Fall 2013

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It is 2001 in New York City, in the lull between the collapse of the dot-com boom and the terrible events of September 11th. Silicon Alley is a ghost town, Web 1.0 is having adolescent angst, Google has yet to IPO, Microsoft is still considered the Evil Empire. There may not be quite as much money around as there was at the height of the tech bubble, but there’s no shortage of swindlers looking to grab a piece of what’s left.

Maxine Tarnow is running a nice little fraud investigation business on the Upper West Side, chasing down different kinds of small-scale con artists. She used to be legally certified but her license got pulled a while back, which has actually turned out to be a blessing because now she can follow her own code of ethics—carry a Beretta, do business with sleazebags, hack into people’s bank accounts—without having too much guilt about any of it. Otherwise, just your average working mom—two boys in elementary school, an off-and-on situation with her sort of semi-ex-husband Horst, life as normal as it ever gets in the neighborhood—till Maxine starts looking into the finances of a computer-security firm and its billionaire geek CEO, whereupon things begin rapidly to jam onto the subway and head downtown. She soon finds herself mixed up with a drug runner in an art deco motorboat, a professional nose obsessed with Hitler’s aftershave, a neoliberal enforcer with footwear issues, plus elements of the Russian mob and various bloggers, hackers, code monkeys, and entrepreneurs, some of whom begin to show up mysteriously dead. Foul play, of course.

With occasional excursions into the Deep Web and out to Long Island, Thomas Pynchon, channeling his inner Jewish mother, brings us a historical romance of New York in the early days of the internet, not that distant in calendar time but galactically remote from where we’ve journeyed to since.

Will perpetrators be revealed, forget about brought to justice? Will Maxine have to take the handgun out of her purse? Will she and Horst get back together? Will Jerry Seinfeld make an unscheduled guest appearance? Will accounts secular and karmic be brought into balance?

Hey. Who wants to know?
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*Also available as an e-book*

Famed investigative journalist Eric Schlosser digs deep to uncover secrets about the management of America’s nuclear arsenal. A groundbreaking account of accidents, near misses, extraordinary heroism, and technological breakthroughs, Command and Control explores the dilemma that has existed since the dawn of the nuclear age: How do you deploy weapons of mass destruction without being destroyed by them? That question has never been resolved—and Schlosser reveals how the combination of human fallibility and technological complexity still poses a grave risk to mankind.

While the harms of global warming increasingly dominate the news, the equally dangerous yet more immediate threat of nuclear weapons has been largely forgotten.

Written with the vibrancy of a first-rate thriller, Command and Control interweaves the minute-by-minute story of an accident at a nuclear missile silo in rural Arkansas with a historical narrative that spans more than fifty years. It depicts the urgent effort by American scientists, policy makers, and military officers to ensure that nuclear weapons can’t be stolen, sabotaged, used without permission, or detonated inadvertently. Schlosser also looks at the Cold War from a new perspective, offering history from the ground up, telling the stories of bomber pilots, missile commanders, maintenance crews, and other ordinary servicemen who risked their lives to avert a nuclear holocaust. At the heart of the book lies the struggle, amid the rolling hills and small farms of Damascus, Arkansas, to prevent the explosion of a ballistic missile carrying the most powerful nuclear warhead ever built by the United States.

Drawing on recently declassified documents and interviews with people who designed and routinely handled nuclear weapons, Command and Control takes readers into a terrifying but fascinating world that, until now, has been largely hidden from view. Through the details of a single accident, Schlosser illustrates how an unlikely event can become unavoidable, how small risks can have terrible consequences, and how the most brilliant minds in the nation can only provide us with an illusion of control. Audacious, gripping, and unforgettable, Command and Control is a tour de force of investigative journalism, an eye-opening look at the dangers of America’s nuclear age.
It’s undeniable—technology is changing the way we think. But is it for the better? Amid a chorus of doomsayers, Clive Thompson delivers a resounding “yes.” The Internet age has produced a radical new style of human intelligence, worthy of both celebration and analysis. We learn more and retain it longer, write and think with global audiences, and even gain an ESP-like awareness of the world around us. Modern technology is making us smarter, better connected, and often deeper—both as individuals and as a society.

In *Smarter Than You Think* Thompson shows that every technological innovation—from the written word to the printing press to the telegraph—has provoked the very same anxieties that plague us today. We panic that life will never be the same, that our attentions are eroding, that culture is being trivialized. But as in the past, we adapt—learning to use the new and retaining what’s good of the old.

Thompson introduces us to a cast of extraordinary characters who augment their minds in inventive ways. There’s the seventy-six-year-old millionaire who digitally records his every waking moment—giving him instant recall of the events and ideas of his life, even going back decades. There’s a group of courageous Chinese students who mounted an online movement that shut down a $1.6 billion toxic copper plant. There are experts and there are amateurs, including a global set of gamers who took a puzzle that had baffled HIV scientists for a decade—and solved it collaboratively in only one month.

*Smarter Than You Think* isn’t just about pioneers. It’s about everyday users of technology and how our digital tools—from Google to Twitter to Facebook and smartphones—are giving us new ways to learn, talk, and share our ideas. Thompson harnesses the latest discoveries in social science to explore how digital technology taps into our long-standing habits of mind—pushing them in powerful new directions. Our thinking will continue to evolve as newer tools enter our lives. *Smarter Than You Think* embraces and extols this transformation, presenting an exciting vision of the present and the future.
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Clive Thompson is a contributing writer for The New York Times Magazine and Wired. He also writes for Fast Company and Mother Jones, and appears regularly on many NPR programs, CNN, Fox News, and NY1, among others.
Year Zero is a landmark reckoning with the great drama that ensued after war came to an end in 1945. One world had ended and a new, uncertain one was beginning. Regime change had come on a global scale: across Asia (including China, Korea, Indochina, and the Philippines, and of course Japan) and all of continental Europe. Out of the often vicious power struggles that ensued emerged the modern world as we know it.

In human terms, the scale of transformation is almost impossible to imagine. Great cities around the world lay in ruins, their populations decimated, displaced, starving. Harsh revenge was meted out on a wide scale, and the ground was laid for much horror to come. At the same time, in the wake of unspeakable loss, the euphoria of the liberated was extraordinary, and the revelry unprecedented. The postwar years gave rise to the European welfare state, the United Nations, decolonization, Japanese pacifism, and the European Union. Social, cultural, and political “reeducation” was imposed on vanquished by victors on a scale that also had no historical precedent. Much that was done was ill advised, but in hindsight, as Ian Buruma shows us, these efforts were in fact relatively enlightened, humane, and effective.

A work of enormous range and stirring human drama, conjuring both the Asian and European theaters with equal fluency, *Year Zero* is a book that Ian Buruma is perhaps uniquely positioned to write. It is surely his masterpiece.

A poignant grace note throughout this history is Buruma’s own father’s story. Seized by the Nazis during the occupation of Holland, he spent much of the war in Berlin as a laborer, and by war’s end was literally hiding in the rubble of a flattened city, having barely managed to survive starvation rations, Allied bombing, and Soviet shock troops when the end came. His journey home and attempted reentry into “normalcy” stand in many ways for his generation’s experience.
IAN BURUMA is the Luce Professor of Democracy, Human Rights, and Journalism at Bard College. His previous books include The China Lover, Murder in Amsterdam, Occidentalism, God’s Dust, Behind the Mask, The Wages of Guilt, Bad Elements, and Taming the Gods.

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Also available as an e-book
“This is New York! We’re like hummingbirds, man,” explains Shine, a small-time Harlem crack dealer breaking into the elite cocaine market. “We go flower to flower. Didn’t they teach you that in Chicago?” Sudhir Venkatesh’s last book arose from his groundbreaking work in Chicago, revealing the true cost of doing business for drug gangs in the city’s worst housing projects. After a decade learning the critical lesson of urban poverty—your neighborhood is your fate—Venkatesh arrived in New York expecting the same harsh certainty. But what Shine shows Venkatesh is something wholly unexpected: a city where neighborhoods mean nothing and networks mean everything, where the distinctions between race and class simply dissolve.

In *Floating City*, Venkatesh explores New York’s highs and lows—the trust-fund socialites with their cocktail parties and elite sex work, the recent immigrants with their illicit jobs and sordid compromises—and discovers a city of tremendous social transformation. Exposing the immigrant nannies working off the books for young professionals in high-priced condos, the black low-income drug dealers serving white hedge fund traders and hip artists, Venkatesh reveals a global city knit together by the invisible shifting threads of the underground economy. Searching for a grand theory to explain the intersecting world of both rich and poor, Venkatesh wonders: Isn’t it possible that staring up at the skyscrapers made you blind to the true picture? Of course, Shine counsels, you’re not in Chicago anymore. Here in New York, “You need to float.”

*Floating City: A Rogue Sociologist Lost and Found in New York’s Underground Economy* follows Venkatesh’s journeys through the “vast invisible continent” of New York’s underground economy, an unseen world linking and strengthening the enormous diversity of a new global city in the throes of becoming. *Floating City* reveals the real winners and losers of the new economy, the thriving elites who pull the levers of power and the desperate laborers who always risk falling off the bottom. Propelled by Venkatesh’s interviews with hundreds of prostitutes, madams, drug dealers, and immigrants, *Floating City* is the ultimate journey into the true workings of America’s most diverse and influential city.
SUDHIR VENKATESH is the William B. Ransford Professor of Sociology, and a member of the Committee on Global Thought, at Columbia University. His most recent book is Gang Leader for a Day, a New York Times bestseller that received a Best Book Award from The Economist. Venkatesh’s writing has appeared in The New York Times, The Chicago Tribune, and The Washington Post. He lives in New York City.
A novel is a story transmitted from the novelist to the reader. It offers distraction, entertainment, and an opportunity to unwind or focus. But it can also be something more powerful—a way to learn about how to live. Read at the right moment in your life, a novel can—quite literally—change it.

The Novel Cure is a reminder of that power. To create this apothecary, the authors have trawled two thousand years of literature for novels that effectively promote happiness, health, and sanity, written by brilliant minds who knew what it meant to be human and wrote their life lessons into their fiction. Structured like a reference book, readers simply look up their ailment, be it agoraphobia, boredom, or a midlife crisis, and are given a novel to read as the antidote. Bibliotherapy does not discriminate between pains of the body and pains of the head (or heart). Aware that you’ve been cowardly? Pick up To Kill a Mockingbird for an injection of courage. Experiencing a sudden, acute fear of death? Read One Hundred Years of Solitude for some perspective on the larger cycle of life. Nervous about throwing a dinner party? Ali Smith’s There but for The will convince you that yours could never go that wrong. Whatever your condition, the prescription is simple: a novel (or two), to be read at regular intervals and in nice long chunks until you finish. Some treatments will lead to a complete cure. Others will offer solace, showing that you’re not the first to experience these emotions. The Novel Cure is also peppered with useful lists and sidebars recommending the best novels to read when you’re stuck in traffic or can’t fall asleep, the most important novels to read during every decade of life, and many more.

Brilliant in concept and deeply satisfying in execution, The Novel Cure belongs on everyone’s bookshelf and in every medicine cabinet. It will make even the most well-read fiction aficionado pick up a novel he’s never heard of, and see familiar ones with new eyes. Mostly, it will reaffirm literature’s ability to distract and transport, to resonate and reassure, to change the way we see the world and our place in it.
SUSAN ELDERKIN and ELLA BERTHOUD started giving novels to each other when they met as English students at Cambridge twenty-five years ago. A novelist, travel writer, writing teacher, and fiction reviewer for the Financial Times, Elderkin now lives in Connecticut with her husband and son. Berthoud lives in Sussex with her husband and three girls and paints in a hut in her back garden. They have run a bibliotherapy service out of The School of Life in London since 2008, prescribing books to clients all around the world.

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Also available as an e-book
Beloved by her readers, special to the poet’s own heart, Mary Oliver’s dog poems offer a special window into her world. *Dog Songs* collects some of the most cherished poems together with new works, offering a portrait of Oliver’s relationship to the companions that have accompanied her daily walks, warmed her home, and inspired her work. To be illustrated with images of the dogs themselves, the subjects will come to colorful life here.

These are poems of love and laughter, heartbreak and grief. In these pages we visit with old friends, including Oliver’s well-loved Percy, and meet still others. Throughout, the many dogs of Oliver’s life emerge as fellow travelers, but also as guides, spirits capable of opening our eyes to the lessons of the moment and the joys of nature and connection.

*Dog Songs* is a testament to the power and depth of the human-animal exchange, from an observer of extraordinary vision.

**PRAISE FOR MARY OLIVER**

“Oliver’s poems are thoroughly convincing—as genuine, moving, and implausible as the first caressing breeze of spring.”
— *The New York Times Book Review*

“[Mary Oliver] teaches us the profound act of paying attention—a living wonder that makes it possible to appreciate all the others.”
— Renée Thot, *Boston Globe*
Born in a small town in Ohio, Mary Oliver published her first book of poetry in 1963 at the age of twenty-eight. Over the course of her long career, she has received numerous awards. Her fourth book, American Primitive, won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1984. She has led workshops and held residencies at various colleges and universities, including Bennington College, where she held the Catharine Osgood Foster Chair for Distinguished Teaching. Oliver currently lives in Provincetown, Massachusetts.
Our brains were designed for tribal life, for getting along with a select group of others (Us), and for fighting off everyone else (Them). But modern life has thrust the world’s tribes into a shared space, creating conflicts of interest and clashes of values, along with unprecedented opportunities. As the world shrinks, the moral lines that divide us become more salient and more puzzling. We fight over everything from tax codes to gay marriage to global warming, and we wonder where, if at all, we can find our common ground.

A grand synthesis of neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy, *Moral Tribes* reveals the underlying causes of modern conflict and lights the way forward. Here the human brain is revealed to be like a dual-mode camera, with point-and-shoot automatic settings (“portrait,” “landscape”) as well as a manual mode. Our point-and-shoot settings are our *emotions*—efficient, automated programs honed by evolution, culture, and personal experience. The human brain’s manual mode is its capacity for deliberate *reasoning*, which makes our thinking flexible. Our point-and-shoot emotions make us social animals, turning Me into Us. But they also make us tribal animals, turning Us against Them. Our tribal emotions make us fight, sometimes with bombs, sometimes with words, and often with life-and-death stakes. Drawing inspiration from moral philosophy and cutting-edge science, *Moral Tribes* shows us when to trust our instincts, when to reason, and how the right kind of reasoning can move us forward.

*Moral Tribes* is the work of Professor Joshua Greene, the director of Harvard University’s Moral Cognition Lab, a pioneering scientist, a philosopher, and an acclaimed teacher. The great challenge of *Moral Tribes* is this: How can we get along with Them when what they want feels so wrong? Ultimately, Greene offers a surprisingly simple set of maxims for navigating the modern moral terrain, a practical road map for solving problems and living better lives.

A major achievement from a rising star in a new scientific field, *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them* will refashion your deepest beliefs about how moral thinking works and how it can work better.
Joshua Greene is the John and Ruth Hazel Associate Professor of the Social Sciences and the director of the Moral Cognition Lab in Harvard University’s Department of Psychology. His research has been supported by the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the MacArthur Foundation. Greene has appeared on Charlie Rose and Scientific American Frontiers, and his work has been featured in The New York Times, Discover magazine, WNYC’s Radiolab, and NPR’s Morning Edition.

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TIES THAT BIND

STORIES OF LOVE AND GRATITUDE FROM THE FIRST TEN YEARS OF STORYCORPS

DAVE ISAY

A celebration of the relationships that bring us strength, purpose, and joy

Ties That Bind honors the people who nourish and strengthen us. StoryCorps founder Dave Isay draws from ten years of the revolutionary oral history project’s rich archives, collecting conversations that celebrate the power of the human bond and capture the moment at which individuals become family. Between blood relations, friends, coworkers, and neighbors, in the most trying circumstances and in the unlikeliest of places, enduring connections are formed and lives are forever changed.

The stories shared in Ties That Bind reveal our need to reach out, to support, and to share life’s burdens and joys. We meet two brothers, separately cast out by their parents, who reconnect and rebuild a new family around each other. We encounter unexpected joy: A gay woman reveals to her beloved granddaughter that she grew up believing that family was a happiness she would never be able to experience. We witness life-changing friendship: An Iraq war veteran recalls his wartime bond with two local children and how his relationship with his wife helped him overcome the trauma of losing them.

Against unspeakable odds, at their most desperate moments, the individuals we meet in Ties That Bind find their way to one another, discovering hope and healing. Commemorating ten years of StoryCorps, the conversations collected in Ties That Bind are testament to the transformational power of listening.
DAVE ISAY is the founder of StoryCorps and the recipient of numerous broadcasting honors, including six Peabody awards and a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship. He is the author/editor of numerous books that grew out of his public radio documentary work, including three StoryCorps books: Listening Is an Act of Love (2007), Mom: A Celebration of Mothers from StoryCorps (2010), and All There Is: Love Stories from StoryCorps (2012)—all New York Times bestsellers.
Like all of us, though few so visibly, Alan Greenspan was forced by the financial crisis of 2008 to question some fundamental assumptions about risk management and economic forecasting. No one with any meaningful role in economic decision making in the world saw beforehand the storm for what it was. How had our models so utterly failed us?

To answer this question, Alan Greenspan embarked on a rigorous and far-reaching multyear examination of how Homo economicus predicts the economic future, and how it can predict it better. Economic risk is a fact of life in every realm, from home to business to government at all levels. Whether we’re conscious of it or not, we make wagers on the future virtually every day, one way or another. Very often, however, we’re steering by out-of-date maps, when we’re not driven by factors entirely beyond our conscious control.

The Map and the Territory is nothing less than an effort to update our forecasting conceptual grid using twenty-first-century technologies. It integrates the history of economic prediction, the new work of behavioral economists, and the fruits of the author’s own remarkable career to offer a thrillingly lucid and empirically based grounding in what we can know about economic forecasting and what we can’t. The book explores how culture is and isn’t destiny and probes what we can predict about the world’s biggest looming challenges, from debt and the reform of the welfare state to our competition with China to natural disasters in an age of global warming.

No map is the territory, but Greenspan’s approach, grounded in his trademark rigor, wisdom, and unprecedented context, ensures that this particular map will assist in safe journeys down many different roads, traveled by individuals, businesses, and the state.
ALAN GREENSPAN was born in 1926 and reared in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City. After studying the clarinet at Juilliard and working as a professional musician, he earned his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in economics from New York University. In 1954, he cofounded the economic consulting firm Townsend-Greenspan & Co. From 1974 to 1977, he served as chair of the Council of Economic Advisors under President Gerald Ford. In 1987, President Ronald Reagan appointed him chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, a position he held until his retirement in 2006. He is the author of the number one New York Times bestseller The Age of Turbulence.
With 50 Foods, noted authority Edward Behr has created the definitive guide to the foods every food lover must know. A culinary Baedeker, 50 Foods will delight and inform the connoisseur as well as the novice.

Like Behr’s celebrated magazine, The Art of Eating, 50 Foods presents simple, practical information about buying, using, preparing, and enjoying. Behr focuses on aroma, appearance, flavor, and texture to determine what “the best” means for each food. He tells you how to select top quality—signs of freshness and ripeness, best season, top varieties, proper aging. If the way to prepare, serve, or eat something is little known, then he explains it (how to open an oyster, why the best way to cook green beans is boiling, how to clean a whole salted anchovy, when to eat and when to discard the rind of a cheese). Behr also names the most complementary foods and flavors for each of these fifty marvelous foods and the wines that go with them.

The fifty selections provide a broad sensory range for the modern gourmet. Most of the foods are raw materials, but some have been fermented or otherwise transformed—into bread, ham, cheese. Six of the fifty are cheeses. As Behr explains, cheese is probably the best food, as wine is the best drink.

Behr argues that food tastes more delicious when it is closer to nature. Skilled low technology is almost always superior to high technology. But with scientific insight, the old methods can be refined to achieve more consistent high quality.

We can’t always have the best, but with the information in this book we can eat better every day. Knowing good food is part of a complete understanding of the world—part of a full enjoyment of nature, a full experience of the senses, a full life.

For the connoisseur at any level, 50 Foods is a beautifully written guide to deliciousness, with color illustrations by Mikel Jaso throughout.
EDWARD BEHR is the founder of the acclaimed food magazine *The Art of Eating*. His writing has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Forbes*, and the *Financial Times*. He lives in Vermont.
The Smithsonian Institution is America’s largest, most important, and most beloved repository for the objects that define our common heritage. Now Under Secretary for Art, History, and Culture Richard Kurin, aided by a team of top Smithsonian curators and scholars, has assembled a literary exhibition of 101 objects from across the Smithsonian’s museums that together offer a marvelous new perspective on the history of the United States.

Ranging from the earliest years of the pre-Columbian continent to the digital age, and from the American Revolution to Vietnam, each entry pairs the fascinating history surrounding each object with the story of its creation or discovery and the place it has come to occupy in our national memory. Kurin sheds remarkable new light on objects we think we know well, from Lincoln’s hat to Dorothy’s ruby slippers and Julia Child’s kitchen, including the often astonishing tales of how each made its way into the collections of the Smithsonian. Other objects will be eye-opening new discoveries for many, but no less evocative of the most poignant and important moments of the American experience. Some objects, such as Harriet Tubman’s hymnal, Sitting Bull’s ledger, Cesar Chavez’s union jacket, and the Enola Gay bomber, tell difficult stories from the nation’s history, and inspire controversies when exhibited at the Smithsonian. Others, from George Washington’s sword to the space shuttle Discovery, celebrate the richness and vitality of the American spirit. In Kurin’s hands, each object comes to vivid life, providing a tactile connection to American history.

Beautifully designed and illustrated with color photographs throughout, The Smithsonian’s History of America in 101 Objects is a rich and fascinating journey through America’s collective memory, and a beautiful object in its own right.
Richard Kurin serves as the Smithsonian Institution’s Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture, with responsibility for most of its museums and many of its educational programs. He is an anthropologist and cultural historian, a former Fulbright fellow with a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He is the author of several books, including Hope Diamond: The Legendary History of a Cursed Gem, and his scholarship and museological work have been recognized by the International Council of Museums, UNESCO, and Harvard’s Peabody Museum. Awarded the Smithsonian Secretary’s Gold Medal for Exceptional Service, he represents the Smithsonian on the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the White House Historical Association, and numerous other boards.
John Heilemann and Mark Halperin set the national conversation on fire with their bestselling account of the 2008 presidential election, *Game Change*. In *Double Down*, they apply their unparalleled access and storytelling savvy to the 2012 election, rendering an equally compelling narrative about the circuslike Republican nomination fight, the rise and fall of Mitt Romney, and the trials, tribulations, and Election Day triumph of Barack Obama.

Drawing on hundreds of interviews with the people who lived the story, Heilemann and Halperin deliver another reportorial tour de force that reads like a fast-paced novel. Character driven and dialogue rich, replete with extravagantly detailed scenes, *Double Down* offers a panoramic account of a campaign at once intensely hard fought and lastingly consequential. For Obama, the victory he achieved meant even more to him than the one he had pulled off four years earlier. In 2008, he believed, voters had bet on a hope; in 2012, they passed positive judgment on what he’d actually done, allowing him to avert a loss that would have rendered his presidency a failed, one-term accident.

For the Republicans, on the other hand, 2012 not only offered a crushing verdict but an existential challenge: to rethink and reconstitute the party or face irrelevance—or even extinction. *Double Down* is the occasionally shocking, often hilarious, ultimately definitive account of an election of singular importance.
MARK HALPERIN is an editor at large and a senior political analyst for Time magazine, and a senior political analyst for MSNBC. Halperin, who has covered seven presidential elections, received his B.A. from Harvard University and resides in New York City with Karen Avrich.

JOHN HEILEMANN is the national affairs editor for New York magazine and a political analyst for MSNBC. An award-winning journalist and author of Pride Before the Fall, he is a former staff writer for The New Yorker, Wired, and The Economist. He lives in Brooklyn.
Excerpts
It’s the first day of spring 2001, and Maxine Tarnow, though some still have her in their system as Loeffler, is walking her boys to school. Maybe they’re past the age where they need an escort, maybe Maxine doesn’t want to let go just yet. It’s only a couple blocks, it’s on her way to work, she enjoys it, so?

This morning, all up and down the streets, what looks like every Callery Pear tree on the Upper West Side has popped overnight into identical white clouds of pear blossoms. As Maxine watches, sunlight finds its way past rooftop and water tanks to the end of the block and into one particular tree, which all at once is filled with light.

“Mom?” Ziggy in the usual hurry. “Yo.”

“Guys, check it out, that tree?”

Otis takes a minute to look. “Awesome, Mom.”

“Doesn’t suck,” Zig agrees. The boys keep going, Maxine enjoys the tree half a minute more before catching up. At the corner by long-implanted reflex she drifts into a pick so as to stay between them and any driver whose idea of sport is to come around the corner and run you over.

Sunlight reflected from apartment windows has begun to show up in blurry patterns on the fronts of the buildings across the street. Two-part buses, new on the routes, creep the crosstown blocks like giant insects. Steel shutters are being rolled up, early trucks are double-parking, guys are out with hoses cleaning off their piece of sidewalk. Unhoused people sleep in doorways, scavengers with huge plastic sacks full of empty beer and soda cans head for the markets to cash them in, work crews wait in front of buildings for the super to show up. Runners are bouncing up and down at the curb waiting for the lights to change. Cops are in coffee shops dealing with bagel deficiencies. Kids, parents, and nannies wheeled and afoot are heading in all different directions for schools in the neighborhood. Half the kids seem to be on new Razor scooters, so to the list of things to keep alert for, add ambush by rolling aluminum.
On September 18, 1980, Senior Airman David Powell and Airman Jeffrey Plumb walked into the silo at Launch Complex 374-7, a few miles north of Damascus, Arkansas. They were planning to do a routine maintenance procedure on a Titan II missile, the largest intercontinental ballistic missile ever built by the United States: 10 feet in diameter and 103 feet tall, roughly the height of a 9-story building. The nose cone on top of the Titan II was deep black, and inside it sat a W-53 thermonuclear warhead, the most powerful weapon ever carried by an American missile. The warhead had a yield of 9 megatons—about three times the explosive force of all the bombs dropped during the Second World War, including both atomic bombs.

Powell and Plumb were missile repairmen. They’d been called to the site that day because a red warning light had signaled that pressure was low in the Stage 2 oxidizer tank. If Powell and Plumb didn’t find any tank leaks, they’d simply unscrew the cap on the oxidizer tank and add some more nitrogen gas. It was a simple, mundane task, like putting air in your tires before a long drive.

The airmen entered the launch duct at level 2. Far above their heads was a concrete silo door. Far below the men the missile stood on a thrust mount, a steel ring that was attached to the walls by large springs so that the Titan II could ride out a nuclear attack, bounce instead of break, and then take off.

Every task had to be performed according to a standardized checklist, which the team chief usually read aloud over the radio communications network. There was one way to do everything—and only one way. Technical order 21M-LGM25C-2-12, Figure 2-18, told Powell and Plumb exactly what to do, as they stood on the platform near the missile.

“Step four,” the team chief said over the radio. “Remove airborne disconnect pressure cap.”

“Roger,” Plumb replied.

“CAUTION. When complying with step four do not exceed one hundred sixty foot-pounds of torque. Over torquing may result in damage to the missile skin.”

“Roger.” As Powell used a socket wrench to unscrew the pressure cap, the socket fell off. It struck the platform and bounced. Powell grabbed for it but missed.

Plumb watched the nine-pound socket slip through the narrow gap between the platform and the missile, fall about seventy feet, hit the thrust mount, and then ricochet off the Titan II. It seemed to happen in slow motion. A moment later, fuel started spraying from the missile like water from a garden hose.

“Oh man,” Plumb thought. “This is not good.”
The printed word helped make our thought linear and abstract and vastly increased our artificial memory. Newspapers shrank the world; then the telegraph shrank it even further, producing a practically teleportational shift in the world of information. With every innovation, cultural prophets bickered over whether we were facing a technological apocalypse or utopia. Depending on which Victorian-age pundit you asked, the telegraph was either going to usher in a connected era of world peace or drown us in idiotic trivia. Neither was quite right, of course, yet neither was quite wrong. The one thing that both apocalyptics and utopians understand is that every new technology invisibly pushes us toward new forms of behavior while nudging us away from older, familiar ones. Harold Innis—the lesser known but arguably more interesting intellectual midwife of Marshall McLuhan—called it the “bias” of a new tool.

What exactly are the biases of today’s digital tools? There are many, but I’d argue three large ones dominate. First, they’re biased toward ridiculously huge feats of memory; smartphones, hard drives, cameras and sensors routinely record more information than any tool did before, and keep it easily accessible. Second, they’re biased toward making it easier to find connections—between ideas, pictures, people, bits of news—that were previously invisible to us. And the third one is they encourage a superfluity of communication and publishing. This last feature has a lot of surprising effects that are often ill understood. Any economist can tell you that when you suddenly increase the availability of a resource, people not only do more things with it but they do increasingly odd and unpredictable things. As electricity became cheap and ubiquitous in the West, its role expanded from things you’d expect—like nighttime lighting—to the unexpected and seemingly trivial: Battery-driven toy trains, electric blenders. The superfluity of communication today has produced everything from a rise in self-organized projects like Wikipedia to curious new forms of expression: Television-show recaps, video-game walk-throughs, map-based storytelling.

In one sense, these three shifts—infinite memory, dot-connecting, explosive publishing—are screamingly obvious to anyone who’s ever used a computer. Yet they also somehow constantly surprise us by producing ever-new “tools for thought” (to use the writer Howard Rheingold’s lovely phrase) that upend our daily mental habits in ways we never expected.
Compared to the skinny Dutchmen or Frenchmen, or shabby, unwashed Germans, the spruce Canadians and tall Americans, well fed, well paid, sharp looking in the sexy uniforms of conquerors, must indeed have looked like gods. Not that relations between troops and local women were equal. The men had money, luxury goods, cigarettes, silk stockings, and more important, the food that people desperately needed to survive. And the many expressions of worship for the liberators suggest a potentially humiliating lack of balance. Yet to see the women who were so eager to fraternize as naïve hero worshippers, or powerless victims, would not be entirely accurate.

Benoîte Groult, who later became a popular novelist, wrote an account of her “American hunting” exploits. Groult spoke English and was one of the Frenchwomen who volunteered to fraternize through the American Red Cross. But she spent most of her evenings at clubs catering to Allied soldiers that welcomed French girls, but barred Frenchmen, clubs with names like Canadian Club, Independence, Rainbow Corner. Groult’s descriptions of American and Canadian soldiers are as adoring as those by people who thought they were gazing at saints. Except that they are amazingly down to earth, and the men are far from saintly.

She is well aware of the material benefits of having sex with an American. Lying in bed with Kurt, she remarks, is like sleeping with a whole continent: “And you can’t refuse a continent.” Afterward, they ate: “My appetite was sharpened by four years of occupation and twenty-three years of chastity, well almost. I devoured the eggs hatched two days ago in Washington. Spam canned in Chicago. Corn ripened four thousand miles from here. . . . . It is quite something, the war!”

Reading contemporary accounts, one might get the impression that the summer of 1945 was one long orgy indulged in by foreign servicemen and local women, out of greed, or lust, or loneliness. This impression might be confirmed by statistics: Five times as many women were hospitalized in Paris for venereal disease in 1945 than in 1939. High VD rates can be explained by the lack of medical supervision, or contraceptives, poor hygiene in poverty-stricken areas, or any number of other reasons. But the fact is that many women and men were simply looking for warmth, companionship, love, even marriage. Much as the early months of liberation offered the chance for wild abandon, people also longed for the return to normality. It should not be forgotten that the 277,000 legitimate Dutch births in 1946 were also the highest figure in the recorded history of the nation.
We reached a dark staircase in the back of the strip club; the security guard pushed me up one flight, then pressed me against the wall with his massive palm while his other hand rapped on a metal door. Inside sat three extras from a John Cassavetes movie—a young woman in lingerie and two middle-aged men with gaunt faces and greased black hair combed back over their heads. One of them had a calculator in his hand, the other played with a small rubber band. Both had unbuttoned shirts and silver chains in their chest hair. Both shot me bored looks as the half-naked girl continued with what she was saying.

“The best thing about me, I don’t flake out like some girls. I’m dependable.”

“I wouldn’t even know what that means, sweetheart,” said the man with the calculator.

“I’ll be here,” she continued. “I’ll show up when I say I’m gonna show up—and I’ll be ready to do my thing.”

Unimpressed, the man with the rubber band looked at the guard, then at me. “Who’s this guy?”

The guard tightened his grip on my arm. “He’s been snooping around.”

“I’m a sociologist,” I said. “I’m doing a study of sex work in New York, and how people make money in clubs.”

The man with the calculator laughed. The man with the rubber band shook his head. “What is it with you people?” He turned to his partner. “Must be, what, the fourth guy wants to study us? This year? Look, a little advice: None of these girls want your free condoms and nobody needs an AIDS test. Why don’t you go looking for people under bridges or somewhere who really need the fucking help?”

Clearly, he was a bit shaky on the concept of sociology. “I’m not a social worker,” I said.

“You don’t want to help?” said the man with the rubber band. “Why don’t you want to help?” said the woman in lingerie. All three pairs of eyes focused on me.

“I think it’s important just to know what people do for a living,” I said. “To really know. How much they make, how hard it is, why they do it, who they are, things like that.”

“How hard is it?” the woman in lingerie repeated. “It’s hard, baby! I’ll fill your ear with that.”

The man with the calculator turned his palms up. “Yo, sweetheart.”

She went silent, looking away.
DIFFERENT, BEING

*Middlesex* (Jeffrey Eugenides)
*A Confederacy of Dunces* (John Kennedy Toole)

It may be that some lucky, delusional solipsist somewhere on the planet has at all times been convinced that she (or he) feels exactly like everybody else on the inside: completely, blessedly unremarkable and typical in every way. But as a rule, most people fall into one of two groups. They’re either normal and don’t know it, or abnormal and don’t know it. This state of affairs is not permanent; it can turn on a dime. At one point or another everyone feels different. Different from what? is the real question.

There may be no book that more richly and inventively handles the question of difference than Jeffrey Eugenides’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Middlesex*. Calliope ("Cal") Stephanides belongs to a warm and noisy Greek American family in Michigan and discovers in adolescence that she is not a girl after all, but a boy: She has a genetic anomaly that reveals itself only when she hits puberty. Cal’s typical teenage life is completely overturned when the physiological changes start raining down on her—that is, him. And you thought you were weird at thirteen.

Cal’s beautifully nuanced reflections are helpful to anyone who’s ever felt eccentric and out of place. Eugenides’s generous expression of Cal’s character shows how full and uncontainable the human personality is, how much it exceeds commonly assumed boundaries. Eugenides reveals this to you through the panacea of his literary imagination, setting you free to celebrate whatever difference you may believe yourself (at the moment) to possess.

A more objective kind of difference also deserves consideration: the sheerly external difference known as the grotesque, which includes extreme beauty, extreme hideousness, or extreme behavior generally. One of the more memorable fictional examples of this tendency is embodied in the oozing, corpulent form of Ignatius J. Reilly, the obese, unclean, arrogant, and effulgent hero of John Kennedy Toole’s picaresque New Orleans novel *A Confederacy of Dunces*. The title of the book comes from Jonathan Swift’s piercing remark, “When a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this sign, that the dunces are all in confederacy against him.” In his own opinion (and doubtless in Toole’s) the revolting, cocky, garrulous, and unclubbable Ignatius J. Reilly is such a genius. If you yearn to stand apart and excel in this manner, make him your blueprint.
BENJAMIN, WHO COMES FROM
WHO KNOWS WHERE

What shall I do?
When I pick up the broom
he leaves the room.
When I fuss with kindling he
runs for the yard.
Then he’s back, and we
hug for a long time.
In his low-to-the-ground chest
I can hear his heart slowing down.
Then I rub his shoulders and
kiss his feet
and fondle his long hound ears.
Benny, I say,
don’t worry. I also know the way
the old life haunts the new.
Psychologist Frank Keil and colleagues have documented what he calls “the illusion of explanatory depth.” In short, people think they understand how things work even when they don’t. For example, people typically think they understand how a zipper or a flush toilet works, but when they actually try to explain how these things work they fail miserably. But—and this is key—when people try to explain how these things work and fail, they recognize that they’ve failed, and they revise their estimates of how much they understand.

In a brilliant set of experiments, Philip Fernbach, Todd Rogers, Craig Fox, and Steven Sloman applied this idea to politics. They asked Americans to consider six controversial policy proposals, such as a single-payer health care system and the cap-and-trade system for reducing carbon emissions. They asked people to offer their opinions about these policies and to indicate how well they understand them. They then asked people to explain in detail how these policies are supposed to work. Finally, they asked people to once again offer their opinions and rate their understanding. They found that people, after being forced to explain the mechanics of these policies, downgraded their estimates of their own understanding and became more moderate in their opinions. The experimenters ran a control version of this experiment in which people, instead of explaining how the policies are supposed to work, offered reasons for their opinions. For most people, offering reasons left their strong opinions intact.

What these studies elegantly demonstrate is that the right kind of rational, “manual mode” thinking can bring us closer together. Simply forcing people to justify their opinions with explicit reasons does very little to make people more reasonable, and may even do the opposite. But forcing people to confront their ignorance of essential facts does make people more moderate. As these researchers note, their findings suggest an alternative approach to public debate: Instead of simply asking politicians and pundits why they favor the policies they favor, first ask them to explain how their favored (and disfavored) policies are supposed to work. And what goes for Meet the Press goes for Meet the Relatives. When your opinionated, turkey-stuffed uncle insists that national health insurance is a historic step forward/the end of life as we know it, you may yet shift his opinion in your direction without overtly challenging him: “That’s very interesting, Jim. So how exactly does national health insurance work?”
Dave Shea, 55, talks to his best friend, Alice Doyle, 59

Dave Shea: I told my father that I was coming home to help him after my mother died. I was going to stay only a few months, but then I met people in Butte and fell in love with the place. So I decided to stay.

One day he said to me, “Would you mind helping me with the graves today?” We went to the garage, he had shovels and rakes and clippers and a trunk full of bouquets in coffee cans. I said, “What are we doing?” He went, “We’re doing the graves. Just be quiet, and let’s go.”

So we got in the car, and we drove to the cemetery. En route, he told me how when he was a kid he lived with his mother, who was a miner’s widow, his two maiden aunts, and his two sisters. And they would get on the streetcar on top of Montana, take it to the end of the line, and then, all dressed in black and carrying their rosary beads, they’d walk to the cemetery and spend the day doing the graves, saying a rosary at each grave. And then at sundown they would get on the last car that went up the hill and go home.

And I just thought, Wow. I’ve known you all my life. I’ve never heard this story. We did my grandmother’s grave and my mother’s. And then we got back in the car and started driving around the cemetery, looking for these other graves. I asked, “Who are these people?” My dad said, “These are the people who helped me through my life. They don’t have any relatives, and they don’t have any survivors, and every year I do their graves.”

We stopped at a grave, and it said MR. AND MRS. TORPI. My dad said, “We were poor, and we didn’t have anything. And when I needed to learn how to drive a car, Mr. Torpi taught me. And when I had to have a car to go on a date or something, Mr. Torpi would loan me his Buick.”

My dad never spoke about his past, and we never talked about where he came from, but that day I heard my dad’s whole life through the process of paying tribute to the people who helped him out.

Many months later I was looking out over the cemetery, where there’s maybe forty acres of plastic flowers, and a guy said, “My God, isn’t that tacky?” I just looked at him, and I might have agreed with him in another life, but all of a sudden I realized, Well, no, it’s not tacky. It’s beautiful.
The Need for Containment

Unless the upward momentum of entitlement spending is contained and turned around, the erosion of gross domestic savings will almost surely continue to suppress capital spending, productivity, and growth in standards of living, as it has done incrementally for nearly a half century. Net domestic savings is now approaching zero and gross domestic savings is headed in that direction. Hence, unless we increase our current rate of borrowing from abroad, additions to our capital stock will fall further.

We have pretty much exhausted the low-hanging fruit that helped fund the rise in benefits as a share of GDP. The almost certain further rise in benefits will presumably be drawn from a further reduction of discretionary spending as our Afghanistan military (and financial) commitments wind down. That projection will leave defense spending in 2019 as a share of GDP, at its lowest point since 1940, and nondefense discretionary spending (as a share of GDP) at the lowest levels in more than a half century. Social benefit funding from additional reductions in “discretionary” spending, both defense and nondefense, will presumably become ever more difficult. Moreover, we are left with little buffer to fund unanticipated new military imperatives or major hurricane-related relief programs, for example, short of printing money.

Our Global Reach

We are the world’s reserve currency, which grants us special access to the world’s savings. That has given the United States an extraordinary degree of flexibility to act on the world stage. But our heavy borrowing from abroad since 1992 has brought our international investment position from a net credit in 1986 to a net debt of $4 trillion in 2011. We can continue to pawn or sell the nation’s capital assets to fund growing social benefit consumption, at least for a while. But as Britain’s post–World War II sterling crises demonstrated, there is a limit to the accumulation of foreign borrowings. Should the United States ever reach that limit and sources of new foreign funding dry up, our status as the world’s leading financial power will be profoundly shaken.

Short of major entitlement reform, it is difficult to find a benevolent outcome to this clash between social spending and savings in this country. The answer, whenever it comes, will surely be political. The economic malaise of the late 1970s was a period of financial distress that unexpectedly brought us Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.
Asparagus

Just-cut green asparagus—the joy of a vegetable garden in spring—with its slight touch of bitterness and astringency, tastes clean, fresh, green, sweet. On the warmest days when the soil is moist, the spears push upward with uncanny speed, rising half a foot or more in a day. Once cut, they immediately start to change. For maximum freshness, I sometimes put the water on to boil before going out with my knife.

How to prepare and serve asparagus: Although a raw spear tastes pleasant, asparagus gains character with cooking. If you haven’t done so in harvesting, break the stalks where the tender and tough portions meet—the point where they break easily—and discard the tough bases. Peel white asparagus and, for almost all purposes, peel the green. I use a vegetable peeler; French cooks often use a small knife, cutting so the diameter of each spear is the same top to bottom. For adding to scrambled eggs, an omelet, or frittata, don’t peel the green stalks but cut them into 1/8- to 1/4-inch diagonal slices, leaving the tips whole, and cook them gently in butter, stirring, until tender.

Complements: Most flattering is butter. (On the table, you can place melted butter, lemon wedges, and salt and pepper, for each person to make a pool of seasoned butter into which to dip the warm spears. It’s easy to add too much lemon, and if the asparagus and plates aren’t hot, the butter will congeal; if that’s a danger, use olive oil instead.) The most refined forms of butter for asparagus are sauce hollandaise (butter held by egg yolk in a lemon-flavored emulsion), sauce béarnaise (hollandaise with tarragon), and above all sauce maltaise—hollandaise with fresh blood-orange juice. Asparagus was born for sauce maltaise, which originally, in classical French cooking, had no other purpose.

Notes on Wine: It used to be said that asparagus doesn’t go with wine, and yet it goes well with a number of white wines. I’m fascinated by the possibilities. Served with butter, especially, or with sweet olive oil (not in vinaigrette), asparagus likes a clean, floral white wine with refreshing acidity as long as the wine is also just slightly sweeter than the vegetable, or in proportion to the difference the wine will taste tart and its good flavors will disappear. In particular, the flavors of young Condrieu—smooth peach, a suggestion of vanilla, and something like the caramel of browned butter—merge seamlessly with those of buttered green asparagus in a union unlike almost any other in food and wine.
Though he was six feet four inches tall and towered over most of his contemporaries, President Abraham Lincoln chose to stand out even more by wearing stovepipe hats. Lincoln was cognizant of how he appeared to the public and to military and political leaders, having grown a beard just after his first election perhaps to project a more mature bearing in the role of commander in chief.

Lincoln acquired this top hat from J. Y. Davis, a Washington hat maker. It is made of silk fibers over a paper base and fabric lining, decorated with a silk ribbon. After its purchase, Lincoln added a grosgrain silk ribbon mourning band in memory of his deceased son, Willie.

Stylish silk hats were popular in the 1860s. Silk had been replacing beaver fur as the preferred hat material in America for several decades. Queen Victoria’s husband, Prince Albert, wore a top hat, and it became a symbol of upper-class respectability. In America, silk hats signaled a more urbane presence than the more back woodsmanlike fur cap. While frontier values of honesty and hard work might have helped get Lincoln elected, he would need to project sophistication and stature to meet the nation’s challenges during the Civil War.

Typical of clothing in Lincoln’s time, the hat is not marked for size. Most clothing in preindustrial America was custom made, either at home or by a tailor or dressmaker. Army uniforms were one exception, and the huge numbers of uniforms needed for the Civil War sparked the development of standard sizes for men.

Lincoln wore this hat for the last time on April 14, 1865, when he took a carriage ride from the White House to nearby Ford’s Theatre to attend a performance of My American Cousin. General Robert E. Lee had surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House just days before. Lincoln and his wife occupied the presidential box with another couple. Lincoln sat in his chair, watching the play, his hat on the floor beside him, when John Wilkes Booth fired the bullet that would end the president’s life hours later.

After the assassination, the War Department preserved the hat and other materials left at Ford’s Theatre. In 1867, the hat came to the Smithsonian. Joseph Henry, the secretary of the institution and one of Lincoln’s most trusted scientific advisers, ordered the hat locked away in the basement of the castle—fearing it would become an object of inappropriate veneration. The public didn’t see the hat until 1893, when it was loaned for an exhibition.
On the morning of October 3, 2012, Barack Obama and his team boarded Air Force One in Las Vegas, Nevada, bound for Denver, Colorado, where that night the president would take part in the first presidential debate of the 2012 election. Around the country, Democrats were gloating over the glaring stumbles—notably the infamous 47 percent video—of Obama’s opponent, Mitt Romney. The gap in the polls was widening by the day; the GOP establishment was on the verge of giving up on Romney. But among Obama’s advisers, the mood was dark for the president’s performance behind closed doors in preparing for his initial onstage clash with Romney had ranged from barely passable to outright dreadful. On the plane, Team Obama brooded in fretful silence, with one of his closest adjutants thinking, “This could be a complete disaster.”

What exactly happened to Obama in Denver, and why, is arguably the most puzzled-over mystery of the 2012 campaign, but it is far from the only one. What was the real story behind the revelation of Romney’s 47 percent comments, and why did he do almost nothing to mitigate the damage they caused? How did the relationship between Obama and Bill Clinton, long tinged by resentment and mutual suspicion, morph into a potent political partnership? What led New Jersey governor Chris Christie, in the aftermath of a devastating natural disaster, to sing Obama’s praises—and what did it say about his true feelings for Romney, whom he had campaigned for all year long? Why did New York mayor Mike Bloomberg privately detest Obama so much and yet wind up endorsing him in the election’s storm-tossed final days? What role did conservative mastermind Karl Rove play behind the scenes in the struggle for the Republican nomination? And how on earth did Clint Eastwood end up performing Dada dinner theater on the closing night of the Republican convention?

John Heilemann and Mark Halperin answer these questions and more, laying bare the secret history of the 2012 campaign.
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<tr>
<td>B00</td>
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