

WQ

THE WILSON QUARTERLY
SURVEYING THE WORLD OF IDEAS

WILL INDIA WIN?



TECHNOLOGY AND THE WRITTEN WORD

PRECIPICES OF VIOLENCE

AUTUMN 2012

COVER STORY
WILL INDIA WIN?

Ambitious reforms in the 1990s lifted India to the forefront of the world's emerging economies, making it the leading challenger to China's authoritarian model of growth. Now, that early momentum is fading. What will it take for the world's largest democracy to begin moving forward again?



- 1. INDIA'S FECKLESS ELITE**
by SADANAND DHUME

- 2. THE FOREIGN-POLICY FOG**
by MICHAEL KUGELMAN

- 3. UNLEARNING CHINA'S LESSONS**
by XUEFEI REN

ON THE COVER: A passenger jet flies over Mumbai's Jari Mari slum. Photograph: Daniel Berehulak / Getty Images Europe

ABOVE: In Bangalore, the Pyramid building on the corporate campus of outsourcing and consulting giant Infosys looms over a residential neighborhood. Photograph: Huw Jones / Getty Images

FEATURES
**WRITERS, TECHNOLOGY,
AND THE FUTURE**

by EDWARD TENNER

"No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money," Samuel Johnson famously said. What happens to books, articles, and stories when the digital revolution leaves less money for writers?

PRECIPICES

by MARGARET PAXSON

In a handful of highland villages in south-central France, local people risked their lives to save thousands of Jews during the Holocaust. What made the Plateau Vivarais-Lignon special?

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IN ESSENCE

Our survey of notable articles from other journals and magazines

CURRENT BOOKS

Reviews of new and noteworthy nonfiction

EDITOR'S COMMENT

ABOUT US

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

EDITOR'S COMMENT

DIVING IN

Welcome to the first all-digital edition of *The Wilson Quarterly*. After 36 years as a paper-and-ink publication, we are plunging into the future. The change gives us the ability to bring readers features we have long wanted to offer, such as full-color photographs and paintings, as well as new ones, notably videos and links to valuable resources, including the Wilson Center's Web site and the *WQ* blog.

Yet the *WQ* remains above all a magazine for *readers*. As digital editors, we face choices between providing an “immersive” approach or a more Web-like “interactive” one. We have leaned toward the former, believing that readers will still come to the *WQ* in search of thoughtful, in-depth explorations of ideas rather than another launching pad to other destinations. But the new *WQ* is an experiment, and we are eager to make the most of the digital world. Reader comments are not only welcomed, but would be received with gratitude. Write to me at wq@wilsoncenter.org.

Those who have read the *WQ* in print will see many familiar features here. Our themed “clusters” of articles remain the heart and soul of the magazine,

allowing us to invite writers with different perspectives to weigh in on a particular subject. In *Essence*, the section in which we distill the best articles we find after scouring literally hundreds of scholarly journals and thought-leading periodicals, follows the same logic, emphasizing new ideas and knowledge from diverse points of view. And this issue brings an especially strong selection of reviews in *Current Books*.

Since we went digital, hundreds of print subscribers have written in to tell of pleasurable hours spent exploring the world of ideas in the pages of the *WQ*. We may not call them pages anymore, but rest assured that the same pleasures await.

— STEVEN LAGERFELD



STEVEN LAGERFELD

is the editor of *The Wilson Quarterly*. Before joining the magazine's staff in the 1980s, he worked at *The Public Interest* and the Institute for Educational Affairs. His articles and reviews have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *The New Republic*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and other publications.

FINDINGS BRIEF NOTES OF INTEREST ON ALL TOPICS

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POSSUM'S BLINDERS

Beyond Okefenokee, local option

The legendary journalist Edward R. Murrow was preceded by a possum. In 1953, a year before CBS aired Murrow's damning *Report on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy*, Walt Kelly's comic strip *Pogo* targeted the Wisconsin Red-hunter with the addition of two new characters to Okefenokee Swamp, the setting of the popular strip: Simple J. Malarkey, a sinister bobcat with McCarthyesque beetle brows and five o'clock shadow, and a sidekick, Mole MacCarony. The strips made Kelly a hero. *Pogo* became "something of a beacon in a politically dark age," writes historian Eric Jarvis. Philosopher Elizabeth Minnich lauds Kelly for being "among the few who were brave enough to publicly criticize McCarthy."

But the cartoonist's bravery sometimes faltered—as when a Senate committee

went after gory comic books in 1954. The star witness, Fredric Wertham, a psychologist whose book *Seduction of the Innocent* had just been published, told the senators that crime-ridden comic books could transform obedient children into juvenile delinquents. "Hitler was a beginner" compared to publishers of such comics, Wertham said. "They get the children much younger."

Some critics likened the hearings to McCarthyism. Not Kelly. Instead, as Kerry D. Soper recounts in *We Go Pogo* (Univ. Press of Mississippi), Kelly appeared before the Senate committee and "put the financial welfare and public reputation of his field ahead of any heroic defense of embattled peers."

Testifying as president of the National Cartoonists Society, Kelly echoed Wertham's contentions. Whereas comics could be "very effective" in imparting "moral lessons," Kelly said, lurid crime



OKEFENOKEE GLEE & PERLOO, INC. USED BY PERMISSION

Pogo's Simple J. Malarkey channels Senator Joseph McCarthy while speaking to Deacon Mushrat.

comics fell deplorably short. In fact, they were nothing less than “juvenile delinquency handbooks.”

When one senator said, “You realize, of course, the great danger of censorship,” Kelly replied, “I realize, too, sir, the great danger of the magazines in question.” His group opposed new censorship laws, he explained—not because censorship was intolerable, but because the “offensive material . . . can be weeded from the mass of worthwhile publications by the exercise of existing city, state, and federal laws.” A number of cities had already banned violent comics, and Kelly endorsed this “local option.”

“We shall meet the enemy, and not only may he be ours, he may be us,” Kelly wrote in a collection of *Pogo* strips in 1953, a statement later condensed to the pithier “We have met the enemy and he is us.” If the aphorism occurred to Kelly during his 1954 testimony, he kept it to himself.

GOOD NEWS

Well-being and watchdogs

Without liberty of the press, the Continental Congress declared in 1774, “a people cannot be free and happy.” The colonists may have been on to something.

In *Social Indicators Research* (forthcoming), Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Bru-

no Takahashi examine various countries’ press freedom and the happiness of the citizenry. The press freedom scores come from a 2010 report by Freedom House; the happiness scores from a 2010 Gallup poll. The researchers find a significant correlation. On the whole, the freer the press, the happier the people.

Citizens may take reassurance from knowing that there’s an institution scrutinizing the government, Tandoc and Takahashi suggest. Perhaps people outsource some measure of eternal vigilance to a feisty press, freeing themselves to focus on more gratifying activities. In addition, press freedom seems to boost happiness indirectly. Environmental quality correlates with happiness, for instance, and news organizations can prod officialdom into cracking down on polluters.

So if the government of Togo, the Gallup survey’s bottom-ranked country, decides to launch a happiness initiative, should it lift its rampant censorship? Or, perhaps, should it seek to boost its \$900 per capita GDP? “Allowing press freedom is *one* of the pathways to making citizens happy,” Tandoc cautions by e-mail. “It is an important component. But whether or not it is the most important component is an empirical question that future comparative studies can tackle.”



HO / REUTERS / NEWS.COM

Peggy Lee in one of her many incarnations

FEVER IN JERUSALEM

Is that all there is? Nope

Introduced to Peggy Lee in 1979, Truman Capote kissed her hand and said, “I’m in the presence of an angel.” The popular singer, best known for her renditions of “Fever” (1958) and “Is That All There Is?” (1969), no doubt thought Capote was angelic too.

During dinner, she held forth on reincarnation. “I’ve been a prostitute, a princess, an Abyssinian queen,” she said, according to Craig Brown’s collection of

tales about celebrity encounters, *Hello Goodbye Hello* (Simon & Schuster). And she could prove it. She said she had a particularly vivid memory from ancient Jerusalem, where she’d been a prostitute: “I’ll never forget picking up *The Jerusalem Times* and seeing the headline ‘Jesus Christ Crucified.’”

Capote judged her “totally bonkers.”

WORD PLAY

Divertissement

In one of the better-known (if rarely read) literary stunts of the 20th century, Georges Perec published a French mystery called *La Disparition* in 1969. Though the title means “the disappearance,” Gilbert Adair’s English translation bears the name *A Void*. There’s a reason for that: In both the original and the translation, the novel doesn’t contain the letter *e*.

Perec was part of the Oulipo, a Paris-based literary group dedicated to what Daniel Levin Becker calls “constrained writing techniques.” In *Many Subtle Channels: In Praise of Potential Literature* (Harvard Univ. Press), Levin Becker writes that “the Oulipo has served as the laboratory in which some of modernity’s most inventive, challenging,

and flat-out baffling textual experiments have been undertaken.” Since its founding in 1960, the circle has attracted such luminaries as Marcel Duchamp and Italo Calvino.

Levin Becker has a mind for Oulipo-style undertakings. He first learned of the group as a Yale freshman in 2002, when a professor mentioned Perec’s *e*-less novel. Not long before, by coincidence, Levin Becker had made a mix tape of songs whose titles and performers’ names had no *e*’s. “I was interested immediately,” he says by e-mail. He studied the Oulipo and then, on a Fulbright fellowship in Paris, spent a year organizing the group’s archives and getting to know some of its active members, informally limited to 12.

In 2009, Levin Becker himself was invited to join the group—the second American in its five-decade history, and currently the youngest. He lives in San Francisco but flies to Paris to attend a meeting or two a year. The literary magazine *Monolith* published one of his own Oulipian projects in 2010: an index of first lines to nonexistent poems, from “Across the room the curl of your lip” to “Your shadow on my wall, forever climbing.”

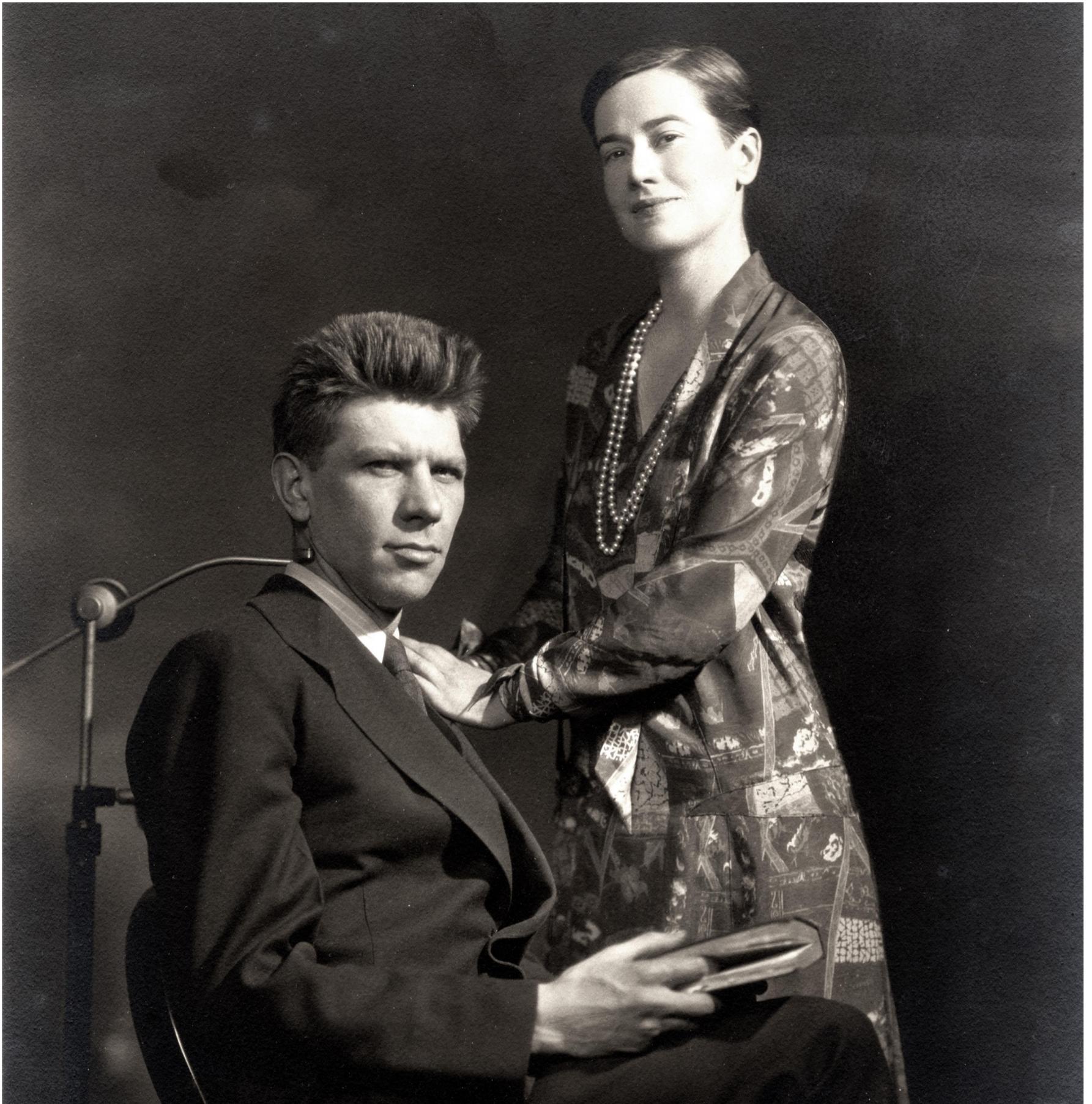
As Levin Becker acknowledges in his book, “This sort of thing isn’t for everyone.”

WE’LL TAKE MANHATTAN

The woman behind The New Yorker
When Harold Ross set out to launch a magazine for Manhattan’s upper crust, to be called *The New Yorker*, success was hardly foreordained. Ross, a Colorado-born high school dropout, was “completely miscast” as editor of a magazine for New York sophisticates, James Thurber later wrote. One contemporary judged Ross “aggressively ignorant”; another remarked that his mind was “uncluttered by culture.” He once shouted to colleagues, “Is Moby Dick the whale or the man?”

In starting the magazine, Ross turns out to have had a largely unheralded partner: his wife, Jane Grant. According to Susan Henry, author of *Anonymous in Their Own Names: Doris E. Fleischman, Ruth Hale, and Jane Grant* (Vanderbilt University Press), Grant compensated for some of Ross’s deficits. She had studied literature under the tutelage of a Shakespeare scholar. And as a stenographer working for the society editor of *The New York Times*, she’d made a close study of *The Social Register*.

At first, Ross couldn’t decide what kind of publication he’d like to start: an upscale tabloid newspaper, a daily paper devoted to shipping news, or a weekly



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON LIBRARY, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

He said “po-tay-to,” she said “po-tah-to.”

magazine about New York goings-on. At a party in 1924, Grant talked up her own preferred option, the New York weekly, to Raoul Fleischmann, a bored millionaire.

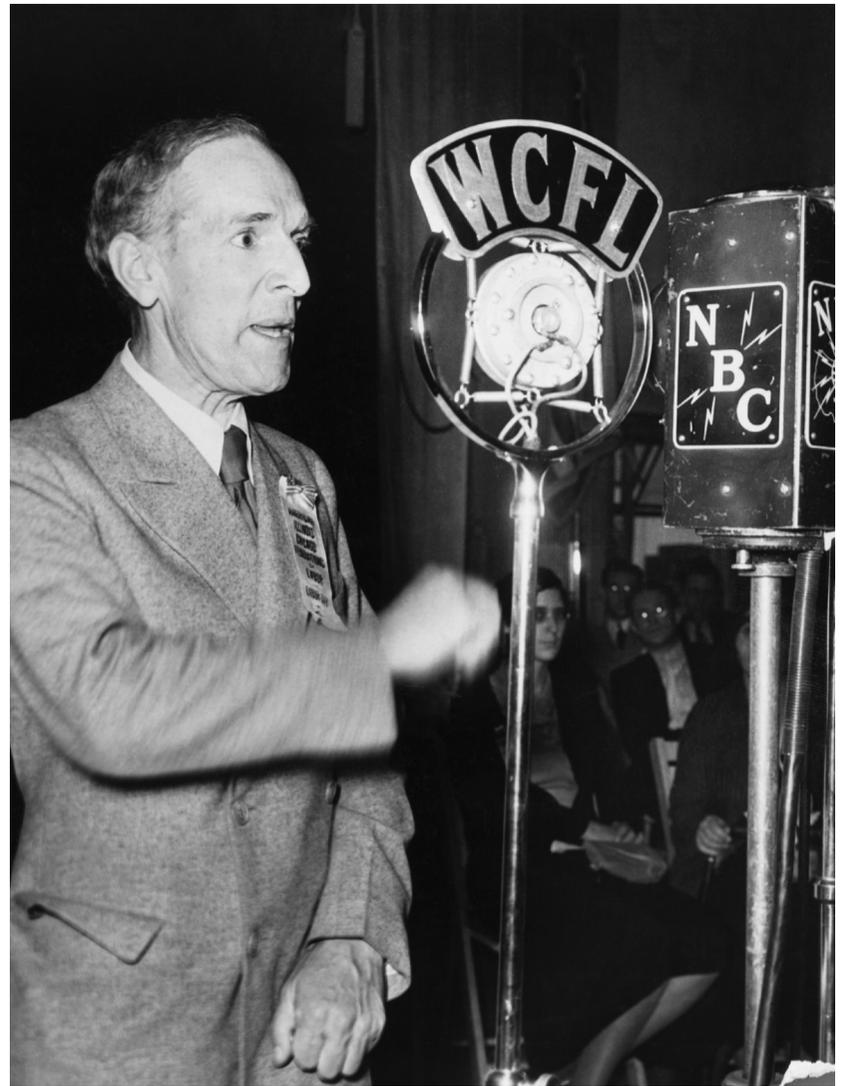
Eager to hear more, Fleischmann arranged a meeting with Ross—who proceeded to pitch shipping news instead. “I couldn’t understand why he came to me with such a dull idea,”

Fleischmann told Grant. She sent Ross back to propose the weekly magazine. This time, Fleischmann agreed to invest \$25,000 and become publisher. The first issue appeared in early 1925.

While continuing in her *Times* job, Grant devised gambits for promoting *The New Yorker*. She hired college women to solicit subscriptions from *Social Register* locals. She also persuaded Ross to publish an article he detested: a young socialite's plaint that the hoi polloi in cabarets made for better company than the city's well-born gentlemen. As Grant had figured, the article got lots of attention in the class-conscious city, with front-page stories in the *Times*, the *Tribune*, and the *World*.

The New Yorker soon thrived, but not the marriage. Grant's growing involvement in the feminist movement rankled Ross. "I never had one damned meal at home at which the discussion wasn't of women's rights and the ruthlessness of men in trampling women," he grumbled. They divorced in 1929.

Despite the divorce, Ross never downplayed Grant's contributions to the magazine. "There would be no *New Yorker* today," he once said, "if it were not for her."



BETTMANN / CORBIS

Upton Sinclair was a stranger to silence.

HOLY FOOL?

Muckraker raked

Upton Sinclair is the patron saint of investigative reporters. His 1906 novel *The Jungle* exposed the horrors of the meatpacking industry and helped bring about the Pure Food and Drug Act. A journalism encyclopedia dubs him "king of the muckrakers."

During Sinclair's lifetime, though, the press was far from worshipful. In fact, as Thai Jones recounts in *More Powerful Than Dynamite: Radicals, Plutocrats, Progressives, and New York's Year of Anarchy* (Walker), many journalists found

him hard to take.

“Mr. Upton Sinclair’s intentions are so good,” wrote Walter Lippmann, a *New Republic* cofounder, “his earnestness so grim, and his self-analysis so humorless . . . [he] is forever the dupe of his own sincerity.”

Lippmann was more charitable than many others. In 1914, as Sinclair tried to stoke public outrage over the murder of striking mine workers in Colorado, a New York reporter noted that “it was rather a dull day,” because “the loquacious-lipped and prolific-penned Upton Sinclair didn’t issue a single voluminous

statement.” When Sinclair popped up in Colorado to protest the killings, a *Los Angeles Times* reporter wrote, “What next fool thing will Upton Sinclair do to get his name in the newspapers? . . . He comes perilously near being a pest.”

At one point, Sinclair donned a mourning band and led a silent march in honor of the mine workers. This time, *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* cheered him on. “The more silence there is around Mr. Sinclair’s neighborhood,” the paper remarked, “the larger the relief to the rest of the country.”

—*Stephen Bates*

CHAPTER 1:
NEW GROWTH AMONGST
OLD STONES

Cnán halted outside the clearing
surrounding the monastery and dropped
to a crouch. She knew how to move silently
through the dense woods. To the North, an
approached. The insects were
than the insects
scud
The
ma
no
ou
i
few young
had likely



CLARK JONES / COURTESY OF SCHOLASTIC, INC. / AP IMAGES

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos introduces his company's latest e-reader in September. Amazon has in many ways been a boon to writers and readers, but many now wonder about its ultimate intentions.

WRITERS, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE FUTURE

These are hard times for those who live by the pen. But technology will not decide their fate. The future of writers—and the articles, novels, and nonfiction books they create—ultimately rests with those who read them.

BY EDWARD TENNER

THE WILSON QUARTERLY AUTUMN 2012

By EDWARD TENNER

WRITING FOR A LIVING IS A UNIQUE profession. It's also a relatively young one, dating essentially from the 18th century; the literary historian Alvin Kernan has called Samuel Johnson's 1755 letter to Lord Chesterfield, in which Johnson proudly declared his independence of aristocratic patronage, "the Magna Carta of the modern author." There's a kaleidoscope of genres and a scale of incomes from effectively subminimum wages to seven figures. Most of all, writing is a profession that millions of people would like to join, at least part-time. To the alarm of critics such as the essayist Joseph Epstein, one survey revealed that more than 80 percent of Americans believe they have a book in them.

Today, many worry that technology, an ally of authorship since 19th-century innovations slashed the cost of printing, may no longer be so healthy for Samuel Johnson's ideal of writing supported by the purchases of a growing literate public. Fifty years ago, almost a generation before the introduction of personal computing, the prospects for authorship looked bright. *The New York Times* reported in 1966 that publishing executives were

concerned that their industry's profitability might make them the target of hostile corporate takeovers. The next year, CBS paid a premium price of \$280 million in a friendly acquisition of the venerable imprint Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. IBM and RCA had already bought into the burgeoning publishing industry, believing that the growth of college enrollments promised an expansion of the book market.

The Great Society era seemed a bonanza for publishers and authors, the vanguard of the new "knowledge workers" celebrated by the popular management guru Peter Drucker. Trade book publishers saw revenues grow 10 to 12 percent annually in those golden years, including an 18 percent jump in 1966 alone. Textbook publishers did even better. Books of all kinds were in high demand.

Sadly, the idyll was short lived. In 1969, when President Richard Nixon called for a large increase in federal support for the arts and humanities, he noted that many cultural institutions found themselves in "acute financial crisis." By 1971, publishers were struggling with inflation and stagnant markets. Not only

was the Great Society's plan for leveling upward in trouble; the New Frontier's notion of diffusing high culture downward to the masses was also losing ground. Campus protests and counter-cultural lifestyles had alienated many in the middle class from the universities and what they represented. It did not help that the style of youthful rebellion had changed, with early activists such as Mario Savio, leader of the mid-1960s Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley, and a serious graduate student who went on to a physics scholarship at Oxford University, giving way to the likes of the Yippie pranksters Abbie Hoffman (author of *Steal This Book*) and Jerry Rubin.

Today, publishing is the weakest link in the old media-entertainment-education nexus. Rupert Murdoch's giant News Corporation is spinning off its lagging newspaper and book publishing operations from its Fox entertainment business. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, a venerable book publisher, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy earlier this year, laden with \$3 billion in debts.

There are many other gloomy signs for the future of reading and writing. The plight of newspapers is well known, summed up in the Pew Research Center's report *State of the News Media 2012*:

The papers' print advertising revenues dropped by \$2.1 billion in 2011, while online revenues increased by only \$207 million—a 10:1 differential, even larger than in the previous year. Magazines have also been losing circulation and advertising, reaching what *New York Times* media correspondent David Carr has called, with some exaggeration, “the edge of the cliff.”

Only a few decades ago, corporations were eager to get into book publishing.

Most authors consider retail bookstores a cornerstone of their effort to build an audience for their books—places where the personal recommendations of staff members and readers' accidental discoveries can work wonders. (John Kennedy Jr., who once startled me with a telephone call inviting me to write for his magazine *George*, explained that he had come across my book while looking for another in a store.) But bricks-and-mortar booksellers are reeling. The bankruptcy of the Borders chain last year shuttered almost 400 stores. The other major chain, Barnes & Noble, is struggling. The news is worse among



The collapse of the Borders chain last year wiped out nearly 400 bookstores and cast a pall of gloom over partisans of the written word.

REED SAXON / AP IMAGES

independently owned bookstores. Their leading trade group lost more than half its membership between 1993 and 2008.

No wonder even some of the most commercially successful authors see the heavens darkening. In February, the popular novelist Jodi Picoult (50 million copies in print) told a reporter from *The Times* of London that the trend toward electronic publishing, with its lower royalties, has been reducing her income. “If you sell the same number of books now as you did a year ago you will make a third less money,” she said. “In America my sales are now just shy of 50-50 print to e-books this year.”

Some detractors of the publishing industry, such as the author and marketing specialist Seth Godin, foresee a totally new world: “Who said you have a right to cash money from writing? The future is going to be filled with amateurs, and the truly talented and persistent will make a great living. But the days of journeyman writers who make a good living by the word—over.”

Such dire predictions are hypnotic. Cultural pessimism was a growth industry even in what we think of as print’s golden age a century and more ago, when a burgeoning literate public was not distracted by radio or Hollywood,

let alone television. The taste for gloom is so strong that it even brings old books back to life. The philosopher Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* (1987) became a surprise million-copy popular hit and was recently reissued in a 25th-anniversary edition. The critic Sven Birkerts's *Gutenberg Elegies* (1995) has likewise been reissued. These and other gloomy tomes have recently been one-upped (one-downed?) in curmudgeonly provocation by the science writer and cultural critic Nicholas Carr's *The Shallows* and the English professor Mark Bauerlein's *Dumbest Generation*. No wonder some psychological researchers believe that negativity bias is an innate feature of the human mind.

In today's market, greater numbers of prose writers than ever before are able to sell 100,000 copies of a book.

Yet despair is not universal. When I spoke with him by telephone, David Fenza, executive director of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, the largest academic organization in creative writing, argued that publishing

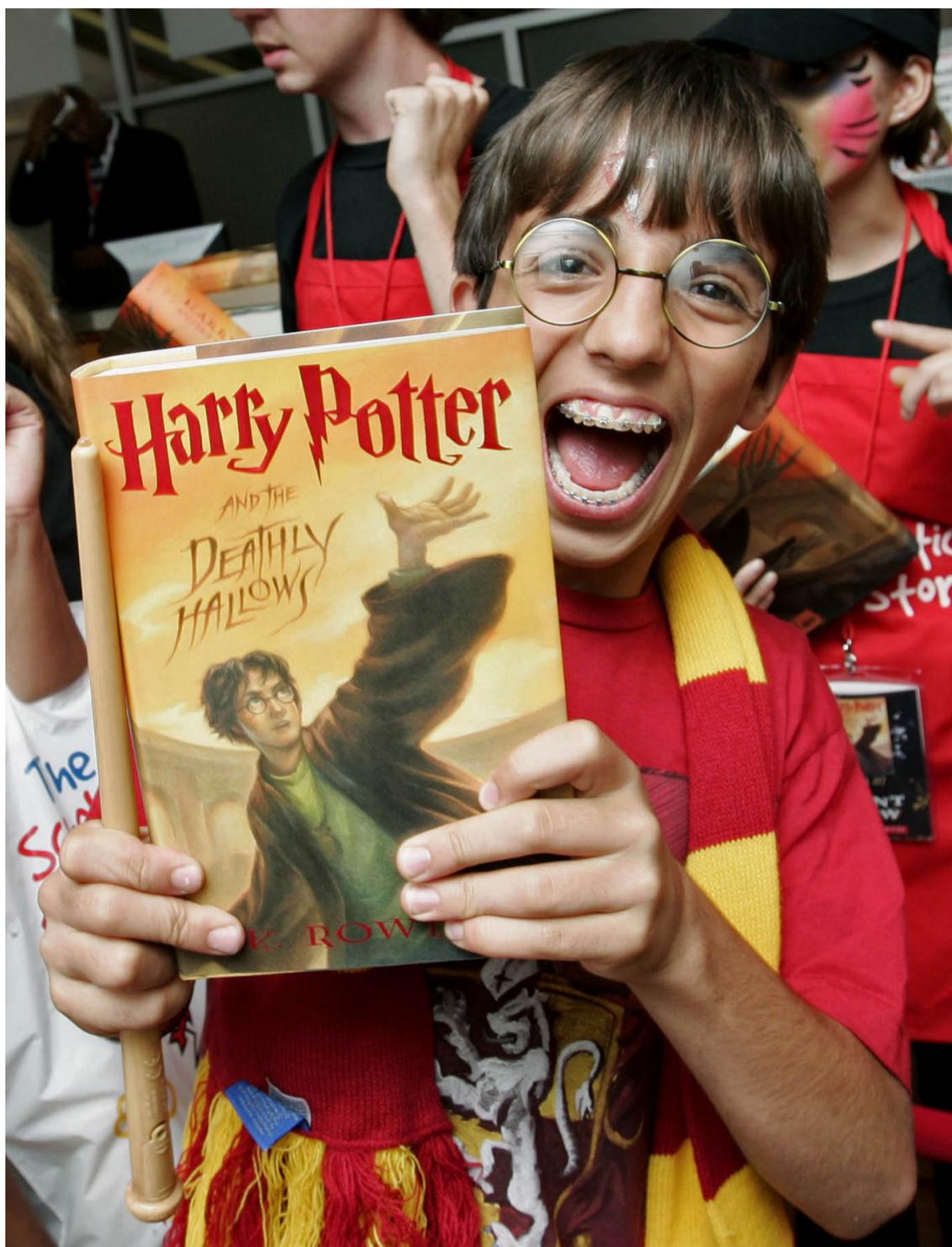
is more vigorous, and more open to a diversity of voices, than ever. He rejected the idea that it's harder for writers to succeed, observing that greater numbers of prose writers than ever before are able to sell 100,000 copies of a book, and greater numbers of poets to sell 10,000 copies. In many universities, the creative writing major has become an alternative to pursuit of the conventional English degree, attracting many students who love reading but not necessarily the latest hyper-specialized scholarly trends in the humanities.

That is only one reason to hope that a more vigorous and participatory culture is arising among at least some young people. The short story, which once flourished in popular magazines, has found a modest revival in *One Story*, a nonprofit print magazine that now has 15,000 subscribers and will soon be complemented by a new publication for teenagers. Book industry statistics also argue against cultural despair. American book publishers reported small but notable gains in the number of books sold (print and digital) and in net revenue during the difficult years from 2008 and 2010, according to *The New York Times*. (The numbers have since remained essentially flat.) Children's books have been a particular bright spot, thanks

partly to continuing enthusiasm for the Harry Potter stories. Of course, pinched revenues are disappointing, and newspaper and magazine closings hurt writers and readers. But is today's hyperangst justified, especially at a time when many industries would be happy to be in steady state? After all, as the *Atlantic* blogger Derek Thompson points out, the revolution in digital music slashed recording industry revenues by 57 percent in just a 10-year stretch after 1999.

However, there are two sets of pressures that rightly concern authors: the squeeze and the crush. The squeeze is the result of technology's dilution of attention time and spending power; the crush is the product of overreach by oligarchic intermediaries and insurgent information consumers.

The squeeze, a growing supply of words competing for limited amounts of reader time, is partly a reflection of the popularity of writing as a career. Technological change has lowered what



BROOKS KRAFT / CORBIS

The book world needs a bit more magic than Harry Potter alone can provide, but the series' runaway success is one promising sign that young people can still be drawn into the world of books.

economists call the "barriers to entry" in writing. This phenomenon helped push the number of books published in the United States from 240,000 in 2003 to more than 347,000 in 2011. Technology has also allowed the already prolific to become more so. The invention of the typewriter in the 1860s made editors' lives easier, but hardly changed the pace

of writing itself. (Think of the literary output of Dickens and Thackeray, or the nearly 20,000 letters Thomas Jefferson is known to have written.) Computers have been a different story, as the experience of the masterly British historian Roy Porter shows. “The steady stream of books,” the *Guardian* said in Porter’s 2002 obituary, “became an avalanche once he had mastered the computer.”

There is also more pressure on established writers and editors to generate content. Newspaper staff must now blog, tweet, and write Facebook posts in addition to doing their primary jobs, an existence Dean Starkman of *The Columbia Journalism Review* characterizes as a kind of journalistic hamster wheel. The quest for Web traffic, he argues, has been diverting precious resources from the core mission of journalism. In 2010, Demand Media, operating sites such as eHow.com and employing thousands of minimally paid freelancers, published 4,500 articles per day, mainly on practical topics from health and careers to home repair, and drew more Web traffic than *The New York Times*. The early assumption that high-quality professional writing would prevail on the Web has proved too optimistic.

If the squeeze is putting pressure on writers’ income, the crush is threatening

it more radically. The crush is not the direct result of electronic publishing, which is not inherently good or bad for writing as a business. Indirectly, though, the electronic book brings with it two opposing but equally disturbing trends, monopoly and piracy.

The electronic book brings with it two opposing but equally disturbing trends, monopoly and piracy.

Today, the challenge to writers is not so much oligopoly as the prospect of hegemony by a single company, Amazon. Until recently, authors could regard it as one of their best friends. It has let large and small publishers alike find readers, especially for backlist titles and other slow-selling books few retailers would stock. It has encouraged discussion of books among its customers, let authors set up personal pages on its site, and made it easier for customers to discover other books by favorite authors.

With the advent of Amazon’s aggressively promoted Kindle readers, the picture has darkened. The long-tailed, friendly underdog has been turning alpha Rottweiler. Unlike vendors of competing

readers and tablets, including Apple and Barnes & Noble, Amazon wants to do more than sell platforms for reading the electronic content it sells. It appears to be promoting self-publication through its site as an alternative to—indeed, a replacement for—conventional publishing. (Seth Godin briefly worked with Amazon in one such effort to supplant traditional publishers.) In his annual letter to shareholders this year, Amazon CEO and founder Jeff Bezos argued that “even well-meaning gatekeepers slow innovation,” a jab at publishers. He was surely cheered when the U.S. Department of Justice filed an antitrust suit charging Apple and five major publishers with colluding to keep the prices of e-books high and prevent price cutting competition between Amazon and its rivals. (Three of the publishers recently settled the claim.) Critics of Amazon argue that its ability to market bestsellers at a loss threatens publishers’ ability to promote new authors. They fear that the company will make nightmares of downward-spiraling compensation come true. Senator Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) has criticized the Justice Department, arguing that “the suit could wipe out the publishing industry as we know it.”

The novelist Scott Turow, president of the Authors Guild, acknowledging

that Amazon has been good for him personally and calling the Kindle “a great innovation,” has nonetheless warned, “It’s only rational to fear what they’re going to do with this accumulation of power.” Steve Wasserman, writing in *The Nation*, cites what Amazon has already done: When the 500-member Independent Publishers Group refused to accept its demand for deeper discounts on IPG members’ products, it deleted almost 5,000 of the publishers’ digital titles from its site. One independent publisher in Texas declared what many publishers and writers have come to believe: “Amazon seemingly wants to kill off the distributors, then kill off the independent publishers and bookstores, and become the only link between the reader and the author.” At that point, writers could be almost completely at its mercy.

Piracy is the inverse of monopoly. Though there is disagreement about its extent, illegal e-book sharing hasn’t reached the levels of theft that plague film studios and music labels. For some writers, the real threat is not piracy itself but pressure to reduce prices to discourage illegal copying. As the novelist Ewan Morrison has suggested, “In every digital industry the attempt to combat piracy has led to a massive reduction in

cover price: the slippery slope towards free digital content.”

Frightening as they are, the squeeze and the crush do not portend an unavoidably dark future. Previous economic and technological crises have been crucibles of innovation, spurring the emergence of new genres and drawing in new writers. Edgar Allan Poe’s puzzle-based mystery stories such as “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and “The Gold-Bug” were a commercially minded response to the Panic of 1837, as the Poe scholar Terence Whalen has argued, that introduced the scientific detective to literature. The Panic of 1893 hurt traditional subscription-based magazines but gave rise to a new breed of inexpensive, mass-circulation counterparts that placed heavier reliance on advertisers for revenues. Some of the greatest writing successes of the 1930s were businessmen who had been bloodied by the Crash of 1929: Yip Harburg, who wrote the lyrics of “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” and the songs in *The Wizard of Oz*, and Benjamin Graham, who distilled the hard financial lessons he had learned in *Security Analysis*, now considered a canonical work on “value” investing.

It’s no less true for being a cliché that problems are opportunities. The travails of newspapers are due in part

to the public’s impatience with chronic formulaic similarity. As the historian and director of the Harvard University Library, Robert Darnton, a onetime police reporter, observed in a classic 1975 ethnographic study of journalists’ tribal ways, “Nothing could be less competitive than a group of reporters on the same story.” Technology has exposed mercilessly what critics and insiders have long acknowledged.

The structural problems of journalism leave room for innovation, as they did more than a century ago, when the 38-year-old Chattanooga newspaper publishing prodigy Adolph S. Ochs, nearly bankrupt after the Panic of 1893, somehow found backers for a takeover of the struggling *New York Times*, turning it into the first elite newspaper priced for the masses. Are there new Ochses in our midst? The greatest disciple of Benjamin Graham, Warren Buffett, has been acquiring newspapers even as Rupert Murdoch has been spinning them off.

Like newspapers, the print encyclopedia business had a chronic problem, in its case the impossibility of keeping many entries up to date. Yet the nemesis of commercial encyclopedias, Wikipedia, has its own structural limitations. Open editing may correct errors and pile up references and images, but it’s not suited

to creating the kind of intellectual synthesis that the classic 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* achieved more than a century ago. Could a 21st-century counterpart of that landmark work be the future of the encyclopedia?

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There's nothing wrong with being treated like a commodity as long as you're an expensive commodity.

.....

What of the average writer? Nobody ever aspired to be an average writer. Apart from technical and contract writing, the profession has always been what economists call a tournament, a competitive environment with only a few big winners, whose successes motivate the rest. It's very possible that the solid middle of the profession will erode further, and a few favored authors will pull farther ahead. The median may decline, but the glittering prizes will remain.

The future depends more on writers themselves than on technology. If they accept the proletarianization thesis, it

will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. If they can show how copyright and good compensation are in the long-term interest of the reading public, if they can mobilize readers to help defeat would-be monopolists of various kinds, if they can use social media to enhance relations with readers, there will still be many disappointed writers, but there will also be new kinds of opportunity. Optimism may fail; pessimism can't succeed. As the sociologist Erving Goffman, whose first book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), has sold 500,000 copies, put it when his Marxist colleague Alvin Gouldner complained of being treated like a commodity by the publisher they shared: There's nothing wrong with being treated like a commodity as long as you're an expensive commodity. ■

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LUCIAN PERKINS

A hub of rescue work during World War II, the single Protestant church in Le Chambon is inscribed with this command: *Aimez-vous les uns les autres*—Love one another.

PRECIPICES

During World War II, villagers in a French farming community rescued thousands of Jews and other refugees, while most Europeans spectacularly failed to hinder the genocides in their midst. What set the villagers apart?

BY MARGARET PAXSON

By MARGARET PAXSON

I VE BEEN SPENDING TIME IN TWO PLACES that were, in the last century, tested with awesome violence. One, a great ravine found now within the city limits of Kiev, Ukraine, was the site of one of the most deadly massacres of the Holocaust. There, on September 29 and 30, 1941, German occupation forces assisted by Ukrainian auxiliary police rounded up almost 34,000 Jews and shot them to death. The ravine into which their bodies tumbled was called Babi Yar.

The other place, the Plateau Vivarais-Lignon, in south-central France, is up high and hard to get to. Living in relative isolation, its people have evolved their own folkways over the centuries. The actions of these villagers were almost unparalleled in the history of the Holocaust: Many of the region's 24,000 residents helped rescue about 5,000 people, some 3,500 of them Jews and most of them children, from near-certain death during World War II.

Tangles of trees and harsh winds are part of both places' stories. The roads through the woods of each led, in the darkest moments of the last century, to two spectacular precipices. In those moments, with their insistent swirls of killing in the name of nation or race or

religion or class, there were still various roads to choose from. What road takes you to one precipice, or the other? Given the limits of choice and of will, how does one find the right way?

Kiev—still struggling to come to terms with its bone-filled muds—can't be compared analytically to the Plateau Vivarais-Lignon in any responsible way. The places are so unlike, their histories so distinct, the nature of the surrounding violence of entirely different magnitudes. But in both locations, more-or-less regular people faced tremendous pressure to preserve their own well-being to the detriment of targeted neighbors and strangers. Their responses were vastly different. In considering the two side by side, I aim not to curse nor to praise any given people (who endured moral tests the likes of which most of us will never have to face), but rather to meditate on these questions: How do small actions of groups, in the aggregate, make huge differences? How can social habits—the things we learn from childhood and pass on to our children—teach us immunity to the winds that whip around us, terrify us, tell us that we must think of ourselves first?

BY THE END OF THE WAR, some 100,000 people had perished in the mile-and-a-half complex of branching gorges that make up Babi Yar; most of those people were probably Jews, but all, one way or another, were from reviled groups—Roma, Soviet prisoners of war, political dissidents, and Ukrainian nationalists. After September 19, 1941, when they captured Kiev, German commanders quickly determined that Babi Yar would be a suitable dumping ground for thousands of corpses. Of those gorges into which the bulk of the bodies were tossed, most have since been filled in, though some deep gashes remain. The bottom is so far down, you wonder if there isn't a lower place to be found on earth.

It is a startling fact that life went on mostly as usual in Kiev after the massacre. It is also startling that the city doesn't pay this massacre much mind today. Its history is hidden, as if in plain sight. If a visitor wants, she can arm herself with maps printed from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Web site, purchase a metro token, and take



A ravine where 100,000 people were murdered, Babi Yar was later used as a dump and is now scattered with bronze commemoratives. Here, a photographer visiting the site fashioned a memorial of his own.

TED SEYMOUR

a train to the spot where on September 29, 1941, the Jews of Kiev were ordered to gather, and from there, were marched toward Babi Yar.

For decades, armies moving back and forth across the continent had pounded through Kiev—notably during World War I and the Russian civil war. It was also caught up in the famine of 1932–33, in which millions starved to death. The Germans had occupied Kiev during

World War I, and some residents of the city, in the grim calculus of allegiances in wartime, welcomed them now. By late September 1941, the German invasion of the Soviet Union was only three months under way, and rumors about what was happening to Jews in particular hadn't yet swelled to meet the true, horrible dimensions of what would become known as the Holocaust. So when signs on rough blue paper were posted throughout the city ordering "All yids of the city of Kiev" to assemble, Jews mostly assembled. They would be gathering not far from a rail line, so many thought they would be deported somewhere. Given what they and their neighbors knew and didn't know, it wasn't outrageous to think this way, even if in some parts of the city they'd already witnessed vile crimes at the hands of the German occupiers: An old woman was told to kneel on the street and was shot and killed; two guard dogs ripped a man in half. And there had been more ad hoc shootings, more chaos.

Khava put on her faux yellow fur and softest scarf and told her neighbors she had dressed up "for the enemies."

Fragments of the stories of those who perished remain in the memories of survivors and rescuers*: Ania, who sewed for a living and was very poor, had two dresses, one red and one yellow. She decided to wear the nicer dress under the older, frayed one, so that she could have something to trade for food and whatever else might be needed—travel permits, bribes—during her coming journey. Khava, who was, according to her friend Vera, "simple and hard working," put on her faux yellow fur and softest scarf and told her neighbors she had dressed up "for the enemies." Lalia's mother begged her daughter—a Russian married to a Jew—to stay behind. "Would you stay behind if your husband was going?" Lalia asked her mother. "No? I won't, either." Ania, Khava, and Lalia were among the 34,000 who fell into Babi Yar.

Today, when you take the metro to Lukianivska Station, you emerge from the underground to a normal street scene of modern Kiev. There are kiosks where meat dumplings are sold, shops and banks, a McDonald's, dogs sniffing around, political posters of a braided girl proclaiming "New Power to Ukraine!" and cars angling through the traffic. With your map in hand, you can start the walk down Melnikov Street, on a cold December day, on the uneven ice of the

sidewalks. There are houses, ornate and painted green, that stood there in 1941, and others that would have come much later. You pass one apartment building, gray and crumbling with broken balconies twisting up its flanks, and you see, in faded red paint, the word *СЛАВА* (glory), distantly calling to some brilliant Soviet future. You walk on bustling streets where thousands once walked in their specially chosen clothing, beside horse-drawn carts carrying the young and the frail.

At a certain point you cross a street, and the line of cheerful storefronts ends and the pedestrians thin. You start seeing boarded-up buildings, decaying brick and wood and corroded metal. You are nearly hit by a car speeding through an intersection. There are broken, rotting vehicles littering the yards. You keep walking, and feel suddenly that you are walking down, down, and further down. There is a graveyard on the left, and a great television tower in the distance, coming out of the ground like an *umbilicus mundi*.

THERE ARE SO FEW SURVIVORS OF that walk to Babi Yar, and the story was so wretched for both bystanders and survivors to tell, that for decades, little was said or written about it. In his

2004 book *Harvest of Despair* and in his ongoing research (from which I've drawn in writing this essay), historian Karel Berkhoff has painstakingly traced the steps of those 34,000 men and women during September 1941: where they stopped and waited; where they turned to walk between two graveyards; the spot where friends said goodbye forever; the places where they were beaten; the places where they gave their papers to the German soldiers; the places where they were stripped by Ukrainian police and then waited, nearly naked; the places where they were lined up and shot; the places that were thick with trees and those that were open and bare.

Memories of witnesses, however imperfect after the years, help us navigate through the events. Vera stole away at night with another girl because they wanted to know what had happened to their Jewish friends. Crouching in the shadows, holding her friend's hand, Vera saw men drinking and laughing, sitting at a table that had been set up by the edge of the ravine. "We see," she remembers, "in front of us, a line of figures in their underwear. White figures." And then, she heard "*ta-ta-ta-ta-ta*," and the figures fell. Another line of white emerged and—"ta-ta-ta-ta-ta"—that line fell, too.

Everyone seems to remember the blue placard that called them to assemble. Everyone remembers the crowds. One woman remembers a young girl of “wondrous beauty,” together with her brother or husband, walking with the others on the way to their deaths. An old man was tossed by his beard over a fence; the beard remained in the hand of the soldier who threw him. A “glamour girl” named Sarah was taken into the woods by a group of soldiers, alone.

Did this tragedy happen because people in Ukraine hated Jews vividly and actively—so much that they were willing to witness, to stand by, and in some cases to aid in this unspeakable crime? The question itself is epistemologically knotty, but what can be said is this: A particular kind of animus toward Jews had long existed in Ukraine, with its history of pogroms that had flared from time to time in its cities and countryside, and of periodic rages among elites who blamed Jews for the political troubles of the day. This animus was like a well-worn garment that could be donned when convenient and politically expedient. But it was not all there was.

There were also friendships, marriages, and other unions that knitted Jews to their neighbors; fellow feeling and in-

stances of sacrifice are woven throughout stories of survivors. In feats of individual heroism, thousands in Ukraine rescued Jews during World War II. Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum and research center in Jerusalem, has honored 2,402 people from Ukraine as “righteous among the nations.” Here, in Kiev, was a murderous invasion of outsiders, and regular people now needed to decide what to do as they peered out windows to watch their neighbors walk down Melnikov Street. Clearly, neither individual acts of heroism—as significant as they were—nor individual attachments were enough to protect the people of Kiev from the calamity unfolding in their midst. People were bound by ties of marriage or friendship, but not enough in the aggregate.

On March 13, 1961, there was a mudslide in Kiev. For years, a brick factory had been dumping its waste into the ravine at Babi Yar, which still held the remnants of blood and bone from the 1941 catastrophe. At one point there were heavy rains; the dam holding the waste burst, and that awful soil overflowed. Mud flooded the streets below, oozing into houses and industrial buildings, engulfing automobiles, knocking over streetcars, and killing, according to estimates, 1,500 to 2,000

people. As the ground flooded, some residents remembered the killing fields, finally, out loud. “Babi Yar revenge,” they said.

Not long ago, on a silver-gray December day, I found myself in what is now the expansive public park called Babi Yar. There were rows of leafless trees along an *allée*, pathways that led to forest, others to open spaces. Women walked by with prams. Evidently, the park had been used for carousing: Refuse was everywhere. Here and there stood official memorials, garish and unsolemn, for those killed at Babi Yar—“To the children,” “To the citizens of Kiev.” One, a monument to Soviet citizens and POWs, had cast in bronze horror-images of people falling and dying. There were also makeshift shrines: a cross with a plastic bouquet of roses, an unadorned wooden cross. A crow flew by. For decades, Soviet authorities suppressed mention of the particular crimes against Jews; the main memorial that does focus on Jewish victims—a large metal menorah constructed by Jewish groups in 1991—was littered with frozen sputum. As I stood near the menorah, the silence of the place was shattered by cacophonous barking: A group of dogs encircled another dog, and attacked it.

As the ground flooded, some residents remembered the killing fields, finally, out loud. “Babi Yar revenge,” they said.

Many of the ravine’s draws have been covered over in the years since 1941. First, dirt was tossed over the corpses, which were excavated and burned. Then the ground was leveled. I wandered for a time in the park among the prams, through the garbage-strewn paths and then some woods, and finally found a true precipice. The earth was carved to an edge. The trees rooted below came up to meet me, and the mournful ash-colored trunks with their black branches looked like skeleton fingers reaching toward the smoky heavens. Standing at the edge, I thought: No monument could be as true as the act of looking down, and then up.

On my way out of the park, I saw an assembly of shiny black crows walking over a floor of rotting leaves, looking, perhaps, for grubs. With sharp beaks, they delicately, soundlessly picked up matted piles of leaves, turned them over, and slowly placed them down again.

ON THE PLATEAU VIVARAIS-LIGNON, the climate is mean: In winter, snows and snaking winds humble the approaching stranger. Once you settle into the farmlands of the plateau, it feels like a cradle, but if you travel around its roughly 30-mile perimeter, you meet with dizzying drops toward a river. And yet, during World War II, thousands of refugees made the climb up here.

Some came from the Warsaw ghetto. Others came from Paris, the petted children of artists or merchants. Some had seen family shops and community temples shattered during the orchestrated pogroms that took place all over Germany and Austria on the Night of Broken Glass in November 1938—hearing screams of “*Saujude!*” (Jew pig!). Some had seen their mothers beaten by soldiers, had seen their mothers’ teeth knocked out. Still others had already been to concentration camps and been clubbed by guards or had watched older, more powerful prisoners kick over their bowls of food around a shared outdoor fire. After the mad exodus south following the German invasion of France in 1940, many had already witnessed the quick hierarchies of hiding and captivity established among those who spoke Yiddish, or French, or German, enjoying the attendant advantages of

making community through trust and trade; those from rich families, or not; those who knew how to break rules and those who held onto them; those who had traded all their jewelry for a train ticket; those who had lost the loves of their lives. They’d hidden in church attics and among the roots of trees in the woods. They’d seen cattle felled by machine-gun fire, and some had seen, for the first time, dead human bodies. Most had had a brush with the end—before some soldier let them pass by, some attic was offered, some lost mother or brother was miraculously found.

One after the other, the refugees found their way to the plateau. Word had spread. There was a set of villages where people were taking in Jews: Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, Le Mazet-Saint-Voy, Tence, Saint-Agrève, Fay-sur-Lignon, Montbusat, and other places—towns, hamlets, even lone homesteads. They’d heard there would be schools for children, farmhouses with room for hiding, ways to obtain false documents and secure passage to Switzerland and safety.

Before German troops moved into the unoccupied portion of collaborationist Vichy France in late 1942, it was still possible for humanitarian and religious groups to gather children from concentration camps in the south and to find



CENTRE DE DOCUMENTATION JUIVE CONTEMPORAINE

Children pose for a group portrait outside Le Chambon in the early 1940s. On the plateau, Jewish children sprung from Vichy internment camps would attend Christian church services in order to hide their identities, but were encouraged to worship in secret as they chose.

places where they might be safer, away from their parents. The plateau became one of the well-known destinations for those children, but also for many other people who had simply found their way by rumor: *Here, they'll take you in.*

Up their trains climbed onto the plateau. And what were they met by? Rock cliffs wet with moss, pine trees, odd jutting volcanic hills, green farmland. Wind, whipping through the forest and over the fields, pounding against stone houses with walls three feet thick. And in winter lay snows so immense that some saw the stuff as if for the first time in their lives.

In the villages of the plateau were narrow streets, more stone buildings, small town squares where locals rinsed their laundry in the public fountain, and stores where old men would gab away the day. In Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, the trains would stop and residents would meet the refugee families and find homes for them. From there, streets wound down to the Lignon River, and up toward forests and waterfalls. And on the way to the river, the single Protestant church met the refugees, too, its stone walls bare except for an incised command: *Aimez-vous les uns les autres.* Love one another.

Among those greeting the refugees were dairy farmers with startling blue eyes, and refugee children, already arrived, who now came to the train station to bring the newcomers to farms by sleigh. There were the volunteers who'd arrived from other parts of France and even other countries to help in this rescue—some for religious reasons and others because they saw in this work a chance to help with what one young volunteer, Daniel Trocmé, called the “reconstruction of the world.” Once they arrived, these refugees were given what was, to survivors, a never-forgotten kindness: They came to the door of a stranger, and the door was opened.

Nearly everyone on the plateau was involved in the rescue effort—not only its Protestant majority, but also Catholics, Jews, and nonreligious humanitarians—and their participation carried risks.

Once there, refugees found work; many joined the rescue effort, teaching

in schools, caring for the weak, procuring false documents. To various degrees, they joined the community. In the late 19th century, the plateau had become a tourist destination for those seeking respite from the noxious air of large French cities. Because of this, housing and supporting infrastructure existed that could now be transformed into makeshift family homes and schools for the flood of outsiders.

If the refugees were children, they went to schools and made friends. The ones without parents would weep at night or wet the bed or howl for food; in time, they would learn to play among the jumble of languages now spoken on the plateau. They would learn the contours of the farmhouses and streets and rivers and hills. For the first time in their lives, city children carried buckets of water and bales of hay.

Nearly everyone on the plateau was, one way or another, involved in this rescue effort—not only its Protestant majority, but also Catholics, Jews, and nonreligious humanitarians—and their participation carried risks. The German army knew in general terms about the rescue, and occasionally they would act. Some pastors endured extra risk; after years of travel in foreign countries, pastors André Trocmé and Edouard Theis

would boldly bring to the pulpit ideas about nonviolent resistance that they'd embraced in those travels. Other pastors would quietly plot with their parishioners the dangerous tactics and techniques of rescue. In 1944, German soldiers went on a rampage, killing farm workers and burning a house down. There was the dashing Roger Le Forestier, a physician who had come to the plateau after fighting leprosy in the Belgian Congo alongside Albert Schweitzer. Now, for his work in rescue and resistance, he was arrested, sent to the infamous Gestapo prison in Lyon, and shot and killed. In June 1943 at the Maison des Roches, a children's home, 18 young men were sent to detention camps alongside the home's director, the bespectacled Daniel Trocmé. Trocmé, who was later called "*un garçon merveilleux*, a hero, a *tsaddik*" by a survivor, had refused to leave his charges. After several months spent moving from camp to camp, from country to country, writing letters to his parents with messages to the children he'd left behind in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, he fell ill and died in Majdanek, a camp in Poland. Five of the boys, the ones who were determined to be Jewish, were sent to the French transport camp, Drancy, and then to Auschwitz, where all were murdered.

But most days, life was as normal as could possibly be imagined in that merciless period. By the time the Germans lumbered up the hills, alarms would sound and dogs would start barking madly. The children would be told to go into the woods to look for mushrooms—sometimes with no sense of the immediate danger.

FOR YEARS, I HAVE BEEN LOOKING closely at small communities to see how they react to large, powerful, and violent states. Sometimes, remarkably, those communities resist the will of larger forces to perpetuate violence. What are, in detail, the social foundations of nonviolent communities? How do they come into existence, and how can they remain resilient and robust once they do?

Perhaps the first thing to understand about Plateau Vivarais-Lignon is that the community has been taking in strangers—persecuted, or poor or ill—for centuries. The villagers know how to do it; they possess the knowledge as a habit and a skill. Since the 16th century, the plateau has been home to a great number of Protestants. Up in hard-to-reach hills and far from the center of French rule, the Protestants on the plateau sheltered their coreligionists or shuttled them to

safety during the gruesome struggles of the Reformation that marked the end of Roman Catholic hegemony. Many of the present-day plateau dwellers are descendants of the Protestants who remained in the region. Studies of altruism—found in the sociology of Samuel and Pearl Oliner and Nechama Tec, for instance, and in the social psychology of Eva Fogelman—don't show that Protestants are necessarily more likely to perform altruistic acts than others. They do, however, find that one social feature that seems to encourage heroic altruism is the experience of having been an outsider, or a minority, or persecuted oneself. Altruism fares best, in other words, among those who have been treated badly and have decided that treating others well is best for all. Martin Luther King Jr. said repeatedly that turning the other cheek is a social act. Done collectively, it becomes a transformative social act.

As Vichy authorities questioned him about the Jews living on the plateau, Pastor Trocmé said, “We don't know what a Jew is, we only know men.”

After the French Revolution, these same Protestant villagers of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon protected Catholic priests who fled the new regime. In the late 19th century, children from nearby industrial cities were brought to the plateau—increasingly known for its fresh, salubrious air—for healing, and a home was opened that welcomed needy children from the south of France and refugee children from Algeria. During World War I, children arrived from the disputed territory of Alsace, and the 1930s brought more refugees, from the Spanish Civil War. During World War II, Jews came, of course, but also German soldiers who refused to fight, communists, and other political exiles. After the war, people came from Hungary, Chile, Tibet, and other countries. Today, a local branch of France's Centre d'accueil pour demandeurs d'asile (Reception Center for Asylum Seekers) hosts families from Congo, Rwanda, Angola, Kosovo, Serbia, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Dagestan, and Chechnya.

When you arrive at a door on the plateau, the people opening it don't ask what kind of person you are. As Vichy authorities questioned him about the Jews living on the plateau, Pastor Trocmé said, “We don't know what a Jew is,



People from around the world find refuge on the plateau, which remains largely a rural farming community.

LUCIAN PERKINS

we only know men.” So in the summer of 1941, it didn’t matter that Elizabeth, who’d traveled an odyssey from Vienna, was Jewish. It didn’t matter that Peter, who was from Berlin and was to lose both parents to Auschwitz, was Jewish either. Or that Pauline would walk into the forest with other Jews of the plateau, to celebrate Sukkot in secret. Years later, Simon, who’d come from Paris to live in a farmhouse, would say, “For me, Le Chambon was the town that made me happy, that gave birth to me . . . intellectually and religiously. Bizarrely, I became Jewish there in the sense of seeing

and researching Judaism.” But no one asked Simon about his Jewishness, and no one asked Hans, who arrived already religious. Still a teenager when interned at the French concentration camp, Rivesaltes, he had volunteered to carry the dead to the morgue, to ensure that part of the solemn Jewish burial rites would be performed for them.

Hans was Jewish, but he could have been any refugee when he arrived on the plateau with a small group of other boys and started attending school. He was a resident of the Maison des Roches, where he lived with a couple dozen charges from places such as Poland, Germany, Holland, Spain, Belgium, Lithuania, and Persia. His parents would be sent away on a transport to Auschwitz from Drancy, and he would never see them again. But years later, Hans spoke of how he still believed in God and miracles, and the necessity of love for mankind, and the way people lived the dictum of “love one another” on the plateau. He and his wife still performed their own ritual each night: “Before we go to sleep,

we hold hands and we kiss goodnight and we say, ‘Never again.’” This is where, telling his story, Hans finally wept.

His rescuers quietly brought some measure of normality to an awful situation. What does normal look like on the plateau? It looks like hard work and well-ordered days of family life. It looks like up-close interactions with fields, trees, and skies. I notice a kind of affable detachment, an uprightness, a clear-eyed kindness. I notice a love of routine and schedule and long midday meals. They are friends, in deed, when ice freezes the pipes and cars break down.

Is this what the groups who open doors always look like? Are they always in faraway villages where modest people speak a homely patois? History and geography have shown that if these villagers have been stubbornly peaceful, others have made pogroms. It’s not the village or the mountain, or even the simple ways that seem to matter most. It’s the fact that this set of villagers learned, over time and as a group, to make this principle routine: To show kindness to a stranger, to offer her your cloak, to return his blows with affection, even in the direst circumstances. They learned to make actual what Jews on the plateau would have known as *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.

Against the rooted normality on the plateau, there are everyday troubles, as well as the fiercer ones that come with taking in traumatized people. But these trials are not weighed against the matter-of-fact practice of sheltering needy outsiders. As a friend told me one night by the orange light of a fire in her family hearth—she, the pale-skinned, blue-eyed granddaughter of farmers who protected Jews during the war—the important thing to do when you open a door to strangers is to have faith. Not faith in the person behind the door, she told me, but faith that all will be, somehow, as it should.

The equation there shifts away from the quick calculations of rational choice: It is a faith in something higher and unseen and absolutely just. “Love one another” is thereby a technology of moral choice. The remarkable things that happened on the plateau during the war didn’t occur because people there were angels or because they were French, but because they had cultivated an altruism that is a near banality of goodness. It is a habit that relies on tiny, everyday acts that, in the aggregate, have meant something astonishing, have led to something monumental, something that could make an old man weep with gratitude.

Here are two precipices: Babi Yar and the Plateau Vivarais-Lignon. Babi Yar—and its bones of one hundred thousand souls. The plateau—and the souls of five thousand who were preserved to have lives and fortunes of their own, with children, and children's children, and the rest. With the unfolding of time, those five thousand will surely give rise to one hundred thousand more. And these will carry the mark of the blessings and prayers of their forebears: *Love one another and Never again.* ■

** All quotes of survivors and witnesses were drawn from the USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, to which I had access while I was the Miles Lerman Center for the Study of Jewish Resistance Research Fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Washington, D.C. All translations from Russian and French are mine.*

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WILL INDIA WIN?

India now rivals China as a model for the world's developing nations. But its recent stumbles have raised doubts about whether it will demonstrate the superiority of the democratic path to development.



SADANAND DHUME
on the failures of India's
leadership class

MICHAEL KUGELMAN
on India's search for a
new role in the world

XUEFEI REN
on unlearning
lessons from China



M. LAKSHMAN / AP IMAGES

India's de facto royal family includes Sonia Gandhi, head of the Congress Party, and her son Rahul and daughter Priyanka. Rahul is considered a prime-minister-in-waiting, with Priyanka ready to step in if he fails. Their father, grandmother, and great-grandfather all served as prime ministers.

INDIA'S FECKLESS ELITE

Its political class may not be up to the task of leading India toward prosperity.

BY **SADANAND DHUME**

By SADANAND DHUME

JUST THE OTHER DAY, IT SEEMED AS IF India could hardly put a foot wrong. Annual economic growth averaged above eight percent between 2003 and '08, and the country was one of the world's few major economies to escape more or less unscathed from the global financial crisis. In November 2010, President Barack Obama made the longest foreign visit of his presidency to India. There, in a rousing address to Parliament, Obama declared that "India has emerged," and pledged to back New Delhi's quest for a permanent seat on an expanded United Nations Security Council. By then, authors and analysts had already churned out a small rainforest worth of books and articles asserting that the 21st century belonged to Asia's two giants, China and India.

Two years later, India's rise looks a lot less certain. Economic growth slowed to an annual rate of 5.5 percent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year, and few independent analysts expected it to top six percent in the rest of the year. For a country still at an early stage of development—in dollar terms, the average Indian earns about as much as the average Chinese did in 2004—this augurs ill. Most economists believe that India

needs to grow by more than seven percent annually merely to keep pace with the 13 million new entrants into the job market each year. (China's growth rate, even after declining from its former torrid pace, is eight percent.) Pratap Bhanu Mehta, president of the Centre for Policy Research, in New Delhi, says India is "flirting with social catastrophe."

Flagging growth isn't the only cause for concern. Foreign direct investment plummeted 67 percent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year, to \$4.4 billion. The rupee has spent much of 2012 touching historic new lows. (By mid-September, it had lost 20 percent against the dollar over the past 12 months.) Though arguably a one-off event, the massive power outage in July that left 600 million people without electricity dramatized the parlous state of Indian infrastructure to the world. The blackout was a powerful follow-up to a stark warning from ratings agency Standard and Poor's the previous month—that India risked becoming the first "fallen angel" among the BRIC economies (Brazil, Russia, India, and China).

In September, the government raised the price of diesel fuel and announced a rash of long-awaited economic reforms

in the retail, aviation, and power sectors. For the first time, big-box retailers such as Walmart will be allowed to own a majority stake in their Indian operations. But it remains to be seen if even these limited reforms, eight years in the making, will take hold amid a firestorm of protest by both the opposition and allies within the ruling coalition. As protestors take to the streets and coalition partners threaten to bring down the government, they highlight the unpredictability of Indian democracy and foreshadow a chaotic alternative to the smooth arc of progress assumed by many.

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Meanwhile, Parliament has been paralyzed by a series of high-profile corruption scandals. Violence between Muslims and indigenous people has flared in the northeastern state of Assam and between Muslims and Hindus in the Hindi heartland state of Uttar Pradesh. In

August, some 50,000 migrants from the northeast who had come to western and southern cities such as Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore, and Chennai in search of better lives abruptly fled homeward, fearing retaliation for anti-Muslim violence in Assam. In a panic, India's government blocked more than 300 Web pages, only a handful of which would be considered inflammatory in most democracies. This action, along with a ham-handed attempt to shackle social media sites Twitter and Facebook, and the brief jailing of a political cartoonist under a colonial-era sedition law, casts doubt on the depth of the world's largest democracy's commitment to freedom of speech.

This catalogue of setbacks raises questions about the health of India's polity. Are the country's ruling elites up to the task of piloting a staggeringly diverse nation of 1.2 billion people, half of them under the age of 25, out of poverty and toward prosperity? Can economic reforms be pushed through in an era of dynastic politics, fragile coalitions, and powerful regional satraps? Can India's institutions rein in resource grabbing of the sort once associated with postcommunist Russia or Suharto's crony-ridden Indonesia? Can politicians rise above appeals to caste, religion, and language

and begin to debate the country's future in terms of ideas? In short, will politics, in the broadest sense of the word, enable India to achieve its potential, or choke it?

To be sure, it's far too early to write off India. It has confounded naysayers before. As far back as 1960, the journalist Selig Harrison famously predicted, in *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, that the country would likely fragment or take an authoritarian turn. Except for a 21-month interregnum in the 1970s, when Indira Gandhi halted elections and suspended civil liberties, it did neither. Before India's green revolution in the 1960s and '70s, some doubted that the country would be able to feed its burgeoning population. It now grapples with the problem of surplus grain rotting in storehouses. And one year of slower growth hardly alters the broader fact that since the advent of economic reforms in 1991, things have been getting better faster than at any other time in Indian history. In this period, India has pulled more than 200 million people out of poverty. According to the World Bank, the share of the population living below the poverty line has declined from more than half to less than a third.

Moreover, many elements of India's relative success story since 1991 remain in place. The middle class, estimated to

One year of slower growth doesn't alter the fact that since 1991, things have been getting better faster than at any other time in Indian history.

number between 60 and 300 million, depending on who's counting, provides a vast consumer market. Unlike most developing countries, India is home to a clutch of ambitious companies with global reach. This year, 48 Indians made *Forbes* magazine's list of the world's billionaires. Mumbai-headquartered Tata Motors has defied skeptics and turned around the fortunes of Jaguar Land Rover after buying it four years ago. Anil Ambani's Reliance ADA Group owns a 50 percent stake in the Hollywood studio DreamWorks. In 2010, Mahindra and Mahindra took over South Korea's Ssangyong Motor Company. India is also set apart from most developing countries by its deep domestic financial markets, which give business ready access to capital.

Although India's savings rate has declined somewhat over the past three years, at 31 percent it remains higher

than it was in the 1990s and not much below the rates that powered the economic miracles of East Asia's "tigers" in the 1970s and '80s. And while company executives often gripe about education standards, only China churns out comparable numbers of engineers and management graduates each year. A large and prosperous diaspora—more than three million strong in the United States alone—acts as a bridge of ideas and innovation between India and the West.

India is attempting a transformation few nations in modern history have successfully managed: liberalizing the economy within an established democratic order.

As for India's rickety democracy, on the positive side, a few relatively well-governed states such as Gujarat on the west coast and Tamil Nadu in the south have discovered the benefits of running business-friendly administrations. More competition among the country's 28 states could lead to better governance over time. Last, but perhaps

most important, for all its flaws, India's democracy provides it with great structural stability. Unlike their counterparts in many countries at a comparable level of development, Indians can take the peaceful transfer of power by the ballot for granted at all levels of government.

Nonetheless, no country is immune to dysfunctional politics, and, looked at dispassionately, the odds aren't exactly stacked in India's favor. As Brown University political scientist Ashutosh Varshney notes, "India is attempting a transformation few nations in modern history have successfully managed: liberalizing the economy within an established democratic order."

In other words, India embraced universal suffrage (at independence in 1947) at a much earlier stage of economic development than the most successful Asian economies—Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. (Tiny Singapore can still be called quasi-authoritarian; the ruling People's Action Party has held power continuously since independence in 1965.) Although India's democratic experiment has worked remarkably well in many ways—not least by empowering those at the bottom of the social pyramid—the system also makes it extremely difficult to carry out important but unpopular reforms, such as slashing

fertilizer subsidies and ensuring that farmers pay market rates for electricity.

It's hard to argue that, on average, Indian politicians are fully equipped for this challenge. Sixty-five years after independence, for example, India's democracy appears to reward educational merit less than the British Raj did in its final decades, when it allowed Indians a measure of self-government. At independence, India's ruling class was arguably the best educated in the developing world. The father of the nation, Mohandas Gandhi, was a lawyer educated at London's Inner Temple. The first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, studied at Cambridge University, and the chief drafter of the constitution, B. R. Ambedkar, had a doctorate from Columbia University. Simply put, in both erudition and probity, India's founders were on average several notches above their present-day successors. Today, nearly a third of state and national legislators have criminal charges pending against them, including serious ones such as murder, kidnapping, and extortion.

Over time, the odds of an idealistic young man or woman acquiring a world-class education and aspiring to public life in India have become vanishingly small. Many of the most talented instead look toward the private sector or

emigrate to the West. Indian elections are usually decided by an electorate that votes primarily on the basis of identity—caste or religion. Moreover, most political parties in India have morphed into family fiefdoms handed down from parent to child like an heirloom. In many ways, the parties resemble personality cults more than organizations of individuals motivated by similar ideals and policy prescriptions.

The best know of these families is, of course, the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, rivaled in longevity only by North Korea's Kims or Saudi Arabia's House of Saud. Sonia Gandhi, the daughter-in-law of Indira Gandhi, is president of the ruling Congress Party and is India's most powerful politician. Manmohan Singh, her mild-mannered and technocratic prime minister, is widely seen as a seat warmer for Gandhi's 42-year-old son, Rahul. Should he become prime minister, Rahul Gandhi will follow in the footsteps of his father, grandmother, and great-grandfather. Should he fail to ascend to the top post, the party, conditioned by decades of loyalty to bloodline rather than ideas, will almost certainly turn to his 40-year-old sister, Priyanka.

But why focus on Congress alone? Akhilesh Singh Yadav, chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, is the son of former chief



SAURABH DAS / AP IMAGES

Women wait in line to vote in Manglipattu, north of Madras. Indian voters generally turn out in large numbers, but in many places, long-ruling parties nominate candidates from only a handful of families.

minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. Another son of a former chief minister heads neighboring Uttarakhand. Politics in Punjab, India's breadbasket, is largely a battle between two powerful clans, one representing a former royal family, the other usually backed by the Sikh clergy. Sons of former chief ministers run Orissa and Jammu and Kashmir. Until 2010, another ran Maharashtra.

Parliament is no exception to the nepotistic norm. Seven in 10 of its female members, notes historian Patrick French, owe their entry into politics to family ties. Two-thirds of members of

Parliament under the age of 40 are "hereditary MPs" from political families. In short, while the right name gives a politician a leg up in other countries, in India it's more like two legs and an arm. Fifty-odd families effectively run much of the country. Traditionally, the Communists and the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), each disciplined by a distinctive worldview, have been better than others at nurturing talent. But nowadays the BJP's most prominent young MPs look remarkably similar to their entitled peers in the unabashedly dynastic Congress Party.

Smaller caste-based and regional parties, such as Yadav's Samajwadi Party, are typically personality cults run by a maximum leader who pays lip service to some variant of socialism while drawing electoral support based almost entirely on identity politics.

Arguably, this system fosters corruption. Lacking a culture of transparency, virtually all parties use slush funds for campaigns, which in many parts of the country consist of promising voters free kitchen appliances or laptops, or delivering cash-filled envelopes to them the night before voting. In the absence of intraparty competition, the party leader effectively controls both campaign cash and, when in power, the state's goody bag of handouts. It's hardly a surprise, then, that politicians have developed a symbiotic relationship with crony capitalists in mining and real estate, fields in which access to decision makers is the single most important element of business success. In some cases—as in the ongoing “coalgate” scandal, in which government auditors claim that the national exchequer lost \$34 billion by selling valuable coal reserves at throwaway prices—the politician and the crony businessman are the same person.

Neither dynastic politics nor corruption is uniquely Indian. The former

hasn't appreciably hindered Singapore's progress, nor the latter South Korea's. But India also bears the harmful legacy of past mistakes that have not been fully acknowledged, and therefore not fully repudiated. India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was a Fabian socialist who was contemptuous of markets and enamored of state planning. His daughter, Indira Gandhi, raised rabble-rousing to an art form and turned the crude license-permit system she inherited from her father into a refined instrument of economic torture. In her time, the marginal tax rate rose to 97 percent, and thanks to the license system even the most routine economic decisions, such as where a business could build a factory or how much it could produce, were made by bureaucrats.

Under Gandhi's rule, which spanned most of two decades until her assassination in 1984, India fell steadily behind its East Asian peers on measures such as the growth of per capita income and human development. Between them, Nehru and Gandhi ruled India for all but four of its first 37 years of independence. They created a political discourse centered on government intervention and largesse that persists to this day. So pervasive is this discourse that even the opposition BJP, ostensibly a party of the

Right, often espouses economic views that are indistinguishable from those of India's Marxists. Though it pushed reforms when it was in power (1998–2004), in opposition the BJP has led the charge against fuel price rationalization, opposed foreign investment in retail, and stalled the implementation of a modern goods-and-services tax to replace an inefficient patchwork of levies.

No Congress-led government has treated liberalization as something to celebrate or explain to the masses.

Thanks to this legacy of mistrusting markets, no Congress-led government, including the one that was compelled to launch reforms in 1991 against the backdrop of a balance-of-payments crisis, has treated liberalization as something to celebrate or explain to the masses. Most seem to view it as bitter medicine to be taken in the depths of a crisis—as with the most recent batch of reforms in September. For others, it's a somewhat distasteful means to acquire the resources to fund welfare programs

that guarantee subsidized grains or government jobs for villagers. No wonder that the handful of reformers in government usually operate by stealth, preferring to tweak policies on the margins rather than make a full-throated case for privatizing money-losing companies or streamlining subsidies.

In economic terms this may put India on a fiscally unsustainable path, but in political terms it makes perfect sense. Indeed, the current Congress-led coalition returned to power in 2004 on the strength of a factually incorrect but electorally appealing argument: that liberalization had not helped India's poor. Not surprisingly, it interpreted its mandate as an excuse to boost often wasteful welfare spending and put the brakes on reforms such as the privatization of state-owned enterprises. The party's reelection in 2009 with a larger parliamentary mandate cemented the widely held belief in Indian politics that only handouts guarantee electoral success. Only the economic slowdown, and perhaps the threat to Singh's international image as an economic reformer earned as finance minister in the 1990s, has forced the government to partially change course.

None of the costs of democracy are unique to India. But together they add

up to a disquieting possibility—that there's a fundamental mismatch between the country's economic aspirations and its political culture. On the surface, India may be a democracy like any other—with an elected government, a professional civil service, and a legal system inherited from the British. But unlike its counterparts in almost any other advanced democracy, much of India's political class represents values at odds with those of the most productive element of society: the educated middle class. The middle class seeks order; the political class thrives on chaos. The middle class embraces hard work and thrift; the political class has become synonymous with theatrics and public theft. The middle-class dream rests on a sound education; a career in politics usually takes flight on a famous last name.

This dysfunctional polity accurately reflects the current Indian electorate. Higher-end estimates of the size of India's middle class (as many as 300 million people) are based on a person's capacity to afford basic consumer goods such as a cell phone, a television, or a motorcycle. But while 300 million consumers may mean a lot to Samsung or Honda, they represent only a quarter of India's population. Moreover, it's not clear how many of them oppose the

status quo. Bluntly put, you may have a cell phone in your pocket and sneakers on your feet, and still think of burning a bus as a legitimate form of political protest and some form of Nehruvian socialism as the ideal economic system.

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Nonetheless, there are glimmers of hope. About 60 million Indians are middle class by global standards, not merely Indian ones. With rising incomes and greater awareness of the outside world—spurred in part by television news, social media, and foreign travel—this cohort is most likely to begin to question the peculiar honor code of Indian politics, under which a party stands to lose face, and with it influence, if it can't marshal the street muscle to bring ordinary life to a halt.

But even this group, roughly the well educated and the professional class, faces formidable challenges. Already



Above the fray: The more affluent they are, the more Indians are likely to remove themselves from politics. Here, an office complex in Chennai.

KUNI TAKAHASHI / THE NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

hobbled by relatively meager numbers, they are also shut out by the dynastic nature of most political parties. A culture that equates dissent with disloyalty precludes competitive internal party elections of the sort that are commonplace in the industrialized world. It's true that with the right combination of backroom maneuvering and administrative skill, a talented lawyer, doctor, or journalist may yet ascend the greasy pole of power. But this will demand a willingness to wade into the muck of a notoriously corrupt system, and to play permanent second fiddle to a party's chosen princeling. Not surprisingly, the most ethical,

talented, and ambitious prefer to make their mark elsewhere.

Nonetheless, those locked out of the political process also have themselves to blame for their predicament. With their resources, capacity for organization, and access to the media, they ought to punch above their weight rather than below it. Unlike in America, in India, the richer you are, the less likely you are to vote. In the richer neighborhoods in Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, and in the gated apartment complexes springing up in satellite towns such as Gurgaon, outside the capital, people have chosen to secede from Indian democracy rather than to

fix it. On-site generators provide power. Private guards take care of security. The kids study in private schools and visit private doctors. For the most part, politics belongs to a distant world, glimpsed on television news, gossiped about at parties, and, at best, participated in only when national elections come around every five years.

In the long run, however, this apathy is untenable. For India to get the leadership it deserves, the educated must not only vote in larger numbers but also seek a way to enter active politics. The quixotic attempt by Meera Sanyal, a senior banker with the Dutch multinational ABN Amro, to run for a seat in Parliament from South Mumbai in 2009, ought to serve as a symbol of inspiration rather than a cause for derision. (Sanyal won only about 10,000 votes out of 640,000 cast.) Before he tarnished his image by getting involved in a cricket scam, Shashi Tharoor, a former top official at the United Nations and a Congress member of Parliament from the southern state of Kerala, showed that Indian voters are willing to give an outsider a chance. Baijayant Panda, an articulate politician from the eastern state of Orissa, has found a way to blend traditional constituency politics with a forward-looking view of policy.

In the long run, time may well be on the outsider's side. If the economy picks up again, the numbers of those with a regular job, a home loan, and a sense of professional purpose will continue to swell. According to the consulting firm McKinsey & Company, by 2025 India's middle class will expand roughly tenfold, to 583 million people, or more than 40 percent of the population. At that time, presumably, politicians will no longer find it necessary to whip up mobs against big-box stores or bring traffic to a halt in the national capital over the price of fuel.

If more politicians could think beyond the inherited template of identity politics and government handouts, they would see the enormous potential—for their parties and for India—of locking in the support of the middle class. In a properly functioning democracy, political arguments are won in newspapers and on television, and through orderly grassroots expressions of dissent. For India to join the developed world, it needs to drag its politicians into the 21st century. Or else, they may just drag India down with themselves instead. ■

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GAMMA-RAPHO VIA GETTY IMAGES

Indians enjoy a strong sense of having a unique role in the world, derived from the history of their country's ancient civilization, its dazzling diversity, and the ever present legacy of Mohandas Gandhi.

THE FOREIGN-POLICY FOG

Propelled by economic success and a sense of its own exceptionalism, India stands poised to create a new role for itself on the world stage. But Indians do not agree on what that role should be.

BY MICHAEL KUGELMAN

By MICHAEL KUGELMAN

IT'S NO EASY TASK NAVIGATING THROUGH heavy fog in the dead of night. But on one memorable occasion in New Delhi, my driver wasn't going to be stopped. It was 3 a.m. as we careened out of Indira Gandhi International Airport and onto the highway leading to my downtown hotel. The fog was so thick that our headlights barely illuminated the vehicles in front of us. Yet my driver kept plowing ahead, even though he wasn't very sure where he was going.

India's foreign policy is on the same kind of path. The country is moving away from the nonalignment doctrine it followed during the Cold War, but it doesn't know what should take its place. The contours of a new worldview are emerging, but remnants of the old one linger, reflecting an uncertainty about India's proper role abroad that is tied to the country's complicated situation at home.

In April 1955, the Indonesian city of Bandung hosted a one-week conference for leaders from India and other Asian and African states—described by African-American writer and activist Richard Wright, who attended the event, as “the despised, the insulted, the hurt, the dispossessed”—in which they

condemned the Cold War and railed against the West. The conference inspired the launch of the Non-Aligned Movement, and India, led by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, was a founding member. The bloc opposed alliances between its members and the major powers, emphasizing the pursuit of neutral and independent paths. Over the next few decades, India's relations with the West frayed, and its economy languished—a consequence of protectionism and other inward-looking economic policies it embraced after becoming independent in 1947.

By the summer of 1991, India had reached a point of economic desperation. Wasteful fiscal policies had nearly exhausted the country's foreign exchange reserves, obliging New Delhi to dispatch nearly 50 tons of gold to the Bank of England to serve as collateral for a loan. *The Economist* later likened the transaction to “an indigent household pawning the family jewels.”

It was a humiliating moment that validated a view rapidly solidifying among top government officials, most notably an Oxford-educated finance minister named Manmohan Singh: The status quo was no longer tenable. So India

changed course. Singh drew up historic reforms that liberalized the economy and opened India up to the world.

Economic growth, trade, and investment first inched up, then soared. By the turn of the millennium, the country's successes had come into sharp focus: The economy was growing rapidly, civil society was flourishing, free media were expanding, and a surging information technology sector (filled with upstart firms of global reach such as Infosys, Wipro, and Tata Consultancy Services) was taking the world by storm. When most of the world's major economies were devastated by the 2008–09 financial crisis, Indian policymakers proudly noted that India barely paused, and in 2010 its economy grew by more than nine percent, according to the World Bank.

Many Indians believe that their country is destined to occupy a unique moral position in the world and to play a large role in improving it.

These accomplishments sent New Delhi's branding gurus into overdrive,

spawning jaunty slogans such as “Incredible India” and “India Shining.” The achievements also reinforced the long-standing sense of exceptionalism embedded in many Indian minds: Blessed with economic growth, a vibrant democracy, relative stability, and a respected image abroad, India, they believe, is destined to occupy a unique moral position in the world and to play a large role in improving it.

History is one obvious source of Indian exceptionalism. The subcontinent is home to one of the world's oldest and most accomplished civilizations. Another source is pride in India's rich variety of traditions—nonviolent, democratic, tolerant, secular—and their coexistence within a large Hindu-majority state brimming with ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity. This exceptionalism shows itself in what Americans often see as Indians' tendency to view foreign affairs in moral terms.

As early as the 1930s, a young Nehru—the Indian independence leader who once wrote to his father that “greatness is being thrust on me”—was imploring colonized India to look beyond its own plight and help “free the [world's] people from the chains of imperialism and capitalism.” Decades later, when Finance Minister Singh was

attempting to convince Parliament of the need for economic liberalization, he proclaimed that “no power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come,” intimating that the moment had arrived for India to become a global economic power.

India’s leaders today want a stronger global voice, and they want to help establish new rules and norms for the management of world affairs. “India should aim not just at being powerful,” according to *NonAlignment 2.0*, a much-discussed strategic blueprint published earlier this year. “It should set new standards for what the powerful must do.” This bold statement should not be taken lightly. *NonAlignment 2.0* was written by eight highly influential Indians—including the head of a major New Delhi think tank, the editor in chief of *The Hindu* newspaper, a former foreign secretary, and a prominent entrepreneur previously with Infosys. New Delhi covets prime spots in international institutions and at negotiating tables, and always has its eyes on the ultimate prize: a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. This desire to join the world’s heavyweights represents a sea change from the Cold War era, when India identified with the downtrodden.

The desire to join the world’s heavyweights represents a sea change from the Cold War era, when India identified with the downtrodden.

India’s approach to the major powers has also changed, at least in part. Alarmed by China’s economic success, its close ties to Islamabad, and its growing presence in the Indian Ocean region—Chinese ports and facilities have sprung up in Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Bangladesh—New Delhi sometimes give the impression of wanting to side against its eastern neighbor. It is modernizing its military and strengthening its armed presence in disputed frontier areas. (India and China fought a border war in 1962.) Some Indian hawks recommend that India seize Chinese territory if Beijing encroaches on disputed lands, and urge India to increase its maritime power to forestall China’s push into the Indian Ocean region.

India has a strong military. With about 1.3 million active personnel, it boasts the third-largest armed forces in the world.



An Indian military delegation meets its Chinese counterpart on the Indo-Chinese border. No major border clashes have occurred between the two countries in more than 20 years, but their relationship remains strained.

MUSTAFA QURAIISHI / AP IMAGES

Land power has always been the chief source of Indian military strength—only Russia’s army has more land-based weaponry. The Indian air force is well equipped, and the government continues to strengthen it. Between 2007 and 2011, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, India was the world’s largest arms importer—and fighter aircraft constituted some of the main acquisitions. Naval power is a more complicated story. India has the world’s fifth-largest fleet, and it has demonstrated its effectiveness by staging tsunami relief operations in South Asia and humanitarian

evacuations from Lebanon during the Hezbollah-Israel conflict of 2006. Though the navy is undermanned and lacks sufficient firepower and aircraft carriers to project power much beyond Indian waters, naval modernization is well under way.

Not long ago, a prominent Indian security analyst told me that India and China could one day go to war over natural resources in the Bay of Bengal, off India’s eastern coast (where major new reserves of natural gas were discovered in 2002). Other observers worry about hostilities over unresolved border disputes or water supplies. Yet it’s not just the

prospect of war that, for many Indians, justifies a hard line on China—it’s also the broader fear that China’s rise threatens India’s own ascent.

For some in New Delhi, China is a bigger source of concern than Pakistan, with which India has fought three wars.

For some in New Delhi, this anxiety is so acute that China is becoming a bigger source of concern than Pakistan, with which India has fought three wars. India certainly worries about Pakistan’s instability, nuclear policies, and sponsorship of extremist proxies in Afghanistan, as well as the virulently anti-India militant groups based on Pakistani soil. Indians often describe the 2008 attacks on Mumbai by one of these organizations, Lashkar-e-Taiba, as their 9/11. The terrorist shootings and bombings killed more than 160. Yet many Indian officials believe that Islamabad is too bogged down by internal crises to pose an existential threat. If Pakistan were to collapse, a scholar at an Indian government-funded research organization told

me last year, almost nonchalantly, then “we just need to make sure it doesn’t bring us down with it.”

In other quarters, India is promoting the very alliance politics it once rejected. Last year, it signed a strategic agreement with Afghanistan. In 2007, it reached a similar understanding with Japan—the two powers drawn together by mutual concern about China. Even the U.S.-India relationship has warmed considerably, as evidenced by a robust arms trade, joint military exercises, and a controversial 2008 civil nuclear accord that gave India access to nuclear fuel and technology even though it hasn’t signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

During the Cold War, the U.S.-India relationship was so strained that New Delhi, unhappy about Washington’s support for Pakistan and fearful that the United States was a new incarnation of colonial Britain, once signed a treaty of friendship with Moscow. The change began with the 1991 economic reforms, which impressed the American business community and prompted it to push for better bilateral relations (with a strong assist from the growing Indian-American community). Another catalyst was the end of the Cold War, which enabled the two capitals to bond over the shared goal of promoting democracy and open

markets abroad. And the 9/11 attacks gave the United States and India common cause in the vigorous pursuit of effective counterterrorism policies.

India has come a long way since that conference in 1955, when (in Wright's words) "the underdogs of the human race" converged on Bandung to denounce the world order. Yet it hasn't made a complete break with the past. In many global forums, India's positions continue to track those of the developing world, conflicting with those of the West. In concert with the other four BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, China,

and South Africa), India has resisted the U.S. and EU positions at the Doha global trade talks and pushed back against some Western countries during UN climate negotiations.

It's also wrong to conclude that India is on a collision course with Beijing. Many Indian diplomats view China as relatively harmless. They believe that its activities in India's neighborhood are driven more by economic and energy interests than by hegemonic impulses, and can be parried with deft diplomacy. Prime Minister Singh and others call for more trade, people-to-people exchanges,



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to the White House in 2009 was one sign of the improved relations between the United States and India since the end of the Cold War. PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVAIS / AP IMAGES

and general rapprochement with China, a stance that has prevailed in official India since Nehru's time.

As for the United States, relations have improved, but that hardly means that India will align itself with U.S. policy. New Delhi accuses Washington of underemphasizing the bilateral relationship and failing to appreciate India's rising power. Many Indians believe that the Obama administration cares more about improving ties with Islamabad than about taking the U.S.-India partnership to a new level. The government is also unhappy about an American law that raises U.S. visa fees for skilled foreign workers (including Indian citizens) and legislation that would punish American firms for using Indian call centers.

Even the cornerstone of today's warmer U.S.-India relationship, the civil nuclear deal, sparks hostility. The accord nearly wasn't ratified by India's government, thanks to opposition from anti-American leftists in the ruling coalition who were opposed to a measure that would tie their country more closely to the United States. Indian parliamentarians still have not passed the enabling legislation that U.S. energy firms believe is required if the agreement is to be put into full effect.

New Delhi's foreign policy is especial-

ly fuzzy in regard to the Middle East. In some ways, India's diplomacy is in tune with the West's. Relations with Israel, which before the 1990s were nonexistent, are now strong. New Delhi has declared its opposition to a nuclear-armed Iran and supported a UN resolution calling for sanctions against Syria's brutal government. Because it fears losing access to Iranian oil as a result of U.S. sanctions, it has strengthened ties with Saudi Arabia—Singh made a rare state visit there in 2010. Yet India also refused to support the UN Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force against Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi and abstained from a General Assembly resolution demanding that Syrian president Bashar al-Assad step down.

Elite views of Indian foreign policy are as fragmented as the policy is inchoate. Understanding this requires taking stock of India's situation at home, where, for all the achievements, major problems remain. At least 250 million Indians live on less than a dollar a day. There are more desperately poor people in just eight of India's 28 states than in all of sub-Saharan Africa. Four hundred million people live without electricity. Corruption and communal violence are rife, and the country is beset by dozens of insurgencies—including a low-grade

Maoist rebellion extending across more than two-thirds of India's states.

Some on the left, citing these domestic problems, contend that pursuing a more prominent role abroad—and allocating the necessary resources to support this goal—is foolish and hypocritical. If we can't tame an insurgency, they ask, how can we dominate the Indian Ocean? How can we be a credible voice for new global norms when our own traditions of secularism and tolerance are undercut by religious and ethnic violence? "India," the noted historian Ramachandra Guha flatly declared earlier this year, "should not even attempt to become a superpower."

Some of those with doubts about a more internationalist stance question whether India even has the credentials to become a superpower. Annual economic growth slowed to just under seven percent last year—a strong rate, but still too slow for a poor country. Inflation is rising. Whispers abound that the "growth miracle" is ending. Military modernization is imperiled by a plodding, state-owned defense industry. And India frequently finds itself in the global spotlight for the wrong reasons. The 2010 Commonwealth Games, held in New Delhi, were marred by inefficiency and graft. This summer's mammoth power outages,

which affected more than 600 million people, prompted many to wonder how a nation that can't provide basic services can ever hope to be a global power.

Whispers abound that India's "growth miracle" is ending.

Superpower skepticism attracts not only left-leaning academics such as Guha, but also the political Left itself—including the influential communist parties that served in the last governing coalition and, until 2011, ruled the state of West Bengal for 34 consecutive years.

However, a second group of Indians—best described as foreign-policy "realists"—says that global engagement can fuel domestic progress. "The success of India's own internal development will depend decisively on how effectively we manage our global opportunities," state the authors of *NonAlignment 2.0*. A new book by Shashi Tharoor, a prominent member of the ruling Congress Party and a former UN diplomat, calls for a "multialignment" policy in which India takes an opportunistic approach to alliances abroad, with a preference for those that help promote development back home.

Predictably, some Indian elites seek a middle ground. For instance, *NonAlignment 2.0* calls for continued neutrality. “Both India and the U.S. may be better served by being friends rather than allies,” its authors write. But they also underscore the imperative of global engagement and an open economic order. The eminent journalist Prem Shankar Jha took a different type of hybrid approach this summer, imploring India to “stand by” the UN’s national sovereignty principle and reject resolutions critical of the Syrian government—in effect, calling on India to leverage its newly acquired global stature to uphold the old ideals of nonalignment.

Such balancing acts appeal to many Indians, but they are tough to maintain. Earlier this year, an Israeli diplomat in New Delhi was targeted in a terrorist attack likely carried out by Iran. Not wanting to upset its good relations with Tehran by acknowledging Iranian complicity, but also not wanting to imperil improved ties with Israel by denying Iranian guilt, New Delhi chose to say nothing publicly. This past summer, the *Times of India* revealed that a New Delhi police investigation had concluded that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard was responsible. Yet India’s government has largely kept quiet.

Indian officials will not always have that luxury. Imagine if India needs to

cast a vote in the UN on a U.S. punitive strike on Iran. An abstention or vote against would anger the United States and other members of the clique of powerful nations that India aspires to join. Yet a vote in favor would repudiate the noninterventionism and other principles embraced by India and ingrained in the association of nonaligned states that it helped launch.

Back on that foggy New Delhi night, my intrepid driver somehow managed to find his way to my hotel. India needs to hope that its quest for a foreign-policy strategy has a similarly happy resolution, and soon. Washington has announced a “pivot” toward Asia, the Indian Ocean is fast becoming one of the world’s most important geostrategic areas, and two of the biggest story lines in world politics are unfolding in India’s neighborhood—the withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan and China’s continued rise.

The world is coming to India, and it will need to know where New Delhi stands. ■

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LHI 2010

COMMONWEALTH GAMES



PRESS ASSOCIATION VIA AP IMAGES

Empty seats were just one of the disappointments of the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

UNLEARNING CHINA'S LESSONS

India's leaders have instinctively looked to China for the secrets to national success. The impulse often serves them poorly.

BY XUEFEI REN

THE WILSON QUARTERLY AUTUMN 2012

By XUEFEI REN

IN 2003, BOMBAY FIRST, A BUSINESS-backed civic group, commissioned McKinsey & Company to devise a plan to make Mumbai a more competitive “global” city. The high-profile consulting firm responded with “Vision Mumbai,” offering eight recommendations in key areas such as housing and infrastructure that it said could transform Mumbai in only 10 years.

Curiously, the study cited Cleveland and Shanghai as examples of such reinvented cities. Needless to say, Cleveland did not make much of an impression on the Mumbai elite. But Shanghai, China’s glittering jewel, resonated far beyond the city limits. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and other Indian politicians frequently expressed admiration for Shanghai, especially its state-of-the-art infrastructure—bridges, tunnels, sleek new subway lines, and a thriving international airport designed by French architect Paul Andreu and served by a futuristic maglev (magnetic levitation) train. In 2006, Singh declared Mumbai could “learn from Shanghai’s experience in reinventing itself, in rebuilding itself, and in rediscovering itself.” But it is not just Shanghai that India

has looked to and not just in Mumbai that it has tried to apply what it has learned. Now, it must unlearn many of its Chinese lessons.

China’s head start has made it a natural reference point as India’s political elites debate their own policies.

It is no surprise that India has often turned to its neighbor for ideas to boost the Indian economy. Market reform in China started in 1978, more than a decade before it did in India. That head start has made China a natural reference point, implicitly and explicitly, as India’s political elites debate their own policies—how to tap into the wealth of overseas Indians, how much to deregulate the economy, and which sectors to open to foreign investment. That habit does not always serve them well. As its massive blackouts in July dramatically showed, India needs more power plants, along with better water and sewage systems. But the kind of gaudy infrastructure trophies that Shanghai and other Chinese cities have built come at a cost,

in human as well as financial terms, that is only now being reckoned. For the most part, the ideas Indians have borrowed from China have unfolded in very different forms when put into practice in their own country. As China's economy took off in the 1990s, Indian officials paid frequent visits to its booming cities. A tour of Shenzhen, which grew from a fishing village of 30,000 people in 1978 into a metropolis of 10 million after it became a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), convinced powerful bureaucrats that India ought to pursue a similar strategy of carving out areas governed by special rules designed to speed development. After several years of wrangling, the Indian parliament passed the requisite law in 2005. Today there are 158 Indian SEZs in operation, with hundreds more approved.

Yet India's SEZs are very different from China's. Because land in China is owned by the state and there are few restraints on government's ability to relocate residents, it is relatively easy to create such zones. The government acquires large amounts of land and then leases it to private investors, offering tax incentives and other inducements to sweeten the deal. China has a single-party political system, but because power is

highly decentralized, city governments can forge policies suited to local needs. (First-generation SEZs, however, were given more authority than later ones.) The formula has worked well, attracting a staggering amount of foreign investment and boosting China's manufacturing and export sectors.

India's city governments have little say in the policies governing local Special Economic Zones.

In India, however, land is in private hands and individual landholdings are often very small, making it extremely difficult to assemble large tracts. Private investors rather than governments are responsible for proposing SEZs, and the zones themselves are much smaller than in China. Perhaps most important, city governments have little say in the policies governing local SEZs. In the Indian system, power is concentrated in New Delhi and the 28 state governments, and the states largely run urban affairs. But state politicians look largely to powerful rural constituencies for support. Even mighty Mumbai, India's largest city, with 18 million residents in

its metropolitan area, accounts for only 16 percent of the population of its home state of Maharashtra.

Because of the different institutional contexts, SEZs, which looked like an economic bonanza to many Indian leaders, have instead been a source of conflict and, occasionally, political firestorms. India's vigorous democracy invites resistance and protest by those opposed to government policies; it came in a downpour. In Nandigram, in the impoverished eastern state of West Bengal, 14 people were killed when police clashed with demonstrators—many of whom stood to lose their homes—over the acquisition of 27,000 acres of land for a new chemical plant. (The plant ultimately was moved to another location.) Such conflicts can be disastrous for those in power. In the town of Singur, also in West Bengal, a nearly complete Tata Motors factory sits abandoned four years after protesters, bolstered by the populist politician Mamata Banerjee, forced the company to pull out. Banerjee rode the campaign to West Bengal's top ministerial position, unseating an incumbent from the state's longtime ruling party, which had backed the project.

In China, meanwhile, the SEZ model has increasingly revealed its limitations. It pits local governments against one

another in destructive bidding wars, offering tax cuts, cheap land, and cheap labor in order to attract capital. The SEZs have spawned megafactories operating at a scale never seen before in history. In Shenzhen, the Longhua factory, run by the Taiwanese electronics firm Foxconn, employs hundreds of thousands of workers; they are housed in company buildings on or near the fenced factory compound so that managers can better control their lives. Labor rights abuses are widespread, and many workers endure monotonous work, long hours, and harsh treatment. Foxconn made global headlines in 2010 when 14 of its young employees in factories in different cities committed suicide.

BECAUSE CHINA IS THE ONLY COUNTRY where the scale of urbanization can match its own, India has closely watched how the Chinese plan and manage the growth of their cities. Nearly a third of India's population now lives in cities, 45 of which have more than a million inhabitants—places whose names outsiders rarely hear, such as Kanpur, Visakhapatnam, and Vadodara. China is farther along this path, with half its people living in urban areas, and more than twice the number of cities boasting more than a million inhabitants.

Together, Chinese and Indian cities accommodate one-seventh of the world's population.

Yet while both countries are on the fast track of urbanization, their cities could not be more different. India's cities are diverse in culture, ethnicity, languages, and landscape, with slums crowding close to middle-class neighborhoods and business districts. People live in shacks, apartment buildings, and gated communities—or sleep on the sidewalk. Chinese cities are dominated by one ethnic group (the Han) and language (Mandarin). Most city dwellers—whether young or old, rich or poor—live in some kind of gated housing complex. And China's cities have all developed in similar patterns, with a central business district surrounded by satellite new towns, migrant villages, and manufacturing zones on the periphery. Despite these differences, Indian leaders seem enamored of China's model of urban development.

In the 2000s, Shanghai leveled more than a thousand acres of homes and businesses to make way for redevelopment projects. Most of those who were forced out were compensated in cash at far below market prices; consequently, they had to move to lower-rent districts far from the city center. Many of them have ended up in massive new satellite towns

on the urban periphery. Shanghai's city center, especially the former French and International Concessions, has become a shiny, homogenized colony for transnational elites, complete with boutique hotels, upscale restaurants, Louis Vuitton shops, and Ferrari showrooms. Not a trace of the poor people who once inhabited these streets remains.

In Mumbai and a few other large Indian cities, one can now see the beginnings of such sterilized zones, areas scrubbed of the poor and filled with generic architecture and middle-class-friendly shopping malls. As part of its effort to remake itself in the image of Shanghai, Mumbai mounted a large-scale demolition campaign beginning in 2004, displacing more than 300,000 slum dwellers. But as in Shanghai, demolition has not eliminated poverty, inequality, or even slums. Those who have lost their homes have simply moved elsewhere. It is an approach to urban development that India surely needs to unlearn.

It also ought to unlearn the Chinese lesson about the value of hosting costly high-profile international events. Beijing spent \$40 billion to prepare for the 2008 Olympics, lavishly investing in new subway lines, roads, landscaping, and other amenities. Now the Bird's Nest—the spectacular and controversial 90,000-seat

stadium built at a cost of nearly \$500 million—stands empty in Beijing's Olympic Park. Few events can fill the massive facility. Not far away, the Water Cube, site of the Olympic aquatic events, is only partly occupied by a new water theme park. Empty sports venues have become fixtures of the Chinese landscape. Shanghai hosted the World Expo in 2010, Guangzhou had the Asian Games the same year, and Shenzhen had the Universiade in 2011. In India, New Delhi had its moment in the media sun during the 2010 Commonwealth Games—the facilities were finished just in time—but it's far from clear what the \$6 billion investment brought to the city and its people.

The taste for such “megaevents” is part of a larger Chinese commitment to massive infrastructure projects, and in India, the argument by economists and development specialists that poor infrastructure is the number one bottleneck slowing urban development has fallen on receptive ears. But good infrastructure is often a result rather than the cause of sustained economic development. There is a difference between basic amenities needed to keep the economy running and the population healthy—water, sewerage, and electricity—and “world-

class” infrastructure intended to transform places into global cities.

A nation lacking China's seemingly boundless investment capital will soon find that piling up showcase projects diverts precious resources from basic infrastructure and other essentials. The Chinese themselves are learning the hazards of infrastructure excess. Many local governments with dreams of glory have borrowed heavily from state banks and now find themselves deeply in debt. Yunnan, a poor, mountainous province in southwestern China, has built the third-largest network of highways in the country in hopes of attracting outside investment. But the roads are lightly traveled and the income from toll charges has been disappointing. Yunnan Highway Ltd., the state-owned firm that built the roads, has defaulted on its \$15 billion in loans. Today, as China's vaunted economy stumbles, the solvency of local governments has become a major concern of investors around the world.

India largely relies on the private sector to build infrastructure, and that introduces hazards of its own. When the right to use new roads, subways, and bridges depends on the ability to pay, the majority of the poor are often locked out and their interests ignored.



Bridge to nowhere: Mumbai's \$335 million Sea Link bridge does not do a lot for the affluent few it serves, much less the city's many poor inhabitants.

RAJANISH KAKADE / AP IMAGES

Mumbai proudly christened its gorgeous new \$335 million Sea Link bridge in 2009, but the toll-financed span does nothing for Mumbai's millions, merely shaving some time off the commute of affluent suburbanites bound for the city's business district. The bridge, furthermore, dumps drivers into clogged city streets still in desperate need of improvement. In decrying the Sea Link's huge construction delays and cost overruns, the editors of India's *Economic Times* wrote, "The first step towards holistic town planning may be legislative change that gives cities strong mayors

with substantial budgetary resources, who can carry through major initiatives."

Given the structure of India's system of governance, that kind of change will not occur quickly. A good starting point would be to build human capital at the municipal level. In India, the talented shun jobs in city government, while in China graduates of the top universities avidly compete for such positions. Even large cities such as Mumbai and New Delhi have only a handful of professional planners and architects. State governments have few incentives to devolve power to the cities, but they are unlikely

to change as long as there is a vacuum of human capital at the local level.

In the years since “Vision Mumbai” appeared, the city’s economy has grown only slowly and living conditions for the middle class and the poor have deteriorated. There is a better way than the pursuit of Chinese-style cities on steroids. If it can empower local governments and attract ambitious and talented young people to make them work better, India will be well launched

on its urban age, with the promise of more interesting, diverse, and livable cities—cities that someday will make China jealous. ■

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IN ESSENCE

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FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

THE SURGE AND ITS SKEPTICS

THE SOURCE: “Testing the Surge” by Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro, in *International Security*, Summer 2012.

IN JANUARY 2007, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush ordered an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Iraq, where a fearsome insurgency and fighting between the Shiite Muslim majority and Sunni minority were tearing the country apart. Armed with a new counterinsurgency strategy,

U.S. and Iraqi troops left their big bases and fanned out among the people. Their plan: to protect Iraqi civilians, put their society back on its feet, and flush out the insurgents. By the end of 2007, casualties were down sharply. Twenty-three Americans and about 500 Iraqi civilians died that December, compared to 126 and 1,700, respectively, in May.

So the surge worked? Academics, military officers, and others have debated the question ever since. A vocal group of naysayers point to another explanation. In late 2006, the Albu Ri-sha, a tribe of Sunnis in Anbar province



At a Baghdad base in 2008, Sons of Iraq militiamen graduate from a training course. The Sons of Iraq were crucial to the U.S. troops, bolstered by the surge, decimating the insurgency.

DUSAN VRANIC / AP IMAGES

that included fighters for the insurgency, switched sides. They formed American-financed militias called the Sons of Iraq and turned their guns on the radical Sunni insurgent group Al Qaeda in Iraq. In what became known as the Anbar Awakening, other Sunni tribes followed.

A lot rides on the surge versus Awakening debate, write Stephen Biddle, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, Jeffrey A. Friedman, a PhD candidate at Harvard, and Jacob N. Shapiro, a professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton. If the surge alone did the trick, then proponents of military intervention and unconventional warfare can point to it as a success. The Awakening explanation, on the other hand, suggests that Iraq is a unique case and bolsters skeptics of U.S. intervention abroad.

Neither side can take all the marbles, the authors argue. It was the “synergy” between the Awakening and the surge that made the difference. At four earlier points, various Sunni tribes had attempted to ally with the Americans. But the United States had too few troops to back them, and Al Qaeda in Iraq quashed the uprisings.

The Albu Risha stepped forward at just the right time. By late 2006, innovative U.S. commanders were inching toward

the winning formula of protecting Iraqi civilians and embracing fighters disaffected with the radicalism of Al Qaeda in Iraq. With America’s help, the Albu Risha withstood fierce counterattacks. In 2007, U.S. reinforcements took this approach across the country, allowing the Awakening to take wing.

If the surge alone did the trick, then proponents of military intervention and unconventional warfare can point to it as a success.

The dampened Sunni insurgency then left Shiite militias such as Muqtada al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army, which had purported to defend Shiites from insurgent attacks, bereft of a unifying purpose. The militias turned on one another and fell into criminality, costing them recruits and popularity. Al-Sadr eventually declared a ceasefire.

The authors say a newly declassified dataset of almost 200,000 violent incidents in Iraq backs their argument. While the surge in early 2007 nudged violence downward, in most cases it was not until the formation of a Sons of

Iraq militia in a given area that the number of attacks plummeted. The authors say their interviews with 70 coalition officers who fought in Iraq just before and during the surge, which ended in mid-2008, confirmed the importance of the Awakening.

Counterinsurgency by itself can produce modest success, say the authors, but it takes time and can test popular support at home. That lesson applies in Afghanistan, where there is no sign of an Iraq-like Awakening among the Taliban. ■

DRONE AMBIVALENCE

THE SOURCE: “Mixed Messages on Targeted Killings” by Charles G. Kels, in *Armed Forces Journal*, July–Aug. 2012.

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION HAS TAKEN great pains to defend recent U.S. drone attacks on targets outside conflict zones, namely in Pakistan and Yemen. But by “trying to please everyone at once instead of holding firm to basic, time-tested principles,” writes Charles G. Kels, an attorney with the Department of Homeland Security and a major in the Air Force Reserve, the administration has pleased no one. In fact, Kels says, it risks undermining its own legal authority and setting poor legal precedents for

drones’ use in the future.

Kels further asserts that the administration is trying to reconcile two fundamentally different rationales for military action. It has pursued the fight against Al Qaeda and its associates as a war and obeyed the requisite national and international laws on war. Article 51 of the UN Charter protects the right to self-defense and permits attacks on “nonstate actors” in countries that aren’t directly involved in the conflict if they are “unwilling or unable” to act. But the administration also wants to satisfy those who, speaking through humanitarian organizations such as the International Red Cross, reject the argument that the conflict with Al Qaeda qualifies as a war and insist that the United States must abide by human rights law. In effect, Kels writes, doing so would require the United States to act like a police officer rather than a warrior, reacting to attacks against it on a case-by-case basis.

The Obama administration has said, for instance, that it exhaustively vets drone targets to ensure that each attack is legitimately made in self-defense. But the existence of such a process suggests that the United States is meting out justice, not pursuing a war. The administration should be clear that its

bureaucratic checks and balances are strictly voluntary; otherwise, it could risk establishing a precedent for elaborate vetting procedures.

In another ungainly step, Attorney General Eric Holder stated in March that deliberations such as those that preceded the fatal September 2011 drone attack on Anwar al-Awlaki, an American working with Al Qaeda, satisfied the due process obligation of the Fifth Amendment. But in wartime, what matters is the threat an individual poses, not his nationality, Kels says. During World War II, “an American national at Omaha Beach wearing a Nazi uniform and firing at our troops would have been just as valid a target as the German national beside him.”

The administration should also stop vowing that its efforts produce “zero casualties” among civilians and that it only uses lethal force when the capture of a target is not an option, Kels argues.

The international law of armed conflict recognizes that civilian casualties can’t always be avoided. It does not state that an enemy can be killed only if he can’t be captured.

By forgoing the opportunity to lay out a clear policy now, the United States could be stripping itself of the freedom to defend itself in the future.

Having a clear policy on drone use is not only a matter of good statesmanship, but an issue of national security, Kels argues. By forgoing the opportunity to lay out a clear policy now, he says, the United States could be stripping itself of the freedom to defend itself in the future. ■

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

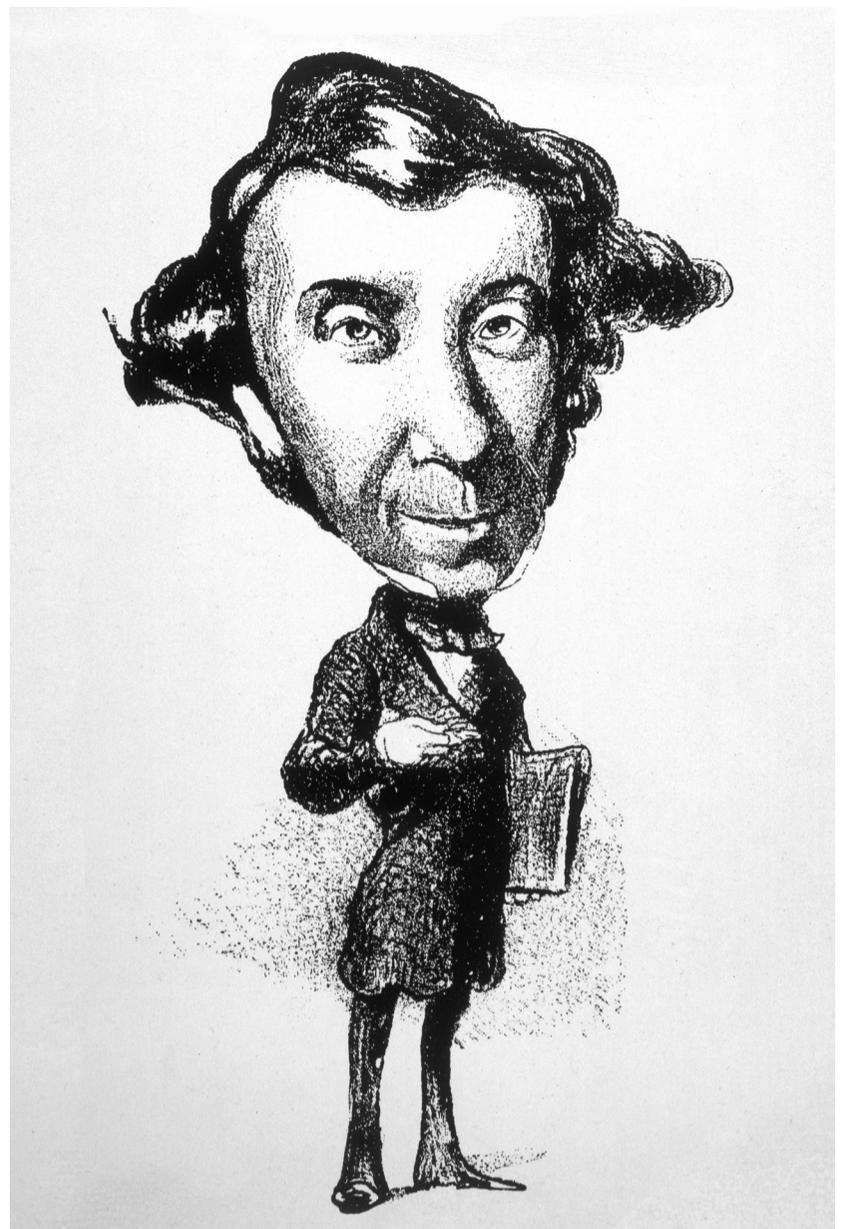
TOCQUEVILLE'S BLIND SPOTS

THE SOURCE: “Tocqueville and America” by James Q. Wilson, in *The Claremont Review of Books*, Spring 2012.

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE LITERALLY WROTE the book on the United States. *Democracy in America* (1835–1840), informed by his wide-ranging nine-month visit to the country, is generally recognized as one of the classic studies of American political culture.

But Tocqueville was only human, and *Democracy in America* is still just a book. For all its insight, writes the late political scientist James Q. Wilson, the French nobleman’s magnum opus “left a bit to be desired.”

Tocqueville believed that Americans would come to value equality over liberty. Reasoning that liberty appears immediately valuable only to dissidents, he concluded that equality, which can be enjoyed by all immediately, would lure the general public. But he was wrong, Wilson writes, observing that “we accept economic inequality here to a much greater degree than it is accepted elsewhere.” He notes that many Americans oppose equality-driven measures such as the inheritance tax and affirmative action quotas. Freedom,



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America’s keenest observer: Alexis de Tocqueville

rather, is “the central organizing story of American life.” U.S. soldiers returning from Iraq, for example, often said they were defending freedom—even though that’s not the reason U.S. leaders gave for the Iraq war.

Tocqueville was deeply worried by American individualism, equating it with corrosive selfishness. But for Americans, Wilson argues, individualism has more to do with being “masters of our own souls.” A healthy skepticism of majority opinion hasn’t made us indifferent to others. Americans value local

governance and excel in collective enterprises; compared to the people of other countries, Americans are much more likely to join civic groups and other voluntary organizations.

If you really want an acute 18th-century perspective on how the United States would work, Wilson argues, you should look to the men who wrote the U.S. Constitution. While Tocqueville feared that democracy would lead to a tyranny of the majority, the Founding Fathers predicted the emergence of factions. Tocqueville hoped Americans' customs and mores would preserve liberty; the Founders saw the need to design new means of doing so, notably the separation of powers. And while the aristocratic Tocqueville dismissed commerce as vulgar, Alexander Hamilton and others prevailed over their opponents and shaped a frankly commercial republic, paving the way for American prosperity.

Tocqueville did see one thing more clearly than the Founders. He argued that religion was needed to temper and broaden individuals' understanding of what constituted their self-interest, and that Protestant traditions of self-government had a restraining influence on the formation of interest groups. The Founders, however, were largely silent

on religion in writing the Constitution, recognizing that it would be impossible to encompass all the religious traditions that existed in America.

Acknowledging Tocqueville's greatness, Wilson qualifies his criticism by explaining, "I want to put Tocqueville in context; I do not want him to be a cardboard hero of American thought with all of his arguments left unexamined." ■

DON'T DISCOUNT CHARACTER

THE SOURCE: "Candidates Matter: Policy and Quality Differences in Congressional Elections" by Matthew K. Buttice and Walter J. Stone, in *The Journal of Politics*, July 2012.

WHAT DETERMINES WHETHER A CANDIDATE for congressional office makes it to Capitol Hill? Your average political scientist will tell you that the national-level popularity of the candidate's party is huge. Money and incumbency also play important roles. But the quality and specific positions of the candidate? Pshaw! Political scientist Walter J. Stone and PhD candidate Matthew K. Buttice, both of the University of California, Davis, beg to differ.

They studied congressional candidates in 155 House districts in the 2006 elections. To gauge the quality and ideological positions of the candidates, they

interviewed state legislators and 2004 national convention delegates. (They defined candidate quality as a mixture of governing ability, integrity, and leadership prowess.) They also used a survey to assess the views of voters living in those districts.

Voters' perception of a candidate's character is pretty hard to change—unless there's a scandal.

When there are few differences in the quality of candidates in a race, Buttice and Stone found, candidates' views on policy can be important. In the districts they studied, there was a 33 percent probability that moderate voters would go Republican if the two parties' nominees had similar ideologies, but a 41 percent chance when the views of the candidates were polarized. The wider the ideological divide between the can-

didates, the less quality mattered. In the most polarized races, Buttice and Stone found that candidate quality had a significantly diminished impact.

The authors note that voters' perception of a candidate's character is pretty hard to change—unless there's a scandal. Candidates have much more control over their policy positions. In toss-up districts, where moderate and independent voters are the deciders, candidates with a big quality advantage have a strong, measurable incentive to move toward the center. That reduces voter's focus on ideology and puts the quality issue more in the forefront. Candidates who don't have strong quality bona fides have every reason to stake out more intensely ideological positions.

Don't trust the cynic who says that money determines elections. "Candidates carry a fair amount of the freight in these elections, even in the context of nationally polarized parties, widespread dissatisfaction with a sitting president, and deep frustration with national policies," Buttice and Stone write. ■

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

A FAREWELL TO GROWTH

THE SOURCE: “Is U.S. Economic Growth Over? Faltering Innovation Confronts the Six Headwinds” by Robert J. Gordon, in *NBER Working Papers*, Aug. 2012.

ECONOMIC GROWTH AS WE KNOW IT IS OVER, argues Northwestern University economist Robert J. Gordon. It hasn’t ended completely, but the United States will never again see living standards double in a few decades, as they did between 1957 and ’88. Indeed, Gordon calculates that it will take a century for the U.S. economy to achieve a comparable improvement. Not only have the most important growth-generating innovations already occurred, but the United States faces powerful “headwinds” that will dampen the progress that does take place.

There have been three industrial revolutions in U.S. history, Gordon observes. The first occurred between 1750 and 1830, when steam engines, cotton gins, and railroads transformed manufacturing and transportation. The second (1870–1900) produced electricity, the internal combustion engine, running water, and indoor plumbing. We are still in the midst of the third revolution, involving information technology, which

began in the 1960s and reached its climax three decades later.

Not all industrial revolutions are alike, however. The digital age has made the lives of many Americans easier, but its influence on productivity has been pitiful in comparison to that of previous breakthroughs. No, not because office workers spend their days watching cat videos on the Internet. Information technology’s contributions to productivity don’t hold a candle to innovations such as running water and indoor plumbing, which freed men and particularly women from countless hours of work hauling water and sewage.

Gordon says that U.S. labor productivity increased nicely between 1996 and 2004, when businesses embraced the Internet and other computing technologies, but after 2004 the pace of improvement slowed. In contrast, the effects of the second industrial revolution elevated U.S. labor productivity for 81 years.

The 20th century’s unceasing climb in living standards could very well be a one-time event, Gordon says. At its onset, the United States, with 75 percent of its population living in the countryside, was primed for an industrial makeover. That opportunity won’t be repeated. Few future advances will be as fundamentally transformative as air conditioning and the car.

Innovations will occur, Gordon acknowledges, though they will face a gale of “headwinds” including high levels of government and household debt, climate change, the globalization of industry, and weak secondary education. If U.S. economic growth slows as he predicts, these headwinds could flatten the per capita real GDP growth rate to a dismal 0.2 percent per annum by 2100. To those who doubt his argument about the limited impact of today’s technology, Gordon poses this question: Which would you rather have: an iPad or indoor toilets? ■

THE CLUNKER BUST

THE SOURCE: “The Effects of Fiscal Stimulus: Evidence From the 2009 Cash for Clunkers Program” by Atif Mian and Amir Sufi, in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Aug. 2012.

WHEN THE “CASH FOR CLUNKERS” PROGRAM debuted as part of the Obama administration’s fiscal stimulus program in the summer of 2009, it inspired as much skepticism as glee. Some grumbled that the program wouldn’t help matters, while others saw economic and environmental sense in extending a credit of up to \$4,500 toward the purchase



JONATHAN ALCORN / ZUMA PRESS / NEWS.COM

The “cash for clunkers” program rid the streets of some unsightly fuel hogs, but the economy was still junk after it expired.

of a new fuel-efficient vehicle to motorists who traded in old, pollution-spewing wheels. Economists Atif Mian of the University of California, Berkeley, and Amir Sufi of the University of Chicago argue that, in the end, the program did little to jump-start the economy.

One thing's for sure, though: The credit got Americans to open their wallets. The program exhausted its \$1 billion budget within a week, prompting Congress to approve another \$2 billion for the program. Mian and Sufi calculate that an additional 370,000 vehicles were driven off the lot while the credit was available.

Just as skeptics warned, though, most sales “were borrowed from purchases that would have otherwise occurred in the very near future.” Mian and Sufi compared total car sales in areas with large numbers of clunkers to sales in areas with few clunkers in the year following the start of the program. While auto purchases in high-clunker areas were 40 percent higher than in low-clunker areas during the deal, they dropped off significantly in the months following the end of the tax credit. The rate of purchases in low-clunker areas inched up during the program, but barely. They did not suffer much of a decline after the program ended, however, topping sales in high-clunker areas for five months. Ten

months after the program expired, the cumulative number of cars purchased in high-clunker areas was not significantly different than the number purchased in low-clunker areas.

Mian and Sufi also found that the auto tax credit had little impact on other economic outcomes. House prices, household defaults, and employment rates all continued to follow existing trends in both high- and low-clunker cities in the year after the program ended. It's important not to generalize, the authors say: Other forms of fiscal stimulus, such as unemployment benefits, may offer different benefits. But like its automotive namesake, the “cash for clunkers” program wasn't a reliable vehicle for economic growth. ■

THE LIMITS TO CONSTRAINT

THE SOURCE: “Environmental Alarmism, Then and Now” by Bjorn Lomborg, in *Foreign Affairs*, July–Aug. 2012.

FORTY YEARS AGO, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN impossible to escape *The Limits to Growth* (1972). The report, issued by the Club of Rome, an international group of world leaders in business, government, and academia, argued that the depletion of economic, social, and environmental resources would lead the world economic

system to collapse around 2010. That frighteningly persuasive vision helped the book sell more than 12 million copies in dozens of languages.

The study overlooked the most important resource of all: people, and their ability to discover and innovate.

Now that the world is safely past its predicted expiration date, it's clear the authors got the story "spectacularly wrong," writes Bjorn Lomborg, the director of the Copenhagen Consensus Center and author of *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (2001). Yet its influence abides. The book, Lomborg writes, "helped send the world down a path of worrying obsessively about misguided remedies for minor problems while ignoring much greater concerns and sensible ways of dealing with them."

The Limits to Growth used computer models to determine the interrelated trajectories of change in five basic components of growth—population, agricultural production, natural resources, industry, and pollution. Technological advances might momentarily avert disaster in each area, the models showed,

but negative trends would implacably resume. If the world were to escape this cycle, the authors argued, consumption and birthrates would have to be sharply reduced.

The study overlooked the most important resource of all: "people, and their ability to discover and innovate," Lomborg writes. Take mercury, which the *Limits* authors fingered as a dangerously dwindling resource. Today we barely use it, having found better materials to put in thermometers and batteries. The report's predictions that the world would exhaust its supplies of natural gas, oil, copper, and other natural resources have all proved false. And forget mass starvation—the ranks of the malnourished have dropped from 35 percent of the world's population when the report came out to 16 percent today.

The most insidious effect of *The Limits to Growth* was not misinformation, Lomborg says, but the way it galvanized public attention around "worst-case environmental-disaster scenarios that make rational policymaking difficult." Misplaced anxiety about pollutants has led the developed world to embrace organic agriculture despite its expense and inefficiency. Recycling has become a fetish even though it "provides little environmental benefit at a significant

cost.” Meanwhile, indoor and outdoor air pollution, which contributes to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people worldwide, excites little attention.

What people need to understand is that poverty poses a far greater threat to quality of life than the challenges cited by the *Limits* authors, and “eco-

conomic growth is one of the best ways to prevent it,” Lomborg argues. An expansion of international trade has more potential to enhance human well-being than the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change. In the end, he says, the benefits of economic growth vastly outweigh its limits. ■

SOCIETY

TWO BLACK AMERICAS

THE SOURCE: “Black and White No Longer” by Richard Thompson Ford, in *The American Interest*, Sept.–Oct. 2012.

IN JULY 2009, HENRY LOUIS GATES JR., A Harvard professor and a black man, broke into his own home when he couldn't

unlock the door. Neighbors reported a burglary, and when a Cambridge police sergeant arrived, Gates shouted abuse at him and was soon arrested for disorderly conduct. Many held up the incident as a case of racial profiling, and an example of how little race relations have progressed. In truth, it bore little resemblance to the harsh stop-and-frisk tactics practiced in American cities—last year, New York City police stopped nearly 700,000 people, 84 percent of them black or Latino. (Only 12 percent of those encounters

resulted in arrests.) The Gates brouhaha, Stanford Law professor Richard Thompson Ford argues, illustrates a very different problem: “Increasingly desperate attempts to cling to outdated ideas of racial identity and solidarity have bred a fundamentally dishonest racial conversation that warps individual psychological development and confounds cross-racial understanding.”



AB1 WENN PHOTOS / NEWSCOM

Hip-hop stars such as Lil Wayne, with their brushes with crime and drugs, are seen by many as authentic representatives of black masculinity. For some black men they are dangerous role models; for others, merely entertainers.

Until recent years, dealing with racism united black Americans; rich and poor could count on day-to-day injustices. Since the civil rights era, however, racism has been in steady decline. As white supremacists are replaced by “a generation raised on *The Cosby Show* and Oprah Winfrey,” and prestigious schools and companies alike recruit minority applicants, opportunities for mainstream blacks are on par with those for whites, and racially tinged snubs are little more than occasional annoyances, Ford says. Meanwhile, members of the black underclass struggle to secure such basics as nutrition, employment, and personal safety—their opportunities for social advancement are stuck somewhere near Reconstruction. For them, racism is still a fact of life.

Amid the fracturing of the black community, defining the “black experience as one of constant peril and in terms of the suffering of the most disadvantaged, victimized, and unfortunate blacks” is, Ford contends, “at best a useful fiction that encourages us to work to improve the plight of the disadvantaged. But at worst it’s a way of staking a claim to sympathy for injuries suffered by other people.” If persistent racism is no longer a given, what does it mean to be a black American?

In trying to work out identity, “we haven’t moved past race, but our relationship to it has become exaggerated and stylized,” Ford writes. “From the predictable racial scandals that are a staple of talk radio and television news to the caricatures of black masculinity offered by professional musicians and athletes, today’s race relations are insincere in a profound but mostly accidental way. We are reciting lines written for characters we were supposed to be, wish we were, or are afraid of becoming.”

Hip-hop stars have emerged as prime arbiters of the “authentic” black experience, marked by crime and the mistreatment of women.

Hip-hop stars have emerged as prime arbiters of the “authentic” black experience, marked by crime and the mistreatment of women. Never mind that rappers are no more than well-paid “professional entertainers” beloved by mainstream culture; impressionable youngsters seek to emulate them—to their own detriment.

Rejecting the mystique of the urban outlaw is of a piece with escaping poverty

and isolation, but schoolchildren who venture to do so are often called out, among their peers, for “acting white.” Harvard economist Roland Fryer has examined the phenomenon, and Ford agrees with his analysis: The insult is meant to keep members of an embattled group, those most likely to leave, from abandoning the others. If this is so, then blacks should work to dismantle the complex social pressures to act quote-unquote black, even if doing so creates an identity crisis. ■

THE GAY PARENT REPORT CARD

THE SOURCE: “How Different Are the Adult Children of Parents Who Have Same-Sex Relationships? Findings From the New Family Structures Survey” by Mark Regnerus, in *Social Science Research*, July 2012.

A NUMBER OF WELL-PUBLICIZED studies have made the case that children raised by gay parents differ little from those reared by heterosexual couples. As appealing as this conclusion may be, says sociologist Mark Regnerus of the University of Texas, Austin, the supporting research has many flaws. For one, the studies focus on outcomes for children

and teenagers, while many effects of upbringing aren't evident until later in life. Also, they rely on the answers of parents, who may not be the most objective sources. Most important, respondents were self-selected rather than chosen at random, and many were the kind one finds in educated and progressive urban environments.



MARMADUKE ST. JOHN / ALAMY

Most studies of children raised by gay parents so far have focused on a single segment of society, those living in affluent and progressive communities.

A study he based on a more varied pool of data “reveals far greater diversity in the experience of lesbian motherhood (and to a lesser extent, gay fatherhood) than has been acknowledged or understood,” Regnerus says. He surveyed a nationally representative sample of 3,000 young adults about their health, social behaviors, and relationships. Most had come of age before gay marriage became legal anywhere—the oldest participants had turned 18 in 1990 and the youngest in 2011. More than 200 respondents had at least one parent who had had a same-sex romantic relationship. It was a diverse group: Forty-three percent of those with a lesbian mother were black or Hispanic.

Regnerus found that adults with a lesbian mother or gay father fared worse than adults raised by married, biological parents.

After controlling for a number of factors, including the age, race, and childhood socioeconomic status of the respondents, Regnerus found that adults with a lesbian mother or gay father fared

worse than adults raised by married, biological parents. This finding was based on multiple indicators of well-being, including use of public assistance, employment history, presence or absence of depression, and history, if any, of marijuana use. Among the respondents, 28 percent of adults raised by a lesbian mother and 20 percent of adults raised by a gay father were unemployed, for instance, while only eight percent of adults raised by their married biological parents were out of work. Even in comparison to respondents who had stepfamilies, a status that typically results in poorer outcomes for children, adults with a lesbian mother fared worse on about a quarter of the indicators. (Adults who were adopted by strangers as children differed the least from people raised by their married biological parents.)

Critics argue that the Regnerus study doesn't say much about children being raised by same-sex parents today—only two respondents in the group he surveyed were brought up from birth by a committed same-sex couple. Regnerus allows that the number of people who have reached adulthood after living in a stable gay household is too small at this point to enable meaningful conclusions. Still, he argues that his findings are consistent with other research

on families. “If same-sex parents are able to raise children with no differences” from children raised by their married biological parents, Regnerus writes, “it would mean that same-sex couples are able to do something that heterosexual couples in stepparenting, adoptive, and cohabitating contexts have themselves not been able to do—replicate the optimal child-rearing environment of married, biological-parent homes.” ■

REDRAWING THE POVERTY LINE

THE SOURCE: “Identifying the Disadvantaged: Official Poverty, Consumption Poverty, and the New Supplemental Poverty Measure” by Bruce D. Meyer and James X. Sullivan, in *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Summer 2012.

THE OFFICIAL U.S. POVERTY RATE IS AN IMPORTANT benchmark for policymakers, researchers, and advocates as they grapple with the dispensation of billions of dollars in government aid. The huge sums that are involved ensure that the stakes will be high whenever anyone tries to define who is poor. The current method takes the wrong approach, argue Bruce D. Meyer, a professor of public policy at the University of Chicago, and economist James X. Sullivan of the University of Notre Dame. The most accurate way to identify society’s most disadvantaged

is to look at how much people consume, not their income.

The nation’s official poverty measure debuted in the 1960s and hasn’t changed much since then, aside from adjustments for inflation. Because research at the time showed that the average family spent a third of its after-tax income on food, the poverty level was set at three times the cost of a nutritional but low-cost diet for each person in a household. In 2011, 15 percent—about 46 million Americans—lived at or below the poverty line, defined as \$23,021 for a family of four.

Last year, in response to criticism, the U.S. Census Bureau released a secondary gauge. The Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) defines resources to count not just cash income, but also food stamps, tax credits, and other government benefits. It subtracts costs such as tax liabilities, child care, and out-of-pocket medical expenses. It also has different poverty thresholds for renters and homeowners, and adjusts thresholds in response to regional variations in the cost of living.

But both measures still trip over the same problem, the authors say: In large part because people tend not to give very accurate reports of their income, it is not a particularly accurate measure of disadvantage. In one 2010

survey, for instance, 44 percent of eligible food stamp dollars were not accounted for.

Meyer and Sullivan developed a measure based on resource consumption, not income, and they argue that it provides a more accurate picture of poverty. To prove their case, they compared 25 characteristics of the bottom 16.5 percent of the U.S. population as calculated with each of the three tools. (According to the authors' calculations, the SPM put the poverty rate at 16.5 percent in 2010.) The Meyer-Sullivan proved the most accurate. It yielded the worst off of

the three groups, having the lowest annual consumption (\$18,000 for a family of four), and being the least educated (40 percent lacked a high school diploma) and the least likely to have health insurance (57 percent).

Additional exercises demonstrated that a consumption-based measure most accurately identified the worst-off Americans and therefore would allow for better-targeted aid to the poor. Advocates are right to call for a revised poverty measure, the authors say, but the one just added to the books isn't doing the trick. ■

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

THE KOSHER RENAISSANCE

THE SOURCE: “American Processed Kosher” by Jeffrey Yoskowitz, in *Gastronomica*, Summer 2012.

NO FOOD FROM ANIMALS THAT HAVE CLOVEN hooves or chew their cud. No seafood that lacks scales or fins. Nothing made from meat that has been prepared, served, or stored with dairy products (and vice versa). These are just a few of the many rules of *kashrut*, the dietary code stated in the Torah, the holy Jewish text. About 1.5 million American Jews, mostly fol-

lowers of Orthodox Judaism and other relatively traditional expressions of the Jewish faith, “keep kosher,” as the practice of adhering to the code is known. But “how exactly does an ancient code of dietary ritual get applied to the Nabisco factory in East Hanover, New Jersey?” asks writer Jeffrey Yoskowitz.

A little more than a century ago, few Jews fretted about whether the outside world kept kosher. Jewish people prepared food themselves or purchased it at local shops in their tightly knit communities. But as white bread, eggs cradled in stiff paper, and other industrial food products appeared, the question became



For those not in the know, it's easy to overlook. But for millions of Americans, a kosher stamp such as this one, the encircled K of the Brooklyn-based OK Kosher Certification, defines what is edible.

TED SEYMOUR

more salient. How were kosher-keeping Jews to know whether ham, a prohibited food, was used in a can of soup, or if mass-produced marshmallows contained gelatin from pigs' hooves? Not until 1966 did the U.S. Food and Drug Administration require food labels to contain ingredients.

A few enterprising rabbis stepped in to fill the void. For a fee, they inspected the facilities of food manufacturers, suggested kosher-friendly substitutions, and, when practices met with their satisfaction, allowed their clients to advertise their approval. But some rabbis charged outrageous amounts, while others never set foot in the factories they claimed to have inspected.

Today, a kosher seal is the most frequently accorded food designation in the United States, more common than “natural,” “organic,” or “premium.”

In 1918, the Orthodox Union (OU), a local synagogue organizing body in Brooklyn, responded by creating national standards for kosher certification

and starting an inspection service with uniform standards. By stressing the size of the American Jewish market, it convinced Coca-Cola, Heinz, and other American food manufacturers to produce their goods in accordance with *kashrut*. Today, many American food products bear the OU's stamp of approval—a small encircled U—or that of another credible kosher certifying group.

The OU acted in part because it was worried about the future of Jewish solidarity as more Jews settled in suburban communities with a diversity of faiths. A large-scale kosher certification program allowed Jews to keep kosher more easily and generated revenue for Jewish publications and youth programs.

Today, a kosher seal is the most frequently accorded food designation in the United States, more common than “natural,” “organic,” or “premium.” And while Jewish religious observance is declining, the number of temple-going Jews who observe aspects of *kashrut* is growing. Some temples in the liberal Reform movement of Judaism, which does not consider *kashrut* essential to the faith, are incorporating the food code in their outreach activities. Keeping kosher will never be entirely convenient—Yoskowitz points out that the popularity of the

local foods movement poses new challenges to ascertaining the conditions in which one's dinner was prepared—but it seems destined to last. ■

MORMONISM'S MUTABLE ZION

THE SOURCE: “Visions of Zion” by Patrick Q. Mason, in *Christian Century*, Aug. 22, 2012.

JOSEPH SMITH (1805–44), WHO FOUNDED the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830, had a radical vision. Zion, the earthly community where “the Saints” would await the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ, was to be a classless commune in which Mormons would “hold all things in common,” writes Patrick Q. Mason, a professor of North American religion at Claremont Graduate University.

What happened to these early ideals? “In the late 19th and early 20th century,” Mason writes, “the church dropped many of its overtly communitarian practices and shifted toward making personal morality the mark of saintliness.” This change roughly followed the path of conservative Protestant churches at the time as they parted ways with the reform agenda of the liberal Social Gospel movement.

Mormons today tend to “downplay

the radically countercultural aspects” of Zion, such as the elimination of poverty, inequality, and war. The Mormon church instead focuses on individual morality and the importance of family.

From the beginning, Mormonism had emphasized the fundamental importance of individual rectitude.

From the beginning, Mormonism had emphasized the fundamental importance of individual rectitude. Smith rejected the concept of original sin, emphasizing human free will. “We believe that man will be punished for his own sins,” one Mormon tenet asserts, “and not for Adam’s transgression.” The theological emphasis on individual responsibility has very concrete implications for worldly affairs. Mormons also believe in a pre-Creation “war in heaven” in which Satan “sought to enslave the children of God and Christ guaranteed their freedom as moral agents,” Mason relates. Many Mormons view contemporary ideological and political clashes as a continuation of this battle. Anything that might infringe on individual moral freedom must be resisted.

At the same time, the church is widely recognized for the generous welfare programs that serve its 14 million members worldwide. It has also rapidly expanded its broader humanitarian relief efforts, which brought aid to disaster-stricken people in 58 countries in 2010.

Family is the other top concern of the Mormon church. A 1995 proclamation stipulated that “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.” This has translated into widespread Mormon opposition to same-sex marriage, and, according to Mason, an “almost universally conservative” approach to sexual ethics. But the concern with family can also yield

centrist positions, as on immigration. In 2011, the church backed the moderate Utah Compact, which opposed any immigration measures that would pry apart families, such as deportation.

What of Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney’s Mormonism? In the 1980s and early ’90s, during his time as a Boston bishop and stake president, both leading ecclesiastical positions filled by lay volunteers, he was known as “a compassionate leader who . . . often donated his own money to families in need,” Mason recounts. But all this took place within the confines of the congregation. Mason concludes that “for better or worse the radical, socially transformative vision of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young has been thoroughly domesticated.” ■

HISTORY

COLONIAL VOCABULARY

THE SOURCE: “Second Thoughts on Colonial Historians and American Indians” by James H. Merrell, in the *William and Mary Quarterly*, July 2012.

NATIVE AMERICANS NUMBER IN THE MILLIONS today, and their colonial-era ancestors often tended large farms and lived in settlements across a broad swath of

North America. But you wouldn't know that from reading most contemporary scholars' work, says James H. Merrell, a historian at Vassar College.

Merrell, who pioneered a new understanding of Native Americans in books such as *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors From European Contact Through the Era of Removal* (1989), argues that even many of the best-intentioned historians cling to a flawed vocabulary that distorts our view of history.



An 1835 print shows American Indian women tending a farm. Even today, though, historians tend to diminish the accomplishments of Native Americans, depicting them, for instance, as keepers of small gardens rather than farmers.

THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NYC

Largely inherited from the colonial era, today's terminology is an obstacle to accurately describing what is now known about early America.

Historians still commonly associate Native Americans with words related to hunting, such as "forest," "wilderness," and "wild," apparently ignoring long-known evidence of Indian agriculture. A Virginia colonist wrote in 1650 of an "immense quantity of Indian fields cleared already to our hand, by the Natives." An early New England writer admired "diverse acres being clear so that one may ride a hunting in most places of the land." Colonial armies certainly knew about large-scale Indian agriculture: They seized 70,000 bushels of corn from Cherokee farmers during the Revolutionary War.

Nonetheless, when historians do refer to indigenous farming, they tend to minimize it. While they often say that Indians "grew vegetables" in "gardens," the colonists are frequently described as having cultivated well-tended farms.

Merrell also takes issue with descriptions that give a sense of "a few scattered tribes" of Indians in parts of the country. As recently as 2006, one historian wrote that "everything west of the Alleghenies was bison" in early America. Modern maps often compound the problem,

inaccurately depicting whole regions as being devoid of indigenous inhabitants, or including only a fraction of their Native American residents. Yet John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, described the Narragansett Bay area of New England as "full of Indians."

Careless scholarship distorts the present, too. A historian's book from 2002 consigns Mohegans, Pequots, and Narragansets to the "many extinct eastern tribes," when in reality they retain the status of federally recognized nations. Creeks and Seminoles are frequently killed off by historians, even though there are tens of thousands of them in southeastern states. Another historian mentions "Indian extinction" in his book published in 2007, despite the presence of scores of tribes in the United States today.

All this loose talk is a holdover from "the imperial project of relieving Indians of their sovereignty and their land," Merrell argues. It was easier for colonists to justify pushing back some scattered Indian hunters than large populations of settled farmers.

"Surely at the dawn of a new millennium," Merrell writes, "we can at least aspire to other ways of talking about early America." ■

ARTS & LETTERS

BUT IS IT ART?

THE SOURCE: “Cash-and-Carry Aesthetics” by Jed Perl, in *The Baffler*, June 2012.

JED PERL, ART CRITIC FOR THE *NEW REPUBLIC*, is a regular gallerygoer. He finds a lot to like, but for the past few years, he and many other art lovers have felt disoriented because “the shared assumptions about the nature of art that ought to bind together our variegated experiences are nowhere to be found.” In assessing artistic value, markets have taken over the function that ideas used to have. Good

art is now simply defined as art that sells. Current art scene darlings, courting popular appeal, create work that is a mishmash of contradictory images.

Prime offenders, Perl says, are Lisa Yuskavage’s “soft-porn figure paintings, with their smarmy renderings of babes with big breasts and big hair,” and John Currin’s “slick, sleazy studies of suburban housewives.” Perl views the *Cremaster* cycle, by former model Matthew Barney, with special horror. The five-part video installation depicts the artist in “a sprawling but static pageant of athletic prowess, cross-dressing, and gender-bending.” Barney’s unbeautiful, arbitrary images



CHEIM & REID, NY AND ACME, LOS ANGELES

Bill Jensen, *With Color XVIII* (2007–8)



CHEIM & REID, NY AND ACME, LOS ANGELES

Bill Jensen, *Garden of Afflictions* (2005–6)

don't add up to anything, and the audience isn't supposed to ask for something as old hat as meaning. These artists are the children of pop art, whose practitioners often included the trappings of mass culture—such as comics and advertisements—in their creations. Their campy works were meant to be viewed ironically: Their distance from an aesthetic ideal was the point. Perl laments that today's “laissez-faire aesthetics makes a mockery of nothing. Even irony is too much of an idea.”

The arguments that once ignited artists and gallerygoers—about “representation and abstraction, form and content, high and low, good and bad”—now embarrass them. The old debates were, admittedly, often academic, or ignored the emotional component of experiencing art. But without intellectual rigor, audiences now doubt their own aesthetic experiences, even when they enjoy a certain work: Are they being had?

The sort of contemporary art that Perl applauds is based in craft, evidences deep knowledge of the masters, and follows a particular, personal vision. He champions the artist Bill Jensen, whose paintings of layered color draw on Japanese brushwork and the work of abstract expressionist greats. The paintings create both an intellectual and a felt experience: “When his

color becomes extravagantly giddy, with eye-popping oranges and purples and greens, the point is not to be campily carnivalesque but to be heartfelt, exuberant, exultant.” Jensen's admirers are devoted but, compared to those of Yuskavage, Currin, or Barney, small in number. That's fine, Perl concludes. Unlike pop music or movies, great art does not have to have something for everyone. ■

MOZART AND THE *MISERERE*

THE SOURCE: “Secret Harmony” by Kelly Grovier, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, June 8, 2012.

IT'S GOOD FRIDAY, 1770. PILGRIMS HAVE filled the Sistine Chapel for the rite of the Tenebrae. At the altar, the priest is extinguishing the candles meant to represent Christ's life on earth. Ringing through the chapel is one of Europe's most famous pieces of sacred music, Gregorio Allegri's 17th-century work *Miserere Mei*, a polyphonous choral setting of Psalm 51. Among the rapt pilgrims are 14-year-old Wolfgang Mozart and his father, Leopold. Young Mozart is not just transfixed by the music; he is committing it to memory. After the service, he will transcribe the score of the coveted work, executing a prodigious feat of musical mastery.

It will also be a major affront to the Roman Catholic Church. The church so highly prized the *Miserere Mei* that anyone who copied even a part of it risked excommunication, writes Kelly Grovier, a poet and cofounder of the *European Romantic Review*.

The work's significance goes back to Psalm 51's origins as an act of penance by King David for committing adultery. Later, in medieval London's criminal underworld, Psalm 51 became known as the "Neck Verse"; the ability to recite its lines to jailers could free the convicted of the death penalty. At the end of the 15th century, the psalm was elevated to a new level of fame: Days before his execution at the hands of Vatican agents, Florentine preacher and reformer Girolamo Savonarola produced a bracing commentary on the work that quickly became an influential Christian text.

And so King David's creation "was already vibrating with mystical, personal, and political significance" by the time Italian composer Allegri reworked a young polyphonist's musical setting of the psalm and brought it to a large audience. The piece was performed by two asymmetrical choirs, one with four

members and one with five. The arrangement used the "previously underappreciated harmonies of the 5:4 ratio," Grovier writes, "a proportion which was soon being seized on by contemporary artists and intellectuals as constituting a mathematical link between the spiritual and phenomenal worlds." The performance of the work at the venerated Tenebrae service further heightened its spiritual meaning.

The *Miserere Mei* also resonated with the space in which it was first performed, the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo had used a 5:4 ratio in laying out the frescoes of biblical scenes and other decorative features. This unique "interdependence of eye and ear" may have been one reason the church was so insistent that the piece not be performed outside the Sistine Chapel's hallowed confines.

In the end, Mozart skirted the wrath of the Vatican. But his replication of the *Miserere Mei* was unprecedented in more ways than one. In what was essentially "the first illegal download in musical history," Grovier writes, "Mozart's crime set in motion an ever-accelerating popular compulsion to possess the unpossessable." ■

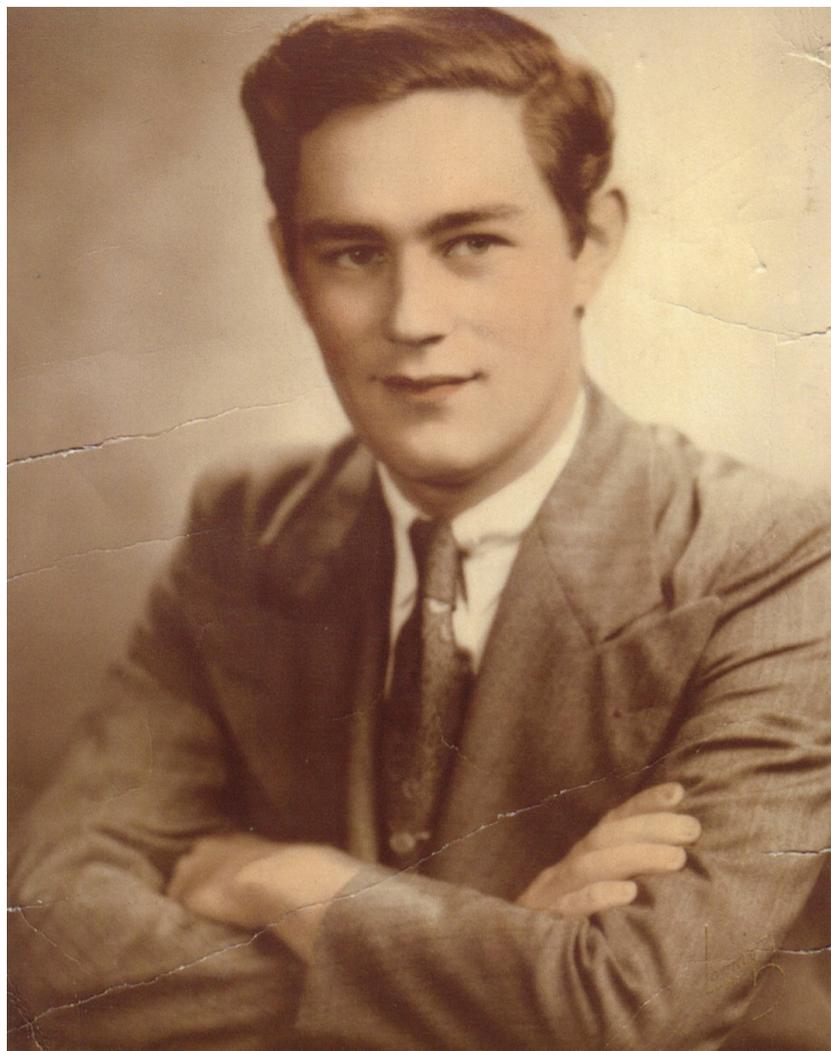
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

THE MANY LIVES OF MEMORY

THE SOURCE: “Remembering H.M.” in *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Summer 2012.

FOR MOST OF HIS LIFE, 27-YEAR-OLD HENRY Molaison had suffered from severe epilepsy. In 1953, in a bid to ease his condition, doctors performed experimental brain surgery, removing his hippocampus. Molaison’s epilepsy vanished, but so did his ability to form short- and long-term memories. He could still walk, talk, read, and dress himself, and recalled concepts, events, and people from before the operation. Yet “he remembered no events and very few facts” from after it, according to John D. E. Gabrieli, a cognitive neuroscientist at MIT, where Molaison participated in years of studies until his death in 2008.

Molaison contributed “more to our understanding of the brain than had been learned in the previous 100 years,” said Robert Desimone, a cognitive scientist at MIT. That contribution prompted Desimone, Gabrieli, and other leading neuroscientists to participate in a panel discussion honoring Molaison, with excerpts published in the *Bulletin*. By studying what he could and could not

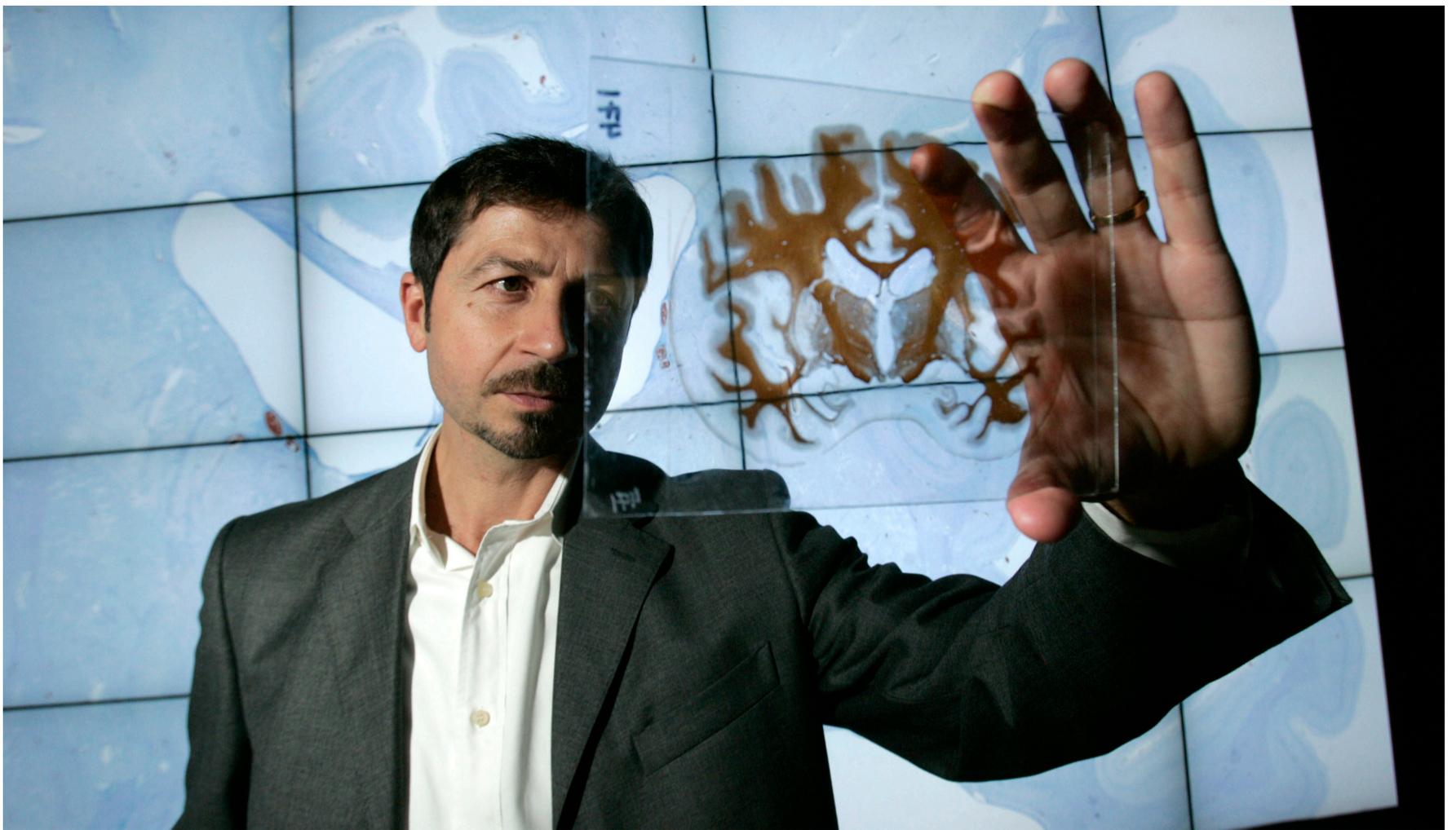


COURTESY SUZANNE CORKIN

Henry Molaison in his senior year in high school

remember, scientists determined that H.M., as he is called in the scientific literature, was able to form new memories in unexpected ways. This finding ushered in a more complex understanding of memory and cognition.

In the years after the operation, a neuropsychologist, Brenda Millner, taught H.M. to write by having him watch his hand in a mirror. He retained no memory of the sessions, or of Millner herself. H.M.’s accomplishment, which Millner chronicled in a study, opened a window onto a “separate, independent instrument of memory that allows us to be powerful skill learners,” Gabrieli said.



JOHN GIBBINS / ZUMA PRESS

Jacopo Annese, director of the University of California, San Diego's Brain observatory, holds a mounted slide from the brain of "H.M.," whose unusual injury made him an invaluable subject for scientists studying memory.

In another investigation, Gabrieli, then a graduate student, gave H.M. a list of words to read that contained the seldom-used term “bazooka.” H.M. could not remember the words on the list—or that there had been a list—but when Gabrieli asked him to name three weapons, “gun,” “knife,” and “bazooka” were the items he named. This and other experiments demonstrated that “words that are instantly forgotten leave another kind of memory trace in the brain,” Gabrieli said.

While in graduate school, Elizabeth Kensinger, now a cognitive scientist at Boston College, designed a test for H.M.

in which he had to select the famous individual from a pair of names. To her surprise, he was just as successful picking out people who became famous after his surgery as those who were famous before it. Despite the severity of his amnesia, “some kind of slow learning process allowed him to glean new knowledge,” Kensinger explained. Most of us learn new information after being exposed to it just a few times; H.M. probably used a different mechanism that allowed for learning after thousands of exposures.

H.M. helped correct the idea that an injury to just one part of the brain could obliterate the capacity to learn and re-

member. Through him, scientists realized that “memory is a fantastic diversity of different instruments geared to learn different kinds of things,” Gabrieli said. These instruments may occasionally interact, “but they lead independent lives in our brains.” ■

SILICON VALLEY'S NEXT TARGET

THE SOURCE: “The Siege of Academe” by Kevin Carey, in *The Washington Monthly*, Sept.–Oct. 2012.

FIRST SILICON VALLEY PRACTICALLY KILLED newspapers, then it delivered a devastating blow to book publishing. What iconic American industry does it have in its crosshairs now? Education, reports Kevin Carey, the director of education policy at the New America Foundation. Venture capital investment in educational technologies totaled almost \$400 million in 2011, up from less than \$100 million five years ago. “The one thing that sticks with me more than anything else,” Carey writes about a recent trip to the epicenter of the digital revolution, “is that the onslaught is shaping up to be relentless.”

The potential market is vast—education is a \$1 trillion industry in the United States. Higher education is particularly ripe for disruption, as they say

in the valley, because college students are graduating with expensive degrees, no jobs, and lots of debt. Silicon Valley start-ups hope to decouple learning and the college experience from brick-and-mortar universities.

The most important customers for these new technologies may be beyond U.S. borders, however, where opportunities for a solid education are hard to come by and a Western credential carries a lot of weight. When Stanford computer scientist Sebastian Thrun offered a free online class last year, the students from Lithuania alone outnumbered Stanford’s entire student body.

Venture capitalists are throwing money at any twentysomething with a MacBook Air and a decent idea, Carey reports. A start-up called Udemy provides professors and others a platform for creating online courses and takes 30 percent of any revenue generated from the class. The Minerva Project aims to digitally export elite college courses to developing countries. Meanwhile, the nation’s leading universities, including Harvard, Stanford, and the University of California, Berkeley, are busily developing online education platforms for no better reason, perhaps, than that they don’t want to be left behind.

Aside from personnel, the main

expense such initiatives face—cloud storage and computing—is cheap and getting cheaper. And the potential market is global and growing rapidly. Perhaps as early as the end of this decade, foreign-born workers and others who have used online tools to learn and earn degrees—“or whatever new word is invented to mean ‘evidence of your skills and knowledge,’” Carey says—will be regarded highly enough to compete for jobs with workers from traditional schools.

Then the true disruption will commence. Because these workers won’t have tons of debt, they’ll be able to accept lower wages than traditionally minted grads. Old-school colleges will then struggle and probably fail to persuade potential students of the value of ponying up so much cash for their credentials. Make no mistake, Carey says: “We may not know who and we may not know when, but someone is going to write the software that eats higher education.” ■

MR. PARADIGM

THE SOURCE: “Shift Happens” by David Weinberger, in *The Chronicle Review*, April 22, 2012.

IF YOU’VE HEARD THE PHRASE “PARADIGM shift” a few too many times, you can blame

a Harvard-trained physicist-turned historian of science named Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996). His *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, published 50 years ago, did much more than add a buzz phrase to the language. The readable 172-page treatise—more than a million copies have been sold—“did a gestalt flip on just about every assumption about the who, how, and what of scientific progress,” writes David Weinberger, a senior researcher at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School.

Kuhn obliterated the traditional notion that science proceeds on a steady linear path toward truth.

Kuhn obliterated the traditional notion that science proceeds on a steady linear path toward truth. Instead, he argued, scientists in each field are governed by “paradigms,” a collection of facts and assumptions that shape their understanding of their field and influence the kind of research they pursue. New findings that challenge a particular paradigm are rejected as flawed or otherwise dismissed—tenure decisions

are one way a paradigm is reinforced—until enough of them pile up to spur a revolution. Suddenly, for example, Newtonian mechanics gives way to quantum mechanics.

Kuhn’s idea of “incommensurability”—that scientists aren’t able to understand one paradigm while operating under the guidance of another—has been particularly controversial. It suggests, among other things, that scientists have no way of gauging if they are making progress and that truth itself does not exist.

It’s a pity, Weinberger says, that Kuhn’s

arguments have become a foundational element of a new relativism. Kuhn was not a relativist but did think that old ideas about truth were defunct. “We must learn to get along without anything at all like a correspondence theory of truth,” he wrote in 1986. Though Kuhn upended the old paradigm of what truth was and how we could get close to it, he nonetheless expected that a new one would arise. The problem, Weinberger observes, is that we have yet to “come to a new shared understanding about what it means to live truthfully as humans.” ■

OTHER NATIONS

PUTIN'S TOMB

THE SOURCE: "An Autopsy of Managed Democracy" by Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, in *Journal of Democracy*, July 2012.

ADD TO BORSHT, VODKA, AND IMPOSING FUR hats another quintessential feature of Russian life: rigged elections. Vladimir Putin returned to the presidency of the Russian Federation in March after four years of running things from behind the scenes as prime minister, retaking Russia's highest elected office on the strength of balloting that international observers condemned as fraudulent. Russians staged large, vig-

orous protests in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and other Russian cities following unfair parliamentary elections and Putin's announcement of his presidential bid, but he remains popular among much of the electorate. "Why has Putin regularly rigged presidential elections when he has been well positioned to win them even if the competition were free and fair?" ask Ivan Krastev, the chairman of the Center for Liberal Strategies in Sofia, Bulgaria, and Stephen Holmes, a law professor at the New York University School of Law. "And why did the Kremlin rig elections in a manner so flagrant that nobody could doubt that they were rigged?"



"No vote" says the makeshift muzzle. Vladimir Putin's announcement last winter that he would again seek Russia's presidency sparked unusual mass protests.

DMITRY LOVETSKY / AP IMAGES

The ploy, Krastev and Holmes say, is intentional: Fixed elections were the “central, load-bearing institutional pillar” of Putin’s regime during his first two terms as president, from 1999 to 2008. They delivered four crucial results.

First, by permitting only inept and out-of-touch competitors to appear on the ballot in the 1999 and 2003 elections, the Kremlin bolstered the sentiment among Russians that even if the final tallies hadn’t been falsified, Putin still would have won.

Second, the elections were convenient loyalty tests for the Kremlin. If regional elites couldn’t produce high turnouts for Putin or his party, they would be replaced by people who could.

Third, Putin’s lopsided electoral victories served to showcase “Russia’s national unity and to dramatize the imagined coherence and solidarity of Putin’s nation,” a unity many Russians yearned for in the wake of the disorienting breakup of the Soviet Union.

Finally, rigged elections were an easy way to display power. “It is certainly easier to engineer elections than to build roads or socialize the Chechen youth,” the authors remark. By brazenly manipulating elections, “Putin managed to conceal his regime’s deepest secret—namely, that rather than being

misgoverned, Russia is governed very laxly if at all.”

The secret’s out now, however. Putin has “trashed the very idea” of a democratic future for Russia, Krastev and Holmes say. And Western-oriented Russians, who once held out for that possibility, seem prepared to dig in for a longer fight against him. ■

BINDING AGREEMENTS

THE SOURCE: “Germany, by the Book” by Michael Naumann, in *The Nation*, June 18, 2012.

“IN GERMANY THE CULTURAL DEFINITION OF the ‘book’ as a major source of intellectual, scientific, economic, and aesthetic self-improvement has carried the day over the capitalist notion that a book is a commodity and therefore deserving of no special considerations. The book as such is sacred,” writes Michael Naumann, editor of the German magazine *Cicero* and former CEO of the American publisher Henry Holt.

In the late 19th century, German publishers and booksellers created a price cartel, a voluntary arrangement whose terms “resembled a prenuptial agreement between both sides, based on trust, notarized by a lawyer’s office, and armed with expensive sanctions.” At the heart of this

compact, enshrined in law in 2002 and since revised to cover Internet sales, Naumann argues, is the Germans' reverence for the book.

German booksellers, who must undergo an apprenticeship of up to three years and are trained in cultural history and economics, enjoy “social prestige.”

The shoestring-budget political or literary publisher benefits, as do houses churning out romances and thrillers and those that stay afloat by mixing “commercial tastes with classical literary ambitions.” Readers can choose from a variety of works, including translations. Because Germany's 2,000 publishers issue a total of 90,000 titles annually—four times as many per capita as in the United States—competition is ensured; in Europe, only Iceland and Finland have lower average book prices. (France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, and Spain also have fixed-price agreements for books.)

Whereas U.S. giants such as Amazon and Walmart routinely hawk bestsellers

at steep discounts in order to attract customers, bookstores in Germany count on profits from popular titles, using the revenue to keep worthy but low-selling works in stock. The stores also receive government help in the form of a tax advantage that allows them to write off up to 90 percent of the value of unsold books. More than 3,500 bookstores exist in Germany today; Berlin alone boasts 300. German booksellers, who must undergo an apprenticeship of up to three years and are trained in cultural history and economics, enjoy “social prestige.”

Germany's fixed-price law is under attack by European Union antitrust regulators, but for the moment, the EU has bigger financial headaches than the German publishing industry. The more immediate threat to booksellers comes from the onslaught of direct-from-publisher Internet sales and online bookstores. Traditional bookstores have seen their share of annual sales decline; it currently stands at 50 percent. Germany's rising Pirate Party, a new political group campaigning against strict intellectual property rights, has put fixed prices—indeed, any prices on communication materials, even books and music—in its sights. Finally, books themselves, those romantic objects made of paper pages inscribed with ink and stitched together



Will Africa ever industrialize? Many of the continent's millions still labor on small-scale farms that serve local markets.

CHRISTOPHER AND SALLY GABLE / GETTY IMAGES

with thread, may soon be replaced by their digital doppelgängers: Kindles, iPads, and other e-readers. ■

THE KEY TO AFRICA'S GROWTH

THE SOURCE: "Can Africa Industrialize?" by John Page, in *Journal of African Economies* (supplement), Jan. 2012.

AFRICA ISN'T KNOWN FOR ITS SMOKESTACKS. After a spurt of industrial growth following decolonization, industry declined and workers streamed into farming and other less productive sectors. (South Africa and

Mauritius are two exceptions.) Today, manufacturing accounts for a smaller share of the average low-income African country's gross domestic product than it did in 1985. But no other sector can provide the same economic dynamism. Does Africa stand any chance of becoming an industrialized, middle-income continent in the near future?

Yes—though to do so, it will need to double down on exports, argues economist John Page of the Brookings Institution. It has a long way to go: Manufacturing's share of output and employment is

much smaller than it was in China, India, and Indonesia when they reached the lower-middle income status Africa now aspires to. And yet, while the continent faces a more competitive global environment for exports than East Asia and China did when they reinvented themselves as the “world’s factory” in the 1980s and ’90s, climbing wages and growing consumption in these areas offer an opening for Africa.

Page says African policymakers should focus on policies that enhance infrastructure and promote workers’ skill development, because deficiencies in these two areas are the chief factors driving the high cost of African exports. It still takes about three months for the average African business to obtain a telephone line, and electrical outages occur almost a hundred days a year. Africa also suffers from a dearth of educated workers with business or technology skills. The continent increased its college enrollment rate by only one percent between 1990 and 2005. Such handicaps account for between 18 and 35 percent of the price of Africa’s manufactured exports. In China, in comparison, they only account for eight percent.

Africa should not attempt to become an all-around industrial powerhouse, Page cautions. Better to develop competence in one area of production, as Vietnam has

with garment assembly. At the same time, public policies that support the development of industrial centers where companies could more easily tap markets, workers, and other resources would encourage industrial growth. The time is ripe for Africa to industrialize, but “success is by no means assured,” Page writes. ■

CHINA’S IMAGINARY MIDDLE CLASS

THE SOURCE: “Crossing the 50 Percent Population Rubicon: Can China Urbanize to Prosperity?” by Kam Wing Chan, in *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Jan.–Feb. 2012.

IN CHINA, SOCIAL MOBILITY IS INEXTRICABLY tied to migration—the best-paying jobs are in cities. As more and more Chinese trade the hoe for the conveyor belt, the thinking goes, a middle class will naturally form. There are reasons to trust such a scenario: It has been a classic pattern since Britain pioneered it during the Industrial Revolution. Last year, for the first time in China’s history, more than half of the country’s population

Last year, for the first time in China’s history, more than half of the country’s population was living in cities.

(which then totaled almost 1.35 billion people) was living in cities. Furthermore, a Brookings Institution economist has estimated that China's middle class will grow from 12 percent of the population in 2010 to 50 percent by 2021.

But geographer Kam Wing Chan, of the University of Washington, Seattle, argues that the development of a Chinese middle class faces a formidable obstacle: the *hukou* system, a residential registration scheme imposed under Mao Zedong that governs local employment eligibility and access to schooling and other government services. Chan thinks it threatens to choke off the benefits of urbanization.

An ideological relative of the Soviet *propiska* system, *hukou* was originally a method for the government to manage the planned economy and ensure the proper distribution of labor. The system has persisted, and benefits remain substantially greater in urban areas. But it's very difficult for people to obtain urban *hukou* status even after living and working in a Chinese city for years.

That means that many Chinese migrant workers—Chan puts the number at 160 million—are effectively second-class citizens. They are unable to rise beyond menial, low-paying factory jobs;

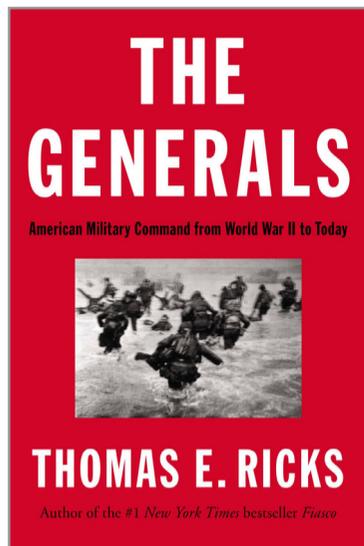
lack access to adequate unemployment compensation, pensions, and public housing; and must pay additional fees for basic services, such as public school for their children. The majority of workers with urban *hukou* receive government pension contributions and health care, for instance, but only about 10 percent of rural migrant workers get either. They are far from being a budding middle class.

Statistics from China are notoriously fuzzy, and some China watchers suggest that the migrant workers are steadily acquiring urban *hukou*. The system, they claim, may be on its way to being abolished. Chan is skeptical. According to his scrutiny of the numbers, “only a very small number of rural migrant workers are given urban *hukou* every year, given the near impossibility of obtaining one without a college education or a lot of money.”

Chan suggests that in the coming decades, China may not so much resemble Britain as Latin America. There, “urbanization has not brought a much larger consuming class, but . . . has simply shifted rural poverty to urban poverty, creating sometimes greater miseries for the poor and greater social and economic polarization.” ■

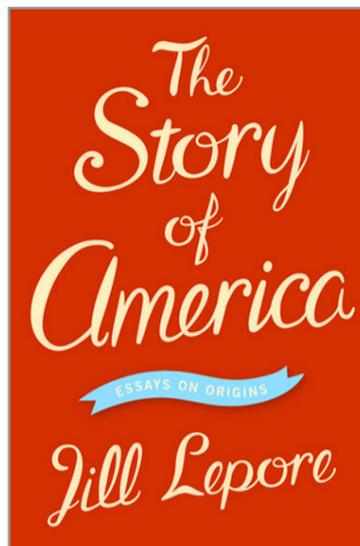
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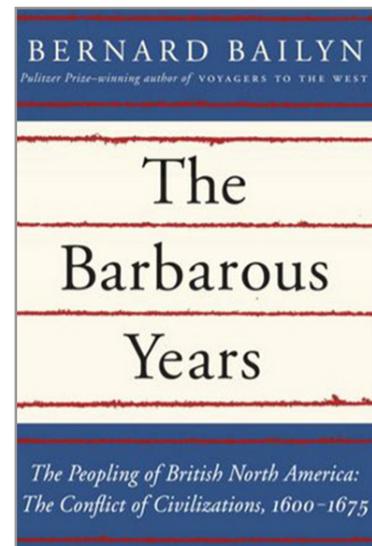
THE GENERALS
By Thomas E. Ricks
Reviewed by
Brian McAllister Linn

In a devastating review of General Tommy Frank's...



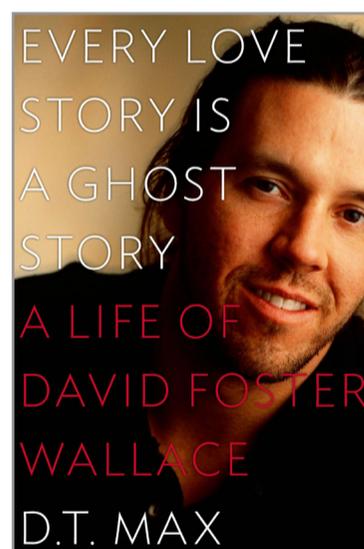
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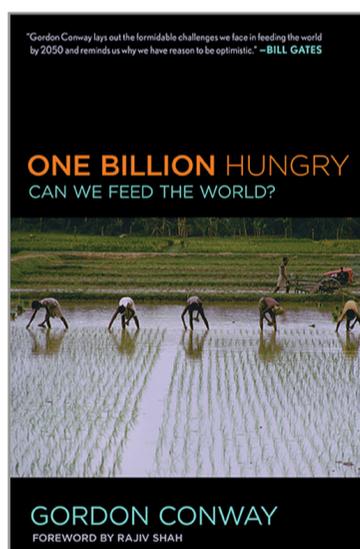
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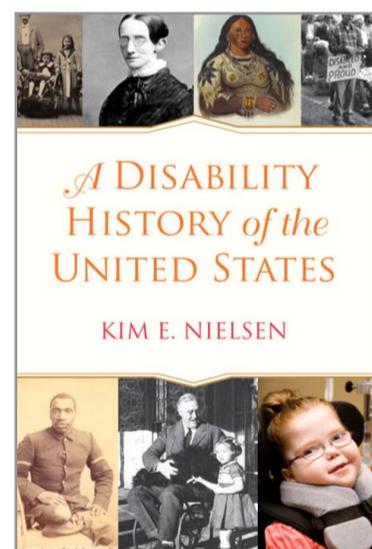
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Failure to Lead

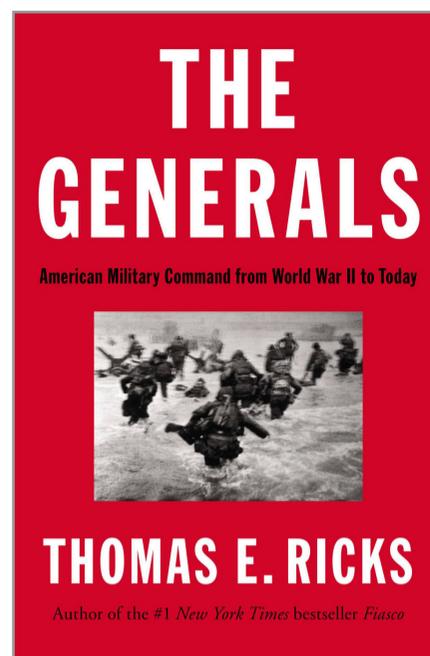
THE GENERALS:

AMERICAN MILITARY COMMAND FROM WORLD WAR II TO TODAY

REVIEWED BY **BRIAN MCALLISTER LINN**

IN A DEVASTATING REVIEW OF GENERAL Tommy Frank's 2004 autobiography, Andrew J. Bacevich observed that as the United States has become increasingly reliant on its armed forces to maintain its global position, "the quality of senior American military leadership has seldom risen above the mediocre. The troops are ever willing, the technology remarkable, but first-rate generalship has been hard to come by." This critique from Bacevich, a prominent professor of international relations at Boston University and a former Army officer, caused a firestorm in the U.S. Army—staffers at the Pentagon allegedly handed out copies with the fervor of Soviet dissidents distributing samizdat.

Within a few years relations between field officers and the brass had gotten to a point where open confrontations were occurring at many of the military schools. Whether true or not, a story circulated that students at one war college, most with some two decades of



By Thomas E. Ricks
Penguin Press
576 pp. \$32.95

service, were required to submit their questions for screening so that no visiting general might be offended. Treated like adolescents, the students responded by asking variations of "Sir, how did you become such a brilliant and handsome man, and how can I be more like you?"

In a 2007 article in *Armed Forces Journal*, Army officer Paul Yingling added fuel to the fire, declaring that the "intellectual and moral failures" evident in Iraq "constitute a crisis in American generalship." Yingling argued that, in contrast to the traditional ideal of military accountability and command responsibility, in today's Army "a private who loses a rifle suffers far greater consequences than a general



JOE SKIPPER / REUTERS / NEWS.COM

General Tommy Franks, shown briefing reporters in 2002, liked to talk tactics, not strategy. The details man bungled both the attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, writes author Thomas Ricks. Such failures have become commonplace among top U.S. military leaders.

who loses a war.” With the exception of a few senior commanders—David Petraeus, Martin Dempsey, Ray Odierno—and some of the recently promoted junior officers, the 11-year global war on terror has not been kind to the reputa-

tion of U.S. Army generals.

In Tom Ricks’s provocative study of the origins and consequences of this decline, he asks the fundamental questions American policymakers, citizens, and military personnel have largely chosen to ignore: Why has the U.S. Army, which in World War II produced a galaxy of superior general officers—George C. Marshall, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Matthew B. Ridgway, James Gavin, George S. Patton, Lucian Truscott—subsequently gone to war under commanders such as William C. Westmoreland, Norman Schwarzkopf, and Tommy Franks? Why have fellow officers held so few senior military leaders accountable for their strategic failures? Why has the practice of superior officers relieving from command those who don’t measure up—standard operating procedure during World War II—virtually disappeared from the U.S. armed forces? And, as a corollary, why, since the Korean War, is relief from command more likely to be a consequence of moral rather than military mistakes, and more often than not

the decision of political rather than military leaders? Why has the U.S. Army consistently produced dedicated, intelligent, articulate, innovative, and adaptive field-grade officers, and equally consistently failed to promote them to its highest ranks?

Ricks is well qualified to take on the task of deconstructing the complexities of American military command. He has established his credentials as one of the nation's foremost military analysts in a long career as a journalist and defense commentator for *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*. His 2006 book *Fiasco* delivered a devastating critique of the George W. Bush administration's misguided military adventurism and the U.S. military leaders who executed it. It was, and remains, probably the most influential work on the early years of the Iraq war, shaping the narrative for all subsequent coverage of that conflict. I've assigned *Fiasco* to my military history classes, and by far the strongest support for its analysis comes from veterans. One Marine Corps drill sergeant confessed to throwing her copy across the room every three pages and called it "fucking professionally embarrassing, sir." But she insisted I assign it to every subsequent class. Another veteran responded

to a fellow student's criticism that someone should "tell the Army's version" with the comment, "Dude, *Fiasco* IS the Army's version. Who do you think provided him all his sources?"

Why has the Army consistently produced dedicated, intelligent, articulate, innovative, and adaptive field-grade officers, and equally consistently failed to promote them to its highest ranks?

In *The Generals*, Ricks provides a historical overview of U.S. Army command since World War II by studying some two dozen Army generals, from Marshall to Petraeus. This approach has been taken before, but almost inevitably in treatments only slightly less hagiographic than the generals' own memoirs. Ricks provides a refreshingly candid assessment both of American generals and of the Army that gave them command.

Taking George C. Marshall as the general who made it all work, Ricks identifies the personal characteristics Marshall viewed as essential for leadership:

common sense, professional knowledge, physical fitness and stamina, loyalty, determination, optimism, and the ability to work within a group. Marshall was ruthless in removing officers he believed incapable of meeting his high standards; as Army chief of staff he fired some 600 before World War II began. Of the 42 senior officers who in 1941 commanded units at the division level or higher in the Louisiana Maneuvers, the testing ground for the Army's upper-level leadership, only 11 went on to command in wartime. Ricks makes the convincing argument that the relief-from-command system in World War II cleared away the incompetents and allowed those who excelled to rise quickly.

First and foremost among these beneficiaries was Dwight D. Eisenhower, who not only embodied all of Marshall's criteria for a general's character but also profited from Marshall's purge of older, less competent superiors. In his treatment of Eisenhower and several other generals, Ricks makes a strong case that Marshall's system of identifying good officers and removing bad ones was largely institutionalized within the Army during World War II. When Matthew B. Ridgway took over the dispirited Eighth Army in Korea in 1951, he followed Marshall's example, ruthlessly

purging officers whom he believed had failed to provide leadership.

What has happened since then? At the institutional level, the very size of the post-World War II service, its increasing bureaucratization, and the need to protect Army interests against those of the other services made relief for cause institutionally unacceptable. In Vietnam, Ricks notes, superiors cautioned generals such as William DePuy who did relieve officers that they were damaging both their own careers and the Army. Whereas in World War II relief was taken as proof the system worked, after the Korean War relief was increasingly interpreted as a failure of the Army, and thus unacceptable.

Unwilling, or unable, to remove mediocre officers, superiors have resorted to micromanaging. This has created a culture in which top officers control rather than command, and in which subordinates are promoted for their compliance, not their initiative. Compounding the problem is the fact that the Army personnel system provides only a very short time for officers to command tactical forces. They are under enormous pressure to perform well—another indirect result of micromanagement—and often respond by ignoring requirements they view as nonessential (such as educating

junior officers for command duties) and focusing on those that enhance their careers. Above all, both senior and junior officers have learned to avoid risk, since mediocre performance will probably not hurt one's career, but making a mistake may destroy it.

When this "zero defects" Army has gone to war, these micromanaging leaders have proven unable to adjust to chaos and complexity, and their subordinates have been either unable or not permitted to take action. The perils of command by micromanagement became apparent during the Vietnam War, when company commanders engaged in active combat with the enemy received a torrent of often-conflicting advice from successive layers of helicoptering senior leadership. And despite the Army's post-Vietnam sloganeering about its commitment to commander's intent, mission-type orders (telling a subordinate what needs to be done, but not how to do it), and practicing leadership, Ricks finds evidence of the same micromanagement, and the same aversion to risk, in both the Persian Gulf War and the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Enraging and informative as it is, *The Generals* raises several important unresolved questions that are sure to spawn further debate among historians

and military intellectuals. First, are the U.S. Army's post-World War II leadership problems essentially individual or systemic? Has the Army in the last half-century simply had a run of bad luck in the pool of senior officers available to lead its forces, or has its personnel system consistently proved incapable of generating superior wartime commanders? The book's organization—each chapter devoted to an individual general—tends to reinforce the thesis that failure is the result of having the wrong man in the wrong job, but much of the weight of Ricks's analysis, as well as his recommendations for change, points to systemic problems. It is not clear if he believes Army wartime command could be improved by addressing the systemic problem of failing to identify—and require for promotion—those innate qualities Marshall esteemed, or if it should be improved by fostering more opportunities to practice genuine leadership free from micromanagement.

The tension in Ricks's analysis between systemic and individual failure is nowhere more apparent than in his treatment of William C. Westmoreland, the general who commanded U.S. ground forces in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968. Ricks cites historian Stanley Karnow, who describes Westmoreland as a

quintessential 1950s “organization man” adrift in the complexities of the Vietnam War. But is Ricks defining an organization man as someone who compromises his individuality and integrity for the institution? Under that definition, a far better example would be the Army chief of staff during the Vietnam War, General Harold K. Johnson, who is alleged to have considered resigning over the conduct of the war, but went along with Westmoreland and President Lyndon B. Johnson because he thought that to disagree might hurt the Army.

A second question concerns the nature of modern generalship itself. Marshall did not have to rely on his fellow officers for much of the expertise needed to mobilize, train, and deploy the military resources of the United States. A host of civilians (the dollar-a-year men) applied their corporate expertise to solving the Army’s problems. In contrast, the modern Army general usually comes from the operational career path, with extensive experience in the management of troops and their equipment. But as a general, within the space of two years he or she may be expected to write the service’s new combat concept, serve as president of a school, oversee the training of Afghan forces, or direct the design and testing of a new tank. For several decades,

Army generals have been in a perpetual cycle of learning and then leaving an assignment, seldom staying long enough to see any operation through to completion. Small wonder that many of the most intelligent and innovative become frustrated and opt out of higher command, leaving the uppermost ranks to those adept at climbing over the burned-out remains of their staffs, avoiding risk, and cultivating allies.

The nation’s high command seems more focused on budgets, technology, and prestige than on winning wars.

A third question is whether excellence in wartime generalship is actually a priority for the U.S. armed forces or the nation. Ricks makes a convincing argument for restricting most of his analysis to the U.S. Army’s generalship, but many of his criticisms—careerism, conformity, risk aversion, strategic mediocrity—could be applied to the senior leadership throughout the armed forces. Despite perpetual campaigns to make every servicemember from privates to generals an exemplar of the “warrior spirit,” the nation’s high

command seems more focused on budgets, technology, and prestige than on winning wars.

An outsider reading the Army vision statements of the last decade might well conclude that the service was more concerned with developing the Future Combat Systems (an estimated \$160 billion “system-of-systems” that included a Future Force Warrior infantry combat system, a fleet of high-tech vehicles, and an “intelligent munitions system”) than with resolving the operational problems in Iraq and Afghanistan. The congressionally mandated Quadrennial Defense Review, an analysis of the nation’s strategic goals and possible threats that is reputed to require the personnel equivalent of an infantry division to complete, is just one of the outside demands placed on the armed forces. Indeed, at least since the Korean War, Congress

has seemed more willing to tolerate military mediocrity—even to the point of losing a war—than to risk military mobilization, increased taxation, equitable national service, or a reduction of the bloated military-industrial complex.

In short, perhaps Americans, both civilian and uniformed, are getting the military leadership they want. This notion is far beyond Ricks’s stated purview in *The Generals*, but after reading his entertaining, provocative, and important book, it is hard not to ask such questions. ■

BRIAN MCALLISTER LINN is a professor of history and Ralph R. Thomas Professor in Liberal Arts at Texas A&M University and the author of several works of military history, including *The Echo of Battle: The Army’s Way of War* (2007) and *The Philippine War, 1899–1902* (2000). He was a Wilson Center fellow in 2004–2005.

History for "We the People"

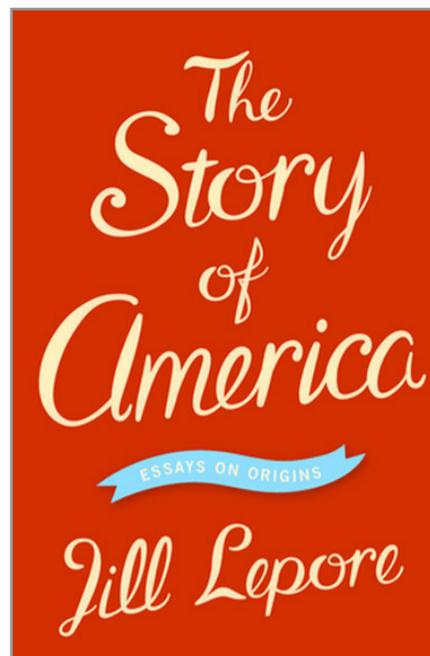
THE STORY OF AMERICA:

ESSAYS ON ORIGINS

REVIEWED BY **BROOKE ALLEN**

THE ERA WHEN SERIOUS HISTORIANS ASPIRED to write works that also qualified as literature are long, long gone. During the Enlightenment, David Hume and Edward Gibbon wrote prose as grand as any in our language, and brought sophisticated literary techniques to the craft of history writing. Their tradition was carried on by the great historians of the 19th century: Thomas Babington Macaulay, Hippolyte Taine, Francis Parkman, Alexis de Tocqueville, George Bancroft, Jacob Burckhardt, and Thomas Carlyle all composed their epics with an eye to the literary immortality they eventually achieved. Exciting, mellifluous narrative was, to them, no insignificant part of the historian's craft, and the result is that while many of their ideas are no longer groundbreaking, we continue to read them for their flair, their masterful syntax, and most of all their big-picture perspective.

The 20th century saw a narrowing of focus, an increased specialization and



By Princeton Univ. Press

Jill Lepore

416 pp. \$27.95

professionalization. Historians, like social scientists, joined university faculties and began to write more for their peers than for the general reader, and—again like social scientists, not to mention literary scholars—to develop an opaque jargon that might almost have been designed to repulse the non-specialist. “Popular” history was often left to nonacademic historians, whose work was enjoyed by readers but looked at askance by the professionals—viz. the academy’s snide disparagement of the biographer David McCullough, whose work has provided pleasure and edification to millions.

But there continue to be a few academic historians who write for a broad public, and one of the most visible is

Jill Lepore, the Harvard historian who is also a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. Tellingly, Lepore's first ambition was to be a writer rather than a scholar, and she did an undergraduate major in English literature before going on for a PhD in American studies at Yale. Throughout her career, she has adhered to the storytelling standards of an earlier era: Her historical works have garnered numerous mainstream honors (including a nomination for the Pulitzer Prize), and she contributes frequently to widely read periodicals apart from *The New Yorker*. She has even written (along with fellow scholar Jane Kamensky) a frothy romantic novel set in 1770s Boston.

The Story of America is a new collection of Lepore's essays, almost all of which initially appeared in *The New Yorker*. As with so many essay collections, a rather awkward attempt has been made to corral the disparate pieces under an overarching theme, in this case that of "American origins"—to show, as the jacket blurb informs us, "how American democracy is bound up with the history of print." Not all the pieces quite fit the mold (there are essays, for instance, on Edgar Allan Poe, Charlie Chan, and Clarence Darrow that have quite different things to say), but there are enough of them to make a satisfactory whole, from a dis-

cussion of John Smith's famously unreliable account of the founding of Jamestown to a disquisition on the history of the presidential inaugural address, culminating with that of Barack Obama. According to Lepore's own description, "The essays in this book concern documents—things like travel narratives, the Constitution, ballots, the inaugural address, the presidential biography, the campaign biography, the IOU, and the dime novel. Historical inquiry relies on standards of evidence because documents aren't to be trusted." Neither, she implies, are grand narratives:

To say that the United States is a story is not to say that it is fiction; it is, instead, to suggest that it follows certain narrative conventions. All nations are places, but they are also acts of imagination. Who has a part in a nation's story, like who can become a citizen and who has a right to vote, isn't foreordained, or even stable. The story's plot, like the nation's borders and the nature of its electorate, is always shifting. Laws are passed and wars are fought to keep some people in and others out. Who tells the story, like who writes the laws and who wages the wars, is always part of that struggle.

A number of the essays in this collection illustrate this contention in sometimes startling ways. It's important for us to remember, in this era of vocal constitutional "originalists," that the Founders never foresaw many things we now consider inevitable—such as universal suffrage, to take an obvious example. After all, as Lepore reminds us, the now-hallowed word "democracy" was actually considered a slur until the advent of Andrew Jackson in the 1820s, and democracy's rise "was neither inevitable nor swift. It countered prevailing political philosophy. If democracy is rule by the people and if the people are, as Federalists like John Adams believed, 'the common Herd of Mankind'—the phrase was a commonplace—then democracy is the government of the worst, the tyranny of the idle, the ignorant, the ill informed." For a century and a half, it has been the done thing to deride this theory as reactionary and to poke fun at Adams as a relic of monarchism. From the vantage point of the 21st century, however, as we observe the fruits of 200 years of Jacksonian democracy in both our elected government and our national discourse, one is tempted to give Adams credit for a little more sense on the subject than he normally gets.

All evidence to the contrary, we con-

tinue to believe, deep in our hearts, that the Founders' "We the People" meant *all* the people, not just the propertied white men. We also seem to believe that the act of voting was always an inalienable right, justly administered—hence our righteous outrage when innovations such as the Diebold voting machine or, currently, the South Carolina Voter ID law are introduced. Lepore's fascinating essay "Rock, Paper, Scissors" puts the voting booth into historical perspective, demonstrating that we don't know nearly as much as we think we do about our political institutions. In the early years of the Republic, voters had to write their own ballots, and the potential for manipulation, intimidation, and falsification was enormous:

Early paper voting was, to say the least, a hassle. You had to bring your own ballot, a scrap of paper. Then you had to (a) remember and (b) know how to spell the names and titles of every candidate and office. If "John H. Jones" was standing for election, and you wrote "John Jones," your vote would be thrown out. (If you doubt how difficult this is, try it. I disenfranchise myself with "comptroller.") As suffrage expanded—by the time Andrew

Jackson was elected president in 1828, nearly all white men could vote—scrap-voting had become more or less a travesty, not least because the newest members of the electorate, poor men and immigrants, were the least likely to know how to write.

A travesty, yes, but the method by which it was eventually improved turned out to be a mixed blessing at best.

Political parties stepped into the breach by printing ballots in partisan newspapers (*all* early American newspapers were openly partisan) that came to be called “party tickets,” and listed the entire slate of candidates for their favored party. For the voter, there was no need to know how to write—or to read, for that matter. This innovation facilitated the rise of the major parties (thus limiting voters’ choices) and led to “massive fraud, corruption, and intimidation.” (The development of the party system was another eventuality the Founders did not plan for, and would not have liked; in fact, in his

Farewell Address, George Washington warned that “the alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism.”) It was not until the 1890s that America adopted the so-called Australian ballot, “with its radical provision that governments should provide ballots.”



Thomas Nast’s political cartoons helped bring down the New York City political machine of William “Boss” Tweed in the 1870s. Reformers in many American cities were outraged by the Boss’s blatant manipulation of voting.

CORBIS

It's clear that many aspects of our political culture that we look on as sacrosanct and traditional are in reality nothing of the sort, and Lepore is at her most provocative when she takes these on. In another excellent essay, "To Wit," she discusses the history of the presidential inaugural address, a custom that, like so many in our political culture, developed almost accidentally. There is no mention of such an address in the Constitution, which calls only for an oath of affirmation; Washington inadvertently set a precedent when he addressed Congress after being sworn in at Federal Hall. His address was characteristically brief and to the point, but subsequent presidents saw the inauguration as a forum for populist oratory and developed the address accordingly: The worst was William Henry Harrison, whose speech went on for more than two hours and brought on the pneumonia that would send him to the grave a month later. Length did not make for quality, as James Garfield noted in his diary: "I have half a mind to make none. Those of the past, except Lincoln's, are dreary reading." Arthur Schlesinger Jr., nearly a century later, thought much the same thing: "The platitude quotient tends to be high, the rhetoric stately and self-serving, the ritual obsessive, and the surprises few."

Of the inaugural address, James Garfield noted in his diary: "I have half a mind to make none. Those of the past, except Lincoln's, are dreary reading."

Lepore's strength as a popular historian is her ability to make her target audience—informed but non-specialist readers—take a second look at the political culture we have long taken for granted, and realize that our system was not preordained, not historically inevitable, not even, always, very well planned. A number of these essays are surprising and enlightening; invariably, they are also too short and simplistic. But this is because they are "popular" works, tailored to the attention span of the *New Yorker* reader. We should be grateful that they are also tailored to the *New Yorker's* standards of literacy and elegance. Let's hear it for popular history! ■

BROOKE ALLEN is the author of several books, including *Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers* (2006). She teaches literature at Bennington College.

Bloody New World

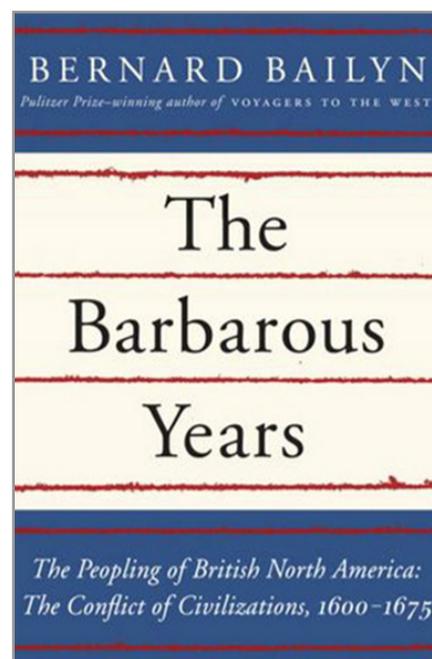
THE BARBAROUS YEARS:

THE PEOPLING OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA: THE CONFLICT OF CIVILIZATIONS, 1600–1675

REVIEWED BY **GRAHAM HODGES**

BERNARD BAILYN HAS WRITTEN SEMINAL books in the field of Atlantic history, a new way of looking at the past that argues, against the usual view that America was born in splendid isolation, that the peoples, governments, and economies of Europe, the Americas, and Africa have profoundly affected one another since the 15th century. Now Bailyn provides a powerful synthesis of America's role in the Atlantic world between 1600 and 1675. Knowledgeable readers of his massive oeuvre may approach this new book confident in the promise of expert, supple prose, dazzling research, a keen grasp of important historical questions, and strong, if not always agreeable, answers.

For those less familiar with Bailyn, consider that he has been awarded two Pulitzers, and is Adams University Professor and James Duncan Phillips



By Bernard Bailyn

Knopf

640 pp. \$35

Professor of Early American History emeritus at Harvard University, where he trained dozens of graduate students who populate the nation's history departments and frequently win Pulitzers, Bancrofts, and other major prizes for historical writing. After his retirement from formal teaching, he founded the influential International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World at Harvard, which has attracted hundreds of young professors from around the world. Their works provide a good share of the secondary literature of *The Barbarous Years*. Bailyn, who recently turned 90, sets a lofty example for his fellow historians with his meticulous and extraordinary scholarship.



This painting, created around 1665 by Johannes Vingboons, shows a Manhattan vastly different than today's, but then as now, visitors to the city were impressed by the number and diversity of its inhabitants.

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK / CORBIS

Bailyn's introduction indicates that *The Barbarous Years* is a prequel to his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Voyagers to the West* (1986). In *Voyagers*, he analyzed a massive register of some 10,000 immigrants who sailed from Britain to America shortly before the American Revolution. Bailyn reconstructed their experience by emphasizing these immigrants' travels, communities, and networks. There were criticisms along with the accolades. Reviewers wondered how Bailyn could conclude that that his voyagers were typical of the time; one reader asked if the

many enslaved Africans forcibly brought to American shores might be as characteristic of our colonial forebears as the British immigrants. Still, Bailyn's demographic work, superb style, and command of sources constructed the emerging architecture of Atlantic history.

In *Voyagers* and a slim companion book, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (1988), Bailyn argued that the experiences of immigrants in North America were expansions of domestic mobility in their nations, that American settlement was not uniform but highly

differentiated, and that the main catalyst for population growth and recruitment was land and labor needs, which were transformed by American conditions. He concluded that American culture in the early modern era was the exotic far western periphery, a marchland of European metropolitan culture.

The Barbarous Years extends Bailyn's methods in those books back into the 17th century, with important innovations. To support his general argument that every English colony had to go through barbarous years before achieving stability, which was gained only through multiple bloody wars against native peoples, Bailyn has constructed a sturdy narrative. Lacking demographic databases, he primarily relies on personal stories. Sensitive to criticism that earlier books had too narrow a compass, Bailyn now presents a fuller account of native peoples and new arrivals, including English Protestants and Catholics, Walloons, and African, Dutch, German, Swedish, and Finnish immigrants. He investigates the world of native peoples east of the Mississippi and, separately, that of European settlers. Roughly the first third of the book is about Virginia and Maryland. Bailyn then shifts to Dutch New Amsterdam (present-day New York City), followed by a sparkling chapter on New

Sweden (in the Delaware River valley). The final third of the book focuses on Plymouth Colony and New England.

Virginia's seasoning years were especially bad. The settlers endured terrible starvation in 1609, when their diet progressed from horses, cats, and rats to shoe leather.

For each colony, Bailyn carefully reconstructs settlers' origins, ruminates on the quality and number of migrants, and reveals the demography and architecture of each settlement. Virginia's seasoning years were especially bad. Bailyn details the terrible starvation that settlers endured in 1609, when their diet progressed from horses, cats, and rats to shoe leather. The most desperate dug up corpses. According to an English settler, one man murdered his wife, "Ripped the Childe out of her woambe . . . Chopped the Mother in pieces and sallted her for his foode." A fleet carrying more settlers and life-saving provisions arrived the following spring.

Gradually, the Virginia Company of

London sought much-needed labor. It hoped to recruit skilled craftsmen, but could only enlist immigrants from the “idle crue . . . of lascivious sonnes . . . bad servants . . . and ill husbands” who would rather starve than work, wrote an employee of the company. Joining them were “Hammerours,” roughly 150 soldiers hardened from wars against the Dutch who were imported to prepare the Indians for, as colonial promoter Richard Hakluyt put it, “our preachers’ hands.” As native peoples resisted further incursions inland, Virginians battled them with particular ferocity. The Hammerours were rough masons, Bailyn notes, “typical of the plundering, half-vagabond troops of the time who were traded among commanders like cattle and whose service was likely to be cut short by death under degrading conditions.” The Hammerours, who reappeared in many colonies, soon immersed Virginia in deadly wars against native peoples.

Bailyn’s tight focus on settlement, war, demography, and material culture at times limits other approaches to a new cultural history of the early colonies. For example, while he offers useful demographic detail about the vagrant children sent over as labor in 1619 and the servant women imported as wives,

other than short descriptions drawn from ship manifests, few details surface to enable us to see these individuals as more than numbers. None achieve the meaning with which Kathleen Brown imbues the storied Thomas/ine Hall, a transgendered laborer in 1620s Virginia, in *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (1996).

While settlers’ intentions toward native peoples were more liberal in nearby Catholic Maryland than they were in Virginia, Maryland nonetheless descended into a plundering time accompanied by devastating anxiety over Indian attacks. Still, small freeholders arduously carved out tobacco plantations with hard work, discipline, calculation, and some luck. Matching such vaunted qualities was ruthless barbarity toward those who were powerless, be they Indians, Africans, or fellow Europeans. Prosperity came from acquiring indentured servants, some in voluntary service, and many not. As in Virginia, sturdy ne’er-do-wells, prostitutes, and orphaned or kidnapped children constituted coerced labor.

Bailyn argues that the African slave trade was marginal before the 1660s. He dismisses the importance of creole free blacks living in the Chesapeake region

before 1670, contending that their numbers were too small and their impact easily exaggerated, an interpretation at odds with that in Ira Berlin's influential work *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (1998), in which creoles play a major role. Bailyn had much more to say about slavery in his recent book of essays, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (2005).

Such diminution of the black experience mars Bailyn's otherwise nuanced appraisal of the New Netherlands. Beaver pelts proved to be an inadequate staple commodity, and the colony struggled through mismanagement and incompetently waged wars against the Indians. New Netherlands began to thrive in the 1640s as more than 2,000 immigrants arrived from all over northern Europe, bringing the total population to 3,500. As in Maryland and Virginia, their land ambitions reached into Indian territories, sparking violent conflicts in 1641 and 1655. New Amsterdam's leaders needed an economic rationale for the colony; its farmers needed labor.

Enter the slave trade, with direct imports from Africa; by 1664, blacks, free and enslaved, constituted nearly a quarter of New Amsterdam's population. In *The Barbarous Years*, they remain nameless. That's too bad, because many were

interesting characters. Manuel de Gerrit de Reus, "the Giant," for example, was sentenced to death by lot after a tavern brawl resulted in the death of Jan Premero, another black. Gerrit frustrated his executioner by breaking two nooses and consequently was granted clemency, a decision that married Dutch and African beliefs in supernatural powers. Overall, Bailyn's portrait of slavery's emergence in New Amsterdam is somewhat flat. Given his fine insights into the importance of religion in New Amsterdam and elsewhere, Bailyn misses the chance to explain why, for example, Dutch pietists became the most intransigent and dominant slaveholders in the American north, extending human bondage in the Mid-Atlantic well into the 19th century.

Much more satisfying is Bailyn's recreation of New Sweden along the Delaware River, with its Mennonite settlers, and the visionary Pieter Plockhoy's passionate plans for human equality. Bailyn's extensive skills at demography, material history, and ideological history are on full display in this highly original chapter. In 1663, with the colony now under Dutch control, Mennonites, led by Plockhoy, strived to create an ideal society, "free of corruption," Bailyn writes, "a beacon for aspiring humanity." Plockhoy's utopian community did not

last long, yet it was a model for innumerable utopias to come.

Another planned paradise was under way 400 miles to the north in Puritan Plymouth. Bailyn reminds us that William Bradford, the Pilgrim leader, would ever deny that the members of his flock were “Familists,” or radical levelers seeking an “ecstatic union with Christ.” They were much more pragmatic, a quality Bailyn unravels in the several chapters on the Puritans.

The Puritans had the advantages of family immigration, that famous work ethic, and, above all, the presence of intellectuals who could guide the colony through its innumerable crises.

Their insights were needed as the Puritans slipped into the barbaric slaughter of Indians in the Pequot Wars, which reached a climax in 1637. As much as the Puritans feared native peoples, they guarded constantly against antinomianism, the belief that faith alone, not moral law, can help the individual achieve salvation, a tenet that undercut the authority of Puritan ministers. As Bailyn details, Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, Samuel Gorton, and others challenged Puritan orthodoxy and were summarily banished. By the 1650s, merchants, clerics, and university professors topped New England’s social hierarchy.

We don’t learn much from *The Barbarous Years* about Pennsylvania, New Jersey, or the Carolinas, as those colonies were founded only in the 1670s. Nor does Bailyn spend much time on the French and Spanish colonies. After all, as its subtitle indicates, his book stops at 1675—the year that saw the beginning of Metacom’s Rebellion, also known as King Philip’s War, which nearly wiped out Puritan society. Simultaneously, a motley crew of angry servants, enslaved blacks, and Indian-phobic farmers led by the sparrow nobleman Nathaniel Bacon almost destroyed Virginia. In *American Slavery/American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (1975), Edmund Morgan, Bailyn’s fellow nonagenarian historian, brilliantly analyzed Bacon’s Rebellion as the big bang that created white populism and black slavery. To read Bailyn’s insights into Bacon, Metacom, and Edmund Morgan, I will have to watch for the next volume in his grand series. After reading *The Barbarous Years*, I can’t wait. ■

GRAHAM HODGES is the George Dorland Langdon Jr. Professor of History and Africana and Latin American Studies at Colgate University. His recent books include *David Ruggles: A Radical Black Abolitionist and the Underground Railroad in New York City* (2010) and a revised edition of *New York City Cartmen, 1667–1850* (2012).

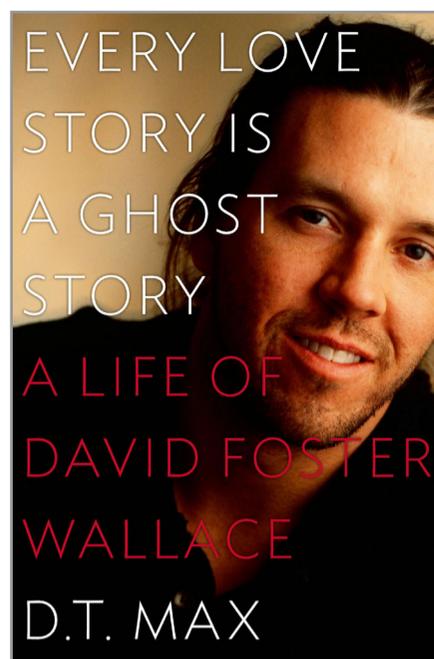
Infinite Rest

EVERY LOVE STORY IS A GHOST STORY:

A LIFE OF DAVID FOSTER WALLACE

REVIEWED BY JARED BROSKY

IN 2008, DAVID FOSTER WALLACE HANGED himself at his home in California. He had emerged on the literary scene in 1987 with his first novel, *Broom of the System*, but is probably best known for *Infinite Jest*, published nine years later. The famously hefty novel, with its hundreds of endnotes, rendered America's relationship with its appetites in an original voice—a new language that was sprawling and obsessive in a way that suited its subject. By the time Wallace died, he had also published three short-story collections, two collections of essays, and a book-length pop-science essay on infinity. Last year, his longtime publisher released *The Pale King*, the novel he was working on when he died. Wallace accumulated detractors as well as fanboys, but few neglected to acknowledge his outsize talent and uncommon intellect. His impact was such that only four years



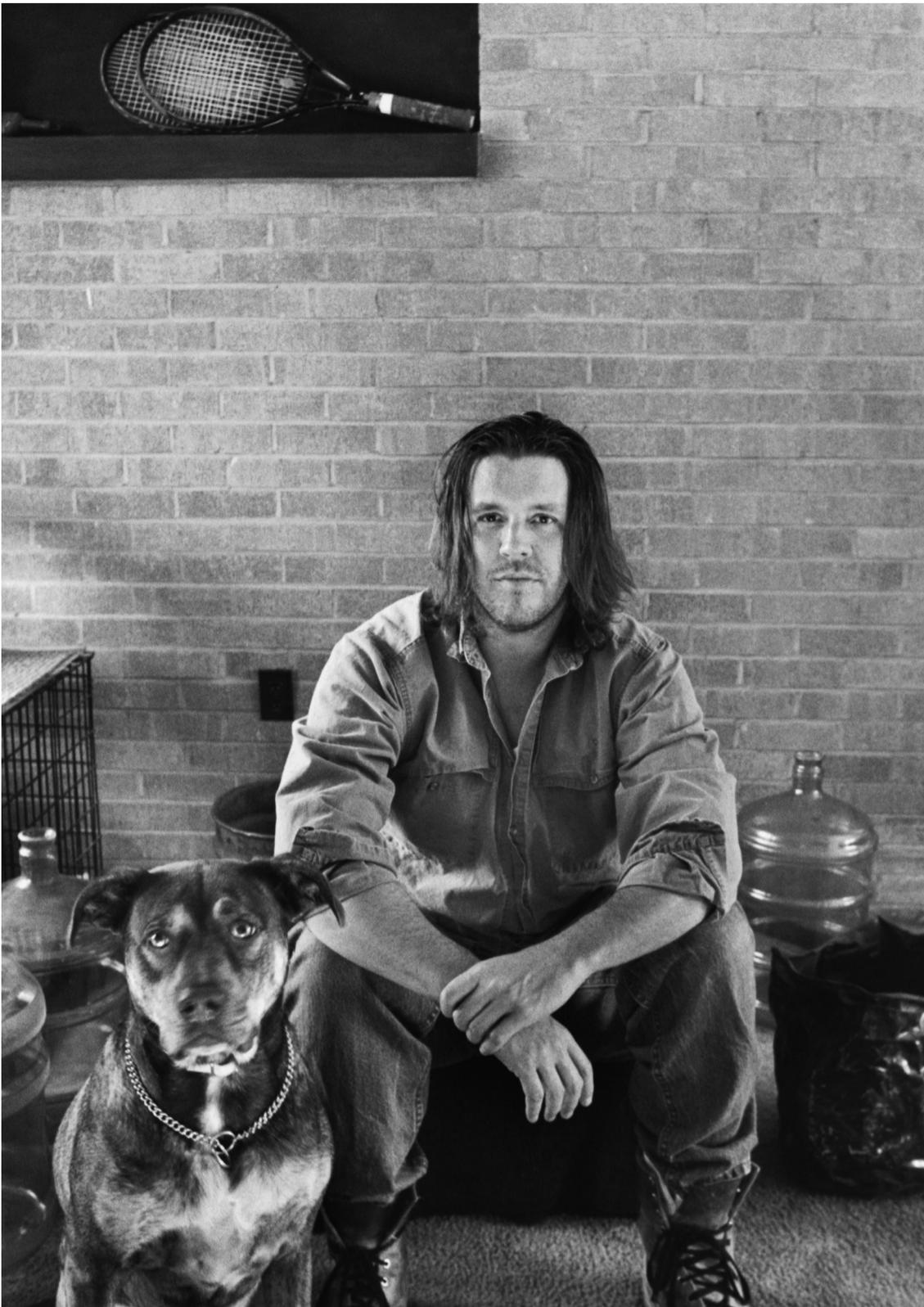
By D. T. Max

Viking

356 pp. \$27.95

after his death, we have a biography on our hands—*New Yorker* staff writer D. T. Max's *Every Love Story Is a Ghost Story*.

Biographies this contemporary with their subject are most often written about celebrities, and to the extent Wallace might be classified as one, *Every Love Story* fills a similar demand. Inquiring minds are nothing new, but for all the appetites Wallace wrangled into *Infinite Jest*, our collective jones for information has truly come into its own since the novel's publication 16 years ago, sharpened by unprecedented access to data. While Max's biography may owe its magazine pacing and early arrival to this dynamic, it is nonetheless the first to step into the very real void



MARION ETTLINGER / CORBIS OUTLINE

Writer David Foster Wallace, photographed here in 2001, loved dogs and even considered opening a shelter for strays.

left by Wallace's sudden and voluntary departure at the age of 46—a loss that is still hard to measure, of a writer doing the important work of mapping out a landscape that was familiar and yet had somehow gone uncharted.

An artist's biographer must attempt to identify the underpinnings of art in

life, and Max obliges, exploring Wallace's intellectual evolution and literary influences, employing a good deal of correspondence with fellow luminaries and forebears—letters to Jonathan Franzen and Don DeLillo, whose responses are often conspicuously absent—and documenting the struggles with depression that affected most of Wallace's adult life. The effect of Wallace's life on his art is palpable, particularly in his unsettlingly acute portraits of depression in the short stories "The Depressed Person" and "Good Old Neon," the latter of which depicts the recursive mental patterns of a narrator who will ultimately commit suicide.

Some of the connections Max so matter-of-factly states, however, are lacking in nuance. Of Wallace's time at a recovery house, he writes, "Wallace created dozens of characters, many capturing aspects of how he saw himself." The character Joelle Van Dyne in *Infinite Jest* is a stand-in for writer Mary Karr, the target

of Wallace's real-life infatuation. And Max homes in on Wallace's fraught relationship with his mother, of which he sees much evidence in Wallace's work. One story, for instance, he casually diagnoses as "a meditation on his difficult relationship with his mother. . . . In the story—as, he believed, in his own life—a mother's intense love for and disappointment in her son is the root of his neurosis."

Especially in the case of a contemporary author, such observations can be limiting, offering us an interpretation that is easy and preemptive, the paper that covers rock. It's not that the connections are wrong, necessarily, just that we're tempted to infer too much from them about what is real and true about the work as a whole—in a veteran's writing about war, or Scott Turow's writing about lawyers, or Hemingway's writing about men who fish.

One of Wallace's peers, William Vollmann, has said, "Of all the arts, although photography *presents* best, painting and music *convey* best, and sculpture *looms* best, I believe that literature *articulates* best." Words articulate best perhaps, but central to Wallace's work is the idea that they can also totally fail and even obfuscate. The epigraph to Max's book is from "Good Old Neon": "What goes

on inside is just too fast and huge and all interconnected for words to do more than barely sketch the outlines of at most one tiny little part of it at any given instant." The one-to-one connections Max makes throughout *Every Love Story* seem to stand against what Wallace identified as the central struggle of writing: He wanted his work to deal with what it was to be, in his words, "a fucking human being," not what it was like to be David Foster Wallace.

Max succeeds in conveying the artist's sense of internal and intellectual warfare, its casualties and its fragile victories, and, most hauntingly, its endlessness.

But Max manages to pull off something that reminds us that words can do those other things too: They can *present*, and *loom*, and *convey*. In the hands of a lesser biographer, the anguishing episodes of depression and self-doubt would have seemed like a dreary accumulation of weights bound to tip the scale, but Max presents them as a series of

triumphs. Where the side-by-side rendering of personal and artistic struggles missteps when tidy lines are drawn, it succeeds in conveying the artist's real sense of internal and intellectual warfare, its casualties and its fragile victories, and, most hauntingly, its endlessness. One comes to believe in the possibility of a different ending: Nothing is inevitable.

As *Every Love Story* draws to an end, Max's narrative shifts gears into a high-speed reckoning of the final months of Wallace's life, presenting us with an

artist who in many ways had found peace even as the cumulative turmoil had already had its effect. It is what Max conveys here that seems truest of all: Wallace is with us and, in the course of a paragraph, he is gone. This is how many of us might remember it. Everything adds up to this, but Max admirably smudges the formula: Of course it does not. ■

JARED BROSKY is a writer and artist living in New York City.

Feeding the Masses

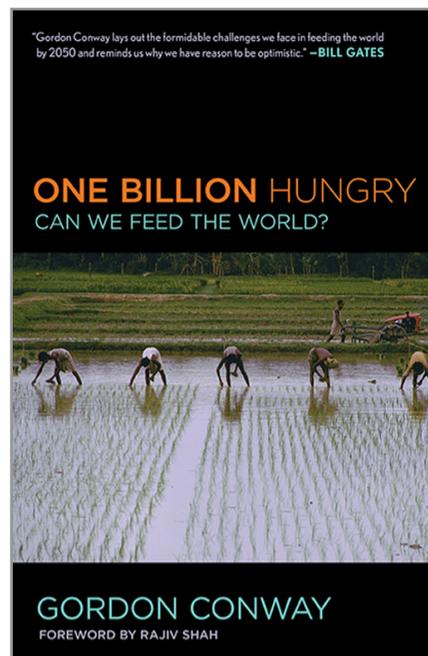
ONE BILLION HUNGRY:

CAN WE FEED THE WORLD?

REVIEWED BY **C. PETER TIMMER**

WE ALL WANT TO END HUNGER. GORDON Conway's book *One Billion Hungry* provides the road map. "Think global, eat local," the mantra of the sustainable agriculture movement, will not cut it. We need serious new policies in well over a hundred countries to meet this goal. Conway, a professor of international development at Imperial College, London (and, before that, the president of the Rockefeller Foundation and of the Royal Geographical Society), is perhaps the most knowledgeable and distinguished agroecologist of his generation, and in *One Billion Hungry* he does not mince words. The fact that for more than a century the international community has not acted decisively to end hunger is the most galling failure of the modern era. There is more than enough food in the world; what's the problem?

The problem is economics. The problem is politics. The problem is markets. Food is produced to make a profit. Food



By Gordon Conway
Cornell Univ. Press.
439 pp. \$24.95

is marketed and sold to make a profit. Households without the means to participate in that for-profit system go hungry. In India more than a quarter of the population, about 300 million people, require access to the public food distribution system. Even in the United States, 46 million people rely on food

Food is produced to make a profit. Food is marketed and sold to make a profit. Households without the means to participate in that for-profit system go hungry.

stamps. As Nobel Prize–winning economist Amartya Sen has reminded us, it is not the amount of food in these societies that determines whether people are hungry, but the nature of their “entitlement” to that food. Worldwide, a billion people fall into the trap between availability and access.

And trap it is. Mothers without enough nutritious food deliver weak and stunted babies, whose own malnutrition condemns them to an early death or, if they are lucky, a hungry survival that allows them to pass their poverty and low productivity on to another similarly deprived generation. People too weak and hungry to pull themselves up by their bootstraps need help.

Conway provides clear (if lengthy) guidelines for what to do and how to do it. Microfinance and insurance programs are necessary to help farmers afford new seeds, fertilizer, and equipment, and to protect against crop loss. Advanced research is needed to develop sustainable and high-yielding technologies that will work on small farms. Government policies and investments are needed to support agricultural research, effective extension to educate farmers, rural infrastructure, and profitable crop and livestock production. Only then can the resulting food system meet the four

challenges Conway identifies: “higher productivity, improved stability, more resilience, and greater equitability.”

He speaks convincingly and authoritatively when addressing the promise of agricultural science. One item on his list of 24 “things that need to be done” is that we “accept that biotechnology is an essential tool in attaining food security”—which is sure to displease those who oppose genetically modified foods—and biotechnology is only one of the high-end technological tools that offer promise. I agree.

Despite Conway’s optimism, however, his book did not leave me particularly upbeat. Conway often makes his points with examples that leave the reader wondering whether they are in any way representative. The fact that one woman in Mali has increased her farming area from half a hectare to one hectare because of the World Food Program’s Purchase for Progress does not convince me that this program, which buys commodities from smallholder farmers in developing countries, is the best way to improve those farmers’ market access. And more focus is needed on the steps that are absolutely vital to progress. We can’t succeed if all 24 of the steps Conway presents in the final chapter are indeed essential.

At a more fundamental level, Con-



DAVID LONGSTREATH / WFP

The UN's World Food Program promotes food production in poor countries in part by helping to create new markets for smallholder farmers. The scene here is in Cambodia's rural Kampong Speu province.

way's discussion of the need to "create" markets so that farmers can connect to input suppliers in one direction and consumers in the other is incomplete, even misguided. The chapter he devotes to this subject starts with a quote from another farmer helped by Purchase for Progress, this time a Ghanaian who benefited when the bags of maize she was selling started to be weighed accurately. That's a good thing in a local market, but there are bigger issues.

Markets function everywhere, for better or worse. New ones don't need to

be created; the existing ones need to work better. In a market economy (the only kind of economy with a successful record of raising labor productivity, and hence living standards, over many generations), markets must play three key roles. First, as Conway stresses, they move inputs to farmers and food to consumers. Even socialist, planned economies must use markets this way, whether or not there are empty shelves and long lines at the bakery.

But markets fill two deeper roles that imbue market economies with

their distinguishing strengths, as well as frequently harsh outcomes. Markets help in the process of price discovery—determining what a commodity or service is “worth.” This, in turn, dictates such important values as the price of rice or the wages for unskilled labor. Price discovery is about who gets what. And, finally, markets serve as the arena for allocating society’s scarce resources to meet the virtually unlimited needs and desires of consumers. The efficiency with which markets perform this allocation process—when price formation functions reasonably well—is the reason market economies have outperformed other forms of economic organization over the long haul.

Efficiency in resource allocation is simply critical to raising economic output in a sustainable fashion, and thus to reducing poverty and hunger, but Conway sees little role for this process in his renewed proposal to end hunger through a “doubly green revolution” that produces higher agricultural yields and is environmentally sustainable.

He is a planner at heart—smart and knowledgeable enough to know what needs to be done, and thus able to tell a competent government what to do. I am not so naive as to believe that simply “getting prices right” will solve the problem of hunger (although I wrote a book by that title long ago), but I also do not believe we can plan our way out of hunger by bending markets to our will.

The trick, which only a few countries—mostly in East and Southeast Asia—have managed smoothly, is for government policy and markets to work together to bring poor households into a growing economy that is based on a productive, stable, and sustainable food system. Only then can we abolish hunger for good. ■

C. PETER TIMMER is the Thomas D. Cabot Professor of Development Studies, emeritus, at Harvard University, and the author or editor of several books about agriculture and food security, including *Getting Prices Right: The Scope and Limits of Agricultural Price Policy* (1986).

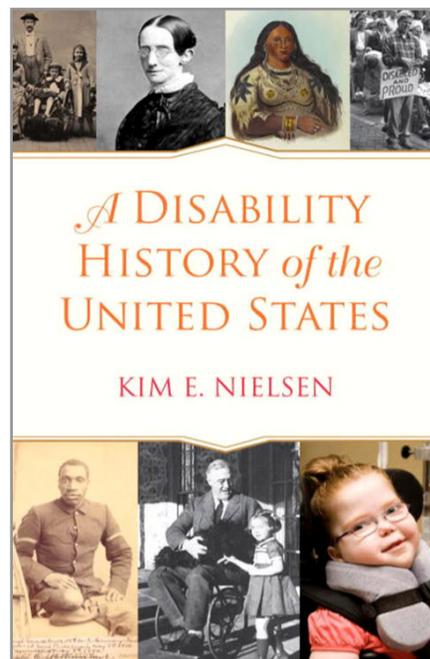
Disability and Democracy

A DISABILITY HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

REVIEWED BY **STEPHEN KUUSISTO**

IN THE INTRODUCTION TO THEIR INFLUENTIAL 2001 volume *The New Disability History*, editors Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky rightly noted that American historians have largely overlooked disability in their narratives. It is therefore invigorating to read Kim Nielsen's *A Disability History of the United States*, which focuses attention on people with disabilities, some of whom are known, and many of whom have been forgotten.

Nielsen excavates the long-buried history of physical difference in America and shows how disability has been a significant factor in the formation of democratic values. From the start, the United States, perhaps more than any other nation, has combined the opportunity to work with narratives of individual ambition: The Puritan work ethic and the Horatio Alger story reflect a cultural imagination that has always been preoccupied with myths of individualism and independence. But Nielsen shows



By Kim E. Nielsen
Beacon Press
240 pp. \$25.95

that people with disabilities also reflect the progressive idealism of the United States.

The range of this book is marvelous. It extends from the early efforts by New England Puritans to reconcile the existence of physical difference with

The Puritan work ethic and the Horatio Alger story reflect a cultural imagination that has always been preoccupied with myths of individualism and independence.



KEVIN ANDERSON / AP IMAGES

Kansan Trevor Roberts had part of his leg amputated after suffering a bad break in a high-school football game in September 2010, but by the following March he was back on a playing field.

their understanding of divine order to the organized activism of Civil War veterans who fought for public assistance, and on to the movements that led to enactment of the Americans With Disabilities Act in 1990. Along the way, Nielsen explores disability in American indigenous cultures; the stories of slaves with disabilities; the establishment of disability as a social, rhetorical, and legal category in the 19th century; the history of eugenics; the oppression of deaf people who were prevented from using sign language; and compulsory sterilization laws.

Nielsen is particularly convincing in describing the hierarchies of power that have contributed throughout history to the marginalization of disabled

people. The “ugly laws” of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that forbade people with disabilities or evident deformities to appear on public streets were designed, in part, to hide from general view people who had been injured in industrial accidents or by disease. Even the blind were to be concealed. Today, some U.S. soldiers with prosthetic limbs are even returning to battle, and the South African runner Oscar Pistorius, whose legs are both amputated below the knee, just competed in the London Olympics. These developments would have been almost unimaginable just 70 years ago, when President Franklin Roosevelt went to great lengths to minimize public awareness of the polio-induced paralysis that had left him unable to use his legs.

This tale is one of families, veterans, workers, and elders, which is, of course, why disability is the story of us. Nielsen demonstrates that despite the fact that disability was long a cause for social marginalization, people with disabilities have been protected and supported by America’s representative democracy. The passage of pension and benefit programs for war veterans, disability benefits for miners, and the development of

rehabilitation and accommodation strategies guaranteeing access to the public square all tell a story of a democracy that resists the cult of rugged individualism in complicated ways.

What emerges in this volume is a history of several ideas. The first is the definition of disability, which has been the subject of an ongoing and spirited public debate. The second is the evolving understanding of human value and its relationship to labor. Finally, Nielsen asks us to consider democracy as an instrument of progressive self-definition—a view that Walt Whitman would call a “democratic vista” and

that has proved particularly important to those who live with physical differences. Another way to say this is that disability has been part of the women’s rights movement, the labor movement, the struggle for racial equality, and the struggle for sexual equality. It is the identity or minority position that claims all others. The history of disability is a history of our national conception of human dignity. ■

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