

New York Nonsense, Civic Sense and Urbanity

"New York is the most fatally fascinating thing in America. She sits like a witch at the gate of the country." -- James Weldon Johnson, 1909.

Since 1977 I've written too much about New York City to even begin to think about sorting through it now, but these pieces come fondly to mind, and for good reasons. What James Weldon Johnson said a century ago is still true. I daresay that the following pieces capture some of that truth.

[The thundering, rolling democracy of the New York Subways](#) in the 1990s, *Washington Post Travel* section, 1998.

[Jackie Gleason's Brooklyn](#), *Newsday*, 1987, an elegy on the occasion of his passing.

["Putting Out the Bonfire,"](#) a Bronx cheer for Tom Wolfe, *Lear's*, 1990.

[Urbanities, inanities, and writers' betrayals of the civic culture.](#) *New York Observer*, 1988

[Ed Koch's mayoral mouth and New York's travails](#), *Dissent*, 1981

[New York just after 9/11](#), *Daily News*, *New York Post*, *New York Observer* "The Rebuilding Of New York-leans," *The American Prospect*, September 23, 2005

Hurricane Katrina's devastation of New Orleans made some New Yorkers ask, "[Haven't we been here before?](#)" The column was also on CBS News website.

["Boodling, Bigotry, and Cosmopolitanism: New York in the 1980s,"](#) *Dissent*, 1987, reprinted in *In Search of York* (Jim Sleeper, editor), a splendid anthology [Empire City: New York Through the Centuries](#) (Kenneth Jackson, David Dunbar, editors)

["Rebuilding the Ghetto Does Work,"](#) a quick *Daily News* rebuttal in 1994 to a *New York Times* article that had claimed that it doesn't.

[Urban elites, developers, and civic purposes.](#) *The Nation*, a review of Roger Starr's *The Rise and Fall of New York City*, 1985

[New York on 9/11](#) (*Daily News*, *New York Post*, *New York Observer*)