

as a global spectator sport, with an emphasis on epic Las Vegas tournaments at Binion's Horseshoe casino and emergent World Series of Poker celebrities such as the laconic Texan Doyle Brunson and cocaine-addicted whiz kid Stu Ungar. The game's "grittiness and peril might help to explain why its outlaw cachet continues to linger," McManus writes, "even when today's live games are played mostly by well-scrubbed folks sipping mineral water in state-sanctioned card rooms." Cheating may have diminished—though it continues to crop up in online games—but players still feel that they're getting away with something.

McManus suggests a more philosophical side of the game in the person of Herbert O. Yardley, a code breaker, spy, and poker instructor whose nonchalant resilience over three wars and countless careers becomes the book's running joke. Yardley's own book, *The Education of a Poker Player* (1957), counseled honesty and patience as the virtues of the poker table. "In the end," McManus writes, quoting the journalist Al Alvarez, "what he is describing is not so much a game of cards as a style of life." The game that began as a haven for scofflaws, layabouts, and swindlers can build character, too.

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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

## The City's Limits

Reviewed by Catherine Tumber

FROM THE MOMENT HENRY David Thoreau drove a post into the shores of Walden Pond, the American environmental movement declared its hostility toward cities—those sooted handmaidens of industrial despoliation into which, by 1920, half the American population was

**GREEN METROPOLIS:**  
Why Living Smaller,  
Living Closer,  
and Driving Less  
Are the Keys to  
Sustainability.

By David Owen.  
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smooshed. The argument against urban congestion was moral, aesthetic, and increasingly grounded in science. Yet in spite of the hygienic improvements of Progressive-era municipal reforms, the birth of the federal Environmental Protection Agency, and the more recent recognition that auto-dependent suburban sprawl poses grave environmental hazards, cities remain the bane of environmentalists. Today's movement to "green" cities with more open parkland, urban agriculture, and ecologically minded building design belongs to a long tradition.

Contrary to environmentalism's anti-urban bias, David Owen argues, New York City—the *ur*-metropolis itself—is among the greenest human settlements on the planet, measured in terms of its carbon footprint. "The average New Yorker," he points out, "annually generates 7.1 tons of greenhouse gases, a lower rate than that of any other American city, and less than 30 percent of the national average." And the beauty of it is that New Yorkers don't even have to try—or to care. Simply by not driving, and by living on top of one another in small apartments stacked in tall buildings, the denizens of Gotham do more for the environment than the most strenuously eco-friendly composter can imagine.

For those unfamiliar with the environmental argument for urban density, *Green Metropolis* (which developed from a 2004 article Owen wrote for *The New Yorker*) is a fair place to start. Owen devotes a good part of his book to showing that high-tech green fixes—developing an electric-car industry, constructing Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified buildings, and going off the grid with residential solar panels and other technologies—offer false comfort, as long as they perpetuate our dependence on automobile transportation. Such measures do little more than flatter the vanity of architects, engineers, and high-end, conspicuously green consumers, while providing a convenient

marketing edge for a host of new products and real estate ventures. Michael Pollan-inspired locavores also come in for a drubbing. In reducing their “food miles,” Owen argues, they ignore agricultural efficiencies of scale while turning over precious urban real estate to plants rather than people.

The other prong of Owen’s argument is that, absent politically infeasible federal fuel taxes, only the market will get us to environmental El Dorado. As long as the price of oil remains low, Americans will continue down the auto-dependent highway to Helldorado, where each suburban dwelling consumes far more energy than its vertical-living counterpart: If all eight million New Yorkers were made to live at the sparse density of the classic New England town in which Owen himself resides, “they would require a space equivalent to the land area of the six New England states plus Delaware and New Jersey.”

Owen is right about the environmental efficacy of higher residential density, yet he’s wrong—deeply wrong—about how better to concentrate population. Let’s begin with his model: Focusing on New York City certainly carries rhetorical force. But, as Owen explains at the outset, the causes of New York’s density levels are historically and geographically unique. Where does that leave the rest of the country? How might his argument apply to a smaller city, such as Akron, Ohio? Or to Detroit, which has lost half its population over the past 50 years, and must repurpose vast areas of vacant land? In these places, urban food production and ecological restoration make a great deal of sense. And if these cities must in-fill their urban cores anyway, to achieve density, why not do it with green buildings?

Owen is quick to dismiss “planners,” even though his ideas are indebted to the Smart Growth and New Urbanism movements, which he mentions only in passing. Long-

term design, the development of land-use policy, and transportation planning are precisely what far-flung cities in the hinterland need in order to prepare for a low-carbon future. New York may be contributing more than its fair share to reducing carbon emissions, and Owen is right to question the wisdom of “greening” such places. But clearly he has never been to Cleveland.

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RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

## Know Thy Neighbor

Reviewed by Peter Skerry

ON NOVEMBER 5, A MUSLIM U.S. Army psychiatrist, Major Nidal M. Hasan, opened fire in a facility at Fort Hood, Texas, killing one civilian and 12 fellow

soldiers and wounding many more. This horrific incident is one that many Americans now associate with Muslims, but the book *Muslims in America* presents a strikingly different image. On the frontispiece is a photo of an attractive woman hugging a young boy, her black hair flowing from underneath a hardhat bearing the emblem of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and her green fatigues emblazoned with an American flag and her last name: Khan.

As this image suggests, Muslims today are adapting to life in America and integrating into American institutions. Muslim women are getting educated and joining the workforce, and while they tend to dress modestly, many do not wear a headscarf. And as Americans are now suddenly aware, a few thousand Muslim Americans serve in the armed forces, including personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan. This assimilation is one facet of the story that Edward Curtis, a professor of religious studies

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