

# W

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SURVEYING THE WORLD OF IDEAS

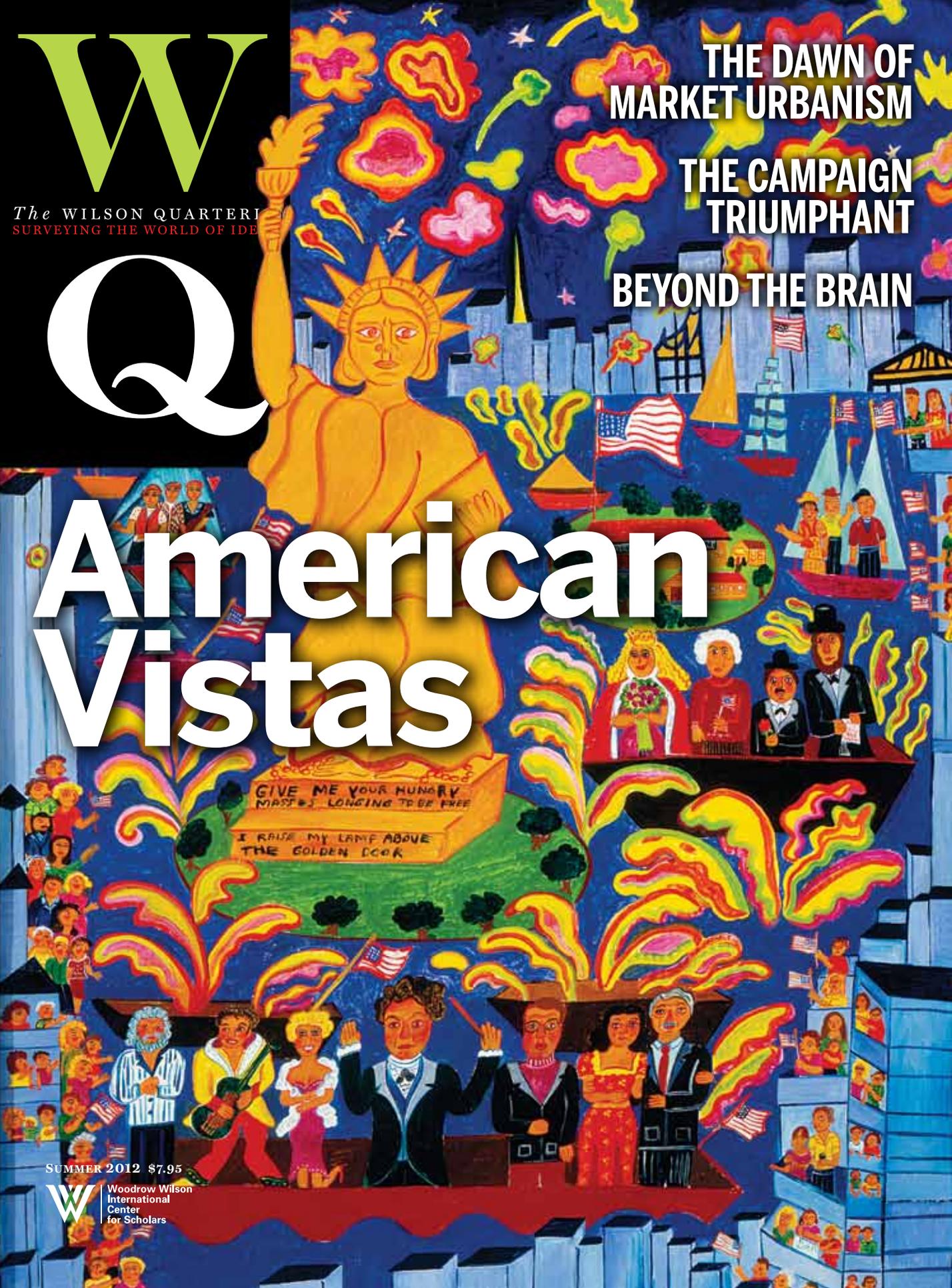
# Q

THE DAWN OF  
MARKET URBANISM

THE CAMPAIGN  
TRIUMPHANT

BEYOND THE BRAIN

# American Vistas



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# FEATURES



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Twelve years into a new century, a kind of grimness pervades the United States. Is it just the postcrisis hangover of a stagnant job market, or have the era's upheavals and uncertainties, at home and abroad, changed something fundamental? To find out, we enlisted some of our longtime contributors.

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ON THE COVER: *Miss Liberty Celebration* (1987) © 2012 Malcah Zeldis/Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York. ABOVE: The SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket lifts off.

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

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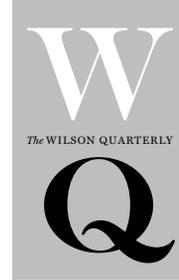
You hold in your hands the last print edition of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

Beginning with the Autumn issue, the *WQ* will appear in digital form only—as an app available for Apple and Android devices, on the Nook and Kindle, and as a PDF available for download on your computer. (Visit our Web site, [www.wilsonquarterly.com](http://www.wilsonquarterly.com), for a full menu of digital options.) We hope you will join us on the next leg of a journey that has already stretched over 36 years.

Technology is often painted as an enemy, a disrupter, but that has not been our experience at the *WQ*. Without the technological advances of the last two decades, this magazine would not have survived. I don't remember with any great fondness the days when editors leafed through mounds of books in search of illustrations, then set assistants to work typing letters to hidebound clerks at distant museums begging them to mail copies of the selected images, before the next millennium, please. Thanks to online databases and other resources, we can now do that work quickly, with many fewer hands. I distinctly remember the excitement I felt in 2001 when we were able to gather essays from all over the globe via e-mail for our cluster "How the World Views America."

Still, this is an apt moment to salute all that has gone before. I tip my hat to the late Peter Braestrup, the Yale-educated former Marine who pulled off the astonishing feat of launching the *WQ* in 1976 and shepherding it into adolescence, and to Jay Tolson, my brilliant predecessor, who grew it into adulthood. Many others, from editors and writers to businesspeople and financial supporters, have helped make the *WQ* what it is. But it is you, our readers, who have been the ultimate sustainers of the whole enterprise. The greatest reward for me and my colleagues has been our sense of serving a great community of restless, intellectually curious people—seekers. We hope you will seek us out on the other side of the digital divide.

—STEVEN LAGERFELD



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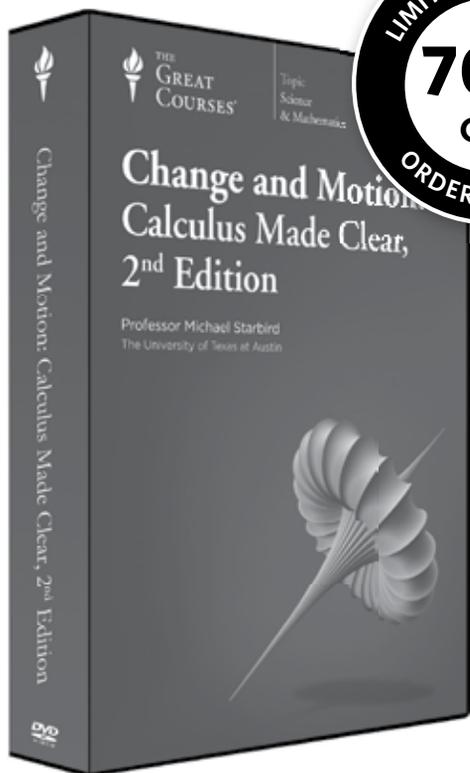
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# LETTERS

## CONNECTIVITY ISSUES

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN RIGHTLY regrets that communications technologies haven't much expanded global awareness ["A Small World After All?," Spring '12], and so, among other things, he recommends a different approach. Facebook should steer contacts not just to high school classmates but to "strangers in Africa or India," while Google could use information derived from people's searches to "help you discover compelling content about topics you've never explored."

It's a worthy prospect, but impractical, and not only because of the Hayek principle that says that if people have the resources to do something and they don't do it on their own, forcing and nudging them won't work. It's also because the Web has accelerated information about world events to near instantaneous tempos. This does not produce deeper understanding and heightened curiosity. Rather, it produces an appetite for familiar items easily consumed. If you offer more information, people need more time to process it, to pick and choose, evaluate, and conclude. In the case of the Internet, though, more information

appears in a torrent, meaning less time to examine each piece.

The glut of information impacts social life as well, as Christine Rosen nicely outlines ["Electronic Intimacy," Spring '12]. She contrasts social relations online to an old-fashioned correspondence from her early adulthood. The latter was intimate, thoughtful, one to one, and *slow*. Online communications are one to many and, according to research cited by Rosen, anxiety producing and objectifying (because you can't handle so many "friends" and "profiles" if you treat each one as a complex and distinct human subject).

Again, speed is part of the problem. The Web allows one person to communicate private news to 200 others at once and to receive constant updates from *their* 200 lives. The latest figures from Nielsen set the tally of text messages by a teen with a mobile device at 3,500 per month. As the total number of messages rises, the value of each one of them diminishes, as do the most meaningful human relationships. Love and friendship need time and circumstance. Social media hasten the first and bypass the second, to the point that we need a

new name for them, one that underscores their superficiality. "Contact media"? "Talk media"?

**Mark Bauerlein**

*Author, The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (2008)*

*Professor of English  
Emory University  
Atlanta, Ga.*

TOM VANDERBILT NOTES THAT text messages and e-mail are increasingly supplanting the old-fashioned telephone call ["The Call of the Future," Spring '12]. I admit to being pleased at the potential reprieve from the spoken (occasionally strident) accounts of the lives of others that I overhear being publicly rendered, even laundered, through landline or cell phone calls. In a world where ambient noise is escalating alarmingly, the silent tap of keypads is like music to the ears of those of us unfortunate enough to be within earshot of someone else's telephone interlude. I find just as much satisfaction in receiving a meaningful, well-thought-out e-mail or social network message as in having a leisurely telephone conversation.

**Joseph Ting**

*Brisbane, Australia*

ETHAN ZUCKERMAN RIGHTLY observes that news travels faster

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than ever on the Internet, and that social media facilitate local connections, making possible the Arab Spring revolutions (not to mention Occupy Wall Street). Yet the same radical connectivity also provides a means of censoring information. Literacy, even before it was digital, served both as a tool for liberation and as a repressive mechanism for controlling the citizenry.

Christine Rosen looks back with nostalgia to the time when letters were composed with a pen, a technology more conducive to reflection—and more private—than today’s text messaging and e-mail. But though we’ve all hit “send” unwisely, such things also happened in the age of perfumed stationery; Horace had good reason to warn 2,000 years ago that a word once uttered can’t be taken back.

There were privacy issues in the epistolary age as well: Seals could be broken, envelopes steamed open. Shakespeare’s Hamlet escapes execution by opening the letter Claudius sends to the English king and revising the message to request that its bearers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, be put to death instead.

The digital age has given us more text than we can possibly read. Again, the printing press did that, as did its predecessor, manuscript culture.

What’s revolutionary is that the Internet opens membership in the writers club to all. More and more people are writing online about a wider array of subjects, and they’re doing it without the aid of editors, publishers, or bookstores. Cultural gatekeepers ask, “Should everybody write?” (they clearly think not), but

writers ignore the naysayers and type merrily away.

**Dennis Baron**

*Author, A Better Pencil: Readers, Writers, and the Digital Revolution (2009)*

*Professor of English and Linguistics  
University of Illinois  
Urbana, Ill.*

## CONSERVATIVE CORRECTIVE

DANIEL AKST CRAFTED A thoughtful and intellectually generous article [“A Manifesto at 50,” Spring ’12] analyzing the significance a half-century later of the leftist Port Huron Statement and (secondarily) of its conservative predecessor from 1960, the Sharon Statement. Alas, Akst’s thoughtfulness is not matched by an adequate understanding of the political theory that has animated American conservatives ever since the Sharon Statement.

What particularly rankles is Akst’s strange assertion that the Sharon Statement, written to guide the fledgling Young Americans for Freedom organization, was somehow a manifestation of a “utopian” impulse. In truth, the entire intellectual edifice of modern conservatism—based as it is on Madisonian liberalism and practicality—is built on an explicit rejection of utopianism. Recognizing that the word “utopia” literally means “no place,” conservatives reject overarching government in large part because of its tendency to try to create utopias where none can exist. As government attempts to remake human nature itself, it increasingly turns to forms of compulsion that diminish liberty—which is why the group founded in Sharon pronounced in

its name that “freedom” was its primary concern.

Akst also skates over the dramatic climax of the Sharon Statement, with its then-breathtaking assertion “that the forces of international Communism are, at present, the greatest single threat to these liberties; [and] that *the United States should stress victory over, rather than coexistence with, this menace*” (emphasis added). I dare say every attendee at the Port Huron conference would have bristled at this declaration as an example of dangerous “militarism”—one of the evils Akst repeatedly credited the Port Huron “idealists” for resisting. For the next 30 years the American Left did everything in its power to oppose the very idea of “victory over” international Communism, while it was the antiutopians of the Right, led by Ronald Reagan, who insisted on achieving that victory and thus expanded liberty, human dignity, and prosperity worldwide.

Surely this victory over Communism amounts to a “progressive” achievement, thus contradicting Akst’s rather tendentious claim that “all the important progressive changes of the last couple of centuries . . . have bubbled up through social movements like those framed by the words written in Michigan 50 years ago.”

My father was one of the 86 people who attended the Sharon Conference. He spent the next 40 years as a volunteer leader in the vineyards of conservatism—a difficult and completely unremunerated labor. He would have disagreed with Akst’s claim that the leftist mission described at Port Huron is a “much

heavier lift” than the conservative enterprise of protecting liberty by battling the utopian impulses of the Left.

None of which is to denigrate Akst’s admirable interest in helping Left and Right find common ground. But the conservative vision should not be misdescribed as an expression of easy selfishness, unconcerned with the broader community’s needs.

**Quin Hillyer**

*Senior Fellow, Center for Individual Freedom*

*Senior Editor, The American Spectator  
Mobile, Ala.*

## POLITICAL SCIENCE

CHRISTOPHER CLAUSEN’S ESSAY [“Left, Right, and Science,” Spring ’12] reveals how difficult it now is to think clearly about the place of science in public life. Clausen seems to believe in the fact/value distinction. He argues that scientific language is improperly employed to discuss issues that are “really moral and political.” His main point seems to be that science deals exclusively with facts and, thus, cannot dictate policy choices, which depend on values.

But Clausen is not consistent in this distinction. He cites evidence that scientists are more left-wing than the average American, intimating a left-wing bias in the institutions of science. He calls scientific institutions “a team of specialized players” and insists that “science is anything but above the battle.” So, is science a “different realm of thought” or party to the political fray?

Those who see science as value free have a less confusing view: Science serves as a constraint on any policy. No matter your values, you

may not ignore facts. If anthropogenic climate change is an established fact, any policy regarding economic development or environmental protection must be built upon that fact. Scientific fact is common ground that allows policy discussions to rise above the “partisan bickering” that Clausen equates with democracy.

A core question of contemporary science studies is whether we can grant that the institutions of science do not transcend all social and moral value without reducing science to just one more partisan voice in a cacophony of such voices. Clausen appears to leave us with the joy of bickering and faith in politics. But without some institutions that can be entrusted with truth seeking, power is always arbitrary and politics is meaningless.

**Alan Richardson**

*Author, Carnap’s Construction of the World: The Aufbau and the Emergence of Logical Empiricism (1997)  
Professor and Distinguished  
University Scholar  
Department of Philosophy  
University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada*

THANK YOU FOR PUBLISHING Christopher Clausen’s perceptive reflections on the 2009 Pew Research Center survey of public attitudes toward science. Having been cited in the article and having authored an earlier survey of scientists’ religious views, allow me to add a few comments. Perhaps I’m simply more optimistic than Clausen, but I view the Pew results as a glass half full whereas he tends to see them the other way.

The Pew survey shows that, de-

spite the so-called Republican war on science and fundamentalist attacks on Darwinism, scientists score higher than virtually all other groups in public esteem. A remarkable 84 percent of Americans say that science’s effect on society is mostly positive, and seven out of 10 believe that scientists contribute a lot to society’s well-being. Only four out of 10 say the same about the clergy, and we all know where members of Congress fall. These are significant results at a time when the news media dwell on popular opposition to teaching Darwinism, doing stem cell research, or passing climate change legislation.

The Pew survey found that, compared to the population as a whole, Republicans and Protestants disproportionately reported that science conflicted with their own religious views. Still, only a minority of either group felt this way. Even more striking, only half of those surveyed who believed that humans and other living kinds were created in their present form said that science conflicted with their beliefs. This finding confirms earlier ones about creationists. They don’t view themselves as rejecting science—just Darwinism.

Finally, Clausen asserts that public school teachers are forbidden to teach creationist concepts as alternatives to Darwinism. This is not quite true. Public school teachers may present various concepts of origins so long as they don’t do so with the purpose or primary effect of promoting belief in a religious (or irreligious) view, such as by teaching creationism as valid science. In their written opinions, Supreme

Court justices have repeatedly encouraged our schools to treat religion as part of our history, culture, and society. Indeed, surveys show that many public school biology instructors effectively use creationist alternatives to teach students about evolution and the nature of science. Our teachers and students are smart enough to know the difference between teaching and unconstitutional proselytizing.

**Edward J. Larson**

*Author, Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion (1998)*  
*University Professor of History and Darling Chair in Law*  
*Pepperdine University*  
*Malibu, Calif.*

## SOLITARY VOICE

FOR A PUBLICATION THAT CLAIMS to advocate no agenda or viewpoint, the *WQ* certainly provides a fine approximation of one with Stephanie Elizondo Griest's "The Torture of Solitary" [Spring '12].

I am a state prisoner in Virginia, serving a sentence of 124 and one-half years without parole, most of them imposed for crimes of which I am innocent. I have been incarcerated since 1996, almost exclusively in solitary confinement, including a period of nine and one-quarter years at this time.

While Griest focuses on the punitive uses of solitary confinement, my situation is entirely different. Because of the nature of the charges I was convicted of and because of certain affiliations I had prior to my arrest, I will always be a prime target to be killed in any general prison population setting, no matter how

low the security level.

For reasons largely of bureaucratic inertia, the Virginia Department of Corrections will not allow itself officially to agree with my assessment, so I am forced to keep myself in solitary confinement, for my own safety.

To be clear, solitary confinement is not fun on any day of the week. I note in myself the diminished mental acuity and emotional stability associated with this form of confinement, but I'm still thinking clearly enough to understand that however unpleasant my situation is, it surely beats being dead.

**John D. Smith**

*Red Onion State Prison*  
*Pound, Va.*

## JAPAN'S FIGHTING FUTURE

NICHOLAS EBERSTADT'S excellent essay "Japan Shrinks" [Spring '12] depicts an unprecedented demographic decline that will drag Japan into uncharted economic, social, environmental, and diplomatic territory. It will also affect the future of Japanese national power. As Japan's population ages and declines at accelerating rates, the nation will confront a mismatch between its strategic posture and resources.

For the past decade, successive administrations have deployed Japan's ground, air, and naval forces far beyond Japan's own neighborhood to fulfill a range of global responsibilities. At the same time, pressures closer to home, including a rising China, increasingly consume policy attention. Japan's proliferating security challenges are already

bumping up against manpower constraints, potentially stifling its quiet ambitions.

Consider the fact that the male population eligible to join Japan's Self-Defense Forces (aged 18 to 26) peaked at nine million in 1994. By 2010, the size of this age group had plummeted to around six million.

Tokyo's defense policy documents have held out hope that technology will substitute for people. But most military operations—ranging from high-end conventional wars to postconflict reconstruction—require soldiers.

Unless Japan is prepared for a major military buildup, which is unlikely, the country's shrinking pool of manpower will weigh heavily on Japanese decision makers. Tokyo's bold claim that it will actively promote international peace and security while bolstering its independent capacity to defend itself strains credulity.

Eberstadt is surely right that Japan will be compelled to rely on coalition partners for its security. The corollary is that the depopulating nation may become less willing and able than it has been for the past six decades to help the United States defend the liberal international order.

**Toshi Yoshihara**

*John A. van Beuren Chair of Asia-Pacific Studies*  
*U.S. Naval War College*  
*Newport, R.I.*

## CORRECTION

"The Meritocracy Machine Hiccups" on p. 68 of the Spring '12 In Essence section contained a misspelling of the surname of the author of the reviewed article. She is Florencia Torche, not Torch. We regret the error.

# AT THE CENTER

## **AMERICAN INNOVATION: THRIVING BUT THREATENED**

AMERICA'S ECONOMIC GLORY days are over; China stands poised to replace the United States as the world's leading innovator. So goes one narrative about America in the global economy. A panel convened by the Woodrow Wilson Center, the sixth in its National Conversation series, presented a more nuanced picture. All the panelists agreed that innovation remains one of America's great strengths. The threat to U.S. preeminence, they said, can be better attributed to skilled-labor shortages, shortsighted business and government policies, and deep-seated problems such as the deterioration of public education. "China doesn't determine our tax rate, our patent policy, what our corporations invest in research," said former Lockheed Martin CEO Norm Augustine. "We have met the enemy, and it's us."

Former Michigan governor John Engler, president of the Business Roundtable, an association of chief executives of large U.S. corporations, said the United States is one of the few countries yet to devise a national plan for competing in the global economy. It needs one. He also urged Congress to bring stability to regulatory policy. "For CEOs, the thing that just drives them nuts is the uncertainty," Engler said. "Tell me what the rules are; I'll see if I can play the game." The current system is so convoluted and in such constant flux, he la-

mented, that "we really don't even have a tax code in this country."

Jan Rivkin, a professor of business administration at Harvard Business School, said that a survey of 10,000 of the school's alumni revealed an appreciation of the economy's overall strength. But more than 70 percent of respondents said they expected a decline in U.S. competitiveness over the next three years. The causes: aging infrastructure, a needlessly complex tax system, spotty elementary and secondary education, and, most important, a work force that struggles to compete. Among those who made decisions about whether to send jobs out of the United States, "the availability of skilled labor was more often a reason to leave the country than to stay," Rivkin said. He recommended apprenticeships for high school and college students to ensure that graduates "have the skills that business wants."

Augustine, a prominent advocate of scientific research, argued that education needs a dose of free enterprise: "Pay a great physics teacher more than a good physics teacher. And fire a bad physics teacher." Short-term thinking, meanwhile, afflicts the corporate world. One solution: "Change the capital gains tax rate so that if you hold an investment for 10 years, the tax rate is one percent on the gain. If you hold it for 10 days, it's 99 percent. That would change the way CEOs and boards think."

Paul Vallas, a former Wil-

son Center distinguished scholar who has overhauled several urban school districts and is interim superintendent of schools in Bridgeport, Conn., said needed education reforms are obvious but drastic: lengthening the school day and school year; recruiting the best and brightest young people to teach (even if they don't remain in the profession for long); and reducing the yawning performance disparity between rich and poor students through universal early childhood education. "The gap begins during the ages of zero to three," he observed.

Deborah L. Wince-Smith, president of the nonprofit Council on Competitiveness, argued that the burden of federal regulation, amounting to about 14 percent of GDP, holds back companies. Training for "middle-skills" workers—currently in short supply—is imperative, she said. Yet Wince-Smith, like the other panelists, expressed continuing confidence in America's underlying strength. "We could spend most of our time receiving visitors from around the world" seeking the secrets of American innovation, she said.

## **ENTER THE ISLAMISTS**

THE ARAB SPRING DID MORE than topple "geriatric autocrats." It heralded the arrival of a politics infused with religion. *The Islamists Are Coming: Who They Really Are*, edited by U.S. Institute of Peace-Woodrow Wilson Center Distinguished Scholar Robin Wright,



Islamists chant in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Will a role in government change their tune?

surveys the new realities. Dozens of Islamist parties in 14 countries “have redefined the agenda,” Wright said in April at a Wilson Center panel discussion launching the book.

The parties’ politics vary widely. Progressive groupings that blend their faith with democracy—such as moderate parties in Tunisia and Morocco that govern in coalitions with secular groups—jockey for position alongside ultraconservative Salafis committed to sharia law. Movements splinter along generational lines. Young Egyptian “Costa Salafis”—so named because they congregate at Costa coffee shops—joined street protests last year that unseated President Hosni Mubarak, while an old guard of Salafis resisted, deeming involvement in politics heretical.

Worldly concerns press upon the Islamists. “What they’re faced with are tough economic realities,” said David Ottaway, a Wilson Center senior scholar who contributed a chapter on Algeria. “It’s a very quick learning experience.” Islamists who don’t catch on may find their time in power cut short.

Would the upstarts go peacefully? Samer Shehata, a professor of Arab politics at Georgetown Uni-

versity and a former Wilson Center fellow who wrote a chapter on Egypt, said that the extent to which “Islamists produce liberal democracy” remains an open question.

Some of the Islamists’ policies are already raising alarms. “The next decade is likely to be tough on women,” Wright said. The West will, at least initially, “have very tense relations with these countries.”

## CAPITOL SLOWDOWN

AT THE WILSON CENTER PANEL discussion “Congress and the Global Energy Crunch,” Robert Simon, staff director of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, assessed the output of the current Congress:

As of today, May 21st, we have enacted 119 public laws in the 112th Congress. So you say, “Well, 119 is a respectable three-digit number. Maybe that’s pretty good.” How does it compare? Two years ago, in the last Congress, when May 21st of the second session rolled around, we had enacted 166 public laws—about 40 percent more productivity in the last Congress than this. Two years before that, in the 110th Congress, we had enacted not 119 and not 166; we had enacted 233 public laws at this juncture. That’s almost double current productivity.



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# FINDINGS

BRIEF NOTES OF INTEREST ON ALL TOPICS

## The No Vote

*Suffering suffrage*

American pundits seem to be channeling Yeats: The center cannot hold. Congress is riven with partisanship and intransigence. With Fox News and MSNBC, the Tea Party and the Occupy movement, moderation in the pursuit of just about anything is no virtue. The nation may not be ungovernable, but it's lurching that way.

The political scientists Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein are the latest to embrace this dismal account. In their view, a leading culprit is the American nonvoter.

Just 62 percent of eligible voters went to the polls in the 2008 general election. Voters tend to be more partisan than nonvoters, Mann and Ornstein write in *It's Even Worse Than It Looks* (Basic Books), so low turnout pushes campaigns toward the extremes. To appeal to party bases, candidates focus on the most divisive, incendiary issues.

Mann and Ornstein think there's a way to reduce the polarization and refine the discourse: make voting compulsory.

It's not a new idea. In 1705, the colonial assembly of Virginia

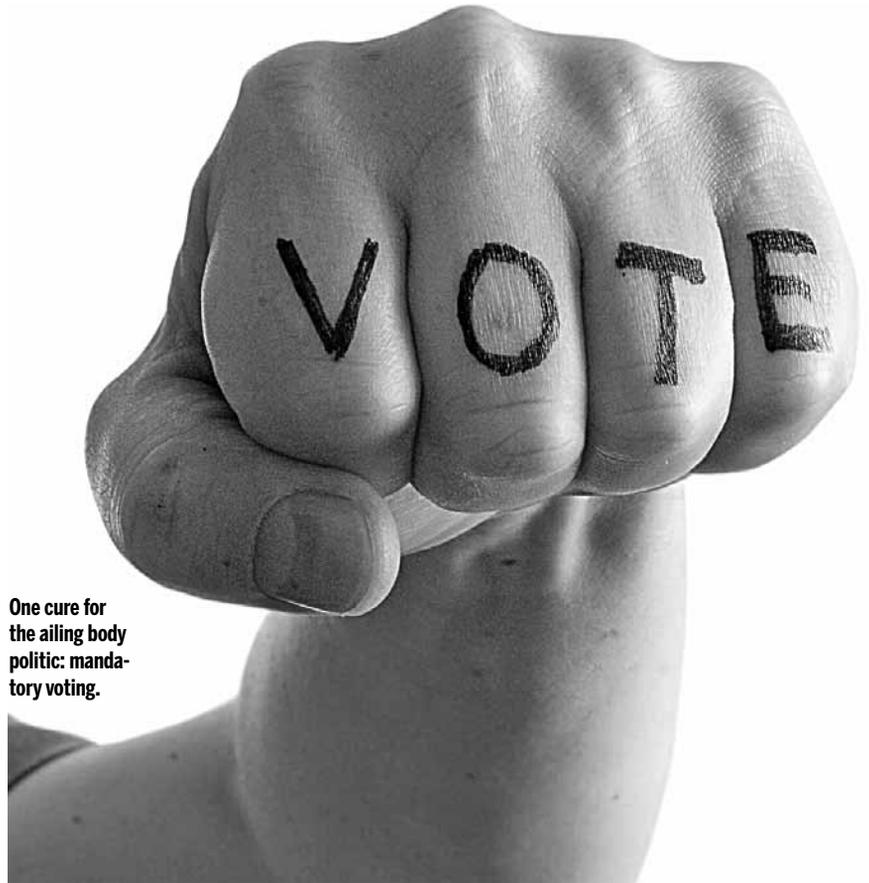
One cure for the ailing body politic: mandatory voting.

required freeholders to vote, on penalty of 200 pounds of tobacco. During the Progressive Era, several state legislatures debated bills to mandate voting, though none passed. Kansas City imposed a \$2.50 tax on nonvoters, but the Missouri Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional in 1896.

Proponents of mandatory voting have had greater success outside the United States. More than two dozen democracies now require citizens to vote. When the laws are enforced—many aren't—

finances vary from about \$3 in a Swiss canton to more than \$400 in Cyprus. Nonvoters in Peru can lose access to some government services. A Belgian who misses four elections can be disenfranchised—which, admittedly, a dedicated nonvoter wouldn't find insufferable.

Mann and Ornstein favor the Australian system, adopted in 1924. Citizens who don't vote receive a notice in the mail. They can either pay a fine of around \$20 or explain why they didn't



make it to the polls. Acceptable excuses include illness, accident, and religious scruples; unacceptable ones include disenchantment with the candidates. Turnout is close to 95 percent, and surveys find that most Australians support the law.

Not everyone deems low voter turnout a problem, though. In a 1954 article, W. H. Morris Jones of the London School of Economics defended apathy as “a political virtue,” writing that “a state which has ‘cured’ apathy is likely to be a state in which too many people have fallen into the error of believing in the efficiency of political solutions for the problems of ordinary lives.” Others have defended non-voting as a fundamental liberty. When it struck down Kansas City’s ordinance, the Missouri Supreme Court said, “If suffrage is a sovereign right of the citizen, he must be as free, according to the dictates of his own untrammelled will and conscience, not to exercise it.”

Whatever its virtues may be, Mann and Ornstein admit that their proposal doesn’t have much chance of getting adopted. “Americans,” they write, “don’t like compulsory anything.”

There’s another hurdle, too. According to a Pew survey conducted in 2010, nonvoters disproportionately consider themselves liberals and favor a larger, more activist government. Because compulsory voting would help Democrats and hurt Republicans, Mann and Ornstein’s cure for excessive partisanship is, in all likelihood, doomed by excessive partisanship.

## Undeath and Taxes

*Scholars meet brain eaters*

Zombies are overrunning academia. In several recent articles, philosophy professors have pondered zombies and the meaning of consciousness. Four mathematicians used a 2009 study to develop epidemiologic models for the outbreak of a zombie infection. In *Theories of International Politics and Zombies* (2011), political scientist Daniel W. Drezner outlined how, under different conceptions of international relations, world leaders might respond to rampaging zombies. Now comes Adam Chodorow, a specialist in tax law at Arizona State University, with his own deadpan take on the undead.

A zombie crisis raises intricate tax questions, Chodorow writes

**You mean I still have to pay income taxes?**



in the *Iowa Law Review* (forthcoming). Is a zombie legally alive? Probably, the author thinks. For legal purposes, is the zombie identical to the pre-death individual? That’s iffier: “It seems a stretch to consider a flesh-eating automaton to be the same person as the Nobel laureate he used to be. . . . The zombie could be considered a new being.” If your spouse dies and then rises from the grave, are you still married for tax purposes? Hard to say. Do zombies owe tax on income? Yes, but Congress might opt to let it go: “A zombie-prepared tax return is almost certain to suffer certain defects, and collection might require various skills not typically seen in the garden-variety government agent.”

It’s an unserious article with serious implications, according to Chodorow. Courts routinely confront developments in science or technology that lawmakers never envisioned, such as whether the use of thermal imaging devices by police constitutes a “search and seizure” under the Fourth Amendment. A zombie outbreak would raise the same sort of challenges.

The legal system treats death as unambiguous and unchanging, but “it seems likely that what currently stands as the boundary between life and death will move as science advances, whether through cryogenics or some other development,” Chodorow said in an interview. “It makes sense to address the issue now to avoid confusion.” Without new laws, we may soon be arguing over the exact timing of the dawn of the dead.

## Bad Words

### *Reading too much?*

On Twitter, the Department of Homeland Security urges its 80,721 followers to check their smoke alarm batteries, commemorate National Hurricane Preparedness Week, and “Report Suspicious Activity Immediately.” Nothing remarkable there. Lots of government agencies use Twitter, Facebook, and the like to get their messages out. But DHS is also using social media in a second, more controversial way: to keep track of what Americans are talking about online.

Responding to a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit in February, Homeland Security officials released the department’s 39-page “National Operations Center Media Monitoring Capability Desktop Reference Binder.” DHS turns out to be scrutinizing social media, blogs, and the comments sections of news Web sites. It’s looking not only for information concerning terrorism and other threats to public safety, but also for materials that “reflect negatively on DHS or some other federal agency.”

The Electronic Privacy Information Center, which sued for the document, also takes issue with the department’s list of red-flag words. Along with the names of government agencies, DHS scans for words related to ter-

rorism, major health threats, natural disasters, and drug smuggling. Some terms are precise—“ricin,” “Ebola,” “Al Qaeda”—but EPIC complains that others are “broad, vague, and ambiguous,” including “drill,” “incident,” “target,” “pork,” “airport,” “snow,” “El Paso,” and even “social media.”

A Homeland Security representative told reporters that the agency is reassessing its list. In the meantime, think twice before you blog about that drill you bought at Target in El Paso.

## Overeating Out

### *Off menu*

By considerable majorities, American adults dine out at least once a week (82 percent) and weigh too much (68 percent). Many restaurant-goers aren’t making the best menu choices, according to RAND Corporation researchers Helen W. Wu and Roland Sturm.

Wu and Sturm studied nutrition information provided by 245 major restaurant chains. In the journal *Public Health Nutrition* (forthcom-

**Starters point the way to corpulence.**



ing), they report—perhaps surprisingly—that most entrées fall within federal calorie guidelines for a meal. Trouble is, Americans tend to order more than just entrées. On average, appetizers turn out to exceed entrées in calories. Even a salad with dressing can approach an entrée-level calorie count.

Wu thinks that restaurants ought to offer more low-cal options. “It’s hard enough for people to make a healthy choice when they have limited information, but information alone is not enough,” she said by e-mail. “It’s nearly impossible to make a healthy choice when there aren’t any to be found on the menu.”

Change won’t happen overnight, of course. For now, if you start your meal with an appetizer, stop there.

## Sour Grapes in the Big Muddy

### *Left behind*

John Steinbeck befriended radical writer Lincoln Steffens, wrote speeches for Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson, and defended those who refused

to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. The Marxist magazine *New Masses* lauded Steinbeck’s 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath* for its “militant, class-conscious philosophy.” His ideals live on in



**Hawk in a foxhole:** In *Newsday*, John Steinbeck backed American involvement in Vietnam.

San Jose State University's John Steinbeck Award, whose recipients include Sean Penn, Joan Baez, Michael Moore, and Rachel Maddow.

But Steinbeck rejected liberal orthodoxy on a defining issue of the 1960s: the Vietnam War. He traveled to South Vietnam in late 1966 and produced a series of hawkish articles for *Newsday*. Literary scholar Thomas E. Barden has collected them in *Steinbeck in Vietnam: Dispatches From the War* (Univ. of Virginia Press).

Steinbeck found much to admire in the American military effort. Troops' morale "clanged through the valleys like a struck gong," he proclaimed, citing General William Westmoreland as his source. Steinbeck wrote that the skills of helicopter pilots "make me sick with envy," and he called the M-16 rifle "a beautiful thing." He even declared, "I love my over-

size fatigues." Toward the Viet Cong, by contrast, Steinbeck was contemptuous. "The V.C. have no respect for honor or decency. They consider these matters stupid and weak," he wrote.

Steinbeck maintained that his time in-country gave his views added weight, and he urged critics of the war to come "sit behind sandbags with the kids they call murderers" and see the war for themselves. He added, "There is a chance of being killed. . . . But, hell, everything is dangerous. One might lose an eye on the corner of a protest placard, or be garroted by a guitar string."

Steinbeck's stance put him out of sync not just with the Left, but with the literati as well. (No doubt the two overlapped considerably.) Published a few months after the *Newsday* series ended in 1967, *Authors Take Sides on Vietnam* fea-

tured the views of 259 writers. Steinbeck wasn't among them, and scarcely any contributors shared his sentiments. Susan Sontag called the United States "a criminal, sinister country." "This war is a cancer," Arthur Miller wrote. Norman Mailer opted for a hipster tone: "Mr. J., Mr. L.B.J., Boss Man of Show Biz—I salute you in your White House Oval; I mean America will shoot all over the shithouse wall if this jazz goes on."

For his part, Tom Wolfe mocked the whole writer-canvassing enterprise. "I predict your book will be marvelous stuff," he wrote to the editors. "Moralism is a foxhole for incompetents. I think everybody will be delighted to see all the writers screaming Yes! or No! or Arrrggggggh! and jumping in there. Best wishes."

## Sharp Skills

### *Haste lays waste*

Before the advent of anesthesia in the mid-19th century, surgeons tried to minimize patients' agony by cutting fast. Among the quickest was the British surgeon Robert Liston, who could amputate a leg in less than a minute.

But as Atul Gawande recounts in *The New England Journal of Medicine* (May 3), speed posed risks: "Liston operated so fast that he once accidentally amputated an assistant's fingers along with a patient's leg. . . . The patient and the assistant both died of sepsis, and a spectator reportedly died of shock, resulting in the only known procedure with a 300 percent mortality."

—*Stephen Bates*

# The Dawn of Market Urbanism

*A better approach to shaping the places in which we live has emerged just as Americans responding to the rising cost of energy begin to crowd into older suburbs and cities.*

BY WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI

THE MODELS FOR HOW WE BUILD CITIES AND SUBURBS have changed significantly in the last two decades. Crudely put, the Age of Planning has been replaced by the Age of the Market. This shift is largely the result of the calamitous experience of urban renewal during the 1950s and '60s, when large swaths of inner-city neighborhoods were cleared and replaced with standardized apartment blocks, mammoth public-housing projects, and blighting urban expressways. Many cities have still not fully recovered from what amounted to urban lobotomies. This experience gave centralized, top-down city planning a bad name, but urbanization itself did not stop—after all, people have to live, shop, and play somewhere.

For the majority of Americans, that “somewhere” has turned out to be the suburbs. The model for the mass-produced suburb emerged fully formed during the postwar period. The sprawling communities were focused on the single-family house, assumed that residents would be dependent on the automobile, and resulted in physical and social fragmentation. In 1993, a meeting in Alexandria, Virginia, brought

together architects from across the country who had coalesced around a new suburban model. In the words of Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, two of the founders of the movement that became known as New Urbanism, “In order to promote community, the built environment must be diverse in use and population, scaled for the pedestrian, and capable of supporting mass transit as well as the automobile.” (See their essay, “The Second Coming of the American Small Town,” in the Winter 1992 *WQ*.) New Urbanism attracted

**Celebration, Florida, is the leading example of the new town-centered communities pioneered by developers catering to changing public tastes.**

WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI is emeritus professor of urbanism at the University of Pennsylvania. His first article in *The Wilson Quarterly* appeared in the Summer 1992 issue. His latest book is *The Biography of a Building: How Robert Sainsbury and Norman Foster Built a Great Museum*.



the public because of its traditional architecture and “small-town” image; developers liked it because it was a way of building at higher densities.

A decade earlier, Seaside, a resort village in the Florida panhandle; Kentlands, a mixed-use project in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C.; and Laguna West, a suburban planned community in Sacramento County, California, had demonstrated what such development might be like. They were followed by Celebration, outside Orlando, Florida, probably the best-executed—certainly the best-known—New Urbanist community. It was the result of a collaboration between a farsighted (and wealthy) client—the Disney Company—and two talented architects, Robert A. M. Stern and Jaquelin T. Robertson. Now more than 15 years old, with 7,500 inhabitants, Celebration demonstrates how various types of housing—large single-family homes as well as townhouses and apartments—can be combined to create many of the qualities of a traditional town. Celebration stresses walkability and density, although it still depends heavily on automobiles. Like those of other New Urbanist communities, Celebration’s layout is a throwback to the garden suburbs of the early 20th century, but adapted to late-20th-century lifestyles.

That this new model emerged during the housing market boom of the 1980s was no accident. Not only was demand strong enough to ensure *any* project a chance of doing well, the boom opened the door to inexperienced developers

and lenders who were willing to try new ideas. It was only after these neophytes had enjoyed some measure of success that large firms such as Disney embraced the concept. While the first projects tended to be built on outlying virgin sites unencumbered by regulations and surrounding neighbors, later New Urbanist projects have moved to urban in-fill sites. These initiatives have been of varying sizes: Stapleton, situated on the site of the old Denver airport, and benefiting from mass transit and proximity to downtown, will eventually have 30,000 residents; Atlantic Station, a 138-acre project in Atlanta, is likewise in a central location; University Place is a small residential neighborhood close to downtown Memphis.

University Place is a so-called Hope VI project. Hope VI is a federal program, begun in 1992, that replaces 1950s-era public-housing projects with a mix of subsidized and market-priced housing planned according to New Urbanist principles. To date, 170,000 units of Hope VI housing have been built. The program is not without its critics, who point out that the largely low- and mid-rise Hope VI housing does not provide a unit-for-unit replacement of the high-rise public housing, while proponents argue that in most cases the dysfunctional public-housing towers were largely empty. It should also be said that the mixing of public housing, work force housing (which is partially subsidized), and units sold and rented at market rates is a social experiment whose success it is still too early to judge.

One of the attractions of places such as Celebration and Stapleton is the proximity of walkable shopping streets, a signal of a change in the habits of American consumers. Beginning in the 1960s, large indoor shopping malls were the model for shopping, even in cities. But while the malls in the best locations have continued to prosper, nobody builds new malls anymore and many older malls are being shuttered. This downturn is due to overbuilding, a decline in the fortunes of many department stores (the traditional anchors for shopping malls), changes in shopping patterns that favor convenience over a more leisurely experience, competition from big-box stores and discount retailers—especially Walmart—and, to a lesser extent, the gradual shift to online shopping.

The two shopping formats that have replaced the mall are at opposite ends of a spectrum. At the no-frills end is the power center, consisting of several big-box

JIM SIEGEL



discount stores such as Best Buy and Petco surrounding a parking lot. Largely a response to shoppers' demand for low prices and convenience, power centers are less expensive to build and manage than indoor malls. On the other hand, from a social viewpoint they are a step backward, since they pare the traditional shopping experience to its bare bones: get in, shop, get out.

At the other end of the spectrum is the so-called Main Street mall: an outdoor arrangement that dispenses with the indoor concourses of traditional malls and replaces them with a traditional street, cars and all. Some Main Street malls go further, adding apartments and offices on the upper floors above the stores and restaurants. In appearance, such a mall resembles a small-town main street, with sidewalks, sidewalk cafés, and on-street parking (although it is designed, built, and managed by a single owner). Reston Town Center, in Washington's Virginia suburbs, resembles the downtown of a small city, with high-rise condominiums, office buildings, and a hotel, as well as sidewalk-oriented shops and restaurants. Not surprisingly, the open-air street model has proved more successful in urban locations than the introverted shopping mall, and open-air Main Street malls have been built in Bethesda, Maryland; West Palm Beach, Florida; and Dallas, Texas.

**M**ain Street malls are an example of what developers call mixed use, a new approach to planning that is a reaction to the earlier practice of physically separating different uses such as residential, shopping, and entertainment. The idea is that mixing uses generates more traffic at different times of the day, and that the uses complement one another. Mixed use does not mean indiscriminately combining different functions, however. Single-person or student housing can exist in late-night entertainment districts, but family or senior housing requires quieter surroundings. Nor is a mixed-use project merely a deconstructed mall; shoppers expect to see local retailers, not just familiar national chains. And design quality, which has traditionally been less important in shopping mall planning, is a crucial factor. One of the pleasures of traditional shopping streets is the variety of the architecture, as well as the detailed design of the public spaces—benches, landscaping, lighting—and successful mixed-use developments provide this experience. The



**With a population density rivaling Hong Kong's, livable Vancouver, Canada, represents one pole of the North American urban spectrum.**

town center of Celebration is a good example of well-designed mixed use. Arcaded shops of different sizes line the sidewalks, with apartments on upper levels; parking is discreetly fit in the center of the block. Low-rise office buildings are located next to condominiums; one street corner is occupied by a small hotel.

The new reality of the last few decades is that developers have replaced city planners as the chief actors in urban development. This has happened not only because city planning lost credibility after the urban renewal debacle, but also because the real estate industry changed. Most developers in the past worked in small, family-owned firms, but increasingly these have been overshadowed by large, professionally managed corporations, many of which are publicly owned companies operating on a national scale. One of the lessons of the urban renewal period was that thanks to short election cycles, large urban projects that took decades to complete were difficult for city administrations to implement successfully. Paradoxically, large, well-funded companies such as Forest City, the developer of Stapleton and Atlantic Yards in Brooklyn, are in a better position to take the long view.

Developers are also better than public agencies at figuring out what people want—and how best to deliver it. Waterfront developments, for example, have proved remarkably popular, as have Main Street malls. But the shift from public to private planning is not an unalloyed good. The concerns of developers naturally tend to be restricted to their own projects, which are designed and marketed as branded, standalone entities. As a result, new development is often not well integrated with the surrounding city. Nor does the

developer have the incentive or, indeed, the tools, to deal with larger issues such as urban infrastructure.

One solution to the integration problem is private-public collaboration, and indeed the projects that have been most successfully integrated with their surroundings have tended to be private-public partnerships, with the public body providing those functions that private developers find difficult or impossible to undertake. Two good examples are both urban in-fill projects under way in Washington, D.C. One is The Yards, which occupies 42 acres in Washington's southeastern quadrant on the site of a decommissioned Navy shipyard. Since this is federal land, the General Services Administration has been involved in the planning. The result includes a public park, preserved historic buildings, and a plan that is well integrated with the Anacostia River waterfront and the Washington street grid. The other in-fill project, CityCenter, occupies a 10-acre superblock downtown, previously the site of a convention center. With the collaboration of the city government, the project reintroduces previously closed streets and lanes into the superblock site. Once completed, the new buildings will form a seamless whole with their surroundings.

The challenges of the next two decades are not limited to in-filling empty urban sites. A more daunting issue is housing density. Assuming that energy prices continue to rise over time and that some sort of government regulation of carbon emissions will come into effect, energy conservation will become a paramount concern. Mass transit and walkable communities are two logical responses, but they can only function successfully with relatively high urban densities—higher than in most American downtowns. Yet the thriving and dense downtowns of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco suggest that a significant portion of the millennial generation is attracted to just such urban environments. Downtowns have successfully attracted two groups in recent years, childless young professionals and retirees. The challenge is to make urban living appealing to families. Obviously, better public schools are part of any solution; without them, it is unlikely that downtown populations will become more diverse.

One of the ways of increasing downtown population density is sometimes called “the Vancouver model”—

extremely slim residential high-rise towers sitting on bases consisting of townhouses that create a traditional streetscape. Downtown Vancouver, Canada, has adopted high-rise living at a density rivaling levels found in Asian cities such as Singapore and Hong Kong. But Vancouver is the only North American city so far to have done so. A less drastic approach is medium-rise/high-density housing, such as townhouses and walkup apartments. While the urban housing built from about 2000 until the onset of the recent housing market crash was aimed at buyers with relatively high incomes, one challenge of the future will be to develop housing that is more family friendly and definitely cheaper.

**T**here are many different models for dense urban living, but few examples of how to densify suburbs. Once the housing industry revives—whenever that happens—the demand for exurban locations is unlikely to rebound. Higher gasoline prices, and a generally more conservative approach to risk on the part of developers in the wake of the recent housing collapse, will see to that. But it is unlikely that Americans' preference for single-family houses and suburban lifestyles will drastically change. So, then, where will tomorrow's new houses be built?

They could occupy in-fill or replacement parcels in suburban communities on the periphery of central city districts. The overbuilding of retail space in the last several decades means that the sites of shuttered malls will also be prime candidates for redevelopment. But at some point, the delicate issue of increasing the population density of existing suburbs will have to be broached. Suburban densification requires that communities revise existing zoning regulations in order to allow the subdivision of lots, taller buildings, multifamily housing, and an increase in mixed-use development. Creating walkable town centers requires rethinking zoning that previously prevented commercial enterprises in housing areas. Walkable streets and corner stores—it's hardly rocket science. The corner store was once a staple of American neighborhoods—it could return. What we need is not particularly difficult or complicated, but given the historical resistance to change, especially to any measure that even slightly increases housing density and traffic, how to get it done will be the real challenge. ■

# The Campaign Triumphant

*They're long, exhausting, and sometimes appalling, but America's raucous presidential campaigns are also testimony to the success of its continually evolving democracy.*

BY GIL TROY

"THE PEOPLE HAVE NOMINATED YOU WITHOUT ANY pledges or engagements of any sort . . . and they want you to do nothing at present but allow yourself to be elected," the poet and newspaper editor William Cullen Bryant told Abraham Lincoln in 1860. "Make no speeches, write no letters as a candidate, enter into no pledges, make no promises." As Americans grumble, in what has become a quadrennial ritual, that the presidential campaign is too long, too nasty, and too frivolous, they should consider whether they would really prefer a return to the 19th-century rules of the game that are so often held up as an alternative.

A look back at the evolution of the presidential campaign since the early days of the Republic highlights the remarkable democratic achievements of the last two centuries. America's presidential campaign process works. It sifts through candidates, facilitates a continent-wide conversation, and, most important, bestows legitimacy on the winner. Presidential cam-

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paigns are intense, long, and costly because they are popular, consequential, and continental in scope. Most aspects of the campaigns that Americans hate reflect the democracy we love.

The evolution of the campaign has been a process of endlessly revisiting questions about the nature of American democracy that have been with us since the nation's founding. Since George Washington coolly retreated to Mount Vernon to await his inevitable selection by a handful of elite presidential electors in 1789, America's center of political gravity has shifted from the self-chosen few to the democratic masses. The elite maneuverings of the early Republic gave way beginning in the 1830s to nominating conven-

tion intrigues, which were replaced a half-century ago by today's familiar primary-caucus hijinks. American politics evolved from elite based to boss based to people based, from nominating individuals who had mastered America's politics of privilege to selecting those who could master party politics, to anointing today's masters of media messaging.

Originally, most Americans agreed with Representative William Lowndes of South Carolina, who declared in 1822 that the presidency was not "an office to be either solicited or declined." Candidates stood silently, relatively undemocratically, for election, largely avoiding contact with the people, like kings in waiting. A little more than a century later, one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's strategists advised him to mount a markedly different kind of effort: "You are you," he said, and "have the faculty of making friends on a campaign tour." Forty years further on, the activist campaign threatened to become too insulated and choreographed. In 1972, journalist Theodore White said he could have covered Richard M. Nixon's reelection effort by "staying home and watching television with the rest of the people—which was the way the president wanted it." In becoming democratized, bringing the people in, the process also became dependent on the news media and political consultants, which inevitably meant to some degree keeping the people out.

Standard histories of the presidential campaign emphasize a few transformative elections, such as William Henry Harrison's successful protopopulist "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" bid in 1840 and William McKinley's cleverly merchandized mass spectacle in 1896, suggesting that the nature of the campaign followed an almost inevitable course, in a series of sudden developmental bursts. Actually, it evolved slowly and imperfectly. Candidates' prominence in the campaign proved inversely proportional to party strength but directly related to the presidency's power; strong parties constrained candidates during the 19th century, while the presidency's subsequent expansion empowered them. Communication and transportation advances—railroads, the telegraph, radio, television, and the Internet—created the necessary conditions for change, but public attitudes had to shift in order to legitimize the innovations, and strategies for applying these innovations had to emerge.

**They may be rubber stamps, but conventions such as the 1956 Republican gathering in San Francisco still stir the party faithful.**



CORBIS

The presidential campaign has evolved through four phases: republican, democratic, populist, and electronic. In each, the candidates have juggled dozens of roles but the voters have experienced the contenders largely in one defining, dominant mode: as icons during the republican phase; as actors during the democratic phase; as activists, even superheroes, during the populist phase; and now, during the electronic phase, as images. Each era has pivoted around a central dilemma regarding the people's role in American democracy's most defining act, electing the president of the United States.

### THE REPUBLICAN PHASE: PASSIVE ICONS

Americans have long been ambivalent about electoral politics at its loudest and messiest, or what Hubert Humphrey called "armpit politics." While responding to the passion, they crave dignified elections. In the first few contests for America's highest office, the candidates were almost completely passive. Campaigns were orderly procedures for designating society's obvious, virtuous, natural leaders. Candidates functioned as icons, ideal representations of the perfect gentleman and leader.

The word "candidate," from the Latin for "white," *candidus*, evoked the white togas embodying the supposed purity of ancient Rome's senators. Candidates were to "stand" for election, not "run." George Washington's impassive wait for the call of the people at Mount Vernon during the first presidential election epitomized these monarchical yet republican ideals.

The campaigns of the republican phase broadcast mixed messages about the people's role in selecting leaders. The Founders feared both "mobocracy" and dictatorship. The Electoral College was a filter, put in place on the assumption that the presidential electors would be chosen by state legislators rather than voters. The electors would select the president after a period

of dispassionate deliberation. This structure partly reflected the Founders' respect for state prerogatives, and partly reflected their elitism. They maintained power for the few by rooting the decision in the consent of the governed without depending excessively on their judgment. Similarly, passive candidates were insulated from the people—and from substantive democratic debate. Each candidate's virtues were assumed to be known and would speak for themselves.

### THE DEMOCRATIC PHASE: PARTY RULE

Washington's successors lacked his exalted standing, and, therefore, the luxury of remaining completely aloof. The Revolution, moreover, democratized America in ways the Founders had not imagined. The old social hierarchies and habits of deference rapidly crumbled, while vigorous economic growth and urbanization unleashed new political forces. Beginning in the 1820s, the Jacksonian democratic revolution, with its powerful political parties, universal white male suf-



The Whigs' William Henry Harrison, the son of Virginia slaveholders, wrapped himself in military glory and symbols of the common man—hard cider and log cabins—to secure victory in the election of 1840.

frage, democratic ethos, and charismatic leader in the person of war hero General Andrew Jackson, brought a personality-based mass excitement to politics. Many political restrictions were swept away. One result was that voters in most states now chose presidential electors directly, bypassing state legislators. Presidential politics became increasingly national in scope, as federal issues such as internal improvements and the future of slavery eclipsed state concerns. Candidates found it increasingly difficult to stay above the fray (some were happy to dive in), and traditionalists, as a writer

in *The Nashville Union* put it in 1852, viewed “every innovation upon the received usages of our fathers, in so important a matter as the presidential election,” as an assault on the Republic itself.

By 1840, the Whig candidate William Henry Harrison felt compelled to explain that “appearing among my fellow citizens” was the “*only way* to disprove” his rivals’ charge that he was a “caged simpleton.” His efforts were modest by modern standards but significant for the nominee of a party that in many ways represented the old privileged order. He attended rallies celebrating his exploits in battles against the Indians and in the War of 1812, and usually campaigned against campaigning—even as he campaigned. In adopting popular Jacksonian tactics to mobilize the masses by building a colorful campaign around Harrison’s wartime heroics, the Whigs bowed to the fact that the democratic sensibility had become all-American—parties had to campaign vigorously and melodramatically to win.

In the 19th century, parties poured tremendous effort into mobilizing the masses. Bosses such as New York State’s Thurlow Weed developed intricate structures and effective methods for securing grassroots party loyalty and turning out the vote. Election days were mass carnivals, capping months of squabbling, pamphleteering, parading, speechifying, mudslinging, and no-holds-barred editorializing in party-controlled newspapers. After Jackson, party leaders most prized “available” candidates, meaning pliable, electable politicians. Particular campaign issues and the candidate’s personal virtues paled before “one broad, paramount issue,” a writer in the *Democratic Review* magazine confessed in 1844: “Which of the two great leading parties shall be placed in power?”

No longer dignified, passive icons, candidates were becoming loyal party actors, sometimes speaking, sometimes stumping, always following the party script. This development produced the parade of third-rate presidents who helped America stumble into the Civil War: Zachary Taylor, Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan. Once required chiefly to solemnly express their reluctance to seek power, each party’s nominees were now expected to submit acceptance letters binding them to party platforms through increasingly elaborate policy statements. In

1876, Samuel Tilden’s detailed treatise of more than 4,000 words affirmed his Democratic loyalties while giving his endorsements of civil service and currency reform his own personal twist.

State and local party bosses usually picked candidates at their own levels; the national parties then hosted elaborate congresses to nominate standard-bearers and define the party platform. These colorful, often chaotic, quadrennial conventions were way stations between republican elitist politics and today’s mass politics. Bosses lobbied in their clubby “smoke-filled rooms” for their “favorite son” candidates and hammered out party positions. The people were not invited. Still, the conventions’ democratic chaos reflected America’s march away from hierarchy toward populism. Even bosses had to keep voters happy.

Bent on nominating dependable party loyalists, the conventions frequently became deadlocked, and ended up picking many last-minute dark horses. A one-term Whig congressman from Illinois in a new party founded by the antislavery giants William Henry Seward and Salmon P. Chase, Abraham Lincoln followed the democratic phase’s textbook dark-horse strategy in 1860. He was not most Republicans’ first choice: “Our policy, then,” he said, “is to give no offense to others—leave them in a mood to come to us if they shall be compelled to give up their first love.”

The traditional restrictions on nominees frustrated Lincoln. Having orated his way into prominence during his 1858 Senate election debates with Stephen A. Douglas, during the 1860 presidential campaign Lincoln was “bored, bored badly,” his law partner William Herndon later reported. Campaigns were still thought of mostly as battles waged across fixed lines; at a time when party loyalties ran deep, they were more about mobilizing partisans than wooing the undecided or the few independents.

The campaign during the democratic phase was more monologue than dialogue. In 1824, Andrew Jackson vowed to declare his opinion “upon any political or national question . . . about which the country feels an interest.” The good general was declaring, not learning from or adjusting to public opinion. Similarly, “active” candidates stumped—an expression derived from the custom of speechifying from atop a tree stump—in order to be seen and heard better, not to

better see and hear for themselves. But many Americans were beginning to wonder if the candidates and the people needed to be in conversation, and if so, how dynamic the exchange should be. “A live lion in good voice, will produce . . . a far greater and more lasting effect by being *seen* and *heard*,” than all the campaign biographies “which can be written,” one Whig enthusiast wrote in 1852, justifying General Winfield Scott’s active approach—and demanding more.

#### THE POPULIST PHASE: ENGAGED ACTIVISTS

**B**eginning in the late 19th century, a host of changes, from industrialization and the growth of cities to advances in transportation and communications, made American politics more populist, and the presidency more central in both governing and electoral politics. Candidates were no longer mere actors but activists, more independent of party, less regional in orientation, more visible in the campaign. Stumping, whistle-stopping, and, later, prop-stopping on airplanes, they became less gentlemanly, more independent, and more aggressive. Candidates had to prove themselves worthy of commanding what Theodore Roosevelt called the “bully pulpit.”

After Franklin Roosevelt helped make the United States into a superpower, turning the White House rather than the Capitol into the nation’s focal point and nerve center, Americans wanted these activists to be superheroes who dominated their parties and the national news.

With the empowered president speaking to people in their living rooms via radio, then television, the office became more powerful yet more personal, requiring candidates who were charismatic and eloquent yet accessible.

Nominees had been interacting with voters ever more intensely throughout the 19th century. Defending the traditional reticence of candidates even as technology and political necessity increasingly made it anachronistic, rivals and editorialists denounced as undignified and unprecedented the stumping tours of William Henry Harrison in 1840, Henry Clay in

1844, Winfield Scott in 1852, Stephen Douglas in 1860, Horatio Seymour in 1868, Horace Greeley in 1872, James G. Blaine in 1884, and William Jennings Bryan in 1896. Pressured to be more active but concerned that stumping would betray too great an appetite for power, James A. Garfield in 1880 and Benjamin Harrison in 1888 mounted so-called front porch campaigns. In this compromise approach, the candidates used various all-American settings in their hometowns as venues for greeting delegations of supporters from across the country. Harrison kept up the illusion of lofty indifference to power by appearing pleasantly surprised, again and again, as 300,000 people in 110 delegations visited his Indiana residence.

The 1896 campaign consolidated and advanced many innovations. During his 18,000-mile, 600-speech campaign, William Jennings Bryan, a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Nebraska and the nominee of both the Democrats and the Populists, insisted that voters had “a right to know where I stand on public questions.” His opponent, Governor William McKinley of Ohio, welcomed 750,000 visitors from 30 states to his front porch in Canton. Meanwhile, McKinley’s campaign manager, business magnate Mark Hanna, modernized presidential campaigning.

**BENJAMIN HARRISON kept up the illusion of indifference to power by appearing surprised, again and again, as delegations visited him.**

Hanna treated voters like consumers to be swayed, not party members to be mobilized, creating dozens of special-interest groups, deploying hundreds of targeted speakers, raising millions of dollars, and distributing trainloads of pamphlets. Hanna “advertised McKinley as if he were a patent medicine,” remarked Theodore Roosevelt. Subsequently, Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Truman, in particular, showed that they too could be the stars of the national show, running energetic, charismatic campaigns—with radio added to the mix starting in 1924.



At the turn of the 20th century, William McKinley shifted campaigns' focus from party organizations to interest groups.

In this populist phase, the debate about political debate continued. The principle of democratic interaction, encouraging conversations between voters and candidates, was already established. Especially after opinion polling arose in the 1930s, candidates became increasingly responsive, taking voter feelings and feedback into account when making policy stands or deciding which issues to emphasize.

With candidates now running to be prime minister as well as king, they had to publicize their policy stands in addition to demonstrating their good character. Most politicians could not resist mudslinging, just as voters, despite their dismay, could not resist being swayed by it. And as reporters became the source Americans went to first for information about the campaign, debate intensified between those who valued coverage of "the issues" and those who wanted horse race updates. As pressure increased, perhaps inevitably, to emphasize the horse race aspect, the "media," as the press would

soon be called, would increasingly be regarded not so much as an instrument of responsible decision making as a wellspring of vulgar distractions that often lowered the tenor of campaigns.

#### THE ELECTRONIC PHASE: TAILORED IMAGES

The television revolution ushered in campaigning's electronic era. The TV studio replaced the stump as the foremost means of reaching the masses. Some candidates and most consultants dreamed of a sanitized campaign free of crowds—just the opposite of what their 19th-century counterparts had sought. Rising professionalization and fears of unscripted moments combined with growing faith in technology. Richard Nixon's aide H. R. Haldeman proclaimed in 1968, "The reach of the individual campaigner doesn't add up to diddly-squat in votes."

Media markets, newspaper deadlines, TV broadcast times, and sound bites now marked the campaign's rhythms—though the requirement to press the flesh remained an important check on the televised campaign, especially in traditional bastions of grassroots politicking such as Iowa and New Hampshire. Consultants, advertising experts, and the all-important bagmen and -women needed to finance expensive airtime replaced the party bosses and precinct workers of yesteryear. These professionals made the campaigns slicker and more soulless. A *Time* magazine cover story in 1988 deemed the contest between George H. W. Bush and Michael Dukakis the "Battle of the Handlers."

As the social upheaval of the 1960s manifested itself politically in proliferating state primaries and caucuses, the bosses' power to select presidential nominees diminished and party discipline suffered. Independent gunslingers with enough popularity—and money—could win the nomination and take over the party apparatus. A peanut farmer turned one-term Georgia governor could dazzle the Democratic Party and win the presidency in 1976; a movie star could seize the governor's mansion in California in 1966 and then the White House in 1980. Winning candidates emerged less beholden to party powers. Campaigns were no longer quests to emphasize a candidate's iconic virtue or party loyalty but to project an appealing image. In this electronic era, smooth talkers such as John Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton,

and Barack Obama dominated elections with what George H. W. Bush's chief of staff John Sununu called the "see-me-feel-me-touch-me" campaign.

Televised debates became one of the modern campaign's defining rituals. When competing for the nomination, candidates usually appeared at awkwardly staged televised forums, the crowd on stage getting steadily smaller as would-be nominees fell out of favor (or funding) one by one. During the general campaign, debates frequently were dramatic turning points, most famously in the Kennedy-Nixon encounter of 1960. In 1976, Gerald Ford stumbled during a debate with Jimmy Carter, declaring Eastern Europe "free" even though the Soviet Union still dominated the region. In 1980, Ronald Reagan genially shrugged off Carter's criticisms, chuckling "There you go again." In 2008, the 47-year-old Barack Obama appeared cooler, even more mature, than his increasingly erratic 72-year-old opponent, John McCain.

Television commercials offered equally powerful moments. In 1964, the "Daisy" commercial used a little girl counting flower petals to illustrate Democrats' charge that Republican Barry Goldwater might bring about Armageddon by starting a nuclear war. In 1988, a political action committee with no formal ties to George H. W. Bush or the Republican Party maligned Democratic nominee Dukakis for furloughing the murderer Willie Horton, who had gone on to kill again.

Mushrooming campaign budgets reflected the greater effort required to get anything noticed across America's continental expanse. Candidates competed against sports and sitcoms for attention, not just against one another. The costs were high, but considering that McDonald's spent about \$2 billion on advertising in 2008, the campaigns' \$1 billion outlays for advertising in the general election that year appeared a reasonable price to pay for democracy. True, the process of raising money risked corrupting candidates or at least draining their time and energy. But in an advanced capitalist country, winning the "invisible primary," demonstrating the ability before any votes were cast to build support and raise money, became a critical test of political viability. Moreover, given America's strong libertarian streak and constitutional protections, no expert had figured out how to insulate Democrats or Republicans from the indignities and other costs of fundraising.



**Call it the new hoopla. The Internet promises better information and closer connections between voters and candidates, but it also adds to the campaign cacophony of ugly accusations and rhetoric.**

Americans continued to raise concerns about campaigns' utility and authenticity, with complaints intensifying about the tone and length of electoral battles. Candidates appeared too dependent on consultants and too burdened by fundraising. Presidents often became consumed by reelection plans by their third year in office, and at the start of their fourth year, primaries and caucuses loomed. Yet despite all the complaints, turnout in presidential elections was rising, topping 60 percent of eligible voters in 2008 after going as low as 49 percent in 1996.

It is not yet clear whether a new "virtual" phase has replaced the electronic campaign. Following the historical pattern, there has been a time lag between the Internet's development and its emergence as an important campaigning tool. Initially, the Internet simply extended the media-intensive televised campaign, offering another avenue for commercials and information characterized by the great American political carnival's classic mix of education and entertainment. During the uncertainty in November and December 2000 over the outcome of the George W. Bush-Al Gore contest, traffic on Internet news and campaign sites surged.

Internet enthusiasts such as political consultant Joe Trippi and media impresario Arianna Huffing-

ton believed that Barack Obama's use of the Web in 2008 revolutionized campaigning. So far, the 2012 campaign has been even more dependent on online advertising, punditry, and fundraising. It has demonstrated the best and worst of the Web, improving candidate communication and voter education while also encouraging harsh blog and advertising attacks and generally adding to the noise.

While it will take more election cycles to clarify whether the process has entered a virtual phase, the money muddle persists. Despite the hype about President Obama's online fundraising, much of his nearly \$750 million war chest in 2008 came from the traditional big-money sources that have fueled both parties. The Supreme Court's decision striking down limits on independent political expenditures, in *Citizens United*

candidate to communicate with 310 million distracted citizens effectively? How can Americans reconcile the dueling job descriptions of a president trying to be both prime minister and king, peddling policies and personality? Do the most qualified candidates win campaigns? And if not, why not?

Many of these questions reflect the questioner's opening assumptions or end vision. Like a patient on the Freudian couch, the presidential campaign has many issues that were not worked out in the nation's infancy and remain unresolved. This state of affairs fuels perpetual grumbling, with yearnings for a mythic golden age. Campaigns, like so many aspects of even the most workable democracy, are human improvisations balancing competing values. We will never be fully satisfied with them.

Fortunately, American campaigns usually end happily. Inaugurations provide the ultimate vindication of the process and closure for the nation, no matter how long, tense, or tight a race might be. Even in 2000, once a Supreme Court decision made George W. Bush the winner, Americans accepted their new leader. At the inauguration, attended by Vice President Gore, Bush's bitter rival, the transfer of power and legitimacy was seamless.

Yes, the modern campaign is excessive, part old-fashioned carnival and part obnoxious reality TV show. But like automotive crash tests, tough campaigns determine a potential president's strength and durability while revealing the candidate's character to the nation. "Campaigns are like an MRI for the soul," said David Axelrod, Obama's political guru. "Whoever you are, eventually people find out."

Whatever nostalgia there may be for the brass bands and legendary leaders of yesteryear, few Americans wish to return to the days when bosses ruled, candidates cowered, women and blacks did not vote, and the white men who did had little or no contact with their potential leaders and limited information about them. In today's extraordinary and extended quadrennial democratic conversations, a country of more than 300 million peacefully chooses a leader who arrives in office with unquestioned legitimacy. As Reagan said during his costly, nasty, lengthy—but successful—1984 reelection campaign, "It's a good idea—and it's the American way." ■



*v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), has widened the channel for big-money political action committees to pour out ads and other forms of political advocacy, especially negative commercials.

Many of the historical dilemmas about the nationwide courting ritual we call the presidential campaign remain unresolved. Are voters fools—do they get by with what political scientist Samuel Popkin calls “low information rationality,” picking up random, disconnected cues about the candidates in the same manner as when they go shopping for a new refrigerator? Or do they choose the leader of the world’s superpower after more careful deliberation? Is it possible for a

# Beyond the Brain

*In the 1990s, scientists declared that schizophrenia and other psychiatric illnesses were pure brain disorders that would eventually yield to drugs. Now they are recognizing that social factors are among the causes, and must be part of the cure.*

**BY TANYA MARIE LUHRMANN**



Drawing by a  
schizophrenic patient

BY THE TIME I MET HER, SUSAN WAS A SUCCESS story. She was a student at the local community college. She had her own apartment, and she kept it in reasonable shape. She did not drink, at least not much, and she did not use drugs, if you did not count marijuana. She was a big, imposing black woman who defended herself aggressively on the street, but she had not been jailed for years. All this was striking because Susan clearly met criteria for a diagnosis of schizophrenia, the most severe and debilitating of psychiatric disorders. She thought that people listened to her through the heating pipes in her apartment. She heard them muttering mean remarks. Sometimes she thought she was part of a government experiment that was beaming rays on black people, a kind of technological Tuskegee. She felt those rays pressing down so hard on her head that it hurt. Yet she had not been hospitalized since she got her own apartment, even though she took no medication and saw no psychiatrists. That apartment was the most effective antipsychotic she had ever taken.

Twenty years ago, most psychiatrists would have agreed that Susan had a brain disorder for which the only reasonable treatment was medication. They had learned to reject the old psychoanalytic ideas about schizophrenia, and for good reasons. When psychoanalysis dominated American psychiatry, in the mid-20th century, clinicians believed that this terrible illness, with its characteristic combination of hallucinations (usually auditory), delusions, and deterioration in work and social life, arose from the patient's own emotional conflict. Such patients were unable to reconcile their intense longing for intimacy with their fear of closeness. The science mostly blamed the mother. She was "schizophrenogenic." She delivered conflicting messages of hope and rejection, and her ambivalence drove her child, unable to know what was real, into the paralyzed world of madness. It became standard practice in American psychiatry to regard the mother as the cause of the child's psychosis, and standard practice to treat schizophrenia with psychoanalysis to counteract her grim influence. The standard practice often failed.

The 1980s saw a revolution in psychiatric science, and it brought enormous excitement about what the

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new biomedical approach to serious psychiatric illness could offer to patients like Susan. To signal how much psychiatry had changed since its tweedy psychoanalytic days, the National Institute of Mental Health designated the 1990s as the "decade of the brain." Psychoanalysis and even psychotherapy were said to be on their way out. Psychiatry would focus on real disease, and psychiatric researchers would pinpoint the biochemical causes of illness and neatly design drugs to target them.

Schizophrenia became a poster child for the new approach, for it was the illness the psychoanalysis of the previous era had most spectacularly failed to cure. Psychiatrists came to see the assignment of blame to the schizophrenogenic mother as an unforgivable sin. Such mothers, they realized, had not only been forced to struggle with losing a child to madness, but with the self-denigration and doubt that came from being told that they had caused the misery in the first place. The pain of this mistake still reverberates through the profession. In psychiatry it is now considered not only incorrect but morally wrong to see the parents as responsible for their child's illness. I remember talking to a young psychiatrist in the late 1990s, back when I was doing an anthropological study of psychiatric training. I asked him what he would want non-psychiatrists to know about psychiatry. "Tell them," he said, "that schizophrenia is no one's fault."

It is now clear that the simple biomedical approach to serious psychiatric illnesses has failed in turn. At least, the bold dream that these maladies would be understood as brain disorders with clearly identifiable genetic causes and clear, targeted pharmacological interventions (what some researchers call the bio-bio-bio model, for brain lesion, genetic cause, and pharmacological cure) has faded into the mist. To be sure, it would be too strong to say that we should no longer think of schizophrenia as a brain disease. One often has a profound sense, when confronted with a person diagnosed with schizophrenia, that something has gone badly wrong with the brain.

Yet the outcome of two decades of serious psychiatric science is that schizophrenia now appears to be a complex outcome of many unrelated causes—the genes you inherit, but also whether your mother fell ill during her pregnancy, whether you got beaten up as a child or

were stressed as an adolescent, even how much sun your skin has seen. It's not just about the brain. It's not just about genes. In fact, schizophrenia looks more and more like diabetes. A messy array of risk factors predisposes someone to develop diabetes: smoking, being overweight, collecting fat around the middle rather than on the hips, high blood pressure, and yes, family history. These risk factors are not intrinsically linked. Some of them have something to do with genes, but most do not. They hang together so loosely that physicians now speak of a metabolic "syndrome," something far looser and vaguer than an "illness," let alone a "disease." Psychiatric researchers increasingly think about schizophrenia in similar terms.

And so the schizophrenogenic mother is back. Not in the flesh, perhaps. Few clinicians talk anymore about cold, rejecting mothers—"refrigerator" mothers, to use the old psychoanalytic tag. But they talk about stress and trauma and culture. They talk about childhood adversity—being beaten, bullied, or sexually abused, the kind of thing that the idea of the schizophrenogenic mother was meant to capture, though in the new research the assault is physical and the abuser is likely male. Clinicians recognize that having a decent place to live is sometimes more important than medication. Increasingly, the valuable research is done not only in the laboratory but in the field, by epidemiologists and even anthropologists. What happened?

**T**he first reason the tide turned is that the newer, targeted medications did not work very well. It is true that about a third of those who take antipsychotics improve markedly. But the side effects of antipsychotics are not very pleasant. They can make your skin crawl as if ants were scuttling underneath the surface. They can make you feel dull and bloated. While they damp down the horrifying hallucinations that can make someone's life a misery—harsh voices whispering "You're stupid" dozens of times a day, so



**With a subsidized apartment of her own and other help, Susan (left) has fared well. She attends a community college and no longer sees a psychiatrist or takes antipsychotics.**

audible that the sufferer turns to see who spoke—it is not as if the drugs restore most people to the way they were before they fell sick. Many who are on antipsychotic medication are so sluggish that they are lucky if they can work menial jobs.

Some of the new drugs' problems could be even more serious. For instance, when clozapine was first released in the United States in 1989, under the brand name Clozaril, headlines announced a new era in the treatment of psychiatric illness. Observers described dramatic remissions that unlocked the prison cage created by the schizophrenic mind, returning men and women to themselves. Clozaril also carried the risk of a strange side effect: In some cases, blood molecules would clump together and the patient would die. Consequently, those who took the drug had to be monitored constantly, their blood drawn weekly, their charts reviewed. Clozaril could cost \$9,000 per year. But it was meant to set the mind free.

Yet Clozaril turned out not to be a miracle drug, at least for most of those who took it. Two decades after

its release, a reanalysis published in *The Archives of General Psychiatry* found that on average, the older antipsychotics—such as Thorazine, mocked in the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* for the fixed, glassy stares it produced in those who took it—worked as well as the new generation, and at a fraction of the cost. Then there was more bad news, which washed like a tidal wave across the mental health world in the late 1990s, as if the facts had somehow been hidden from view. These new antipsychotics caused patients to gain tremendous amounts of weight. On average, people put on 10 pounds in their first 10 weeks on Clozaril. They could gain a hundred pounds in a year. It made them feel awful. I remember a round young woman whose eyes suddenly filled with tears as she told me she once had been slender.

The weight not only depressed people. It killed them. People with schizophrenia die at a rate far higher than that of the general population, and most of that increase is not due to suicide. In a now famous study of patients on Clozaril, more than a third developed diabetes in the first five years of use alone.

The second reason the tide turned against the simple biomedical model is that the search for a genetic explanation fell apart. Genes are clearly involved in schizophrenia. The child of someone with schizophrenia has a tenfold increase in the risk of developing the disorder; the identical twin of someone with schizophrenia has a one-in-two chance of falling ill. By contrast, the risk that a child of someone with Huntington's chorea—a terrible convulsive disorder caused by a single inherited gene—will go on to develop the disease goes up by a factor of 10,000. If you inherit the gene, you will die of the disease.

Schizophrenia doesn't work like that. The effort to narrow the number of genes that may play a role has been daunting. A leading researcher in the field, Ridha Joobar, has argued that there are so many genes involved, and the effects of any one gene are so small, that the serious scientist working in the field should devote his or her time solely to identifying genes that can be shown *not* to be relevant. The number of implicated genes is so great that Schizophrenia Forum, an excellent Web site devoted to organizing the scientific research on the disorder—the subject of 50,000 published articles in the last two decades—features what

Joobar has called a “gene of the week” section. Another scientist, Robin Murray, one of the most prominent schizophrenia researchers in Europe, has pointed out that you can now track the scientific status of a gene the way you follow the performance of a sports team. He said he likes to go online to the Schizophrenia Forum to see how his favorite genes are faring.

The third reason for the pushback against the biomedical approach is that a cadre of psychiatric epidemiologists and anthropologists has made clear that culture really matters. In the early days of the biomedical revolution, when schizophrenia epitomized the pure brain disorder, the illness was said to appear at the same rate around the globe, as if true brain disease respected no social boundaries and was found in all nations, classes, and races in equal measure. This piece of dogma was repeated with remarkable confidence from textbook to textbook, driven by the fervent anti-psychoanalytic insistence that the mother was not to blame. No one should ever have believed it. As the epidemiologist John McGrath dryly remarked, “While the notion that schizophrenia respects human rights is vaguely ennobling, it is also frankly bizarre.” In recent years, epidemiologists have been able to demonstrate that while schizophrenia is rare everywhere, it is much more common in some settings than in others, and in some societies the disorder seems more severe and unyielding. Moreover, when you look at the differences, it is hard not to draw the conclusion that there is something deeply social at work behind them.

**S**chizophrenia has a more benign course and outcome in the developing world. The best data come from India. In the study that established the difference, researchers looking at people two years after they first showed up at a hospital for care found that they scored significantly better on most outcome measures than a comparable group in the West. They had fewer symptoms, took less medication, and were more likely to be employed and married. The results were dissected, reanalyzed, then replicated—not in a tranquil Hindu village, but in the chaotic urban tangle of modern Chennai. No one really knows why Indian patients did so well, but increasingly, psychiatric scientists are willing to attribute the better outcomes to social factors. For one thing, families are far more

involved in the ill person's care in India. They come to all the appointments, manage the medications, and allow the patients to live with them indefinitely. Compared to Europeans and Americans, they yell at the patients less.

Indian families also don't treat people with schizophrenia as if they have a soul-destroying illness. As an anthropology graduate student, Amy Sousa spent more than a year in northern India, sitting with doctors as they treated patients who came with their families into a dingy hospital where overworked psychiatrists can routinely have 10 appointments an hour. Many of the doctors didn't mention a diagnosis. Many of the families didn't ask. There was a good deal of deception—wives grinding medication into the flour for the daily chapattis they made for their husbands, doctors explaining to patients that they were completely well but should take strengthening pills to protect themselves from the ravages of their youth. As a result, none of the patients thought of themselves as having a career-ending illness, and every one of them expected to get better. And at least compared to patients in the West, they generally did.

The most remarkable recent epidemiologic finding relates to migrants: Some fall ill with schizophrenia not only at higher rates than the compatriots they leave behind, but at higher rates than the natives of the countries to which they have come. Dark-skinned migrants to Europe, mostly from the Caribbean or sub-Saharan Africa, are at risk of developing schizophrenia at rates as much as 10 times higher than those of white Europeans. This is a dramatic increase, and it has been shown by so many studies conducted with such methodological care that it cannot be dismissed as diagnostic racism, as if white clinicians confronted with angry black men simply called them "schizophrenic" (even though this sometimes happens). Nor does it seem that biology alone can explain the increased risk, although serious research is now being done to test the hypothesis that vitamin D deficiency plays a role.

Some observers think that the epidemiologic finding is a stark story about the way racism gets under the skin and drives people mad. It is probably more complicated than that. Another young anthropologist, Johanne Eliacin, spent two years doing fieldwork among African-Caribbean migrants living in London. Eliacin saw racism, and she felt viscerally her subjects'

stinging sense of being unwanted and out of place. But she also saw a social world shot through with hostility and anger, in which people were isolated and often intensely lonely. The African-Caribbean people in Tottenham spoke of there being no community in the community. They held up schizophrenia as the symbol of what had gone wrong. Yes, racism lay at the root of the problem, but the tangible distress was the sense of being hopelessly trapped.

Epidemiologists have now homed in on a series of factors that increase the risk of developing schizophrenia, including being migrant, being male, living in an urban environment, and being born poor. One of the more disconcerting findings is that if you have dark skin, your risk of falling victim to schizophrenia increases as your neighborhood whitens. Your level of risk also rises if you were beaten, taunted, bullied, sexually abused, or neglected when you were a child. In fact, how badly a child is treated may predict how severe the case of an adult person with schizophrenia becomes—and particularly, whether the adult hears harsh, hallucinatory voices that comment or command. The psychiatrist Jean-Paul Selten was the first to call this collection of risk factors an experience of "social defeat," a term commonly used to describe the actual physical besting of one animal by another. Selten argued that the chronic sense of feeling beaten down by other people could activate someone's underlying genetic vulnerability to schizophrenia.

All this—the disenchantment with the new-generation antipsychotics, the failure to find a clear genetic cause, the discovery of social causation in schizophrenia, the increasing dismay at the comparatively poor outcomes from treatment in our own health care system—has produced a backlash against the simple biomedical approach. Increasingly, treatment for schizophrenia presumes that something social is involved in its cause and ought to be involved in its cure.

You can see this backlash most clearly in the United States in the Recovery Movement, which explicitly embraces the idea that the very way you imagine an illness will affect the way you experience it—an idea that seems, well, almost psychoanalytic. As the movement's manifesto defined it, "recovery is a process, a way of life, an attitude, and a way of approaching the day's



**At the Banyan, an organization serving the mentally ill in Chennai, India, residents undertake simple activities in groups in order to prepare them for the more complex tasks of independent life.**

challenges.” One of the most influential patient-driven initiatives in decades, the Recovery Movement received a federal imprimatur of sorts in 2003, when the Bush administration issued a mandate promoting “recovery-oriented services.” Treatment providers paid by Medicare and Medicaid were told that schizophrenia would no longer be understood as an illness with a chronic and debilitating course, a death sentence for the mind. Instead, patients and mental health professionals were instructed to believe that people with schizophrenia could live as effective members of a community, able to work and to be valued. The expectation of permanent impairment was to be replaced with hope.

In practice, the ascendancy of the Recovery Movement has meant that many programs and day treatment centers once run by nonpatients have been turned over to clients (so as to empower them), and that the staff allows clients to make more decisions about how to spend their money and what to do with their time. These changes have not come without bumps. Clients have not always made good choices; the staff has sometimes been reluctant to allow clients a free hand. The anthropologist Neely Myers, who spent months doing ethnographic fieldwork in client-run recovery services in Chicago, points out that this very American expectation that everyone will be an independent, productive citizen sets

a high bar for people struggling with serious psychosis.

But the point is that the very idea of the recovery intervention upends the bio-bio-bio vision. Clients are encouraged to take their medication, of course, but the real therapeutic change is thought to come through something social: something people learn to do, say, and believe.

That is also true for other innovative strategies to treat schizophrenia. In Europe, the Hearing Voices network teaches people who hear distressing voices to negotiate with them. They are taught to treat the voices as if they were people—to talk with them, and make deals with

them, as if the voices had the ability to act and decide on their own. This runs completely counter to the simple biomedical model of psychiatric illness, which presumes that voices are meaningless symptoms, ephemeral sequelae of lesions in the brain. Standard psychiatric practice has been to discount the voices, or to ignore them, on the grounds that doing so reminds patients that they are not real and that their commands should not be followed. One might think of the standard approach as calling a spade a spade. When voices are imagined as agents, however, they are imagined as having the ability to choose to stop talking. Members of the Hearing Voices movement report that this is what they do. In 2009, at a gathering in the Dutch city of Maastricht, person after person diagnosed with schizophrenia stood up to tell the story of learning to talk with the voices—and how the voices had then agreed to stop.

This lesson—that the world as imagined can change the world as it is—lies behind the intervention that helped Susan so much. In care as usual, people diagnosed with schizophrenia are regarded as severely disabled and thus as appropriate recipients of supported housing and other benefits. People are required to get their diagnosis to justify their placements, sometimes being asked to collect an actual piece of paper from one office and turn it in at another. Many people with schizophrenia cycle

through long periods of homelessness. Few of them like it. You would think that they would line up to be housed. But they dislike the diagnosis even more than they dislike being out on the street, because the idea of being “crazy” seems even more horrifying to them than it does to those of us who have roofs over our heads. For many months, I spent time with homeless women on the streets of Chicago who clearly met criteria for schizophrenia. They talked about going crazy as something the street did to people who were too weak to handle the life, and they thought of being crazy as having a broken brain that could never be fixed. They often refused to accept housing that required a psychiatric diagnosis, or they would take it for a while and then leave. They lived lives

confident hope that new-generation antidepressants would cure depression—those new miracle drugs such as Prozac and Zoloft that made people thinner, sharper, and “better than well,” in psychiatrist Peter D. Kramer’s apt phrase—dimmed when the public learned that teenagers committed suicide more often while taking them. No simple genetic cause for depression has emerged. There is clearly social causation in the disorder, and it too looks different in different cultures, shaped by particular causes, social settings, and methods of treatment. In the standard psychiatric textbook, Harold I. Kaplan and Benjamin J. Sadock’s *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, depression is now mapped out with a host of factors, some of them biological, many of them not, and the recommended treatment includes psychotherapy.

**THE PUSHBACK AGAINST purely biomedical treatment of mental illness is a return to an older, wiser understanding of mind and body.**

In part, this backlash against the bio-bio-bio model reflects the sophisticated insight of an emerging understanding of the body—epigenetics—in which genes

of restless nomadism, intermittently being hospitalized or jailed by the police when their behavior got out of hand, then being released to supported housing, then, in turn, finding their way back to the bleak streets.

The new kind of intervention simply gives people housing without asking them to admit to a diagnosis. Programs like the one that helped Susan are supported by federal funding set aside for people with serious mental illness, but the benefit is not described that way to clients. Though Susan knows that she has subsidized housing, she thinks she got it because she entered a program at a shelter to help her get off crack. Those who created programs like the one Susan is in believe that the social setting in which a patient lives and imagines herself have as much to do with her treatment as any medication. In general, the data prove that they are right. People are more likely to accept housing when offered it in these programs than in care-as-usual settings, and after they are housed their symptoms lessen—whether or not they are taking medications.

The pushback against purely biomedical treatment is also occurring with other psychiatric illnesses. The

themselves respond to an individual’s social context. There is even an effort within psychiatry to abandon diagnosis altogether and instead to treat dimensions of specific behaviors, such as fear or working memory. Realistically, this project—the Research Domain Criteria—won’t dismantle the diagnostic edifice. Too much of the structure of reimbursement and care depends upon the fiction of clear-cut, biologically distinct diseases. Still, the scientists are trying.

The pushback is also a return to an older, wiser understanding of mind and body. In his *Second Discourse* (1754), Jean Jacques Rousseau describes human beings as made up out of each other through their interactions, their shared language, their intense responsiveness. “The social man, always outside of himself, knows only how to live in the opinions of others; and it is, so to speak, from their judgment alone that he draws the sentiment of his own existence.” We are deeply social creatures. Our bodies constrain us, but our social interactions make us who we are. The new more socially complex approach to human suffering simply takes that fact seriously again. ■

# AMERICAN VISTAS



*MISS LIBERTY CELEBRATION (1987), MALCAH ZELDIS*

After 36 years in print, *The Wilson Quarterly* rides off into the digital tomorrow with four essays examining what the future holds for the United States.

**Martin Walker** on the case against decline | p. 36

**Robert J. Samuelson** on the withering of affluence | p. 42

**Wilfred M. McClay** on the fate of learning | p. 48

**Steven Lagerfeld** on America's promise | p. 56

# America's Edge

*Take some favorable demographics, add a generous shot of American ingenuity, and stir in a very large quantity of natural gas, and you have the beginning of a bright new American future.*

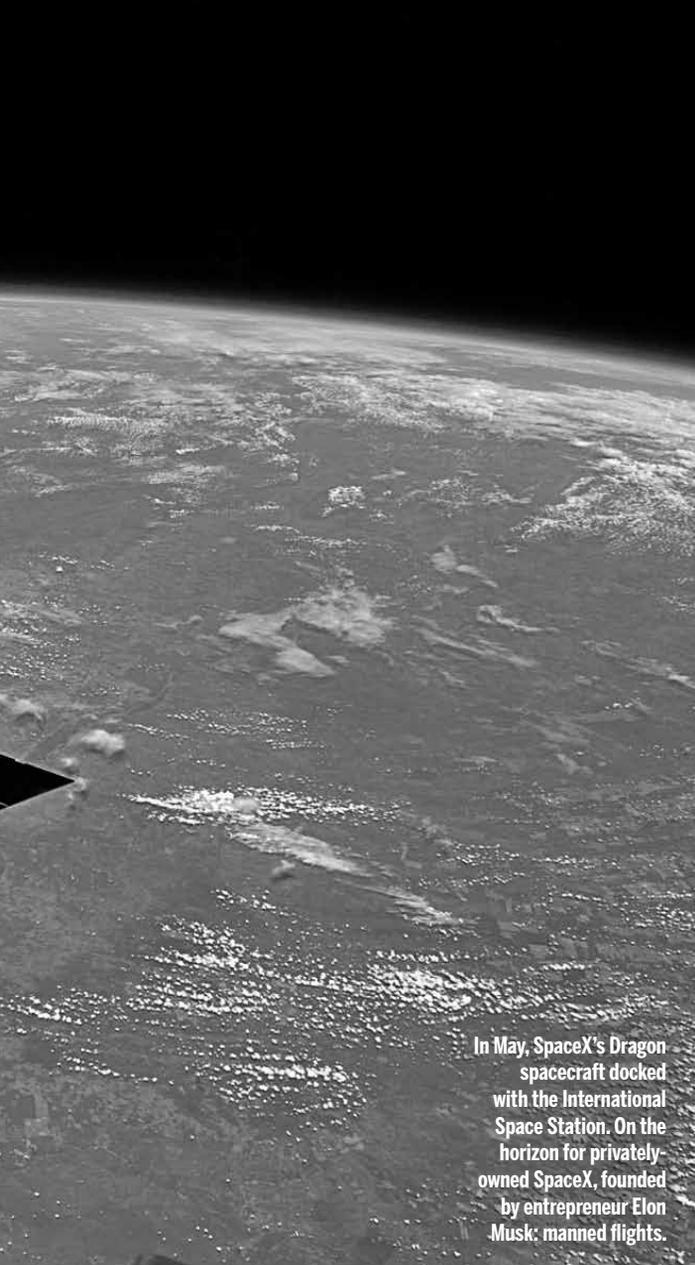
BY MARTIN WALKER

IF THE UNITED STATES WERE A PERSON, A PLAUSIBLE diagnosis could be made that it suffers from manic depression. The country's self-perception is highly volatile, its mood swinging repeatedly from euphoria to near despair and back again. Less than a decade ago, in the wake of the deceptively easy triumph over the wretched legions of Saddam Hussein, the United States was the lonely superpower, the essential nation. Its free markets and free thinking and democratic values had demonstrated their superiority over all other forms of human organization. Today the

MARTIN WALKER, a senior scholar at the Wilson Center, is senior director of the Global Business Policy Council. His latest novel, *The Crowded Grave*, will be published by Knopf this summer.

conventional wisdom speaks of inevitable decline and of equally inevitable Chinese triumph; of an American financial system flawed by greed and debt; of a political system deadlocked and corrupted by campaign contributions, negative ads, and lobbyists; of a social system riven by disparities of income, education, and opportunity.

It was ever thus. The mood of justified triumph and national solidarity after global victory in 1945 gave way swiftly to an era of loyalty oaths, political witch-hunts, and Senator Joseph McCarthy's obsession with communist moles. The Soviet acquisition of the atom bomb, along with the victory of Mao Zedong's communist armies in China, had by the end of the 1940s



In May, SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft docked with the International Space Station. On the horizon for privately-owned SpaceX, founded by entrepreneur Elon Musk: manned flights.

infected America with the fear of existential defeat. That was to become a pattern; at the conclusion of each decade of the Cold War, the United States felt that it was falling behind. The successful launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957 triggered fears that the Soviet Union was winning the technological race, and the 1960 presidential election was won at least in part by John F. Kennedy's astute if disingenuous claim that the nation was threatened by a widening "missile gap."

At the end of the 1960s, with cities burning in race riots, campuses in an uproar, and a miserably unwinnable war grinding through the poisoned jungles of Indochina, an American fear of losing the titanic struggle with communism was perhaps understand-

able. Only the farsighted saw the importance of the contrast between American elections and the ruthless swagger of the Red Army's tanks crushing the Prague Spring of 1968. At the end of the 1970s, with American diplomats held hostage in Tehran, a Soviet puppet ruling Afghanistan, and glib talk of Soviet troops soon washing their feet in the Indian Ocean, Americans waiting in line for gasoline hardly felt like winners. Yet at the end of the 1980s, what a surprise! The Cold War was over and the good guys had won.

Naturally, there were many explanations for this, from President Ronald Reagan's resolve to Mikhail Gorbachev's decency; from American industrial prowess to Soviet inefficiency. The most cogent reason was that the United States back in the late 1940s had crafted a bipartisan grand strategy for the Cold War that proved to be both durable and successful. It forged a tripartite economic alliance of Europe, North America, and Japan, backed up by various regional treaty organizations such as NATO, and counted on scientists, inventors, business leaders, and a prosperous and educated work force to deliver both guns and butter for itself and its allies. State spending on defense and science would keep unemployment at bay while Social Security would ensure that the siren songs of communism had little to offer the increasingly comfortable workers of the West. And while the West waited for its wealth and technologies to attain overwhelming superiority, its troops, missiles, and nuclear deterrent would contain Soviet and Chinese hopes of expansion.

It worked. The Soviet Union collapsed, and the Chinese leadership drew the appropriate lessons. (The Chinese view was that by starting with glasnost and political reform, and ducking the challenge of economic reform, Gorbachev had gotten the dynamics of change the wrong way round.) But by the end of 1991, the Democrat who would win the next year's New Hampshire primary (Senator Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts) had a catchy new campaign slogan: "The Cold War is over—and Japan won." With the country in a mild recession and mega-rich Japanese investors buying up landmarks such as Manhattan's Rockefeller Center and California's Pebble Beach golf course, Tsongas's theme touched a national chord. But the Japanese economy has barely grown since, while America's gross domestic product has almost doubled.

There are, of course, serious reasons for concern about the state of the American economy, society, and body politic today. But remember, the United States is like the weather in Ireland; if you don't like it, just wait a few minutes and it's sure to shift. This is a country that has been defined by its openness to change and innovation, and the search for the latest and the new has transformed the country's productivity and potential. This openness, in effect, was America's secret weapon that won both World War II and the Cold War. We tend to forget that the Soviet Union fulfilled Nikita Khrushchev's pledge in 1961 to outproduce the United States in steel, coal, cement, and fertilizer within 20 years. But by 1981 the United States was pioneering a new kind of economy, based on plastics, silicon, and transistors, while the Soviet Union lumbered on building its mighty edifice of obsolescence.

**T**his is the essence of America that the doom mongers tend to forget. Just as we did after Ezra Cornell built the nationwide telegraph system and after Henry Ford developed the assembly line, we are again all living in a future invented in America. No other country produced, or perhaps even could have produced, the transformative combination of Microsoft, Apple, Google, Amazon, and Facebook. The American combination of universities, research, venture capital, marketing, and avid consumers is easy to envy but tough to emulate. It's not just free enterprise. The Internet itself might never have been born but for the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and much of tomorrow's future is being developed at the nanotechnology labs at the Argonne National Laboratory outside Chicago and through the seed money of Department of Energy research grants.

American research labs are humming with new game-changing technologies. One MIT-based team is using viruses to bind and create new materials to build better batteries, while another is using viruses to create catalysts that can turn natural gas into oil and plastics. A University of Florida team is pioneering a practical way of engineering solar cells from plastics rather than silicon. The Center for Bits and Atoms at MIT was at the forefront of the revolution in fabricators, assembling 3-D printers and laser milling and cutting machines into a factory-in-a-box that



**Workers using new drilling technologies tap into the Marcellus Shale near Burlington, in northeastern Pennsylvania.**

just needs data, raw materials, and a power source to turn out an array of products. Now that the latest F-18 fighters are flying with titanium parts that were made by a 3-D printer, you know the technology has taken off. Some 23,000 such printers were sold last year, most of them to the kind of garage tinkerers—many of them loosely grouped in the “maker movement” of freelance inventors—who more than 70 years ago created Hewlett-Packard and 35 years ago produced the first Apple personal computer.

The real game changer for America is the combination of two not-so-new technologies: hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) of underground rock formations and horizontal drilling, which allows one well to spin off many more deep underground. The result has been a “frack gas” revolution. As recently as 2005, the U.S. government assumed that the country had about a 10-year supply of natural gas remaining. Now it knows that there is enough for at least several decades. In 2009, the United States outpaced Russia to become the world's top natural gas producer. Just a few years ago, the United States had five terminals receiving imported liquefied natural gas (LNG), and permits had been issued to build 17 more. Today, one of the five plants is being converted to *export* U.S. gas, and the owners of three others have applied to do the same. (Two applications to build brand new export terminals are also pending.) The first export contract, worth \$8 billion, was signed with Britain's BG Group, a multinational oil and gas company. Sometime between 2025 and 2030, America is likely to become self-sufficient

in energy again. And since imported energy accounts for about half of the U.S. trade deficit, fracking will be a game changer in more ways than one.

The supply of cheap and plentiful local gas is already transforming the U.S. chemical industry by making cheap feedstock available—ethylene, a key component of plastics, and other crucial chemicals are derived from natural gas in a process called ethane cracking. Many American companies have announced major projects that will significantly boost U.S. petrochemical capacity. In addition to expansions along the Gulf Coast, Shell Chemical plans to build a new ethane

cracking plant in Pennsylvania, near the Appalachian Mountains' Marcellus Shale geologic formation. LyondellBasell Industries is seeking to increase ethylene output at its Texas plants, and Williams Companies is investing \$3 billion in Gulf Coast development. In short, billions of dollars will pour into regions of the United States that desperately need investment. The American Chemistry Council projects that over several years the frack gas revolution will create 400,000 new jobs, adding \$130 billion to the economy and more than \$4 billion in annual tax revenues. The prospect of cheap power also promises to improve the balance sheets of the U.S. manufacturing industry.

Gas is not the only fuel unlocked by fracking. In 2003, the Bakken Shale formation in North Dakota was producing only 10,000 barrels of oil a day. Now, producers are extracting more than 500,000 barrels a day, making North Dakota the second-largest oil-producing state in the country and a boom region with unemployment at three percent. Similar supplies of "tight" oil elsewhere in the Great Plains states may deliver up to two million barrels a day in extra production by the end of the decade. U.S. oil production has increased 25 percent in the last four years, and after

peaking at 60 percent of U.S. consumption in 2005, oil imports are down to 42 percent and are still dropping. Controversies around the fracking process mean that the rise of natural gas production will not be smooth; there are environmental and water safety issues, although probably fewer than with either coal or oil. Above all, the prospect of replacing America's old coal-fired power plants with natural gas, which emits half as much carbon dioxide as coal in combustion, means that the United States could even meet the emissions targets of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which the Senate declined to ratify. At the least, the frack gas revolution buys a lot of time in the longer-term effort to cut carbon emissions.

**THANKS TO THE FRACK gas revolution, the United States is likely to become self-sufficient in energy between 2025 and 2030.**

**T**he geopolitical implications of the frack gas revolution are significant. Self-sufficiency in energy transforms America's relationship with the Middle East and Saudi Arabia, whose priority in U.S. foreign policy is likely to decline significantly.

The United States will maintain an interest in supporting Israel and constraining Iran. It will still hope that Iraq can achieve stability and prosperity through responsible government. But given the advances in military and other technologies and the proximity of the U.S. base in Diego Garcia, none of these interests require a costly military presence. Indeed, since the future principal customers for Saudi and Iranian oil and gas are likely to be India and China, Beijing and New Delhi may soon inherit the diplomatic and geopolitical complications of the region.

The effects of the frack gas revolution in other countries that will be able to tap potentially plentiful supplies—Argentina, Australia, Indonesia, and several in Europe—are another bonus, reducing the future importance of Iran and Russia as major gas exporters and therefore their political influence. Already, Russia has delayed the development of the Shtokman gas field in the Arctic Ocean, whose gas was to have been brought ashore at Murmansk for processing and shipment to the United States. The greater availability of oil on the global market has forced Russia's giant energy company Gazprom to accept renegotiation of its longer-term contracts with European customers.

While Europe may be able to generate something like 50 years of its current gas consumption from its recoverable shale resources, it will have many other available suppliers, not only Persian Gulf states such as Qatar but also Australia, Argentina, and industry newcomers that will include Mozambique and other countries in East Africa, where massive offshore gas deposits have recently been discovered. A study by the Baker Institute at Rice University suggests that Russia's market share of Europe's energy supply will drop from 27 percent in 2009 to 13 percent by 2040. This would reduce Russia's ability to exploit its energy exports for political influence, and also seems likely to undermine Russian ambitions, intermittently voiced by Vladimir Putin, to establish a natural gas cartel along the lines of OPEC.

**R**ussia's third hoped-for market has been China, but that country has its own large reserves of shale gas, estimated to be larger than those of the United States. A report prepared for the U.S. Energy Information Administration calculates that the United States possesses 482 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of recoverable shale gas reserves, while China has 1,275 tcf. But more than half of China's reserves are in regions of severe water stress. While the water demands of shale gas are not excessive (the average well uses as much water in its operational life as a Florida golf course uses in a few weeks), this will inhibit China's exploitation of its resource.

The Baker Institute reckons that China can still count on a minimum 230 tcf of recoverable reserves, roughly the same amount as Europe. Chinese companies have invested billions in U.S. and Canadian shale producers, not simply to secure energy supplies but to learn the complex technologies America has pioneered to exploit it.

For future White House national security advisers, what's not to like? Russia's hopes of using its energy reserves as a diplomatic and political weapon are frustrated. Europe's dependence on Russian oil and gas is markedly reduced. The United States dramatically curtails its balance-of-payments deficit and is no longer forced to see Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf

states as vital national security concerns. As a bonus, China sharply reduces its dependence on imported energy, which could help moderate the zeal with which it pursues energy supplies beyond its shores and risks confrontation with its neighbors over the vast oil potential of the South China Sea.

The United States holds another trump card: its healthy demographics. With the highest birthrate among the group of industrialized countries that make up the G-7, it can count on a relatively young labor force well into the present century. While more than 30 percent of the populations of Germany and China

**AS CHINESE WAGES RISE, U.S. manufacturers are coming home—though they are unlikely to employ the masses they once did.**

will be over 60 in the 2030s, it is projected that only 25 percent of Americans will be 60 or older in 2032. At the least, that means that for all the difficulties the United States faces in financing the pensions and health care of its elderly citizens, these difficulties are much less daunting than those of its most prominent competitors. The Census Bureau projects that the U.S. work force will grow by more than 40 percent between 2000 and 2050, while that of China will shrink by 10 percent, the European Union's by 25 percent, and Japan's by more than 40 percent.

The problem, of course, will be generating jobs for America's workers. There are hopeful prospects. As Chinese wages rise, U.S. manufacturing is coming home again, back to where transport costs are lower, productivity rates are higher, and the legal system is more hostile to counterfeiters and technology theft. And while U.S. energy costs look likely to fall, electricity costs in China are up almost 20 percent over the last two years. In 2009, Peerless Industries, a maker of audiovisual mounting products, cited shorter lead times, cost efficiencies, and local control over the manufacturing process as reasons for bringing its work back from China to Illinois. General Electric is



**Made in the U.S.A.:** American beef exports topped \$5 billion last year, and total farm exports were a record-setting \$136 billion.

investing \$1 billion in American plants to build domestic appliances.

But onshoring, as this return of manufacturing is called, is only a partial answer to the jobs question. The reality is that manufacturing is unlikely ever again to provide the mass employment it did in the past. In the last 40 years, the value of U.S. manufacturing (in constant dollars) has increased by 240 percent, but the manufacturing work force has shrunk by a third. Blame automation, computers, and sharply improved productivity.

Beyond the obvious growth industries such as education and care for the elderly, the jobs of the future will probably come from industries and products that have yet to be invented. As they were in the past, many of those inventions are likely to be made in the United States, which will also be benefiting from its status as the world's top food exporter. Worldwide, there will be two billion extra people to feed by 2050, and many of them will be hoping to clamber up the protein chain from rice and gruel to eggs and hamburgers. The OPEC oil cartel's influence may be waning with the shift in energy markets, but in the future, a cartel of food-exporting countries (possibly destined to be known as OFEC) would be far more potent. Indeed, one of the most likely future trends is that the heartland between the Rockies and the Appalachians will gain special benefits from the energy revolution and the coming boom in food exports. This should help balance the disparity that emerged in recent decades when the East and West Coasts fared significantly better than the inland states.

In terms of energy, raw materials, demographics, and skills and education, there is no reason why the United States should not continue to flourish, with more and more of its people prospering over the coming century. Its difficulties are likely to come from a system of governance that is becoming dysfunctional and that shows few signs of being able to tackle the challenges of financing the pensions and health care of retiring baby boomers and repairing the roads, bridges, water and public transport networks, and other infrastructure whose disrepair is already a scandal. The country has a ramshackle mechanism of taxation, a battered and discredited financial structure, and an education system that does little to help a dismayingly large proportion of its young people. Failure to fix these problems would undermine all the advantages the United States can otherwise expect to enjoy in the future.

**A**t the heart of these woes is politics, the arena in which a democratic society decides its goals and priorities. So remember how the country charted the course that carried it through the five-decade confrontation of the Cold War: A Democratic administration, with a Republican-controlled foreign relations committee in the Senate, crafted a bipartisan, long-term strategy that avoided panic, played to American strengths, and enlisted allies while trying to uphold traditional democratic values. It worked before. With cool heads, open minds, and goodwill, there is no reason why America cannot make it work again in meeting today's challenges. The 2010 Simpson-Bowles fiscal reform plan even offered a blueprint that many people across the political spectrum embraced as a foundation for a broad agreement.

If the capital's politicians cannot rise to the occasion, there are intriguing signs of a new fiscal politics emerging in the states. Washington may have ducked the issue so far; stuck with requirements to balance their budgets, the states cannot. This federal structure is itself one of the Republic's reserve strengths, allowing the states to pioneer and experiment with new policies. The states may teach Washington how to solve the fiscal problem. If that fails, there is one final recourse. In a nation built on "We, the people," the ultimate responsibility rests with Americans themselves. ■

# The Withering of the Affluent Society

*Though Americans see upward mobility as their birthright, that assumption faces growing challenges, with consequences not just for the size of our wallets but for the tenor of our politics.*

BY ROBERT J. SAMUELSON

THE FUTURE OF AFFLUENCE IS NOT WHAT IT USED to be. Americans have long believed—it's part of our national character—that our economic well-being will constantly increase. We see ourselves as a striving, inventive, and pragmatic people destined for higher living standards. History is a continuum of progress, from Robert Fulton's steamboat to Henry Ford's assembly line to Bill Gates' software. Every generation will live better than its predecessors.

Well, maybe not.

For millions of younger Americans—say, those 40 and under—living better than their parents is a pipe dream. They won't. The threat to their hopes does *not* arise from an impending collapse of technological gains of the sort epitomized by the creations of Fulton, Ford, and Gates. These advances will almost certainly continue, and per capita income—the average for all Americans and a conventional indicator of living standards—will climb. Statistically, American progress will resume. The Great Recession will be a bump, not a dead end.

The trouble is that many of these gains will bypass

the young. The increases that might have fattened their paychecks will be siphoned off to satisfy other groups and other needs. Today's young workers will have to finance Social Security and Medicare for a rapidly growing cohort of older Americans. Through higher premiums for employer-provided health insurance, they will subsidize care for others. Through higher taxes and fees, they will pay to repair aging infrastructure (roads, bridges, water systems) and to support squeezed public services, from schools to police.

The hit to their disposable incomes would matter less if the young were major beneficiaries of the resultant spending. In some cases—outlays for infrastructure and local services—they may be. But these are exceptions. By 2025 Social Security and Medicare will simply reroute income from the nearly four-fifths of the population that will be under 65 to the older one-fifth. And health care spending at all age levels is notoriously skewed: Ten percent of patients account for 65 percent of medical costs, reports the Kaiser Family Foundation. Although insurance provides peace of mind, the money still goes from young to old: Average health spending for those 45 to 64 is triple that for those 18 to 24.

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The living standards of younger Americans will almost certainly suffer in comparison to those of their parents in a second crucial way. Our notion of economic progress is tied to financial security, but the young will have less of it. What good are higher incomes if they're abruptly revoked? Though it wasn't a second Great Depression, the Great Recession was a close call, shattering faith that modern economic policies made broad collapses impossible. Except for the savage 1980-82 slump, post-World War II recessions had been modest. Only minorities of Americans had suffered. By contrast, the Great Recession hurt almost everyone, through high unemployment, widespread home foreclosures, huge wealth losses in stocks and real estate—and fears of worse. A 2012 Gallup poll found that 68 percent of

historical “poverty of the masses.”

Economic growth became a secular religion that was its own reward. Perhaps its chief virtue was that it dampened class conflict. In *The Great Leap: The Past Twenty-Five Years in America* (1966), John Brooks observed, “The middle class was enlarging itself and ever encroaching on the two extremes”—the very rich and the very poor. Business and labor could afford to reconcile because both could now share the fruits of expanding production. We could afford more spending on public services (education, health, environmental protection, culture) without depressing private incomes. Indeed, that was Galbraith's main theme: Our prosperity could and should support both.

To be sure, there were crises of faith, moments

when economic progress seemed delayed or doomed. The longest lapse occurred in the 1970s, when double-digit inflation spawned pessimism and frequent recessions, culminating in the 1980-82 downturn. Monthly unemployment peaked at 10.8 percent. But after Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker and President Ronald Reagan took steps to suppress high inflation, faith returned.

Now, it's again imperiled. A 2011 Gallup poll found that 55 percent of Americans didn't think their children would live as well as they did, the highest



**Congratulations! After you pay off your student loans, you can get to work on the national debt.**

Americans knew someone who had lost a job.

The prospect of downward mobility is not just dispiriting. It assails the whole post-World War II faith in prosperity. Beginning in the 1950s, commentators celebrated the onrush of abundance as marking a new era in human progress. In his 1958 bestseller *The Affluent Society*, Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith announced the arrival of a “great and unprecedented affluence” that had eradicated the

rate ever. We may face a cramped and contentious future.

Let's be clear: The prospect is not national impoverishment; it is of relative deprivation. Even if disposable per capita incomes fell 10 percent—an extreme outcome—Americans would remain wealthy by any historical standard. Such a change would entail a decline in the annual disposable income from \$37,000 to \$33,300 (in 2011 inflation-adjusted dollars), probably over many years. People might adjust in ways that

barely affected daily routines. They might live in slightly smaller houses, drive more fuel-efficient vehicles, or eat out a bit less. These are inconveniences, not tragedies.

But popular expectations would be dashed. Even assuming a full recovery from the Great Recession—possible, though not certain—the resulting prosperity will be qualified by greater competition for scarce economic resources. Massive federal budget deficits are only the most conspicuous sign of a society that has promised itself more than it can afford. To resurrect a familiar metaphor: A more slowly growing economic pie will face more claimants for slices. Some will receive bigger slices, others smaller.

**G**enerally speaking, there are two types of economic mobility, though they're often confused. The first is intergenerational mobility (also called "relative mobility"). It involves children moving up or down the economic ladder from their parents' position—do they rise to the top, stay where they started, or fall toward the bottom? Call the second type "national" mobility (specialists refer to it as "absolute mobility"). It concerns whether or not most members of each succeeding generation live better than their predecessors. If they do, then the whole society can be upwardly mobile even if all children occupy the same position relative to others as their parents on the social ladder. To take an obvious example, the poorest third of Americans lived much better in 1980 than in 1930.

In the United States, both types of mobility abound. For starters, birth is not fate. Americans do not automatically match their parents' position on the economic ladder. A report by the Pew Economic Mobility Project finds that 61 percent of children born to parents in the richest fifth of Americans fall from that stratum, while 58 percent of children born in the poorest fifth rise above to a higher stratum. There's not much movement from the very bottom to the very top. Only six percent of children make that journey. But in between, there's much shifting.

Similarly, economic growth since World War II has

allowed most Americans to live better than their parents did—even if they haven't moved up the economic ladder. In the first two postwar decades, household incomes roughly doubled. Despite slower growth since then, about two-thirds of today's Americans have higher incomes than their parents at a similar age, Pew finds. Even this understates the extent of the achievement, because some of those who lost ground still have relatively high incomes. They're children of well-to-do families who don't match their parents' status, but their fall has been modest. Among the poorest fifth of Americans, about four-fifths have incomes higher than their parents'.

Both types of mobility have contributed to America's success. Although studies suggest that intergenerational mobility—again, children moving up or down the economic ladder—is greater in some other countries, the United States has enough of it to foster the bedrock belief that striving and talent are rewarded. That is

**EVEN IF THE UNITED STATES fully recovers from the Great Recession, Americans will endure greater competition for scarce economic resources.**

important because societies in which economic status is rigid discriminate against individual ability and effort and discourage parents from striving to help their children succeed. As for national (or "absolute") mobility, it affects social peace and satisfaction, because intergenerational mobility is a zero-sum game. For everyone who climbs the ladder into a higher stratum, someone else must fall down into a lower one. By contrast, a rising tide does lift all boats.

But there's a rub: Upward national mobility requires strong economic growth—and U.S. growth is weakening. Growth comes from two sources: more labor (more workers or longer hours) and improved efficiency (or labor productivity, measured in output per hour). Unfortunately, slower labor force expansion virtually guarantees a decline in overall U.S. economic growth.

As economist Brink Lindsey of the Kauffman Foun-

## U.S. ECONOMIC GROWTH, 1950–2040

|                                      | 1950–2011  | 2002–2011  | 2012–2022  | 2023–2040  |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Annual GDP growth (%) due to:</b> |            |            |            |            |
| Labor force increases                | 1.5        | 0.8        | 0.7        | 0.5        |
| Productivity increases               | 1.8        | 1.4        | 1.7        | 1.7        |
| <b>Total annual growth</b>           | <b>3.3</b> | <b>2.3</b> | <b>2.3</b> | <b>2.2</b> |

Note: Some numbers do not add due to rounding.

Sources: Congressional Budget Office, Social Security Administration

dation notes, two powerful trends boosted labor force growth for many years: the influx of baby boomers from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, and the flood of married women into jobs starting in the late 1950s. Both trends have ended. Baby boomers are retiring; the oldest ones, born in 1946, turned 65 in 2011. And women's participation ebbed a decade ago, well before the recession, with some women deciding to stay home or retire early. (From 1960 to 1999, the labor force participation rate of women 16 and over rose from 38 percent to 60 percent; in 2011, it was 58 percent.)

As a result of these trends, the number of new workers barely exceeds the number of those retiring. Barring major pleasant surprises, the slower labor force increases reduce projections of overall economic growth from a postwar average of slightly more than three percent to slightly more than two percent, as the table above shows. (The table shows “potential” economic growth under assumed conditions of “full employment,” but actual results are also affected by business cycles.)

Ideally, we would raise productivity to offset slower labor force growth. Realistically, we don't know how to do this. What creates higher productivity is a murky mixture of new technologies, industry organization, government policies, management competence, worker abilities, and market pressures. Economists don't fully understand the process and can't manipulate it. Future rates of productivity growth could as easily fall as rise. In the table, the assumed annual gains average 1.7 percent, near the post-World War II rate of 1.8 percent. But gains might be two percent, one percent, or who knows what. Large deficits and higher taxes may crowd out investment or discourage risk taking, slowing productivity increases. That would further trim future

economic growth, making it even harder for the young to achieve upward mobility.

It's already hard enough. The mounting number of retirees increases pressure to move money from workers to the elderly. Consider that in 1960 the worker-to-retiree ratio was 5:1; in 2010 it was 3:1, and the projection for 2025 is nearly 2:1. At the federal level, the pressures stem from higher spending on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. At the state and local levels, they

stem from Medicaid (states pay about 40 percent of its costs) and pensions for government workers. In *The Predictable Surprise: The Unraveling of the U.S. Retirement System* (2012), Sylvester Schieber, an actuary and former chairman of the Social Security Advisory Board, estimates that state and local public employee pensions are 20 to 25 percent underfunded.

Higher taxes to pay for Social Security and Medicare will undermine after-tax wages. So will mounting employer costs for health insurance and pensions; these expenses limit what companies would otherwise pay in wage increases. Schieber estimates that all these factors could absorb two-thirds of compensation growth from 2015 to 2030. Other studies reach similar conclusions. Economist David Auerbach and physician Arthur Kellermann, both of the Rand Corporation, find that 80 percent of median-family income gains from 1999 to 2009 went to higher health spending in the form of employer-paid premiums, out-of-pocket costs, and taxes. And these studies don't count the cost of infrastructure repair.

The future of today's young has been heavily mortgaged. The grimmest prospect is a death spiral for the welfare state. That could happen if we continue to pay for promised benefits by increasing taxes or deficits, further retarding economic growth and thus spurring still more tax and deficit increases to sustain benefits. But to all of these unsettling possibilities, there's a ritualistic, upbeat response: We shall overcome. We're a can-do people. The U.S. economy adapts to change. It creates new technologies and industries. Its long-term resilience is incontestable. As Vice President Joseph Biden once put it, “No one's ever made money betting against America.”

Unfortunately, that isn't true. Many people have

made money betting against America: those who sold stocks in August 1929 or the dollar in the late 1970s, and those who bet against the U.S. mortgage market in 2006. The list goes on. It's true that over long stretches—decades—the U.S. economy has generated higher living standards for most citizens. But even this truth is selective. Banking panics occurred regularly in the 1800s. In the mid- to late 19th century, disease and poor diets lowered living standards of urban workers. Then came the Great Depression, the Great Inflation, and now the Great Recession.

So: America is not entitled to economic success. What actually happens depends on private markets and public policies. To be sure, the future is not etched in stone. Uncertainties abound, as any prediction must acknowledge. Here are three caveats.

First, forecasts of the future as an extension of the present are suspect. Unforeseen events—for good and ill—intervene. History is littered with false prophets. Consider Harvard economist Alvin Hansen (1887–1975). In 1938, when unemployment was still 19 percent, he sought to explain why the U.S. economy couldn't shake the Depression. His answer was “secular stagnation.” There was no engine of expansion. Slower population growth meant fewer new consumers and less reason for businesses to invest. Technology was not advancing, dampening investment in new industry. And decades earlier the “frontier” had effectively ceased to exist, so there was no longer any spending on new settlements to boost the economy.

It was all plausible—and wrong. After World War II, the baby boom created a population explosion. Countless technologies spawned new industries in television, aviation, synthetic fibers, and plastics, to name a few. And there was a new frontier to settle—suburbia.

The second caveat is that economic progress may be overrated. Younger Americans may be less obsessed with material goods as the be all and end all of a satisfying life. Moreover, many Americans will enjoy rising incomes over their lifetimes, reflecting experience and seniority. In 2009, for example, the median income of working men aged 45 to 54 was 40 percent higher than



In the postwar affluent society, presents were piled high under American Christmas trees.

for their counterparts aged 25 to 34. Viewing their own lives, most Americans might feel upwardly mobile. The difference would be that tomorrow's 45-year-olds might have less than today's.

Finally, we are not helpless. We might mitigate the forces that assail a broad-based affluence. Just because health spending hasn't been tamed in the past doesn't mean it won't be tamed in the future. As society ages, Americans may recognize that longer life expectancies justify longer working lives and that wealthier retirees deserve fewer (or no) subsidies from less affluent younger workers. That could lead to steps that would reduce the burdens of the old on the young.

Though the future will doubtlessly differ from how anyone now imagines it, the trends fostering downward mobility are insistent, because they are rooted in demographics, politics, and global economics.

We are at a symbolic turning point. The coincidence of the Great Recession with baby boomers' retirements marks the eclipse of the post-World War II social compact, formed in the 1950s and '60s. That arrangement promised that business cycles would be mild, because economic policy could moderate booms and busts. Technological change would be gradual, because dominant firms such as General Electric, AT&T, and General Motors controlled it and had a stake in gradual change. Large institutions were mostly benign. Major corporations provided career jobs and generous fringe benefits (health insurance, pensions) for most of their workers. There were reciprocal loyalties and obligations between employee and employer. Greater wealth enabled government to create a safety net for the old, the disabled, and the poor.

The props underlying this unspoken compact have been weakening since 1980. Technological changes are no longer gradual; they're abrupt and disruptive, driven largely by computer hardware and software companies, or Web-based enterprises such as Google and Facebook. Career jobs still exist but are dwindling in number. The reciprocal loyalties between workers and their employers have weakened. The promise of overall economic stability seems hollow. The fundamental lesson of the 2007–09 financial crisis is that economists overestimated their ability to prevent calamitous boom-bust cycles. Globalization has increased economic complexity faster than economists' capacity to keep up. The social safety net—actually, the welfare state—is popular, but huge government deficits put its affordability in doubt.

**T**he premise of the post–World War II affluent society, that we were or would soon become so rich that we could afford almost anything, was never true, but we often acted as if it were. We avoided unpleasant choices, especially in government, accepting routine federal budget deficits (46 out of 51 years since 1961). Now, limits are painfully evident. There are more promises than can be fulfilled. Meeting all of government's spending commitments would require higher, broad-based taxes, which both liberals and conservatives reject, or perpetually large deficits, which both parties consider unsustainable and undesirable.

What looms is a future of more distributional struggles between young and old, rich and poor, different regions, and many interest groups. Each will defend subsidies, work to avoid tax increases, and maneuver for regulatory advantage.

The role of economic growth in advanced nations is less to make people richer than to reduce conflict. If most people feel that they're "getting ahead," they're less resentful of others who are doing better or hold different views. "Periods of economic expansion in America and elsewhere, during which most citizens had reason to be optimistic, have also witnessed greater openness, tolerance, and democracy," writes Harvard economist Benjamin Friedman in *The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth* (2005). If, however, people fall behind—or fear they will—they become more resentful. Until the Great Recession, three decades of growing economic inequality had

inspired little popular backlash. This changed after unemployment rose. The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street movements reflect the fallout of feared downward mobility.

Lower economic growth will have broad consequences. Already, defense spending is headed toward claiming the lowest share of GDP since 1940. In effect, the welfare state is defeating the Pentagon. Some will cheer, others complain. Either way, America's global role will change.

The prospect of downward mobility could discourage younger Americans from marrying and having families—a development that would accelerate America's aging. Although people marry and have children for many reasons, their economic outlook is an important influence. Low-income men are not prime candidates for marriage. Birthrates collapsed in the 1930s because families worried that they could not support new offspring. It is surely no coincidence that in the wake of the Great Recession the number of marriages fell five percent in 2010 and births three percent.

As it is, the generations are in an undeclared war. Americans in their late forties, fifties, and sixties believe that the contract made with them should be kept. They want their Social Security and Medicare benefits. They are angry when what they thought were career jobs are unexpectedly terminated; corporate buyouts and firings weren't part of the bargain. Meanwhile, their children and grandchildren are befuddled and frustrated. Their unemployment rates are high, and their wage levels—compared to those of the past—are low. Yet they feel guilty advocating trims to Social Security and Medicare, even when the transfers go from the struggling young to the comfortable old.

The Affluent Society was more a state of mind than an explicit economic target or threshold level of income. It announced the arrival of an era when traditional economic concerns were being overwhelmed by a seemingly unstoppable flood of abundance. Prosperity was a panacea. We could afford a decent society as well as a wealthy society. Many traditional social, political, and economic choices could, with a little patience, be evaded. There was enough for almost everything. We have been, in historian David Potter's apt phrase, a "people of plenty." What happens when there is less plenty than we expected? We are about to find out. ■

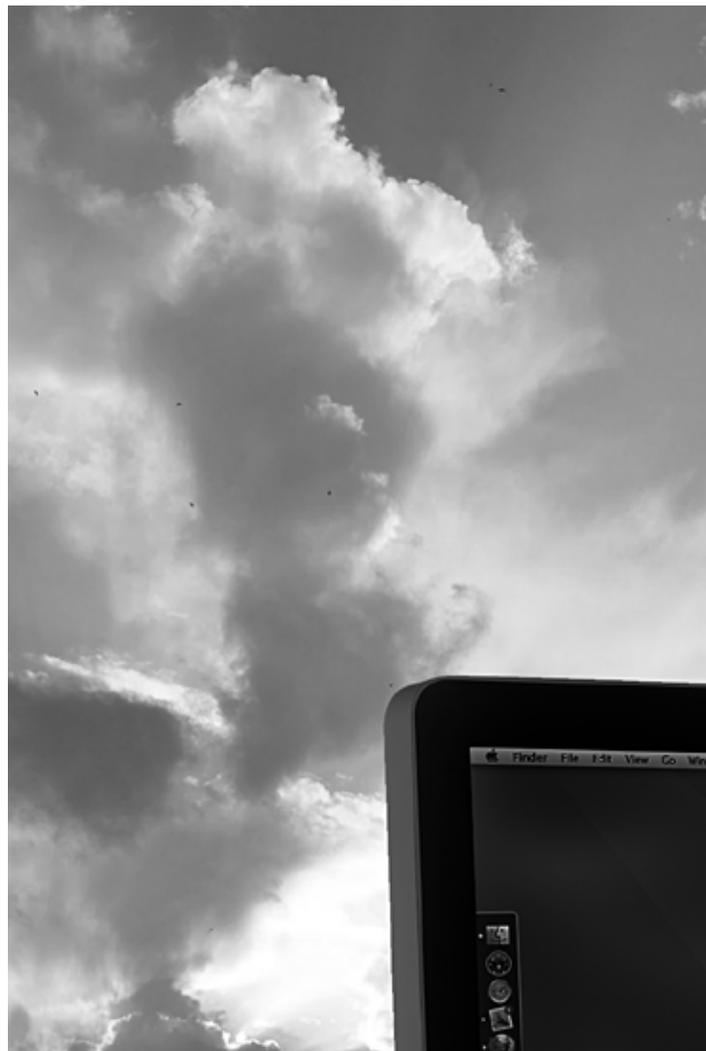
# The Tocquevillian Moment . . . and Ours

*The great 19th-century observer of America's democratic revolution has much to teach the tumultuous new century.*

BY WILFRED M. McCLAY

TO SAY THAT WE ARE LIVING THROUGH A TIME OF momentous change, and now stand on the threshold of a future we could barely have imagined a quarter-century ago, may seem merely to restate the blazingly obvious. But it is no less true, and no less worrisome, for being so. Uncertainties about the fiscal soundness of sovereign governments and the stability of basic political, economic, and financial institutions, not to mention the fundamental solvency of countless American families, are rippling through all facets of the nation's life. Those of us in the field of higher education find these new circumstances particularly unsettling. Our once-buffered corner of the world seems to have lost control of its boundaries and lost sight of its proper ends, and stands accused of having become at once unaffordable and irrelevant except as a credential mill for the many and a certification of social rank for the few. And despite all the wonderful possibilities that beckon from the sunlit uplands of technological progress, the digital revolution that is upon us threatens not only to disrupt the economic model of higher education but to undermine the very qualities of mind that are the university's reason for being. There is a sense that events

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and processes are careening out of control, and that the great bubble that has so far contained us is now in the process of bursting.

By harping on the unprecedented character of the challenges we face, however, we may allow ourselves to become unduly overwhelmed and intimidated by them. Although history never repeats itself, it rarely, if ever, presents us with situations that have absolutely no precedent, and no echoes. We have, in some respects, already been here before. “In times of change and danger when there is a quicksand of fear under men’s reasoning,” wrote the novelist John Dos Passos in the tense year of 1941, “a sense of continuity with generations gone before can stretch like a lifeline across the scary present.”

So let me propose, as a lifeline for our own era, that we consult a figure who has served Americans well in the past: the French writer Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–59), one of the most eminent European social and political thinkers of the 19th century, and still an incomparable analyst of the virtues and pitfalls of modern democratic societies. The first part of my title not only refers to the man and his unique biographical context, but also uses his name to label something more general: a particular kind of pivotal moment in human history, something that he both described well and experienced fully—a moment of profound social transition in which an entire way of life is in the process of being inexorably transformed, but in which the precise shape of this transformation is yet to be fully determined.

Tocqueville was the child of an aristocratic French family, many of whose members had suffered death or devastation at the hands of the French Revolution. As a consequence, he was haunted all his life by the specter of revolutionary anarchy, and of the tyranny such a sweeping social revolution would inevitably bring in its wake. But such fears never led him to advocate the wholesale restoration of the pre-revolutionary French social order. He was an aristocrat at heart, but not a reactionary. Instead, his apprehensions led him to examine intently the change that was coming, in the hope of directing it to a more felicitous end.

A concern with the characteristics of modern democracy is the guiding preoccupation of his *Democracy in America*



(1835–40), the work for which he is best known among American readers. Tocqueville was only 26 years old when, accompanied by his friend and sidekick Gustave de Beaumont, he came to the United States in 1831. He was ostensibly traveling on official business for the French government, to study the American prison system. In reality, he was intent upon “examining, in details and as scientifically as possible, all the mechanisms of the vast American society which everyone talks of and no one knows.” Tocqueville intended to write a large and path-breaking book about America, which he hoped would make his intellectual reputation and launch him on a successful political career in France.

The resulting book, published in two successive volumes, turned out to be perhaps the richest and most enduring study of American society and culture

ever written. *Democracy in America* envisioned the United States as the vanguard of history, a young and vigorous country endowed with an extraordinary degree of social equality among its inhabitants. In America, one could gaze upon “the image of democracy itself, of its penchants, its character, its prejudices, its passions”—and having so gazed, could perhaps take away lessons that would allow leaders to deal more intelligently and effectively with the democratic changes coming to Europe.

Tocqueville was firmly convinced that the movement toward greater social equality—which is what he meant by “democracy”—represented an inescapable feature of the modern age, a hard fact to which all future social or political analysis must accommodate itself. Indeed, one could say that the great

recurrent motif in Tocqueville’s writing was this huge, sprawling historical spectacle, the gradual but inexorable leveling of human society on a universal scale. “To wish to stop democracy,” he warned, would be “to struggle against God himself.”

A leveling democratic regime would have sweeping effects in every facet of human life: not merely in politics and institutions, but also in family life, in literature, in philosophy, in manners, in mores, in male-female relations, in ambition, in friendship, and in attitudes toward war and peace. Tocqueville was interested not only in the outward forms of democracy but in its *innermost* effects, the ways in which a society’s political arrangements, far from being matters that merely skate on the surface of life, have influences that reach deep into the very souls of its members.

He accomplished this analysis, mostly in the book’s second volume, by contrasting the form that each of these facets of life take on, first in aristocratic societies, then in democracies. The result was a coherent and memorable



Alexis de Tocqueville later explained that he had hoped in writing *Democracy in America* “to teach democracy to know itself, and thereby to direct itself and contain itself.”

image of a strikingly middle-class society: feverishly commercial and acquisitive, obsessively practical-minded, jealously egalitarian, and restlessly mobile. Tocqueville saw many things to admire in this energetic, bumptious democracy—but also much to fear.

Chief among the dangers was its pronounced tendency toward individualism. The various bonds and structures of authority that had knit together an aristocratic order were absent from a democracy. Consequently, Tocqueville saw in America the peril that citizens might elect to withdraw from involvement in the larger public life, and regard themselves as autonomous and isolated actors, with no higher goal than the pursuit of their own material well-being.

In aristocratic societies, powerful structures of authority—ecclesiastical, cultural, political, economic—had been closely woven into the social order. Families remained in place for centuries; men and women remembered their ancestors and anticipated their descendants, and strove to do their duty to both. Citizens occupied a fixed position in the social pecking order, with tight bonds to those in their same social niche. So enmeshed was the individual person in this comprehensive order that it was nonsensical to imagine him or her apart from it—as implausible as swimming in the air, or breathing beneath the waves.

In democratic societies, however, where the principle of equality dictated a more fluid sense of connection, such duties and fixities were lost. Tocqueville described the new condition thus:

In democratic peoples, new families constantly issue from nothing, others constantly fall into it, and all those who stay on change face; the fabric of time is torn at every moment and the trace of generations is effaced. You easily forget those who have preceded you, and you have no idea of those who will follow you. . . . As conditions are equalized, one finds a great number of individuals who . . . owe nothing to anyone, they expect so to speak nothing from anyone; they are in the habit of always considering themselves in isolation, and they willingly fancy that their whole destiny is in their hands.

Furthermore, there was a danger that this atomized condition, in which families, neighborhoods, communities, and other intermediate forms of human association were rendered weak and listless, would lead to democratic despotism, an all-embracing “soft” tyranny that relied upon the dissolution of the bonds among its members, and their consequent inability to act together as citizens, as means

**TOCQUEVILLE SAW MANY things to admire in America’s energetic, obsessively practical-minded, bumptious democracy—but also much to fear.**

of smoothing the way toward a massive bureaucratic state that would rule over every feature of their lives. Unchecked individualism could lead to something very nearly its opposite.

**H**ow does a democratic society in which all the formerly reliable defenses against anarchy and anomie have been lost still find a way to order itself, and produce the kind of virtuous behavior and commitment to the common good that is required for it to be cohesive, successful, and free? Can a society in the grip of massive change still find ways to import into the new order some of those things that were most estimable in the old?

These are the questions at the heart of “the Tocquevillean moment.” It is the moment when an old order becomes conscious of the imperative need to give way to a new one—and becomes conscious, also, of the particular dilemma that this change presents to thoughtful individuals, such as Tocqueville, whom history seemed to have destined to ride the crest of such a monumental transformation, carrying a full awareness of both sides.

Many of Tocqueville’s contemporary readers failed to understand this balancing act at work in his writing, and he was stung by their incomprehension. A letter Tocqueville wrote to an unfavorable French reviewer is worth quoting at length. We do not know for certain

whether this letter was ever received, or even sent. But it is as clear a statement as Tocqueville ever provided of precisely what he was up to:

I had become aware that, in our time, the new social state that had produced and is still producing very great benefits was, however, giving birth to a number of quite dangerous tendencies. These seeds, if left to grow unchecked, would produce, it seemed to me, a steady flowering of the intellectual level of society with no conceivable limit, and this would bring in its train the mores of materialism and, finally, universal slavery. . . . It was essential, I thought, for all men of goodwill to join in exerting the strongest possible pressure in the opposite direction. To my knowledge, few of the friends of the Revolution of 1789 dared point out these very frightening tendencies. . . . Those who saw them and were not afraid to speak of them, being the sort of men who condemned in one fell swoop the entire democratic social state and all its elements, were more likely to irritate people than guide them. The intellectual world was thus divided into blind friends and furious detractors of democracy.

My aim in writing [my] book was to point out these dreadful downward paths opening under the feet of our contemporaries, not to prove that they must be thrown back into an aristocratic state of society . . . but to make these tendencies feared by painting them in vivid colors, and thus to secure the effort of mind and will which alone can combat them—to *teach democracy to know itself, and thereby to direct itself and contain itself.* (emphasis added)

It would be hard to imagine a better expression of the Tocquevillian moment, when social change arrives at a crossroads, and awaits further direction. As Tocqueville expressed it at the conclusion of *Democracy in America*, “Providence has not created mankind entirely independent or perfectly slave. It traces, it is true, a fatal circle around each man that he cannot leave; but within its vast limits man is powerful and free; so too with peoples.”

The Tocquevillian moment involves the ways in which we come to terms, not only as individuals but also as citizens and societies, with whatever fatal circle our times and conditions have drawn around us.

**H**ow did Tocqueville believe that the Americans of his day managed to counter the dangerous aspects of democracy and create a free and vibrant society? He located a number of factors. He credited the pervasive influence of religion in Ameri-

can life, noting to his astonishment the ways in which religion served to support democratic values and free institutions. He applauded Americans for their talent in forming voluntary associations, and for their decentralized federal institutions, both of which tended to disperse power and encourage the involvement of citizens in the activity of governing themselves.

But most of all Tocqueville praised Americans for embracing the concept of self-interest rightly understood—and in so doing, he underscored the crucial importance of education in the conduct of a successful democracy. It was a foregone conclusion, in his view, that self-interest had replaced virtue as the chief force driving human action. To tell an American to do virtuous things for virtue’s sake, or at the authoritative direction of priests, prelates, or princes, was futile. But the same request would readily be granted if real benefits could be shown to flow from it. The challenge of moral philosophy in such an environment was to demonstrate how “private interest and public interest meet and amalgamate,” and how one’s devotion to the general good could also promote one’s personal advantage. Belief in that conjunction—that one could do well by doing good—was exactly what was meant by the “right understanding” of self-interest.

Hence, it was imperative to *educate* democratic citizens in this understanding, to teach them how to reason their own way to acceptance of the greater good. The American example made Tocqueville hopeful that the modern principle of self-interest could be so channeled, hedged about, habituated, and clothed as to produce public order and public good, even in the absence of “aristocratic” sources of authority. But it would not happen of its own accord.

“Enlighten them, therefore, at any price.” Or, as another translation expresses it, “Educate them, then.” Whatever else we may believe about the applicability of Tocqueville’s ideas to the present day, we can be in no doubt that he was right in his emphasis upon education. But not just any kind of education. He was talking about what we call *liberal education*, in the strictest sense of the term, an education that makes men and women capable of the exercise of liberty, and equips them for the task of rational self-governance. And the future of that ideal of education is today very much in doubt.

Which brings us back to the anxious and unstable time American colleges and universities are living through. Worries about ever-escalating costs and diminishing prospects for postgraduate employment have made many Americans question ingrained assumptions about the heretofore unquestionable value of a college education. Their concerns are entirely legitimate and must be answered.

Understandably, some academic leaders look to the new information technologies for a quick fix, hoping the vast economies of scale they offer will lower costs and improve access, while breaking down some

same spectacle, the gradual but pervasive process of democratic leveling that Tocqueville described, now taking the form of a radical democratization of access to information. Like it or not, such a development is challenging the standing of nearly all traditional institutions of formal education and those who work in them, not to mention other institutions, such as the great newspapers, magazines, libraries, publishing houses, networks, studios, and other intellectual and cultural institutions, all of which have lost much of their authority along with their monopolies.

Much of this change is inevitable, and much of

**THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION is best understood as a continuation of the gradual process of democratic leveling that Tocqueville witnessed.**

of the insularity and impracticality of academic life. In his 2011 book *Change.edu*, Andrew Rosen, chairman and CEO of the for-profit education firm Kaplan Inc., offers an argument that is winning a sympathetic hearing in many quarters: The model of a four-year residential college is doomed, and the salvation of higher education lies in radical institutional innovation, along with much greater use of technology. Online learning, skills-based training outside of traditional undergraduate degree programs, and tech-enabled community outreach through local colleges and community colleges—these and other more cost-effective expedients will eventually create a new model for higher education.

Such changes are of a piece with the ways in which the Internet has disrupted the well-established channels through which movies, television, recorded music, and news content are published and distributed. The near-irresistible tide moving in the direction of universal information dissemination and access through digitized media is itself a great and sprawling historical spectacle, as productive of awe and uncertainty as the one Tocqueville witnessed. Indeed, it is perhaps best understood as a *continuation* of the very

the fruit of the digital revolution is unquestionably good. But there is also much to be said for being more cautious than we have been in substituting the digital and the virtual for older educational practices. This revolution may, if embraced uncritically,

render impossible the things we have always sought to achieve through the process of formal education. The Internet is a tool of unparalleled utility. But the facility it offers may already be eroding our capacity for thinking in the focused and undistracted ways the older forms of literacy fostered and demanded. There is mounting evidence, related in studies such as Nicholas Carr's 2010 book *The Shallows*, though already anticipated in Sven Birkerts's remarkably prescient *Gutenberg Elegies* (1994), that the Internet's steady and exclusive use tends to habituate its users—meaning all of us—to think in increasingly undisciplined and fragmentary ways, that it tends to dull our capacity for sustained and penetrating attentiveness and inhibit our ability to detect larger patterns of meaning. The “linear mind” fostered by the literary culture of books, Carr argues, is being “pushed aside by a new kind of mind that wants and needs to take in and dole out information in short, disjointed, often overlapping bursts—the faster, the better.” If we are not careful, this “new kind of mind” will change for the worse the way we read, the way we write, and the way we think.

So we must be Tocquevillean. That means we should not be too quick to discard an older model of

what higher education is about, a model that the conventional four-year residential liberal-arts college, whatever its failures and its exorbitant costs, has been preeminent in championing. And that is the model of a physical community built around a great shared enterprise: the serious and careful reading and discussion of classic literary, philosophical, historical, and scientific texts.

What we may need, however, is to be more rigorous in thinking through what we want from such a model of education, and what we can readily dispense with. Perhaps we do not need college to be what it all too often has become: an extended *Wanderjahre* of post-adolescent entertainment and experimentation, played out in the soft, protected environment of idyllic, leafy campuses, less a *rite du passage* than a retreat to a very expensive place where one can defer the responsibilities of adult life.

At the very least, such an education ought to help us resist the uncritical embrace of technological innovation, and equip us to challenge it constructively and thoughtfully—and selectively. There is, for example, no product of formal education more important than the cultivation of reflection, of solitary concentration, and of sustained, patient, and disciplined attention—habits that an overwired and hyperconnected way of life is making more and more difficult to put into practice. If we find it increasingly difficult to compose our fragmented and disjointed browsings into coherent accounts, let alone larger and deeper structures of meaning, that fact represents a colossal failure of our educations to give us the tools we need to make sense of our lives. Colleges and universities should be the last institutions to succumb to this tendency. They should resist it with all their might, because that is precisely what they are there for.

It should be obvious that the consequences of failure would not be confined to the world of the campus. As former secretary of state Henry Kissinger made



**An endangered breed? Reading books requires us to form coherent structures of meaning out of information fragments, to understand relationships, and ultimately to know ourselves.**

clear recently, these consequences would be far reaching and practical: “Reading books requires you to form concepts, to train your mind to relationships. You have to come to grips with who you are. A leader needs these qualities. But now we learn from fragments of facts. . . . Now there is no need to internalize because each fact can be instantly called up on the computer. There is no context, no motive. . . . This new thinking erases all context. It disaggregates everything. All this makes strategic thinking about the world order impossible to achieve.”

An education that still revolves around the encounter with serious and substantial books is therefore to be commended on very practical, Tocquevillean grounds. To borrow the words Tocqueville used in his letter to his French critic, such an education seeks *to teach democracy to know itself, and thereby to direct itself and contain itself*. It equips us to negotiate the multitude of Tocquevillean dilemmas presented to us by the fatal circle of our times—such as the tsunami of digitization that is, precisely like Tocqueville’s own revolution of democratization, too powerful to be reversed, but too full of potential for both good and ill to be treated fatalistically.

The careful reading of serious books, particularly older books, equips us with something subtle, resis-

tant to easy description, whose utility is impossible to distill into a sound bite or sentence. When, for example, we accord Plato's *Republic* our respect as a great text deserving of a lifetime of study, this does not mean we are expressing approval of the many defects of the Athenian society in which it was produced. We study the *Republic* because it formulates powerful criticisms of democracy that remain enduringly valid and troubling, criticisms that we would not have had the wit to formulate on our own—and because in reading it and wrestling with it, we are teaching our democracy to know itself better, and thereby contributing, not to the undermining of our democracy, but to its deepening, its resiliency, its ennoblement. To find and retain those things from the past that remain estimable and enduringly valuable is what it means to cultivate a civilization.

**T**ocqueville was prone to melancholy, and he worried that the task of democracy's ennoblement would prove too difficult, too exacting, too exhausting. There is always in his work a sense of an uphill challenge, with the issue very much in doubt. And it does not take a great deal of imagination to find, in his description to his French critic of the “downward paths opening under the feet of our contemporaries,” a description of much in the state of our own democracy today.

What remains consistent, both in Tocqueville and in the present day, is the imperative of freedom. Remember his words at the end of *Democracy in America*: “[Providence] traces, it is true, a fatal circle around each man that he cannot leave; but within its vast limits man is powerful and free; so too with peoples.” It is hard at any given time to know where our containing circle is drawn. But Tocqueville clearly thought that we have far more power to shape our lives and our destinies than we allow ourselves to believe. That is why the Tocquevillean moment is, at bottom, an occasion for the exercise of the profoundest human freedom.

It is not an unlimited freedom, of course. What

could such a thing mean anyway? What, after all, is a radically unconditioned state, other than a state of utter randomness and inconsequentiality? A completely unconstrained freedom would be, as the philosopher George Santayana quipped, “like the liberty to sign checks without possessing a bank account.” You are free to write them for any amount that you please, but, Santayana added, “it is only when a precise deposit limits your liberty that you may write them to any purpose.” We are not like the gods of the *Iliad*, those cosmic jet setters whose freedom was nearly absolute, but who paid for that privilege by appearing trivial and small when set beside the poignant dignity of limited, vulnerable, mortal men and women. In other words, the exercise of freedom is most meaningful when it is the art of the possible, and involves us in assessing the tradeoffs and relative merits of actions whose range is inescapably finite, due to conditioning factors that are beyond our control.

No, the difficult and complex freedom of the Tocquevillean moment is exactly the sort of freedom for

**TO FIND AND RETAIN those things from the past that remain estimable and enduringly valuable is what it means to cultivate a civilization.**

which we humans were made, and it provides an opportunity for our finest qualities to flourish. The fatal circle is also the ground of our freedom, the horizon that gives focus and purposefulness to our efforts. History may delimit our choices, but it does not dictate what we ought do with what is set before us. For that task, we will need a great deal of technical information. But more than that, in order to grasp the ends toward which that information should be directed, we will need to furnish our hearts and imaginations with the counsel of books, especially old ones. And perhaps especially a book, now nearly two centuries old, called *Democracy in America*, in whose pages many shocks of recognition and much wise guidance await the patient reader. ■

# Open Doors

*For 36 years, it has been The Wilson Quarterly's central preoccupation: What's on the horizon for the great American experiment?*

BY STEVEN LAGERFELD

SITTING AT THE FAMILY BREAKFAST TABLE LATE ONE recent morning, I looked around bemusedly at the band of sleepy, late rising college friends my daughter Liz had assembled: Sabeen, a Pakistani American; Daniel, a Korean American; Brinay, an African American; and Matt, a white guy who is gay. It is the sort of scene that would have been unimaginable, impossibly exotic, to whoever owned my suburban house just a few decades ago. Now it's the kind of tableau that could probably be seen in any house in the neighborhood. Utterly conventional.

Nineteen seventy-six was the year I returned to as I surveyed my breakfast guests. That was America's bicentennial, and the year the first issue of *The Wilson Quarterly* appeared in print. How much America has changed since then, I thought, and as troubled as our national situation now seems, you couldn't pay me enough to go back to 1976, splendid though it was. America was the great subject in the heart of the *WQ*'s founding editor, Peter Braestrup, the ever-grateful son of immigrants who had found refuge from the Nazis in the United States, and he established certain themes that have animated the magazine ever since, themes that were already my own when I joined the staff years ago. So it wasn't mainly the diversity of my little breakfast crowd that struck me most that Saturday morning, but what it represented. Freedom. Change. Opportunity.

STEVEN LAGERFELD is the editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

America is hardly perfect, but it is remarkable—let's say exceptional—in the way it constantly opens new doors, whether for individuals and groups or for economic and technological innovations. The belief that one has the freedom to create one's own life, regardless of family background, social status, or any other factor, is uniquely strong in the United States. Earlier this year, the Pew Global Attitudes Project reported responses to a revealing survey question, one that pollsters have posed for many years, always with essentially the same results. Asked if "success in life is determined by forces outside our control," 72 percent of Germans said yes, as did 57 percent of French and 50 percent of Spaniards. Among Americans, only 36 percent agreed.

Yet as the great social scientist Seymour Martin Lipset wrote in these pages a dozen years ago ("Still the Exceptional Nation?" Winter 2000), American exceptionalism is "distinctly double-edged." The individualist, achievement-oriented American Creed yields exceptional wealth and opportunity for upward mobility but at the cost of higher rates of poverty, crime, and economic inequality than other Western nations. America's levels of taxation are much lower than in other advanced societies and the state less interventionist, but its social welfare system is not as generous. Its less fettered capitalism insures that the unemployment rate is much lower—but so are benefits for the unemployed.



There is a painfully simple yet often overlooked principle at work here, one that is increasingly absent from the nation's political discourse: Virtually every good thing involves tradeoffs. That idea has always been central to the ethos of the *WQ*, expressed through our commitment to presenting both sides of the issues. In order to make wise choices, we need to confront what may be lost as well as what might be gained. Pancakes at breakfast are a wonderful thing, but they will make you fat. Opportunity is a blessing, but it comes at the cost of inequality.

Since the 1970s, there has been a steady shift in that tradeoff at the heart of American life. The economic inequality we accept as the price of freedom and opportunity has been steadily increasing. Fabulous opportunities remain wide open at the upper levels of American society, from corporations and hedge funds to the media and the political elite, to an extent no other country can match. Talent is still welcome at the very top, no matter where it comes from. Just ask Barack Obama. For many, though, a ceiling has been lowered.

**F**or a long time, it was reasonable to accept the rise of economic inequality as a necessary but temporary tradeoff. Historically, times of fundamental economic change have yielded lots of outright winners for a number of years before greater balance

was restored, and the developments of the past few decades—the rise of globalization and new information technologies, with all the “creative destruction” they have yielded—are nothing if not fundamental. But the imbalance that began in the 1970s has not stopped growing, and it shows little sign of abating.

My daughter Liz and her college-educated friends will not necessarily have an easy time of it in the future, but for them the sky still really is the limit. And many of those who lack a college degree still have solid prospects. But there is a whole class of people for whom the new terms of our national tradeoff are completely inaccessible. America's education system has many shortcomings and it has let down a lot of people, but none nearly so much as those who do not even make their way through it.

In 1976, it was plausible to think that a person without a high school degree could hope for a decent life. It no longer is. There is little chance for such people to make their way in the modern economy, much less to participate as citizens in our public life and to live fulfilling lives. And there is a national cost. Especially at a time of growing international economic competition, these are lives we cannot afford to waste. Yet 25 to 30 percent of America's young people drop out of school. In hard numbers, that means, for example, that 1.3 million of the 4.3 million Americans who entered high school in 2006 failed to graduate in 2010. This

is a national tragedy. It is also, more than anything I can think of, a national disgrace.

A telling fact about American social and economic mobility is that for all the openness and fluidity at the top, the very bottom is a sticky pit. There are many reasons for this, but none greater than the fact that so many of the nation's poorest people lack high school diplomas. About 40 percent of children born into the lowest fifth of the income distribution will find themselves in the same place as adults. Few of those who rise will go very far. According to researchers Julia Isaac,

**THE PROCESS OF RENEWAL and reinvigoration has continued, often unappreciated and under the surface. Who, after all, would go back to 1976?**

Isabel Sawhill, and Ron Haskins, only one in three will reach the middle class. By contrast, 60 percent of children born into the top two fifths can expect to live in comparable affluence when they grow into adulthood.

Yet there is good news. Dropout rates are notoriously difficult to calculate and numbers are often contradictory, but it is clear that high school graduation rates are on the rise, climbing according to one count from about 70 percent a dozen years ago to 77 percent in 2008.

This is a case of American strength meeting American weakness. Ever since the Reagan administration raised the alarm about the state of education in its *Nation at Risk* report in 1983, a slow revolution has been building in the nation's schools. This being the United States, the challenge could not be addressed by diktat from on high. While the federal government has played an important galvanizing role—the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind legislation, the Obama administration's Race to the Top initiative, which has awarded \$4 billion to innovative states since 2009—most of the energy has come from below, in the form of state and local reforms and countless experiments by local school districts, nonprofit organizations, and education entrepreneurs of many stripes,

such as the leaders of Teach For America. There are now, for example, more than 5,000 charter schools in the United States, startups operating largely independently of local school boards and pursuing a huge variety of education strategies. Some are wonderful, others are terrible and are destined to be shut down. All are products of the American capacity for experimentation and innovation.

Much more needs to happen. Graduation rates must be pushed up (Japan graduates 95 percent of its young people) and high school should be made more academically rigorous. Yet we ought to abandon the harmful fantasy that all young people need to go on to college. Dignified work is available to those who don't wear white collars. Pathways must be opened so that students who are not going past

grade 12 can get a real education while also preparing for decent careers. It is a lot to ask, but experiments have begun in some communities and there is no shortage of ideas about what to do next.

Slowly, America's schools are reinventing themselves. It is not only the schools. From its beginning, the *WQ* has had an abiding concern with American institutions and the elites who are responsible for them—the schools and universities, the news media, the military, the organs of government—and the history of the past 36 years has not often seemed uplifting, to say the least. Yet the process of renewal and reinvigoration has continued, often unappreciated and under the surface. Who, after all, would go back to 1976?

Looking around the breakfast table that Saturday morning, I thought that we don't need to be overly concerned about the kinds of futures Liz, Sabeen, Daniel, Brinay, and Matt will have or the kind of country they will inherit. And there is every reason to be very hopeful about what lies in store for their less fortunate peers. They are all endowed with what George Washington called "the sacred fire of Liberty" and they all live in a land ready to give full compass to their talents. Yep, I said to myself, just another morning in America. ■

# IN ESSENCE

REVIEWS OF ARTICLES FROM PERIODICALS AND SPECIALIZED JOURNALS HERE AND ABROAD

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## POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

### How to Bring Back the Constitution



Americans increasingly enlist the Constitution in political battles, but by relying on courts alone to implement its principles, they risk sapping the body politic of its singular strength.

**THE SOURCE:** “Restoring the Constitution” by James W. Ceaser, in *The Claremont Review of Books*, Spring 2012.

CAN A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL principles help address the immense economic and political challenges to governance of the United States? Many Americans, especially conservatives, think so. Responding to Tea Party activists,

for example, the House of Representatives kicked off the 112th Congress with members solemnly reading the entire Constitution aloud. Political scientist James W. Ceaser of the University of Virginia, however, cautions that not all roads back to the Constitution are the same.

There are two kinds of constitutionalism, he says. Legal constitutionalism is mostly the domain

of judges and legal experts, who interpret the Constitution’s application in specific cases. Political constitutionalism is the work of politicians and citizens. In this approach, the Constitution “fixes certain ends of government activity, delineates a structure and arrangement of powers,” and leaves it to “political actors making political decisions to protect and promote constitutional goals.” Until the 1960s, the two forms of constitutionalism were roughly in balance, but today most Americans, including many conservatives, take it for granted that constitutional interpretation is the sole province of the courts. That’s a mistake, Ceaser argues.

Consider the court challenges to President Barack Obama’s Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (which had not been decided when Ceaser wrote). They rest mainly on the argument that Congress, in imposing penalties on those who fail to purchase health insurance, has exceeded its power under the Constitution’s commerce clause. But if the penalty had simply been called a tax, Ceaser points out, opponents would have had no case. “Does it not seem odd that the ‘great’ constitutional question focuses on an

avoidable point,” leaving out the larger issue of “whether the federal government can take full control of this area of economic and social activity[?] . . . Doesn’t this way of looking at matters trivialize the Constitution, as if it were more concerned with procedural rules than with broad ends?” Such great questions need to be answered over time in the political process, not with a single Supreme Court ruling, Ceaser says.

Many liberals try to brush the document aside or render it infinitely malleable with their doctrine of the “living Constitution” but conservatives have their own constitutional inadequacies, Ceaser argues. Many imagine that “their political theory is not just permitted under [the Constitution], but dictated by it.” They forget that “the Constitution cannot do all the work that a party must do on its own.” They, too, are in the grip of legal constitutionalism. “Until the meaning of political constitutionalism can be recovered,” Ceaser concludes, “calls for a return to the Constitution will be to little avail.”

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

## Hanging Together?

**THE SOURCE:** “The Big Sort’ That Wasn’t: A Skeptical Re-examination” by Samuel J. Abrams and Morris P. Fiorina, in *PS: Political Science and Politics*, April 2012.

ARE MORE AND MORE AMERICANS clustering together in neighborhoods with people who share their lifestyle and beliefs, increas-

## EXCERPT

## Patriotism’s Janus Complex

*Patriotism is Janus faced. It faces outward, calling the self, at times, to duties toward others, to the need to sacrifice for a common good. And yet just as clearly, it also faces inward, inviting those who consider themselves “good” or “true” Americans to distinguish themselves from outsiders and subversives, and then excluding those outsiders. Just as dangerous, it serves to define the nation against its foreign rivals and foes, whipping up warlike sentiments against them. . . . Quite a few different things can go wrong when a nation sets out to inspire strong emotions with itself as the object.*

—**MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM**, Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, in *The University of Chicago Law Review* (Winter 2012)

ingly blind to those unlike themselves? Yes, said journalist Bill Bishop, and he put a name to the phenomenon with the title of his much discussed 2008 book *The Big Sort*. The trend, he argued, is helping to spread mutual incomprehension and political polarization in America.

Bishop is all wet, contend political scientists Samuel J. Abrams of Sarah Lawrence College and Morris P. Fiorina of the Hoover Institution and Stanford University. “Geographic political segregation is *lower* than a generation ago,” they say. (Think about it: Are Mississippi and Massachusetts more different from each other than they were in 1950, or more alike?)

Bishop’s case leans heavily on his finding that there has been a big increase in the proportion of voters living in counties where a presidential candidate has rolled

up a “landslide” victory margin of 20 percentage points or more. But he chose 1976 and 2004 for his comparison; it’s not surprising that an election pitting centrists Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter against each other produced closer votes at the county level than one in which George W. Bush squared off against John Kerry.

More important, Abrams and Fiorina argue, presidential elections don’t give a very granular view of political reality. Montana voted overwhelmingly for Bush in 2004, for example, but it also elected a Democratic governor.

Is the United States becoming politically balkanized? Far from it, contend two political scientists.

A better gauge is voter registration. A look at the trends between 1976 and 2004 in the 21 states that require voters to declare a party affiliation produces a completely different portrait. When landslide counties are defined in these terms, the authors report, “the proportion of the American population living in landslide counties has fallen significantly, from about 50 percent to 15 percent.” Part of the explanation for the new diversity is that the large margin in registration that Democrats once enjoyed nationwide has disappeared as the number of Republicans and independents has grown.

Even if America were balkanizing in the way Bishop believes, it wouldn’t really matter, Abrams and Fiorina assert. That’s because neighborhoods don’t matter as much as they did in the past. In a recent survey, 65 percent of Americans said they could name only a quarter of the people in their neighborhood. Asked whether they ever talked about political issues with others in their community, 84 percent answered “never” or “rarely.” Increasingly, Americans conduct their political lives on the Internet or in other venues.

But it’s also true that most Americans aren’t nearly as preoccupied with politics as, say, people who write or read books about political polarization. When pollsters asked survey participants in 1995 to consider a list of 10 groups and choose the one they most identified with, only five of more than 1,200 respondents put a political party first. Perhaps, the authors conclude, it’s members of the polit-

ical class who are huddling together in the kind of ideological and lifestyle ghettos Bishop describes, not Americans in general.

## POLITICS &amp; GOVERNMENT

## Why Felons Can’t Vote

**THE SOURCE:** “Voting and Vice: Criminal Disenfranchisement and the Reconstruction Amendments” by Richard M. Re and Christopher M. Re, in *The Yale Law Journal*, May 2012.

ONE OF THE IRONIES OF HISTORY is that an argument that got black men the vote is now an instrument for taking it away. Americans barred from voting because of their criminal record now total more than five million, a number that includes an estimated 13 percent of African-American men, according to the Sentencing Project.

Advocates looking to reduce or eradicate criminal disenfranchisement often home in on an obscure section of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868), one of the three civil rights amendments ratified during Reconstruction. They claim that incorrect or overly broad interpretations of the provision have unjustly denied voting rights to many Americans. Richard M. Re and Christopher M. Re, recent graduates of Yale Law School and Stanford Law School, respectively, argue that they’re wrong. The Fourteenth Amendment was explicitly intended to authorize criminal disenfranchisement, albeit only for serious crimes.

The Fourteenth Amendment

extended citizenship and equal protection under the law to former slaves. Drafted when there was insufficient political support for explicit constitutional affirmation of black male suffrage, the amendment requires that states lose congressional representation in proportion to the number of eligible men they bar from voting. Yet it allows states to disenfranchise men guilty of “rebellion, or other crime.” Those words were the work of the radical Republicans who dominated Congress, the authors write. Representatives such as William Loughridge of Iowa and John Bingham of Ohio took inspiration from the philosophy of formal equality, which characterized “persons by their actions and not by their station.” The Republicans cited black men’s service in the Union Army as evidence that they deserved the right to vote. The flip side was that wrongdoers would have to forfeit that right.

Criminal disenfranchisement was widely accepted by lawmakers on this basis, but the punishment was intended to apply only to people convicted of serious crimes, such as felonies, the authors argue. The federal Reconstruction acts that established interim military governments in the South even specified that disenfranchisement was permitted only in felony cases.

Some have argued that the Fifteenth Amendment (1870), which guaranteed the voting rights of black men, implicitly repealed the disenfranchisement provisions of the Fourteenth. That’s too much of a stretch, the authors say, not-

ing that both amendments were the handiwork of pro-disenfranchisement Republicans. The Supreme Court also ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment contained an “affirmative sanction” on criminal disenfranchisement in a 1974 decision.

A few states have used the vagueness of the “other crime” formulation to disenfranchise citizens convicted of relatively minor offenses, such as misdemeanors. These practices go beyond anything intended by the framers of the Fourteenth Amendment.

ern intelligence agencies first feared that Iran would have nukes by 2000. That projection has subsequently been moved back to 2005, then 2010, and now 2015. Success, Hymans argues, is hardly inevitable.

Iraq provides a good example of a nuclear program that floundered because of bad management. In the early 1980s, Saddam Hussein fired or jailed nuclear scientists who displeased him. Matters only worsened when Hussein’s son-in-law, Hussein Kamel al-Majid, took the reins of the nuclear effort. In 1987 he asked a top scientist, Mahdi Obeidi, how much time he needed to finish a gas centrifuge. Obeidi pleaded for a year, knowing it would actually take twice that time. Kamel gave him 45 days, a deadline that Obeidi raced to meet in “a mad dash.” The centrifuge cracked during its first test, setting back the program for years and costing the government millions. A weapons inspector later marveled, “This was

## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

# Will Iran Defeat Itself?

**THE SOURCE:** “Botching the Bomb” by Jacques Hymans, in *Foreign Affairs*, May–June 2012.

POLITICIANS IN WASHINGTON and Tel Aviv debate the question daily: Are sanctions or bunker busters the best way to thwart Tehran’s nuclear ambitions? Jacques Hymans, professor of international relations at the University of Southern California, suggests an alternative: Do nothing.

Before 1970, all seven states that sought the bomb succeeded, and in fairly short order. But of the 10 regimes that have attempted to go nuclear since then, six failed or abandoned the effort: Libya, South Korea, Yugoslavia, Brazil, Iraq, and Syria. Iran may become the seventh.

The difference is that the late-comers, Iran included, have all been developing countries with overbearing leaders and underdeveloped public administration systems. (One, Yugoslavia, no longer even exists.) These regimes “rely on a coercive, authoritarian man-

agement approach to advance their quest for the bomb, using appeals to scientists’ greed and fear as the primary motivators.” This seldom works. Scientists lose their professional pride; “bureaucratic sloth, corruption, and endless blame shifting” ensue.

Little wonder, then, that “the Iranians had to work for 25 years just to start accumulating uranium enriched to 20 percent, which is not even weapons grade.” West-

**In 2007, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced that Iran was enriching uranium on an industrial scale. Skeptics say the regime’s incompetence may doom its nuclear efforts.**



HASAN SARBAKHSHIAN / AP PHOTO

probably one of the most expensive undertakings in the history of mankind in terms of dollars spent to material produced.”

Hymans disagrees with analysts who attribute “the great proliferation slowdown” mainly to other factors. Treaty-based non-proliferation measures didn’t take effect until the 1990s—two decades after the slowdown started. And a military campaign will not necessarily eliminate a nuclear program entirely. Israel’s 1981 air strike on an Iraqi nuclear reactor that was still under construction “actually spurred Hussein to move beyond vague intentions and commit strongly to a dedicated nuclear weapons project.”

Indeed, the one variable that might enable a regime such as Tehran’s to succeed in spite of itself is external attack. “Nationalist fervor can partially compensate for poor organization,” Hymans warns. “Therefore, violent actions, such as aerial bombardments or assassinations of scientists, are a loser’s bet.”

#### FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

## Obsolete Observers?

**THE SOURCE:** “Can International Election Monitoring Harm Governance?” by Alberto Simpser and Daniela Donno, in *The Journal of Politics*, April 2012.

IT’S BECOME COMMON FOR election monitors to file into countries around the world to look over the shoulders of government officials counting votes. Monitors

### EXCERPT

## Fast-Food Nation

*The United States is a bit like a 375-pound, middle-aged man with a heart condition walking down a city street at night eating a Big Mac. He’s sweating profusely because he’s afraid he might get mugged. But the thing that’s going to kill him is the burger.*

—**DAVID ROTHKOPF**, CEO and editor at large of *Foreign Policy*, in *Foreign Policy* (May–June 2012)

provide an important service by helping detect election-day fraud. But their impact is waning in some countries as regimes ramp up “their use of pre-election manipulation that is less likely to be criticized and punished,” write political scientists Alberto Simpser of the University of Chicago and Daniela Donno of the University of Pittsburgh. The bad news doesn’t stop there: Many of the tactics these regimes use have more insidious effects on governance than the ballot stuffing of yore.

Consider the case of Armenia. Reports of fraudulent voting and vote count manipulation were so widespread in the wake of its 2003 elections that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, whose activities include election monitoring, issued a condemnatory report. The next time around, Armenian president Robert Kocharian and his cronies fostered biased media coverage and pressured government employees into campaigning for the regime. They got what they wanted: Pro-government forces triumphed in

the 2007 parliamentary elections, and Armenia received a passing grade from the monitoring bodies. But nobody would say that Armenian governance improved.

This dynamic has played out over and over again in many countries. In studying 944 elections around the world between 1990 and 2007, the authors found that high-quality election monitoring is “robustly associated” with subsequent declines in the rule of law, administrative performance, and media freedom.

What makes this correlation even more unfortunate is that election-day performance remains the yardstick of choice among the major powers. For example, the United States and the European Union didn’t condemn the fraudulent 2004 presidential election in Ukraine until evidence of vote falsification surfaced, despite the regime’s pre-election crackdown on independent news media and the poisoning of opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko.

Part of the difficulty of dealing with pre-election manipulation,

the authors write, is that it's much harder to assess than, say, ballot stuffing. Who did what, when, and why, is often slippery. Simpson and Donno suggest one way of dealing with the problem: a public system of rating incumbents' democratic credentials that could "impinge on incumbents' career prospects after they leave office, thereby leading them to partially internalize the social costs of their actions."

Election monitoring is still an important tool, especially in countries that haven't experienced sophisticated missions, the authors write. And, at the very least, election-day observers forestall devious rulers from reverting to their ballot-stuffing ways.

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## Not Just Window Dressing

**THE SOURCE:** "Human Rights as Myth and Ceremony? Re-evaluating the Effectiveness of Human Rights Treaties, 1981-2007" by Wade M. Cole, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Jan. 2012.

SKEPTICS SCORN THE TREATIES and agreements that wend their way through the United Nations as the window dressing of international relations. But Wade M. Cole argues that these derided measures are more effective than some might think.

The University of Utah sociologist studied the impact in 148 countries of four UN treaties enacted from 1981 to 2007 pertaining to torture, civil liberties and political empowerment, wom-

en's rights, and racial discrimination. Departing from the approach of previous researchers, Cole assembled a nuanced portrait of each country's commitment. Did it ratify or only sign the measure? (A signature is a weaker commitment and not legally binding.) Did it append any qualifications or reservations? Did it couple its ratification with pledges of enhanced monitoring and enforcement?

Cole then collated his findings with data from several rights-based indexes. Whether female residents had the right to vote, own property, and earn equal pay, for instance, was used as an indicator of how closely a country abided by the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Cole found that treaties have an impact—some of the time. Whether a country signed or rati-

fied a treaty didn't predict its subsequent observance of rights. Neither did the number of reservations it entered. Muslim countries, for instance, entered the highest number of reservations when ratifying CEDAW, essentially nullifying key legal protections. But countries with good human rights records, such as Australia and Canada, also entered reservations, in their cases to harmonize the treaty's provisions with existing national legislation.

Countries that agreed to enhanced monitoring and enforcement provisions on top of ratification, however, did a much better job of enforcing human rights. Oddly enough, the monitoring and enforcement provisions that give rights treaties their juice are rarely resorted to. A pledge to submit to enhanced monitoring is often "a purely ceremonial commitment that nevertheless has tangible consequences," Cole says.

## ECONOMICS, LABOR &amp; BUSINESS

## Frayed in the U.S.A.

**THE SOURCE:** "What Export-Oriented America Means" by Tyler Cowen, in *The American Interest*, May-June 2012.

TO THOSE WHO FRET ABOUT America's economic future, have no fear: "Export success will resurrect the United States as a dominant global economic power," declares Tyler Cowen, an economist at George Mason Uni-

versity (and a member of the *WQ* board of editorial advisers). The downside is that an export-led rebound will not improve the incomes of most Americans.

After wavering in the age of outsourcing, U.S. exports are now growing at a clip of 16 percent per year. Cowen is sanguine that the momentum won't fade. The growing use of artificial intelligence and



**What's missing from this picture? That's right—workers. Despite an industrial revival, the U.S. manufacturing sector is hiring few new employees to run today's automated plants.**

computing power in manufacturing portends good things for the United States. “The more the world relies on smart machines, the more domestic wage rates become irrelevant for export prowess,” he says. At the same time, the recent shale oil and natural gas discoveries on U.S. territory will supply domestic industry with fuel, create jobs, and provide a valuable export product. And as incomes improve in the developing world, the appetite for the higher-quality goods the United States exports—not to mention its energy—will grow.

An export-oriented America can expect a smoother ride internationally, Cowen believes. The trade imbalance with China will almost resolve itself thanks to greater Chinese demand for sophisticated American goods, economic integration with Latin America will increase, and a stronger economy will mean more money for American defense priorities.

On the domestic front, however,

things won't be nearly as copacetic. The wealthiest Americans will still earn lots of money—perhaps even more than the wealthiest Americans do now. But, the median wage in the United States will remain stagnant as global competition keeps pay low and new technologies shrink the need for unskilled labor. American manufacturing workers who used to command \$21 to \$32 an hour are going to have to make do with \$12 to \$19.

These developments will eventually produce a two-tiered economy much like what is seen today in many developing countries. “We will continue to cut a proverbial ‘deal with the devil,’ in which ever more jobs will be created in the relatively protected service sectors, while much of the economic dynamism will accrue to the capitalists, CEOs, and managers who dare to export,” Cowen writes. The tensions between export and protected service industries such as education and health

care will likely exacerbate America's fractious politics.

If there's a silver lining, Cowen believes it's that the prognosis for the poor and lower middle class is not as bleak as it might seem at first glance. The technology that is making labor more efficient is also revolutionizing other parts of the economy. The Internet will make higher education cheaper and more accessible, for one. All Americans will have the potential to have “positive experiences in their lives and lots of free and nearly free goods.” Even so, Cowen observes, “we may need one day to edit the Pledge of Allegiance to read: ‘Two sectors, under God, with liberty and justice for all, prosperity and dynamism for some.’”

#### ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

## Warming in My Backyard

**THE SOURCE:** “The American Public's Energy Choice” by Stephen Ansolabehere and David M. Konisky, in *Daedalus*, Spring 2012.

CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVISTS take note: Your efforts appear to be in vain. Despite constant warnings about global warming, the American public doesn't think about the issue much when making judgments about which domestic fuel choices to support. On the basis of this conclusion, Harvard government professor Stephen Ansolabehere and Georgetown public policy professor David M. Konisky argue that leaders would be smart to emphasize policies focused on other issues in or-

der to tackle the climate challenge.

Ansolabehere and Konisky studied a series of public opinion surveys launched in 2002 to gauge how Americans assess the costs and environmental effects of different fuels used to generate electricity. The two researchers found, on the one hand, that many rated environmental impact an important factor in their opinions about national energy use. Specifically, they favored forms of energy they believed to be less harmful to the environment. Seventy-five percent wanted to increase the use of solar and wind power, for instance.

The problem is that most of the respondents did not have an accurate understanding of energy costs. And they conceived of environmental harms in terms of local problems—think water pollution and toxic waste—rather than grand phenomena such as climate change. Wind and solar power were perceived, wrongly, as being cheaper than coal, natural gas, oil, and nuclear power. When surveyed again after being told that coal and natural gas are in reality much cheaper than wind and solar power, respondents' support for traditional fuels grew slightly while support for renewable sources dropped significantly.

Even Americans who are very worried about global warming “express only slightly higher support for expansion of nuclear power or contraction of coal power—two changes in the U.S. energy portfolio thought to be essential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the electricity sector,” Ansolabe-

here and Konisky note. If all Americans were to share that high level of concern about climate change, the number of supporters of coal would only fall 10 percentage points, and the number supporting wind and solar power would only increase 20 percentage points.

The two researchers despair of rallying support to combat cli-

mate change directly. They believe that policymakers should instead harness concerns about local environmental damage to do the job. Reducing emissions from local coal-burning plants through regulation is one way. A pragmatic approach may not please climate change activists, but at least it's a start.

## SOCIETY

# Immigration Policy's Backfire

**THE SOURCE:** “Unintended Consequences of U.S. Immigration Policy: Explaining the Post-1965 Surge From Latin America” by Douglas S. Massey and Karen A. Pren, in *Population and Development Review*, March 2012.

IN APRIL, THE PEW RESEARCH Center reported that the net number of people migrating from Mexico to the United States had fallen to zero, and might even have entered negative territory, largely thanks to the evaporation of job prospects in the United States. This finding coincides with the end of a four-decade trend that saw the Hispanic population of the United States rise from 10 million in 1970 to 50 million in 2010. What caused the upsurge? An ill-conceived immigration reform law in 1965 and decades of harsh enforcement policies that backfired, contend Princeton sociologist Douglas S. Massey and Karen A. Pren, manager of Princ-

eton's Mexican Migration Project.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was intended to open a new era for U.S. immigration policy. The sweeping legislation did away with retrograde quotas on select nationalities, replacing them with quotas that prioritized immigrants' skills and family connections. Lawmakers also ended the Bracero program, a guest worker scheme for Latin Americans that critics put “on a par with Southern sharecropping.”

The new law made countries in the Western Hemisphere subject to quotas for the first time, however, and the allotments for visas for Latin Americans were woefully insufficient. Mexicans, the largest Latin American migrant group, had previously enjoyed access to unlimited resident visas and about 450,000 guest worker visas through the Bracero program. By the late 1970s, the only legal way



**Migrants harvest strawberries under the California sun through the Bracero program, a guest worker scheme that ended in 1965.**

for a Mexican migrant to enter the United States was to secure one of just 20,000 resident visas or to be invited by an immediate relative who was a U.S. citizen.

You don't have to be a policy expert to predict what happened next: The migration flow between Mexico and the United States didn't change. Instead, suddenly the United States had an illegal immigration problem. Many politicians and media outlets began depicting illegal migrants as criminal or deviant, and public sentiment hardened. Massey and Pren say this turn of events gave birth to an "enforcement loop" that continues to this day: Restrictionist policies lead to more border apprehensions, which inflame anti-immigrant sentiment, which leads to more severe restrictions. You wouldn't know it from the rhetoric, but illegal immigration from Mexico peaked in 1977. Still, the U.S. Border Patrol's coffers

have continued to swell. In 2010, when illegal Latin American migration was approaching historic lows, the Border Patrol enjoyed a budget increase of \$244 million.

The enforcement binge had an important unintended effect. Normally, immigrants move back and forth across the border, eventually going home permanently in many cases. The crackdown encouraged those who made it to the United States to stay put. Many of those who stayed decided to become citizens. And citizens can bring in relatives to become citizens. The result: The number of legal immigrants from Mexico rose from less than a half a million in the 1960s to nearly three million in the 1990s.

Massey and Pren argue that illegal immigrants in the United States should be offered various paths to citizenship and other forms of legal residency. Americans, they say, need to recognize that immigration is often a circular process, not a one-way street.

#### SOCIETY

## A Prescription for Health Care?

**THE SOURCE:** "Growth of Consumer-Directed Health Plans to One-Half of All Employer-Sponsored Insurance Could Save \$57 Billion Annually" by Amelia M. Haviland, M. Susan Marquis, Roland D. McDevitt, and Neeraj Sood, in *Health Affairs*, May 2012.

HEALTH CARE COSTS ARE SUCKING the country dry. One remedy gaining support is consumer-directed health insurance plans, in

which individuals accept high deductibles in return for relatively low monthly premiums. Many variants offer health care savings accounts that allow plan holders to store money tax-free to help pay for the increased out-of-pocket medical expenses. Enrollment in such plans expanded from four percent of employer-sponsored enrollment in 2006 to 13 percent in 2010. Big savings could be in the offing if the trend continues, report Carnegie Mellon University public policy and statistics professor Amelia M. Haviland and her coauthors.

Consumer-directed plans could eventually constitute 50 percent of employer-sponsored enrollment, in part because the 2010 Affordable Care Act encourages their growth. Haviland and her colleagues looked at the recent experience of plan users to estimate the effect. What they found will thrill budget hawks: Such a shift would reduce health care spending \$57 billion per year. That's equal to seven percent of all costs for the employer-sponsored population.

Because the insured have more "skin in the game" due to their high deductibles, they are more likely to evaluate their options closely and are less likely to seek out unnecessary care, Haviland and colleagues say. "About two-thirds of the savings would result from fewer episodes of care and about one-third from lower spending per episode," they note. Prescription drug costs (through greater use of generic drugs), visits to specialists, and rates of hospitalization all dropped in the first year of enrollment of the group

they studied. Low-income families and families that had a member with a chronic illness saw their costs decline at a rate comparable to that experienced by middle- and upper-income families of more typical health status.

There are still kinks in the consumer-directed model. When people shift from traditional insurance to the new plans, they reduce their use of preventive care. Among women whose coverage changed to a consumer-directed model, for example, the number who underwent a screening for cervical cancer decreased almost five percent in the first year after the shift.

Some enrollees may have been unaware that most preventive care is fully reimbursed by insurance, as required by the 2010 law. Enrollees in consumer-directed plans will need to be better educated about the health care system, the authors say. And additional research needs to be done

on the long-term spending and health outcomes of such plans. But in a field barren of much good news, an option that seems to reduce costs responsibly is welcome indeed.

## SOCIETY

## Higher Education's Wily Newcomer

**THE SOURCE:** "The For-Profit Postsecondary School Sector: Nimble Critters or Agile Predators?" by David J. Deming, Claudia Goldin, and Lawrence F. Katz, in *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter 2012.

THE FOR-PROFIT COLLEGE IS a relatively new animal in U.S. higher education. But it is rapidly making its presence known: The proportion of students enrolled in for-profit schools grew from less than one percent in 1970 to more

A quarter of people who attend for-profit colleges default on their student loans within three years.

than nine percent in 2009. Harvard economists David J. Deming, Claudia Goldin, and Lawrence F. Katz say it remains to be seen whether these new institutions are "nimble critters" using innovative methods to bring a needed service to an underserved population or "agile predators" picking the pockets of guileless students.

The three economists compared the educational and vocational status of students at for-profit colleges, community colleges, and other nonselective nonprofit institutions in the 2003–04 academic year. For-profit schools performed better than their competitors at enrolling students who normally struggle to see the inside of a college classroom, such as single parents, low-income students, and GED holders. For-profit schools also did a slightly better job at retaining students in short-term certificate and associate's degree programs, posting modestly higher completion rates than nonprofit two- or four-year colleges.

But negative stereotypes about for-profit schools were also borne out. Students at these institutions carried larger debt burdens, reflecting the higher sticker price of tuition. In the 2010–11 academic year, the average undergraduate

## EXCERPT

## History's False Lessons

*I have always thought George Santayana's celebrated phrase that those who fail to remember the past are condemned to repeat it to be one of the dumbest things ever said by a smart person. It assumes the past repeats itself, which hardly seems likely, and that the past can be understood by posterity as offering simple moral lessons—history as a kind of McGuffey's Reader writ large—when in fact history is almost never morally binary, but rather bears out Walter Benjamin's saturnine claim that every document of civilization is also a document of barbarism.*

—DAVID RIEFF, writer and journalist,  
in *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas* (Spring 2012)

tuition at for-profit colleges was around \$15,000, about \$8,000 more than in-state tuition at public four-year institutions. (Half of the undergraduates at for-profit colleges receive federal Pell Grants, reserved for the neediest students, to help cover the cost.) More troubling is that three years out of school, a staggering 25 percent of these students had defaulted on their loans. By contrast, among students who had matriculated at private and non-profit schools the default rates were eight and 11 percent, respectively.

The financial misfortunes of the graduates of for-profit schools could be linked to their struggles in the job market. Even after adjustments were made for the fact that they started with more disadvantages, they were much more likely to be unemployed six years after enrollment, and those who did have jobs were being paid eight percent less than their peers who had attended traditional schools.

Seventy-nine percent of students from for-profit institutions said that they were satisfied with their program, and 65 percent said that their education was worth the cost—the lowest percentages of the groups surveyed. Even so, the authors point out, the majority of attendees were satisfied. In any event, new U.S. Department of Education regulations are going to make it tougher to get federal financial aid to attend for-profits with questionable track records. “The challenge,” the authors write, “is to rein in the agile predators while not stifling the innovation of these nimble critters.”

## PRESS & MEDIA

# HuffPost Rising

**THE SOURCE:** “Six Degrees of Aggregation” by Michael Shapiro, in *The Columbia Journalism Review*, May–June 2012.

PUBLICATIONS ACROSS THE Internet are struggling to keep their heads above water, but *The Huffington Post* appears to have made it safely to land. The New York-based *Post* attracts 1.2 billion page views a month. It won its first Pulitzer Prize, for a series of features on severely wounded veterans, in April. A struggling AOL plunked down \$315 million for ownership rights last year. How in the world did the crazy-eyed news site formerly thought of as a “glitzy thief of journalism” ascend to such heights?

If *HuffPost*'s success could be boiled down to three words, they would be network, network, network, writes journalist Michael Shapiro. The first version

***HuffPost* is all about traffic. Baby animals are just one form of click bait on the site.**



of the Web site to hit the Internet, in 2004, featured commentary by an unlikely pair, comedian Larry David and the late Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., both friends of the site's linchpin, left-leaning socialite Arianna Huffington. The fount of contributors, fed by Huffington's substantial Rolodex, has never dwindled. Celebrities and ordinary people alike now clamor to place unpaid articles on the site, gaining only exposure and the chance to be perceived as part of the *Huffington Post* club.

*HuffPost*'s first traffic guru, Jonah Perretti (who has since moved to BuzzFeed.com), believed that most content had to be both “viral and sticky”: It had to encourage people to visit again, and had to be so “engagingly simple” that the average reader, trapped in front of her office computer, would dispatch it to a friend with little comment. Often these pieces were

links to more traditional journalistic sources with a new headline and *HuffPost*'s logo slapped on them. But the site also offered original reporting. *HuffPost* was particularly smart to cultivate reader comments, an afterthought at most online publications that is now gold in the eyes of

advertisers. In the past year alone, *HuffPost* attracted 54 million comments.

Add to all of this a fanatical attention to the mechanics of Internet visibility. Forget the standards of yore: The time from conception of an original *HuffPost* article to posting is minimal, and editors may continuously tweak a piece in light of traffic reports to maximize page views. They also double down on search engine optimization, relentlessly seeking out new methods for “winning the Google search.” After actor Heath Ledger died in 2008, for instance, *HuffPost*’s traffic monitors discovered that many people were searching for *Keith Ledger*. Editors added “keith” tags to their items, and traffic boomed.

It’s not been all roses, of course. The site has received a bit of pushback from unpaid contributors, some of whom filed a class-action suit after the AOL deal, claiming that they deserved compensation. (The suit was dismissed in April.) And perhaps most important, *HuffPost* has yet to reap big profits. Its first year out of the red was 2010, and even then profits only amounted to \$30 million. Of course, that number looks good in this day and age, and at a time when many journalists are staring down pink slips, it pays the salaries of more than 300 writers, editors, and reporters. Is *HuffPost*’s success scalable? Probably not, says Shapiro. The timing and actors were just too unique.

reflected an integral part of his understanding of Christianity, argues Eric W. Gritsch, emeritus professor of church history at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. “The promise of Christ’s imminent return made Luther serene and saved him from being dead serious about his own self,” Gritsch says.

Luther was exceptionally pious early in life. As a Catholic priest, he struggled mightily with guilt and the spiritual hierarchies of the church. While poring over Scripture at the University of Wittenberg, Luther grew convinced that the heart of Christian life was faith in God, rather than virtuous deeds, as Catholic doctrine held. “We do not depend on our own strength, conscience, experience, person, or works *but depend on that which is outside ourselves*, that is, on the promise and truth of God, which cannot deceive,” he wrote (emphasis Luther’s).

What followed for Luther was that people’s lives on earth had relatively little effect on whether they would receive God’s grace. That attitude seems to have given him license to indulge in language that would surprise the pious.

Luther used humor to meet his rhetorical goals, “to enhance his biblical witness, to ridicule those in power, and to mock death and the devil.” Twenty-five years after he published the Ninety-Five Theses, for instance, he poked fun at an archbishop who made the faithful pay admission to view sacred remains by circulating a pamphlet (anonymous at first) advertising mock relics, includ-

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

# The Scatological Luther

**THE SOURCE:** “Martin Luther’s Humor” by Eric W. Gritsch, in *Word and World*, Spring 2012.

“I RESIST THE DEVIL, AND OF-ten it is with a fart that I chase him away.” The fragrant author of this boast? Martin Luther (1483–1546), who ushered in the Protestant Reformation by railing against the sale of indulgences and other practices of the Catholic Church in his famous Ninety-Five Theses (1519).

One would naturally assume that the German monk was a stern and proper man, but Luther was actually rather earthy. That quality



Freud would have had a field day with the fixations of church reformer Martin Luther.

ing three flames from the burning bush on Mount Sinai.

His humor tended toward the scatological. He claimed he experienced a spiritual revelation while on the toilet: “The Holy Spirit unveiled the Scriptures for me in the tower.” The pope, a nemesis, was his “dearest little ass-pope.”

Yes, some of his comments fall firmly within the realm of bad taste. Just before he died, Luther told his wife, “I’m like a ripe stool, and the world’s like a gigantic anus, and so we’re about to let go of each other.” But Luther’s humor deserves to be integrated into his legacy, Gritsch argues, noting that little has been made of it in the authoritative Weimar edition of his writings. Luther’s humor is testimony of his conviction that “between birth and death and between the first and second advent of Christ, one must trust the promise of Holy Scripture that all will be well after the final hour of earthly time.”

## RELIGION &amp; PHILOSOPHY

## In Defense of Scholasticism

**THE SOURCE:** “Toward a Cultural History of Scholastic Disputation” by Alex J. Novikoff, in *The American Historical Review*, April 2012.

“SCHOLASTICISM” HAS LONG been a synonym for the worst kind of pedantry. “How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?” is the classic brush off directed toward this medieval school of thought. (It probably makes light

Though often ridiculed, Scholasticism was crucial to the development of the Western intellectual tradition.

of Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas’s inquiries into the nature of angels in *Summa Theologica*.) But Rhodes College historian Alex J. Novikoff argues that Scholasticism and its formal debate technique, disputation, were crucial to the Western intellectual tradition.

One normally associates rhetorical rigor with the philosophers of ancient Greece, who hashed out their arguments in the agora, a public meeting ground. The discipline continued in Rome’s forums, but with the demise of the Roman Empire, dialogue moved inward, becoming a meditative practice. That changed in the 11th century with Anselm of Bec, an Italian-born monk who taught in a Norman monastery; he found himself drawn into using reasoned dialogues with his students as a method of instruction. The logic-heavy form of dialogue he pioneered became the “polemical genre of choice” for thinkers in the 12th century. Around the same time, renewed interest in Roman law, which used a question-and-answer approach to arrive at decisions, further whetted the scholarly appetite for dialectic study.

Medieval disputation truly flowered with the 12th-century rediscovery and translation of Aristotle’s *Topics* and *Sophistical Ref-*

*utations*, which provided the best models yet for dialectic argumentation. Little was neglected in the effort to get to the truth. Disputation could occur before a scholarly audience, with one student arguing against a preannounced thesis, another dissecting his criticisms, and an instructor summing up the proceedings. It could be a private exercise between an instructor and his students. Or it could be conducted before the public, with the debaters taking on subjects *de quolibet* (“about anything at all”).

Sound familiar? It should—disputation is still central to Western higher education. The University of Paris made it a cornerstone of its pedagogy when it came to prominence in the 13th century, and the debate form “became an essential ingredient in the basic organization of academic learning,” Novikoff writes. The logic, rigor, and critical thought that became hallmarks of early modern Western intellectual culture can be traced to the medieval custom.

Disputation also made its influence felt in other realms, Novikoff argues. Polyphonic composition and the motet, both of which developed in 13th-century Paris, applied disputation’s use of point and counterpoint to music. John Locke (1632–1704) wrote that disputation was only good for employing the “ingenious and idle in intricate disputes about unintelligible terms, and holding them perpetually entangled in that endless labyrinth.” But the sharp-tongued English political philosopher probably owed the Scholastics more than he cared to admit.

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

# The Emperor's New Clothes

**THE SOURCE:** "Tape Delay" by Madeline Miller, in *Lapham's Quarterly*, Spring 2012.

FOR CENTURIES, AMBITIOUS rulers have cloaked themselves in the mantle of patriotism they found in Virgil's epic poem the *Aeneid*. Elizabeth I minted coins with words from Virgil (70–19 BC), and America's Founders quoted him on the nation's great seal. Benito Mussolini had Virgil's books reissued and his likeness printed on stamps, and even staged a bimillennial extravaganza in 1930.

On its surface, the *Aeneid* is an imperialist screed, telling of the half-god Aeneas's travels from his Trojan homeland to subdue the backward Latin peoples and found Rome. But scrubbing away the patriotic varnish, beginning in the 1960s, researchers discovered in Virgil "a far more pessimistic view, one that seriously questioned the idea of human progress and imperial power," writes classics scholar Madeline Miller. That reading has since become accepted among many classicists. Why did it take so long to come to the fore?

Some of Virgil's dim view of conquest is hiding in plain sight. Aeneas travels to the underworld to meet past and future Ro-



At the end of Virgil's epic, Aeneas ignores a foe's pleas for mercy and stabs him through the heart, killing him.

man greats. "You can almost hear the drums and trumpets," Miller says, but tellingly, on his way out, Aeneas bypasses a door for "true shades" and instead departs through a second one, for "false dreams." His father's ghost entreats Aeneas to "spare the defeated," and in the final lines, a native Latin begs for his life. Aeneas stabs him through the heart.

Virgil had cause to hide pathos in hoorah. Taken under the protection of the young Octavian, adopted son of Julius Caesar, Virgil

saw his homeland splintered by civil wars that destroyed the Roman Republic and enthroned his sponsor as emperor in 27 BC. Not for nothing was Octavian the "last man standing"—a ruthless dictator, he had aided in Cicero's assassination and later exiled Ovid for work he considered immor-

al. Tasked with writing an epic featuring the new emperor, Virgil wisely chose a more distant subject, and when asked for a reading, the good poet recited excerpts from the more heroic episodes. To this day, these are the only portions of the *Aeneid* printed in many textbooks.

Translators, too, have downplayed the *Aeneid*'s calls for mercy and peace while embroidering language of conquest. Victorian scholars later picked up on Virgil's melancholy but failed to answer the questions it raises. It wasn't until the 20th cen-

tury, with its wars, genocides, and leaders "unmasked as self-serving, incompetent, or fallibly human," Miller says, that Virgilian scholarship turned a corner. Bernard Knox had fought in World War II, and Miller recounts the future classicist's story of finding the *Aeneid* amid the rubble of an Italian village, opening it, and reading, "A world in ruins . . . For right and wrong change places; everywhere / So many wars, so many shapes of crime."

The advent of modernism in

the late 19th and early 20th centuries brought with it a rejection of forced coherence and facilitated the new reading of Virgil, as did the New Criticism, a literary trend favoring close textual analysis. Both movements were well suited to the study of a poem composed over a period of 10 years at the painstaking pace of three lines a day, by an author who “speaks with two voices” and had every reason to sweat each word.

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## Gertrude Stein’s Buried Beliefs

**THE SOURCE:** “The Strange Politics of Gertrude Stein” by Barbara Will, in *Humanities*, March–April 2012.

MOST BOOKWORMS KNOW THE American writer Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) as the pen behind some of the most original modernist literature of the early 20th century, as an early collector of avant-garde art, and as a lesbian unafraid to acknowledge her long-term partner. Less known is the author’s enthusiasm for the collaborationist Vichy regime that during World War II ruled part of France, the country where Stein spent most of her adult life. A recent exhibition of the Stein family’s art collection

at New York City’s Metropolitan Museum of Art failed to note that the author’s portion of the collection owed its survival in Nazi-occupied Paris to her Vichy contacts until a public outcry forced curators to make revisions.

Dartmouth English professor Barbara Will writes that the pass Stein has received may be linked to the feeling in some scholarly circles that the writer embraced the regime to protect herself—she was, after all, a Jew and a homosexual at a time when being either could mean a death sentence. Information that surfaced posthumously suggests that her Vichy contacts did ensure the safety of her and her Jewish partner, Alice B. Toklas, as they waited out the war in the rural Bugey region, near the Swiss border. Furthermore, after the war ended, Stein claimed to have joined the French Resistance in 1943.

Will rejects this purely benign view of Stein’s motives. Stein held extreme views that were in evi-

dence as early as the 1920s, Will argues, particularly in her correspondence with her close friend Bernard Faÿ, a right-wing French historian. During World War II, Stein translated Vichy leader Henri Philippe Pétain’s speeches into English and published an essay connecting the World War I hero’s vision for France and the goals of her experimental writing. Even after Pétain was sentenced to death for treason following World War II, Stein praised the armistice he negotiated with Adolf Hitler in 1940 as “a miracle.”

Like many modernist writers, left and right, Stein lamented the changes industrialization and capitalism had visited upon society. As a poet and novelist, she shrugged at material rewards and pursued the fragmented and elusive literary style she believed to be closest to artistic truth. Pétain’s fascist ideas presented her with “a blueprint for a new kind of revolution in the United States, one that would negate the decadence of the modern era and bring America back to its 18th-century values,” Will argues. In a 1940 essay for *The Atlantic*, Stein compared Pétain to George Washington and Benjamin Franklin.

“Fredric Jameson [the noted literary and cultural analyst] has criticized the systematic ‘innocence’ of intellectuals that gives a free pass to those whose work we admire,” Will notes. “It is high time for us to strip away that innocence, and to produce a more inclusive, complex, and realistic portrait of our modernist predecessors and their work.”



Famed writer Gertrude Stein may have been a literary icon, but her political activities were less than laudatory.

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## Glossed in Translation

**THE SOURCE:** “Read My Lips” by Chiara Barzini, in *Harper’s Magazine*, May 2012.

AFTER BENITO MUSSOLINI’S EXECUTION in 1945, his people, brutalized and bankrupted by five years of war, might have been more united in hatred for the Italian dictator than in patriotic pride. One of Il Duce’s nationalistic mandates, however, would have unlikely staying power. Determined to rid his country of outside influences, the dictator had banned all foreign words written or spoken, including those uttered in the new talking movies that arrived in the 1930s. The art of dubbing that grew to fill the hush, writes Italian screenwriter Chiara Barzini, has since given Italians *Doppiaggese* (“Translationese”), a language stripped of regional dialect and peppered with new words and phrases.

American movie studios tested several workarounds after Mussolini’s ban. Intertitles left Italian viewers, many illiterate, to watch in gloomy silence, so the studios devised technology that played speech over pictures. When, in 1933, Mussolini prohibited even foreign films that had been dubbed into Italian outside Italy, his compatriots developed a voiceover industry, producing “stunningly literal translations” of foreign words, even names. The practice continued long after the ban expired. Louis Armstrong became Luigi Braccioforte, for instance, and an

Italian curse word was truncated to sync with the lips uttering its Anglo-Saxon equivalent.

“By the ’80s, a whole segment of Italy’s pop culture existed in *Doppiaggese*,” Barzini remembers. “As children, my friends and I took pleasure in calling one another the absurd phrases Italian dialogue adapters had invented. We became *pollastrelle* (‘chicks’), exclaiming ‘*Grande Giove!*’ (‘Great Scott!’) like Doc from *Back to the Future*.” Voice actors, who passed down their trade to their children, polished the craft to such an extent that their diction was considered “true” Italian. They were often called to lend their voices even to native speakers such as Sophia Loren, whose regional dialect did not, it was thought, measure up to her sophisticated looks.

If dubbing was a homogenizer, it was just as often a tool for creation. Legendary director Federico Fellini used it extensively during editing, changing or adding dialogue in postproduction. Barzini quotes one voice actor who says that people in his trade “like to feel that we add something to the original actors.” Italians still dub foreign films, and audiences have become so accustomed to certain actors being paired with certain voices that hearing a different one for, say, Paul Newman or Sean Connery is unthinkable. The death in 2009 of the actor who had long dubbed Woody Allen induced a “state of panic” among moviegoers. “He did an incredible job making me into a better actor than I am, a funnier person than I am,” Allen said in eulogy. “I was fortunate enough after many years to

### EXCERPT

## The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

*The western has given us some of the most complex characters and stories in the history of cinema. . . . Our society does not accept that all men and all women are different. It does not accept that while some are horrified by what they are obliged or choose to do, others are not, and are prepared to bear whatever responsibility or sentence falls to them. It believes, rather, that everyone should think the same or at least abstain from doing what the majority deems reprehensible. . . . “This isn’t the Wild West,” people say. Fortunately so. But perhaps we live in an age so pusillanimous that it cannot even tolerate serious stories from another age, when men were less respectful of the law and less obedient and less fair, but also more complex, more contradictory, and more profound.*

—JAVIER MARÍAS, novelist, translated by Margaret Jull Costa, in *The Threepenny Review* (Spring 2012)

get a chance to meet him, and I was very, very taken with the fact that he looked like me, and how attractive he was.”

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## Linguists at War

**THE SOURCE:** “Angry Words” by Tom Bartlett, in *The Chronicle Review*, April 6, 2012.

NOAM CHOMSKY IS WELL KNOWN as a left-wing public intellectual, but in the academic world he is renowned as the father of the foundational modern theory about human language.

Chomsky’s theory of universal grammar, forged in the 1960s, has two central tenets: There is a single underlying structure for all human languages, and humans have this structural information hard-wired in their brains at birth. But many of Chomsky’s arguments are elusively theoretical. So when he published a paper in 2002 that seemed to say that the distinctive feature of human communication is “recursion,” a critic pounced.

A recursive language, explains Tom Bartlett, a senior writer at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, allows for “additional phrases and clauses [to] be inserted into a sentence, complicating the meaning, in theory indefinitely.” In a new book, *Language: The Cultural Tool*, linguist Daniel Everett argues that a language called Pirahã (pronounced pee-da-HAN), spoken by some 250 people in a remote part of Brazil, proves Chomsky’s theory wrong because the language

lacks this crucial trait. Everett’s book “is an attempt to deliver, if not a fatal blow, then at least a solid right cross to universal grammar,” Bartlett reports.

But Everett, the dean of arts and sciences at Bentley University, also offers a broader critique of Chomsky’s theory, arguing, as Bartlett puts it, “that the structure of language doesn’t spring from the mind but is instead largely formed by culture.” Everett is part of a growing band of Chomsky critics. In the new field of corpus linguistics, for example, researchers hoping to gain more empirically grounded insight into the relative roles played by biology and environment in language acquisition use computer software to analyze sentences and phrases; others use brain scans.

Even by the standards of the academic world, the fights have been brutal. Chomsky, famous for his sharp rhetoric, has called Everett a “charlatan” and hinted that

he faked his data. (Everett’s argument is hampered by the fact that he is the only linguist who speaks Pirahã.) Three Chomsky allies accused Everett of racism for arguing that Pirahã falls outside the human norm, and Everett believes one of them is behind the decision by Brazilian officials to ban him from visiting the tribe, which he has studied for 30 years. Some of Chomsky’s critics dis-pense with the niceties, attacking universal grammar as little more than theoretical hocus-pocus. “It’s crazy to say it’s dead. It was never alive,” scoffs Ted Gibson, a cognitive scientist at MIT.

That doesn’t mean Everett has landed a bruising blow on universal grammar. He recruited Gibson to conduct his own analysis of Pirahã, expecting support for the argument that it lacks recursion. But, Bartlett reports, Gibson has found that “suggestive evidence is against [Everett’s theory] right now and not for it.”

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## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

# Denying the Deniers

**THE SOURCE:** “Asymmetric Seasonal Temperature Trends” by Judah L. Cohen, Jason C. Furtado, Mathew Barlow, Vladimir A. Alexeev, and Jessica E. Cherry, in *Geophysical Research Letters*, Feb. 25, 2012.

CLIMATE CHANGE DENIERS have made much hay of research that claims that global temperatures have stopped rising. Global warming, they gleefully con-

clude, must not be the threat so many think it is. But such thinking overlooks important nuances, argue Judah L. Cohen and his coauthors. Their research suggests that temperatures have continued to rise in many parts of the world during some parts of the year, even as the global average has barely budged.



A babushka braved the elements in Minsk, Belarus, last winter, Europe's coldest in years. Scientists say that global warming continues, with frigid winters offset by warmer summers.

The authors analyzed global land temperatures for the period 1979–2010 using observational data and climate modeling. They found that the annual increase in average global temperature became smaller, then disappeared altogether, starting in the late 1990s. When the researchers broke the data down by season, however, they found that things looked very different. Significant warming trends were evident in spring, summer, and fall, with global increases over the decade 2001–10 ranging from 0.68 °C in the summer to 0.88 °C in the fall. In central and northern Eurasia, summer and fall temperatures increased more than double those amounts.

Winter in the Northern Hemisphere, however, presented a significant anomaly. Winter temperatures rose slightly in the first 10 years but leveled off around 1987 and even dropped later in the observed period. This difference was

big enough to offset the gains during other parts of the year, giving life to the sound bite that global warming was a thing of the past. But the increases during the non-winter months are reason enough to take climate change seriously.

What accounts for the pattern of cold winters in the Northern Hemisphere? The authors can't say for sure. But theories that link the phenomenon to a warm-

ing Arctic, declining levels of Arctic sea ice, and increasing autumn snow cover in Eurasia have merit—and are thought to be connected to global warming to boot.

## SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

## The Russian Math Deluge

**THE SOURCE:** “The Collapse of the Soviet Union and the Productivity of American Mathematicians” by George J. Borjas and Kirk B. Doran, in *The NBER Digest*, June 2012.

WELL-EDUCATED IMMIGRANTS are almost always considered a net positive for the U.S. economy, especially if they work in the fields of math, science, or engineering. Economists George J. Borjas of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and Kirk B. Doran of the University of Notre Dame say that this equation is far from straightforward, at least judging from the case of mathematicians who immigrat-

### EXCERPT

## Science as Survivalism

*Science is not about certainty. Science is about finding the most reliable way of thinking, at the present level of knowledge. . . . It's the lack of certainty that grounds it. Scientific ideas are credible not because they are sure, but because they are the ones that have survived all the possible past critiques.*

—CARLO ROVELLI, a theoretical physicist at the University of the Mediterranean in Marseille, France, at [Edge.org](http://Edge.org) (May 30, 2012)

ed to the United States from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991 caused a deluge of emigration, particularly among the highly educated. One thousand mathematicians picked up and left their troubled homeland, with about a third settling in the United States. Like many Soviet professionals, mathematicians had been prohibited from exchanging ideas with their colleagues beyond the Iron Curtain. As a result, Soviet mathematics had developed deeply in some areas while veering away from topics that were popular in the United States. The arrival of this unique breed created a stir. One Harvard mathematician told *The New York Times*, “It’s been fantastic. You just have a totally fresh set of insights and results.”

But what was a collaborative boon for some American academics turned out to be a liability for others. Borjas and Doran gathered a range of data relating to the publications, citations, and professional affiliations of American and Soviet-born mathematicians working in the United States over the past 70 years. They found that the arrival of the Soviet cohort corresponded with a drop in the productivity of American mathematicians working in the fields in which the expatriates specialized. The American mathematicians published about 1,050 fewer papers and received about 2,700 fewer citations per year between 1992 and ’99. There were larg-

An influx of Soviet émigré mathematicians in the early 1990s pushed many Americans out of the field.

er consequences: In comparison to their predecessors, the American mathematicians were much less likely to publish reputation-establishing “home run” papers, and much more likely to move to lower-ranked institutions or

leave the field.

Moreover, the huge spurt in productivity that one might expect from a fresh crop of knowledgeable workers did not materialize. Citation and publication numbers for all mathematicians working in the United States stayed basically the same.

American mathematicians probably learned quite a bit from their ex-Soviet counterparts, the authors say. But since the field’s resources—in this case, jobs and publishing opportunities—were scarce, some had to fall off the vine.

## OTHER NATIONS

# A Change of Heart in Britain

**THE SOURCE:** “A Quiet Revolution” by Peter Kellner, in *Prospect*, March 2012.

BRITAIN IS ONE OF THE BASTIONS of the modern welfare state; decades ago, its people became comfortable with the idea that the government was responsible for funding social programs to reduce income inequality. A study conducted in January by the market research firm YouGov, however, indicates a decisive change of heart.

The survey’s strongest message: The British public wants deep cuts in social spending. After more than a year under the controversial austerity policies of Conservative prime minister David Cameron, 74 percent of respondents

said they thought that the government doles out too much in health, welfare, pension, and other benefits, reports Peter Kellner, the president of YouGov. The sentiment is strikingly pervasive. Almost 60 percent of members of the center-left Labor Party who were surveyed agreed, as did a majority of those who made less than £10,000 per year (about \$16,125).

Perhaps more surprising is that Britain’s current financial woes were not the main impetus for the evident change in public opinion. Rather, it was the perception that tax and welfare regimes are fundamentally unfair, with benefits going to the wrong people for the wrong reasons.

How did British social spending become such a source of contention? Support for the welfare state has been waning since the mid-1980s. Spending is much greater now than it was a generation or two ago. Following World War II, most Britons were working class; they had jobs, but few paid income tax. “Welfare spending was an immensely popular but also affordable way of helping the right people in the right way,” Kellner says. In the early 1950s, social security, for example, consumed only five percent of Britain’s gross domestic product. Today it soaks up 14 percent.

Taxes have risen substantially to cover the growing bill. But few “think they are getting their money’s worth,” Kellner explains. Two-thirds of respondents said that either a significant minority or a majority of beneficiaries were gaming the system.

Even so, Britons don’t favor across-the-board cuts. Only about a tenth of respondents said that spending on the elderly and disabled—groups that include the middle class, and display fairly obvious need—should be trimmed. Populations perceived as “scroungers”—the unemployed and unmarried single parents, for instance—were the ones to attract ire. Universal benefits, such as the child benefit, which is paid to all parents of children under 16, were also viewed negatively. (Next year, this benefit will be reduced or eliminated for higher income families.)

The British are not turning their backs on the welfare state, Kellner believes, but want “to re-

turn to its essence,” as conceived in the famous Beveridge Report of 1942. That means a leaner welfare state, more carefully targeted toward the truly needy.

## OTHER NATIONS

## Don’t Blame Madrasas

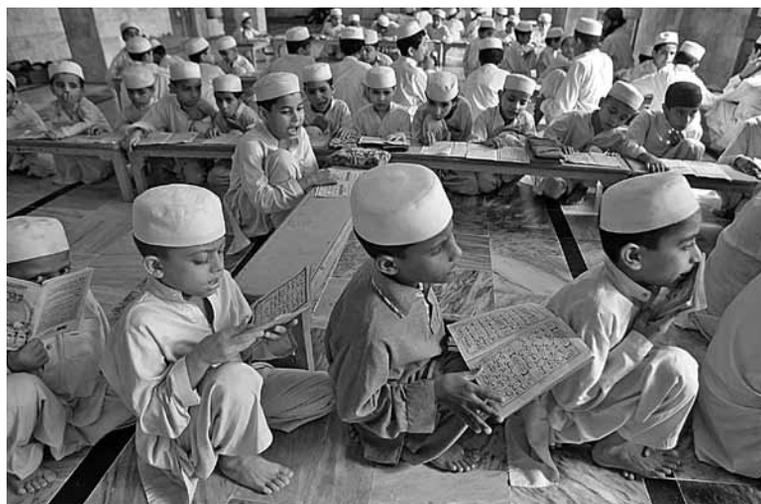
**THE SOURCE:** “The Enduring Madrasa Myth” by C. Christine Fair, in *Current History*, April 2012.

PAKISTAN’S MADRASAS HAVE gotten a bad rap, asserts Georgetown University political scientist C. Christine Fair. If you want to know how terrorists are groomed in Pakistan, she says, you need to look beyond the walls of these Islamic religious schools.

As Islamist terrorism became a bigger threat in the 2000s, U.S. analysts and politicians fingered Pakistani madrasas (which are attended by children and teenagers) as

“nurseries of jihad,” Fair observes. The United States has since granted Pakistan \$100 million in aid to improve public education and essentially “lure madrasa students back to public schools.” But claims that madrasas are “expanding dramatically” and “churning out jihadists by the thousands” are false, she writes. The misunderstanding can be traced to a 2002 International Crisis Group report that incorrectly stated that one-third of Pakistani students attended madrasas full-time. More credible research shows that the real number is between one and three percent. In addition, Fair’s research shows that madrasas’ share of the Pakistani student population has remained stable. There is no basis for the alarmist claims about the “burgeoning number of Pakistani madrasas and their supposed legions of aspiring terrorists,” she argues.

There is also a fundamental misunderstanding about the purpose of the institutions. The common view is that madrasas are



Students read the Koran at a Karachi, Pakistan madrasa. The Islamic religious schools’ reputation for fomenting terrorist activity is vastly exaggerated, argues one scholar.

## OTHER NATIONS

## Bad Medicine for the Congo

**THE SOURCE:** “Dangerous Tales: Dominant Narratives on the Congo and Their Unintended Consequences” by Séverine Autesserre, in *African Affairs*, April 2012.

schools of last resort, where poverty and extremism mingle to produce violence. The reality is otherwise. The majority of students who attend madrasas do so on a part-time basis, in conjunction with a private or public education. Pakistani parents use madrasas because “they want their children to have an Islamic education,” Fair says, just as many religious Americans send their children to parochial schools, Bible study, or Hebrew school. As in these institutions, the nature of religious instruction varies greatly across madrasas.

Not all madrasas are innocuous, Fair acknowledges. Militant groups affiliated with the Deobandi Islamic movement have made a practice of drawing terrorist recruits from Deobandi madrasas and mosques. And yes, madrasa students support extremist violence in greater numbers than their peers. But public school students support such violence at high rates too, Fair says, citing research by Pakistani scholar Tariq Rahman, and their numbers dwarf those of full-time madrasa students.

“Scholars would be better served by thinking of terrorist recruitment as a labor market in which organizations attempt to recruit the right person for the right job,” Fair writes. Many terrorist operations require agents with advanced technical skills, knowledge that is far outside the ambit of a madrasa education. “By doggedly insisting that Pakistan take action against madrasas, the United States has confused educational policy with law enforcement,” she says.

MULTILATERAL INTERVENTIONS rarely go as planned. The one in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where nine years of war beginning in 1994 left millions dead, is no exception. The Congo is the largest sub-Saharan African country by area, and its 74 million people belong to more than 200 ethnic groups. Despite the odds, UN peacekeepers—in concert with the African Union and other organizations—arrived in 1999 and eventually brought a measure of security to most of the country. In 2006, they oversaw multiparty elections. Yet Séverine Autesserre, a political scientist at Columbia University, contends that the outsiders have made life worse for many Congolese.

The interveners, particularly Westerners, erroneously believed that nefarious warlords profiting from the country’s rich mineral deposits (principally gold and diamonds, as well as coltan, a me-

UN peacekeeping forces have brought some security to the Congo, but they have bred other kinds of havoc.

tallic ore) were responsible for the violence. Their solution was straightforward: to expand the fragile Congolese state’s power into the country’s troubled eastern region, and to ban mining that benefited armed groups.

But only some of the violence is directly related to so-called conflict minerals, according to Autesserre. The Congo is riven with corruption and intense “grassroots antagonisms over land and power.” To focus on mining is to overlook these problems.

Stringent international requirements for mineral “supply chain verification”—including a provision in the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010—are depriving many ordinary Congolese of their livelihoods while leaving untouched the corrupt military leaders who control rural areas.

Other international prescriptions have also backfired. Building roads and bases for underpaid and corrupt security forces in the east “merely results in replacing one group of perpetrators (foreign and Congolese rebel groups) with another.” It’s little surprise that more Congolese fled their homes out of fear for their security in 2010 than in 2006. Or that in 2011 the Congo slipped to the very bottom of the UN’s Human Development Index.

The West and the UN take note, but only selectively. Rape is widespread and monopolizes the outsiders’ concerns. Congolese struggle to “draw the attention of the media or donors to horrif-

ic events that have no sexual dimension.” Not enough is done to combat other abuses, such as forced labor and the conscription of child soldiers.

Rebels have learned to see rape as a quick ticket to the big time. In 2010, Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, a warlord in the east, “ordered his soldiers to systematically rape women, instead of just looting and beating people as they usually

do, because he wanted to . . . be invited to the negotiating table.” He got his wish.

Autesserre does credit the international intervention with “re-establishing peace, albeit a precarious one, over most of the Congolese territory.” But it’s time for a rethink. The international community ought to drop its focus on a single cause (conflict minerals), a single symptom (sex-

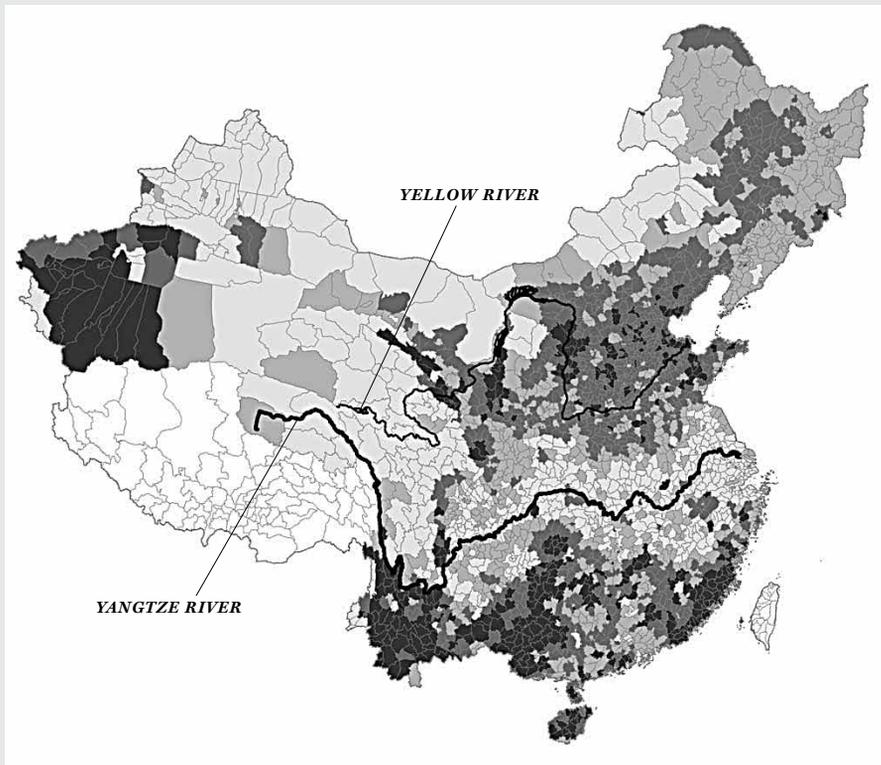
ual violence), and a single solution (expanding the state). Instead, the interveners should ensure that Congolese security forces receive their salaries. They should attend to the causes of widespread rape, such as poverty, a broken justice system, and warped gender roles. And they should put an end to the simplistic narratives that precipitated the intervention’s mistakes in the first place.

MAP

## Chinese Name Puzzles

*What’s in a name? If you’re Chinese, possibly a clue to your heritage. With a scant 7,327 surnames shared by 1.28 billion people—18 million Americans surveyed, by contrast, had nearly 900,000 last names among them—China is fertile territory*

*for studies involving isonymy, the prevalence of surnames. The Chinese pool is particularly small because last names are rarely more than a single character and are passed down the paternal line untouched. Today, 85 percent of the population has one of the 100 most frequently occurring surnames, and 21 percent are surnamed either Wang, Li, or Zhang. Writing in the **American Journal of Physical Anthropology** in an article posted online in March, management researchers Yan*



*Liu, Liujun Chen, and Jiawei Chen, of Beijing Normal University, and genetics researcher Yida Yuan, of the Chinese Academy of Science, used this phenomenon to trace population movements since the 8th century BC. Darker regions of the map indicate greater degrees of surname similarity and less migration. The Yangtze River region, for example, has relatively low levels of surname similarity, suggesting that many migrants have flocked to the area over the centuries.*

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:**

Thomas Rid on modern dictators

James Morris on the humanities

Emily Bernard on integration

Aaron Mesh on LBJ

Rob Dunn on sleeping in

A. J. Loftin on Jerome Kagan

Michael O'Donnell on George Orwell

Darcy Courteau on the persuasive arts

Troy Jollimore on American ideas

Cullen Nutt on kiddie Christianity

# CURRENT BOOKS

REVIEWS OF NEW AND NOTEWORTHY NONFICTION

## Remembering the Holocaust

*Reviewed by Walter Reich*

BETWEEN 1939 AND 1945, NAZI GERMANY fought two wars. One was a war of conquest against armed countries. The other was a war of annihilation against Jews. It lost the first war. In the main, it won the second. To be sure, not all of Europe's Jews were murdered; the Allied victory stopped Germany from being able to find and kill all of them.

We still remember the first war. As for the second, we failed to recognize its goal while it was being waged, for decades ignored it, and began to understand its focus and magnitude only in the 1970s, in large measure because of the popular NBC television miniseries *Holocaust*, starring Meryl Streep. It was seen by many tens of millions of people in the United States and abroad, and magnified popular awareness of the Holocaust.

Since then, the public's consciousness of the Holocaust—its Holocaust memory—has been, in many ways, abused and degraded. That's why Alvin H. Rosenfeld wrote *The End of the Holocaust*, in which he considers both how the Holocaust should be remembered and how that memory has been, in its purity and detail, profoundly disfigured. The disfigurement

### THE END OF THE HOLOCAUST.

By Alvin H. Rosenfeld.  
Indiana Univ. Press.  
310 pp. \$29.95

of Holocaust memory has been a subtle process that has stretched out over decades. By describing that process so well, and by explaining so meticulously why it has been corrosive, Rosenfeld has gone far toward preserving our chance to learn something important from that immense event of irredeemable evil.

In this important book, Rosenfeld, a professor of Jewish studies and English at Indiana University Bloomington and one of the world's most distinguished scholars of the Holocaust, shows how the event has been universalized, trivialized, sentimentalized, and, in some ways, blotted out. And he shows how the horror of the Holocaust has been minimized and even disparaged by those who want the public to focus on their own historical traumas and are frustrated by the Holocaust's power to eclipse other tragic national experiences.

He understands that, for the public, the sources of Holocaust memory aren't history books, as numerous and documented as they may be. Few people read history.

And relatively small numbers go to museums. Most learn about the Holocaust from television shows, movies, a few books they may read in school, and statements by political figures. Sometimes, these prominent sources misrepresent and even abuse what the Holocaust was, and therefore our memory of it.

Hollywood films about the Holocaust—the most powerful source of our “knowledge” about that experience—are uplifting, optimistic, and affirmative.

During the past two decades, Hollywood films about the Holocaust—the most powerful source of our “knowledge” about that experience—have been, almost invariably, uplifting, optimistic, and affirmative. The most successful of them, Steven Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List* (1993), which won seven Academy Awards, dramatizes the story of Oskar Schindler, a German businessman who saved eleven hundred Jews from certain death by insisting that he needed them to work in his factory. *Schindler’s List* may have been well meant, but it shaped the public’s memory of the Holocaust as an event that had

**Anne Frank shared the fate of six million Jews, but retellings of her story downplay ethnicity—and her gruesome end.**



redeeming features. The movie doesn’t focus attention on the overwhelming reality of the Holocaust: Most Jews weren’t saved by anyone, almost no Nazis were rescuers, and six million Jews were systematically murdered.

A different category of distortions that Rosenfeld catalogues are words that were once in the exclusive province of Holocaust discussions but have been repurposed for other causes. The word “Holocaust” has been applied by various public figures to the AIDS epidemic, abortion, and American slavery. Conservative talk-show host Rush Limbaugh has attacked women’s rights activists as “feminazis,” and, at the other end of the spectrum, Betty Friedan wrote of women who aspire only to be housewives that they are “in as much danger as the millions who walked to their own death in the concentration camps.” When these words and images are used in such ways, they no longer evoke the seriousness they once had—thereby trivializing the Holocaust itself.

Still other distortions leach all meaning out of the Holocaust by equating the suffering of the Jews with that of their killers. In 1985, President Ronald Reagan, on a trip to West Germany, decided to visit a German military cemetery near Bitburg, though he was urged not to do so because it contained the graves of 49 members of the Waffen SS, which was involved in the mass murder of Jews and other populations and had been declared a criminal organization during the postwar Nuremberg trials. Reagan went nevertheless, saying that the SS “were victims just as surely as the victims in the concentration camps.” The visit was widely covered in the press, and the public was left with the impression that the SS had been victims no less than the Holocaust victims they’d helped kill. If the president of the United States could make such an equation, why shouldn’t the American public?

Rosenfeld’s most important contribution is his discussion of Anne Frank. It is, after all, that young girl’s diary—together with



***Schindler's List* director Steven Spielberg films Liam Neeson playing a German rescuer. In truth, few Nazis acted nobly; most Jews weren't saved.**

the play and the movie that were based on it—that, more than any other document of the time, has shaped the world's sense of what the Holocaust was. Yet, as Rosenfeld masterfully shows—and as others before him have argued, most trenchantly the fiction writer and essayist Cynthia Ozick—the story of Anne Frank, in its various incarnations, was watered down and rendered universal and uplifting precisely in order to make it attractive and accessible to as broad an audience as possible, especially non-Jews. What people who read this story or see it performed learn about the Holocaust is profoundly incomplete.

Anne Frank, together with her parents, her sister, Margot, and a few other Jews, hid from the Germans in a secret apartment behind her father's business office in Amsterdam, aided by a few trusted non-Jews. She began her diary in June 1942, when she was 13, and wrote her last entry in August 1944, just before the group was betrayed to the Germans and arrested. Soon they were sent to Auschwitz, where her mother starved to death. In October 1944 Anne and Margot were sent to Bergen-Belsen, where they died of typhus in March 1945, just three weeks before the camp was liberated by the British.

Of all the apartment's residents, only Anne's father, Otto, survived. After Otto Frank returned to Amsterdam, Miep Gies, a non-Jew who had helped hide the Franks and had found Anne's diary, gave it to him. Frank had it published in Holland in 1947, after which it was published, in 1952, in the United States and the United Kingdom. In 1955 it was adapted into a play that won a Pulitzer Prize, and then it was made into a movie. It has been translated into more than 60 languages and has sold more than 30 million copies. For decades,

the diary has been the most widely read Holocaust-related document in the world. *The Diary of a Young Girl*—together with the plays, films, exhibitions, and school curricula it has spawned—has done more than anything else to shape Holocaust memory.

The problem is that the story of Anne Frank, as it has been passed down to us, has been partial and, as a result, misleading, leaving the memory of the Holocaust, for many, cleaner and shinier than the event really was. As Rosenfeld shows, Otto Frank, as well as those who wrote the play and brought it to the stage in 1955, wanted to shape Anne's story so that large audiences could identify with it, admire it, and come away feeling inspired by it. The versions that resulted emphasized Anne's buoyancy, optimism, and vivacity. Eleanor Roosevelt stressed the "shining nobility" of the human spirit that Anne's diary reveals. Reviewing the book, *Newsweek* declared that Anne Frank would be "remembered as a talented and sensitive adolescent whose spirit could not be imprisoned or thwarted."

As Rosenfeld helps us understand, the play's writers, Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett—successful Hollywood screenwriters who had written *It's a Wonderful Life*—creat-



Members of a Nazi mobile killing unit execute Jews, including a woman and her child, near Ivangorod, Ukraine in 1942.

ed this effect by taking liberties with Anne's diary. They understated "the specifically Jewish aspect of her story and instead universalized her experience as the experience of suffering humanity in general." Under director Garson Kanin's guidance, according to one biographer of Anne's father, "almost all references to Jews and Jewish suffering were erased."

Reviewing the play, *New York Herald Tribune* critic Walter Kerr observed, "Soaring through the center of the play with the careless gaiety of a bird that simply cannot be caged is Anne Frank herself. . . . Anne is not going to her death." Another reviewer declared in the *New York Post* that the play "brought about the reincarnation of Anne Frank—as though she'd never been dead." And Garson Kanin, writing in *Newsweek* in 1979, a quarter-century after he had directed the first stage production of the play, compared Anne Frank to Peter Pan and the Mona Lisa. Anne, he wrote, "remains forever adolescent."

And that's the image that endures of Anne Frank. In fact, in her last days, Anne and her sister, after they were transferred from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen, were ravaged by typhus; they were, as one witness remembered, "two scrawny threadbare figures" who "looked

like little frozen birds." Margot rose from her bunk and fell dead. Anne confessed to the witness that, horrified by the lice and fleas, and hallucinating, she had thrown away her clothes. Later, Anne's body was dumped into a mass grave with 10,000 other corpses. Unless we know these details, our memory of the Holocaust is wrong.

In his illuminating chapters on four Holocaust survivors—Jean Améry, Primo Levi, Imre Kertész, and Elie Wiesel—Rosenfeld offers examples of those who have articulated the enduring meaning of the atrocity they witnessed and the compelling nature of Holocaust memory.

Améry committed suicide in 1978. Levi believed that the writer's torture by the Gestapo and his victimization as a Jew in Nazi camps led to his death. "Whoever has suffered torment," Améry once wrote, "will no longer be able to find his way clearly in the world, the abomination of annihilation will never be extinguished. Trust in humanity . . . can never be regained." This is an accurate depiction of what the Holocaust was, and a reaction to it on which we prefer not to dwell. It's hardly surprising that we choose instead to remember the inspiring words Anne Frank recorded in her diary before she was thrust into the heart of the Holocaust's darkness, and which the Broadway play made famous: "In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart."

Even if we learned the full extent of the Holocaust's harsh and unexpurgated truth, it would be hard to absorb that knowledge—and harder still to retain it in the face of those who would abuse and trivialize it. For showing us how to remember the Holocaust, and how to recognize many of the ways in which its memory is being killed, we owe Alvin Rosenfeld a debt of immense gratitude.

WALTER REICH, who holds the Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Chair in International Affairs, Ethics, and Human Behavior at George Washington University, is a former director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. He is a senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center and a contributing editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

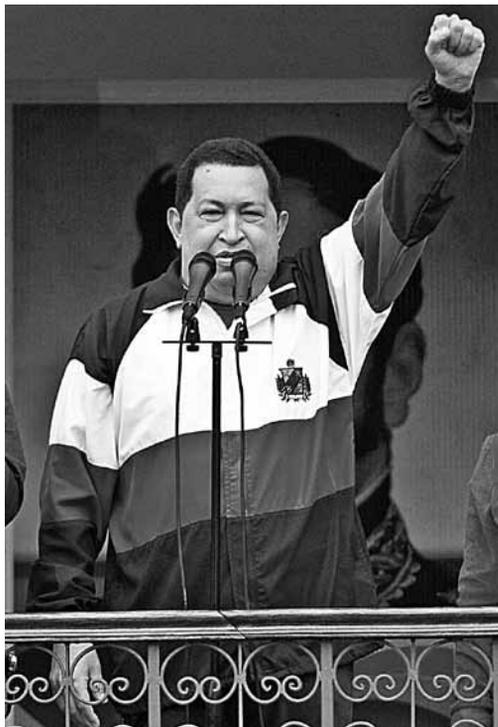
# The Powers that Be

Reviewed by Thomas Rid

“DO THESE PEOPLE IN EGYPT REALLY UNDERSTAND what freedom means?” a well-meaning friend asked Hamed Abdel-Samad after he returned home to Germany from Cairo’s Tahrir Square earlier this year. “Probably not,” the young political scientist, who had witnessed thugs and policemen beating protesters, replied sarcastically. “It would be great if you could come to Egypt with me to teach them your experience with freedom, how you fought for it, how you risked your life, how you came to appreciate it.” Abdel-Samad, who was born in Egypt, said in a radio interview earlier this year that we—by whom he means Westerners—are spoiled by peace, saturated with freedom, and take our inherited liberties for granted. “Right now,” he said, “I can’t see an expression of freedom anywhere that is fresher than in the Arab world.”

William J. Dobson vividly portrays this struggle against authoritarian rule in *The Dictator’s Learning Curve*, a collection of short,

**Dictators such as Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez create a façade of democracy but use subtle means to threaten citizens.**



MIGUEL GUTIERREZ / EPA / CORBIS

## THE DICTATOR’S LEARNING CURVE:

Inside the Global Battle for Democracy.

By William J. Dobson.  
Doubleday.  
341 pp. \$28.95

evocative dispatches from the Arab countries and Egypt, but also Russia, China, Venezuela, and, in less depth and detail, Malaysia. Dobson’s main argument is that the *nature* of dictatorship has changed. Today’s dictators and authoritarian regimes, he writes, are “far more sophisticated, savvy, and nimble” than those of the past. In contrast to 20th-century totalitarian rulers, modern dictators understand the importance of keeping up appearances: It can be essential to appear to be a democracy, especially if the goal is to avoid becoming one. They’ve also learned that using and abusing a warped version of legal process can be an effective tool of control, and a subtler one than blatant repression and violence.

Dobson, an editor at *Slate*, is at his best when he is telling stories—often instances in which “the dictator’s learning curve” was put to viciously effective use. Hugo Chávez’s innovative methods of keeping Venezuela’s opposition down offer a frightening example. One summer day in 2010, Dobson was waiting on the front steps of a government building in Caracas for an appointment with a Chavista congressman. As he waited, street vendors kept walking up to him trying to sell what he believed were pirated DVDs of Hollywood films, as is customary on many a street corner in Moscow, Beijing, and New York. But when he looked more closely, he realized he was being offered copies of the *Maisanta* for \$1.50.

The *Maisanta* (the name is a reference to a 19th-century rebel leader) is a digital database that contains detailed information on Venezuela’s registered voters, including name, address, voter identification number, and whether the identified person receives government



**She speaks for the trees: Corrupt officials planned to raze a public forest near Moscow, but Yevgenia Chirikova led activists in protest.**

support or has abstained from voting in past elections. Most important, the database reveals whether someone voted for a controversial 2004 recall referendum that challenged Chávez's grip on power. This trove of information about the country's 12 million voters conveniently fits on one compact disc. In normal democracies, such information would be closely protected, but Chávez's government had either actively released it or neglected to keep it secure. As Dobson observes, "In a society ruled by patronage politics, being identified as an enemy of the state can have serious consequences." One woman told Dobson that when her fiancé needed urgent medical treatment and went to the emergency room, the admissions staffer ran his voter ID card through the computer and told him he had to go elsewhere. He had cast a ballot for Chávez's recall in the referendum. Academics, of course, could also work with the database, and some ran household surveys that they matched against the *Maisanta* information. The statistics showed that the income of Chávez's opponents dropped by five percent after the roster was published. Once the information was publicly available, the government

did not even actively need to use the data against its opponents; Venezuelans knew whom not to hire, grant a permit, or give medical treatment.

Dobson's riveting account of a Russian "accidental activist," Yevgenia Chirikova, offers an example of how those who resist authoritarian regimes may prevail using the same modern methods. A decade ago, Chirikova and her family moved to Khimki, a leafy suburb an hour northwest of Moscow. The town's Soviet-style residential buildings were unremarkable, but were surrounded by an attractive woodland, the Khimki Forest, a rare Russian natural reserve that enjoyed public protection.

One day, on a walk in the woods with her two young daughters, Chirikova saw trees marked with red paint and small cuts in the trunks. Back home, she learned from a quick Internet search that the region's governor, Boris Gromov, had slated the forest for demolition in order to make space for a motorway from Moscow to St. Petersburg. Chirikova wrote a letter to the governor, naively thinking she had uncovered a plain error. Slowly she realized the corruption around the project (well-connected real estate developers had peddled soon-to-be prime property ahead of the motorway's announcement), and began rallying neighbors and activists to pressure the local authorities to abandon the plan. Thugs threatened her neighbors and rounded up sleeping activists who had camped out to protect the trees, the authorities attempted to take away her daughters, and a local journalist was beaten nearly to death for covering the story. Chirikova managed to enlist Europe's Green parties and environmental organizations in her cause, and the European Union subsequently cut funding for the project, buying time for the Khimki Forest.

Despite Dobson's eye for detail in such accounts, this book is an imprecise hybrid: part journalistic storytelling, part political analy-

sis. At one point Dobson relates a conversation he had with then-Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's former public relations adviser, Ali Eddin Hilal. The man admitted—and this was well before the 2011 revolution—that the regime's fake political opening could not go on indefinitely. "His response," Dobson writes, "reminded me of Alexis de Tocqueville's admonition that 'the most dangerous moment for a corrupt regime is when it attempts to reform itself.'" Dobson doesn't elaborate. But it is not enough merely to remind readers of Tocqueville's admonition. Nor is it enough to say that modern dictators are different from their 20th-century forebears without exploring the nuances of that comparison. Didn't Hitler, practicing gestures with a mirror, or Stalin, with his altered pictures, also appreciate the significance of appearance? Is Chávez really more sophisticated than Mao? Dobson leaves these questions untouched.

Two-thousand eleven was a historic year. A wave of revolutions swept the Arab world, although their outcomes still hang in the balance. Some of the world's oldest and most formidable authoritarian regimes fell, in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. Syria likely will be next. Other non-democratic governments in the region survived, such as those in Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates. Why did some fall while others did not? This question is foremost on the minds of authoritarian leaders in countries including China, Russia, and Venezuela. "Dictators," as Dobson likes to call them, are scared pale by the possibility of sudden popular revolt.

So what explains the difference? Those regimes that have so far weathered the storm of the Arab Spring are monarchies, not republics. This is no coincidence. Any political ruler, even the most brutal tyrant, requires a degree of tacit legitimacy. Monarchies can fall back on a symbolic legitimacy, especially in conservative societies, that is fed by a deep-rooted belief in dynastic, hereditary rule—hence the quasi-monarchic tendencies in several republics (see Muammar al-Qaddafi's attempt to in-

stall his son Saif al Islam in power, Mubarak's attempt to pass his rule on to his own blood, or Bashar al-Assad's continuation of his father's brutal reign). But such analysis is mostly absent from Dobson's fast-paced storytelling.

This is not to say that *The Dictator's Learning Curve* falls flat. Many of the stories of bold activists and the various creative attempts of governments to keep them down or out are compelling. Dobson's coverage of Venezuela's internal political struggles is particularly fascinating. He had spectacular access to well-placed sources in this oil-rich country, including political prisoners. His account of the fate of María Afiuni is bone chilling:

Formerly a judge in the Thirty-First Control Court in Caracas, Afiuni made a decision that displeased the regime, and was put behind bars indefinitely—in the same jail with criminals she had convicted.

The book's travel reports are uneven. Dobson's treatments of Venezuela and Russia are excellent, while his dispatches from Egypt are too focused on Hosni Mubarak and his son Gamal; they appear to have been written before the January 2011 revolution, and thus at times feel outdated. Dobson's Thomas Friedman-like style of reporting may explain the variations in quality: The chief criterion for various anecdotes' inclusion in the book seems to be whether Dobson was able to add "he told me" or "she told a friend of mine." Fortunately, this me-first attitude recedes somewhat as the book progresses and Dobson turns his attention to the people who have come to understand what freedom means.

Judge María Afiuni made a decision that displeased Chávez, and was put behind bars indefinitely—in the same jail with criminals she had convicted.

THOMAS RID is a reader in war studies at King's College London and was a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center in 2009. He has coedited *Understanding Counterinsurgency* (2010) and co-authored *War 2.0* (2009), and is the author of *War and Media Operations* (2007). He is currently at work on a book about deterrence.

# Ideal Education

Reviewed by James Morris

THE CRISIS IN AMERICAN EDUCATION—prenatal to postdoctoral—may be the nation’s longest-running soap opera. It’s hard to remember a time when there wasn’t hand-wringing about what was going on at one educational level or another. An acronymed army of councils and commissions and such thrives on stoking our unease and risks anaesthetizing our attention. How bracing, then, to hear a single voice as literate and reasonable as Andrew Delbanco’s. His message in *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be* may be little more encouraging in the end than that of the furrow-browed alarmists, but it’s delivered with the high civility and spacious reach of the educational ideal he ardently defends.

Delbanco, a much-lauded scholar and teacher of American literature and culture at Columbia University, makes no arguments that other clear-eyed observers of American higher education have not. What commends his book is its richness of reference and its willingness to charge colleges and universities with lapses that should sow insomnia among administrators. “One generalization, I think, applies across the board: There is a sense of drift,” he writes. And after describing the ethical knottiness of the more selective institutions’ admissions policies, he observes, “The stark fact is that America’s colleges . . . have lately been reinforcing more than ameliorating the disparity of wealth and opportunity in American society.”

To a remarkable extent in so slim a volume, Delbanco acknowledges, if only glancingly, the universe of possible contemporary realizations of the word “college,” including those that exist nowhere but in the ghost precincts of computer programs. His fondest association of the word is with the undergraduate education characteristic of the nation’s liberal arts institutions:

## COLLEGE:

What It Was, Is,  
and Should Be.

By Andrew Delbanco.  
Princeton Univ. Press.  
229 pp. \$24.95

four-year residential colleges that are not part of universities—a Carleton College or Wellesley College, for example, as distinct from Yale College or Harvard College—“where most students study subjects that are not narrowly vocational.”

Such institutions, “virtually unknown outside the Anglo-American world,” barely register on the numerical margin even in America, where they enroll some 100,000 students. Measure that number against community college enrollments exceeding six million and a total undergraduate population of about 18 million.

What alarms Delbanco is the increasing disappearance of the general humanistic education American colleges have offered from their Puritan beginnings down through centuries of curricular refinement and adjustment. (A fair criticism of the book is that it too often blurs the line between the humanistic education available at an independent college and that available at an institution such as Delbanco’s own university.) It’s an education heavily dependent on literature, philosophy, and history, and suffused with a fundamental moral and ethical dimension. It’s an education that’s communal and lateral—students (and faculty) learn from one another; for Delbanco, the importance of that practice cannot be overvalued. It’s an education that urges students to consider the great recurrent questions about their place in the world and their responsibilities to a larger community, an education that punctuates the words “How to live” first with a question mark and then with a period, and yet again, perhaps, with a question mark.

Alas, it’s not an education that answers overtly the question “How do I earn a living?”—and there the rub for the humanities and liber-

al arts has always been. No surprise, then, that “literature, history, philosophy, and the arts are becoming the stepchildren of our colleges.” Even at colleges embedded within elite universities, the number of humanities majors in graduating classes is shrinking. Between 1990 and 2009, for instance, the proportion of such majors dropped at Stanford from 20 percent to 15 percent, at Brown from 37 percent to 24 percent, and at Yale from 50 percent to 33 percent.

Education in the humanities is not antithetical to the sciences, which are to be embraced for their separate understanding of the natural world. But the humanities will never *be* the sciences, despite attempts to impose on them a scientific rigor. The humanities don’t generate new knowledge, as the sciences repeatedly do. They maintain and burnish the old knowledge, the truths about humanity that carry no date and every date, and they display that knowledge for discovery and contemplation and challenge by new generations.

When the humanities mimic the technical, they hope for—what, exactly? Delbanco cites (dismissively) a “literature lab” at Stanford “where teams of graduate students per-

form searches of digitized texts looking for patterns of recurrent words that signal shifts in theme or style over the long history of prose fiction.” There’s nothing new about the grim rigor; classical scholars once made entire careers of counting *predigitized* Greek particles (sweet that the word leads a double life in syntax and in science). May all the counters rest in unvisited tombs.

Few nonfiction book titles stand upright these days without the crutch of a subtitle, often of novella length, but Delbanco’s subtitle is almost as stark as his title. What college *should be* for Delbanco is in large measure what it has traditionally been, for at least a segment of colleges. What it *will be* is another matter, because the crises higher education faces today may be fatally destructive of precious traditions.

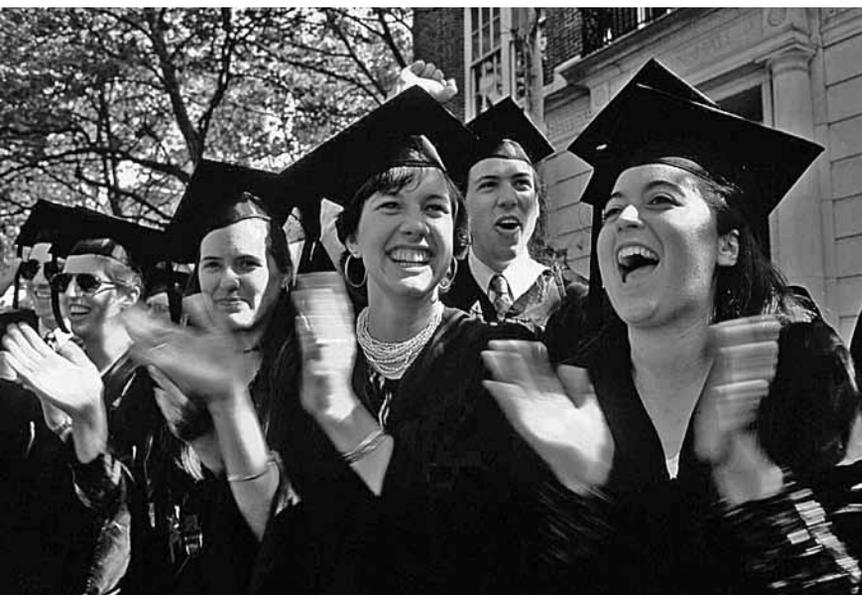
Delbanco worries that liberal arts education, even when suitably tweaked to meet contemporary circumstances, may not have a future. The passion of his advocacy is evident, but it’s leashed by a rueful recognition of today’s fiscal and demographic realities: the rise in tuition and other costs at colleges, and the decline in interest among matriculants. Still,

he’s convinced that the current debate about what a college education should be—and for whom it should be—will benefit from the statement of “some fundamental principles that have been inherited from the past, are under radical challenge in the present, and, in my view, remain indispensable for the future.”

Delbanco sketches the evolution of the American college from its New England beginnings. He traces the emergence of the re-

**The number of humanities majors has declined at many institutions, including Brown, where the proportion of such majors fell from 37 to 24 percent between 1990 and 2009.**

CATHERINE KARNOW / CORBIS



search university, in the latter part of the 19th century, as both a haven for liberal arts education—some of the most elite colleges in the country are within universities—and a threat to it, because too many university professors believe that the requirement to appear before undergraduates in a classroom is a distraction from their real work of research. He notes the changing character of student populations as colleges and universities have gradually altered their once exclusionary ways, though these ways may simply have taken new forms: “Need-blind admissions, for instance, is an admirable ideal, but it can be little more than a feel-good slogan if a college concentrates its recruiting in places like Scarsdale or Riyadh.”

He indicts the failure of colleges “to reconnect their students to the idea that good fortune confers a responsibility to live generously toward the less fortunate.” He urges that we increase the number of college teachers who are trained to teach and who welcome their time in the classroom—who believe, in short, that students are the point of college. He’s hopeful enough to wonder whether the technologies that are altering the education-

al landscape, often by making that landscape vanish, may also bring new opportunities for lateral learning. Might it be possible to tame the rampant technologies and harness them to a humanist’s will?

Above all, Delbanco insists that college be accessible and affordable, especially to lower-income students, for whom it may seem impossibly out of reach. He points out that the habits of mind honed by liberal arts education—a disposition to absorb, reflect, assess, argue, persuade—are prime resources of a healthy democracy. Will that lofty promise persuade students (or their parents) to incur a massive, lingering burden of debt for an education that seems a Prada purse when a canvas wallet will do? Delbanco’s suggestions to enhance affordability are feeble and familiar: “making additional expenditures for existing programs that serve low-income students, such as Pell grants and Perkins loans, and crediting some portion of college tuition as a tax deduction.”

An educational ideal too singular to survive yet too precious to be forsaken is becoming too risky to embrace.

JAMES MORRIS is an editor at large of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

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CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

## The Color of Friendship

Reviewed by Emily Bernard

IN 1992, AFTER A JURY ACQUITTED LOS ANGELES police officers who had viciously beaten a black motorist, the late Rodney King, black Angelenos rioted in protest. Afterward, President Bill Clinton diagnosed the country’s racial ills as the consequence of too few interracial friendships. Tanner Colby’s engrossing book begins with the same premise: “If we’re not talking about why black people and white people don’t hang out and play Scrabble together, we’re not talking about the problem.”

Colby, whose previous books were very successful biographies of “dead, fat comedians” (Chris Farley and John Belushi), might seem an

unlikely author for such a book. He began the project after realizing during the 2008 presidential campaign that, despite his passionate support of Barack Obama, he “didn’t actually know any black people,” nor did most of his friends. The result, *Some of My Best Friends Are Black*, is a refreshingly honest and textured story that has much to contribute to conversations about race in America.

**SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE BLACK:**  
The Strange Story of Integration in America.

By Tanner Colby. Viking.  
294 pp. \$27.95

*Some of My Best Friends Are Black* is structured around four major arenas of everyday life: “schools, neighborhoods, the workplace, and church.” The book is not a memoir, but Colby weaves in his own stories with ease and



Amid the bloody 1992 L.A. riots, a woman asks passing motorists of all races to honk their horns for peace.

humor. He explores the history of busing in his hometown of Birmingham, Alabama; recounts the process of desegregation in a neighborhood in Kansas City, Missouri, a place where, he says, “the segregated American cityscape came into being” through decades of redlining, block-busting, and racial covenants; and takes on the advertising industry in New York City, where he was once a copywriter. The book ends with a profile of two Roman Catholic churches in Grand Coteau, a town deep in southern Louisiana’s “Cajun Country,” where determined parishioners managed to end a long history of segregation in worship.

Colby’s heroes, black and white, understand that interracial “brotherhood” is built on personal relationships. Those heroes range

from Martin Luther King Jr. to Cas McWaters, a “conservative Southern Baptist Republican with a gravy-thick Alabama accent.” In 2005, his first year as the principal of Colby’s alma mater, Birmingham’s Vestavia Hills High School, McWaters banned the Confederate flag, the official school banner. When Colby asked him what accounted for his progressive attitudes, he said, “Just having black friends here in Vestavia, I suppose. . . . Close friends, people that eat over at my house, go to Sunday school together.”

Colby’s stories are peopled with “Children of the Dream,” black men and women “vested with the hopes of all their parents had fought for in the civil rights era.” He focuses on those who have thrived in white environments, most of whom attribute their success to adopting the mindset of Tyceley Williams. A classmate of Colby’s at Vestavia, Williams describes herself as the “Black Girl with a Really Great Attitude,” who focused on her ambitions rather than the racial ignorance she regularly encountered. Likewise,

The two ad executives developed friendships with whites, relationships that enabled them to penetrate the highly segregated old-boy network on Madison Avenue.

black advertising executives Vann Graves and Geoff Edwards developed friendships with whites, relationships that ultimately enabled them to penetrate the old-boy network on Madison Avenue, which was highly segregated until the 1970s. Colby’s heroes all highlight the profitability—financially, socially, and spiritually—of both blacks and whites choosing to make intimate interracial connections.

Today, segregation in public spaces is illegal, but there is only so much the law can redress. For many whites, Colby writes, “as long as you’re not the guy dumb enough to get caught e-mailing racist jokes around the office, all you have to do is read about black people in the newspaper” and remain comfortable in homogeneous surroundings. Most of Col-

by's admirable subjects are ordinary people who, like the author, grew interested in what lay beyond a complacency that many of them discovered was undergirded by conventional biases and assumptions about the "other." Herein lies the difference between desegregation, which amounts to a numbers game, and integration, which boils down to sharing everyday experiences.

The book's uplifting finale concerns the merging of two parishes, black and white,

Today, true communion between blacks and whites in Grand Coteau, a town deep in "Cajun Country," can be measured in barbecues and Sunday get-togethers.

in Grand Coteau, famous as the site of "the Miracle of Grand Coteau," which occurred in 1866 when a young postulant to the local convent succumbed to a grave illness and then supposedly returned from the dead. Thousands of Catholics make pilgrimages to Grand Coteau every year, but for Colby, the real miracle is the unification of the two parishes. Today, true communion between blacks and whites there can be measured in mundane social interactions such as barbecues and Sunday get-togethers.

Only a few years ago, nobody in the county believed that such scenes would ever be possible, least of all black parishioner Wallace Belson Jr., whose father was beaten merely for stepping into the white church in 1964. Thirteen successive pastors led the way to integration, but it was patient parishioners who saw the effort through to the end. As Colby establishes throughout the book, "The impossible is always waiting for anyone who wants to give it a try." *Some of My Best Friends Are Black* is an invitation for both blacks and whites to let go of racial fear and indulge their curiosity.

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## HISTORY

## Proud American

Reviewed by Aaron Mesh

AIDES TO LYNDON BAINES

Johnson always knew when their boss had decided to engage in a political battle. Once he had finished

precisely calibrating the personal costs and benefits, he would begin to gather momentum in a ritual that allies described as "revving up": the effort to persuade himself of the goodness of his cause, regardless of whether he had previously supported or opposed it. Thus motivated, he would "get all worked up," as his longtime lawyer, Ed Clark, put it, "all worked up and emotional, and work all day and night, and sacrifice, and say, 'Follow me for the cause!'—'Let's do this because it's *right!*'"

Those who have read Robert A. Caro's three previous biographical volumes on Johnson will recognize this groundswell—the sudden marshaling of outsized energies—because it is also the pattern of these mammoth, magnificent books. They chronicle in exhaustive detail the strengths and flaws of the 36th president of the United States, then surge forward toward a pivotal moment with the full weight of that character study behind them.

In this fourth installment—a comparatively trim 712 pages—the payoff is even greater. In the course of this book, Johnson is bumped from presumptive 1960 Democratic presidential nominee to the bottom half of John F. Kennedy's ticket, then suffers the further abasement of being vice president in an administration that despises and pities him. His political future shrinks to a narrowness that Caro, with typical flair, compares to "the Dallas canyon" of office buildings and warehouses the presidential motorcade drove through on November 22, 1963. The assassin's bullet that kills Kennedy instantly makes Johnson president, and the second half of

### THE PASSAGE OF POWER.

By Robert A. Caro.  
Knopf. 712 pp. \$35



LBJ, pictured with Martin Luther King Jr., Whitney Young, and James Farmer, meets with civil rights leaders in January 1964.

*The Passage of Power* is a headlong rush as LBJ realizes what he can do when handed great authority.

Much of the book's first half can be summed up with another Johnson phrase, familiar from previous books: "Too slow. Too slow." Caro has corralled his usual army of details: some uncovered serendipitously (he reveals in the footnotes that his back doctor also treated JFK) but mostly during extensive interviews. To these he adds a deliciously maddening tendency to reach the cusp of a conflict, then pan to a wider angle to give a comprehensive view of its context.

Johnson finally meets his match in the Kennedys—especially Robert, with whom he develops "one of the great blood feuds in American political history." In the corridors of a Los Angeles hotel during the 1960 nominating convention, JFK offers Johnson the vice presidency, a position that Bobby tries to persuade him not to accept. Soon Johnson finds himself a hick pariah among the denizens of the Camelot inner circle, who nick-

name him "Rufus Cornpone." There are several episodes of wounding humiliation (as when Johnson tries to dance with JFK mistress Helen Chavchavadze at a party, slips and falls, and finds himself lying on her, according to one of the guests, "like a lox").

But these doldrums are a necessary backdrop to accentuate the whirlwind of activity Johnson undertakes once he enters the Oval Office. Before, actually: It's in the first three days after Kennedy's assassination, when Johnson is still holed up in room 274 of the Executive Office Building, across the street from the White House, that he makes the choices that will not only preserve the country from chaos but elevate its character. Told that he shouldn't risk his political chips on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, he replies, "Well, what the hell's the presidency for?"

LBJ meets his match in the Kennedys. He finds himself a hick pariah among the denizens of the Camelot inner circle, who nickname him "Rufus Cornpone."

Nothing is so moving as when a hard man decides to do good. By the time this Texas politician takes presidential office, Caro has shown us exactly what kind of man he is—grasping, bullying, and almost bottomlessly corrupt—and so it is all the more affecting to see him recognize, if only briefly, a higher purpose to his ambition: giving basic freedoms to black Americans denied them by segregation, and basic human dignity to poor people denied them by inequality of opportunity. *The Passage of Power* is about how Lyndon Johnson gained power, but it is also about how he conducted it to others.

The book reaches its own emotional peak in an impromptu “revving up” speech delivered to the nation’s governors gathered for Kennedy’s funeral. Johnson knows he’ll need their leverage to pass civil rights legislation, and he leans on them with this pledge: “I am not the best man in the world at this job, and I was thrown into it through circumstances, but I am in it and I am not going to run from it. I am going to be at it from daylight to midnight, and with your help and God’s help we are going to make not ourselves proud that we are Americans but we are going to make the rest of the world proud that there is an American in it.” At this moment, the reader experiences a fleeting but genuinely stirring sensation: pride that Lyndon Johnson was an American.

AARON MESH is a reporter for *Willamette Week*, an alternative weekly newspaper in Portland, Oregon.

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

## Keeping Time

Reviewed by Rob Dunn

IT’S LATE, AND, AS ALWAYS, I HAVE LOTS OF things I’d like to do before I go to bed. I don’t sleep much. I enjoy being awake. My dreams are quiet, but my days are full of things to explore, the treasures of ordinary life. So when I began to read Till Roenneberg’s *Internal Time*, a book whose dust jacket mentions



Teens wake hours later than children or adults. Adolescents may have been night hunters in our distant past.

sleep and biological clocks, I was hoping to find a passage clearly stating that those who sleep less are happier and wiser, and live longer, or at least are more interesting to talk to at parties. I didn’t find it, but the book was fascinating, and so I read on, and now, at 11 p.m., I have begun to write.

The story of the daily rhythms of our bodies begins with the study of the skies. In 1729, French astronomer Jean Jacques d’Ortous de Mairan found himself wondering how the Earth’s spin affected the species around him. He kept a mimosa, one of his favorite plants, on a windowsill near his desk. Leaves furled, it slept even when he could not, and so he decided to stay up a little longer and study how it knew what to do during the day and night. De Mairan put his plant in the cupboard. There it did as it had always done, opening all of its leaves simultaneously at daybreak

### INTERNAL TIME:

Chronotypes, Social Jet Lag, and Why You’re So Tired.

By Till Roenneberg.  
Harvard Univ. Press.  
272 pp. \$26.95



and closing them at night. Somehow the plant knew what was going on outside the cabinet. That was the end of de Mairan's experiment; he left the rhythm of mimosas observed but unexplained.

In 24 easy-to-read chapters, Roenneberg proposes to explain what de Mairan did not and to tell us why the circadian rhythms in our bodies matter in our daily lives. Other books have dealt with our biological clocks, but

Roenneberg focuses on the ways in which societal pressures seem to be leading us to disregard our clocks, at considerable cost.

Your body is set, more or less, on 24-hour days, but just when those cycles begin and end is "entrained" by light. Receptors in your eyes (apart from those rods and cones you learned about in school) tell you if it is day or night. These receptors are not wired to your conscious brain, but to a special part of the subconscious brain called the suprachiasmatic nucleus, in essence, your timekeeper. The timekeeper signals the pineal gland what to say to the body via hormones such as melatonin (whether it be "night, night, night" or "day, day, day"). At night our temperature decreases, and our cortisol production declines. Even our metabolism waxes and wanes. All of this happens without us ever thinking about it, the tides of our bodies pulled by invisible and very ancient forces.

Roenneberg spends a lot of time discussing what are known as chronotypes—categories of individuals who differ in their sleep rhythms, whether because they need more or less sleep

or tend to be early wakers or late wakers. But as Roenneberg points out, such chronotypes do not really exist as categories. Instead, like other complicated attributes of living things, the variation among individuals is continuous (and relatively modest—we vary less in rhythm than in height). Most people are neither lark nor owl but human, falling somewhere along a continuum. Most of us need between seven and a half and eight and a half hours of sleep (but get less). Some turn in early, others late, though very few people wake up before five or after ten.

More to the point, while we differ in our timing, the biggest differences in our degree of larkiness have to do with age. Teenagers are the weirdest ones. They are innately late risers, getting up (in the absence of alarm clocks and parental intervention) several hours later than younger kids or adults. Get them up too early and they are mean, silly, and not as clever as they might be later in the day. As we age, we rise earlier and earlier.

Roenneberg not only explains our daily cycles but also asks us to re-evaluate the extent to which we allow society to push us toward longer days and artificial waking times. He argues that it behooves us to rewild our cycles and live in a way that recognizes our natural rhythms, whether that means allowing teenagers to wake up later, living like larks or owls if that is our nature, or just sleeping more.

I like being awake. From Roenneberg's perspective, spending more time awake than I should is a sort of vice I should try to combat. He is probably right, but I find solace in noting that de Mairan discovered circadian rhythms while working so late at night he could barely hold his quill. Meanwhile, I better wrap this up because I see it is now 4 a.m. and the damned larks, those early risers, have just begun to sing.

ROB DUNN, a biologist at North Carolina State University, is the author of *The Wild Life of Our Bodies: Predators, Parasites, and Partners That Shape Who We Are Today* (2011) and *Every Living Thing: Man's Obsessive Quest to Catalog Life, From Nanobacteria to New Monkeys* (2008).

## A Sage's Advice

Reviewed by A. J. Loftin

I'M SITTING BESIDE A TALL stack of books by Jerome Kagan, published by Harvard, Yale, Cambridge, Basic Books. This stack doesn't include Kagan's papers (nearly 400), or his textbook *Psychology: An Introduction*, written with Julius Segal, which has gone through at least nine editions.

A professor emeritus at Harvard, Kagan, now 83, began his career at Yale, where his ap-

Kagan sees a Bermuda Triangle: Psychologists, lost in the airspace between the sciences and the humanities, are unable to read the signals from either one.

prenticeship to behavioral researcher Frank Beach required him to masturbate a group of male dogs over several evenings. Eventually he got a day job, assessing children for a longitudinal study of childhood temperament at the Fels Research Institute. He moved to Harvard in 1964 and continued to study children. His research culminated in *The Nature of the Child* (1984), a developmental study that emphasized the enduring role of temperament. Kagan went on to codirect Harvard's Mind/Brain/Behavior Interfaculty Initiative, an interdisciplinary program established in 1993 to investigate relationships between the nervous system, human behavior, and mental life.

The themes of Kagan's books widened accordingly, to include more philosophical and cultural questions. Indeed, *Psychology's Ghosts* revisits ideas Kagan advanced in previous books, namely *Three Seductive Ideas* (1998),

### PSYCHOLOGY'S GHOSTS:

The Crisis in the Profession and the Way Back.

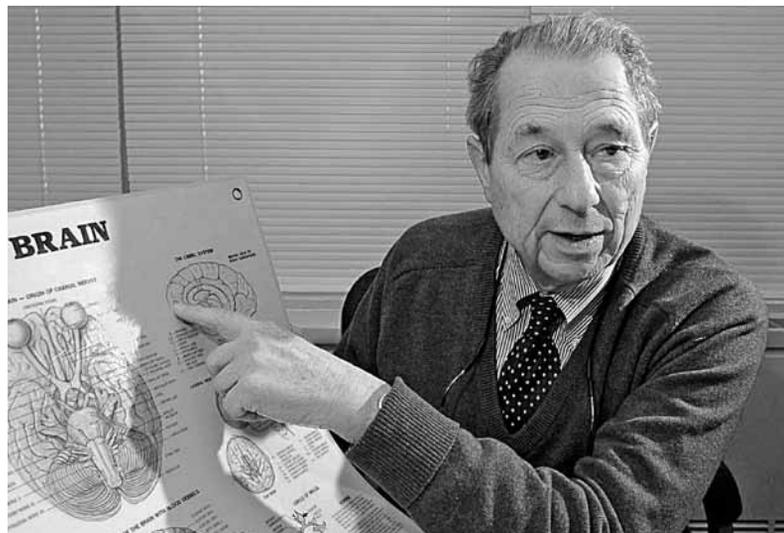
By Jerome Kagan.  
Yale Univ. Press.  
392 pp. \$32

*An Argument for Mind* (2006), and *The Three Cultures* (2009)—the title of the latter an allusion to C. P. Snow's influential lecture cautioning against the growing gulf between the sciences and the humanities. Where in 1959 Snow saw a schism, Kagan now sees a 21st-century Bermuda Triangle: social scientists, lost in the airspace between two great branches of knowledge, unwilling or unable to read the signals from either one.

*Psychology's Ghosts* makes important criticisms of the profession: Psychologists should pay more attention to the setting, age, class, and cultural background of their research participants; researchers should look for patterns of measures rather than use single measures; and psychiatrists need to consider life circumstances rather than simply diagnosing patients and prescribing medication on the basis of symptoms. Kagan singles out the infamous *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* for well-deserved scorn. However, most psychiatrists and psychologists see the *DSM* as not much more than a tool for billing insurance companies, so Kagan's low opinion won't be news to them.

Kagan is also annoyed by recent studies that claim to measure "happiness," a social construct with dubious cross-cultural applica-

**Jerome Kagan recommends several reforms in psychology: For one, clinicians should consider patients' life circumstances as well as reported symptoms.**



tions. Yet in *Psychology's Ghosts* he advances as fact his own opinion about what makes people happy, namely, "commitment to a few unquestioned ethical beliefs." I know some pretty cheerful people whose beliefs you wouldn't touch with a pitchfork.

Kagan prefaces *Psychology's Ghosts* with a promise that he will make some constructive suggestions for change, but in his last chapter he doesn't do much more than air his complaints on a loftier scale. And a section titled "Promising Reforms" meanders around before briefly alighting on Thomas More, the Old Testament, Chairman Mao, the late psychologist John Bowlby, Hollywood movies, and mathematician John von Neumann. Subheads such as "Look for Patterns" and "The Need for Patience" feel tacked on.

So who are psychology's ghosts? The spooks pop out only at the curious end of this book, where they encounter "the muse of history, reclining on a cloud . . . continually altering the scenery and rewriting the script so that new generations speak new lines." Kagan continues:

The muse smiles as she watches each cohort rage wildly at ghosts, trying to make sense of a script with a permanently unfathomable meaning while insisting that their lines are better than those of their neighbors. Although the initial role assignments were determined by throws of the dice, the muse is willing to give a new role and a revised script to those who pay the proper fee. To a select few, she whispers her secret: "Play your role with passion, even if you suspect that it is expendable, and allow the compassion you had as a child to balance the urge to always maximize the self."

A man approaching the end of a remarkable social science career wants to speak philosophically? Fair enough, and lay readers will find much to admire in Kagan's humanist approach. But as the corrective to an entire profession, *Psychology's Ghosts* displays a rather insubstantial regard for literary style and scientific particulars. Social scientists may prefer to find their "way back" to Jerome Kagan's earlier work.

A. J. LOFTIN is a writer living in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

## ARTS &amp; LETTERS

## Record of Achievement

Reviewed by Michael O'Donnell

GEORGE ORWELL (1903–50), the moral compass of the 20th century, had his own true north: farming and fishing in peace. He spent the last years of his life on the rural island of Jura, off Scotland, fighting tuberculosis and writing his sixth and final novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)—one of the great books of our time.

In his diaries, Orwell (born Eric Arthur Blair) does not discuss his novels directly, but the terse, factual entries recording weather and the number of eggs given by the hens each day do offer a sense of his ideal working conditions. It is hard to say whether he craved distraction or merely kept his priorities straight when one reads entries like this: "Diary not kept up for several days owing to pen being mislaid."

Orwell's diaries were first published in 1998 as part of the 20-volume *The Complete Works of George Orwell*. The diaries are now available in a single volume for the first time in the United States. Written from 1931 to 1949, they remind us that most of Orwell's life was not so pastoral. Instead, it was filled with dramatic adventures that fueled his writing and shaped his politics. The journalist George Packer has called Orwell an "empirical absolutist," meaning that he hated to write about a thing he had not personally experienced.

The early entries cover Orwell's days as a tramp, a period that provided material for *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933), and his subsequent investigation of poverty in the industrial north of England, from which he drew for *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937). This volume's lacuna is Orwell's experience fighting the fascists during the Spanish Civil War. Plainclothes policemen in Barcelona seized the one or two diaries that record-

## DIARIES.

By George Orwell.  
Edited by Peter Davison. Introduction by Christopher Hitchens. Liveright.  
597 pp. \$39.95



Despite his penchant for adventure, George Orwell enjoyed farm life. This late-1930s photo captures him milking a goat.

ed those events, and delivered the work to the Soviets. Though the writings likely remain in the archives of the former KGB, Orwell trans-

formed them into literature as well, with the extraordinary memoir *Homage to Catalonia* (1938).

Of greatest interest are entries from the periods of Orwell's life that he did not turn directly into books. His World

War II diaries are the highlight. Although all of the entries feature Orwell's direct prose style, there are occasional hints of the novelist at work: "Characteristic war-time sound, in winter: the musical tinkle of raindrops on your tin hat." And there are ominous passages that reveal his unusually clear view of the awful century unfolding, such as this one from June 1940 that prefigured his 1945 novel *Animal Farm*:

Where I feel that people like us understand the situation better than so-called experts is not in any power to foretell specific events, but in the power to

grasp what kind of world we are living in. At any rate I have known since about 1931 . . . that the future must be catastrophic. I could not say exactly what wars and revolutions would happen, but they never surprised me when they came. Since 1934 I have known war between England and Germany was coming, and since 1936 I have known it with complete certainty. . . . Similarly such horrors as the Russian purges never surprised me, because I had always felt that—not exactly that, but something like that—was implicit in Bolshevik rule. I could feel it in their literature.

Orwell volunteered for military service days after Germany invaded Poland, but was turned away because of poor health. His frustration comes through in entries despairing of the uselessness of writing at such a time. Determined to contribute somehow, he eventually became a sergeant in the Home Guard and produced war propaganda for the BBC. This was a sharp irony, for he had lashed out in the past against propagandists who worked safely away from the frontlines. Recalling just such a passage from *Homage to Catalonia*, Orwell spotted the hypocrisy and ruefully chastised himself: "I suppose sooner or later we all write our own epitaphs." As the late Christopher Hitchens nicely puts it in this volume's intro-

Policemen in Barcelona seized Orwell's diaries and delivered them to the Soviets. The writings likely remain in the archives of the former KGB.

duction, when Orwell discovers one of his own contradictions, “he tries his best to be aware of the fact and to profit from it.”

Yet self-awareness could not overcome an admirable, scrapping pluck: an unsuppressed, hackles-up reaction to events of the 1930s and '40s that cast right and wrong into sharp relief. It was a time for standing up and taking sides. Thus, if Germany invaded England, Orwell vowed privately to himself, “there is nothing for it but to die fighting, but one must above all die *fighting* and have the satisfaction of killing somebody else first.” For a man who died battling totalitarianism with his typewriter, these words are a fitting epitaph.

MICHAEL O'DONNELL is a lawyer in Chicago. His writing has appeared in *The Nation*, *The Washington Monthly*, and *The Los Angeles Times*.

## Guided by Voices

Reviewed by Darcy Courteau

IN THE KUWAITI DESERT IN March 2003, before 800 soldiers of the Royal Irish Regiment, British army colonel Tim Collins made a dazzling eve-of-battle speech. With Shakespearean flourishes and the moral fine-tuning of Jehovah, he instructed the troops to “tread lightly” in “the birthplace of Abraham,” though some would kill, others would be killed, and there would be “no time for sorrow.” Iraq’s children would one day acknowledge that the “the light of liberation in their lives was brought by you.” Reporters and their audiences, including President George W. Bush, were electrified. Months later, however, Sam Leith, a writer and former literary editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, spoke to a high-ranking officer who suspected the speech had sunk like a stone before the immediate audience, youngsters more worried about staying alive in the desert than in history books.

Leith recounts the story in *Words Like*

*Loaded Pistols*, his brief, rambunctious handbook of rhetoric, to illustrate a larger point.

If you want folks on your side, you’ve got to speak their language. Collins would have done better to borrow a page from General George S. Patton, who roused his soldiers with a profane promise to get them home—the fastest route being through Berlin, where he’d personally shoot the so-and-so Hitler, “just like I’d shoot a snake!”

To help his readers both to hone their own rhetorical skills and to train their noses to detect baloney when the scent wafts their way, Leith breaks down the basics of rhetoric, the art of persuasion systematized by Aristotle. He often provides practical advice: When confronted with your past failures, talk about building a better future. But “if you’re arguing against someone about what to do in the future, find something in the past with which to discredit him.”

*Pistols* is not all pop how-to. A self-con-

**WORDS LIKE  
LOADED PISTOLS:**  
Rhetoric From  
Aristotle to Obama.

By Sam Leith. *Basic  
Books*. 312 pp. \$26.99



The Devil tests his rhetorical chops on Jesus in this detail of Hans Thoma's *Temptation of Christ* (1910).

fessed rhetoric nerd, Leith will not disappoint his fellows. He sprinkles his study with terminology, from “atticism” (“crisp, unornamented, aphoristic style”) to “zeugma”—go look that one up, there’s a glossary in the back—as well as metrical line readings that poets might appreciate. He observes that Antony’s supplication to “friends, Romans, countrymen” in *Julius Caesar* rouses its listeners because it sounds like the opening bars of AC/DC’s heavy metal song “Back in Black”: “DUM! DUH-dum! DUH-dum-dum!” And the three consecutive stressed syllables “Yes we can” gave that hopeful 2008 refrain enough heft to lob its speaker into the White House.

Patton promised his soldiers he’d get them home—the fastest route was through Berlin, where he’d shoot the so-and-so Hitler, “just like I’d shoot a snake!”

Rhetoric is, in fact, everywhere that elections are, and that’s for the better, Leith maintains, since the art is most robust in societies where citizens are allowed a say. “People in Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and Libya, by pushing for democracy, are arguing, in effect, for the right to argue,” he writes of the Arab Spring. This is true, but many a fine voice has incited not compassion but cruelty, not virtue but vice. Indeed, the rhetoric masters the book profiles include not only Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. but also Adolf Hitler, and even Satan, who speaks with a silver tongue in Genesis and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

Perhaps for that reason, not everyone has been as excited about rhetoric as Aristotle was. His mentor, Plato, may have been dismayed that his pragmatic pupil thought rhetoric on a par with the search for objective truth. The Western tradition of persuasion is confrontational to the core, “better at dealing with either/or propositions than and/also possibilities or neither/nors,” Leith notes. I wouldn’t have minded hearing more about that analysis, or about this one: The very point when

women became educated and enfranchised strangely coincided with the “point at which our long history of understanding and consciously thinking about rhetoric sank beneath the waters of Lethe.” Leith doesn’t speculate why, but I wish he had.

To be fair, that discussion might have been beyond the scope of this book, whose larger aim, Leith writes, is to pass along love, for “to understand rhetoric is in large part to understand your fellow human beings.” That sounds like a suspiciously benign motivation to study the art of argument, but in these funny, friendly pages, it rings entirely true.

DARCY COURTEAU is an assistant editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

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RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

## A Nation of Thinkers

Reviewed by Troy Jollimore

CARLIN ROMANO BEGINS his new book with a provocative thesis: The United States is the most philosophical nation on earth. Romano, a critic at large for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and professor of philosophy and humanities at Ursinus College, declares his stance in the first few pages of *America the Philosophical*: “The surprising little secret of our ardently capitalist, famously materialist, heavily iPodded, iPadded, and iPhoneed society is that America in the early 21st century towers as the most philosophical culture in the history of the world, an unprecedented marketplace of truth and argument that far surpasses ancient Greece, Cartesian France, 19th-century Germany, or any other place one can name over the past three millennia.”

How could such a hotbed of philosophy have gained the reputation for being an *un*-philosophical, indeed downright anti-intellectual culture? Romano’s explanation is that the word “philosophy” has come to be identified,

**AMERICA THE PHILOSOPHICAL.**

By Carlin Romano.  
Knopf. 672 pp. \$35

incorrectly, with the work of a small number of Ivy League philosophy professors in the analytic tradition whose research concerns technical matters related to epistemology (i.e., the theory of knowledge)—people such as Willard Van Orman Quine, Donald Davidson, and Wilfrid Sellars, who saw science as the model for good philosophy and regarded logic as their primary instrument.

Outside of this sphere stands another American philosophical tradition, which is less concerned with the fine points of logic than with rhetoric and imagination, would rather persuade than prove, and cares less about precision and accuracy than utility. This tradition, which Romano refers to with his label “America the Philosophical,” is largely derived from such founding pragmatist philosophers as Charles Sanders Peirce and William James. In Romano’s view, it also includes a wildly varied range of thinkers and figures, among them Richard Posner, Cornel West, Susan Sontag, Oliver Sacks, Robert Coles, Robert Fulghum, and even Hugh Hefner—as well as Richard Rorty, whom Romano credits as the man who revealed analytic epistemology to be a sham.

One could, of course, accept the existence

of these two traditions without accusing either of being spurious. But Romano misses no opportunity to heap scorn on the practitioners of analytic epistemology. Unfortunately, the overheated rhetoric he habitually employs makes him seem at least as intolerant as the allegedly narrow-minded academics he is attacking. At one point, he charges that “post-Rortyan epistemologists” are “oblivious in their inbred conventions to time and intellectual culture passing them by, [and] continue to focus on narrow syllogistic arguments in the theory of knowledge.” The reasoning of mainstream analytic epistemologists takes a wide variety of forms, and categorizing them as makers of “narrow syllogistic arguments” is a caricature at best. After a while, it appears that “analytic epistemology” functions as a label for whatever Romano doesn’t like, philosophically speaking.

Other than the fact that he finds them interesting, the figures Romano discusses with approval seem to have little in common. He gives no sense of what particular issues or debates he takes to define or even matter to philosophy. Perhaps this makes a kind of sense, given Romano’s apparent understanding of pragmatism as holding that it’s the practical

effects of an idea on society and history, rather than its content, that matter.

This understanding explains how Romano can assert that the United States today is “the most philosophical culture in the history of the world.” What is important to him is “the quantity of [America’s] arguments, the diversity of its viewpoints, [and] the cockiness with which its citizens express their opinions.” Skeptics will remind us that what matters, philosophically, is not just the quantity of debate but its quality, the degree

**Romano’s “casual wiseman” Hugh Hefner lands in London to open a Playboy club.**



of thoughtfulness it expresses.

Romano also tenders as evidence of America's philosophical bent "the intensity of its hunt for evidence and information, the widespread rejection of truths imposed by authority or tradition alone, [and] the resistance to false claims or justification and legitimacy." But are Americans really more committed than other people to evidence-based belief, or

Romano tenders as evidence of America's philosophical bent "its hunt for evidence and information, the widespread rejection of truths imposed by authority."

more rational in their skepticism? American attitudes toward evolution and global warming, not to mention the willingness of large numbers of Americans to accept the epistemic authority of their fa-

vored news outlet, casts doubt on Romano's claim. And Romano has very little to say about the role of religious commitments in Americans' thinking.

Is this to say that the United States is an entirely un-philosophical society? Not at all. But *America the Philosophical* violates the first rule of good philosophy: It insists on treating this complex question as if it were a simple one.

TROY JOLLMORE is a professor of philosophy at California State University, Chico. He is the author of *Love's Vision* (2011) and the forthcoming book *On Loyalty*, as well as two volumes of poetry.

## Cult of Youth

Reviewed by Cullen Nutt

IN 1945, A MILLION AMERICAN teenagers all over the country took to gathering on Saturday nights to praise Jesus. Youth for Christ, the evangelical organization that engineered these "rallies" in hundreds of churches and auditoriums, played boisterous music and encouraged audience participation, transforming worship into feel-good entertainment. A 26-year-

old pastor named Billy Graham barnstormed across America on behalf of Youth for Christ, telling audiences that Christianity was not all doom and gloom. "The young people around the world today who are having the best time are the young people who know Jesus Christ," he declared.

These meetings initiated a startling trend, writes Thomas E. Bergler, a professor of ministry and missions at Huntington University, a Christian college in Indiana: The most successful American churches of the last half-century, primarily conservative evangelical Protestant ones, adopted Youth for Christ's methods. Falling in love with Jesus, often with the encouragement of catchy music and uplifting sermons, took pride of place at the altar. Firm belief and religious duty receded in importance. Americans, Bergler observes, preferred to clap their hands to the beat and "feel better about their problems" than profess a selfless Christian creed.

In *The Juvenilization of American Christianity*, he explains how evangelical youth ministries, by attempting to beat American youth culture at its own game, pushed churches to champion sensational and self-centered models of worship. In the 1940s and early '50s, secularism and moral permissiveness seemed to menace the youth flock. Bobbysoxers danced to swing and melted to the voice of Frank Sinatra. Teenage crime rates jumped. Grown-ups fretted about the "youth problem."

To insulate youngsters from temptation, evangelicals attempted to devise their own teenage counterculture. Outfits such as Gospel Films churned out Christian movies glorifying Bible clubs and evangelism, while infectious Christian pop music carved out a niche in youth worship and in the recording industry. In later decades, youth ministers were encouraged to dispense with onerous Christian jargon and passé church furniture such as the pulpit. Not even the Bible was off limits; in 1966, Youth for Christ rolled out a paraphrased teenage edition. Evangelicals deemed

### THE JUVENILIZATION OF AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY.

By Thomas E. Bergler.  
Eerdmans. 281 pp. \$25



Teens sway to rock music at Florida's evangelical Christ Fellowship. "Church doesn't have to be boring," its Web site says.

these changes to be small compromises in the quest to purify society.

Churches that failed to cater to youth tastes lost worshippers. The Catholic Church was particularly hard hit; many Catholics who came of age in the tumultuous 1960s and '70s either lapsed or left. Mainstream and liberal Protestant denominations such as the Methodists concentrated on social justice and other left-wing causes, which did little to animate most teenagers, and thus failed to fill the pews. Black churches, incubators of the civil rights movement, faced a different problem: Some young followers drifted toward radicalism and away from the tutelage of church elders who preached nonviolence. Others felt that adults in the congregation were simply out of touch with their needs.

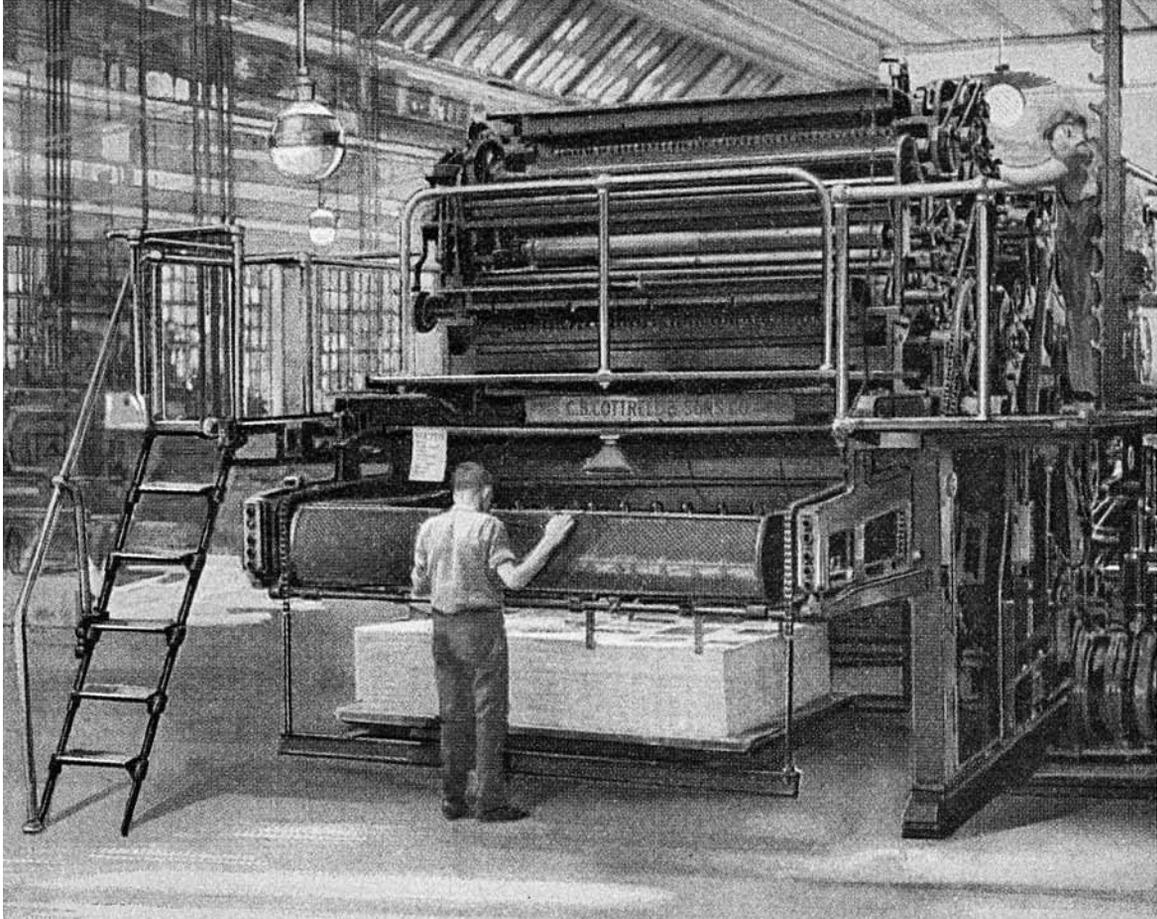
Evangelical teenagers reared in the feel-good faith were unfazed by social upheaval and sexual revolution. As adults, they craved worship thrills of the kind they had experienced as kids. Many of these Christians have never really grown up, Bergler maintains.

Their beliefs are in constant flux; emotional needs outweigh religious commitments. As discerning consumers, they expect their church of choice to be comforting and entertaining. Bergler, whose own Christian faith informs the book, argues that churches sorely need more mature adherents who are set in their beliefs, awake to both salvation and suffering, and versed in duty and doctrine.

Bergler delivers his message with grace. He avoids cynicism and concedes that young-at-heart worshippers have given American Christianity new life. The problem, he says, is that the most successful evangelical churches embrace the characteristically American obsession with consumption and personal satisfaction when they should be cultivating an otherworldly faith. His book is a jolting reminder that, even in a country as religiously observant as the United States, the Gospel directive to "seek first the kingdom of God" remains a tall order.

CULLEN NUTT is an assistant editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*.

# PORTRAIT



## *Last Ink*

On this, the final page of our final paper issue, we pay homage to the printing press. Its modern incarnations are a far cry from Johannes Gutenberg's 15th-century invention—the German-made, computerized press that prints the *WQ* could fill a boxcar—but all presses share the same basic function. They are where ideas come to actual earth, where we entrust our abstract squiggles to plant pulp: 32,000 pounds of paper went into the summer run. “Souls dwell in printer’s type,” wrote Joseph Ames, author of a history of printing, *Typographical Antiquities* (1749). To Gutenberg and all the paper-and-ink folk who came after him, we soulfully doff our ink-stained caps. ■