

# **GANZ NOTES - TNS 12, 4 (25 April 2023): Jane Jacobs (1916-2006)**

## **QUICK OVERVIEW**

**Jane Jacobs****1916–2006****Education****School of Graduate Studies,  
Columbia University****First break****Joining the magazine*****Architectural Forum* (1952)****Key Publications*****The Death and Life of Great  
American Cities* (1961)*****The Economy of  
Cities* (1969)*****Cities and the Wealth  
of Nations* (1984)*****Dark Age Ahead* (2004)****Garlands****American Sociological  
Association Outstanding  
Lifetime Contribution  
Award (2002)****Rockerfeller Foundation  
creation of Jane Jacobs  
Medal (2007)****Quote****'Cities have the capability  
of providing something for  
everybody, only because,  
and only when, they are  
created by everybody'****Sharon Zukin on Jane Jacobs (November 2011)  
in *Architectural Review***

"Where Jacobs's ideas work well, they focus on the social web that undergirds microcosmic urban life. Her description of the 'sidewalk ballet', the set-piece of the

second chapter in *The Death and Life*, weaves a rhythmic narrative of the butcher, the baker, the bartender and other stalwarts of High Street shops who keep an eye on the street and subtly, without direction from external authorities, exert social control over the unpredictable flow of strangers and friends. Jacobs's remarkable idea is that the street is pre-eminently a social space. If we ignore the routine interdependencies and everyday diversity a city street enfold, we lose the qualities that give it life and guarantee its safety."

## YOUTUBE CONVERSATION ABOUT JANE JACOBS

See YouTube comment by Blanca Calvo Boixet on Jane Jacobs: *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9GkaaMKIXs&t=140s>

## TODAY IS THE FEAST OF ST. MARK, EVANGELIST

**Mark 1:** <sup>1</sup> The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ [the Son of God].\* [1]

In the Greek text of Mark, the word "**beginning**" has nothing in front of it, neither "the" nor "a"; the Gospel starts abruptly with the simple word "**Beginning**." By this device Mark calls attention to this word and emphasizes it. In this way he recalls the opening of the Hebrew Bible - "In

the beginning" - the moment of Creation. **In Jewish tradition the word "beginning" was equated with Wisdom, because in the book of Proverbs personified Wisdom says, "The Lord made me *the beginning* of his way" (Prov 8:22).** So, some Jewish teachers paraphrased Genesis 1:1 to read, "In *Wisdom* God created the heavens and the earth." **Mark's opening is thus rich in meaning, identifying the gospel (or "good news") of Jesus with Wisdom, and that Wisdom with a new Creation.**<sup>[2]</sup>

## **ABOUT SERIES 12**

Series 12 of The Night School of the Faber Institute explores, Guest by Guest, month by month, **how it happens that when evil has gotten into the fabric of a culture (e.g., American culture), the soul/a person instinctively "retracts" in revulsion (very often unnoticed by a person this retraction). That is, evil is a toxin that corrupts things so central to the soul's essence that the soul/a person "pulls back" and finds/establishes a defensive position in relation to that evil (doing this most often without noticing that he or she has done this).** The soul/a person seeks a "safe" spot (i.e., a way of understanding himself or herself) in which to hide, something which Becker powerfully describes as "the vital lie". **When this is happening on a broad front in the people of an unhealthy culture, those people/that nation (government, church, social class) will quickly lose track of what being a human being is. Not knowing who we are at this fundamental level of awareness leaves us too able to be manipulated to**

**“conform” to someone else’s “safe” version - vital lie - of personhood.**

January 2023	Ernest Becker (1924-1974)	As a cultural anthropologist, Becker was searching for explanations of why human society develops in the way that it does, and he was particularly interested in why human society is so violent, why different social groups are so intolerant and hateful of each other.
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February 2023	Frederick Douglass (1817/8-1895)	An advocate for women's rights, and specifically the right of women to vote, Douglass' legacy as an author and leader lives on. His work served as an inspiration to the civil rights movement of the 1960s and beyond.
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March 2023

T.S. Eliot  
(1888-1965)

Paul Pastor, through his reading of Eliot's concern with human meaning in *Time*, explored how the soul had become "hollow" or "wasted" by an avoiding, or pulling back from, the responsibilities of *Time*.

April 2023

Jane Jacobs  
(1916-2006)

A central biblical symbol is that of a City – God's city on earth: Jerusalem, and Zion (the Temple Mount). Christians then developed the idea that the Temple was a formal representation

of all that the Garden of Eden meant (how God intended us to exist in relation to Him and to all of creation), and that human beings were Temples of the Holy Spirit. The interesting point in all of this is how a "city" could be, from God's perspective, an ideal place for Eden to exist ... if we knew how cities work and do not work.



May 2023	Ed Yong (b. 1981)	The "retraction" or "pulling back" from an intimate knowledge of the First Gift (creation) that the presence of Evil catalyzes removes human beings from an essential relationship of life and understanding.
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## A QUESTION

What exactly do we mean when we refer to "the city of Portland" (or any other city)? To what exactly are we referring?

## THE MEANING OF "ZION"

Psalm 122:

II

<sup>6</sup> For the peace of Jerusalem pray:  
"May those who love you prosper!  
<sup>7</sup> May peace be within your ramparts,  
prosperity within your towers."d

8 For the sake of my brothers and friends I say,  
"Peace be with you."<sup>e</sup>

9 For the sake of the house of the Lord, our God,  
I pray for your good. [3]

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**metonymy**" –  
(a) *Rhetoric*. (A figure of speech characterized by)  
the action of substituting for a word or phrase  
denoting an object, action, institution, etc., a word or  
phrase denoting a property or something associated  
with it, e.g. as when referring to the monarchy as  
'the crown' or the theatre as 'the stage'; an instance  
of this. (b) In extended use: a thing used or  
regarded as a substitute for or symbol of something  
else. Also (esp. in *Linguistics* and *Literary Theory*):  
the process of semantic association involved in  
producing and understanding a metonymy.

### **Margaret Barker (2009) –**

For many years, the quest to recover the world of the temple was, for me, a fascinating field of research, but vast. **It extended from the first temple as it was remembered - perhaps with the golden haze that can soften a distant but still cherished memory - to the corrupt reality of Herod's monstrosity, which St John described as the great harlot, 'the mother of harlots and of earth's abominations', drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (Rev. 17.5-6).** Then, in February 1999 I was present, for the first time, at an episcopal liturgy of the Orthodox

Church. My eyes were opened, and I realised that I was looking at temple ritual. Since then, I have been searching in early Christian material for evidence of the temple roots of Christian practice.

*Lexham Factbook* – The **first temple** was built by King Solomon around 950 BCE and was destroyed in 587/6 BCE by the Babylonians. After the fall of Babylon in 539 BCE, Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem and led by Zerubbabel, began to rebuild the temple. The **second temple** was completed around 518/17 BCE and was extensively **renovated by Herod the Great starting in 20 BCE**. The Romans destroyed the second temple in 70 CE during the First Jewish Revolt.

**During the five centuries or so before the time of Jesus, the story of the original temple had become fused with the story of Eden.** Both had been lost, but the early Church claimed that both had been restored. **The Christians saw themselves as the new temple, or rather, the restored true temple, the living temple.** Had not the risen LORD promised the faithful that they would eat again from the tree of life in Eden? They were restored Adams.

First a little about the meaning of the temple building itself because this gives the world view and the context. **The temple represented the whole creation, both visible and invisible. The veil of the temple separated the holy of holies - which was the invisible world, eternity, the state of God and the angels from the visible material**

creation in time. Both were part of the one creation, and the shape of the temple symbolised the LORD enthroned in the midst. This is what Jesus meant by 'The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you.' (Luke 17.21). The veil distinguished eternity from time, and the unity from the distinct beings of the material creation. *In the holy of holies there was neither time as we know it nor matter, and so there could be, by definition, nothing to divide and separate.* It was the state of unity, divine unity.

The temple world view envisaged a great covenant of wholeness that bound all creation: it bound the visible creation to all the parts of itself and the whole to the Creator who was the source of its life. Recent scholarship has used the term 'cosmic covenant', *but in the Old Testament it is called 'the covenant of peace', that is, of wholeness, and 'the covenant of eternity', binding the temporal to the eternal.* The verb 'create', *bara'* which is only used of divine activity, is related to the word for covenant, *be'rith*, and both mean 'binding'. **Anything that broke these bonds was, by definition, sin.** In the New Testament, this appears as 'The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph.4.3).

## A. The Meaning of "Zion"

In its biblical usage, the term "Zion" has at least four meanings.

FIRST - The word seems, first, to have been **the name of a fortress in Jerusalem during the period just before**

**David captured the city from the Jebusites.** It was he who changed the name "the stronghold of Zion" to "the City of David" (2 Sam 5:7, 9). The likelihood is that the earliest biblical usage of the term was in reference to the ridge in the SE section of Jerusalem which lies between the Wadi Kidron and the Tyropoeon Valley.

SECOND - David's son and successor Solomon expanded Jerusalem to the NW, building his great temple of YHWH, the God of Israel, upon a hill that came to be known as "Mount Zion" (e.g., Ps 78:68–69). **Indeed, as we shall soon see, the biblical Zion traditions are usually tightly associated with the theology of the temple. It is thus this second meaning, the use of "Zion" to designate the Temple Mount, that is most relevant to our discussion.**

THIRD - From the second derives the third meaning: **by a process of metonymy "Zion" came to refer to Jerusalem itself, that is, to the entire temple city.**

Thus, Lamentations uses "Fair Zion" (e.g., JPSV [1985]) and "Jerusalem" interchangeably (e.g., Lam 2:6–8). "Fair Zion" is simply the poignant personification of the great temple city; a sharp distinction between the traditions of Zion and those of Jerusalem cannot be sustained.

FOURTH - By a further use of metonymy, Zion, like Jerusalem, came to refer to the people Israel and not just their temple mountain and city, so that Second Isaiah reports YHWH to "[h]ave said to Zion: 'You are My people!' " (Isa 51:16; JPSV), and Zechariah can apostrophize thus: "O Zion, you who dwell in Fair

Babylon!" (Zech 2:11; JPSV). This last citation, from about 520 BCE, shows how much the term "Zion" changed—or, rather, grew—in the half millennium from the time Israel first used it. **Once the name of a ridge in pre-Davidic Jerusalem, it had now become a designation for the people of Israel themselves, though without having shed its spatial reference.** Since the fates of the Temple Mount, of Jerusalem, and of the whole house of Israel were inextricably intertwined in the temple theology, it stands to reason that the same term could come to refer to any and all of the three.<sup>[4]</sup>

## QUOTATIONS

**William McClay (2011) –**

Her book was refreshingly un-abstract and densely empirical, built upon an accumulation of lovingly rendered details about what works and doesn't work in modern city life. **Despite the withering contempt of experts and allies alike—even the architectural critic Lewis Mumford, letting his unfortunate susceptibility to vanity get the better of him, could not resist dismissing *Death and Life* as a "preposterous mass of historic misinformation and contemporary misinterpretation" assembled by "a sloppy novice"—this unaccredited journalist-mother, with no college education, no training in planning, and no institutional support,** wrote a book that would change the way the world thinks about cities.

**Veery Huleatt (June 2017) –**

**Robert Moses's characterization of his opponents as "a bunch of mothers," although meant to be dismissive, was not far off the mark. Jacobs's activism was motivated by her love for her neighborhood and what it nurtured and protected—her children and her neighbors' children, and the bustling cultural life and the friendships it enabled. It's wrong to be a victim, she told her neighbors. If you love something, stand up and fight for it! Robert Moses's attitude, Jacobs wrote, "boil[ed] down to a *deep contempt for ordinary people.*" And this contempt was his downfall. Blind to the strength of ordinary loves and convictions, Moses underestimated his opponents and was defeated.**

**John Blundell (2012) –**

**Jacobs has said "I believe in control from below and support from above", and she is relentless in her criticism of city planners and elected officials who, backed by tax money, think they can plan our lives. *To Jacobs, the best cities are the result of human action, not human design.***

**Roberta Brandes Gratz (2016) –**

**Interestingly, Jane Jacobs divided the world into *foot people and car people.* For foot people, she agreed, the book gave "legitimacy to what they already knew themselves. Experts of the time did**

not respect what foot people knew and valued. They were deemed old fashioned and selfish—troublesome of the time sand in the wheels of progress."

### ***The Guardian* (newspaper) "Story of Cities #32 (2016)**

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In 1961, Bennett Cerf, one of the founders of the publishing firm Random House, sent a copy of a new book by Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of American Cities*, to the legendary city planner Robert Moses. Moses's reply was curt:

Dear Bennett,

I am returning the book you sent me. Aside from the fact that it is intemperate and inaccurate, it is also libelous. I call your attention, for example, to page 131. Sell this junk to someone else.

Cordially, Robert Moses

## **HOW TO THINK**

One of the most valuable aspects of this book is **the way Jane Jacobs thinks**.

A **conceptualist/idealist** will think in concepts, beautiful concepts – objects of thought – and explore and organize concepts into attractive patterns. A conceptualist will build, if you will, "castles in the air". To put this another way, **a conceptualist will start with concepts as if they were the data of experience**.

A **realist** will attend to the data of experience, paying close attention to what his or her observations of actual



life offer for his consideration (asking questions of that experience; seeking to understand patterns in that experience – “a long, loving look at the (potentially) real”. In short, a realist knows how *to pay attention habitually*.

Recall the “realism” of **Mary Oliver (d 2019)** expressed in one of her most famous poems, “The Summer Day” -

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

*This* grasshopper, I mean—

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,  
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,  
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up  
and down—

who is gazing around with her enormous and  
complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly  
washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

**I don't know exactly what a prayer is.**

***I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down  
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,  
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through  
the fields,***

**which is what I have been doing all day.**

Tell me, what else should I have done?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?

So, in this book we shall start, if only in a small way, ***adventuring in the real world***, ourselves. The way to get at what goes on in the seemingly mysterious and perverse behavior of cities is, I think, **to look closely, and with as little previous expectation as is possible, at the most ordinary scenes and events, and attempt to see what they mean and whether any threads of principle emerge among them.** This is what I try to do in the first part of this book. [Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (p. 13). Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.]

**READ HERE** from her book: Part I, Chapter 2: "The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety", starting at page 50.

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**Veery Huleatt in *First Things* (June 2017) –**

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up and fight for it! Robert Moses's attitude, Jacobs wrote, "boil[ed] down to a deep contempt for ordinary people." And this contempt was his downfall. Blind to the strength of ordinary loves and convictions, Moses underestimated his opponents and was defeated.

**Unfortunately, one of the great places of conceptualism is the Church.** It is one thing to be committed and with greatest devotion to Tradition – a very great treasure and essential legacy: the story of the works of the Holy Spirit – but it is quite another to "forget" that doctrines (objects of thought) and dogmas (affirmations of enduring truth and mystery) **came from the most concrete of circumstances, of actual people actually experiencing life and trying to figure things out, trying to understand sufficiently what God was up to in that time and place.**

## **ONE OF THE WISEST THINGS**

It was Fr. Gordon Moreland, SJ, who was the Father of my Soul, who once told me, "Rick, you must remember that Institutions do not love people; people love (or do not love) people."

**The Church does not love us; it never did or will.**

Rather, it will *demand* that we love it. But holy and good people, who incarnate a Christ-like life (taught them by the teachings and traditions of the Church) can and may love us, helping us understand what the Church properly is. It is a very early Christian understanding that Christians

are the new Temple, who "contain" within them the entire structure and purposes of the biblical (Jerusalem) Temple.

## SIGNIFICANT WORDS

### CITY

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**city**" –

**2.** A large or important municipality. **a.** With reference to English-speaking places: a municipality traditionally or officially designated a city, being larger in size or population, or having greater status, than a town.

Use of the term *city* is now typically granted to large towns meeting certain criteria relating to population size and density, record of local government, number of public facilities, etc. **However, the distinction between *town* and *city* has varied over time and is understood differently throughout the English-speaking world. In the United Kingdom city status is granted by the monarch and has traditionally been associated with cathedral towns**, although many newly-created cities since the late 19th cent. have lacked cathedrals (see the etymology for further discussion of cities in England, Scotland, and Ireland).

**In early U.S. use, 'city' was often applied to small settlements in anticipation of future growth, and**

is regularly used for small, incorporated places as well as for major conurbations [i.e., "an aggregation of urban areas"], with exact legal characteristics varying in different states.

City status is also variously determined in different Canadian provinces, but in some cases cannot be lost once granted, meaning that the term may be used of small municipalities following population decline.

London is an anomaly: it contains two officially designated cities, the City of London (see sense [6a](#)), and the City of Westminster, but 'city' is also used more generally to denote the entire urban area of Greater London.

## PROGRESS & DEVELOPMENT

In my lifetime, the "city" and what a "thriving" city has meant, is one that reflects progress. So much that existed is knocked down, removed, plowed under **for the sake of progress** ... and we all were expected to be amazed by progress, ignoring what it destroyed. How often I remember hearing that it was wrong "to get in the way of progress."

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**progress**" from the Latin *progressus* -us, masculine (from *progredior*, *progrediri*, 3) meaning "an advance, a going forward, a development" –

2. *spec.* Advancement to a further or higher stage, or to further or higher stages successively; growth;

development, usually to a better state or condition; improvement; an instance of this. Frequently **to make progress**. In later use applied esp. to **manifestations of social and economic change or reform**.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**development**" –

"**I. Senses relating to growth or becoming more advanced or elaborate.** **1.** The action or process of bringing something to a fuller or more advanced condition; *spec.* the explanation or elaboration of an idea, theory, etc. Also: an instance of this." However, and probably more to the delight of Jane Jacobs is this definition: "**2.b.** The growth or formation of a wart, tumour, or other anatomical aberration." See also: "**3. a.** Growth or maturation into a form which is more advanced, more elaborate, etc.; gradual change or progression by successive stages. Also: an instance of this." Further, "**5. b.** The action or process of designing and bringing to fruition a new product or technology, typically after the implementation of alterations to the original concept following testing or consultation." Further, "**7. a.** The action or process of modifying a site or property so as to enhance its profitability or suitability for a particular purpose; **the conversion of land to a new purpose**, esp. by constructing new buildings." Perhaps the meaning of "development" that would most appeal to Jacobs is: "**II. Senses relating to disclosure, becoming visible, or opening out.** **†9. a.** The action or process of uncovering or bringing to light something previously hidden or undisclosed, or of shedding light on an unclear matter. *Obsolete.*"

# THE DEATH AND LIFE OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES (1961)

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (originally published 1961)

ASIN: B01HWKSBDI

Publisher: Vintage; Reissue edition (July 20, 2016)

Publication date: July 20, 2016

Print length: 448 pages

## INTRODUCTION

**NOTE:** A way of getting to the insight Jacobs labors here to express is that long before there were "cities" there were people, actual people with actual work and dreams, living together in "society" (Latin, *societas* meaning "friend") and helping one another secure vital values. A "city" was not a city; it was just where people lived.

In short, I shall be writing about **how cities work in real life**, because this is the only way to learn what principles of planning and what practices in rebuilding can promote social and economic vitality in cities, and what practices and principles will deaden these attributes. (4)

## OUR METHOD – "ADVENTURING IN THE REAL WORLD"

So, in this book we shall start, if only in a small way, ***adventuring in the real world***, ourselves. The way to get at what goes on in the seemingly mysterious and perverse behavior of cities is, I think, to look closely, and with as little previous expectation as is possible, at the most ordinary scenes and events, and attempt to see what they mean and whether any threads of principle emerge among them. This is what I try to do in the first part of this book. (13)

I think that unsuccessful city areas are areas which lack this kind of **intricate mutual support**, and that the science of city planning and the art of city design, in real life for real cities, must become the science and art of catalyzing and nourishing these close-grained working relationships. (14)

**But people who are interested only in how a city "ought" to look and uninterested in how it works will be disappointed by this book.** (14)

She was saying more: **There is a quality even meaner than outright ugliness or disorder, and this meaner quality is the dishonest mask of pretended order, achieved by *ignoring or suppressing the real order* that is struggling to exist and to be served.** (15)

Also, to be frank, **I like dense cities best and care about them most.** (16)

## **PART ONE: THE PECULIAR NATURE OF CITIES**



## (PAGES 29-140)

### 2 - THE USES OF SIDEWALKS: SAFETY

A city sidewalk by itself is nothing. It is an abstraction. It means something only in conjunction with the buildings and other uses that border it, or border other sidewalks very near it. The same might be said of streets, in the sense that they serve other purposes besides carrying wheeled traffic in their middles. **Streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs.** (29)

But sidewalks and those who use them are not passive beneficiaries of safety or helpless victims of danger. **Sidewalks, their bordering uses, and their users, are active participants in the drama of civilization versus barbarism in cities.** To keep the city safe is a fundamental task of a city's streets and its sidewalks. (30)

### CITIES ARE "FULL OF STRANGERS"

Great cities are not like towns, only larger. They are not like suburbs, only denser. They differ from towns and suburbs in basic ways, **and one of these is that cities are, by definition, full of strangers.** To any one person, strangers are far more common in big cities than acquaintances. (30)

The bedrock attribute of a successful city district is that **a person must feel personally safe and secure on the street among all these strangers. He must not feel**

**automatically menaced by them.** A city district that fails in this respect also does badly in other ways and lays up for itself, and for its city at large, mountain on mountain of trouble. (30)

**Today barbarism has taken over many city streets, or people fear it has, which comes to much the same thing in the end.** "I live in a lovely, quiet residential area," says a friend of mine who is hunting another place to live. "The only disturbing sound at night is the occasional scream of someone being mugged." **It does not take many incidents of violence on a city street, or in a city district, to make people fear the streets. And as they fear them, they use them less, which makes the streets still more unsafe.** (3)

## **"UNSAFE" DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN "THE POOR"**

**The problem of sidewalk and doorstep insecurity is as serious in cities which have made conscientious efforts at rebuilding as it is in those cities that have lagged.** Nor is it illuminating to tag minority groups, or the poor, or the outcast with responsibility for city danger. There are immense variations in the degree of civilization and safety found among such groups and among the city areas where they live. **Some of the safest sidewalks in New York City, for example, at any time of day or night, are those along which poor people or minority groups live.** And some of the most dangerous are in streets occupied by the same kinds of people. All this can also be said of other cities. (31)

## UNCONSCIOUS NETWORK OF VOLUNTARY CONTROLS

The first thing to understand is that the public peace—the sidewalk and street peace—of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. *It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves and enforced by the people themselves.* (31-32)

**Mary Ann Glendon in a review of a book by Jane Jacobs in 1992** – “In her latest book, Jane Jacobs trains her genial, sparkling intelligence on a subject that is much neglected in our law-saturated society: the great webs of manners, customs, social sanctions, and informal understandings that undergird economic and political life. **As Judith Martin (Miss Manners) has had occasion to point out in these pages, members of a society without well-developed systems of *informal* social regulation will tend to resort too often and too quickly to the LAW, a crude, incomplete, and expensive substitute.** With *Systems of Survival* [1992] Jacobs becomes an eloquent contemporary proponent of Tocqueville’s view that ***manners and mores are much more important than laws*** in sustaining the world’s democratic experiments.”

**A FALSE SOLUTION TO FEAR – SPREADING PEOPLE**

## APART

The second thing to understand is that the problem of insecurity **cannot be solved by spreading people out more thinly**, trading the characteristics of cities for the characteristics of suburbs. (32)

Yet Los Angeles [an example of sprawl] cannot, any more than any other great city, evade the truth that, **being a city, it is composed of strangers not all of whom are nice**. Los Angeles' crime figures are flabbergasting. Among the seventeen standard metropolitan areas with populations over a million, Los Angeles stands so pre-eminent in crime that it is in a category by itself. **And this is markedly true of crimes associated with personal attack, the crimes that make people fear the streets.** (32)

The reasons for Los Angeles' high crime rates are undoubtedly complex, and at least in part obscure. **But of this we can be sure: thinning out a city does not ensure safety from crime and fear of crime.** This is one of the conclusions that can be drawn within individual cities too, where pseudo-suburbs or superannuated suburbs are ideally suited to rape, muggings, beatings, holdups and the like. (32-33)

## NO OPPORTUNITY FOR STREET BARBARISM

**Some city streets afford no opportunity to street barbarism.** The streets of the North End of Boston are

outstanding examples. They are probably as safe as any place on earth in this respect. Although most of the North End's residents are Italian or of Italian descent, the district's streets are also heavily and constantly used by people of every race and background. (33)

Frank Havey, director of the North End Union, the local settlement house, says, "I have been here in the North End twenty-eight years, and in all that time I have never heard of a single case of rape, mugging, molestation of a child or other street crime of that sort in the district. And if there had been any, I would have heard of it even if it did not reach the papers." **Half a dozen times or so in the past three decades, says Havey, would-be molesters have made an attempt at luring a child or, late at night, attacking a woman. In every such case the try was thwarted by passers-by, by kibitzers from windows, or shopkeepers.** (33)

## **A STREET ABLE TO HANDLE STRANGERS – THREE QUALITIES**

A city street equipped to handle strangers, and to make a safety asset, in itself, out of the presence of strangers, as the streets of successful city neighborhoods always do, must have three main qualities:

**First**, there must be a clear demarcation between what is public space and what is private space. Public and private spaces cannot ooze into each other as they do typically in suburban settings or in projects.

## EYES ON THE STREET

**Second**, there must be eyes upon the street, **eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. *The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to ensure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street.*** They cannot turn their backs or blank sides on it and leave it blind.

And **third**, the sidewalk must have users on it fairly continuously, both to add to the number of effective eyes on the street and to induce the people in buildings along the street to watch the sidewalks in sufficient numbers. Nobody enjoys sitting on a stoop or looking out a window at an empty street. Almost nobody does such a thing. **Large numbers of people entertain themselves, off and on, by watching street activity.** (35)

In settlements that are smaller and simpler than big cities, controls on acceptable public behavior, if not on crime, seem to operate with greater or lesser success through **a web of reputation, gossip, approval, disapproval, and sanctions**, all of which are powerful if people know each other and word travels. (35)

## **"PROTECTED" SPACES CAN NEVER REPLACE SIDEWALKS/STREETS**

It is futile to try to evade the issue of unsafe city streets by attempting to make some other features of a locality, say

interior courtyards, or sheltered play spaces, safe instead. ***By definition again, the streets of a city must do most of the job of handling strangers for this is where strangers come and go.*** The streets must not only defend the city against predatory strangers, but they must also protect the many, many peaceable and well-meaning strangers who use them, ensuring their safety too as they pass through. (35-36)

On the surface, we seem to have here some simple aims: To try to secure streets where the public space is unequivocally public, physically unmixed with private or with nothing-at-all space, so that the area needing surveillance has clear and practicable limits; and **to see that these public street spaces have eyes on them as continuously as possible.** (36)

## **“THE EYES” - STOREKEEPERS AND BUSINESS OWNERS**

Third, storekeepers and other small businessmen are typically strong proponents of peace and order themselves; they hate broken windows and holdups; **they hate having customers made nervous about safety.** They are great street watchers and sidewalk guardians if present in sufficient numbers. (37)

## **PEOPLE LIKE CROWDS**

This last point, that **the sight of people attracts still**

**other people**, is something that city planners and city architectural designers seem to find incomprehensible. **They operate on the premise that city people seek the sight of emptiness, obvious order and quiet.** Nothing could be less true. People's love of watching activity and other people is constantly evident in cities everywhere. (37)

## THE PURE WATCHERS

It is just so on city streets elsewhere. **A lively street always has both its users and pure watchers.** (37)

This woman was one of thousands upon thousands of people in New York **who casually take care of the streets. They notice strangers.** They observe everything going on. If they need to take action, whether to direct a stranger waiting in the wrong place or to call the police, they do so. **Action usually requires, to be sure, a certain self-assurance about the actor's proprietorship of the street and the support he will get if necessary,** matters which will be gone into later in this book. (38)

## THE PROBLEM OF "TRANSIENT" DWELLERS

The high-rent tenants, most of whom are so transient we cannot even keep track of their faces, have not the remotest idea of who takes care of their street, or how. A city neighborhood can absorb and protect a substantial number of these birds of passage, as our neighborhood



does. **But if and when the neighborhood finally becomes them, they will gradually find the streets less secure, they will be vaguely mystified about it, and if things get bad enough, they will drift away to another neighborhood which is mysteriously safer.** (39)

Once a street is well equipped to handle strangers, once it has both a good, effective demarcation between private and public spaces and has a basic supply of activity and eyes, the more strangers the merrier. (40)

### **DENSITY IF IT MEANS "DIVERSIFIED"**

The preferences of Utopians, and of other compulsive managers of other people's leisure, for one kind of legal enterprise over others is worse than irrelevant for cities. It is harmful. **The greater and more plentiful the range of all legitimate interests (in the strictly legal sense) that city streets and their enterprises can satisfy, the better for the streets and for the safety and civilization of the city.** (41)

### **STREET LIGHTING CAN BE DANGEROUS**

Thus, the [street] lights induce these people to contribute their own eyes to the upkeep of the street. **Moreover, as is obvious, good lighting augments every pair of eyes, makes the eyes count for more because their range is greater.** Each additional pair of eyes, and every increase in their range, is that much to the good for dull gray areas. ***But unless eyes are there, and unless in the brains***

*behind those eyes is the almost unconscious reassurance of general street support in upholding civilization, lights can do no good.* Horrifying public crimes can, and do, occur in well-lighted subway stations when no effective eyes are present. They virtually never occur in darkened theaters where many people and eyes are present. Streetlights can be like that famous stone that falls in the desert where there are no ears to hear. Does it make a noise? ***Without effective eyes to see,*** does a light cast light? Not for practical purposes. (42)

## **“SOLUTIONS” WHEN LIVING IN A DANGEROUS CITY**

Suppose we continue with building, and with deliberate rebuilding, of unsafe cities. How do we live with this insecurity? From the evidence thus far, there seem to be ***three modes of living with it;*** maybe in time others will be invented but I suspect these three will simply be further developed, if that is the word for it. **The FIRST MODE is to let danger hold sway and let those unfortunate enough to be stuck with it take the consequences.** This is the policy now followed with respect to low-income housing projects, and to many middle-income housing projects. **The SECOND MODE is to take refuge in vehicles.** This is a technique practiced in the big wild-animal reservations of Africa, where tourists are warned to leave their cars under no circumstances until they reach a lodge. It is also the technique practiced in Los Angeles. Surprised visitors to that city are forever recounting how the police of Beverly Hills stopped them, made them prove their reasons for

being afoot, and warned them of the danger. This technique of public safety does not seem to work too effectively yet in Los Angeles, as the crime rate shows, but in time it may. And think what the crime figures might be if more people without metal shells were helpless upon the vast, blind-eyed reservation of Los Angeles. People in dangerous parts of other cities often use automobiles as protection too, of course, or try to. A letter to the editor in the *New York Post*, reads, "I live on a dark street off Utica Avenue in Brooklyn and therefore decided to take a cab home even though it was not late. The cab driver asked that I get off at the corner of Utica, saying he did not want to go down the dark street. If I had wanted to walk down the dark street, who needed him?" **The THIRD MODE, at which I have already hinted while discussing Hyde Park-Kenwood, was developed by hoodlum gangs and has been adopted widely by developers of the rebuilt city. This mode is to cultivate the institution of Turf.** Under the Turf system in its historical form, a gang appropriates as its territory certain streets or housing projects or parks—often a combination of the three. Members of other gangs cannot enter this Turf without permission from the Turf-owning gang, or if they do so it is at peril of being beaten or run off. In 1956, the New York City Youth Board, fairly desperate because of gang warfare, arranged through its gang youth workers a series of truces among fighting gangs. The truces were reported to stipulate, among other provisions, a mutual understanding of Turf boundaries among the gangs concerned and agreement not to trespass. (46-47)

## **THE WORKING CITY AS "DANCE", "BALLET"**

Under the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a marvelous order for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city. **It is a complex order. Its essence is intricacy of sidewalk use, bringing with it a constant succession of eyes.** This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it ***the art form of the city and liken it to the dance***—not to a simple-minded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off *en masse*, but to ***an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole.*** The ballet of the good city sidewalk never repeats itself from place to place, and in any one place is always replete with new improvisations.  
(50)

# Jane Jacobs



Jacobs, Jane

**Jane Jacobs**, née **Jane Butzner**, (born May 4, 1916, Scranton, Pa., U.S.—died April 25, 2006, Toronto, Ont., Can.), American-born Canadian urbanologist noted for her clear and original observations on urban life and its problems.

After graduating from high school, Butzner worked at the *Scranton Tribune*. She moved to New York City in 1934, where she held several different jobs while writing articles for various newspapers and magazines. In 1944 she met and married architect Robert Hyde Jacobs. Already keenly interested in city neighbourhoods and their vitality, both as a writer and—increasingly—as a community activist, she explored urban design and planning at length with her husband. In 1952 she became an associate editor of *Architectural Forum*, where she worked for a decade.

In 1961 Jacobs published her first full-length book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, a brash and passionate reinterpretation of the multiple needs of modern urban places. The book, translated into several languages, established her as a force to be reckoned with by planners and economists. *The Economy of Cities* (1969) discusses the importance of diversity to a city's prosperity, and it, too, challenged much of the conventional wisdom on urban planning. Opposed to the Vietnam War and worried that her sons would be drafted, Jacobs and her family moved to Canada in 1968; she later became a Canadian citizen. Her other works include *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (1984) and *The Nature of Economies* (2000). *Dark Age Ahead* (2004) centred on the decline of American culture.

This article was most recently revised and updated by Amy Tikkanen.

## Citation Information

Article Title: Jane Jacobs

Website Name: Encyclopaedia Britannica

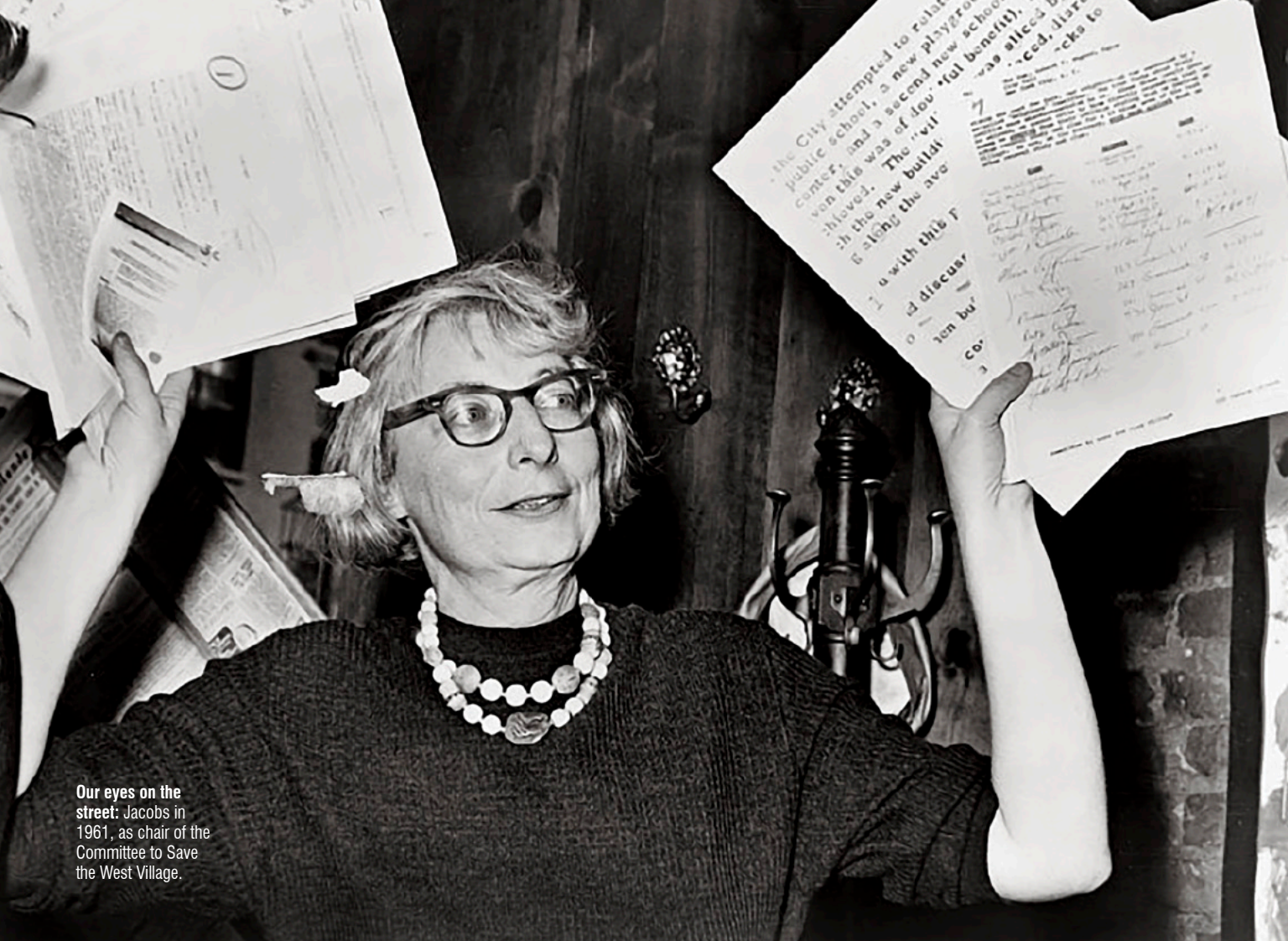
Publisher: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

Date Published: 21 April 2023

URL: <https://www.britannica.com><https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jane-Jacobs>

Access Date: April 21, 2023



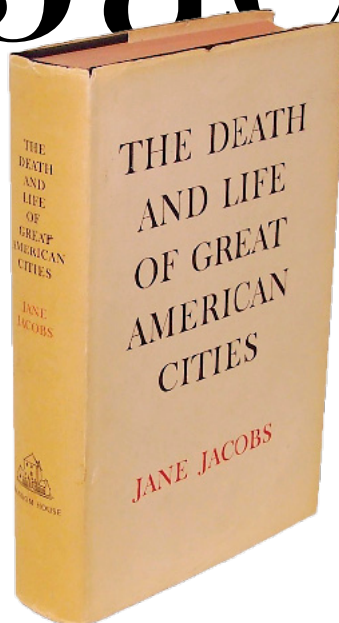


Our eyes on the street: Jacobs in 1961, as chair of the Committee to Save the West Village.

# The Genius of Jane Jacobs

**T**HIS YEAR MARKS THE CENTENNIAL OF JANE Jacobs's birth. Her 1961 book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, changed the way the world views cities. It has been translated into multiple languages and is considered one of the most influential books about cities in the 20th century. It introduced a new way of thinking about planning for cities at the high point of the demolition-derby days of urban renewal. The importance of street life, local plans, "eyes on the street," mixed use, old buildings, transit, neighborhoods, diversity, and appropriate density are all mainstream ideas in urban design and planning today. They were revolutionary when Jacobs introduced them more than a half-century ago.

Put down for not having a planning degree, let alone a college degree, Jacobs challenged "credentialism" in the same way as Ralph Nader, Betty Friedan, Rachel Carson,



*She argued in favor of local wisdom and community visions, rejecting the grandiose designs of distant planners.*

by **ROBERTA  
BRANDES GRATZ**

and Marshall McLuhan. Even though before her book was published, Jacobs had been writing articles about areas of the city for *Vogue* and architectural criticism for *Architectural Forum*, she was often referred to as “just a housewife.” It is frequently the outsiders of a field, often journalists, who wind up changing that field. “This is the role of the great amateurs: to see clearly the issues that academic specialists cannot see because they are limited by the blinders of their institutions and their disciplines,” observed Canadian journalist Robert Fulford in *The New York Times* in 1992.

The consummate urban advocate, Jacobs is probably best known for helping defeat several projects promoted by New York City’s planning czar Robert Moses, such as the Lower Manhattan Expressway, which would have wiped out SoHo, Chinatown, and much of Greenwich Village. She didn’t hesitate to speak truth to power either in her writing or street protests. Above all, however, she considered herself a writer. Jacobs became world-famous for all of her seven books and is often referred to as the most significant urban thinker of the last century.

But Jacobs didn’t for one moment think her books had as big an impact as was often said. In the 1993 introduction to the Modern Library edition of *Death and Life*, she questioned the widespread claim that her book changed the urban-development field. Interestingly, she divided the world into foot people and car people. For foot people, she agreed, the book gave “legitimacy to what they already knew themselves. Experts of the time did not respect what foot people knew and valued. They were deemed old fashioned and selfish—troublesome sand in the wheels of progress.” As Jacobs put it:

It is not easy for uncredentialed people to stand up to the credentialed, even when the so-called expertise is grounded in ignorance and folly. This book turned out to be helpful ammunition against such experts. But it is less accurate to call this effect “influence” than to see it as corroboration and collaboration. Conversely, the book neither collaborated with car people nor had an influence on them. It still does not, as far as I can see.

This is not false modesty. There is much wisdom in her words here. In my own observing and writing about the citizen-based rejuvenation of cities, I have witnessed as many efforts initiated and led by people who never heard of Jacobs as those led by readers of her books. Whether in urban downtowns or neighborhoods, or in suburbs or small towns, local residents and businesspeople know instinctively which improvements will bring positive change. When they have the means to pursue those improvements, or when new people come in and make improvements that harmonize in scale and use with the existing place, positive change occurs. Jacobs recognized this and argued in favor of local wisdom and community visions over the grandiose designs of distant planners and other so-called experts.

Conflict arises when distant experts, developers, and city hall planners come up with schemes in which that local wisdom has not been brought to bear at the beginning of the process. Such schemes usually show little respect for the nature and built form of the community and then are presented at “public” forums, in what is deceptively called a public process. At that point, the plans are tinkered with and maybe an “amenities” package is

added (a form of bribery to ensure passage even if inappropriate to the place). But the input of local stakeholders is nonexistent in the beginning and minimal at the end. This is when the total transformation and, often, replacement of a community occurs, not its genuine regeneration.

Jacobs had a good way of describing this. “There are two kinds of change, and you can symbolize them on the land,” she told me years ago. “There is the kind of change in which the topsoil is being built up, and it is being made more fertile and is good husbandry of the land. The land is changing when you do that, but it is positive change. Then there’s the kind of change that’s just as definitely change—that’s erosion. Gullies are being dug in the land, and the topsoil is being carried away and it’s being made infertile. The fact that it’s changed doesn’t mean it’s progress. It’s ruin. But people were, for a long time, brainwashed into the idea that every sort of change in a city was progress. ‘Well, yes, it’s bad but that’s progress.’ No, that’s erosion.”

The essence of Jacobs’s thinking was expressed in a 2005 letter to New York’s Michael Bloomberg, then mayor, in opposition to the city’s dramatic “upzoning” plan and in support of a well-developed community alternative plan for the future of Brooklyn’s Greenpoint-Williamsburg neighborhood, then still a gritty, mixed-use area, in the real meaning of mixed use. Single-family homes, apartment houses, tenements, and small local retailers were scattered among all manner of manufacturing and art and artisan uses, housed in former warehouses and manufacturing buildings. “Revitalization successes...don’t result from gigantic plans and show-off projects,” she wrote the mayor. “They build up gradually and authentically from diverse human communities; successful city revitalization builds itself on these authentic community foundations.”

The community’s plan, devised through a highly participatory process, did not prevail and, as she predicted, “visually tiresome, unimaginative, and imitative luxury project towers” have emerged, and continue to do so, to replace, not rejuvenate, the neighborhood.

Jacobs never “prescribed” what change should look like. A genuine public process, with public input from the beginning, would arrive at the right point. She learned strictly by observation of what worked and what didn’t. She learned about street life in, among other places, her own neighborhood of Greenwich Village. She learned about the sterility and disrespect for residents in East Harlem public housing, the process of positive organic change in the East End of Boston, and the devastation of total clearance in the West End. She learned about the importance of old buildings in many places, and the necessity for economic diversity in Detroit and Rochester. Jacobs learned everywhere that there was something to be observed about every one of the threads in the intricate web that makes up the urban fabric.

Her approach is not rocket science. As Jacobs wrote in the preface of *Death and Life*: “The scenes that illustrate this book are all about us. For illustration, please look closely at real cities. While you’re looking, you might as well also listen, linger and think about what you see.” ■

**“Experts of the time did not respect what foot people knew and valued.”**

—Jane Jacobs

*Roberta Brandes Gratz is an award-winning journalist and author of The Battle for Gotham: New York in the Shadow of Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs and We’re Still Here Ya Bastards: How the People of New Orleans Rebuilt Their City.*



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## BOOKS &amp; THE ARTS



Rachel Carson, 1962

TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES



Betty Friedan, 1980

GETTY IMAGES



Jane Jacobs, 1963

TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES

# Three Who Made a Revolution

REBECCA SOLNIT

**A**t a dinner table last fall, I mentioned that Women's Strike for Peace did some extraordinary things in the early 1960s, not least helping to bring down the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). A well-known political writer sitting across from me sneered that the women in WSP were insignificant and that HUAC didn't exist by then anyway. He was wrong on both counts, but his remark wasn't surprising. The way people talk in decades suggests that the 1950s and '60s never overlapped and thereby blanks out the first half of the latter decade to make the second half into "the '60s," that era popularly imagined as a revolutionary romp by a bunch of anti-war young men. In fact, those young men took up a revolutionary challenge raised in part by middle-aged women who launched some of the key ideas and fought some of the first battles in their defense. The radical and powerful Women's Strike for Peace did it in the streets (and in the hearings chamber—Eric Bentley, in his history of HUAC, credits WSP with striking the crucial blow

in the fall of "HUAC's Bastille" in 1962). Jane Jacobs, Rachel Carson and Betty Friedan did it in books.

Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* appeared in 1961, Carson's *Silent Spring* came out the following year and Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* appeared in 1963. These three intellectual bombs collectively assailed almost every institution in American and indeed industrial and Western society. Jacobs ripped into the reinvented postwar city, urban planners' obsession with segregating home from work, rich from poor, urban dwellings from the street and from commerce, business from residential, people from one another, making cities over in the new image of suburbia—and by implication, the belief in progress and technology and institutional control. Carson radically questioned the faith in big science and its disastrous new solutions to age-old problems, and maybe even the old Cartesian worldview of isolated fragments, which she replaced with a precocious vision of ecosystems in which con-

*Rebecca Solnit's Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities (Nation Books) is out in a new and expanded edition. Her other recent books include A Field Guide to Getting Lost and, with Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe, Yosemite in Time: Ice Ages, Tree Clocks, Ghost Rivers.*

taminants like DDT and fallout kept traveling from their origins to touch and taint everything. Friedan took on the women's half of the American dream, gender, patriarchy and the middle-class suburban family, bringing the assault full circle. After all, the suburbanization Jacobs excoriated was designed to produce the all-too-private lives Friedan investigated. Together, these three writers addressed major facets of the great modern project to control the world on every scale, locating it in the widespread attacks on nature, on women and on the chaotic, the diverse, the crowded and the poor. Their work transformed our perceptions of the indoor world of the home, the outdoor world of cities and the larger realm of the biosphere, opening vast new possibilities for social transformation.

It's true, as some critics have argued, that Jacobs, Carson and Friedan mostly avoided a deeper systemic analysis. Yet such an effort is implicit in Friedan's constant references to the marketers and advertisers who wish to keep women as good consumers, in Jacobs's scorn for top-down solutions and grand-plan developers, in Carson's condemnation of the chemical manufacturers and pest-prone monocropping of agribusiness. *Silent Spring* declares, "There is still very limited awareness of the nature of the threat. This is an era of specialists, each of whom sees his own problem and is unaware of or intolerant of the larger frame into which it fits. It is also an era dominated by industry, in which the right to make a dollar at whatever cost is seldom challenged." Rereading their books, I wonder if they didn't name the beast because their old-left contemporaries who did proffered such an unappealing alternative to corporate capitalism and were being persecuted for doing so. Or perhaps they just weren't interested in that kind of broad prescription—their books, after all, were broad enough.

What's more, the standard-issue socialism of the era was far less radical than the ostensible "reformism" of these three writers, insofar as it accepted the premises of a civilization that was flawed from birth. Lurking as an unexpressed and possibly inexpressible idea in these three books is a searching critique of industrial civilization as a whole, and maybe some other aspects of Western civilization all the way back to when Adam blamed Eve. If they failed to join the revolution of their time, they laid the groundwork for the far grander one that was coming: the one rethinking nature, agriculture, food, gender, sex, race, domestic life, home and housing, trans-

portation, energy use, environmental ideas, war, violence and a few other things—the one that has made it possible to question every authority and tradition.

**D**eath and Life and *Silent Spring* are still magnificent, still readable, though only the former seems contemporary. Jacobs's book describes with brilliant specificity what works and what doesn't in cities, in language that is fearless and crisp as a trumpet blast: "The pseudo-

*Thanks to the work of Friedan, Jacobs and Carson, the home, the city and the biosphere itself have never looked quite the same.*

science of city planning and its companion, the art of city design...have not yet embarked on the adventure of probing the real world." She describes the social ecology of cities, enumerating what generates safety, pleasure, liveliness, complexity, civilization as an everyday outdoor experience. Many concessions have been made to her hugely influential arguments—the building of Le Corbusier-style housing projects for the poor has more or less ceased, and my own city, San Francisco, has made a number of decisions one suspects she approves, such as rebuilding an earthquake-damaged stretch of elevated highway as a broad surface street with pedestrian amenities.

But much of what she describes as wrong is still wrong, and places like Las Vegas and Phoenix seem to have devoted themselves to defying her every insight and prescription. Often viewed as conservative for its lack of enthusiasm for big government, *Death and Life* was not about the virtues of free enterprise but of local control. What it celebrated most was life in public, the everyday life of the streets that seven years later would become the extraordinary life of the streets in protest, demonstration and revolt, in Prague, in Paris, in Mexico City and in cities and on campuses across the United States. (Jacobs was so opposed to the Vietnam War she moved her family to Toronto, getting her draft-age sons out of the reach of the Army.)

Carson's book is extraordinary to revisit. To read its early passages is like listening to God call the world into being during the days of its creation, even if this is only the world of environmental ideas: A passage here evokes issues taken up by Alfred Crosby in *Ecological Imperialism*, one there recalls Vandana Shiva's critiques of biotechnology, another seems to pre-

figure Michael Pollan's *The Botany of Desire*, another Sandra Steingraber's *Living Downstream*, and her strong clear voice is still audible in Terry Tempest Williams's environmental writing. Carson wasn't the first to come to grips with many of these environmental crises looming at the end of the 1950s; her brilliant achievement in *Silent Spring* was to synthesize technical information hitherto unavailable to the general public and to make that newly awakened public understand and care.

The book had a colossal impact from the beginning and is often credited with inspiring the DDT ban that went into effect nationwide in 1972. Though some now challenge the relationship between DDT and eggshell-thinning in wild birds, species from brown pelicans to bald eagles and peregrine falcons have rebounded from the brink of extinction since the ban. Conservatives like Michael Crichton prefer to blame Carson and environmentalists for "millions of deaths" from malaria, but the ban was never applied worldwide and DDT is still used selectively overseas (Carson pointed out that since mosquitoes quickly develop resistance to DDT, as insects do to many other pesticides, the stuff is hardly a cure-all). But picking on Carson over DDT misses the point that she was the first to describe the scope of the sinister consequences of a chemical society, the possibility that, with herbicides, pesticides and the like, we were poisoning not just pests, or pests and some songbirds and farmworkers, but everyone and everything for a very long time forward. As one chapter opening puts it, "For the first time in the history of the world, every human being is now subjected to contact with dangerous chemicals, from the moment of conception until death." Still true. And if the particulars of the chemicals identified by Carson have changed enough that her book no longer has the currency Jacobs's does, that may be one measure of its success. Another is the far greater environmental literacy of the public, the necessary precursor to any broad environmental movement.

**I**n *The Feminine Mystique* Friedan, who died earlier this year at age 85, described an array of nebulous social forces—women's magazines, Freudian psychology, politicians' speeches, advertising and more—pressuring and persuading women to be stay-at-home mothers, producing the baby boom and consuming household and beauty products and demeaning, demoralizing ideas about their capabilities. Her job

was hardest of all, because these forces weren't technically coercive; to prove that they were, she had to argue against the powerful facade of contented domesticity, a facade not only men but many women were (and are) bent on preserving. Simply by demonstrating the forces that had pushed women back into the home after the war and into a more retrograde version of female identity, Friedan was digging deep and fighting hard; if her book now seems overly focused on middle-class married white women with kids, it carved out wholly new territory to think about what we might nowadays call the production of identity and the possibility of resistance.

In many respects, *The Feminine Mystique* seems dated now. Friedan's background in psychology seems to have made her susceptible to a lot of the era's clucking over "delinquency," homosexuality, adultery and promiscuity, as though she were witnessing the first stirrings of what would become feminist and sexual revolutions without seeing the implications. Nor does she question the foundations (if not the delights) of marriage, affluence or suburbia. Still, there are fleeting moments when she recognizes the links between the "feminine mystique" and consumer capitalism, as in her observation that "in the suburbs where most hours of the day there are virtually no men at all...women who have no identity other than sex creatures must ultimately seek their reassurance through the possession of 'things.'"

Friedan's inchoate solution to "the problem that has no name" seems to be that these educated middle-class women need careers or some kind of intellectual stimulation, a solution far less profound than her analysis of the problem, and one that overlooked the women who were already invading politics. In *The Feminine Mystique* she said of the 1950s, "It was easier to look for Freudian sexual roots in man's behavior, his ideas, and his wars than to look critically at his society and act constructively to right its wrongs." Of course, Friedan would go on to think more radically about what women's lives could become and what we could change, and of course in writing for women's magazines and then taking up a five-year residence at the New York Public Library's Allen Room, where she wrote her landmark book, she was having more of a career than she let on—not to mention a history of youthful activism in left and labor politics that she seldom discussed.

Jacobs and Carson were also work-

ing—the former as an editor at *Architectural Forum*, the latter as an independent writer. Indeed, they and the WSP activists seem like the women Friedan imagined but did not actually portray in her book. Married with three children, Jacobs continued a professional life of writing, engaging in the world of ideas and, by the time her book appeared, fighting Robert Moses's plan to put an expressway through Greenwich Village's Washington Square. Indeed, she was able to shame the nation's anointed urbanist, Lewis

*Friedan punctured the powerful facade of contented domesticity, one that not only men but many women were bent on preserving.*

Mumford, into supporting the cause, even though he had just patronized her book in *The New Yorker* as "Mother Jacobs's Home Remedies" and reduced her description of the rich social life an urbanite might experience on the street to "the little flirtations that season a housewife's day."

Sexism in those days went around undisguised; *Time* magazine, in the course of asserting that DDT posed no human health problems, brazenly portrayed "Miss Carson" as "hysterically over-emphatic" with a "mystical attachment to the balance of nature," her book as an "emotional and inaccurate outburst." Carson, who never married but raised a couple of nieces and a great-nephew, had been a successful scientist and writer within the federal government before she became an independent full-time and bestselling author in 1952. *Silent Spring* was published in September 1962. The Cuban missile crisis began a month later, and for a while people in the United States thought they wouldn't have the luxury of dying slowly from chemicals, rather than suddenly from bombs.

A year earlier, the United States and the Soviet Union had decided to resume nuclear testing after an informal three-year moratorium. In response, six women met in Washington, DC, and began to organize what became, on November 1, 1961, a nationwide strike of tens of thousands of women in sixty cities across the country—mostly married-with-children middle-class white women whose radical potential would grow with the decade. The aboveground tests were already known to create radioactive clouds that drifted over the earth, dropping radioactive byproducts as they went. Strontium 90 was seeping into mother's milk and thereby into newborn children; the weapons that were supposed to

protect civilians in case of an all-out war were routinely contaminating them. Using their status as middle-class moms as a shield, WSP activists plunged into the fray, taking risks no one else had dared, refusing to screen out potential communists and reaching out to women in the USSR. Within a couple of years, they had helped bring into being the Limited Test Ban Treaty (an achievement acknowledged by UN chief U Thant and President Kennedy) and made a mockery of HUAC's anticommunist inquiries. In early 1964, they were among the first to oppose the Vietnam War.

Epochal insurrection was breaking out all over during what is often seen as the nation's most repressive era. The civil rights movement was in full swing (though the contributions of key players like Ella Baker and Rosa Parks would be marginalized and/or downplayed). In the 1950s the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis organized, respectively, gays and lesbians; the Daughters held their first national conference in San Francisco in 1960, the year students and labor protested HUAC's anti-educator hearings in that city in one of the first confrontations that looked like "the '60s." Tom Hayden spent the summer of 1960 with students in SLATE, the Berkeley student activists' organization, and brought what he learned back to Michigan and Students for a Democratic Society. The history of SDS is well-enough known at this point; that WSP was working side by side with SDS on antidraft and antiwar organizing has been airbrushed out of history's official portrait. But the later '60s only reaped what the more daring had sown at the beginning of the decade. And among the most visionary sowers were those women whose achievements as books and bans and changed roles are still here.

An e-mail arrived as I was finishing this essay, detailing the work of four or five women researching and deploying new bioremediation technologies in the cleanup of New Orleans' toxic residues. Based at the Common Ground community center, these women are scientists, environmentalists and urban activists all at once, and the e-mail goes on to describe them conferring while a young man reads a book to three girls in daycare. It's hard to imagine this guerrilla cleanup team now without Carson, Friedan and Jacobs then. "Only a book" is a popular epithet, implying that writing always takes place on the sidelines, but these three make it clear that books can change the world. ■

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