



THE BERLIN JOURNAL

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Number Thirty-Three Fall 2019

HOW DEMOCRACIES DIE

by Steven Levitsky and
Daniel Ziblatt

THE FUTURE OF WORK IN GERMANY

by Laura D'Andrea Tyson

FICTION

by Adam Ehrlich Sachs, Angela
Flournoy, and Paul La Farge

THE EMPATHIC WIT OF HEINRICH HEINE

by Azade Seyhan

ARTIST PORTFOLIO

Renée Green

THE HISTORY OF THE POSTCARD

by Liliane Weissberg

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CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel Ziblatt is Eaton Professor of the Science of Government at Harvard University and the fall 2019 Axel Springer Fellow. **Steven Levitsky** is a professor of government at Harvard University. Fall 2019 Daimler Fellow **Steven Klein** is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Florida. **Laura D'Andrea Tyson**, the fall 2019 Richard C. Holbrooke Fellow, is Distinguished Professor of the Graduate School at the Hass School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley. Writer **Adam Ehrlich Sachs** is a fall 2019 Mary Ellen von der Heyden Fellow in Fiction. Artist **Renée Green** is a

professor in the School of Architecture and Planning at MIT; she is the fall 2019 Ellen Maria Gorrissen Fellow. Writer **Suki Kim** is the Holtzbrinck Fellow in fall 2019. Spring 2020 Anna-Maria Kellen Fellow **Liliane Weissberg** is Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor in the Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. **Azade Seyhan**, the fall 2019 John P. Birkelund Fellow in the Humanities, is a professor of humanities and German at Bryn Mawr College. Fall 2019 Nina Maria Gorrissen Fellow **Tatyana Gershkovich** is an assistant professor of Russian studies

at Carnegie Mellon University. **Veronika Fuechtner** is a spring 2020 Anna-Maria Kellen Fellow and an associate professor of German at Dartmouth College. Writer **Angela Flournoy** is a fall 2019 Mary Ellen von der Heyden Fellow in Fiction. Writer **Paul La Farge** is the spring 2020 Holtzbrinck Fellow. **Rosalind Morris**, a professor of anthropology at Columbia University, was the inaugural Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in the Humanities, in fall 2018. **Yvette Christiansë** is a professor of Africana studies and English literature at Barnard College. **Natacha Nsabimana** is

a 2018–20 Provost's Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Chicago. **Miriam Ticktin** is an associate professor of anthropology at The New School for Social Research. **Adam Ross** is the editor of the *Sewanee Review*; he was the Mary Ellen von der Heyden Fellow in Fiction in 2014. Writer **Kenny Fries** teaches in the MFA Creative Writing Program at Goddard College. **George Packer**, a staff writer at *The Atlantic*, was the fall 2009 Axel Springer Fellow and spring 2014 Holtzbrinck Fellow.

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THE AMERICAN ACADEMY IN BERLIN

TRUSTEE-IN-RESIDENCE
Gerhard Casper
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
Christian U. Diehl

Am Sandwerder 17–19
14109 Berlin
Tel. +49 (30) 80 48 3-0
Fax +49 (30) 80 48 3-111
americanacademy.de

14 East 60th Street, Suite 604
New York, NY 10022
Tel. +1 (212) 588-1755
Fax +1 (212) 588-1758

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Democracy's Reminders

THREE DECADES AGO this fall, a political earthquake rocked the barrier that had divided Europe and the city of Berlin for nearly five decades. The so-called Autumn of Nations saw protesters from across Eastern Europe publicly oppose one-party rule and state oppression. In Berlin on October 7, 1989—the fortieth anniversary of the German Democratic Republic (GDR)—Mikhail Gorbachev, lifted by his *Glasnost* initiative in the Soviet Union, urged the East German leadership to strongly consider reforms.

They did not, of course, and on that day, in the city of Plauen, more than 10,000 demonstrators confronted water cannons and police dogs. The next day, over 20,000 gathered in Dresden. Political dissidents numbering over 70,000 faced down Communist arms in Leipzig's Monday Demonstrations on October 9. Over the coming weeks, these figures multiplied. On November 4, the Alexanderplatz Demonstrations, in Berlin, drew half a million protestors, organized by the city's actors and theater employees.

These popular sentiments were eventually amplified by West German leaders, including Helmut Kohl, Horst Teltschik, and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, and by American counterparts Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and James A. Baker III—all urging the expansion of democratic rights that would lead to the beginning of the end of the Cold War. Final vindication would come on the night of November 9, 1989, as jubilant East Germans pushed across the Bornholmer Straße checkpoint into West Berlin, and awestruck West Germans watched on television.

The relationship between the United States and Germany was particularly close then. They worked together to reunify Germany and to forge a monetary policy that would provide a transition for the eastern half of the country to market capitalism and liberal democracy—no small feat—and then paved the way for the European Economic and Monetary Union. Even thirty years later, we have yet to entirely grasp the enormity of this undertaking—how tightly German and American administrations collaborated to orchestrate a broader, freer, and more prosperous Europe. On a much smaller scale, prominent American and German individuals worked together to establish the American Academy in Berlin, whose charge was led by Richard C. Holbrooke, the US ambassador to Germany as American troops departed the once and future capital.

In spite of the present grumblings from Washington, it is prudent to recall just how much the transatlantic partnership can achieve when things really matter. Democracy, after all, is no given; it survives only when people and governments uphold democratic values, when they behave

and think democratically “in the living relations of person to person,” as John Dewey wrote—when citizens deliberately choose self-governance. This choice depends in part upon economic prosperity, an important point to keep in mind as digitalization portends fewer jobs, less transparency, and more attempts to spread disinformation throughout the body politic.

In the spirit of highlighting the fragility and substance of democracy, this issue of the *Berlin Journal* opens with a suite of related essays, the first by fellow Daniel Ziblatt and his Harvard colleague Steven Levitsky, from their new book, *How Democracies Die*; the second by fellow Steven Klein, about the role of debt in the political economies of post-WWII democracies; and the third by Laura D'Andrea Tyson, who takes an extended look at how Germany is successfully navigating social change as automation takes hold of parts of its industrial sector. Writer Adam Ehrlich Sachs offers a story of related metaphorical portent, about a blind astronomer who predicts a solar eclipse, and Suki Kim reports from inside the world's darkest regime, North Korea.

Other shared concerns come to the fore. One topic—painfully etched into the history of democracy in America—is the legacy of African slavery and colonialism, addressed by the scholars and thinkers who took part in the Andrew W. Mellon workshop “Double Exposures.” Herein, Rosalind Morris, Natacha Nsabimana, and Yvette Christiansë approach the past and present of “extraction” from the African continent, physical and moral, and Miriam Ticktin offers a timely reflection on walls and immigration. Short stories by Angela Flournoy and Paul La Farge allude to slavery's deep echo into the suburban present, as epitaphs and apparitions. European literary history forms another cluster of interest, with Azade Seyhan on Heinrich Heine; Tatyana Gershkovich on Vladimir Nabokov; and in Veronika Fuechtner's interview with novelist Frido Mann. Finally, Liliane Wiessberg offers an entertaining foray into the history of the postcard, a format that, when it first appeared, radically altered notions of public and private and ushered in a new economy of writing at the dawn of European modernism.

As with previous issues of the *Berlin Journal*, this one too promises a glimpse into the robust intellectual life at the American Academy. Its topics signal what our residential fellows are working on while here, what occupies their minds on the Wannsee, and what ideas they bring to their German peers and the interested public for those most vital of democratic activities: discussion and debate.

R. Jay Magill, Jr.

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Noch mehr Sicherheit

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HOW DEMOCRACIES DIE

Assessing the patterns
of declining republics

by Steven Levitsky and
Daniel Ziblatt



IS **IS OUR DEMOCRACY** in danger? It is a question we never thought we'd be asking. We have been colleagues for fifteen years, thinking, writing, and teaching students about failures of democracy in other places and times—Europe's dark 1930s, Latin America's repressive 1970s. We have spent years researching new forms of authoritarianism emerging around the globe. For us, how and why democracies die has been an occupational obsession.

But now we find ourselves turning to our own country. Over the past two years, we have watched politicians say and do things that are unprecedented in the United States—but that we recognize as having been the precursors of democratic crisis in other places. We feel dread, as do so many other Americans, even as we try to reassure ourselves that *things can't really be that bad here*. After all, even though we know democracies are always fragile, the one in which we live has somehow managed to defy gravity. Our Constitution, our national creed of freedom and equality, our historically robust middle class, our high levels of wealth and education, and our large, diversified private sector—all these should inoculate us from the kind of democratic breakdown that has occurred elsewhere.

Yet, we worry. American politicians now treat their rivals as enemies, intimidate the free press, and threaten to reject the results of elections. They try to weaken the institutional buffers of our democracy, including the courts, intelligence services, and ethics offices. American states,

which were once praised by the great jurist Louis Brandeis as “laboratories of democracy,” are in danger of becoming laboratories of authoritarianism as those in power rewrite electoral rules, redraw constituencies, and even rescind voting rights to ensure that they do not lose. And in 2016, for the first time in US history, a man with no experience in public office, little observable commitment to constitutional rights, and clear authoritarian tendencies was elected president.

What does all this mean? Are we living through the decline and fall of one of the world’s oldest and most successful democracies?



AT MIDDAY ON SEPTEMBER 11, 1973, after months of mounting tensions in the streets of Santiago, Chile, British-made Hawker Hunter jets swooped overhead, dropping bombs on La Moneda, the neoclassical presidential palace in the center of the city. As the bombs continued to fall, La Moneda burned. President Salvador Allende, elected three years earlier at the head of a leftist coalition, was barricaded inside. During his term, Chile had been wracked by social unrest, economic crisis, and political paralysis. Allende had said he would not leave his post until he had finished his job—but now the moment of truth had arrived. Under the command of General Augusto Pinochet, Chile’s armed forces were seizing control of the country.

Early in the morning on that fateful day, Allende offered defiant words on a national radio broadcast, hoping that his many supporters would take to the streets in defense of democracy. But the resistance never materialized. The military police who guarded the palace had abandoned him; his broadcast was met with silence. Within hours, President Allende was dead. So, too, was Chilean democracy.

This is how we tend to think of democracies dying: at the hands of men with guns. During the Cold War, coups d’état accounted for nearly three out of every four democratic breakdowns. Democracies in Argentina, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Thailand, Turkey, and Uruguay all died this way. More recently, military coups toppled Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi in 2013 and Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra in 2014. In all these cases, democracy dissolved in spectacular fashion, through military power and coercion.

But there is another way to break a democracy. It is less dramatic but equally destructive. Democracies may die at the hands not of generals but of elected leaders—presidents or prime ministers who subvert the very process that brought

them to power. Some of these leaders dismantle democracy quickly, as Hitler did in the wake of the 1933 Reichstag fire in Germany. More often, though, democracies erode slowly, in barely visible steps.

In Venezuela, for example, Hugo Chávez was a political outsider who railed against what he cast as a corrupt governing elite, promising to build a more “authentic” democracy that used the country’s vast oil wealth to improve the lives of the poor. Skillfully tapping into the anger of ordinary Venezuelans, many of whom felt ignored or mistreated by the established political parties, Chávez was elected president in 1998. As a woman in Chávez’s home state of Barinas put it on election night, “Democracy is infected. And Chávez is the only antibiotic we have.”

When Chávez launched his promised revolution, he did so democratically. In 1999, he held free elections for a new constituent assembly, in which his allies won an overwhelming majority. This allowed the *chavistas* to single-handedly write a new constitution. It was a democratic constitution, though, and to reinforce its legitimacy, new presidential and legislative elections were held in 2000. Chávez and his allies won those, too. Chávez’s populism triggered intense opposition, and in April 2002 he was briefly toppled by the military. But the coup failed, allowing a triumphant Chávez to claim for himself even more democratic legitimacy.

It wasn’t until 2003 that Chávez took his first clear steps toward authoritarianism. With public support fading, he stalled an opposition-led referendum that would have recalled him from office—until a year later, when soaring oil prices had boosted his standing enough for him to win. In 2004, the government blacklisted those who had signed the recall petition and packed the Supreme Court, but Chávez’s landslide reelection in 2006 allowed him to maintain a democratic veneer. The *chavista* regime grew more repressive after 2006, closing a major television station, arresting or exiling opposition politicians, judges, and media figures on dubious charges, and eliminating presidential term limits so that Chávez could remain in power indefinitely. When Chávez, now dying of cancer, was reelected in 2012, the contest was free but not fair: *Chavismo* controlled much of the media and deployed the vast machinery of the government in its favor. After Chávez’s death, a year later, his successor, Nicolás Maduro, won another questionable reelection, and, in 2014, his government imprisoned a major opposition leader. Still, the opposition’s landslide victory in the 2015 legislative elections seemed to belie critics’ claims that Venezuela was no longer democratic. It was only when a new single-party constituent assembly usurped the power of Congress in 2017, nearly two decades after Chávez first won the presidency, that Venezuela was widely recognized as an autocracy.

This is how democracies now die. Blatant dictatorship—in the form of fascism, communism, or military rule—has disappeared across much of the world. Military coups and other violent seizures of power are rare. Most countries hold regular elections. Democracies still die, but by different means. Since the end of the Cold War, most democratic breakdowns have been caused not by generals and soldiers

but by elected governments themselves. Like Chávez in Venezuela, elected leaders have subverted democratic institutions in Georgia, Hungary, Nicaragua, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Ukraine. Democratic backsliding today begins at the ballot box.

The electoral road to breakdown is dangerously deceptive. With a classic coup d'état, as in Pinochet's Chile, the death of a democracy is immediate and evident to all. The presidential palace burns. The president is killed, imprisoned, or shipped off into exile. The constitution is suspended or scrapped. On the electoral road, none of these things happen. There are no tanks in the streets. Constitutions and other nominally democratic institutions remain in place. People still vote. Elected autocrats maintain a veneer of democracy while eviscerating its substance.

Many government efforts to subvert democracy are "legal," in the sense that they are approved by the legislature or accepted by the courts. They may even be portrayed as efforts to *improve* democracy—making the judiciary more efficient, combating corruption, or cleaning up the electoral process. Newspapers still publish but are bought off or bullied into self-censorship. Citizens continue to criticize the government but often find themselves facing tax or other legal troubles. This sows public confusion. People do not immediately realize what is happening. Many continue to believe they are living under a democracy. In 2011, when a Latinobarómetro survey asked Venezuelans to rate their own country from 1 ("not at all democratic") to 10 ("completely democratic"), 51 percent of respondents gave their country a score of 8 or higher.

Because there is no single moment—no coup, declaration of martial law, or suspension of the constitution—in which the regime obviously "crosses the line" into dictatorship, nothing may set off society's alarm bells. Those who denounce government abuse may be dismissed as exaggerating or crying wolf. Democracy's erosion is, for many, almost imperceptible.



HOW

VULNERABLE IS AMERICAN democracy to this form of backsliding? The foundations of our democracy are certainly stronger than those in

Venezuela, Turkey, or Hungary. But are they strong enough?

Answering such a question requires stepping back from daily headlines and breaking news alerts to widen our view, drawing lessons from the experiences of other democracies around the world and throughout history. For the sake of clarity, we are defining a democracy as a

system of government with regular, free, and fair elections, in which all adult citizens have the right to vote and possess basic civil liberties such as freedom of speech and association. Studying other democracies in crisis allows us to better understand the challenges facing our own. For example, based on the historical experiences of other nations, we have developed a litmus test to help identify would-be autocrats before they come to power. We can learn from the mistakes that past democratic leaders have made in opening the door to would-be authoritarians—and, conversely, from the ways that other democracies have kept extremists out of power. A comparative approach also reveals how elected autocrats in different parts of the world employ remarkably similar strategies to subvert democratic institutions. As these patterns become visible, the steps toward breakdown grow less ambiguous—and easier to combat. Knowing how citizens in other democracies have successfully resisted elected autocrats, or why they tragically failed to do so, is essential to those seeking to defend American democracy today.

We know that extremist demagogues emerge from time to time in all societies, even in healthy democracies. The United States has had its share of them, including Henry Ford, Huey Long, Joseph McCarthy, and George Wallace. An essential test for democracies is not whether such figures emerge but whether political leaders, and especially political parties, work to prevent them from gaining power in the first place—by keeping them off mainstream party tickets, refusing to endorse or align with them, and, when necessary, making common cause with rivals in support of democratic candidates. Isolating popular extremists requires political courage. But when fear, opportunism, or miscalculation leads established parties to bring extremists into the mainstream, democracy is imperiled.

Once a would-be authoritarian makes it to power, democracies face a second critical test: Will the autocratic leader subvert democratic institutions or be constrained by them? Institutions alone are not enough to rein in elected autocrats. Constitutions must be defended—by political parties and organized citizens, but also by democratic norms. Without robust norms, constitutional checks and balances do not serve as the bulwarks of democracy we imagine them to be. Institutions become political weapons, wielded forcefully by those who control them against those who do not. This is how elected autocrats subvert democracy—packing and “weaponizing” the courts and other neutral agencies, buying off the media and the private sector (or bullying them into silence), and rewriting the rules of politics to tilt the playing field against opponents. The tragic paradox of the electoral route to authoritarianism is that democracy's assassins use the very institutions of democracy—gradually, subtly, and even legally—to kill it. □

This essay is excerpted from *How Democracies Die*.
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IN THE RED

Democracy in an age of debt

by Steven Klein

OUR POLITICAL AGE is one of debt. The long shadow of the 2008 financial crisis continues to define politics. In the American Democratic Party presidential primary, Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders have released dueling plans for who can forgive the most student debt—currently at \$1.49 trillion. For many so-called millennials in America, the burden of student debt prevents them from taking out that other, more “responsible” form of debt—housing debt—and getting on the property ladder, a ladder made lucrative precisely because the broad access to mortgage debt inflates the value of real estate.

But even as attitudes towards debt vary between countries, its political ramifications are unavoidable. Germany’s household debt currently equals 52 percent of its GDP, as opposed to 80 percent in the United States. Yet Germany’s fate is still debt. Instead of domestic consumer debt, German

banks rushed into Europe’s southern periphery, enabling the debt buildup that exploded during the Eurozone crisis, reshaping the European Union. Given the global interdependence of financial systems and flows, the effects of debt are no longer nationally bound—even if the liability for debts remains a national responsibility.

Debt is coming to redefine democracy, in ways the full extent of which is not yet clear. It is even less clear that our established political ways of thinking—about democracy, citizenship, and the relationship between democracy and capitalism—are adequate for confronting this new era. In an era of permanent debt, how does the hierarchical relationship between debtors and creditors relate to the egalitarian promise of citizenship? How does the continuous surveillance of credit ratings affect political freedom? And what can social democracy mean at a time when political communities are increasingly subject to the dictates of bond markets?

While this moment calls for new thinking, it is far from the first time that the principles of democracy have clashed with the imperatives of capitalism. Until the Great Depression, European economies were governed by the ideal of the market society and the straightjacket of the gold standard, which, along with the limited franchise, were designed to curtail the democratic reorganization of economic relationships. Few thinkers identified these tensions as astutely as the Hungarian social and political philosopher Karl Polanyi. Polanyi's most famous work, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, published in 1944, was largely neglected upon its release. Yet it has found a remarkable afterlife, becoming one of the key texts for debates about the relationship between democracy and capitalism. But Polanyi also provides some central insights for thinking about equality and citizenship in our age of debt—insights that could help discern how democratic institutions could master twenty-first-century capitalism.

Karl Polanyi: Prophet for Our Times?

BORN IN BUDAPEST in 1886 to a Jewish family, Polanyi was raised in Vienna in the Austro-Hungarian empire, an empire that became a model for many postwar visions of a transnational liberal order. In his student days, Polanyi became an important member of liberal intellectual circles, but his experiences with “Red Vienna”—the historic experiment with municipal socialism—pushed him into dialogue with socialism. Red Vienna sparked some of the most consequential philosophical debates about capitalism, socialism, and democracy—debates that influenced, in addition to Polanyi, central twentieth-century thinkers like Joseph Schumpeter, Ludwig von Mises, and Friedrich A. Hayek. The birth and eventual collapse of the Republic of Austria inspired much of Polanyi's writing. He sought to make sense of the promise of the socialist experiment as well as how global economic institutions and political dynamics thwarted democracy in central Europe. He experienced the consequences personally: the election of the “Austro-fascist” Engelbert Dollfuss in

1932 marked the end of Austria's nascent experiment with democracy and Vienna's with municipal socialism. While his wife, Ilona Duczyńska, remained in Austria to organize armed resistance to the new regime, Polanyi left for England, where he began working on what would become *The Great Transformation*, finishing it after moving to the United States.

Like all great social and political thinkers, Polanyi combines clear, simple slogans with a complex theoretical argument. Perhaps he was too successful; his slogans have often been taken for his argument. The slogan for which Polanyi has become famous—“society against markets”—belies the most significant thrust of his thought, which challenges the opposition between state and market. Rather, Polanyi's thought advances two central insights: the first, that markets for commodities require non-market coordinating institutions to function; the second, that these non-market coordinating institutions form around three “fictitious commodities”—land, labor, and money. For Polanyi, the tension between democracy and capitalism resides in the interplay between these non-market institutions—institutions that blur the border between states and markets.

Polanyi argues that, with the emergence of modern industrial technology, Europe underwent a great experiment to organize all of society based on the ideal of the competitive market. Led by the model of the British

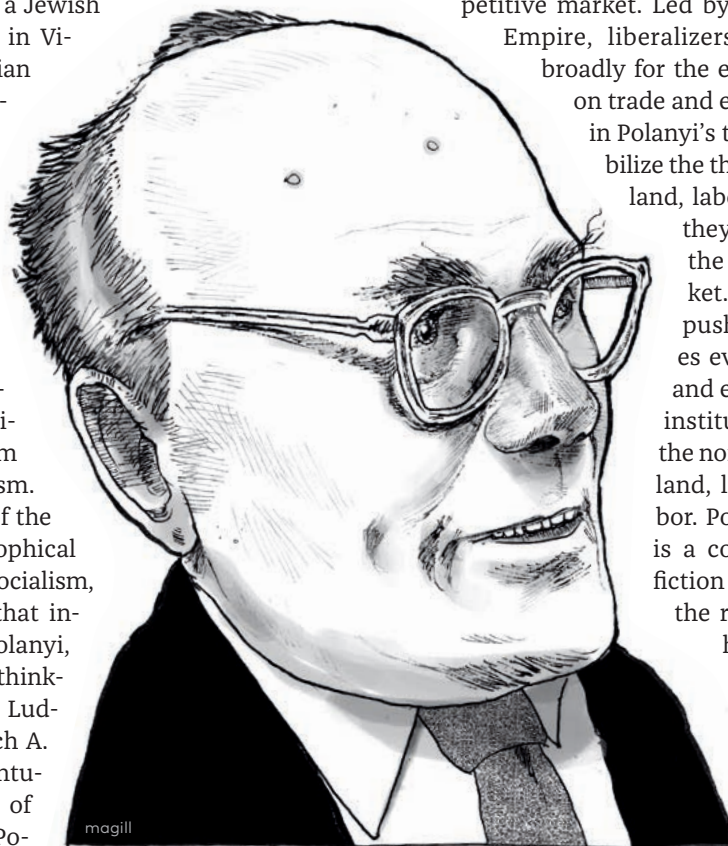
Empire, liberalizers across Europe pushed broadly for the elimination on restrictions on trade and exchange. But most central in Polanyi's telling was the need to mobilize the three factors of production—

land, labor, and money—such that they would be fully subject to the fluctuations of the market. In each case, though, the push towards the market faces eventual political blowback and efforts to build non-market institutions that can recognize the non-economic significance of land, labor, and money. Take labor. Polanyi contends that there is a contradiction between the fiction of the labor contract and the reality of living, breathing humans who labor. In the

long run, markets may clear—but, in the meantime, people need to eat. These realities are embodied in the formation of non-market institutions like labor unions, where

by wages are set based on a principle of reciprocal solidarity rather than the market principle.

But Polanyi's central drama comes from the interplay between labor and money. For him, money is a fictitious



commodity because it always plays two roles: from the perspective of the market, money should be a stable means of exchange, one that simplifies and facilitates trade and contracts. But money is also a political institution, one that secures the continuous flow of credit through the economy. For the most part, these two functions align, but periods of economic crisis and change can pull them apart. This is especially so as the self-organization of workers disrupts the operation of the market principle in relation to labor, preventing the deflation that would allow for the adjustment of international trade balances.

Polanyi contends that the development of central banking was a response to the increasing recognition that the gold standard was destructive, not just for workers but for productive business enterprises in general. The move to fiat money made explicit the political foundations of money, enabling central banks to respond to economic crises and enhancing the circulation of credit in the economy. As with trade unions, central banks help to coordinate economic decision-making so as to prevent panics and unnecessary credit crunches. Both trade unions and central banks are non-market coordinating institutions that blur the lines between the state and the market. They are not captured well by the opposition between state and market or regulated and unregulated markets. They play a crucial role in the economy, but they are often shielded from direct democratic scrutiny and control. Yet with the rise of institutions like labor unions and central banking, Polanyi saw the first glimpse of an alternate political order to the market society, one that would subordinate the major centers of economic power to ongoing democratic accountability and control.

Rethinking Debt and Democracy

THE MIDCENTURY WELFARE STATE, then, embodied an effort to reconcile capitalism with the democratic potential of both the labor movement and the non-market management of money and credit. Yet this era of partial economic democracy was short lived. In retrospect, we can see that the mid-century welfare state settlement was built in a permissive institutional context. Postwar growth and the persistence of exploitative relationships between colonial powers and their former colonies all helped to reconcile business to powerful trade unions and active central banks. But beginning in the late 1960s, cracks began to show in the postwar settlement.

The story of the breakdown of the mid-century settlement has been told many times. Amidst persistent inflation due to uncoordinated wage demands and external shocks, the defenders of the market system advanced a new gospel of central bank independence. But less often noted is that the decline of social democracy has coincided with the rise of the politics of debt. Easy access to consumer credit became what sociologist Colin Crouch calls “privatized Keynesianism,” a way to sustain economic demand without direct fiscal stimulus. In the United States, rising asset values—above all, in real estate—compensated for stagnant wages and weak retirement systems.

The rise of debt has transformed democracy. Political cleavages are being redefined around debtor-creditor relationships, both domestic and international, as well as by the politics of asset values and real estate. The increasing reliance on debt to finance government expenditures would tilt political power away from democratic constituencies and towards bond markets, which have taken on a totemic power. Finally, these shifts led to the growing power of central banks as the guardians of the economy, raising fundamental questions for democracy: Are central bankers neutral technocrats realizing preset policy goals, or do they have to balance, even if unknowingly, competing interests and values? If the latter, how should banking systems be organized to ensure fairness and transparency? In the United States, this could mean ensuring representation from different groups in society in the Federal Reserve System, such as labor unions. Or it could mean rethinking the overriding focus on price stability and so reviving better cooperation between fiscal and monetary policy in the context of persistent low inflation.

Recognizing the political foundations of money also raises questions about the right to access credit and benefit from national banking systems. Ultimately, the credit-making function of central banks rests on the future security provided by democratic institutions. Indeed, part of the rise of central banking was to enable states to borrow for military conflict, using future tax revenues—and so ultimately political legitimacy—as collateral. Citizens of a country are collectively responsible for their liabilities, but often without a reciprocal right to access the benefits of an extensive credit system on equal terms. Rather, they are subject to sometimes harsh and unaccountable credit evaluation regimes that emphasize the rights of creditors rather than debtors. A full normative theory of the right to credit would have to balance concerns about moral hazard against the distributive benefits of expanding credit. But the foundation for such a right comes from the political and democratic basis of credit-creation in the economy as a whole.

RESTRICTIONS ON NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE JUSTIFIED BY THE ECONOMIC GROWTH UNLEASHED BY THE SINGLE MARKET.

Globalization or Cooperation?

BREXIT AND TRUMP—the revolt against globalization in defense of the historical fantasy of national sovereignty. Today, it sometimes seems that the only alternatives to market-driven globalization are various versions of authoritarian nationalism. And without a doubt, nationalism is the dark underbelly of arguments for economic citizenship. Does a return to an ideal of economic democracy, as described by Polanyi, mean a retreat back towards relatively closed society? Certainly, proximity aids the functioning of coordinating institutions by making it easier to shame non-cooperators—one of the benefits of embedding them at the national level. Equally, though, economic democracy requires international cooperation.

Instead of such cooperation, though, global integration has largely proceeded through market making, opening up national markets to foreign investment and global capital flows. Behind this form of globalization is skepticism towards democracy. Democratic institutions produce protectionism, rent-seeking, and constraints on the ability of states to enact regulations. Other “non-tariff barriers to trade” are justified by the additional economic growth market integration will produce. In contrast, reciprocal cooperation accepts the legitimacy of democratically created restrictions on the market and non-market institutions but searches for global institutions to ensure that the democratic systems take into account the interests of non-members.

The European Union exemplifies both reciprocal cooperation and market-driven globalization. The project of integration was born of a desire to substitute cooperation for conflict within a continent where no state was large enough to exercise hegemony. Over time, however, the single market has become the telos of integration, as the European Court of Justice and the European Commission have become increasingly willing to subject domestic economic systems to supervision in order to perfect the single market. Restrictions on national governments would be justified by the economic growth unleashed by the single market. Yet again, debt interrupted this vision of smooth market integration. The contradiction between reciprocal cooperation and market-integration exploded during the Eurozone debt crisis. And it exploded because the architecture of the European Monetary Union failed to take seriously the complexities of money. The euro immensely facilitated market integration. But it also separated out money from debt, as national central banks remained responsible for issuing bonds tied to national governments.

The Eurozone crisis thus set up a remarkable clash between the principle of cooperation and the principle of market-making—with the latter winning the day. In the landmark *Pringle and Gauweiler* rulings, the European Court of Justice found that the extraordinary efforts by the European Central Bank to counter market panics by potentially buying government bonds did not violate the non-bailout clauses of the EU treaties. But this was because such bailouts came with harsh forms of conditionality and direct political supervision—conditionality that overrode domestic democratic legitimacy. Conditionality meant the internal reorganization of debtor economies in line with the demands of the single market. Reciprocal cooperation between national governments gave way to the demands of the single market, as debtor countries were compelled to reorganize their internal economies to increase the scope of market forces—or face the prospect of crashing out of the Eurozone.

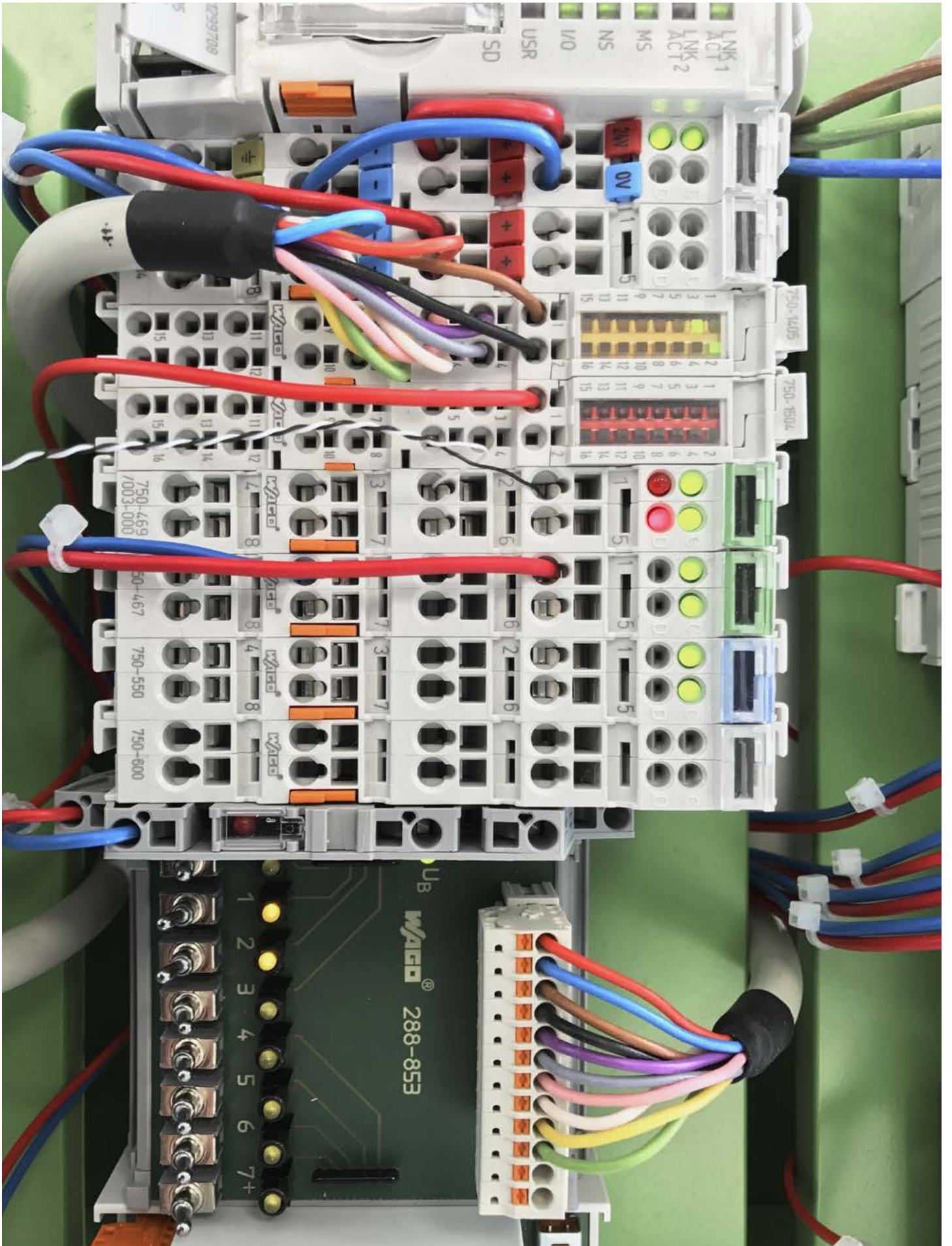
THE EUROPEAN
UNION EXEMPLIFIES
BOTH RECIPROCAL
COOPERATION
AND MARKET-DRIVEN
GLOBALIZATION.

Conclusion

THE ORGANIZED WORKING CLASS built social democracy in Europe and, to a lesser extent, North America, in an era of rapid industrialization and democratization. In creating institutions to disconnect the value of labor from the demands of the

market, social democracy constructed a new ideal of social citizenship. But what does citizenship, social or otherwise, mean in an era of debt and finance? How can democratic ideals assert themselves in the face of independent central banks and globalized financial markets?

While far from exhaustively answering these questions, Karl Polanyi provides one of the most incisive analyses of the tension between capitalism and the non-market institutional structures that channel democratic demands and ideals into economic production and exchange. He helps us see how the conflicts within capitalism are defined, not just by the confrontation between labor and capital, but also by the politics of money and conflicts between debtors and creditors. And he envisions a path beyond the deadlock between market openness and nationalist closure. In the face of resurgent authoritarian nationalism, democrats and liberals can rescue the principle of international cooperation between democratic communities—but only if we lay to rest the fantasy of the market society. □



ZUKUNFTSMUSIK

How automation will
affect the future of work
in Germany

by Laura D'Andrea Tyson

I.

PREDICTIONS BASED ON HISTORY, THEORY, AND CURRENT RESEARCH

INTELLIGENT MACHINES ARE transforming the way we produce, the way we work, the way we learn, and the way we live throughout the world. Individual drivers and major logistics companies such as UPS are using new technologies to optimize their route planning. Companies such as BMW and Tesla have already released self-driving features in their automobiles, which are produced with the help of sophisticated robots. DHL has launched a fully automated and intelligent urban drone-delivery system in China. Drones are also being used to deliver health supplies to remote locations in the poorest countries. The Associated Press is using artificial intelligence to help write news stories. 3-D printers are being used to produce replacement parts—for both machines and humans. There is a major German business initiative spearheaded by BMW to increase the use of 3-D printing in the automotive industry. AT&T has a broad worker-training program and, in collaboration with Udacity,

is offering online nanodegrees in data analytics and other digital tools. Siemens is one of the largest providers of vocational training in Germany, with a focus on topics such as data analytics, software development, and data security.

Marvelous new technologies that automate work promise higher productivity, greater efficiency, more safety, flexibility, and convenience. But they are also stoking fears about their effects on jobs, skills, and wages. A 2019 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 48% of Americans think that automation has mostly hurt workers, and 76% believe that inequality will increase if robots and computers perform most of the jobs currently being done by humans. In the EU, according to a 2017 survey published by the European Commission, 74% of citizens expect that robots and AI will destroy more jobs than they create. The primary concerns among workers and citizens are about both the quantity and the quality of jobs. Will there be enough jobs for workers seeking employment? Will the available jobs have wages that provide meaningful livelihoods for workers and their families? What can companies and policymakers do to alleviate the costs and share the benefits of the new technologies broadly?

Feeding these concerns are several recent studies finding that large shares of employment in both developing and developed countries are “susceptible” to automation using currently available technologies. Both history and

economic theory, however, indicate that fears about technological unemployment, a term coined by John Maynard Keynes, nearly a century ago, are misplaced. Historical evidence shows that technological change fuels productivity gains, which in turn fuel income gains, boosting both the demand for goods and services and the demand for human labor to produce them. At least to date, technological progress has not resulted in less employment, but rather in changes in the size and growth of industries, sectors, and occupations.

The assumption that *all* technologies increase labor demand simply because they raise productivity, however, is wrong. It is possible that some automation technologies may, in fact, reduce total employment, because they cause sizable displacement effects but only modest productivity gains. Moreover, even if future automation does not lead to technological unemployment, in the short to medium run—which could span decades and the entire lifetimes of workers—labor-saving automation is likely to trigger significant changes in the sectors, skill-mix, and location of jobs, displacing tens of millions of workers around the world and requiring them to transition to new employment opportunities. And if the workers displaced by automation are unable to acquire the skills necessary for new jobs or to find them quickly, both frictional and structural unemployment are likely to increase, causing adverse economy-wide effects on growth and potential output.

History is replete with periods of productivity enhancing technological change that produce serious social and economic strains. Disruptive technologies can generate huge profits and productivity, but they can also destroy businesses, communities, and individuals, and depress wages. During the Industrial Revolution in England in the nineteenth century, average real wages stagnated for forty years, even as productivity soared. During the last forty years, skill-biased and labor-saving technological progress has eroded middle-skill, middle-wage jobs, polarized the labor market, and exacerbated rising income-inequality in a variety of ways. It has favored more-skilled over less-skilled workers; it has increased capital returns over labor; it has enabled or “turbo-charged” globalization, reducing employment and constrained wage growth for middle-income workers, particularly in manufacturing and tradable services, in developed countries; it has increased the advantages of superstars and the super-lucky; and it has generated rents in highly imperfect markets.

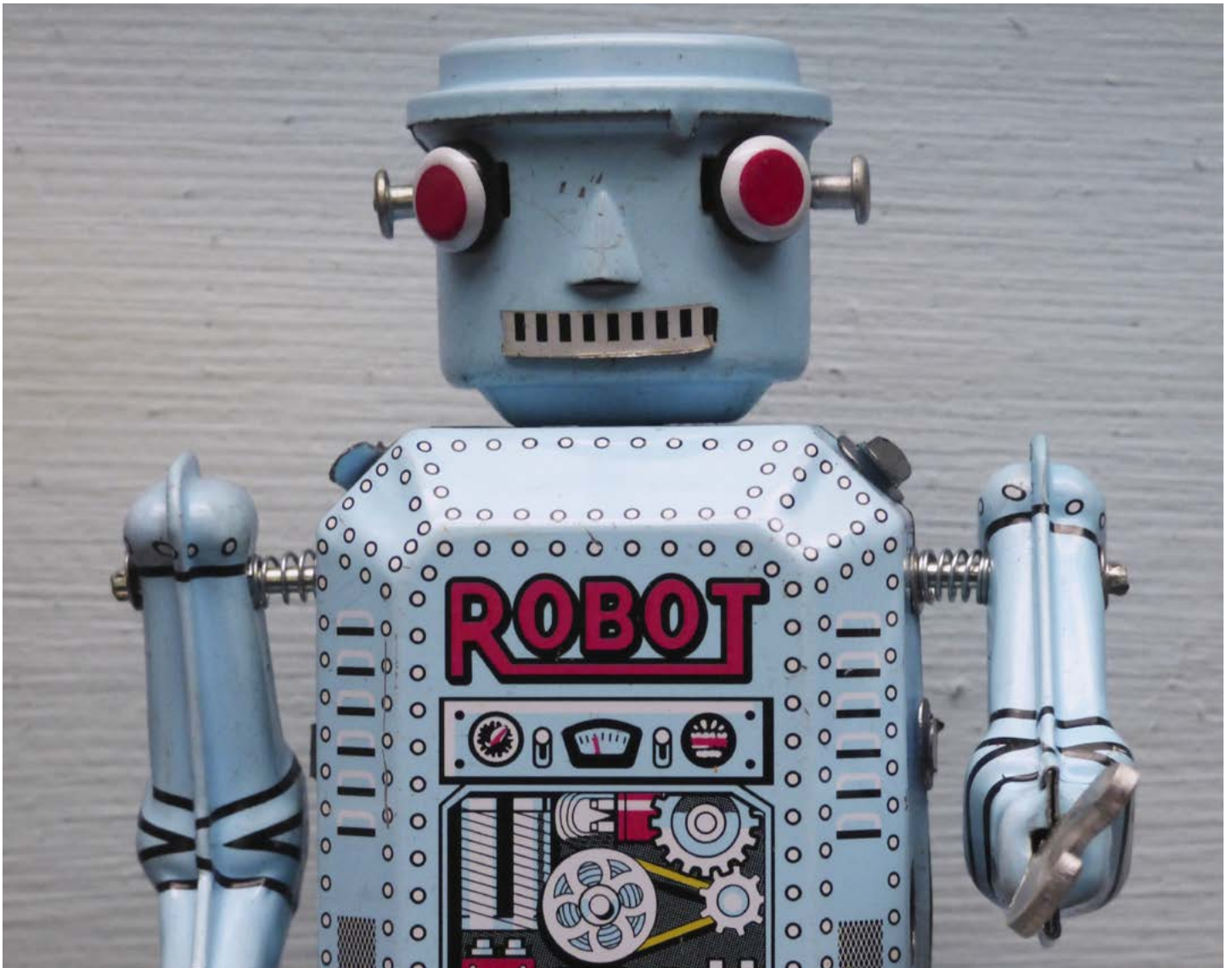
The tide of automation does not automatically lift all boats. Because of its displacement effect, labor-saving automation need not fuel wage increases commensurate with productivity growth. By replacing labor with machines in production tasks and putting downward pressure on wages, automation can reduce labor’s share of value-added (and national) income and increase income inequality. Indeed, there are now several studies indicating that automation has played a major role in decoupling productivity growth and wage growth and is a significant factor behind the decline in the labor share of national income in advanced

economies. According to a 2017 study by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), for example, technological progress explains about half of this decline since 1990.

There is a wide range of estimates of the likely speed and scale of disruption of labor markets that will be caused by future automation. Automation, as measured in these studies, encompasses a variety of currently available tools, including computer software, digital platforms, intelligent robots, and machines and systems to carry out tasks that could otherwise be done by human workers. Using a variety of time periods and measurement techniques, existing research concludes that automation’s effects on the future of work and labor markets will be substantial. The University of Oxford’s Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne, for example, found in 2013 that 47% of US occupations and, according to their 2016 study with Citibank, on average 57% of occupations in the 36 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are at risk of automation over the next two decades. A study published earlier this year by the OECD finds substantially smaller effects, concluding that 14% of jobs in the OECD have a high risk of automation, 70% or higher, while 32% of jobs have a moderate risk, between 50% and 70%. Moreover, there are notable differences among the OECD countries—ranging from 6% of jobs at high risk of automation in Norway to 34% in the Slovak Republic and 18% in Germany.

A comprehensive January 2017 study by the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), covering 46 countries and 80% of the global labor force, estimates that while less than 5% of occupations could be fully automated with currently demonstrated technologies, 60% of occupations have 30% or more of their constituent activities that could be automated. A December 2017 MGI report finds that under a likely mid-point scenario for the pace of automation about 15% of the global workforce—or 400 million workers—could be displaced between 2016 and 2030, requiring between 75 and 375 million workers, or 3% to 14% of the global workforce, to change occupational categories. In developed economies, where high labor costs are likely to accelerate the adoption of labor-saving technologies, the share of the workforce that may have to change occupational categories and the skills associated with them is even higher. In these countries, routine jobs in major occupational categories such as production and office support, and jobs requiring a high school education or less are projected to decline, while jobs in occupational categories such as healthcare and care providers, educators, builders, managers, and jobs requiring a college or advanced degree are projected to grow. Automation risks are greatest for routine cognitive tasks such as data-collection and data-processing, and routine manual and physical tasks in structured, predictable environments, like production-line jobs in manufacturing. In advanced economies, including the US and European countries, large shares of middle-skill, middle-wage employment consist of such routine jobs.

Existing research also finds a negative correlation between the skill levels and wages of occupations/tasks and



their potential for automation. In developed economies, automation is likely to reduce the demand for low- and middle-wage routine jobs, with workers in middle-skill jobs the most vulnerable. Low-wage workers could be somewhat less at risk, since their wages are too low to justify the cost of implementing labor-saving technologies. Middle-wage workers, in contrast, may have high enough earnings to make such technologies cost effective.

These conclusions are evidence of the skill-biased nature of automation—on balance, it reduces the demand for low- and middle-skill workers in routine jobs while increasing the demand for high-skill workers performing abstract tasks that require technical and problem-solving skills. The skill-biased nature of technological change has been apparent in the advanced economies over the last several decades and is likely to persist and intensify in the future. The resulting polarization of the labor market is reflected in both widening educational wage-differentials and widening overall wage inequality. As a result of these trends, income inequality is likely to continue to grow in the US and other developed countries as automation continues

to substitute for humans in many routine middle-skill and middle-wage occupations, while increasing the demand for workers with the higher skills and education complementary to and required by the new technologies.

II.

THE FUTURE OF WORK IN GERMANY

DESPITE GERMANY'S HIGH COST of labor, its exposure to labor-saving and skill-biased technological change, and significant automation, the country's economy is at full employment, the labor force participation rate is relatively high, and wages are growing. Although employment in manufacturing declined significantly between 1970 and 2013, from 40% to 19% of total employment, Germany has

the highest share of employment in manufacturing among the advanced economies, twice the share of the UK and the US, and higher than the share in Japan. Germany is also the most automated country in Europe in terms of industrial robots: for every 10,000 workers in the manufacturing industry there are 322 industrial robots, more than three times the European average of 106 industrial robots.

Recent research on the deployment of robots in Germany and the US yields important comparative results, revealing significant differences. A 2018 German study found that from 1994 to 2014 an additional industrial robot (defined broadly as an autonomous, automatically controlled, reprogrammable, and multipurpose machine) per 1000 employees directly reduced manufacturing employment by two jobs, but indirectly increased employment in the service sector by approximately the same number, yielding a zero net-effect on total employment in local labor markets specializing in industries with high robot usage. Overall, robots were responsible for 23% of the decline in manufacturing jobs in Germany during this period, driven by a reduction in the number of manufacturing jobs available for new, young labor-market entrants over time. Interestingly, robot adoption did not increase the risk of displacement for incumbent manufacturing workers, suggesting that businesses deployed robots to complement the skills of their existing workers and reshape their tasks rather than to substitute for them. The study finds evidence that these workers were willing to trade-off job stability for lower wage-growth. As a consequence, over time, workers more exposed to robots had lower labor earnings, and automation caused labor shares in exposed regions to decline. The study also shows that while there were positive earnings effects from automation for managers and skilled technical occupations, there were negative earnings effects for the bulk of medium-skilled and low-skilled workers whose routine tasks could be more easily replaced by robots.

Using a similar methodology, a comparable 2017 study, by Daron Acemoglu and Pascual Restrepo, found that from 1990 to 2007 the infiltration of industrial robots undermined both employment and wages in local US labor markets. One additional robot per 1000 employees reduced employment by three to six workers, and wages declined between 0.25 and 0.5%. In contrast to the German results, the introduction of robots did not indirectly increase employment in business service or other jobs, so the net effect on employment was negative. Similar to the German results, the negative employment and wage effects were largest for workers with a high-school degree or less and were concentrated in the bottom half of the wage distribution, driving up wage inequality as measured by the 90–10 wage differential.

Assuming a moderate pace of future automation, MGI estimates that, given trendline GDP growth and the projected decline in the working-age population, that there will be enough net jobs created to maintain full employment in Germany through 2030. Nearly a third of the workforce, however, may need to switch occupational groups, causing significant dislocation and transition costs. But

employment and wage polarization trends are likely to continue. The share of employment in the bottom two-thirds of the wage distribution is likely to fall, while the share in the top one-third is likely to increase. Moreover, the demand for workers with less than a secondary education is likely to fall, while the demand for workers with a college or more advanced degree is likely to increase. Finally, thousands of workers will need to upskill or reskill to meet the requirements of new job opportunities.

For many German workers currently employed in routine cognitive and physical jobs most likely to succumb to automation, the quality of new job opportunities, as measured by wages and benefits, may be lower than the quality of the old jobs that are displaced. In short, in the absence of offsetting policies, Germany, like other developed countries, may not be headed to a “jobless” future, with high technological unemployment, but to a “good jobless” future, in which a growing share of workers in middle-skill jobs can no longer earn middle-class incomes and sustain middle-class livelihoods.

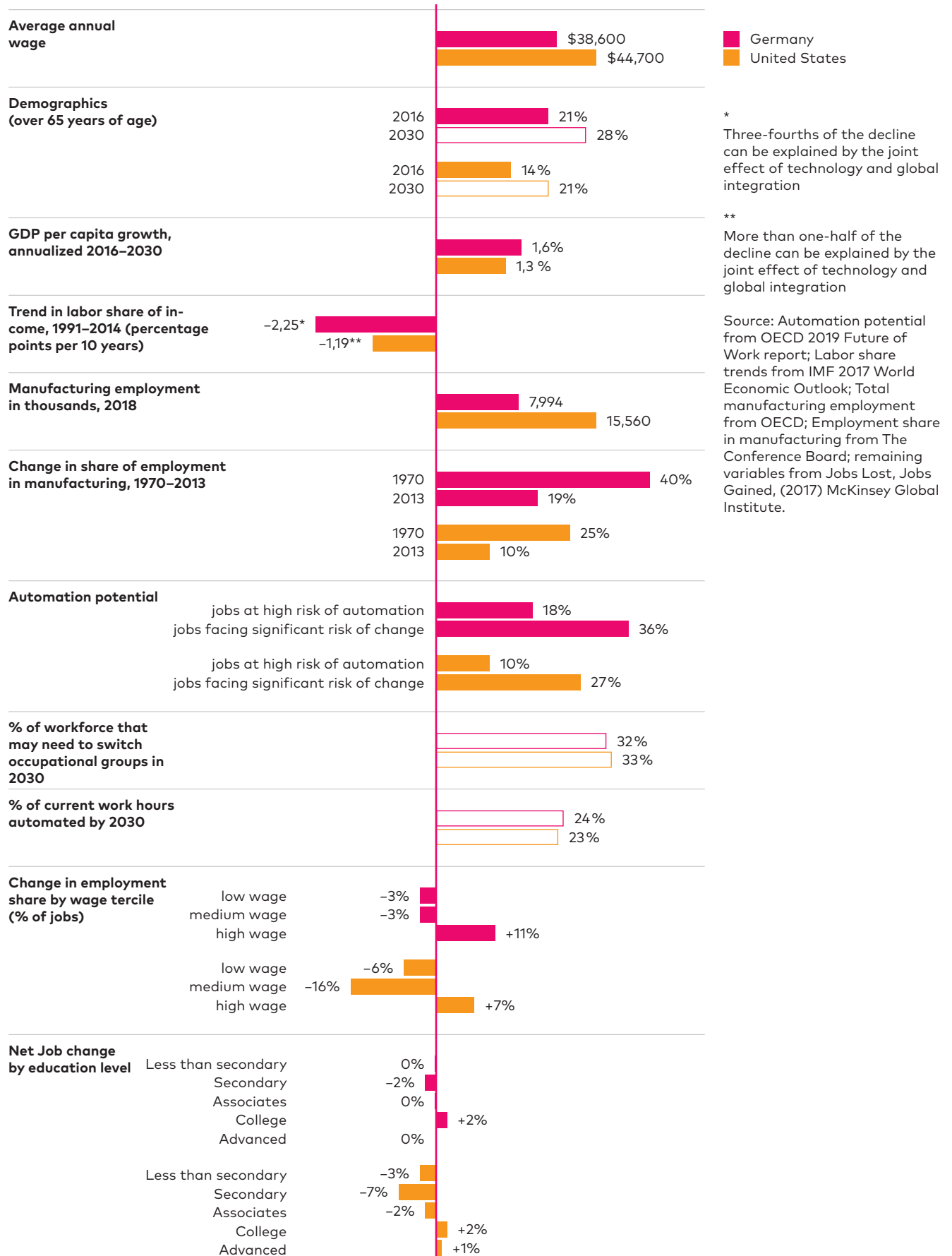
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GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS, AND LABOR RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF AUTOMATION

INTELLIGENT MACHINES that can substitute for human labor are creating similar challenges for advanced countries, but governments and businesses in individual countries are responding differently. What can policymakers do to speed and ease the significant displacements and transitions between jobs and occupations that will be triggered by automation? Fiscal and monetary policies to sustain full-employment levels of aggregate demand over the business cycle are critical. As the recent performance of the US, Germany, and many other advanced countries confirms, supportive macro-policies can foster high overall levels of employment and low unemployment levels, even as automation changes the composition of jobs. And over the medium term, policies to promote investment in infrastructure, housing, alternative energy, healthcare, and care for the young and the aging can boost economic competitiveness and inclusive growth while creating additional jobs in occupations that are likely to be augmented rather than displaced by automation.

A second critical policy response is the expansion and redesign of workforce training programs to upskill, reskill, and relocate workers. Unfortunately, most of the advanced countries are unprepared for a faster pace of job reallocation—the destruction and creation of jobs with different

TABLE 1: GERMANY AND US KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS



* Three-fourths of the decline can be explained by the joint effect of technology and global integration

** More than one-half of the decline can be explained by the joint effect of technology and global integration

Source: Automation potential from OECD 2019 Future of Work report; Labor share trends from IMF 2017 World Economic Outlook; Total manufacturing employment from OECD; Employment share in manufacturing from The Conference Board; remaining variables from Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained, (2017) McKinsey Global Institute.

skills, in different firms, in different industries, and in different places. Over the past two decades, government outlays for labor-force training and labor-market adjustments have fallen in most OECD countries. Despite evidence of their effectiveness, active labor-market policies in the form of government employment services, job-search assistance, training, and unemployment benefits have been cut in many countries. In the majority of OECD countries, fewer than one-third of jobseekers receive unemployment benefits. In Germany, unemployment insurance is only available after a full year of contributions, and the pension system penalizes career interruptions with substantial reductions in entitlements. In the absence of policies to reallocate workers from disappearing jobs to new ones, automation will result in higher structural and frictional unemployment.

These trends must be reversed. As part of a new social contract for the age of automation, lifelong learning, supported by active labor-market policies, needs to become a reality. As machines take over routine tasks, jobs will change, and work activities that complement intelligent machines will require different skills and higher levels of education. High-level cognitive abilities and complex social interaction skills such as logical reasoning, stronger communication skills, and enhanced social and emotional skills will become more important, while machines take over routine capabilities that are common in the workplace today. The good news is that the demand for workers with the requisite skills is projected to increase, and many routine middle-skilled jobs will be replaced by higher-skill, better paying ones. The challenges for both individual workers and for the societies in which they live, however, are how to equip workers with the required skills and education, as well as how to pay for the sizeable investments in training, education, and other active labor market policies that will be required.

For mid-career workers—with children, mortgages, and other financial responsibilities—training that is measured in weeks and months, not in years, will be necessary, and workers will need financial support to undertake such training. Sending people out for new, lengthy degree-programs at their own expense is not the answer. Instead, “nanodegrees” and stackable credentials, often obtained online and with the help of government training-funds, are likely to gain in importance. Active labor-market policies to promote the reskilling and re-employment of displaced workers are essential, and Germany has made significant strides. German policies include vouchers for individual workers for both job placement services and job training. Private job-placement services eligible for voucher support must have proven track-records in placing individuals in jobs, and voucher payment is conditional on worker tenure in new jobs for at least three months. Germany’s job training voucher system has been shown to increase employment probability for individual workers by two percentage points. Unfortunately, both in Germany and throughout the OECD, workers with lower skills who are most at risk from automation are less likely to take advantage of training

and education opportunities. In Germany, the gap in training participation between high- and low-skill adults is the highest in the OECD at approximately 50 percentage points, compared to 43 percentage points in the US.

As a result of the displacements and transitions caused by automation, a growing number of workers are likely to find themselves forced to change jobs, occupations, employers, and even locations of work frequently, and they may find themselves working in various forms of “non-standard employment,” including self-employment, temporary employment, contract employment, and independent-contractor employment with platform businesses like Uber. Governments will have to develop and finance policies to provide universal and portable social benefits like healthcare, childcare, and retirement security to work-

Active labor-market policies to promote the reskilling and re-employment of displaced workers are essential, and Germany has made significant strides.

ers in non-standard employment. Recent studies by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the OECD provide detailed recommendations for the provision of such social protections. For employees, portability of traditional social protections between EU member states already exists under Regulations (EC) 883/2004 and 987/2009. But there is no assurance of the portability of benefits across employers within a country, nor is there assurance of the portability across different types of work—for example, between traditional employment and self-employment.

Ultimately, decisions to deploy automation technologies are made not by policymakers but by businesses responding to incentives that are heavily affected by policies, including tax policy. A relatively high cost of labor, including taxes on labor, increases business incentives to adopt labor-saving technology. So do taxes that reduce the cost of capital through accelerated amortization, interest deductions, and other mechanisms. Indeed, economists Daron Acemoglu and Pascual Restrepo suggest in a 2019 paper for the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, “Automation and New Tasks: How Technology Displaces and Reinstates Labor,” that the current composition of taxes in the US and other developed countries is accelerating the adoption of labor-saving automation. And the more the labor-saving automation paradigm is adopted as a competitive strategy,

the more market incentives will favor investing in such automation at the expense of other strategies that focus on creating new labor-intensive tasks rather than substituting for labor.

Business decisions are also influenced by the institutions representing workers and their interests. Collective bargaining can bring workers' voices into decisions around technology adoption, deployment, and adjustment processes. Unfortunately, worker voices have become more muted in the last several decades, as the share of workers who are members of unions and covered by collective agreements has declined sharply throughout the OECD, including Germany. Today, the German share is about 17%, compared to 10.5% in the US. There are also several unique institutional features of German business governance—works councils, supervisory councils, and national unions and employers' associations organized by sector—which are likely to affect company decisions about the pace and magnitude of automation and its effects on employment levels, wages, hours of work, and other working conditions. Small- and medium-sized businesses, often privately or family owned, are also likely to shape such decisions in Germany in ways that give greater voice to workers and local communities and that assess the costs and benefits of labor-saving automation strategies differently.

The effects of automation on the future of work are not technologically determined. They can be shaped by the policies and actions taken by governments, businesses, workers, and citizens. Recent studies by the ILO and the OECD suggest guidelines for inclusive strategies to share the costs and benefits of automation broadly. Germany, building on its strong social contract and labor-market institutions, is developing an ambitious agenda to realize this goal while maintaining its strong global competitiveness. The US and other OECD countries can learn from Germany's forward-looking vision and leadership.

How will policymakers respond to the transition costs and income inequalities resulting from the coming wave of automation? Who will bear the dislocation costs on the path to an automated future? Will the benefits of intelligent machines be widely shared or be captured by a small percentage of the population? The answers to these questions depend not on the design of these machines but on the design of intelligent policies and intelligent business practices to reap their benefits and share them broadly across society. □

“
German
perfectionism
is demanding.
And very
successful
internationally.
”

We ensure that your growth will never be constrained by limits of any kind – especially by national borders. We can assist your company in national and international M&A projects and assume the legal project management as International Lead Counsel. In that, we not only bring lots of expertise but always a bit of German thoroughness, too.

Strong characters make strong partners.

THE ORGANS OF SENSE

Fiction by Adam Ehrlich Sachs

IN AN ACCOUNT sent to the *Philosophical Transactions* but for some reason never published there, or anywhere else, a young G. W. Leibniz, who throughout his life was an assiduous inquirer into miracles and other aberrations of nature, related the odd and troubling encounter he had with a certain astronomer who'd predicted that at noon on the last day of June 1666, the brightest time of day at nearly the brightest time of year, the Moon would pass very briefly, but very precisely, between the Sun and the Earth, casting all of Europe for one instant in absolute darkness, "a darkness without equal in our history, but lasting no longer than four seconds," the astronomer predicted, according to Leibniz, an eclipse that no other astronomer in Europe was predicting, and which, Leibniz explained, drew his notice in part because the astronomer in question, whose observations of the planets and the fixed stars were supposedly

among the most accurate and the most precise ever made, superior to Tycho's, was blind, and "not merely completely blind," Leibniz wrote (in my translation from the Latin), "but in fact entirely without eyes."

There could be no question of his *feigning* blindness because his sockets, and this much was known, were empty, wrote Leibniz, for whom this encounter seems to have both hastened and brought to a close the sole significant intellectual crisis of a philosophical career otherwise dominated by the sanguine rationalism for which it is now known, and for which, at least since the time of Voltaire, it has periodically been ridiculed.

Now, this astronomer had built, it was rumored, the longest telescope known to man, and therefore the most powerful, a telescope said to stretch nearly two hundred feet, reported Leibniz; but according to all known laws of optics the true power of a telescope is a function also of the power



Composite photographic image of the total solar eclipse seen from outside Crowheart, Wyoming, August 21, 2017. Photo: Michael S. Adler

of the eye that peers into it, left or right, and the power of the eye is of course a function of the existence of the eye, and in this case neither eye existed, “neither the left nor the right.” Hence in mid-June when Leibniz set out from Leipzig for Bohemia—first by carriage, down sun-dappled forest lanes, then, upon reaching the foothills, by horse, past the black mouths of salt mines, and finally, in the high mountains, by foot, along muddy paths forged by goats, over passes still deep in snow, a journey it would be all but impossible to imagine him making in his big curly wig and expensive silk stockings if we did not have this textual evidence that he indeed made it, although the absurd image of the Leibnizian wig poking through a snowdrift, or Leibniz himself stepping around a goat, has been sufficient in some quarters to cast doubt on the authenticity of the whole document—he knew that he was dealing most likely with a mystic, a madman, or a cunning fraud. But there was, as he explained to the *Philosophical Transactions*, a fourth and presumably final possibility, a possibility as intriguing as it was improbable: that he would encounter up there in the snowy mountains of Bohemia a man of reason, a man of science, whose prophesied flash of darkness would actually come to pass, who in other words stared up at the sky with his empty sockets and saw somehow what no other astronomer in the world could see, foresaw with no eyes what they could not foresee with two. If that were the case, Leibniz concluded, then when the light went on again four seconds later it would find the laws of optics in a shambles, knowledge in ruins, the human mind in an intimate embrace with the world, and the human eye in a state of disgrace.

He intended to reach the observatory by sunrise on the twenty-eighth, to stay there two days and two nights in order to “rigorously but surreptitiously assess the astronomer’s sanity” through “a series of subtly stringent interviews proceeding from the political to the theological,” i.e. from the lowest to the highest, “by way of the ethical, the logical, the astronomical, and the metaphysical,” and finally at noon on the third day, i.e. the thirtieth, to observe by the astronomer’s side the Moon’s predicted occultation of the Sun, the foretold four seconds of darkness on Earth, “the assessment sine qua non of his sanity.”

“He could pass my assessment without passing God’s,” Leibniz wrote.

“We are actually always passing each other’s sanity assessments but failing God’s,” he wrote. “I’m always passing your assessment and you’re always passing mine, always with flying colors, this is what a conversation is, an alternating series of not-very-stringent sanity assessments, though in God’s eyes presumably we’re frequently mad.”

Still, he noted, we never increase the stringency of our assessments!

“Of course, even the most stringent human assessment is ridiculous in light of even the laxest assessment administered by God,” Leibniz wrote.

It is worth noting that two weeks earlier, for reasons that remain obscure some three and a half centuries later, Leibniz had been denied his doctorate in law by the faculty of the University of Leipzig, despite having recently published his first book, *On the Art of Combinations*. Upon hearing the verdict he had gone for a walk on the outskirts of town, in the Rosental woods, where, while staring at the trunk of a tree, he was struck for the first time—as he recalled decades afterward in a letter to the French skeptic Simon Foucher—by the “calamitous” implications of the philosophy of Descartes, who had severed the mind from the world, transformed the world into a gargantuan machine, and made the mind doubt everything but its own existence. For a brief moment in his nineteenth year, Leibniz lost his faith in reason. The next fortnight finds him en route to Bohemia. I imagine him trudging through that summer snow in search not only of material for publication but of a happier and more harmonious relationship between mind and world.

“Observatories
were constantly
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in my head.”

In any case, something must have gone wrong, his calculations, his cartography, for it was not until after sunrise on the thirtieth, more than two full days behind schedule and only a few hours before the predicted eclipse, that Leibniz reached the observatory, and almost without realizing it, for he was at that point, as he recounts, suffering from hunger, dehydration, and hypothermia (“I have nearly completed a treatise on some remarkable properties of mountains,” he reports to the *Philosophical Transactions*), and had hallucinated over the course of the night prior, while staggering from one peak to the next under the lash of a freezing rain, a vast number of astronomical observatories “of every conceivable and inconceivable geometry,” not only triangular observatories and pentagonal observatories but observatories of hundreds of sides and in fact even thousands of sides, “in short, a night of pure polygonal unease.” “Observatories were constantly popping out of the mist, and only after I ran up to them in relief did I realize they were in my head.” So, when the sun rose and he saw right in front of him a small, perfectly circular tower of red brick, crumbling in parts, perched on the edge of a high cliff well above the clouds, with an immense telescope, even longer than rumored, protruding from it at an angle over the void, he assumed at first (“not unreasonably!”) that this circular observatory was just another illusion produced by his bedeviled mind, the final illusion, the observatory toward which last night’s distressing sequence was inexorably tending, and which, knowing his mind, his mind would not rest until it had produced. (“In the astronomer’s mind I would soon encounter a similar,

but of course not identical, since no two things in nature are identical, sort of mind.") It was only when he heard the telescope creak ("animalistically") in the wind that Leibniz realized he had actually found it, "it was not inside my head, it was actually out there in the snow on the edge of the cliff."

On the next page of his account, he depicts with a draftsman's hand the intricate system of pulleys and poles that held the heavy iron instrument aloft, marking lengths and angles with terrific precision. It is an impressive diagram, a marvel of its kind, far more detailed than the diagrams most instrument-makers of the time drew or commissioned for their own contraptions. The caption reads: "It was not inside my head."

THE TOWER HAD few windows, and the few that it did have were small, and shuttered tight, but after several circumnavigations of the structure Leibniz found a slat that was slightly askew and permitted him, if he stood on his toes, to peer inside. Outside it was bright and clear but inside the observatory it was dark apart from the light of a single candle, which dimly illuminated a very old man sitting on a three-legged stool, pressing one of his two empty eye sockets to the brass eyepiece of that colossal telescope. He neither wore glass eyes nor covered his sockets with patches; where the eyes are usually found "he merely had two uncanny voids." Obviously someone at some point had simply gone ahead and plucked them out. Every so often the astronomer would suddenly pick up his quill and write something down with considerable urgency, and although Leibniz could not make out from his vantage point what it was the astronomer was writing, "he gave off at such moments the distinct impression of someone who has really seen something." If this was a sort of performance, it was not clear for whom he might be performing, since there was no one else save a fat slumbering cat in the observatory, and as far as Leibniz could tell, he, Leibniz, had not yet been detected. If this was a performance for God, God, the being that need only be possible to be actual, and Who therefore is actual, because He is possible, and Who as a consequence of His actuality perceives at every instant an infinity of perceptions, would, no doubt, not be fooled, a fact of which reason itself, if it functioned rightly in him, would inform the astronomer. And if it is a performance for himself, he is, as I will prove, mad, Leibniz reasoned, for it is part of the essence of a



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performance that one stages it for others, so anyone who performs for himself acts as if he has within him another being, who might be performed for—an evident absurdity; and if he believes this absurdity, then he is mad, and if he acts this way without believing it, then he is also mad. Hence, Leibniz reasoned, if this “ceremony of sight” (my translation) is performed for himself, then he is mad; if it is performed for God, then he is also mad; and if it is performed for others, there being no one else here besides me, whom as far as I can tell he has not detected, then he is also mad. So, if he is sane, and he has not detected me, then this is not a performance, and either he really sees, or he thinks he really sees.

AS FOR HIS physical appearance, apart from his missing eyes, Leibniz reported to the *Philosophical Transactions*, the old astronomer was shriveled-up and bony and hunched over, and had some white hair on his head but not a lot of it (though each strand was long, there were not many strands), and the skin of his neck sagged below his chin, and his nose was big, the big bent nose perhaps of an Israelite, though altogether his face emanated an aura of “amiability and intelligence.” Whenever the astronomer bowed his head to peer into the telescope, his head, from Leibniz’s vantage point, vanished completely behind the high jutting ridge of his shoulders; “his spinal column had probably deformed with age.” The astronomer wore the rags and furs of the goatherds Leibniz had passed on the ascent. “Nothing on his feet, nothing on his head.” “The possibility that he actually was a goatherd, who had lost his eyes, and his mind, and strolled into this observatory, and began calling himself ‘the astronomer,’ was of course not lost on me.” From the moment he first saw him, Leibniz was well aware that what the old man herded might be something quite other than “flocks of truth and falsity through the pastures of the kingdom of reason.”

On the next page: a drawing of the old man hunched over on his stool, at the eyepiece of the telescope, the lengths of his limbs and the angle at which he held his head marked with precision as though the man himself were part of his instrument. The caption reads: “Was he a goatherd?”

If the solar eclipse took place, Leibniz noted, that was sufficient proof that he was, in fact, an astronomer, because the probability of someone who is not an astronomer predicting, eyes or no eyes, an eclipse that no other astronomer in the world has predicted is negligible. But if the solar eclipse failed to take place, it was no proof that he was not an astronomer, since it is not only non-astronomers who mispredict eclipses, but also astronomers, eyes or no eyes, though of course especially no eyes. The probability of someone who is an astronomer, even a sighted one, mispredicting a solar eclipse is actually quite high, as any induction over past solar eclipse mispredictions will indicate, since astronomers, even the sighted ones, are

constantly mispredicting eclipses. “If the eclipse does occur we can deduce that he is actually an astronomer and actually sane, but if the eclipse fails to occur we can deduce nothing at all—not that he is not an astronomer, not that he is a fraud, not that he is not sane: nothing!” Leibniz suddenly realized the one-sidedness of the sanity assessment that would shortly, for it was now almost nine o’clock in the morning, be administered by God in the form of a solar eclipse occurring or failing to occur. If the old man passed the test he was indeed sane, but if he failed the test it was no proof that he was not sane.

“He could fail God’s assessment without failing mine,” Leibniz wrote.

It is straightforward to prove that someone is an astronomer, or is sane, but how do you prove that someone is *not* an astronomer, or is *insane*? The first proof is trivial, the second perhaps impossible, Leibniz explained. How in general do you prove that someone is insane? What would such a proof even look like? Natural phenomena are of no help here. God, who, of course, as a consequence of His nature, has infinite knowledge of the universe, including the universe inside the human head, knows the answer, but the limitations of man prevent man from receiving that knowledge from Him. “I hazard to suggest that man is, in this respect, on his own.” There were now exactly three hours until the predicted eclipse. Leibniz would, in that time, he wrote, rap on the window, gain entry to the observatory, ask the old man simply, *How did you come to lose your eyes and how do you claim to see the stars without them?*, and then at the stroke of noon incline his head toward the heavens. If Leibniz deemed the man’s story sane, and the solar eclipse furthermore occurred, then the old man was certainly sane. If Leibniz deemed the man’s story insane, yet the eclipse occurred, then, too, the old man was certainly sane. If Leibniz deemed the man’s story insane, and the eclipse furthermore failed to occur, then the old man was probably, but only probably, as it would be no demonstration, insane. And if Leibniz deemed the man’s story sane, but the eclipse failed to occur, then the old man was possibly (but only possibly!) sane, although, in truth, in that case, at once the thorniest case and the most common, and, added Leibniz, actually even the quintessential case here on Earth, we would know more or less nothing at all.

“At that moment,” Leibniz wrote, “I rapped on the window.” □

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LAND OF DARKNESS



A writer faces her fears
inside North Korea

by Suki Kim

I AM THE ONLY writer ever, as far as we know, to have lived undercover in North Korea, embedded within the system to investigate the place. In 2011, I took my fifth trip into Pyongyang, where, under the guise of being a missionary and an ESL teacher, I lived for six months with 270 North Korean males in a military compound. For this act, I am often described as “fearless.” People call me brave. But, even if it sounds illogical, I consider myself to be a very fearful person. Even more, I believe my fearfulness is the only way I can begin to explain my time undercover in the gulag nation.

North Korea is perhaps the darkest place in the world. The country lacks electricity; everything is gray and monotone, and the only light is given to the Great Leader, an authoritarian,

godlike persona now worn for the third generation by 35-year-old Kim Jong Un, who is considered the sun, though that sun exudes no warmth for its people. No other contemporary country is so entirely devoid of light.

I have always been afraid of the dark. I rarely dream, and I used to sleepwalk as a child to escape the pitch-blackness of being asleep. Even now, I cannot turn the light off at night. This is a dreary habit since artificial light is so disruptive that I almost never sleep well. But my fear of the dark is overpowering; I would rather forsake good sleep if it means keeping the darkness at bay.

Morning brings no relief. I often wake with a sinking feeling, then spend many early hours staring at unopened emails with dread, ill at ease with facing a shared territory of interaction. I have even been avoiding emails about this essay, which I've been afraid to start for weeks. I disabled

Morning brings no relief. I often wake with a sinking feeling, then spend many early hours staring at unopened emails with dread, ill at ease with facing a shared territory of interaction.

the calendar app on my phone so that I would not be reminded of the approaching deadline. I recently had to fly from New York to Seoul, and the reasons for that trip became secondary to the flight itself, which suggested to me a 14-hour-long refuge when no one would be able to reach me or expect me to reciprocate.

I experience the world, that is, as a map of fears to navigate, its coordinates all shattering bits coming at uneven speeds. This feeling has dogged me for as long as I can remember, and the map operates as a knot growing more tangled within me each day. Parts of it—the toughest paths to fathom—have been there for as long as I can recall. One of these paths leads back to North Korea, which often seems to me the dark night from which I have run all my life.

My family was separated by the Korean War, and I was born and raised in South Korea. When I was twelve, my father, who had been a millionaire, suddenly went bankrupt. In the middle of night, I was awakened and shoved into a car and driven to a city far away, to a relative's house, where I waited for my parents to join me. Because bankruptcy is

punishable there by jail, my parents had gone into hiding. I was a child and didn't understand, so I waited, every day expecting their return. But I didn't see them again until a year later, at John F. Kennedy Airport, in New York, after our family had fled Korea.

Predictably, I don't remember much of that year of waiting; that time remains in my mind as a hollow darkness from which the only sensation I recall is that of a thirst, the huge, bottomless kind that cannot be quenched. The darkness did not lift even when I immigrated to America and became reunited with my parents, now penniless. I did not speak a word of English. Everything I knew simply vanished in one instant, and I got stuck, I think, in the shadowy nook where I hid as a girl, aged twelve.

Perhaps because of all this, I am good at waiting. I can wait for days and years, through rain and storm—even through darkness—and hardly ever ask questions. Somewhere deep in my mind, I must imagine that if I am quiet and good, my parents will come back. I could have made, I suppose, a very good wife to a very conservative man. But instead I became a writer in the English language despite, or maybe because of, the fact that English, which I adopted as a teen, was another road on my map of fear.

As I write this, I'm reminded of a well near my childhood home. It was a deep, old-fashioned, cylindrical well made of stone, and the neighborhood kids played around it, throwing things and shouting into its vault to hear the echo. I was always terrified of it and never went near. Later in life I became briefly fixated with the work of Haruki Murakami because he kept using wells as symbols in his novels. But eventually I got bored of reading him; I realized that it wasn't Murakami's writing that haunted me but the well from my childhood. My passion for his work was just the flipside of a stronger fear.

How all this relates to North Korea might seem, I realize, abstract. I can't say it provides direct explanation. Perhaps I traveled to the darkest place on earth because I empathized with its citizens, who are stuck in that darkness and cannot get out. Perhaps their voicelessness became mine because it reminded me of mine. Or it's possible that North Korea, in some ethereal way, became a kind of darkest night, the longest wait, the well from my childhood.

I PURSUED COVERAGE OF the country for a decade, every step of the way nearly paralyzed with fear. I was not one of those intrepid foreign correspondents who jump into war zones, nor did I have a team of editors, fixers, and photographers working alongside to help figure out the logistics and arrange the precautionary backups. Although I signed a book contract long before 2011—when I finally dove into Pyongyang for those six months—my meager contract was just a piece of paper with a vague deadline, never a support network I could rely on for protection. In Pyongyang, I was watched around the clock by the minders who lived directly below me in a dormitory under complete surveillance. My classes were

recorded and reported on, and I had to get permission for every lesson from the North Korean staff. I saved my notes on USB sticks, which I kept on my body at all times. I made sure to delete my traces from my laptop every time I signed off. I saved a backup copy on an SD card, which I hid in different spots in the room, always with the light off. I created a document within a document, burying the notes in the middle of what looked like class lesson material. I was utterly on my own and knew no one who could come to my rescue if I were caught with the four hundred pages of notes I had taken in secret. The most likely scenario was that I would vanish in that bleak, dark unknown.

NORTH KOREA IS the most inaccessible country in the world, and its regime has committed human rights abuses at a scale, according to the United Nations, “without parallel in the contemporary world.” It is a society built entirely on fears. Its dictators have manipulated and exploited human frailties to incorporate them into its system of control and abuse. Its citizens cannot leave the country, and their movement within it is restricted. Information is censored, and every interaction is surveilled. Education is only about the cult of the Great Leader, as is the media, and the citizens are treated as slaves and soldiers to uphold the myth. Those who enter its borders without permission or who commit acts that are forbidden by the regime—even something as seemingly innocuous as ripping a poster of their Great Leader—can face sentences of more than a decade of hard labor. Public execution is sanctioned by the regime, which is also known for kidnapping foreigners. No one with any sense of self-preservation would sneak into North Korea to write a book.

This leads people back home in the United States, or in South Korea or Europe, where I’ve traveled in recent years to give talks—the same people who like to call me fearless and brave—to ask the inevitable questions: Wasn’t I scared? And why did I go?

These questions always give me pause. Perhaps it is a natural human instinct to look for a neat, rational motive for any story that seems incredible. Readers often want to identify with their narrator and the reasons for her action, or perhaps they just want to be assured that the author of a story is not out of her mind. Some years ago, when I published my first novel, there were readers who seemed to take personal offense at the story being open-ended. A few even told me



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I should write a sequel to redo the ending with a proper conclusion.

Yet such an instinct is self-defeating; no true story worth anyone's time operates according to a predictable pattern. Accepted plots are almost always contrived. It is entirely possible to be scared and not scared at the same time, though this idea is rarely allowed. Such a blurred line reminds us how limited our agency is to control our circumstances; this mathematics of fear leaves no such gray area. In our attempt to be satisfied with a story's arc, we like to limit ourselves to a one-dimensional narrative of a hero fighting evil, although we know that life is almost always somewhere in between.

One of the questions I am most frequently asked about North Korea is whether the people there are "brainwashed under their Great Leader." The question strikes me as deeply patronizing; citizens there are not simplistic robots. They may believe and not believe all at once. My North Korean students would, in unison, swear against the imperialist America and its puppet South Korea as their chief enemies and say that if a war broke out, they would kill their enemies without hesitation. But when I asked them, "What about me? I'm both South Korean and American," they looked embarrassed and laughed shyly, mumbling, "But you are our teacher. You are different."

Isn't this the kind of paradox by which the human mind works? There is a place in our being that allows for simulta-

My North Korean students would, in unison, swear against the imperialist America and its puppet South Korea as their chief enemies and say that if a war broke out, they would kill their enemies without hesitation.

neous belief in something while knowing it not to be true—or for calmly speaking with students in a classroom while experiencing absolute terror about the consequences of being found out by authorities. I think of it as a kind of blind spot.

Despite the differences in circumstances in America, we have seen plenty of examples of the blind spot operating through the recent election cycle. It appears that an overwhelming sector of the population became convinced that

a real-estate guy who played a boss firing people for eleven years on a popular reality TV show was uniquely qualified to lead the nation. Even in this country, where celebrity prestige seems to dictate the public conscience, it cannot be that people would confuse playing the boss on television with having anything to do with being the actual boss of a nation—but perhaps such was the comfort of indoctrinated habit. It's of a piece with an American psychology that has allowed joking about the Great Leader to be our cultural norm. Movies like the animated *Team America: World Police* and the comedy *The Interview* are among the most popular reference points for North Korea; a country where 25 million people are currently being trapped and tortured has largely been figured into American mainstream culture as the butt of jokes.

EVERY TIME SOMEONE in an audience asks me how and whether all North Koreans are brainwashed, I am struck by how unintelligible such a question is, and how much it assumes a fundamental difference between the operations of their own minds and the minds of North Koreans. I often feel I am watching an object of fear grow to dominate the audience member's brain and arrest their understanding. Perhaps there is a comfort in denying North Koreans their humanity, distancing their experiences as unreal. To do so allows us to have no obligation and responsibility to them, and it frees us from the vague sense of our complicity. They cannot touch us. The blind spot allows a person in such a situation to feign an act of agency that masks a deeper lack of agency; it is at once willful ignorance and knee-jerk self-protection.

Each time someone calls me fearless, I think of this blind spot, as I believe it helps explain my time in North Korea. I do not mean to suggest that I was naive to its dangers, but that each time I thought about being caught, I blocked the matching pangs of fear that came, attempted to usher them away from the front of my consciousness as well as I could.

In Pyongyang, I was allowed to leave the campus only in a group with minders for a few hours on weekends, and my days were meticulously mapped out, so the only break I got was to jog in a circle around the tiny campus. I wore the mini USB sticks containing the notes for my book on a necklace as pendants, and I always feared that the strand might loosen and slip off me while I was not paying attention. In those passing moments, when the possibility of being discovered struck me as an impending, inevitable doom, my breath would catch, and as a kind of survival mechanism, I would shut my eyes and push away the thought.

IT OFTEN SEEMS to me that the desire to comprehend fear strikes at a mystery at the center of life. We breathe toward death; each moment alive is a clock tick toward not living any longer. There is no happy ending, and to help all this make sense to us, we repeat histories, fight needless wars,

recite prayers, and fall in love, often more than once, with people who will break our hearts. Life is born from those blind spots, with each mishap, every accident.

Because I identify with fear, I turned out to be, as much as one can be, well suited to pursue North Korea and to bear each frightening day there as if I were a researcher at a laboratory working on a case. I did not count on caring so much for my students, but I did, and that consequence was afforded to me by my own blind spot. Each interaction surprised me, shocked me from unknowing to knowing, gave me names and faces toward a deeper understanding of the North Korean horror. The dark stopped being dark for one illuminating second at a time, and even if night returned each time to blacken the sky completely, the darkness that followed was never quite the same.

T **HERE IS NO** full circle, tidy conclusion, or simple solution to any of this. I am still scared of North Korea. My inbox is full of unread emails. Mornings are hard, and I try to avoid reading breaking news from above the thirty-eighth parallel, which is inevitably negative; two Americans from the school where I was undercover are being held hostage by the regime. When I finally do glance at the news, I don't look at photos because I am afraid that I might see the faces of my students, which would make me tumble and lose my precarious balance.

Sometimes I still fear that it will all come to haunt me one day, that someone sent by the Great Leader will find me while I am traveling somewhere far away from home, and that I will either be taken back to Pyongyang or be punished for writing about what they did not want revealed. But each time my mind goes there, I stop myself, and though it is not clear where my thoughts retract to, there is often a lull; for a brief moment I am numb, and fear cannot get to me. □

This essay first appeared in *Lapham's Quarterly* in summer 2017 and is reprinted here with permission.



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WISH YOU WERE HERE!

A brief history of the
postal card

by Liliane Weissberg

THE POSTCARD IS a rectangular piece of sturdy paper and often bears a printed picture.

It has many predecessors: the illustrated broadsheet, playing card, advertising notices, visiting card, or, simply, stationery stamped or engraved with images. But it's fair to say that the postcard proper could not have come into existence without the invention of the postal stamp.

The first issue of the penny stamp, in Great Britain, in 1840, marked a change in the entire economic system of correspondence. Previously, mail was paid for by the recipient of a missive, not the sender, and while the cost of mail depended on the number of letter sheets used, it was largely calculated in reference to the individual mail-service employed and the distance a letter had to traverse. The postal stamp brought radical change: mail was now paid for up front, and the calculation of distance for delivery was largely replaced by another measurement: weight.

At first, the concept of stamping was not limited to a small square of paper to be affixed on the corner of an envelope; it involved the entire envelope itself. William Mulready, an artist and member of the British Royal Academy, won a competition for the design of an official postal envelope. The design showed Britannia front and upper center, surrounded by symbols

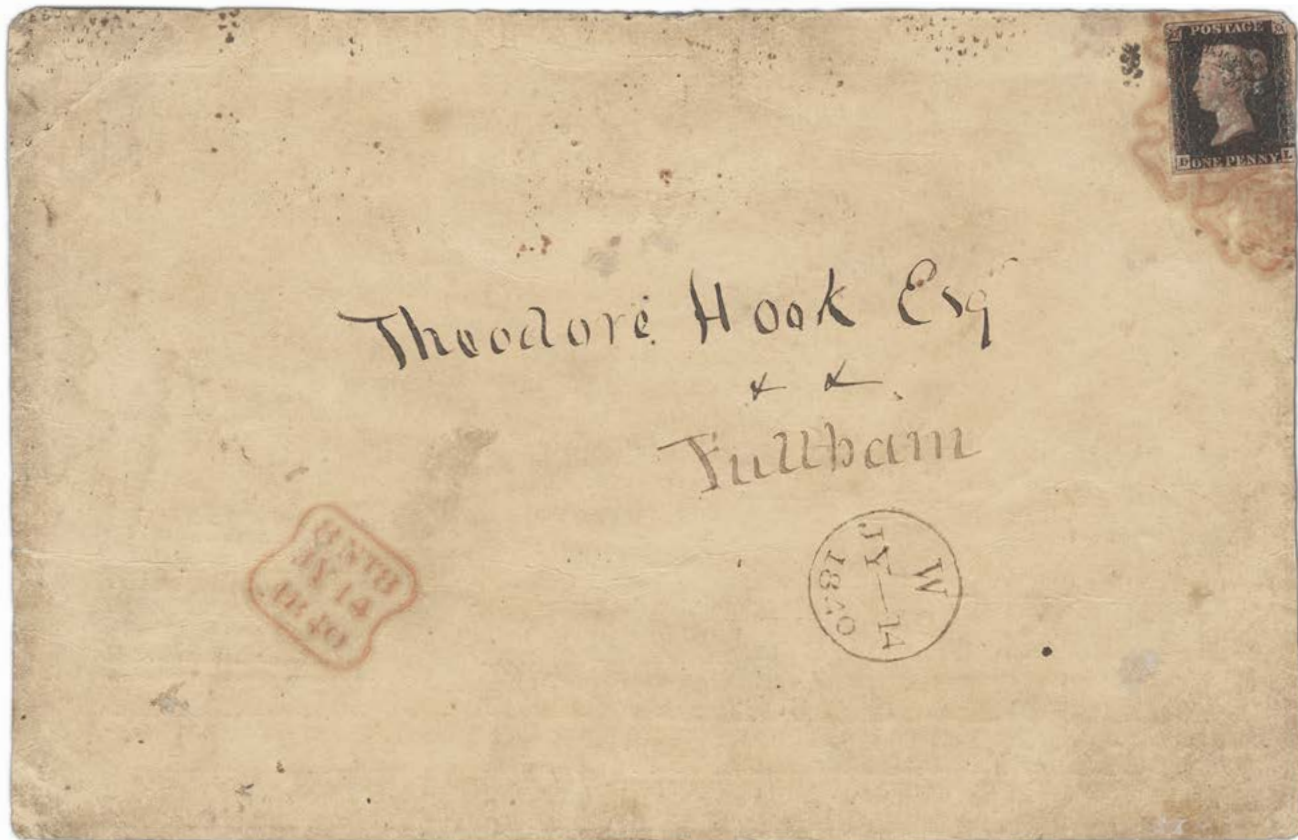
of imperial power that referred not only to current colonies but also to colonies of the past. William Penn is pictured on the upper-right margin of the envelope, in conversation with Native Americans. Criticism of Mulready's design was voiced as soon as the envelope was published, discussed in the *London Times* and elsewhere. Competing, privately published envelopes were also issued. They pictured caricatures of Britannia, flying scribes, and a donkey instead of a lion. These images were discussed publicly as well; there was also the question whether such privately issued envelopes should or could enjoy the services of the British Royal Mail.

But it is another piece of mail that should elicit our rapt attention. In July 1840, a simple piece of paper, addressed to "Theodore Hook," was graced with the new black penny-stamp and dropped into the London mail. It is the first postal card to be mailed (that we know of). On the back of the sheet, there was a hand-drawn image: a caricature of postal workers eagerly dealing with the new envelopes and stamps. The address of the sender was not given, but it can be assumed that it was no other than the recipient of the card himself, the novelist and playwright Theodore Hook, who was always ready for a good hoax. The intended viewer of this missive was therefore not the recipient of the mail; the intended





Backside image of the "Theodore Hook, Esq." postcard. Courtesy of Eugene Gomberg.



Frontside image of the "Theodore Hook, Esq." postcard. Courtesy of Eugene Gomberg.

viewer was the postal workers who had to sort and deliver it. In this sense, Hook was aware of a new and important transformation: in contrast to a letter inside an envelope, this piece of mail had no envelope to conceal the sender's private note. Its message, instead, was public. Hook's postcard acknowledged this novelty.

WHEN THE PRUSSIAN postal official Heinrich von Stephan proposed the introduction of an open "postal sheet," or *Postblatt*, to the Northern German Postal Federation 25 years later, in 1865, he could cite many reasons that would recommend its adoption: the postal sheet was light and therefore economical, and it was thought to limit the flood of mail. Letter writing would be faster, too, and an emphasis on speed was important in a time of technological progress and industrial revolution. He also hoped that the limited space would promote a more concentrated style of writing. Moreover, the postal sheet was meant to compete with the telegraph system, by offering a cheaper, and hence more democratic, means of communication.

In all of this, the postal sheet was *modern*. Von Stephan argued in his application:

The form of the letter, like many other human contrivances, has, in the course of time, undergone numerous modifications. In antiquity, the wax tablets that contained the writing were united by rings; the letter was, so to speak, a book. Then came the form of the roll, which lasted until the Middle Ages. Later still, the letter assumed a more convenient form and was sent folded up, and ultimately, the envelope came into use [...] From these various changes, the form became ever more and more simple. This is equally true of the contents, as is shown by the extreme pomposity of the earlier epistolary style, with its formal repetition of titles, etc.

Von Stephan's sketch of the evolution of the letter points to a straightforward development from the wax tablet to the new postal sheet. And this most novel format would have "the dimensions of ordinary envelopes

of the larger size and consist of stiff paper, corresponding therefore in size and quality to the recently introduced Money Orders used in some of the German postal districts."

Unfortunately, von Stephan's proposal was not met with success; the new type of money order failed to satisfy the Postal Federation's economic calculations. Publicly, however, they offered a different reason: the postal sheet failed to maintain the mail service's standard of privacy. In newly bourgeois nineteenth-century German society, private and public realms were carefully separated; messages that could be viewed by postal employees, servants, or other external readers were seen to violate this separation.

With the German effort roundly rejected, the Austro-Hungarian Empire pressed forward, becoming the first state to approve the postcard for official mail delivery, in 1869. This time, the proposal had been issued by an economist, Emmanuel Hermann, for whom the calculations did make sense (Hermann has been celebrated ever since as the inventor of the postcard).

A British business journal of the day reported:

The Austrian government has introduced a novelty in postage which might be introduced with great benefit in all countries. The object is to enable persons to send off, with the least possible trouble, messages of small importance, without the trouble of obtaining paper, pens, and envelopes. Cards of a fixed size are sold at all the post-offices for two *Kreutzers*, one side being for the address and the other for this note, which may be written either with ink or with any kind of pencil. It is thrown into the box, and delivered without envelopes. A halfpenny post of this kind would certainly be very convenient, especially in large towns, and a man of business carrying a few such cards in his pocket-book would find them very useful. There is an additional advantage attaching to the card, namely, that of having the address and postmark inseparably fixed to the note.

The sender's address was not to be included. Instructions were formulated to protect mail recipients as well as postal workers from offense. (For a while, six rules for postcard writing were printed on the bottom of each card.)

The correspondence card elicited additional concerns: in contrast to von Stephan's predictions, people feared that it would lead to a deterioration of writing style and a decline in epistolary decorum. And if the cards could not assure privacy, were women allowed to use them? Did cards have to be distinguished in size and color to mark the gender of the correspondent, as had been previously done with the color of letter seals? In the years following 1870—the year Germany's postal system, under von Stephan, officially introduced the postcard in the country's north—books of etiquette focused on questions of postcard decorum and social class: Was one allowed to write cards to persons of a higher or of lower social standing than the author? Was the card too cheap a medium to be used by the upper class? Many of these questions and concerns subsided when Queen Victoria herself pronounced her personal interest in postcards.

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Source 1: *What is Cancer?: Types of Cancer*. National Cancer Institute, 2015
Source 2: *Exascale Computing Project Funds Three CI/Argonne Projects*. Computation Institute & The University of Chicago, 2016



Once private companies began to issue these cards, they became increasingly decorated with images, turning the postal sheet or correspondence card into a picture postcard. Most of these are known as “view cards” and show geographical locations; advertisements or greetings cards also appeared. The early postcards kept the separation between the address side, on the front, and message side, on the back; they had to thus combine image and text on one side. The text was to be inscribed by hand under or next to the image; text and image were to be read and viewed together. New printing technologies made this possible, and German publishers were ahead of the pack. Lithography as *Steindruck* was further developed specifically for this purpose, and Germany soon emerged as a lead publisher. The old centers of book publication, primarily Leipzig, became hubs of postcard production, exporting their wares throughout Europe and to America and African colonies.

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 helped to increase the popularity of the postcard. For the delivery of mail during wartime, weight became all important. The French mail service even experimented with delivery via balloons. Preprinted cards would also be issued and distributed to soldiers on the front, which assured both speedy notices for soldiers—and easy censorship for superiors. All a soldier had to do was to check whether they were healthy or not, whether they felt well or not, and send it on, like a questionnaire.

Germany became Germany, of course—i.e. the German Reich—*after* the Franco-Prussian War. View cards became crucial in promoting the national project, acquainting the German population with the newly imperial sites, particularly its new capital, Berlin. British or French citizens were informed about colonial territories mostly via postcards printed by German publishers.

And then, of course, there was the rise of the tourist industry, with which the phenomenon of the postcard would become intimately linked. Between 1895 and 1920, during the

so-called Golden Age of the Postcard, almost three hundred billion postcards were mailed worldwide. Germans were by far the most avid users of the medium, forwarding view cards of local sites and places encountered during travel, as well as cards for holidays or special occasions. Moreover, collectors not only wrote on postcards, they also bought them as souvenirs and for inclusion in albums. Postcards could even be stamped at post offices for dating purposes only, without putting them in the mail—a popular practice that lent evidence of one’s travels.

By 1907, an important physical change would take hold: the postal office would permit the printing of divided address sides. Now, the postcard could truly transform from a correspondence card into a picture postcard, with an entire side dedicated to the image. Photographs, framed at first in white margins, began to adorn the cards. People began to collect them with vigor—not for the messages, which became increasingly secondary, but for the images themselves. Postcards offered cheap reproductions of pictures that were, in turn, standard size, and could thus be placed into photo albums. At first, postcard collecting was viewed as an occupation for women and girls, but the industry sought to change this, introducing specific sub-genres of picture cards featuring political caricatures, pictures of popular actresses, or scarcely clad women.

Germany’s dominance in the postcard market ended with WWI. Mail services were restricted, and wartime was an obvious setback for tourist travel. But it was Germany’s final defeat in the Great War, perhaps more so than the use of new print technologies, that put an end to the country’s postcard reign. Companies in the United States, England, and France were on the rise.

And then, *et voilà*: Paris became the capital of the postcard. The 1889 World Exhibition there marked the centennial anniversary of the French Revolution, showcasing new inventions, people, and objects from places all across the world. It also offered a

three-hundred-meter steel-and-iron construction that would become the symbol of a new time. While the Eiffel Tower loomed above the fairgrounds, one could also enter the newly invented elevator to ascend to three separate viewing platforms. On the two lower ones, visitors could find restaurants and shops, including ones that sold postcards. On the top level, a postmaster was conveniently seated at his desk, eager to stamp visitors’ purchases and mail them off.

THE EIFFEL TOWER was the grandest post office of all, and it was dedicated to the medium of the postcard. In exchange for its spotlight, the Eiffel Tower became the postcard’s most popular motif. But something else was to happen: tourists who climbed the Eiffel Tower not only viewed the intricate steel construction, they also saw the city of Paris itself—its wide avenues, marvelous geometry, and bustling pedestrian life. A reversal was underway: the world exhibit used the Eiffel Tower, which turned Paris itself into a grand exhibition space.

Postcard publishers were quick to take advantage. At the time of the World Exhibition and throughout the following decades, postcard printers hired illustrators, and soon photographers, to capture the views from above. They documented Notre Dame and the streets of Paris, leaving out a couple of *arrondissements*—those of the very poor, and some of the very wealthy. Photographers like Yvon (Pierre Yves-Petit) photographed sites from above, climbing on roof tops and ledges; Eugène Atget took photographs in the street, documenting empty sidewalks and shop windows alive with consumable things. It was a mapping project of enormous proportions. Parisian picture postcards were published in series, so that consumers could acquire a panorama of the city that could be arranged and rearranged in personal photo albums. These postcard images turned Paris into an icon of modernity. They also launched the postcard’s career as its own exhibition space—and as a city’s best advertising agent. □



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Renée Green: Pacing Code. Survey

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Artist Portfolio



[1]

PACING ARCS

Renée Green

IT MAY SEEM STRANGE, or it may seem in keeping with the project *Pacing*, that one year since its two-year engagement at Harvard's Carpenter Center ended, I am still learning about it, studying it, and further engaging with the processes generated then, which continue to take surprising forms. Slowing down to pay close attention, yet steadily continuing to engage. To touch. To feel. To be aware. To be still. And to move. To consciously focus on attention and energy expenditure and circulation. These were some of the initial intentions, thoughts, and motivations.

When I was approached by the Carpenter Center for Visual Arts with a two-year invitation as an artist for the "Institution (Building)" framework, I immediately began having ideas. An extended period of time to present and develop work sparked the notion of *Pacing*. I liked having the possibility of study, and I relished the opportunity to consider Le Corbusier, the architect of the building (1960–63), in relation to different conditions and contexts, this time intersecting with my own daily life. All of this appealed to me. To be able to further reflect after the passage of time, after having lived through different times and places since having inhabited one of his buildings, intrigued me.

More than twenty years ago, I'd made a work, *Secret* (1993), which had grown out of another invita-



[2]

tion to engage with a Le Corbusier site, his building *Unité d'habitation* (1947–52), in Firminy, France. I'd inhabited an abandoned unit in *l'Unité* in 1993, and I'd revisited *Secret* again in 2006 and 2010 to produce additional parts of the work, as I continued to think with it. The 2016 invitation to engage with the Carpenter Center thus allowed me again to think about Le Corbusier's relations to the Americas and to the Catalan architect Josep Lluís Sert, but I was also interested in what seemed to be a lack of relations between Le Corbusier and the architect Rudolph M. Schindler, who was also a European exile, born in Austria, in 1887, the same year as Le Corbusier.

The proposition to work, as an artist, with the entire Carpenter Center was compelling. I wanted a chance to reflect upon previous works and interests, to make new work, and to think about where and how my work actually takes place now, after having done so much of it over the years throughout the world. I wanted to make a new film, and I wanted to put my works in relation to this building in various ways, to experiment with and to "test" the building. As I lived nearby, I wanted to be able to walk to visit the works and the building and the people who would pass through; I wanted to be in conversation with others. I was and continue to be curious about what is here. In this local-

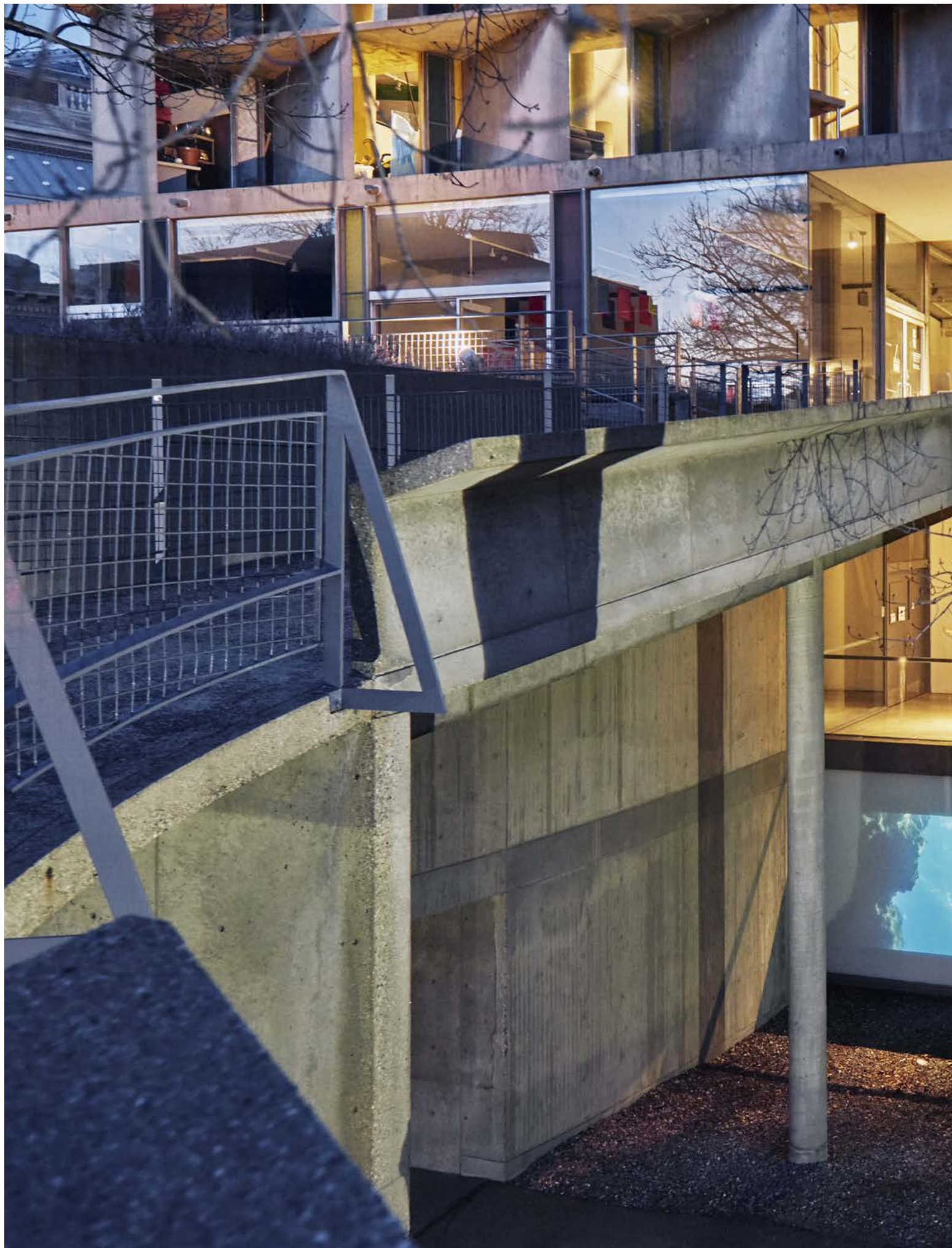
ity (Cambridge, Boston, Massachusetts, United States, North America), but also, I wanted to experience the only other locality where Le Corbusier was able to build in the Americas (La Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina, South America)—to think with both hemispheres. I wanted to focus precisely on what could now be probed of any generative perception of the Americas, in relation to speculative past and contemporary worlds, imagined and material. I wanted to study differently and to experience the locations I attempt to inhabit and move through, to see what could happen by paying attention to the developing *Pacing* territories. Fiction and poetry proved to be necessary in this undertaking, along with digging into archives and libraries. Harvard's Graduate School of Design is the home of the Le Corbusier Research Collection, which I often passed on walks. The presence in the Carpenter Center of the Harvard Film Archive was another stimulating resonance.

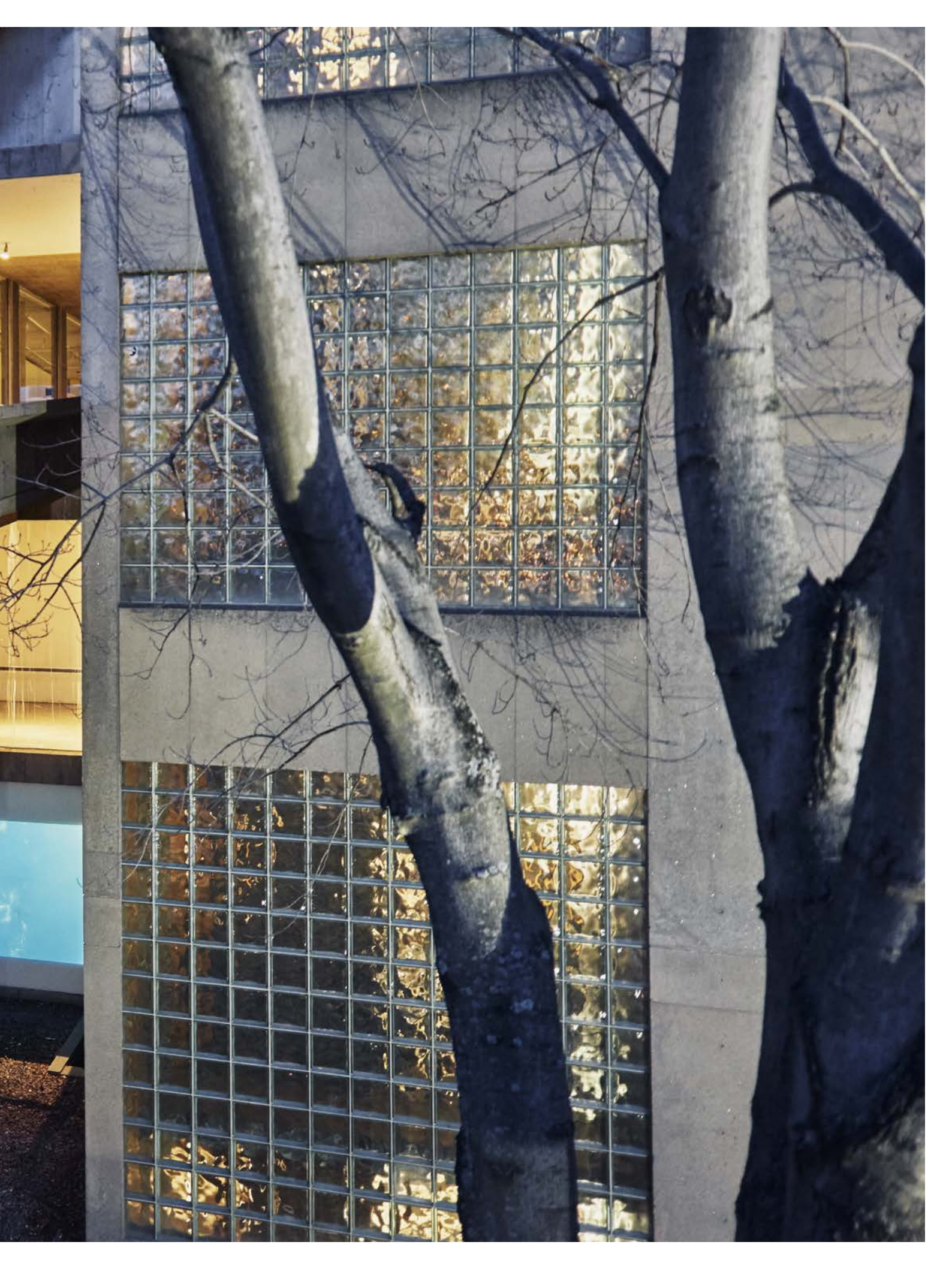
Many aspects of what I imagined then are still ongoing now—a daily study, still developing, which in some ways reflect the overall work. I was primed for *Pacing*, and as I continued walking in and around the site, studying and reflecting, the *Pacing* impetus continues its ongoing becoming, even if under different names and in different places—now, in Berlin. □



[3]











[OPENING SPREAD]

Code: Survey, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, 2017.

[1] Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Cambridge, Mass., ca. 1964. Courtesy of Harvard University Archives, 19724, Box 15.

[2] *Casa Curutchet*, La Plata, Argentina, 2017. Courtesy of the artist and Free Agent Media.

[3] *Within Living Memory (Media Bichos & Space Poem #3)*. Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, 2018.

[4] *Within Living Memory (Media Bichos & Walking in NYL)*. Installation detail. Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, 2018.

[PREVIOUS SPREAD]

Within Living Memory (Begin Again, Begin Again). Installation view, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, 2018.

[THIS SPREAD]

Within Living Memory (Selected Life Indexes & Schindler Series). Letterpress series, installation view. Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, 2018.

Unless otherwise noted, all images courtesy of the artist and the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts.

EMPATHIC WIT

A renewed need for the
genius of Heinrich Heine

by Azade Seyhan

At the end of

his 1956 essay “Die Wunde Heine” (The Wound That Is Heine), Theodor Adorno darkly reflected that Heinrich Heine’s perennial theme of hopeless love was an allegory of homelessness. Adorno, forced into exile after the Nazis came to power, thought that Heine’s fate had been literally realized in his mid-twentieth-century present: “It has become the homelessness of all,” Adorno wrote. “All are damaged in nature and language like the banished person that [Heine] was.” There will never again be a *Heimat*, he asserts, except in a world from which no one will be cast out, a world of truly liberated humanity. He concludes, “The wound that is Heine will only heal in a society that could realize this reconciliation.”

My early encounter with Heine’s empathic yet rebellious voice came in a class taught at Robert College, in Istanbul, by a German professor who had himself been exiled from the Third Reich, Traugott Fuchs. Though he was not Jewish, Fuchs had been expelled from his job in Germany because he tried to organize a protest against the dismissal of his Jewish professors at the University of Marburg. In Istanbul, he joined figures such as literary theorist Erich Auerbach and linguist and literary critic Leo Spitzer in their exodus out of Germany to Istanbul, where he spent the rest of his life. It was here, in the late 1960s, during a period of political instability in Turkey, as members of any group associated with leftist ideology were being persecuted, that Professor Fuchs’s German

class organized a contest to produce the best translation of Heine’s 1844 political poem *Die schlesischen Weber* (The Silesian Weavers) into English and Turkish.

Fuchs was only a junior lecturer in Germany, where he could have stayed to pursue an academic career. Instead, he chose to throw in his lot with his hunted and haunted compatriots in Turkey. He initiated Germanic studies at the University of Istanbul, and while colleagues whose fates he chose to join departed for better career opportunities in Germany and the United States, Fuchs remained on the shores of the Bosphorus, which became his proxy *Heimat*. From there, he kept up a voluminous correspondence with former exiles: Auerbach and Spitzer, Hermann Hesse, Erwin Panofsky, and

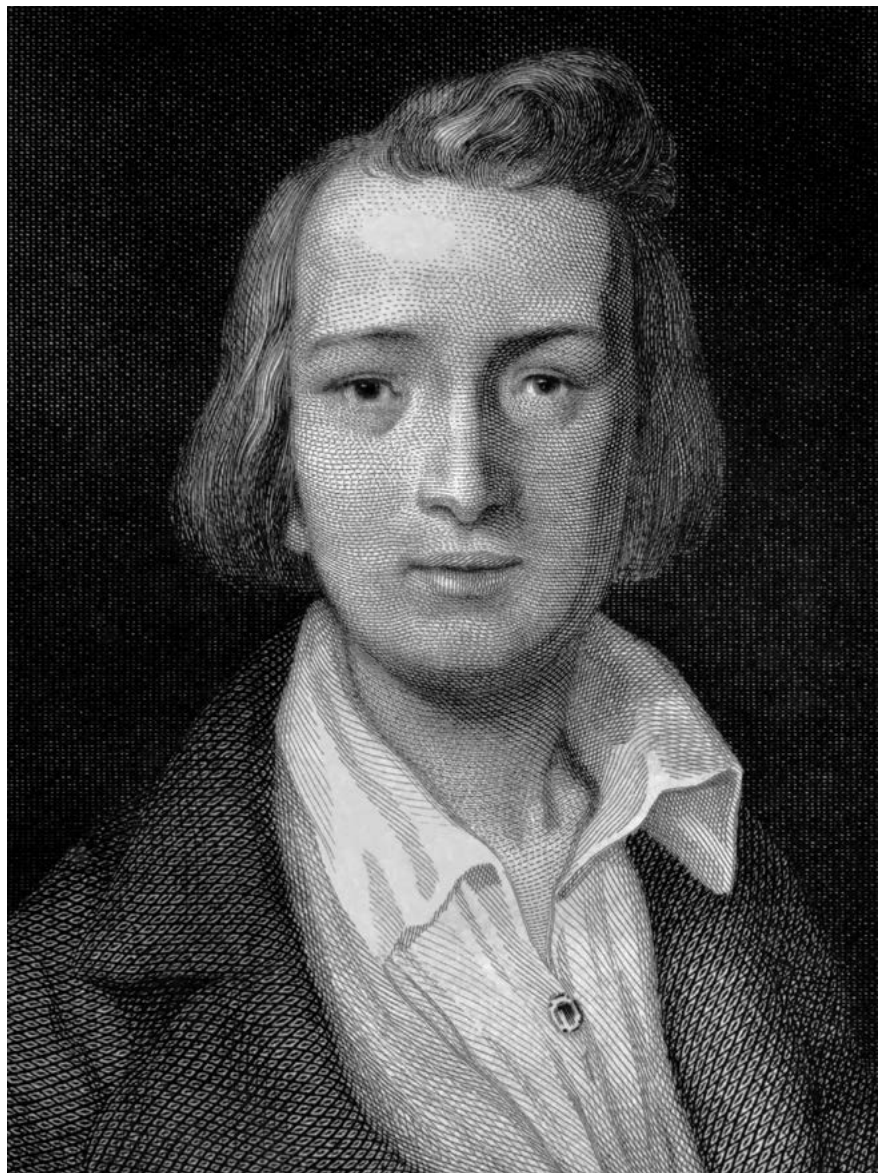
others. Their exchanges forged a network of communications that reflect a transnational, translational intellectual history of World War II and the post-war period.

Though Fuchs died in relative poverty—he was financially unprepared for retirement and, unlike other exiles, could not collect a pension from the German government—he did not die in obscurity. The Traugott Fuchs Archive Project at Boğaziçi University (formerly Robert College) is the custodian of Fuchs's correspondence with Auerbach and of Auerbach's extensive correspondence with Martin Buber and Walter Benjamin, among others. This constellation of relationships, along with Fuchs's deliberate exodus to Istanbul and his knowledge of Heine are for me touchstones in the greater narrative of the iterative exodus of German culture across time and geography.

Throughout

this intellectual trajectory, Heine remains a presence, all the way up to today, as the worst refugee crisis since the end of WWII unfolds in our midst. Millions of people are flocking to Turkey and Germany from the war-ravaged fields of Iraq and Syria. They will never have a home to return to. Heine's wound has not healed.

More broadly, as the persecution of academics and intellectuals in Turkey, Iran, Russia, China, and certain Arabic countries mounts, the histories and stories of censored, hunted, and displaced writers have come out of the shadows of cultural amnesia. Long after the publication of his landmark work, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946), Auerbach is not only credited with founding the discipline of comparative literature, at the University of Istanbul, he also has become the subject of an entire field of what may be called Auerbach Studies. Decades after Walter Benjamin's tragic death, in 1940, his work has achieved a critical appreciation to a degree inconceivable in his lifetime, so much so that he is ranked alongside major twentieth century thinkers such as Freud, Heidegger,



Tony Johannot (drawing) and Jakob Felsing (copper engraving), *Heinrich Heine*, 1837. From *Deutscher Musenalmanach für das Jahr 1837*, eds. Adelbert von Chamisso and Gustav Schwab (Weidmann, Leipzig, 1837). Source: Wikicommons.

and Foucault. His place in the course syllabi of German and other humanities courses at American universities eclipses by far those of Brecht and Heine, if the latter is taught at all.

How does Benjamin's status as an unemployed Jewish intellectual, an exile in Paris, a theorist of the city, and an art and media critic relate to the intellectual and literary lineage of Heinrich Heine? It is understandable that modern academics, who have been addressing questions of aesthetics through the lens of various media and supra-aesthetic concerns, would

consider Benjamin a cherished find in the archaeology of literary and cultural theory. As a genuinely interdisciplinary thinker, Benjamin is referenced by literary theorists, art historians, cultural and intellectual historians, media specialists, anthropologists, and philosophers. But there are many similarities between the two, and in many ways Benjamin is Heine's intellectual heir.

Heine was a formidable critic of German culture, and his critical writings form a genre of cultural negotiation between the end of the

Kunstperiode and the age of industrialization. His work as a cultural critic and translator, “foreign correspondent,” travel essayist, philosopher, art critic, political poet, and genre bender constituted not only an early forerunner of the work of the three visionaries of modernity—Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud—but also influenced the foundational tenets of the Frankfurt School, particularly the writings of Adorno and Jürgen Habermas.

Just as Heine was a chronicler and critic of the passage from the Enlightenment to modern culture, Benjamin was a chronicler of the transition from nineteenth-century industrialization to the age of high capitalism and mass production. Poised at both ends of the European—and, more specifically, German—discourse on modernity, the works of Heine and Benjamin are informed by a keen awareness of the cultural and social consequences of the representational nature of knowledge. Like Heine, Benjamin transgressed boundaries of genres to read works of culture in their sociohistorical contexts. Heine’s critical prose has often been dismissed as unsystematic, lacking in disciplinary solidity, and frivolous because of its relentless irony. Just as the suspicion toward Heine’s liberal views and republicanism was an outcome of his resistance to committing to any political affiliation, so was the reticence toward his revolutionary brand of cultural criticism a result of his refusal to subscribe to a particular genre.

Similarly, because Benjamin was not associated with any particular school of thought—though he has variously been dubbed a Marxist, an anthropological materialist, a messianic critic, and an urban chronicler—his work, until its belated and unexpected efflorescence in the late 1960s, was rarely known and almost never read within any disciplinary field, not even in German. Although Heine, who had an indisputable reputation as a poet in his lifetime, has never been compared to the great visionaries of modernity, his prose writings arguably provide a prototype of Benjamin’s fragmented, cross-genre work.

When Heine is seen in this light, as an intellectual precursor to German critiques of contemporary culture, one questions why this major literary architect of modernity, a world-renowned poet, a witty philosopher of such enormous gifts and knowledge is rarely studied outside German academic circles. When will his work, which resounds so strongly with the concerns of today’s worlds of displacement and disruption, again reclaim its place on the world literary-cultural map? Why has contemporary German criticism been so slow or reluctant to revisit and reassess Heine’s astonishingly prescient representations of censorship, persecution, and forced exile? This is especially curious considering Germany has in recent years become host to an unprecedented number of refugees and thousands of persecuted intellectuals—not least from Turkish universities decimated by President Erdoğan. (Incidentally, a new Turkish translation of Heine’s 1836 *Die romantische Schule* [Romantizm Okulu], issued by Turkey’s largest publisher, sold out in no time. Heine’s critical reassessment of German Romanticism illuminates the trials and traumas of modernity in a strikingly novel fashion that resonates with Turkish intellectuals and even with the concerns of postmodern thinkers.)

Perhaps the absence of a reassessment of Heine as a commentator upon modern exile and its vicissitudes can be attributed to the poet’s ideologically laden reception in his own country. While Heine’s posthumous fame remained cherished in France, England, and many other European countries, he was defamed both by the Nazis and, quite oppositely, by Karl Kraus, the Austrian-Jewish satirist, essayist, and poet who was thrice nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature. Although these acts of denigration came from opposing ideologies, they did not cancel each other out. Each instead caused long-term damage to Heine’s critical reception. As Habermas noted in 1986, Heine was doubly banned from participating in political formation: firstly through exile, and secondly through censorship.

It’s high time

to reconsider Heine’s critical legacy. Now more than ever, the work of this brave and hunted poet of modernity has much to teach us, especially to those who, like him, have been robbed of their home and history. No writer of his stature has empathized more with the plight of people persecuted and exiled by their own people or governments. Nowhere is this empathy more strikingly revealed than in Canto XV of his epic *Atta Troll* (1843), in which he tells of a moving encounter with a family of Cagots, a persecuted minority group in western France and northern Spain. Despite their Christian faith, the Cagots were treated like pariahs, forbidden to touch food at public markets or even to enter churches, except unseen, through a back door. Heine enters the hut of the Cagot family, addresses the father as his “brother” and kisses his child. Heine calls their cruel exclusion from the community “a dark heritage from the dark age of faith.” His affection for the outsider is displayed without false sentiment, a characteristic of his empathic identification with people excluded from the social order.

Today, exile has become a permanent condition for millions of persecuted and displaced people strewn throughout the Middle East and Europe. Populist movements bordering on fascism, gross inequalities in a rapidly globalizing world, attacks on refugees, ethnic persecution, fomented by powerful political heads from the Americas to the Far East, have created, in the words of the late Algerian novelist Assia Djebar, “a random and bloody lottery” we experience on a daily basis. “Such a chain of violence and its blind acceleration certainly emphasize the uselessness of words,” she wrote, “but their necessity as well.” Heine’s words—in prose poems, critical essays, poem cycles, travelogues, journalism, autobiography, and philosophical fragments—bear testimony to this hard truth, and to literature’s unique potential to speak through the ages. □

IMPOSSIBLE PROXIMITY

How to read like
Nabokov

by Tatyana Gershkovich

IN ZADIE SMITH'S 2009 essay "Rereading Barthes and Nabokov," a battle plays out for the soul of the reader. She begins with two epigraphs:

The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author.

- Roland Barthes

A good reader, a major reader, an active and creative reader is a rereader.

- Vladimir Nabokov

Barthes celebrates the reader's unlimited interpretive freedom. Nabokov, in contrast, insists the text's meaning remains in the custody of its author; the reader can only hope to approximate it through diligent, effortful rereading.

As a college student, Smith read in the Barthesian way, enjoying readerly free reign. But reading like Barthes made her "feel lonely." It meant to "jettison the very idea of communication, of any possible genuine link between the person who writes and the person who reads." The Barthesian mode now fails to satisfy her as both a reader and a writer, as someone who "[feels] the need to believe in [writing] as an intentional, directional act, an expression of an individual consciousness."

The loneliness Smith felt will be familiar to other readers trained in the wake of poststructuralism and deconstruction. Well-versed in the inherent instabilities of language, these readers—that is, we ourselves—no longer trust a text to convey a message from author to reader. We have become "suspicious" readers, readers for whom

the text is always deceptive—either intentionally, because the author seeks to manipulate the reader, or unintentionally, because the meaning of what she writes is determined by her class interests, her repressed sexual urges, the discourse of her times. But our suspicious hermeneutic practices are, as Smith intuited as an undergrad, unsatisfactory; they are inadequate to all of our readerly needs. Our suspicion deprives us of one of the chief pleasures of reading: the sense that in reading we come to know a consciousness other than our own. In Nabokov, Smith sees the potential to reinstate this pleasure.

But I wish to propose a correction to her view of a confident Nabokov confidently connecting with his readers, serenely doling out literary delights. It seems to me that in seeking

relief from Barthes, Smith fails to appreciate the way in which Nabokov's mode of reading is also shaped by skeptical doubt, even if his reaction to that doubt is very different from Barthes's. Nabokov's fiction and criticism can best be understood as a distressed response to his own skepticism—to what might be called (after Stanley Cavell) his skeptical disappointment.

AS OTHER SCHOLARS HAVE observed, Vladimir Nabokov's quasi-scientific approach to reading in many ways resembles that of the Russian Formalists. He, too, believes that art is not a faithful reflection of reality, but rather a "distorted ('shifted') image of the object in reality," as Berkeley Slavist Irina Paperno has written. He, too, attends foremost to an artwork's materiality, to its structure and language, to its "how," not its "what." He, too, rejects the idea that a literary work furnishes us with knowledge of the historical, political, sociological, or biographical variety. "I am sick of reading biographies in which mothers are subtly deduced from the writing of their sons and then made to 'influence' their remarkable sons in this or that way," he wrote in his 1944 book on Nikolai Gogol.

But Nabokov's empiricism is different from that of the Formalists. It is both more stringent and more peculiar. The "information" he is after—and indeed, that word appears frequently in his discussion of his method, which aims, he wrote in *Strong Opinions* (1973), "to provide students of literature with exact information about details"—is information of a rather idiosyncratic kind. Any Formalist would agree with him that an analysis of Gogol's use of adverbs and prepositions is important for understanding his story "The Overcoat" (1842). But Nabokov's need to "clearly visualize" the arrangement of Anna Karenina's train compartment—the impossibility, as he says in *Lectures on Russian Literature* (1981), of "comprehend[ing] certain important aspects of Anna's journey without it"—would exceed the requirements of

most Formalist analysis. Moreover, few have found Nabokov's diagrams of the Samsa household and his drawings of Kafka's insect ("a domed beetle, not the flat cockroach of sloppy translators") helpful in understanding *The Metamorphosis*, let alone indispensable, as Nabokov insisted. And many critics have taken Nabokov to task for the sort of "exact information" he offers in the commentary to his 1964 translation of Alexander Pushkin's famed 1833 novel *Eugene Onegin*. Here, in addition to making useful literary-historical observations, Nabokov expounds at length on the layout and dimensions of Pushkin's Boldino estate, including the lilacs surrounding the manor house. We are instructed, in his *Lectures on Literature* (1980), to "notice and fondle details." But what sort of purpose do such details serve? They hint, I think, at the objectives of Nabokov's mode of reading.

The desire to know what sort of insect Kafka saw in his mind's eye or what sights and scents surrounded Pushkin during his stays as Boldino suggests an aim beyond determining how a text functions. Readers ought to "discover," as Nabokov puts it, "a definite order in the system of [a text's] gaps and odd perches—and this order is characteristic of the author's individual style." And for him, an individual style is coextensive with an author's identity: "A writer's art is his real passport," he writes in *Strong Opinions*. "His identity should be immediately recognized by a special pattern or unique coloration." In other words, what Nabokov aims to discover, if not inhabit, is the authorial consciousness. This is a task anathema to Formalism. Indeed, it harkens back to an earlier form of criticism, a kind that was practiced by the literary critic Iulii Aikhenvald (1872–1928), Nabokov's friend and mentor in émigré Berlin.

A neo-Kantian critic active in the first three decades of the twentieth century, Aikhenvald has now been largely forgotten, partly thanks to the disruption of his work due to his exile, in 1922, from the Soviet Union. But he was well known to his literary peers, particularly for his multi-volume work

Silhouettes of Russian Writers, which came out in five editions between 1906 and 1928. Aikhenvald's criticism remains noteworthy for the challenge it posed to the scientism of emerging Formalism.

Aikhenvald held that the literary text is a meeting of two souls—the author's and the reader's. It is the formation of a "spiritual dyad." He describes how in reading Pushkin's poetry, for example, we nearly merge with the poet himself: "In his poetry, Pushkin told his biography in such a way that this biography became all human," he wrote in a 1906 essay, "change the names, individual details and facts, and it would be you." After cataloguing a few of Pushkin's devices, Aikhenvald insists that any attempt to dissect Pushkin's poems is hopeless. To understand Pushkin, "one has to simply read him," to immerse oneself in the "very flow, the resounding joy of his poetry." Nabokov, for whom art is the expression of a unique and creative mind, rejected the Formalist notion that an artist is a "vehicle not [an] agent," as Nabokovian Michael Glynn put it. He shared Aikhenvald's sentiment that an aesthetic experience is a communion between author and reader, famously describing it, in *Lectures on Literature*, as a "spontaneous embrace."

Their aspirations of communion notwithstanding, neither Nabokov nor Aikhenvald had illusions of actually attaining any certain knowledge about another's meaning, let alone his psyche. But whereas Aikhenvald celebrates this uncertainty, Nabokov finds it hard to abide. For Aikhenvald, "the word is elusive, the word is obscure, and we readers do not understand it in the exact way the author meant it," he writes in his essay "The Writer and the Reader," published in 1922. "Only there is no calamity in this—the reader must augment the author or else there would be no literature."

Aikhenvald argues that as long as the reader does not deliberately distort the author's work, he should not be ashamed of or deny his subjectivity: "Everyone has a right to himself," he notes in *Silhouettes*. Aikhenvald



suggests that our goal as readers is to articulate how a text draws out our own judgments and attachments. Nabokov, in contrast, concedes that our aesthetic impressions are always subjective—“everything worthwhile is to some extent subjective”—but insists, in *Lectures on Literature*, that “the reader must know when and where to curb his imagination and this he does by trying to get clear the specific world the author places at his disposal.” To the extent possible, the reader is to investigate the *author’s* world. Aikhenvald stressed the reader’s subjectivity, Nabokov the need to restrain it.

“**T**HERE IS NO calamity in this”—perhaps not for Aikhenvald, but Nabokov continued to long for certainty about others, a certainty he knew would always elude him. In this, he resembles the Cavellian skeptic. On Stanley Cavell’s account, the skeptic who bemoans our inability to know other minds the way we know our own is disappointed not by an epistemological deficiency but rather by our metaphysical separation from one another. The problem for the skeptic is

not that I can never know everything there is to know about, say, the quality of your pain; one can imagine a world in which I could do so. The problem is that even if I were to know all about your pain, it would still be *your* pain and not mine. What the skeptic means is therefore something like: “I do not acknowledge [your pain] the way you do; I do not acknowledge it *by expressing pain*.” I cannot relate to your pain as you do. Your pain cannot be *my* pain, and vice versa. The skeptic turns what is, in fact, a tragedy of the human condition into an epistemological problem. The only way to solve the problem would be to achieve a perfect identity with another; yet such identity—even if it could be achieved—would deprive us of the very “otherness” that makes the problem coherent in the first place. Achieving the kind of identity the skeptic longs for would mean collapsing into solipsism, not transcending it. The problem of *other* minds will thus always remain a problem; and the skeptic who feels it to be a problem at all will always be disappointed.

Nabokov’s disappointed desire for such identity is manifest in many of his fictions, and also, vividly, in his

most ambitious critical endeavor—the commentary to *Eugene Onegin*. In his early essay “Pushkin, Truth, and Verisimilitude” (1937), Nabokov attempts an Aikhenvaldian approach to Pushkin, even echoing Aikhenvald’s rhetoric: “Nothing is more tedious than describing a poetic legacy that defies description. The only acceptable method to know it is to read it, to ponder over it, to discuss it with oneself.” Yet when he returns to Pushkin years later, Nabokov does describe it in painstaking, often esoteric detail. Nabokov’s stated purpose was to enable Anglophone audiences to read Pushkin.

But the excess of the commentary—an excess that, in fact, makes it hard for an English reader to appreciate the poet—suggests that Nabokov is driven by a different desire. His wish for an impossible proximity with an other—with an author—results in the idiosyncratic and seemingly gratuitous empiricism that he demands of all readers, including himself. His stringent empiricism—so often mistaken for the whim of a haughty aristocrat—represents the disappointed desire for an impossible proximity with others. □

WRITING GENERATIONS

A conversation with
Frido Mann

by Veronika Fuechtner

This August 2017 conversation with writer Frido Mann (b. 1940), a grandson of Thomas Mann, was part of the research for my book project “The Magician’s Mother: A Story of Coffee, Race, and German Culture.” In this book, I trace the Brazilian background of Thomas and Heinrich Mann’s mother, Julia Mann, née da Silva Bruhns (1851–1923), who grew up on her father’s plantation, the Boa Vista estate, in the coastal town of Paraty, south of Rio de Janeiro. Her great-grandson Frido Mann is an accomplished musician, retired psychology professor, and the author of several works of fiction and nonfiction, the latter on topics ranging from quantum physics to religion to music. His writing has engaged his family’s Brazilian history, including in his novel *Brasa* (1999), his autobiography, *Achterbahn* (2008), and the scholarly volume *Mutterland* (2009). Mann’s latest book, *Das weisse Haus des Exils* (2018), offers a timely reminder of Thomas Mann’s anti-fascist activism during his exile in the United States. Frido Mann is currently an honorary fellow of the Thomas Mann House in Pacific Palisades, California—a house where he spent parts of his childhood with his grandparents.



Thomas Mann and Frido Mann, circa 1944, Los Angeles, California.
Photo courtesy Frido Mann.

Veronika Fuechtner (VF): Your novel *Brasa* was a roman à clef in many ways. Firstly, it deals with the Brazilian roots of your family; secondly, it's a novel that engages with certain texts—for example, your great-grandmother Julia Mann's memoirs, *Aus Dodos Kindheit* (1903/published 1958), and perhaps also with your grandfather's novel *Buddenbrooks* (1901). Thirdly, your novel is also an introduction to the history and culture of Brazil; you even included a glossary. Finally, it's also a roman à clef for your family history.

Frido Mann (FD): Yes, many relatives do make an appearance. They may be transposed to Switzerland, and the generations are at times switched, but they are recognizable.

VF: You wrote in *Achterbahn* that Thomas Mann was not represented in this book. But it seems to me that he is present in its style. *Brasa* also deals with his literary legacy.

FM: Not consciously, but it must have been that way. I would say that was unavoidable. It just happened that I

wrote in this genre, in this style. The association with *Buddenbrooks* is so clear that Thomas Mann doesn't even have to be mentioned. His brother, Heinrich, makes a direct appearance as a protagonist, but not Thomas.

VF: I also noticed that you like to question the authority of the narration. For example, you often write, "it seemed to be that way." Or there are passages that open up other possibilities—it *could have been that way, maybe it happened another way*—and then the reader doesn't really know what actually happened.

FM: Yes, that's possible. And in that context it's important that my style doesn't only draw from the German side. At the time, I was also very strongly influenced by Latin American literature, not Brazilian, but rather Spanish-language Latin American writers. My absolute favorite was Isabel Allende, who also writes family histories. She has this style, sometimes a bit drastic, that she supposedly picked up from Gabriel García Márquez: I am sure she doesn't like to

hear that, but it's true, isn't it? That's what I did, too, at least a little bit—I picked it up from her.

I wrote *Brasa* in 1994 after I had read her novel *The House of Spirits* and saw the movie. Serious filmmakers were upset about the film because it's a *Zutatenfilm*: a film with one ingredient added after the other. Still, I thought it was incredibly fascinating. But the original history of *Brasa* really started with another film. In early 1993, I went to see a film in Münster called *Urga*, by the Russian director Nikita Mikhalkov. I was so impressed—several generations, different countries, one truck driver. *Urga* is a javelin. When someone wants to start a family, they throw the javelin, and where it lands, the family settles. That's the story, and it went through several generations and encompassed several countries, China, Russia, Mongolia. I knew I had to do this. But how? And then it occurred to me: Why would I go to Mongolia? Why not write about my own roots? I didn't know anything about Brazil at that time; I really had to start from zero. I always had heard from my grandfather—yes, yes, my mother, Brazil, the parrots, and this and that. But I didn't know anything beyond that. Then I started my research, and exactly at that moment, my great-grandmother's memoirs, *Aus Dodos Kindheit*, were translated into Portuguese. She had written the book in German and it was finally to be translated into her mother tongue. Just as I was about to investigate my family's history, I got an invitation by the Goethe Institute to come to the book launch of the translation. At that event, I could already say that I had written the first few pages of a novel, which pays homage to these memoirs.

VF: So, it's fair to say that *Brasa* is also a roman à clef in yet another way: a key to your own story of researching your family history. It's a key to your own relationship to Brazil, a country that also has a certain claim to this family history. The Brazilian sociologist Vamireh Chacon, for example, has said that Thomas Mann is also "one of us," a Brazilian in family and spirit.



MARKUS LÜPERTZ / »ACHILLES« GIPS, BEMALT 333 x 75,5 x 138 CM 2014 BODE-MUSEUM, BERLIN« / FOTO: ANDREA STAPPERT

FM: When I was in Brazil for the book launch, there was a huge article in the daily *Journal do Brasil* titled “A volta da senhora Mann” (the return of Mrs. Mann). It was indeed a return. And, of course, they’re very proud that a Brazilian produced two *Weltsöhne*—two sons of world literature.

VF: Let’s get back to your novel *Brasa*. I was fascinated by the fact that Afro-Brazilian history and culture is given much more space than indigenous culture, which is more documented in your family as an influence. There were very vivid and haunting descriptions, especially regarding slavery.

FM: Yes, that’s correct. I also invented a maternal line in the novel that connects to the Boers [that is, to South African history] and also to Salvador, the north of Brazil. There is always talk of the indigenous origins, but I believed from the beginning that in Brazil you never know what kind of mixture there is. I was always told that there might be African ancestors one didn’t know about. (...) And then I was also fascinated by the fact that my great-grandmother Julia was friends with the children of slaves on her family estate, and that she preferred slave food—cheap meat and the black beans—to the red beans of the master’s house. This made an impression upon me. This history thus plays a big role in the novel—because that is Brazil.

VF: The Afro-Brazilian martial art *capoeira*, which was practiced and disguised by slaves as a dance, also plays a large role in the novel, actually even structures it. The novel starts, for example, with a quote from a song about *capoeira*, “Berimbau,” by Vinicius de Moraes. It’s about the battle between

masters and slaves but also about battles between lovers. There are many avenues through which capoeira is expressed.

FM: Already in 1994, when I was in Paraty for the first time, there was capoeira every Saturday evening. In front of the Igreja da Matriz, the church in the town center, there were many trees, and then there were always two or three people who danced capoeira all evening. I just had to watch it. It was so impressive. Before, I only knew it from books.

VF: Your book also navigates the tension between nature and nurture, between culture, socialization, and differing origins. You joked to me in an e-mail that making caipirinhas is in your genes—*é genético*. So what are we? Products of our education or of our genes?

FM: This question still looms large for me long after having completed the trilogy of which *Brasa* was a part. Particularly the question of how intellectual and spiritual systems like religion are a part of us. A monk at the Europa-Monastery, in the Austrian *Salzkammergut*, once told me: “The conflicts between the religions don’t stem from the religions but from the cultures they are a part of.” Religions all want the same thing. But they dress it up in different ways. And that’s where the misunderstandings or exclusions come in. In Judaism, for example, you think of being Jewish as an origin, as a people. Religion is tied to genes and a place. This is us and this is them. But if you start thinking beyond this, it makes no sense. And that’s what intrigued me about Brazil, this *miscegenação*, the diversity, that everyone lives with one another, even

with all the limitations Afro-Brazilians experience in Brazil. They are not persecuted, but they are discriminated against. In the end, they are not equal.

VF: It is negotiated in different ways. It depends on class.

FM: Exactly, but in Brazil I always saw children playing together, black, brown, red, green (*laughs*)—everyone played peacefully together. But when they grow up, everything becomes a bit more serious. It’s not that way in the US.

VF: Yes, it’s very divided.

FM: It’s also not like that in Spain or Argentina, but it’s fantastic how it just happens in Brazil. Still, I am aware that you can’t idealize it in the way Stefan Zweig did in *Brazil: Land of the Future* (1941). Yet this mixture is an opportunity; there are possibilities. Whether these will be realized is another question entirely. Brazil remains a young society.

VF: It’s eternally young (*laughs*). That’s maybe also a curse.

FM: In good and bad ways. At first, European visitors are fascinated by the positive, but when they stay longer and take a closer look—the promise doesn’t always hold up. A German friend who lives in Paraty told me from the outset: “Don’t believe that Brazilians are as easygoing as they first seem. They’re much more complicated than us.” □

THE MISS APRIL HOUSES

Fiction by Angela Flournoy

After a survey of university trustees, experts, faculty, and community members, the Committee puts forth the following recommendations:

In literature associated with the property, prior occupants of the "Miss April Houses" should be referred to as "people" or "inhabitants." In special circumstances approved by the Committee they may be referred to as "workers." Under no circumstances should they be referred to in any other fashion.

THE COMMITTEE LACKED a librarian, they explained. I was new to campus. So new that my badge wasn't programed yet. For the first month, I had to stand out front of the Jefferson Building in the humidity before each meeting (twice weekly, at lunch) and wait for another committee member

to swipe me in. It was usually Becca Samuels, from campus counseling, with her enamel pins and cat-eye glasses and shaved side, making me feel like I hadn't moved to a new place at all. Then we'd sit around a conference table in the Office of the General Counsel. My job at these meetings, as it was explained to me, was to vote when called but mostly to listen to the proceedings and at the very end consider how the library might set up a webpage with links to supplemental information and research suggestions for interested students and visitors. That wasn't the only reason I was there, I suspected, but it was a fancier job than I'd had before, and fancy jobs always have their particular requirements.

Nobody wants to be stuck in meetings during their lunch break after just having moved a thousand miles and not even having time to get a lay of the land, or buy a microwave

or figure out where to get decent towels, but I figured it could have been worse. We could have used parliamentary procedure and meetings could have gone on forever. Instead Dr. Gander, the co-chair, kept the meetings under an hour each time, no matter what.

The Committee endorses the Board of Trustees' proposal to continue calling the structures in question the Miss April Houses and approves the following language for a commemorative placard at the site:

Miss April Lee-June Walters (1902–1974) was born in House #2 and lived in both houses with her two sons and first husband, John Binker Walters (1897?–1955), then with her second husband, Woodrow Gendry II (1920–1981). Miss April was a cherished part of the University community and a longtime member of the hospitality and dining services staff. During the Great Depression vegetables generously shared from her small farming plots were often the sole source of fresh produce that students and faculty ate. Following campus expansion in 1963, when the houses were moved from the southeast to northwest corner of campus, independent community members replanted Miss April's garden, ensuring that she enjoyed sustainable, locally grown produce for the rest of her life.

It was right around the time that my badge started working that Nnamdi Watson, PhD, joined the committee. A visiting lecturer in African-American history with a five-year appointment, which had been renewed once, putting him on year eight. The week prior, Lyle Sanders, the ancient professor of rhetoric and oldest black tenured faculty member, had quit the committee, sighting health concerns, which was just as well. He mostly slept through the meetings, his head dropping suddenly and freaking everybody out. Nnamdi

was there to keep our number at a respectable two, we both figured. Solid build, neat, shoulder-length locs. Short, but cute. Horn-rimmed glasses, bow-ties, or tweed vests over crisp, long-sleeve oxfords every day. A Kappa, I could tell before he told me so. Friendly enough. He said he liked my twist-out, called it glossy. I laughed, said thank you. He called me "sista" and I did not roll my eyes. By this time I'd also finally bought a microwave.

The following informational display has been approved:

A mounted poster highlighting the furniture and tools in the houses, including one kitchen table, one bed with a quilt similar in style to those sewn by Miss April during her tenure, one washing board, an embroidery hoop and one broom.

Items currently in the houses but hereafter prohibited from display:

- A hatchet, found hanging near the fireplace of House #1.
- Seventeen handmade dolls that comprised Miss April's collection (some inherited from her mother), donated to the University by her sons.
- The 6-inch-by-12-inch wooden box with a cross carved into its top, found buried behind House #2 in 1983.
- All contents of this box.

In consideration of the preservation of the approved objects for display, the Committee recommends that access to the interior of the houses be limited to scholars with written permission from the University's Department of Special Collections, and various special persons as designated by the Board of Trustees. Visitors from the general population should view the interior of the houses from the front and back porches via the double-paned, shatter-proof windows.

A TYPICAL COMMITTEE MEETING went like this: We were all given a proposal for an element to be included in the restoration of the houses, then thirty minutes would be devoted to presentations regarding the merit of the proposal, sometimes made by the authors themselves, but more often by third-party experts. Then we'd deliberate for twenty minutes or so (usually less) and issue our recommendation. Patricia Dwyer, the head of the Office of the General Counsel, would then run the recommendation through whatever sort of legal analysis was necessary and return to the next meeting with the proper wording for us to adopt. Pretty efficient, I thought. The catered lunch varied from sandwiches to Italian to Chinese.

The Committee acknowledges receipt of a petition presented by community member Shaw Hammers proposing that the site include literature about the transatlantic slave trade, including the amount paid for the original inhabitants as listed in University archives.

Finding: Committee finds such literature to be outside the scope of the goals of the restoration project.

From the outset, Nnamdi had taken issue with the omission of the word "slave" and the use of "houses" over quarters or cabins. I was with him at first. I mean, if you don't use it, that's erasure, right? But then Becca Samuels from campus counseling services—the woman who swiped me in in the early days—finally stopped speaking in slogans and said something that made a little sense on the day we discussed the petition (it had two hundred signees, but only about eighty from people affiliated with the university, and most of those were classified as staff). Becca asked: Would the relatively small population of students of color find comfort in these houses, or would they become fodder for ridicule used against them? She

presented research about young people and constant proximity to sites of past trauma. “It can feel like stepping on the same land mine day after day just to get from one class to the next,” she concluded. This was more flourish than reality because the houses, being tucked up in the corner of campus like they were, weren’t on the way to anyone’s class.

Predictably, Patricia Dwyer rattled off a bunch of legalese that suggested the proposal could one day bankrupt the university. I didn’t care about Dwyer’s point, but Becca’s—it was worth mulling over, her land-mine analogy notwithstanding. Who am I to say what causes another person trauma? In the end I decided to show solidarity and vote with Nnamdi. We lost 2-6.

In accordance with a recommendation from expert linguists, the following language and accompanying illustrations* have been accepted by the Committee:

Lenny Roberts used the phrase “lee little” to mean very small. “Lee” is similar to a WOLOF word that means small.

One of the inhabitants of this House was named Esther Malink. MALINKE is the name of an ethnic group, also known as the Mandenka, the Mandinko, the Mandingo or the Manding.

To express amazement, inhabitant Buster Griggs would exclaim, “Great Da!” The FON people (also known as the Fon nu, the Agadja, or the Dahomey) worship a god named Da.

Miss April referred to peanuts as “pindas.” Pinda is the KONGO word for peanut. The Kongo people are the largest ethnic group in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

*Illustrations should show a map of West Africa with corresponding geographic regions of each ethnic group highlighted in either of the

University’s official colors.

This linguist (there was only just the one—not plural), Dr. Nichole Valdes-James, made a very compelling argument. Even Nnamdi, who hated us all by now, had to admit it. Gander, the co-chair, looked charmed in spite of himself. Who can argue with enduring language? Who would see a posting like that and not be impressed, intrigued? Apparently, Nnamdi had expected plenty of people to be offended. After the meeting, he walked me back to the library. “A decade ago you hardly ever heard the word Africa on this campus, if not in the pejorative,” he said. I said, “Well, Africa’s pretty trendy up North these days.” He looked at me like I was an idiot, muttered, “This isn’t up North.” But then he invited me to get a drink with him.

The Committee recommends the following permanent information placards be added to the façade of the Miss April Houses wherever the restorers find aesthetically pleasing:

A display highlighting the restoration efforts of university researchers, with attending photographs of the process of transporting the cabins to their current location.

A display with the name of members of this Committee.

I LEFT BROOKLYN BECAUSE I was at the point where just walking to the post office made me want to reach out for the nearest stranger’s neck and squeeze it, and I’m not a particularly violent person. All of these forever-children in wrinkled clothes with make-believe jobs and very real bank accounts looking down their noses at me, as if the sight of me made the neighborhood bad? I know, I know. But just because it’s happening all over the place doesn’t make it any easier to stomach. Plus, I was single again. Plus, all my friends were having kids and moving away, or just moving away because

things had gotten so unbearable in Brooklyn. I was sitting at my desk at my branch library one day, with a stack of books to weed, and thought: “You know what? They can have this place.” I went online, applied for this job and got it, even though I don’t have any university experience. The air is much, much cleaner down here.

The Committee acknowledges receipt of a petition presented by community member Shaw Hammers, submitted on behalf of Nnamdi Watson, Visiting Lecturer in African-American Studies (and member of this same Committee, hereby recused from this vote) proposing an informational placard featuring scholarship speculating on how and against what odds particular words and phrases might have lasted in the inhabitants’ lexicon over the generations.

Finding: Committee finds that such a placard would be outside the scope of the goals of the restoration project.

IT WAS STUPID of the committee to accept proposals on a rolling basis. This was a policy established before I arrived. Of course Nnamdi would try to take the one thing everyone was enthusiastic about and flip it on them. I told him the night before to just leave it alone, be happy they don’t just bulldoze the houses altogether, but he said, “It’s the principal of the matter.” And I said, “That’s usually what someone says before they do something dumb,” and he shook his head and threatened to leave my apartment. But he didn’t. He didn’t leave the committee either. He came twice a week, ate heartily, and smiled too much at everyone there.

The following permanent placard must be affixed within twenty feet of the entrance of both Miss April Houses:

A display thanking the individual and corporate donors that made the restoration project possible.

Language on this display is up to the donor's discretion, granted such language meets the guidelines outlined above.

THE SEMESTER WAS nearly over by the time we worked our way through all of the proposals. No, I didn't let them put my name on the official committee placard. I was new and maybe I didn't quite understand the stakes, but I knew better than to put my name on either one of those houses. They didn't even ask me to explain why I abstained. No, I did not join Nnamdi, Shaw Hammers, and the seven others who staged a sit-in in for three days on the porch of House #1. That doesn't mean I didn't care.

If you focus on what we did accomplish as a committee, versus what was left out, we communicated two important truths: The past inhabitants made due with what they had—a few pieces of furniture, a humble kitchen—and they found ingenious, albeit small ways to make their language endure. That's not nothing. That's huge, I think.

And maybe a later committee can add more information. □

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Fiction by Paul La Farge

— Ghosts? Alida said. In an old house like this, probably.

Robert was only joking, but he had expected a less equivocal answer.

— I see. Is that why ...?

— The price? Alida laughed. — Oh, honey, no. That's called divorce. And it's winter, you're smart to be buying in the winter.

— I see, Robert said again. And the furniture?

— Not included! But if you want it, I can ask the seller. I don't know where she thinks it will all go.

— Thanks, but no.

— New broom, Alida said. Just what an old house needs. Look, here's a cedar closet for your coats and sweaters and things.

Half an hour later, Robert shook Alida's oddly warm hand, got into his car, and found his way to the Taconic.



He wanted the house. Who wouldn't want it? A historic three-bedroom farmhouse on five acres of land, hundreds of feet above sea level, and relatively close to the city! By the time he reached Westchester, Robert was daydreaming, masochistically, about being outbid by vile hedgies who would lay glass tile in the shower, or crypto-bros who'd hold shamanic rituals in the woods. He called Alida



Claude Monet, *The Magpie* (1868–69), oil on canvas, 89cm × 130cm. © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) / Hervé Lewandowski.

from the Bronx and said he was ready to make an offer.

— Wow, okay, love at first sight?

— It's a good place, Robert said stiffly.

Four busy weeks later, the house belonged to Robert. He drove up to take possession on a Friday afternoon, bringing with him a few things that would come in handy. But his first emotion, on opening what was now

his side door, and stepping into his mud room, was disappointment. Now that the furniture was gone, the rooms looked smaller than he remembered, and less bright. The floor bulged, as though trying to contain something that was trying to come up from below. The charming Revolutionary stairs were crooked, the paint on their treads badly scratched. Robert touched the ovoid complexities that ran along

the underside of the dining-room mantel: original woodwork, Alida had affirmed. Carved in the days when the ink wasn't dry on the Constitution. He tried to project his mind back into that time, to feel the thrill of the American experiment as the people who lived here then might have felt it, but what he actually felt was that the previous owners' furniture might be gone, but its smell remained: cat pee and

Febreze. He opened one of the beautiful twelve-paned windows and let in a slab of frigid air.

When he looked in the living room, he saw that the previous owners' furniture was not, in fact, entirely gone. A loveseat and a rocking chair remained: the chair by the front windows, the loveseat at an angle to the fireplace. Robert wondered if the seller had left them behind for him. More likely she'd run out of room in the moving truck, and guessed it wouldn't be worth his

The snow fell heavily now: he could see it swirling outside the kitchen windows.

while to complain. And she was right, he thought, but still. Away with you! He lifted the rocking chair, with the idea that he'd stick it in the basement, but it was strangely heavy, as if its frame were reinforced with lead. It didn't matter. Robert would come back with guys — guys would remove it. On his way out of the room he noticed a third item that had been left behind: an iron lawn jockey which functioned as a doorstop, keeping the living-room door open. He scowled at it. It grinned indifferently.

— You're going, too, he said.

He went out to the car and brought in his supplies. The easel, the precious Audubon, the tackle box with his watercolors and inks. A box of kitchen things and some meager groceries from the gas-station deli on Route 9. A beat-up but still warm ski jacket, which he hung in the cedar closet. A pair of binoculars. On his last trip in, he saw that it had begun to snow. He set up the easel in the little south-facing room he'd marked out as his studio, and spent a while turning it one way and another. When

it got dark, he went downstairs. The snow fell heavily now: he could see it swirling outside the kitchen windows. Robert had planned to drive on to the house of some old friends who lived in the Catskills, but the thought of attempting their mountain road at night, in a snowstorm, discouraged him. Why chance it? He called his friends to say he wasn't coming; they did not sound disappointed, or even, he thought, particularly surprised.

Robert heated a can of minestrone in the pot he'd brought from the city, buttered two slices of un-toasted bread, and took the meal into the living room. He sat in the rocking chair and watched snowflakes halo a white-blue streetlamp up the road. What did people do here in the winter, he wondered. He pictured a fire in the fireplace, a frocky Revolutionary family singing along with an odd tortoiseshell piano, only he didn't know any songs from the period, so their music was a jumble of Christmas carols and "The Star-Spangled Banner." He washed his dishes with fragrant gas-station-deli dish soap, brushed his teeth, and lay down on the loveseat to check his phone. It, the loveseat, was too short, but if he drew his knees up it became tolerable. The problem was the cushion, which stank of farts and dust. If only he had something to spray it with, he thought, and chuckled at his own foolishness and snobbery. That was when the ghost came in. She was black, which was almost as surprising to Robert as her being a ghost at all.

She was much younger than Robert, was his next thought. Thirty at most. She wore a long brown dress and a blue apron. Her hair was tied back under a neat yellow kerchief.

— You shouldn't have let the fire go out, she said.

— Sorry, Robert said.

— Never mind, the ghost said. Only my knees hurt when it's cold like this. Looks like it's going to snow all night.

— How can you tell?

— No wind, and there's a smell in the air, can't you smell it? A heavy smell.

— Maybe. Robert smelled only sofa cushion.

— There, the ghost said, without having done anything visible. She rose to her feet.

— Will you need anything else?

— Have you got a bed? Robert was delighted by his failure to be shocked, unless this was shock.

— You want a bed down here?

— No, never mind. What's your name?

— Anna.

— Have you been here long, Anna?

— Yes, a while.

— I just moved in, Robert said. I'm Robert.

Anna curtsied. Before he could say anything else, she was gone: carried out of the room on quiet ghostly feet. Robert lay still, almost not breathing, not because he was afraid of the ghost — he still wasn't — but because he was afraid of inconveniencing her by making her come back in. This is extremely strange, he thought, but he was the one who had brought up ghosts in the first place, so he couldn't claim to be entirely surprised. And it was nice, in a way, to imagine that he wasn't alone.

THE SNOW WAS impassable the next morning. Robert's car, seen from the house, was a white lump. He boiled water, made a mug of fancy Ethiopian coffee, and wondered what to do. He remembered seeing a shovel on the porch, but if it had been there once, it was gone now. The storm had left bitter cold air behind, and gusts of wind that kicked up the stinging dry snow. Robert hurried back in and stood in the mud room, rubbing his frozen hands. He'd have to call for help. Fortunately, there was a phone book in the coat closet, a fat yellow phone book, practically a historic artifact. Robert looked up "Snow Removal" and made a round of calls, but no one answered. He left his number, trying not to sound too desperate, or too out-of-town. He went down to the basement to look for that shovel, and was surprised to find, in the jumble of paint cans and nail-bearing boards which the previous owner had left behind, a low red bookcase full of paperbacks. They were all

mysteries, Robert saw, and practically all by the same person, a writer he'd never heard of named Towers Wick. Their titles all had *Death* in them: *Death of an Average Joe*, *Death Takes Ten*, *Death Doubles Down*. Robert was not a mystery reader; he liked the classics, Balzac, Dickens, Conrad, Henry James. Still, beggars, et cetera. He took a much-used copy of *Death*, *All Included* up to the living room, and, with an easy feeling that the house was looking out for him, settled in the

They did what vacationing people do: sat on the veranda and watched the ocean, hunted for seashells, fussed over the food.

rocking chair and waited for the snow-removal people to call.

Death, *All Included* was set in one of those hermetic Caribbean resorts that Robert had instinctually avoided all his life: a compound of tawny cement bungalows against a background of mangrove swamps, a white beach and sparkling blue water all the way to the horizon. The main characters were Rex, a portly old detective, and his young assistant, Archie; they were on vacation. They did what vacationing people do: sat on the veranda and watched the ocean, hunted for seashells, fussed over the food. Inevitably, a dead body was going to show up, and their holiday would become an investigation, but meanwhile, for pages and pages, nothing much happened. Rex argued with the chef about the béarnaise sauce. Archie took a snorkeling lesson. They both smoked and drank as if no one would ever get cancer. Ah, the '50s, Robert thought. He wondered if *Death*,

All Included was a late volume in the Towers Wick corpus, and he, Wick, was toying deliberately with the reader's expectations.

Anna was wiping a ghostly rag along the windowsills.

— Oh! Robert said. I didn't see you come in.

— Just tidying up. Will you be wanting dinner?

Robert thought it was early to be asking about dinner, then remembered that in Anna's era it had been the mid-day meal. — No, thanks, he said. I'm hoping to be on my way before then.

— So soon?

— Actually, I was supposed to leave last night, my friends are expecting me. Anna ...

— Yes?

— Why are you here? The question had occurred to him the night before.

— Why do you think? Anna said.

Robert felt suddenly that he had entered uncertain territory. — I suppose there's something you have to do, he said. Some task you left unfinished when you were ... Could he say *alive*? Call a ghost a ghost? — Earlier, he concluded.

Anna laughed sharply. — There's always something to do in an old house like this.

When she had left, silently, in-substantially, Robert got his phone and verified what he had suspected to be the case, that New York State had permitted slavery until 1827, decades after this house was built. If Anna had been here since the beginning — if she had died, as was probable, in her twenties or thirties — then she might have died a slave, and, by some ghastly metaphysics, she might be one still. The question was, what to do about it? *Free ghost slave*, Robert typed into his phone, but the internet was useless for this. Probably you had to call a priest, to arrange an exorcism. Robert scowled. He had known some priests as a child and his memories of them were not good. Anyway, he thought, these people would have been Protestants. Wouldn't they? Soon he was daydreaming about having people to dinner. *Yes, she's a real ghost. Of an enslaved person. Did you know, slavery*

was legal in New York until 1827? Just about every household up here had a slave or two. A reminder that you Northerners are hardly guiltless.

Robert was hungry. He heated a can of black bean soup and ate it standing up, in the kitchen, then he pulled on his coat and city shoes and went outside. The snow, it turned out, was deep but light. He could wade through it, kicking up sprays of glittering crystals as he went, leaving a clear track behind. His car was good and buried, but he brushed snow from the windshield with his sleeve, and determined that it would take only a few minutes to clear the rest of it. He went back into the house, took off his shoes, and was suddenly overcome by the desire to lie down. He hadn't slept well the night before, and he hadn't eaten well, either. He sank onto the loveseat, picked up *Death*, *All Included*. Apparently Towers Wick had known something about tropical fish, and he wanted you to know it, too: there were pages and pages of Archie snorkeling, in the company of amberjacks and African pompanos, French angelfish and cocoa damselfish. When he came out of the water, Rex was nowhere to be seen. A crime! Robert thought, but no. Rex had thrown out his back carrying a beach umbrella. He was getting a massage from Clarence, the physical therapist. His large buttocks trembled under a threadbare white towel. Ah, realism, Robert thought. The triumph of the superfluous detail. Only what did it triumph over? Lightning, pirate ships, tombs with bloody hands rising out of them, a terrible pair of eyes — before Robert knew it, he was asleep. □

The complete version of this story was originally published in *the Los Angeles Review of Books Quarterly Journal: Occult Issue*, no. 22, April 2019. It can be read in its entirety online, at lareviewofbooks.org/article/all-included/

THE ANDREW W. MELLON WORKSHOP

With generous support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the American Academy in Berlin established the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship in the Humanities to advance the research capacity of the Academy and to strengthen collaboration between the US and Germany at both individual and institutional levels.

The Mellon Foundation is funding two fellowships each year, in an initial three-year commitment, for projects on the topics of migration and social integration, race in comparative perspective, and exile and return. In addition to the public lecture or other events offered by the Mellon Fellow while in residence, the Academy also convenes a weeklong, interdisciplinary workshop in January (for the fall fellow) and in June (for the spring fellow), thereby enhancing transatlantic dialogue and networks. Approximately a dozen workshop participants also take part in a public event, hosted in cooperation with an institutional partner. We are grateful for the myriad contributions from the Institute of Cultural Inquiry and the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, who hosted the public workshop events in our inaugural year of Mellon Foundation funding.

The first two Andrew W. Mellon Workshops in the Humanities took up themes of global intellectual responsibility. From January 7 to 11, 2019, Rosalind C. Morris, a professor of

anthropology at Columbia University, convened the workshop "Double Exposures: Resource Extraction, Labor, and Migration in Africa, Germany, and the United States." In a series of panels, a group of 19 experts discussed the extraction of natural resources in Africa within the movement of people, resources, and ideas about race in the global economy. The first day concluded with an evening screening of *The Gamblers: The Zama Zama Miners of Southern Africa*, followed by a discussion at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry with Morris, who directed the film, and media artist Philippe Leonard.

From June 3 to 7, 2019, the Academy's second Mellon Fellow, Ronald Radano, a professor of African cultural studies and music at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, chaired the workshop "Phonographic Knowledge and the African Past: Sonic Afterlives of Slavery and Colonialism." The interdisciplinary group examined the role of phonographic archives today in how we remember our past, how we think about African history, and how the topic is addressed in a transatlantic context. During visits to the Phonogram Archive at the Ethnological Museum and the Sound Archive of the Humboldt-Universität, the group also met with German counterparts. Radano moderated an evening public event, "Scratching against the Kaboom and Blare of Trumpets." South African

composers Philip Miller and Thuthuka Sibisi as well as Rosalind Morris explored the music and sonic landscape created in collaboration with William Kentridge for the multimedia performance "The Head and the Load," about the participation of African countries in the First World War. The work premiered in 2018 at the Tate Modern, London, The Park Armory, New York, and the Ruhrtriennale, Duisburg.

In addition to a future Mellon workshop publication series, the Academy is publishing key findings here, in the *Berlin Journal*. We begin in this issue with works by three of the participants of the January workshop: an essay by University of Chicago postdoctoral fellow Natacha Nsabimana, about the meaning of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda; a photo-essay on the metamorphoses of "the Wall" by Miriam Ticktin, an associate professor of anthropology at The New School; and an essay on the aftermath of slavery and free work, by Yvette Christiansë, a professor of Africana studies and English literature at Barnard College. □

- **Michael P. Steinberg**, Academic Consultant to the Mellon Workshops
- **Berit Ebert**, Head of Programs and Development

Reflections on "Double Exposures"

by Rosalind C. Morris

Ever since the Berlin Conference (1884–1885), the relationship between Germany and the United States has included reference to Africa. This is often forgotten today. Nonetheless, the scramble for African resources, conducted over centuries but accelerating during the industrial era, not only had enormous consequences for the continent, it also profoundly shaped the trajectory of this relationship. One of the motives for convening this Mellon workshop was to redress the lacunae in contemporary scholarship around this *triangulated* history.

We started with two basic questions: How can one rethink this history to recognize the centrality of Africa in what is too often thought of as a bilateral relation? And: What is the relation between the shifting forms of extractivism by which Africa was rendered as a source of value for the US and Germany (and other European states) and the histories of migration both *within* Africa and "out of" Africa?

Given that colonialism also entailed movement *into* Africa (of capital and colonizers, of cultural forms and military forces), we were confronted with the need to understand how different orders for naming and representing these movements have affected the political imagination and its projects. Why, for example, is the European colonial subject in Africa not a migrant? And why is the African migrant so invariably imagined as someone fleeing the continent—a figure of excessive desire and insufficient means? In fact, most migrants from Africa today move *within* Africa.

Economic inequality and the increasing precarity in which millions of people live—thanks to environmental pressures, political conflict and the effects of colonial extractivism—has incited constant movement. But this movement differs from that which preceded colonization. The competitive colonialism of the Berlin Conference era was, above-all, a border project; it divided Africa internally and it surrounded it with a kind of categorical border whose transgression became the prerogative of the colonizers and their beneficiaries. The new migrations within Africa have been answered at the state level with border securitization, and on the cultural and political plane have alternated between forms of regional cooperation and periodic outbursts of xenophobic violence.

A third kind of border now divides the world between people whose movements are free and legitimate—and who can therefore be said to have mobility—and people whose movements, even when voluntary, are not recognized. They experience what may be described as movement without mobility. They are the migrants whom many in Europe and the United States would like to reject. But this effort to limit migration from Africa is the result of an historical inversion. Where Africans were once abducted and forcibly removed from Africa, today the demand made on the majority of Africans is that they stay in place.

To understand this inversion entails a complex task of thinking "doubly." This was signaled by the title of our workshop, "Double Exposures." In this reference to photography, but especially to a photographic "error" in which one exposure is written over another, we hoped to suggest the contradictory nature of the relations within which Africa has been repeatedly exposed and its subjects made vulnerable to forces emanating from afar. Plundered for its "natural riches," it has also been reviled for its impoverishment. Moreover, the civilizational discourses of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries used this very impoverishment to legitimate colonization in the name of a guided transition

to modernity and membership in the category of humanity defined by its eligibility for human rights.

To address these issues, we assembled anthropologists, philosophers, historians, literary critics, an art historian, and a writer of fiction and poetry. Yvette Christiansë helped us to grasp how colonial administrative techniques such as the Register of the Liberated Africans concealed the continuity between unfree and free labor, permitting an *increase* in forced movement after the British abolition of slavery—especially in the Indian Ocean. Urging us to think the relation between the Atlantic economy and its others, she showed us how "liberation" also set the terms for the inversion that would culminate in efforts to prevent African movement *out of Africa*. Miriam Ticktin helped us to understand the historical development of border technologies, making clear that barriers are now flexible and abstract—comprised not only of walls and fences but of surveillance technologies and biometric information—and then shared by states as much as they are used to separate them. Andrew Zimmerman's research on the Tuskegee-inspired projects that brought African Americans to German Togo in an effort to transform local agriculture into a labor-intensive monocropping economy intended for export showed us how, ironically, this process extended American imperial influence beyond its formal geopolitical reach. It also demonstrated how a system developed as part of the counterrevolution (post-Reconstruction repression of African Americans) in the US could become a technique for preventing the rise of political independence movements in Africa—even if they were resisted. He thus questions the framework within which we tend to think of counterrevolutions as *following* revolutions; sometimes, they are preemptive. Daniel Herwitz provoked us to consider how many of the historical and social processes we were discussing had been mediated by aesthetic forms that made extractivism, especially natural-resource extraction, desirable—the exemplary instance,

of course, is the diamond. Finally, my own research on the deindustrialization of the gold mines in South Africa, which informed the video installation *The Gamblers* (which premiered at Berlin's Institute for Cultural Inquiry as part of the workshop's public programming), helped the group to think the difference between movement and mobility.

Our deliberations were not merely historical, however. In the exchange between our German philosophical colleagues and the anthropologists of contemporary Africa, we were also led to rethink the nature of the value system that has impelled extractivist operations in Africa—and not merely the extraction of natural resources. This was aided by Jörn Etzold's exploration of the deep histories that link credit, debt, and guilt in Western literature and philosophy and which “ground” not only the extractive industries but the hierarchies structuring the colonial relationship.

Both Manuel Schwab and Natacha Nsabimana presented research that asked us to enlarge our sense of how humanitarian intervention transforms crises in Africa into sources of value for interests elsewhere. These include new forms of material value, in both the war-making and peace-keeping economies, and the trade in new financial instruments that allow people to profit from so-called humanitarian crises. They also include new value-forms in what Schwab referred to as “intractive economies.” Africa is also now a source of immaterial values, including the ideals of conciliatory and transitional justice. We saw this in Nsabimana's exploration of Rwanda's post-genocide Truth and Reconciliation process and other African experiments with what she terms “supplemental justice.” Below, she considers how Africa now provides a contradictory image of the human: the site of both primal conflicts and violence, and of radical social justice. She asks: What do Europeans and Americans want from these spectacles of conciliation, which they do not implement at home? The description of conciliatory justice as

traditionally African works to obstruct the demand that it be attempted elsewhere, while the very existence of these “traditions” becomes evidence of a cultural value system unbroken by colonialism. Is the love of this form of ostensibly African justice partly motivated by a desire for the possibility of a forgiveness of colonial violence? Such questions cannot be answered, but they do deserve reflection.

Our deliberations led us to contemplate the ways in which the ambivalences of colonial discourse recur today, as Africa becomes the object of a new scramble. Treated as an emerging market, as an experimental site for new financial instruments, its natural resources sought by an expanding Chinese economy, one cannot but sense *déjà vu*. But the valorization of African justice, in institutions like the TRCs and in cinematic dream-machines like *Black Panther*, suggests something else: part of an enormous recovery process in which the very idea of “the human” is being re-excavated *in Africa*. This is not the idea of the human at its origin point that archaeologists seek, but rather the idea of a humanity that treats itself as a species apart, one capable of universal reason. Because that concept was inseparable from colonialism, it is important now to question its return—without disavowing it. We were assisted in this effort by Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky, who considered the current crisis of migrancy in Europe, with reference to Karim Ainouz's film *Central Airport, THF (Tempelhof)*. Treating the tension between Kant's proposed rights of human movement and the human tendency to transform everything into property, she helped us conceive of the problem of migration and property at the dark heart of the Enlightenment, urging us to think of the ways in which solidarity might be produced in opposition to these histories of division of Africa. □

Transitional Justice

by Natacha Nsabimana

DURING THE 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, between 800,000 and one million people were killed in the span of three months. A year later, approximately 120,000 perpetrators were imprisoned. They were held in jails and prisons originally designed to house only 45,000. There were twelve prosecutors and 744 judges in total in the entire country.

Rwanda was at an impasse, confronted with a nearly insoluble question: how to handle the broad-based participation in the killings. A commissar of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, the guerrilla army that ended the genocide by capturing the country and ousting the previous regime, commented, “When we captured Kigali, we thought we would face criminals in the state; instead we faced a criminal population.”

A three-pronged approach involving the Rwandan government and the United Nations was chosen as the vehicle for justice, comprised of an International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), to be located in neighbouring Arusha, Tanzania; the Rwandan regular courts; and, finally, a form of transitional justice called *Gacaca*. This was advertised as “home-grown,” because it was a revamped form of a pre-colonial conflict-resolving mechanism. The key objectives of *Gacaca* courts were outlined by the Justice Ministry as follows: “Seeking the *truth* of what occurred in 1994, accelerating prosecution, eradicating a culture of impunity, and encouraging reconciliation.”

By June 2012, after seven years in operation, the Gacaca courts had tried close to two million genocide cases and offered sentence reductions in exchange for a guilty plea and/or confession and a public apology. The confession and apology were legally mandated conditions of the process, and it formed the basis upon which judgment was made and punishment was pronounced. The survivors were also encouraged to forgive. Forgiveness was measured against what was lost, against a truth that had to be corroborated by the accusers and accompanied by evidence of remorsefulness. People who refused to confess or whose confession was rejected went back to prison.

The sentences ranged from prison time, to freedom, community service, or a combination of the three. Perpetrators were put into three categories: (1) leaders and planners (2) people who killed in groups or aided in committing offenses, and (3) property offenses. People in this first category were tried in ordinary courts, structured by punitive justice. Gacaca courts initially only dealt with offenders in categories 2 and 3 but later came to absorb some people from category 1. The impulse to forgive and unite was therefore combined with punitive calculations. Moreover, Gacaca courts mandated that all adults residing in the locality where the courts were in session be present. The corroboration of the accused's confession was done in part by those in the audience who were also present at the scenes of the crime. Mandatory attendance aimed at something larger, namely that the revelations and decisions undertaken within the courts would reverberate beyond the trials. It was now punishable to kill Tutsi, unlike under previous regimes and especially during the genocide, when this was encouraged.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE, ITS critics argue, focuses on peace but is ultimately a "postponing of justice," which would entail an actual reorganization of the social fabric in which the economic and political advantages enjoyed by the perpetrators and

beneficiaries of crimes past are radically altered. Rwanda's Gacaca courts are a good place to begin to think about the increasing popularity of the transitional justice model for postwar spaces, particularly on the African continent.

The Gacaca concept is not unique, nor is its popularity outside of Africa. Rather, it is part of a growing trend. These judicial institutions and others, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, have become highly valorized and are especially praised by European and North American observers. But what does the rest of the world see in these institutions, and why do they value what they so rarely enact in their own contexts?

In my view, the transitional courts such as Gacaca and the TRC are being asked to perform a supplementary function to the so-called real business of the law—of international courts and punitive state law in many European and powerful Asian states where the idea of transition is not operative and where incarceration is the norm. In this sense, Gacaca courts and related institutions are the new scenes of what we might term "moral extractivism." Their elevation to exemplary status implies that Africa is the source of an alternative paradigm, albeit one admired from afar but rarely emulated in Europe or the United States.

To be sure, the content, rationale, implementation, and historical and political conditions vary from South Africa to Rwanda and elsewhere. Moreover, these processes are themselves associated with particular forms of historical social relations, everyday practices, and different sociopolitical configurations in the diverse geopolitical spaces in which they are applied. These factors are beyond the scope of this brief essay, but they are not what is at stake. Rather, I am interested in the common language and expectations that link these forms despite their significant differences.

Reconciliation, for example, is a central tenet in all such transitional structures. Belligerents must come together and unite anew. Truth is

another central factor. The rationale is that the atrocities of the past must be exposed, narrated, and remembered to avoid being repeated. Implicit in these operations is the assumption that the present is the time of transition, for negotiations are aimed at a future without violence—or, at least without mass violence. There are astute and excellent scholarly critiques and discussions of the transitional justice concept and its institutional forms. Some focus on what political reform entails and ask what role extra-judicial processes play in furthering that aim. Some question whether the telos of the transitional model does not simply assume that liberalism is the goal and thus that the whole world should be following the lead of Europe and North America.

Here I am interested in raising related but different questions: What are the connections between transitional justice and the reconciliation narrative? And, what are the legacies of colonialism organized around extractive economies? In other words, in relation to this legacy, what does reconciliation, as a narrative, actually *do*? Moreover, given Africa's history of colonialism and postcolonial predicament, whom does it serve? Is it possible that the Euro-American affection for ostensibly "traditional African" forms of reconciliation reveals a desire for evidence that colonialism was not entirely destructive?

In my view, in proposing Gacaca courts, the Rwandan authorities wrestled precisely with these questions and expectations. But their task was made difficult by an irreconcilable past, whose legacies have shaped the ethnic histories and forms of violence that have recurred throughout Rwanda's history. How does one reconcile a postcolonial present of cyclical violence that emanates largely from German and Belgian colonial logics with this new logic of truth and reconciliation? What kind of truth or views of the past and its relationship to the present can be offered in courts where the only question concerns the immediate past? What is justice under these circumstances?

Gacaca's motto was "justice that unites," a perfect remedy to deal with both the need and impossibility of rendering punitive law, given the circumstances. Despite the recognition that the country was juridically destitute, the Rwandan government insisted on some form of punishment. This is the crucial contradiction that confronted the nation: a desire for punitive justice and the demand for a process that values conciliation. It is an impossible contradiction, and it expresses two sets of desires: the termination of "impunity" alongside a demand for conciliation. On the one hand, there was the need to mark this new temporal and political order that insisted killing Tutsis was a crime. On the other, it needed to show, even if only rhetorically, its "African" virtue by enacting a process that values conciliation above and in opposition to punishment. This latter demand expresses a desire that comes partially, if not largely, from "out" of Africa: a desire for Africa to demonstrate a residual "Africanity" undamaged by colonialism—one that assuages Euro-American concerns and that suggests that colonial violence did not do irreparable damage to the moral basis of African societies.

THE AMBIVALENCE OF this structuring logic of the truth and reconciliation narrative is not new. It is rooted in a historical order whose prehistories include the transatlantic slave trade and European colonialism. But it has been transformed in the twentieth century. This historical order has always marked this world as in transition, *en route* to becoming something else. The formerly colonizing states still function as the teleological endpoint of history. But we might ask why or if African states should be modeled on European political forms, and why the legal response to genocide in Africa so frequently excludes reference to the historical violence of slavery and colonialism that set the terms within which genocide took place. Insofar as those histories were associated with the scramble for African natural resources (persons, minerals, territories, trade routes), it is necessary

to consider how the transformation of one form of extractivism, that of natural resources, may be linked to a new form of extractivism: a moral one. In this new form, the new values that are being produced are not only those that sustain industrial processes; they also sustain a vision of humanity. The Africans, excluded from the category of the human for so long and whose exclusion legitimated the institutions of slavery, now come back as the bearers of the human, as the shining representatives of its most exemplary promise: forgiveness. This is an underlying value for Euro-America of the Gacaca courts and other mechanisms like the TRC, and this is why the intensive investment in these institutions can be analogously understood as the site of a moral, racialized extractivism. □

Border Walls

by Miriam Ticktin

THE FALL OF the Berlin Wall seemed to prophesy the end of hardened border walls between countries: in 1990, only 15 walls remained in the world. But border walls have had a remarkable resurgence. According to some estimates, there are currently 77 border fences or walls worldwide. In 2015 alone, 15 new ones appeared.

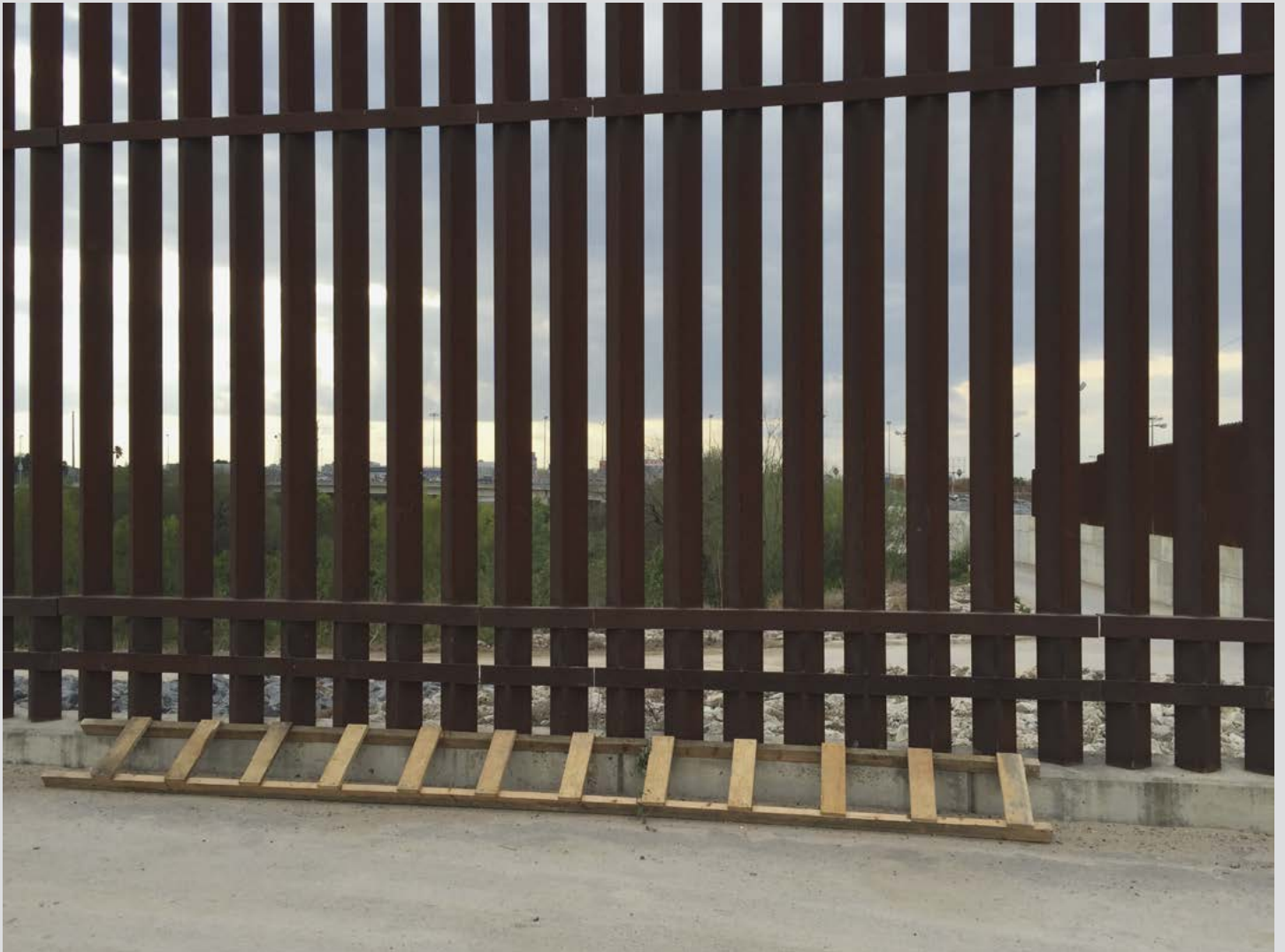
Walls are part of wider political movements centered on fear and exclusion of the Other. As icons of national sovereignty, they symbolize security and protection; arguments for closed borders now immediately signify border walls. Yet we know that border walls do not actually

stop people from crossing borders. Despite border fences jutting into the sea around Ceuta and Melilla, people swim around them to cross from Morocco into Spain. In the US–Mexico context, fingerprints on the wall are proof of those who have scaled it; paraphernalia like ladders and ropes regularly litter the ground beside the wall. Indeed, American border control officers admit to using a measurement called the "border calculus"—a device that anticipates how quickly someone will disappear after they scale the wall.

So what work do border walls actually *do*?

Walls are sorting devices. They funnel humans, nonhumans, and things into different lanes, each with its own speed, related to assumed status and value; they alternately humanize or dehumanize. Some commodities take on the status of persons, carrying special visas that allow them to cross at accelerated speeds; some humans have the status of things, and are subject to quarantine and containment. Some are funneled into the desert; others are given air-conditioned passage across. At the US–Mexico border, there are panels in the border wall activated by devices that resemble garage-door openers; this is for the easy passage of certain goods. And thanks to environmentalist and animal rights activism, many border walls are now designed with holes to allow animals to cross—that is, if they are lucky enough to find these rare passageways.

Paradoxically, rather than symbols of national purity that purport to uphold and protect, border walls are products of regular border-crossings themselves: they are thoroughly mixed and impure. There is a robust, transnational market in border security designs and technologies in which the structures and the associated surveillance devices are developed and sold. Israeli companies lead the way, profiting from Gaza—a "great laboratory," according to general brigadier Roei Elkabetz, of the Israeli Defense Forces—sharing wares such as smart fences: highly fortified steel



ABOVE: Ladders are cleared from the US–Mexico border wall daily. (Photo: Miriam Ticktin)



RIGHT: A cabbage truck crosses the US–Mexico border wall, permitted entry by border-patrol guards through a remote-control door. (Photo: Miriam Ticktin)

RIGHT: Barbed wire atop a border fence at Cueta, a Spanish autonomous city on the north coast of Africa. (Photo: Miriam Ticktin)

FAR RIGHT: The South Africa–Zimbabwe border fence on the Limpopo River (Photo: Ebrahim Hajee / Rosalind Morris)

BOTTOM: Signs at the US–Mexico border announce who and what has free mobility. (Photo: Miriam Ticktin)



barriers that have the ability to sense a person's touch or movement.

More nefariously, not only do border-wall aesthetics and technologies themselves cross national borders; they cross *species*-borders, drawing on strategies of containment used for nonhumans. Such technologies both create and build on the impression that immigrants are invasive entities like pests and swarms that must be contained or exterminated. One of the wall designers whose prototype was a finalist for the Trump border wall explained that his "wirewall" technology was initially developed to trap lobsters and crabs, then it served to keep fish in pens, and finally, to cage chickens. Now it is being proposed for humans. □



Extracting Liberation

by Yvette Christiansë

“LET AFRICANS REMAIN in Africa.” This was the advice of George L. Sullivan, a commander in the British Admiralty’s anti-slaving fleet, expressed in his 1873 memoir, *Dhow Chasing in Zanzibar Waters and on the Eastern Coast of Africa: Narrative of Five Years’ Experience in the Suppression of the Slave Trade*. Sullivan’s proposal anticipated what would become the

norm of the twenty-first century, after the centuries of Africans being forcibly removed from their homes: Africans should not be permitted to leave the continent. The history of this reversal is inseparable from the process by which slavery was transformed—via indenture and apprenticeship—or maintained and concealed. To understand the “migrant” crisis today requires understanding that history.

The British Admiralty’s anti-slaving fleet policed the Atlantic and Indian Oceans as well as the Caribbean for almost a century, beginning in 1808. Created to enforce Britain’s 1807 slave trade ban, it operated alongside an American prevention fleet—active in the Caribbean between 1819 and 1861—and a Brazilian fleet that patrolled its coast between 1819 and 1822. The need for these patrols emerged from what became evident as soon

as the laws and treaties with trading countries went into effect. From the beginning, the *de jure* intent of the law was in contest with the *de facto* reality that the demand for fresh slave labor remained unchecked. Attitudes toward British suppression efforts varied radically from colony to colony. Planters in labor-hungry colonies from the Caribbean, to Indian Ocean archipelagoes such as the Comoros, Mascarenes, and Seychelles were especially loathe to see their labor sources cut off. Their efforts at circumventing the law were met with new techniques for tracking and surveilling individuals. Nonetheless, the maritime patrols could claim to have reduced at least the Atlantic trade by the 1840s.

The story does not end there, however: the bulk of the trade simply shifted location. Indian Ocean trade remained active and, in fact, increased

during this same period. Its scale was astonishing. Between May and June 1846 alone, Commander Hotham reported the landing of some 10,000 enslaved Mozambicans in Cuba.

These contradictions ran through every aspect of the battle to end the slave trade. Although there had been decrees and measures abolishing or limiting slavery in its various institutional forms around the world and across the centuries, the decisions by Britain and America gave abolitionists special cause for hope.

The rescued were called “Liberated Africans,” “Captured Negroes,” “Returnees,” or “*emancipados*.” With some exceptions, the majority were sent on to places deemed safe enough to prevent their recapture and sale into slavery: British colonies and other settlements in places such as Sierra Leone, on Africa’s Atlantic seaboard; St. Helena, in the South Atlantic; British colonies in the Caribbean, and the Seychelles, Mauritius, and Durban, in the Indian Ocean, Aden in the Gulf, and Mumbai in India. There, freed slaves were entered into stipulated apprenticeship for periods ranging between five to fourteen years or placed in model villages of converts to Christianity. In the Seychelles, Liberated Africans became the core of the present-day Seychelles nation—the Seychellois claim descent from over 2500 Liberated Africans who were landed at Port Victoria on Mahé Island between 1862 and 1874. But often there was little difference between slavery and these other forms of labor, in a condition that can only be described as deferred freedom. The poignant irony of this is attested to in the registers used to track the Liberated Africans, the last column of which listed “How disposed of.” Those documents, which form the centerpiece of my own research, bear witness to the continuing violence of slavery even after its abolition. They include the names and details of “recaptives,” many of whom did not survive their journeys into freedom. Some were infants as young as one month. Special missions were created just for the children. Nonetheless, the moral battle

for imperial authority depended on what could be called a trade at the end of the slave trade. A new trade. “Free trade.”

The consequences of the 1807 and 1808 legislations required international treaties that increasingly recognized Britain’s maritime domination—treaties giving the anti-slaving captains the right to board ships flying under treaty-country flags. One consequence was an increasing inference that being a modern nation meant embracing a morality that recognized the inhumanity of slaving. Such was the sentiment of David Livingston, who claimed in a letter to the Earl of Clarendon in March 1856, “I am now proud that I belong to a country whose Government possessed the high moral courage to go on its efforts to benefit the slave, in spite of all the plausible sophistry brought to bear against it.” This high-minded language was grounded in a reformed humanism that had found its moral program, not to mention compensation, in Smithian economic rationalities. In November 1866, the Governor of Gambia went so far as to cite Adam Smith in a report on the Liberated Africans who, he wrote, “contain in themselves all the elements of a commercial people” and evidenced “parsimony,” Adam Smith’s quintessential characteristic for a nation’s achievement of real moral and economic wealth. Governor D’Arcy noted the Liberated Africans’ hard work and their capacity for trade, which he assumed would lead to the proper (exploitative) use of resources. Likewise, Livingston’s letter to the Earl of Clarendon opened with an acknowledgement that “the English Government is known to take a deeper interest than any other in developing the resources and promoting the civilization of Africa.” So, abolition was linked to the sense that Africans could be made the medium of a more direct extractivist relationship to Africa.

Policing the ocean for slave ships and then regulating the fate of those rescued also required new techniques of surveillance that made use of photography to supplement the descriptions in registers. Slavers used

every means of obfuscation available—sailing under non-treaty flags, for example, and renaming slaves in their documents, or altering purchase records. They also manipulated the heterogeneous laws and policies on slavery that operated in nations that had not yet signed treaty agreements with Britain, or that enjoyed exemptions under their terms. Thus, captains of dhows that sailed to the East coast of Africa with the north-west monsoons relied upon Britain’s treaties with Zanzibar. In 1822, the Zanzibar-based Omani Sa’id ibn Sultan agreed to stop selling slaves to Christian countries and sanctioned British seizure of any dhows carrying slaves between Cape Delgado and the coast of India. He signed another treaty in 1845 that also prohibited slaving outside of Zanzibari-controlled areas. Yet, this also left “domestic” slavery untouched. Even after his son Sultan Bhargash signed a treaty ending all slave trade in 1873, dhows continued to carry Africans to the Gulf and elsewhere.

For every success, one British commander claimed, too many slavers escaped to count. On both sides of the continent, captains of an intercepted vessel used treaty exemptions. Where some treaties attempted to regulate the movement of slaves by requiring a “free pass” or passport for any African on board a ship in the Atlantic or Indian Ocean, slavers forged these. Operating in Zanzibari waters, traders made use of the Sa’id ibn Sultan treaties to collect slaves along the coast and sail north inside treaty waters until they could push out across the western Indian Ocean to make for Muscat, Sur, or other receiving ports. They used the same routes even after 1873. Ship design entered the contest. Where dhows were able to rely upon their shallow drafts to slip into estuaries that thwarted the deeper drafts of the naval vessels, slave traders from Europe and the Americas turned to builders for faster and better ships. When captured, rather than destroying these vessels, the British commandeered them to strengthen their fleet. Increasingly, the British navy in the Indian Ocean was forced to rely

upon steam and this meant a further reliance upon coal that had to be sourced wherever possible, whether it had been mined by slaves or not. Coal purchased from the Sulu Sultanate and Mayotte in the Comoros, for example, was most likely mined by slaves. Mayotte had been taken by France in 1843 and became a dispersion point from which the labor-hungry French possessions of Réunion and Nossi-Bé were supplied by so-called *engagés*, free laborers carried from today's Mozambique and Tanzania.

This made for a long period of anxieties. How to tell from a distance in the Atlantic that a ship was conducting legitimate trade or was carrying slaves? How to tell off the Zanzibari coast if the many people laid upon pallets in a dhow were new slaves or slaves for the "domestic" trade? How to tell if the women on a dhow were indeed the wives of the crew and not newly captive? How to tell if everyone on board was a crew member and some were not newly captive slaves? Handbooks and manuals of discernment were distributed to assist admiralty-fleet captains to distinguish not only between likely slaving vessels but also between people who might or might not have a claim to freedom. Here, a whole technology of racial typology arose.

Ironically, the biggest challenges came from the successful interceptions. That the British had to institute checks and balances on how the Liberated Africans were treated once landed made it immediately clear that the idea of a "safe" place was a fiction. In truth, Liberated Africans were often spirited away or "disappeared" within local networks or between one colony and another in the Indian Ocean archipelagoes. They could also be kept in forms of obligated labor that could extend well beyond the stipulated period of an apprenticeship—on the basis of debt, unsatisfactory performance or a host of "violations" of the ostensible contracts of employment. For these reasons, some critics decried the apprenticeship system as nothing more than the defraying of the cost of liberation. For supporters, the system

had many goals, and these were ambiguous. Although they were required to pay a wage, the masters and mistresses to whom the apprentices were assigned actually benefitted from a new supply of much needed labor, at a relatively low cost. And even abolitionists perceived the apprenticeship system as a way to forestall idleness and dissolution, based on the widely shared presumption that these were characteristics of "African blackness." Sullivan saw what this complaint was really about: it justified the apprenticeship system—which he saw as little more than slavery. Liberated Africans were delivered by the letter of the law, but into places where the law and its enforcers had not changed their attitudes towards Africans.

Much of what Sullivan wrote in his memoir had been articulated in his letters to the Admiralty and appearances before various Royal and other Commissions. His commitment to the suppression is evident. Yet, racially, while his descriptions of Liberated Africans are mixed with concern and outrage, his accounts of African cultural practices are derogatory, as are the wholesale stereotyping pronouncements upon Arabic-speaking traders. Emerging from these contradictions, Sullivan and others of his ilk became increasingly concerned with the plight of the individuals who had been abducted or dislocated in tandem with the question of the national or, rather continental wealth that was being compromised by slavery's destruction of local "populations."

"What country in the world could stand such a constant drain on its population," he asked. He addressed this question quite precisely in the idiom of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which had given to laissez-faire economics its moral program. Slipping between a generalized "Africa" and reference to an unspecified "country," Sullivan reasoned that the drain of its population disabled a country. It disrupted trade and rendered Africa, "that great continent agriculturally barren." Moreover, the effect would not be contained within Africa. It would be "felt throughout the world, perhaps

for centuries." How much better would it be to "benefit . . . all other nations of the world" if Africans were left where they were to make available the "immense wealth of Africa which now lies buried and dormant." This was a profound change in the conception of Africa by European imperialists. No longer was it just a source; it became a resource. Not just a place from which to extract, but a site of extractivism.

Complaints about the cost of the anti-slaving work were made regularly in both houses of the British Parliament, but the entire project of liberating Africans produced profits in unexpected ways. On St. Helena, in the south Atlantic, the Liberated Africans needed clothes and blankets, provided by British mills. And, inadvertently, the efforts to keep track of Liberated Africans strengthened ties between colonies and contributed to local and metropolitan economies. In 1827, for example, the Registrar of Slaves on Mauritius wrote urgently of the shortage of paper for creating registers and asked for paper from the Cape Colony. The Cape, in turn, purchased paper from England. There was even economic benefit for photographers who provided passport-sized photographs of Liberated Africans for identification purposes, a practice that extended to identifying indentured Indian workers on Mauritius. And the crews of the prevention fleet received prize monies for each successful capture.

For all their altruism, the remarks by Governor D'Arcy and Sullivan about the potential of African labor in realizing Africa's wealth remain within the same extractionist logic that underpinned slavery. It was the attendant logic that perceived Africa as borderless in comparison to the protected borders of other countries, especially those in Europe—the borders whose rights were to be respected in the "away" of Europe's colonial interests in Africa and secured through the gentlemen's agreements of the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. The graveyards of the Mediterranean today are testimony to this awful continuity, concealed in the narrative of slavery's end. □

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The library table at the Hans Arnhold Center during the June 2019 Andrew W. Mellon Workshop. Photo: Ralph K. Penno



Photo: Ralph K. Penno

IN PRAISE OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

German president Frank-Walter Steinmeier delivered a stirring speech in defense of democracy and the power of reason on Tuesday, March 5, 2019, at the Academy's Fritz Stern Lecture.

He opened by saying that Germany's widespread optimism at the fall of the Berlin Wall and the hopes that people would come together under democratic rule were beginning to vanish. Today, instead, "a new fascination with authoritarianism is becoming widespread." Referring to growing nationalist sentiment in Europe and the United States, Steinmeier acknowledged that though "a

feeling of home" was important to human happiness, when such feelings retreat into "isolation, exclusion, and rejection of others," and "when they retreat into fear of the future and the notion of an imagined and supposedly glorious past, they become dangerous."

Such feelings stem from a frustration with the pace of deliberative democracy, Steinmeier said, particularly when it comes to climate change. Students at a Stanford University panel on which Steinmeier had recently spoke "held the view that deliberative democracy as we know it is too slow and cumbersome." But democracy

is slow, he reminded; it involves compromise "and also means that one has to allow for the ability to be wrong, to be fallible." This capacity has been hampered by the "heckling, hatred, and harshness" of discourse on social media. "Internet trolls who spread misinformation on behalf of foreign governments, or automated 'social bots' programmed to influence public opinion are the exact opposite of openness. . . . They disrupt public democratic discourse."

Asked by an Academy audience member whether his idealistic vision of democracy collided with the realities of the world, Steinmeier pointed to recent grassroots

movements in Italy and France that were bringing politicians to the table with citizens to discuss reform. He also proudly referred to the millions of Germans engaged in local politics and those who were actively working on political and social causes in civil society. These are the people who are doing the work of democracy, who understand its values and its value.

Steinmeier concluded his lecture with a final, memorable salvo, to which Fritz Stern would give his characteristic smirk of approval: "There is not a liberal or an illiberal democracy. Democracy is liberal, or it is not a democracy." □

THE RICHARD C. HOLBROOKE FELLOWSHIP

The Richard C. Holbrooke Forum for the Study of Diplomacy and Governance was established in 2013 as a remembrance of the American Academy in Berlin's founder and his lifelong commitment to applying the tools of diplomacy and statecraft to solving some of the world's most intractable problems. The Forum organized workshops on statecraft and responsibility (chaired by Michael Ignatieff and Harold Koh), authoritarianism (chaired by Martin Dimitrov), and the Digital Diplomacy Project (convened by John C. Kornblum). In fall 2018, this latter tripartite series concluded with the seminar "Values in a Networked World: A Positive Outlook," generously hosted by Daimler AG in Berlin. Beginning with a consideration of how national political interests may or

may not dovetail with a global code of conduct for the digitalized world, the workshop went on to focus on technology's impact on the dual prongs of democratization and human isolation, culminating in a debate about "value and values" in transatlantic relations.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the Richard C. Holbrooke Forum and to better integrate its activities into the American Academy's core programming, the Forum was enhanced to include one residential fellowship per academic year. At the end of fellow's stay, he or she curates a workshop to foster meaningful exchange between leading thinkers and practitioners from Germany and the US.

From May 26 to 27, 2019, the inaugural Richard C. Holbrooke Fellow, George T.

Frampton (former chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, and co-founder and CEO of Partnership for Responsible Growth), convened the workshop "Climate Policy and Politics 2020-2030: What the US Can Learn from Germany and the EU." The participants—including leading scholars as well as practitioners from government and business—discussed key challenges relating to the German *Energiewende* and carbon taxation as examples of how to pursue the 2030 Paris Climate targets. The group considered individual measures such as low-carbon fuel standards, zero-emission vehicle mandates, electric charging infrastructures, and battery improvements as well as how businesses and governments can sustain market competition while

meeting desired carbon reductions. The panel featured Baroness Brown of Cambridge (UK Committee on Climate Change), John Podesta (Center for American Progress), and Stéphane Dion (Canadian Ambassador to Germany and Special Envoy to Europe and the EU; former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former Minister of the Environment of Canada). Both workshop components were generously hosted by Bayer AG in Berlin.

Political challenges do not stop at national borders, of course, so neither should debate about those challenges. This is why the Richard C. Holbrooke Workshops in 2018-19 again stressed the urgent need for transatlantic cooperation across a range of topics. With the Forum, the American Academy in Berlin continues to strengthen substantive intellectual debate and to make available its core ideas, in the Holbrooke Forum publication series. To learn more, please visit www.americanacademy.de/holbrooke-forum/publications. □



Photo: Annette Hornischer



Photo: Ralph K. Penno

THE 2018 MAX BECKMANN DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

On December 17, 2018, the American Academy hosted artist Arthur Jafa as the year's Max Beckmann Distinguished Visitor. Jafa's visit coincided with the finissage of his exhibit *A Series of Utterly Improbable, Yet Extraordinary Renditions*, at the Julia Stoschek Collection Berlin.

Hailing from Tupelo, Mississippi, Jafa has developed a dynamic oeuvre of films, artifacts, and

happenings over the past three decades that cite the universal and specific articulations of Black being. "When African people were sent to the Americas," he said at his lecture, "at some point they became Black people. I'm interested in teasing out what that means." A recurrent question surfaces throughout Jafa's work: How can visual media—objects, photographs, films—transmit the "power, beauty, and alienation" that

are embedded in forms of American Black music? In an attempt to do just that, Jafa co-founded the motion picture studio TNEG, with film director Malik Sayeed, to create "a Black cinema as culturally, socially, and economically central to the twenty-first century as was Black music to the twentieth century." Jafa's latest project, "The White Album," is a filmic pastiche of Black cultural references that lends

powerful valence to contemporary Black identity. "I don't feel like I have an obligation to speak for Blackness," Jafa said. "But I do feel an ethical responsibility to interrogate why I feel that obligation."

Jafa's works are held in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, The Tate, Studio Museum in Harlem, High Museum, Dallas Museum of Art, Stedelijk Museum, Luma Foundation, Perez Art Museum, LACMA, and the Julia Stoschek Collection, among others. In 2017, Jafa directed the music video for American rapper Jay-Z's song "4:44." □

ALUMNI SEMINAR AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

On November 15, 2018, the American Academy in Berlin held its second alumni seminar, at Stanford University, entitled "Politics - Culture - Identity," in which Academy alumni and academic peers examined contemporary questions of identity politics. The first session—a discussion between former Academy Distinguished Visitor Francis Fukuyama and

trustee Gerhard Casper—dealt with the relationship between identity politics and democracy. The second session addressed the interplay of social resistance, the arts, and identity politics, featuring alumnus Josh Kun (University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Communication), former Academy Distinguished Visitor Tricia Rose (Brown University), and Ana Raquel Minian (Stanford University). □



Gerhard Casper, Francis Fukuyama, Pascal Levensohn



George P. Shultz



Tricia Rose



Josh Kun and Ana Raquel Minian

Photo: Annette Hornischer



Photo: Ralph K. Penno

WEISS AND CHIPPERFIELD

Two speakers at the American Academy during the week of March 18, 2019, engaged with a perennial topic: the responsibility of art and culture to society. Daniel Weiss, the president and CEO of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, discussed the social responsibility of museums. Sir David Chipperfield discussed the social responsibility of architects. Both were at the Academy as Marina Kellen French Distinguished Visitors, a program that brings leading practitioners in the arts and

culture to Berlin for an evening lecture and interaction with Berlin peers.

Museums have a dual role, Weiss said: to educate and to entertain. This can sometimes mean dealing with controversial topics. Though some museum visitors are looking for a place to debate social issues, many others are seeking a place of stability and beauty. But Weiss said it was “not a contradiction to have beauty and to provoke.” This, he argued, is the dual social responsibility of the art museum in our time.

The Met has come a long way from its early days, of course, when it was first opened in a small rented building on Fifth Avenue, in 1872. It has since expanded to a complex of halls with more than two million square feet of gallery space, two million works of art, and an annual budget of over \$300 million. “In many ways, the Met is one of the most interesting and successful social experiments in American history,” Weiss said.

Sir David Chipperfield suggested that his eleven-year project to restore Berlin’s Neues Museum, which reopened in 2009, “was an extreme example of the relation between architecture and society.” Today, he thinks that relationship

is struggling. “It stresses me that architects have become detached from planning, and that planning has become a reactive rather than a proactive process.” Regarding architects’ need to take on greater social responsibility, Chipperfield talked about Fundación RIA, his nonprofit foundation set up in 2017, in Galicia, in northwestern Spain. The foundation’s aim is to revive the economically struggling region by helping the development of industry, urban regeneration, and preservation of the natural environment along the coastline. “You can’t protect the environment if you just talk about protecting nature,” Chipperfield said. “You need to take into account the future of peoples’ lives.” □

STREET SMART

In 2019–20, the American Academy’s library service team will again be dashing about in a dark gray **smart forfour** to get to and from Berlin’s extensive network of libraries and archives. They take the **smart** to retrieve the books and archival materials requested by the Academy’s residential fellows for their individual research projects.

For this convenience, we extend our thanks to Daimler AG. Since 2012, their support has contributed to the success of many research endeavors—from scholarly monographs and novels to biographies and historical works. The Academy remains grateful to Daimler for this sustained commitment to academic and creative excellence. □



Photo: Heiga Beck

POLITICS AND BRÖTCHEN

During the 2018–19 academic year, the American Academy hosted a series of breakfast discussions at the Unterdend Linden location of Café Einstein. The idea behind the series was to move some of the robust discussions occurring after evening lectures in Wannsee further into Berlin-Mitte, and, moreover, to more deliberately address topics currently affecting transatlantic affairs, politics in the United States, and the future of Europe. To this end, we invited Academy friends—from business, government, journalism, and academia—for discussions over an early morning

breakfast with a number of influential speakers. Over the course of the year, the

breakfast series welcomed journalist William Drozdiak, who is writing a book about Emmanuel Macron; national-security expert Julianne Smith, who worked for Vice President Biden; Obama speechwriter and senior advisor Ben Rhodes; author James Kirchick, of the Brookings

Institution, author of *The End of Europe*; China expert John Pomfret; and General David Petraeus, who spoke with Academy trustee Wolfgang Ischinger, head of the Munich Security Conference, at Daimler's Corporate Representative Office at Haus Huth. □



Wolfgang Ischinger and Gen. David Petraeus

Photo: Annette Hornischer

WELCOME ABOARD



Photo courtesy University of Glasgow

In fall 2018, the American Academy welcomed art historian Joseph Koerner to its board of trustees. Koerner is the Victor S. Thomas Professor of the History of Art and Architecture at Harvard University and since 2008 has been a senior fellow of the university's Society of Fellows. He also serves on the board of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society.

Born and raised in Pittsburgh and Vienna, Koerner studied at Yale University and Cambridge and spent a year studying philosophy and German literature at Heidelberg University. He received his PhD in 1988 from the University of California, Berkeley. Koerner's area of expertise is early Netherlandish painting, German Renaissance art,

and the Northern Renaissance. His books include *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape*, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, *The Reformation of the Image*, *Dürer's Hands*, and *Bosch and Bruegel: From Enemy Painting to Everyday Life*. Koerner also wrote and presented the three-part series *Northern Renaissance* and the feature-length documentary *Vienna: City of Dreams*, both of which aired on the BBC.

Koerner is the recipient of the Jan Mitchell Prize for the History of Art (1992), a Guggenheim Fellowship (2006), and an Andrew W. Mellon Distinguished Achievement Award (2009). He has delivered the Slade Lectures at Cambridge (2003) and Oxford (2013), Mellon Lectures at the National Gallery in Washington (2008), Tanner Lectures at Cambridge (2012), and the Gombrich Lectures at the Warburg Institute (2016). □

PROFILES IN SCHOLARSHIP

ANDREW W. MELLON FELLOWS IN THE HUMANITIES

Roberto Suro (Fall 2019)

Professor of Journalism and Public Policy, University of Southern California
Suro examines the challenges that recent flows of asylum-seeking pose for many Western democracies; in Berlin, he will focus on the city's multi-decade postwar legacy of migration. Suro aims at developing policy options and proposals based on new understandings of migration flows, political reactions that roil the topic, and post-migration trajectories.

Moira Fradinger (Spring 2020)

Associate Professor of Comparative Literature, Yale University
Fradinger studies the cultural and political debates, as well as artistic productions, generated around the 2012 Argentine legal reform that de-pathologized gender identity and sexual rights. Her project details Argentina's contribution to new thinking about gender and sexual-identity struggles, democracy, the family, heterosexuality, female reproduction, and in the most general terms, the human as such.

ANNA-MARIA KELLEN FELLOWS

Veronika Fuechtner (Spring 2020)

Associate Professor and Chair of German, Dartmouth College
Fuechtner will complete a monograph on Thomas Mann's Brazilian mother and his construction of "Germanness" and race, and how the novelist's immigration background profoundly influenced his life and writing. While Mann's work has been analyzed with regard to sexual difference and the construction of Jewishness, the critical potential of this

Brazilian background has remained unexplored.

Liliane Weissberg (Spring 2020)

Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor in the School of Arts and Sciences, Professor of German and Comparative Literature, University of Pennsylvania
Weissberg's project focuses on the "Golden Age" of the postcard (1890-1930), noting that postcard writing differed from letter writing by insisting on brevity and questioning the privacy of communication. Drawing on archival sources in Berlin's Akademie der Künste and the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach, she aims to sketch the history of the postcard and its use by important figures, among them Franz Rosenzweig, Sigmund Freud, and Walter Benjamin.

AXEL SPRINGER FELLOWS

Daniel Ziblatt (Fall 2019)

Eaton Professor of the Science of Government, Harvard University
Ziblatt studies the origins of conservatism and the rise of radical Right, or right-populist political parties. He argues that the crises of democracy in the US and Europe today can be traced to the changing form of modern center-right movements and parties. His work studies the roots of postwar center-right politics and how they have shaped—and been shaped by—major episodes of democratization since the end of World War II.

Dominic Boyer (spring 2020)

Ronald S. Lauder Endowed Professor of Anthropology; Director, Center for Energy and Environmental Research in the Human Sciences (CENHS), Rice University
Boyer's project "Electric Futures"—a collaboration among Rice University, Humboldt Universität Berlin,

and the NUMIES energy research group, in Chile—examines global efforts to design and build new models of electrical infrastructure in the face of global climate change. In Germany, his research includes examining more than 800 energy cooperatives and 120 remunicipalization initiatives that have been set up since 2005.

BERTHOLD LEIBINGER FELLOW

George Steinmetz (Spring 2020)

Charles Tilly Collegiate Professor of Sociology, University of Michigan
Steinmetz's project examines European sociology's varied engagements with colonial and Continental empires from 1930 to 1960 and their contributions to subsequent sociology and other fields. This imperial research has been oddly erased from the histories of sociology. In Berlin, Steinmetz will look at German sociologists' involvement with Nazi imperialism in occupied Eastern Europe and colonial plans for Africa.

DAIMLER FELLOW

Steven Klein (Fall 2019)

Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Florida
In "After Crisis: Karl Polanyi and the Politics of Capitalism," Klein draws together the thought of Polanyi with the tradition of critical social theory to develop a vision of the democratic transformation of the capitalist economy. Klein offers a sustained critique of present-day capitalism, identifying it as a regime of economic authoritarianism within thin, formally democratic institutions.

DIRK IPPEN FELLOW

Marco Abel (Fall 2019)

Professor of English and Film Studies, University of Nebraska at Lincoln

Abel will start a new book project, tentatively entitled "Left Politics without Leftism: A Counter-Genealogy of Germany's Political Cinema," which investigates the political cinema of the 1960s and 1970s. Abel's project constitutes a prehistory to his book *The Counter-Cinema of the Berlin School*, which won the German Studies Association Prize for Best Book 2014.

ELLEN MARIA GORRISSEN FELLOWS

Renée Green (Fall 2019)

Artist, Writer, and Filmmaker; Professor, School of Architecture and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Green's two-year project at Harvard University's Carpenter Center for Visual Arts, *Pacing*, culminated in the spring 2018 exhibition *Within Living Memory*, which inhabited all public spaces in Le Corbusier's Carpenter Center building. In Berlin, she will continue working on a film based on the materials gathered during her research on the Carpenter Center and the Casa Curutchet, in La Plata, Argentina, Le Corbusier's only built structures in the Americas.

Kevin Jerome Everson (Spring 2020)

Visual Artist; Professor of Art, University of Virginia
Everson's filmic oeuvre combines scripted and documentary moments in the lives of working-class African Americans and other people of African descent. Rather than deploying standard documentary realism, however, he favors a strategy that abstracts everyday actions and statements into theatrical gestures, in which archival footage is re-edited or re-staged, and in which real people perform fictional scenarios based on their own lives.

**HOLTZBRINCK
FELLOWS****Suki Kim (Fall 2019)***Writer*

Kim is the only writer ever to have lived undercover in North Korea for immersive journalism. She is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Without You, There Is No Us: Undercover Among the Sons of North Korea's Elite*. In Berlin, she is working on *The Portrait of Complicity*, a narrative investigative non-fiction book about war and its psychological consequences generations later, seen through North Korea's ruling class.

Paul La Farge (Spring 2020)*Writer, Red Hook, NY*

In Berlin, La Farge is writing "Way Out," a collection of short stories linked by themes of confinement and escape. The book also looks at Carl Hagenbeck's invention of the modern zoo—the likely impetus behind Kafka's story "A Report to an Academy," which inspired La Farge's own musings for this collection.

**INGA MAREN OTTO FELLOW
IN MUSIC COMPOSITION****Carolyn Chen (Spring 2020)***Composer, Sound Artist, and Performance Artist, Los Angeles, California*

Chen places traditional instruments in conversation with everyday sounds and invites participation in musical games and live installations. At the Academy, she is working on new compositions incorporating movement and storytelling.

**JOHN P. BIRKELUND
FELLOWS IN THE
HUMANITIES****Azade Seyhan (Fall 2019)**

Fairbank Professor in the Humanities and Professor of German, Bryn Mawr College Seyhan's project focuses on a unique cultural encounter between professors exiled from Hitler's Germany and institutions of Turkish higher education that offered them refuge and intellectual

community. The mandate of the German academic exiles—including figures such as city planner Ernst Reuter—was to mediate the ideals of Enlightenment modernity to the institutions of the young Turkish Republic by various forms of translational activity and cultural transfer.

**Amanda Anderson
(Spring 2020)**

Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Humanities and English; Director, Cogut Institute for the Humanities, Brown University Anderson's book project "The Slow Time of Ruminantion" argues that some of the most influential frameworks for understanding human thought—in psychology, in moral and political philosophy, and in cognitive science—have failed to recognize the quality, form, and significance of slow, persistent ruminative processes. Using examples drawn from literature and memoir, she considers experiences of profound loss, grief, regret, or injury to demonstrate the productive moral purpose of ruminantion.

**MARY ELLEN VON DER
HEYDEN FELLOWS IN
FICTION****Angela Flournoy (Fall 2019)**

Writer, Brooklyn, NY Flournoy, author of *The Turner House*, a finalist for the 2015 National Book Award, is writing her second novel, a series of stories about the lives of young African-American women in New York and Los Angeles. The novel imagines these cities now and in twenty years, interweaving stories of new patterns of migration with the individual lives of black women.

**Adam Ehrlich Sachs
(Fall 2019)**

Writer, Pittsburgh, PA Sachs is working on his next novel, tentatively titled "The Ballet Master," which draws on fairy tale and historical fact to tell the story of an Expressionist choreographer and his daughters at the

moment of his break from ballet.

**NINA MARIA GORRISSEN
FELLOWS IN HISTORY
Tatyana Gershkovich
(Fall 2019)***Assistant Professor of Russian Studies, Carnegie Mellon University*

Gershkovich is working on "Tolstoy Red and White: 1920–1928," a book about the struggle over Tolstoy's legacy between the radical Left in the Soviet Union and Russian émigré intellectuals in Berlin, as the latter sought to preserve a coherent cultural community in the face of dispersion, linguistic isolation, and poverty.

Tom Conley (Spring 2020)*Abbott Lawrence Lowell Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies and of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University*

In "The Engineer's Art," Conley contributes to a growing academic field that studies literature and the fine arts in relation to the history and theory of cartography. He examines how spatial reason in early modern France informs a range of documents, including maps, novels, poetry, polemical tracts, broadsheets, and atlases. By juxtaposing documents otherwise studied in isolation, Conley points to the forces of analogy and spatial process that continue to shape media in our age.

**RICHARD C. HOLBROOKE
FELLOW****Laura D'Andrea Tyson
(Fall 2019)***Distinguished Professor of the Graduate School; Faculty Director, Institute for Business and Social Impact, Berkeley Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley*

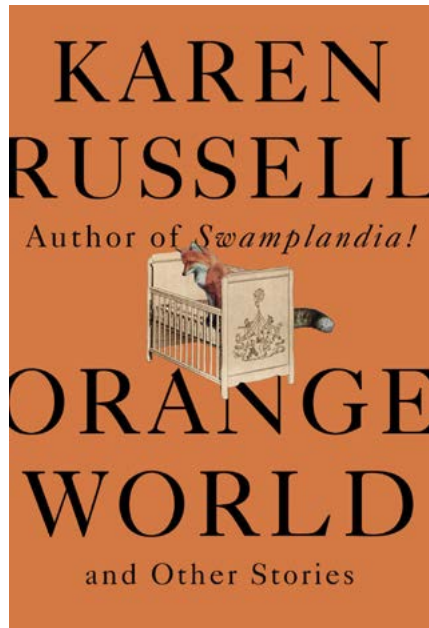
To understand how US businesses and policymakers can better respond to the effects of automation on employment, wages, labor-market dislocation, and income

inequality, Tyson is investigating the unique features of German business governance, labor-market policies, and systems of training and apprenticeships.

Fall 2019 Distinguished Visitors and Speakers

**MARCUS BIERICH
DISTINGUISHED VISITOR IN
THE HUMANITIES****Judith Wechsler***National Endowment for the Humanities Professor Emerita, Tufts University***JOHN W. KLUGE
DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Claudia Rankine***Frederick Iseman Professor of Poetry, Yale University***STEPHEN M. KELLEN
LECTURER****James von Moltke**
*CFO, Deutsche Bank***GUEST SPEAKERS****Nicholas Christakis***Sterling Professor of Social and Natural Science, Yale University***David Frum***Staff Writer, The Atlantic***Jill Lepore***David Woods Kemper '41 Professor of American History, Harvard University***George Packer***Staff Writer, The Atlantic*

BOOK REVIEWS



**ORANGE WORLD AND
OTHER STORIES**
BY KAREN RUSSELL

Knopf
May 2019, 288 pages

A review by Adam Ross

“I would suggest this,” wrote Italo Calvino, in *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, “my working method has more often than not involved the subtraction of weight.” Calvino would reject the granular approach of realism, the heavy task of holding a mirror to experience, in favor of the fabular. As an artist, it was the only way he felt he could deal with the “opacity of the world” in all of its petrifying complexity. In this same essay, entitled “Lightness,” Calvino added, “Whenever humanity seems condemned to heaviness, I think I should fly like Perseus into a different space. I don’t mean escaping into dreams or into the irrational. I mean that I have to change

my approach, look at the world from a different perspective, with a different logic and with fresh methods of cognition and verification.”

With her fifth book, the story collection *Orange World*, Karen Russell stakes her claim as the American heir to Calvino. Her imagination, nearly limitless in its capacity to generate fantastical conceits, speaks directly to the fraught conditions of the here and now while subtracting weight from them. In a world that seems on the verge of collapse, each story swerves toward chaos, bearing directly toward threat, toward solipsism, toward disaster by way of the surreal. “Orange World,” warns the New Parents Educator in the title story, “is where most of us live.” It’s the world, our pregnant protagonist, Rae, extrapolates, that’s “a nest of tangled electrical cords and open drawers filled with steak knives. It’s a baby’s fat hand hovering over the blushing coils of a toaster oven. It’s a crib purchased used.” If *Green World* is the helicopter-parented condition of absolute safety and *Red World* is the unthinkable place where driving-while-texting causes a head-on collision, then *Orange World* is the if-it-can-go-wrong-it-will-go-wrong state of mind where we all dwell—paralyzing, for sure. In her first trimester, Rae learns from her genetic counselor that her unborn child has a high probability of being born with a defect. How does Rae deal with these Damocletian days before the child’s arrival? Why, make a deal with the devil, of course.

Or a devil, as it were, who promises her newborn’s safety in exchange for its own nightly feedings—a suckle for succor. What makes the story remarkable isn’t just the comedy Russell mines out of Rae’s powerlessness, but the details Russell ascribes to the demon that make it seem utterly real: “She tries not to look at it; when

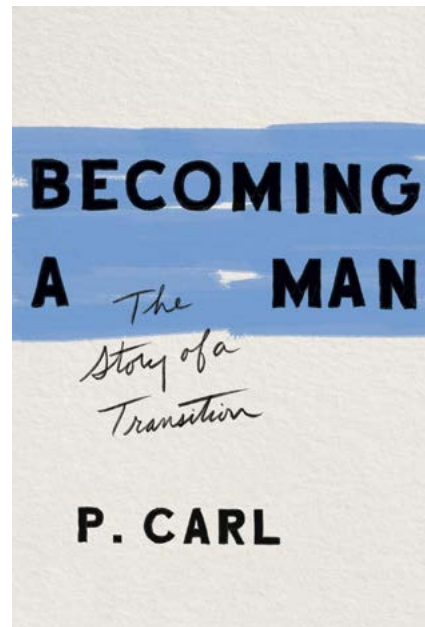
she looks at it, her milk dries up. It lays its triangular head on her collarbone, using its thin-fingered paws to squeeze milk from her left breast into its hairy snout. Its tail curls around her waist. Unlike her son, the devil has dozens of irregular teeth, fanged and broken, in three rows; some lie flat against the gums, like bright arrowheads in green mud.” The story unfolds as a parable about weening, not just the baby’s from the mother but the mother’s from the idea that she can ever truly protect her child from anything. Perhaps being a truly loving parent requires this exorcism of magical thinking; perhaps being a truly loving mother walks hand in hand with the recognition that her baby is not only born into danger but must learn to navigate it.

Russell’s protean art allows her to take on any subject; one of the collection’s accomplishments is “The Prospectors,” a portrait of American angst set against the backdrop of Depression-era Oregon. Two young women, Clara and Aubby, accept an invitation to a party at a lodge on Mount Joy. The girls are hustlers, on the grift, trying to survive; they’re often forced to trade on their femininity. To their horror, they find themselves the only women at a party hosted by the ghosts of men who died (by avalanche) building the lodge, but don’t know they’re dead. The story is layered with disquietude. Will the tale end with the women’s gang rape and murder? Will they be similarly imprisoned? And these men, trapped in a place they were building for the rich—are they the walking dead that economic collapse zombies? Russell weaves similar anxieties through “The Tornado Auction,” where Wurman, a lapsed tornado farmer—the weather systems were harvested to do large-scale controlled demolition—decides to come out of retirement to grow one more

storm. He's a widower; like Lear, he has three daughters, all of whom have fled his ranch after years suffering his inattention. His favorite, Suzie, was nearly killed in an accident (funnel cloud). Wurman's sure he has nothing to lose now that there's no one in his life he can hurt. When his twister breaks free, it registers with Wurman as something close to a lone gunman's suicidal joy. "I slid up the sash and looked down to what remained of the wind chimes, scattered about the porch like shell casings, and then over to the shelter . . . just as the steel walls buckled and my twister smashed out. Sucking surface air, she tore a black furrow through the pasture, and within seconds of hitting the atmosphere her pearly color began to mutate as she absorbed the stain of whatever tumbled through her—now she was woodsmoke, now pollen, now gravel, now red dirt." These stories tap in the unease of men whose skills are outmoded and who've spent their lives doing one thing well in a country that no longer needs their services, or who are simply considered expendable. No wonder they have a death wish, or are in denial. Not surprisingly, the latter ends with a supercell gathering on the horizon, while "The Prospectors" concludes with these men abandoned by our heroines to the frozen doom. When capitalism collapses, it's every person for herself.

Rather than try to depict the spirit of the times by way of a shambolic "Billion Footed Beast," to use Tom Wolfe's approach to the social realist novel, the stories in *Orange World* meditate on the responsibility of each generation for everything from climatologic destruction to gendered and racial violence—of who caused it, of who is inheriting this world, and how it is possible to exist in it—by their author's unique brand of magical realism. At her best, Russell, a true original, arrives armed with every mythic being's magical instrument, whether its Orpheus's lyre, Hermes's winged sandals, or Eros's bow. She uses them to make the real seem at once strange and new. We gladly suspend our disbelief as we enter her

various worlds, we are charmed by their lurid wizardry, and we are gifted with novel ways of considering how we live, right here, right now. Fresh methods of cognition and verification, indeed. □



BECOMING A MAN: THE STORY OF A TRANSITION BY P. CARL

Simon and Schuster
January 2020

A review by Kenny Fries

The title of P. Carl's *Becoming a Man: The Story of a Transition* beckons to the title of Paul Monette's *Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story*. Monette's memoir, published in 1992, covered the part of his life during which he was closeted gay man at the height of the early AIDS pandemic. This was a time in the US when the lives of gay men became more visible, even if not entirely accepted. Carl's memoir, which covers his life until a short time after his late-in-life transition from Polly to Carl, at age 50, is published at a time when there is an increasing visibility and expanding acceptance of gender and body transitions—and

when long-suppressed stories of the abuse and thwarting of women at the hands of men are gaining long-warranted attention.

According to Carl, a Distinguished Artist in Residence at Emerson College, "the power of white masculinity" is "either pushing us toward civil war or breathing its last gasp." It is early in Carl's transition when the confirmation hearings of now-US Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh take place, during which Kavanaugh is accused of sexual assaulting Christine Blasey Ford, when they were both in high school. Ford's dismissive treatment by Republican men of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Kavanaugh's own unhinged denials, shows what is at stake. "If we learned nothing else from the Kavanaugh hearings," Carl writes, "we learned that women asserting their truth and their power and their PhDs make some men crazy and red-faced—men who will go to any lengths to put down, threaten, and erase the threat of a woman's reality that impinges on *their* ambition."

It is this reality in which Polly also lived, enraged, within her family, in university, and on the job. It is also this reality, coupled with the increasing knowledge that her gender did not conform to the body to which it was born, that caused a series of breakdowns and suicide attempts. Carl describes his transition process as "becoming the very thing that had made my life and my career a series of threats and clashes and near firings." Polly navigated these cultural traps as best as she could.

This reality is intimately known to most women, and it has come increasingly to the cultural forefront—brought into ever higher relief since Hillary Clinton's 2016 US presidential campaign defeat and the ascendance of Donald Trump, who is, to many of us, the personification of toxic masculinity and male privilege run amok. Carl's story highlights this throughout *Becoming a Man*. When he describes his aging father, who is sick with cancer, he is also describing a father who revels in "a burnt-out masculinity that is still at the center of American life,

still the building blocks of patriarchy.” Then, turning this lens on himself, Carl encapsulates the conundrum in which he finds himself in the early days of his transition: “Some fucked-up part of me wants this sometimes.” This is evidenced in his obsession with the trappings of his newfound masculinity: sneakers, bars, bourbon, the gym, his beard. He thrives in a newfound freedom when he is now treated as a man, especially by other men.

But this enthrallment with masculinity comes at a price. Carl offers many quotidian examples, but one particularly stands out. During a Lyft ride, he doesn’t interrupt the driver’s misogynistic banter; he joins in. Carl shows here the difficulty of derailing misogyny, even when one is all too aware of the price paid, a price he once paid as Polly. This is the conflict at the heart of Carl’s memoir.

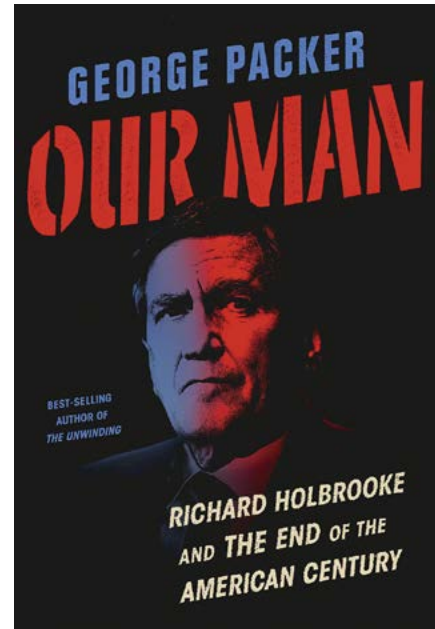
Perhaps the most helpful person to Carl during and after his transition is his therapist, and he includes a number of exchanges with her throughout. Carl decides to take testosterone, he says, “when I made the choice to have my breasts removed.” But the therapist interrupts him, saying, “choice is deciding whether to have kale salad instead of a BLT for lunch.” Carl belatedly counters her in his memoir, writing, “I choose to inject testosterone into my thigh every two weeks; no one straps me to a table and plunges a needle into my leg, but nothing about any stage of my transition feels like choosing between kale salad and a BLT.” Choice is oftentimes difficult to discern, as Carl’s reflection suggests, but not interrupting misogynistic banter is also a choice.

Carl’s therapist also describes his transition “as a health issue. It is not a pathology but rather like diabetes; the body isn’t producing something it desperately needs to live, to feel itself.” What Carl’s therapist says is a reminder of the importance of the field of disability studies, which is rooted in how societies and cultures have defined embodied difference, and how we have stigmatized different bodies. Carl suggests that “men of every political viewpoint cannot handle

bodies.” And this, at this stage of his transition, includes the author himself. Carl finds the change in bodies around him difficult to handle. His unsympathetic descriptions of his mother’s dementia echoes what he must have learned from his father. As Carl continues the process of becoming a man, disability studies might inform some of his further reflection; it can help all of us “handle bodies” better, especially bodies that are deemed different or “other” by the dominant culture.

Throughout his memoir, Carl shows how “the entire architecture of our society is founded in gender.” Some of the book’s most poignant scenes delve into the difficulties Carl’s transition causes for Lynette, his longtime partner and a writer who was diagnosed with cancer early in Carl’s life as a man. Carl admits, “Being a white man married to a white woman is just so pleasant, so easy, and so terrifying.” But, he also admits that Lynette did not sign up for being married to a man, and he is clearly troubled for having altered the terms of what was a lesbian relationship. Whether their decades-long marriage can survive the transition is one of the questions tracked in the memoir.

In the course of his memoir, Carl discovers that “no convalescence is without history or context.” He entreats his therapist to “purge . . . American history from my body.” Carl understands this history and the context of becoming a man in our raucously dangerous Trumpian culture. Now, living as a white man, he also knows firsthand both the privileges of and pain caused by masculinity. How Carl will resolve his dilemma of becoming a white man remains, at memoir’s end, an open question. In many ways, his process mirrors that of society as we try to resist toxic masculinity’s ever-present menace. But our culture might just be as enthralled by masculinity as Carl is during the early days of his transition. In *Becoming a Man*, Carl offers a memoir that reminds readers of the larger questions of how to purge, if we can, this ugly history from our body politic. □



OUR MAN: RICHARD C. HOLBROOKE AND THE AMERICAN CENTURY BY GEORGE PACKER

Knopf
May 2019, 608 pages

In lieu of a review, we offer here the complete Prologue to alumnus George Packer’s latest book, OUR MAN, about the late diplomat Richard C. Holbrooke, founder of the American Academy in Berlin.

Holbrooke? Yes, I knew him. I can’t get his voice out of my head. I still hear it saying, “You haven’t read that book? You really need to read it.” Saying, “I feel, and I hope this doesn’t sound too self-satisfied, that in a very difficult situation where nobody has the answer, I at least know what the overall questions and moving parts are.” Saying, “Gotta go, Hillary’s on the line.” That voice! Calm, nasal, a trace of older New York, a singsong cadence when he was being playful, but always doing something to you, cajoling, flattering, bullying, seducing, needling, analyzing, one-upping you—applying continuous pressure like a strong underwater current, so that by the end of a conversation, even two minutes on the phone, you found yourself far

out from where you'd started, unsure how you got there, and mysteriously exhausted.

He was six feet one but seemed bigger. He had long skinny limbs and a barrel chest and broad square shoulder bones, on top of which sat his strangely small head and, encased within it, the sleepless brain. His feet were so far from his trunk that, as his body wore down and the blood stopped circulating properly, they swelled up and became marbled red and white like steak. He had special shoes made and carried extra socks in his leather attaché case, sweating through half a dozen pairs a day, stripping them off on long flights and draping them over his seat pocket in first class, or else cramming used socks next to the classified documents in his briefcase. He wrote his book about ending the war in Bosnia—the place in history that he always craved, though it was never enough—with his feet planted in a Brookstone shiatsu foot massager. One morning he showed up late for a meeting in the secretary of state's suite at the Waldorf Astoria in his stocking feet, shirt untucked and fly half-zipped, padding around the room and picking grapes off a fruit basket, while Madeleine Albright's furious stare tracked his every move. During a videoconference call from the UN mission in New York, his feet were propped up on a chair, while down in the White House Situation Room their giant distortion completely filled the wall screen and so disrupted the meeting that President Clinton's national security advisor finally ordered a military aide to turn off the video feed. Holbrooke put his feet up anywhere, in the White House, on other people's desks and coffee tables—for relief, and for advantage.

Near the end, it seemed as if all his troubles were collecting in his feet—atrial fibrillation, marital tension, thwarted ambition, conspiring colleagues, hundreds of thousands of air miles, corrupt foreign leaders, a war that would not yield to the relentless force of his will.

But at the other extreme from his feet, the ice-blue eyes were on

perpetual alert. Their light told you that his intelligence was always awake and working. They captured nearly everything and gave almost nothing away. Like one-way mirrors, they looked outward, not inward. I never knew anyone quicker to size up a room, an adversary, a newspaper article, a set of variables in a complex situation—even his own imminent death. The ceaseless appraising told of a manic spirit churning somewhere within the low voice and languid limbs. Once, in the 1980s, he was walking down Madison Avenue when an acquaintance passed him and called out, "Hi, Dick." Holbrooke watched the man go by, then turned to his companion: "I wonder what he meant by that." Yes, his curly hair never obeyed the comb, and his suit always looked rumpled, and he couldn't stay off the phone or TV, and he kept losing things, and he ate as much food as fast as he could, once slicing open the tip of his nose on a clamshell and bleeding through a pair of cloth napkins—yes, he was in almost every way a disorderly presence. But his eyes never lost focus.

So much thought, so little inwardness. He could not be alone—he might have had to think about himself. Maybe that was something he couldn't afford to do. Leslie Gelb, Holbrooke's friend of 45 years and recipient of multiple daily phone calls, would butt into a monologue and ask, "What's Obama like?" Holbrooke would give a brilliant analysis of the president. "How do you think you affect Obama?" Holbrooke had nothing to say. Where did it come from, that blind spot behind his eyes that masked his inner life? It was a great advantage over the rest of us, because the propulsion from idea to action was never broken by self-scrutiny. It was also a great vulnerability, and finally, it was fatal.

I can hear the voice saying, "It's your problem now, not mine."

He loved speed. Franz Klammer's fearless downhill run for the gold in 1976 was a feat Holbrooke never finished admiring, until you almost believed that he had been the one throwing himself into those dangerous

turns at Innsbruck. He pedaled his bike straight into a swarming Saigon intersection while talking about the war to a terrified blond journalist just arrived from Manhattan; he zipped through Paris traffic while lecturing his State Department boss on the status of the Vietnam peace talks; his Humvee careered down the dirt switchbacks of the Mount Igman road above besieged Sarajevo, chased by the armored personnel carrier with his doomed colleagues.

He loved mischief. It made him endless fun to be with and got him into unnecessary trouble. In 1967, he was standing outside Robert McNamara's office on the second floor of the Pentagon, a 26-year-old junior official hoping to catch the secretary of defense on his way in or out, for no reason other than self-advancement. A famous colonel was waiting, too—a decorated paratrooper back from Vietnam, where Holbrooke had known him. Everything about the colonel was pressed and creased, his uniform shirt, his face, his pants carefully tucked into his boots and delicately bloused around the calves. He must have spent the whole morning on them. "That looks really beautiful," Holbrooke said, and he reached down and yanked a pants leg all the way out of its boot. The colonel started yelling. Holbrooke laughed.

Back in the Kennedy and Johnson years, when he was elbowing his way into public life, the phrase "action intellectuals" was hot, until Vietnam caught up with it and intellectuals got burned. But that was Holbrooke. Ideas mattered to him, but never for their own sake, only if they produced solutions to problems. The only problems worth his time were the biggest, hardest ones. Three fiendish wars—that's what his career came down to. He was almost singular in his eagerness to keep risking it. Having solved Bosnia, he wanted Cyprus, Kosovo, Congo, the Horn of Africa, Tibet, Iran, India, Pakistan, and finally Afghanistan. Only the Middle East couldn't tempt him. As the Washington bureaucracy got more cautious, his appetite for conquests grew. Right after his death,



American Academy in Berlin founder Richard C. Holbrooke at the Hans Arnhold Center, May 16, 2008. Photo: Annette Hornischer

Hillary Clinton said, “I picture him like Gulliver tied down by Lilliputians.”

He loved history—so much that he wanted to make it. The phrase “great man” now sounds anachronistic, but as an inspiration for human striving maybe we shouldn’t throw out the whole idea. He came of age when there was still a place for it and that place could only be filled by an American. This was just after the war, when the ruined world lay prone and open to the visionary action of figures like Acheson, Kennan, Marshall, and Harriman. They didn’t just grab for land and gold like the great men of earlier empires. They built the structures of international order that would endure for three generations, longer than anything ever lasts, and that are only now turning to rubble.

These were unsentimental, supremely self-assured white Protestant men—privileged, you could say—born around the turn of the century, who all knew one another and knew how to get things done. They didn’t take a piss without a strategy. Holbrooke revered them all and adopted a few as replacement fathers. He wanted to join them at the top, and he clawed his way up the slope of an establishment that was crumbling under his crampons. He reached the highest base camp possible, but every assault on the summit failed. He loved books about mountaineers, and in his teens he climbed the Swiss Alps. He was a romantic. He never realized that he had come too late.

You will have heard that he was a monstrous egotist. It’s true. It’s even

worse than you’ve heard—I’ll explain as we go on. He offended countless people, and they didn’t forget, and since so many of them swallowed their hurt, after he was gone it was usually the first thing out of their mouth if his name came up, as it invariably did. How he once told a colleague, “I lost more money in the market today than you make in a year.” How he bumped an elderly survivor couple from the official American bus to Auschwitz on the fiftieth anniversary of its liberation, added himself to the delegation alongside Elie Wiesel and left the weeping couple to beg Polish guards to let them into the camp so they wouldn’t miss the ceremony. How he lobbied for the Nobel Peace Prize—that kind of thing, all the time, as if he needed to discharge a surplus of self every few hours to maintain his equilibrium.

And the price he paid was very high. He destroyed his first marriage and his closest friendship. His defects of character cost him his dream job as secretary of state, the position for which his strengths of character eminently qualified him. You can’t untangle these things. I used to think that if Holbrooke could just be fixed—a dose of self-restraint, a flash of inward light—he could have done anything. But that’s an illusion. We are wholly ourselves. If you cut out the destructive element, you would kill the thing that made him almost great.

As a member of the class of lesser beings who aspire to a good life but not a great one—who find the very notion both daunting and distasteful—I can barely fathom the agony of that “almost.” Think about it: the nonstop schedule, the calculation of every dinner table, the brain that burned all day and night—and the knowledge, buried so deep he might have only sensed it as a physical ache, that he had come up short of his own impossible exaltation. I admired him for that readiness to suffer. His life was full of pleasures, but I never envied it.

We had few things in common, but one that comes to mind is a love of Conrad’s novels. In one of his letters, Conrad wrote that “these two

contradictory instincts”—egotism and idealism—“cannot serve us unless in the incomprehensible alliance of their irreconcilable antagonism. Each alone would be fatal to our ambition.” I think this means that they need each other to do any good. Idealism without egotism is feckless; egotism without idealism is destructive. It was never truer of anyone than Holbrooke. Sometimes the two instincts got out of whack. Certain people—his younger brother, Andrew, for example—couldn’t see his idealism for the mountain of his egotism. Andrew thought his brother was missing the section of his brain that would have made him care about anyone other than himself. But Holbrooke’s friends, the handful he kept for life, absorbed the pokes and laughed off the gargantuan faults without illusion. They wanted to protect him, because his appetites and insecurities were so naked. Now and then they had to hurt him, tear him to pieces. Then they could go on loving him. They knew that, of them all, he had the most promise, and they wanted to see him fulfill it—as a way to affirm them, their generation, their idea of public service, and their country. If Holbrooke could do it, then America might still be an adventure, with great things ahead. He always wanted more, and they wanted more for him, and when he died they mourned not just their friend but the lost promise.

He loved America. Not in a chest-beating way—he didn’t wear a flag pin on his lapel—but without having to try, because he was the child of parents who had given everything to become American, and he grew up after the war amid the overwhelming evidence that this was a great and generous country. In the late summer of 2010, he went with his wife—his third wife and widow, Kati—to see a revival of *South Pacific* at Lincoln Center. Lifelong friends can’t remember Holbrooke ever shedding tears, but he wept at *South Pacific*, and other men his age were weeping, too, and he tried to understand why. That was around the time he began speaking his thoughts into a tape recorder for some future use—maybe his memoirs—and

here’s what he said: “For me it was the combination of the beauty of the show and its music, and the capturing in that show of so many moments in American history, the show itself opening in New York at the height of New York’s greatness, 1949, the theme—Americans at war in a distant land or islands in the South Pacific—the sense of loss of American optimism and our feeling that we could do anything. The contrast with today—” At this point his voice breaks, and I find it hard to keep listening. He had only a few months to live. “—it was very powerful, and I kept thinking of where we were today, our nation, our lack of confidence in our own ability to lead compared to where we were in 1949 when it came out, evoking an era only five years or seven years earlier, when we had gone to the most distant corners of the globe and saved civilization.”

I’m trying to think what to tell you, now that you have me talking. There’s too much to say and it all comes crowding in at once. His ambition, his loyalty, his cruelty, his fragility, his betrayals, his wounds, his wives, his girlfriends, his sons, his lunches. By dying he stood up a hundred people, including me. He could not be alone.

If you’re still interested, I can tell you what I know, from the beginning. I wasn’t one of his close friends, but over the years I made a study of him. You ask why? Not because he was extraordinary, though he was, and might have rivaled the record of his heroes if he and America had been in their prime together. Not because he was fascinating, though he was, and right this minute somewhere in the world fourteen people are talking about him. Now and then I might let him speak for himself—that was something he knew how to do. But I won’t relate this story for his sake. No: we want to see and feel what happened to America during Holbrooke’s life, and we can see and feel more clearly by following someone who was almost great, because his quest leads us deeper down the alleyways of power than the usual famous subjects (whom he knew, all of them), and his boisterous struggling

lays open more human truths than the composed annals of the great. This was what Les Gelb must have meant when he said, just after his friend’s death, “Far better to write a novel about Richard C. Holbrooke than a biography, let alone an obituary.”

What’s called the American century was really just a little more than half a century, and that was the span of Holbrooke’s life. It began with the Second World War and the creative burst that followed—the United Nations, the Atlantic alliance, containment, the free world—and it went through dizzying lows and highs, until it expired the day before yesterday. The thing that brings on doom to great powers, and great men—is it simple hubris, or decadence and squander, a kind of inattention, loss of faith, or just the passage of years?—at some point that thing set in, and so we are talking about an age gone by. It wasn’t a golden age, there was plenty of folly and wrong, but I already miss it. The best about us was inseparable from the worst. Our feeling that we could do anything gave us the Marshall Plan and Vietnam, the peace at Dayton and the endless Afghan war. Our confidence and energy, our reach and grasp, our excess and blindness—they were not so different from Holbrooke’s. He was our man. That’s the reason to tell you this story. That’s why I can’t get his voice out of my head. □

Prologue to *OUR MAN* by George Packer. Copyright © 2019, George Packer, used by permission of The Wylie Agency (UK) Limited.

ALUMNI BOOKS

Kate Brown

Manual for Survival: A Chernobyl Guide to the Future
W. W. Norton & Company
March 2019

P. Carl

Becoming a Man
Simon & Schuster
January 2020

Dennis Dickerson

The African Methodist Episcopal Church
Cambridge University Press
November 2019

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H.G. Adler: A Life in Many Worlds
Oxford University Press
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Dangerous Mystic: Meister Eckhart's Path to the God Within
Penguin Press
March 2018

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After the Berlin Wall: Memory and the Making of the New Germany, 1989 to the Present
Cambridge University Press
September 2019

Ellen Hinsey

The Illegal Age
Arc Publications
September 2018

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Concordance
Grenfell Press
January 2019

John Koethe

Walking Backwards: Poems 1966–2016
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
November 2018

Jonathan Lethem

The Feral Detective
Ecco, November 2018

Susie Linfield

The Lions' Den: Zionism and the Left from Hannah Arendt to Noam Chomsky
Yale University Press
March 2019

Thessia Machado

Toward the Unsound
Arts Club of Chicago, 2019

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Darkness by Design: The Hidden Power in Global Capital Markets
Princeton University Press
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My Red Heaven
Dzanc Books
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OUR MAN: Richard Holbrooke and the End of the American Century
Knopf, May 2019

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Farrar, Straus and Giroux
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University of Chicago Press
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Princeton University Press
February 2019

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"Wehvolles Erbe": Richard Wagner in Deutschland: Hitler, Knappertsbusch, Mann
S. Fischer Verlag
July 2017

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Self-Portrait in Black and White: Unlearning Race
W. W. Norton & Company
October 2019

Norton M. Wise

Aesthetics, Industry, and Science: Hermann von Helmholtz and the Berlin Physical Society
The University of Chicago Press, June 2018

Peter Wortsman

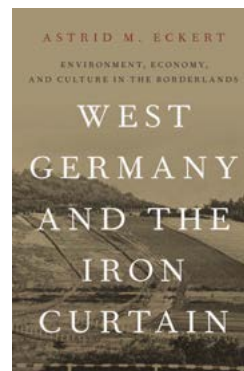
Stimme und Atem: Out of Breath, Out of Mind
Palm Art Press
October 2019

The Caring Heirs of Doctor

Samuel Bard
Columbia University Press
April 2019

John Wray

Godsend
Farrar, Straus & Giroux
October 2018

**Astrid M. Eckert**

West Germany and the Iron Curtain: Environment, Economy, and Culture in the Borderlands
Oxford University Press,
October 2019

In *West Germany and the Iron Curtain*, spring 2011 fellow Astrid M. Eckert takes a fresh look at the history of Cold War Germany and German reunification from the spatial perspective of the West German borderlands that emerged along the volatile inter-German border after 1945. These regions constituted the Federal Republic's most sensitive geographical space, where it engaged with socialist East Germany in very concrete ways. At the heart of Eckert's timely book, eleven years in the making, stands an environmental history of the Iron Curtain that explores transboundary pollution and landscape transformation across the caesura of 1989–90. Throughout, she demonstrates that these borderlands—which disappeared with reunification—did not simply mirror some larger developments in the Federal Republic's history; they actually helped to shape them.

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