

EXCERPT

Sic Transit Gloria Doctorate

The case of Robert Mugabe gets one thinking about this most peculiar of academic nods [the honorary degree]. . . . In June the University of Massachusetts at Amherst rescinded the honorary doctorate it had bestowed on Zimbabwe's longtime president in 1986.

Last year the University of Edinburgh similarly withdrew its 1984 degree. . . . Maybe The Economist will cancel Mugabe's subscription next. . . . Are honorary degrees really such silly things that we should mock their bestowal or withdrawal? . . . They do seem to lack core importance in the academic enterprise. . . . On the other hand, eliminating honorary degrees would knock commencement ceremonies down yet another notch, to some still undiscovered level of boredom.

—CARLIN ROMANO, literary critic for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and critic at large for *The Chronicle Review*, July 11, 2008

as if it cut back on driving by 1,000 miles. If it substituted a bean or vegetable casserole for roast beef every Sunday, it could save the equivalent of the greenhouse gases produced by

driving 1,160 miles. If red meat were eliminated altogether, it could save emissions equal to driving 8,100 miles a year.

There are many reasons to buy

local food, including the taste of fresher, riper produce. But for the average family, saving the environment by reducing "food-miles" is not the most important.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

The Inside-Out City

THE SOURCE: "Trading Places" by Alan Ehrenhalt, in *The New Republic*, Aug. 13, 2008.

REMEMBER THE BREATHLESS spate of news stories when the first few couples moved into converted department stores in downtowns across America about a decade ago? Debunkers of this trend have pointed out the minuscule numbers ever since. Even so, writes Alan Ehrenhalt, executive editor of *Governing* magazine, cities are truly undergoing a complicated and profound "demographic inversion."

Central cities are becoming lighter in hue and deeper in pockets. Atlanta

is shifting from an overwhelmingly black city to one where African Americans are teetering on the verge of minority status. Before September 11, 2001, about 25,000 people lived south of the World Trade Center in Manhattan. Now the same area is home to 50,000. Charlotte, North Carolina, has 12,000 people living downtown, and will have more when its supply of homes catches up with demand. Vancouver, British Columbia, houses 20 percent of its 600,000 residents in two square miles at the city's heart.

Chicago, "Hog Butcher for the World, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat," is becoming like 19th-century

Vienna, where the people who can afford it live close to the center, and the poor and newcomers live on the outskirts, writes Ehrenhalt of the city where his grandfather operated a tailor shop on the site of what is now the University of Illinois science complex. Not even assistant professors live near the campus now. Too expensive.

The demographic inversion doesn't represent the abandonment of the suburbs or a mass movement of inner-city immigrants fleeing inflated gas prices. Rather, "the massive outward migration of the affluent that characterized the second half of the 20th century is coming to an end," Ehrenhalt says. The deindustrialization of the city, with its consequent loss of jobs, also heralds the loss of the noise and grime that accompanied them. Random street violence, while beginning to increase, is not the spec-

EXCERPT

The Park's New Wildlife

Any crime you find in the big city you'll find here in [Kentucky's] Daniel Boone National Forest, but no big-city police officer gets the chance to deal with such a variety of offenses: assault, murder, rape, turkey baiting, timber theft, drug trafficking, body dumping, ginseng poaching,



Where the bodies, the ginseng, and the marijuana are buried.

looting of archaeological sites, DUIs and off-road vehicle violations, illegal camping, fishing and hunting out of season. Marijuana is grown on the mountain-sides in the southern half of the Daniel Boone, and every fall, especially at Halloween, the woods are set afire. With fewer and fewer wild places left, less and less "outdoors," many more Americans flock to the national forests, bringing their own ideas of "wilderness" with them.

—KATHY DOBIE, author of *The Only Girl in the Car* (2003), in *Harper's Magazine*, July 2008

ter it was in the 1980s. A striking "pro-city sensibility" has emerged. "The demographic changes that have taken place in America over the past generation—the increased propensity to remain single, the rise of cohabitation, the much later age at first marriage for those who do marry, the smaller size of families for those who

have children, and, at the other end, the rapidly growing number of healthy and active adults in their sixties, seventies, and eighties—have combined virtually all of the significant elements that make a demographic inversion not only possible but likely," Ehrenhalt concludes.

The leafy suburbs of today are

unlikely to become the slums of 2030, but may retrofit themselves with more town centers and sidewalks and street grids superimposed on strip mall landscapes. The friendly mom-and-pop grocer will not reappear, but within our big cities, Ehrenhalt writes, "we are groping toward the new communities of the 21st century."

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Bogged Down Again

THE SOURCE: "America's Quagmire Mentality" by Dominic Tierney, in *Survival*, Winter 2007–08.

WHAT DO POST-CIVIL WAR Reconstruction and U.S. nation-building efforts in the Philippines, Cuba, Haiti, Somalia, Kosovo, and

now Afghanistan have in common? The average American prematurely branded them all quagmires.

Americans are predisposed to see failure in state-building efforts, writes Dominic Tierney, a political scientist at Swarthmore College. Almost as

soon as federal troops undertook Reconstruction in the South in 1865, Northerners began to lose heart over the slow rate of progress. Deciding by 1877 that the effort was a failure, they supported the troop withdrawals that would leave blacks to their fate.

Fast-forward to the second wave of nation-building, at the turn of the 20th century—in the Philippines, Cuba, Haiti, and elsewhere. In Manila, Mark Twain wrote, America blundered into "a mess, a quagmire