bother longtime residents of Rosedale. It’s how and why those changes are happening. In a separate interview, Bowens ruefully conceded that it was whites who “saw the baby ready to be reborn” on H Street. She works as a secretary for a downtown doctor, but noted that business ownership runs in her blood—for years her grandmother ran a restaurant near the Capitol where people lined up for fried fish on Fridays. “I had an opportunity a long time ago to say, ‘You know, H Street is there. No one’s doing anything on H Street. I can go open up a business.’ But because we weren’t taught as black people how to do that, we kind of let it sit. . . . That *credit* word makes us fear.”

The perception that change of others’ making is washing over longtime residents is what’s at the heart of their anxieties. No one but criminals wants fewer police on the streets. No one wants houses and commercial buildings to remain vacant. But neither do they want their community to become a place where they’re the ones who don’t belong.

That’s why displacement—though it may not happen as often as people assume—is such a powerful notion.

Bowens, who has gotten active in community politics, wants to be upbeat. She helped start a scholarship fund for area students, and ran, unsuccessfully, for the local seat on D.C.’s neighborhood advisory commission. But she gets pensive when I ask her what she worries about for the future. “In my mind, the changes that are happening still need to continue, but we need to make sure that we embrace people, because if you don’t, it’s going to be—this is a heavy word—but it’s going to be like a holocaust effect. If you get people to come in and take over, it’s going to be like a slavery takeover. You just got people that take over and don’t care about the mindset of the people, and they just try to kill off everything that doesn’t belong or look like them.”

**F**or the past few weeks, the rattle and grind of backhoes has filled the air. The dilapidated Rosedale Recreation Center was torn down last fall to make way for a brand-new complex, complete with a library and an indoor swimming pool. Months of red tape delayed construction, but work has finally resumed. Many of the residents I spoke to don’t go to the new bars and restaurants on H Street, but everyone was eager for the recreation center to rise again. Stephon Starke, the man whose father owned a liquor store during the riots, teaches boxing to kids there. It’s the heart of the community and a monument to its history.

Hearing my neighbors talk of the day the recreation center would reopen, I saw a gulf between the way they perceived it and the way I do—as a boon to my property value, primarily. Some gentrifiers move in and stay, but many, like me, have one foot outside the neighborhood from the start, anticipating the day when a new job or the birth of a baby who will grow up and need to attend a good school will prompt us to put a “For Sale” sign in the front yard. I may not be here long enough to see the rec center completed a year from now, let alone send my own children, when I have them, off to the pool. No matter how you measure transience on that spectrum of urban morality, it separates me from my neighbors.

But the possibility of goodbye is no excuse not to say hello on the street. ■

# Stores and the City

*Many cities launched revival efforts with downtown festival marketplaces such as Boston's Faneuil Hall. Can retailers work the same magic in less affluent neighborhoods?*

**BY DAVID ZIPPER**

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE IS ONE OF AMERICA'S most iconic streets. But if you follow it a few miles east of the White House and across the Anacostia River, you will find yourself in a very different world. The avenue is lined with gas stations, check-cashing shops, and takeout restaurants that serve the area's predominantly African-American population. Many of the storefronts are faded and worn, and it's often difficult to tell whether a functioning business operates inside. Few people stroll the sidewalks.

You wouldn't know it from looking at this stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue, but the District of Columbia was recently ranked among the top cities in the United States for retail development by Marcus and Millichap, a national real estate advisory firm. The District's downtown has boomed recently, with 54 restaurants and many stores opening since 2007, along with new office and apartment buildings. But the 130,000 Washingtonians who live east of the Anacostia are served by only four sit-down restaurants. The unemployment rates in the area's two wards are roughly 19 and 30 percent, compared with a District average of

10 percent. A third of the residents live below the poverty level.

So it was a big event last August when a new supermarket opened at 2323 Pennsylvania Avenue S.E., in the relatively prosperous Fairlawn neighborhood. Then-mayor Adrian Fenty and Councilmember Marion Barry, a former mayor, came to give speeches and mingle with the crowd. More than 300 people turned out to taste the free samples of sushi rolls and organic hot dogs and explore something Washington had never seen before: an organic grocery store east of the Anacostia.

Because I work for the city government trying to bring new businesses to the District's underserved communities, I was on hand to savor the moment. One of the people I met was an unemployed chef named Dominic who kept himself working with occasional catering jobs. A tall, muscular man with long dreadlocks, Dominic told me how happy he was that he wouldn't have to travel over the Anacostia anymore to get the quality ingredients he needed. Indeed, the owner of the new store had decided to open this location partly because he noticed that many of the customers at his store in the Capitol Hill neighborhood were coming from east of the Anacostia to shop. The nearest conventional grocery store is more than a mile from Fairlawn. The grand opening was just the latest piece of good news for neighborhoods east of

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**First mover:** A city subsidy helped persuade Gary Cha to open a new branch of his local grocery store chain in a developing neighborhood.

the Anacostia, where some of the benefits of Washington's economic stability are finally beginning to arrive. Close to downtown and blessed with falling crime rates, the area has seen its population grow in recent years.

The new supermarket is the latest addition to Yes! Organic Market, a small Washington-based chain whose owner, Gary Cha, a cheerful middle-aged Korean immigrant, has found success with stores that are essentially smaller, more affordably priced versions of a Whole Foods supermarket. The new store on Pennsylvania Avenue sells both organic and conventionally grown fruits and vegetables, and shoppers can find a ready

supply of products ranging from freshly packed meats to bulk rice and boxes of macaroni and cheese (10 different kinds, no less). When it opened, Yes! Organic became only the fourth supermarket east of the Anacostia, where there is now one grocery store for every 33,000 residents. Elsewhere in the District, the average is close to one store per 10,000 residents.

It's a big victory when a grocery store opens in a neighborhood like Fairlawn. Health and anti-obesity advocates such as Michelle Obama point out that many poor people have little access to fresh fruits and vegetables. They say it's imperative to have more grocery stores

in inner cities. Urban development boosters such as the nonprofit Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (my former employer) suggest that enlightened businesses can solve urban problems, and are quick to applaud the savvy retail executive who follows the invisible hand to a neighborhood with unmet demand. Yet events like the Yes! Organic opening are all too rare. By ICIC's own estimates, inner-city residents' unmet demand for retail products remained constant at about \$40 billion from 1998 to 2007. There is no reason to believe the gap has since closed.

When I'm trying to interest businesspeople in new areas, I've found that the "consciousness raising" of the sort these advocates promote is a useful but limited

**RETAILERS ARE RELUCTANT to move into a new area until they see a competitor succeed there.**

tool. In my many meetings with retailers, I've never known statistics about childhood obesity to motivate a grocery store executive—whether out of altruism or guilt—to open a new outlet in a poor neighborhood. Nor do I know of any executive who ever drafted an expansion plan solely on the basis of a neighborhood's unmet demand, even when cities offered a subsidy.

The executives who make the decisions about where to open new stores are a conservative bunch, often preferring to see a competitor move into a new area first. Chains and supermarkets generally trust local retail brokers to help them make location decisions, but the brokers have their own biases. In particular, they have an incentive to recommend familiar neighborhoods, even if an emerging area offers more profit potential, in order to avoid the risk of alienating their client. They are also eager to close the deal (and receive their commission) quickly, and better-known neighborhoods are an easier sell. These pressures can make it particularly difficult for underserved urban areas to attract the all-important "first movers" whose success can draw other retailers.

That's why cities hire people like me: to help fix such glitches in the market. By educating retailers, helping them find suitable sites in emerging areas, and—when necessary—arranging to subsidize their costs, I try to help residents in these communities gain the shopping options they want, along with new job opportunities.

But the stakes don't stop there. The scarcity of retail establishments east of the river is one of the reasons why Washingtonians spend so much money shopping in nearby Virginia and Maryland. The District's Office of Planning recently calculated that local residents buy more than \$1 billion of goods in the suburbs—roughly equivalent to 15 percent of all retail

sales within the city. To put that number in perspective, eliminating this billion-dollar retail "leakage" would bring roughly \$60 million in new tax revenue to the District's coffers. It would also create jobs. The National Retail Federation esti-

mates that one retail job is created for every \$250,000 in consumer spending. This means that eliminating \$1 billion in retail leakage could create enough jobs for 4,000 people, a significant number in a city where more than 33,000 people are seeking work.

Many city governments have recognized retail's potential to employ lower-skilled residents, capture sales lost to the suburbs, and catalyze neighborhood development, and they have moved beyond high-profile downtown retail projects such as Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco and Faneuil Hall in Boston, hoping to grow more retail businesses in lower-income neighborhoods. Most of these efforts have focused on retail chains because, while people like me are thrilled every time a new homegrown neighborhood florist or clothing boutique opens, we realize that the chains' size means they can hire the most residents and generate the most tax revenue. Pennsylvania's much-touted Fresh Food Financing Initiative provides a suite of financial incentives designed to induce supermarkets to move into underserved areas.

Many cities also encourage retail development in targeted areas through “tax increment financing,” a form of subsidy based on future tax revenues expected from the project.

The enthusiasm for retail development isn’t universal. Critics say that new stores merely attract dollars that customers would have spent at other stores in the city rather than bring in new money the way, say, a corporate headquarters or new technology company would. One of my counterparts in Dallas told me flatly that he does not consider retail strategies such as the District’s to be economic development at all.

That surprised me, because retail has been a major development priority in Washington for more than a decade. The city has established a nonprofit organization called the Washington, DC Economic Partnership to meet with retailers and brokers, offer tours, provide demographic information, and suggest sites for development. The Economic Partnership plays a central role in organizing the District’s booth at the annual convention of the International Council of Shopping Centers in Las Vegas, where tens of thousands of retailers, developers, and real estate brokers converge to pitch opportunities and ink deals. With private meeting rooms and scale models of neighborhoods, the District’s exhibit is easily among the most sophisticated efforts by cities at the convention.

The District has also created financial assistance programs to bring “destination” retailers downtown and expand residents’ shopping options in targeted development corridors, or “Great Streets.” Pennsylvania Avenue east of the river is one of nine such corridors. Momentum seems to be growing, as retailers such as Bed, Bath & Beyond, Home Depot, and Target have established their first stores in the city. Walmart recently expressed interest in opening four District stores as well, including one east of the Anacostia. But Walmart is something of an anomaly among major retailers; having exhausted most suburban and rural markets, the company is effectively forced into urban areas in the search for growth.

The District’s efforts to attract grocery stores east of the Anacostia still face big challenges. When pressed, representatives of the major chains offer an array of explanations for their hesitation. Some complain about a shortage of job-ready workers, though Yes! Organic’s experience suggests that those fears are unfounded.

When the company began hiring for the Fairlawn store, 150 people lined up to apply for fewer than 30 jobs, and Cha says employee performance has been on par with that in his other District locations.

The chains’ concerns about profit margins seem more justified. Supermarkets already have among the lowest margins in retail, and a study of the Philadelphia area by the Reinvestment Fund, a community development organization, found that even before they open their doors, new inner-city stores spend seven times more on worker training and five times more on security than their suburban counterparts. Once the stores are operating, they continue to absorb higher costs for maintenance and ongoing employee training. In Washington, the city government has tried to offset these disadvantages by creating a tax exemption program that eliminates virtually all property taxes and license fees for 10 years for grocery stores that open in underserved areas.

Profits in inner-city supermarkets are further squeezed by the fact that the stores can’t sell large quantities of high-margin items such as cheese and wine. At the same time, the lack of competition can lead to higher prices for consumers: One recent study found that identical products cost 10 to 15 percent more in inner-city grocery stores than in suburban ones. However, this is not an ironclad rule; Cha adjusted to local conditions by shaving a little bit more off the prices at Yes! Organic’s Fairlawn store.

**B**ut market dynamics are only part of the reason why less affluent neighborhoods are underserved. The inherent risk aversion of many retail executives is a less quantifiable but equally imposing obstacle. As a retail broker in Chicago observed recently in a trade magazine, the people he represents “never get fired for the deal they don’t do.” Brokers themselves reinforce retailers’ conservatism through their desire to sign a deal as quickly as possible. Few are willing to invest the time required to persuade clients that an unfamiliar community offers an opportunity worth pursuing. Brokers are well aware that pushing their clients too hard toward those new markets could backfire and cost them a commission. For those of us trying to attract new stores, the result is a chicken-and-egg problem when we try to bring the first large stores into

an underserved community.

This obstacle can be overcome if local government responds quickly when a particular opportunity—at a certain site, at a certain time, with a certain retailer—presents itself. Even if the deal requires a subsidy, it may be worth pursuing if other retailers will follow. This is the kind of potential my colleagues saw—I was not directly involved in the effort—when the prospect arose of a new Yes! Organic store in Fairlawn.

Yes! Organic's path to Pennsylvania Avenue began several years ago, when Tim Chapman, a local developer, received a subsidy from the city government to build 118 affordable apartments at the Pennsylvania Avenue site. The ground floor of the building was set aside for retail, and it was Chapman's responsibility to fill it. Unlike most locations east of the river, the site offered the allure of being in an attractive new apartment building with a built-in customer base. Just as important, it was on what developers call the "PM side" of Pennsylvania Avenue, meaning that evening commuters on their way home to suburban Prince George's County, Maryland, could make an easy right turn to park and shop and another right turn to be on their way again. Roughly 50,000 cars pass the site daily.

Chapman hoped to bring in a retailer that would appeal to the building's residents, but he was rebuffed when he reached out to coffee shops and upscale restaurant chains. One of the few retailers that expressed serious interest was a convenience store operator whose benefit to the tenants and the surrounding community would have been minimal.

At that point, Chapman shifted his focus to Gary Cha and Yes! Organic. Since Cha took over an existing organic grocery store in the upscale Cleveland Park neighborhood in 1982, his expansion has tended to follow a formula: A local leader from an evolving neighborhood tells him she is a fan of one of his stores and asks him to open a new one in her area. If conditions look favorable, Cha dives in. That's how he moved into the Capitol Hill, Brookland, and Petworth neighborhoods. He likes to buy land or secure long-term leases in such areas before competitors arrive and property values rise. "Neighborhoods like Cleveland Park are quickly saturated," Cha observes. "I try to find others that don't have as many grocery options, and then get the benefit as the neighborhood grows."

**The vista looking down Pennsylvania Avenue past Gary Cha's new grocery store is full of promise—and question marks. City officials hope the supermarket will spark a retail revival in the neighborhood.**

Even by Cha's standards, a move over the Anacostia would be a venture into uncharted territory, though he was somewhat reassured knowing that his Capitol Hill store already attracted customers from Fairlawn and other neighborhoods east of the river. Trying to offset the project's risk, Cha and Chapman presented a proposal to the city government. If the city would help pay for light fixtures, flooring, and other costs of buildout, Cha and Chapman would sign a lease for a 7,500-square-foot space. The city ultimately contributed \$900,000 through the Great Streets program, enough to cover more than half of the capital cost. A deal was signed in February 2010, six months before the store's August grand opening.

It is too early to know yet whether the Fairlawn store will be successful. Cha claims that it is following the traditional "j-curve" of a new supermarket, with sales falling as the novelty of a new location wears off, but then rising as the store builds its customer base. Initial sales have led him to adjust his product mix to emphasize items that are selling well (organic green vegetables, for example) and remove those that aren't (microbrew beers). He also plans to add a hot table so he can sell ready-to-eat dinners to evening commuters.





The Yes! Organic store's arrival in Fairlawn came about through a confluence of factors that would be hard to replicate. But it could prove to be a pivotal moment for retail development in the District. City officials and retailers will be watching what happens on Pennsylvania Avenue closely. If the store does prove profitable, my job will become much easier. Instead of relying on market data and incentives in my appeals to retailers, I'll simply point to Yes! Organic and ask, "Why aren't you there too?" Retailers and brokers are a competitive bunch, and I suspect they'll move quickly once they see someone else making money. That's my goal: to capitalize on human nature to catalyze inner-city retail development rather than constrain it.

The spillover benefits from first movers such as

Yes! Organic help explain why many cities are willing to provide financial incentives to help businesses get started. Some level of longer-term subsidy may be necessary if the market by itself does not produce enough results. The clear social benefits of inner-city supermarkets—jobs, convenient access to healthy food, and the potential to attract other development—suggest that they may merit that kind of support.

City officials like me take no particular pleasure in subsidizing retailers. Indeed, I look forward to the day when Yes! Organic joins a long list of inner-city successes that are so widely known that I no longer have to worry about recruiting first movers. But that day isn't here yet. The inner city's potential is still waiting to be tapped. ■

# IN ESSENCE

REVIEWS OF ARTICLES FROM PERIODICALS AND SPECIALIZED JOURNALS HERE AND ABROAD

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## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

### Tweeting Toward Freedom?

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

WHEN EGYPTIAN ACTIVIST AND Google marketing manager Wael Ghonim reflected on the overthrow in February of Hosni Mubarak, he said, “Everything was done by the people [for] the people, and that’s the power of the Internet.” Some credit a Facebook page with sparking the Egyptian protests. Twitter, too, played a role, but a different one—helping to spread news to audiences in Egypt, but mostly abroad. Ghonim sees great power in these tools. “If you want to liberate [a people],” he said, “give them the Internet.”

Not everyone is so sure. It’s too soon to say how large a role social media have played in the recent Middle East upheavals, but a debate about the Internet’s potential to promote democracy has raged for at least a decade, since before Facebook even existed.

There’s also the question of

what happens after a revolution. In Egypt, according to a report in *The New York Times* (March 19, 2011), protesters are starting almost from scratch. Amr Hamzawy, a political scientist who was one of the young leaders, is quoted saying, “We are still searching for a good name for a party and an idea that attracts people’s attention.”

Journalist Malcolm Gladwell assumed the mantle of skeptic in chief with an article in *The New Yorker* (Oct. 4, 2010) contrasting today’s online activists with the young civil rights leaders who launched lunch counter sit-ins in the South in the early 1960s. Sure, these online tools, Facebook in particular, can increase participation in social movements—if you can call a single click of the mouse participation. More than a million people have joined a Facebook page of the Save Darfur Coalition, but few among

them have taken any additional action to help those in Sudan.

What social media are not good at, Gladwell maintains, is providing the discipline, strategy, hierarchy, and strong social bonds that successful movements require. Such connections are what gave the four student leaders in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1960 the courage to defy racial subordination, despite the likelihood of violence. The instigators were two pairs of college roommates. They all lived in the same dorm, and three of them had gone to high school together.

Gladwell doesn’t mean to say social media are worthless: When people have an array of what social scientists call “weak ties”—such as “friends” on Facebook or contacts on Twitter—they are exposed to a greater range of new ideas and information, surely a good thing. Such tools can make social processes work more efficiently. In 2006, to cite but one small example, strangers coordinated online a successful search for a cell phone lost in a New York City taxicab.

Author and New York University professor of new media Clay Shirky is a bit more



Cell phones in hand, Egyptians gathered in Cairo's Tahrir Square in February to demand, perhaps in a tweet, the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak.

sanguine. Writing in *Foreign Affairs* (Jan.–Feb. 2011), he says that Gladwell's critique is "correct but not central to the question of social media's power; the fact that barely committed actors cannot click their way to a better world does not mean that committed actors cannot use social media effectively."

Shirky argues that the value of social media to the cause of democracy should be measured over the course of "years and decades," not weeks and months. Instead of focusing on the small set of instances in which activists using new technology were or were not successful at toppling authoritarian regimes, analysts should

examine the ability of social media to enhance civil society and over time shift power away from governments and toward people.

Gladwell took to the letters section of the following issue of *Foreign Affairs* to continue the debate, writing: "What evidence is there that social revolutions in the pre-Internet era suffered from a lack of cutting-edge communications and organizational tools? In other words, did social media solve a problem that actually needed solving?"

New technologies have sometimes provided activists with a tool that turned out to be crucial, Shirky responded. The protesters who brought down Philippine president Joseph Estrada in 2001

spread word of their street demonstrations via text message. Social media are not magical. Insurgents may not always prevail (as in Iran in 2009). But on balance, social media will bring "a net improvement for democracy," much as the printing press did.

Evgeny Morozov, author of the new book *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, casts himself as a "cyber-realist" in *Bookforum* (April–May 2011), pillorying "cyber-utopians"—Ghonnim being the chief example—who believe that social media can trigger spontaneous change. Morozov has pointed out that the new tools can be used just as easily—and perhaps more effectively—by

authoritarian regimes seeking to spy or crack down on dissidents, by, say, breaking into their e-mail accounts or monitoring their Facebook activity. For example, Chinese officials hacked dissidents' e-mail accounts last year.

All of the issues raised by new media take on a hard reality in one place: the U.S. State Department, where officials have seized on the promotion of Internet freedom as a central plank of American policy. In a January 2010 speech, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, "We want to put these tools in the hands of people who will use them to advance democracy and human rights."

If the United States is to pursue a policy of "Internet freedom" around the globe, it must tread carefully and strategically. Shirky's *Foreign Affairs* essay explores some of the mistakes he says the State Department has already made in this arena. In particular, he criticizes the government's "instrumental" approach—the allocation of funds for the development of technologies to "reopen" access to outside Web sites, such as Google or the BBC, in countries where they are censored. "Politically appealing, action-oriented, and almost certainly wrong," Shirky says. This strategy places too much emphasis on access to outside information sources and not enough on encouraging communication among citizens, which would strengthen civil society.

Instead, he recommends that the United States adopt an "environmental" approach, premised on

Partly because of the State Department's promotion of Internet freedom, Iran and other countries are seeking to create "sovereign" alternatives to Facebook and Google.

the belief that the development of a strong public sphere must precede regime change. "Securing the freedom of personal and social communication among a state's population should be the highest priority, closely followed by securing individual citizens' ability to speak in public. This reordering would reflect the reality that it is a strong civil society—one in which citizens have freedom of assembly—rather than access to Google or YouTube, that does the most to force governments to serve their citizens."

Such a strategy would also minimize the risk that activists will be seen as America's pawns. When the United States too directly tinkers with the tools that activists use—such as when a State Department official asked Twitter to delay routine maintenance so that Iranian activists could keep tweeting during the 2009 uprising—it gives the appearance of meddling, rather than a principled pursuit of political freedom.

Morozov, in a piece in *Foreign Policy* (Jan.–Feb. 2011), argues that it's too late. Washington has already violated the num-

ber one rule of promoting Internet freedom: "Don't talk about promoting Internet freedom."

Before the State Department's initiatives in this area, "the state of Web freedom in countries like China, Iran, and Russia was far from perfect . . . but at least it was an issue independent of those countries' fraught relations with the United States." Thanks to its collaboration with Silicon Valley tech companies, the U.S. government's fingerprints are all over the best-known tools, and many countries "are now seeking 'information sovereignty' from American companies." Russia is considering investing in a homegrown version of Google; Turkey may provide government-run e-mail addresses to citizens; in Iran, a Facebook alternative exists called Velayatmadaran (which can be loosely translated as "Followers of the Leader"). "The best way to promote the Internet Freedom Agenda may be not to have an agenda at all," Morozov says.

In the end, the more pedestrian uses of social media may prove the most revolutionary. Shirky cites the "cute cat theory" of digital media, formulated by Ethan Zuckerman, a senior researcher at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University. Those in power may often be able to restrict the Internet freedoms of activists with few repercussions, Zuckerman says, but if their censorship hinders the vast majority of Internet users' ordinary communication—sharing pictures of cute cats—they will risk brewing a revolution.

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## Grand Strategy Revisited

**THE SOURCE:** “Imperial by Design” by John J. Mearsheimer, in *The National Interest*, Jan.–Feb. 2011.

SINCE THE END OF THE COLD War, U.S. foreign policy has not produced inspiring results: The United States has been at war roughly two of every three years. The military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan have been long and costly. Three major foreign-policy problems have persisted without signs of resolution: preventing Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons, getting Pyongyang to give them up, and settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “The United States is in a world of trouble today . . . and this state of affairs is only likely to get worse,” laments University of Chicago political scientist John J. Mearsheimer, a noted “realist” thinker.

The mistake the United States made was not in the execution of its foreign policy but in the choice of its grand strategy. In the decades since the Cold War, the United States has pursued “global dominance,” working to maintain its primacy and spread democracy, trying to make the world over in its own image.

There are two main varieties of global dominance: neoconservative (embodied by the Bush administration after 9/11) and liberal imperialist (embodied by the Clinton administration and now seeing a revival under President Barack Obama). The neo-conservatives have greater confi-

dence in the ability of the U.S. military to transform the globe. The liberal imperialists put emphasis on alliances and international institutions. But both seek global dominance, which “is exactly the wrong formula,” Mearsheimer contends. It only stokes anti-American sentiment and gives rogue regimes greater incentives to build nuclear weapons (in the hope of deterring an American attack).

“The United States needs a new grand strategy,” Mearsheimer believes. There are several options, but the best is to return to what has been America’s approach for most of its existence: “offshore balancing.” Washington should seek to ensure that no power dominates any of the three strategically important regions (Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf) in the way the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere.

This strategy requires a strong military, but one that is stationed at home or on carriers offshore, ready to intervene but not stay. It also means staying out of the business of spreading democracy, and refraining from interference in the domestic affairs of other nations. Mearsheimer argues that this is “the best formula for dealing with the threats facing America—whether it be terrorism, nuclear proliferation, or a traditional great-power rival.” Most important of all, offshore balancing is well suited to dealing with a rising China—the number one strategic concern in the years to come.

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## Learning From Al Qaeda

**THE SOURCE:** “Becoming the Enemy” by Stanley A. McChrystal, in *Foreign Policy*, March–April 2011.

IN OCTOBER 2003, SOON AFTER he arrived in Iraq to head the U.S. Joint Special Operations Task Force, now-retired Army general Stanley A. McChrystal and his fellow commanders got out a whiteboard and started to map out the organizational structure of the recently founded Al Qaeda in Iraq. “By habit, we started mapping the organization in a traditional military structure, with tiers and rows. At the top was [Abu Musab al-] Zarqawi, below him a cascade of lieutenants and foot soldiers.” But the more information the U.S. commanders got, the less their whiteboard drawing made sense.

The structure of Al Qaeda in Iraq was defined “not by rank but on the basis of relationships and acquaintances, reputation and fame. . . . Who trained together in the pre-9/11 camps in Afghanistan? Who is married to whose sister?” That structure allowed Al Qaeda in Iraq to grow quickly and recover swiftly from losses. A young Iraqi militant could start fighting, build a reputation, and be easily integrated into the network. One of the greatest advantages Al Qaeda in Iraq had was the “alarming” speed at which it could operate.

The U.S. military was the opposite of nimble. McChrystal sketched out the shape of the U.S. organization between Baghdad (headquarters) and a team in Mosul (commanded by

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## China's Inner Struggle

**THE SOURCE:** "Coping with a Conflicted China" by David Shambaugh, in *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2011.

David Petraeus, then a major general): an hourglass. "They met at just one narrow point"—a few antennas on top of a trailer in which the special operations forces worked. The antennas were incapable of transmitting classified information "with any timeliness." Units in Fallujah, Tikrit, and elsewhere could wait days before crucial intelligence was relayed to them. "Information we captured could not be exploited, analyzed, or reacted to quickly enough—giving enemy targets time to flee."

To keep up with Al Qaeda, the U.S. military needed to become more like a network. McChrystal and his staff took the simple step of convening a meeting of representatives of various U.S. military efforts in Iraq. A new system emerged, with a shorthand label only a military commander could love: F3EA (find, fix, finish, exploit, analyze). It brought together intelligence analysts; drone operators; combat teams; specialists to exploit information from cell phones, maps, and detainees seized during raids; and more intelligence analysts to distill that information. Operations that once took days now could be completed in hours. Soon, the number of daily operations increased tenfold, and success rates improved substantially.

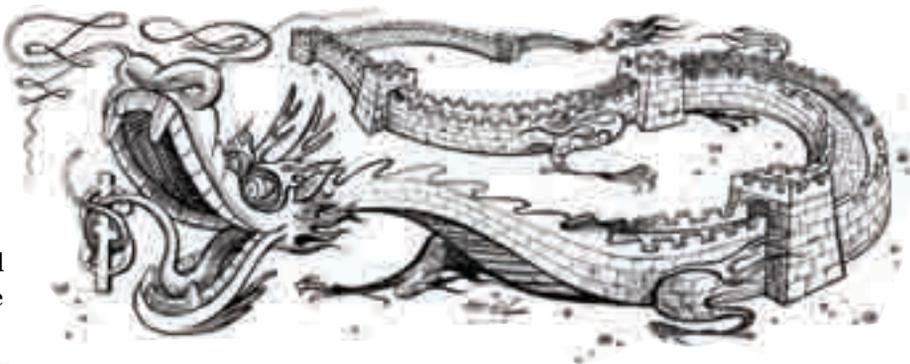
After serving as director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a little under a year back in Washington, McChrystal became the top commander in Afghanistan in 2009. There the networking of the military was already under way, and he pushed it along. What does it take to lead a network? Well, that's another story, says McChrystal.

U.S. POLICYMAKERS HAVE struggled to come up with the right way to handle China as it grows into a superpower. Before they fasten on a specific approach, they should tune in to the debates raging among China's elite about its foreign policy, writes David Shambaugh, a political scientist at George Washington University.

The questions before the Chi-

state that can navigate its own way in the world and resist outside pressures"—currently dominate. Realism has a long tradition in China, with academics, policy researchers, and members of the military among its influential adherents. Realists reject "concepts and policies of globalization, transnational challenges, and global governance" in favor of a narrowly self-interested foreign policy. Recent U.S. moves that are seen as hostile—such as the sale of a \$6 billion arms package to Taiwan—and China's humming economy have stoked realist sentiment.

China's nativist school advocates an isolationist foreign pol-



A frightening face masks deep disagreements over foreign policy among China's elites.

nese are fundamental: Should China be active in global affairs or isolationist? Should it draw on its military and economic might to reach its objectives or should it use soft power—diplomacy and culture? How much should China continue to focus on its relations with the United States?

In the swirl of these discussions, "realists"—who place "a premium on building up a strong

icy, arguing that China should avoid virtually all forms of international collaboration. Nativists, found mostly in the ideological wing of the Communist Party, are severely critical of capitalism and the United States, and believe that reform has compromised China's socialist integrity and autonomy. While nativists' ranks are increasing, especially among Internet-savvy youth, they play

second fiddle to the more pragmatic realists.

Taking a more conciliatory approach are those who value working with the West, particularly on matters that are in China's strategic interest. Some argue that China needs to keep its eyes trained on the "major powers," while Asianists contend that strengthening ties in China's backyard should be the priority. Members of these schools largely hail

from the country's foreign-policy establishment. They have some influence, but it is muted in the aftermath of the recent financial crisis, which reinforced Chinese skepticism of global governance structures.

Should the United States respond to China's current realist posture tit for tat? Shambaugh says no—that would risk a trade war. Though the realists and nativists hold the keys for now,

China can still be persuaded to make important contributions on issues of global concern such as North Korea's nuclear program. U.S. policymakers must be flexible. Glints of every school will come out in China's "schizophrenic" foreign policy. The best course is to "push Beijing for more, and publicly expose its minimalist contributions" to the global order while remaining aware of America's limited leverage.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

# The Inequality Engine

**THE SOURCE:** "The Inequality that Matters" by Tyler Cowen, in *The American Interest*, Jan.-Feb. 2011.

MANY SOCIAL CRITICS ASSAIL rising income inequality in America, but in the assessment of Tyler Cowen, a George Mason University economist and author of the

new book *The Great Stagnation*, it's what is causing the inequality that is truly troubling: namely, an unwieldy financial industry whose core practices undermine the stability of the economy and the prosperity it provides.

There is no question that income inequality has increased

over the last couple of decades. The share of pre-tax income earned by the richest one percent of Americans went from about eight percent in 1974 to more than 18 percent in 2007. But the real drama is at the apex of the pyramid: The richest 0.01 percent (about 15,000 families) claimed less than one percent of pre-tax earnings in 1974, but more than six percent in 2007.

What's fueling the gargantuan income increases of the mega-rich? It's not manufacturing,

EXCERPT

## Financial Giants

*Jan Pen, a Dutch economist who died last year, came up with a striking way to picture inequality. Imagine people's height being proportional to their income, so that someone with an average income is of average height. Now imagine that the entire adult population of America is walking past you in a single hour, in ascending order of income.*

*The first passersby, the owners of loss-making businesses, are invisible: Their heads are below ground. Then come the jobless and the working poor, who are midgets. After half an hour the strollers are still only waist-high, since America's median income is only half the mean. It takes nearly 45 minutes before the normal-sized people appear. But then, in the final minutes, giants thunder by. With six minutes to go they are 12 feet tall. When the 400 highest earners walk by, right at the end, each is more than two miles tall.*

—*The Economist* (Jan. 22, 2011, Issue 36)

which once propelled men such as Henry Ford into the stratosphere of wealth. It's the world of finance. In 2004, the top 25 hedge fund managers together earned more than all the CEOs of the companies listed in the S&P 500. Among people earning more than \$100 million a year, Wall Street investors outnumbered executives of publicly traded companies nine to one.

Two practices central to the financial industry drive the skyrocketing incomes: "going short on volatility" (betting against unlikely swings in market prices) and "moving first" (being faster than the competition when new information emerges, sometimes by seconds or less, in a winner-take-all system).

Going short on volatility involves betting against unlikely events—such as a collapse of the mortgage bond market. The returns can be steady and un spectacular, until one starts using other people's money and taking riskier bets. And if you bet wrong, "what's the worst that can happen? Your bosses fire you, but you will still have millions in the bank and that MBA from Harvard or Wharton." Add the safety net of government bailouts, and you've got an industry in which many of the top earners do not have much to lose.

It's worrisome "from a social point of view," Cowen argues. In normal times, society suffers as many of the most talented people choose the financial sector over fields such as medicine or education. But more dangerous, says

Cowen, is that when their bets flop, as they did during 2007–09, "everyone else pays the price"—particularly those lower on the income ladder, who can spend months unemployed in the wake of a financial crisis and don't have a fancy degree and valuable social network to fall back on.

Cowen says we must "find a way to prevent or limit major banks from repeatedly going short on volatility at social expense." The catch? No one knows how to do so. It remains to be seen whether the new financial regulation law will have a positive effect.

"For the time being, we need to accept the possibility that the financial sector has learned how to game the American (and UK-based) system of state capitalism," Cowen writes. "It's no longer obvious that the system is stable at a macro level."

#### ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

## A Higher Capitalism

**THE SOURCE:** "Creating Shared Value" by Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer, in *Harvard Business Review*, Jan.–Feb. 2011.

FOR TOO LONG, BUSINESSES have pursued narrow, short-term strategies that maximize quick profits and don't address society's greatest needs. They are squandering an incredible opportunity, argue Harvard Business School professor and management strategy guru Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer, cofounders of

the social impact consulting firm FSG. Business leaders believe that all profits are equal, but Porter and Kramer argue that "profits involving a social purpose represent a higher form of capitalism." By investing in communities, a clean environment, and a healthy and well-paid work force, companies will reap big profits over the long haul, they say.

When it comes to addressing problems such as housing and health care affordability, and assistance for the elderly, companies have relegated helpful initiatives to peripheral social-responsibility units.

By exploring business solutions to such problems, managers can create what Porter and Kramer call "shared value," meaning, simply, everybody wins—society will benefit from the innovation business can bring to bear, and businesses will be more productive and more efficient, and over time will create greater markets for their goods. "The purpose of the corporation must be redefined as creating shared value, not just profit per se," the authors write.

They contrast their plan with well-intentioned strategies such as fair trade, which attempts to see that farmers in the developing world are paid more than the prevailing rate for their crops. In a shared-value approach, companies would train farmers in more productive techniques and supply them with better tools, seeds, and fertilizer, improving productivity and output. Preliminary evidence indicates that such

a strategy can boost farm incomes more than fair trade does.

When a company's link to one specific community is tight, as with the computer industry in Silicon Valley or the diamond-cutting trade in Surat, India, the benefits of a "shared-value" approach will be bigger and more obvious. For example, Nespresso, a Nestlé brand, located the procurement facilities for its coffee beans near the farms where the beans grow. This allowed it to assess the quality of the product on the spot and pay growers a premium for superior beans.

Social entrepreneurs and companies in the developing world have led the way in making social improvement central to their business plans. The challenge now is to do so across the business community, in every decision companies make.

Capitalism has long been "an unparalleled vehicle for meeting human needs, improving efficiency, creating jobs, and building wealth," Porter and Kramer say. New opportunities await.

#### ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

## How to Save the Euro

**THE SOURCE:** "The Euro's Never-Ending Crisis" by Barry Eichengreen, in *Current History*, March 2011.

EVERY BROKE COUNTRY IS broke in its own way. At least that's true of the European countries that have come to the brink of default

since the global financial crisis unleashed waves of economic panic. In Greece, the cause was a love affair with "enormous, unsustainable government budget deficits." In Ireland, it was large homes and a real estate bubble that dwarfed that of the United States. With such different proximate causes, what can the European Union do from on high, "beyond encouraging member states to tend to their gardens"?

It can begin by examining one commonality: At base, both countries were experiencing credit booms that began in 2002, just three years

The euro was supposed to increase European cohesion. Instead, it has pulled the core and periphery further apart.

after the introduction of the euro. (Seventeen of the 27 EU member countries have embraced the euro.) European technocrats hoped the euro would create "cohesion" through a rise in per capita incomes in "peripheral" countries such as Ireland, Greece, Portugal, and Italy, bringing them closer to parity with "core" countries such as France and Germany. But instead of converging, the core and periphery grew further apart; Germany enjoyed an export boom, while on the periphery, foreign capital financed consumption, not investment.

Though it's unclear whether these booms were caused by the euro, argues Barry Eichengreen, an

economist at the University of California, Berkeley, there is no doubt that the EU needs to undertake serious reform to prevent future boom-and-bust cycles. He prescribes several measures, all of which would strengthen the hand of the EU relative to national governments.

First, the EU must strengthen the Stability and Growth Pact, through which it monitors the fiscal policies of member countries and ostensibly subjects offenders to sanctions and fines. Some steps have already been taken: In the past, sanctions could not be imposed absent a vote by the EU Council of Ministers. Now they proceed unless a vote overturns them.

Eichengreen's second recommendation is meaningful stress tests for Europe's banks. There are big obstacles to administering such tests: National governments are more interested in preventing their banks from losing market share than in making an honest assessment. Supervision of the stress tests will have to be delegated to a supra-national authority. "If Europe has a single currency and a single financial market, it is going to need a single bank regulator," Eichengreen says.

Finally, the EU should create a permanent emergency financing vehicle. "Crises will happen," Eichengreen writes. "Not establishing a properly funded facility capable of providing emergency assistance is the macroeconomic equivalent of driving without a seat belt."

These steps will not be easy politically, but if Europe's leaders do not take the necessary precautions, "not just the euro but the EU itself could be at risk."

## ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## Null Effect

**THE SOURCE:** “Was There Really a Hawthorne Effect at the Hawthorne Plant? An Analysis of the Original Illumination Experiments” by Steven D. Levitt and John A. List, in *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, Jan. 2011.

IN 1924 THE NATIONAL RESEARCH Council ran a now famous experiment at Western Electric’s Hawthorne plant in Cicero, Illinois. The researchers asked a simple question: Does better lighting make workers more productive? They were surprised by what they found. Productivity improved regardless of whether the lights were low or high.

The unexpected results gave rise to one of the key insights of modern psychology, later named the Hawthorne effect: Researchers can change the behavior of their subjects merely by studying them. More broadly, the mere fact of paying

attention to people makes them more productive. The Hawthorne study helped usher in a whole field of research, called industrial psychology; influenced the shape of ideas about human relations and management; and shaped the fundamentals of experimental design.

Since the 1970s, scholars have returned to the data from follow-up experiments done at the Hawthorne plant and questioned the original findings, but the data from the initial studies, conducted in 1924 and 1925, were thought to have been lost. University of Chicago economists Steven D. Levitt and John A. List were able to locate them in the libraries of the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, and Harvard Business School, and apply modern statistical techniques to the nearly century-old data. They find little support for the Hawthorne effect. A “naive” reading of the data does

show some evidence of the effect, but much of that correlation can be explained by other, previously unexamined factors.

Remarkably, for example, the researchers always came in to alter the lighting on Sundays, when the factory was closed. They then measured the effect on Monday. But the workers were always more productive on Mondays than on other days, even when not being studied. The original researchers seem to have mistaken the day-of-the-week effect for the Hawthorne effect, Levitt and List remark. They find some evidence that workers being studied became more productive over a long period of time, but nothing strong enough to justify any big claims.

The Hawthorne effect may have risen to prominence because it had behind it “the power of a good story.” But good stories do not good science make.

## EXCERPT

## End Times?

*The word ‘developed’ contains an important assumption: that a historical process known as development (closely related to modernization—another problematic word) not only exists throughout the world, it culminates in a known end which has already been reached. This word implies that countries like France, Canada, and our own happy United States of America have reached the end of history, the summit of human achievement, stable and enduring arrangements in political economy that are unlikely to change much going forward.*

*Nothing could be stupider or less historically defensible than this belief, yet few assumptions are more widespread among the world’s intelligentsia, planners, and, especially, bureaucrats. Technological change has never been moving faster or with greater force than it is today, as the implications of one revolution in IT after another work themselves out; the foundations of the global economic and political order are being shaken by the dramatic rise of new powers. Yet somehow many of us believe that the Western world is an end state: the comfy couch at the end of history rather than the launching pad for another great, disruptive leap into the unknown.*

—WALTER RUSSELL MEAD, professor of foreign affairs at Bard College, on his blog.

*Via Meadia* (Jan. 17, 2011)

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

# The Elusive Conservative Majority

**THE SOURCE:** "After the Wave" by Henry Olsen, in *National Affairs*, Winter 2011.

REPUBLICANS MAY HAVE trounced the Democrats in the 2010 midterm elections, but if history is any indication, their big gains will be fleeting. The GOP failed to cement electoral wins in 1966, 1980, and 1994 into a permanent governing majority. Henry Olsen, a vice president of the conservative American Enterprise Institute, says Republicans need to face some facts about the voters who are the decisive swing bloc: the white working class.

Many conservatives have long believed that as a whole, the American electorate tilts center-right. In surveys, self-described conservatives outnumber liberals by as much as two to one. Well over half the voting public says it favors smaller government. But those same polls also find strong support for large government programs such as Social Security and Medicare, and other surveys show high levels of backing for education spending. When Republicans come to power and try to reverse liberal policies, voters respond by voting Democratic in the next election cycle.

"Voters," Olsen says, "may hate the house of government, but

[they] love the bricks used to build it." It's this paradox that has pushed many Republican governors—as it did President George W. Bush—to drastically expand government spending under their watch.

Many Republican-leaning voters are not conservatives at all. They are antiliberal: They prefer low taxes and balanced budgets, but fearing they could lose everything they've worked for, they also support state-sponsored welfare and retirement benefits. They are patriotic and support the armed forces but are suspicious of anything "big," whether it be the military, business, or government. This piece of the puzzle—the fear of anything "big"—"gets to the heart of working-class identity," Olsen says.

"Conservatives need to persuade working-class voters that their efforts to reform key safety-net programs are intended not to shred those safety nets but, rather, to save them," Olsen argues. He endorses efforts like the one conservatives made in pursuit of welfare reform in the mid-1990s. It was framed as a question of encouraging welfare recipients to be more independent, not as a chance to save money and take away from those in need. In New York City, crime is down and police budgets are shrinking years after Mayor Rudolph Giuliani

launched a vigorous reform effort based on the notion that maintaining public order is part of the social safety net.

Olsen contends that reform, rather than wholesale dismantling, is not at odds with the conservative project. Indeed, he argues, certain safety-net programs are essential if free-market capitalism is to flourish.

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

## Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

**THE SOURCE:** "In Front of the Burgundy Curtain: The Top Ten Lessons I've Learned About Advocacy Before the Nation's Highest Court" by Lisa S. Blatt, in *Green Bag*, Autumn 2010.

IN HER TWO DECADES OF PRACTICING law, Lisa S. Blatt has argued 30 cases before the nation's highest court, more than any other woman in the country. Her up-close-and-personal vantage point has taught her a few things about life at the Supreme Court.

At oral argument, each side's lawyer has 30 minutes to "present" her case, which really means that she will be peppered by tough questions from nine of the smartest people in America. Well, just eight in practice, since Justice Clarence Thomas hasn't spoken at oral argument in more than five years. In Blatt's opinion, that is "a blessing." Eight justices are plenty!

The justices, particularly Antonin Scalia and Stephen Breyer, purposely ask outlandish questions in order to reveal the limits of each party's legal reasoning. In one case involving a government property



Lisa S. Blatt in her natural habitat. She has argued 30 cases before the nation's highest court.

seizure, Justice Breyer asked the government's lawyer whether his argument implied "that the Constitution would permit, in your view, the Taj Mahal, for example, to be forfeited if it was once used to sell a teaspoonful of marijuana." Blatt says she half-expected the lawyer to respond, "Justice Breyer, are you crazy?" But he didn't take the bait, and instead outlined under what circumstances that would indeed be the case.

Nevertheless, there are times you should *not* carry your argument to its logical conclusion: "Whatever you do, don't say, 'The government can ban books.'" This is essentially the mistake government lawyers made during the 2008 oral argument concerning corporate campaign expenditures in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commis-*

*sion*. The justices wondered whether the government's logic in defending limits on corporations' spending in political campaigns could lead public libraries to ban a 500-page biography published by a corporation that ended with the sentence, "So vote for person X." The lawyer's answer was yes, and the government subsequently lost the case 5–4. In such instances, Blatt recommends either "tossing logic and consistency entirely out the window" or rethinking your argument altogether.

Blatt also makes some clear-eyed observations about the Court's role in American law. "Constitutional change is inevitable," she says. Judges often espouse restraint, but the truth is that Supreme Court cases are a zero-sum game: Each decision expands the

rights of either individuals or the government. When it comes to which cases the Court hears, "coordinated and strategic movements" and amicus curiae briefs (those submitted by interested parties) have gained influence in recent years.

Each year, only one percent of petitions filed are heard by the Court, about 70 in all. With so few cases heard, it's a rare privilege to stand in front of the Court's burgundy curtain—rarer yet if you're a woman. "The courtroom is a battlefield," Blatt says. Prepare to fight.

#### POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

## Where Are the Female Politicians?

**THE SOURCE:** "Gendered Perceptions and Political Candidacies: A Central Barrier to Women's Equality in Electoral Politics" by Richard L. Fox and Jennifer L. Lawless, in *American Journal of Political Science*, Jan. 2011.

IT WASN'T VERY LONG AGO THAT almost no women were elected to major political offices. In the 1970s there were two female governors, and it was only in 1978 that the first woman whose husband had never served in Congress was elected to the Senate for a full term. Today, many more women hold elected office—there are 17 female senators—but the gains have slowed since 2000.

Scholars offer several explanations: overt discrimination, "situational" factors (e.g., not enough women in the feeder fields of law and business), structural barriers (e.g., the large number of incum-

bent male office-holders), and socialization (the persistence of traditional gender roles that deter women from entering the fray).

Academic research suggests that overt discrimination is no longer a potent factor. Situational explanations have lost some of their power since women have increased their presence in law and business. And the enactment of legislative term limits in 21 states without subsequent large gains by women has put into doubt the role played by the male incumbency advantage. Situational factors and structural barriers surely play some part, but they cannot account for the size of the gap. That leaves just one candidate: socialization.

Now, two political scientists, Richard L. Fox of Loyola Marymount University and Jennifer L.

Lawless of American University, have found, simply, that it is “difficult for women to embrace themselves as politicians.” In a survey of high-level professionals working in law, business, education, and political activism—fields likely to contain people who might run for office—they find that 80 percent of the men believe they are either “qualified” or “very qualified” to hold elected office. Less than two-thirds of the women regard themselves so highly.

Women are also twice as likely as men to say they are “not at all qualified” for the job. (Nine percent do so.) This is particularly striking because women are also more likely to aspire to local, rather than national, offices—positions usually requiring fewer credentials.

Women’s perceptions of the

political arena are another deterrent. Just 52 percent say they have a thick enough skin to endure a campaign.

A similar strain of self-doubt appears in studies of women beyond the realm of politics, beginning when they are quite young. Adolescent females, for example, think less highly of their mathematical abilities, despite no objective indicators that males are actually more able. And while females get better test scores in language arts, their self-assessment of their abilities is no higher than males’.

It will likely be a long time before women come close to holding an equitable share of the elected offices in this country. What they have to overcome next, say Fox and Lawless, is a socialization process that breeds self-doubt.

## SOCIETY

# Diversity Dismantled

**THE SOURCE:** “Affirmative Inaction” by William M. Chace, in *The American Scholar*, Winter 2011.

AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES have long been governed by two competing ideals: They aim to be both meritocratic centers of intellectual excellence and “model commonwealths” that bring together individuals of diverse backgrounds.

The “model commonwealth” ideal has taken a big hit over the

years as one of its principal tools, affirmative action, has fallen out of favor with the courts and the public, writes William M. Chace, a former president of Wesleyan University and Emory University. In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the place of diversity in higher education in *Grutter v. Bollinger et al.*, ruling that race and ethnicity could continue to serve as criteria in admissions. But that same year, in *Gratz et al. v. Bollinger et al.*, the Court said that racial and ethnic

considerations could be made only if they were “narrowly tailored”—that is, if they were just two of many traits the institution considered in holistically evaluating candidates. No longer could institutions automatically increase the rankings of minority applicants.

Such holistic scrutiny is too expensive for public universities, with their tens of thousands of hopefuls. Many states, meanwhile, have banned affirmative action through ballot initiatives and by other means. In California, a 1996 state ban cut black enrollment in the freshman class of the elite University of California, Berkeley, from 258 to 140 in less than a decade. Nationwide, only about

35 percent of four-year public institutions consider minority status in admissions decisions, down from more than 60 percent in the mid-1990s.

Public skepticism about affirmative action is high. Critics point to sizable Indian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, and Iranian contingents on many campuses, scoffing at the notion that diversity is waning. They observe that African immigrants are nabbing slots pri-

Critics of affirmative action point to sizable Asian contingents on many campuses, scoffing at the notion that diversity is waning.

marily intended for the descendants of slaves. In one 2009 poll, 61 percent of respondents said they opposed affirmative action.

There is a place where the idea of the model commonwealth can and must survive, Chace says. Private colleges and universities, with their deep coffers, can afford to evaluate applicants case by case. Because they don't directly take much public money, they are somewhat shielded from state bans on racial preferences. And anti-affirmative action groups, because of their regard for private institutions and individual rights, are less likely to challenge nonpublic schools in court. Ironically, Chace observes, private colleges may "end up being more diverse in their enrollments than public colleges."

## SOCIETY

## What War Is Good For

**THE SOURCE:** "Strange Bedfellows: War and Minority Rights" by Robert P. Saldin, in *World Affairs*, March–April 2011.

THE DEMISE OF "DON'T ASK, Don't Tell" last December was only the most recent iteration of an old pattern: Over the last century, America's wars abroad have had the salutary side effect of advancing minority rights at home, says Robert P. Saldin, a Robert Wood Johnson Scholar at Harvard University.

Before World War I, suffragists had pushed without success for women's voting rights. President Woodrow Wilson was a staunch opponent of gender equality, telling his staff that a "woman's place was in the home, and the type of woman who took an active part in the suffrage agitation was totally abhorrent," as an aide later recalled.

But the war changed Wilson's mind. About 25,000 women served in Europe in various capacities, including on the front lines, and some 350 were killed. At home, more than one million women took jobs outside the household to aid the war effort. In a 1917 speech before the Senate, Wilson reversed himself, saying, "We have made partners of the women in this war; shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right?" The Nineteenth

Amendment was ratified just three years later, and women soon went to the polls. Another war, in Vietnam, led to a further expansion of the franchise, when in 1971 Congress lowered the voting age from 21 to 18.

World War II and the Korean War pushed the country down a path toward greater racial equality. At the outset of World War II, African Americans were kept from the battlefield because white officers believed they were not trustworthy and would flee. "But the luxury of holding such prejudices collapsed amidst manpower shortages," Saldin says, and over the course of the war more than one million African Americans served in combat, though units were still segregated. President Harry S. Truman issued an executive order ending segregation in the armed forces after the war, but it wasn't fully implemented until 1952, during the Korean War.

In the civilian world, too, discriminatory policies fell during World War II. The Soldier Voting Act of 1942 abolished the poll tax, the first expansion of African-American voting rights since Reconstruction, and a 1944 Supreme Court decision ended all-white primaries. A *New York Times* reporter wrote at the time that "the real reason for the overturn is that the common sacrifices of wartime have turned public opinion and the court against previously sustained devices to exclude minorities from any privilege of citizenship the majority enjoys."

Saldin sees two explanations for wartime liberalization. Discrimin-

ation against women, African Americans, or gay men and women deprives the country of their contributions at a time of great need. And discrimination against blacks became increasingly untenable when the nation was rallying against fascism and communism in the name of freedom. Second, war tends to engender a stronger sense of national cohesion. Deep divisions in society take on a different cast when we feel “we’re all in this together.”

## SOCIETY

## Work Hard, Play Harder

**THE SOURCE:** “The Drinking Game” by Marshall Poe, in *Policy Review*, Oct.–Nov. 2010.

THE RULES OF THE COLLEGE Drinking Game are simple: Students must drink excessively, and politicians, college presidents, and public health specialists must rail excessively about the excessive drinking. They’re missing the mark, says historian Marshall Poe. “College drinking per se is not the problem,” he argues.

Not the problem? That may come as a surprise to many, but Poe argues that the effect of alcohol on campus is “largely positive.” American higher education is the envy of the world, and one of the reasons for that is that colleges and universities have done something very difficult: create strong communities and a sense of identity. From his perch at the University of Iowa, Poe has observed that for most students, “rowdy drinking is considered

essential to becoming a Hawkeye.” Social events such as house parties, pregame tailgating, and Greek life build cohesion, and all run on the fuel of alcohol.

College life wasn’t always this way. Until the 1970s, the drinking age in almost every state was 21—and the college population was relatively small. But when thousands of young American men went off to fight in Vietnam, many at home argued that if they were old enough to die for their country, they should be old enough to drink. (The draft age had been lowered from 21 to 18 in World War II, but few argued then that the drinking age should follow.) By 1975, only 11 states still had a drinking age of 21, and alco-

pus of booze in the years since. Today, roughly 80 percent of students drink and 45 percent binge drink.

College administrators have employed a variety of strategies to end alcohol’s reign: calling in law enforcement, imposing academic sanctions, pushing “responsible” drinking, limiting supply on campus, and spreading the word that alcohol is not as popular as students perceive. All of these strategies have failed, and the colleges must share some of the blame; they have often been half-hearted in their efforts.

College administrators will never succeed in drying out their campuses, nor should we want them to, Poe argues. Administrators should



**Chug! Chug! Chug! Chug!** University of Wisconsin football fans do their part to rouse school spirit.

hol began its starring role in the life of the American college student.

It wasn’t long before statistics from the National Transportation Safety Board began to show a shocking rise in teenage traffic accidents. Between 1976 and 1985, the drinking age bounced back up in 26 states. But colleges have been unable to rid their cam-

narrow their focus, harshly punishing the minority of college drinkers who pose a threat to themselves and others—about 10 to 15 percent of the population. Any student charged by police with public intoxication or driving under the influence should be expelled without ado, he recommends. For everyone else, bottoms up!

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

# The Enduring King James

**THE SOURCE:** “How Good Is It?” by Diarmaid MacCulloch, in *London Review of Books*, Feb. 3, 2011.

AS WE NOTED IN “CHAPTER and Verse” (“In Essence,” Summer 2010), the King James Bible, published 400 years ago this year, has a long history of shaping Western literature and culture. It has also engendered innumerable modern translations, whose more colloquial language—meant to appeal to everyone from “extreme teens” to “busy moms”—could not be further from the “thees” and “thous” of the original. But, as Diarmaid MacCulloch observes, the King James Bible had strong competition even in its own time, principally from the Geneva Bible of the 1550s and Miles Coverdale’s 1538 edition, which formed the basis for the Book of Common Prayer. Why did the King James version prevail?

The idea for the new translation came from King James VI of Scotland, who later became King James I of the newly conjoined kingdom of Great Britain. He objected to “the bitter notes” in the Geneva Bible, marginalia that, in his view, often took on the tone of a hectoring minister. When James ascended the British throne in 1603, “a remarkably efficient and scandalously

underfinanced set of committees” produced the new bible in just seven years.

Much of its success resulted, MacCulloch believes, from the committees’ reliance on “a single early Tudor translator of genius, William Tyndale,” who translated the sacred text from Hebrew and Greek in the 1520s, and on Coverdale’s Psalm translations. But the King James version also appeared at a fortuitous historical moment, just as the English and Scottish churches were “grudgingly moving together under King James’s guidance, and before English Protestantism had irretriev-

ably fragmented.” The King James Bible became “a unifying symbol for English-speaking Protestantism” rather than “a totem of royalism, as it so easily might have done.”

As a result, after the upheaval of the English Civil War, the Interregnum, and the restoration of Charles II in 1660, Anglicans, English Protestant Dissenters, and the Established Church of Scotland emerged as “people of a single book.” And they took that book with them when they moved across the oceans to new lands.

MacCulloch, who teaches theology at Oxford and whose latest book is *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, recounts these developments in the course of reviewing several books published in conjunction with the quadricentennial. In one of these,

an essayist “chronicles how successful a handmaid of empire the KJB proved.” Unlike other bibles, for instance, it translates four different Hebrew words to mean *nation*, which helped inspire “a new vision of Britishness as a nationality with a mission.”

The King James Bible still exerts a powerful influence on culture and language in the English-speaking world. But MacCulloch reports that scholar David Crystal, who uses Google searches to explore “the continuing background hum of Jacobean sacred text” in modern vernacular, finds that the influence is uneven. Of the 257 phrases from the King James Bible that Crystal says remain



King James I of England

in wide use, only a few come from the Old Testament. Among them, from Genesis, is one that has become a “treasured part of English usage”: *Go forth and multiply*.

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## Friends Who Pray Together . . .

**THE SOURCE:** “Religion, Social Networks, and Life Satisfaction” by Chaeyoon Lim and Robert D. Putnam, in *American Sociological Review*, Dec. 2010.

IN STUDY AFTER STUDY, RESEARCHERS have found that religion makes people happy. Nearly 30 percent of people who attend religious services weekly report “extreme” satisfaction with their lives, compared with less than 20 percent of those who steer clear of religious institutions. Why? Is it because churchgoers feel loved by God? Is it because they sleep easy at night, knowing where they’ll go after they die? No and no. A new study finds that the answer may be much closer to hand:

A new study says churchgoers are happier chiefly because of the friends they’ve made in the pews.

Churchgoers are happier because of the friends they’ve made in the pews.

Two sociologists, Chaeyoon Lim of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Robert Putnam of Harvard (author of *Bowling Alone*, a seminal 2000 book about Americans’ declining social connectedness), find that people who have close friends from their congregations are more likely to be happy than those who have the same number of close friends through nonreligious affiliations. People who regularly attend church and have three to five close friends from their religious community are 50 percent more likely to be “extremely satisfied” with their lives than non-

religious people who have the same number of friends.

Any evidence that a belief in God by itself leads to happiness is “weak and inconsistent,” the authors report. Private practices such as praying at home are not linked to greater life satisfaction. Those who attend church but have no friends there are not any likelier to be happy than those who stay home on Sunday.

If you aren’t a believer and are looking for more satisfaction in your life, a strategy of going to church in order to make friends isn’t going to work: A bevy of friends from church does little to bolster life satisfaction for those who don’t consider religion an important part of who they are. What really seems to make people happy is the sense of belonging that comes from a combination of religious identity and religious friends. As Lim and Putnam put it, “It is neither faith nor communities, per se, that are important, but communities of faith. For life satisfaction, praying together seems to be better than either bowling together or praying alone.”

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## A Tale of Two Literary Cultures

**THE SOURCE:** “MFA vs. NYC” in *n+1*, Fall 2010.

AMERICA IS HOME TO TWO DISTINCT literary cultures, defined by where a writer earns his keep: the university (which we’ll refer to as MFA)

and the publishing house (hereafter, NYC). Each culture has its own heroes (Stuart Dybek in the former, Philip Roth in the latter), standard genre (short story versus novel), must-read publications (*Poets & Writers* versus *The New York Observer*), and social

events (departmental open houses versus book parties).

In 1975 there were 79 programs in creative writing offering a master of fine arts (MFA) or other degree. Today there are 854, and each is a source of financial support for writers—lecture fees, adjunct professorships, and something pen porters could once only dream about: steady employment, even tenure. “It’s safe to say that the university now rivals, if it hasn’t surpassed, New York as the economic center of the literary fiction world,” observes the unnamed author

of this article, an *n+1* editor.

Some have celebrated this new economic cushion as liberation for the writer from the profit-driven marketplace of publishing. But any writer who leaves NYC for MFA will find that freeing herself of one market's pressures just places her under another's. In MFA-land, a prospective writer will first experience pressure to publish short stories in literary quarterlies, followed by a race to publish her thesis, and finally, the necessity of continuing to publish more stories, all while teaching a fresh crop of literary hopefuls.

For writers traveling in the world of MFA production, from classroom workshops to literary journals to anthologies, the form that gets studied and published is the short story. "At first glance," says the author, "this may seem like a kind of collective suicide, because everyone knows that no one reads short stories." But what "everyone" reads is not as important in MFA culture—the incentives to publish for a large audience aren't there. What matters is to get read by other MFA students and to have one's stories assigned as course work year after year. In the publishing world, by contrast, novels lose their spots at the bestseller table in a matter of weeks. ("The contemporary New York canon tends to be more *contemporary* than *canon*," the author smirks.) Paradoxically, the obscure short stories of a professor teaching in an MFA program may find a more enduring readership than an NYC writer's novel.

It remains to be seen, but MFA may have more staying power than NYC. "A business model that relies on tuition and tax revenue (the top six

MFA programs, according to *Poets & Writers*, are part of large public universities); the continued unemployability of twenty-somethings; and the continued hunger of undergraduates for undemanding classes does seem more forward-looking than one that relies on overflow income from superfluous books by celebrities, politicians, and their former lovers."

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## Crazy for Caravaggio

**THE SOURCE:** "Caravaggiomania" by Richard E. Spear, in *Art in America*, Dec. 2010.

IS THERE ANYTHING THAT wouldn't be improved by a dash of Caravaggio? No, apparently. In recent years Caravaggiomania has ripped and roared across the art world, reaching explosive proportions in 2010, the 400th anniversary of the Italian Baroque artist's

death. One exhibition in Rome drew more than 5,000 visitors daily and kept its doors open around the clock in the days before it closed. Marketers splash Caravaggio's name on everything, sometimes plausibly (for example, a "Caravaggio" canvas and painter's easel), but at times less so (Caravaggio-branded eyeglasses and Caravaggio "velvet effect decorative stucco"). And, of course, there is a Caravaggio iPhone app.

Art historian Richard E. Spear writes that Caravaggiomania was preceded by a period of increased scholarly interest beginning in the middle of the 20th century that has now spread to mass audiences. This, in Spear's opinion, is "positive," but he is not impressed with the reasons behind the public's adoration.

To begin with, many people confuse interest in Caravaggio's compelling life story with interest in his art. Michelangelo Merisi (his birth name) was born into



Caravaggio's cinematic style makes him a darling of modern viewers. Above, *Judith Beheading Holofernes*.

poverty in northern Italy in 1571. He murdered a rival in Rome, was imprisoned in Malta, escaped, took refuge in Sicily, and died in 1610 while making his way back to Rome in hopes of winning a papal pardon. His sexuality, education, and religious beliefs all remain subjects of speculation. Spear says that our culture “fetishizes” biography, and that it’s typical that artists who rise to star status have interesting backgrounds.

Though Caravaggio’s biography could draw crowds on its own, the “immediate and easy” nature of his work also plays a role. “This is not to imply that Caravaggio’s work fails to reward sustained looking, which surely it does, or that it appeals only to the populace or the 100 million who communicate in tweets,” Spears contends. The artist employs dramatic lighting and framing to lend a mystical quality to his human subjects, imbuing his paintings (about 60 exist that are definitively attributed to him) with a cinematic quality. Vittorio Storaro, a celebrated cinematographer, called Caravaggio “a great filmmaker.” Direc-

tor Martin Scorsese says that Caravaggio’s work has been influencing filmmakers since the late 1960s.

Spear believes that Caravaggio-mania will fade, as fads do—there’s just no telling when. Until that time, the masses can enjoy their Caravaggio T-shirts, key chains, and art exhibitions.

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## DFW 101

**THE SOURCES:** “The Afterlife of David Foster Wallace” by Jennifer Howard, in *The Chronicle Review*, Jan. 6, 2011, and “Our Psychic Living Room” by Rebekah Frumkin, in *The Common Review*, Fall-Winter 2010–2011.

WHEN THE CELEBRATED WRITER David Foster Wallace committed suicide in September 2008, at the age of 46, scholarship on his dense, footnote-laced fiction and nonfiction was sparse. Since then, academics have been hard at work filling the void, essentially making Wallace “the next canonized American writer.”

Academic studies of the literary lion have proliferated for a number of

reasons, writes Jennifer Howard, a senior reporter at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. One is that Wallace’s writing—typified by the 1,100-page *Infinite Jest* (1996), an “epic, ironic, lonely-in-the-crowd, cri de coeur of a novel”—has all the makings of scholarly fodder.

Wallace’s work also broke the prevailing literary mold. In the opinions of some ivory tower denizens, he moved beyond the abstruse post-modernism of Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, and Don DeLillo—American novelists who seemed to own the future of the canon in the 1970s and ’80s. Unlike these bleak writers, Wallace did not seek to unmask “the hollow hypocrisy of the bourgeois social order,” Marshall Boswell, an English professor at Rhodes College, tells Howard.

Writing in *The Common Review*, Rebekah Frumkin agrees, arguing that Wallace’s allure derives in part from how earnestly he writes about moral questions present-day American novelists have been reluctant to address directly. His fiction and essays take on a range of complex subjects (mathematics, drug addic-

## EXCERPT

## Try, Try Again

*As with the scientist, the chef, the parent, as with anyone caught up in the practice of art—that distillation of the human enterprise, which is, at its simplest, a business of paying attention—failure instructs the writer. Every novel, in the moments before we begin to write it, is potentially the greatest, the most beautiful or thrilling ever written; but in the*

*long dying fall after we have finished it (if we finish it), every novel affords us, with the generosity of a buffalo carcass affording meat, hide, bone, horn, and fat, the opportunity to measure precisely, at our leisure, the distance between it and that L’Enfantesque dream. Our greatest duty as artists and as humans is to pay attention to our failures, to break them down, study the tapes, conduct the postmortem, pore over the findings; to learn from our mistakes.*

—MICHAEL CHABON, author of six novels, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Amazing Adventures of Cavalier* and *Clay*, in *McSweeney’s* (Issue 36)

tion, and the influence of the mainstream media, to name a few), but they are also about “trying your best to be a good, kind human being in a hostile world; about telling the Truth; about admitting your vulnerabilities and sincerely seeking help from others,” Frumkin, a student at Carleton College, writes.

There is some opportunism at work in the dawn of Wallace studies. The scholars drawn to his work are generally young, and they see in the great writer’s output a chance

not only to plumb a contemporary but also to stake their professorial quills on unmarked scholarly terrain—mountains of Wallace’s papers are newly available at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin. The curator of the Wallace archive says the impressive resource may help archival research become “more central to the work of a new generation of scholars.”

With all the activity Wallace is inspiring in the ivory tower, his loss is

arguably most keenly felt in the coffee shops where literary aspirants hone their craft. He has had an “immense and wide-ranging influence on the direction of contemporary American fiction,” Boswell tells Howard. “Jonathan Franzen, George Saunders, Zadie Smith: All are indebted to Wallace.” Scholars (and fans) don’t have to content themselves solely with his surviving peer fiction writers just yet—*The Pale King*, Wallace’s unfinished last novel, has just been published.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

# Wasted Youth

**THE SOURCE:** “Age and Great Invention” by Benjamin F. Jones, in *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, Feb. 2010.

ALBERT EINSTEIN WAS NOT yet 30 when he published a series of papers that forever changed what we know about matter, space, and time. Though Einstein was unusually young to be making career-capping discoveries, most of the last century’s great innovators weren’t much older when they made theirs, typically in their late thirties or early forties. “Great innovations are the [province] of the young,” writes Benjamin F. Jones of the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. But perhaps not for long, Jones finds. Over the course of the 20th century, the mean age at which scientists made their great achievements rose by about six years.

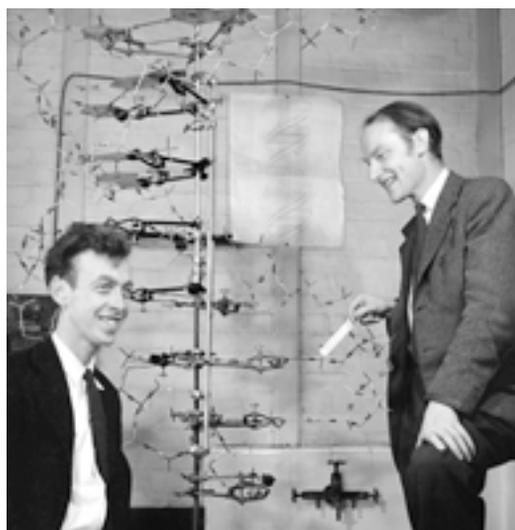
Why? Simply put, there’s more

for young scientists to learn before they can start making their own contributions. At the start of the 20th century, scientists began working on their own ideas around age 23. Today, most don’t get started until they reach 31.

Unfortunately, innovation potential still seems to fizzle out in the fifties, regardless of when a scientist begins producing. The average R&D worker today contributes about 30 percent less than a century ago, as measured by comparing the number of such workers in the economy and the growth rate of

per capita income. Studies looking at per capita patent counts have uncovered a similar phenomenon.

It’s possible that the early years of an inventor’s life are not only the most prolific but also the most creative—the best chance to produce the sort of Einsteinian breakthroughs that can upend the foundations of a field. It’s a Catch-22 for the budding researcher: Study long



**They look like children! James Watson and Francis Crick uncovered the double-helix structure of DNA when they were both quite young.**

enough to make your big breakthrough, and you'll find you're too old to do so.

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## The Math Beneath

**THE SOURCE:** "On Early Warning Signs" by George Sugihara, in *Seed Magazine*, Dec. 20, 2010.

ON THE SURFACE, IT DOESN'T seem that financial modeling has much in common with climate science, ecology, or neuroscience. But in fact these fields are grappling with similar mathematical problems: how to map nonlinear, deeply interconnected systems and anticipate systemwide collapse, notes George Sugihara, a theoretical biologist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego.

For financial modelers, the challenge is to predict crashes. An investment banker looking at one portfolio will not be able to see the systemic factors that could lead to a meltdown. Likewise, a marine scientist trying to protect a species of fish will not be able to account for all of the variables in the system that affect the survival of that particular fish without looking beyond that one species. In the field of climate science, linear models cannot predict what we know historically to be true: that climate change can be rapid and extreme. The existing models are all very good for painting a picture of a complex system at a specific point in time, but they do not have the ability to explain "jumps in variability," or

what mathematicians call heteroscedasticity.

Complexity theorists—the mathematicians who explore these sorts of systems—are beginning to pinpoint some early warning signs of systemic collapse. One is that as systems get closer to meltdown, they become slower to respond to external stimuli. Another is that pulses occurring in neighboring parts of the web become synchronized. For example, nearby brain cells fire in unison in the lead-up to an epileptic seizure.

A similar pattern emerged before the recent financial crash. Over time, financial institutions' investment holdings became more alike (the perverse result of each institution independently pursuing extreme diversification) and began to respond to changes in the market nearly simultaneously. When large financial institutions such as Lehman Brothers fell apart, the fallout was not unlike what happens in an ecosystem in which many animals rely for sustenance on one large animal species that suddenly dies out.

Heed Einstein, Sugihara advises: "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler."

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## The Revolution That Wasn't

**THE SOURCE:** "Refuting a Myth About Human Origins" by John J. Shea, in *American Scientist*, March–April 2011.

JOHN J. SHEA IS AN ARCHAEOLOGIST. He is also a flintknapper, or someone who makes stone tools. While on a dig at a 195,000-year-old

site in the Lower Omo River Valley Kibish Formation in Ethiopia, he was given pause by the stone tools our supposedly "primitive" human ancestors had left behind. Nothing about the tools seemed archaic or primitive in the least; they were made by hands that skillfully manipulated a range of rock types, and were not all that different from what a flintknapper could make today. What separates these "primitive" flintknappers from "modern" humans?

Maybe not much, says Shea, a professor at Stony Brook University. Archaeologists have for too long per-

An archaeologist says it is time to discard the notion of distinct primitive and modern periods.

petuated the idea that there are distinct primitive and modern periods, with a revolution occurring between the Middle and Upper Paleolithic periods (roughly 40,000 years ago). In fact, fossil evidence challenging that view has been around for decades.

From the 1970s onward, archaeologists based their idea of the Paleolithic revolution on artifacts from Europe, where they had found fossils of *Homo sapiens* with Upper Paleolithic tools dating back 35,000 years, and *Homo neanderthalensis* and other protohumans with earlier tools. But later, when they began to look outside Europe, in Asia and Africa, they found much older *Homo sapiens*—some dating as far back as 200,000 years—with the same primitive tools once associated with Nean-

derthals. To accommodate this evidence, archaeologists theorized that modern behaviors emerged tens of thousands of years after the earliest Homo sapiens.

The tendered explanation is a nice way of fitting the evidence to a long-cherished narrative, but it is not really scientific, Shea says. The archaeological record shows that “modern” behaviors have cropped up in different regions for long periods of time but then vanished. (Archaeologists label sites yielding this kind of evidence “precocious,” which,

according to Shea, merely reflects these scientists’ bias.) If modernity were a revolutionary shift, why would it disappear for prolonged periods?

Shea believes that things such as sophisticated stone tools don’t appear because of sudden shifts in human abilities. Humans create them because their particular environment demands them, and because they can build on the technological advances of their forebears. Rather than focus on the illusory progress of Homo sapiens, Shea argues, archaeologists

should study variations of human behavior from place to place.

If you look at stone tools produced in eastern Africa from 284,000 to 6,000 years ago, you don’t find a steady accumulation of different technologies, but constant and wide variation depending on the needs Homo sapiens faced given the environmental conditions of the time. In recent centuries humans have exhibited great variation in stone tool technology, but “no anthropologists in their right minds would attribute this variability to evolutionary differences,” Shea says.

## OTHER NATIONS

# India’s Vanishing Officers

**THE SOURCE:** “The Officer Crisis in the Indian Military” by Dinesh Kumar, in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Dec. 2010.

INDIA’S ARMED FORCES ARE among the largest in the world, with more than 1.3 million troops on active duty. But they are facing a crisis: They can’t find enough qualified and willing candidates to fill their junior officer ranks, reports doctoral candidate Dinesh Kumar of Monash University in Melbourne.

The shortage is not entirely new, but today it is worse than ever, in part because the opening of India’s economy has created new avenues for upward mobility. In addition, new officers face the unappealing prospect of being shipped off to the country’s counterinsurgency missions against separatists in the province of Jammu and Kashmir.

In 1997, when the Ministry of Defense first hired an advertising agency to burnish the military’s image, the army faced an officer shortfall of nearly 13,000, more than 25 percent of the slots it was seeking to fill. Three years later, the shortfall reached 31 percent. The navy and air force have smaller but growing shortages.

In addition to recruitment, India’s military faces problems with retention. Between 1995 and 2007, requests from officers for early release surged by nearly 200 percent, suggesting “a very high level of internal dissatisfaction.”

The armed forces’ woes could abet regional instability. India’s military must be prepared to fight nuclear and conventional wars against China and Pakistan (six of the army’s 13 corps are located along the disputed borders with those two

nuclear powers), and the officer crisis undermines its capabilities. One retired officer Kumar interviewed said, “In a future war, we will suffer. When today’s leadership grows 30 years hence, it will be mediocre at very best.” He predicted that India could lose the next war with either China or Pakistan.

## OTHER NATIONS

# Who’s Dying in Canada

**THE SOURCE:** “Lesson From Canada’s Universal Care: Socially Disadvantaged Patients Use More Health Services, Still Have Poorer Health” by David A. Alter, Therese Stukel, Alice Chong, and David Henry, in *Health Affairs*, Feb. 2011.

CANADA’S UNIVERSAL HEALTH care system is often cited as an example for the United States, but it is not without its limits. A new study finds that although ready access to health care in Canada helps to narrow the gap between haves and have-nots, Canada’s poor continue

Even though Canadians have more equal access to health care than Americans, there is still a substantial gap between the health of rich and poor.

to have worse health than wealthier Canadians, say David A. Alter and three of his colleagues from the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences in Ontario.

In their study of 15,000 patients in the province of Ontario from 1996 to 2008, people with low incomes were nearly three times as likely to die during the study. Poorer people also went to see a primary-care doctor far more often than those of greater means, an average of 62 times over the course of the study versus 47. The discrepancy, the authors say, arose not because poorer patients received inferior care or were seeking preventative care, but because of behavioral patterns that increased the likelihood of certain illnesses, such as heart disease. Low-income patients tended to smoke more, get less exercise, and have worse eating habits. They also were more likely to suffer from depression.

Alter and his coauthors believe that their findings “do not argue against universal health care,” but demonstrate that universal care alone does not completely close the gap between rich and poor. More aggressive measures, such as behavioral interventions early in life, are necessary to accomplish that.

## OTHER NATIONS

## Asia's Religious Renaissance

**THE SOURCE:** “Religious Resurgence in Contemporary Asia: Southeast Asian Perspectives on Capitalism, the State, and the New Piety” by Robert W. Hefner, in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Nov. 2010.

DEFYING A CENTURY OF PREDICTIONS that East and Southeast Asia would become increasingly secular in an age of modernization and globalization, these regions are in the grips of a religious resurgence. Intriguingly, it's not a return to old-time religion but an explosion of religious movements that are distinctly modern in character. They tend to be laity based, to be receptive to leadership by women, and to preach a path to material wealth, observes Robert W. Hefner, director of the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs at Boston University.

One of the most dramatic arrivals is El Shaddai, an officially Cath-

olic but Pentecostal-flavored movement with millions of members in the Philippines. Its typically very poor adherents are promised “wealth in magical exchange for tithing donations to the ‘treasure boxes’ so prominently displayed at El Shaddai’s five-to-10-hour prayer rallies.” Followers chant the slogan “I am rich! I am strong! Something good is going to happen to me!”

In Thailand, the Buddhist Dhammakāya Temple near Bangkok has attracted throngs of middle-class Thais using similar messages and slick advertising. But like many of Asia’s religious innovators, the temple is not concerned only with material well-being. It upends tradition by giving ordinary followers access to the forms of meditation once monopolized by monks. In a world in flux, says Hefner, institutions such as the Dhammakāya Temple offer people “confidence and moral security.”

Of all the religious resurgences, China’s has been the “most startling,” in light of the aggressively sec-



Chinese Buddhists attend a Buddhist Association of China conference in Beijing last year.

ular state there. A generation after the “superstition-smashing calamities” of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, tens of millions of Chinese have become practicing Buddhists, several hundred million observe ancestral and temple rites, and perhaps as many as 60 million consider themselves Christian. Women are disproportionately represented in the leadership of lay Buddhist associations, new Christian groups, and neo-traditionalist temple worshippers.

Even Islam, a religion that has historically shared little common ground with Western capitalism, has in Asia been revived with a market-friendly flavor. In Indonesia, *Islam de marché* (or market Islam) has arrived, borrowing freely from American Protestant evangelicalism. One of its stars is Craig Abdurrohim Owensby, an American convert to Islam who was a Protestant preacher and worked with Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell before he made a fortune in Indonesia selling subscriptions to cell phone messages from the Qur’an.

Instead of destroying religious faith, globalization and modernization have created new needs among those whose lives have been changed, Hefner concludes, and religious entrepreneurs have succeeded by answering their call.

## EXCERPT

## China’s Foodies

*We, the people of Chengdu, love to eat. Food is more important than life itself. . . . My grandpa told me how, in the 1930s, when warlords were battling for control of Chengdu, and artillery fell on the Huangchengba area, deluging streets with debris as houses collapsed, customers in a packed mapo tofu restaurant watched the bedlam creep closer as they waited for their meals, urging the chef to hurry so they might take shelter. The chef maintained his steady pace in the open kitchen, responding, “Mapo tofu cannot be rushed; that would ruin my reputation.”*

—LIAO YIWU, a writer in Sichuan Province, in *Asia Literary Review* (Winter 2010)

## OTHER NATIONS

## Defying the Democracy Cure

**THE SOURCE:** “When Democratization Radicalizes: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey” by Günes Murat Tezcür, in *Journal of Peace Research*, Nov. 2010.

SPURRED BY THE HOPE OF joining the European Union, Turkey embarked on a wave of reform between 1999 and 2004. It abolished its death penalty, liberalized regulation of political parties and the press, and expanded the rights of non-Muslim minorities. Ankara even eased up on treatment of the country’s ethnic Kurds, who are concentrated near the borders with Iraq and Iran, and who have been subjected to a long-standing Turkish policy of repression and

forced assimilation. In 2002, the Grand National Assembly voted to allow radio and television programs to be broadcast in Kurdish (albeit for a limited amount of time each day). In 2004, when possibilities were the brightest they had ever been, the Kurdish insurgent group the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) announced an end to a four-year-old cease-fire and resumed a two-pronged campaign of urban bombings and rural insurgency.

Why did the PKK not seize the moment? The group needed to assert its power or risk fading into irrelevance, argues political scientist Günes Murat Tezcür of Loyola University

Chicago. The conservative ruling party of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), was growing in power in Kurdish Turkey and taking votes from the Democratic Society Party, a Kurdish party. Moreover, without the galvanizing effect of state repression, the PKK would have trouble signing up recruits.

Since 2005 the pace of reform has slowed, and the AKP’s power in the Kurdish region of Turkey has waned. This has led the PKK to modify its behavior, as evidenced by the declaration of a temporary cease-fire in 2009.

Democratization is often thought to be a salve for ethnic conflict, Tezcür observes, but when ethnic insurgencies are unable to translate their power into electoral gains, the medicine may not work.

Also in this issue:

David Garrow on Malcolm X

Nancy Isenberg on the Revolution's loyalists

John Mueller on civil liberties

Ben Wildavsky on the sorry state of college educations

Jason Sokol on the South's recent history

Emily Anthes on personality and genes

Laura Kipnis on how to read literature

Miles Hoffman on Dmitri Shostakovich

F. S. Naiden on Socrates and his world

# CURRENT BOOKS

REVIEWS OF NEW AND NOTEWORTHY NONFICTION

## Port of Memories

Reviewed by Timothy Snyder

THE 20TH CENTURY DEFIES NOSTALGIA and mocks historical categories. For historians and others concerned with European civilization, the Holocaust disfigures the natural reflex to make sense of the past. Historians of contemporary Europe often pay little attention to the extermination of its Jews, while historians of the Holocaust generally separate their accounts from European history. Some social theorists see the Holocaust itself as an endpoint of modernity, and thus as a powerful reason to embrace a postmodern view of the world. Yet the historians who have tried to follow this prescription find that the postmodern embrace of the fragmentary and the liminal provides no refuge from the horror. Attending to the borderlands rather than the capitals, and to zones of multinational settlement rather than nation-states, they realize that it was in precisely such places that the Holocaust began, with mass shootings over pits. If the modern storyline seems to lead straight to the gas chamber, the postmodern one leads to the ditch.

Along the northern coast of the Black Sea, nostalgia meets history, and the modern the postmodern. The great port Odessa, a designed city, represents enlightened modernity

as clearly as Pierre L'Enfant's traffic circles or Baron Haussmann's boulevards. It was built from practically nothing beginning in the late 18th century at the orders of an enlightened Russian despot, Empress Catherine, on the designs of a series of Western Europeans, for the express purpose of being a perfect port. At the same time, its Black Sea locale is perhaps the borderland par excellence. It was the end of civilization for ancient Greeks coming from the south by sea and, two millennia later, their distant Russian imperial heirs, coming from the north by land. The city's hinterland, the steppe, was for both ancient dwellers and modern settlers—primarily Italians, Jews, Russians, and Ukrainians—savage and unknown. Odessa was not only the southern extreme of Russian imperial power, but the port where Russian subjects profited from knowing the rest of the world. If St. Petersburg projected an image of calm majesty, Odessa emanated a pragmatic cosmopolitanism.

In his elegant history, Charles King, a professor of international affairs at Georgetown University and the author of histories of the

### ODESSA:

Genius and Death in a City of Dreams.

By Charles King.  
W. W. Norton.  
336 pp. \$27.95

Caucasus and the Black Sea, contemplates the origins of the city. Odessa was the proudest creation of an empire that was breaking the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, mastering the Cossacks of Ukraine, and driving Ottoman armies to the south. All of this made room for a New Russia on the steppe and seacoast that is today chiefly southern Ukraine. The chief architect of this New Russia was Catherine's favorite, Governor-General Grigory Aleksandrovich Potemkin, a forceful and clever man who understood that façades can be foundations.

The founder of Odessa itself was José Pascual Domingo de Ribas y Boyons, a warrior from Naples whom Catherine placed in charge of the city's design in 1794. The steadiest presence was that of Duc de Richelieu, governor-general from 1803 to 1814, who weathered the plague and showed his sense of fairness by treating Jews and Christians equally during its ravages. Also important to King's account is Governor-General Mikhail Semyonovich Vorontsov, like the others a hero of Russia's wars of expansion in the south. King shows an admirable lack of sentimentality in his treatment of the affair of Vorontsov's wife with Alexander Pushkin, which ended when the wronged husband sent the poet away to count locust eggs after one of the region's periodic infestations. During the first third of the 19th century, the story of Odessa is one of power, not romance.

Odessa was at the forefront of the economic globalization of the 19th century, and the city's rise and fall forecast what would happen throughout Europe and, indeed, the West. With a population that would grow to more than 400,000 by the end of the century, Odessa became one of Russia's largest cities. Established near the mouths of four rivers, it was the ideal place from which to export wheat from the Russian Empire across the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and then the world. The Napoleonic Wars made Odessa one of the centers of European trade. Napoleon tried to carry out a kind of reverse blockade, banning the sale of grain from central Europe to his enemies. Russian foodstuffs from Odessa thus gained mar-

kets that they kept through the mid-1800s.

The city's large and increasingly Jewish middle class usually mediated in trade or provided for the city itself. There was almost no manufacturing, and so the city's prosperity depended upon serf labor in the countryside and favorable conditions on the world markets. The Crimean War of 1853–56 taught the British and the French to seek suppliers other than the Russian Empire, which was then their enemy; American farmers were the beneficiaries. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 further reduced the importance of Odessa. Once Europe was trading in earnest for foodstuffs across the Atlantic and Indian oceans, Russian wheat and Black Sea ports mattered much less. At the same time, the end of serfdom in the Russian Empire brought free but impoverished peasants from the Ukrainian hinterland to Odessa, where they confronted a downwardly mobile but still confident Jewish middle class.

For Europe in general, the moment of social and political distress associated with the end of the 19th-century globalization occurred in the 1920s and '30s. But in Odessa, class degradation and ethnic violence came early, in the 1890s and 1900s. As King shows, during the Revolution of 1905 in the Russian Empire, Odessa was the site of extensive pogroms, sometimes followed by episodes of Jewish retaliation. At the end of World War I, as the Russian Empire collapsed into civil war and Ukrainians sought national independence, Odessa's Ukrainian hinterlands were wracked by the continuous mass murder of Jews. It is hard to think of these killings as "pogroms," since the number of victims was in the tens of thousands, a scale never before seen. For this reason, King suggests that Odessa provided a precocious sense of the politics of the 20th century, or indeed the 21st.

King attends to the career of Vladimir Jabotinsky, an Odessan Jew who founded right-wing "revisionist Zionism," a doctrine that advocated an immediate return to a Promised Land defined rather broadly to include the whole of the British Mandate of Palestine. Jabotinsky was a kind of multinationalist, respectful of and respected by other Eastern European nationalists, and, as King



Sergei Eisenstein drew bloody inspiration from the failed Revolution of 1905 to immortalize Odessa in his film *Battleship Potemkin*, but reality was less cinematic. Here, Odessian soldiers and workers take up arms in October 1905.

points out, drawn at one point to Benito Mussolini's brand of fascism as a model. Although this current of Jewish politics was never very important in interwar Eastern Europe, and Jabotinsky had no success organizing the mass emigration he wanted in the 1930s, King notes that Jabotinsky's identification of Jewish self-esteem with expansive territorial nationalism has enjoyed a rebirth of sorts that began in the late 20th century. For King, Jabotinsky's ideas were an unsurprising consequence of the collapse of a cosmopolitan, middle-class city in which Jews could no longer feel that they had a secure place.

In 1905 an anchor slips, prose becomes poetry, and King shifts from history to memory. This is no doubt a conscious choice, since for King the city's moment of greatness has passed, and its rise as a symbol for itself and oth-

ers has begun. It was during the Revolution of 1905 that the sailors of the battleship *Potemkin* mutinied against their officers near the port of Odessa. Twenty years later, the pioneering director Sergei Eisenstein masterfully transformed this event into a beautiful film, exaggerating the scope and resonance of the revolt and adding the unforgettable scene of the civilian massacre on the Odessa Staircase.

King skillfully separates fact from myth, and transforms himself from historian to critic. He plays both roles well, but the price here is the loss of the Bolshevik Revolution as an event. In King's account, the red flags go up in Odessa in 1917, and Soviet power is consolidated a few years later, but we are not told just how. Much happened in between, not least a Hapsburg occupation of the city and its hinterland in 1918. King treats Soviet governance of the city in the 1920s and '30s less

attentively than Russian imperial governance in the 1820s and '30s. It would have been interesting to learn about Odessa's role during the collectivization of agriculture in Soviet Ukraine, when the grain that might have fed a starving population was instead exported from Black Sea ports. It would also have been interesting to learn how Odessa, still a multinational city, suffered from the mass national shooting operations of Stalin's Great Terror of 1937–38.

Yet King must attend to myth if he is to make one of his major points: Nostalgia for Odessa, Soviet and otherwise, has much to do with its Jewish population, as presented, for example, in Isaac Babel's *Odessa Tales* (1931), a collection of short stories set in the city's Jewish quarter, Moldavanka. At the same time, too little is known about the extermination of Odessian Jews during World War II, when Soviet power was absent. Odessa's Jews fell victim not to Germany, but to Germany's ally Romania.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Romania was the most important of the Third Reich's allies. The Romanian army invaded southern Ukraine, and placed a large region known as Transnistria under its own control. After a bomb planted by operatives of the Soviet state police, the NKVD, killed Romanian occupation authorities in Odessa, the Romanians murdered perhaps half of the 50,000 Jews then in the city. The remaining half, like Jews in other

territories conquered by Romania, were sent to concentration camps. When the Soviets returned to Odessa in 1944, they counted 48 surviving Jews. As King shows, the particular horror that befell Odessian Jews during the war was blurred by postwar Soviet propaganda about a "hero city" united in suffering and resistance to fascism and by the fact that the postwar communist regime in Romania was an important Soviet ally.

Odessa, today a pleasant seaside city of 1.2 million people in independent Ukraine, powerfully resists historical placement. It fits neither national narratives of Ukrainian liberation nor nostalgic tropes of Russian revivalism. The city still seems rooted in nothing except itself and the works of genius of natives and admirers such as Babel and Eisenstein. It ought to be an inescapable part of Western histories of the Holocaust and modern Europe. Yet, with important exceptions such as Patricia Herlihy's foundational 1986 book *Odessa: A History, 1794–1914*, it has generally escaped them. King makes a virtue of these difficulties, taking the city on its own engaging terms. His writing is aesthetic without superficiality, and erudite without pretension. Reading the book is like traveling as your best self, the self that you never quite are, ready with every reference, worldly and wise. Because King opens a difficult world with grace, the book's ending comes, as it should, as a shock.

TIMOTHY SNYDER is a professor of history at Yale University. He is the author, most recently, of *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2010).

## A Revisionist's History

Reviewed by David J. Garrow

IN 1965, A FASCINATING political voice was silenced when a team of assassins gunned down Malcolm X, a man whose intellectual and religious journey had finally transformed him into an eloquent spokesman for human equality. No comprehensive and credible biography of this signally

**MALCOLM X:**  
A Life of  
Reinvention.

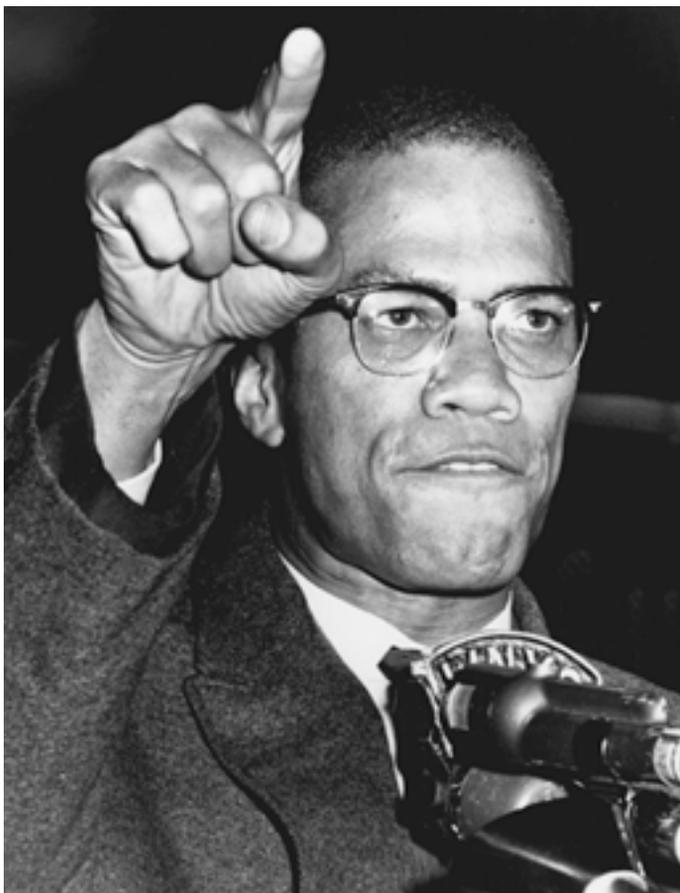
By Manning Marable.  
Viking. 594 pp. \$30

important black freedom advocate has appeared in more than 35 years, but now, in the appropriately titled *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*, Columbia University professor Manning Marable fills this void with a landmark book that reflects not only thorough research and accessible prose but, most impressively, unvarnished assessments and consistently acute interpretive judgments.

Malcolm, of course, chronicled—or authorized journalist Alex Haley to chronicle—his own life in his famous *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, published nine months after he died, but Marable definitively establishes that the *Autobiography* omitted some significant aspects of Malcolm's youthful criminal life while dramatically exaggerating others. Several chapters Malcolm had prepared were deleted before publication, and he did not review important portions of what millions of readers would think of as "his political testament." The *Autobiography* as published, Marable warns, "is more Haley's than its author's."

Born in 1925, Malcolm Little spent his early years in Lansing, Michigan. His childhood was replete with family tragedies: His physically abusive father died violently when Malcolm was six, his mother was confined to a mental hospital when he was 14, and the older half-sister who took custody of him was arrested repeatedly for various minor crimes after Malcolm went to live with her in Boston. Malcolm quit school in ninth grade, and by age 19 his preference for theft and robbery over regular employment had earned him his first of several arrests. Marable corroborates the evidence first presented in Bruce Perry's valuable but flawed 1991 biography, *Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America*, that Malcolm developed a close relationship with William Paul Lennon, a wealthy gay white man in his late fifties, who paid Malcolm for sex.

Malcolm also had an older white girlfriend and partner in crime, whom he physically abused. When Malcolm's sloppiness allowed the police to unravel their small burglary gang, his girlfriend testified against him and served seven months, while Malcolm was sentenced to eight to 10 years. Thus began



Malcolm X addresses a Harlem rally in support of desegregation in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963. Increasingly, he devoted himself to the civil rights movement before his murder in 1965.

an odyssey during which Malcolm would reinvent himself several times over. He spent six and a half years, from ages 20 to 27, incarcerated in Massachusetts prisons before being paroled. Lennon visited him, but the man who most changed his life was fellow convict John Elton Bemby, 20 years Malcolm's senior, who challenged him to develop his intellect by using the prison library and enrolling in correspondence courses. By 1948, when one of Malcolm's brothers told him that he and other family members had converted to the Nation of Islam (NOI) and wanted Malcolm to convert too, the young prisoner had acquired a profound intellectual earnestness.

The NOI had been founded in 1930 by a mysterious mixed-race man who disappeared in 1934 and was succeeded by Elijah Muhammad, née Poole, a Georgia native who headquartered the small sect in

Frustrated African Americans responded to Malcolm X's angry condemnations of white racism and black passivity.

Chicago. The Nation of Islam was Islamic in name only, for Muhammad's teachings represented an oddball amalgam of black nationalism and science-fiction cosmology that bore only the slightest relation to the Muslim faith. By the late 1940s the

NOI had fewer than a thousand members, but for the newly serious young prisoner the group "became the starting point for a spiritual journey that would consume Malcolm's life." The NOI taught that blacks' true ancestral

surnames had been lost during slavery, and Malcolm, like most members, adopted X as his new last name.

Malcolm mastered Muhammad's doctrine, and by mid-1953, less than a year after his release from prison, he was a full-time NOI minister. He was not yet 30 years old. Malcolm's rhetorical prowess soon emerged as one of the sect's greatest assets, and by 1955 membership had grown to some 6,000, in large part thanks to Malcolm's efforts. Over the next six years the ranks of the NOI reached upward of 50,000 as frustrated African Americans responded to Malcolm's angry but articulate condemnations of white racism and black passivity. Malcolm both denounced all whites ("We have a common oppressor, a common exploiter. . . . He's an enemy to all of us") and derided mainstream civil rights leaders as "nothing but modern Uncle Toms" who "keep you and me in check, keep us under control, keep us passive and peaceful and nonviolent."

Muhammad had assigned Malcolm to the NOI's Harlem temple. On the afternoon of April 26, 1957, several New York City police officers savagely beat an NOI member who had verbally objected to their treatment of a suspect. Initially the police refused to transfer the severely injured complainant to a hospital, but when they finally did, Malcolm led a well-disciplined protest of about 100 NOI members through central Harlem that eventually swelled to thousands. The Harlem demonstration thrust both the NOI and Malcolm into the public eye more than

ever before, and advertised the dominance of the NOI's militant all-male internal enforcement arm, the Fruit of Islam.

The year 1957 marked a period of "tremendous growth for Malcolm," Marable writes. As the black freedom struggle in America gained momentum, Malcolm's interest turned toward arguments over the civil rights movement's agenda. He "no longer saw himself exclusively as an NOI minister," and that put him in increasing tension with the sect's leadership. The NOI's black nationalism was essentially apolitical, and Elijah Muhammad could "maintain his personal authority only by forcing his followers away from the outside world."

In January 1958, soon after rejection by a long-time girlfriend, Malcolm married Betty Sanders, a nurse and NOI member with whom he had shared a handful of awkward dates. The partnership was deeply troubled from the outset. Betty combatively opposed the "patriarchal behavior" of her husband and the NOI, and Malcolm "rarely, if ever, displayed affection toward her." Within a year, Malcolm was writing to Elijah to confess that she was complaining "that we were incompatible sexually because I had never given her any real satisfaction" and that she was threatening to seek it elsewhere. When, nonetheless, Betty gave birth to several children, Malcolm absented himself and treated his wife "largely as a nuisance."

Growing tensions between Malcolm and the NOI's ruling circle eclipsed those at home. "The national leadership increasingly viewed the rank and file as a cash register," Marable writes, and Elijah had developed a habit of impregnating the young women who worked in his office—including Malcolm's former girlfriend—in flagrant violation of the NOI's rules mandating sexual fidelity. Talk of the affairs spread, but when Malcolm raised the subject with his closest fellow minister, Boston's Louis X—later Farrakhan—Louis quickly relayed word to Elijah, who was already jealous of his protégé.

Nine days after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November 1963, Malcolm sarcastically characterized the murder as a case of "the chickens coming home to roost." But it was his

follow-up remark—“Chickens coming home to roost never did make me sad; they’ve always made me glad”—that created controversy and gave Elijah and his top aides a pretext for suspending Malcolm from his ministerial role. Three months later Elijah made the suspension permanent, and Malcolm announced that he was leaving the Nation.

Malcolm immediately embraced the real Muslim faith, a commitment he cemented with a visit to Mecca in April 1964 that deeply affected his worldview. He returned home with a vastly different political message. “Separation is not the goal of the Afro-American,” he told a Chicago crowd, “nor is integration his goal. They are merely methods toward his real end—respect as a human being.” Malcolm went abroad again in July, traveling primarily in Africa and the Middle East until November. Marable rightly terms this “a journey of self-discovery,” and in most countries Malcolm was feted virtually as a visiting head of state. He told one friendly reporter that he would “never rest until I have undone the harm I did to so many innocent Negroes” during his years trumpeting the NOI’s pseudotheology.

Malcolm’s compass of thought was widening beyond issues of color, and he struggled to find “a new terminology to translate increasingly complex ideas into crowd-friendly language,” Marable writes. As a result, Malcolm could voice contradictory opinions just days apart, praising integrationist leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. one day, then ridiculing King and liberal politicians the next.

But Malcolm’s fatal hurdle remained his violent former comrades in the NOI, who were outraged by Malcolm’s public remarks about Elijah’s profligate behavior. What’s more, “by embracing orthodox Islam,” Marable argues, “Malcolm had marginalized the Nation in one fell swoop,” and his conversion made NOI leaders all the more determined to see him dead. Leading the charge was Malcolm’s former friend, Louis Farrakhan. In December 1964 he declared in the NOI’s newspaper, “The die is set, and Malcolm shall not escape. . . . Such a man as Malcolm is worthy of death.” One night several weeks later,

several attackers narrowly failed to grab Malcolm at his own front door, and soon thereafter a trio of firebombs set off at three AM sent Malcolm and his family fleeing in their night clothes. He would not escape for long. A week later, three gunmen and two accomplices, all members of the NOI’s Newark mosque, riddled Malcolm with close-range gunfire at a Manhattan lecture hall. He was dead at 39. Several hours later, Louis Farrakhan delivered a guest sermon at the Newark mosque.

Marable’s only significant failing in this otherwise hugely insightful volume is his undisciplined and inconsistent speculation about what, if anything, the FBI—which was conducting extensive electronic surveillance of Elijah Muhammad—or the New York Police Department knew in advance about the assassination team. Until the complete record of the FBI’s surveillance is released, those questions will remain unanswered. What is publicly known is that at least one of the gunmen still lives openly in Newark and has never faced law enforcement interrogation or prosecution.

Much of the official lack of interest in Malcolm’s life, both before and after his murder, stemmed from the fact that “at the time of his death he was widely reviled and dismissed as an irresponsible demagogue.” That caricature has long since been discarded as historians and the wider public have come to realize the remarkable potential that the Malcolm of 1964 and 1965 had as both a fearless champion of black America and an internationally recognized proponent of human equality across all faiths and colors. In fact, Marable is correct when he contends that by the final year of his life Malcolm had come to represent “a definitive yardstick by which all other Americans who aspire to a mantle of leadership should be measured.” This superbly perceptive and resolutely honest book will long endure as a definitive treatment of Malcolm’s life, if not of the actors complicit in his death.

DAVID J. GARROW, a senior fellow at Homerton College, University of Cambridge, is the author of *Bearing the Cross* (1986), a Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Martin Luther King Jr.

# America's Losers

Reviewed by Nancy Isenberg

WITH THE CURRENT RAGE for the Founding Fathers, it is not surprising that their home-grown enemies would spark new interest. Historians have long regarded the loyalists—those who remained faithful to the Crown during the Revolutionary War—with a jaundiced eye, dismissing them as backward-thinking defenders of monarchy and losers in the contest for American independence. Often forgotten is the fact that loyalists made up a sizable proportion of the population. Historians have estimated that they constituted one-fifth to as much as one-third of the 2.5 million British colonists who had to choose a side at the outbreak of the war in 1775.

Thomas B. Allen's *Tories* is, unfortunately, not the book to read on this topic. Although Allen has written several books, mainly popular military history, he is not well versed in modern scholarship on the American Revolution. His very title is a good clue that he has no interest in presenting a nuanced account. "Tories" was a term of derision used by the revolutionaries. Allen's book is really about the American patriots, whose every action he defends, while diminishing their opponents. Allen's Tories are "spymasters," "informers," "moles," collaborationists, assassins, and plunderers. British military officers fare scarcely better. At Concord, for example, the British commander is "fat" and "inept," while patriot general Artemas Ward is "a big rugged man." (Although George Washington's devoted general Henry Knox was fat by any measure, Allen never describes him that way.) Allen uses the same hyperbolic language found in wartime propaganda, reducing the divisions between patriots and loyalists to a morality tale of dashing victors and dastardly villains.

## TORIES:

Fighting for the King in America's First Civil War.

By Thomas B. Allen.  
Harper. 468 pp. \$26.99

## LIBERTY'S EXILES:

American Loyalists in the Revolutionary War.

By Maya Jasanoff.  
Knopf. 460 pp. \$30

From the first page, Allen paints Tories as born to the purple, wealthy office-seekers from proud families, living in Cambridge on "Tory Row" (an 18th-century version of a gated community), and motivated by simple greed and resentment toward the uppity revolutionaries. James Otis Jr., a principal defender of colonial rights, is "a Tory in a long line of influential Tories" until his conversion to the patriot side. John Adams would turn over in his grave to read this ridiculous description of Otis—the man whose eloquence he credited with having ignited the Revolution. Adams identified with Otis because, as late as 1775, he too struggled to define himself as a patriot and an American. This difficult process was experienced by many others as well, a phenomenon Allen entirely ignores.

Failing to distinguish propaganda from events on the ground, Allen is unable to separate myth from reliable accounts. He draws heavily on 19th-century sources, such as Thomas Jones and Edward Floyd De Lancey's *History of New York During the Revolutionary War* (1879), which must be read with a skeptical eye. Nor does he bother to sort out the political views of the loyalists. Instead, he depicts them as empty vessels, motivated by a visceral, self-serving anger. The Declaration of Independence, Allen claims, sparked "surprise" at the patriots' audacity, then made loyalists' blood boil, since to their ears it "contained line after line of libel" against George III.

This is an absurd statement. The loyalists were not living in a vacuum, blindly ignoring a decade of protests. Many people who were to become loyalists supported these protests. Loyalists, in fact, had diverse political interests. And the Declaration was propaganda, far less important to them than the resolution approved by the Continental Congress about a week earlier, on June 24, 1776, declaring that residents who refused to show loyalty to the

new government were now traitors. The June 24 resolution legitimated state laws and procedures for the confiscation of loyalist property, suppressing freedom of speech and denying them rights. Allen's Tories come across as foolish reactionaries, shocked and enflamed by Jefferson's prose—despite the fact that they were immersed in the same European intellectual traditions and had adopted the same political vocabulary. *Tories* is a sad example of what can get passed off as history, and displays a minimal understanding of the British imperial world that the loyalists inhabited.

**M**aya Jasanoff's *Liberty's Exiles* is a fine contrast. In this smart and gracefully written book, Jasanoff provides an instructive story of how losers shape history. A historian at Harvard, she specializes in modern British and imperial history, and thus easily avoids the pitfalls of seeing the loyalists through the distorted lens of their patriot adversaries. The cast of characters she introduces at the beginning of the book are three-dimensional figures—people who speak in their own words, are fascinating in their own right, and exhibit conflicted views and divergent aspirations. As a perk, *Liberty's Exiles* takes us beyond Yorktown (the conclusive battle of the war) to describe the loyalist diaspora after Lord Cornwallis's army surrendered.

Beverly Robinson was a Virginian, a good friend of George Washington who married into a large landholding family in New York. After commanding a loyalist regiment, Robinson said farewell to his sons and headed off to England in 1783. One son went to Canada, and another stayed behind in the British garrison in occupied New York to the bitter end. Separated by war, many in the Robinson clan were fated never to see each other again.

Georgia-born Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston spent much of her life in transit. After marrying a loyalist army captain during the war, she was evacuated from Savannah, Charleston, and East Florida—the last viewed as the promised land for southern loyalist exiles until British

diplomats handed the territory over to Spain in 1783. Following her husband to the University of Edinburgh, where he received medical training, she and the family moved next to the yellow fever-infested island of Jamaica. After two of her children died, she returned to Scotland and spent many years apart from her husband. After his death in 1807, she finally found a permanent home with her surviving children in Nova Scotia.

David George, born a slave in Virginia, traveled as a free black loyalist to Nova Scotia, where he established a Baptist church. In 1792, he migrated with his family to Sierra Leone as one of the founding members of Freetown, an antislavery experiment and free black colony. He owed his freedom, in part, to John Murray, Lord Dunmore, the last royal governor of Virginia, who had issued a proclamation in 1775 granting freedom to all



**Colonists who remained loyal to the British Crown were the American Revolution's biggest losers, and thousands fled to settle in Canada.**

slaves who sought British protection. Dunmore's act set the stage for subsequent British policy supporting black loyalist exiles.

Dunmore's own tale had its twists and turns. In 1786 he became governor of the Bahamas, where he backed schemes for retaking Florida as a first step toward reconquering the United States. His loyalty to the Crown was bitterly repaid. He ended his days in disgrace in England, after one of his daughters married a son of George III without the king's permission. The royal family disowned the disobedient son, and in his last meeting with King George III, Dunmore had to suppress his rage, Jasanoff writes, when the king called their "joint grandchildren 'Bastards! Bastards!'"

These disparate personal narratives tell a larger story about how loyalists spread across the British Empire, changing it in the process. Jasanoff exposes the irony that loyalists more resembled their provincial enemies than they did their allies in the British Isles. Loyalists were not "born" loyal. Beverley Robinson resisted declaring his loyalty for two years, even as his good friend John Jay, prominent patriot and future Supreme Court chief justice, urged him to join the Revolution. Jay and Robinson were not that far apart politically, since both had backed the so-called Galloway Plan, a 1774 proposal for home rule that missed passing in the Continental Congress by a single vote. Joseph Galloway drafted the plan, which would serve as the prototype for a unified Canada in 1867.

Jasanoff gives compelling evidence of the loyalists' influence and their ad hoc agenda, which she neatly describes as the "spirit of 1783." The massive relocation of 75,000 white loyalists, free blacks, and slaves after the war contributed to the imperial ambitions of Great Britain. These exiles secured extensive state support from London to resettle in Canada, which not only repaid their loyalty but ensured a strong, continuing British presence in North America. Britain provided reparations, protected the freedom of former slaves, and overcame the difficult logistics of moving and resettling large numbers of exiles. The effort laid the foundation of a coordinated system of refugee relief and was a

harbinger of future state welfare programs. Equally revealing of their liberal impulses is the fact that transplanted loyalists resisted top-down rule and made demands for rights from the British government, much like their former enemies in the United States.

Resistance, persistence, and resentment when promises were not kept made loyalists important subjects within the British Empire. Galloway and William Franklin, Benjamin Franklin's son, were active in demanding financial compensation for loyalists from Parliament. Guy Carleton, the British commander responsible for relocating loyalists from New York, refused to comply with one of the terms of the Treaty of Paris—the return of all slaves to their former masters. He defiantly told George Washington that the freed slaves were to be settled in Canada. Men such as Lord Dunmore and Maryland loyalist William Augustus Bowles promoted schemes for retaking territory, with Bowles offering perhaps the most visionary plan: a pro-British yet independent Creek state of Muskogee in Florida. Territorial expansion was another agenda that loyalists advanced, as they became leading figures in Canada, Jamaica, the Bahamas, Africa, and India. The first major proposal for colonizing Australia came from an American loyalist refugee.

Jasanoff forces us to rethink the Revolution's losers. Loyalists parted with vast tracts of property, ancestral homes, and beloved family members. But as they rebuilt their lives, they redefined the British Empire. They came from different religious backgrounds, different colonies, different races and classes. Yet the British government's desire to incorporate the exiles, and thus to advance Britain's global objectives, allowed the loyalists to assume a unique position: Fighting to regain their lost status, or in the case of free blacks, to ensure their new status, they became dynamic agents of political change. As a result, Jasanoff concludes, "these losers were winners in the end." *Liberty's Exiles* tells a complex and original story of the loyalists. It is a history worth knowing.

NANCY ISENBERG is a professor of history at Louisiana State University, the author of *Fallen Founder: The Life of Aaron Burr* (2007), and coauthor, with Andrew Burstein, of *Madison and Jefferson* (2010).

CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

## Security at What Price?

Reviewed by John Mueller

IN HIS FASCINATING 2000 book *Communazis*, the late scholar of German literature Alexander Stephan describes the U.S. government's surveillance of a group of émigré writers who lived in the United States and Mexico during and after World War II. None were found to pose much of a subversive threat, and the surveillance never led to real persecution—indeed, few of the writers noticed that they were being watched. Instead, what impresses Stephan is the essential absurdity of the situation, as huge numbers of government employees intercepted and catalogued communications, meticulously recorded comings and goings, and sifted enterprisingly through trash bins, exhibiting a “combination of high efficiency with grotesque overkill”—and all, of course, “at taxpayers’ expense.”

David K. Shipler's compass in *The Rights of the People* is wider, and so his book gives context to Stephan's microanalysis. During years of hot war and then decades of cold war, our guardians sought to preserve our security by intercepting millions of private telegrams, opening and photographing countless private letters, compiling watch lists containing millions of names, and opening hundreds of thousands of intelligence files. Particularly during the Cold War, some advocates expressed strong concerns about encroachments on civil liberties. But though few, if any, domestic communists engaged in real espionage or committed violence in the postwar period, at no point did anyone say in public, “Many domestic Communists adhere to a violent foreign ideology; however, they are actually quite a

### THE RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE:

How Our Search for Safety Invades Our Liberties.

By David K. Shipler.  
Knopf.  
363 pp. \$27.95

pathetic bunch, and couldn't subvert their way out of a wet paper bag. Why are we expending so much time, effort, and treasure on them?”

As Shipler documents rather well, we are back at it again in the post-9/11 era—except that technological and other developments have allowed for an exponential increase in surveillance. Thus, billions of communications are intercepted and millions of cases are opened, leading, as he astutely points out, to a preposterous situation in which coherent policing is hampered by obedience to a standing order that authorities follow up on all tips (99 percent of them “hoaxes,” according to one U.S. attorney). The “If You See Something, Say Something” counterterrorism hotline run by the New York City police generates thousands of calls each year—more than 16,000 in 2009 alone—but not one has led to a terrorism arrest.

Shipler, whose previous books include *The Working Poor* (2004) and the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Arab and Jew* (1987), makes a credible case that civil liberties are at risk of abuse. But he documents only a limited amount of maltreatment, much of which seems to have been somewhat self-correcting. He spends considerable time on a couple of cases from shortly after 9/11—when



In the post-9/11 era, domestic surveillance has increased exponentially.

intelligence agencies, it must be noted, were mindlessly stoking hysteria by confidently and erroneously estimating that there were thousands of Al Qaeda agents loose in the land. In one of the cases Shipler highlights, a cascade of misidentifications and fancied connections led to accusations against an innocent man, Oregon attorney Brandon Mayfield, and in the other, a prosecution was egregiously mishandled. However, Mayfield received a formal apology from the Justice Department sweetened with a \$2 million payment, and the other case was thrown out

of court and the misguided federal prosecutor indicted.

If people think the chance every year of being killed by a terrorist is dangerously high, they are unlikely to be moved by concerns about *Miranda* rights.

No defense of civil liberties is likely to be terribly effective as long as people believe that the threat from terrorism is nothing short of existential.

This fear, stoked during the George W. Bush administration and still promoted under Barack Obama, goes almost completely unexamined by pundits and the press. In 2008, then–Department of Homeland Security secretary Michael Chertoff bizarrely declared that the threat was “a significant existential” one. And the hype continues unchallenged. At a recent press conference, current Homeland Security chief Janet Napolitano announced that, though the likelihood of a large-scale organized attack is diminished, the continued danger of a small-scale disorganized attack means that the terrorist threat is higher than at any time since 9/11.

The point is not that there is nothing to find, but that excesses can only be reduced if the hysteria about terrorism is substantially dampened. If people think that the chances that they will be killed by a terrorist in the next year are dangerously high (rather than one in 3.5 million, as is the case), they are unlikely to be moved by concerns about

*Miranda* rights. Shipler briefly surveys the mostly pathetic people arrested since 9/11 and finds them to be scarcely scarier than the domestic demons of the Cold War. But this issue should be central, rather than incidental, to his argument. To undo the security system that has burgeoned over the last 10 years, one must attack not simply the consequences of the system but the premise that furnishes its essential engine, and Shipler leaves that substantially untouched. It may also be useful to factor in the spectacular costs of enhanced domestic security expenditures since 9/11, which appear to have accumulated to more than \$1 trillion. As Stephan might amazedly suggest, taxpayers really ought to take note.

JOHN MUELLER is the Woody Hayes Chair of National Security Studies at the Mershon Center for International Security Studies at Ohio State University. His books include *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them* (2006), *Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism From Hiroshima to Al Qaeda* (2010), and *Terror, Security, and Money*, coauthored with Mark Stewart, to be published later this year.

## Bad Educations

Reviewed by Ben Wildavsky

HOW MUCH DO UNDERGRADUATES really learn in college? The question sounds straightforward, but systematic answers have proven remarkably elusive. Now *Academically Adrift*, which provoked a firestorm of discussion when it was released in January, provides a disheartening verdict: not much. Fully 45 percent of undergraduates experience no improvement in their critical thinking, reasoning, and writing skills during their first two years of college, according to sociologists Richard Arum of New York University and Josipa Roksa of the University of Virginia. By their senior year, more than a third see no statistically significant gains, according to a

### ACADEMICALLY ADRIFT:

Limited Learning on College Campuses.

By Richard Arum and  
Josipa Roksa.  
Univ. of Chicago Press.  
259 pp. \$25

more recent report by the authors.

To reach their conclusions, Arum and Roksa used an innovative test called the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), an essay exam that measures writing and analytical skills and has been administered at hundreds of schools around the country for more than a decade. Many institutions keep the results confidential or report them in ways that are hard to decipher (and to compare to those of other colleges). This means that it's difficult for college applicants and their parents to find out how much learning occurs in the classroom. Preserving schools' anonymity, Arum and Roksa worked with other researchers to test a representative mix of 2,322 undergraduates at a diverse group of 24 four-year institutions, first as freshmen and then later in their college careers. The authors also studied surveys and transcripts to determine how college culture and expectations influence the undergraduate academic experience.

How can students learn so little? For one thing, they spend scant time on academic activities. Surveys show that full-time students spend about 27 hours a week either studying or in the classroom; in the early 1960s that figure was 40 hours a week. By the authors' account, students' devotion to social life, extracurricular activities, and (for many) jobs takes up a lot of their time. Yet 85 percent of those in the study had a B-minus average or better.

Arum and Roksa contend that educational institutions themselves are deeply complicit. George Kuh, a researcher at Indiana University who studies higher education, describes a silent compact that often exists between professor and student: "I'll leave you alone if you leave me alone." About one-third of students in the study had taken no course during the previous semester that required more than 40 pages of weekly reading. Half had never taken a class in which they were asked to write more than 20 pages during a semester. At many institutions, faculty members receive slim rewards for concentrating on undergraduate teaching,

so it is little wonder that they give undemanding assignments and focus instead on research and other professional activities that will advance their careers.

Still, some colleges do a much better job than others of teaching students. Colleges can improve student learning simply by creating a culture of high expectations. After controlling for demographic background and level of preparation, Arum and Roksa found that undergraduates whose professors required more reading and writing learned more.

*Academically Adrift* has by no means won instant acceptance in the academy. The authors' reliance on the CLA has fueled debates about the test's methodology, and also whether its focus on generic skills rather than subject-level knowledge limits its usefulness. (The organization that administers the CLA once received a grant from the Kauffman Foundation, where the author of this review is a fellow.) But in interviews Arum and Roksa have pointed out that math and science majors, who may not be asked to do as much writing as their counterparts in the humanities and social sciences, saw the largest CLA gains. The authors suggest that those students' tendency to spend more time on homework may also benefit their reasoning skills.

Whatever criticism this book provokes in the higher-education establishment, its value is enormous. The disconcerting findings of Arum and Roksa should resonate well beyond the academy. What good is broadening college access—an eminently worthy mission—if students aren't acquiring analytical abilities? With better information on academic outcomes (and more transparency from colleges), it will be possible to evaluate which institutions teach students the most, and which offer the best value. Only then can we insist that colleges and universities that don't measure up deliver the undergraduate education American students deserve.

BEN WILDAVSKY is a senior fellow in research and policy at the Kauffman Foundation. He is the author of *The Great Brain Race: How Global Universities Are Reshaping the World* (2010) and coeditor of *Reinventing Higher Education: The Promise of Innovation*, which was just published.

HISTORY

## So Goes the Nation

Reviewed by Jason Sokol

JAMES C. COBB IS A DON OF Southern historians, and his *The South and America Since World War II* is impressive for its scope and sweep. No important event in the last 70 years escapes his eye: the shifting terrain of party politics and the rise of the civil rights movement, the relationship between race and regional identity, the unchecked strength of the South's corporate elite and the sad plight of its working classes, the popularity of NASCAR and the enduring power of the blues, the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the South's role in the election of Barack Obama. The problem is that all of these individuals and episodes merely dance across the pages—and then they are gone.

Cobb covers territory that many others have explored—though few have attempted so thorough a synthesis, or brought the story of the Southern past up to the present. Those familiar with his prodigious output—including *The Selling of the South* (1982), *The Most Southern Place on Earth* (1992), and *Away Down South* (2005)—will find him sometimes recycling it, but also, at his best moments, expanding upon a career's worth of insights.

Cobb offers one major interpretive frame: the idea that America itself has been quite “Southern” all along. “Neither the South nor America can ever be truly understood as anything but a part of the other,” he writes. He is most passionate when eviscerating writers and scholars—economist and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman and political scientist Thomas Schaller chief among them—who have insisted that the South is a land apart. Long after Southern states had buried their Jim Crow signs and jumped into the nation's economic and political mainstream, such observers continued to portray the region as distinctive because of its racially tinged political conservatism. To Cobb, they

### THE SOUTH AND AMERICA SINCE WORLD WAR II.

By James C. Cobb.  
Oxford Univ. Press.  
374 pp. \$24.95

are but the latest incarnations of Northern writers who, in the decades after World War II, established their own moral righteousness by divorcing the nation from Dixie and turning a blind eye to the fact that racism was an American trait rather than a Southern aberration.

Cobb makes a good case for the primacy of the Southern economy in understanding developments in race, politics, and society. To image-conscious white leaders during the early 1960s, Martin Luther King Jr. was a “fearsome figure” indeed. The mayor of Augusta, Georgia—a segregationist hotbed—capitulated to the integration of lunch counters and theaters in 1962 only because “we were afraid they would bring in Martin Luther King.” As Cobb shows, Southern business leaders finally concluded that “their desire to keep the South racially southern must give way to their goal of making it economically American.” When Cobb pushes himself to make strong claims like that, he is best able to illuminate the dynamic link between the South and America.

Though Cobb is a historian, he offers more original observations about the present than he does about the past. He places the horror of Hurricane Katrina within a minihistory of New Orleans, expertly condensing the city's economic, racial, and political ordeals since World War II. And he notes that in the 2008 presidential election, Barack Obama aroused “intensified white resistance” within certain Southern enclaves. There were not many counties where Obama polled considerably worse than Democratic candidate John Kerry had in 2004. The South—particularly Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee—was home to 97 percent of those counties where he did. Yet the other nine states of the former Confederacy offered surprising degrees of support to the man elected America's first black president. To Cobb, this transformation in the region's racial politics outweighs any lingering resistance.

Cobb concludes by returning to the theme of the South and the nation. “The fundamental reality of Dixie was every bit as ‘American’ in 1941 as it is today,” he writes. This is an intriguing line of argument. But the problem is that he means to make a

comparative point—and he presents only half of the picture. Nearly everything Cobb posits about the North and the West is filtered through quotations from *New York Times* and *Newsweek* reporters. One wishes his claims were much more richly documented and textured. This lifelong Southerner is content to remain in his Southern perch while making assertions about the nation writ large.

My hope, as a Northerner with a keen interest in the South as well as the North, is that Cobb will one day fully apply his acumen somewhere above Virginia or beyond Texas. For now, we are left with his compelling insights into Southern history alongside his surface impressions of Northern history—not a bad proposition with so learned a guide as Cobb, but not a profound one either.

JASON SOKOL teaches African-American history at Harvard University. He is the author of *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights* (2006).

## To Get Rich Is Glorious

Reviewed by Martin Walker

THERE ARE DOZENS OF THEORIES to explain the transformation that sparked the Industrial Revolution in Britain and, consequently, shaped the modern world. Some historians say that the traditions of British liberty, law, and private property were behind it. A religious variant of this idea is that it could never have happened without the Reformation and the Protestant ethic. Intellectual historians talk of the impact of the Enlightenment. Some economists point to the capital accumulations that resulted from the slave trade and the exploitation of India and other colonies. Scientists cite the Royal Society, Robert Boyle, and Isaac Newton (and Francis Bacon before them), who charted the way to innovation and made mechanical tinkering respectable. Financial historians tout the Bank of England's organization of debt and credit markets. Historians of agriculture argue for improvements in farm productivity. Technologists contend that it

### BOURGEOIS DIGNITY:

Why Economics Can't Explain the Modern World.

By Deirdre McCloskey.  
Univ. of Chicago Press.  
571 pp. \$35

could never have happened without the steam engine, and maritime historians say the same about the Royal Navy.

Each of these claims has merit; none are satisfactory. Yet there are few more critical questions in history. Though societies in the past—including the Roman Empire, China in the Song dynasty, and late medieval Venice—produced great wealth through innovation, none achieved Britain's rapid and sustained economic growth, which broke through the usual Malthusian constraints (in which prosperity leads to overpopulation that can erode that prosperity).

But in 18th-century Britain, just as Robert Malthus was preparing his argument that mass starvation was looming, the Industrial Revolution gathered momentum. Real income per capita in Britain doubled in the 80 years from 1780 to 1860. That in itself was remarkable. But from 1780 to the present day, British real income per capita has increased by roughly 1,500 percent. And however spasmodic and ugly the process, the magic has spread to much of the world.

Deirdre McCloskey, a professor of economics, history, English, and communication at the University of Illinois at Chicago, ably deploys all her varied fields of expertise to offer a new and overarching explanation. The key to this revolution, she argues, was a great change in the way people spoke and thought about the merchant and the manufacturer and their values. Not only did a new respect for the bourgeoisie emerge after endless generations of aristocratic and religious and clerical disdain, but broad social acceptance made people feel free to innovate and chart their own life courses. An entire social system based on birth, landowning classes, and a stability that made privilege permanent almost overnight adopted the mantra often attributed to Deng Xiaoping: "To get rich is glorious."

"The North Sea economy, and then the Atlantic economy, and then the world economy grew

The key to the Industrial Revolution, an economist argues, was a great change in the way people spoke and thought about the merchant and the manufacturer and their values.

because of changing forms of speech about markets and enterprise and invention,” McCloskey argues. She goes on to examine and dismiss the claims of other scholars about the origins of the Industrial Revolution, and she is right to question them. In the 18th century, France’s foreign trade grew faster than Britain’s, and France had a bigger internal market. China, India, and the Arab world had strong and prosperous seafaring and trading traditions before Europe was launched on its so-called Age of Discovery. So why didn’t these parts of the world make the breakthrough?

McCloskey’s critiques of other historians can be tedious, and her writing style is so didactic in places that it becomes irritating. But the broad thrust of her book and her erudite excitement in ideas are exhilarating. To buttress her argument, she ranges impressively from the changing social meaning of the word “honest” to post-Marxist theory and Goethe’s poetry. When Shakespeare wrote of “honest, honest Iago,” observes McCloskey, he intended to convey that the character was “honorable in an aristocratic way,” while for novelist Jane Austen, writing two centuries later, the word meant upright and “reliable in a bourgeois way, for making deals.”

All of this is greatly impressive and persuasive, but there remains a nagging question: Why did the rhetoric change, and why did the innovating bourgeois become respectable? Was it simply because he had money, and overmortgaged aristocrats saw the advantage of marrying their daughters to his wealth? Or was it that when the Glorious Revolution tamed the British monarchy, the social order became sufficiently open for the traders and inventors to surge in, just as the Bank of England (1694), Jethro Tull’s seed drill (1701), and Thomas Newcomen’s steam engine (1712) were heralding the coming financial and technological surge?

Skepticism toward any single-cause theory of such a transformation is healthy, and it is tempting to say that it was the combination of so many simultaneous changes, a thought that McCloskey implicitly accepts even as she supplies a mono-causal explanation of her own. This book is the second of a planned six-volume series on the bourgeois era, so we shall see where McCloskey’s great project

leads her. Her core argument, that “talk and ethics and ideas caused the innovation,” is a splendidly promising start.

MARTIN WALKER is a Woodrow Wilson Center senior scholar. His fourth novel, *Black Diamond*, will be published this summer.

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## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### Who Are You?

Reviewed by Emily Anthes

#### WHAT MAKES US WHO WE

are? The question has captivated philosophers and scientists for millennia, from the ancient Greeks and their humors to the 19th-century phrenologists who believed they could divine someone’s personality by mapping the bumps on his skull. The personality question captivates us still, though the answers have gotten more complicated—and microscopic. But fret not: To help navigate the modern maze of neurotransmitters, animal models, and evolutionary theory, we have science writer Hannah Holmes and her book *Quirk*.

Today, many psychologists divide our temperaments into a handful of major components known as “The Big Five”: neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness. Each of these factors gets further broken down into six facets—agreeableness, for instance, includes the facets of trust, cooperation, and altruism. How people score on each of these and other dimensions can provide snapshots of their unique personalities.

Holmes devotes each chapter to a single facet (she covers 18 in all), using the same formula to explore each trait. She begins with a peek into a lab where rodents are bred to exhibit one particular facet. In the anxiety chapter, for example, we meet the Nervous Nellies, mice that cower in the dark corners of elevated mazes, afraid to venture into the open. Such animal subjects are helping researchers unpack the biological underpinnings of personality. Want to create one of these fretful

#### QUIRK:

Brain Science Makes Sense of Your Peculiar Personality.

By Hannah Holmes.  
Random House.  
262 pp. \$26

rodents? Disrupt a gene that regulates serotonin, a neurotransmitter that's also been implicated in depression.

Then Holmes shows that the same chemicals and genes influence human personalities. Study a group of anxious female college students, and you'll find that they, too, have genetic variants that alter the way their brains process serotonin. Finally, Holmes explores why such diversity of personality exists in the first place. "Why," she asks, "would evolution produce animals that appear to be overly fearful, and overly bold?"

Biologists have long known that, from an evolutionary point of view, a diverse population is a healthy one. A species that includes creatures of all shapes, sizes, and talents is more likely to have some individuals that can survive whatever challenge the world throws at them.

It's not a new idea, but it's interesting to consider in relation to personality. Let's look again at anxiety. When food was scarce, brave animals willing to travel to fill their bellies would have had an obvious evolutionary advantage. But venturing away from home comes with risks—of becoming lunch for other critters, say, or suffering a grievous injury. So when food was plentiful and easy to find, the nervous homebodies would be more likely to survive and pass on their high-anxiety genes.

Holmes has a gift for making complex science clear and accessible, but *Quirk* has one flaw: It exhibits more than a whiff of biological determinism. Consider the discussion of altruism. Researchers have found that a neurotransmitter known as vasopressin is connected to altruism. The gene responsible for the vasopressin system comes in two forms—a short gene, which leads to less vasopressin, and a long gene, which leads to more of it. On average, Holmes writes, "people with two copies of the short version of the vasopressin gene give the least; those with one long and one short copy are middling; fools who give the shirt off their back are most likely to have two copies of the long version. Vasopressin and



*Brains Imagine* (1995), by the artist Myrrh

altruistic behavior look as though they're bound in holy matrimony. Or in biological matrimony, at any rate."

The genetic effect on altruism is indeed remarkable, but DNA is not the end of the story. To assess generosity, scientists often use a game in which players are given a small amount of cash and asked to decide how much to contribute to a common pool of money. Noting, for example, that subjects from cultures in which offering charity is insulting tend to give little, Holmes concedes culture's influence on this experiment.

It's an observation that warrants more than a couple of sentences in a chapter chock-full of molecular biology. Even if Holmes wanted to maintain her rigid focus on genes and neurotransmitters, it would have been worthwhile to remind readers that brains and genes are just part of the puzzle. With personality, as with most human traits, it's nature *and* nurture. Holmes's book, interesting as it is, addresses only half of the equation.

EMILY ANTHERS is a science writer who lives in Brooklyn. She is working on a book about biotechnology and the future of animals.

# Reasoning Against Reason

Reviewed by Jag Bhalla

*THE SOCIAL ANIMAL* IS A BOOK of grand and diverse ambitions, by one of the nation's most intellectually creative journalists, *New York Times* columnist David Brooks. His aim is to revolutionize our culture's operative beliefs about human nature, using scientific studies that reveal the "building blocks of human flourishing." His book is part fiction, part nonfiction popularization (neuroscience, psychology, sociology), and part grand synthesis (intellectual history, social policy). The genre-blended result delivers some hybrid vitality, but at the expense of coherence and rigor.

Brooks believes Western culture has a lobotomized view of human nature inherited from the French Enlightenment. René Descartes and other philosophers described humans as autonomous individuals endowed with powers of reason that are separate from and pitted against the emotions. The ability to flourish depended on an individual's suppression of his unruly passions. British Enlightenment thinkers such as David Hume and Adam Smith argued that we are fundamentally social beings, that our reasoning faculty is weak, and that our emotions are strong and can be usefully educated. The French rationalist view fit better with the rise of the mechanistic sciences. But old dualisms must now duel with data: Science supports the British view.

In a fictional narrative, Brooks weaves vignettes from the lives of two characters, "Harold" and "Erica," to illustrate the "hidden sources of love, character, and achievement" of his subtitle. He uses their upbringings, educations, courtship, and so on to model what research shows are key influences on a successful life. For instance, Erica pursues a career in business after a successful entrepreneur with whom she identifies visits her school. Brooks explains that studies show that ambitious people

## THE SOCIAL ANIMAL:

The Hidden Sources of Love, Character, and Achievement.

By David Brooks.  
Random House.  
424 pp. \$27

"often have met someone like themselves who achieved great success."

*The Social Animal* is a marathon surface skim of a sea of scientific studies. Brooks claims this isn't a science book, since it doesn't get its feet wet in the details. But the tradeoff of depth for a flood of factoids may satisfy neither fans of science writing nor lay readers. To give but one example: To illustrate the limits of the conscious mind, Brooks notes that at its peak it "has a processing capacity 200,000 times weaker than [that of] the unconscious." It's a tantalizing observation, but he doesn't indicate how this capacity was measured.

As readers of his *Times* column might expect, Brooks serves up a smorgasbord of seductive sound bites and contagious coinages (e.g., "Emotional Positioning System"). But some fall flat (as in the New Age-y "the swirls that make up our own minds are shared swirls" and his snarky "sanctimommies"). And he struggles with conceptual laxity, missing opportunities to clarify or revolutionize the terms of the debate. He mainly uses the word "unconscious" to describe information processing that is emotional, instinctive, or not explicitly reasoned, though one of his key goals is to de-Freud our worldview and show that the "unconscious" isn't just a collection of dark, nasty urges.

It's in his efforts to "draw out the social, political, and moral implications" of the science that Brooks reveals his true colors: He's a timid revolutionary. Though he makes some practical recommendations for education—such as providing "structure for disorganized families" through parenting classes or intensive mentoring—he chooses not to draw broader political conclusions. How should we deal with the fact that our economies and institutions are built on assumptions about human nature that are now demonstrably wrong?

The human flourishing that Brooks describes is precisely what Thomas Jefferson had in mind when he quoted Aristotle's phrase "pursuit of happiness." Jefferson thought of the Declaration of Independence as a revolutionary document grounded in science. Brooks takes us toward a declaration of interdependence, based on scientific, if not yet self-

evident, truths. For Jefferson and Aristotle, the individual pursuit of happiness meant a life well lived, which required strong relationships and the fulfillment of community obligations. They knew what science today is rediscovering—that the flourishing of the individual depends on the flourishing of others.

We aren't as far advanced in this revolution as Brooks would have us believe, but his book, despite its flaws, is a contribution to intellectual history in the making.

JAG BHALLA is a writer and entrepreneur living in Washington, D.C. He is the author of *I'm Not Hanging Noodles on Your Ears* (2009), and is currently at work on a book about old ideas undergirding our discourse that are now demonstrably wrong.

ARTS & LETTERS

## Words at Play

Reviewed by Laura Kipnis

IN *THE PLEASURE OF THE Text*, critic Roland Barthes bemoaned the sorry state of literacy in his time, which was mid-1970s France. Half the population didn't read at all, "a national disgrace." Literary studies too was moribund, conquered by two tedious forms of moralizing: "the prevailing one, of platitude; and the minority one, of rigor." It was a frigid, pleasure-challenged climate for literature. Barthes imagined an "antihero" who gains access to the *bliss* of reading by renouncing literary judgments altogether, instead savoring the contradictions and unpredictability inherent in language itself.

Marjorie Garber's *The Use and Abuse of Literature* opens with a strikingly similar lament about literacy in her time, which is present-day America. The share of college graduates receiving English degrees is a shockingly low four per 100, and there's been an accompanying drop in reading rates across all age groups. This is bad news not just for literature professors, but for democracy, since reading correlates strongly with various forms of civic partic-

ipation. Garber's approach to putting things right brings Roland Barthes' antihero back to mind.

If anyone is qualified to rescue literature from the threat of irrelevancy, it's Garber, the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of English at Harvard, and author of some 15 books on cultural and literary matters, including six on Shakespeare alone. She simply knows everything there is to know about the history and practice of literature and criticism. Yet despite having written a sizable chunk of her previous books on our most venerated writer, Garber is not a proponent of the Great Books approach—she's no fetishizer of the canon or timeless notions of quality. For her, "literature" is a shifting cultural status ascribed to books by critical arbiters of the moment, not an intrinsic quality. Rather, there are literary ways of reading, and literary ways of writing—a book *becomes* literature when we ask literary questions of it. Equally, books lose the status of literature when they fall from these considerations, the fate of many—perhaps the majority of—works by once-revered authors.

For Garber, literary ways of reading pose open-ended questions—the most interesting of which are those without definitive answers. What she's dislodging with her deceptively anodyne suggestions are the traditional modes of criticism that hinge on judgments of quality. She's deeply uninterested in what makes particular books good or bad; what engages her is how meaning is produced. She prefers the brand of criticism that engages in uncertainty, productive mistakes, and continuous re-readings that settle nothing—"every *way* of reading produces an equal and opposite *way* of re-reading."

Useless speculation and lack of purpose are the heroes of this story. Along with Barthes, and another influential Frenchman she's fond of invoking, deconstructionist Jacques Derrida, she upholds "play" as the watchword: Literary theory is at its best in "the play of language, the ambivalent ambiguities of the signifier, and the modes of counterintuitive argument." If play is the hero, false dichotomies are the enemy. No binary goes undeconstructed: fiction and nonfiction, high and low, truth and lies, memoir and false memories.

Which isn't to say that Garber is predictably

### THE USE AND ABUSE OF LITERATURE.

By Marjorie Garber.  
Pantheon.  
320 pp. \$28.95

trendy: One of the surprises here is her rousing support for that old warhorse, New Criticism, or “close reading,” in her mind a more inherently radical way of understanding texts than the sociological and historical methods that the denizens of English departments generally regard as “political.” The practice of mining literature for nuggets of self-help, whether ethical or psychological, also rouses her contempt. Reading Marcel Proust shouldn’t be the answer to anything, since literature’s refusal to be used is its “most moral act.” (She’s also oddly irked by books written from the point of view of animals—Laura Hillenbrand’s 2001 horseracing tale *Seabiscuit* comes in for some rare derision.)

To my mind, Garber is entirely right in every respect. But if literary studies is a way of asking literary questions, I can’t help asking one about Garber’s own literary style. I was left wondering what a defense of literature by Garber would read like if it embodied the imaginative play and stylistic freedom she celebrates, rather than the scholarly apparatus and muted tones she employs here. Garber has, after all, previously romped her way through such subjects as cross-dressing, the love of dogs, and the erotics of real estate, in books that were impressively researched but somewhat more unleashed. *The Use and Abuse of Literature* is an enormously learned and wide-ranging defense of the literary imagination, but as Garber herself says, “The future importance of literary studies . . . will come from taking risks, not from playing it safe.”

Laura Kipnis’s most recent book is *How to Become a Scandal: Adventures in Bad Behavior* (2010). She is a professor in the Department of Radio, Television, and Film at Northwestern University.

## A Life Set to Music

Reviewed by Miles Hoffman

Wendy Lesser discovered the string quartets of Dmitri Shostakovich and fell in love. I admire her passion for this music, and I understand her fascination with the composer. At his

### MUSIC FOR SILENCED VOICES:

Shostakovich and His Fifteen Quartets.

By Wendy Lesser.  
Yale Univ. Press.  
350 pp. \$28

best, Shostakovich (b. 1906) managed to turn the simplest of musical building blocks—melodies and rhythms of often-striking banality—into extraordinary musical structures of vast emotional range, all while living a strange double life as both privileged beneficiary and tormented victim of the Soviet regime, under which he lived until his death in 1975.

This book, however, adds little of consequence to the study of the music or the man. Lesser is a cultural critic, a novelist, and the editor of the literary journal *The Threepenny Review*, and she writes well. Sadly, though, she calls her reliability into question right away when she declares that Shostakovich’s “own voice” cannot be heard “in even the best of his symphonies,” a surprisingly sweeping assessment from a nonmusician who conceded a page earlier that she has listened only to “most” of the composer’s 15 symphonies. Later, she gives a nuanced analysis of the Soviet author Mikhail Zoshchenko’s use of language—without mentioning that she doesn’t speak Russian.

Distressingly, much of Lesser’s account of Shostakovich’s life consists of material and insights that appear in previous biographies. Time and again, she uses others’ stories as if she were the one who had realized their illustrative value. I kept Elizabeth Wilson’s important compendium, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (1994), at hand as I read, and though Lesser acknowledges her debt to the book—calling it “a major source” and citing it frequently—I was struck nonetheless by how often she weaves Wilson’s stories into the narrative as if the syntheses were her own.

To cite but one example: In an anecdote about the Twelfth String Quartet and Dmitri Tsyganov, the violinist to whom the quartet was dedicated, Wilson writes, “When Tsyganov anxiously brought up the subject of serialism, Shostakovich retorted, ‘But one finds examples of it in Mozart’s music.’” Lesser retells the same story: “And when Tsyganov voiced concerns about the explicitly serial elements in the quartet, Shostakovich apparently answered him by saying, ‘But one finds examples of it in Mozart’s music.’” The only credit she gives Wilson is for the direct Shostakovich quote.

*Music for Silenced Voices* is based on two major

premises. The first is that because Shostakovich's string quartets—15 in all—flew under the radar of suffocating Soviet scrutiny, the composer was able to fill them with music that was more “pure” and “personal” than the music of his symphonies—the implication being that the quartets are *the* key to a true understanding of Shostakovich and are somehow of greater value than most of his more famous and “public” works.

This is an argument clearly based on personal preference and enthusiasm. One could easily make the case, for example, that nothing could be more personal or revealing than the manner in which an artist responds to obstacles and duress. As Igor Stravinsky once wrote, “Whatever diminishes constraint, diminishes strength. The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees one's self of the chains that shackle the spirit.” Lesser is so wedded to her theory of the quartets' unique status that she casually dismisses the opinion of the distinguished conductor Maxim Shostakovich, the composer's own son, who said of his father's work, “His quartets and his symphonies—yes, it is the same circle of feelings, just on a different scale.”

The book's second major premise is that readers will want to be told quite specifically what “we” hear and feel in each quartet. Lesser informs us that the Seventh Quartet, for example, “is not asking for sympathy, nor is it crying tears over its own sorrow,” and that “in the Adagio fourth movement [of the Third Quartet] we are dead.” She is certainly entitled to feel and hear whatever she likes, but as converts and zealots often do, she overestimates the interest to others of her particular “good news.”

Cultural historian Jacques Barzun once wrote that the critic must not “blur in the minds of his readers . . . the difference between words and music.” To the extent that Wendy Lesser has communicated her enthusiasm and encouraged readers to delve deeply into the Shostakovich quartets, she has done the music a service. To the extent that she has imposed her own limited and limiting interpretations on the reader, she has not.

MILES HOFFMAN is violist and artistic director of the American Chamber Players and music commentator for NPR's *Morning Edition*. He is the author of *The NPR Classical Music Companion* (1997).

## Typical Type

Reviewed by Sara Sklaroff

HERE'S A RIDDLE: WHAT IS so ubiquitous and generic that it barely registers in the mass consciousness, and yet so objectionable to some that it's been publicly denounced as “fascist” and, simply, “crap”?

The answer is the typeface Helvetica. Created in 1957 by two Swiss typographers, it is both a modernist icon and a workhorse default, at once retro and still in heavy use. It's not derided in quite the same terms as typefaces such as Papyrus (think of those hideous *Avatar* subtitles) or—heaven forbid—the goofy script of Comic Sans. Still, to some graphic designers Helvetica is emblematic of crushing conformity, or, at the very least, a pitiful lack of creativity. American Apparel, Gap, and Crate & Barrel use it to hawk their wares—it has long been a favorite of corporations trying to seem friendly or down-to-earth. To others, Helvetica is typographic perfection, infinitely flexible and exquisitely modern, with a gorgeous interplay of positive and negative space.

This tension among the typeface's many meanings was one of the themes of Gary Hustwit's excellent 2007 documentary *Helvetica*, which featured many shots of New York City subway signage. But as design historian Paul Shaw explains in *Helvetica and the New York Subway System*, Helvetica has not always been the face of the city's underground rail. Shaw delves into the question of why Standard, the typeface used in the 1960s modernization of the system's graphics, was replaced by the very similar Helvetica. The book is also a concise history of the New York subway, a visual archive of a century's worth of underground signs (some of which are still in use), and an impressive study of the conflict between the purity of design and the messiness of the real world.

New York City's first subway line was opened

### HELVETICA AND THE NEW YORK SUBWAY SYSTEM.

The True (Maybe) Story.

By Paul Shaw.  
MIT Press.  
131 pp. \$39.95



After decades of visual chaos, the typeface Helvetica brought at least the illusion of order to the New York City subway system.

by a private company in 1904. It soon had a rival; neither included the other's routes on its maps. In 1940, the city bought both systems and merged them with its own. The new system inherited the visual noise of all three: painted terracotta lettering, mosaic station names, porcelain enamel directional signs, and hand-lettered service notices, with no standardization whatsoever.

In 1957, New York designer George Salomon sent the city an unsolicited proposal for an integrated (and quite fetching) signage system based on the elegant sans serif typeface Futura and some unmissable fat directional arrows. The city declined to use the overall plan, but adopted Salomon's color-coded route map, the first to show the entire subway system at once. This would be the pattern for years to come: an acknowledgment that something had to be done about the chaos, but a lack of the wherewithal (money, political weight, courage) to see a comprehensive plan through. During the 1960s, cities such as Milan, London, and Boston redesigned their airport and subway graphics, and New York attempted to follow suit by hiring the design firm Unimark International and beginning an over-

haul using the Standard typeface. But the unmanageable sprawl of the subway system—not to mention the city's financial troubles in the early 1970s—thwarted designers' best intentions. The only aesthetic constant was an altogether different kind of signage: graffiti.

By the 1990s, however, Helvetica was everywhere. Why did it eventually trump all other typefaces? In large part because it *is* the ultimate default choice. Shaw lists the various letter-making equipment catalogued in the 1989 *MTA Sign Manual*, including machines used to produce digital type, phototype, and computer-based letters and stencils. "The only typeface that was available for all of these systems and methods," he writes, "was Helvetica."

At the same time that advancing technology assured Helvetica's fate in New York, the personal computer was bringing the typeface to a far wider audience. The masses now possess the means of typographic production, but there's no guarantee that good design will follow. Helvetica can indeed be a thing of beauty, but only in the right hands.

SARA SKLAROFF is the editorial director of *Diabetes Forecast*.

RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## The Life and Times of Socrates

Reviewed by F. S. Naiden

LIKE DOCTOR JOHNSON, Socrates had a Boswell—Plato. That was not the only disadvantage under which Socrates had to labor. Imagine our having Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1791) without any of Samuel Johnson's

works. Then imagine not one but two Boswells. In Socrates' case, the second was Xenophon, the Athenian soldier and author who wrote two dialogues in which Socrates figures as the chief speaker.

Into this quandary Bettany Hughes inserts *The Hemlock Cup*, a new biography of Socrates. Hughes tries to ignore Plato and Xenophon, and write a *Life and Times*. She has good reason for this evasive maneuver. Socrates was put to death after being convicted by an Athenian court on a charge of impiety and "corrupting the youth," and this episode in the philosopher's life invites an explanation that takes in all the circumstances surrounding this most famous of ancient Greek trials—the attitudes of the jurors; the way of life in Athens, an early democracy; the man-made environment and its influence on public business. The death of Socrates, an event that the painter Jacques-Louis David portrayed on a narrow scale, demands a grand scale.

Hughes has read widely, if conventionally, in recent scholarly literature, and so she provides up-to-date chapters or digressions on Athenian religion, the fifth-century BC building program for the Acropolis, and the Peloponnesian War. Aristophanes is an important figure, thanks to his satire of Socrates in *The Clouds*, and so is Alcibiades, the Athenian general and admiral who was perhaps Socrates' favorite pupil. Other early philosophers, nota-

bly the advocate of humanism and ethical relativism Protagoras, bump up against ordinary Athenians for whom we have scraps of epigraphical evidence, such as a man named Simon, who was perhaps the proprietor of a cobbler shop Socrates frequented. Hughes is at her best in describing the Athenian agora, where Socrates spent much of his time engaged in the conversations that Plato and Xenophon would rework. Good on Socrates' social life, she is best on his social environs.

Alas, Plato and Xenophon keep getting in the way. The pathos of the death of Socrates derives from three Platonic dialogues, the *Crito*, *Phaedo*, and *Apology*. The best defense of Socrates (much better than the defense

Plato says Socrates gave in court) appears in Xenophon's works,

which present Socrates as a practical man and a good citizen, not an atheist or a corrupter of youth. The difference between Plato's pathos and Xenophon's advocacy makes the conviction of Socrates problematic. Plato implies that Socrates died because of his own nobility, which the court resented. Xenophon implies that Socrates died because the court did not want or get the facts. Plato implies that Athens is degraded. Xenophon disagrees—the polis is only mistaken.

Hughes does not know whom to believe. She relates Athens's errors during the Peloponnesian War, which ended in 404 BC, just five years before the trial of Socrates, yet she praises Athenian democracy without any of Xenophon's reservations. Xenophon and Socrates both admired Sparta, and Xenophon lived there after being exiled from Athens, but Hughes is contemptuous of Sparta, and indifferent to other Greek city-states such as Argos and Thebes. Yet the career of Socrates suggests that some attention ought to be paid to Sparta and the others. So far as we can tell, the Athenian

### THE HEMLOCK CUP:

Socrates, Athens, and the Search for the Good Life.

By Bettany Hughes.  
Knopf.  
484 pp. \$35

Did the spirit of Athenian democracy kill Socrates?

courts performed worse than the courts in other Greek cities. The trial of Socrates is far from the only illustration of this weakness. We know that the Athenian assembly dealt highhandedly with the city's officials, a mistake to which Socrates objected. That response may have made him unpopular. We also know that Sparta's assembly mostly avoided this sort of mistake. Did certain Athenian institutional weaknesses kill Socrates? Or did the spirit of Athenian democracy kill him? Hughes avoids these questions, preferring to write a dramatized Baedeker.

Readers who want an introduction to Socrates' Athens will benefit from this book (and would have benefited more were it shorter). Those seeking an introduction to Socrates will find that Plato still has custody of him, and that Xenophon is still trying to liberate him, as any advocate would, from a politically controversial entourage.

F. S. NAIDEN is an associate professor of history at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

## Do You Want to Live Forever?

Reviewed by Edward Tenner

AMERICANS HAVE BECOME obsessed with the once esoteric topic of how to retard, suspend, or even reverse aging. Low-calorie diets, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, electronic scanning and uploading of the mind's contents and powers, and the preservation of cadavers for ultimate revival are among the suggested antidotes. Ray Kurzweil's book *The Singularity Is Near*, in which the computer scientist predicts that humans and machines will merge and make immortality possible, continues to inspire media coverage six years after its publication. The time is right for a

**THE  
IMMORTALIZATION  
COMMISSION:**  
Science and the  
Strange Quest to  
Cheat Death.

By John Gray.  
Farrar, Straus & Giroux.  
273 pp. \$24

humanist counterattack against such radical technological utopianism. For polemical verve, the new death defiance has met its match in the prolific English political philosopher John Gray. *The Immortalization Commission*, in which Gray melds history with philosophy as he seeks to demonstrate the futility of pushing against death's outer limit, is in a genre of its own.

The book appears at first to examine two seemingly unconnected groups: the small band of upper-class Englishmen and -women of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who sought proof that the mind persists after death, and a group of Bolshevik theorists and officials who aspired to re-engineer the species. The English psychics (who included eminent figures such as former prime minister Arthur Balfour) were alarmed by Darwinian theory's intolerable implication that humans were no different than animals and might be doomed to extinction; since most of them had given up on religion, they turned to science to prove that human personalities survive death. The Bolsheviks likewise rejected the notion that they were "the spawn of chance," and set about remaking the human animal in an attempt to conquer death. Though they never succeeded in extending lives, they ended millions prematurely in their quest to destroy and then rebuild humanity.

In seeking evidence of mental life after death, the English group went beyond conventional séances to produce texts supposedly dictated by the spirits of the dead that, Gray argues, were merely projections of the living writers' shared philosophy and culture. Their most spectacular project was the natural conception and birth of a boy they believed had been planned by the spirits of the dead to deliver a messiah for humanity in crisis. Only recently has it been revealed that a man and a woman of the circle, married to others, carried out this plan, possibly with the tacit knowledge of the woman's husband.

They never proclaimed their goal or told the child of his destiny, and he lived a conventional if adventurous upper-class existence as a Guards officer and spy, learning something of his origin only near the end of his life, after he had become a Catholic monk.

For the Soviets, the goal was not communication with the hereafter but physical transformation on earth. The so-called God-builders of the late tsarist era, who believed that science could be harnessed to cheat death, were influenced by the Russian Orthodox mystic Nikolai Fedorovich Fedorov, who proposed reconstituting the bodies of all the earth's dead and sending them into space to colonize the universe. Upon Vladimir Lenin's death in 1924, the revolutionary Leonid Krasin established the Immortalization Commission of the book's title to plan Lenin's mausoleum. The memorial, which was erected in Moscow's Red Square, was not just a public symbol of the dead leader's continuing influence, but a laboratory for the conservation and eventual resurrection of his body and mind (though physical deterioration and

invasive study of Lenin's brain soon foreclosed that option). On a much grander scale, in Soviet hands the idea of overcoming death by remaking humanity became, Gray argues, an inspiration for human experimentation and eventually mass murder, which he recounts with bloody specificity.

Gray's goal, revealed in his last chapter, is to expose cryonics, the Singularity, and other forms of modern immortalism through extremes of tainted lineage: English ineffectuality and Soviet carnage. To those who believe that by midcentury technology will achieve the God-builders' goals, Gray's book will seem the desperate expression of a doomed outlook. But others will find in *The Immortalization Commission* a darkly rewarding vindication of their suspicion that in "longing for everlasting life, humans show that they remain the death-defined animal."

EDWARD TENNER, a contributing editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*, is the author of *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences* (1996) and *Our Own Devices: How Technology Remakes Humanity* (2003). He is a visiting scholar at the Rutgers Center for Mobile Communication Studies and the Princeton Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies.

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## PORTRAIT



### *Alice Pre-Wonderland*

Charles Dodgson (better known as Lewis Carroll) was a fellow in mathematics at Oxford when he made the acquaintance of Alice Liddell, the six-year-old daughter of the dean of Christ Church. An enthusiastic photographer and adorer of children, particularly girls, Dodgson shot Alice throughout her childhood, most famously producing this suggestive photograph in 1858. Four years later, he concocted a tale to entertain Alice and her sisters that became the children's classic *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In a book out this spring, *The Alice Behind Wonderland*, Simon Winchester observes that while there's no evidence that Dodgson acted improperly, his fondness for photographing young girls "puzzles and intrigues to this day."

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