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BY JENN STANLEY | OCTOBER 9, 2015

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The Tech Talent Pipeline, which Mayor Bill de Blasio launched with $10 million in funding, and CUNY’s New York City College of Technology are partners in the program. Since taking office, de Blasio has expressed a desire to boost the city’s tech sector — and to make sure that equity is part of that growth. New York City's Workforce One will cover the students’ costs.

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BUFFALO — What used to be an unthinkable scenario, an active shooter on campus, is not only thought about at New York's public colleges but planned for the same way they prepare for weather disasters or fire.

All 29 four-year campuses in the State University of New York system have their own armed, full-time police officers and are required to plan and practice for active shooters as part of emergency management plans.

But even with preparedness written into mandates, the Oct. 1 shooting that left nine victims dead at picturesque Umpqua Community College in Oregon has campuses again contemplating if that's enough.

Days after the latest high-profile shooting, SUNY Cortland President Erik Bitterbaum announced two active shooter training sessions for staff and a seminar on deterring college shootings to better the odds his campus would "survive a similar act of violence."

"Colleges and universities are special places that promote openness and freedom of discourse," Bitterbaum wrote on the college's website. "We see strangers here every day, but there are things we can do."

At SUNY New Paltz, that means cluing in students to survival strategies, in part through the showing of a convincing in-house video that drives home the Department of Homeland Security-recommended response sequence in an active shooter scenario: Run, hide or, as a last resort, fight.

"We do a very good job here with the officers in preparing and training and drilling," said SUNY New Paltz Chief David Dugatkin, who appears in the video. "But I wanted now to really spread that out to the students, faculty and staff."

SUNY, with 460,000 students on 64 campuses, leaves specifics of emergency planning up to individual campuses. Departments look to best practice recommendations from authorities such as the Justice Department and International Association of Chiefs of Police, Dugatkin said.

Fred Kowal, president of the United University Professions, said it's difficult to say how well informed staff is about security plans or whether active shooter plans are adequate because they vary from campus to campus.

"Campus police may have contingency plans for dealing with such incidents that they keep confidential so as not to tip off would-be shooters about security measures," said Kowal, whose union represents more than 35,000 SUNY academic and professional faculty.

The City University of New York system, which operates colleges within the five boroughs of New York City, works closely with the New York Police Department "which is obviously the nation's leader in responding to emergencies," CUNY spokesman Michael Arena said in an email.

Each campus conducts officer training throughout the year, he said, and regularly reviews and updates emergency plans.

CUNY Brooklyn College faculty member Jean Grassman, who attended one of the training sessions run by the NYPD, sees a need for regular drills.

"My main concern is that the preparedness takes the form of passive lectures, as far as I know," she said.

University at Buffalo student James Corra said he was confident in his college's ability to react to an active shooter.

"We're always alerted when there's an issue," he said.

But the university's response to a September report of a man dropping what appeared to be a gun in the student union on a Monday afternoon, then picking it back up and leaving the building, received mixed responses from students, The Spectrum student newspaper reported. At least one student said he believed the incident merited an evacuation or lockdown of the building. Police officials told the newspaper that didn't happen because the dropped object may or may not have been a gun and the individual involved had left the building.

The incident illustrates the difficulties in anticipating and preparing for events on often sprawling campuses with multiple unlocked buildings and changing populations.

"The unpredictability of the shooter, the layout of a campus on any given day, weather and weekday campus population," Dugatkin said, "are just a few of the challenges."
How Rich Buceta, a Craft Brewer, Spends His Sundays

By SHIVANI VORA OCT. 9, 2015

In 2012, Rich Buceta gave up a career in advertising to pursue his dream of opening a craft brewery. Today, he is the head brewer and owner of the 5,000-square-foot SingleCut Beersmiths in Astoria and puts in over 10 hours almost every day, especially now that it’s fall, which many consider the high beer season. Although Mr. Buceta, 52, lives on the Upper East Side of Manhattan with his wife, Lynne Bilenkey, 48, who heads up online sales for Victoria’s Secret, he chose to open Singlecut in Queens because the borough is home to him. His parents arrived there from Argentina in 1963; he was born at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center; and he graduated from Queens College. In fact, weekends are distinctive for Mr. Buceta because he does not spend them in Queens. Sunday in particular, he said, “is about enjoying the fruits of my labor.” Since sampling his brews can be an occupational hazard, Sunday is also his only break from alcohol.

UNDER COVERS I sleep in until 11. Lynne and I usually go to bed at midnight on Saturdays, so that’s 11 hours straight of sleep. I am a sleeper and always have been. I get about six hours during the week so I catch up on Sunday mornings. Lynne usually sleeps in with me.

NEWS FOR BREAKFAST We DVR “CBS News Sunday Morning” because it airs when we’re sleeping, and watch it while we’re eating breakfast. Our standard is a
healthy version of deli egg sandwiches. Lynne makes them with turkey bacon and sliced tomatoes and uses whole wheat or rye bread, and sometimes a smear of goat cheese. My job is to clean up. While we’re watching, Lynne usually gets dinner going in the crockpot, which she is obsessed with, and uses even in the heat of summer. The turkey chili or Senegalese chicken soup she cooks in it are my favorites.

**SHARING THE PAPER** Around 1 we hunker down to read The Times. Lynne commands the couch while I settle in on our armchair, which has an ottoman. We spend an hour or two going through all the sections. Typically we read in silence, but we have an old-fashioned record player we love using, so sometimes we might listen to classical music. Usually, it’s something by Beethoven or Mozart.

**OUT IN PUBLIC** Around 3, we head to the grocery store. It’s either Whole Foods or Fairway in our neighborhood. Picking up soy or almond milk for the week is at the top of the list. We’re not allergic to dairy but notice that we feel less lethargic without it. Also, we buy ingredients for a juice that’s become a Sunday-night tradition for us. It has kale, carrots, celery, beets, an apple and two to three lemons. I usually drink two pints of beer every day of the week except for Sunday and don’t always eat the healthiest, and drinking a pint of this stuff helps me rebalance my system.

**SIESTA** When we get back home and put away the groceries, I nap for about an hour. It might be my Argentinian roots, but I am really into the idea of an afternoon siesta. Lynne tends to go to the gym and get a pedicure while I’m sleeping.

**DRINK YOUR VEGGIES** By the time I wake up, it’s around 6:30 and time for dinner. We make the juice together in a Breville juicer where you throw in all the fruits and vegetables whole, and they get juiced right up. Along with the juice, we have Lynne’s crockpot meal. Occasionally, we will order in. The quinoa salad from fresh&co is one of our favorites.

**PARK IN THE DARK** The climax of my day is after dinner. I used to be an avid cyclist but don’t have the time for long rides anymore except for on Sunday evenings. I have three different bikes I own to pick from, and head to Central Park and ride the loop three times. It’s the best time to be in the park because it’s cleared from traffic and people. I decompress as I bike around and take in the scenery and city skyline.
BRITS AND CARS I'm home by 9 and take a shower. Lynne and I then get into bed. She watches British serials like "EastEnders" and "Broadchurch" on her iPad, and I turn on Velocity, a channel that has shows about cars. I'm really into "Wheeler Dealers," where a few British guys refurbish and sell vintage vehicles. It's lights out by 11. We both sleep with ear plugs and an eye mask to shut out any noise and visual stimulation. A long workweek is ahead, and we want to be well rested.

A version of this article appears in print on October 11, 2015, on page MB2 of the New York edition with the headline: Juicing Instead of Brewing.
ARTS | BOOKS | BOOKSHELF

Jack and Joy

The creator of Aslan and Narnia married a Jewish communist from Manhattan.

By RUTH SCURR
Oct. 9, 2015 4:25 p.m. ET

Abigail Santamaria set out to rescue “the woman who captivated C.S. Lewis” from the “Shadowlands” myth. Originally a British TV film (1985), then a stage play (1989) and then a movie (1993), “Shadowlands” portrayed the love affair between bachelor Oxbridge academic “Jack” Lewis and the American poet Joy Davidman. Her death from cancer, soon after their romance began, challenged the Christian faith that had inspired Lewis to write “The Screwtape Letters” and the Narnia Chronicles. In childhood, he had lost his mother to cancer, and “Shadowlands” focused on this distressing parallel in Lewis’s life, sideling any details about Davidman. This book gives Davidman her life back.

Davidman (1915-60) emerges from this cradle-to-grave biography consistently forthright and feminist. Born in Manhattan to Jewish parents, she was an avid reader and early atheist. She attended Manhattan’s Hunter College—“the world’s largest tuition-free, publicly funded women’s liberal arts college”—and then Columbia University. One of her early poems, “This Woman,” advised rejecting conventional femininity: “Now do not put a ribbon in your hair; / Abjure the spangled insult of design, / The filigree sterility, nor twine / A flower with your strength; go bare, go bare.”

She pursued her literary ambitions by writing for New Masses, a Marxist weekly
Out of the Shadows

magazine closely connected with the U.S. Communist Party. She joined the Party in 1938, later admitting that part of the attraction was the opportunity to meet men in sexually promiscuous circles. In April 1939, she helped organize a symposium for the League of American Writers, to which three “progressive British poets” were invited: W.H. Auden, Louis MacNeice and Christopher Isherwood. They all disappointed her, especially Auden: “Everyone expected ‘fighting words’ from him…. We were all rather surprised at the conflict between his reputation and the things he has done, and the comparatively mild line he took.” Pacing round the room at the Keynote Club on Times Square, Auden looked down on Broadway and said: “I wonder if that infernal noise could be stopped?”

In the summer of 1939, Davidman went to Hollywood, accepted into MGM’s screenwriter training program. She thought she was following in the footsteps of Dorothy Parker, and sometimes echoed her predecessor's caustic wit. “No one
should ever give Hollywood a good idea to play with; the carnage is frightful,” Davidman declared. Hollywood strengthened her Marxist convictions, but it wasn’t politics that got her fired but her obstinacy. She did not take kindly to “consultation” with producers: “I’m too much of an egoist,” she wrote in a letter, “to listen to anyone tell me how to write; I wouldn’t take it from Steinbeck, let alone some degenerate illiterate of a producer whose knowledge of America is gleaned from glimpses he gets from an airliner.”

Back in New York in 1940, Davidman published her first novel, “Anya,” to critical acclaim. It is a coming of age story about a girl whose passions override moral codes and conventions. When she met and married novelist William Gresham in 1942, she was adamant that, “Love is not a significant full-time occupation. Neither is having a baby.” In a review of Rosamond Lehmann’s 1944 novel “The Ballad and the Source,” Davidman was critical of the depiction of a perfect matron “sweet-voiced, well-dressed, well-lacquered, superlatively well-permanent-waved.”

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After her sons were born, in 1944 and 1945, Davidman reconciled herself to looking after them while her husband worked at a magazine: “Staying at home would really make him suffer and feel inferior, whereas it only mildly inconveniences me,” she wrote to friends. “What I’m mad about is the prevailing notion—even Bill falls into it at times—that, because I’m a woman, it’s quite correct for me to be living this vegetable, parasitic life.” Ms. Santamaria’s book draws on a wealth of unpublished letters to reconstruct the slow collapse of Davidman’s feisty feminist literary ambitions into domestic drudgery and penury.

In 1945, isolated, frustrated and struggling with wartime shortages, she discovered C.S. Lewis’s “Space Trilogy” of fantasy novels (“Out of the Silent Planet,” “Perelandra” and “That Hideous Strength”), a theological allegory about man’s exploration of outer space. Ms. Santamaria locates the beginning of Davidman’s conversion from atheist-communist to Christian believer in this first encounter with Lewis’s writing. Gradually Davidman found that her communism “shriveled up and blew away like a withered tumbleweed,” as she put it in a 1951 essay about her conversion to Christianity; “I cannot tell exactly
when it went but I looked and found it gone.” In 1949, Davidson and her husband, who shared her conversion experience, wrote a joint first letter to Lewis: “We sent the unfortunate man five single-spaced pages of personal history and what not.”

It took Lewis a year to respond. Ms. Santamaria is wry about the heaps of confessional missives he received, some from women intent on marrying him. A psychotic antique dealer named Kitty Martin, for example, arranged a wedding date and placed a marriage announcement in a newspaper. Lewis sent another woman, a one-legged nurse who wanted to come and live with him, a set of his Narnia stories. After he replied to Davidman and they became pen-friends she started “actively plotting some way to get to England.” None of the early letters between Lewis and Davidman survive but she told another friend that she valued their intellectual content and had never enjoyed anything more than “being disposed of so neatly by a master of debate.”

By 1952, on her visit to Oxford to meet Lewis, Davidman was a brash woman of 37 shocking the dons at lunch in Magdalen College: “Is there anywhere in this monastic establishment where a lady can relieve herself?” Back in America, her estranged husband was struggling to pay the household bills and care for their two sons while she spent money recklessly on a mission to seduce Lewis. She failed and went home to a ruined marriage, but returned to England in 1953, “with little cash, no long-term plans—and this time, two boys in tow.”

The friendship between Davidman and Lewis deepened, centering at first on his kindness to her sons, to whom he dedicated the fifth of the Narnia books, “The Horse and His Boy” (1954). Ms. Santamaria suggests that when Lewis moved from Oxford to Cambridge to take up a professorship in Medieval and Renaissance literature in 1954, “Joy became Jack’s transitional object,” helping him proof-read his autobiography and establish a new household in which “she was part of the foundation.” They married in April 1956, when she already had signs of the breast cancer from which she died four years later. Lewis characterized their romance as “a honeymoon on a sinking ship.”

Ms. Santamaria succeeds in de-mythologizing Davidman’s story. She eschews passing moral judgment, just as Lewis did when he told Bill Gresham: “I cannot judge between your account and Joy’s account of your married life.” Both men seem to have behaved admirably in attempting to put the welfare of the boys first. Lewis continued to raise the boys in England after Davidman’s death. The fact that she did not always prioritize her sons might be seen as another of her feminist achievements.

—Ms. Scurr’s “John Aubrey: My Own Life” will be published by New York Review Books next year.
Don't make Times Square square: Be careful not to turn the commons into an overmanaged suburban space

BY ANTHONY MANFREDI / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Sunday, October 11, 2015, 5:00 AM

Times Square Commons

A whole lot of zones for one little square

What Michael Bloomberg hath wrought, could Elmo, Spiderman and a bunch of decades past abandon?

It was our former mayor who looked over the chaos of Times Square — where cars and pedestrians mostly collided — and transformed it into one of the city's great public spaces for hanging out, rather than speed through, a blathering pedestrian-friendly plaza made of tables and chairs.

Despite loud protests by the taxi industry, car owners, delivery trucks and some local businesses fearing the unknown, Bloomberg and his transportation commissioner, Janette Sadik-Khan, dug in and succeeded in creating the plaza, which has since been replicated in Herald Square and other parts of the city.

But now the plaza is at the heart of another intense controversy, a victim of its own success amid complaints that costumed (and uncostumed) performers too aggressively panhandle for "tips."

Let's not blame the victim. Order matters, yes. But so do the strange and unexpected encounters of a "city invincible" once celebrated by Walt Whitman in his poems about New York.

With Mayor de Blasio intent on containing what is now broadly perceived as a quality-of-life problem, City Hall now proposes to transform the crossroads into "Times Square Commons," designating special "activity zones" for panhandling by costumed characters, not to mention the legions who pose for pictures with curiously willing tourists. Those zones will be separated from "civic zones" (for pre-authorized public programming somehow considered less intrusive) and "flow zones" (for orderly pedestrian movement).

The arrangement has some real merits. But we diminish the publicness of urban space when we zone it too much, and that may be too big a price to pay for commercial success in Times Square.

Let me confess my misgivings about the rampant commercialization of New York City's open spaces. Converting publicly-owned pedestrian plazas into privately-stocked food courts, where too few people can afford lobster rolls and designer tacos, is hardly a laur de force for free expression under the First Amendment.

And I think we ought to commend the efforts of stakeholders who pushed back after NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton quipped that the Times Square plaza be "dug up" and returned to cars — and are instead working to preserve some semblance of a public space there.

The urbanist Marshall Berman wrote that public space is "lively," that
sometimes, we just have to let it be. Because it is the frenetic mix of uses and cacophony of public space that makes sharing it so special. Public space is about being authentic. It’s about spontaneity and the negotiation of surprising relationships between diverse people in a society that stubbornly clings to a democratic way of life.

Sure, the activity zones are likely to pass constitutional muster under a legal doctrine that gives the authorities broad power to regulate the “time, place and manner” of speech, though not its content.

My bigger fear is that the proposed zones will inhibit mixed uses inside one of the city’s most important public spaces, no less among people of different stripes and persuasions, who are united by their desires to be outside and seen and heard by fellow New Yorkers and visitors.

Maybe the Times Square Commons plan will result in fewer annoyed tourists and passersby. More dubious to me, however, is the political impact of imposing suburban-style use zones on a publicly owned plaza.

We have seen what single-use zones have resulted in outside of the city. The only truly shared public spaces are shopping malls, which have been rendered sterile and uninviting by bad business decisions and legal precedents that choked off speech inside.

Suburbanites now increasingly stay home and click their way to consumption. In search of authenticity and opportunities to “mix it up,” they’ve also started to re-urbanize and move back to the city, their civic nerve center.

Sadly, too much of that nerve center now requires paid admission. The bonus plaza program that has produced a wealth of privately owned public spaces in return for generous air rights has also led to attempts to stifle free expression and engagement by citizens who want to share space without having to pay for it all the time.

As the city moves forward on Times Square Commons, let’s hope it shows trust in people’s choices and abilities to use these public spaces as they see fit — to bargain and share in freedom.

This is an important caution, rather than a counter-proposal. At least when it comes to the commons, winter may take care of the rest.

Manesano, an adjunct associate professor of CUNY, is the author of the upcoming “Public Spaces, Marketplaces and the Constitution.”
A Swimming President to Lead Colgate U. Next Year

Emerging From the Pool

To stay fit for the challenges of being a college president, Brian W. Casey trains most mornings with the men’s and women’s swim teams at DePauw University. "You have to do whatever it takes to recharge your mind," he says.

Mr. Casey was the 1985 captain of the varsity swim team at the University of Notre Dame, where his specialty was the demanding 200-yard butterfly. He has led DePauw since 2008, and was recently named the next president of Colgate University, to begin in July.

While Jill Harsin, a professor of history, serves as Colgate’s interim president, Mr. Casey is thinking about how his accomplishments in Greencastle, Ind., will translate to Colgate, in Hamilton, N.Y. At DePauw, he has created a strategic plan, directed a major rebuilding program, headed a successful fund-raising campaign, and set up centralized advising for internships, career planning, and graduate-school preparation.
Like DePauw, Colgate is "very aspirational," he says. Officials at Colgate "made it very clear that they are seeking to make it one of the pre-eminent liberal-arts institutions in the country" by attracting a more national and diverse student body, and by better linking intellectual and residential life.

Mr. Casey was Colgate's choice from a "deep and talented pool of candidates," says Daniel B. Hurwitz, chair of Colgate's Board of Trustees. In January, Jeffrey Herbst announced that he would conclude his Colgate presidency at the end of June this year; by August, Mr. Casey had been selected to replace him.

Mr. Hurwitz says a constant refrain that search-committee and board members heard about Mr. Casey was that not only was he "a proven, charismatic leader" but that "he has an unparalleled amount of energy" of the kind college presidencies demand.

Mr. Casey says his energy comes not just from his swimming but also from practicing a form of vitalizing intellectual laps. He studied philosophy and economics at Notre Dame and law at Stanford University. After beginning his career with a Wall Street law firm, he opted instead to earn a doctorate in history from Harvard.

As he began to progress in academic administration, holding posts at Harvard and Brown Universities, he made a bargain with himself. During his frequent airline trips on college business, he would devote outbound flights to reading university documents, but on return legs keep up with history, modern fiction, architecture and urban planning, and whatever else takes his fancy.—Peter Monaghan

The Greening of LA

Many conservationists would hesitate to leave the green of Seattle, but Peter Kareiva, the new director of the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at the University of California at Los Angeles, believes the famously smoggy city provides opportunity to do the most good.

"Your typical conservation biologist
wants to live in Montana or Wyoming or Colorado, and even your sustainability scientist wants to live in Portland or San Francisco or Seattle," says Mr. Kareiva, who was based in his home office in Seattle as he worked as lead scientist and then chief scientist at the Nature Conservancy for 13 years. "Those are very strong green cities, but they don’t reflect the way cities are growing up all over the world. Solving the problems in Los Angeles is going to be much better in terms of figuring out problems in the big new cities that are emerging in China, Latin America, Asia, and Africa."

Mr. Kareiva is realistic about potential downsides of the move, given that people warned him that a university would be "conservative, cumbersome, and full of bureaucracy." He was familiar with academe, having been a professor at Brown University and the University of Washington earlier in his career, and he braced himself for the culture shock of returning to that environment. "I find the social part of teams makes work fun and it makes work great, but academia is about the individual," he says. "I want to get the faculty to see past their own little star and realize it’s nowhere near as much fun as being part of a really great team, but that’s not going to be easy."

Still, he was drawn to UCLA because of its resources and the opportunity to work with different academics to create an interdisciplinary institute. Most scientists at the Nature Conservancy are biologists and ecologists, but "we need climate modelers, chemical engineers, hydrologists, economists, and UCLA has all of these people," he says.

His first priorities: to increase science communication by investing in long-form journalism — and maybe even movies — produced by the institute, to serve as an adviser on the one-year research practicum that undergraduate students take, and to help launch a graduate program. He will also continue to play a role at the conservancy, serving as senior science adviser to its president and as chairman of its Science Cabinet.

Beyond that, he’ll be studying Los Angeles itself: how it functions and struggles with the issue of sprawl.

"What I really want to do," Mr. Kareiva says, "is make Los Angeles a city that people want to come to for its environment, not just for the jobs and economy." — Angela Chen
The Challenge of Growth

Joan T.A. Gabel, the University of South Carolina's new academic-affairs chief, sees the institution’s continuing expansion as "a good problem to have."

That growth — in undergraduate enrollment, spending on popular degree programs, and public-private research partnerships — will also be one of the biggest challenges she will face in her new job, she says. "If you're not paying attention, you lose quality."

Ms. Gabel began her new post as executive vice president for academic affairs and provost in August, succeeding Michael D. Amiridis, who recently became chancellor of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

She joined the academic world about two decades ago, after earning a law degree and spending three years as a lawyer. She went on to hold full-time faculty and administrative roles at Georgia and Florida State Universities, and she then served as dean of the University of Missouri's Trulaske College of Business for five years.

While at Missouri, she says, she was "very involved in campus-level decision-making," serving on the chancellor's budget advisory committee and helping run cross-disciplinary faculty searches.

One of her primary responsibilities at South Carolina is overseeing Palmetto College, the institution's online bachelor's-degree-completion effort. The demand, she says, "has blown away expectations." From 2013 through 2014, says an annual report, Palmetto served 1,015 students, and more than 20 percent earned their degrees.
Another priority is On Your Time, a two-year-old program that restructures the academic calendar for students who want to attend classes year-round and finish degrees in less than four years. As more students enroll, Ms. Gabel says, she and other administrators will continue to tweak course offerings and schedules to "make sure we don’t have an absence or redundancy."

There is evidence, she says, that many of the first students who took advantage of the program are on track for an early graduation. — Sarah Brown

**Boyer Award Winner**

Cathy N. Davidson, a professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center and director of its Futures Initiative, is the winner of the sixth annual Ernest L. Boyer Award, which recognizes people who make significant contributions to higher education in the United States. New American Colleges and Universities, a consortium of selective small to midsize independent colleges, will present her with the award at the 2016 annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges & Universities.

She will deliver a lecture on how colleges can lead on equity, inclusion, and democratic renewal on the opening night of the meeting in Washington, D.C., on January 20. The Futures Initiative that she leads fosters the use of research to improve the teaching of undergraduates of all backgrounds throughout the City University of New York.

**OBITUARY: Expert in Russian Dies**

Sophia Lubensky, a professor emerita of Russian at the University at Albany, died on September 15. She was 80.

Ms. Lubensky began teaching at the university in 1977, a year after she had immigrated to the United States from the Soviet Union, and retired in 2007. A co-author of two Russian-language textbooks, she also compiled the *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms*, which was first published by Random House in 1995 at a turn in U.S.-Russian relations. The dictionary, which was financed in part by the federal government, contains 13,000 Russian idioms and their English translations.
Alternate Realities

By Richard Wolin | OCTOBER 11, 2015

The philosopher Markus Gabriel is something of a wunderkind. Six years ago, at the tender age of 29, he was appointed to his current position as a professor of philosophy and chair of epistemology at the University of Bonn, making him the youngest holder of a philosophy chair in Germany. He is also at the forefront of an innovative, transnational philosophical current known as the new realism (loosely affiliated with speculative realism, whose foremost representative is the French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux). With the English translation of his provocatively titled recent book, *Why the World Does Not Exist*, it won’t be long before his nimble mind makes a distinct imprint on North American philosophical circles.

As Gabriel tells it, the new realism emerged as an attempt to free philosophy from the dead end in which it had become entrapped by two earlier fashionable trends, postmodernism and social constructivism. They shared a thoroughgoing skepticism concerning the capacity of the human mind to penetrate the nature of objective reality, and held that all we can really know is our representations of reality. The upshot of these ultimately self-abnegating paradigms was that professional philosophy had de facto given up on reality.
In *Why the World Does Not Exist*, Gabriel provides us with a thought experiment to demonstrate the ludicrousness of the cul-de-sac in which much of academic philosophy finds itself today: "It would be odd if someone, in response to the question 'Is there still some butter in the fridge?,' answered you by saying: 'Yes, but the butter and the fridge are actually only an illusion, a human construction. In truth neither the butter nor the fridge exists. At the very least, we don't know whether they exist. Nevertheless, enjoy your meal!' " It's a helpful reminder of the cavernous gap separating sophisticated professionals from healthy common sense.

The new realism distinguishes itself from the "old realism" (basically, Aristotle and his followers) by wisely steering clear of traditional metaphysical claims to know the ultimate nature of reality. In this way, it betrays a humility that shows that it has taken to heart the critique of metaphysics as purveyed by the Kantian tradition.

The riddle contained in Gabriel's clever if somewhat melodramatic title pertains to the deceptions of linguistic convention. It was metaphysics — also known as "first philosophy" — that claimed to know the true nature of reality, or "the world." Only on this lexical basis can Gabriel assure us that, in this traditional philosophical sense, the world as a grasped and delimited totality "does not exist." As he adds by way of clarification: "If we think about the world, what we grasp is something different than what we want to grasp. We can never grasp the whole. It is in principle too big for any thought. ... The world cannot in principle exist, because it is not found in the world."

To conclude that the world "is not found in the world" is not idle wordplay. It highlights the logical impossibility of locating "the world" in space and time. Any attempt to do so runs up against an insoluble conundrum: If the world, as is commonly held, contains everything that exists, what is it that, in turn, contains the world?

Among those who hazard exaggerated and misleading claims about what it would mean to know the world, the leading offenders, in Gabriel's view, are the proponents of evolutionism and cognitive science. Both camps long for a unified field theory that would permanently allay both cognitive skepticism and the comparatively meager claims of individual academic disciplines. Such approaches are inherently flawed, because their scientism — the conviction that science alone represents the royal road to
truth — leaves no room for phenomena like poetry, reverie, or human intimacy, experiences that prove refractory to laws of causal determination.

More seriously, the epistemological dogmatism of such approaches risks codifying a new species of metaphysical intolerance, since they condescendingly stigmatize competing claims as "unscientific." As Gabriel pointedly remarked in a 2014 article in Die Zeit: "At an earlier point, God and fate were invoked in order to deprive us of our freedom; today, it is 'nature,' 'the universe,' 'the brain,' 'the egoistic gene' or 'evolution.'" In their aversion to positivism, Gabriel and his fellow new realists, such as the Italian philosopher Maurizio Ferraris, sport their cognitive pluralism on their sleeves.

The nonexistence of the world, one might say, is the bad news. By way of compensation — as well as consolation — Gabriel is quick to share with us the following bit of good news: "I also claim that considerably more exists than one would have expected — namely everything else except the world." Among his list of imaginary objects that may be said to exist — if the meaning of existence is extended to apply to what can be thought, or the notion of "possible worlds" — Gabriel includes elves, witches, "weapons of mass destruction in Luxembourg," and "unicorns on the far side of the moon that are wearing police uniforms." Upon reflection, there is little facile or gratuitous about such observations. We commonly think about culture and religious beliefs as a set of disembodied constructs that often have a distinctly powerful real-world impact.

At a recent book launch held by the Goethe-Institut in New York, I asked Gabriel how much of "reality" might we regain if we subscribe to the new realist paradigm. His response: in truth, not very much. The best that philosophy can do, as Kant proposed, is to certify the conditions or parameters under which valid knowledge of the world may be had. To attempt anything more is to risk relapsing into the hollow platitudes of old-style metaphysics.

Still, the notion of reality or existence that the new realism proposes remains tepid. For Gabriel, to exist means to appear in what he, in reference to Wittgenstein's later notion of language games, calls a "field of sense": a finite domain of meaningful connections. Fields of sense — in German, Seinfelder, a play on words that affords Gabriel, a connoisseur of American popular culture, an opportunity to allude to his favorite sitcom
— stand in contrast to metaphorical attempts to understand the world as a finite, graspable totality.

Fields of sense are purportedly infinite — and infinity is a value that, in Gabriel’s view, is redolent of freedom. To engage "the diversity of interpretive possibilities beyond the fixed idea that there is a single world in which everything happens and which determines what is real and what is fiction" elicits what Gabriel approvingly terms "an emancipatory smile."

Such prescriptions seem reminiscent of Richard Rorty’s smug and nebulous idea of postmodern bourgeois liberalism — a paradigm whose viability hinges on our capacity for ceaseless and unending redescriptions of the world. Rorty declaims that "the aim of a just and free society [is] letting its citizens be as privatistic, ‘irrationalist,’ and aesthetic as they please so long as they do it on their own time — causing no harm to others and using no resources needed by those less advantaged." Or, as Nietzsche said, "There are no facts, only interpretations." The new-realist translation of Nietzsche’s claim might be, "There are no facts, only fields of sense." In the end, one is left wondering just how robust new realism’s reality quotient actually is.

A promising move about college costs

October 11, 2015 By DAVID R. JONES

Students walk across the campus of UCLA on April 23, 2012 in Los Angeles, California. (Credit: Getty Images / Kevork Djansezian)

On its face, the news that Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and the White House are talking about a program that would pay for two free years of community college is great news.

Years of labor market data indicate that a college education is increasingly necessary to earn a family-sustaining wage. It's also clear that financial aid does not always make college affordable for all families.

Costs have soared, even at public schools, and national figures show that high school graduates are less likely to enroll in coursework if they feel college costs would be difficult for their families.

New Yorkers recognize the role college plays in upward mobility, and the challenges of its high costs, according to polling by the Community Service Society of New York. In fact, they say making college affordable -- outside of increasing the minimum wage -- is the policy most likely to help them get ahead. Low-, moderate- and high-income New Yorkers, in equal measure, cite the costs of tuition as the biggest barrier to entering and finishing college.

And perhaps most strikingly, 70 percent of them strongly believe that we should expand the 20th century commitment to a free public education that encompasses high school to a 21st century model that includes free college.

Research underscores that investing in college for disadvantaged students ends up paying for itself.

A cost-benefit analysis by the Community Service Society found that higher tax revenues that come from increased employment of and earnings by college graduates, not to mention the decreases in public expenditures on things such as food assistance and incarceration, more
than made up for the cost of covering tuition and on-campus supports.

The Community Service Society supports Cuomo's approach. But as my colleague Ron Deutsch of the Fiscal Policy Institute points out, the details will be crucial to determine whether the policy would work. And while we do not have all the answers yet, we know some of the factors that should be part of the discussions.

Focus. The initial language about the plan talked about free community college. Consider whether it makes sense to zero in solely on two-year versus four-year colleges. Some national policy discussions have included a "first two years free" plan, eliminating the cost of public university for the first two years, so as not to disincentivize students who want to aim for four-year schools.

Awareness. Ensure that supports are in place so students and the public realize the benefits of this investment -- that means high graduation rates. Current community college statistics are abysmal, but rigorously evaluated programs, like CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associated Programs model, have been shown to boost graduation rates. These should be a part of any plan, as well as monitoring GPA to keep students on track.

Cost. In some cases, non-tuition expenses associated with college dwarf the cost of tuition. The state should consider a need-based program that goes beyond tuition to cover the living costs of low-income students, through a combination of grants, work-study, and subsidized loans.

Quality. The capacity of CUNY and SUNY schools needs to be understood. Many are packed and operate on tight budgets. The education awaiting students must be worthy of the investment.

New York State is right to start figuring out how to make it work because real chances of increasing upward mobility depend on it.

David R. Jones is president and chief executive of the Community Service Society of New York, an advocacy organization for the working poor.
CUNY and NY Health Department work to spread birth control awareness to raise completion

Submitted by Ashley A. Smith on October 9, 2015 - 3:00am

Pairing birth control with college completion may seem unconventional at first glance, but like other outside-the-classroom factors an unplanned pregnancy can deter many students from ever graduating.

That's why the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene along with the City University of New York system last week announced a campaign to promote the awareness of intrauterine devices -- one of the most effective forms of birth control.

The Maybe the IUD campaign is looking to provide information for college students -- particularly those who are minorities or from low-income homes -- about their reproductive options.

"Having access to good reproductive health is essential, and we want to make sure that students are able to make choices about if they want to have children and when they want to have children," said Gail Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community College. "I know personal stories of students who because of a pregnancy or the cost of pregnancy or the challenges of caring for infants and struggling with multiple jobs just made college impossible."

According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, unplanned births account for nearly one in 10 dropouts among women at community colleges and 7 percent of dropouts among all students at community colleges. Sixty-one percent of community college students who have children after enrolling do not finish their education.

Mary Ellen Duncan, a retired president of Howard Community College, who also works with the campaign to prevent teen pregnancy, said she doesn't think many colleges understand how much of an obstacle unintended pregnancies can pose to completing a college education. She's worked to make sure there was a day care option for students at the college.

"It's surprising to people who work in colleges. Having faculty and staff at the college realize that by the time students come to them, while they may think a student knows everything about preventing pregnancy, they don't. It depends on where you live. You may not have gotten terrific sex education or you might have gotten it a while ago or what you learned then might not be the same as what you need now while going to community college," said Andrea Kane, senior director of public policy at the National Campaign.

On campuses like LaGuardia, students will be able to see posters promoting the Maybe the IUD
campaign, and the college's wellness center will pass out information about birth control. The campaign also provides information on the cost of an IUD, whether Medicaid will cover it and how students can find a provider to insert the device.

The reaction to colleges promoting birth control awareness has been positive, Kane said.

"Colleges are so focused intensely on doing whatever it takes to help students succeed and stay in school. They're helping them with financial literacy and management, managing their time and plotting out academic trajectory and career trajectory," she said. "There's a lot of focus on sexual assault prevention and drinking -- all of these things that happen outside of the classroom that affect your ability to succeed in the classroom. Most colleges see this as relevant and appropriate part of their work to address life skills and success skills."

LaGuardia's Mellow said addressing reproductive health is important if people ever expect to get serious about women completing college.

For many colleges, one way to slow the effects of failing to complete because of unintended pregnancies or the demands of parenthood is providing a child care center. LaGuardia has a low-cost Early Childhood Learning Center program that cares for about 250 children. Of the college's nearly 50,000 enrollment, 25 percent are parents, and 98 percent of those students have reported that the program fits into their college schedule, according to LaGuardia's statistics.

"We find they may have a child in child care longer than the time they're in classes because that freedom to study is so essential. It's a freedom that students going to a high-end Ivy League [institution] wouldn't question, because of course they have time to study, but when you're juggling a job and school, day care is essential," Mellow said.

Tackling birth control awareness isn't new for some colleges. The American Association of Community Colleges launched a campaign a few years ago with the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy to encourage faculty members to incorporate pregnancy planning into their academic courses.

"This is not about people telling other people not to have children. This is about helping students align their own aspirations with their actions," Kane said.

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Can You Sail to It? Then It Must Be ‘Yacht Rock’

Mellow music of '70s and '80s rides new wave of popularity; ‘sea of sailor caps’

By JON KAMP

Oct. 11, 2015 8:16 p.m. ET

A few years after his 1980 hit “Steal Away,” Robbie Dupree wondered if the phone would ever ring again. For a star of one of the era’s biggest musical genres, the momentum had stopped. “There were four, five years I couldn’t get arrested,” he
But these days, he and soft-rock contemporaries like the bands Ambrosia ("How Much I Feel") and Player ("Baby Come Back") have the wind in their sails thanks to "yacht rock," a rebranding of the smooth-music genre from the '70s and '80s. Mr. Dupree, long accustomed to gigs with a few hundred attendees, marvels today at crowds in the thousands at yacht rock-themed shows.

"There's like a sea of sailor caps in the audience," says the 68-year-old singer. He wrapped a "Rock the Yacht" summer tour with Ambrosia, Player, the Little River Band ("Reminiscing") and Stephen Bishop ("On and On") on Sept. 18 before nearly 1,400 fans at a sold-out casino venue in Mississippi. Some of the acts may leave port next summer alongside Atlanta-based cover band "Yacht Rock Revue," which drew 3,500 fans to a festival this summer.

The fans—sometimes with a glint of irony—have been clamoring for the music. On Facebook, one said Sirius XM's summertime yacht-rock station "alleviated 30% of my rush hour traffic jam stress." The satellite radio station went into dry dock when summer officially ended, but Sirius XM plans to bring it back next year, a spokeswoman said.

At Yacht Rock Revue's recent Boston show, bearded chimney sweep Chris Podrecca showed up sporting a captain's hat and a tight shirt with palm fronds showing off his boat-anchor pendant. But the 32-year-old said his connection to the music runs deep. "I appreciate the music because of my parents," he said.

Originally known as soft rock, the family-friendly music was moored in southern California and had links to the '70s singer-songwriter trend. The music wasn't a critical darling, eschewed for its slick production and a perceived lack of daring, said Chadwick Jenkins, who teaches music history at the City College of New
There was also a coolness deficit, and the genre just about capsized in the '80s. "A lot of my memories of this music are bowling alleys, orthodontists' offices and waiting rooms," Mr. Jenkins said.

Still, the light-rocking tunes emerged from a time of sharp studio work and professional musicianship, and the inoffensive sounds can mask subtle complexity.

"These are quality musicians, the chords are really smart and the hooks are just so good," said Jason Hare, a musician and fan who wrote an extensive blog about a brand of particularly earnest, sensitive soft rock he calls Mellow Gold.

The Long Island, N.Y., resident, who has a day job in health care, focused on songs like Player's "Baby Come Back," which laments lost love through lyrics like "I was wrong, and I just can't live without you."

Peter Beckett, who co-wrote and sang the 1977 hit, said steady airplay and commercial appearances—think Swiffer ads—have kept checks in the mailbox. But he has also enjoyed the yacht rock resurgence, even if the term was mystifying at first.

"Young people today, when they mention our kind of band, they visualize us on our boats in the '70s drinking Chardonnay, playing our guitars and sailing past
Malibu,” he said. “I never owned a sailboat in my life.”

Still, the genre does have breezy undercurrents thanks to songs like Christopher Cross' 1980 smash “Sailing.” Tapping into that theme, writer JD Ryznar picked the name “Yacht Rock” for a 12-episode comedy series he wrote and directed starting in 2005.

The show, created for a contest called Channel 101, imagined tales and rivalries behind hits from the era’s biggest acts, such as Steely Dan, Hall & Oates, Toto, Kenny Loggins and Michael McDonald. All combined, the episodes have racked up more than 2 million page views online.

If “it sounds good on a boat, it’s Yacht Rock,” said Mr. Ryznar, 38, who also appeared in the series in the role of a thickly bearded Mr. McDonald—the soulful voice celebrated by yacht-rock fans for his myriad connections to other smooth-music artists.

Some bands and singers trying to capitalize on the yacht rock theme didn’t last as major hit makers. Take Ambrosia: The band went on hiatus for several years in the '80s, after their original success around tunes like “Biggest Part of Me” petered out.

But they’ve been surfing the Yacht Rock wave. They played “Late Night with Jimmy Fallon” in 2011 and have seen crowds swell under the yacht rock banner, bass player Joe Puerta said.
Mr. Puerta said he has no problem with the fine line between musical appreciation and irony that can come with yacht rock-themed shows. “Playing for 5,000 people who are going crazy for the music—you kind of go, ‘hey, what’s wrong with this?’” he said.

David Pack, the former Ambrosia singer who penned its top hits, struggles with the nautical theme. Though he said he applauds contemporaries who are finding new life in yacht rock shows, and remains an active musician who still plays his hits, too, he won’t be donning the captain’s hat.

“I guess I have to ask the question: Is the joke on us?” he said.

Nicholas Niespodziani, one of two lead singers in cover band Yacht Rock Revue, said their act is reverential. They formed from an independent-rock band after testing out the ’70s theme at a club gig about eight years ago, and have been so successful they had to spin off a subsidiary called “Yacht Rock Schooner” to keep pace with demand.

Sporting a blue leisure suit and shades, Mr. Niespodziani belted out songs like Toto’s “Africa” at the recent Boston show.

“I think people are less scared to admit they love this music,” he said.

Write to Jon Kamp at jon.kamp@wsj.com
Cornell will take more transfer students from community colleges

By Conor Skelding

12:53 p.m. | Oct. 12, 2015

Cornell University intends to admit more transfer students from community colleges.

"We're expanding the number of transfer students that we're taking," president Elizabeth Garrett told several reporters last week at the Cornell Club. "They're never hard goals, I will say, because admissions is not a science. But we certainly have targets."

This fall, 4,116 transfer applicants applied for admission to Cornell, and 523 enrolled as students, school spokeswoman Melissa Osgood said. (In fall 2014, 572 enrolled after 3,880 applied, and in fall 2013, 561 enrolled after 3,554 applied.)

Cornell spokesman John Carberry said in an email Monday that a target for fall 2016 had not yet been set. "There will be a target, and it will emerge later this fall from conversations taking place now among Beth and Cornell's senior leadership," he said.

Garrett said Thursday that she also intends for Cornell to recruit actively at more community colleges than it does now. (The university's seven undergraduate colleges have various transfer agreements with community colleges.)

"There are some students who aren't quite ready for a Cornell education when they graduate from high school," Garret said last week, giving as an example one she knew personally who had transferred in from a community college and upon graduation "was picking between neuroscience PhD programs at UCSF, UCLA and UC San Diego."

"He could have stayed at his community college, he could have completed his training there, but his life will be profoundly different because he transferred into Cornell," she said.

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"Free" has been the higher education buzzword of the year, as Democrats have proposed federal dollars into public institutions to lower tuition to zero or close to zero.

But as politicians pitch debt-free and tuition-free college, some are also pushing anotherto work in exchange for those new benefits.

President Obama included rhetoric about work in his proposal for free community college benefit only to those students "willing to work for it." But the president's proposal focuses on requiring students to maintain a 2.5 GPA in order to be eligible for free tuition at a community college.

Hillary Clinton has adopted nearly identical language in pitching her college affordability plan. "A different kind of work." "We need to make a quality education affordable and available," she said in August.

Clinton is proposing that students work 10 hours a week in order to receive debt-free college. And she has been using that component to distinguish her plan from that of her rival, the presidential nomination, Vermont Independent Senator Bernie Sanders, with whom she debated on Tuesday evening.

Clinton last week implicitly knocked Sanders's plan for providing benefits to wealthy students. "I worked when I went to college. I had a job. I went to law school, 12 hours a week at your college, you should get extra help."

Sanders has responded to such criticism by pointing out that his plan, which would make college eligible for free tuition regardless of whether they work during college, is a simpler way to do it.

"We disagree on our college plans," Sanders said on MSNBC last week. "I think a straightforward, providing free tuition at public colleges and universities."

Although Sanders's tuition-free college plan does not have a direct work requirement, the federal work-study program. His proposal would also overhaul that program, according to his office.

The emphasis on getting students to work in exchange for aid to attend college isn't new.

"The idea that students should work their way to an education has always been popular," student aid programs, said Christopher P. Loss, assistant professor of public policy at the University of Michigan.

"It's a way to sort of stave off the accusation or criticism that it's just one more big government undeserving population of students who aren't really that invested in their own education trying to tie subsidies of these sorts to some sort of work requirement."

But as politicians call on students to chip in for their education by working, some observe that students already are.

"There are political advantages to saying we're not going to provide aid to students with education," said Mark Huelsman, a policy analyst at Demos, a think tank that has been ever lost an election by criticizing the work ethic of today's youth."

Still, Huelsman said that Clinton's inclusion of a 10-hour-a-week work requirement for students may actually operate as a cap on work for most students rather than a new requirement already working far more hours, he said.
Huelsman also notes that “there are some policy advantages to encouraging a modest
Some research has found that students who work some amount during college -- roughly-- tend to have higher completion rates. Other research has found that students who par
program are more likely to graduate and get jobs after college, though they also tend
“Work requirements are definitely good politics,” said Robert Kelchen, an assistant pro
management and policy at Seton Hall University. “Are they good policy? It depends on
In some cases, Kelchen said, requiring full-time students to work may clash with effort
credits a semester so they graduate on time.
Beyond the federal proposals, many states have adopted work requirements in their fr
state aid programs. For instance, Tennessee’s community college program, which serv
requires students to complete some community service during high school in order to
lottery scholarships require students to maintain minimum academic standards to rec...
SRI International Names Howard T. Everson Co-Director for Assessment Research in SRI Education

MENLO PARK, Calif., Oct. 9, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- SRI International today announced that Howard Everson, Ph.D., is joining SRI Education, a division of SRI International, as co-director of Assessment Research. Working with Assessment Research Director Geneva Haertel, Ph.D., Everson will lead the design and development of innovative, technology-based assessments of student proficiency in STEM-related disciplines.

Everson’s experience directing research for the College Board and ETS, as well as the National Assessment of Educational Progress Statistical Services Institute, will be leveraged to help states and school districts use student assessments strategically in their efforts to implement new college and career-ready standards. In collaboration with colleagues from SRI’s Center for Technology in Learning, Everson will design and lead studies of the validity of learning assessments embedded within online games and other digital learning environments.

Previously, Everson was a professor of psychology and director of the Center for Advanced Study in Education at the Graduate School of the City University of New York (CUNY). Everson’s research and scholarly interests focus on the intersection of cognition, the learning sciences and assessment. He has contributed to developments in educational psychology, psychometrics and quantitative methods.

Before joining the Center for Advanced Study in Education at CUNY, Everson was a faculty member in the doctoral program in psychometrics at Fordham University. Prior to joining Fordham University, Everson also served as the executive director of the NAEP Statistical Services Institute at the American Institutes for Research, and was the vice president and chief research scientist at the College Board. Everson also served as the executive director of the NAEP Educational Statistics Services Institute at the American Institutes for Research and was the vice president and chief research scientist at the College Board.

Everson earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Brooklyn College, an M.S. in teacher education from Montclair State College in New Jersey, and Ph.D. in educational psychology from City University of New York. He was a Psychometric Fellow at the Educational Testing Service and is an elected Fellow of both the American Educational Research Association and the American Psychological Association. He has authored two books and 16 book chapters, and has published in a variety of peer-reviewed journals including Instructional Science, Applied Psychological Measurement, Journal of Educational and Psychological Measurement, Multivariate Behavioral Research, Anxiety, Stress and Coping, the Educational Psychologist and Teachers College Record. Everson has been named the incoming editor of the journal Educational Measurement: Issues and Practices, published by the National Council for Measurement in Education.

SRI Education (http://srieducation.cmail1.com/t/d-l-yhkylid-bldyiij-m/), a division of SRI International, is tackling the most complex issues in education to help students succeed. We work with federal and state agencies, school districts, major foundations, nonprofit organizations, and international and commercial clients to address risk factors that impede learning, assess learning gains, and use technology for educational innovation. SRI International (http://www.sri.com/), a research center headquartered in Menlo
Henry Kissinger, dangerous fraud: Why he’s as responsible for Iraq and the Middle East as Vietnam

He was a mad man, not a realist. He paved the way for disaster after disaster. We still think about him all wrong

COREY ROBIN (http://WWW.SALON.COM/WRITER/COREY_ROBIN/)


Roberts also was a long-time friend of Niall Ferguson, the man who Kissinger wound up choosing to write his authorized biography. Roberts and Ferguson had even written a lengthy chapter together in a volume of essays edited by Ferguson. Worse yet: Roberts had revealed almost none of these involvements — with Ferguson, with Kissinger — to the New York Times when it asked him to write the review.

So unseemly were these entanglements, and the lack of transparency about them, that Margaret Sullivan, the New York Times public editor, felt called upon to rap the paper’s knuckles (http://mobile.nytimes.com/blogs/publiceditor/2015/10/02/conflicts-and-kissinger-a-tale-of-two-book-reviews/?module=BlogPost-Title&version=Blog%20Main&contentCollection=Opinion&action=Click&gtype=blogs&region=body&_r=0&referer=). Which prompted a further back and forth between Sullivan and Pamela Paul, the editor of the Times Book Review. While the back-scratching world of book reviews in the New York Times is an old topic — unlike other publications, the Times...
purposes to be objective and untainted by personal connections, and its reviews help promote or kill books — this scandal brought it into especially sharp relief.

The person who revealed the scandal in Gawker was Greg Grandin (http://greggrandin.com/), an NYU historian and winner of multiple academic and literary prizes. Grandin has his own book out on Kissinger, “Kissinger's Shadow (http://www.amazon.com/Kissingers-Shadow-Americas-Controversial-Statesman/dp/1627794492/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1431130179&sr=8-1&keywords=kissinger%27s+shadow),” which was reviewed by the Times (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/04/books/review/kissingers-shadow-by-greg-grandin.html) the same day that Ferguson’s bio was.

By coincidence, I was scheduled to interview Grandin at the Brooklyn Public Library (http://www.bklynlibrary.org/calendar/deciders-greg-grandin-hen-central-library-dweck-cen-100415) on the day his review came out. I was thrilled by the prospect. (Full disclosure: Grandin and I are long-time friends. Just in case you thought the personal dimensions of this story couldn't get any gummier.)

A lot of Kissinger commentary focuses on a simple-minded opposition between two traditions of U.S. foreign policy: the realist tradition, which is hard-headed about power, human rights, and America's ability to do good in the world; and the idealist tradition, which believes the U.S. should promote freedom and democracy around the globe.

Grandin shows how irrelevant that debate is. His Kissinger is neither a realist nor an idealist; his Kissinger is a “political existentialist.” And where sentimentalists look back on Kissinger’s reign as a time when wise men governed, Grandin shows that there's a direct link between the insanity of Bush’s Iraq War — and Obama’s endless wars — and Kissinger’s insanity in Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Beyond the novel interpretation Grandin offers of Kissinger, his book is a literary triumph, a marriage of style and substance that’s rare in books on U.S. foreign policy. Grandin’s chapter on the deeply troubled and personal relationship between Kissinger and Daniel Ellsberg reads like the opening act of a John Adams opera (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nixon_in_China). Grandin manages to take a serious topic — the fantastically strange, and unnerving, worldview of Henry Kissinger — and make it funny. Kissinger’s Shadow is like Dr. Strangelove, but on paper. It shows you how scary Kissinger’s reign truly was, but never lets you forget the farce that was the man.

What follows is an edited transcript of our interview at the Brooklyn Public Library.

There’ve been many books about Henry Kissinger, including critical treatments by Christopher Hitchens and Seymour Hersh. Why do we need another book?

Kissinger is an outsized personality, and in these other books, he tends to outstrip the context. You learn much about Kissinger, but not so much about the national security state that he exemplifies. My book sees in Kissinger the workings of the larger system, the longer arc of post-war U.S. foreign policy.

But I want to also take on the notion that Kissinger is a foreign policy realist, that he’s opposed to the
idealist strand of U.S. foreign policy: Kissinger is supposed to think the U.S. should only get into battles it knows it can win, and should only do so in defense of its interests, not its ideals. That notion of Kissinger the realist is often juxtaposed with the adventurism of the neoconservatives who drove us into Iraq. I think that's a misrecognition of Kissinger, and my book shows how.

Picking up on that, if there's a through-line in the book, it's the senior thesis Kissinger wrote when he was at Harvard in the late 1940s. Tell us about this thesis, and why it's so important to you?

He submitted it in 1950. It was the longest thesis in Harvard's history. In fact, it supposedly prompted the creation of the "Kissinger rule," where you aren't allowed to submit an undergraduate thesis longer than 200 pages.

How long was it?

Four hundred pages.

You did say he was outsized.

It was a meditation on European philosophers and historians: Oswald Spengler, Immanuel Kant and Arnold Toynbee. Its title was "The Meaning of History," and it reflected its historical moment. It has a strong flavour of post-war existentialism. You read it and you think of Sartre: the idea that life is meaningless, has no purpose, that there's an emptiness to the universe, that there's no moral order. But, like Sartre, Kissinger also believed that individuals could act freely and that that the best way to achieve freedom was to accept that meaninglessness and emptiness of history. What's interesting about that thesis is that you can see how Kissinger refers back to it throughout the years and in all of his critiques of how U.S. foreign policy was practiced.

You say he's a subjective irrationalist, a political existentialist. What does that mean?

Kissinger says that the past is a series of meaningless events and it is we in the present who impose order on the past by our present concerns. He rejects any and all forms of determinism. He also insists that there is a range of possibilities for action, that there is freedom.

This influences his ideas about diplomacy. The responsibility of statesmen is to recognize that they have freedom to move, they shouldn't be constrained by the past, they shouldn't let the past be a prison house of the present. He also believes — and this is where he links up to neoconservatism — that action creates meaning, and that we — states, statesmen, diplomats — don't know our interests until we act in the world.

There's a circularity to Kissinger's thought. Kissinger often is held up as somebody who believes states should act out of a strong sense of interest and purpose. A constant critique that he makes of whatever the current administration happens to be is that it knows how to project power but doesn't know why it is projecting power. But if you start to peel back the layers and get at what he means by purpose, there's no "there" there. Ultimately, he believes we have to project power to create purpose and that our purpose is to project power. And that's a circularity that I think is the motor force of American expansionism.
Again, a traditional realist is someone who believes that there are limits to power and that states have interests, and that have have to operate within those limits to secure those interests. You show that Kissinger has an animus to what underlies that view: namely, cause and effect. He doesn’t really believe that there are causes in the world that affect things.

After the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kissinger has this great line: “There are two kinds of realists. One that observes reality and responds to it, and the other that makes reality.” And what the West needs is the latter. That view was echoed by Karl Rove when he was in the Bush administration: “We’re an empire now and when we act, we create reality.”

This is all in the undergraduate thesis; he explicitly rejects the idea of cause and effect, of causality. We can’t think of the present as the cumulative effect of past actions because the past didn’t cause the present, because nothing causes anything. So you can’t allow the past to determine or even shape what you do in the present; you can dispense with the past.

You can see that idea with someone like Cheney, who will look at Iraq today and say, “Look, we can debate what we did twelve or thirteen years ago, whether we were right or wrong. But there’s a crisis now, and we have to act now to solve that crisis.” That’s Kissingerism: statesmen shouldn’t let yesterday’s catastrophe get in the way of today’s bold action.

Corey Robin is a professor of political science at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center. Author of The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin and Fear: The History of a Political Idea, he is currently writing a book about Clarence Thomas.
Science Consultant Pushes Back Against Unlikely Opponents

By BARRY MEIER OCT. 11, 2015

Dr. Dennis Paustenbach, the head of the scientific consulting firm ChemRisk, has long been a leading expert for companies under legal fire for environmental practices or product safety. He and his firm have also drawn the scrutiny of investigative journalists.

In 2005, The Wall Street Journal reported on a controversial role ChemRisk played during the case that became the basis for the movie "Erin Brockovich." Seven years later, The Chicago Tribune raised questions about a study by Dr. Paustenbach on the safety of flame retardants. And a 2013 article by the Center for Public Integrity examined his efforts to roll back a proposal concerning workplace safety.

Dr. Paustenbach has insisted that ChemRisk's work is scientifically sound and ethical, adding that plaintiffs' lawyers have been behind the attacks on its credibility. And until recently, the company had never sued any publications or writers for defamation.

But the firm is now locked in a legal fight with some unlikely and defiant opponents: two environmental activists who published an unpaid article in The Huffington Post about ChemRisk's work related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.
"If they had not said a word and let it go, it would have slipped off into obscurity," said one of the authors of the article, Karen Savage, a former middle-school math teacher who noted that the article was initially read by only 400 people.

The lawsuit against Ms. Savage, 49, and her co-defendant, Cherri Foytlin, 42, highlights how the Internet has blurred the line between activists and journalists. But it also raises questions about why ChemRisk is pursuing the case when it chose not to sue a more formidable adversary, The Wall Street Journal, against which it raised similar complaints.

Thomas Clare, a lawyer who has long represented Dr. Paustenbach, said the researcher was traveling and unavailable for an interview. In a statement, ChemRisk, which is now a unit of Cardno ChemRisk, said its goal in bringing the action was to "set the record straight and alert anyone who chooses to publish false claims that they will be held accountable."

It also said that Ms. Foytlin and Ms. Savage had intended to write a "hit piece," and as long as the article remained online, its "falsehoods will continue to do substantial harm to ChemRisk's reputation."

The two women appear unfazed. Without resources to hire a lawyer, they initially represented themselves. And last year, after a New York state court threw out ChemRisk's original lawsuit on jurisdictional grounds, Ms. Foytlin took to her Facebook page when the company again sued Ms. Savage and her in Massachusetts.

"That's cool fellas," wrote Ms. Foytlin, a mother of six who lives in Rayne, La. "We're up for Round Two. Bring it, but you betta go tell ya Daddy that people with nothing to lose rarely do. See ya in Boston, Bruh."

The two women are also fighting back. Pro bono lawyers who now represent them recently filed a motion to get ChemRisk's action dismissed under a Massachusetts state law that protects activists from lawsuits intended to chill advocacy on public policy issues. Such actions are known as strategic lawsuits against public participation, or Slapp suits.

The paths of the women and ChemRisk converged not long after the 2010 explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. Ms. Savage and her
four children, who live in Boston, have spent summers in Louisiana. At the time of
the BP incident, Ms. Foytlin had a part-time job writing feature articles for her
hometown newspaper, which has since closed.

Both women said they became concerned about the potential health risks of
chemicals released by the rig’s blowout, as well as substances used by BP to disperse
the spill. Ms. Foytlin said she had taken a BP-sponsored trip to the gulf to observe
cleanup activities and returned with a hacking cough.

“I was having trouble breathing,” she said. “My doctor thought it was bronchitis,
and that’s when I knew what people were saying about the spill were right.”

In 2011, ChemRisk published a study that found no link between the volatile
chemicals released by the explosion and the health problems that cleanup workers
reported. ChemRisk described its study as “independent,” but Ms. Savage had her
doubts, which intensified after she read an account in The Wall Street Journal about
the firm’s role in a lawsuit indelibly associated with Erin Brockovich, a clerk at a
California law firm who pushed the case forward.

In that episode, a utility, PG&E, was sued over chromium leaking into a town’s
water supplies. During those proceedings, it emerged that a 1987 study published by a
scientist in China, Zhang JianDong, had found high rates of cancer among residents
of villages there who drank chromium-polluted water.

PG&E hired ChemRisk to examine the data underlying Dr. Zhang’s report. What
followed has long been the subject of controversy.

In 1997, Dr. Zhang published a second study in which he appeared to retract his
earlier finding of a link between chromium-polluted drinking water and cancer. But
in 2005, The Wall Street Journal reported that court papers indicated that ChemRisk
had “conceived, drafted, edited and submitted” that research to scientific publications
without disclosing its role in it. ChemRisk also paid Dr. Zhang $2,000 for his
“research assistance” on the study, the newspaper reported.

ChemRisk has insisted that it did nothing wrong and that Dr. Zhang signed off
on the report. But the professional journal that published the study retracted it.
In 2013, Ms. Foytlin and Ms. Savage, who met before a protest march by Gulf Coast activists from New Orleans to Washington, contributed an article to The Huffington Post about ChemRisk and its Deepwater Horizon report.

In it, they charged that ChemRisk had a “long, and on at least one occasion fraudulent, history of defending big polluters,” a reference to their interpretation of The Journal’s article about the “Erin Brockovich” case.

A spokesman for Dr. Paustenbach immediately asked The Huffington Post to retract the article. The website referred the complaint to Ms. Foytlin, who posted a note on her Facebook page in which she told ChemRisk to “kiss my derriere.”

ChemRisk then filed its defamation lawsuit. But the company, while suing Ms. Foytlin and Ms. Savage, apparently opted not to file a similar action against a more experienced opponent, The Wall Street Journal.

Responding to questions from The New York Times, ChemRisk initially issued a statement saying that it had not sued the newspaper because it believed that The Journal’s decision to publish several letters to the editor had “set the record straight.”

But the company revised that stance after a Times reporter informed it that a review of correspondence showed that ChemRisk had apparently demanded that The Journal, long after publishing those letters, retract or correct its article.

“If we had known that we’d still be dealing with the damaging falsehoods in The Wall Street Journal article nearly 11 years after it was printed, we definitely would have sued The Journal in 2005,” Mr. Clare, the firm’s lawyer, said in a statement.

ChemRisk’s letters to The Journal a decade ago also indicate that it made nearly identical claims about the economic and reputational damage it had suffered from the newspaper’s article as the ones it is now making in its lawsuit against Ms. Foytlin and Ms. Savage.

“The financial and professional impact of this story has now directly resulted in the loss of millions of dollars in revenues for our organization and this cannot be tolerated,” Dr. Paustenbach wrote The Journal in 2006. “A retraction or correction of the record must occur.”
At a hearing scheduled for this week, a judge in Massachusetts is expected to hear arguments about whether Ms. Foytlin and Ms. Savage qualify for protection under the state's anti-Slapp statute. And that question may hinge on whether the women acted as journalists or as activists seeking to influence public policy.

In court papers, ChemRisk has argued that the state law does not apply to the women because, among other reasons, its protections are limited to those participating directly in public policy decisions, like matters before a town council.

Ms. Savage, who is studying journalism part time at the City University of New York, said that she and Ms. Foytlin rejected an earlier offer from ChemRisk to drop the case if they retracted the article and issued an apology over social media. Their stance is unlikely to change.

"Just the idea that they think they can get anything from me," Ms. Foytlin said. "I have a mortgage, a 1999 Suburban and I have six kids."

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