

Society's Books of Note

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Fred Siegel, *The Revolt Against the Masses: How Liberalism Has Undermined the Middle Class*. New York: Encounter Books, 2014. \$23.99. 256 pp.

Fred Siegel, senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, revisits the history of modern American liberalism that has become its present form and that owes its inspiration to such early twentieth-century figures as Herbert Croly, Randolph Bourne, H.G. Wells, Sinclair Lewis, and H.L. Mencken, all of whom sought an American stability based on European statism. The implications, Siegel argues, for the middle class have been enormous.

Mark Robert Rank, Thomas A. Hirschl, with Kirk A. Foster, *Chasing the American Dream: Understanding What Shapes Our Fortunes*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. \$27.95. 232 pp.

Rank, of Washington University, Hirschl, of Cornell University, and Foster, of the University of South Carolina, analyze the American Dream by examining the tension between the promise of economic opportunities and rewards and the amount of turmoil that Americans encounter in their quest for those rewards, while emphasizing the American Dream's continued importance for the future of the country.

Gregory Clark, *The Son Also Rises: Surnames and the History of Social Mobility*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014. \$29.95. 384 pp.

While it has been argued that rigid class structures have eroded in favor of greater social equality, economic

historian Gregory Clark of the University of California, Davis, argues that movement on the social ladder has changed little over eight centuries. Using a novel technique—tracking family names over generations to measure social mobility across countries and periods—Clark reveals that mobility rates are lower than conventionally estimated, do not vary across societies, and are resistant to social policies.

John Keane, *Democracy and Media Decadence*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. \$27.99. 261 pp.

John Keane, of the University of Sydney and the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (WZB), admits the many thrilling ways that communicative abundance is fundamentally altering the contours of our lives and of our politics, often for the better. But he asks whether too little attention has been paid to the troubling counter-trends, the decadent media developments that encourage public silence and concentrations of unlimited power, so weakening the spirit and substance of democracy.

John Carey, *The Unexpected Professor: An Oxford Life in Books*. London: Faber & Faber, 2014. \$20.91. 384 pp.

John Carey, University of Oxford professor and chief book reviewer for the *Sunday Times*, has been described as an unapologetic socialist whose own life is recounted in this memoir about his early childhood in the 1930s to the present. His accounts inform and entertain from a lifetime of encounters with great literature and enduring social controversies.