

**WINTER  
BOOKS**

the weekly

# Standard

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## Brazening It Out

**JOHN MCCORMACK**  
on the Roy Moore  
campaign



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# The Dulcet Tones of Bernie

THE SCRAPBOOK stopped caring about the Grammys ages ago. Like all entertainment awards, they're not much a measure of talent. Long ago they devolved into the self-satisfied celebration of a self-satisfied industry. And in no way is the music biz more pleased with itself than in its politics, which are—except for the occasional country act—reliably left-wing. Nowhere is that more on display than in the Grammys' "Spoken Word" category, which is generally a prize for the year's most prominent liberal. This year should be no exception: Bernie Sanders has been nominated for a Grammy for the audio version of his book *Our Revolution*.

Sanders (with some help from actor Mark Ruffalo) narrates his own book. Have you heard Sanders speak? There's a certain arresting quality to the man's voice that serves him politically, but let's face it: Sinatra he ain't. (Maybe more an aged Christopher



Walken.) There's no way to stick a microphone in front of Bernie for hours on end and produce anything that deserves to be honored for audio excellence. Nonetheless, Sanders is the odds-on favorite to win. As the *Hollywood Reporter* notes:

Sanders is far from the first politician to score a spoken-word nomination, with his former Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton being nominated in 2004 for *Living History* and winning in 1997 for *It Takes a Village*. Former president Bill Clinton won in 2005 for *My Life* and was nominated two other times. Barack Obama has two Grammys, winning in 2006 for *Dreams from My Father* and 2008 for *The Audacity of Hope*. Jimmy Carter also has two Grammys (and multiple nominations), winning his latest one in 2016 for *A Full Life: Reflections at Ninety*.

And of course don't forget Al Gore's 2009 Grammy for *An Inconvenient Truth*. And there is that as-yet-unrevoked 2002 Grammy for *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them: A Fair and Balanced Look at the Right*, read by grabby-handed author Al Franken.

One gets the sense there aren't a lot of Republicans in the Recording Academy. And these days there may not be very many happy Democrats, either. Hillary Clinton's latest audiobook, her failed-campaign score-settler, came out just a few weeks before the September 30 deadline, making it eligible for this year's Grammys. And yet she was not nominated. The snub from the entertainment-wing of the Democratic party was such that Hillary must be wondering *What Happened?* ♦

## What They Were Thinking



Kim Jong-un and his wife at 'an art performance dedicated to nuclear scientists and technicians who worked on a hydrogen bomb,' September 10

## Some Scheme

Using the phony claim they are fighting voter fraud, racist Republicans have contrived voter ID laws designed to make it hard for members of Democrat-friendly ethnic groups to cast their ballots. Or so the liberal narrative goes.

Republicans say they're just trying to ensure that only those qualified to vote—citizens, for example—get to step into the voting booth. But the left has been arguing for years that these laws are crypto-fascist measures to hobble voter turnout from certain minorities and

TOP: BODY: ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ / WIREIMAGE; HEAD: SCOTT KOWALCHYK / CBS / GETTY; BOTTOM: STR / AFP / GETTY

that Republicans have pursued these laws with the invidious intent of disadvantaging Democrat candidates.

Thirty-two states have some form of voter ID laws on the books, requirements that make it difficult if not impossible for those without a government-issued identification to vote. The *New York Times* is none too fond of these laws and frequently editorializes (sometimes even on the editorial page!) against them. Last month, the *Times* found a new reason to decry such laws—among the disadvantaged groups are the elderly. The headline: “Older Voters Stymied by Tighter ID Requirements.”

Director of the Democracy Program at NYU School of Law Wendy Weiser explained why to the *Times*: “Older Americans are more likely to have expired IDs, or IDs that don’t have their current addresses.”

How odd, however, that when it comes to older voters, Republicans “don’t make it easy for them.” After all, the majority of the Social Security Set vote for Republican candidates, especially during presidential elections. As the *Times* notes, in 2012, 56 percent of older voters cast their ballots for Mitt Romney over Barack Obama, and in 2016, 53 percent chose Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton. Not only that, but a large percentage of older Americans vote: 70.9 percent of those 65 or older voted in 2016, according to the Census Bureau.

If the goal of voter ID laws is to limit the number of Democratic voters, why would Republicans sacrifice such a large number of their essential demographic in the process? The *Times* suggests that the elderly are just “col-



She may vote GOP, but she’s gotta show ID.



lateral damage” in the GOP voter-suppression scheme. If so, that would put quite a dent in the notion that Republicans are evil geniuses: What kind of Machiavels devise elaborate strategies that disenfranchise their own core constituents? Could it be, just maybe, that the GOP effort is about what it says it’s about—stopping voter fraud—and not the racist enterprise envisioned by the conspiracy theorists of the left? ♦

## Electricity to Newcastle

Breaking news from the international environment beat: China last month launched a new electric-powered cargo ship from the southern

port city of Guangzhou, according to the international business publication *Quartz*.

The 2,200-ton ship, which measures 229 feet long and 45 feet wide, runs off more than 1,000 lithium batteries. It can travel 50 miles before needing to stop and recharge for two hours. (And you thought your Tesla had a stingy range.)

*Quartz* quoted a professor from Hong Kong Polytechnic University, who called the environmentally friendly ship a “breakthrough . . . in terms of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and pollution.” Most ships use, *gasp*, high-sulfur heavy fuel oil.

STEVE PARSONS / PA IMAGES / GETTY



Another environmental breakthrough

Sounds like the feel-good environmental story of the week, right? A bold stroke of green leadership from Red China, the world's largest emitter of carbon dioxide? Well, not so fast.

It seems that the ship was designed with but one kind of cargo in mind: As it goes up and down China's Pearl River, the zero-emissions ship, *Quartz* deadpans, "will transport coal to a local power plant." And we're talking about a lot more coal than the "16 Tons" Tennessee Ernie Ford sang about in the 1950s: The ship's capacity is some 2,300 tons.

So there you have it. China, where environmentalism means using electricity to get coal to power plants to be burned to make electricity that can be used to get coal to power plants to be . . . well, you get the idea. ♦

## No Entry, Gentry

Thanksgiving morning, owners of a hipster Colorado coffeehouse chain, ink! Coffee, awoke to find themselves at the center of public controversy. One of their advertisements, a sandwich-board positioned on the sidewalk in front of one of their Denver locations, read "Happily gentrifying the neighborhood since 2014." This proved offensive to longtime residents who have watched their affordably scruffy urban neighborhood, Five Points, undergo rapid economic change (such as the opening of hipster coffeehouses) in recent years.

The shop itself was vandalized—the offending sandwich-board was seized, a window was broken, and the front of the shop was spray-painted with the slogan "WHITE COFFEE," the *Denver Post* reported.

The mortified coffee company went into full grovel mode, apologizing multiple times for what founder and CEO Keith Herbert called its cultural "blind spot." That didn't help much. According to the *Mercury News*, by Saturday, 200 protesters had surrounded the shop. It wasn't good for business.

Who knows how long it will take for the shop to recover from its pariah status? The neighborhood's city council representative, Albus Brooks, has called for his constituents to boycott ink!. That would of course leave the baristas with some time on their hands. Not to worry: Brooks has plans to keep them busy. The councilman is demanding that the workers complete "cultural competency training" in order to make amends.

Brooks tells THE SCRAPBOOK that the sign personally angered him. Though he appreciates the corporate pleas for forgiveness, he believes "this



Protest against gentrifying pigs, November 25

issue is about reconciliation." Ink!, he says, should "allow us to give them an individual who trains cultural competency," and they should "look to hire folks from our community just let out of jail," in order to "learn from and understand" the Five Points neighborhood.

Ideally, Brooks says, all businesses in his district would be required to have their employees submit to this kind of re-education. He reasons that if he, as an elected official, takes time to sit down and talk with the elders in his community, why shouldn't ink! Coffee? "What is a business but a community organization?" Which is almost a perfect description of the sort of enterprise that could be a literal nonprofit. ♦

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# Abolish the CFPB

‘If we’re going to make the investments we need,’ remarked President-elect Barack Obama in 2008, “we must also be willing to shed the spending we don’t. . . . We cannot sustain a system that bleeds billions of taxpayer dollars on programs that have outlived their usefulness or exist solely because of the power of a politician, lobbyist, or interest group.” A noble statement, yet we struggle to recall a single program that ceased to exist during the Obama years.

Every president in modern times begins his administration by claiming a righteous desire to cut public expenditures that serve no useful purpose. George W. Bush proposed a bipartisan “sunset review board” to recommend the elimination of unnecessary programs, to little effect.

“We are eliminating programs that are no longer needed,” said Bill Clinton in his first State of the Union address, characteristically merging intention and reality. “We’re slashing subsidies and canceling wasteful projects.”

How many government programs were eliminated under the presidencies of Clinton, Bush, and Obama? Not many. “The nearest earthly approach to immortality on earth is a bureau of the federal government,” Jimmy Byrnes once noted. Total federal spending grew to \$3.54 trillion in 2016 from \$1.96 trillion in 1993.

Donald Trump’s first budget proposed scores of sizable cuts—a 32 percent cut to the State Department and a 31 percent cut to the Environmental Protection Agency were two of the largest—and the president deserves credit for actually proposing quantifiable savings instead of merely talking about cuts in the abstract. But his administration has made little effort to get Congress actually to impose such cuts.

This will not be remembered as the year federal outlays began to decrease. But it’s not beyond the capacity of a party that controls the White House and both houses of Congress to eliminate one government entity, a small agency that richly deserves that fate—the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). It was in fact singled out for abolition in the 2016 Republican platform.



Pretend director Leandra English and acting director Mick Mulvaney

The CFPB was created by the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act, a law premised on the belief that the global recession was the result of the insufficient regulation of banks. That the recession happened mainly as a result of government policies and government agencies encouraging banks to act foolishly is an argument we will set aside. The CFPB—according to its website—aims “to protect consumers

from unfair, deceptive, or abusive practices and take action against companies that break the law.” The idea that no federal authority was empowered to perform such functions until 2010 is laughable. Among others, the Bureau of Consumer Protection, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation are charged

with these purposes. The CFPB is utterly disposable.

It is in the news these days because its Obama-appointed director, Richard Cordray, with his eyes on the prize of Ohio’s governorship, suddenly stepped down on November 24, but not before appointing his own chief of staff, Leandra English, as acting director. Cordray had previously said he would leave at the end of the month, and it was widely known that President Trump was planning to appoint Mick Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget, to fill the role on an interim basis. Mulvaney is a fierce critic of the CFPB—he’s called it a “sick, sad joke” and pointed out that not only does the agency arrogate other agencies’ authority but it is also largely free of accountability.

Cordray’s publicity stunt generated a day or two of Washington comedy in which two directors were theoretically leading the same agency—one an avowed skeptic of the agency’s *raison d’être* but bearing donuts; the other a career staffer insisting she was now in charge. English sued, but both the CFPB’s legal counsel and, more importantly, a federal judge ruled that the president had clear statutory authority to make the appointment.

Comedy aside, the CFPB is precisely the sort of agency conservatives should have no trouble eliminating.

ENGLISH: MARK WILSON / GETTY; MULVANEY: WILLIAM B. FLOWMAN / NBC / NBC NEWSWIRE / GETTY

It's little more than a left-wing "consumer rights" nonprofit operating with public money and governmental authority—a kind of Public Citizen with nearly unlimited resources and power. The agency aggressively targets small and mid-sized businesses its agents believe are taking advantage of consumers—particularly local and regional banks—with the result that these institutions must spend more on compliance and legal counsel. Who pays the price for that? Ironically, consumers.

These federal Naderites believe themselves to be unaccountable to the rest of the government. The CFPB's creators—the Democrats who passed the Dodd-Frank Act on a party-line vote—said they wanted the agency to be "insulated" from political pressures. That may sound high-minded, but government agencies in the American republic are not supposed to be insulated from the people's representatives. We have national elections every two years for a reason. The CFPB is funded by the Federal Reserve rather than congressional appropriations, and its presidentially appointed director serves a five-year term (so as not to coincide with any one administration) and can only be removed for cause. In 2016, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the agency's structure violates the Constitution's separation of powers. That case is under appeal.

The CFPB takes the intentions of its Democratic founders seriously and for the most part refuses to give

Congress answers about its activities. Congressmen haven't been able to get answers to some very basic questions. How much does the CFPB spend pursuing cases against private-sector firms it believes to be taking advantage of customers? How much does it cost to maintain CFPB offices in some of the nation's most expensive cities?

Now that Mulvaney leads the agency, we will get answers. Upon taking over, he ordered senior CFPB officials to respond to two questions: What is the CFPB statutorily required to do? And what have you been doing beyond those statutory requirements? The answer to that second question is clear: Quite a bit. Mulvaney intends to end this freelancing. That's a good start. But there's more to do.

The House has passed the Financial CHOICE Act, which, like Mulvaney's plan, would force the CFPB to confine its activities to the enforcement of existing consumer protection laws rather than pursue an ideological war. Other agencies are already charged with enforcing those laws. We see no reason why President Trump shouldn't push Congress to eliminate the whole gratuitous thing.

Maybe they'll fail. Maybe Democrats will unite to thwart their efforts. But trying and failing is better than not trying at all. And if they were to succeed, Trump could count the end of the CFPB as a real accomplishment—and one that eluded his predecessors.

—The Editors

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# One Itchy Twitter Finger

This should have been a terrific week for Donald Trump. The Senate, even with its slim and quarrelsome majority, appears ready to pass the major tax overhaul the president has been pushing for. An attempt by a rogue federal agency to forestall the president's appointment of a new director was roundly rebuffed in court. The Commerce Department reported 3.3 percent growth in the third quarter—an impressive gain for a period in which the United States suffered two major hurricanes—and the stock market continued its upward trajectory.

Yet Trump's itchy Twitter finger turned the week into another disaster.

On Wednesday, he retweeted links to three videos posted by a fiercely anti-Muslim British activist, provoking no less than British prime minister Theresa May to issue a rebuke. The videos themselves are nothing more than spurious Internet garbage, and they won't provoke the wave of anti-Muslim backlash that is always being predicted. But that the president of the United States promoted them to his 43 million followers is a disgrace.

Trump followed that up by suggesting that NBC, which had just fired Matt Lauer for sexual misconduct, should also fire the network's "top executives" for "putting out so much Fake News. Check out Andy Lack's past!" Lack is the chairman of NBC News. It's unclear what part of Lack's career the president's tweet was referring to. Two hours later, in a fit of pique directed at MSNBC, Trump alluded knowingly to an old conspiracy theory involving the 2001 death of an aide to Joe Scarborough (who was a Republican member of the House of Representatives at the time). The death, rather than being suspicious, was the result of a fall in connection with a heart arrhythmia.

One would think this president would keep quiet on the subject of prominent public figures stepping down as a result of sexual harassment allegations, but Trump can't keep quiet about anything. According to a November 28 story in the *New York Times*, he tells allies and associates that the *Access Hollywood* tape—the recorded conversation in which Trump spoke in graphic terms of his inability to control himself in the presence of attractive women—may not be genuine.



One of the retweets rebuked by Theresa May

This despite his apology for the remarks when they became public in 2016. The same article noted that Trump continues to question the validity of Barack Obama’s birth certificate and make fanciful statements about his 2016 victory.

One might equally think that Trump would back away from the Alabama Senate race after the credible claims of

Roy Moore’s inability to control himself in the presence of teenaged girls. And yet on November 29, we learned the president is considering using his PAC, America First Action, to bombard Alabama with robo-calls, emails, and text messages promoting Moore. Trump is, further, planning a visit to western Florida in the days before the election to rail about Democrats and, perhaps, Moore’s opponent Doug Jones. The location is no accident; Pensacola is less than an hour’s drive from Mobile, Alabama, and shares the same television market.

The president thus managed to turn a good week for his presidency into a series of pointless and preposterous Internet outrages. But of course a “good week” for any other president—indeed a good week in the estimation of any ordinary human being—is not a good week in Trump’s opinion. A good week for him is one in which the global news media ignore a vast array of consequential matters and fix their attention almost exclusively on the subject of Donald J. Trump.

—The Editors

## Simple Truths

‘T he great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is “What does a woman want?” This was Sigmund Freud’s famous lament to Marie Bonaparte almost a century ago. It’s not clear that decades’ more research by psychoanalysts and social scientists have resulted in any further progress in answering the question. Indeed, for all one knows, there’s been regress in our understanding.

But here’s a question that’s easier to answer: “How should a woman be treated?” The answer isn’t complex or deep. A woman, like a man, should be treated with human decency, according to the rule of law, and free of the abusive, unjust exercise of power. And you don’t need to have plumbed the depths of the female or male psyche to live in accord with these principles of civilized life and the maxims of a free society.

What you may need to do instead is go back to basics. Yes, it’s a time of social turmoil, of cultural upheaval, of generational confusion. But none of these is an excuse for ignoring simple truths about how we should treat one another.

So let us repair to Lord Acton, less pompous but more pointed than Freud: “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Let us repair to Michael Oakeshott, less pretentious but more sensible than Freud: “The rule of law bakes no bread, it is unable to distribute loaves or fishes (it has none), and it cannot protect itself against

external assault, but it remains the most civilized and least burdensome conception of a state yet to be devised.” Let us repair to James Madison, less concerned than Freud with the depths of the human psyche but more helpful for the medium range in which our common life is lived: “As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust: so there are other qualities in human nature, which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form.”

Power tends to corrupt—so we should, in both the public and the private spheres, be on guard against, and erect sturdy guardrails against, the corruptions of power. The rule of law is crucial to a civilized society—so we should go out of our way to uphold and strengthen it to the extent possible. Republican government presupposes decent and admirable qualities among its citizens—so we should be serious about strengthening character and inculcating virtue.

These are the simple truths that are central to a decent and liberal society. We 21st-century sophisticates need to resist the temptation to slide by these old-fashioned truths on our way to plumbing murkier depths. After all,

*The fundamental things apply  
As time goes by.*

—William Kristol

# Chuck Grassley's Blue-Slip Battle

Playing the long game on judicial nominations.

BY FRED BARNES



Chuck Grassley speaks with Al Franken during a Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearing, November 29.

Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) is chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. He has a reputation for being fair-minded. Al Franken (D-Minn.) is a Democratic member of the committee who balked at the nomination of a Minnesota judge to a federal appeals court.

Since the issue was procedural, Grassley thought he could win Franken over. But it was harder than he'd figured on. To get a hearing before the committee, a nominee's home state senators must send in so-called blue slips. The other senator, Democrat Amy Klobuchar, had done so. Franken hadn't.

He had concerns about the nominee, 43-year-old David Stras. Franken was leery of Stras's background as a law clerk to Clarence Thomas, the conservative Supreme Court justice. And he insisted he didn't have adequate "consultation" with the White House

before Stras was selected. The president picks appeals court nominees.

Grassley was not impressed. The complaints were ideological or political, he felt, and thus not legitimate reasons for withholding a blue slip. Besides, the committee had documented all the time the White House had given to consultation with Franken.

But Franken wouldn't yield. Grassley had talked to him three or four times about Stras, never angrily. Then on September 16, he personally delivered to Franken a three-page, handwritten letter attached to information about the history of blue slips and Stras. Grassley had written it at his Iowa farm on paper torn from a left-over spiral notebook. It didn't change Franken's mind.

In the end, Grassley scheduled a hearing for Stras last week over the objections of Franken and Democrats. There had been fears among Republicans and conservatives that Grassley might shrink from making such a strong move. Absent a hearing, the

Stras nomination would have died. A single senator would have kept it from reaching the Senate floor. But Grassley was never going to let that happen.

As early as last spring, he talked on C-SPAN about blue slips as a courtesy, not a rule. And in a Senate speech on November 13, he said he would "honor the blue-slip courtesy, but there have always been exceptions." Stras became one.

Grassley didn't cite Franken by name. That turned out to be the real courtesy. "But a senator can't use a blue slip to block a nominee simply because he or she doesn't like the nominee's politics or ideology [or] because it's not the person the senator would've picked," he said. "The president gets to nominate judges."

That's true, but Grassley is playing a critical role in the judicial revolution that's filling the federal courts with conservatives. It's the biggest Republican success of the Trump era. Grassley is committed to making it bigger.

"These are the kind of people I want," he told me. "You know the words we all use—strict constructionist, lack of judicial activism, having a temperament that leaves their own personal views out of it, looking at the facts of the case and the law and making your own decision just based on that."

Grassley, 84, is one of a handful of key players advancing the judicial makeover after eight years of President Obama's liberal court-packing. The others: President Trump, White House legal counsel Don McGahn, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, and Leonard Leo of the Federalist Society, an expert on the judiciary.

After nearly 37 years in the Senate, Grassley operates in his own unique way. He deals personally with Democratic senators to get their blue slips. He loves process because it bolsters the Senate's constitutional role to advise and consent on judges. He's fine with long workweeks and endless debates.

Grassley has been Judiciary chairman since Republicans took back the Senate in 2015. But it was Trump's election that elevated Grassley's position to strategic significance. He's made the most of it.

Fred Barnes is an executive editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

BILL CLARK / CQ ROLL CALL / GETTY

Amy Barrett, a Notre Dame law professor and a Trump appeals court nominee, produced the first struggle over a blue slip. Senator Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.) procrastinated for weeks, perhaps because Barrett, 45, a law clerk for Justice Antonin Scalia, was seen as a potential Supreme Court nominee. But Grassley was persistent and got the blue slip. After Barrett was confirmed, Trump instantly added her name to his list of possible high court nominees.

Joan Larsen's nomination took more of Grassley's time and effort. The two Democratic senators from Michigan, Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters, held the slips back. Larsen had worked at the Justice Department's office of legal counsel, and the senators demanded to see documents from the Bush-era debates about torture in the war on terror.

Justice officials refused. The documents, while not classified, are closely held. Grassley had to intervene at Justice to provide evidence Larsen had not been involved in the policy on torture.

Senator Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) was downright elusive. A Republican aide said he "ran and hid" to avoid endorsing Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch, a fellow Coloradan. In pursuit of Bennet's blue slip for appeals court nominee Allison Eid, Grassley tried and failed to get a meeting with Bennet in his office. It took Grassley close to three months to get it.

Grassley met with Senator Bob Casey (D-Pa.) in his office to get the blue slip for Stephanos Bibas, an appeals court nominee. Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.) was an exception. She delivered her blue slip for Ralph Erickson, another appeals court nominee, without being asked.

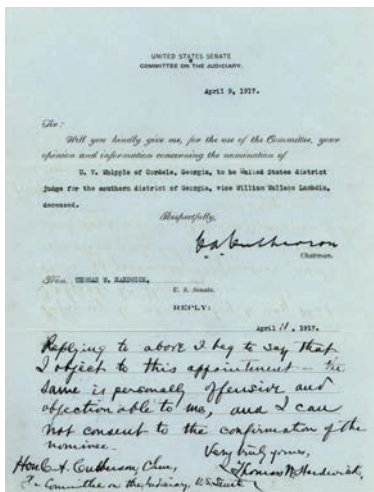
After all this, Grassley's extraordinary effort to secure blue slips is far from over. Nine appeals court judges have been confirmed and nine more await votes on the Senate floor.

There was a precursor to the blue-slips battle, and Grassley was in the middle of it as well. On February 13, 2016, Justice Antonin Scalia died in his sleep. Within hours, Sen. McConnell announced that the Senate

would not confirm a replacement until after the November election. This meant Grassley had to agree not to hold hearings when President Obama nominated Merrick Garland to succeed Scalia.

For Grassley, it was the beginning of a year in which he was harshly criticized by Democrats and subjected to cries of "do your job." Grassley also was running for reelection in 2016.

Within days, the *New York Times* was covering his appearance at a town hall in Dewitt, Iowa, where no one, not even the Republicans, seemed to like him. He faced "sometimes aggressive questioning," the *Times* said.



A blue slip from 1911 with which a senator from Georgia blocked a nominee

"Next to facing the Tea Party people during the Obama administration, this was the most difficult election that I ever had," Grassley says. "And the reason I say it's not quite as bad as the Tea Party is because they were my conservative friends."

The Iowa press attacked him. Billboards were plastered with messages such as "Grassley we're ashamed of you." On another billboard, "supposedly three Republicans had their faces . . . saying 'we've always voted for you but we're ashamed of you,'" Grassley recalls.

His chief abuser, however, was Senate minority leader Harry Reid. "Every speech for four or five months was 'I'm not the same old Chuck Grassley' and 'such a disappointment

I am.'" And Reid kept a plaque on the Senate floor with hostile quotes from the *Des Moines Register*.

That was the mild stuff. Reid is nasty. He's famous for claiming during the 2012 presidential race that Mitt Romney hadn't paid taxes for years. When that was shown to be untrue, he refused to apologize or retract the accusation. He retired in 2016.

As much as Reid disliked McConnell, he seemed to loathe Grassley even more. He raised the stakes, accusing Grassley of "failing dramatically, setting all records of failure," and committing "record-setting obstruction."

And then there was this from Reid: "Senator Grassley has surrendered every pretense of independence and let the Republican leader annex the Judiciary Committee into a narrow, partisan mission of obstruction and gridlock—so partisan, in fact, that the senior senator from Iowa won't respond to a personal invitation from the president inviting him to the White House to discuss the vacancy."

Grassley endured, but his poll numbers drooped. Was he fearful of losing his seat? "Absolutely," he says. "In April, May, June, July, August. When you hover around 50 percent, you've never been that low in 25 years, it worries you." He wound up winning a seventh term, 60 to 36 percent. "It cost me 7 percentage points because I would normally win by 66 or 67."

At last week's hearing, Democrats were unhappy. Having to deal with two appeals court nominees at a time was a strain. Franken was upset because "the blue slip exists for a reason," but his decision to withhold his failed to bar Stras from getting a hearing.

Their whining was familiar. Senators wandered in and out. No one sounded angry. The atmosphere inside the hearing room was far milder than outside in Washington. Grassley is good at defusing tension.

With his eye on the federal judiciary and its lifetime appointments, Grassley declared last year that the election "is not about the next four years," but about "the next forty years." That was his working principle then—and now. ♦

# To Be Sure, Nazis Are Evil

The *New York Times*'s needy readers.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

It's not always easy to sympathize with reporters for the *New York Times*, because so many of them act like . . . how to put it? . . . like reporters for the *New York Times*. But there are exceptions, and to their list we may now add the name of Richard Fausset. He writes (especially well) from the *Times*'s Atlanta bureau, after an adventurous career covering drug cartels in Mexico. Even Atlanta must look good after life with Mexican drug cartels.

Anyway, there's poor Fausset, minding his own business, having just come back from Ohio, where he profiled a "Nazi sympathizer," which is to say, in layman's terms, a Nazi. Another day, another dollar. Suddenly his profile is published and the homey, cloistered world of *New York Times* readers explodes in outrage. Mostly the readers expressed outrage about Fausset because Fausset didn't express outrage about the Nazi.

Fausset portrayed the Nazi—no reason to humanize the bastard by printing his name here—in all his ordinariness. His ordinariness, from what I could tell, was the theme of the profile. Fausset painted his picture with pointillist detail, the way good writers do. His tone was flat and controlled, deliberately without affect.

So here's the Nazi with his bride-to-be, "young and in love," eating at Applebee's. His personal manner is "polite and low key," and his "Midwestern manners would please anyone's mother." (Hey, Ma, look who I brought home!) He shops at Target.

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He knows enough about cooking to add chili flakes to the garlic and olive oil when he's making pasta. He owns some books and apparently reads them. He likes sarcasm and watches *Seinfeld* and his tattoos are lame.



But the guy is, after all, a Nazi, and as the details pile up Fausset never lets his readers forget it; or at least he's trying not to let his readers forget it. At times—as when he says that Hitler was pretty "chill" on the whole gay rights thing—the Nazi approaches self-parody, like the Kenneth Mars character who writes "Springtime for Hitler" in *The Producers*. Other times, as when he daydreams about the all-white America that would have followed a German victory in World War II, he is merely revolting. The piece ends with everybody sitting down to a nice bowl of that pasta.

When he filed his profile, Fausset probably thought he'd ticked off all the obligatory boxes. A *Times* story has to have a lot of what today's news-folk like to call "context." Check: The Anti-Defamation League is brought in to give background on the Traditionalist Worker party, the group of lunatics and buffoons our Nazi belongs to. You need dispassionate disclaimers. Check: Fausset reminds us that the right-wing marchers in Charlottesville adhere to "ideologies many have long considered too vile, dangerous or stupid to enter the political mainstream." (Which, he might have added, is why they haven't.) And a sly linkage of extremists to garden-variety conservatives is always welcome. Check: Many of the Nazi's views "would not seem exotic to most American conservatives."

What's not to like? Plenty, according to the "huge amount of feedback" the *Times* received, "most of it sharply critical," according to an editor's note written a day after the original story. You've probably noticed that "norms" and "normal" and the uncomely verb "normalize" have lately become indispensable to the political vocabulary of Democrats, because, I suppose, we have a Republican president who is indisputably abnormal. Readers accused Fausset of "normalizing" the Ohio Nazi—which might mean that Fausset made him look less like Trump. Can't be sure.

The editor's note offered some examples of the feedback, all of them coming from our modern Chau-tauqua, Twitter. Here's the former CNN news reader Soledad O'Brien: "Would be interesting, if instead of normalizing nazis, if the @nyt actually assessed them through the eyes of those they hate: blacks and jews."

"'How to normalize Nazis 101!' one reader wrote on Twitter. 'I'm both shocked and disgusted by this article,' wrote another. 'Attempting to "normalize" white supremacist groups—should Never have been printed!'"

This last one, with its misbegotten capitalization, strange punctuation, and iron-fisted tone, could have come

from the pudgy fingers of Trump himself. Sad.

There was also a considerable amount of potty-mouthing from *Times* readers. The house columnist at *Teen Vogue*, believe it or not, thought she needed to teach the *Times* a thing or two about manners. “Let’s make one thing f—ing clear, @nytimes: There is no such thing as a Nazi with good manners.” Roger, *Teen Vogue*!

From these and other critiques, it became clear that by “normalization” *Times* readers meant that Fausset fails to rain a sufficient amount of indignation and vituperation upon his Nazi. They took his affectless tone and accumulation of homey detail as indifference at best, endorsement at worst.

“The piece is heavy on banality,” wrote one indignant critic in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, “but fails to capture the evil that [the Nazi] doesn’t even try to conceal.” But this point is self-canceling, isn’t it? If the piece doesn’t capture the Nazi’s evil, then how did the critic discover that

the Nazi wasn’t trying to conceal it? Maybe Fausset has a high enough opinion of his readers to think that some things go without saying.

But he’d be wrong. There’s a trick in journalism called the “to-be-sure paragraph.” It is meant to get the readers off the reporter’s back, letting them know that the reporter is already familiar with the objections that may be forming in their minds. Say you’re writing a story for *Times* readers about the loveliness of rainbows. “To be sure,” the reporter will write, “the beauty we associate with rainbows often follows violent storms that tend to devastate poor areas while leaving wealthier enclaves relatively untouched.”

Fausset’s real fault is that he didn’t salt his story with to-be-sure paragraphs. “He eats at Applebee’s,” he could have written, then reassured his readers by starting a new paragraph: “To be sure, eating at Applebee’s will do little to alter the fact that this Nazi is a creep.”

“His pasta is delicious.” Then: “To

be sure, delicious pasta doesn’t weigh much in the scales of this country’s history of racial injustice . . .”

*Times* readers are a needy bunch, craving reassurance at every turn. The reassurance they require is that their beliefs—even those that are shared by pretty much everybody, like anti-fascism—are true and righteous altogether. And they need to be reassured that the writers and editors of their favorite newspaper know this. They want to see it in print.

But these days I wonder: Is the horse pulling the cart or the other way round? For years, critics of the *Times*, especially on the right, have accused the paper of propagandizing its readers, leading them by the nose to drink deep from the trough of received, vaguely leftish political opinions. But suddenly the situation may be reversed: It’s the readers who are pulling the *Times* towards them, and when the *Times* doesn’t comply, they get angry. Very angry. And you don’t want them to get angry. ♦

## Keeping the Dream Alive

**THOMAS J. DONOHUE**

PRESIDENT AND CEO  
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Justice Department announced in September that it would end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in March 2018. DACA gives temporary legal status to nearly 800,000 young people who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children through no fault of their own. In announcing the end of this program, President Trump started a six-month countdown for Congress to come up with a permanent solution for the Dreamers. Tomorrow, December 5, marks the halfway point—and we’re still waiting.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is asking Congress to act by the end of the year to protect the Dreamers. We are passionate about this issue because it is a matter of principle and fairness. Most Dreamers have been in the U.S. for as long as they can remember—they know no other

home. The only difference between them and their American peers is their legal status.

Just as important, protecting Dreamers is critical for our economy. Hundreds of thousands of these young people contribute their talents to our economy in integral ways. Some DACA recipients have already lost their legal status. The longer Congress waits, the more Dreamers will lose their ability to work here legally and become subject to immediate deportation. This will cause serious disruptions in the business operations of the companies that employ them, which is why many business leaders have spoken out and demanded action on this issue.

In some cases, Dreamers not only work for American companies. They launch American companies. Javier Velazquez is a 21-year-old entrepreneur who started a digital marketing business, Uproot Online, which employs six Americans. He told his

“I’m proud to create jobs for Americans and help our economy grow by paying taxes,” Velazquez said. “I now help more than 100 small businesses in the U.S. and Canada grow their digital footprint.” But Velazquez knows that without congressional action his days of contributing to the country he loves are numbered. “I won’t be able to continue operating my company or help small businesses compete in their local economies.”

If Congress doesn’t act soon, Velazquez’s American Dream will come to an end, along with the dreams of 800,000 others like him. Losing these young people would be a tragedy not just for them but for American businesses and our entire economy. Congress must set aside its differences and take decisive action to protect the Dreamers once and for all.



Learn more at  
[uschamber.com/abovethefold](https://www.uschamber.com/abovethefold).

# Boss or Bystander?

A jury finds Ahmed Abu Khatallah is no mastermind. BY JENNA LIFHITS

**T**he defendant is guilty as sin,” said federal prosecutor Julieanne Himelstein. “And,” she added, “he is a stone-cold terrorist.”

It was the final fiery hour of the trial of Ahmed Abu Khatallah, charged with planning and executing the September 11, 2012, attacks on the U.S. mission and a nearby CIA annex in Benghazi, Libya. He sat a few feet away from Himelstein, looking unfazed by her statements.

The government’s case seemed straightforward when the trial began in early October: Here was a big-name terror suspect responsible for bloody attacks that left four Americans dead coming before a jury in a civilian court. But over the seven weeks of the trial, Khatallah’s lawyers argued that the evidence of his involvement was thin. They cast doubt on grainy video footage from the U.S. mission, the “Excel spreadsheet” phone records that the government said showed him orchestrating the violence, and the credibility of Libyan witnesses who were paid by the U.S. government. They also showed jurors documents that raised questions about whether al Qaeda-affiliated entities were actually behind the attacks.

The defense resonated with jurors, who after five days of deliberation found Khatallah guilty on only four of the 18 counts of the indictment and acquitted him of all the murder charges. Guilty of providing material support to terrorists, damaging the U.S. mission, and using and carrying a semi-automatic firearm, he still faces up to 60 years in prison.

Yet those who defended the Benghazi mission and annex that night

are far from satisfied with the verdict or the civil trial itself.

“You don’t . . . give a foreign terrorist protection under the Constitution and also due process,” says Kris Paronto, who was part of the CIA annex security team. “You interrogate him, and then you eliminate him. Right now, the terrorists are laughing at us.”

Jurors heard from 30 witnesses, including a Libyan informant who was paid \$7 million by the U.S. government to befriend Khatallah and lure him to his capture. They also heard vivid descriptions of the night of terror from survivors.

Prosecutors depicted Khatallah as a man with a “fanatical agenda,” who wanted Libya governed by *sharia*. They said he believed the United States, which he saw as “the cause of all the world’s problems,” was operating a spy base in Benghazi. This was the reason he planned the attacks that “resulted in the murders” of former Navy SEALs Tyrone S. Woods and Glen Doherty, Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, and State Department information officer Sean Smith.

“You have not heard that the defendant was involved in that initial charge on the mission. You have not heard that he lit the match that killed two Americans. You have not heard that he fired the mortar,” assistant U.S. attorney Michael DiLorenzo said during closing arguments. “That does not matter,” he summed up, “because a person is equally guilty as an individual who lit the match or fired the mortar if they are a co-conspirator or if they are an aider or abettor.”

Government lawyers pointed to concurrent phone records and video footage that they said demonstrated constant communication between Khatallah and the first wave of attackers. At least eight members of his

“armed militia,” Ubaydah bin Jarrah, participated in the attack on the U.S. mission. Prosecutors played surveillance footage of Khatallah himself on the compound carrying an AK-47 at around midnight, after “his men had already done the dirty work” and set fire to the buildings.

Khatallah’s lawyers countered that there was no evidence the defendant planned or participated in the attacks. A Benghazi local, he simply had gone to see about the commotion, having no idea the U.S. mission even existed. He went home afterward, his lawyers said, and was never present at the CIA annex, where Woods and Doherty were killed in a mortar attack. The defense described Khatallah as an “easy target” who was being set up to take the blame for the attacks and suggested that the government was using conspiracy law to tie him to violence he knew nothing about.

“They want you to hate him,” assistant federal defender Michelle Peterson told the jury. “They want you to hate him enough to disregard holes in their evidence.”

According to that evidence, Khatallah helped stock up on AK-47s and boxes of explosives “consistent with mortars” ahead of the attack; he issued orders to ensure the attacks went uninterrupted; and he set up a roadblock to prevent emergency responders from arriving at the burning mission.

“Ali,” the paid witness, testified that Khatallah told him he “would have killed all the Americans, each and every one of them,” had another militia leader not intervened. Khatallah, Ali said, also bragged “about being an expert in mortars” and “talked about training men,” suggesting a connection between the defendant and the precision mortar attack at the CIA annex.

Defense lawyer Peterson questioned the credibility of a witness like Ali, whom she described as the “\$7 million man.” Much of the government’s case rests on the thin testimony of a few Libyans, she said. “This really is a house of cards. Without them, you don’t have the identifications of the people they say are co-conspirators. . . . You don’t get any of the pre-planning.”

Jenna Liphits is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

The defense repeatedly raised concerns about Khatallah's treatment after his capture in 2014. Apprehended by U.S. Special Forces, he was hauled aboard a Navy ship and interrogated by officials for intelligence information. It was days before he was read his rights and questioning by FBI agents for the eventual criminal trial began.

"Mr. Abu Khatallah had just been clunked over the head, abducted from his country, hoisted up like a slab of meat onto a Navy ship, blindfolded," Peterson said. "Put in an interrogation room and a cell off and on every day for almost two weeks, not allowed to talk to anyone except the people interrogating him, woken up every two hours." Implicit throughout Khatallah's lawyers' arguments was that this is not how we treat criminal defendants.

One of the most contentious issues as the trial neared its close was a set of documents presented to the jurors in lieu of classified evidence. Some of these "stipulations" undercut the government's portrayal of Khatallah as the attack's ringleader and raised questions about the involvement of al Qaeda-affiliated entities in the events of September 11, 2012. "Some of the stipulations that you're going to see . . . are going to refer to the people who were involved in this attack," said Peterson. "Those stipulations are reasonable doubt in and of themselves."

For the prosecution, Himelstein described the stipulations as just "words on pieces of paper." She warned that they are "internally inconsistent." "One person it will say was the leader, and then it will say another person was the leader. I just tell you that to caution you," she said. "You do not know the reliability of them whatsoever." The judge, though, had instructed jurors to "consider any stipulation of fact to be undisputed evidence."

The prosecution's derision of the stipulations ignited controversy, and the defense filed for a mistrial shortly before Thanksgiving.

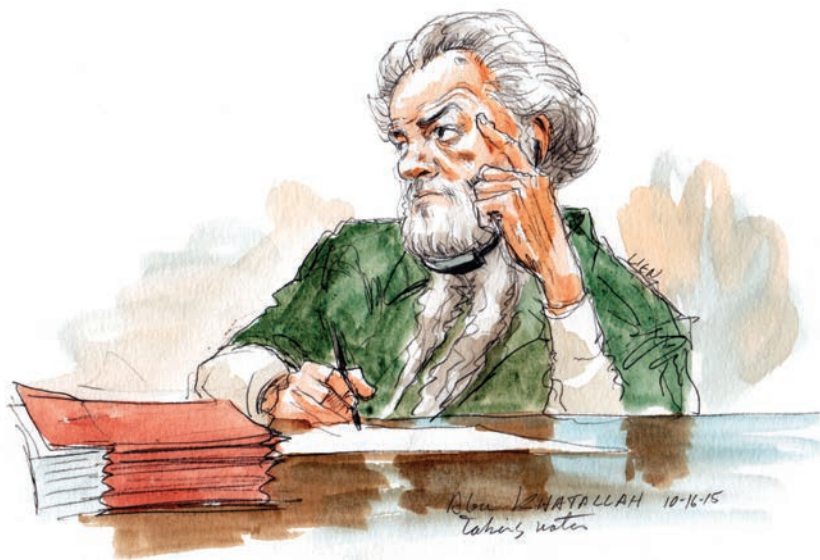
"The government is not here saying that there aren't other participants, but because it's this man who is on trial, let's look at the evidence against this man," DiLorenzo said during

the government's closing argument. "There may be other participants, and there clearly are, but they are acting in concert with his men."

The defense, in closing, accused the prosecution of playing to the jury's emotions rather than proving Khatallah's culpability.

The prosecution fired back in its rebuttal, describing the four Americans that died as "sons." Khatallah "*hated, despised, could not stand, was so angry* about the fact that there were

"I don't believe he was the mastermind or the ringleader," says John Tiegen, another member of the CIA security team. "How many masterminds come out in public and say, 'I'm the one who did it,' that don't have 100 guys around them to make sure they're okay? . . . He's just somebody who talked to CNN early on, and he got caught up in it, and the last administration just went for it," he says, to show they were "holding somebody accountable for what happened."



Courtroom rendering of Ahmed Abu Khatallah

American facilities in Benghazi," said Himelstein. "His hit squad was *searing* through the United States mission, searing violently with rage—his rage against America, brandishing AK-47s, RPGs, and all sorts of weapons to destroy *us*, those innocent men who are on the compound!"

In the end, the jury didn't accept the prosecution's portrayal of Khatallah as the Benghazi attack's mastermind.

Kris Paronto says that while Khatallah might have assisted in planning the attacks, the description of him as the ringleader was always just a "political ploy." "This guy was never the mastermind. He was a middleman at best," he says. The Obama administration wanted the controversy over the Benghazi attacks "to go to bed," Paronto says. Their view was "Here, we got the guy, let's put Benghazi to rest."

Tiegen condemns the decision to prosecute Khatallah in civilian court as a "political stunt." "He didn't do a criminal act, he did an enemy combatant attack," Tiegen says. "It was a full-on frontal assault on a compound."

During Khatallah's trial, U.S. forces captured another suspect in connection with the Benghazi attacks, Mustafa al-Imam, who, according to President Trump, "will face justice in the United States."

In a statement after the trial, acting assistant attorney general for national security Dana Boente vowed to track down all of the Benghazi attackers. "Abu Khatallah's arrest and prosecution were critical steps in our efforts to identify and hold accountable those who were responsible for the terrorist attacks on our facilities in Benghazi," said Boente. "Our work is not done." ♦

# Promises, Promises

What happened to the Trump military buildup?

BY GARY SCHMITT



*Trump fabricating a U.S. military buildup in Seoul, November 8*

Donald Trump made a lot of promises when campaigning for president. To name just a few, he was going to build a wall along the border with Mexico (and have Mexico pay for it), end Obamacare, rebuild the nation's bridges and airports, and deep-six the nuclear deal with Iran. He also promised to rebuild the American military to such a size and extent that the country's "military dominance" would "be unquestioned, and I mean unquestioned, by anybody and everybody." As outlined by candidate Trump, the Army would grow to 540,000, the Navy would expand to 350 ships, and both the Marine Corps and the Air Force would see significant increases in numbers and capabilities. Expectations among those serving in the military were that Trump's plans were Reaganesque in scope.

Yet when President Trump put forward his first budget in March for the 2018 fiscal year, it was anything but. The administration's budget called for

only a 3 percent increase over Obama's plans for 2018. It was nowhere near the levels required for beginning the defense build-up touted by candidate Trump and, indeed, was more than \$100 billion short of what the bipartisan National Defense Panel, co-chaired by William Perry and John Abizaid, had recommended as necessary to match America's means with its strategic goals.

And whether President Trump knew it or not, his proposed modest increase in defense spending was dead on arrival because it was included in a federal budget that had no chance of being enacted by Congress. Crafted by OMB director Mick Mulvaney, who as a congressman had repeatedly voted to cut defense spending, the budget's deep slicing of moneys for foreign aid, the State Department, and domestic programs to "offset" the increase in military spending was almost certainly intended to create a budgetary stalemate on the Hill. Stalled, the likely result would be passage of a continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government funded that would cap spending at last year's level, meaning that even Trump's

small hike in defense expenditures would not happen. And this is precisely what transpired. Unable to pass a new appropriations bill by the end of the fiscal year in September, Congress instead enacted a continuing resolution that runs out on December 8. As a result, the Pentagon and the services are stuck in neutral, unable to start new initiatives or plan ahead given the continuing uncertainty over what resources they will really have.

As irresolute as the White House has been in keeping its promise to rebuild the military, Congress can't be left off the hook. In the runup to the 2016 election, House speaker Paul Ryan established various task forces headed by committee chairs to advance a Republican policy agenda. As the new speaker put it, "if we want a mandate, then we need to offer ideas. And if we want to offer ideas, then we need to actually have ideas." House Republicans' "number-one goal for the next year," he announced, "is to put together a complete alternative to the Left's agenda." The result was six reports released under the title "A Better Way: Our Vision for a Confident America," one of which tackled national security. While noting the military had "been subject to damaging rollbacks" and that this was impacting the country's ability "to deter and defeat our adversaries," the report then argued that "to maintain the most capable fighting force in the world, we must have adequate, predictable budgets." Despite controlling both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, the Republican leadership has so far not delivered on that goal.

As one might hope, the two armed services committees have been doing their job, authorizing a defense topline that approaches \$700 billion for the 2018 fiscal year, a figure that would be a decent jump-start in addressing what ails the military. And both the Senate and House committees, under the respective leadership of Senator John McCain and Representative Mac Thornberry, have done a good job of hammering home what those ailments are: readiness at a shockingly low level, the inadequate modernization and

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CHUNG SUNG-JUN / GETTY

recapitalization of the all three services and the Marine Corps, and the growing gap between the threats faced in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East and the Pentagon's ability to address them.

However, authorizing what moneys can be spent for is not the same as appropriating, and it is congressional appropriations that actually provide the dollars that can be spent. The current conundrum is that Republicans are divided between defense hawks who want to spend more on defense and deficit hawks who know that passing an increase will require getting some Democrats onboard by providing more moneys for domestic spending. And in doing so, they fear, the federal debt will grow. Concern about the debt is only heightened by the fact that the tax bills being put forward by the House and the Senate are likely to add to the debt. Since neither party nor the White House will countenance dealing with the real budget problem—the growth in entitlement spending—there doesn't appear to be a way to appease either the

deficit hawks or Democrats and spend what needs to be spent to refurbish the American military.

With the December 8 deadline for appropriating moneys required to keep the government up and running imminent and an equally pressing desire to pass a tax bill before Christmas, it's virtually certain that the Pentagon will be handed another CR that keeps spending flat. How long that CR will last is anybody's guess. It could be a few weeks or a few months. And even if an appropriations bill is finally passed, given the lack of will on the part of the Republican leadership and the White House to make the nation's defenses a priority, the most one can hope for is a deal with Democrats to marginally increase resources for both the Pentagon and domestic accounts. In short, nothing on the scale required.

While in South Korea, in a speech before the national assembly, the president said that "the United States, under my administration, is completely rebuilding its military and is spending

hundreds of billions of dollars for the newest and finest military equipment anywhere in the world being built, right now." He might wish that were the case; he might even believe that is the case. But it certainly isn't the case.

What's worrisome is not only that when it comes to goals like deterring Russia, North Korea, China, and Iran and defeating Islamist terrorism we're betting with (military) chips we don't have, but that we keep telling the men and women of the military that help is on the way when it isn't. If the nation wants an all-volunteer force that excels at doing its job in all kinds of godforsaken lands, it can't continue to have its elected officials overlook the state of the military. Going in harm's way is one thing; going in harm's way repeatedly with equipment and platforms worn thin by age and use is something else entirely. That experienced pilots, sailors, and soldiers have begun to walk is no surprise given the promises made and the promises not kept by Congress and their commander in chief. ♦

## Free Speech is Under Assault on College Campuses

### Take a Stand for Campus Free Speech

College campuses should be places where freedom to think and learn is unassailable. But this past year, concerned citizens have watched as colleges have become places where free speech is under daily attack by censors who are ready to silence anything that challenges their ideology.

A new set of campus rules has emerged that has little to do with educating young minds and much more to do with enforcing political correctness. At **Yale**, students waged furious protests after a professor criticized attempts to regulate Halloween costumes. At **Middlebury**, students disrupted the invited remarks of social scientist Charles Murray—and assaulted their own political science professor for attempting to

host a dialogue with him. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, George Will, and Ben Shapiro were "disinvited" from

**Brandeis, Scripps, and DePaul**, respectively. The list goes on and on.

On too many college campuses, students, faculty, and administrators expect freedom from speech, not freedom of speech.

**This is no way to prepare students for adulthood.**

The good news is that the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) is fighting back. We work with alumni, parents, and donors across the country to stand up against these practices that betray America's long tradition of free expression and liberty.

ACTA is an independent higher education policy organization that promotes academic freedom,



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AMERICAN COUNCIL OF  
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

# A Less and Less Grand Coalition

Merkel and the Muslims.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL



*Shall we do it again? Schulz and Merkel, September 24*

When the nationalistic Alternative for Germany (AfD) party swept into the national legislature with 13 percent of the vote in the fall, the American op-ed industry boomed but Germans mostly took it in stride. The country has had populist parties since World War II, even extremist ones. They have tended to burn themselves out. True, none has been quite so big as the AfD, and none has drawn on grievances so widely shared. First is the euro. Germany has prospered from the European Union's common currency, but other EU members feel trapped in it, resentful, and entitled to compensation from the German taxpayer. The AfD, against such bailouts, would leave the eurozone. Second is migration. Chancellor Angela Merkel opened Germany's borders to refugees from the Syrian war in 2015, and well over a million

young men walked to Germany from all across the Muslim world. Germany has now had half a dozen incidents of Islamist terrorism, a scourge from which it had been relatively free. The year 2016 began with hundreds of sexual assaults by migrants in front of the Cologne cathedral and ended with a Tunisian migrant driving an 18-wheeler into a Berlin Christmas fair, killing 12. Still, Germans have grown confident about their institutions over the decades and outright cocky about their ability to keep their political system on an even keel.

But since the weekend before Thanksgiving, German institutions have been reeling. The coalition talks that followed September's election broke down and failed to produce a government. That has never happened before. Suddenly the newspapers are full of articles about the "Lessons of Weimar" and the "End of the Merkel Era," and foreign statesmen are telling Germans that their

actions in the coming weeks might determine whether the European Union stands or falls.

The problem is that the election was both a victory for Merkel and a repudiation. Her Christian Democrat (CDU) party lost 9 points in the polls (falling to 33 percent); its Social Democrat (SPD) coalition partner lost 5 (falling to 21). Since the war, these have been the two main parties of right and left. There was something disreputable about banding the whole political establishment together in a "grand coalition." So humiliating was the SPD loss that its leader, Martin Schulz, announced he would not consider joining the government. Since Merkel had ruled out governing with the AfD, this required working something out with two upper-middle-class parties that couldn't stand each other: the businessmen's Free Democratic party and the environmentalist Greens.

After two months, FDP leader Christian Lindner announced he was pulling out of the talks. As usual when someone blows up a coalition, his allies called it a matter of principle, his adversaries a fit of pique. The allies were right. Lindner was worried about two things: first, that the impulsive Merkel would try to make herself a hero to the European Union. She might agree with French president Emmanuel Macron on a large common budget or on Europe-wide deposit insurance that would put German savers at risk.

Lindner's second worry was that Merkel would issue a further invitation to migrants. Lindner had brought his party back from the dead to a stunning 11-percent finish, and he had done so with uncompromising talk about border security. For some voters, the FDP was a way to support the AfD's policies while still getting invited to cocktail parties. After months of tergiversating, Merkel and the Greens had agreed to a cap of 200,000 on new migration—but they had insisted it be kept flexible, and Lindner assumed that the letter of the law would be used to undermine the spirit. He walked. The Social Democrats agreed to

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THOMAS IMO / PHOTOTHEK / GETTY

make themselves available to govern. Merkel is now negotiating to reinstall the same grand coalition to which voters gave poor marks.

Just how explosive an issue Muslim immigration is was shown by an extraordinary report on Muslim population growth that the Pew Research Center issued in the last days of November. Between 2010 and 2016, Germany's Muslim population rose from 3.3 million (or 4.1 percent of the population) to 5 million (6.1 percent), a 50-percent increase in half a decade—most of it due to Merkel's invitation. Its consequences will be magnified by a second problem: Germany's native population is in a state of demographic collapse. With a median age of 47, it vies with the two other defeated Axis countries, Italy and Japan, for the title of the oldest society in the history of the planet. Germany's native population is projected to decline by 15 percent by 2050. Europe as a whole is going to lose about 10 percent of its non-Muslim population, which Pew reckons could fall from 495 million to 446 million.

Pew modeled several possible scenarios for the next generation and found that demographically speaking Germany is going to be altered at its core, no matter what happens. Should it halt all migration today, the relative youth and higher fertility of Muslim residents would still result in a country that is 9 percent Muslim a generation from now. Should Germany's *Willkommenskultur* continue to flourish—that is, should migration continue at the rate of the period 2014-2016—Germany will be 20 percent Muslim.

This is a continent-wide transformation, and it is coming soon—roughly when the children of people getting married today finish grad school. With low immigration, according to Pew's models, Europe will have 36 million Muslims by 2050. With high immigration, it will have 76 million. An extraordinary number: This would mean 17 million in Germany, 13 million in France, and 13 million in Britain. Sweden would have 5 million; it would be 31 percent Muslim.

These numbers are not predictions—they are Pew's *projections*, assuming a scenario of high Muslim immigration. But there are many forces at work to encourage such immigration. Most migrants to Europe are Muslims. Of the top five source countries for immigration, four are almost wholly Muslim (Syria, Morocco, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and the fifth, India, has a Muslim minority of 170 million people. Pew's projections do *not* count those million or so Muslims who are in “legal limbo” after having had an asylum application rejected, considering it “unlikely” that they will stay in Europe. One wonders what grounds Pew has for making that assumption.

Pew displays an extraordinary sociological optimism about German public opinion: “Only about three-in-ten (28 percent),” the Pew experts write, “say these refugees are a ‘major threat’ to Germany.” (*Only!*) This optimism is shared by most European governments and experts, but not by most European citizens, who understand what an important thing a religion is. Even with merely moderate immigration, there are two countries that would see their Muslim population rise by more than 10 percent: Sweden and Britain. You begin to understand the electrifying effect that immigration had on the Brexit referendum: All these nations, even if no one dares to say it, are fighting for their demographic lives.

And you begin to see how, under the surface of German politeness and

historic repentance, people might be angered by the return of the Christian Democrat-Social Democrat grand coalition that got Germany into its immigration predicament. Normally a leader in Merkel's position will pay a high price in policy and personnel for the support of a reluctant coalition partner like the SPD. But Merkel's governing strategy has always been to upstage and demoralize the Social Democrats by preempting the issues they care about. She committed Germany to phasing out nuclear power, instituted quotas for women on corporate boards, and secured gay marriage (while professing to be personally opposed). Germany's taboo against right-wing parties allowed Merkel to pull this off, protecting her from her own conservative voters. But the vote for the AfD and the FDP this fall is a sign that the taboo is losing its power. And what is left on the SPD's wish list for Merkel to provide? The key proposals that have been leaked from negotiations so far include tax hikes and the abolition of private health insurance.

Germany is not the only country that runs on collusion between two parties that once stood at opposite poles of the system. Ireland has a “confidence and supply agreement” by which one major party backs the other. The Netherlands had such a government until the last election. Such arrangements are usually justified as a defense against radicalism. They run the risk, though, of stoking the tensions that lead to radicalism in the first place. ♦

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# Brazening It Out

*Despite everything, Roy Moore is ahead*

By JOHN McCORMACK

*Henagar, Alabama*

**R**oy Moore—the Alabama GOP Senate candidate credibly accused of dating high-school-aged girls as a grown man, molesting a 14-year-old girl, and sexually assaulting a 16-year-old—emerged on November 27 to hold his first public campaign event in nearly two weeks. “Judge Moore will not field questions from the media or anybody else,” Tony Goolesby, the DeKalb County coordinator for Moore’s campaign, said at the beginning of the event. “We want to stay in control, we do have security and everything. So no questions, no outbursts from anybody.”



*More than 100 Moore supporters in Henagar, Alabama . . .*

Moments earlier, Goolesby had pulled up in a car outside the event at the community center in the small town of Henagar in northeastern Alabama. After he got out, he began shoving a cameraman who happened to work for Fox News. “Follow our orders,” Goolesby barked. “Go. Now.”

“It’s not unusual for people to get bumped around a bit in the media scrum,” Fox News’s Jonathan Serrie reported on air later that night. “This was not a scrum, though. It’s highly unusual for members of a political campaign to physically engage in this manner with members of the press.”

What’s even more unusual is that the Moore campaign coordinator was shoving a Fox News cameraman to keep him away from a car that Roy Moore wasn’t even riding

in. “That was a decoy car,” Rodney Ivey, a DeKalb County GOP official on the scene that night, told me. “They [the press] run over there wanting Roy Moore, and we had it already planned, and we slipped him in the back door while all that was going on.”

As the event in Henagar made clear, the Moore campaign and its supporters have taken their bunker mentality and war on the press to a whole new level—which is what you might expect from a Senate campaign in which the candidate faces multiple accusations of misconduct that ranges from merely disgusting to criminal.

Rodney Ivey, like most Moore supporters, says he simply doesn’t believe the allegations against Moore. “The way he looked when he talked about it tonight—the look in his eye—there’s no truth to none of that,” Ivey told me outside the community center in Henagar.

But didn’t he find the number of accusers troubling? “Five or six can come out just as easy as one or two if you get the right ones to come out,” Ivey said. “They’ve all worked for the Democrat party. They’ve all had their picture made with Hillary.” Asked where he read that all of Moore’s accusers worked for the Democratic party, Ivey said he wasn’t sure. (In fact, only one accuser worked for the Clinton campaign; at least two were Trump voters.) Had Ivey read the original *Washington Post* report? “I have not read it all, but my girlfriend reads them all and she tells me about them.”

**I**s there any good reason for anyone who has read the many allegations against Moore to doubt them? It’s worth taking the question seriously and making meaningful distinctions between the accusations.

Moore has been accused of dating or trying to date 16- and 17-year-old girls when he was in his thirties, and the evidence for these allegations is overwhelming.

There is the testimony of Gena Richardson, who told the *Washington Post* that Moore took her on a date when she was a 17- or 18-year-old high-school senior that ended with an “unwanted ‘forceful’ kiss.” A friend confirmed she had seen Moore frequently approach Richardson at the mall, and the two girls had discussed the incident at the time.

Wendy Miller told the *Post* that Moore took an interest in her when she was working as a “Santa’s helper” at the mall at age 14 and asked her out on a date when she was 16. Her mother told the *Post* that she forbade the date.

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IMAGES: JOE BUGLEWICZ / GETTY

Kelly Harrison Thorp told AL.com that when she was a 17-year-old waitress at Red Lobster, Moore asked her on a date, which she rebuffed. When she told him her age, Moore allegedly replied: “I go out with girls your age all the time.”

Debbie Wesson Gibson told the *Post* that Moore asked her out after speaking at her high school civics class when she was 17 and he was 34. They dated with the approval of Gibson’s mother, and Gibson says physical contact never went beyond kissing.

Sean Hannity asked Moore on November 10 if he ever dated Gibson. “I remember her as a good girl,” Moore replied, claiming Gibson never accused him of “any inappropriate behavior.” Pressed again on whether they dated, Moore said: “I knew her as a friend. If we did go on dates then we did. But I do not remember that.” Debbie Wesson Gibson is the lone Moore accuser who did work for the Clinton campaign (and several other Democratic campaigns), as a sign language interpreter.

Asked by Hannity if he dated 17- or 18-year-old girls, Moore replied: “Not generally, no.” In Moore’s own telling, his wife of 32 years first caught his eye at a dance recital when she was 15 or 16. To disbelieve that Roy Moore dated high-schoolers as a man in his 30s, you not only have to disbelieve all the women and some of their friends and mothers—you must essentially disbelieve Roy Moore.

As creepy as Moore’s pursuit of high-school-aged girls may have been, the legal age of consent in Alabama, then as now, is 16. The allegations from Leigh Corfman, however, are of criminal misconduct. According to Corfman, at the age of 14 she met Moore outside of the courtroom where her own child-custody hearing was taking place. Corfman and Moore then met on two occasions without her mother’s knowledge. The *Washington Post* reported on November 9:

On a second visit, she says, he took off her shirt and pants and removed his clothes. He touched her over her bra and underpants, she says, and guided her hand to touch him over his underwear.

“I wanted it over with—I wanted out,” she remembers thinking. “Please just get this over with. Whatever this is, just get it over.” Corfman says she asked Moore to take her home, and he did.

One of Corfman’s childhood friends, Betsy Davis, told the *Post* that Corfman told her about the incident at the time. Another friend confirmed anonymously that she had heard a similar story, and Corfman’s mother says she was told the story in the 1990s. To disbelieve Leigh Corfman, you must either believe that her friends and mother were quickly roped into a vast conspiracy or that Corfman has been privately telling a fictitious story about Moore to friends and family for nearly four decades. None of the women interviewed by the *Post* knew each other.

The other criminal allegation against Roy Moore comes

from Beverly Young Nelson, who said in a news conference alongside her lawyer Gloria Allred that when she was 16, Moore offered her a ride home, and without her consent groped her breasts, then grabbed her neck, and tried to force her head toward his crotch before she escaped from the car.

Nelson provided a yearbook inscription from Roy Moore as proof that she knew him. It reads: “To a sweeter more beautiful girl I could not say ‘Merry Christmas.’ Christmas 1977. Love, Roy Moore, D.A. 12-22-77 Olde Hickory House.” Moore’s campaign has cast doubt on the authenticity of the yearbook inscription because the characters “12-22-77 Olde Hickory House” appear in a different script. The Moore campaign also alleges that the signature



... turned out to hear their candidate, November 27.

was lifted from a court filing. Moore’s campaign claims the letters “D.A.” don’t stand for “district attorney” (Moore was assistant D.A. at the time), but for the initials of his assistant, Delbra Adams, who would stamp the judge’s name on court documents and write her initials.

The Moore campaign has called on Nelson to release the yearbook to independent experts for examination, and Nelson’s attorney Gloria Allred responded that she would release the yearbook and Nelson would testify if the Senate would hold a hearing investigating the case. But the Senate Ethics Committee would not have jurisdiction over the matter unless and until Moore wins election and takes his seat. The Constitution gives each house of Congress the authority to expel a member with a two-thirds vote; it does not give Congress the power to prevent a duly elected member from taking his seat. A message left by THE WEEKLY STANDARD with Allred’s law firm was not returned.

While Nelson’s story has not been as thoroughly vetted by journalists as the other accounts, it has not been disproven. She says she told her sister within about two years of the alleged assault, and her sister has not disputed that. Both Nelson and Corfman have described themselves as Trump voters.

**B**reitbart News, the website run by Steve Bannon, has sent reporters to Alabama to try to discredit Leigh Corfman's story, but their efforts to poke holes in the account have been pathetic. In one story, *Breitbart* reported that although Corfman told the *Post* "she talked to Moore on her phone in her bedroom," Corfman's mother said she didn't have a phone line in her bedroom. But her family did have a phone with a cord that could reach the bedroom. In another report, *Breitbart* suggested the meetings with Moore were implausible because there were only 12 days between Corfman's child-custody hearing and



Attorney Gloria Allred, right, listens as Beverly Young Nelson details her allegations against Roy Moore during a press conference in New York, November 13.

when, according to the court order, she was scheduled to move to her father's house 20 miles away. But that's plenty of time for Corfman to have met Moore twice.

Corfman's allegations—backed up by contemporaneous accounts, journalistic vetting, and her own willingness to defend the allegations in a public TV interview—are the most difficult for the Moore campaign to answer. In all those ways, Corfman's story is as credible as the story of Juanita Broaddrick, who in 1999 went public in an NBC News interview with an allegation that Bill Clinton had raped her in a hotel room in 1978. Broaddrick gave contemporaneous accounts of the alleged rape to five people, including a colleague, whom she told immediately after the alleged assault.

When I asked Moore campaign chairman Bill Armistead if he believed Juanita Broaddrick, he replied: "I have no comment." Asked the same question in a separate interview, Moore campaign strategist Brett Doster said: "I don't want to start speculating about all of—or speaking for Clinton and all of his various dalliances." Doster contrasted Moore's character with Clinton's adulterous marital history: "The principal reason why you should doubt those allegations is because Roy Moore has denied those allegations and because we have hundreds of credible character

witnesses who say this is completely out of line with who he is now or who he was then." Moore faces one allegation of sexual misconduct as a married man—that he grabbed the buttocks of a woman in his law office.

The Moore campaign has also asked: Why now, after nearly 40 years, are these allegations coming out, and not when Moore ran for state supreme court justice? Quin Hillier, a veteran conservative journalist and activist based in Mobile who wrote his first profile of Moore back in 2000, says it makes perfect sense that the allegations didn't come out until now. "This whole idea that it was just open, out there, and should've been easy to find out is nonsense," he says. "He'd never been vetted before on anything other than his oddball interpretations of faith versus government."

Corfman, for her part, says that one reason she didn't publicly come forward sooner was because she didn't want her children to have to endure attacks on her character. "There is no one here that doesn't know that I'm not an angel," Corfman told the *Post*. As if to prove Corfman's point, Moore campaign chairman Bill Armistead threw a jab at her behavior as a child in an interview with *THE WEEKLY STANDARD* on November 29. While trying to cast doubt on Corfman's allegations, he garbled the *Breitbart News* report and falsely claimed that Corfman "wasn't living with her mother at the time" she says she privately met Moore. "Custody had been given over to her father," Armistead said. "That's what this proceeding was all about. She went to court—the mother to turn the custody over to the father—because she was a problem child."

**D**espite the enormous moral cloud hanging over Moore's head, polls suggest he is more likely than not to win. Two public surveys released at the end of November show Moore with a 5- to 6-point lead, which is about what internal Moore campaign polling shows. While Moore had trailed in several polls right after the scandal broke, his numbers have turned around for a few reasons, and the most important may be Donald Trump.

Within days of the *Washington Post's* bombshell report, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell said that he believed Moore's accusers, called on the candidate to drop out, and said he would support an expulsion hearing if Moore wins. Conservative senators Mike Lee and Ted Cruz rescinded their endorsements. The National Republican Senatorial Committee and the Republican National Committee cut off funding. Senior Alabama senator Richard Shelby cast an early write-in ballot for a Republican other than Moore. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, whose open Senate seat is the one being contested in the December 12 special election, said he had no reason to doubt Moore's accusers. "There is a special place in hell for people who prey on children," Ivanka Trump said on November 15.

EDUARDO MUNOZ ALVAREZ / AFP / GETTY

“I’ve yet to see a valid explanation, and I have no reason to doubt the victims’ accounts.”

And then, just before the Thanksgiving holiday, the most influential Republican in America threw his support to Moore. “I can tell you one thing for sure: We don’t need a liberal person in there, a Democrat, [Doug] Jones,” Donald Trump said. “I’ve looked at his record. It’s terrible on crime. It’s terrible on the border. It’s terrible on the military.”

“I do have to say, 40 years is a long time,” the president said when asked about the Moore allegations. “[Moore has] run eight races, and this has never come up. So 40 years is a long time.” A poll conducted November 26 to 27 by Change Research asked Alabama voters who pulled the lever for Trump a year ago if they believed any of the allegations against Moore were true. Only 9 percent said yes, a drop from the 16 percent who said yes in a poll conducted in mid-November before Trump’s comments.

Trump is not usually known for letting logical consistency constrain him, but in this instance he did. If multiple credible accusations of women against Moore are enough to convict Moore in the court of public opinion, that standard should also apply to Trump. The *New York Times* speculated on November 25 that Trump “sees the calls for Mr. Moore to step aside as a version of the response to the now-famous ‘Access Hollywood’ tape, in which he boasted about grabbing women’s genitalia, and the flood of groping accusations against him that followed soon after.” Democrats have also given Moore an assist, both in their initial failure to call for Rep. John Conyers to step down despite credible accusations of sexual harassment against the senior member of their caucus and in their nomination of Doug Jones, an unalloyed liberal whose extreme stance on abortion is morally repulsive to most Alabama voters.

While Trump’s support may prove vital to Moore, the response of local Republicans may be almost as important. His base has stood by him and state and local officials have done the same. “There is intense suspicion, at least, at any story that is even remotely a last-minute story that is seen as [coming from] a liberal East Coast news source. The intense suspicion sometimes leads people to lose their willingness to analyze any particular story on its merits,” says Hillyer, the Mobile-based journalist, who believes the accusations in the *Washington Post* are true. “I have not heard any sort of publicly political evangelical that had been expected to be with Moore back off because of these allegations.”

Perhaps the only public sign of GOP turmoil in Alabama came just before Thanksgiving, when Moore campaign communications director John Rogers resigned. “Unfortunately John just did not have the experience to deal with the press the last couple of weeks, and we’ve had to make a change,” Moore strategist Brett Doster said, suggesting the communications director had been fired. Moore campaign chairman

Armistead then issued a contradictory statement: “John made the decision to leave the campaign last Friday—any representations to the contrary are false—and we wish him well.” All three men declined to comment for this story on Rogers’s reasons for leaving the campaign.

Meanwhile, Doster’s role in the Moore campaign has left many of his former colleagues puzzled. A veteran establishment consultant who’s worked for Jeb Bush, George Bush, and Mitt Romney, he seems an unlikely fit for the Moore campaign.

“It’s beyond befuddled. It’s WTF,” says Peter Schorsch, publisher of FloridaPolitics.com and a political consultant who has worked with Doster in the past. “I spoke to one consultant the other day who described this as political suicide.” Several of Doster’s former colleagues called him a good guy and principled conservative and were surprised that he hadn’t left. “Brett has always been a good person to me,” says Tim Miller, who was Jeb Bush’s presidential campaign communications director. “I’m not passing judgment on him. I also don’t understand why you wouldn’t walk away from somebody like Roy Moore.”

“There’s no constitutional right to having people spin lies for you in order for you to get into public office. This is not the same as having a constitutional right to a defense,” adds Miller. On the outside, at least, Doster appears to some like he’s trapped choosing between his dignity and his reputation for loyalty—an extreme case, sure, but a possible dilemma familiar to many Republicans in the current political environment. In his interview with THE WEEKLY STANDARD, though, Doster gave no hint that he doubted Moore or was having any second thoughts about working for him.

While most Alabama Republicans disbelieve the accusations, or at least say they disbelieve them, a handful of high-profile Republicans have argued that even if Moore molested a 14-year-old girl, people should still vote for him. “I certainly have no reason to disbelieve any of them,” Alabama governor Kay Ivey said of Moore’s accusers. “I believe in the Republican party, what we stand for, and most important, we need to have a Republican in the United States Senate to vote on things like the Supreme Court justices, other appointments the Senate has to confirm, and make major decisions. . . . So that’s what I plan to do, vote for Republican nominee Roy Moore.”

Moore, a Christian fundamentalist, has long portrayed himself as a righteous leader who would restore the biblical values that this country lost following the sexual revolution. Win or lose, what his candidacy will most likely accomplish is the erosion of one of the few remaining moral norms almost universally accepted in the United States—that sexual assault by an adult on an underage minor is beyond the pale. ♦



Jungle Tales by James Jebusa Shannon, 1895

# Shared Words

*The culture-making act of reading together.* BY STEPHEN MILLER

Some historians talk about a “reading revolution” in the middle of the 18th century, during which literacy rates rose and people came increasingly to prefer reading silently over reading aloud—mainly novels, a relatively new literary form. In *The Social Life of Books*, Abigail Williams, a professor of 18th-century studies at Oxford, says the reading revolution was much weaker than historians have suggested; the old tradi-

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## The Social Life of Books

*Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home*

by Abigail Williams

Yale, 351 pp., \$30

tion of reading out loud remained alive and well. To support her argument, Williams cites myriad sources: diaries, journals, commonplace books, letters, library withdrawals—enough sources to justify her thanking five researchers for their help.

There were practical reasons for reading books aloud. “Domestic lighting was primitive, and prohibitively expensive,”

Williams says. “Why strain the eyes with insufficient light and small print when a single person with a well-lit book could do the work of many?” Also, eyeglasses were rare until late in the 18th century, so it made sense for a person with good eyesight to read to people whose eyesight was poor. And reading aloud was a way of entertaining others—including people who were illiterate and could not read for themselves—while they were doing housework.

There also were moral reasons for reading aloud. Many observers thought it was dangerous for young women to read novels by themselves. Young women, one 18th-century moralist said,

were susceptible to “giddy and fantastical notions of love and gallantry” that they imbibed from novels. Samuel Richardson recommended that his novel *Pamela* be shared among company.

Reading aloud stayed in vogue for other reasons. Eighteenth-century Britons admired good oratory. In the 1750s, so-called “spouting clubs”—debating and reciting societies—became popular with tradesmen. In these venues reading aloud was a spectator sport. And more generally, Britons prized sociability. Many people enjoyed reading aloud with their families or friends. A self-help book on marriage recommends reading aloud with one’s spouse. “And though you should not naturally be disposed to the same taste in reading or amusement, this may be acquired by habit, and by a hearty desire of conforming to his inclinations and sharing in his pleasures.” A satirical self-help book takes a different view. The author of *An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* says you can torment your husband by continually interrupting him when he’s reading a Shakespeare play aloud.

Not everyone enjoyed being read to. William Wilberforce, the abolitionist, complained, “I cannot make the same use of passages I notice in books that are read to me as if I had read them with my own eyes, and could know them at a glance.” Some listeners grumbled that readers would drone on without noticing that no one was interested in what they were reciting. Williams quotes one woman griping that a houseguest insisted on reading the newspaper “aloud to us paragraph by paragraph, half of which are bad news of retreats of our army.”

Sometimes reading aloud was a punishment inflicted on children. The engraver Thomas Bewick remembered that when he got into a fight his parents required him to spend Sunday evenings reading “the Bible, or some other good book, to old Mrs. Beilby and her daughter, or others of the family.” One wonders how Mrs. Beilby felt about being reluctantly read to by a boy.

The subtitle of Williams’s book—*Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home*—is misleading; her book is

not only about how 18th-century Britons read, it is also about what they read. Her conclusion is startling: Most Britons only read books “partially.” They mainly read abridgments, extracts, and miscellanies—that is, anthologies.

Until the invention of the steam-powered printing press in the mid-19th century, books were expensive, so most people read low-priced chapbooks, which were sold by itinerant hawkers. The contents “ranged from ballads, cut-down seventeenth-century romances, ... stories of British heroes ..., true-life criminal tales, [and] religious material to scaled-down versions of prose fiction.” People mostly

*Commentators of the era ‘worried about learning bought too easily and readers who could no longer engage with whole texts.’*

read the famous 18th-century novels—*Gulliver’s Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Tom Jones*—in chapbook versions.

Britons also read abridgments of plays. “For a couple of pennies, readers could acquire heavily abridged forms of stage plays, shrunk into one act.” Williams mentions Thomas Bowdler—the man who took the bawdy passages out of Shakespeare and gave us the word “bowdlerize.” Algernon Swinburne, the decadent late-19th-century poet, defended Bowdler’s *The Family Shakespeare*: “No man ever did better service to Shakespeare than the man who made it possible to put him into the hands of intelligent and imaginative children.”

The most popular compilations contained sermons, theological tracts, and religious verse. When Robert Burns was managing a small library in Lanarkshire, he was irritated that the patrons wanted him to order books of divinity that he called “damned trash” rather than such secular pleasures as *Don Quixote*, *Joseph Andrews*, and the *Arabian Nights*.

Many readers made their own personal compilations: commonplace books, in which they would write down passages from books for future enjoyment or reference. Commonplace books, which occasionally were read aloud, were “an eclectic and inventive hotchpotch of materials,” Williams writes; they’d sometimes include recipes. In keeping with the way the word was used at the time, Williams uses commonplace as a verb, referring, for example, to an 18th-century clergyman who “commonplaces useful observations” from the books he reads.

One might conclude from Williams’s survey that 18th-century Britons were mainly interested in hearing (or reading) extracts of verse or prose that were uplifting, edifying, moving, or heartwarming. The educator Hannah More attacked “the Swarms of *Abridgements*, *Beauties*, and *Compendiums* which ... may be considered in many instances as an infallible receipt for making a superficial mind.” Williams says that commentators of the era “worried about learning bought too easily and readers who could no longer engage with whole texts.”

From the vantage of two centuries on, the view is sunnier and more democratic: Chapbooks, abridgments, extracts, and miscellanies made snippets of great literature available to the middle class and the poor. The effect on British (and by extension American) identity was enormous. For example, while we rightly esteem Shakespeare’s linguistic creativity, it wasn’t until long after his death that his influence came to be fully felt. “Over the course of the eighteenth century,” Williams writes, “Shakespeare became ever more firmly ensconced as the national bard.” Many men and women first read passages from Shakespeare in a chapbook or heard Shakespeare being declaimed in a spouting club. If they liked what they read or heard, they might decide to borrow the whole play from a circulating library. The stories and ideas that shaped our culture weren’t just transmitted pristine and silent from mind to mind across the pages, but were also passed hand to hand and shared with voices raised. ♦

# Glamorous Gardener

*The flowers and fame of Bunny Mellon, Jackie Kennedy's confidante.* BY STEPHANIE GREEN



Bunny Mellon, right, with Jacqueline Kennedy in Boston, 1961

**O**n the evening of President John F. Kennedy's assassination, Bunny Mellon arrived at the White House to console the first lady, one of her closest friends, who was too distraught to see her. Bunny had brought a "thing of flowers" for the chief usher "to put them by her bed."

Within hours Bunny was busily attending to the floral arrangements for the president's state funeral.

This was the modus operandi of Rachel Lowe Lambert Lloyd Mellon: to leave a little beauty wherever she went. "Nothing should be noticed," she was fond of saying—but there is much to notice in her first full-length biography. Bunny's life and times,

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**Bunny Mellon**  
*The Life of an American Style Legend*  
by Meryl Gordon  
Grand Central, 516 pp., \$28

author Meryl Gordon shows, were punctuated by headlines and by powerful figures who were as captivated by Bunny as they were by her way with flowers.

Born to great wealth in 1910, Bunny was from the cradle surrounded by the bold and the beautiful. But it's her legacy of finding the sublime in the small and unadorned that sets her apart, especially in the gardens she designed.

Her father's family made a fortune from Listerine, affording Bunny—nicknamed like many WASP kids—an

upbringing of family mansions, country retreats, and elite private schools. Her love of horticulture was nurtured by her maternal grandfather; he took a shine to young Bunny, who felt eclipsed by her far prettier sister, Lily, and had a prickly relationship with her mother.

After Bunny graduated from the Foxcroft School, she acquiesced to her father's wishes and skipped college, settling instead for her first "MRS degree" in 1932, marrying fellow patrician Stacy Lloyd. They settled at her family's Carter Hall in Virginia and became part of the horsey social orbit of Paul Mellon, the scion of the Mellon dynasty, and his wife, Mary.

This is where Bunny's story becomes a charming mélange of *Down-ton Abbey* and the British sitcom *As Time Goes By*. While Stacy and Paul did their part for the war effort, both allegedly taking mistresses while stationed in Europe, they returned to troubled marriages. Stacy and Bunny were at odds over money and slowly grew apart. In 1946, Paul's wife died after a sudden illness, and Bunny was practically underfoot to help him grieve and run the households.

Bunny and Stacy divorced amicably in 1948 and Bunny pulled off the biggest coup of her life by quickly becoming Mrs. Paul Mellon, the "empress of Upperville." The couple maintained homes in Antigua, New York, Cape Cod, and Paris, but their primary base was Rokeby Farm, a huge estate that Bunny spared no expense to conform to her idea of paradise.

"Look, that's all wrong. The hill is in the wrong place," she told her staff one day, surveying the view of the farm from her window. Within three months, the hill was moved.

Bunny loved doling out gems from Schlumberger and Tiffany, but the Tiffany blue box was too blasé for her, so she'd find the perfect seashells on the beach to put the jewelry in. Everyday people with these kinds of caprices may be called wacky divas, but Bunny was so imaginative and kind—not to mention rich—that, as Gordon puts it, people preferred to think of her as eccentric.

The most important non-family alliance in Bunny's life was her friendship with a woman 19 years her junior: Jacqueline Kennedy, later Onassis. Bunny met Jackie in the 1950s when she was a young senator's wife. They "both loved art and fashion and ballet and all things French," Gordon writes. "They could tease each other and tell each other the truth."

Jackie leaned on Bunny for advice on everything from home décor to marital infidelity. (In the mid-1960s, Paul Mellon took up with prominent Georgetown shop owner Dorcas Hardin, who was warm and caring, in contrast to the regal Bunny. In Gordon's telling, Mellon was in love with Hardin; she became his longtime mistress, and although he and Bunny never divorced they thereafter largely led separate lives.)

Jackie asked Bunny to create the White House Rose Garden, a project of special interest to President Kennedy. Although Bunny had no formal training in garden design, she would continue to oversee the White House gardens, tending to them herself in her couture Balenciaga gardening clothes.

Bunny remained at her friend's side until Jackie's death in 1994 and even oversaw the flowers at JFK Jr.'s wedding two years later.

By the time of Paul Mellon's death in 1999, his legacy was sealed with his longtime philanthropic devotion to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, where the countless Impressionist paintings he and Bunny discovered together still hang in homage to their mutual pursuit of beauty.

Bunny spent her remaining years ensconced in her private world of elegance, but for one rather ugly episode. Despite her acute good taste, she had become enamored of John Edwards, the charismatic senator from North Carolina, funneling thousands of dollars into his campaign coffers. It later emerged that these funds were used by smarmy campaign aides to finance and hide Edwards's mistress and love child. When Bunny died in 2014 at the ripe age of 103, Edwards showed up at her funeral, but her family relegated him to the back of the church. ♦

BCA

# Wind on Our Cheeks

*Thoreau's search for life lived truly.*

BY CHRISTOPH IRMSCHER

About two-thirds into Laura Dassow Walls's extraordinary new biography of Henry David Thoreau, she relates an anecdote that tells us more about the man than many a scholarly tome. On one of his many walks in or around Concord, Mass., a passerby accosted him: "Halloo, Thoreau, and don't you ever shoot a bird then when you want to study it?" Snapped back Thoreau: "Do you think that I should shoot you if I wanted to study you?" Study the living being, not its dead shell. And this is precisely what Walls has done in her definitive life of this opinionated, often difficult, but always interesting writer, who was so excited to have been born into just the right place and, as he said proudly, "in the very nick of time."

Great biographies are never just about the life of a particular man or woman, but about life itself. And, as it happens, life was also the primary object of Thoreau's quest. In a much-excerpted passage from his 1854 masterpiece, *Walden; or Life in the Woods*, he claimed that he wanted nothing more than "to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms," as if it were a wild animal that could be trapped, contained, and tamed into obedience. Which, as Thoreau was happy to admit, would have been impossible.

To her great credit, Walls gives us so much more than the quotable Thoreau, the bane of the American literature survey course. Undergraduates, it is true, invariably dislike Thoreau. If you are getting ready to interview for the job that might change your life,

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**Henry David Thoreau**

*A Life*

by Laura Dassow Walls  
Chicago, 615 pp., \$35

the last thing you want to hear is Thoreau's advice that new clothes are less important than the person who wears them. Thoreau hated fashion and the pressure it put on people's self-esteem: "The head monkey at Paris puts on a traveller's cap, and all the monkeys in America do the same." But tell that to an interview committee. And his professed aversion to philanthropy—"A man is not a good *man* to me because he will feed me"—usually puts off the more progressively minded students in the classroom.

Of course, as I try to explain to my students, Thoreau never meant to discourage us from dressing well or from helping other people. Instead, he wants us to question a system in which external conformity replaced inner identity, in which fleeting effects are more important than durable motives: "If you give money, spend yourself with it." While Walls briefly registers her impatience with Thoreau's critics—those who think he was a hypocritical mama's boy who didn't do his own laundry and enjoyed dinner at the Emersons' rather than eating his homegrown beans at Walden Pond—she fortunately spends little time defending him. Instead, she immerses herself and her readers fully in Thoreau's environment, the fields, meadows, woods, and streets of Concord. Walls's book is, first and foremost, the product of an extraordinary act of empathy. But it is also an outstanding literary achievement. No biographer has more credibly evoked those blisteringly cold, crystal-clear New England winter

days, days that, thanks to Walls's prose, sparkle, glimmer, and chill for us the way they once did for Thoreau, when, rising early, he had to first thaw his ink before he could begin his writing. The air was so cold that at night, bed-sheets would freeze around people's faces. And those who ventured out during the day often couldn't fully button their coats since their fingers were too numb. "Everyone marveled at the cold," writes Walls. "Marvel" is a beautifully appropriate word here. Imagine the same sentence with a different verb, and it instantly disappoints: "Everyone was astonished by the cold." But what really carries the whiff of 19th-century small-town New England is Walls's "everyone," a reminder of a time when the weather temporarily leveled differences between the rich and the poor, the young and the old, and all would stare in mute wonder at the transformed landscape.

And yet Thoreau was not everyone. How odd he must have seemed when one encountered him on the road: a small, wiry man with piercing blue eyes, his pockets weighed down by all he carried around with him—a jackknife, twine, pencils, telescope (to see the birds), microscope (to count the stamens of the flowers he found), and diary (to write down what he had found). Emerson probably never fully understood him, a thought that pained Thoreau, who lamented that their friendship was a "tragedy of more than 5 acts." "Ugly as sin" his sometime neighbor Nathaniel Hawthorne called him, while Hawthorne's son Julian, one of Thoreau's walking companions, settled for the somewhat kinder "unbeautiful." Of course, Thoreau, throughout his life, was surrounded by other very odd people—moody Ellery Channing, for example, as uneven a poet as he was a father and husband, and the formidable Sophia Foord, 15 years older than Thoreau, who alarmed him with her marriage proposal. Even though Foord was immediately rebuffed, she swore that she was Thoreau's soulmate and that her spirit would join his in the afterlife.

The great imaginative accomplishment of Walls's book is to put Thoreau firmly back into the community that fostered and, for the most part, protected him. Unmarried aunts, uncles, and siblings were common in Concord, and Thoreau's secret (if a secret it was), his preference for men, was safe with his fellow townspeople.



Henry David Thoreau in 1856

Walls's approach to Thoreau's sexual identity is a model of biographical probity. Although Thoreau wrote constantly about Thoreau (if only, he quipped, because he didn't know anyone better than himself), he rarely let his guard down. Walls is right to point us to an agonized passage written after Thoreau had returned from Mount Katahdin in Maine: "Think of our life in nature,—daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it,—rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks!" Thoreau's prose becomes almost shrill, a cry for company, so easily withheld from the lonely soul: "Contact! Contact! Who are we? where are we?" This is a preview of *Leaves of Grass*, a powerful anticipation of that pivotal moment in Walt Whitman's famous poem, published just a few years later, when the speaker longs for the wind to softly caress and tickle him. Thoreau's best pages bristle with the same furious energy that dispels any idea that they

are just the awkward products of sublimation. However, as Walls simply and beautifully clarifies Thoreau's dilemma: "In another place and time, he might have found his life's partner with a man."

It was life in all its forms, human and nonhuman, that attracted Thoreau, from the forest seeds in the ground to the squirrels that distributed them to his Penobscot guide Joe Polis, who knew his way around the vanishing Maine wilderness yet took pride in his neat house and took the Bangor newspaper. Thoreau became angry when James Russell Lowell, the editor of the *Atlantic*, deleted a key statement from his manuscript "Chesuncook": "A pine cut down, a dead pine, is no more a pine than a dead human carcass is a man."

But even as he pleaded for the status of trees, Thoreau continued to be haunted by the specter of human suffering. For a long time, his house had been a trusted stop on the Underground Railroad. In a touching account by the abolitionist Moncure Conway we learn how tenderly Thoreau, often suspected of being a cold fish, would treat a trembling fugitive who had shown up at his doorstep during "slave-hunting time." Thoreau never forgot that other, less-privileged people had preceded him at Walden Pond, notably old Zilpah White, a slave until the revolution, who built her one-room house in the woods long before Thoreau put his hoe into the ground nearby. Living a hardscrabble life, White survived by making baskets and spinning linen for the citizens of Concord. Someone—perhaps English soldiers out on parole—set fire to her house, killing her dog, her cat, and her chickens. But Zilpah White carried on. At least one of Thoreau's contemporaries still remembered her as she survived out there in the woods, next to her steaming pot, singing and repeating to herself what Thoreau, throughout it all, knew, too—that, whatever we think our differences might be, they run only skin-deep: "Ye are all bones, bones!"

BENJAMIN D. MAXHAM / THOREAU SOCIETY AND THE WALDEN WOODS PROJECT

# Russian Enigmas

*'Tis the season for Russophile reading.*

BY JOHN WILSON

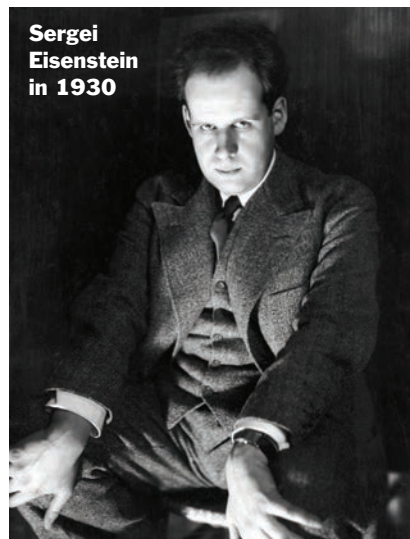
At this very moment, I trust, a novelist somewhere is trying to weave Russia's election-year meddling into the stuff of fiction. (I wish Keith Thomson would take it on.) Meanwhile, one of the most interesting literary stories of the last decade has gone mostly unnoticed—and this too, so it happens, has a Russian angle.

The story involves a writer named Paul Watkins, who completed his first novel before he turned 20. Over the years, his books (mostly fiction but some nonfiction as well) received many splendid reviews, but he was never a big seller, nor was he taken up and anointed by any influential taste-making faction. After 2006, it seemed he had stopped writing, much to the sorrow of his faithful readers (me included).

Not so: He had assumed another identity. With the 2010 novel *Eye of the Red Tsar*, writing as Sam Eastland, Watkins (who has taught for many years at the Peddie School in New Jersey) started a series centering on Inspector Pekkala, part detective, part secret agent, serving Tsar Nicholas and then Stalin. Pekkala, a Finn, is a larger-than-life figure, with ancestors in *The Kalevala* (the great Finnish mythological epic), yet his adventures are always grounded in the quotidian. In 2014, in the preface to the fifth book in the series, *The Beast in the Red Forest*, Watkins revealed that he hadn't gone silent after all.

This summer, the seventh and final book in the series was published. *Berlin Red* is a superb tale—but don't start there. Go back and try *Eye of the Red Tsar*. If you like it half as much as I did, you have a lot

*John Wilson edited Books & Culture from its founding in 1995 until its closure in 2016.*



Sergei Eisenstein in 1930

of good reading to look forward to.

How did people live (or die) under Stalin? How did they go on? (Pekkala spends almost a decade in the gulag.) And are the answers to those questions more pertinent than we might suppose to people (like us) living under very different circumstances? Yes, they are indeed, if the shelves taken up with biographies and memoirs and novels inspired by the lives of Akhmatova, Pasternak, and Shostakovich, among others, are any measure.

One name to add to that list is Sergei Eisenstein. This fall, thanks to Seagull Books, we have five volumes by the great filmmaker, newly published or reissued, some of them gathering disparate pieces, some of them quite fragmentary, but none without interest. The title piece of one such collection, *On the Detective Story*, is particularly interesting.

Like his contemporary Viktor Shklovsky, the literary theorist (though that description makes him sound tedious if you associate it only with the “high theory” of recent decades), Eisenstein

ransacks the span of world literature within the space of a few pages, moving nimbly from folk-tales to classics to contemporary writing, from Shakespeare to *Fantomas*. (He has some excellent observations on Chesterton's Father Brown stories, and his account of Ellery Queen's *The Chinese Orange Mystery* is more nourishing than an entire shelf from the Yale School.) In contrast to many contemporary writers, Eisenstein doesn't overelaborate; he leaves it to his listeners or readers to make connections.

Reading this essay is like sitting in on an irresistible monologue, as if we were around a table where Eisenstein was holding court. Not even the ritual quotations from Marx, Engels, and their comrades can break the spell. Following the title essay are some bits and scraps under the somewhat misleading heading “Lectures on Literature,” including roughly six more pages on detective fiction: some tasty passages, some not (“The detective story is the most naked expression of bourgeois society's fundamental ideas on property”).

That last sententious pronouncement makes me think of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, which parodied this line of thinking before Eisenstein was even born. If you've never read it, or haven't read it for years, you have at least three new versions to choose from in addition to the recent one by Larissa Volokhonsky and Richard Pevear.

Novels appear in new translations for many reasons: to make money for a publisher and a little at least for a translator; to replace (perhaps) an older translation whose idioms now seem fusty; to compete with another contemporary translation that (so the rival translator believes) has failed to do justice to the original; and so on. Contrary to much huffing and puffing about the estimable Pevear/Volokhonsky versions having cornered the market, never in my reading lifetime have so many competing translations of Russian classics been available. There's Oliver Ready's 2014 *Crime and Punishment* from Penguin and two brand-new translations just released in November: Nicolas Pasternak Slater's from Oxford and Michael R. Katz's from Liveright. I can't think of a book more timely for our moment. ♦



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# Fighting Before the Footlights

*Opera as politics by other means.*

BY JAY NORDLINGER

**A**s a rule, I favor a strict separation between music and politics. Politics need not worm its way into every nook and cranny. Of course, sometimes composers like to impose politics on their music. Sir Peter Maxwell Davies declared that a string quartet of his was about the Iraq war: a depiction of it and a condemnation

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**The Politics of Opera**  
*A History from Monteverdi to Mozart*  
 by Mitchell Cohen  
 Princeton, 512 pp., \$39.95

of it. What it was, was a string quartet.

Once, Toscanini was asked about the first movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony. What does it mean? He said, "It means *allegro con brio* in E flat." That's the spirit.

When you put *words* with music, however, all bets are off. Then you can

invest music with political or other meanings. And this is doubly true—triply true—in opera, with its stories and messages.

Now comes Mitchell Cohen, with *The Politics of Opera*. Cohen is a professor of political science at Baruch College, a branch of the City University of New York. For almost 20 years, he coedited *Dissent* magazine and is now one of its editors emeriti. One of his previous books is about Lucien Goldmann, a French Marxist philosopher, born in Romania, who lived from 1913 to 1970.

"Early operas began usually with prologues," Cohen writes. Following suit, he begins his book with a prologue. In it, he says that the book will be about "political operas" in a broad sense: operas that address politics and political ideas directly or indirectly; or that harbor important political implications."

Operagoers, especially in Europe, will know that *any* opera can be rendered political by a determined director. Some years ago in Salzburg, I reviewed

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RICHARD TERMINI / METROPOLITAN OPERA



Golda Schultz as Pamina, Tobias Kehrer as Sarastro, and Charles Castronovo as Tamino in the Metropolitan Opera's Julie Taymor-designed production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*

BCA

# Prodigy's Last Years

*Mozart's music on the page and on the stage.*

BY JOHN CHECK

When Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was relieved of his duties in June 1781 as court organist to Prince-Archbishop Hieronymus Colloredo, the 25-year-old had every reason to believe he would achieve great success on his own. Conditions in Salzburg, the city of his birth, had become unbearable, owing in part to Colloredo's lack of respect for him. Headstrong, replete with confidence in his abilities, Mozart had agitated for his release.

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**Mozart in Vienna**  
*The Final Decade*  
 by Simon P. Keefe  
 Cambridge, 667 pp., \$44.99

Success would be his indeed. Over the next 10 years, centered now in Vienna, Mozart would write his most glorious works: A short list includes the operas *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *The Magic Flute*; a generous handful of symphonies, including his last three, his very best; and more than half his piano concertos.

But those 10 years were also his last. Mozart died in 1791 at the age of 35. The

music from his final decade is the subject of the latest book by Simon P. Keefe, a professor at the University of Sheffield and an accomplished Mozart scholar.

The story of a work from early in his Vienna tenure, a sonata for two pianos (K. 448), shows how Mozart, no longer in the archbishop's employ, had to draw on all his resources to secure a livelihood. The sonata was commissioned by Johann Michael Auerhammer to exhibit the talents of his daughter, Josepha, to whom Mozart gave lessons in his early days in Vienna. The sonata was premiered at a private concert attended by select members of the nobility. This concert gave Mozart the chance to show himself, before an audience of potential patrons, as a musical triple threat: composer, performer, and teacher.

Keefe is interested principally in the intersection of Mozart's composing and performing activities; for him, understanding the "vibrant continuities between the two" is a key

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a production of *Der Freischütz*, Weber's Christian tale of 1821. Rather ingeniously, the director turned it into an anti-American polemic. His townsfolk were fat American tourists, wearing sports jerseys and munching chips. He had a villain of the piece say, "Destruction, death, corruption, rape, war, invasion, burned children, low taxes, and religion—that is what we would kill for; that is what our hearts yearn for." The inclusion of "low taxes" was a nice touch.

In his book, Cohen does some stretching, I think, meaning that he sees politics where politics may be absent. One problem is that he simply knows so damn much, about politics and everything else. Yet he is aware of the problem of overinterpreting—of stretching—and he is measured in his judgments. You can see this in the following passage:

While it would be obviously absurd and incongruous to subsume Mozart's achievements under political categories, an interpretation of his operas must account for the fact that most of them spoke to major issues of his century—not as tracts but as artistic engagements with the world. And Mozart, together with his various librettists, lived in a world thick with political and social drama, at an era's trembling end. The French state cracked.

An excellent passage, with a particularly good final sentence. (Cohen writes well, though I have a complaint: He is one of those who say "reason why"—as in "One reason why Ovid's retelling of Greek myths spoke to his own Roman times ..." I go for "that." But mine is not to reason why.)

The book's title, *The Politics of Opera*, suggests perhaps a bigger book, a wider survey, than Cohen has written. The subtitle narrows you down: *A History from Monteverdi to Mozart*. Monteverdi was born in 1567; Mozart died in 1791. Also, Cohen writes that "for the sake of manageability, I limited the geography of this book to Italy, France, and the Habsburg Empire." That is a mighty swath.

Cohen begins *before* Monteverdi, actually—with those pioneering opera composers Jacopo Peri and Giulio Caccini. (Caccini is the composer of "Amarilli, mia bella," one of the most beautiful and haunting songs ever written.) They lived and worked in Renaissance Florence, and who can resist that place, in that time? When Monteverdi got down to writing operas, says Cohen, he was "a true reformer of his art." That phrase made me smile, because we're used to thinking of Monteverdi as the Origin.

I was interested in what Cohen had to say about *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, or *The Return of Ulysses to His Homeland*, Monteverdi's masterpiece of 1640. I had just reviewed a performance of it, as there is a good amount of Monteverdi about now: This is an "anniversary year" for him, the 450th anniversary of his birth.

Suffice it to say, when Mitchell Cohen sees and hears an opera, he sees and hears a lot. To you, it may seem primarily a piece of music or a piece of lyric theater. For him, it reveals layer upon layer, politically, socially, and historically.

Of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, Cohen writes, "The story is about gods, royals, aristocrats, and men of 'lower' strata. It is sung through them, and political and social implications are suggested significantly by whose voices do and do not join." That would never have occurred to me. Did it occur to Monteverdi? Cohen also says that this opera, at the time of its premiere, "presented a persistently unflattering mirror to aristocrats in an aristocratic republic" (Venice).

Cohen is very good at getting under the skin of a piece and gauging the environment in which it was created. At the same time, he realizes that a really good work of art transcends time and space.

In the course of his book, Cohen tells us about Galileo's father, a musician who, in the early 1580s, wrote a treatise called *Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music*. He also tells us about two illustrious French Rs—Rameau and Rousseau—and their contentious relationship.

I had a special interest in Cohen's

treatment of *The Magic Flute*, too, because I had just reviewed a performance of that Mozart masterpiece (as one does: Mozart does not need an "anniversary year"). *The Magic Flute* provides a field day to someone like Cohen: Masons, Illuminati, priests, child-spirits! And Cohen indeed goes to town, for some 50 pages. A modern journalistic term applies: "deep dive."

"The overlap among Viennese Enlighteners and Masons is an essential backdrop to *The Magic Flute*," Cohen writes. Who knew? Cohen, certainly. He also speaks of the "middle and capitalist classes." I'm not sure what he means by "capitalist," but those who use it usually mean nothing good.

True to his subtitle, Cohen ends with Mozart—but he dips a toe into Beethoven, in the form of *Fidelio*, the composer's sole opera. It is a masterpiece, of course. It is also one of the great paens to political freedom, and to marital love, in all of art.

I wonder whether Professor Cohen would consider a sequel to his book. You could do a volume on Verdi alone, when it comes to the politics of opera. People have also written volume after volume about Wagner's *Ring*, and probably always will, quite aside from the rest of that composer's oeuvre.

Cohen dedicates his book to the memory of Irving Howe, with whom he worked over the years. An "exemplary intellectual," he calls him. Cohen cites Howe's book *Politics and the Novel* and says, "I learned a great deal about smart writing and thinking well from him." You can learn a great deal from Cohen, too: He is astoundingly, dizzyingly learned—although an intellectual writing on music is not for everybody.

For years, I would run into Martin Bernheimer in the opera house. (The great critic has retired this season.) We had a regular, joking routine. Say we were about to see a performance of *Der Rosenkavalier*. One of us would say, "This is the one about the cigarette girl in Seville, right?" (That would be *Carmen*.) The other might say, "Actually, it's the one about how the Ethiopian princess runs off with the bullfighter."

(That would be a mixture of *Carmen* and *Aida*.)

Stories abound in opera—and they can run together in one’s mind—but the music stands above them, somehow. *The Marriage of Figaro* gives you a thousand layers, politically, socially, and historically. It is also a Mozart piece in D major (a long one).

A book such as Cohen’s may not be

for everyone—whose is?—but it is certainly for some. I was thinking of the ideal reader of this book. He ought to be a political scientist, an opera maven, a man alive to the myriad machinations of the world.

The answer came to me as I was reading passages on Machiavelli, that (literal) Renaissance man. Ladies and gentlemen, Bill Kristol. ♦

## CHECK FROM PAGE 31

to appreciating the special quality of the music. Mozart the performer was a masterful improviser. As a keyboardist, he was able to play extemporaneously—using no notated music whatsoever—to dazzling effect. Keefe cites the high praise of critics who had the privilege of hearing him in action. One likened his improvisational ability to “a sweet bewitchment.” Another was exhilarated trying to follow the “bold flight of his fantasy.” More rhapsodically, a third wrote that “we swim away with him unresistingly on the stream of his emotions.” Mozart’s genius for improvisation was honed during his years as a touring prodigy. One tour, known to Mozart aficionados as the Grand Tour, began when he was just 7 and lasted three and a half years, taking him and his family to the great European capitals. His absorbent mind took in all that he heard—music from Italy, France, England, and elsewhere—and almost immediately he fashioned original compositions that perfectly caught the spirit of his models. His imagination then began to play upon what he heard, resulting in variations that evoked a thousand moods and atmospheres.

A hint of Mozart’s improvisatory bent can be heard in the Piano Sonata No. 13 in B-flat Major (K. 333), a work that, according to Keefe, has so far not been dated with certainty, though composed likely in 1782 or 1783. The last movement, a rondo, opens with a refrain that returns several times. Even in its first appearance, at the beginning of the movement, Mozart ornaments the refrain in various ways: by filling in gaps in the melody with embel-

lishing tones, adding arpeggios that demonstrate the performer’s virtuosity (a product of years of practice), and changing the accompaniment in the left hand midway through so as to suggest the entrance of an orchestra. All this he does in a stretch of music that takes about 20 seconds to perform. Twenty imperishable seconds: Here is an instance in miniature of the flourishes that to him were second nature.

At every turn, Keefe is interested in showing how Mozart’s approach to composition was qualified by pragmatic matters surrounding performance. For example, as the French-hornist Joseph Leutgeb (for whom Mozart wrote his four horn concertos) approached the end of his career, the composer wrote solo parts that were less taxing to play. And in a reverse situation, the undiminished skill of the clarinetist Anton Stadler prompted the composer to explore the timbral possibilities of an instrument that was still working its way into the sonic landscape of the symphony orchestra. Having been commissioned to write *Don Giovanni* for a premiere in Prague and knowing the reputation of the city for producing fine woodwind and brass players, Mozart included a large contingent of these instrumentalists in the orchestra and gave them challenging music to play.

While writing opera arias for solo singers, Mozart always made sure

to tailor his melodies to suit the strengths, and cloak the weaknesses, of star performers. On the other hand, writes Keefe, when composing for a small group of singers, say a trio or a quartet, he believed “he had to be allowed a free hand to compose what he himself deemed appropriate.” Appropriate or not, the composer also referred, at least on occasion, to the extramusical gifts of his best singer. In the banquet scene toward the end of *Don Giovanni*, Mozart has Don Giovanni boast repeatedly to Leporello of a “tasty dish” (Keefe’s translation of *piatto saporito*); here is a hardly veiled reference to Teresa Saporiti, the Italian soprano who sang the role of Donna Anna and was, by all reports, easy on the eyes.

Readers with musical training—not just able to read musical notation, but with an understanding of harmony, counterpoint, and form—will be best equipped to appreciate *Mozart in Vienna* and to weigh its arguments fairly. Keefe’s writing frequently becomes technical, not just on matters of the music itself but even on subjects like the kind of paper Mozart used and the shade of the ink that appears on a musical score; these and related variables help musicologists determine the date of a composition or the order in which individual parts were written.

Obviously and unfortunately, no recording exists of Mozart’s own performing. This, for Keefe, has the inevitable effect of “[distorting] the lens through which his music is viewed.” Through this distorted lens, listeners today see only the composer; the performer disappears from view. They all too often miss out on the “seamless fluidity” that characterizes the “composition-performance dynamic” of Mozart’s time. Thanks to the miracle of musical notation, at least part of his work has been preserved. This remnant makes listeners long for the “sweet bewitchment” they have missed. ♦



Mozart, in a portrait by his brother-in-law, ca. 1790

# Papal Postscript

What his biographer learned from time spent with John Paul II. BY NATHANIEL PETERS

In 1991, George Weigel arrived in Prague to research *The Final Revolution*, a book that told the story of Pope John Paul II's influence on the collapse of communism. That book would show that Weigel understood John Paul from the inside, as the pope thought he needed to be understood, and would pave the way for Weigel's later role as papal biographer with his international bestseller *Witness to Hope* and its sequel *The End and the Beginning*. But such a future was unforeseen in 1991 when, as the guest of honor at the Prague seminary, Weigel was presented with "a platter of carp heads—not the whole fish, just the heads—from which dull, piscine eyes stared out at me. It was, I deduced, a local delicacy, and these good men were trying in their straitened circumstances to be generous." Over the coming days, therefore, the bar down the street became Weigel's "evening refectory" and he recalls losing "a fair amount of weight on what I came to call the 'Prague seminary diet.'"

Stories like this abound in Weigel's latest book, *Lessons in Hope*. It is a sort of dual biography, an account of the actions of divine providence that formed John Paul II into a history-shaping spiritual leader and Weigel into his most authoritative interpreter in the English-speaking world; as John Paul remarked to now-cardinal James Harvey, Weigel "knows the Pope's mind better than the Pope."

*Lessons in Hope* offers an intimate understanding of John Paul II in action.

Nathaniel Peters is executive director of the Morningside Institute and a lecturer at Columbia University.

**Lessons in Hope**  
*My Unexpected Life with St. John Paul II*  
by George Weigel  
Basic, 357 pages, \$32



Above, John Paul II in Krakow, 1979; at right, Weigel in 2014



The pope was an excellent listener who could also make the crowds he addressed feel he was speaking to each member personally. He was intellectually curious, hosting annual summer seminars at which scholars in the sciences and humanities would brief him on recent developments in their fields. He worked tirelessly for ecumenism and to strengthen relations between Catholics and Jews. And he had a great sense of humor. Weigel recounts a story of when John Paul began to use a cane. He noticed a group of bishops watch him slowly move to the dais of the room for their meeting, turned toward them, and said "Eppur' si muove' (And yet it moves)—the words Galileo muttered to his inquisitors on his way out of his trial, still insisting, sotto voce, that the

Earth was not stationary but revolved around the sun."

John Paul II was neither a liberal nor a conservative, at least as those terms are nowadays used in American politics. He did not become captive to progressive elites, nor did he seek their approval—nor did he relish standing alone *contra mundum*. Rather, he sought to affirm the good and the true in the liberal, democratic world order and worked to make it obedient to Christ. In John Paul's mind, as Richard John Neuhaus once described it to Weigel, the biblical understanding of human dignity undergirds the concept of human rights that stands at the center of world politics. Religious freedom, in turn, is central to human rights.

The idea of the human person made in the image and likeness of God, made free and made for love, formed the core of John Paul's thought, which put him in direct conflict with the Communist regimes of Poland and the Soviet Union. In treating that conflict, Weigel returns again and again to the failure of the *Ostpolitik* of John Paul's predecessors. Their attempts to moderate the church's message and negotiate with the Soviets led to more intense persecution. By contrast, John Paul realized that the way to fight deadly lies is not by negotiating a détente but by proclaiming the truth forcefully and unabashedly. The transformation that began with his nine-day visit to Poland in 1979 concluded a decade later with the peaceful end of communism there.

John Paul's convictions—and his vocational discernment—were profoundly formed by his participation in "the great experience of my contemporaries," as he told Weigel: "humiliation at the hands of evil." He also knew great private suffering. A friend noted "an odd regularity to his life. Whenever he has a big religious experience, someone dies or is stricken," from his mother dying while he prepared for first communion through a bishop friend suffering a stroke before his

election as pope. John Paul was able to interpret these experiences through robust theology and philosophy and produce powerful reflections on suffering. In a similar way, his great capacity for friendship—which he maintained with numerous Polish couples after he had been elected pope—and his pastoral experience as a chaplain allowed him to write *Theology of the Body*, his great treatment of human sexuality. And his time as a manual laborer under the Nazi occupation inspired his encyclical on work, *Laborem Exercens*.

Weigel's astute analysis of the pope's life and thought is sprinkled throughout with anecdotes from their interviews and encounters. He describes his amusement as he watched on TV a Bob Dylan performance in Bologna for a large audience that included John Paul; after the music, the pope, riffing on Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind," delivered a "wonderful impromptu talk about the Holy Spirit blowing in the wind of the last decade of the twentieth century. ... The man, I said to myself later that night, has *game*." A few days later, when Weigel and John Paul met for a lunch appointment, the pope "said grace, sat down, fixed me with that look across the table, and began the proceedings by asking, 'Who eez Bob DEE-lahn?'" (Weigel's reply: "Holy Father, think of him as someone whose songs always sound better when someone else sings them.")

The clarity and joy with which John Paul lived, along with the intellectual and pastoral riches of his words, attracted millions to him. "How can young people join a group of permanently confused people who don't know where they're going?" the Nigerian cardinal Francis Arinze asked Weigel. "The Holy Father is just the opposite." Frequent short visits to his chapel throughout the course of the day fueled his life, which was, as Weigel argues, marked above all by hope: John Paul's "rock-solid confidence in God's guidance of his life ... made him the freest man in the world." Those who desire to have such freedom and clarity, especially in our days of ecclesiastical and political confusion, would do well to read this book. ♦



## Recent Books by Our Contributors

Friends of THE WEEKLY STANDARD are so prolific that it can be easy to lose track of all their projects—so we wanted to take this opportunity to highlight a few recent books by some of our cherished and most frequent contributors.

Elliott Abrams defends democracy promotion in *Realism and Democracy: American Foreign Policy after the Arab Spring*. A long introductory essay, itself worth the price of the book, examines America's Cold War record on human rights. (This includes a description of Abrams's own involvement during the Reagan administration; he helpfully reprints the text of his 1981 memo that begins "Human rights is at the core of our foreign policy, because it is central to America's conception of itself.") Abrams then discusses U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East under several administrations and makes the case for the robust promotion of human rights and the indispensability of American leadership. Foreign policy realists who think the United States should forsake human rights to make deals with dictators will have to grapple with Abrams's arguments for years to come.

Four decades ago, Paul Cantor argued in *Shakespeare's Rome: Republic and Empire* that *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra* contain within them a political philosophy worthy of study. That book has been reissued this year, along with a new one, *Shakespeare's Roman Trilogy: The Twilight of the Ancient World*. In the new book, Cantor revises and extends his thinking and says much more about the third Roman play, *Julius Caesar*, showing what the trilogy can teach us about eros, virtue, tyranny, and much else. Can reading Shakespeare help us better understand what it means to be human beings and citizens? If so, Cantor is as wise a guide

to the bard's political wisdom as can be hoped for.

In *Seablindness: How Political Neglect Is Choking American Seapower and What to do About It*, Seth Cropsey sets out the stark choice we face: Either we "demand the U.S. Navy do more with less, or provide the money needed to grow the fleet." But his historically informed and technologically savvy case for American seapower is not just about expanding the Navy's fleet and modernizing its weapons. It is also about morale: The strain we put on our Navy and Marine personnel and their families can contribute to lower retention rates and to veterans' physical and mental health problems. And it is about morality: Seapower is necessary for our self-defense, and "the moral imperative of self-defense," Cropsey writes, "cannot be separated from our—or any people's—natural right to life."

Judging just by its title, Jeremy Rabkin and John Yoo's new book *Striking Power: How Cyber, Robots, and Space Weapons Change the Rules for War* might seem very futuristic. But about a quarter of the book looks backwards, to describe the historical evolution of the law of war. This is a necessary chore, since Rabkin and Yoo believe that recent international agreements intended to codify and extend laws of war have actually undermined their protections—and that this problem will become more obvious and dangerous as cyber, autonomous, and space weapons advance. While Rabkin and Yoo argue hopefully that these "new technologies create weapons of less destruction, not mass destruction," they are measured in their conclusions and believe that better and clearer thinking in this area is needed—a goal to which their book helpfully contributes.

—Adam Keiper & Adam Rubenstein

# An Illuminating Look

*A tantalizing tour of medieval manuscripts.*

BY MALCOLM FORBES

In Umberto Eco's medieval whodunit *The Name of the Rose*, the narrator, a Benedictine novice, comes to realize that "books speak of books: it is as if they spoke among themselves." Armed with this newfound awareness, he sees the monastery library in another light—not as a quiet, cloistered retreat but a more animated realm, "the place of a long, centuries-old murmuring, an imperceptible dialogue between one parchment and another, a living thing."

Christopher de Hamel, one of the foremost authorities on medieval manuscripts, is attuned to such murmurings. In his deeply edifying and hugely entertaining new book *Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts*, he states that ancient, unrecorded books begin as "silent and inanimate objects" but after they have been examined, identified, and catalogued, they come alive and develop unique personalities. De Hamel was originally going to call the book "Interviews with Manuscripts," for "books can talk" and they have plenty to reveal. "Sit back," he instructs his reader at the outset, "turn the pages and listen quietly to what the books tell us. Let them talk."

English-born de Hamel has been listening to books and sharing their secrets throughout an illustrious bibliophilic career, first as the head of manuscripts at Sotheby's and then as a fellow and librarian of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. At the college's historic Parker Library, he was curator of hundreds of rare and priceless medieval and Renaissance manuscripts. His published works include a history of the Bible and a number of books

*Malcolm Forbes is a writer and critic in Edinburgh.*

**Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts**  
*Twelve Journeys into the Medieval World*  
by Christopher de Hamel  
Penguin, 632 pp, \$45



*Christopher de Hamel (right) shows a manuscript to Prince Charles in 2001.*

on illuminated manuscripts. To call de Hamel a passionate paleographer would be to sell him short.

In his new book, de Hamel scrutinizes a dozen illuminated manuscripts, ranging from the 6th to the 16th centuries. They encompass the Gospels, astronomy, music, literature, and Renaissance politics, and they take de Hamel to some of the greatest libraries in the Western world, from Oxford to Paris, Munich to New York, St. Petersburg to Los Angeles. We travel with him and gain exclusive access to books that, despite being cornerstones of our culture, are so fragile and precious they remain off limits to the general public. As de Hamel pithily explains, "It is easier to meet the Pope or the President of the United States than it is to touch the *Très Riches Heures* of the Duc de Berry."

Working chronologically, de Hamel begins his journey with the Gospels of Saint Augustine, created in the late 6th century and housed today at the Parker Library. Considered the oldest non-archaeological artifact to have survived in England, the book was reputedly entrusted by Pope Gregory the Great to Augustine on his mission to convert the heathen English to Christianity in A.D. 597. It was a practical book, carried in processions and during the liturgy, and as such would not have been venerable enough to have become a relic. How far it has come: Today it is viewed by many as "a religious relic of the highest spiritual value." De Hamel records an instance in 2005 of a visitor weeping and kissing the ground in front of its glass display case.

From here de Hamel trawls the centuries, singling out for each chapter one text he deems emblematic of the era. In Dublin he shows us the Book of Kells, another manuscript of the four Gospels and the iconic symbol of Irish culture. "It is probably the most famous and perhaps the most emotively charged medieval book of any kind," de Hamel writes. Over half a million people buy tickets and stand in line to see it every year. Its script or decoration adorns souvenirs and pub walls, banknotes and postage stamps. James Joyce traveled with it, studied it, and imitated it.

De Hamel's tour also takes in a Spanish monk's collection of grisly interpretations of the apocalypse, an anthology of satirical poems, tender love lyrics and rowdy drinking songs, and a treatise for princes on warfare (which includes the dastardly stratagem of lobbing glass bottles filled with venomous snakes onto the deck of an enemy ship). At times his investigations lead him off on intriguing detours—as when an examination of the Leiden *Aratea*, a Carolingian picture book of the constellations, triggers a discussion about the then-non-taboo practice of copying. In another instance, a study of an Old Testament commentary by Saint Jerome, the translator of the Vulgate Bible, branches out into a lesson on the act, and the art, of writing.

Two chapters are particularly stimulating. We learn that the Hours of Jeanne de Navarre was a private and personalized prayer-book created for a French king's daughter. After its owner was struck down by the Black Death in 1349, it began a new life on an eventful back-and-forth, lost-and-found journey. It changed hands among royal descendants and routinely crisscrossed the English Channel. In 1942 it was "requisitioned" by Hermann Göring from a Rothschild baron. Three years later a French officer rediscovered it in a knapsack among other Nazi loot stashed on a special train bound for Berchtesgaden. He in turn gave it to a monastery back in Brittany, and it was only when the monks took it to an antiquarian bookseller to fund the repair of their storm-damaged roof that the book was recognized. Of the 12 items closely examined in de Hamel's book, this is the smallest ("made for the hands of a queen") and the only one preserved today in the country in which it was made.

Such is the "restlessness" of illuminated manuscripts, de Hamel notes. This explains why the item in his other standout chapter, the Hengwrt Chaucer, is to be found not in England but Wales. In a deft and original move, de Hamel stages a mock court case, airs evidence, and appoints himself a member of the jury to determine which scribe copied down the greatest work of Middle English literature, *The Canterbury Tales*.

Doubters may suspect that this playful approach constitutes a brief respite from the rigors of scholarship, an interlude of freshness and creativity in an otherwise dry and starchy read. But they would be wrong. De Hamel's book is erudite but on no account dull or forbidding. He dispenses with footnotes and decodes all jargon, leaving us neither irked at nor flummoxed by the mention of pan-dects, rustic capitals, and Visigothic minuscule. Whether leading us through a library to its vaulted depths or describ-



Above, a portrait of St. Luke in the 6th-century Gospels of St. Augustine. Below, a page from the 16th-century Spinola Hours depicting the rich man feasting while the poor man begs in vain (but gets into Heaven).



ing a manuscript—its history and its authorship, its pages and its binding, its handwriting and its pictures—he maintains a tone that is teacherly yet chatty. "Come in—really," he says, slipping into tour-guide mode to present the 12th-century Copenhagen Psalter. "Sit beside me and let's gaze in admiration for a moment. We won't touch it: just look."

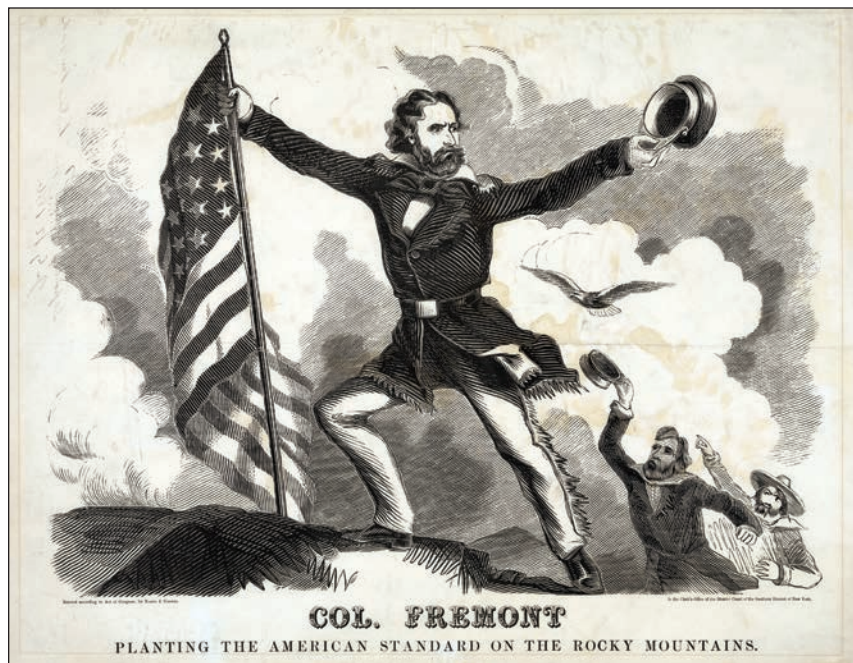
If de Hamel's book has a flaw it is this—not the many author-to-reader addresses, which may appear twee but are in fact endearingly quirky, but rather the conveyed impression and false hope of our being able to look and touch. "No one can properly know or write about a manuscript without having seen it and held it in the hands," de Hamel tells us, and "nothing can compare with the thrill of excitement when a supremely famous manuscript itself is finally laid on the table in front of you." Even though the book is beautifully illustrated with color images throughout, we readers are not there alongside de Hamel in screened-off reading rooms and cannot properly know these manuscripts or feel that incomparable thrill.

However, losing ourselves in de Hamel's glorious Wunderkammer of a book is far and away the next best thing. His curiosity and enthusiasm are infectious and his dedicated sleuth-work and educated guesses are invigorating. When not awed by the sheer scope of his expertise or absorbed by his concerted efforts to decipher script or dissect scripture, we are diverted by his light flourishes and witty evaluations. In his eyes, the Book of Kells "risks being mobbed, like a pop star or a head of state." Adam and Eve in one 10th-century manuscript are "shown naked and knobby-kneed in the upper corner of the opening, brightly pink like newly arrived English holidaymakers on Spanish beaches."

The book isn't all unadulterated praise. Refreshingly, de Hamel punctuates his assessments with criticism where necessary. He highlights writing that is too rich or downright unreadable, pictures that are overly decorative or underdeveloped, and pages that have been rendered dark and shiny, "probably from overzealous handling and even pious kissing." Not every manuscript is perfect. And yet all are at least minor miracles, works that, for the most part, are imbued with rare beauty, enduring wisdom, and enchanting strangeness. ♦

# Campaign Trailblazer

*The explorer who became the Republican party's first presidential nominee.* BY JAY COST



Ever since Theodore H. White's *The Making of the President 1960*, book buyers have been treated to the quadrennial offerings of presidential-campaign tell-alls. Many of these offer very little beyond cheap political thrills—White's 1960 book reads like JFK fan fiction—but the genre is not without its valuable examples. White's own *The Making of the President 1968* is a bracing analysis of a decisive moment in our national history. And political scientists like Gerald Pomper, Paul Abramson, and Jack Pitney have written on elections from a more scholarly angle, bringing rigor and depth to the narrative. But even these works, fine as they are, can only tell us so much. After all, the full import of an election can only be grasped when it is placed in context of

Jay Cost is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

## Lincoln's Pathfinder

*John C. Frémont and the Violent Election of 1856*  
by John Bicknell

Chicago Review, 355 pp., \$26.99

the events that preceded and followed it.

So it is unsurprising that the best books on campaigns these days are of the historical variety. The University Press of Kansas inaugurated its fantastic American Presidential Elections Series over a decade ago—and it continues to produce good work, with entries this year on the elections of 1860, 1940, and 1952. My favorite from Kansas is *The Real Making of the President: Kennedy, Nixon, and the 1960 Election* by W.J. Rorabaugh—the title being a not-so-subtle jab at White for the part he played in mythologizing JFK.

Now from Chicago Review Press comes *Lincoln's Pathfinder*, John Bick-

nell's account of the 1856 presidential race. It is one of the best historical narratives of a campaign I have read.

The mid-1850s was one of the messiest moments in American political history, and Bicknell is not afraid to get his hands dirty. The scope of his research is impressive—he pored through old newspapers, correspondence between politicians, and the record of congressional proceedings. Bicknell synthesizes all this information into a coherent tick-tock of the events between the election of 1852 and the campaign of 1856, which pitted Republican John C. Frémont against Democrat James Buchanan and Know-Nothing Millard Fillmore.

Some gruesome passages are hard to absorb—like the story of a fugitive slave killing her own children to keep them from having to return to bondage—but these are necessary to get across just how vicious civil society had become. Such grim passages are leavened by Bicknell's intricately detailed accounts of the politicking that went on behind the scenes at the nominating conventions. These are fascinating tales, for politicians had to balance not only a growing regional divide but also disputes over immigration and (in the North, at least) over how far opposition to slavery should go. Bicknell's bracing conclusion as to why Frémont lost the general election—“because northern voters still feared disunion more than they hated slavery”—seems right on the mark.

The only criticism I have of the book is its frame, or metanarrative, as suggested by the title. Abraham Lincoln hardly appears in the story, mostly in the early pages as he plans and organizes and campaigns in Illinois, and again toward the end when his name is floated for the vice presidency in 1856. More to the point, Frémont's reputation as a “pathfinder” to the West—he had led five exploratory and surveying expeditions—hardly corresponds to his actions in 1856. He comes through the pages with surprising passivity and, at times, political naïveté. The real tactician in the Frémont household was his wife Jessie, the daughter of famed Missouri senator Thomas Hart Benton.

Bicknell's book is not so much about Lincoln or Frémont as it is about a

strange incongruity. On the one hand, the nation was starting to tear itself apart, literally. There was violence over Kansas, violence over the Fugitive Slave Act, even violence within Congress. Meanwhile, the political class, though aware of the growing savagery of politics, seemed ignorant of its broader implications. They continued doing all the things they used to do to win political offices, even though the old world was crumbling around them.

That is a big part of why Frémont and Buchanan won their parties' nominations: They had taken no hard stands on the great sectional divide, so the political class naturally gravitated toward them. Alas, their nominations only made matters worse. Buchanan



A Frémont-Dayton campaign poster

had been little more than a bland functionary for decades and was unfit for the office of the presidency, especially in such dark times. It is hard to imagine that Frémont, had he won, would have done much better.

Ultimately, this paints Lincoln in all the better light. His 1860 nomination was also a product of compromises. He was the rarest of politicians—a Republican who did not offend a critical mass of his own party. But here was a man who, unlike his immediate predecessors, possessed the wisdom to see that civil war could be an opportunity to reorganize political society permanently and for the better.

It is for this reason that this book is highly recommended. Not only is it a gripping and interesting narrative of the events of the 1856 campaign, but it also serves as a chronicle of how civil society really was falling apart, how nobody seemed to know what to do about it, and how Lincoln was the true pathfinder. ♦

## The Science and Tech Shelf

We're all taught in school about the scientific method—an idealized version of how researchers think up hypotheses, conduct experiments, study the evidence, and confirm or disconfirm their original hypotheses. In *Rigor Mortis: How Sloppy Science Creates Worthless Cures, Crushes Hope, and Wastes Billions*, longtime NPR science reporter Richard Harris shows just how far that idealized version is from reality. There are systemic problems in U.S. biomedical science, and they go far beyond the “reproducibility crisis” that has been hotly debated in recent years: Harris’s eye-opening book discusses shoddily designed experiments, “HARKing” (hypothesizing after the results are known), poor assumptions, and incentives that warp both careers and research results.

David N. Schwartz’s *The Last Man Who Knew Everything* is the second biography of Enrico Fermi in as many years, following Gino Segrè and Bettina Hoerlin’s *The Pope of Physics*. This burst of interest is long overdue—Fermi built the first nuclear reactor, contributed mightily to the Manhattan Project, and did important work in quantum theory, but he has rarely been biographized. This is perhaps less because of the difficulty of explaining his work than because so much of his life was devoted to physics that there is little juicy personal material for a biographer to draw out. These two Fermi biographies make a valiant attempt to give us not only Fermi the scientist but also the husband, father, and friend.

Thinking about today’s vast, secretive, and high-tech National Security Agency, it’s hard to imagine how small, confused, and haphazard were its origins. Journalist

Jason Fagone’s *The Woman Who Smashed Codes* is not just a vindication of the career of Elizebeth Smith Friedman, the gifted cryptanalyst whose work breaking codes during both world wars has been underappreciated, it’s also a riveting historical account of politics, espionage, and the creation from scratch of U.S. signals intelligence capabilities. And it’s a love story: Elizebeth and her extraordinary husband William Friedman collaborated for decades, in a true marriage of hearts and minds.

In a 1927 *Life* magazine cartoon, a businessman shows off his company’s “latest achievement—a typewriter for the Chinese trade.” Behind him stands a machine two stories tall, with 1,000 keys. The practical problem behind this joke—the challenge of inventing devices that can render a language that isn’t alphabetic or syllabic—is the subject of *The Chinese Typewriter: A History*. This fascinating microhistory is the first of two volumes from Stanford historian Thomas S. Mullaney; the sequel will examine Chinese computing.

If you’re curious about what artificial intelligence might mean for the human future but you are too busy to read (or have the good sense to be wary of) the books by Ray Kurzweil, Nick Bostrom, Robin Hanson, and the other overlapping transhumanists, MIT physicist Max Tegmark’s *Life 3.0: Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence* offers a readable, albeit scattered and credulous, overview of the subject. Its subtitle, though, is a bit off the mark: Tegmark’s book, like most others in this area, suffers from its author not having tried very hard to understand what “being human” really means.

—Adam Keiper

# Triumphant Tuesdays

The new 'Smitten Kitchen' cookbook promises to save your weeknights. BY EMILY MACLEAN

When legendary editor Judith Jones returned stateside in the early 1950s after years of living in France, she was dismayed to find that there was little joy in American cooking:

It was still the era of fast and simple. The prevailing message was that the poor little woman didn't have time to cook, and, moreover, it was beneath her dignity to waste time cooking if she could reach for a frozen product or a ready-made substitute. This was a message that the food industry had been skillfully promoting since the nineteenth century. . . . In fact, we were almost made to feel guilty for indulging in such a mundane occupation when we could be pursuing higher goals.

Julia Child, with Jones's help, did more than anyone to spark a change in that outlook, showing Americans that cooking at home was something to be enjoyed—could even be a source of pride—and that novice cooks could make delicious meals for their families and friends. Child, and cookbook authors Marcella Hazan, Lidia Bastianich, Madhur Jaffrey, and others modified recipes from their countries based on what was available at American grocery stores and introduced international flavors into American home kitchens.

In the decades since, we have become far more interested in what goes on our plates. "Farm to Table" is now stamped almost by default on the menus of chic new restaurants (we non-farmers consider agriculture very romantic). Many city-dwelling "foodies" take an obsessive interest in where their ingredients

Emily MacLean is managing editor at National Affairs.

**Smitten Kitchen Every Day**  
Triumphant and Unfussy New Favorites  
by Deb Perelman  
Knopf, 330 pp., \$35



Bakery-Style Butter Cookies (see opposite)

come from. Williams Sonoma, alongside its cookware and cutlery offerings, now sells for \$1,500 a cedar chicken coop with a small enough footprint to fit a townhouse garden.

But intrigued as we may be by the possibility of thoughtfully planned and carefully prepared meals, dinnertime still comes once a day, and most American families run on two incomes—which means someone has to put dinner on the table after working all day. Appropriately, a lot of the most popular sources for recipes are focused on getting a nutritious dinner on the table quickly and painlessly. Who wants to make a recipe with 15 ingredients and 5 steps at 6 o'clock on a Tuesday?

Deb Perelman does. And she believes that in your heart, you do too. Because sometimes, after working all day and getting home late, a person needs a win. "What I have always loved about cooking is the way a happy discovery . . . has the power to completely change the course of a day," she writes in the introduction

of her new book, *Smitten Kitchen Every Day*. "I like the way following a recipe to the letter can feel like handing the reins over after a long day of having to make all the decisions, but also that pulling off a good meal when you least expected is the fastest way to feel triumphant, even if your day left you short of opportunities to."

It's this kind of everyday victory that Perelman has aimed to deliver for over a decade on *Smitten Kitchen*, now one of the longest-running food blogs around. There, Perelman interacts with her readers, who can feel assured that the recipes will work in their kitchens because she tested them in hers—hindered for years by a very old, unreliable oven and no dishwasher—and identified potential problems. She's quick to find shortcuts, but if you really do need, say, to sift the flour, she'll insist. In her blogging, Perelman usually sticks to ingredients that can be found at normal grocery stores, but for tough-to-find items she provides Amazon links. And there are beautiful photographs at every step.

With her distinctive, self-deprecating tone, Perelman convinces readers that if she can do it, we can too. She more or less taught me, and countless other women in my generation, how to cook—and convinced us that we could teach ourselves.

Perelman's first cookbook came out in 2012 to acclaim, hitting the *New York Times* bestseller list and winning the Julia Child Award from the International Association of Culinary Professionals. *Smitten Kitchen Every Day* is her much-anticipated follow-up. Most of the recipes are new, though there are a few favorites from the blog. This book is consciously different from her first: As she notes in the introduction, Perelman has two kids now, so the recipes in this book are more time-conscious than those in her first. But time constraints are only one factor and are secondary to deliciousness; there is nothing triumphant about a bland pork chop, even if it took only 20 minutes to make.

A case in point is the pea tortellini with parmesan broth. The recipe starts with this warning: "I once read that if

## Bakery-Style Butter Cookies

With permission from *Smitten Küchen Every Day*

### INGREDIENTS

#### Cookies:

- 1 cup (8 ounces or 225 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 2/3 cup (135 grams) granulated sugar
- 2 large egg yolks
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 cups (260 grams) all-purpose flour

#### To finish:

- 1/2 cup (160 grams) jam of your choice
- 1 cup sprinkles, chopped nuts, or finely shredded dried coconut
- 10-to-12-ounce (285-to-340-gram) bag semisweet chocolate chips or chopped chocolate

**Make the cookies:** Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.

Combine the butter and sugar until well blended and light. Add the egg yolks, vanilla, and salt, and beat to combine. Scrape down the bowl and beaters. Add the flour, and mix just until the flour disappears. Fit a piping bag with a medium (approximately 1/2-inch opening) French star tip, or you can use a large plastic bag with the corner snipped off.

Pipe the dough into about 1/2-inch-wide, 1-and-3/4-to-2-inch-long segments, spaced about 1 inch apart, on your baking sheets. It's possible a professional would have a better way to do this, but since I am not a professional, I

use a knife or scissors and simply snip off the dough for each cookie, giving it a clean finish. Bake the cookies for 11 to 13 minutes, or until they are golden at the edges.

You can cool these completely on the baking trays, or for at least 2 minutes, to make them easier to lift to a cooling rack. Let the cookies cool completely. Repeat with the remaining dough.

**Assemble:** Meanwhile, place your jam in a sandwich bag, but don't snip off the corner until you're going to need it, to limit messes. Place the sprinkles on plates with rims or in shallow bowls. Melt the chocolate chips in the microwave or in a small saucepan until they're three-quarters melted, then stir to melt the rest. (This will keep the chocolate from burning or overheating.) Place the melted chocolate in a bowl with a good depth for dipping. Line two large baking sheets with parchment, or just use the cookie trays you baked on, wiping off any excess crumbs.

Once the cookies are completely cool, flip half of them over, to become the bottom half of your sandwiches. Snip a little corner off your jam bag, and squeeze a little down the center of each flipped cookie, but not so much that it will squeeze out when sandwiched. Sandwich with the other half of the cookies. Dip each a third to half of the way into the chocolate and (trust me) let it drip off, wiping away any excess. (I know we all love chocolate, but the sprinkles will slide off if it's too thick.) Roll the cookies in sprinkles, then return them to the baking sheets to set. You can pop them in the freezer for 5 minutes to hasten this process along.

**Do ahead:** These keep at room temperature in an airtight container for a week.

someone makes you homemade-from-scratch tortellini they must be absolutely in love with you, because it takes a hellacious amount of work." To make the task less onerous, Perelman substitutes premade wonton wrappers for homemade pasta dough. This shortcut puts homemade tortellini within reach (though maybe not after work). Wonton wrappers were easy to find in the tofu section of my local Giant (likely a testament to my neighbors' adventurous food habits), and Whole Foods was happy to sell me parmesan rinds. Folding 100 tortellini took about 45 minutes, but the broth had to simmer that long anyway. The effort was worth it: The final product was bright and delicate, surprising for a homemade soup.

The one-pan farro with tomatoes is a favorite from the blog archives. True to its name, it requires just one pot—which is all the advertisement necessary for anyone without a dishwasher. It tastes like a light risotto and only takes about 40 minutes, including cutting up the cherry tomatoes. The "fall-tough salad" (a pun on the Middle Eastern fattoush) is another weeknight favorite from the archives that made the book. It calls for sumac, a paprika-like spice with a distinctive lemon flavor that is hard to find at the grocery store—but Amazon can deliver it in two days. Ordering an ingredient online for the first time can feel like succumbing to the worst impulses of our modern age, but it's hard to get overly exercised about this

when it's in the service of family dinner—or at least it's easy to rationalize.

The wintry apple bake with double ginger crumble took just 20 minutes to throw together. I already had everything I needed in the kitchen, so it was the first thing I made when the book arrived. Perelman credits Nigella Lawson with teaching her to add baking soda to her crumb, which she promises makes a more cookie-like topping, and the thicker crumb somehow made it passable as breakfast food.

The chocolate pecan slab pie is another recipe that is better with help from Jeff Bezos. Unless you live in New York or somewhere near a very special grocery, you'll have to order the golden syrup, but this magic ingredient is

worth the trouble. (Perelman suggests using maple syrup as a substitute, but I found it's a little too much.) This recipe is adapted from a blog post, newly presented in slab form—basically a thinner, sheet-pan-sized pie—which makes much more sense, because one pecan pie is not going to suffice, no matter how many people are going to be at the party.

In my spot-testing, I encountered only one significant problem—the strawberry cloud cookies. I was excited to make these: I wanted to use my new sandwich-bag piping technique from the tortellini (an unnecessary step, but a fun and tidy way to deal with the sticky meringue dough). When I took them out of the oven, they looked like perfect pink river rocks, but 10 minutes later they had collapsed. They still tasted like cotton candy, but the texture was more the chewy end of a cotton candy than the cloudy beginning.

One of the best things about cooking from a website is the process pictures that illustrate the trickiest parts. When you're beating egg whites and wonder what "stiff peaks" are supposed to look like, there is a picture to show you. When developing her first cookbook, Perelman worried that the obsessive documentation of every step would be impossible to replicate in book form, so the publishers made it work: In the first book, the really tough steps were documented, even if the prettier, final product was pushed to the corner of the page. The new *Smitten Kitchen Every Day* doesn't follow this approach, which is too bad, as I could have used some help with the tortellini-folding technique.

But the photography that is included is nonetheless helpful in getting readers excited about making dinner—even though none of us has as much time as we would like. Many of Perelman's long-time readers have growing families too and face the same challenge she does of getting dinner on the table at a reasonable hour. New readers and frequent blog commenters alike will be happy to find weeknight dinners that don't feel like compromises and, silly as it sounds, give them a chance to feel triumphant, even on a Tuesday. ♦

BCA

# Fiction Roundup

*This year's not-to-be-missed novels and stories.*

BY SAM SACKS

Fiction finds itself in a curious position in 2017, when the favored form of disparagement is to accuse opponents of peddling fake news. But fake news is a nearly perfect characterization of a good novel or short story, and fiction writers have proudly refined its production to an extent that makes pundits and politicians look like pikers. Art, said Picasso, is a lie that makes us realize truth, and here are some of the books in which the lies are most seamlessly spun and the truths most profound.

The collection *Bad Dreams and Other Stories* is deceptive in the way of all Tessa Hadley's books. Like her forerunners Barbara Pym and Anita Brookner, Hadley is often poooh-pooohed as an anodyne writer of dowdy drawing room mini-dramas. But accompanying her domestic settings is a dark and unnerving understanding of human nature, especially concerning the enigmas of girlhood. The stories here are all smiles until the moment they slide in the shiv.

In *Who Killed Piet Barol?* Richard Mason continues the adventures of the titular Barol, fiction's most likable libertine since George MacDonald Fraser's Flashman. Mason's intricate, sensually told tale is an homage to the delights of the bedroom and dinner table, but it's also a bracing and informed portrait of South Africa in the early 20th century. You don't need to have read the previous Barol book, *The History of a Pleasure*

*Seeker*, to enjoy this one, but odds are that if you haven't you'll want to.

The disputes roiling college campuses get their first serious dramatization in Jean Hanff Korelitz's *The Devil and Webster*, set in a small New England college whose quad has been taken over

by outraged student protesters. Korelitz takes on the third-rail subjects of racism and censorship, but her touch is so light and humorous, and her plotting so adroit, that the story never descends into political spleen.

In a year teeming with imagined dystopias, none was flat-out weirder than Tomoyuki Hoshino's *ME*,

in which a shiftless Japanese bachelor discovers that hundreds of his clones—in spirit if not likeness—are living throughout the city, swapping identities. An eerie exploration of the comforts and terrors of conformity, *ME* is part parable, part nightmare, part slapstick comedy, and part something I'm not sure has any label at all.

The opposite ends of family life are beautifully depicted in Kristen Iskandrian's *Motherest* and Bernard MacLavery's *Midwinter Break*. Iskandrian's debut, about a reclusive college freshman who stumbles into motherhood long before she's ready, transmutes the usual material of millennial despair into a story of bravery and hope. *Midwinter Break* relates the Amsterdam vacation of a long-married, retired couple wondering whether to continue living together or risk their last years alone and on their own terms. MacLavery, at 75 years old, writes with the tempered poetry of a man who has seen everything of the world and is still in love with it.



*Sam Sacks writes the Fiction Chronicle for the Wall Street Journal and is a founding editor at Open Letters Monthly.*

## Gift ideas from our pages

Not sure what books to give your loved ones? Turn to back issues of THE WEEKLY STANDARD for ideas.

**The Aeneid** by Virgil (Chicago, \$35). Here's how Susan Kristol's review (September 18, 2017) begins: "The publication of a new translation of the *Aeneid* by poet David Ferry at the age of 93 is an outstanding achievement. Having also translated Virgil's other masterpieces, the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, Ferry has spent two decades in the company of this great Roman poet."

**Grant** by Ron Chernow (Penguin, \$40). From Carl Rollyson's review (November 13, 2017): "So how, in Chernow's telling, did Grant become a great general, a much better presi-

dent than has been generally supposed, and a great man? It was partly a matter of events, partly of character, and, perhaps most of all, the result of Grant growing into the roles—roles that were assigned to him but that he also sought, however quietly and circumspectly. When his moment in history arrived, Grant was ready to salute his destiny."

**Scalia Speaks: Reflections on Law, Faith, and Life Well Lived** (Crown Forum, \$30). Here's a snippet from Adam J. White's review (October 9, 2017): "In decades of public speeches at home and abroad, Scalia educated, challenged, and entertained countless audiences. Now anyone who wants to benefit from the late jus-

tice's wit and wisdom can do so with *Scalia Speaks*, a collection of speeches edited by Christopher J. Scalia and Edward Whelan (that is, the justice's youngest son and his former clerk)."

**Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow** by Yuval Noah Harari (Harper, \$35). Lawrence Klepp's take (August 7, 2017): "Harari's style is breezy and accessible, sprinkled with allusions to pop culture and everyday life, but his perspective is coolly detached and almost Machiavellian in its unflinching realism about power, the role of elites, and the absence of justice in history. He is an unapologetic oracle of Darwin and data. And he is clearly a religious skeptic, but he practices a form of Buddhist meditation, and among the best things in his new book, like his previous one, are his observations on the varieties of religious experience."

Hearteningly, today's novelists have continued to draw inspiration from the Greek myths. Brian Van Reet's intense and multifaceted Iraq war novel *Spoils* updates the legend of Cassandra, while Jesmyn Ward evokes the *Odyssey* in *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, her emotionally charged road-trip novel through a Mississippi crowded with historical ghosts. Colm Tóibín's *House of Names* imposes an almost otherworldly detachment on its retelling of the keening, blood-drenched story of Clytemnestra. The conversations these books hold with the ancient texts invite the best kind of readerly engagement, so that even their missteps are fascinating.

Jarett Kobek's novel *The Future Won't Be Long* turns back to the more recent mythological age of pre-Giuliani Manhattan. The East Village squats, the underground club scene, the drugs, the expensively tailored nihilism, Bret Easton Ellis: It's all here, rendered with just the right mixture of nostalgia and disdain. Kobek carries his story through the years with propulsive speed, and his interest is less with the gaudy touch-

stones of the era than with a central friendship that survives even the most self-destructive fads.

Bradford Morrow stages an academic mystery with real historical sweep in *The Prague Sonata*, which follows a musicologist's quest to restore the movements of a beguiling classical composition that was broken up and hidden from the Nazis during World War II. And with *Forest Dark* Nicole Krauss serves up her own intellectual confection, imagining an alternate reality in which Kafka survived his tuberculosis, emigrated to Israel, and left behind a pile of unpublished writing. Morrow's novel is plotted and scored like a golden-age film, and its triumphant ending will rouse you to applause. Krauss's book, fittingly for a Kafka tribute, is more mysterious and circular, sending you back for careful rereadings.

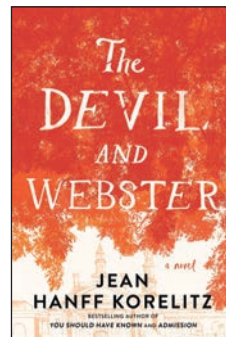
How to describe the experience of reading the stories in Hungarian writer

Laszlo Krasznahorkai's *The World Goes On?* Their long, whirlpooling sentences enfold you like a Gregorian chant or a Steve Reich composition.

Their relentless progression toward epiphany is reminiscent of some newly excavated Gnostic gospel. But whatever likeness you think of for these vignettes and snatches of memory, they are undeniably the work of a visionary whose art exists only on the poles of the sacred and the profane.

Finally, for pure sentence-level beauty it's hard

to top *All We Shall Know* by Donal Ryan, the Irish writer with the best claim to the mantle passed down from the master stylist John McGahern and, before him, Frank O'Connor. This compact story, about the saving friendship of two outcast women, blends Ryan's delicate gifts for description with the colorful speech of the Irish countryside to generate a music of irresistible complexity and grace. ♦



# STYLON NEWS

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## Franken apologizes for latest apology about recent apology

### PLANNING NEXT APOLOGY FOR THURSDAY

*'I couldn't possibly be sorrier'*

BY GERHART KLEIN

Embattled Minnesota Senator Al Franken issued yet another apology this morning, on the heels of a recent apology for his latest apology to women who have accused him of inappropriate behavior. "It has been made clear that my recent apology for the apology about my last apology was not apologetic enough," said Franken from a lectern in a press room on Capitol Hill.

"I cannot understate how sorry I am that I neglected to adequately express how sorry I was for not making clear that I was really, truly, and deeply sorry for how my behavior has affected the women who have come forward," he continued. "And while I don't remember the actions the same way they do, I apologize for my memory, and for not apologizing for my memory



JONATHUNDER

One sorry senator: Franken releases his December apology schedule.

in my most recent apology, and, of course, for not apologizing for not apologizing for my memory in the apology before that."

Since allegations of sexual misconduct first surfaced a few weeks ago, the senator has apologized 11 times, with 4 of those apologies addressing other apologies that left critics demanding further apologies, which led to today's apology, the senator's most comprehensive and apologetic to date.

"Just to be clear, I am sorry for my behavior, for my apologies,

and for anything else I might have done that has negatively affected the women who have come forward," he went on. "And to all other women, too. I am sorry to them. And to girls around the world. And boys. And men, for that matter. All humans. Everywhere. To everyone on earth, I apologize," an exhausted Franken concluded. "I know I am better than this. I do. Because I'm good enough, I'm smart enough, and doggone it,

SORRY CONTINUED ON A6